

Alpha·
and
Omega

A Novel of Jesus

by Francis Wolfe

This book is a novel of fiction; it is not a book of doctrine, or
theological or spiritual instruction.
The ideas contained are fictional story telling,
theories and possibilities.

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Historical Setting

This novel is set in Israel about 30AD. Israel has not recovered from the disastrous conquests of Assyria and Babylon, which drove its people into exile, slavery, and religious compromise. There are more Jews living outside of Israel than in, and half the population in Israel is non-Jewish. The faith is in real danger of disappearing by dilution and compromise.

The leaders have wisely adopted a policy of including the several diverse groups within Judaism, rather than excommunicating them, which would further deplete the Jewish population within Israel. These groups include the Essenes, Zealots, Pharisees, and the rulers themselves, the Sadducees.

A program of religious conversion has been undertaken by which the faith is strengthened among current members, and lapsed members are called back; even pagans are appealed to. The village synagogues are centers of learning and community, and Greek and Aramaic translations of the scriptures are made available to the faithful. The temple has been rebuilt and made the tangible focus of the faith and of pilgrimage. The scribes and Pharisees set a strict standard for the faith in an effort to prevent its dilution.

The prophesied Messiah — priest, prophet, and king — is yearned for. He will drive the Romans from the land, restore Israel's borders, convert or exile the impious, bring justice and prosperity to the nation. The most hopeful vision of the Messiah's reign has him bringing God's instruction, and salvation to the entire world. Hope in the Messiah is a refuge for many, who toil to produce a harvest and provide for their families in the face of so many who strip them of their earnings. The mean lifespan in Israel is forty years.

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FATHER

Jesus is a Foster Father

“**YOU** are his father Jesus, do something!” Hazorus said sternly.

Hazorus’ concern was directed at Zerah, foster son of Jesus. Zerah’s mother Abigail died in childbirth, and Zerah’s father followed his wife two years after that. Abigail was cousin to Jesus’ aunt Elizabeth; she had lived in Nazareth and grew up as a sister to Mary.

“There he is!” shouted Jesus as he ran to Zerah, who had become lost in the Passover crowd just outside the Beautiful gate of the temple.

Jesus was in a better position than most to take on a child. Two years ago, he entered into a partnership with his cousin Hazorus, and his return had been enough to pay off his two room house that he shared with Mary and Zerah. Hazorus made the thrice yearly pilgrimages to the temple to make thanks and sacrifice to the God of Israel, and now to give Jesus another note of credit and to update him on further business expansion.

Zerah was quickly recovered, even before the ten year old boy had considered himself lost. He suffered through a mild rebuke, and the family was little delayed in entering the temple. Zerah’s grandmother Mary took charge of him while Jesus and Hazorus wandered about, and then entered the court of the Israelites.

It was a custom in Jerusalem that no person be without lodging on Passover eve. Every son and daughter of Israel was to be protected behind door posts painted with lamb’s blood. Jesus and family, and Hazorus provided a lamb in exchange for shared lodging with acquaintances in Jerusalem.

The evening of their return to Nazareth found Jesus and Mary reclining on the roof of their home, the topic of conversation was the memory of Joseph. It was a frequent topic, and all their memories were good ones. Joseph was a rare man, his life being the care of his family, cultivation of virtue, and piety toward God. He had often spoken of the brevity of life and of its real end — attainment to God.

The memories were like wine, and the conversation slowed as recollections were savored; silence fell and at an appropriate moment Jesus said, “Mother, was there ever the possibility of other children between you and Joseph?”

Mary replied, “No there was not. Joseph would not violate my marriage to the Holy Spirit, I remain a virgin...I think you know that.¹ I also think that you just like hearing of the courage and nobility of Joseph and that is why you ask these questions. I enjoy recalling his goodness also.”

A minute of comfortable silence followed before Mary announced, “I am going inside to check on Zerah.” This was Mary’s favorite part of the day. Zerah would be asleep, Mary would wrap her arms around him and stroke his hair, just enough to half awaken him so that she could coax him to sleep again with a song.

Jesus had been the recipient of such affection until he was declared a man at his ritual mitzvah, at age thirteen. After that time, the status of authority was supposed to reverse between Jesus and Mary, but it was never a matter of conflicting ideas or plans, so there was little transition. Sometimes his mother still stroked his hair while he sat, using a comb as an excuse.

Jesus would remain on the roof, he slept on the roof most of the year, he had even constructed a vent along the edge of the roof that allowed the rising heat from the cooling interior bricks to enter his blanket. After sunset he would pray, then sleep on the roof. He was up well before dawn for more prayer. His prayer was a combination of his favorite psalms and scripture verses, meditation on life, God, and his own particular calling.

He used the remaining time before sunrise for centering prayer in which he cut off all distractions, thoughts and words other than God. The clutter of the day past, or the day approaching was disregarded simply by directing each faculty to the Father. His

¹ Mary gave birth only to Jesus. She espoused her husband the Holy Spirit at the annunciation and conception of Jesus. She remained faithful to her spouse the Holy Spirit and would not have relations with any other. In the Aramaic language “brother” and “sister” included those same generation males and females of one’s extended family, as there was no word for cousin. The extended family was the norm, and the language reflected this.

In this novel Jesus is depicted as a foster father — an all too common occurrence in a world in which people often died in their prime and left children needing care. Jesus is in fact a literal father. All of creation came to be through him, (Jn 1:3).

inner voice spoke, “God almighty...God, my God...God of hope...”, in an effortless rhythm with some simple variations. His inner voice preoccupied his hearing, allowing little notice of the few sounds of the night. His posture was one that likewise did not require effort of maintenance, he knelt sitting on his lower legs, his head tilted back, so as not to fall forward if a bit of sleep attempted to disturb his peace. Even his hands were directed to God in a gently raised position. The particular form these things took was secondary to their intention, union with the God of Israel.

Every fever was a death watch. Some fevers came on fast, others occurred at the end of life in those suffering ongoing illness or weakness. Joseph had died with a fever after a year of increasing weakness. Now Zerah was suddenly stricken. Jesus and Mary agreed to take night shifts in caring for Zerah, but neither could sleep. They had discussed calling for a physician, but they as often harmed as healed. Jesus preferred to trust in God.

Jesus’ son Zerah died in his sleep. Mary was collected, but Jesus buried his grief in burial activity. Jesus had constructed many coffins, but had none now. The coffin was used only to carry the body, and was not usually buried with the deceased, and Jesus would just have to do without.

Jesus went to the cemetery at dawn, just two hours after the death of Zerah. He searched for a burial location and brought along a spade. The cemetery was a public field and it was proper form to check in with the civil council first, but he did not want to wake anyone. Graves were marked with stones, by any one of several methods. The flat stones used as markers were occasionally taken, so it was best to sink a marker deep, and with the wider portion below ground making it more difficult to pull up.

Jesus knew the grave yard and what areas were reserved, and dug an interment hole for Zerah. He lined the hole with wildflowers and wild straw. A blanket served as a shroud for the boy. Sometimes a shroud could cover only the upper body, such were the circumstances of the villagers in Galilee. Jesus stepped into the hole, and gently laid Zerah to rest. He filled in the grave, and stretched himself across the mound. Jesus prayed and cried tears of hope.

Later in the day, the thought occurred to Jesus — it seemed he was to be Messiah in Israel with no son as heir to the office.²

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² Chapters 1-3 depict Jesus as believing that he is called to the office of Messiah. Later chapters have Jesus growing in understanding, that the Messiah is his own person. He grows also in understanding the purpose of the Messiah, not as a king of the earth, but the means and the ends of salvation. This novel depicts Jesus as advancing in virtue and soul. Jesus was unconditionally divine, but also fully human. Every act of virtue and faith advanced his human soul in some way. A recurring idea that Jesus speaks of in this novel, is that the faithful will become Messiah themselves. This is the idea that the faithful constitute the literal body of Christ, on earth and in Heaven. Christ is now the entire body of Christ, and not Jesus alone (Acts 9:4). “Christ” is the Greek translation equivalent of the Hebrew “Messiah”.

Slave

Jesus is an Indentured Servant

“Job!”...“Job!”...someone was calling for Job. Why Job, what did it mean? Did it mean anything? Why did he hear the name Job everywhere he went? ¹

At the marketplace in Nazareth, a woman called out “Job”, while a man shouted, “Yes, I am calling you.” The woman was closer and her words partially over spoke the others. Jesus heard, “Job, I am calling you.” Jesus was ready for anything; he scanned the area looking for anything unusual. Then he thought of Mary.

Jogging home, he tried not to recall of the story of Job and his family, and he wished that the name were more common, it might explain why he kept hearing it. But few people were named Job, and he had encountered this entire population in the last week.

Mary did not ask why Jesus was worried, or out of breath, or preoccupied most of the times he stepped through the door. That evening the reasons began to be revealed.

The rabbi was at the door step to tell of the death of Hazorus, uncle and partner of Jesus. He had died of fever in Tyre, five days ago. The funeral was over of course, but Jesus would have to make a trip to recover his share of the business, and to pay his respects.

The court summons probably crossed paths with Jesus — it going to Nazareth, and he going to Tyre. When Jesus arrived at the home of Hazorus, his agent explained to Jesus that the business assets were being claimed by the creditors, that the personal assets

¹ The Biblical character Job was scrupulous and perfect in his obedience to the decrees of God, and was richly rewarded. God sought to advance Job’s soul by stripping him of his good fortune, leaving only faith in his life. He was to maintain faith and virtue, simply for the sake of God. Job had no part in sin, now he was tasked with eradicating even legitimate *self* interest. To persevere in faith, in such circumstances could only be done out of love of God. Job triumphed, was freed of self love and advanced in faith of God. In the Christian economy of salvation, once a person is free of self, he or she is then available for complete incorporation into Christ. One cannot become Christ if one remains self, even legitimate self. See also Appendix, “Spiritual Advancement”.

of Hazorus and Jesus were both attached to the business and were likewise being claimed.

It was impossible to find a lawyer who would take the case without being paid in advance; they all thought that Jesus was at risk of a decision that would take all this assets, leaving the lawyer without payment. Jesus had to sell his horse to pay for a lawyer.

The decision regarding claims and assets was to be made in a Phoenician court, since it had been agreed to by Hazorus that Phoenician business law would be the basis for the contracts. The court required a new assessment of the assets, which were reported at half their reasonable value. Hazorus knew the system, and his Phoenician agents would have prevented this fraud, but all Jesus could get out of them now was delay and double talk. Jesus' lawyer was also doubly paid, he accepted a bribe to under represent his client.

Jesus wished he had never made the partnership. He could not help but go over it all again in his head, trying to see what had gone wrong, or what wrong he might be guilty of to bring on such a disaster. Hazorus was an honest and pious Jew, a shrewd businessman, and competent in every discipline. He could buy the cloak from a man's back and sell it back to him the same day, and had actually done this.

Hazorus had been a trader, he would purchase only what he could subdivide several times for resale — wheat, timber, cloth, papyrus. Several ships unloading a single commodity in Tyre or Caesarea might flood the market, this is when Hazorus would purchase.

Two years ago, Hazorus had acquired 223 large trees north of Tyre, included were many beautiful cedars of Lebanon. Because he was willing to purchase the trees alone without the land, he obtained a great value. Jesus was to form, lead, and work in the carpentry shop that harvested and used the lumber from these trees. He was to work for a reduced wage up front, but would share one fifth of the profits from the shop for the length of his work.

Hazorus was impressed with the plan Jesus had devised, the wood shop was to be on site where the trees were harvested. Jesus had advised that this provision be in the contract of purchase. It made work easier, and eliminated the expense of leasing a work shop. As each tree was harvested, it would be cut into a length determined by a number

of factors: best use of the tree, demand for any given type of wood piece, tools, workers, and transportation available. The premium lengths, long and straight were sold for ships masts or extra long roofing joists. The elbows where branch joined to trunk were also valuable in ship construction. The smaller pieces would be sold by piece or auction to caravan owners who would take them to the cities, which had long ago depleted their surrounding forests. Mary and Zerah would remain in Nazareth, and Jesus would make his home in the shop.

Everything had gone right, the work was stimulating, hard and invigorating; he hired and directed assistants and daily labor from the marketplace. He went to the docks to take orders for ship repair parts, and quickly became a competent, efficient, and respected maritime engineer. The methods of sealing hull planks, inserting iron as reinforcements and joiners, and coating these to prevent rust were also acquired and in some instances improved upon by Jesus.

Jesus considered his busy work day an expansion of his prayer life; every task was executed in the image of God — justly, fully, competently — never with cynicism or negligence. Jesus had always worked in this manner, this was not a new method but it was new beauty, new holiness and one he created with his hands, mind, and spirit. Jesus had given a full third part of his profit to orphans and widows, much of it through the Essene house in Tyre, but now all these memories were as bitter as they were sweet.

Before the calamity, Jesus could see where it was all going. It confirmed his belief that he was called to be Messiah in Israel. Success would provide the means and influence for the peaceful assumption of rule from the Romans. Faith and virtue would restore Israel to moral and material glory and the Messiah king would lead the people into all of this. The foreigners would not be hunted or expelled, but would join the kingdom as sons and daughters of Israel. The God of Israel allowed Rome to rule in Israel because he meant to make them Jews!

His call to become Messiah was not his imagination, he had heard it from Joseph, from Mary, from Mary's sister. Others had said as much...in pieces, and it was up to him to assemble the pieces.

The court's decision was rendered in favor of the creditors, all assets of the business and its owners were to be forfeited to the creditors. Jesus lost everything in the Phoenician disaster — home, business, future prospects, social standing...joy,

confidence, direction. It was all he could do to go to synagogue and make some dry prayer.

The days following the disaster were dismal, their home was seized by agent tax collectors with a hired Roman guard, and Mary went to stay with her sister Elizabeth in Bethany. Even after all of this a substantial amount of debt remained. The only thing he had to sell was his self...there were buyers.² It was a calculated risk, but if he did not do it, it might be done for him with an even worse outcome. Galley slaves were put there by the courts.

To be a slave in a galley was one of the very few situations that was worse than a debt sentence in prison. The debtor was not expected to pay off his burden of course — his family was. To motivate relatives to pay, the life of a debtor prisoner was made even worse than the other prisoners.

Depending on the prison and its overseer, a debtor prisoner might be given a year to live before death by serial beatings and starvation. It was simple math, the civil overseer was paying for food from his budget, and it was pointless to do so if no one would redeem the prisoner. The cell could be better used for a paying prisoner.

If an unredeemed debtor prisoner was strong enough he might be sold as a galley slave or a mineral miner. One was chained to an oar, living in undrinkable bilge salt water, mold, and rats; the other was chained to a mountain, which he hacked into rubble. Jews did not imprison those in debt, but Jesus was bound to Phoenician Law. Debt sentences were part of business law, and the Romans were usually content to let localities administer such law.

He had to act quickly, not to save his house — that was gone. He had twenty-eight days to pay or face debtor's prison, a mineral mine, or a galley. Jesus actually had a preference in the matter. Tekoa the Idumean took on indentured servants. Tekoa was a relative of Herod, and Jesus could apply in Capernaum; any official or tax collector could act as agent, interview Jesus and report the results for decision.

The interview went well Jesus thought; he was summoned to Caesarea for final appraisal and hire. There Jesus accepted the offer of Tekoa to pay off his debt owed, in exchange for five years labor. He was put to work tending camels in Caesarea and working the local trade routes.

² It was no scandal in Israel for a person to sell his labor as an indentured servant. Jesus spends time as an indentured servant in this novel. In reality, many who are the body of Christ have actually lived as slaves or indentured servants, fathers and mothers.

Jesus disliked the job at once. It was a matter of the corruption, anger, violence, irreverence, and lax morals of nearly everyone he worked with. He had seen it all, but always at a distance or from the insular position of a business agent for Hazorus. Now he was one of the slave workers himself. That evening he was banded as property.

Jesus had his choice of banding, or rather the circumstances of its application. If he was willing to pay he could purchase opium or wine to make it a bit less painful, but where does a slave get money? Some of the senior indentured servants had devised schemes, which earned them some money, and everyone had heard the stories of this or that slave becoming rich himself, purchasing freedom, citizenship or virtually anything else. But at this moment Jesus was penniless, and he had no desire to consume pain killing agents, some of which killed their patient.

A copper finger ring was selected and test fitted to ensure it was just undersized. The ring was then heated to expand and held by pliers over a bucket of water. The theory was that the greased finger of the slave would be quickly pushed through the ring and then directly into the water; the water would cool and shrink the band around the finger, while minimizing contact with the red hot copper. It worked, and Jesus was a banded man; the copper ring bore the mark of his owner. Under penalty of death, a property band could only be removed by the owner or his designee. Permanent slaves were not banded, but branded.

Jesus worked the caravan station along the coast road, a mile south of Caesarea. The station workers slept in the open just outside the corral gates, in cold weather or cold rain a blanket was given. The tenders were responsible for guarding the camels against theft, and any restitution for lost camels was made by whipping, or a lien placed against their release date, in the case of indentured servants.

Jesus watched as the first camel was contracepted. He did not want to see a second, but did ask later what it was all about — pushing stones into female camels. No one could give a detailed reason other than it prevented pregnancy, which would sap the strength of the expectant mother along the route.³ Caravan camels were not allowed to

³ Pebbles are inserted into the uterus, irritating it, which causes the lining to become hostile to the implantation of the fertilized embryo, which is then expelled. The modern IUD is derived from this ancient method.

breed; they were on the trail except for recuperation periods, which lasted no more than a month. The herders told Jesus that the prostitutes in Caesarea used this same method.

The camel herders had it a bit better than the station workers, they slept in the open also, but their clothing and food was better and most of them seemed to have at least a bit of money, even the slaves. It was a matter of the caravan master delivering the contracted load; anything extra was his to keep, and some of it did trickle down. Skimming, bribery and dealing on the side was standard practice for any worker with authority in any measure. Among the camel tenders at Caesarea station, the overseer Thalís skimmed the worker's provisions, not the load.

The work started at dawn or before. Camels and donkeys were fed and watered, animal waste collected for sale as fertilizer, packing equipment was repaired and oiled. Under performing animals had to be evaluated for treatment and recovery, or sale and slaughter. Incoming caravans might be unloaded or the loads transferred in whole or part to new beasts. More often, the loading and unloading occurred at the docks of Caesarea harbor, a mile north. Provisions for the outgoing caravans were loaded, the caravans carried grain to feed the pack animals as good grazing along the trails was rare. Sheep or goats were taken in tow as meat on the hoof to feed the caravan herders. The caravan master might have his own pack animal to carry a tent or personally owned items for trade. As a new man, Jesus worked feeding the animals and cleaning the corrals. If these tasks were completed, he was assigned any other task at the will or whim of the overseer.

Caravans were even formed to support the caravans. Jesus made trips to the nearby docks to purchase grain for caravan feed. Grain was more economically transported by ship than by camel and this was the method that wheat from the Nile delta took, but inland transit was by camel. Pulling grain carts would have been more efficient, but the wooden wheels and axles of a cart just could not endure extended travel on the trails or even the paved roads, and carts were used mostly within a village. The grain trade was all a matter of a signed contract. If a camel caravan could deliver it cheaper than local farmers, then the caravan got the contract.

Much of the trade along the routes had Alexandria as a destination or an origin. Egypt was a net exporter of grain, linen, and papyrus. Israel was a major trade partner with Egypt and supplied much of its wine, figs, oil, olives, wool and raisins. Caravans originating in the East carried specialty cloth, silks, spices, glass, semi-precious stones and refined minerals. Wood was more economically carried by merchant ship, and many

Egyptian ships delivering wheat to ports on the Italian peninsula made the return voyage loaded with cut hardwood lumber.

The question of who owned a caravan was often a difficult one to answer. It was complex because each component might be owned by a different party. The pack animals themselves had different brands on their hides and some were leased. The cargo was often not owned by the owner of the pack animals, and a large caravan might be formed of several smaller ones. Virtually all caravans traveling the coast road purchased upkeep services at the Caesarea caravan station.

Caesarea station was considered a customs post, and as such it was operated by the governor of Judaea or his agent. The governor Pilate leased out the operating rights and sub leases might even be sold by the new operator. The customs tax included feed and corral services. This guaranteed business for the station, it was pointless to provide one's own feed, as the caravan master paid for station services whether they were used or not.

Cargo, animals, and workers would be bought and sold as needed per contract. The business seemed fairly stable, with some future cargo always being contracted and hired for, but Jesus also saw workers being traded away just like the cargo and the animals. With so much movement it was easy to skim wages, cargo, feed; or to declare an animal sick and sell him cheap for a kickback later. The stolen profit usually ended up purchasing prostitutes, opium, khat, wine or was lost in gambling.

With such pleasures as one's diversion, little effort was given to decent living or the life of the spirit. Respect up or down the ladder was nonexistent, fear was the motivator. Cursing, cheating, kicking, shoving, stealing were the means of life. Few had a goal other than a night's wine or sleep to escape their misery for a few hours. Once a month, the overseer gave each worker a flask of wine, and the evening off from corral duty. In a Jewish community indentured servants were given one day in seven to rest, but Caesarea station was not in the Jewish section. Jesus fought temptation to bitterness and despair; he could not understand what he had done wrong to be abandoned by God.

Thalis was hard on everyone in his charge, Jesus especially seemed to be on the receiving end of his abuse. Jesus' work merited little complaint, and his attitude even less, but Talis found fault whenever he was of a mind to find it. Talis seemed to want to break the spirit of Jesus, or perhaps somehow raise his own status by domineering such

a worthy person as Jesus. Whatever the reason, Thalís would often use his camel stick to supply punishment as required by the many infractions he found.

Eighteen months in, Jesus was gaining a bit of seniority and value. He knew the docks, the vessels, the cargo, the deck hands, the prices of commodities; he spoke and wrote Greek and understood the mathematics of commerce and credit. He was able to advise on favorable contracts for grain caravans originating from the docks. This earned him better treatment but unknown to him also delayed his release.

At the end of these eighteen months he was given a letter. It was from Zechariah, father of his cousin John. Mary was living with Elizabeth, and they were trying to raise money to purchase his release. The letter also asked if he had received the previous two letters or any of the food parcels. The letter was given to him by the overseer Thalís...but what was the point in inquiring into the missing food parcels. Jesus kept silent.

Jesus started herding local caravans. Wheat was usually the cargo and it was a much improved situation. The caravans operated using freemen, foreign slaves, and indentured servants. Half spoke Aramaic, most of the others spoke Greek, but few other than Jesus spoke both. Additionally Jesus knew the cultures and roads of Galilee and Judaea; he was scrupulously honest and hardworking, all of which increased his value on the market. Any relatives trying to redeem him would have to pay more than his initial sale price.

The next three years had Jesus herding camels and asses on the roads to Damascus some sixty miles north of Galilee, and along the coast road and inland. Jesus noticed his disposition was changing. He was stripped of everything, but did not claim any lingering rights to these. Neither did he claim any future rights from God. He wanted to rebuild his life as one founded upon the spirit of God, not the trinkets of success, wealth or status. There was plenty of time to meditate on such thoughts as he walked the cargo camels inland week after week.

His work with Hazorus, and the unfolding business plan had been stimulating — setting up lumbering operations for the big cedars, and the comradeship among the carpenters had been fulfilling. He made mental scenarios by extending all these events to different conclusions. What would his situation be now, if the business had not failed and if the judge in the debtor court had not been bribed? What ultimate difference did

business success or failure mean? For that matter, what was the meaning of good health or poor, a life fulfilled by family and friends, or one of abuse as a slave. There was a difference of course, but the difference was confined to this brief life only.

All he had was his soul, all else was gone. But that was all he needed, and it was all that mattered in the final tally. He committed himself to perfection, starting now and with no consideration to the accidents of life. Such a commitment had its motivation as much in the moment as in eternity. Jesus needed a goal, he could not drift. No one could.

The other slaves who had nothing found their purpose in self destruction by wine, prostitution, theft, and plotting the death of their abusers. Some had attained their goals; they had years of drinking behind them, scores of prostitutes, some had even obtained their revenge in blood. But none had peace, and none had happiness beyond one evening every other week. What of the caravan masters and owners? A few were men of faith; most spent their days trying to obtain more gold, which they would leave at the end of this brief life. Come what may, the meaning of Jesus would be his soul, and not just by the Law of Moses, but by heroic faith and virtue in the face of those who had none and tried to extinguish it in others.

Jesus continued as philosopher of the trails. He was increasingly happy to have no concerns other than his soul. This never lasted long, he owned tasks that had to be completed; there were camels to drive, masters to please, and cargo to account for. At either end of a journey there was ample trial to perfect his virtue, and on the road he gave it structure of thought.

Was it possible to be a slave to virtue...not vice but virtue? Yes, he himself had been. He knew he had been, because he was crushed when they had been taken from him. Jesus concluded that there were masters of virtue and slaves of virtue. The slave of virtue required it compulsively for his happiness, just as the morning drinkers in the pubs. How many times had he seen people crushed when the good parts of their life suffered.

Jesus no longer saw his trials as curses but as blessings. His actions became increasingly perfect in the Father. He cringed when he felt himself straying from the Father — small things, but not really. A glance to satisfy self interest was a step away from the Father. A moment of delay in answering some caravan duty was a moment of wallowing in self, instead of life in the will of Father.

The master of virtue was never without virtue — he made it, and in every circumstance. He carried it with him in his soul, he perfected it and shared it by his actions. This virtue, generated from the trials of life was real...no less real than the vices that put humanity in its current predicament.

This was not news, he had heard this at synagogue, and the Greeks had extrapolated this idea into a Stoic philosophy of virtue. It was so popular that every Greek and Roman carved away a piece of it for his own purposes.

But now...the Father had taken everything he owned....No, the Father had taken everything that owned him. The Father wanted to free him, by making him a caravan slave...the Father desired union with him, and was clearing away the obstacles to union. The Father wished this union so that He might regain the rule of Israel...now through his Messiah king...Jesus. This day was pivotal, the plan had been revealed.

From Jerusalem he hauled hides from the sacrifices of the temple. The hides, olive oil, and wine were loaded on the grain ships for the return trip to Alexandria. His camels made fifteen miles or more each day, fully loaded.

His inbound cargo was Egyptian wheat, which had a somewhat limited market in Judaea, it was considered unclean by interpretation of the Law of Moses and could not be used in the temple. Temple wheat had to come from a Jewish farm, on Jewish land, carried by a Jewish caravan. Imported wheat was eaten by the non-Jewish population and by Jews willing to be looked down upon by the priests and Pharisees for eating unclean food.

Jesus began to see friends and family at his destinations, he saw his mother. He was usually in charge of smaller caravans having only a few herders, and all agreed to push hard to have a bit more time on the other end. News was always welcome except the worse sort, but death within an extended family was routine. The resurrection was now regular teaching in the faith, and it gave meaning to the patient suffering required in this life. His cousin John had become a novice in the Essene house east of Jerusalem near the Asphaltitus Sea. That was years ago, two years after his mitzvah, and only occasional news was heard of him.

Whatever else, Rome had made the roads of empire free of bandits to a degree rarely had. Trade had increased due to this, and the Roman emphasis on road building.

Outside the empire to the east however, highway robbers still made their living in dealing death. Jesus would have firsthand knowledge of this.

Several large cargoes had been contracted for, and the less profitable local route to Jerusalem was stripped of herders. Jesus was assigned to one of these large, long distance caravans. The caravan was seven days east of Damascus and in scrub land. Jesus was leading a column of ten camels toward the rear. It was near sunset and the caravan master shouted instructions for a slight course change, they were to intercept three riders coming toward them from the east.

The master would greet the riders and ask about conditions ahead on the trail. It was remotely possible that the riders were traders seeking to sell to the caravan, but not this far out. The better outcome was that the riders needed supplies from the caravan, in which case the caravan master would sell at a premium and replace it upon arrival with cheaper purchases.

The course adjustment was made; it was more of a burden for the caravan, but they were the seekers of information from the smaller group. The riders were moving slowly and one of the group stopped and dismounted his camel to examine it. As the caravan came within ear shot, the rider remounted his camel and drew a sword waving it as he shouted orders. Jesus saw a cloud of dust, then several...men were appearing. They had been hidden in holes under blankets with dirt and brush covering. The three riders had drawn them into a circle ambush and the rider who had dismounted was a delay, bringing the caravan into the concealed circle of ambushers. Ambushes occurred from surrounding hills, not in the open! But now bandits equal in number to the caravan herders were attacking and no defense was ready.

The three mounted riders attacked the lead column and the flank columns, hacking at the leading camels legs to bring a column to a stop. The caravan stopped moving as several tethered camels assumed a kneeling position, unable to stand. The caravan now sought to compress itself for a more efficient defense, but immobile camels had to be untethered now while under assault. Three of the attackers flung hot oil on groups of men, some of the men knew the significance of this attack and ran and stripped. The attackers then unmasked smoldering torches and waved them into flame. Two oil soaked defenders were torched as they advanced to defend the camels.

The most immune beings were the camels themselves, they were objects of value to both the contesting parties. The flame attack was especially effective in that it

gave the bandits uncontested time to cut free the camels and drive them off the trail. The caravan crew could not leave the larger group to recover the single lost camels; these strays were rounded up by the attackers, not later but as the attack was underway — each camel carrying a load of valuable cargo. The defenders could not chase the bandits without leaving the rest of the caravan herd.

The attackers were proceeding methodically; regrouping, concentrating and making quick attacks, inflicting but not taking casualties; they were in control of the battle and the movement of the caravan. The caravan was now split into two sections, the smaller group containing tethered teams of four and six animals, the caravan herders including Jesus had cut free these animals from those crippled, and moved to any area unoccupied by bandits. They were in effect drifting away from the main body. The larger section was now ahead on the trail, still under attack and out of sight in the darkness, torches and the screaming of men and animals were the only elements perceptible. Jesus was driving the rear group west, not east toward the main body.

The remnant caravan consisted of Jesus, one other herder and ten camels. They debated whether to cripple two camels and leave them as prizes to delay any bandits who were tracking them. After an hour however, they were well west, and off the trail. It was unlikely they would be detected. Jesus now had the luxury of thinking about the horrible happenings. An hour ago he had seen men brutally murdered by men who loved money more than God, virtue, the lives of others, or even their own lives. He wondered if someone had given information about the caravan's cargo and route in exchange for a bribe. Jesus said silently to himself, "If I get out of this alive, I am not going back to the life of a dog." The dog's life was one of pack rule of muscle and aggression, posturing, ignorance, animal satisfaction, fighting, noise, and a short life, poorly lived.

Jesus and Enos tethered the ten camels together and made best possible speed west, with little sleep for the men or beasts. The two herders and ten loaded camels entered Damascus from the east five days after the attack. They watered and fed the camels and exchanged six pieces of silver jewelry for it. They pressed on to Capernaum in Galilee, then to Caesarea where the camel train had originated. The raid had been a disaster, with sixty eight camels lost, and only two men out of fourteen reporting.

The contracts had to be made good on. The caravan owners would take an enormous loss. Jesus guessed that some of the slaves would be sold to raise money and

reduce operating expenses. Jesus had just six months left in his contract of indenture. His owner offered him for sale, but no buyers could be found because of his little time remaining in servitude. Jesus was released from servitude in consideration for his actions in defending and returning what remained of the caravan.

Jesus was given a writ of satisfaction and he chose to have it filed in Jerusalem. Jesus would carry his legal writ to Jerusalem for filing himself, and avoid the courier fee. He had business there any way.

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Essene

Jesus Lives in an Ascetic Monastery

Jesus wanted peace, a life with God alone — no more business or money, no more caravan prostitutes, no more cursing, fighting or deceit. He knew where he was going to find it, the Essene house near Jerusalem.¹

The two temple sponsored Essene houses in Jerusalem were orthodox in their theology, if on the mystical side. The temple subsidized these Essene houses with money for their housekeeping, scrolls and charitable hospitals, and in many other ways supported them. That was the carrot. The Essenes in turn bound themselves to the Jewish faith — the Law and the Prophets...and the serving high priest.

The stick, if necessary was denial of entry into the Temple of Jerusalem, withdrawal of funding, repossession of scrolls, food, clothing and community house, all of which were on loan to the Essene house by the temple authorities.

There were groups, notably the Samaritans, who in the opinion of the high priests were outside the acceptable boundaries of the faith and were not allowed into the temple. On one occasion several generations prior, the entire suite of disincentives was applied to an Essene house in Jerusalem — denial of temple access and eviction from their monastery. The temple offered the members transfer to other houses and half accepted. The monastery building itself was sold. The remaining members were stigmatized within the Jewish community, and had to live among the Gentiles and Pagans.

¹ The Essenes were Jewish ascetic/mystical communities. At the time of Jesus, the Jewish historian Josephus estimated there to be 4000 Essene monks in Israel. The duty of a professional religious is the restoration of the world and its peoples to union with God. Faith, reverence, virtue are the tools which a religious uses to make such restoration. The core reason, then and now for entry into a religious order is for spiritual advancement and perfection for the entrant. It is easier made in circumstances dedicated to the advancement of soul, such as a convent. In the time of Christ, the Essenes and the Jewish temple priesthood had fallen out, and they were not on than cordial terms. The Essenes still attended the temple, but did not support animal sacrifice as being meaningful. See also appendix, “Essenes”.

It was a matter of the majority of the Sanhedrin supporting the Essenes and not unanimous support that kept them as Jews. The Essene house at Kidron was solidly within orthodox boundaries however, and was meant to be an example to those more “mystical” houses.

The Jewish faith in Israel was a diverse assembly and the Sanhedrin accepted this in an effort to prevent further fragmentation of Judaism, which now existed as islands in Roman Palestine. This consideration saved some of the less orthodox Essene communities. These less orthodox houses prompted complaints from the temple scribes about their detailed regulations, which were at variance with the detailed regulations of the temple scribes. They held as canonical some additional scrolls. The “Life of Enoch” was given the same stature as the Pentateuch, and everyone thought that their high opinion of the sun was idolatrous, or nearly so. However, the Essene communities were powerhouses of faith, charity, humility and piety, and there was more respect than complaint for them.

John was a member of the Essene community at Qumran and Jesus hoped to get a good recommendation from him. Jesus made contact with the Essenes through a temple priest who was essentially the first interviewer. A further interview was granted with the leader of the Kidron Essene house. The priest also gave Jesus some soap to wash himself and his garments, and some food for a few days. In the month he had been in Jerusalem he had taken a few day jobs, and conserved his money as much as possible.

Abida was the abbot of the Kidron house, and the person whom Jesus had to impress as being a worthwhile investment. Abida had 56 years, and was grossly competent in every task of the hand or heart. Abida himself however, believed that he suffered flights from reality. For years he had dreams in the night and in the day, that he was to play a vital part in the coming of the Messiah; these thoughts were his own problem of course, and he had not been spoken of them to anyone.

Report from the Nazareth rabbi spoke of Jesus as being pious, honest, healthy, and literate. The report also mentioned that it was believed that Jesus was the child prodigy who taught in the temple thirteen years ago. This event was remembered by virtually every religious authority in Jerusalem. Over three days, everyone had come to hear and question the child. The boy was of age to comment on the scriptures and nobody really wanted to shut down such a fount of knowledge and inspiration. The event

had much potential for the boy, but it just never came to be, and was now rarely spoken of. When it was, it was agreed that the stories of the event were greatly exaggerated.

Abida knew differently, he was there. He had stayed for three days listening and speaking with the boy. The revelations and dreams that Abida suffered included a child prophet, which Abida thought might refer to the boy. Abida grilled Jesus as to his alliance with the Zealots, the Romans, the Sadducees, and heretic Essenes — that was standard enough. What was not standard was the applicant's vision for a religious. It was stunning, and it matched the ideal that Abida had for it.

The philosophy of Jesus for a dedicated religious was the perfection and expansion of the Judaic faith by heroic mediation — that is spirits of irreverence turned into faith by heroic acts of faith; anger and hoarding suffered into patience, moderation and trust...and shared with those in need. This was the core duty of a consecrated religious, whether he be Essene or Pharisee. Furthermore, these experts of the spiritual life were to teach and cultivate the life of the spirit in all of Israel. Jesus withheld his vision for the Messiah as the heroic embodiment of all this.

Jesus explained that the mortification practiced by the Essenes was a good act, but would be even more effective if the practitioners fully realized its effect. Such practices were thought to be useful in mastering one's will, in showing one's zeal for God, and in showing contempt for the world and the flesh, which were thought to be at battle with God. There was truth to this, but such asceticism benefited not only themselves, but all of Israel and even the world. Jesus was of the opinion that to mortify *oneself*, was usually incorrectly done. The effective task was to mortify one's *self*.

Abida asked Jesus about his dealings with the many religions and philosophies that Jesus would have encountered in his work as a freeman, and then indentured in the caravans. It was a useful inquiry. A candidate's observations of the many non-Jewish faiths spoke much about him. Abida also obtained a measure of a man by pushing the candidate to extremes in topics. Abida would first speak favorably toward a certain religion, or even a sect within Judaism, then critically of it, observing the candidate's response at each extreme.

Jesus was an admirer of good will, piety, and religious discipline where ever he found it. He did not want to homogenize Jewish religion with every other theology, but

he did think that other faiths offered practical lessons. Jesus thought that the Buddhist attainment of selflessness was a necessary step in the advancement of soul, but it found its completion in allowing union with God.² Jesus had additional theories, but limited discussion of them to speaking of union with God resulting in the resurrection of the body, which was considered orthodox, if debated Jewish theology.

Abida let down his guard on the topic of the resurrection and joked, “Don’t tell the Sadducees that.” Incredibly, the Sadducees who were the chief priests of Israel, did not even subscribe to the idea of an afterlife of body or soul.³ It was a good break for the next topic, which was beyond the scope of the interview. Abida asked Jesus if he subscribed to any particular Messianic prophecy...not the written prophecies of the prophets, but the personal forecast that virtually every Jew had concerning the Messiah — who, when, and how.

Jesus said that he saw a Messiah being chased out of the temple just last week. It was an appropriate jest, and a smile was had by both. Jesus then cleared his throat and spoke with less humor, “The office of Messiah will be filled when a man takes it upon himself to become the Messiah. Its occurrence depends on man, in a measure not less than upon God. As Israel comes into its new golden age, all other nations will seek to join the kingdom of God, it will be a reverse invasion and conquest, peaceful armies of nations all seeking to be subjects and students of the Messiah of Israel.”

Abida had found a soul mate. He had never in his life been so impressed with a candidate, and it was more than just his profound vision, it was everything observable about the man. Abida suppressed his offer with difficulty, taking on a novice was a major decision and he wanted to let his emotions subside in order to base his decision on merit alone. Abida did show Jesus the house, and Jesus met a few of the brothers. The library

² Buddhism and Christianity are more parallel than disjointed. There are many variants of Buddhism, but most do not deny the possibility of God. Buddhist efforts end at nirvana which is understood as cessation of desire. If God exists, he will reveal himself only after one has attained the state of nirvana. Christianity continues so to speak, after nirvana, when a person once free of selfish or corrupt desire (sin) may join Christ, who is now the entire body of Christ.

³ The Sadducees acknowledged only the first five books of scripture — the Pentatuch — which did not specifically teach the ideas of a soul or afterlife. The Sadducees were temple high priests and would have discouraged such mystical ideas as an afterlife. However, ideas of soul, Heaven and the resurrection were standard teaching among the scribes, Pharisees and the faithful.

interested Jesus, it contained the scrolls of the prophets and the Law, various commentaries, and even some Greek philosophy. The Greek scrolls were property of Abida, his father was Greek and his mother a Jew. Jesus asked about his cousin John and was told that he was with the Qumran house, at the northwest corner of the Asphaltitus dead sea. The interview had taken almost an hour, and the tour perhaps twenty minutes. Jesus was told to contact a certain scribe in the temple after noon tomorrow for the results of the interview.

The nearly five years in the caravan had made Jesus single minded in his quest for perfection of soul. Anxiety and second guessing, had no place in the new order of his soul; if the Essene position was not to be, then it was a victory — an elimination of what was not God's will. But it was to be, and Jesus was told that he was the new novice and told to report to the Kidron house tomorrow at the ninth hour.

Greater Judaea had proportionally more ascetic communities than perhaps any other nation. If these communities had a Jewish component they were lumped into the term "Essene". Not every Essene community however was sufficiently orthodox to be considered a *Jewish* ascetic community, at least by the temple. In their quest for enlightenment, some had grabbed hold of any and every ascetic theology and interlaced it with Jewish doctrine. Ostracization worked both ways — some Essene communities would not visit the Jerusalem temple.

Most were rural communities of unmarried men, yet some Essene communities included wives for the purpose of reproduction. All seemed to emphasize perfection of soul for the purpose of greater union with God. They sought to make every act of life conform to the ideal for it: equality, patience, piety, generosity, joy, moderation was their way of life. Some communities practiced specialty skills such as prophecy, healing and medicine. Women also had religious communities, but these tended to be more practical than ascetic. These were largely orphanages and hospitals, and were not usually considered Essene houses.

The Kidron house was one of six in or around Jerusalem, and one of two that were sponsored by the temple. It consisted of forty unmarried men of all ages, many were widowers. Pharisees, scribes, rabbis, farmers...and former caravan workers could all apply for membership. All who stayed past the novitiate period were necessarily proficient in the ways of humility, poverty, prayer, and benevolence.

Abida had been elected twelve years ago by the membership from a temple approved list of candidates. The temple Pharisees, who had loose control of the house, approved of Abida's plan for the house to cultivate a membership of missionary-prophets. "Prophecy", as cultivated in the monastery was the ability of counsel in spiritual matters, especially in spiritual advancement. However no member was expected to fast himself into a condition in which he was hearing the voices of angels.

Abida was grossly competent in any capacity, it was a pleasure to take orders from him. He foresaw most possibilities, assigned suitable persons and resources, allowed personal initiative and judgment in fulfilling the task, and used his own ingenuity and diplomacy to sidestep, overstep, or resolve problems that did occur. He was respected without exception by the Sanhedrin and the temple priests. He had the qualified support of most, and the friendship of many. But he kept them all at arm's length; avoiding the small talk, mutual backslapping and gifts that would have made him inner circle. He had a certain way about him, it was a combination of office and compassion. Jesus observed the official core overlaid by personal compassion, but also this combination in reverse order.

Since returning from the Babylonian exile centuries ago, Israel had never fully recovered its religious or cultural unity. The Babylonians had been conquered by the Persians, and the Persians conquered by the Greeks. Israel was one of several colonies that changed owners accordingly. Judas Maccabeus was thought by all to be the hope of Israel, perhaps even the Messiah. His army did recover the country from the Greeks, but internal fighting then allowed the Romans an easy conquest. The Sanhedrin, who now had only limited rule and only over the Jewish population, did not expect to expel the superpower that ruled Israel. They instead tried to recall lapsed Jews and to convert the Gentiles; they would regain control of the country from within. The Essene missionaries played an important role, they served as domestic missionaries, and it was hoped to expand and link the islands of Jewish population until a homogeneous whole was again achieved.

The synagogue rabbis did appreciate the visits of these bulk produced Essene "prophets". They spoke of pilgrimage in this life, imploring villagers not to invest their energy in anger against the tax collectors, the Romans, or the amoral Gentile population, which surrounded every Jewish enclave. They exercised the people in the skills of hope,

especially in the Messiah, reminding them that the glory of Israel was not extensive borders or a full treasury, but its God and the faith of the people.

The Kidron house actually had a membership of fifty-two, but any in excess of forty were always away on assignment. The forty house members would make day trips within Jerusalem, to its 100,000 citizens and perform other tasks as directed by the elder Abida, or as requested by the temple.⁴

The monastery itself was just outside the city walls, and directly across from the temple near the summit ridge of the “Hill of Olives”, as it was called. Kidron house owned the ancient orchard of Gethsemane, or perhaps more properly the orchard, building, and animals were under the custody of the Kidron Essene house; this reminder was made by the temple, which had title to all of it. Orchard duty was a favorite of all the brothers, and one of them could always be found at the praying rocks near the summit of the orchard.

Mastery of the daily routine was the primary task in the life of a novice. Six days a week, all members were awakened two hours before dawn, made a quick toilet and assembled in the main hall, standing alongside both of the lengthy walls. A thanksgiving was made under the direction of a leader, a hymn was chanted, and psalms were sung or recited. More hymns, then all kneeled for silent listening and meditation as selections from the Law were read. Final hymns were sung, and the leader offered God’s blessing on all assembled, these exercises in praise extended until sun up, when enough light was available for scripture study.⁵

The tables were arranged in rows, down the length of the room. These sitting tables were not common, but they were necessary for the task of study, and each table had two benches. The scrolls were brought from library storage, and unrolled two on each

⁴ Population estimates of Jerusalem at the time of Jesus vary greatly, 25,000 is a common estimate. The figure of 100,000 is based in part upon a temple work force of 7,000 – 10,000 people. Perhaps 80% of this workforce lived in Jerusalem, which makes an estimate of 25,000 too low. The population would increase several fold from pilgrim ingress during holy days.

⁵ Members of a religious order have as a primary occupation, the praise of God and devote hours to group and private prayer and hymn. The idea is that our world’s proper functioning is dependent upon union with God, and this spiritual labor is just as necessary as physical labor. Praise, approval, and devotion to God are first among the commandments because disorder comes about by separation from God. In praising any person there is an implicit union of wills.

table. The main hall had windows lining the walls, placed high in the walls, with exterior shutters of woven branches to minimize rain penetration. Thirty men had study duty, while ten saw to the morning household tasks, each week ten men were rotated.

Study lasted until mid-morning, at which time the first of two meals was served in the common sleeping and work area. Prayer was made before the meal and a hymn concluded it. It was now the fourth hour and the beginning of the work day.⁶ Each brother would attend to his particular work; pottery making, copying of scripture, gardening, weaving were all worked at. Kidron House was also a source of temple scribe candidates.

The house produced for itself what it could in the way of pottery, food, clothing, furniture and the like. A certain portion of the membership was deliberately sent out of the monastery to work; this was the proving ground for their spiritual skills of patience, endurance, and counseling. When workers were needed, these Essene workers were sought after, they did not haggle over wages, they were scrupulous in their work ethic, and they were literate, numerate, and bright. Sundown was normally the end of the workday, and the second meal was eaten by oil lamp.

Saturday, the Sabbath was a day of rest. Visitors were received by the brothers, use was made of the courtyard, and much of the day was spent at the temple. Wine was had in the evening, as was meat. Abida enforced the Sabbath as a day of enjoyment and rest, as a command from God.

Jesus was assigned domestic duty as was common for novices. He worked as a cook's helper, washer of laundry, sweeper, doorman, errand runner, all of which he performed most competently.

According to a man's own judgment, if his duties were completed he was to turn his attention to charity, prayer, or study. At any hour outside of the scheduled six hours of sleep, men could be found in the main hall at scripture study, or in prayer in any room. Various good works away from the monastery also occupied their time; pairs of men would travel the short mile to the temple to make prayer and praise, or to visit residents

⁶ Time keeping used would have been the standard 12 hour day. Daylight was divided into 12 hours, with sunrise being the first hour, and noontime the sixth hour. A summer hour was longer than a winter hour.

who requested assistance of a spiritual or domestic type. They were responsible for checking out with the doorman, who was responsible to keep it all straight in his memory.

Abida was a result getter in training the men. He motivated them and built them by trial, failure, and triumph; and a man's response to failure was as important as was success. Abida believed habit was the key to success or failure and would often say, "Thought gives rise to will, will promotes act, repeated act forms habit, habit determines character, character determines destiny."

Abida would deliberately provoke a man, to test and strengthen his character. He would give a man the wrong item to deliver, to copy, or to cook and then ask why the task was not completed correctly. The offended brother was expected to give lesser importance to success or failure of a task, than his spiritual composure and attitude in observing its failure. The brothers were aware of these devices, but it kept them on guard and they would mentally act out responses to both success and failure. Mentally rehearsing a response to failure actually made success more likely. Spilled ink, shattered bowls, ruined projects, wrong measurements all served a greater purpose. On Friday's Abida would often delegate his position as abbot to a senior member and subject himself as an ordinary member.

It was easy to attain perfection in the monastery which was set up for that purpose, everyone agreed that the life of family, debt, job, and in-laws was a far more demanding vocation. Many of the brothers had lived such a life, and easily and joyfully adapted to the discipline of the monastery, which was less demanding in most ways.

Abida would speak eloquently about the ordered peace of Eden. Abida believed restoration of the world, free of crime, poverty and war would come about only by repairing the underlying spiritual disorder. He said that social assistance was necessary of course, but to prevent the disorder in the first place was the only real solution. Prevention would occur as the virtues of patience, humility, moderation, reverence, and chastity were restored. Abida noted quite correctly that there was no shortage of good ideas in the world, but they would take root only in minds and wills that first held correct virtues of patience, humility, moderation, reverence, and respect.

Abida often spoke in parables, and instructed his missionaries to use them when they preached. Jesus thought them to be effective in teaching anyone, the graphic story

was held in one's mind more easily than a theological proof. For those seeking deeper understanding the image or story might be easily recalled anytime for further reflection. Abida believed that the providence of God included not only sustenance for the body, but the understanding necessary for advancement of the soul.

Jesus was frequently employed as a messenger and courier. He spoke Greek, was courteous to everyone including the Romans, and had no personal or family connections. Lack of connections meant he was not aligned with any particular interest group; he was not assumed to be an enemy by alternate halves of the leadership. Abida was a member of the Jerusalem city Sanhedrin, and he would often entrust Jesus as messenger to the temple and Sanhedrin councils around Judaea.⁷

In his messenger duties, Jesus would sometimes deliver a message personally to the High Priest or a member of the Great Sanhedrin. If the matter were urgent, he would mount a horse and travel to a local Sanhedrin council in Hebron, Caesarea, or Capernaum. If contact was required with a Roman outpost or local prefect, Jesus was one of those making such contact.

Jesus especially enjoyed seeing, meeting and even talking with the temple leaders. One of his frequent contacts was a Pharisee named Judas Iscariot. Judas worked in the temple and on one occasion traveled with Jesus to Alexandria because Judas spoke the Egyptian dialect.

Jesus lived five years at the Kidron house, he added a sort of academic perfection of soul. This was on top of the deep core formation he forged as a slave in the caravans. The spiritual life was served on a plate in the Essene monastery, to master it was not as difficult as his years as a caravan driver had been. He noticed that the best monks were often those who had previously lived a family life. Those who had known only the Essene monastery would more often fray a bit, if the pressures of the world were encountered. For those who had navigated a family through difficult times, any small

⁷ The Great Sanhedrin of Israel had 71 members and was the Supreme Council of Israel. This full council rarely met; daily government was decided by 23 of the members who constituted the Lesser Sanhedrin of Israel. Cities had a local Sanhedrin of 23 members; villages had a council of elders. The Sanhedrin would not only judge, but also proactively rule according to the strength or weakness of the Roman governor or the Jewish king. In this novel Abida is a member of the Jerusalem city Sanhedrin. By Roman law, capital punishment was the reserve of the Roman governor, but many exceptions are encountered: the death of John the Baptist, the (near) stoning of the adulteress, the death of Stephen.

problems of the monastery were easily mastered. Jesus had not forgotten the commitment to perfection of soul that he made, regardless of future circumstances.

In the monastery, Jesus polished his theology. Abida was of the opinion that while the Law was revealed to Moses, the logic had been revealed to the Greeks. Abida's father had been Greek, and he had inherited a collection of scrolls of metaphysics and philosophy, which he kept in the library of the monastery. Within Judaism, there were many undercurrents, one of which was the incorporation of Greek metaphysics into the Law of Moses. Abida did not know it, but he was perhaps the prime proponent of this in Jerusalem.

He would speak of the Law of Moses as being the necessary legal codification of the underlying principles of the spirit. The unseen but real world of spirit — patience, reverence, brotherhood, chastity, generosity, was the unseen framework of the world established by God. Because these were moral virtues, they were subject to the will of man, and any degradation from their original perfection produced a corresponding degradation in the world.

Jesus lived this paradise at Kidron house for five years. The routine at the Kidron house became perhaps a bit too easy, and Jesus was glad when Abida gave him orders to go on an extended mission.

Abida called Jesus into the courtyard where they might speak privately and said, "I am sending you on mission. You are to go first to your cousin John who is baptizing at the Jordan, east of Jericho. He is to be your partner and leader on the mission, I have obtained permission from the Qumran monastery for him to join you. The Qumran password is "baptism", he will ask you for it to authenticate you and your message."

Abida continued, "Your mission is to sustain, encourage, and enlarge the faith in Galilee. Instruct with respect to your audience, according to your good judgment, and the inspiration of the God of mercy. Be attentive to those who seek perfection and retain them for your service and for a possible Essene community. You are to instruct first the children of Israel, but do not deny the promptings of the Spirit of God, for whom this mission is undertaken."

"The synagogues in Galilee have given us hospitality in the past, and there are many other Essene houses in Galilee. Remember it is the Essene way to trust in God, and to use trials as steps you must ascend in your journey of advancement of soul. See to

your mission first and all else will be freely given. I will be in contact, and you may demand our password from any messenger for authentication in important matters. You are to leave as soon as possible, but no later than day following Sabbath. Now, conclude or delegate all of your outstanding tasks. Do you understand your orders, and do you have any questions?”

Brother Jesus replied that he understood and had no questions, and he would start at once on preparations for his mission. It was the second day after Sabbath, and reassignment of duties required four days to complete. It became more involved as it proceeded; specific persons had to be located or recalled, records were transferred, walk about's performed, quick training made, and all of it had to revolve around the house's own schedule. Jesus left before sunrise on Friday, taking two days food. The Essene understanding of God's providence was founded in a man's own efforts, that is a man's efforts were simply an unfolding of God's providence, manna was not normally expected to fall from Heaven, but harvested as wheat. To disregard prudent provision was to deny by extension, the providence of God.

Jesus was eager for an extended visit with John. Immediately after his mitzvah, John had insisted on becoming an Essene of the Qumran monastery. He spoke of this calling to his parents Elizabeth and Zechariah. Neither was surprised and both had also been given signs of John's prophetic vocation. John was an exceptional monk, excelling in the life of the spirit. At age twenty-five, he was allowed to retreat into the desert for further discernment. He would remain in the desert surrounding the Dead Sea for five years, then begin his mission in that same area.

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Wilderness

Make Clear the Way

The Kidron Essene house was outside the city wall, and the road east was well traveled and maintained, Jesus was fresh, eager and had put five miles behind him when the sun broke. Part of his discipline of spiritual advancement was wonder, joy, and gratitude in every situation. If it was not inherent in the situation, he would make it. This morning however, it was being served in heaping bowls to him, and he was drinking it straight. He made all this his morning prayer.

John was preaching in the area of the Jericho crossing of the Jordan River, also known as the Haljah Ford. The road Jesus walked led directly to it, crossed the Jordan and continued east to Philadelphia in the Decapolis. The day was perfect, the sun was silver and darting from the scattered clouds, a moderate breeze invigorated him, and the road was alive with travelers of all sorts.

Jesus estimated that John would be preaching and baptizing right at the ford, and he sought confirmation from travelers coming from the east. Jesus was taken aback when some referred to him as “the Essene Prophet”. Jesus arrived at the ford three hours before sundown, he had walked twenty-four miles that day. John was not to be seen at the river crossing, and along the banks he observed no indications of people assembling. He learned that “the prophet” retreated to the hills at night, and reappeared at the river during the day. Jesus spent the night along the banks, there was plenty of wood for a fire, and he obtained a coal from another traveler.

John did not appear the following morning. From the reports of travelers, Jesus was certain that John was preaching at the ford, and he considered what might be the reason for his absence. He concluded that few travelers would be willing to stop before noon, this was the cooler part of the day, and that John would appear at the river later in the day. John would have larger crowds in the afternoon when people would welcome a reason to stop for a rest. His theory proved correct, two hours after noon, disciples of John began their roadside appeals on either side of the ford. Just upstream of the ford, John appeared, shouting, flailing, and wearing some sort of animal skin.

John had taken the Nazarite vow upon entering the Qumran Essene community. His uncut hair was braided just behind his ears on both sides. He would tie these two ropes of hair in a loose knot, either on his chest or his back. Jesus would observe that when John was entering into very intense activity among the people, he would make a second knot to ensure his braids did not become an obstacle to the gestures of his hand or staff.

John did what he could to maintain cleanliness. At Qumran, cleanliness was given a priority almost equal to prayer. If John was eccentric in dress and manner, he was no wild man. His clothing was a long loin cloth, reaching to his ankles, and covered with a camel skin which no longer had the shape of a coat or a cloak. He would use a blanket as a mantle. Among many Nazarites, it had become a custom that one's beard only could be trimmed as needed, especially the moustache which would otherwise overgrow into an obstacle for eating and speech.

Most people saw John for only an afternoon, but those who lived with him knew him beyond his adrenaline fueled oracles. He was at essence a man of peace. He preached out of duty, and sought solitude and prayer out of preference.

John was cultivating faith and virtue in the people in a way, and on a scale that the Jerusalem priests could not; but he had also earned mixed feelings from the Sanhedrin. They did not disagree with most of his preaching, but it had brought the anger of King Herod Antipas upon them, and they were caught ineffectively in the middle. Herod Antipas did not rule Judaea, he ruled Galilee...but so did the Sanhedrin.

John disapproved of King Herod's marriage to his brother's ex-wife Herodias, and so did many of the temple and the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was in ways happy to have someone else voice their disapproval of the ruler of Galilee, and none less than John the "prophet". The problem was that John preached against greed and corruption wherever he found it, and the temple priests were sometimes on the receiving end of his prophetic wrath. He did speak eloquently about the faith and the people looked to him as a prophet, this is what kept him alive. Incredibly he suggested cooperation with the Romans, and this caused problems with the Jewish partisans — the Zealots.

The Jordan River was a natural stopping point for travelers, and a stop forced on them by the customs agents on either side of the Jordan river border. Water was available of course, and firewood along the banks offered a welcome chance to cook a hot meal. Travelers tended to stay in groups for security and those stopping at the river attracted others to stop for the night.

Jesus observed the crowds approaching to hear John. He was a real showman, amplifying everything: the finality of judgment, Heaven and Hell, the fleeting nature of life, health, wealth, and power. He even exaggerated his presence by his prophet's attire and staff. The staff he used was a foot taller than himself and he used it to strike water and rocks, to point to someone in the crowd, or even to pin a person. His disciples were nine on this day who saw to the crowd and practicalities of the mission; John was the mouthpiece. The female disciples saw to the female pilgrims, the elderly, and the children.

For two hours it was quite a show. John preached, appealing to reason, faith, morals, instinct, Jewish scripture and tradition; then at the tenth hour, he called the people to recommitment and baptism.

John worked all parts of the baptism; encouraging, directing the patrons and staff, baptizing and then seeing off those exiting. On this occasion John worked the baptism station in the shallow water near the shore. It was prudent to provide this option to mothers bringing infants for baptism, and the elderly who would rather not wade into the rib deep water further out. Those close in would have water poured over their head and then be anointed with oil.

John had begun preaching before Jesus could speak with him, he saw Jesus while speaking but continued. Now the baptisms were drawing to a close and John approached Jesus on shore, "Brother, I have been expecting you. It is good that we finally work together."

Jesus returned the greeting. The two spoke very briefly of family and then of the new mission. John said that a third man might be sent from Qumran. John had instructions to continue preaching until the last day, two months hence, and if the third man had not arrived they were to proceed north to Galilee on mission.

John invited Jesus to work with him for the last days of his mission before the new joint venture started. The third man had some time to arrive — eighty-one days.

Jesus decided he would work with John's mission. John appointed Jesus as "learning leader" of the disciples. It was a merciful immersion; rather than criticism for the many things Jesus had to learn, the disciples of John were most helpful. It really paid off for everyone, grumbling at someone new does not promote learning but discourages it, and the project is delayed that much longer. The disciples laughed at themselves and cultivated humility in many other ways. Within a week, Jesus was truly ready to lead the others.

He came into the mission well acquainted with the theology and practice of spiritual advancement, and all its components. The people they served were mostly Jews. Occasional Greeks, Pagans or Eastern religious would stop to listen to John. To people not stopping, John might even walk alongside preaching his message, starting at the front and working his way back...as he wore out his welcome with each node of travelers in the column. The quality of a zealot was observed not in how he handled success, but failure. John insisted that Jesus try his technique.

With forty-five days left in the mission, Jesus informed John that he wished to go on retreat for the remainder of the time. John thought it was a good plan, Jesus was due back no later than the last day of the month of Nissan. John thought it unlikely that the third Essene would show, but if he did he would be put to work with John. Jesus said that he would leave early tomorrow. John agreed but seemed to have a question. "What is it John?" asked Jesus.

"Brother, what I am thinking of, you have no need for. If you were burdened with sin, your retreat would be more fruitful if it were resolved before leaving but...."

Jesus interrupted, "Let it be done. Water and oil bestow the gifts of God through his Holy Spirit. Let the gifts accompany me on retreat." ¹

John and Jesus stepped off the bank into the shallow water, Jesus knelt, and John poured water from his cupped hands over the head of Jesus saying, "Receive now, the Holy Spirit."

¹ John practiced a ministry of baptism for the forgiveness of sin and the infusion of moral virtues of fortitude. In John's baptism of Jesus, forgiveness was not required by Jesus and the Holy Spirit offered gifts of fortitude for his upcoming fast and mission. With the institution of the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit would additionally bring salvation via membership in the body of Christ, at baptism.

Immediately a dove alighted upon the shoulder of Jesus, and all present heard a voice from above. Jesus heard, “You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

John and the others heard, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

The Asphaltitus Sea — the Dead Sea — was only twenty miles east of Jerusalem, but was wilderness. Twenty inches of annual rain in Jerusalem watered the surrounding olive tree orchards, but the nearby Dead Sea received only two inches each year, and aside from springs was nearly devoid of vegetation. It was on account of the rapid drop in elevation from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, that any moisture in the atmosphere was released before reaching the Dead Sea. Because there was no outlet, the inflowing Jordan River added a small amount of mineral salt, which was not removed but accumulated year after year. The Dead Sea had eight times the salt concentration of the ocean, and supported no life.

The Dead Sea was the low spot of a 200 mile long canyon, with many areas having a distinct and steep rim. The Sea of Galilee was another low spot in this canyon, and it too was lower than sea level. Sheep herding existed, but it was more limited by lack of vegetation, rather than lack of fresh water. While water from the Dead Sea itself could not be used, several fresh water springs did feed the Dead Sea. Apart from herding and a few salt production operations, there was little reason anybody frequented the area.

Jesus walked south and by noon was at the northern shore of the Dead Sea. The west rim was steep, but the east side where Jesus had arrived, had a more moderate slope. It was early spring, the temperature was moderate and the rains had just ended, not that the Sea received much. Still, it meant that the springs would be charged, and finding water might be easier. Finding water however was not a concern — a necessity yes, but not a concern. The Father would provide as needed. In any event Jesus had taken water just two hours ago, a traveler inbound to Jerusalem had offered him some. Jesus was now traveling south along the east rim, with no particular destination in mind. He trusted that the even the discernment goal of the retreat would be revealed.

The next two days had Jesus settling into a routine. He continued slowly south, stopping often to look about, to meditate, to recite psalms. It was not a matter that a greater intensity or volume of prayer was expected to bring a better discernment, but it

was necessary that he free his soul of all discretionary interests, hence the solitude, and then to fill the void with the Spirit of God. Fasting was the time tested method for discernment; the prophets, and even the entire nation under Moses had entered the desert to clear their souls. To clear the mind had value as far as it went, but to clear one's entire soul was to free not only the intellect, but the will.

Jesus broke his days into a series of one, two, or three hour episodes of meditation, prayer, psalm and hymn singing, and simple wandering. He would recall the scrolls of Moses, the Prophets and the rest of scripture, all of which were fresh in his memory after five years of study with the Essenes. He found it beneficial to intersperse other activity; building shelter might have been one such task but it was more a diversion than a necessity — he was on pilgrimage not encampment — and there was little in the way of foliage to use.

Fire making was more necessary, not to cook the food he did not have, but to ward off animals. He considered it, but decided against it; he would have to use a friction technique of wood against wood to produce an ember, which could take hours as he was not expert in it. It just had worry, desperation and survival attached to it, he would be clinging to what he sought to free himself from. He found a spring and spent a number of days in its vicinity, wandering out then returning the next morning. Nights were spent mostly thinking about his mission, not its schedule but its substance.

“Messiah” continued to nag Jesus. Yes, he was to be Messiah...but when, he had thirty years, and was only a simple Essene monk. The Messiah was to make Israel into the kingdom of God that it had never fully been. He did not insist that the Messiah be king, or a warrior that drove the Romans off the land...but the Messiah must aspire to something, and he seemed to be going nowhere in particular.

Jesus was open to the idea that the Messiah, expected by all of Israel, was to fulfill his role as priest, prophet and king in a new way. For centuries the kings in Israel had failed in their primary duty, and even the priests had sacrificed to the idols the king erected. The prophets did their jobs well enough, but they were listened to only after their deaths. The Messiah would need to take a different approach. In the widest interpretation, the Messiah was to bring everlasting peace and prosperity to the entire world.

It came full circle again, nothing was resolved. He was a man wandering the desert without influence, support, opposition or even water. Was it as simple as proclaiming himself Messiah and having the people fall into rank? It had been tried before, many people had claimed the title and had gathered a small following, but they had all come to nothing, sometimes by a century of Roman soldiers. The institution of false Messiah was well established in Israel. Not all believed the Messiah would appear, but everyone was certain that each year one or more false Messiahs would come forward.

He had done all he could for now, it was after midnight...probably. Perhaps a solution would present itself as he walked. Jesus got up, walked with the moon behind him, and stepped on a large snake. He knew the feeling, a sort of ground turned to jelly effect as the large serpent squirmed powerfully under his foot. Jesus jumped back and the snake coiled into striking posture. Jesus was quickly two man lengths away. He looked around for any other threats then backed away, before turning and power walking away from the snake. Snake stepping was a hazard during the cool nights; they were cold blooded, slow, and coiled to conserve heat. He was satisfied not to return to determine what species it was, but did reconsider the idea of building a fire.

There was always something to contend with, even in the desert. Two weeks into his discipline, Jesus was sitting in the shadow of a cliff. He had finished some prayer and looked up to view the horizon as he often did. At a distance of perhaps 100 feet stood a woman. The woman and Jesus studied one another momentarily, then she walked toward him. She was beautiful, sensual, and clean and had not been wandering the desert for days. Jesus was assuming nothing, and as always gave the person and situation before him a charitable estimation. As she approached, Jesus fixed his eyes at a point six feet in front of him. Her feet, then legs came into view, and she stopped at the feet of Jesus who remained sitting. Jesus looked up and spoke clearly and slowly, "Do you need help?" She smiled but said nothing, Jesus returned his eyes to her feet. His suspicion was growing, and was all but confirmed as he saw her attractive tunic fall at her feet.

The next half hour was from Hell itself as she danced and sang, groaned and made remarks both sophisticated and crude. He had never before felt any undue sexual attraction, but now for the first time he felt it. It was more of a mental debate however than a matter of passion; in a short while Jesus had the upper hand, then waited patiently

for her to leave. He occupied his thoughts with silent recitation of the psalms. The casualties in this encounter were his eyes and neck, his eyes desiring to look up to focus on any distant object, and his neck required relief from his self imposed paralysis. He would rather that she were a loaf of bread.

At length it stopped dancing, and only slightly out of breath said, “I am commanded to reveal who I am, and who you are...I AM NOT.” It then began a set of broken gagging noises, which preceded the release of vomit onto the ground, which stank of sulfur. Jesus considered the description given, “I AM”, followed by a negation. It seemed to wait upon Jesus who looked at it. It then continued, “I now tell you, that you are the Son of God and the divine Messiah.”² Jesus had nothing further for it, she considered her instructions completed and began to curse and claw at her face and chest. Not waiting for the conclusion of this event, Jesus rose and left without looking at it.

Jesus had never been severely subjected to sensuous trials, even in the caravan he found the prostitutes, the opium and the graft repulsive. The repulsion was when an act was projected to its completion and the Devilish consequences were foreseen, something that his caravan comrades never did.

Years later it might be said that Jesus was always and fully integrated into the will of God. This would be true in a past tense, to those who were not there. But the Father’s will was not handed to Jesus on a plate, he had to will it himself.

Jesus refined his discernment efforts. He removed his own efforts as much as possible. The more he sought the Father’s will by strength of his own will, the more deeply he shared in his own will, instead of the Father’s. Perhaps he was trying too hard — forcing his will, instead of accepting the Father’s will. He recalled Abida’s advice to become a winnowing basket.

Winnowing grain with a shallow basket involved repeatedly tossing the grain into the air, allowing a breeze to remove the chaff. Each time less chaff resettled, until the grain alone remained in the basket. The abbot Abida told the monks to expect false thought of all types: moral, emotional, logical. In a well formed soul however, the false thoughts would not stand repeated winnowing, and would not find a hold.

² Where the word “divine” is used as an adjective, the author leaves it in lower case. Where “Divine” may be used as a pronoun for “God”, the word is capitalized.

Abida further thought that one's station in life was willed by God and should not be lightly changed for another. One's particular circumstances or status was an accident of life, and not fundamental to the soul. In fact more difficult circumstances held greater potential for the soul when these were cultivated into their best form in faith and virtue.

Jesus pondered all of this and worked toward a conclusion that had him as a Messiah of current circumstances. He was not to expect to be as Herod or David in their palaces, with barons and an army to enforce his will. This was never a concern, he did however need the authority of Messiah. He must be raised to authority by some other means; the Sanhedrin was the obvious answer.

The next week passed uneventfully, until he spotted a caravan in the distance. There was a path of sorts but no real road, which was only a concern if wagons were in tow, and he did not see any. The party was mounted on horse and camel and apparently saw Jesus before he saw them. The assembled riders were quickly upon Jesus and told him that they were emissaries from an Eastern kingdom that was effectively the Rome of the East, and had been told that Jesus could be found in the desert. They were most generous, and were not offended when Jesus refused all food and drink. After niceties the man in charge came to the point.

Jesus was their choice for national governor, with an expected career path to king within five years. The emissary told of how he had sought the opinion of many, and had prayed to the God of Israel, and they were sure Jesus was the one for the post. It was out of duty that Jesus was expected to accept the offer. It had been revealed to them that Jesus was the Messiah, and further that their mysterious Eastern king was to facilitate the coming of the Messiah into his kingship.

Jesus thanked the man but declined, saying he was certain that God had a specific other purpose for his life, but did not go into detail and excused himself. The emissary walked beside Jesus while the other advisors followed with their animals at a respectful distance. The mysterious man grew more adamant, but offered to compromise; Jesus could simply postpone his other mission, or could direct it from his new kingdom, and he would have all the resources that he now lacked.

Jesus said he was ending the conversation and wished God's blessings upon the man. The man grabbed Jesus' shoulder and stepped in front of him saying, "Sir, at least look at what I offer."

The man unveiled a panorama of the kingdoms of the world, present and future. All were somehow not just shown but offered now — to Jesus if he would redefine his mission and commit his life to the duties of King of the World. “You would pay my king homage during the transition period, and when you assumed your reign the people would pay you homage,” said the emissary.

Jesus said briskly, “You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve.”

Finally the Devil’s emissary threatened, “I am authorized to put you to death if you do not comply.”

Jesus said calmly, “I expect we will talk again at that time,” and resumed walking away.

Jesus heard, but did not look back to see the emissary go mad with anger, screaming and hacking a nearby assistant with a sword, and finally crawling into the large fire that had been built during the negotiations, heaping coals upon his back and grinding them into his face.

What now? He was committed to his mission, even if it meant death. He would consider it all tomorrow, he wanted to put some distance between himself and the emissaries. He walked for two hours, then stopped to sleep but could not. He turned west toward the sea and walked until dawn.

Two other apparitions occurred about the third and fourth weeks. Interior trials in which the Devil did not appear in the flesh were continual and varied in intensity and nature. At one point Jesus was tempted to ask the Father to turn the stones he walked on into loaves of bread, and the temptation to despair was continual.

Jesus turned west once again toward the Dead Sea. He almost missed it. He was further south than he had estimated, and was now at the southern tip of the sea. Jesus continued walking, but now along the west rim, for most of the day. His fast had heightened his senses and his appreciation of the beauty. He had denied satisfaction to his basic drives, which now were attuned to seeking it higher. Not just the stark beauty of the desert, but the peace of God, the immortality of God. He observed a perfection in the desert landscape which seemed to largely have avoided the corruption found closer to population centers. But the Almighty was not content to be a gardener, He had chosen to be a parent, and the free will of the children came with that.

Jesus was gathering pieces of the plan, and more than one had confirmed him as Messiah — the Devil's daughter who spewed vomit and truth, the king and kingdom dream, Abida's visions. His mother Mary especially had told him the story of her espousal to the Holy Spirit, and his birth as the Messiah of Israel.

But what of it? Such a great office given to a man with no authority or influence. How was he to restore Israel to glory, when it was under occupation and when he himself rejected the violence of the Zealots? Jesus asked, "Father, is the Messiah to be a priest of the temple? Shall I rule as David did? How shall I rule those you give to me? There was no reply, and Jesus looked inward.

The thought — king and kingdom — recurred in the day, and again in the night as a dream. He was pondering it now. *The Messiah was to rule the kingdom of God...not the kingdom of Israel.* But if Israel was not God's kingdom on earth, what was?

But why define God's kingdom by the boundaries drawn by kings of the earth? The kingdom of God was not land, but spirit. The kingdom of God were the souls of God's children. This had always been the primary concern of Israel and its God — soul, virtue, reverence, not extensive borders or a full treasury.

Was he was both king and kingdom? Were those who would share in the kingdom of God to become Messiah themselves? Was this the trial of faith — to become Messiah? It was like being told to drink honey. But how were others to share in the kingdom? By will, was the extent of the answer that occurred to Jesus. He was confident that the complete answer would be revealed to him.

Jesus found shade in the shadow of a cliff, and directed his thoughts to the idea of "king and kingdom", and how by an act of will others would share in both. He could just not devise a mental model for a man sharing in God by his act of will...he was thinking too narrowly! It was not an act of will, it was two acts of will; the will of man and the will of God. What man could desire, omnipotent God could complete.

Jesus did not expect the Father to shout down an answer from Heaven. He wondered how many days he had been on fast. He looked about and saw the highest point, it was some distance away, it would take him most of an hour to even arrive at its base.

From the top of his new hill, he slowly surveyed the entire area. He saw wadi troughs in the hillsides where water fed scrub brush about three times a year. He saw a dust funnel. He saw a crow, then a fox stopping to investigate something, then move on. Jesus wandered down the hill to this point of interest.

As he approached, it appeared to be cast off fabric, part of a blanket perhaps. Coming closer he saw that it was an animal mummified by the dry heat of the desert. It was the scapegoat...the goat that was released each year bearing the sins of Israel! How did such a superstition become part of the faith? It was to be symbolic, but he knew of many who understood it literally. Synagogue ladies would plaster the goat with notes describing sins and petitions. The extra pious would flee from the animal, not wanting to become defiled by contact with it. What was even the point, to bear away sin, only to relocate it?

Abida's theology came to mind; he would speak of virtue and sin as real, and not just symbolic ideas. He would speak of virtue being made sin by moral mischoice, and then a person reforming the sin into virtue again by acts of moral courage — patience in the face of anger, respect when insulted — that was the job of an Essene, not a goat.

...What if a man...a Messiah, were to make someone's sin...into his own virtue? He would accept their sin as his own, but restore it as virtue by moral effort. The sin would now be virtue, and be under joint ownership. The Messiah would be incorporating the sinner (now virtuous) into the very being of the Messiah...union with God. *The Messiah would save people by making them part of himself.* The Messiah was the divine Son of God, and would take all who desired as himself. The Messiah would claim all the goodness abandoned by evil and create a new kingdom of God within himself.³

Jesus walked...anywhere, would his new understanding be overturned by tomorrow, would he find flaws in it himself. He wandered for the remainder of the day, and most of the night. He examined everything again, but each time it became more coherent. Jesus finally fell off to sleep only an hour before sunrise.

³ This is the core of Catholic/Orthodox understanding of salvation, by which the faithful literally become Christ, who is now the entire body of Christ constituted of the faithful. We are first incorporated into the human nature of Christ, and when we fully purge all traces of self we are able to be incorporated into the divine nature of Christ, (2Pet 1:4). See also Appendix "Christology".

Jesus was no longer amazed when some person appeared from nowhere simply to visit, and his next visitor was a man much like himself. The man was composed, and had an air of authority and wisdom about him. The man could have fit into any middle or upper class as a merchant, an administrator, or any similar office. The man offered no story as to why he was wandering the desert at dusk, but began to speculate on life and Jesus' place in it. Jesus replied that he had business elsewhere and could not accompany the man. As Jesus walked away, the man followed behind. Jesus knew that something had to break, that they would not be walking in silence all night, but it would have to come from this other fellow who Jesus wanted no dealings with.

Soon enough, Jesus found himself walking along the highest point of the temple wall, and thankfully in a lengthwise orientation. Jesus stopped, turned about looking at the man and said, "Why do you disturb me?"

The man replied, "Sir, I am here to enrich your life...and I do not refer to wealth or power. As the Son of God, you have no need for such things. Prove it to yourself, throw yourself down...God will send a legion of angels to preserve you."

Jesus hated disguise and deceit, and it was incarnate at his side. He looked about the temple below him and saw the evening offerings being made; men, women, and Gentiles in their courts, and the entire city of Jerusalem was visible. It was a magnificent sight, he calculated that this was not a vision but reality. The sun was twenty minutes from setting and where it hit a stone structure, a stunning warm glow was seen. He was quite satisfied to continue looking about, rather than at the annoying man. Jesus observed the shadows where the setting sun left a void of... "Sir, Sir, you owe it to yourself to listen to me." It was the pestiferous man trying to sell him some corruption.

Jesus now set his attention fully on the annoying man to get through his offer and said, "I am listening. As to your request; no, I will not throw myself down. I need not test the Father's providence, it will be provided as needed."

"And I do not ask you to." rebutted the man, "What I ask is that you restore yourself to your proper office as Son of God, by living a life more in line with your dignity. When I say throw yourself down, I speak figuratively. I ask in reality that you raise yourself up...see there what I mean."

Jesus observed that this man was more slippery than a serpent, what he said one second he denied the next.

The man pointed now to golden stairs that ascended to Heaven, “You may teach your people the righteous way, not as a peasant but as God glorified. Who would not listen to God from Heaven. I do not ask that you abandon your mission, but complete it from your throne in paradise. You would be violating nothing, and enhancing your purpose. You are God regardless of circumstances, so why not take circumstances most conducive to your goals?”

Jesus again looked about, then at the man and said, “I will do just that, provided it is my Father’s will.”

The salesman broke his lips, then pursed them. He put out his hands in an appealing gesture before speaking as he calculated his next words. But Jesus could stand no more and preempted him, “Demon, you *have* tempted me. I will throw you off this wall...but for what reason, you have angels to serve you also. Shall I command you to leave, it is within my power to do so.”

The man smiled slowly, again breaking his lips to speak, but Jesus continued, “Demon, you are more repulsive than the swine that wallow in their own filth. It is no wonder that you disguise yourself and your evil, which sends souls to Hell. Filth, deceit and ruin had not even been thought of until you arrived.”

The man chuckled and said, “Oh Sir, your words sound like those of my wife.”

Jesus continued, “If you will kindly remove yourself now, I consent to speak with you again before my death.”

The man considered the offer and replied, “...Yes, I see that we are finished here. I will leave you undisturbed until future circumstances as you describe them.” Having tried every temptation, the Devil departed from him for a time.

Jesus was a new man, and now the Messiah confirmed by God himself, and the Devil knew it. Previously, Jesus would not have considered ordering the Devil to leave, but now he knew himself to be the very Son of God with the authority to do so; with the authority to work miracles and to forgive sin, and even to build his own person into a larger body of the Messiah. Now, he would not chase the Devil away at all, but welcome his weak attacks and offer virtue in return. If Adam’s sin had to have its effect in the world, so did every act of spiritual remediation. The Devil would be defeating himself by his assaults.

Jesus looked back over the years of trial, which were simply the years of daily living. The assault most difficult was the period after his financial ruin when he was tempted to despair and to question his self worth. If it were to happen today he would laugh as the Phoenician robber judges took his wealth. His unfulfilled plans for temple service now caused him no anguish; now his greatest concern was to fulfill the will of his Father, whether that was as a carpenter or a scribe, rich or poor. The dozens of annoyances that occurred daily were now like eggs being hurled against a wall of stone, or like a fly landing on an elephant — neither felt, nor of any consequence. Trials were friends in disguise that served to strip the leprosy of self from his will. They were the treatment prescribed by the physician of Heaven.

Jesus observed that the trials — the moral decision points — proceeded in the order of spiritual advancement taught by Abida. The Devil's daughter was a straight forward matter of avoiding sin, it was the purgative stage. The offer of a kingdom by the emissaries was quite legitimate, but the response had to be a denial of legitimate self interest; it simply was not the Father's will for Jesus, however legitimate it might be. It was the illuminative stage in which one's particular path is discerned, and what is available is either taken or rejected according to one's particular calling.

The third trial in which he was told to test the providence of God — by jumping of all things — seemed a matter of trust and hope, not so much about rejection of evil as a participation and union in God. It was faith, the highest element. Abida spoke of the unitive stage, in which there were no longer two wills, but one. There was something more about the third trial...it was something that every person of the light had to do — trust in God at the door of death, trust that God would save one from falling.⁴

Jesus slept until noon, but awakened with much resolved. But not everything, lesser concerns now demanded attention — Jesus needed water. It became late afternoon and he was on the lookout for signs of water, if he judged a hilltop worth the assent he

⁴ The biblical wilderness trials are usually paralleled to general categories of sin or imperfection to be avoided. 1. Jesus was called by the Spirit into the desert to fast, not to eat stones made into bread; and God not the Devil would provide bread as needed. 2. The vision of the kingdoms: for those seeking the life of the spirit, worldly success must not draw on ones efforts. 3. The temptation to jump from the temple wall would be giving into religious pride. Jesus is not only entitled to worldly religious honor, but bodily protection by virtue of his divine status. If Jesus had acted on any of the temptations, it would be difficult to call it sin, but his mission would have suffered in some way from the diversion.

would climb to the top to survey the area for any signs. Animals and birds traveled toward water in the evening, and lush vegetation in a desert was a sure sign of water. He was at the rim and hoping to locate a spring feeding into the sea. He did finally spot some shrubs that were a bit out of place for the available rain fall. Fresh water springs took all sorts of configurations around the Asphaltitus Sea. Some even entered the sea beneath the surface of the water. This appeared to be one such spring, if it was a spring.

But what of it? He had no tools to dig into the rock, to get to the water...while gripping shrubs half way up a cliff.

Jesus paused and looked across the sea; the sun was in its last minutes, and the upper part of the cliffs on the eastern shore were golden where the sun illuminated them. The scene was especially beautiful; there was a heavy haze that lent distance and majesty to the opposite cliffs. The ground where Jesus stood was all the more contrasted against the haze muted eastern cliffs. The sea itself reflected the evening sky, and was subject likewise to the haze — monolithic, majestic, golden...the hand of God.

Jesus turned away from the sea. He raised his hands to the cliff before him and rebuked it saying, "Move yourself, and reveal the spring, that I might drink from it!" Jesus immediately began walking toward the cliff that he might obtain water from the spring.

He had just stepped off when he was toppled to the ground. The earth was shaking violently. It was surreal...little noise, and dust just starting to rise here and there. His vision was not of the shaking earth, but the earth as seen through the eyes of his shaking head. There was just nothing to topple other than himself, no trees or buildings to uproot, crumble, or to kick up much dust. He now saw some rocks tumbling into the sea from the surrounding cliffs, including his cliff that he was now watching. The earth continued to shake and now the cliff before him was breaking away. In a surprisingly slow motion and dull rumble, the entire cliff side was sliding down and into the sea.

The earthquake stopped as suddenly as it had started. Jesus stood and saw an enormous cloud of dust rising close in front of him from the destroyed hillside. Jesus took off his cloak and wrapped it around his head and nose, leaving the smallest possible eye slit. After expanding in all directions, the breeze increased and blew the cloud out over the sea, sparing Jesus having to contend with it. Mud flows were now extending from the shore line in all areas, and into the sea. Jesus looked about in a full circle, then

closely examined the former cliff for signs of the spring. About half way up he could see water flowing over the rocks, it was darkening the sandstone where it flowed. The spring must have weakened the interior of the cliff where it had separated, it now sloped moderately into the sea.

Jesus said mentally, "Thank you Father, for giving me that which I need." Jesus hiked over to the adjoining hill, and then down the slope and drank from the spring. After drinking, Jesus stayed in the area, he sensed that his fast was nearing completion.

On the thirty ninth day, an angel of the Lord appeared to Jesus to counsel him. He was told to walk north and that he would be soon be told when to leave the desert and begin his mission. It was further confirmed by the angel, that he was to carry out the orders of his superior in religion Abida. He was to carry out his mission as an Essene, calling people to the faith. He was to speak also of the latest development in Judaism — the Messiah who was now among them. The angel told him that he would suffer rejection by some, and that whatever happened had its ultimate meaning in what Jesus made of it.

Jesus walked north along the hills of the western rim. The next day he came upon a mesa that was isolated from the other hills, it was closest to the sea, and he wondered if it might become an island in high water. As he examined it in detail, he saw that there were buildings of sorts on top. The top was walled, and he saw movement...people...it was Masada, the fortress built by King Herod the Great. It was said that it could hold out for years. Jesus viewed the mesa fortress for some time, thinking over kings, kingdoms, their expenses, values, and ultimate disposition. Jesus then rose, and continued north...toward the two soldiers who were running toward him. They were sentries from Masada, and they wanted to know who he was, and what he was doing on the King's land. There was no king, Masada now belonged to the Roman Prefect Pilate, but Jesus did not challenge the assertion.

It was well known that one must not come within viewing distance of the fortress without permission, and this wanderer could not produce any sort of authorization. There was a road that passed by Masada along the shore of the Dead Sea; load bearing animals had to obtain a permit, and pedestrians were required to travel only along the road. Persons wandering about were suspect.

Jesus replied, “I am Jesus from Galilee, and I am traveling north. I am sorry, I was not aware that this was the King’s land. I will gladly remove myself from the area.”

The sentry considered the vagrant and said, “There is a fine for trespassing on the King’s land.” The sentry did not seem surprised when the man without a bag or water jug replied that he had no money.

The sentry pointed his sword at Jesus and said, “Return to the road and to Galilee, and never come here again.”

Jesus backed away, turned east toward the coast road and quickly walked away. He now considered his fast and retreat completed, and as he walked, he committed himself to the revelation of the fast. He was the Messiah, the Son of God. He wondered how all this would fit in with the leader of the mission, his cousin John.

He walked into the village of Ein Gadi, one of the very few along the shore of the Dead Sea; it was a major oasis with some terraced fields and orchards. The streams from several springs converged here and supported sheep herding in the surrounding hill area.

Jesus obtained water and food from a generous family, then continued north to rejoin John and start the new mission in Galilee.

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Disciples I

Fishers of Men

Jesus arrived back at the Haljah ford but saw no sign of John. Just two hours after his arrival however, two men approached Jesus, they were Mathias and Andrew disciples of John. John had been arrested, along with several others.

Herod's guard had taken John and the newly arrived Essene, also named Jesus and all the disciples except Mathias and Andrew. Mathias and Andrew acted in accordance with John's instructions to avoid confrontation if possible, without compromising their mission. The arrests had occurred two weeks ago, and the two disciples had been awaiting the return of Jesus.

Jesus told them that the mission was to continue, that the Qumran house was looking into John's release, and that they would be adding their own prayers. Jesus would send word of all this to the Kidron house, and the Qumran house, but they certainly already knew. It happened all too frequently that a missionary became ill or died. The house was informed and the mission proceeded with any necessary replacement sent.

Essenes had a reputation of being accurate news reporters, and accurate information was a prized commodity. Such news would normally be written, and delivered by a Jew of religious standing traveling between points. Inaccurate news reflected badly on the Essenes research, efforts and judgment, and where a point was uncertain, it was stated as such.

The Sanhedrin was among the best informed bodies in the Mediterranean, and it would certainly be informed of the arrest of such a popular figure. The Sanhedrin took reports of all kinds: event reports, progress reports, court reports, movement and personnel reports, financial reports, planning reports, situation and opinion reports, from within Israel and from Jews in Egypt, Rome, and other cities. Information on births, deaths, disease, weather, crops, arrests, executions, caravans, military movement, Roman laws and Zealot activity were all contained in some report. Synagogue Rabbis gathered

much of the information and they knew accurately much that was not public knowledge. Jesus wondered what response the Sanhedrin had offered to Herod.

For several years the prophet John had preached on Heaven and Hell, on the covenant with God, the Law of Moses, and on current problems including Herod and the Romans. He was well known throughout Israel, loved by most common Jews and loved-hated by most in religious authority. He condemned King Herod Antipas' marriage to the divorced wife of his brother Philip, and spoke against greed and corruption wherever he found it. No one was spared, not even the priests. The temple hated him for that, but he had their favor in preaching obedience to the Law. The group having no major complaint with him were the Romans, to whom John yielded political power.

The three set out for northern Galilee, and hoped that the recent trouble would not follow them that far. Some religious practicalities now had to be dealt with by Jesus...being the Messiah. Abida knew it, but to reveal it to others would be considered blasphemy. To be a son of God, was a compliment or a goal; but to be the Son of God was blasphemy. God was One. The core of the Jewish faith was one God, and only one God. There were on occasion lunatics who claimed to be God, or a human Son of God, and they were dealt with as lunatics. For a sane man to claim systematically that he was the divine Son of God, and to cultivate a following was the most severe crime in Israel. Opinions about the nature of the Messiah varied, but none of them impinged upon the core doctrine of God as one — no other Gods, Goddesses, Sons (human or divine), Daughters, Wives, or Equals.

Jesus knew differently, but convincing others would not be easy. But did he have to reveal it at all? Yes he did. The Messiah was salvation, and it was salvation because the Messiah was God made man. There was more; those wishing salvation, must become Messiah themselves.¹ All this was to be explained to the toughest and most skeptical audience possible — the Jews of Israel.

¹ This novel uses a literal understanding of the faithful as the body of Christ; we attain Heaven as Christ — the body of Christ. This is the Catholic and Orthodox understanding. Other Christian traditions understand salvation as our living alongside Christ in Heaven, with the purpose of Christ being only the forgiveness of sin, thus allowing one's attainment of Heaven. Scripture speaks on the faithful as being the literal body of Christ in Acts 9:4, and Mt. 25:42-45. See also appendix, "Christology".

What was the most effective way to reveal this to Mathias and Andrew? It could not wait, and Jesus called the group to a halt. They took water and Jesus asked the two, “What did John tell you about the Messiah?”

The response of Andrew surprised Jesus. Andrew told of their understanding of the Messiah, it was what John had taught them and it was radically different from any other version. John’s Messiah was to be God made man. Andrew continued saying the Messiah was to rule the spirits of men; the Messiah would drive evil and oppression from Israel by expelling it from the souls of men, not by driving men from Israel.² In this way the Messiah-King of Israel was to rule all peoples. There was a moment of satisfied common consent to these ideas, but a pregnant pause as Andrew turned to Mathias to let him speak the remaining portion. Mathias fumbled meekly with a few preambles, then composed himself and spoke clearly, “Master, the prophet John told us that you are the Messiah.”

Jesus smiled slightly and said, “Yes, I am.” Jesus then continued, “And do not be amazed at this, you too will become Messiah.”³ Do not try to understand all of this now, it will be revealed in its time. Come now, be happy and let us be off to Galilee to tell the good news of the Messiah.” Everyone was relieved that the news had broken and they joyfully set off.

Essene business put John and Jesus in contact a few times, and Jesus was aware of John’s theology. The Qumran Essene house where John was a member had a reputation for asceticism; they did not challenge the temple priests; but their piety, fervor,

² New Testament usage equates ‘spirit’, (pneuma) to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. ‘Soul’, (psyche) refers to the immaterial elements of a person. Today, one’s soul is thought to be the totality of one’s immaterial attributes, and in a human all of these have the attribute of immortality. Traditionally the moral aspects of the soul are termed the “superior” portion; and non-moral attributes which are the immaterial framework of one’s body, are termed the “inferior” portion. See also appendix, “Spirit”.

³ It is Catholic teaching that the faithful are the body of Christ. Christ is now all members of the body of Christ: Jesus, Eucharist, the faithful, angels. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states explicitly that we become Christ in at least two paragraphs: (1) CCC 1213, “Through baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ.”; (2) CCC 795, “...Let us rejoice then and give thanks that we have become not only Christians, but Christ himself...he and we together are the whole man.”. The idea and term “Whole Christ”, (which means, Christ is now the larger body of Christ of all members), occurs at least six times: CCC 795, 796, 797, 1136, 1187, 1188.

and ascetic life did embarrass them. John was thought by many to have appeared from nowhere at the will of God, but in fact he was on a specific mission to preach, convert, and revitalize the faith in the area where he was working. Each Essene missionary was given wide discretion on methods, and was expected to provide for his own requirements. John simply did this in an extreme way, when his cloak wore out he exchanged a week's labor for the camel skins he now wore. Grasshoppers and roots constituted most of his meals, he did not want to burden others by requesting food — or so he said. It was Essene practice to recruit assistants, and even start additional houses. Mathias and Andrew were such Essene assistants.

Jesus' mission was identical to John's, and trouble did not halt a mission. Jesus expected John to be released after a deal was struck between Herod Antipas and the temple. Jesus expected John to be exiled for a few years to Egypt perhaps, then allowed to return with a pledge of silence from John's Essene house. The Qumran house was not directly controlled by the temple, as was the Kidron house, but it was Jewish and was expected to obey the temple authorities.

It was not common that an Essene was arrested or exiled, but John was not a common Essene. This was a time when the Qumran house was happy to be subservient to the temple political machinery. John would not save his own life by agreeing to stop his irritating preaching, but he would follow orders from his Abbot, and the Qumran house would follow orders from the temple.

In theory the Essene mission of Jesus was not new, radical, or complicated. In practice, the fact of the missionary being the Messiah awaited for 1000 years, did complicate matters. Jesus, Mathias, and Andrew entered the synagogue in Nazareth, and were nearly stoned after Jesus proclaimed himself to be the Messiah foretold by the prophets. Walking away from town, Jesus would not enter into the sense of despair that was probing him. Was he expecting the Devil to cooperate? Were works of the Spirit somehow immune to obstruction? No.

He would put it out of his mind, his mission would begin in the next village. Still he felt that he owed an explanation to Mathias and Andrew; they had left their master the Baptist and now followed Jesus, and he had apparently failed. They were walking just behind Jesus, but came abreast when Jesus began to speak, "Mathias, Andrew, the Devil will oppose our work in many ways, but do not be discouraged. We

will not attain victory by joining with him in anger and despair, rather the virtues of humility and faith will be our weapons of conquest. What good effort in this world is not subject to impediment? Therefore do not think that the most vital of works will proceed unopposed.”

Jesus continued, “Andrew, tell me how you came to know the Baptist.” Jesus kept the conversation relevant to their mission, and they walked until sundown. Mathias and Andrew told Jesus that they followed the Baptist because they believed he was a prophet, but that was not enough of an answer for Jesus. He helped them to put into words, what they knew in their hearts. The question was retrogressed several steps and each step answered logically. It was training. Jesus was training Mathias and Andrew to be missionaries, and the three devised an appeal:

“We followed the Baptist because he was a prophet of Israel, who heralded the coming of the Messiah. The Messiah is now among us and we now follow him. John himself gave testimony that the new prophet Jesus is the Messiah who will lead Israel into its promised glory, and all mankind into peace and prosperity.”

A bit heavy on set structure perhaps, but it was a start. All three agreed however, that it was not likely to register at all with anyone unfamiliar with Judaism, or the prophecies of the Messiah. Jesus told them that for now they would be appealing only to the children of Israel. Jesus also told them that the God of Israel would supply signs as needed to testify to the Messiah.

The men came to a village south of the lake in Galilee and inquired where they might find the rabbi. It was nearing sundown and this was the best time to speak with him. The rabbi would likely be working his trade and would soon return home for the evening, and later perhaps to the synagogue to lead prayer or instruction. Morning or evening, either end of the workday were the hours of operation for the country rabbi. The men would state their business, which might be followed by an invitation to a meal and possibly lodging. If dinner followed, the rabbi would politely ask to be brought up on news of events in areas of common interest. This was a polite way of authenticating the guest. If the visitor appeared to have little knowledge of several of these topics he was assumed to be an impostor, or somehow minimally connected and just seeking a free meal and bed.

The Essenes were not the only group with domestic missionaries in Israel. The temple considered every rabbi a permanently based missionary and in theory he was to go throughout his area of responsibility and encourage people to the faith. A strange situation had arisen with the new evangelization efforts. Everyone without exception in an area was to be appealed to: Romans, Phoenicians, Syrians, Samaritans. If a conversion was not made, at least a small improvement in cultural relations might be achieved. The problem was that the most stringent of Jews would have no contact with a non-Jew for fear of defilement. When asked if the Romans should be made Jewish they would answer yes, but many would not make any practical efforts toward this end, and they would even disdain those making contact with the infidels.

In the end, contact was not made with the rabbi, and the men passed the night just outside of town in a field. It had been two days since they had eaten.

Jesus awoke before dawn and ventured a short distance to meditate and plan. If Andrew or Mathias saw him, they would know that he had retreated the short distance to be alone with his thoughts. So far they had two failures for two attempts, and a change of tactics was needed. He would take the lead in the mission now; it would not be a case of waiting upon a rabbi, or simply declaring himself Messiah. He would not hope for an ideal response from ideal people. He would do what was necessary to bring them to him, and what was necessary to authenticate his message. That meant miracles and prophecy. Jesus woke Mathias and Andrew, Capernaum was six hours away and there was no reason to stay there.

In Capernaum, Matthew the tax collector had just seized the fishing boat of the man Zadok. With him were several agents of wealthy men who followed Matthew on his monthly seizure rounds. They would purchase items on the spot at auction and cart them away. In the case of the boat they might hire a man to sail it across the lake away from its former owner, or chain it to the pier.

Matthew instructed his brother Aaron to start the bidding, and a large net was the first item up for bid. Bidding was started at one shekel of silver, the man Jesus was the only bidder and won the item. A bit of commotion ensued when he told Aaron that he had no silver but would pay in a short while. Matthew argued and threatened Jesus, and he had to do the same with his men as they obeyed the instructions of the prophet and laid

the net in the water. The net was deployed in a corner that was formed by a pier that projected out from the bank. The auction stopped as all the bidders assembled around this strange enterprise. Again, Matthew emerged from the crowd to confront Jesus, but was preempted, “Matthew, you will now be paid your taxes, how much is due?”

Matthew replied sternly “Sixteen shekels are overdue and the auxiliaries⁴ are on their way, so end your rioting and leave.”

Jesus turned to the crowd and said, “Friends, the man Zadok whose livelihood has been seized today has a covenant with the God of Israel. He makes the covenant with his good actions, with his good words and intentions, with his hope and faith. Now the God of loyal covenant intends to keep his part of the covenant.”

Jesus began picking up small stones and tossing them into the pool enclosed by the net. The stones were splashing as they hit, but it was noticed by some, and then all that two or three stones were causing three and four splashes — something else was adding to the disturbance. It was fish, and more than one...the stones were becoming fish as they entered the water! A stone even over shot the pool, becoming a fish on the pier and flopping itself into the water. For each his own reason, the people began to toss stones into the pool to create their own fish. The friends of Zadok, bystanders, and even the agents tossed a stone into the pool.

When the net was quite full, Jesus stepped forward grinning and shouted, “Friends, that is enough. Thank you for your help.” To Matthew he said, “Matthew, follow me and we will no longer ransom the property of men, but their souls.” Matthew left everything, and followed Jesus.

Jesus and company spoke briefly to the fisherman who now enjoyed better circumstances. Jesus assured Zadok of additional help if needed, but advised him to sell the fish at once and pay off his taxes. He hired two helpers on the spot and harvested and sold the huge catch. Jesus and his three disciples, which now included Matthew went for lunch, Matthew paid.

It was impossible for the miracle worker to eat in peace. He stuffed some dried fish into a small loaf of flat bread, and spoke to the crowd while taking bites from the sandwich, small ones so as not to interrupt his speech for too long. The crowd was

⁴ Roman auxiliaries were troops recruited from the local population. Regular Roman legions were heavy infantry numbering 6000 Roman citizens.

growing and Jesus was seeking high ground, not to escape but to address. He was outside of a carpenter shop and asked the workman if he could take the workbench outside and use it. The carpenter readily agreed and helped Jesus move it just outside of his shop.

Jesus stood upon the sturdy table and spoke to the crowds. He shouted, “Friends.”...“Friends.”...“Hear me.” Finally there was silence and the prophet spoke, “I will see to your ill ones, but first listen carefully, for the kingdom of Heaven is among you. The kingdom and the event prophesied for a thousand years is here now. The Messiah is in Israel and awaits your consent. He invites you to unimagined glory. However the Messiah can do little without your help; so do your part and approach him in humility, faith and virtue.”

“Why do the children of Israel spend their lives taxing and seizing the property of others, as we have seen this morning. Why do good people denigrate themselves in pubs — seething, cursing and fermenting evil. Why do the chosen children of the Almighty God spend their lives in worry and hoarding. Such people cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven.”

Jesus paused to make eye contact with everyone at least quickly. A man took advantage of the silence to shout, “Are you the Messiah?” Jesus spoke back loudly, “You have said it, but questioning the Messiah will not attain you Heaven, you must believe in the Messiah who is now here.” The crowd was murmuring loudly and pressing forward, some wanted to touch him, others to seize him.

Jesus shouted, “Let the Messiah’s deeds testify for him,” and bent down to a woman on a stretcher, who was curled and had little movement. Matthias, Andrew and Matthew had moved beside Jesus to push the crowd back to make room, and they called for silence that the prophet might heal. Jesus spoke loudly to Matthew, “Matthew, grab her legs and pull.” Matthew obeyed at once, and Jesus pulled on her arms. The woman screamed as she was straightened, her joints cracked loudly and with a staccato noise that was unbroken. Jesus shouted to Matthew, “Pull, pull!”...“Pull hard!” The woman was fully extended and Jesus released his grip.

The woman was crying hysterically and brought her hands over her face sobbing, “What have you done?”

Jesus said, “Stand up woman.” and extended his hand to her. The woman realized that she was moving her hands freely and that her legs were extended for the first

time in years. She immediately stopped crying and looked up at Jesus, and slowly pushed herself upright to standing.

The crowd shouted “Miracle!”, and surged forward into Jesus crushing him. Mathias, Andrew and Matthew pulled forcefully on Jesus then quickly moved him into a boat and shoved off. The boat pulled out beyond the range of waders and the disciple-bodyguards turned back a few swimmers, saying that the prophet would soon speak. They did row in closer and Jesus spoke. He insisted that the people maintain order, and that he would return tomorrow three hours after dawn, to the fallow field off the west road, a mile out of town.

The four set the sail and traveled an hour south. Jesus and Matthew disembarked, while Mathias and Andrew returned the boat. Jesus and Matthew talked, Jesus told Matthew that he was to join the pilgrims as a disciple, but it was ultimately his decision. Jesus questioned Matthew as to his personal history, and had Matthew examine his actions and goals at each stage, this was done in a sort of third person manner, with Matthew examining the life of the person Matthew from a distance. It was more constructive this way, it was a matter of the new Matthew viewing the old Matthew, and good riddance to the latter.

At one point early in their conversation, Matthew asked Jesus, “Rabbi, did I once interview you?”

Jesus replied, “No, you did not arrive at the interview, but I did; in the end I went to Capernaum. Now it is I who am interviewing and hiring workers.” Jesus was referring to his job interview as an indentured servant in the caravans. Matthew was content not to pursue it any further.

All four were encamped by afternoon. Jesus spoke with Matthew again about his desire to become a permanent disciple. Matthew was advised to do nothing too soon, but let his emotions settle and then make a willful decision. Until such a decision, he would accompany them.

Jesus made his own decision, he needed more assistants for crowd control. It was a real problem, he was given quite a buffeting today. He sent Andrew back into

Capernaum to recruit some, and bring them to the public field, a mile west of Capernaum, two hours after dawn.⁵

Andrew was from Capernaum and knew most people at least by sight, and went straight to the boat piers. Jesus had not given exact instructions, but for this job muscle and a loud voice were valued as much as piety. He obtained the services of his brother Simon Peter, James and his brother John, and two others. Andrew promised them a fair recompense from the prophet for working crowd control.

The next morning Jesus arrived as he had promised. He and the other disciples walked alongside the crowd on the road, but with his face wrapped. He did not want to heal until he had spoken, and took precautions to conceal his identity. Andrew and his detachment of bodyguards were waiting on a ridge in the field. Jesus joined them, unwrapped, and addressed the people.

“Friends, thank you for hearing me. Hear now the good news I bring to you. The day that Israel has long awaited is upon us, the kingdom of God is offered to you, therefore repent and share in this good fortune.”

“For what reason were you born, and for what reason did the tribes of Jacob bind into the nation of Israel? Is your purpose to work the fields, eat its produce and finally return to the dust from which you were made? These are only your means of life...your high purpose is barely imaginable, and today it is revealed to you. Look at me and see your end, believe in me and share in the Father’s good plan for you, follow my teachings and attain the peace that the world can neither give nor take away.”

“The Law of Moses is indeed the revelation of God. What if God now were to reveal himself not in word, but in flesh? The Father does so now. The Messiah is before you, as prophet and more. You are called to share in the Messiah, to become Messiah yourselves. Do not be taken back by this. It must be so, and the prophets have spoken of it.”

⁵ In an effort to minimize crime and wandering by night time strangers, villages designated some outlying fields as “public”, for overnight use by travelers. Such a field might be owned by the king or village, or a marginally producing field might be given a tax exemption when offered for public use. A village could declare itself off limits to non-villagers during night hours, if it cared to enforce this rule.

“Such belief does not come easy, nor is it complete. Knowledge of the truth must direct one’s will to act within the truth. In this way your outstretched hands will be grasped by God of Heaven.”

“To become the anointed of God and share in the life of your Father in Heaven, you must resemble your Father just as a child should. Those who cheat at market scale, work for profit on Sabbath, drink themselves silly, prowl, pay or sell themselves for pleasures of the flesh do not resemble the Father and can have no part in his abundant life. Those who do not acknowledge their God, those who curse God and creation, those without charity or forgiveness, likewise cannot reunite with the God of creation and virtue.”

“Why do you dwell on this life, on its injustice and its futility. Wealth, happiness, and health on earth are fleeting and fragile. Why do you put your hopes in these houses of sand which crumble away so often within your lifetime. Dwell rather in the kingdom of God. Many of you do, but you leave one foot in this world. Let your faith be cultivated, and your desire turned toward the Messiah who fulfills the Law of Moses.”

The prophet spoke in this manner for a half part of an hour. After concluding his message Jesus said, “Good people, I know that you have many concerns, and I will now assist you with your other needs. First however, remember how these disorders came to be. The God of Israel does not wish them for you, nor does he generate them. Disorders of all sorts are the result of disorder in moral conduct. Even those living good lives are subject to the disorder produced elsewhere. The disorder of sin is real, and it must have a real effect in the world. Those who suffer hardship with faith will do much to reform the disorder in our world.”

“I will attend to many of you, but you must also put your lives into good order. To make straight life or leg, only to have it quickly contorted by sin is of no lasting value. To those living upright lives, I tell you to seek the highest life possible. By belief in the Messiah your faith will attain its consummation. Until now you have waited impatiently for the Anointed of Israel; he is now here and offers you a share in himself.”

Jesus went into the crowd and healed many. To those who had lived full lives, he encouraged them to make their remaining time the most fruitful of their lives, to bring the Law of Moses to its fulfillment by acts of heroic faith, virtue, and desire, and to

believe that the Messiah was now among them. He spoke again of the need not only to empty oneself of disorder, but to make every faculty, every moment and every act one directed toward the Father. In doing so they would enter more deeply into the very life of the Father.

The local rabbis prudently withheld judgment of Messiah claimants. They simply made their reports to the temple when one appeared. The impostor Messiahs were of all types, some were obviously seeking notoriety or money; many were genuinely pious but did not deliver on their promises of miracles. Those Messiahs promising self rule were quickly dealt with by the Romans. This new prophet was quite different, he had cured dozens in two days, had turned stones to fish, and made crowds frenzied with faith.

Jesus gave assistance mostly by healing, but some requested help in matters of children, parents, money, virtue and every type of problem. His assistance in these matters was not usually one of direct intervention but a call to faith, virtue and perseverance on the part of those seeking the help. He reminded them that all must take a burden of original sin, and reform it by acts of faith and virtue.

The new bodyguards performed well. They were all invited to visit with the prophet and three accepted, two having left during the sermon when Jesus declared himself the Messiah. Simon Peter, James and John stayed to meet the prophet.

Over an extended dinner he spoke with the new men and offered Peter, James and John a place in the traveling mission. The other two were fine men, but their calling was with family, not on the road. The pilgrims made camp overnight, then set out the following morning walking south. Jesus had an errand to make, and it was on their way.

The road that circled the Lake of Galilee connected numerous smaller villages. Many did not even have a well, but simply obtained water from the lake. One such village was named Bar Magan, and in it lived the “feline widow”, who was aunt to Jesus. Ruth the feline widow, was cousin to Elizabeth, who was sister to Mary the mother of Jesus. She had amply earned her title, her small home was infested with dozens of felines. She herself did not know how many, as there was a continual new litter, while others would be consumed by predators. Ruth depended on her many children, nephews,

nieces and relatives of all sorts for her livelihood. None dared spend the night, but stopped during the day and left before sundown.

Felines were rare in Israel, and it was said that every surviving one of them could be found at her home. Attempts had been made to eradicate the population, but their prudent caution, small area, and quick movements made the felines difficult prey for a hunter, and any successes were soon replaced.

Jesus was one such nephew who brought her(?) provisions. Ruth was always grateful and considered her nephew Jesus a saint. She would speak of him to everyone, even going beyond literal fact in telling of his kindness to her pets. Jesus had become associated with the burgeoning feline population and he alone would visit during non-daylight hours.

On this occasion however, Jesus entered Bar Magan at the second hour. Ruth had sixty years and was in good health, and so far her continual prophecies of her own impending death had not occurred. As usual however she made her nephew promise that he would be with her “when her time came”. Long ago Jesus had promised that he would be with her if he was in Galilee, and was forced to confirm this every time he visited. Jesus was pleased to find his aunt well, and left her some coins but told her not to spend it on the felines. The disciples had remained at some distance and were amazed at the activity of her household. Jesus emerged from the home of Ruth, and walked quickly away with the disciples.

The road skirted the Sea of Galilee, and was well traveled. As always the interruptions along the way were the purpose of the journey and curvilinear progress was slow. At midmorning a boy ran toward Matthew who was at the head of the column, shouting that a man was dying and needed help. The entire group followed the boy, then ran ahead as they saw the man in need. The man had apparently tried to hang himself from a tree, but the rope broke and he was unconscious on the ground, other travelers must have passed by. The rope was still tight around the man’s neck and his breathing was shallow. Jesus removed the rope at once. Simon advised pumping his chest, as this was known to save drowning victims on the lake. Jesus consented and Simon began to compress the man’s chest. The man slowly regained consciousness. He was leaned against the tree and allowed time to compose himself and take water.

Shortly thereafter the man made dry thanks, and attempted to rise and leave. Jesus insisted that he remain seated and asked his name. He replied that his name was Nathaniel, and that he must be leaving.

Jesus knelt to the ground, placed his hand on Nathaniel's shoulder and said, "Nathaniel my friend, today you have lost something of value — money, esteem, love, purpose. But of what value are these things that are so easily lost? These things are bound to fail, either in this life or the next — riches, honor, even love of man or woman, and purpose of life drawn from these things."

"Nathaniel, I am the new prophet and Messiah in Israel. You wish to end your life...do so, but replace it with my own. ⁶ Shall I say to you that your life is not futile...it is. My life is not. Your life can end only in Hell. My life has no such possibility."

The words of this man made no sense to Nathaniel, but they were overflowing with hope. Bravely he choked out the words, "I would gladly share in your life master, but how?"

Jesus replied, "You think you have lost everything Nathaniel, but you have lost only your chains. It is enough for today that you leave from here. Come now, let us leave. I will instruct you."

The pilgrims set off again, Nathaniel walked next to Jesus and told the particulars of his life and of recent events. The men were traveling toward Magdala, six miles south of Capernaum. It was hill country with many streams in the valleys feeding the lake. Approaching one such stream the pilgrims noticed a man with a donkey struggling to make the beast ford a shallow stream. When the pilgrims were nearly upon him, he mounted the beast to ride it through the stream. Half way across the donkey began to buck violently, throwing the man into the soft mud of the stream bed. He avoided landing on the stepping stones, but was humiliated, and muddied...and for no gain, the donkey returned to the original bank.

⁶ Semi figurative speech is used here by Jesus, as he often did. Jesus is not proposing that Nathaniel kill his body, but mortify his self, then become a member of Christ (the body of Christ). Regarding the remainder of the paragraph: strictly speaking, every (purely) human life must end in Hell, as a result of original sin which is shared by all humanity. What saves a person is participation in Christ (God). For now the world exists as a strange mix of good and evil, but at the end of time Christ will separate from evil, reclaiming all goodness into himself. All that does not share in Christ will be totally separated from God, which is the state of Hell.

The pilgrims were quickly upon the man to render assistance. Jesus was the last to arrive, and surveyed the situation. He then offered a strange observation saying, “This is how God treats his friends.”⁷

The man looked sharply at Jesus and retorted, “It is no wonder then, that God has so few friends!”

The master smiled at the student and said, “No wonder.” Jesus then turned to the donkey and commanded, “Cross now to the other side, and remain still.”

The animal crossed over, stepped just off the road and waited silently.

The muddled man and the newer disciples were stunned by this miracle and could offer no comment. Finally the owner said, “Sir who are you, and how did you do that?”

Jesus replied, “I am the new prophet in Israel, and any friend of God is a friend of mine. You sir, as I have spoken are befriended by God, therefore let us travel the road together. Come now, bring your donkey and let us be on our way.”

Jesus was invited to dine with the man Timaeus, whose donkey Jesus had ordered across the stream. Jesus accepted, and placed Andrew in charge of the camp, and to see to the purchase of food for the evening meal for the rest.

Jesus arrived at the modest home of Timaeus, wine was served and conversation was made. The meal of rice, beans, eggs and bread was served from common bowls. Jesus ate slowly and lightly, but showed gratitude and grace to his host. The meal was completed and the discussion turned to the occupying Romans. The two sons of Timaeus were zealous in their opposition to the Romans, and in a short time had revealed themselves as partisan fighters. They did not hide their disdain for Jesus, as he had spoken of tolerance and even cooperation with the Romans.

The younger son Dismas was the arc type warrior monk. He fought to remove the corrupt religion and non-religion of the Romans — statues and idols, gambling and prostitutes. He kept himself ready for death at all times by fasting and prayer, devotion to the God of Israel, and burning hatred for the Romans. The older son Simon was an

⁷ This incident is from the life of St. Theresa of Avila. After being bucked from a donkey, God spoke these words to her. The theology is that suffering and disorder are the raw material that friends of God fashion into virtue, hope, and faith. Everyone suffers, but those who do so in faith incur the friendship of God. The muddled man's observation that such treatment might reduce God's circle of friends, was the reply of St. Theresa.

effective fighter, but not as impassioned as his brother. The father Timaeus, looked forward to unending peace in the Heavenly house of Abraham.

Jesus asked, “Dismas, Simon, do you have any weapons in the house?” Neither answered. Jesus rose from reclinement, walked to the edge of a mat, and studied the floor.

Simon said, “No sir, we have none.”

Jesus replied, “Simon I accept what you say as the truth, but we must now make it so. Anyone following me must speak the truth, and I tell you that truth will be fashioned from falsehood. When corruption, falsehood and evil is encountered you must not protest it, but rather make it the truth, and to do so you must first become the truth. Let us start with a simple task.”

Jesus rolled the mat away, exposing the dirt floor. He dug down and pulled up some wrapped objects. He returned to where they had been reclining but sat on his legs and opened the cloth which protected a spear and a Roman short sword. He called for the oil lamp and heated the tip of the spear in it.

Dismas did not speak his thoughts, but knew that a small oil lamp would have no effect on the malleability of the iron. Jesus then selected a useful looking rock that was flat on one end, and approximately pointed on the other. Jesus began to hammer the straight iron tip into a hook. This reformation was completed in no more time than a smith would require if using proper heat and tools. Jesus then bent the hooked blade so it projected from the shaft at an angle. An orchard pruner could stand off and use his new pruning hook at an angle, the blade would be horizontal to the ground and better able to cut the stem of a fruit on tree.

Jesus briefly admired the result and then turned to the sword. He examined it and apparently needed something more. He told the others that he would return very soon and walked outside. Jesus returned with a thick stone slab. “You took that from the well in the plaza.” accused Dismas.

Jesus said that he had, and that he would return it undamaged. He then used the sword to carve an angled hole in the floor and inserted the stone slab into it. The stone anvil now offered a peaked edge on which to forge the sword blade into a plow share by partially folding it lengthwise. Again, Jesus heated the blade and hammered it on one edge, then the other while holding it by the handle. Simon and Dismas knew what was happening was impossible, but it was happening. In about a quarter part of an hour, Jesus

had bent the blade nearly upon itself lengthwise, leaving a portion at both ends to secure the share edge to the plow. The result was a blade bent lengthwise in the middle, it would form a sharp leading edge for a wooden plow.

When he was finished, he said to Simon, “Now your words are true, there are indeed no weapons in this home, and I am glad for it; for those who live by the sword, shall die by the sword.”

Jesus stood up and said, “Simon...Dismas...follow me. We will exile the evil of the Romans from Israel, and they will become slaves to the Messiah of Israel, slaves to goodness.” The Zealots Simon and Dismas left at once and followed Jesus.⁸

Jesus was still an Essene on mission and only provisionally in charge of that mission. He was still hoping for John to be released in some fashion. To kill a prophet was bad form to say the least. But as Jesus considered possible outcomes, it appeared more likely that he would have to continue as the sole Essene missionary. Jesus had undertaken several day missions as an Essene from the Kidron House, mostly as guest speaker at Synagogue or at a pious association, but he had never before had anyone follow him home. Now he had a hundred.

Besides those invited by Jesus, many others trailed the group, sometimes more than a hundred. These were people of all sorts, and for all reasons. They were welcome to follow the prophet, but they were expected to provide for themselves. A particular peeve of Jesus, were people of religious title appearing in a village or at a home claiming entitlement to meals and lodging because of their declared piety. He would not impose himself or his group in such a manner.

A situation reverse to this, that Jesus occasionally encountered was a “hands off the plow” theology that some pious persons had. Jesus was of the “do, hope, and don’t worry” school. The good people in question were of the “drift and don’t worry”

⁸ By tradition, Dismas was the “good thief” crucified with Jesus. He was in fact not a thief, but a Zealot revolutionary. The earliest Greek language scriptures identify him as a “revolutionary” in Mt 27:38, and Mk 15:27; else where he is called a “criminal”. Over time, “criminal” became corrupted into “thief”, and fails to do justice to good Dismas. Dismas was zealous for the Law of Moses, he was pious, kind, and generous (to non Romans), and fought the occupiers as a religious revolutionary. In this novel Dismas is a disciple of Jesus.

philosophy. Such people must have thought that the world, and even their families were an illusion — that’s how they acted.

One such cloud dweller was soundly reproved by the prophet. The man had left his family and wandered Judaea devoting himself to scolding nearly everyone who had any dealings with this life — farmers, parents, merchants. He had attached himself to the camp followers and an accurate estimation of his life had been assembled by the disciples. Jesus then asked him to walk alongside, and reprimanded his actions and lack of actions. Jesus told him that the life and actions of a desert ascetic were not of more value than that of any other person. The farmers that the man criticized were not failing to trust in God, but acting in the will of God, and as instruments of God for the good of others. Parents were not selfish, but quite the opposite.

The qualities of virtue, faith, and commonality with God’s will, were the elements that would be examined at the end of one’s life. It did not matter if a precious gem was carried in a scrap of cloth, a bag of leather, or a chest of carved ivory. The man did return to his family and became a worthy follower of the Messiah. In the years following he became a sought after teacher of the holiness he cultivated by way of humility.

Jesus assumed that the Messiah awaited by every high priest, for a thousand years would be welcomed and asked to lead Israel from the seat of Moses. Jesus did not however expect the temple to accept him easily, no Messiah claimant should be. A few months of rumored miracles did not make a Messiah, nor should it. Jesus would let a full year pass for the temple priests to evaluate him, his mission, and his claim. He had every reason to believe that the Sanhedrin would confirm him as Messiah. The Father had done so already.

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Galilee I

Days of Peace

It was in Galilee that the new prophet began his mission several months ago. Since then, he had been alternately threatened with harm, and praised as the Messiah. On balance, he had much evidence of success; great crowds gathered to hear him, and he had more disciples than could travel in his itinerant group.

Galilee was the breadbasket of Israel. It was largely built around the Sea of Galilee with its fishing industry and population centers. Cities and villages ringed the lake, including the administrative center of Galilee, the city of Tiberius where its Jewish ruler Herod Antipas supervised his tetrarchy...with Roman permission. Its western border did not extend to the Great Sea, or east of the Jordan River, and it was divided from Jerusalem by hated Samaria.

Formerly all of Galilee had been Jewish, but most of the population had been exiled to the north in 721 B.C. by the Assyrians. The land had been repopulated by surrounding peoples who largely did not adopt the Jewish faith, or in the case of the Samaritans, did so in an adulterated manner. Additionally, the original Jews did not return in sufficient numbers from exile. Galilee was no more than half Jewish.

Galilean Jews had a tendency to trade religious precision for practicality and many did not keep the finest points of the Law to the satisfaction of the Pharisees. A thousand years prior, the temple authorities might have simply excommunicated the lot of them, but now there was precious little to dispose of, and the Galilean Jews lived instead under the contempt of the temple community.

About five percent of the Jews considered themselves as belonging to one of four extremity groups within the faith: Sadducee, Pharisee, Essene, Zealot, and occasionally a Jew attempted the fifth category of Messiah. The Pharisees were literal pietists, and often synagogue rabbis. The Essenes were spiritual ascetics, and the Zealots were partisan nationalists, fighting the occupying Romans. The Sadducees were Jerusalem aristocrats and self appointed temple chief priests.

The Sadducees were the controlling element of the Great Sanhedrin, which was the ruling court of Israel. It had power within the Jewish community in religious, and some civil matters. Its actual power varied greatly depending on the strength of competing powers in Israel. The former king, Herod the Great allowed the Sanhedrin only the power he wished to allow it. In the absence of a king, the Roman governor was the primary power, which strangely increased the power of the Sanhedrin. Rome wanted taxes, order, and an empire, and was content to let their provinces rule themselves within these requirements.

The Sanhedrin met in the “Hall of the Hewn Stones”, located in the inner court buildings of the temple, but the full Sanhedrin of seventy-one members rarely met. Daily governance was conducted by the Lesser Sanhedrin composed of twenty-three of its members. Metropolitan Sanhedrin courts of twenty-three members located in every city decided local matters and even villages had councils.

Half of the population in Israel was non-Jewish and mixed rule was more art than law. By implication, those living in Jewish enclaves subjected themselves to Jewish law. When a dispute arose between Jewish and Roman law, it was decided by a Roman court. The Jews were the only people in the region with a religious law that was in strict opposition with the state gods of Rome.

It was agreed by all Jews that the Messiah, the anointed one was imminent. He was expected to be the greatest ruler of Israel — priest, prophet and king. Prophecy of the Messiah could be traced back hundreds of years, and was given by the prophets of Israel. Details of the coming Messiah were more poetic than specific, and if stretched some prophecies could be interpreted as meaning the Messiah to be divine. However the core of the Jewish faith — one God — remained intact regardless of prophetic interpretation, and for a Messiah to claim to be divine, was blasphemy punishable by death.

Messiah claimants were reported to the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin took the wise course of letting the Messiahs disprove themselves and they were rarely interfered with. So far they had all proven themselves fraudulent. By this policy, the moral authority of the temple was increased as they had never confirmed a false Messiah.

Most Messiah claimants progressed from ascetic teaching to attempted miracles as their following increased, but failed attempts at miracles proved to be their own

destruction. When a potential Messiah involved himself in profiteering or serious heresy he was quickly shut down.

Jesus had quickly come to the attention of the Sanhedrin, he appeared from nowhere to perform miracles and teach crowds that were numbered by the thousands. This new missionary rabbi actually denied nothing of the faith, but seemed to want to make his own self the hub of it, rather than the Law. He did not say “reject the Law”, but “believe in me”. Belief...to what extent? Believe that he existed, that he was a rabbi, a prophet, a man Messiah, or the Son of God? The Great Sanhedrin had found it most productive to allow those claiming to be the Messiah to bring about their own downfall, and all had. At the moment there were at least two Messiah claimants in Israel, Jesus of Nazareth and Solomon the Shepherd.

Jesus continued his work in Galilee, mostly on the west side of the lake. Jesus sent disciples ahead to Arbela to announce that the prophet would be visiting two days hence, on the Sabbath. The people would be resting from their work, and available to turn out. The pilgrims spent the night a few miles outside of town, and arrived in mid-morning. Those wanting first services from the prophet did not wait, and found the group soon after daybreak.

By now the disciples had developed an effective system of crowd control. Everyone kept one eye on Jesus and the other on the people who approached him. People were allowed access according to a word or gesture from Jesus or by the judgment of the disciple-body guards, and there was the inevitable breach by which some desperate soul would penetrate the ring of men. Those successfully gaining unauthorized access usually fell at his feet begging; one man dropped in beside Jesus from a tree limb. The women as usual did much of the finer work, and were unexpectedly acknowledged and thanked by Jesus.

Disguise was sometimes utilized. When circumstances became too kinetic the disciples might wrap their heads in scarves and Jesus would do likewise. With the prophet no longer identifiable, the crowd would calm itself. Distinct head scarves or outer tunics might also be exchanged for the same effect.

The order of events changed as the ministry progressed, in the early weeks until now, Jesus had healed first to establish his authority, then he preached. Now, his

reputation alone would bring large crowds and now he would preach first then heal. He would select a location to speak based on the return report of the pair of disciples he sent ahead. If the town had a large public area, he would often preach there. The area around the village well was often large to allow herds to water, market areas worked, and fishing villages had pier areas.

Arbela was located within a few miles of several other villages, and Jesus expected a large crowd. He intended to speak from a ridge outside of town, and that is where he assembled the people. The prophet sat down on the ridge top, and the disciples had the people sit on the down slope. It was a good day to speak, the absence of a breeze allowed the speaker's words to carry far. Jesus rose and addressed the people who were some two thousand in number.

"Friends...thank you for hearing me today," Jesus spoke slowly, loudly and clearly.

"The Messiah is now among you, and invites you to enter into the kingdom of Heaven...now. It is for this fulfillment that the Law of Moses has guided Israel for centuries. During these centuries the prophets spoke of the Messiah, and now in your presence these prophecies are fulfilled."

The crowd murmured, Jesus waited then continued speaking, "The Law is your guide, but it cannot be your fulfillment. Your fulfillment is the resurrection spoken of by the prophets, and spoken of today by the temple Pharisees. Those who keep the Law will be those who share in the resurrection. I am the resurrection and the life."¹

"I do not ask that you cast off the Law, but rather bind yourself to the Son of Heaven, that you may share in his eternal life. The Father of Heaven and the Son of Heaven are One."

"Bind yourself to your Father in Heaven in every possible way. Live justly and expect your daily bread from the God of Israel. Your God is not like a stingy paymaster, but gives with joy and from a love that seeks to burst from his heart, but is so often rejected."

¹ The idea of the resurrection of the body was given by the prophets and accepted by most Jews, but this idea was not without opposition. The Sadducees who were often temple priests, incredibly did not acknowledge an afterlife of either body or soul. The Pharisees acknowledged both a bodily resurrection and a spiritual afterlife; this and other matters frequently put the two groups at odds.

“Bind yourself to hope. Hope is your spirit planning for the good things of God.”

“Bind yourself to the spirit of poverty. Numbers have no meaning, own what you require for your pilgrimage in this life, and for your particular calling. To be poor in spirit is to be rich in the graces of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit cannot dwell in those parts of the soul which are already occupied by the trinkets of this life.”

“Bind yourself to purity of thought, uncontaminated with envy, anger and unchaste desires. You will progress in this only as you persevere in its practice.”

“Bind yourself to the Father’s Son, who is the Messiah now among you.”

“Bind yourself to the virtue of humility. Humility frees one from self. You too will be Messiah, but only if you renounce self.”

The people were buzzing and moving, some closer, others were leaving. Jesus continued.

“Flee from the worries of the world. You are a pilgrim on earth, striding toward your homeland. Do not invest your efforts in that which will pass away.”

“Flee from honors, and if they find you remain detached and do not bind yourselves to the honor of this world. Rather seek the approval of your Father in Heaven. Be his son or daughter in whom he is will pleased.”

“Flee from sin. Do not let it even take hold in your imagination, for it will want to proceed to your acts. Adulterers, drunkards, thieves and the impious, will not inherit the kingdom of God.” ²

“Flee from self indulgence. Your soul is to find rest in your God alone. To allow it to rest in luxury prevents it from advancing to God.”

“Become masters of life, by mastering both vice and virtue. Do not give your lesser nature the least allowance. Yes, I say your lesser nature, everyone born of woman must take on his share of the sin of Adam. One who denies this can never progress in its conquest. Think more often of your life to come and your place in it, which will be according to your virtue and faith. Do not think the priests and the solitaries of the desert

² When Jesus says that a certain action or disposition will prevent entry into Heaven, there are two specific possibilities for this denial of entry. The first is a person being detained in Purgatory until free of the selfishness preventing union with God. The second possibility is condemnation. St. Paul would later speak of purgation of imperfection as necessary before entry into Heaven.

will gain advantage from their office, they too will be judged only on their resemblance to God their Father.”

“Strive also to be a master of virtue, and not its slave. You have seen slaves of virtue, they are like storm tossed fishing boats that flounder when the seas turn against them. Do not be one who is happy to be fed virtues of health and success but when these are gone, have little strength of soul to sustain one’s faith.”

“These good people have excessively invested in what is bound to one day fail — love of man or woman, health, riches, status and honor. If these do not fail you in this life, they will not follow you into the next. Why then spend undue effort on them? Your life in Heaven will consist entirely of the Messiah himself. You will enter into Heaven when you yourself become Messiah.”

The crowd rumbled and murmured, some shouted. Jesus continued, “You have seen the physicians carve away living flesh from a living person. What then happens to the flesh? It dies because it is no longer part of the body. So must you remain one, with the living one who is called Messiah, and is here now.”

“Before you are set both Heaven and Hell, indeed within your very soul is both good and evil, no one can escape this, but all are called to conquer it.”

“Think of a pleasant day in which all goes well, in which the day unfolds as it should, there is no conflict with those who sell to you, no complaints from those who buy from you, your relatives and children know their place and duties; there are no obstacles of weather, taxes, or illness. This is a small sampling of Heaven, obtained by those who live justly.”

“Now recall a bad day in which everything is in opposition to you, from the time you rise until the time you sleep. You are yelled at, thieved upon, assailed by creditors and in-laws, you are cold and wet and have no wood for a fire and no oil for a lamp. The door breaks off, the roof falls in. Such is a mild sampling of the disorder of Hell, and each new day will be more of the previous.”

“Do not be crushed by your failures, you may not rise unless you first fall. It is good that you see the limitations of success, health, and honor. Your faith and virtue alone will accompany you after this life.”

“The commandments given to Moses? Yes, they are in order of importance. Loyalty and reverence to God is of primary concern. Seek first the kingdom of God, then all else will be freely given. Estrangement from God has put the world in its current predicament, and reunion with God and his virtues will reform evil in the world.”

“Be mindful of your thoughts, both those that you deliberately will and those that wander into your attention. These thoughts are real actions; consider that the angels could make virtue or sin only in thought. I tell you that on the day of judgment, every thought, act and word will be accounted for. It and its owner will find themselves in a place appropriate to these things. Before your judgment, be certain that all your lesser thoughts and actions be given to the Messiah, he will restore them as virtue and you will retain ownership. On the day of judgment your false thoughts and words will have new existence as the very virtues of the Messiah.”

“The Messiah is virtue made from vice. Yes, the Messiah wants all of you, both your success and failure. He will make a glorious kingdom from all that is given to him. Retain nothing for yourself. In a spirit of faith and resolve, give the Messiah even your failings.”

“Give to the Messiah all of your good thoughts and acts, especially those that are hard won. In doing so, you will be acting as Messiah. The Messiah is love in the face of hate, hope in response to hardship, and virtue made from vice. The Messiah will use all this to enlarge the kingdom of God, who is the Messiah himself.”

“Be certain to rely on your God, and not on yourself for all things, the food you need, your cloak and your coat, and the joys and trials that you require for holiness. Your dependence on his providence is not a burden for him, but a blessing for you and your God. In your reliance, you are binding yourself closely to him. Do not think that prayer or holy effort are the only ways one shares in the life of God. Become as an infant in your trust of the God of providence, and not an island of self supply. Those who remain self will not become Messiah.”

“I tell you whoever does not hate father and mother, wife and husband, and even his own life and self, cannot enter into the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is like a reptile that sheds his old self for a new one, or one fish that eats another, so that single one may result.”

“When you triumph in faith and hope, it is not you alone who benefits, these are used also as powerful means of redemption for others. In the new kingdom, the children of light will rule cities and peoples. It will be justice that each citizen rule over those he admits to the kingdom. The most able King of Love will rule over all, and his rule will be absolute. Rule will no longer be rebelled against as it is now, rather this rule of love will be sought after. The children of God will seek his rule as an infant seeks the rule of his mother.”

“If you do achieve the One of God, but your own spouse, or child, or mother, or father remains two; I tell you, do not abandon such a person, because the unbeliever is made holy by the faith of the other. By covenant, those who have concern for the interests of their God, will obtain his efforts in their own interests.”

“Do not worry about what tomorrow will bring. Live only each moment, and not in worry or hoarding. The purpose of your life is not to accomplish the tasks of each day, but to grow in faith and in virtue each day. The trials of each day are as a dull rock that contains streaks of gold when turned on its back. So too is every trial of your day. The wealth that may be obtained by triumph over trial could not be contained within the very Temple of Jerusalem.”

“You are a pilgrim, away from your homeland. Do not seek to remain in exile, rather make great strides toward your God who is your Father in Heaven. Others will do as they do. For you, rejoice now that the Messiah is among you and become Messiah yourself.”

“Many choose the burdensome yoke of status and worry. Many choose the heavy burden of attainment and success. In your pilgrimage, choose the light load and the gentle yoke. Do not burden yourself unnecessarily. Your home is in Heaven where so much of what is held in esteem on earth will appear as foolishness when set next to true wealth.”

Jesus spoke for nearly an hour, and of many things. He detailed the challenges of life in Israel, and of the profitable response. He spoke of obedience to the Law of Moses, and of its expansion and fulfillment. He spoke of his gratitude for the people and their efforts, and for their turnout today.

Marcus Curtius Blaesus had heard Jesus once before.³ He was a counselor for Quintus Flavius Celsus, who was the governor-mayor of Caesarea and second in command after the Prefect Pontius Pilate. Marcus was tasked with observing and reporting on the activities of the new prophet, who had practical control over a large following.

It was very much a secondary concern, but since the prophet seemed to speak in riddles, it was thought that Marcus might make sense of it. Marcus was well versed in the natural and philosophical sciences and often acted as an emissary to the Jews in Caesarea.

Marcus was impressed with the man. He had a magnificent presence that was understated by his humility and kindness. It was Marcus' observation that most influential people sought to arrange circumstances for the benefit of their own goals, but this Jesus was imploring the crowd to advance themselves.

The sermon had concluded and the prophet was speaking with people as he wandered through the crowd, and was now the length of two men from Marcus. A woman imposed her child onto Jesus begging, "Great prophet, have pity on my child, he was born blind and deaf...I will do anything you say, but please heal my son."

The woman thrust her child into the chest of Jesus, who grasped the child as he slid off. The woman then fell to her knees at the feet of the prophet. The child's face was terribly deformed, with no eyes or nose, he breathed with great effort through his mouth. Jesus viewed the child and wept.

Jesus composed himself and spoke, "Woman will you give me your only child to be my own."

The woman could not speak, but she moved her head in her hands, and against the feet of Jesus to signify her affirmation.

Jesus spoke to the infant, "If you are to be my own flesh and blood, then you must be as I am." Jesus then looked at the crowd and said, "All of you must be as I AM."

³ Roman names generally consisted of three parts, praenomen (given name), nomen (clan or tribe name), cognomen (family name); in that order. The name Pontius Pilate uses only the nomen and cognomen. In this same paragraph the title "Prefect" is used. "Procurator" was first used in Judaea soon after the rule of Pilate. A Prefect is a civilian ruler, a Procurator is a military governor.

Every Jew knew the implication of this, and all except the speaker and his disciples began to murmur and protest, or stand perplexed. The prophet began to trace out human features on the face of the unfortunate infant. Jesus pressed hard with the fingers and palm of his right hand. He moved and mounded the flesh into a brow ridge, eye sockets, and a nose. The features flowed into place and proportion under his hand movements. In two minutes a face had been formed. Jesus pulled open the eyelids, and the baby gurgled with happiness.

The people fell to their knees including Marcus, who just did not know what else to do. Jesus hoisted the child like a new father and showed off his new son. He asked the mother, "What is his name?" The woman replied that she had not given him a name.

Jesus said, "His name shall be Zerah, after my own son."

The crowd applauded with clapping and hooting. The only person showing any anxiety was the mother of the child, who looked longingly at her former son.

Jesus said to her, "Woman, I make you steward of my son." and handed her the child.

Jesus, his men and women, and many of the crowd then walked toward the edge of the village. It would be difficult now to speak to the crowd, and the good fortune of healing the boy should be followed by celebration. Jesus had general plans to get to the edge of the village to shake off the crowd and regroup, make plans and rest. Depending on what was decided, he would move on or perhaps return to the village later to give more instruction.

The light skinned foreigner Marcus was still two or three lengths away from Jesus, alone and conspicuous as the crowd thinned. Jesus called to him, "Good sir, speak with me." In other circumstances, a peasant would not call to a Roman or Jewish upper class man and suggest that they speak. However, Jesus had a sort of moral authority by which he spoke to anyone as an equal, and miracle working gave the prophet large license.

Marcus approached and said, "Peace be with you Rabbi," which was unusual and impressive for a Roman.

Jesus replied, "And with your spirit. What brings you here my friend?"

“I came to hear you speak, I have heard that you are the new prophet.” spoke Marcus.

Jesus said, “I am Jesus from Galilee, and who are you sir?”

Marcus replied, “My name is Marcus Curtius Blaesus, I am counselor for the governor-mayor of Caesarea, who is Quintus Flavius Celsus. I am called simply Marcus.”

Quintus Flavius wore several hats, in addition to being mayor, he was executive officer to Pilate and had cultivated an intelligence network in Judaea and Galilee. He had sent Marcus to the area on several items of business, one of which was observation of the new “prophet”. Jesus was in Galilee, and not under the jurisdiction of Pilate, but that was a technicality that could be observed or not, as Pilate wished.

Marcus was to present the best manners of Rome, and let the prophet know that the Roman prefect Pontius Pilate took interest in his words and actions. Pilate also had other spies — Jewish spies who were not easy to discern from the crowd.

Marcus was to cultivate a relationship with Jesus, and use it to inform, influence or warn him as needed by the Roman authority. Marcus was the perfect one to do this, he had extensive knowledge of philosophy, the sciences, rhetoric, and had studied Judaism in the four years that he had been in Judaea. Marcus was to question Jesus as to his theology and motives under the story that Caesar wanted to compile a survey of the religions of the empire. Rome wanted to know of course if this new “prophet” was building an army of revolt.

With Marcus, was his assistant Philip Alexander. Philip was a Greek scholar and a former lukewarm Pagan priest. Finding little meaning or future in the gods, he had been increasingly attracted to Judaism and the Jewish community in Alexandria. He found work in places where Jewish interests intersected with Greek or Roman activity.

Marcus was prepared for any circumstance, except what had happened to the infant — the miracle, the illusion, the act, or whatever it was. He questioned Jesus about what had happened, “Rabbi, what exactly occurred with the infant? You appeared to heal him, but that would be impossible.”

Jesus replied, “No man could mold flesh anew, there must be some other explanation.”

Marcus said coolly, “Yes Rabbi, that was my comment also...”

Jesus said, “So it was,” and then proceeding to a new topic said, “Tell me Marcus, do you acknowledge the gods?”

Marcus told Jesus that the gods were inventions, useful in cultivating morality, and hope in a better life to come, this hope was what kept people in check instead of in revolt. He thought that the priests found the gods useful in taxing the people, securing their own authority and justifying oppression and abuse.

Jesus seemed to offer no disagreement to this thesis and said, “Continue Marcus.”

Marcus summarized his own feelings on the matter, saying that with all this being true, he was of the opinion that it was not the gods who created man, but man who created the gods, and not honest men but dishonest men looking for another way to rob the people.

Jesus smiled, nodded his head and said, “Consider now the true God, the one God, the God of goodness who abhors the abuses you observe, the God of Israel who now seeks his children who are scattered throughout the entire world.”

Marcus was not fond of being preached to, but he was tasked with understanding the theology of this man who exerted a large, growing, and so far benign influence. Marcus conceded, “Yes rabbi, your one God of Israel does speak of justice, and the people are exceptional in their virtue.”

Jesus continued, “Marcus, prove the one God to yourself. Does anything have absolute existence?”

Marcus replied, “That cannot be known.”

Jesus said, “It is known my friend. Consider that existence cannot be drawn from nothing. There would simply be no thing to bring anything else into existence. If anything exists, it must be either absolute existence or a creation by absolute existence.”

Jesus paused to let what he had said register then continued, “Now, all that exists unconditionally is God. All that is not God, has to have its origin in God, because there is just no other source.”

Again Jesus paused briefly then said, “Either way Marcus, God exists.”

Marcus accepted the proof for the moment. Jesus continued, “As to the one God, consider first the many gods of Rome. If these deities were really God, then the gods would in fact be a single God. All that is absolute and uncreated is God. Every idea and every virtue internal to God is an aspect of the one God.”

Marcus was not offended that Jesus would find fault in the gods, he gave it no thought and said, “Rabbi, it seems that we are agreeing God to be the principles of logic and mathematics which all the world may be reduced to; a God to be learned of, but not one that is capable of being worshiped.”

Jesus replied, “God is indeed logic and the laws of nature, and even more. You say, all that exists has its origin in nature, but recall that it was just shown that nature and all of creation has its origin in God. Your mathematics is indeed an attribute of God, and so are all legitimate elements of our world...including awareness, free will, and intellect. Is this true Marcus?”

Marcus nodded tentatively.

Jesus then continued, “If all these noble traits of man have their ultimate origin in God...and they do, then God is necessarily an aware, intelligent, being of free will. God is not an unaware force of nature, and better still, this God desires your friendship.” ⁴

Marcus was silent. The new prophet had his respect. He was supposed to be probing the man’s political philosophy, especially toward the Romans, but Marcus was digesting this lesson instead and finally offered a few words saying, “You speak well Rabbi.”

Marcus continued, “Rabbi, the Governor Pontius Pilate wishes that you retain my assistant Philip Alexander as your own assistant. He will help you in civil matters. Palestine is a patchwork of peoples, all of whom are subject to Roman administration, but are sometimes slow to accept it. Your escort Philip Alexander has the authority of the governor and he will see that you travel unimpeded.”

To a more cynical man it would have occurred that the new Philip was offered as a permanent spy. Jesus simply welcomed the new man who had been inserted into his group of disciples. Jesus then spoke to the remaining people as they approached him. Many of the villagers offered their own home for the prophet’s use. Jesus politely declined, saying that they were too many in number to burden a single household, but

⁴ To prove to others that God is intelligent and eternal being can be done, because there is empirical and logical evidence which is accepted even by atheists. Such evidence is not available in proving Jesus is God made man. Jesus Christ must be proven to oneself, by oneself; and many have done so. As faith (participation in God) increases, obstacles to Christ are surmounted, and inclusion of Christ into one’s life becomes more likely.

they would gratefully accept a meal to return to camp with. The disciples collected a meal at several homes of the villagers, and at their discretion offered a coin in exchange, but the villagers refused the money.

By sundown, the pilgrims had fire, food, water and even wine. Marcus was invited to stay for the evening meal, and did so. The meal was bread, cheese, olives, mutton and wine. Jesus asked Mathias to give the blessing. The group remained sitting, but came to silent attention, looking at the prayer leader who said the traditional words, “Blessed are you Lord our God, who brings forth bread from the earth.”

Because the mutton would take some time to cook, the men began to slowly eat the bread and the other food. Two women were traveling with the band; Suzanna and Judith as usual were doing a disproportionate amount of the work, but they were happy to do it. Their duties included preparing the meals, and seeing to any new women members or guests. The pilgrims would leave the water flasks at the well the next morning, where they would be collected by their owners.

New disciples now joined the group daily, or rather followed the group of Jesus. Jesus invited thousands to faith and virtue, but he rarely extended an invitation for a person to travel with his immediate group of disciples. Logistics was the reason. A hundred pilgrims was more than the population of half the villages they visited. In tow were people of every description — spectators, spy Pharisees, disciples of all sorts, outcasts, water sellers, local children seeking sport. Anyone who for whatever reason thought it would be satisfying to follow the prophet for a day or a week could be found. These formed a second group, the proximate group consisted of permanent disciples.

The Messiah mission was growing, but into exactly what, Jesus was not sure. It was not Jesus who was indecisive but the High Priest, the Sanhedrin and the temple. Perhaps he should have returned at once to Kidron house when it was revealed to him that he was Messiah...Abida would have understood. The temple?...No. But this was to presume failure, and he had no reason to make such a presumption.

Jesus had sent a pair of disciples ahead of him to Capernaum to announce that he would speak at the second hour at the boat piers. It was the habit of Jesus to teach in the

morning if possible, then visit the people in their fields, shops, and homes for the remainder of the day.

Jesus' sermons mostly covered the same subject matter, as most people were hearing it for the first time. Major topics presented were: the Law of Moses as a means to a larger end, individual destiny according to virtue or vice, the cause and the reformation of evil, spiritual advancement by denial of self allowing the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, faith as a sharing in God, Roman occupation and God's allowance of it, constructive versus destructive suffering, The Messiah and his presence now in Israel, and God's larger plan to include all peoples. Parables, similes, rhetorical exaggeration, questioning, and props were all used to construct a dramatic oration.

Jesus had been speaking for about three quarters of an hour, and many Pharisees and rabbis were in attendance. Capernaum was the Jerusalem of Galilee, its large synagogue had an impressive staff and it was the spiritual center for Jews in the north.

The opposing principles of "an eye for an eye", and "mercy in place of justice", were both current theology. In practice, mercy was usually doled out as surplus, after justice had been completely satisfied. Jesus was of the belief that this offered little in the way of mercy, and was far less profitable, both for an individual and for his society. He spoke on this for the last portion of his sermon.

"It is more profitable to mediate injustice into virtue, than to protest. In the first case, the injustice will be brought to reform as surely as iron must yield to the hammer of the smith. Know that if you do not see the desired result it is because the virtue produced has been applied as remedy to even more important matters, namely the salvation of souls. Do not be scandalized if I say that your suffering at the hands of the Romans will result in their own salvation."

"In the second case, a petition may or may not obtain justice. Therefore, always seek the greater profit and do not return evil for evil. When a loan merchant seizes your goats, do not curse him, rather bless him. If your Father above does not at once replace the goats, he will credit your account to the full with gold, and then start a second account. When a soldier strikes you, do not strike back, do not even shield your face, rather remain still in spirit and call God's mercy down upon him. In doing so, you will be thought a coward on earth, but a hero in Heaven."

Jesus continued, “The world may be likened to an island kingdom, in that nothing may enter the kingdom or leave it. All that happens in the kingdom must in some manner be effected within the kingdom. Again, if a chariot has a wheel out of round, it does no real good to place it instead on an oxcart, then the oxcart cannot give service, the wheel must be repaired in the final accounting. Again, if festive meat becomes poisoned it cannot be made good by giving it instead to the hunting dogs. It is unavoidable that it must be washed and salted to repair the poison.”

“Therefore do not be content to transfer evil by returning a harsh word or deed. The sons of David must be like that noble king, giving without counting the cost, and not like the tax collectors who rarely give and then only as seed to produce more money.”

“Every act will be revealed before the court of Heaven. For those still bound to their sins, it will be revealed as such. Those offering their failings to the Son of Man, will find their former sins, now existing as love, virtue and union within the Son of Man. Their admission of guilt will be counted as wisdom and not folly; and for those who persevere in advancement of spirit they will glory as sons and daughters of the Almighty. On the day of judgment, people will render an account of every sin and of every careless word they speak. Be certain that your failings then exist as virtue, having been offered to the Messiah for repair.”

“This accounting required may be likened to a certain wise woman. This woman had many children, and also a husband who was very particular. The husband demanded that everything he received be just so. If something, or even someone came before him with a blemish, he would cast them out. Words, images, the very thoughts of all in his household had to conform to his own strict requirements.”

“The children of the wise woman and the particular man often gave articles, gifts, payment, or visits to their father. In every case the wise woman received the articles, words, or visits and in some manner presented them to the particular man herself. For an article given, she would inspect and repair it, for words, she would paraphrase the speech, even during visits, she would say that she invited the guests and that they were part of her own larger family. The particular man knew the truth, but was most pleased with the woman’s actions and the way in which she accounted for those things not proper, and made them correct by her various acts.”

“Therefore I tell you again, appeal to the Son of Man, that your misdeeds and careless words, may exist as the love exerted in forgiveness. The Messiah will be mercy itself. The Messiah is now among his people, and will dispense mercy to them. Even those who have fullness of virtue must pass through the heart of the Messiah before attaining Heaven. If these have no mercy in their spirit, how then may they accept mercy which will be so foreign to them.”

Jesus thanked the people for making the effort to turn out to hear him. He also announced that he would offer blessings upon those who were ill or in need of any sort. After three hours of healing and counseling, the prophet offering a mass blessing to the remaining people, and moved into the town to conduct further teaching.

Jude Thaddeus Abnego was born in Nubia, in what would one day be considered Sudan. He was of royal lineage, but was more a seeker of truth, than a royal place holder. His mother was a Jew, and except for a few years of agnosticism in his youth, he remained a Jew. He did business out of Alexandria as a trader of commodities, much of it Nile wheat bound for Rome and Greece.

Thaddeus had stopped in Capernaum as he traveled to Damascus. He had agreed to act as agent to purchase caravan wares coming from the east. He was waiting on a north bound caravan to Damascus, hoping to join it for safety on his own trip north. He had heard of the new prophet and turned out today to see and hear him.

Thaddeus was part of the crowd that encircled Jesus, but was removed from the prophet by a depth of ten people. Thaddeus had at least a day to wait and was patiently immobilized, and not pushing others to see Jesus.

Jesus was now within view...and now within reach...Jesus was now facing him. Jesus was being jostled and swamped like a boat in a storm. He reached out and grasped Thaddeus Abnego and shouted, “Thaddeus, you will now act as my agent of purchase! I desire that you acquire souls for me! I will supply the exchange, and you will seek those for purchase! I offer you wages many times better than what you now earn! Come now, and we will talk of it!” Thaddeus had grabbed the sleeve of Jesus’ tunic and was being dragged with him.

Jesus was now on the market street in Capernaum, and was being crushed by the crowd that was leveling even the market stalls. The disciples formed a semicircle around him and pushed him into a narrow walkway between two buildings. The crowd could not

follow, and the company of Jesus exited behind the buildings. The disciples acknowledged their new member Thaddeus, and everyone walked quickly away from the crowd that was starting to filter through. Jesus wrapped his head in a shawl and the men staged a delaying action stopping any pursuers, thus allowing Jesus to put distance between himself and the crowd, which had nearly caused harm. If a disciple became separated, he was to meet the main group at the synagogue at sundown.

The next day saw Jesus again preaching to a multitude near Capernaum. When he had concluded it was near sundown and he sent the disciples to the other side of the lake by boat, while he stayed behind. The wind was against the boat so the disciples could not set sail, and made slow progress with the two oars they operated. At the midpoint of their crossing the wind became a storm that tossed the boat and turned it in every direction. The disciples battled the storm, rowing and trying to reach the other side of the lake, but during the third watch of the night they decided to return to Capernaum, and hoisted a small amount of sail in the strong wind. Shortly after setting sail they saw a man walking toward them on the water! Some thought it was a piece of sail cloth that had ripped away, but it soon became apparent that it was indeed the form of a man.

Peter called out to it, "What ghost are you?"

The figure answered, "It is I, have no fear."

All exclaimed, "It's the master!"

Peter exclaimed, "If it is you Lord, command me to come to you on the water!"

Jesus said, "Come to me."

Peter stepped out of the boat and onto the water and began to walk to Jesus. A strong wind hit him and he began to fear and sink into the lake, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus stretched out his arm and lifted Peter back into the boat. After this they instantly arrived at the shore on the eastern side of the lake, and everybody was afraid to ask Jesus any questions concerning this.⁵

⁵ Miracles involving "impossible" events of time, physics and logic are recorded in the life of Jesus, the prophets and the saints. It appears that each entity created by Christ exists in a partial parallel universe. It acts according to the physical and logical laws of its semi-independent universe. We observe and interact with many of these individual universes.

The Eucharistic miracle of Lanciano, is one in which the host became five pieces of human flesh, any combination of them always equaled the weight of any other single piece. This system of physical laws is different from our own parallel system of logic and physics, where the five pieces will outweigh a single piece. Other examples are (physical) angels moving instantaneously, rather than requiring time, as our own parallel

Jesus walked further and saw a group of women at a well, drawing water and talking. He went alone to speak to them. Approaching he said, “Blessings upon you and your households, daughters of Israel.”

The women replied respectfully and asked him if he was the prophet from Nazareth. Jesus said that he was, and asked if there was anything he could do for them.

One of the women replied, “Tell us sir, does God accept our prayers as well as those of the holy men. The desert solitaries and the Essenes have no burdens of family to attend to and often advance in holiness, performing great fasting and lengthy prayer, but our days are consumed by our tasks.”

Jesus replied, “The greatest merit consists in being in the midst of the world and yet holding the world under one’s feet, serving God in the state of life to which it has pleased him to call you. Remember, it is far more meritorious to renounce one’s own will and submit to the will of God, than to perform the greatest bodily mortifications. You must not in the future use language such as ‘I want this; this is pleasant, but this other is not’. Do what you do not wish to do, leave undone what you wish to do. One such act is much more beneficial than an entire year of penances. The soul that suffers patiently tribulations from people is greater than that of a penitent.”⁶

“It is true that a desert solitary may be at prayer three hours before dawn, but the holy woman who is awake three hours before dawn attending to her sick child shows a love no less great. The fasting of the solitaries is useful to the degree that it unites them to the God of Israel. It has no merit beyond that, nor does any effort have value other than in such union. To remain, and even excel within the will of Father has much more value than depriving one’s self of food or sleep. To remain fully within the will of the Father in all circumstances is to fully unite with the will of the Father. Fasting and the

system requires. The science of relativity shows that time is individual to every system in parallel. Theologically it allows God to concentrate on each individual as if he or she were his sole concern.

Theology textbooks often say that God cannot do the logically impossible such as creating a single ended stick. God could easily create a single ended stick, he would simply create a parallel universe with the needed physical laws. The miracle of Lanciano shows that what is logically impossible in our own system may indeed become reality in its own appropriate parallel universe.

⁶ This paragraph recounts the words of Christ to Blessed Anna Maria Taigi, an eighteenth century Roman wife and mother of eight. She advanced in soul as she conquered the numerous daily trials brought on by her coarse husband and large family. She was given miraculous graces of healing, and her gifts of prophecy and miraculous knowledge are unsurpassed. Her instructive biography is still in print, “Wife, Mother, and Mystic”.

like *are* important means, but only a means to strengthen the spirit for the battles of the will.”

“To those who have children who have rejected virtue and faith, I ask you, to what children should these disorders be given; to children without parents to offer prayer and hope for them? These wounds are given to children having parents of faith. It is for you to make prayer and virtue on their behalf, and bring them to the attainment of salvation.”

“The life of a wife is one of obedience, not rule. Blessed are you because the virtues of obedience and humility are the highest in Heaven, they are of such magnitude that the downfall and the redemption of mankind hinge upon them. Lawful obedience anywhere brings justice and peace everywhere. Judge therefore, the importance of your lives. Those who rule first and obey last will find in Heaven the last to be first and the first last.”

“Amen, I tell you that no title or office, even that of priest or prophet will be great in itself. At judgment only one’s virtue and faith will be used in assigning one’s place in the new kingdom. Those finding no glory in this life are not at a disadvantage.”

The women were stunned by this man who valued them and their work as wives and mothers.

The travels of the pilgrims were never dull. The prophet always answered pleas for help and healing; when he was not engaged in these tasks he was teaching crowds or the disciples. A prophet was given to Israel once a century and the disciples were being groomed to be prophets themselves.

The group continued south from Hippos, and around the southern tip of the lake, then north toward Tiberias. Tiberias had replaced Sepporis as the capitol city of Galilee, and was home to its tetrarch-king Herod Antipas, but many Jews would not even enter the city. Tiberias had been built over a Jewish cemetery and was therefore defiled, and anyone entering it was likewise defiled. Jesus intended to speak north of the city, halfway to Magdala. The two cities were five miles apart, and people from both cities would be able to turn out.

South of Magdala the pilgrims came upon a woman lying face down. People entering and leaving the town must have seen her, she was not far off the road. Jesus

ordered the disciples to see if she needed help. They returned and told the master that the woman was a leper.

Jesus asked, “But does she need help?”

It was perhaps a strange question. The answer the disciples were devising become more academic as Jesus walked to the woman. Andrew yelled “Yes,” as Jesus bent down to speak to the woman, who was crying with her face pressed into the dust.

The woman sobbed, “unclean!, unclean!” in broken speech.

Jesus stood, and continued observing her as he gave thought to what was to be done.

The disciples stood near, not wanting to appear cowardly, if the master thought it proper to touch a leper. Jesus said, “Hold her! Remove her wrappings.”

Two men held the woman, and one of the female disciples removed the ragged cloth that covered her face.

Jesus gathered a small handful of earth and said, “Nothing unclean shall enter the kingdom of God.”

Jesus spit on the face of the leper. He then stroked the dust into the spittle and smoothed it over the woman’s face. The woman screamed, but was unharmed. Jesus continued smoothing the mud, the woman stopped struggling and accepted her fate. The mud was now covering her face and neck, and in a quantity that could not have come from what Jesus had started with.

The mud on her face was drying at the thinnest layers and Jesus had worked his way to her hands. Upon finishing he commanded, “Rinse her with water.”

The disciples did so. The woman was no longer leprous. She was beautiful, about the same age as the master, with auburn hair, large eyes and full features. Jesus removed her shredded outer tunic, replaced it with his own and said, “Seven devils have left you. You have fought as a heroine for many years, now advance to your victory.”⁷

Mary heard some of what the man said, and understood none of it. Jesus smiled broadly and said to the women, “See to our guest.”

⁷ The Gospel records devils as a cause of illness. In Luke 13:10-16, Jesus attributes a crippling illness to the Devil. In Luke 11:14 Jesus drives out a demon causing muteness. Other examples are the many instances of demons protesting as they are removed by Jesus as he heals illness (Luke 4:40-41). Here Mary is freed of seven demons causing leprosy, (Lk 8:2). Regarding, “...advance to your victory.”; Mary’s faithful suffering is likened to that of Job and it is rewarded. Illness is no obstacle to holiness, but Jesus desires that Mary be cured. Mary is required by the Law of Moses to shout “unclean” to anyone approaching.

The newest disciple told her name, Mary from Magdala. The women told Jesus that they had used all their water to clean Mary and they needed more, and suggested that water might be obtained from the nearby lake or in Magdala. Jesus opted to enter Magdala.

In Magdala, some women approached Mary, astonished that she was no longer a leper. They seemed to have known her from years ago, before she was afflicted. Mary now knew whom it was that she traveled with, and told all who would listen about the new prophet who had cured her. Jesus sent Peter to ask Mary to refrain from speaking of him. She was able stop for a short while, but was soon spouting her story again.

The story of Mary's healing brought out much of the town, and the pilgrims were again being encircled and crushed. Unable to charitably make any headway through the dense crowd, the pilgrims' movements ground to a halt. Jesus shouted to the pulsing ring of disciples to enter the courtyard that was to their right. They entered and Jesus continued to heal in this more controllable area.

As the healing continued the crowd grew, and the courtyard became inaccessible for the ingress of new patients. Three men, one on a stretcher made their way to the roofs of the buildings forming the perimeter of the courtyard, and lowered their paralyzed friend by a rope. Andrew and Peter had seen even more extreme means used to gain access to the master. They thought that an audience with the healer had been earned by the trespassers, and took hold of the stretcher and the man tied to it and set him before the prophet. The man had little movement other than his head, but with effort spoke clearly, "Have mercy on me great prophet and heal me."

Jesus placed his hand on the man and said, "Your sins are forgiven."

The crowd audibly inhaled and then murmured, and a priest near Jesus said, "God alone can forgive sin, and the priests of the temple are God's instruments in doing so."

Jesus rebuked the priest saying, "There are other workers in the field of God also, and their efforts cannot be disregarded. Which is easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk.'"⁸

⁸ From Mt 9:1-8, "Which is easier...", here Jesus speaks of the natures of religious and practical forgiveness. The forgiveness offered by the temple priests is not challenged, but Jesus notes that this sacramental declaration of forgiveness must have its roots in practical forgiveness. Forgiveness is more

Jesus continued, “You priests do well in acting as an instrument of God’s forgiveness, but consider the nature of forgiveness. Forgiveness is more than a log erasure in the court of Heaven, forgiveness is more than merely a matter of record, it is real reform of the offending spirits of disorder. Sin exists as disorder of the body, mind, and soul; and of the entire world. It corrupts love between persons and nations, and corrupts the perfect design of the body and soul of man. This is what we observe in the man before us.”

“As for the sin that cripples him, I intend to reshape it into straight and strong limbs, and I do so now.” Jesus turned his attention to the man lying before him and said, ‘Rise and walk, your sins are forgiven.’”

The man slowly straightened his limbs and arched his back. He rose on his own, repelling attempts to help him.

Jesus continued, “Do not think that such forgiveness — such reform — is made only on a cross of sacrifice, it is not. Reformation of the world may be made at all times, by all who aspire to become Messiah.”

In the courtyard were priests, rabbis, scribes, Pharisees and others who adhered to the Law of Moses, and to its strict and exclusive interpretation. These men protested in unison, and Jesus was unable to discern the words. He spoke nevertheless saying, “Scribes and Pharisees, do not despise those who reform disorder by their acts of holiness, rather you should do the same. I say to you, the new priesthood will be one of all disciples. Those of me who bear the cross in whatever form Heaven decrees are both priest and sacrifice. I say therefore that in the New Covenant the sacrifice will not be of lesser stature than the one offering the sacrifice.”

than just a log erasure in Heaven; sin exists within the closed system of creation, and is real and cannot just be *written* off. Forgiveness is real reform of the spirits of disorder, (anger made love, greed made moderation, lust made chastity, etc.). Jesus notes that practical reform of sin is the more difficult task which ends in sacramental forgiveness.

The priests and Pharisees object to a non-priest, non-Pharisee offering forgiveness. In a sacramental religious system, sacramental forgiveness is the task of an ordained priest, but the distribution of such forgiveness would not be possible if it were not first practically provided by the common priesthood of the faithful, (1Pet 2:9). All who constitute Christ (the body of Christ) - Jesus, priests, laypersons – constitute the common priesthood and may provide such practical forgiveness of sin by their acts of faith and virtue. Just as sin must have its effect, so too must practical spiritual reform have a real effect, even in the absence of a sacrament.

In the early Church the assembly of the faithful were encouraged to make such acts, and offer them to the priest who in turn offered them to Christ for the forgiveness of sin.

The debate was not settled to the satisfaction of either party, but Jesus outlasted those protesting his words. Jesus healed many that day, then spoke outside of Magdala for two days following.

The pilgrims left from Magdala and traveled by boat across the lake in Galilee, north toward Bethsaida. John noted that this was a shrewd tactic for a holy man. This was not the first time Jesus had shaken off the camp followers in some manner. His most frequent method was to leave camp before sunrise, leaving instructions to the disciples to meet him in some village on their itinerary. He would sometimes take one or two disciples, and leave behind a hundred or more camp followers.

Jesus was likely to take such action when the numbers of followers exceeded the population of the villages ahead. In the early days food seemed to be miraculously available as needed, but sometimes reality had its way and people missed meals. On more than one occasion Jesus had the disciples distribute a few loaves of bread, which incredibly fed thousands!

During one such miraculous mass meal Matthew tried to observe the details by keeping his eyes glued to his hand as he handed out loaves. He was careful to pick up only a single loaf, from a basket containing three loaves. He made a child reach out *to him*, so that he could observe both his hand and the basket. The child took the *upper* loaf, leaving the bottom loaf in Matthew's hand. Perturbed that he had been outfoxed, he took his eyes off the basket. When he looked again the basket was now full, while only an instant before it held three loaves, one of which he had given away.

This game continued for some time. Those approaching him for bread may have thought he looked a bit stingy in hugging both his hand and the basket close to him, and they took loaves from the basket that was now behind him! He simply could not look about fast enough, and many people who did receive strictly one loaf from him, found that they now had two, or three loaves. The crowd was having great fun in passing out the never ending loaves of bread. The women gave in a more generous manner, and insisted that any leftover food be gathered up and given to families. Joanna suggested that the smallest scraps be left for the birds and rabbits.

Generally the disciples were too afraid to ask the prophet any questions, especially regarding miracles. It was usually Jesus who asked the questions and supplied the answers. Now he spoke of the many healings of the past few days, and their basis in faith — repentance, resolve, prayer, virtue, denial of self will...all allowing union with God, and separation from evil and disorder. The deepening union brought a greater sharing in all God's attributes, including the mastery over matter that was called "miracles".

The disciples were amazed, but Jesus was not and the events were not enough to keep him awake now. He was soon reposed in the rear of the boat, using a rolled blanket as a pillow. The pilgrims were again crossing the lake in Galilee, and sleep had overcome the prophet.

Peter saw a storm in the distance, but it was difficult to judge its intensity and it was nearly upon them before he could estimate its power. Such estimation was of little practical value, violent or not they could not outrun it.

Peter had the men use the two oars in an attempt to keep the vessel heading into the storm, so as to avoid being overturned by the wind and waves hitting the boat from the side. They just could not reliably maintain this heading, and the boat was taking water. All the disciples wanted to awaken Jesus. The sea had been exceedingly rough for some time, but incredibly the master remained asleep. No one could explain it, but none of the disciples had the courage to awaken Jesus.

Jesus was not asleep, but in bilocation.⁹ The bilocation had come over Jesus some time ago, when he fell deeply "asleep". He was making good on his promise to his aunt Ruth, the feline widow near Capernaum. Her time had come, she was near death and she had called out to her saint Jesus. Jesus became aware of this and of the promise

⁹ Bilocation is an event in which a person's body is in two locations at the same time, but is willfully functional only at the distant location. Non willed bodily functions occur at both locations, but only at the distant location (which is the reason for the bilocation), does the person interact normally. This type of bilocation is termed "*bilocation of personality*". Many witnesses have reported the saints in two places at once. St. Martin DePorres was reported in France and Peru on the same day, in a time when sailing the ocean took weeks. Reliable reports have witnesses not just seeing someone else of similar appearance, but speaking and working with the bilocated person, whom they had personal and detailed knowledge of.

Another type of bilocation is "*bilocation of office*". In this event, another member of the body of Christ (an angel typically) will assume the appearance and functionality of the person bilocating. Therese Neumann (1898-1962), would attend physics lectures given by a relative in California via bilocation, while she was at home in Germany. Angels would take her form at the distant location, and she was aware of what was occurring there. This is a rare instance of sensory awareness shared between members of the body of Christ on earth, (Rom 12:5).

he made to her fourteen years ago. He was at a loss as to how he would fulfill his promise, and he called upon the Father for help.

Jesus was transported in body and spirit to the home of Ruth, which was miles away. He remained in body only in the boat, and had completed assisting his aunt when Andrew pulled the blanket from Jesus' head, and shook him awake shouting, "Master we are perishing, save us!"

Jesus came to and surveyed the "crisis", and again showed little emotion, except for being awakened. He directed his speech at Peter, the boat's master and said, "Why do you awaken me, have you no faith?" He then scowled at the storm and rebuked it saying, "Evil One, remove yourself."

The storm ceased at once and there was great calm on the lake. The men were amazed and said, "What sort of man is this, whom even the winds and the water obey?"

Jesus heard them speculating and said, "A man with faith the size of a mustard seed could rebuke this storm. The Evil One is not tightly bound to the storm because the elements of nature have no moral will. Friends, if this occurs again, use your faith and allow me my sleep."

The men made landfall some distance from Bethsaida. At the instructions of Jesus, they beached the boat and walked toward town. The storm was active again, but was not directly over them. Still they were in open country and no shelter was available; there were trees close by which might serve, but these were at risk of lightning strikes. The incoming storm was exhibiting cloud flashes and distant thunder, but Jesus did not appear worried. It might be an opportunity to wash their clothes and scrub themselves down.

The group numbered nine disciples and Jesus. As usual there was an unwarranted lack of suggestion, and everyone marched on awaiting a possible decision by the master. As the first drops hit them Jesus did stop and observe the sky, but not for long and they moved on.

Soon the entire group was laughing, and entirely drenched. The soil was not sandy, which might have served as a scrubbing medium for their tunics, but everyone scrubbed down hair or clothing as they laughed and walked. In the middle of their abandon they were pulled alert by a nearby lighting strike, it was perhaps a half mile away. Washing did not stop, but the abandoned laughing did. Shortly after, they were

advancing through the area of the strike and everyone was examining the field to the west trying to locate where the strike hit. Peter slowed and the entire group did likewise, there was what appeared to be a flock of sheep lying at the base of a tree.

Peter turned to Jesus and spoke urgently, "Master, they have been hit." Peter, Jesus and the rest ran to the tree. The rain had largely ceased and they arrived at the tree to find that it had indeed taken a lightning strike...and casualties. Eleven sheep and two shepherds were on the ground and not moving; the tree had split into two parts, and branches and wood splinters littered the area.

John and Thaddeus had turned over one shepherd, and both pressed their ears to his chest. Andrew and James confirmed that the second was breathing and were setting him against the damaged tree. James had been taught by a physician to raise the head and chest of an injured man, in order that the heart might more easily pump blood to the majority of the body that was below it.

The upright patient had splinters projecting from his face, and one from his eye. The disciples examined the splinter lodged in the man's eye, but they did not want to cause more damage in removing it.

During this lull, James asked, "Master what crime did this man commit that he might be blinded?"

Jesus replied, "James, make no such assumption of evil. First remove the beam from your own eye, that you may see clearly the cause and removal of the splinter in another man's eye. The Messiah himself, who is in no way criminal will suffer the fate of a criminal."

It was just as well that the survivor was unconscious, it allowed the splinter to be removed from his eye. The task was left to finer hands, Suzanna used her nails to extract the splinter, she then removed all the remaining splinters from the man's face and used her shawl to make a head wrapping to protect the eye. Thomas was off searching the area for scattered sheep, at the order of Jesus.

The other shepherd was not breathing and had no discernible heart beat. It was told to the master that the man was dead. The master observed the body carefully and at length said, "He will remain so. You may pray Qaddish if you wish." No one knew the disposition of the man's soul, or even if it had been revealed to the master.

Jesus then moved among the dead sheep. He looked over at the surviving shepherd and the two disciples who were attending to him and shouted, “How is he doing?”

The answer came that the man would survive, but there was no telling how long he would remain unconscious. Jesus said, “Try and revive the shepherd, his sheep are awakening.”

Thaddeus was with Jesus evaluating the sheep, but they were dead and not asleep, and not awakening. Jesus said, “Thaddeus, help me get these sheep up.”

Thaddeus did not know what Jesus was speaking of, but said, “Yes master,” and waited.

Jesus closed his eyes, and raised his face to Heaven. It was not clear to Thaddeus what Jesus was doing, praying probably. Thaddeus began a silent prayer, but did not get beyond two fumbling words, when Jesus said to him, “Help me get them up.” Jesus was shaking the sheep before him...it “awakened” and stood up bleating. Jesus moved to the next and did the same, and once again said to Thaddeus, “Help me!” then pointed to a sheep next to Thaddeus and said, “Get that one up!”¹⁰

Two sheep were now on their feet, and Jesus was working on a third. Jesus was now perturbed that Thaddeus was not helping as instructed, and shouted, “Now Thaddeus, do it now!”

Thaddeus bent, pulled, and shook his sheep, which quickly came to bleating, and scrambled to the others who had been “awakened”.

Jesus shouted to Peter and John, “Get that man on his feet, his sheep are straying!” Peter and John began efforts to awaken the shepherd, and he quickly regained consciousness.

John knelt in front of the seated man and said, “Sir, sir, you must attend to your sheep, they are straying.” The shepherd observed the strange situation, jumped to his feet and ran to the milling sheep and began to sing his herding song. He then cupped his hand around his mouth and yodeled, those sheep hiding in the brush scampered out to their master.

¹⁰ This scenario is based on a miracle by St. Martin de Porres, who raised a flock of sheep from the dead.

Thomas had been sent to round up the straying sheep, but saw the reunion and returned. He reported that the few sheep he saw ran from him, and he was completely unsuccessful. Jesus smiled and thanked him for the attempt.

The matter of the dead shepherd remained. The dead man was the brother-in-law of Levi, the surviving shepherd. Levi showed little emotion over the death of his brother in law, and told the pilgrims that his wife and his home was less than an hour's walk, and he wished to bring back a donkey to carry the body. All of this was arranged and burial was left to Levi. The pilgrims continued on their way.

Fourteen months had passed since Jesus assumed the Essene mission from John. Jesus had learned in the wilderness that he was the Messiah. Now Messiah was the mission. The temple had observed Jesus and his mission for more than a year, and now Jesus would ask the Sanhedrin to acknowledge him as Messiah.

Jesus hoped that acceptance would be given, and that he would lead Israel from the structures of Judaism. If he was rejected, he would simply continue in the manner of a mendicant prophet...that was the theory, but Jesus was no fool. Rejection could only be followed by active opposition, he was too influential to be considered a neutral. He would have to continue until imprisoned, exiled or executed. If the chief priests and the Sanhedrin rejected him, then he would form his own structures of leadership and function.

The Passover holy day was seven weeks away, and Jesus intended to attend in Jerusalem. The plan now was to make another tour along the west bank of the lake, on their way to Jerusalem. If they arrived early, it would not be a problem, but traveling with the prophet was a slow affair. Villages and synagogues were visited, crowds of people taught and healed; sometimes Jesus sent the disciples ahead and remained behind in retreat. The remaining weeks in Galilee unfolded in just this way. The pilgrims walked directly through Samaria, and no one was surprised when Jesus spent days there teaching.

From Samaria, Jesus sent Judas and John ahead to ask that he be given audience with the Sanhedrin, and that he be acknowledged as Messiah in Israel. Jesus further said that failure to render a decision within one month would be interpreted as rejection by the Sanhedrin. Until an answer was received, the pilgrims would remain in the area of

Jerusalem, and available. Jesus taught in the temple, in the city, in nearby camps and villages.

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J u d a e a

Jewel of God

Peliah was wealthy, or more properly her husband was, he had given her an ear ring and a finger ring as wedding tokens. It was sometimes done that a man would kiss the ring of office of another as an act of bonding, humility, or service. Jesus was dining with Peliah and her husband. Jesus wore no ring but knew this tradition of course, and said to Peliah, “Good woman, stand by me.”

Jesus then told a parable illustrating the dignity of every calling in the kingdom of God.

“A king owned vast lands, filled with people of every description. So that he might recognize the particular honor of each, he commanded that each person wear a finger ring symbolic of his way of life. Those in authority wore a certain ring, as did husbands and their wives. Those who toiled in the field, in the shops, or as servants all had a ring indicating their particular dignity. Even children wore rings denoting their obedience and help given to their parents, and the king considered even these acts of children deserving of a reward. Indeed the heart in one’s work counted more in the king’s judgment than the hand laid to it, or the particular work.”

“To the king’s regret, some of his subjects became corrupted in their hearts, and their manner of work likewise suffered. They exchanged their finger rings of virtue for those of dishonor. The king sent his son to reform those who strayed, and to offer them his own ring and a sharing in his office and his royalty. To the king’s amazement some did not accept this generous offer and were content to remain in their corruption. The king then ordered that every hand wearing a ring of corruption be cut off and thrown into the fire. The king’s advisors at court noted that the heart of such a person was also corrupted, and therefore not only the ring must be cast out. The king then decreed that those not accepting the ring and office of his son, would be cast whole body into the fire.”

“The king put such people out of his memory and rejoiced in his remaining kingdom. The king then went throughout his kingdom meeting each subject, and as an act of gratitude he kissed the finger ring of each person. No one was ignored, not even

the young, nor women, nor servants, for the king held that every noble work of the heart was worthy.”

Jesus turned to the wife Peliah, took her hand and kissed her ring.¹

It was a most interesting evening, ordinarily if a stranger were to kiss the hand or ring of a wealthy wife, the offender would be quickly dealt with. When a prophet did such an unconventional act, it was assumed that it was a holy act because it was done by a prophet. Both Peliah and her husband Noah were uplifted by this act and by the prophet’s teachings of that evening. Jesus had brought only Philip, and the two returned to the olive orchard of Gethsemane after midnight.

Judas had delivered his master’s request for an audience with the Great Sanhedrin for the purpose of confirming him as Messiah of Israel. Caiaphas was high priest, and led both the Greater and the Lesser Sanhedrin. Caiaphas called for opinions from the Lesser Sanhedrin, half thought that more time was needed, and wanted Jesus to address them directly, this group would concede that Jesus might be a *prophet* of God, but the Messiah was not yet in Israel.

Half or more were convinced that Jesus could not be prophet *or* Messiah because he violated many of the finer points of the Law. With this being the opinion of the Lesser Sanhedrin, Caiaphas thought there was no point in calling for the full Sanhedrin to meet. Judas relayed the Sanhedrin’s message to Jesus:

“The Sanhedrin closely observes any claimant of Messiah, and will confirm the Messiah when he is revealed to Israel. The man Jesus must obey the authority of the Law of Moses, and of the Sanhedrin during the course of his mission.”

Jesus thanked Judas, and considered how to proceed. This was the most difficult outcome in a practical sense. He must proceed in building a structure independent of the temple, while remaining able to incorporate his mission into temple Judaism if the Sanhedrin later confirmed him. He was not sure at what point the two — Messiah Jesus and temple Judaism — were irreconcilable but a disjuncture had begun.

¹ This incident is based on the story of a wife who kissed the ring of a bishop, who then retained her hand and asked her why she kissed his ring. She replied “Out of respect for your high office.” The bishop then kissed the ring of the wife; the astonished woman stammered “Why did you do that?” to which the bishop replied, “Out of respect for your high office.”

Jesus had hoped that the temple hierarchy, its priests and scribes would welcome him as Messiah and allow him to fulfill his mission from the temple. To bypass the high priest of the Law of Moses was not something Jesus had any intention of doing. But if the high priest continued to reject the Messiah, then the Messiah must move forward without him.

With the reply of the high priest that Judas had delivered, Jesus moved forward with his own infrastructure. He would appoint twelve of the disciples as apostle-teachers. Jesus thought, “The temple complains of one Messiah, now there will be twelve more.” He could not help but think even further ahead. If the temple continued to reject him, the apostle-teachers would be made apostle-priests of the New Covenant.

The permanent disciples now numbered sixteen. Three more followers had joined the immediate group that traveled with Jesus: Judas who was a temple Pharisee; Thomas, son of the disciple Suzanna; and James who was brother of John the prophet. The women who followed Jesus in his immediate group were Suzanna, Mary called Magdalene, and Joanna who was wife of Herod’s palace overseer.

The disciples were considered for apostle in the order they were received. Some were not available for assignment as permanent apostles for one reason or another. Mathias was still an indentured servant, and his master would have to be contacted to obtain his freedom or permission. This proved impossible in the short term as his master was away in a Greek city. Dismas was not sure he wanted to renounce the Zealot cause. Judas could not give allegiance to another teacher without the approval of his current master.

Judas was a Pharisee of Aaron, who was leader of a school of Pharisees. The Pharisee Aaron was tolerant of Jesus, but could not accept Jesus as Messiah until he was declared as such by the Sanhedrin. Any Pharisee would be expelled if he took the premature stand of accepting Jesus as Messiah, and becoming a permanent disciple was an implicit admission of this.

Judas submitted a conditional resignation to the elder Aaron. He offered his resignation as no exemption could be granted for him to be a permanent disciple of Jesus. Judas was surprised when he was told that his resignation would be retained for future consideration, and that until such time, he was free to become a permanent disciple of the

Rabbi Jesus. He would remain under the authority of the elder Aaron and of the high priest, but was exempt from all discretionary duties as a Pharisee.

To now, Jesus was continually two steps behind in staffing. He waited upon the Sanhedrin until he could wait no longer. apostle-teachers were desperately needed and Jesus appointed twelve. They were: Simon called Peter and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip, Nathanael, Matthew the tax collector, Thomas, Thaddeus, Judas, James, and Simon the Zealot. The women were effectively apostles, as many orthodox Jews would not allow a strange man, even a prophet to teach their wives.²

It was that time when the temple tax for the year was due. It was collected in two days, mostly at the local village level, where the rabbi or his agent would make note of it. In Jerusalem, with many Jewish pilgrims year round, a clay token could be requested to be given as proof of payment upon return to one's village. Jews everywhere were required to pay by noon, but none of the pilgrims had paid, they simply had no money.

The pilgrims had come to the attention of a temple tax agent, who approached them. The agent motioned to a pair of temple guards who acted as secure couriers of the collected coins. Peter stepped forward to greet the agent, Jesus observed. The agent spoke clearly, "Have you men paid the temple tax?"

Peter answered, "No, not yet."

The agent continued, "If you are able to, you must pay it today."

Judas stepped forward, holding up an empty purse and said, "We have given what we have to the poor, and we have no money to pay the tax."

The temple tax had been instated by Nehemiah centuries ago to raise funds to rebuild the temple. Current levy was half a shekel of silver for every man; women and

² Because of such cultural restrictions, especially in the baptism of women, the early church ordained women to the office of deacon, (Rm 16:1). Deaconesses were ordained when their duties included sacramental baptism of women, as the entrant was usually baptized nude. The office of deaconess within the mainstream church is mentioned by early Christian writers such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Basil of Caesarea, John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nyssa.

The Council of Chalcedon of 451 decreed that women should not be ordained deacons until they were 40 years old. The oldest ordination rite for deaconesses is found in the 5th-century Apostolic Constitutions. It describes the laying on of hands on the woman by the bishop with the calling down of the Holy Spirit for the ministry of the diaconate. A fuller version of the rite, as used by Bishop Barberini, is found in the Barberini Codex of 780 AD.

children were not assessed. The agent was about to speak, but Jesus said, “How much do we owe? We are fourteen men.”

The agent quickly said, “Seven shekels.”

Jesus said, “We will pay that now.” He took half a loaf of bread and tore and scattered it about in front of himself and the agent.

Sparrows were at once upon the bread, but there quickly came a group of crows. Many of them had a half-shekel coin in their mouth, which they dropped in order to retrieve the bread crumbs. It was later learned that an elderly coin changer in the temple had collapsed and crows had taken his coins, this was thought to be the source of the coins.³

The bread was very quickly taken, or more properly exchanged for silver shekels, which now lay in place of the bread. The apostles gathered fourteen of the coins and gave them to Judas, who gave them to the agent, who took them and gave Judas a clay coin with the number “14” inked on its back, then bowed and walked off.

Nobody was sleeping much, it was unusually cold, in a cold month. The two blankets were given to the women, who tried to pass them off to each other, or drape them on sleeping persons. Matthew alone was snoring, comfortable under two blankets that had been deposited on him. From Gethsemane’s orchard, Jesus was watching the moon, the temple and Jerusalem, and felt a cold sensation on his hand. Within a minute he observed more snowflakes drifting down and smiled, it was payoff for a cold sleepless night. The snowfall was soon very heavy and everyone was awake, observing the rare occurrence. For three hours it continued, and into the dawn.

At the lead of Jesus, everyone stood up and observed the scene. Jerusalem was blanketed, the hills were white and sparkling as the low rising sun touched them. It was magnificent! Steam was rising from the springs and pools in the city. Already workers

³ Crows, raccoons, and other animals are known to take attractive and shiny objects. The annual temple tax was half a shekel weight of silver per adult male. Women and children were not assessed. The coins here would have been two drachma coins from Roman Trye, each weighing a half shekel of silver. No non-Jewish person or coin was allowed beyond the court of the Gentiles into the inner areas. Roman silver shekels had to be exchanged for temple coins sold by the money changers. The temple coin was made of bronze or copper, and was not an equivalent exchange for a silver coin. The first Jewish silver coins were made during the revolt of 66AD. Jews outside of Israel paying the temple tax might also be required to change their Roman empire coins into temple coins via local money changers, since the destination of the tax coins was the interior of the Jerusalem Temple. A shekel weight varied but was about 1/3 ounce. The issuing authority would stamp the silver ingot with its seal to guarantee its weight. These were the first coins.

were busy sweeping the snow away at the temple using baskets to gather the sweepings. Children were heard and seen in the Kidron valley below, they were making balls from the snow and tossing them at each other. Jesus said loudly to the pilgrims, "Let us meditate upon the goodness of the Lord." This was to be the morning's prayer.

In Jerusalem, it snowed one year in seven. It was not usually so extreme as to freeze pooled water, or most vegetation. On one such day the pilgrims were within the walls of the city sheltering themselves from a cold wind. They were near one of the gates in the Tyropean valley. For all the preaching that Jesus made as to indifference to circumstances, he seemed to have a core of asceticism, and would not seek any indoor shelter, preferring to pray in the cold.

After a few hours of cold meditation, Jesus seemed to become alert to something and rose to his feet in a sort of deliberate sequence, and for some specific reason. He looked nowhere in particular and then said to the others, "Let us leave the city."

The pilgrims left through the gate and turned west walking along the base of the city walls, above the Hinnom Valley. They arrived at the refuse pit called Gehenna. It was a gray day; the wind was brisk and cold and blew the stench alternately toward the pilgrims, then away from them. Jesus made no attempt to avoid the odor, and the men did likewise. The gusts whipped the cloaks and scarves into the faces of the men, but they stood stoically facing the wind and the road leading to the pit.

Peter took upon himself the task of respectfully asking the master what they were waiting for. Jesus replied, "We are not waiting, we are praying, please continue to do so." The apostles began to silently pray.

At length, Jesus turned to the group and said, "The cart men are delayed by the Evil One, who seeks to prevent me from recovering my children, but it will not be so. These children have had nothing in this life, excepting pain; but they shall have unending joy in the next, and will be rewarded a hundred fold in this life. Andrew, James, Matthew...go over the ridge and help our friends."

Crossing over the ridge, the three came upon two men, a donkey, and a covered cart which trailed a sickening odor, but which blew off quickly in the wind. They seemed to be having trouble moving the cart, one man lead the yoked donkey and the other pushed, but they were out of strength and out of spirit.

The three disciples approached the cart men, “We were sent to help you,” Matthew spoke loudly in a gust, and the three got behind to push. The speed improved but it was difficult, the disciples learned that the cart contained bodies for disposal and that the cart men had encountered several problems along the way. One of the two wheels was seizing up.

Shortly, six more disciples arrived, running as best they could. Judas reached under the cover and pulled out a skin of oil, and applied some of it to the stubborn wheel, which then turned much easier. In answer to the stares of the others he said, “The master told me I would find some oil under the tarp.” No one was really surprised, and soon nine disciples were pushing and pulling the cart, with the cart men leading the donkey.

The group arrived at the Gehenna pit, there was a steep slope leading down into it. The road that passed by it was widened and had a raised stone edge to prevent unloading carts from tumbling in. The pit was the destiny of all refuse that had no other use, especially unclaimed, diseased bodies. The Jewish communities of the villages saw to the burial of strangers and lepers, but in the metropolis of Jerusalem the bodies of non-Jews, lepers, beggars, robbers, and others often ended up in Gehenna.

It was a place that fueled itself, literally and culturally. The organic heap of filth burned slowly and continually from the inside out, and wild dogs fought with demon possessed wild men for the bodies at night. Archers in the towers of the city wall did what they could to prevent such scavenging.

“Unload the bodies, and lay them before me.” Jesus said to the cart men. Jesus spoke with a certain authority and sincerity that usually effected his requests, and the cart men laid the wrapped bodies before the prophet. When the task was completed the cart man said, “Rabbi, you should know that all these people were lepers.”

“Does anyone claim these?” Jesus said loudly, looking in all directions for any claimants. There was of course no response. Jesus said firmly, “Then I claim them. I am the life of all who desire fullness of life, and those who would have this life will not be found in the pit of Gehenna.”

“Release these people,” Jesus said to the cart men.

The cart men were unsure as what to do, this man was likely the prophet that everybody was speaking of, but they hesitated to unwrap the bodies. Jesus walked to the

first body and untied the bindings, he moved aside the sackcloth from the head, which gasped deeply and loudly for air.

“Release her!” commanded the prophet, “Release them all!”

The apostles quickly freed the others, who likewise sought their breath as they were uncovered and returned to life. Within a few minutes all six were on their feet, looking at each other, and all the others. All were restored not only to life, but to health. The leprosy was gone, and each beamed with clear skin, fine hair, and straight limbs. The two women and four men looked to range in age from about 16 to 40 years at most.

Jesus then spoke, “Children, the God of Israel has raised you to life again. We are pilgrims and are returning now to our guest house, you may join us, or go your way.” Most of the scavengers in the horrible pit came close to observe what was happening. Jesus implored them to leave, obtain baptism, place their trust in the God of Israel and begin a new life.

The group set off, Jesus leading and speaking to each of them, not detailing their return to this life, but helping them to plan their future. Three had families they believed were still existing, and wanted to return to them; the other three were given the locations of pious and generous benefactors in Jerusalem, who volunteered their services to the prophet in whatever way he required.

Later that week, Jesus was preaching in the market stalls in the upper city. In the upper city of Jerusalem lived the wealthiest citizens in Israel. The streets were paved with stone and the mansions were large and opulent. Those making purchases that day were mostly servants of the wealthy who lived in the upper city.

Jesus spoke to these servants saying, “Servants of men, do not think that yours is a life forgotten by the God of Israel. Rather he bestows privilege upon you. Wealth that is tightly bound to one’s will is like a mill stone that slows movement toward God. The status that the rich and powerful strive to maintain in the eyes of others, is poison to the soul. When one has many concerns, the life of the world consumes the life of the soul.”

“With the advent of the Messiah, who is now in Israel and is here now, those who are free of these things that burden the soul are called to enter the kingdom of God. Do not delay, enter now and remain forever. This is the promise of the Law and the prophets.”

“Attach no importance to either servitude or mastery. To do so is like attaching importance to the color of one’s hair, or the size of one’s ears. The status of all these things is of no consequence in the kingdom of God. Indeed every good servant is already advancing toward the kingdom in his humility of office and of person.”

“What servant in the upper city of Jerusalem wants for anything? The poor who farm the land are to be found in Galilee and in the orchards around Jerusalem. If you have what is needed for life, give it no further thought, seek then the kingdom of God by acts of obedience, and charity of thought.”

“Do not think that because you are without money that you are without effect. To give to the poor is good, but to prevent poverty by restoring God’s perfect creation is better. In the first perfection in the day of Adam, no one wanted or hoarded, and your acts of virtue do much to restore Israel to this pristine origin.”

“The Messiah is here now, tell others of this. If your master will not allow this, be content to know that your God is aware of your entry into the kingdom and urges you to attain your full stature in the kingdom by perseverance in virtue. It is such virtue and faith that will be the final meaning of your life, and nothing else.”

A wealthy follower of the prophet had leased a market booth that day on behalf of the prophet and was allowing the disciples to conduct baptisms. Jesus spoke to the crowds telling them of the new kingdom, and the New Covenant. He taught of the kingdom of God saying, “Hear the parable of the treasury accounts.”

“A prince was put in charge of his father’s wealth. The father had valuable holdings of a great variety and was generous in lending them. To all who applied he gave what was requested for any good cause. Even those living far from him shared in his wealth to some degree.”

“As for collateral in exchange for the wealth, the great man required only what an applicant had, and what he could easily spare. From one he took useless trinkets, from another he took moth eaten cloth. To all who offered this surplus the wealthy man returned a seven fold portion of wealth. The wealthy man had no use for such rubbish and discarded it all, hoping instead that his debtors would return what was loaned to them, and even hoping for a profit.”

“In time, the wealthy man told his son the prince to close out all the accounts. The prince started on the task, but reported that the debtors could not pay and that he, the

prince would make good on their debt. The prince did so for all who asked, even using his father's money to do so. The repayment extended even to those who had misused their loans. To the consternation of the prince, some never even bothered to apply for this amnesty, even after repeated pleas. The accounts were closed, and the wealthy man moved far away from those who ignored the amnesty offer. Those who did participate in it joined the household of the prince and were even granted a sharing from his father's vast treasury."

Sadducees, Pharisees, priests, and others of wealth or influence were inside the nearby former palace of Herod, which was now a governing house for the Sanhedrin. They were told of the man Jesus who was preaching outside and turned out to hear him.

The wealthy and powerful seemed to have a servant for every task, even servants to hurl insults at Jesus. On this occasion, some men of the Sanhedrin who had come out to hear him prodded their secretaries and scribes. The meaning was understood and they stepped forward to challenge Jesus. The scribes were well versed in the faith and made objections to his theology and to his person. Jesus was warned that the wrath of God was upon every false prophet, and that every "Messiah" to date had come to ruin.

Jesus approached this specific group of men, raised his hands to silence the protesters and spoke. "Good men of Jerusalem, let the works of the Messiah testify to his authenticity. The dead are raised, the lame walk, the faithless find the peace of God. Servants serve their masters with new joy, and synagogues are filled; all because the Messiah offers faith, and many accept. Israel will be restored, and you are witnessing the beginning of this. Do not impede this, rather promote this work of God. The Messiah has offered, and offers himself now as the Messiah of the Temple of Jerusalem, but he is rejected and therefore speaks in the streets. Do not then, banish him from the market places and synagogues."

"As to the insults you speak, they do not harm me, they harm you. Hear the parable of the good Samaritan." Jesus began the story, "There was a certain man of Samaria. He was the best of men. He praised God as he knew how, even if he was incorrect in understanding, his will was likened to God in a way unlike that of many Jews. He even went so far as to rescue Jews left for dead, and he dealt justly with all people."

“For all this he was despised by his fellow men in Judaea and Galilee. He was cursed for his incorrect understanding of religion by those who likewise lacked understanding, but his good will shone like the stars of Heaven, never returning any of the insults he received. To this Samaritan was attributed the evil of the world, but in fact he owned none of it. Neither the accusations nor the vengeance required by false honor were bound to the man’s soul.”

“Rather, the insults revealed both the false understanding of those offering the insults, and their usurpation of God’s sole privilege of moral judgment. If the man would have been a thief, they would have been correct in restraining him, but in fact he caused no harm. Charity by the Jews would sooner win over the Samaritans than insults, but this was not offered. The Samaritan learned his goodness from God, therefore those insulting him were insulting the virtues of God.”

“You treat me as this Samaritan, but you do not know the truth about me. When you insult me you insult the virtue, the will, and the plan of God. I tell you there is only one sin that will not be forgiven in this life or the next, and this blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is it. Your insults cannot adhere to me, because they find no correspondence in me. If I am false, then I will come to a bitter end. If I am the mercy and Messiah of God, then my end will not be bitter, but redemptive, even if you were to hang me from a cross.”

The men said, “We are the elders of Israel, and we will declare the Messiah when he comes. We alone have the wisdom and the authority to do so. You are a mud builder from Galilee, and have never been to a school in the temple and know nothing of our faith, or of the Messiah yet to come. You swindle money from the people and pretend to work miracles. You are a devil and God’s wrath is upon you.”

Jesus replied, “God’s wrath is generated from your own sins of greed and arrogance. Your sin damages the world, and you call it God’s wrath. Learn another lesson from the good Samaritan.”

“The Samaritan was a master of his soul, just as insults had no hold on his spirit, so too was his own wealth kept at arm’s length instead of clutched to his chest. He owned much, but was owned by none of it. He claimed nothing in his pilgrimage on earth, even if he was given much. He was poor in spirit, and as a result earned great wealth that was kept on account for him in Paradise. Your wealth will not follow you to your destiny, and since you have little love...be warned.”

“Again I say, there is only one sin that will not be forgiven in this life or the next, and that is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Hear me carefully, this is what you do when you insult the virtue, plan and person of God. It is the Holy Spirit that brings all these graces to the Messiah and to the world. If you persist in this blasphemy you will have no part in God or Heaven.”

“I offer to be the Messiah of the temple, but you reject my offer. Who will accept it...the Romans perhaps. Will you be content that a Roman govern the kingdom of God on earth. Will the Temple of Jerusalem remain standing one thousand or two thousand years hence, and as the center of the faith? I dread to know the answer.”

“The Temple of Jerusalem need not perish, let it be the home of the New Covenant. Let the temple priests be the priests of the New Covenant. Let the Messiah, who you see now be recognized as the New Covenant. The Law of Moses was not given that it would find its glory in a thousand details, but in the glory of the Messiah who is now among you.”

The men from the Sanhedrin were not moved, but cast their faces like stone. Their secretaries began once more to disparage the prophet. Jesus overruled them with his loud voice, offering a final reproach shouting, “You cling to your own corpses, and fail to embrace the living one! You do not enter Heaven yourself, and would prevent others from doing so! When I am gone you will congratulate one another, it will be the dead embracing the dead! I leave you now, to find those who would hear and act on my words, and come to accept the Messiah, for only the living speak and only the living hear what is spoken!”

Jesus took the pilgrims and left the upper city.

Jesus had sent Suzanna and Mary to purchase food for an evening meal. They were much delayed in returning and Jesus asked Thomas if it was like his mother to be delayed. Thomas replied that if she was delayed there was good reason, and that he had every confidence in their safe return. Women could walk safely in Jerusalem, and almost every woman went to market, many alone.

Thomas suspected that his mother had been delayed by some act of charity, no other reason would delay her from fulfilling her duty. Jesus asked about her charitable habits. Thomas listed many and told a story of the second hand market stall she had operated. In Bethany, Suzanna would solicit donations of used clothing and other items

such as usable pottery and mats, and sell or give the items away at the market from her own tent stand. The proceeds would pay for the stall tax and the remainder given to the poor. On the second day each week, she and others did this.

At length the two women did return, and with much food. Jesus examined the food, it was an unusual purchase; no two pieces were the same. It was as if the women visited forty stalls to make the purchase. Jesus asked if they had encountered problems that delayed them. Suzanna replied that they had not, and started to prepare portions of food for meals. Jesus continued, asking if there was any money left over, and Suzanna replied that they had given the left over money to the poor. Jesus had no objection as this was his policy, but some things still did not fit together. Again Jesus watched as the many types of food were distributed, then said firmly, “All this food was donated at your asking, and you gave all the money away!”

Suzanna replied, “Yes master, I hope I have done no wrong.”

Jesus could find no fault in her actions, tilted his head back and laughed into his hands.

Suzanna could, and had literally charmed the cloak off a person’s back. This she had done as people passed by her second hand tent in Bethany. At fifty years of age she was still doing it.

Another woman, Joanna by name was wife of the palace supervisor of King Herod Antipas who ruled Galilee. Joanna had come to tell Jesus of the death of John the prophet.

Joanna’s husband Chuza had much authority within the palace and this allowed Joanna access to the prophet John. Joanna disguised her visits by bringing food to John. John spoke not of himself but of the Messiah, who was Jesus the prophet from Nazareth. Joanna provided much useful service in cultivating the goodwill of Herod Antipas toward Jesus. She was the leader of the disciples in the city of Tiberias, from which Herod ruled Galilee.

Joanna told Jesus that John was dead, and of the particulars of that night: the princess, her dance, the execution and the delivery of John’s head to the queen. Jesus was calmly saddened, he then told the disciples of John’s death.

Joanna had found the pilgrims in camp. The mood was somber and sad, too sad. Jesus spoke to everyone, “Friends, it is right that we be saddened by the evil of Herod

and his court, and by the death of John. However there is more to the death of John, and we will now consider this. In the New Covenant and the new kingdom, you shall no longer mourn the death of a child of the light. The dead have reason to mourn their dead, but the living shall not mourn those who pass into Paradise.”

“Let us remember John now, not with tears but with praise. Joanna, tell us of the virtue of John that you witnessed during his months of imprisonment.”

Joanna spoke inspiringly of John. Matthias and Andrew were his disciples and also spoke. The praise generated relevant questions and Jesus answered them. A flask of wine was found, and Jesus had it poured into some of the flasks of water. It was observed, but not commented upon that the watered wine lasted much longer than possible. Everyone slept soundly and arose the next morning inspired with thoughts of the new kingdom.

From Jerusalem, the pilgrims traveled east. The Qumran monastery was a day’s walk, and there Jesus told the community of John’s death. John had been a member of the community for twenty years, and all agreed that he was a prophet sent from God. John had prophesied of the immanent coming of the Messiah, and near the end of his life, he had confirmed Jesus to be this Messiah. All at Qumran were aware of this, and were eager to listen to the words of Jesus. The pilgrims stayed five days at Qumran.

From Qumran, the pilgrims traveled into the territory of Perea, which was also ruled by the tetrarch-king of Galilee, Herod Antipas. Jesus and his disciples entered a small village in the Decapolis. It had retained its Jewish lineage and had few Gentile residents. Jesus was responding to a plea for help from a boy who told them of a stoning that was to take place that day.

Jesus sought out the elders and inquired as to the person to be executed and the reason. He was told that Lavi bar Yidmah and family were to be stoned in punishment for blasphemy and theft. The village was near famine and the elders had banned all sale of grain. The wife of Lavi had both spoken of Jesus as the Messiah, and had given away some grain to outlying people in like need.

Jesus obtained the release of the children from execution, as the wife had not actually sold any grain, but since her husband refused to beat her for her blasphemy, the two would be stoned as planned.

Jesus replied that he would not further oppose the stoning, provided that he would cast the stones, as he alone was qualified. The elders agreed to this strange condition, and Lavi and wife were set against the wall of the small common building of the village. The wife Esther, held her husband and both bowed their heads in prayer. Esther was trembling and fearful at soul. Her Messiah was about to execute her, but she did not know how she was at fault. She searched her heart frantically for fault, so that she might repent of it before her death, which was now upon her.

Esther heard, but did not see the prophet say loudly, “The law of Moses shall now be fulfilled. The Son of Truth alone is free of guilt, and he will cast the first stone.”

Esther felt some thing brush against her. She heard the prophet speak again then felt many impacts all over her torso and head. She did not want her last vision in this life to be one of her own stoning, and kept her head bowed. Through her constricted eye lids, she saw objects falling at her feet. Nothing made sense, not the light impacts, nor the things gathering at her feet, nor the broken phrases she now heard.

Esther looked up at her husband, who had just raised his own head. Loaves of bread were hitting them both! The great quantity was coming from the dozen or more disciples of Jesus who here hurling stones that became loaves of bread on impact!

The apostles continued tossing bread-stones at the base of the execution wall as Jesus lead Lavi and Esther away. Jesus spoke to the assembled village, “Justice is now served to the woman Esther. Yes justice. Her faith in the Messiah demands what has happened. Likewise justice awaits also those who refuse the Messiah who is now here.”

Enraged again, the elder patriarch cast a stone at Jesus, which likewise fell harmless as bread. Jesus said, “My time has not yet come. Your justice will draw my blood only after your sin pierces my soul.”

Jesus told the villagers to fill their containers and sacks with the bread, and sell them at once in the nearby city of Philadelphia. The disciple Meir remained with the villagers and the prophet left with the other disciples, returning to Judaea.

The Sanhedrin had mixed feelings about the new prophet, but most still did not support his claim to be Messiah. It was impossible that the Messiah be at variance with the Law of Moses. The Sanhedrin and the chief priests defined the faith of Israel and the interpretation of the Law of Moses, but the man Jesus often spoke in opposition to the

Sanhedrin and the Pharisees, and minimized or even violated the Law of Moses. It was therefore impossible that Jesus was the true Messiah.

Many such objectors acted from good motives. The prophets had warned Israel for centuries that failure to adhere to the Law would bring ruin. If Israel was now ruled by the Romans, at least it still lived. Things could become worse if the Law were not soundly maintained.

Every Messiah claimant had shown some signs of being Messiah, and Jesus had shown more than the others, but this could not be the deciding factor. The Law of Moses was not defined by signs, but by the Law of Moses. Jesus had their grudging respect in some matters. He did fill the synagogues and returned to the faith many who had left. He was an outstanding missionary.

Caiaphas insisted that the Messiah overcome all opposition and obstacles. This was the sieve that separated the true Messiah from the false Messiahs. The Messiah was prophesied, and his advent was certain, and no obstacle could prevent the Messiah from ruling Israel. So far Jesus had not overcome these obstacles, although he had been given every chance. Prophets were generally free to prove themselves on the temple grounds, and Jesus had been preaching for two years.

The Sanhedrin and the Pharisees especially, had members in every city and allies in every village, and were able to maintain close surveillance of Jesus, his movements and his preaching. A new problem had arisen — not more Messiah claimants, but more apostle claimants. In most cities one or more persons were claiming to represent the prophet from Nazareth, and they were soliciting money for the cause. The temple was in the strange position of denouncing these people as false allies of Jesus.

In Jerusalem, the temple administration had just discovered that Jesus was an Essene from the Kidron house. A priest had just called upon Abida to confirm this, and then quickly left. Abida knew what was coming next. He would be replaced, and Jesus would be recalled from his mission by the new abbot.

Abida knew what he must do, and do quickly. Abida drew up a letter dismissing Jesus from the Essene community and signed it. He put a senior man in charge, took the community's horse that was grazing a short distance away, and rode west to find Jesus. It was reported that the prophet had left Jerusalem traveling toward the coast.

In an unusual act, he took money to see him through, he did not have time to delay by negotiating for meals or shelter. Depending on where Jesus was he could complete the travel in a single day. The reports had Jesus visiting towns along the road to Joppa, and two reports had him already there.

When he stopped to rest the horse, Abida would inquire among the people as to the location of the prophet Jesus. The answers did not vary greatly, Jesus was preaching and healing in the synagogues, markets and streets of Joppa. Abida entered Joppa at sundown and asked where he might find the prophet, but no one knew. The new prophet would make himself public during the day, but at night he disappeared into the hills, or a home without leaving public notice. Everyone agreed however that he would be speaking the next morning in the first public field on the road to the east.

Unable to sleep, Abida arose early and set out on the east road and found the field. He expected Jesus to address the crowds from the high point of the field, which was in the northeast corner. It was just after daybreak and Abida saw a man sitting and observing him from that location. Abida recognized the man as Jesus.

Abida approached the man. Jesus stood and said, "Elder brother, peace be with you."

Abida smiled and replied, "And with your spirit." Abida composed himself in a sort of official manner and continued, "Brother, I smile in seeing you again but perhaps I should not, I bring bad news. The temple Pharisees know you are an Essene under my authority and they will order me to make you cease your mission, as soon as they find me. You should continue your work, but you cannot as an Essene."

Abida paused, pursed his lips then said, "Brother, for your good and the good of Israel, I present you with a letter of dismissal from the Essene brotherhood of Israel."

Abida handed the letter to Jesus, who read the brief document and said, "I understand brother. You have acted correctly."

Abida continued, "You are no longer bound by obedience to me, the Essenes, or to our particular overseers in the temple. I hope you will continue your mission, it is for this reason that I dismiss you. You are free however to do as you please. Please count me as one of your disciples."

Jesus replied, "Yes brother, you are most welcome. I was your disciple, and learned much from you, I now accept you as my disciple. The mission has only just

begun, and many laborers are needed, and of every sort. You may stay with our group, or return to Jerusalem...think it over. Now please sit and tell me news of my brothers.”

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Caesarea

Jesus Appeals to the Citizens

Caesarea was a splendid new Roman port city, only 50 years old with a population of 125,000. As the Roman capitol of Judaea it boasted administrative buildings, an amphitheater, a Roman temple, a Hippodrome for chariot races and gladiator contests, and the largest seaport on the east coast of the Mediterranean. It was Rome in miniature. Legionaries shipping in and out, sailors, coastal caravans, and travelers all added to its permanent population. Several Roman cohorts also made their home in Caesarea.¹ Every type of person, religion, occupation, virtue and vice could be found in Caesarea. Almost half the citizens were Jewish, and Jesus was here to preach to these citizens.

The pilgrims were delayed arriving in Caesarea, as the master often stopped to preach the good news. Perhaps they were not delayed, as they neither constructed nor possessed a schedule of any sort.

Knowing that Caesarea was the center of Roman rule in Judaea, Thomas asked Jesus, “Master, are the Zealots correct in fighting the Romans?”

As usual, the answer was not a simple yes or no. Jesus replied, “Caesar does not deny our people the necessities for life, and so long as one does not speak against the Emperor, he lives in peace. More importantly, Caesar allows the most vital element of life — the covenant between God and Israel. Do not expect the Father to make war where none is required.”

“You have heard of the Greek Antiochus who called himself “God manifest”, who attempted to desecrate the Law by erecting idols and forcing the people of the Covenant to eat unclean food. God quickly sent his servant Judas Maccabeus to save the people of Israel from this evil.”

¹ At 600 soldiers, a cohort was a tenth part of a Roman army legion. Up to three Roman legions were assigned to the Providence of Syria, of which Judaea was a territory. The Jewish revolt of 66-70, which resulted in the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, began in Caesarea over a religious dispute between Jews and Pagans.

“Observe the difference between Caesar and Antiochus, the one allows God his just rule in the heart of man, and the other does not. The ruler who challenges God’s rule, be he Roman, Greek or Jew will meet a swift end.”

“The Zealots are eager for the rule of God in Israel. Yet it is not the Romans who prevent this, so there is no need to expel them. If God allows the Romans to rule, and the Zealots fight against this, who is the greater rebel against God? Amen I tell you, God would not allow the Romans rule, at the expense of even a single soul. The Zealots should rather respect, and not fight the Romans. If the Zealots want more exclusive rule within Israel, they should bring themselves to perfection of love. When one rises or falls, others do likewise. No Thomas, the way of the Zealots is not the way of the Messiah, and all who would aspire to become Messiah must use the weapons of the will and the soul.”²

Matthew, Philip, Peter and Jesus approached the market stalls that lined the waterfront. Greek, not Aramaic was the language of the waterfront. Greek was Philip’s native language and he was invaluable in many cross cultural situations. Matthew and Jesus were also fluent in Greek.

Their mission was to procure an afternoon meal for the group. They usually delayed a main meal until afternoon, and this was often their only meal of the day. They might save a bit for breakfast the next day, but would never purchase more than required for a day.

Jesus carried one of the sacks by a shoulder rope, and all of them surveyed the available food. They would not likely have a fire, and they would purchase accordingly.

² It is a difficult teaching, but a major teaching of Jesus (by word and example) was tolerance toward military occupiers and dictators. Jesus tolerated Roman rule because they allowed for the means of life, and did not hinder the very purpose of Israel – worship of its God. Pre-incarnate Christ did however support the overthrow of the Greek Antiochus Epiphanes, because he threatened the souls of the people of Israel. Epiphanes means “God manifest”, and he attempted to force idolistic religion on the Jews, as told of in the Biblical book of Maccabees. The Maccabee family lead a successful revolt, which largely restored the Jewish faith, and gained Israel a short period of independent rule until conquered by the Romans.

Neither political freedom nor servitude have any effect on one’s soul and were of secondary concern to Jesus. According to Christian social ethics, a dictator who allows religious freedom, and provides for the basic needs of the people, is not a legitimate object of revolt. However the use of violent force is justified in a certain set of circumstances.

Christian teaching on the causes of war is that it is caused indirectly by sin. Sin is disorder that corrupts the will and intellect of leaders and nations (and all other parts of creation). Leaders and citizenry operating with a distorted morality may then make willful decisions that lead to unjustified violence.

Prices in the afternoon were often different from prices in the morning, depending upon morning sales volume and afternoon inventory on hand. The purchase was ten loaves, and a sack of olives, and Matthew obtained them for a good price.

Heading back to the rest of the group, the men passed a stall in which a man was offering prayer — Jewish prayer. The men stopped and Jesus said, “Blessings be upon you and your business.”

The man gave his own blessing, and said, “I have not seen you men before, are you new to the city?”

Jesus replied affirmatively and asked if the man sold commodities of grain and olives. It was obvious that he did, and the man replied that he did deal in those items.

Jesus told the seller that he dealt in a more precious commodity, that of souls.

The man made no irreverent comments, and Jesus continued, “Sir, are you aware that souls too, are sold and bought? Yes it is true. Our father Adam sold his for what appeared to be a good exchange, but was not. Now the Messiah is in Israel to repurchase such souls.”

“Here now...the Messiah...and you are his agent?”

Jesus answered, “I speak as him.”

The man paused, then said, “Tell me sir, what is the price of a soul?”

Jesus answered, “In Caesarea they are sold very cheaply, which makes their repurchase price all the more expensive.”

“What is the cost in shekels of silver?”

“Silver will not do, not even talents of gold. Souls must be ransomed in the same currency that they were sold for.”³

The seller waited, hoping that Jesus would continue speaking and not make him drag the information out of him, but Jesus waited patiently for his next question.

“And what currency might that be?”

“Love.”

This time the seller would not budge and began to shuffle some items around, attempting to show disinterest.

³ A person sells a bit of his soul (so to speak), when he replaces love of God, others, self, for some other disordered love. He sells his proper love, for a lesser love. Love is the item purchased and the currency used.

Jesus continued, “Love is what a soul is sold for — false love. True love will repurchase these lost souls. The expense is great, it will cost the very flesh which covers the soul of Love. Love will be scourged then hung like meat in a market, but this is the necessary currency.” The seller was silent.

Jesus asked the merchant, “Sir, what is the first rule of trading?”

The man said, “The basis of profit is to buy at a lower price, and resell at a higher price.”

“And this is a true law. But there are greater laws, and these greater laws have more bearing upon the life of man. If you subject yourself to a law of trading, and if you subject yourself to the laws of Rome, which are both imperfect, how much more should you obey the laws of God. In truth, all are subject to this law. A man may be subjected to either its benefits or its punishment, but all are subject.”

The seller had years of experience dealing with people of all sorts in Caesarea. He closely examined Jesus and said, “You look like a Jew, but speak like a crazed Greek Stoic.”

Jesus replied, “No man in his right mind would offer his life for ungrateful children.”

Jesus continued, “I am the Messiah awaited by Israel. I come to redeem man from impending Hell. Acknowledge this and you will live.”

Jesus paused to let the man consider all this then spoke again, “Lemuel, stay here at your market stall. The Messiah desires his disciples everywhere. These other men you see, follow me on the roads, but you are to follow me from Caesarea. When you hear of my death, do not despair, but patiently wait for such men as these to again visit Caesarea, and then tell them of this event. You will then be assigned your new duties. Peace be upon you.” Jesus opened his hands in an exit greeting and left.

Jesus remained in the market the entire day, visiting stalls and speaking with many. At one point a market seller was arguing with a customer over a matter of dates. The owner demanded that the prophet judge between the two, and give him justice.

Jesus said to the seller, “I have no interest in this, and I will not fight for it. As for you sir, I suggest that you also abandon your interest in it, the damage you inflict upon your soul is in no way balanced by the attainment of satisfaction. God supplies you

with what you need and he always has, your home and your family testifies to that. You are now going to battle over surplus scraps and trinkets. Why not instead advance your soul? This is the occasion to do so.”

Both men abandoned their claim to the dates in question and they remained on the table until hours later when the market seller gave them away.

Simon and Dismas were former Zealots, and they were making their best efforts in tolerance toward the many Roman soldiers in Caesarea.

Jesus asked, “Dismas, in the days when you would argue political reform, would you achieve better results when you spoke more, or louder, or more forcefully?”

“No master that is why I had to take up the sword.”

“Had to, you say.”

Jesus continued, “A person sees the world through the eyes of his spirit, which is in some way wounded. Love of gold, desire for power, lust, and impiety are all wounds on the spirit, and you will not *talk* people out of these disorders of spirit. The solution is one of spiritual reform — greed turned into generosity, hoarding into trust, lust turned into chastity, and it is the call of the sons and daughters of light to make this reform by their acts, and to share it by prayer.”

“I am not amazed that talk obtained you little. There is no shortfall of good ideas in our world, but they do not take root in hearts and minds because these hearts and minds are not properly disposed to accept them. Therefore, precede your words by acts of restorative mediation, and you will have greater success. And do not be distraught if the Father garners part of your efforts to save those appearing before the judgment court of Heaven.”

Philip joined the conversation, “Lord, are you saying that spirits of good virtue may be forced on those who do not know the better way?”

“Yes Philip, this too must be. Consider that the effects of original sin were shared by all of creation, and not by consent. God can neither advance in virtue, nor be corrupted by sin, therefore both disorder or restoration must have its effect in creation.”

“When someone strikes your right cheek, so not seek revenge, but offer the left cheek as well, in this way you will reform the evil spirit assaulting your assailant, in a way that words will not.”

“Dismas, when a Roman tells you to carry a burden for one mile, do so with love, and carry it even two miles.”

“In this same way political action alone will provide little solution, it must be joined to sacrificial love. Then the reformed spirit of the world and its people will act justly in their legal decrees and their action.”

“Dismas, the Romans and Gentiles alone will not benefit, the first beneficiary will be your own soul. The Romans are your necessary enemy. Strive to reform your soul so that this will not be necessary.”⁴

Officially, there were no atheists in the Empire — it was just not possible. To deny the gods was akin to denying the obvious existence of the sun. It was therefore reasoned that to deny the gods was to deny the protection they offered to their client state. This was effectively treason. The gods saw to the good fortune of the empire and were co-rulers with Caesar. If a person chose to make a public issue of the matter, the state was obligated to side with the gods and award commensurate punishment to the offender. Within the empire, Jews were allowed “exclusive worship of their tribal god”.

More often than not, the crowds that Jesus would speak to were composed of both Jews and Pagans — Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Syrians. These good people practicing religion were largely Pagan polytheists. Some were of the Stoic philosophy, which had many variants, some of which acknowledged a God of sorts, who was more of an impersonal Good. Jesus had as much success among the Pagans as among the Jews, and in the years following, the apostles would likewise find the Pagan population very receptive.

It was a matter of practical religion. It was no heresy to include one more god in one’s household, and the god of the Jews, or the god-man Jesus was certainly showing his worth. The miracles were continual, and an afterlife in Heaven to boot. Jesus left it to the disciples remaining in Caesarea, to explain the theology of monotheism to the enthusiastic new members.

Later, the pilgrims were walking the main market street in the Roman section of the city. Jesus was more observing than preaching and they passed stalls selling items of

⁴ “Necessary enemy” — when our soul no longer projects its imperfections there will be no more enemies.

every sort. Jesus observed the stalls selling idols and amulets, but passed them by. He did stop at a stall selling statues that made no immediate sense.

The pilgrims examined the strange objects, but remained undecided as to their purpose. Peter asked Jesus, “What are they?”

Jesus said, “I am not sure.”

The proprietors, who were a man and a woman, answered, “They are statues of art.” The woman continued, “You men are farmers, do you know what art is.”

Jesus pointed to a painted clay statue and said, “How is this art?”

The woman explained the statue, “That work is titled, ‘Abstraction of cycles’. The swirling impressions on the clay remind us of the greater and lesser cycles extant in our manifold encounters.”

Peter exclaimed, “It does what?...Master these people twist the minds and morals of good people. You must call down fire from Heaven to destroy these evil things!”

Peter had grabbed the statue and was shaking it as he spoke. The woman tried to reclaim it from Peter, and both tore the statue from the other. The statue fell to the ground, shattering itself.

Peter and the woman looked at the pieces, then at each other and spoke in tandem claiming the other to be at fault in the disaster.

Jesus was ineffectively trying to separate the two, and resolve the problem. Finally he shouted, “Stop, I will pay!”

The woman accepted all the money the pilgrims had — three days wages, and put the pieces in a cloth, and gave it to Jesus. Jesus and company left at once without taking the swirling cycles.

On another occasion a man threw dirt from the street at the prophet, and railed against Jesus saying, “You are not wanted here Jewish prophet! Israel murdered our fathers, your Joshua killed my ancestors and burned our cities. Not just in Canaan, but here along the coast of Phoenicia.”

The apostles subdued the man before he could further threaten the prophet. Jesus approached the man and stated, “I was present, and in union with the decision that the people of the conquered cities should be put to the sword.”⁵

⁵ “I was present and in union with the decision to put the cities to the sword.”, the book of Joshua records the conquest of Canaan. This novel proposes a possible explanation for the violence of the conquest. When God

Again Jesus explained the theology of sin and evil, as he had to continually, “Know this friend, God does not create evil; evil is the outer face of sin, the disorder of evil is the disorder caused by the sin of man. War, oppression, poverty, and even disease and drought have their origin in the sin of man. Once created, evil must have its effect somewhere, somehow. As father to his children and creator of the world, the God of goodness and justice assigns the evil of man so as to bring good from evil...but it must be assigned. If you want to enjoy the good without having to go through the evil, renounce sin. Do not say ‘I do not deserve this calamity’, say rather ‘I deserve worse, but God spares me.’ Evil in our world is not a matter of God punishing man, but of man punishing himself.”

“As to your complaint of Joshua being the instrument of punishment, and putting cities to the sword. Consider that the entire population of Canaan died every fifty years. The cause of these deaths by disease and age, is the sin of man. In the first case God commanded Joshua to kill the inhabitants, while in the other case God commanded disease to kill the people. Yet both disease and the sword are really the sin of man.”

“Do not think the Canaanites and the Phoenicians alone have their sin inflicted upon them as evil. God does not spare his own children. He allowed the Assyrians and the Babylonians to conquer his children Israel. Please understand that sin must have its effect, and better that it is inflicted on body than soul.”⁶

“King David of Israel sinned, and was given the choice by God of selecting which particular calamity would befall Israel. He was given the choice of war, famine or disease. If he had chosen war, then God would have allowed victory to an enemy king; if famine, then God would have allowed David’s sin to prevent nature from raining. If

allows or even assigns evil (generated by humanity), the entire Trinity is in agreement with that decision, and all decisions. This is the traditional orthodox, (if unpopular) explanation. This novel proposes that no disorder (war, disease, poverty) can simply happen. All are caused by pre-existing disorder (sin), and God assigns this disorder (by direct or extended will), for greater purposes.

⁶ 1Cor 5:5 recounts the effects of sin being suffered in body, sparing the soul. The attribute of justice is real and must be satisfied, either personally or vicariously by Christ. God is free to mercifully assign disorder to the body thus sparing the soul. The book of Revelation portrays this on a worldwide scale. As faith and morality is corrupted, calamities increase; but these are suffered in the world, sparing many souls. In the paragraph that follows, King David’s sin in claiming Israel is told of in 2Sam 24:10-13.

David had chosen disease, then God would have allowed the disorder of sin to manifest itself as deadly fever and poisoned blood and humors.”

“Why not conform yourself to God’s virtues, and become citizens of the new kingdom which is now being populated. This new kingdom is that of the Messiah of Israel, and in it no murder or disease, war or poverty will be found.”

The Phoenician protester left, and Jesus finished speaking in the market. There were many two and even three level buildings lining the street, and people were observing the prophet who was the cause of so much activity.

Rahala the prostitute shouted from her roof top, “I would have you prophet!”

Jesus looked up and boomed, “And I desire union with you Rahala. I will take you in matrimony...do not delay, come quickly.”⁷

The other women gathered closely around Rahala to snicker and comment on her new “husband”. Without warning, the overburdened area crumbled, and the chattering women fell through the roof. A large dog chased Rahala, rather herded her directly into the arms of Jesus. Rahala had a death grip on the prophet, and tried to speak but could only move her lips; she looked desperately into the smiling eyes of the prophet who called to someone in their band saying, “Suzanna, instruct my betrothed.”

Rahala stayed with the pilgrims for three months, seeing no more of Jesus than anyone else, and was given a new life as a member of a womens’ consecrated house and orphanage in Jerusalem, she advanced in soul and became love incarnate. She witnessed the crucifixion of her husband and lived to be 101 years old.

The harbor at Caesarea was a superb example of Roman civil engineering. Ten ton boulders, hydraulic cement and construction stone were formed into a half mile square enclosed harbor. A 200’ tall lighthouse could be seen for many miles by approaching ships. The breakwaters were city blocks extending into the sea, complete with warehouses and repair facilities. It was here that Jesus had previously worked for this cousin Hazorus. Connected to the breakwaters and to the south, was an open pier area that could be used only in fair weather. It was there that the pilgrims were on the day of the fire.

⁷ The matrimony Jesus refers to is a spiritual marriage. Jesus speaks of such a wedding in the Gospels, and nuns become brides of Christ, by taking actual marriage vows.

Caesarea was laid out in the Roman grid system of streets. Two streets behind Waterfront Street was a block of pubs and brothels. Jesus had heard of it from his coworkers in the caravans.

Jesus and ten others were sitting in rest and meditation on the waterfront, when a man stepped to the center of the group and made a sales pitch. He offered them pornography and showed sample ink drawings on papyrus of nude women, and of people engaged in the sex act. Jesus was stunned. He engaged the eyes of the vendor and asked, “Where did you get these?” The man said they were offered at a pub two streets over, on Second Street, and he would be glad to show the men the exact shop.

The group followed the vendor, entering the block known as “the street of the damned” — the name given to the block of shops, brothels, and pubs that catered to corrupt desires. The title was a strange mixture of cynicism, and indifference, the same qualities its patrons cultivated in their own lives.

South Second Street was the vice district. It was tolerated to a degree decided by the Roman administration of the city and of the province. Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judaea, and also an armchair practitioner of the Stoic philosophy, and did not approve of such vice. Pilate was demanding, dutiful, and impulsive, but his conversion to Stoicism had moderated him enough to obtain the post of governor. He allowed the vice because it would exist, and he would rather have it under his control.

The “street of the damned” was enabled and disabled according to the reigning governor by taxes, enforcement of existing morality and zoning laws, and bribery. The one block area was the only place where prostitution was “allowed”, and the only place that pubs were allowed inside the city walls. A pub being defined as a place where one could purchase wine or distilled wine without purchasing a meal. Vendors of such services paid a premium to obtain the required permit. Opium, pornography, and stabbing knives were sold under the counter.

The pilgrims had avoided the “street of the damned” until now, but could not avoid observing the businesses that the smut vendor lead them past. Walking the streets were a few Roman soldiers, and a few non-descript men, no women were seen. The pedestrians would slowly pass by a business and look in or otherwise consider it, and would sometimes step inside.

The pilgrims entered the pub that offered the images that had been shown in sample at the waterfront. The owner was told by his agent that the men would like to see more. Jesus halted the owner as he produced the images and said, "Stop sir, you endanger your soul by selling these. I will purchase all you have, but you must promise to cease buying and selling them altogether."

The owner grew stern and returned the stack of images to a box and pushed Jesus hard, causing him to stumble back. As Thaddeus attempted to put himself between the fuming owner and Jesus, he too was shoved aside by the large man.

Jesus stormed out of the pub and began to shout, "Repent, repent! The kingdom of God is at hand! Repent of this evil! Cease from your ruination, and think of your souls!" The prophet was jogging in a zig-zag pattern from one business to the next, screaming and pounding on doors. Shortly the owners came out and attempted to subdue him.

Jesus had the adrenaline advantage and in his rage no one could stop him. His reflexes were quickened, his movements were quick and full of power, he had taken a length of rope and folded it, making a whip and was fending off those who approached him shouting, "Do not lay hold of me! Until you repent you will have no part in me! Your soul should be a refuge, and a house of prayer, but you have turned it over to thieves."

He mounted a large four ox cart loaded with bundled hides and stood atop. The disciples surrounded the prophet and pulled down any who attempted to climb after him. The assaults on Jesus stopped as the owners sent runners to the waterfront to enlist the service of the Roman auxiliaries in police capacity.

From atop the hides, Jesus spoke loudly and full of passion, "People of Caesarea, you sell the kingdom of God for a very small price! After you vomit your wine, and disease eats your loins; after what you swindled from others is stolen from you; and after the Devil makes his kingdom in your soul, what will you have to show for all your mispleasure? It will not be the kingdom of Heaven, but the torture chamber of Hell. Know this, my very misguided friends, one need not be a son of Israel to obtain Heaven, but one must obey the law of virtue within one's conscience."

"In Israel, our God spoke to Moses on Sinai, he made ten commands upon Israel, but only three were new. The others were to honor your father and mother, but did you obey them in your youth? The next was that you shall not kill. Have you at least kept

life, or do the prostitutes among you drink potions to kill the children they carry. The next command prohibited adultery, but instead it's the first thing in your thoughts. Your conscience commands that you not steal, but you create even new ways to steal, by false weights, documents and promises. Your lies will follow you to Hell, as will your thoughts of coveting who and what belongs to others. Drunkards, fornicators, and the irreverent will not obtain Heaven, but will be thrown into Hell, where they will gnash their teeth and wail in never ending pain."

"You dull your sense of conscience, and when you are occasionally aware of it, you do not follow its promptings the next day, but continue on your path to ruin. You ruin not only yourselves, but many, many others."

"Your mind and your soul are not unaware earthen containers into which you may throw one thing as well as another. What you consent to forms and reinforces who you are. You are body and soul, and your soul is the character of your being. For both those with the Law of Moses and for those without know this; desire gives rise to act, repeated act forms habit, habit forms character and character determines destiny."

"How am I to appeal to you, when you have not the first grounding in proper conduct. If you had remorse I could guide you in a life well lived. You might reform your business by ceasing the sale of women, weapons and lustful images. The wine you sell or drink is properly enjoyed with a meal, not in place of a meal in a five-fold quantity. You curse God and man and thus show your disapproval, your wish will be realized in a place where neither God nor man lives, only demons. The destruction of this street would be a blessing upon you!"

"To the Jews of Caesarea I offer the kingdom of God, and my disciples baptize many. Even to those who are not Jews, I offer salvation. Both those who adhere to the Law of Moses and those who adhere to the law of conscience may accept the Holy Spirit of God and enter the kingdom."

"The Messiah is revealed to you now; yes, in Caesarea, here in the "street of the damned". The Messiah would storm Hell itself to save one of his misguided children and does so now. I implore you to respond in repentance and faith, and commitment to a new life." His sermon was over, but Jesus did not yet know it.

A man had a bag of broken pottery pieces and started to throw them at Jesus. Their curved shapes took them off target in flight and none struck the prophet, and the bag was taken by the disciples, who numbered ten.

The angry shop owners were now in the minority as curious patrons left the businesses to observe the howling man standing on the hide cart. The pub owner who had shoved Jesus was red with rage. His pub was now empty, and his face was boiling and steaming, it seemed as if his head were about to burst. Jesus continued and was now looking and pointing at the people, stopping his finger at the owner.

The man was now smoking, his clothes were actually smoldering from his rage...or from a pipe, or from a coal perhaps. He lunged at the prophet who was out of reach, and burst into flames.

The flaming owner pressed through the crowd, igniting three others. All ran back toward a business or market stall or some other destination, presumably to obtain water. One stopped at a stall to take off his burning clothing, but the clothing stall was now on fire. Two soldiers were dumping an oil lamp on him.

A third area was now burning. Police auxiliaries were now on hand, but greatly outnumbered and of no effect. Jesus had stopped shouting to survey the conflagration with grief. His audience was now dispersing, people ran to the shops to extinguish them, to protect them, or loot them.

Jesus was unable to speak, he could only look in stunned silence. Jesus dismounted the cart, he and the disciples walked away from the street of the damned as it was consumed by fire.

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Disciples II

Jesus Instructs

Rarely were all twelve apostles with Jesus; several might be on assignment elsewhere. To cities and villages, Jesus would send apostles and other disciples. They would reconnoiter and arrange for speaking venues at synagogues. The city elders and would be contacted and any Roman authorities would be notified of the prophet's peaceful intentions, and they would announce to the people that the new prophet would soon be visiting them.

At the decision of the prophet, apostles would remain behind in a village to provide baptism or instruction. The women were not admiring wall flowers, but work horses. Whatever occurred in the ministry applied equally to the women of Israel, and it was often effected by the women who traveled in the pilgrim band.

Jesus was not immune to human limitations, he made mistakes and could be deceived. One mistake he sometimes admitted to was in taking only twelve apostles, as the work load demanded twelve times twelve apostles.

Jesus was teaching in the market in Hebron, and a poor young man had found Jesus in relatively available circumstances and waited patiently to speak with him. Jesus turned to acknowledge the young man who spoke, "Good Master, I have done as you have asked."

Jesus remembered the poor young man very well, but said nothing, allowing the young man to continue his story.

"Master, do you recall more than a year ago, you told me to sell all I owned, and then follow you." Jesus replied that he remembered, and the young man continued, "I have sold or given away everything, and my father has disowned me. I even gave him the garments from my back as I walked away. I seek now to be your disciple, will you

instruct me?” The poor young man was welcomed and quickly grew in holiness. He informed Jesus of his name, which was Adah.¹

Continuing north from Hebron to Bethany, Simon said to the master, “Master you are not the only one who knows the future. When we enter Bethany, my relatives will be told of it by busy bodies, who will then approach me demanding that I repay a debt, or recount to me my failings, or tell me of their hardships as being my fault.”

Jesus looked quizzically at Simon and said, “Simon, why not ask your advocate to intercede on your behalf in these matters?”

Simon returned the quizzical look and said, “Master, I have no such advocate.”

Jesus said, “If that is true, then I do not wonder that you have such troubles. But it is not true, do you not know that you were assigned a guardian-advocate at your birth and he helps you daily, and even more if asked.”

Simon’s expression indicated that he did not fully understand who this guardian was. Jesus continued, “Simon, I speak of your angel who assists you.² He beholds the Father continually, and is ready to make your case before the God of the universe, who is not too busy to generously attend to your smallest needs. I will see that he resolves your family matters in Bethel.”

Simon could only say, “...Thank you master.”

The pilgrims made slow progress traveling the roads. Wherever a group of people was encountered Jesus stopped to teach of the New Covenant. The disciples would scour the area, announcing that the new prophet was now speaking and desired their attendance. The mission was to tell of the good news, that the Messiah was now in Israel and was seeking members for the new kingdom.

¹ The rich young man in the gospel is sometimes presumed to have disregarded the instructions of Jesus, but this is not known with any certainty. In the gospel, the rich young man had attained a high level of spiritual advancement, and Jesus advises him to free himself from his last constraint. Traditionally anyone entering into the unitive stage of spiritual advancement must forgo every attachment to this life: family, riches, poverty; every legitimate self interest must go.

² Catholic teaching is that the angels were tasked with helping humanity, and even on a one to one basis, with each human being given a helper angel. St. Pio who lived until 1968, had frequent dealings with the guardian angels of many people, and worked miracles of every sort. St. Pio is a worthwhile subject for study, he lived until recently and his life is very well documented. Much of his life was spent as a priest hearing confessions, and his penitents have left a record of his insight on every type of domestic problem.

The pilgrims would usually make camp outside of a village. Jesus had continual offers of food and lodging. He would often accept food for later consumption at camp, but he would not often accept lodging.

It was in one such camp that Nahor awakened, sat up and looked for Jesus. Dawn was perhaps three hours away and Jesus was on his knees in prayer. Nahor observed him for some time, as were some of the others. Jesus was sitting on his lower legs, with spine erect and arms bent and outstretched at about the level of his lower chest. It looked comfortable enough. His eyes were closed and his head tilted back slightly. This was not the first time Nahor had seen Jesus pray in this fashion, it happened almost every night, although usually some distance away.

With twenty or more people continually in his presence, everyone had a chance to see the prophet at prayer. His mode of prayer was nothing new, but the disciples scrutinized it still, attempting to understand the difference between his prayer and theirs, which looked very similar.

The noise level was low enough...but it could not last. Someone knocked over a clay flask. Jesus opened his eyes briefly, closed them again, but within a minute was on his feet. He walked over to the small pile of sticks, took enough to rekindle the glowing coals and placed them on the fire.

He spoke the blessing, "Blessed be God who gives us all goodness, blessed be this morning." There were no logs, rocks or stools to sit upon, and the ground was hard; speaking around the campfire involved standing around the campfire. Jesus motioned to those awake to gather for instruction, and soon everyone was awake and assembled, standing around the fire.

"Nahor, do you pray before rising?" Jesus asked.

"Yes master, but I am not sure that I know how." replied Nahor.

"Proficiency in prayer is arrived at not by practice of prayer, but by practice of humility, patience, denial, and obedience. Strive for the prayer of union by your acts during the day, by avoiding rudeness, rashness, hoarding, unchaste eyes. Cultivate the virtues: praise of God, charity of thought, frugality at table."

"As for the prayer, devote all your faculties to God. Your eyes closed so as to see God alone. Your inner voice is usually chattering nonsense about the events and worries of the day, make your inner voice speak the name of God only. Attend your ears to your inner voice, not the noise of the world. You must direct all the instruments of your spirit to your Father in Heaven. Your God will respond with an increase in peace

and virtue for yourself, and for all you affect. During the day, attend courageously to the trials of the day, and each night claim your victory in peace.”

“Recall now what I have said before. You will advance in prayer as you advance in soul. To advance in prayer, do not so much study prayer, but study humility, reverence, joy and hope; patience, moderation and perfect chastity of mind and body. All your efforts to raise your soul to God are in fact prayer.”

“During prayer when you direct your entire being to God, you will share in God by the degree you share in each of God’s virtues. But be content to give and not take, the Father will assign you graces as he desires, to some prophecy and miracles, to others a burden of suffering to be conquered. It is not your place to question God during your brief pilgrimage. During your exile you are to make use of suffering to perfect your virtue.”

“I tell you truly, that the angels envy — if it were possible — the opportunity to grow by conquering trials of the body and of the soul. The angels of Heaven retain their pristine virtue, but they have no knowledge of the highest love, sacrificial love. Their former brothers have no knowledge of virtue at all.”

Jesus continued, “As to the prayer we speak of, make such prayer now, and do not be distressed if you find effort required and that you imperfectly arrive at peace. Perfection of prayer requires first perfection of soul and spirit. And remember that all forms of prayer are possible, if you discover that you are most proficient at praising God, then make this your prayer while you work toward perfecting the other.”

The group made their prayer as they could, but all felt relief to be on the road walking an hour later. Walking north, the pilgrims circled Jerusalem and taught in the surrounding villages. Bethlehem, Emmaus and Bethany were such outlying villages. In Bethany Jesus visited his friend Lazarus. Several days later they arrived in Jericho.

In Jericho on this occasion, Andrew was on the receiving end of an order, comment, or teaching that made no immediate sense, as it was with so many of the master’s teachings. Jesus said to him, “Andrew, go and instruct your citizen in proper conduct.”

Andrew replied, “Master, what citizen do you refer to.”

Jesus pointed to a man who was cursing to a shop keeper, about the Roman taxes and occupation, his in-laws, and a variety of other concerns. He had been doing so for some time, and with a rather loud voice.

Andrew continued, “Master I will do as you wish, but I do not know how he is ‘my citizen’, or how my advice will correct his behavior.”

Jesus was unmoved, which forced Andrew to finally move. Andrew approached the man. He stopped, made eye contact and said, “Good morning sir. Your criticism of the Romans, your family, and most everything else is improper. I respectfully ask you to stop such talk, and in such a loud voice. The God of Israel is aware of all your complaints, and they are legitimate, but it is not our place to question his wisdom in giving such burdens to us.”

Andrew paused before saying more, but was not given the opportunity; the man rose, cursed Andrew, pushed him away and stared him down while adding “holy idiots” to his ongoing litany of complaints.

Andrew said, “Good day, good sir,” as he backed away, rejoining Jesus who rose and lead the men down the street. Andrew asked if he should try again, but Jesus assured him that he had acted well, and that his “citizen” would in the end attain to proper conduct. Andrew inquired again as to how the rude man was his citizen.

Jesus replied, “The children of light shall rule kingdoms of people in the age to come, and that man will be under your governorship, because you will save him with your prayers and your trails of faith.”

Jesus continued speaking, but louder and to all the disciples, “Friends, you have seen today, that words alone are not sufficient to instill faith. Words are seeds that fall in the field of the soul, the field of good soil will produce an abundant harvest, but most are not prepared to receive the seed of faith. Your prayer, sufferings, faith, hope, charity and perseverance will prepare many souls to receive faith and the conduct proper to it.”

“Many before you have done this work of preparation, and you will reap the harvest. Do not think that it is from your words, or even your acts of remediation alone, that souls will be saved; give credit also to the many unseen persons of faith who will make your success possible.”

Jesus continued teaching in Jericho. During this time, Jesus pointed down the street, and said to the disciples Anna and Mary, “Go into the home that has a jar in the window and assist me, for I am near death.”

The women left at once, walking quickly, and even running because of the urgency. They found the house and entered. A woman was alone, unconscious and burning with fever. Mary asked aloud, “What can we do?”

Anna moistened a cloth with water and placed it on the woman’s face and said, “We must pray...in the way the master taught.”

The two began to pray, “Father in Heaven, hallowed is your name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as in Heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and do not subject us to the final test, but deliver us from the Evil One.”

The woman moaned and Anna lifted the cloth. The face was not the woman’s, but that of the master!

“Lord!” exclaimed Anna. Mary said nothing. The face became that of the woman again, her fever left her and she opened her eyes and looked briefly at the women before drifting off into a much needed sleep. Nathaniel was outside calling to the women to return, as the group was leaving.

The women were not sure what to say, if anything about the event. Later that day, Jesus thanked them for healing him saying, “You have my gratitude for healing my fever this morning. It was indeed my body that you healed, we though many, are one body of the Messiah, and individually parts of one another. Your prayers are powerful because of your participation in me, you offer no resistance to a deep indwelling of the most Holy Spirit.³ Well done daughters of Abraham.”

Few days, or nights for that matter were free of unusual events, and of a great variety. The pilgrims made camp outside of Jericho and purchased what was needed for an evening meal.

After midnight a girl crept into camp and took inventory. Next to the man sleeping face down was a large crust of little eaten bread. The girl calculated her approach; she was in danger just being out at night, more so in the camp of men, and if they caught her in the act of stealing they would...she did not know...a scolding...a

³ A relatively common miracle is that of some person in need or suffering, being physically recognized as Jesus, (Rm 12:5). Those who suffer in faith have a likeness to the Messiah. License is taken, because at this point the only other human who was a member of the body of Christ was Mary. Others could become members starting with the communion of the last supper, which happened later. See also appendix, “Christology.

beating...worse. The face down man breathed deeply, was he awakening? She was now within arm's length of the bread, and reached...Wham! The man swung his arms in a semi circle and caught her legs. Within seconds, she was on her rump, the man was on his feet with a foot on her wrist, and the rest of the camp was awake and forming around her, while a woman stoked the smoldering campfire into flame to better see the captive.

No one spoke, but the man with the bread seemed to be in charge. When all were assembled he said, "To my followers, I advise they offer two loaves of bread to the one who would steal a single loaf...but you girl, are a different matter."

The man took his time examining the girl and the situation, then finally pronounced her sentence. "You will stay with us, and I will instruct you in the plunder of souls." With a glance, the man summoned some of the band, all of whom seemed to be at his call. Two woman responded as the man spoke the words, "Suzanna...Mary, please see to our guest."

The girl was drafted into the corps...and had her bread. She told her name, Junia and her story to the pair of women in camp and slept securely, wedged between the two.

Jesus had sent seventy-two disciples to all areas of Israel, and even beyond, six of these went to Alexandria in Egypt. The seventy-two returned four weeks after the feast of booths as planned, and Jesus had arranged a festive meal and evening in celebration. Overall the mission was an enormous success. However there were some matters to discuss and better to do it now, and get them settled. One man had died of fever over a day and a night, and another had made a bad decision that cost a man his life.

Jesus called the group together and had each debrief the entire group, that all may benefit from their experience. Jesus then took Moriah aside and asked him to recount the fatal event near Bethsaida.

Moriah told the master that they were experiencing great success in the Bethsaida area, and they were following their instructions to teach in the outlying area, while two others operated inside Bethsaida. They were essentially circling the city going from village to village, some very small and no more than a few homes around a weak well.

It happened that a demon possessed woman had followed them for some time trying alternately to harm them, disrupt mission efforts, and seduce them. Their prayer

and goodwill had no apparent effect on her. When demanded that she tell her name the woman said, “We are called Legion, because there are a great many of us.”

Moriah told the master that he then commanded the legion of demons to leave the woman. Jesus had Moriah recount his words which were, “In the name of Jesus the prophet and Son of God, I command you to leave this woman and never return.”

The woman howled, fell to the ground and threw dirt on herself in pretended contrition and pleaded, “Please royal one, if we must leave, let us enter into that herd of swine near the lake.”

Moriah continued saying, “I allowed it, and at once the swine went into frenzy, attacking each other and their herders. They ran in all directions, without purpose except to destroy whatever they encountered. The males would assault the females, and the females would trample their own offspring. Many ran to the lake ravenous with thirst, but they all drowned in their unthinking frenzy.”

“Of the several swine herders, most were bitten, and one was trampled to death. The people of the village came out with clubs and blades and killed many. We were chased away by both the swine and the villagers.”

Jesus said, “You were tricked by Satan. Do not allow him anything, whatever he asks for cannot be for good. Never allow him the least compromise.” Jesus continued to tell them that they were not blameworthy for the unforeseen acts of the Devil.

The two understood and told Jesus that they would be more careful in the future.

In Hebron, Jesus told the disciple Ram Noah to go door to door, blessing the occupants and begging for food.⁴ Ram told the master that Hebron was his hometown and everyone knew him, and their memory of him was one of a cynical man giving no attention to the superstition of faith or the Law; furthermore he was of high status before and could not bring himself to beg.

Jesus answered in his usual cryptic manner, “Ram Noah if you do not do this you will retain your former stature, if you go blessing and begging you will lose it. This

⁴ One of the most significant events in the spiritual advancement of St. Francis was begging door to door in his hometown of Assisi. He failed in his first attempt, turning away out of embarrassment when recognized, but thought better and tried again. This event was a great conquest of self pride, and allowed a deeper indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

is indeed a blow that will break your former stature and humiliate you, and it is necessary. If you remain yourself, you may not become as I AM. Think it over, you are free to do as you wish. We will remain in Hebron until you have completed your task.”

Jesus was the master of holy coercion.

Like swallowing bitter water, it was best done as fast as possible. Ram Noah put on his best face, and was committed to making it a productive exercise, he held his head straight and mustered new dignity for the task. He had told Jesus that he proposed to beg at the first twelve houses on the street, and said that he knew them all to some degree.

Jesus approved the plan and told Ram to first devise an explanation for his new philosophy and mode of living, as they were sure to ask. Between the two, they hammered out a short monologue to be delivered in the event of questioning. Jesus said, “Who knows Ram, you may one day be required to speak your reasons to a thousand people...best that you begin practice now.”

The blessing and begging was a bit broken at the first two homes, but Ram was a quick study, and it went much better as he got into the spirit of things. He was now at the door of a former drinking partner and his wife, as the door opened and before his neighbor could say anything, Ram started speaking, “Blessings of the God of Israel upon this house. Good evening friend, may I ask a favor of your generosity. I need a small bit to eat, anything you have will do.”

Keturah the wife said, “...It’s true...you now follow the Nazarene.”

“Yes, it is true, this is not a joke; in fact this is an exercise to feed my stomach and break my self will. I would be grateful for any scrap of food that you might spare.”

Husband and wife were now at the door to see their visitor and Keturah said, “Yes, of course, I will get something...or would you like to come in?”

“No, thank you. I am expected back soon.”

Jotham asked, “Why have you done this?”

Ram Noah began to deliver his explanation, curtly and with purposeful sincerity, “I now follow the prophet because I seek to cultivate the life of my soul. Israel, as you know is blessed with the laws of God, and is now given the Messiah, promised for centuries.”

Jotham observed Ram and said, “Is this your windfall from the Messiah — begging?”

Ram Noah invited Jotham to speak to the Messiah himself, but the visit was concluded when the wife Keturah brought bread and olives.

Ram Noah thought that he would like to develop his small speech into a larger and more articulate theology. That was the fifth home, and Ram had several items of food, more than he could carry and he had bundled them in his over tunic, which he carried.

He was feeling at ease, the burden of status to be maintained was gone. He liked the feeling and was eager to finish off the row of homes. At the moment however, his arms and tunic were full of food, and he at least had to unload everything before continuing.

Jesus saw all this, waved and yelled, "We are leaving Ram, come quickly." The food was consumed in transit, and shared with another beggar.

In the days following, Simon approached Jesus and asked him, "Master, is the resurrection for all peoples or only for the Jews?"

Jesus said, "Simon, ask Mary of Magdala this question, she will speak the truth of it."

Simon objected saying, "Master, would you have a woman teach me religion?"

"Simon, it is more important that you learn humility, gratitude, and detachment, and in asking Mary you will be learning all these things and have the answer to your question. Do not fool yourself that she is an unschooled woman, she has learned much by first practicing humility, gratitude and detachment. She is further advanced in holiness than you are Simon, so give her the respect that is due her, and in doing so you too will advance in soul."

Simon fell back in the marching order and came alongside Mary of Magdala, made contact and spoke to her, "The master sends me to honor you, and to ask you a question."

Mary said, "I am honored by your presence, what is your question sir?"

"Is the resurrection for the Jews only, or for all people?"

Mary replied, "The master spoke of this a few weeks ago you recall, when he was speaking to the Pharisee who believed in the resurrection. The master said the resurrection foretold by the prophets would only be accomplished by the Messiah. The master said that it would not be a matter of the Messiah commanding the resurrection of others, but of the Messiah himself being the resurrection. I understand this to mean that

all people who become Messiah will share in the resurrection. The resurrection is now more a matter of Messiah, than the Law of the Jews.”

Simon said simply, “Thank you good woman.”

The prophet created many similar situations to both break and cultivate the wills of the disciples. A life of seventy years would not be enough time to perfect the disciples, and visit all the children of Abraham. Damascus, Alexandria, Antioch, even Rome had large populations of Jews. Jesus thought it increasingly unlikely that he would be the Messiah of the temple. He had known since the beginning that his own death was a possibility. Some prophets met their ends in a stoning pit. It all made training of the disciples that much more vital.

Jesus taught and healed in the area of Sepphoris. On the third day of the week, Jesus stood in front of the Synagogue and spoke to the people. Among the people were two men and a woman. The men looked to be officials, magistrates or lawyers perhaps. All three were listening intently, but the woman appeared to be the most favorably impressed. Jesus approached her and said, “Would you like to start over...this time differently?”

The woman was forming her answer. It was upon her lips, but her companion put his hand to the chest of Jesus and said loudly, “You cannot take back what was given to me, as the gifts of God are irrevocable.”

Jesus said, “This soul was not given to you, you stole it.”

“She gave me her soul of her own free will, in exchange for my favors. This constitutes a covenant,” the lawyer proposed.

Jesus replied, “The covenant is not binding because she did not fully understand the terms of the covenant, you tricked her.”

“If that is so, then she is mine because I stole her...let her speak for herself.”

Jesus said, “Woman who is this man?”

The woman said, “A friend.”

Jesus grabbed the woman by her tunic and began to pull her away saying, “He is a false friend, he does not love you, he loves himself only. I love you and I will see to your happiness.”

The lawyer seized the woman’s other shoulder and stopped her movement.

Jesus and the lawyer had equal shares of the woman, and were in stalemate. The lawyer was seething. Jesus was equally committed.

The lawyer sought the physical advantage and grabbed the woman's hair and was making some headway in pulling her to him. Jesus was now effectively pulling against her hair via her shoulder and arm, and changed tactics saying, "If you had the wisdom of Solomon, you would still not have her."

The lawyer shouted for his aide, who pulled a short sword from under his outer coat and handed it to his master. The aide now took hold of the woman and the lawyer raised the sword to strike through her middle.

Jesus held firm.

The woman screamed, "NO! NO! STOP!"

The lawyer checked, looked at Jesus and growled, "Do you give her to me whole, or do you take half."

The woman resumed screaming.

Jesus clamped her mouth and said loudly, "This man is willing to give half of you to me. He cannot fully love you. But I love you. I am Love, and I want you desperately. Come now my love. I will speak my Love to you. Leave this man, and be mine."

The woman scowled at the lawyer and said sternly, "Let me go!"

The lawyer released his grip. Jesus and the woman walked away together.

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Galilee II

New Covenant Offered

Jesus had been on mission for two and a half years. It was becoming increasingly apparent that he would not become Messiah of the Jerusalem temple. He would likely have to make the New Covenant apart from Judaism and the temple. He had the foundations, a following of the faithful and a core priesthood if necessary. Jesus was reluctant to bypass the temple. He was called to fulfill, not circumvent the existing faith. Either way however, the Messiah must continue to build the new kingdom.

Just three weeks ago, he had told the people to obey the orders of the priests because they sat on the ruling throne of Moses, then immediately insisted that their hypocritical actions be rejected. Jesus suspected that many Pharisees, priests and scribes were favorably disposed toward him and the New Covenant. However, until the High Priest confirmed Jesus as Messiah, all had to tow the official line. Dissent in the all important matter of the Messiah would not be tolerated.

In the absence of a Jewish king, the temple high priest was the deposit of power. Pilate taxed the Jews, but the High Priest Caiaphas ruled the Jews. Caiaphas had been chosen and appointed by the previous Roman Prefect. He was also leader of the Great Sanhedrin. It was Caiaphas who was priest, prophet and king.

The Sanhedrin *was* hinting that they would like to have Jesus in their assembly — a fine way to silence him, and seize the New Covenant for their own purposes. No, he alone had to be High Priest of the New Covenant; if not from the temple, then from the roads and villages of Israel.

The Covenant of Moses was this: the God of Israel would be the God of all who kept the Law. The New Covenant bound God to all who offered God their *failings*. God — the Son of God — would join his children in humanity, take on their sin, and make it his own virtue, and in the process adopt them into his very person. The humanity of the Son would allow him to enter into the drowning pool of sin, and rescue the victims. The

divinity of the Son would allow the divine adoption of those rescued, and entrance into the only possible refuge free of sin — God himself.

The split between the Mosaic and Messianic covenants was growing wider, and Jesus could not see any reconciliation forthcoming. Temple priests and workers becoming his disciples were removed, and sometimes excommunicated; merchants and craftsmen were likewise shunned, people were losing business, jobs, homes and friends. The best he could hope for from the Sanhedrin was tolerance from undercover supporters, who might delay the inevitable. His influence *was* growing, and this would force a decision by the Sanhedrin, whatever it might be.

Most of the population was north of Jerusalem, and this area was also the most receptive to his invitation. Jerusalem was ruled by the Sanhedrin and the temple, and most of the citizens were allied with these groups. Jesus preferred to preach in Galilee. In and around Jerusalem he met continual opposition, and not just of an academic sort. Children of the priests and Pharisees had on occasion thrown dirt and stones. They were delayed, denied and taxed for trivial reasons. Pious persons would even follow the group reciting prayers of exorcism.

Galilee was ruled by Herod Antipas, who had a latent religious bent. He had enjoyed listening to the prophet John, and very much wanted to meet Jesus. Herod gave the Messiah free access to all of Galilee, perhaps to restore himself to good standing with the people, after killing their prophet John.

The Romans had been observing Jesus nearly as long as the Sanhedrin. Anyone able to draw crowds and influence them was of great interest to Pilate. Judaea was the most troublesome province in the empire. The 600 talent weights of gold levied each year, did not pay for the legion required to control it. The entire province of Gaul required only three cohorts to maintain order.

Three legions controlled the Roman providence of Syria. Usually half a legion was located in Judaea, with the other half in reserve elsewhere in Syria. The half in reserve might do double duty as an augmentation force for the eastern Parthian border. Pilate answered to the Syrian governor in Antioch.

Every generation the Zealots attempted to oust the Roman occupiers. It would usually happen that some semi-Messianic leader would experience a divine revelation, indicating that the time to strike was propitious. They could usually assemble a local

superiority and take a city. The expected divine assistance never materialized however and the Zealots could not hold their gains against one or two Roman legions, who eventually showed.

The conclusion was all too predictable. The Romans besieging the city would break through and eliminate the now exposed Zealot sleeper cells. They would be executed along with accessory, sympathetic, or innocent males aged fifteen to forty years. As an act of clemency, the legion commander might release some prisoners. Those paying a tribute to the commander were likely candidates for such reprieve. Relative peace was then had for another generation.

Jesus had much to do. He was increasingly committed to developing the apostles as the leaders of the New Covenant, but they were still far from being such leaders. They had good hearts...but small hearts. They needed to be crushed, stripped, purged, tried, weaned, and reconstituted. They had to live the life that Jesus had lived in the caravans. The prophet felt that there were not years remaining to train them.

The disciples were often hesitant to ask questions, especially concerning spiritual matters. It was the New Covenant, and the life of the spirit that they were being instructed in, so Jesus usually took the lead in proposing a question and explaining the answer. One subject he spoke of with reluctance was the fall of humanity. He did speak of the consequences and often, but not in a personal manner. He did on one occasion tell the Pharisees that he had been present at the creation of man.

On this day the master had finished a discourse on good and evil. Thomas approached Jesus and asked, "Master, would you have the fallen angels back if it were possible?"

Jesus was silent in thought, remembrance perhaps. He then answered, "With all my heart, I do not seek the condemnation of anyone, neither humans nor angels. My first creation was the "bearer of light"...he was beautiful, the image of the Father who is the light. What depravity he has become. I tell you solemnly Thomas, to this day it is not I who keeps him in Hell, but his own free will. If only he would disown his sin, but he cannot."

Jesus was silent, but looked again at Thomas and continued the explanation. "Thomas, all the angels were made in the image of the Father; like man they shared in all of God's virtues, except his divinity. They were independent free beings, and not God.

Nevertheless, their virtue was equal to God, it was the very image of God, and not less so.”

“Because of the angels’ unobstructed knowledge, those who cast themselves off from God and his perfection, did so totally. It was a decision of will only, and not tainted with temporary emotion. They could not recover or even feel regret, because every virtue that had been dedicated to God, now served only themselves. It was if the fallen angels were thieves who suffered their hands cut off, and now could not even lay hold of their hands to reattach them. No one in their company could, or would help either. Yes Thomas, they felt a certain sorrow, but only for themselves and their new predicament. They could feel no sorrow for offending God. I wish they had.”

“I pleaded with my child the Light Bearer, not to reject the sustaining virtue of humility, but he would not have it. More than half of the angels were then aligned against the Father. I told them of my own choice to submit to God as a man. I told them of the fall which had not yet occurred, and which was not preordained. Many returned because of my pleadings, but a full third were lost.”

“The sin of the angels was self will. They wanted more, but they already had everything. They wanted to be as God — I tell you that was planned. They were given the highest perfection, any change could only be less than perfect.”

“To bring creation into being, the Father had to create from the only thing that was not him, and that was *nothing*. In seeking life outside of perfection, the angels contacted their own essence, which was nothing. Their sin started as they explored their nothingness, as if it were something additional they lacked. The diminution of perfection they pondered did indeed create a new world of sorts, but as their judgment lacked, they made wrong and then evil choices. If this was not enough horror, the Light Bearer then corrupted man and woman.”

Jesus was breathing heavily but said, “Thomas, I have told you much, so now hear the rest.”

“Thomas, the Hell of the Devils is their own creation, neither I nor my Father, nor the most Holy Spirit created their world of corruption. At the final judgment the Father will gather all goodness unto himself, and the demons will be left to their own

corruption with no trace of any goodness — no law, no compassion, no cooperation, no pleasure or joy.”

“Thomas, do you realize that all of humanity likewise is condemned because of the sin of Adam. Neither good persons, nor bad persons will escape. Only those who live as me, as the body of the Messiah will escape; both the good and the sinners who come to me will find salvation. I spoke before, saying that it was not a law of creation that the good attain Heaven, and the evil are consigned to Hell. Hell will be the residue which evil doers cling to”¹

“Your salvation is I myself, my gift of accepting you into my own person. Know this Thomas, I will spare no effort or suffering, I will storm Hell itself to find a repentant sinner if such a one exists. I told you Thomas, if those condemned would cry in remorse, I would swim through the sea of fire to reach them. I will pay the ransom demanded with my own blood and return with any of my children who call to me. But those devoid of goodness cannot call out their repentance. This repentance I speak of is correct action after the fact, yet even this is not within the will of those lost.”

Jesus was flustered, he realized he was crying tears, and wiped them. Before, even in anger the master had always been deliberate and in control. Now he was distraught, his emotions seemed to be in control. All of the disciples had gathered at once to hear the question of Thomas to the master, and they now awaited any further words the master wished to give.

Jesus composed himself and said, “Children, I shall tell you of the story of the fall and of the redemption as it took place in the court of Heaven. I want you to know it, and I want to say it to you now.”

“The Father admired and loved the angels, they were his children. The angels frolicked and sang, and second only to the light of God was Lucifer, the angel of light. Then his name was honored.”

“The Father assembled the entire court of Heaven, and told them of his magnificent plan. He would make more angels, and these angels would make even more,

¹ For now, creation is a strange mixture of good and evil. At the final judgment God will separate good from evil. Evil will then exist undiluted with those who own it. This will be Hell. The separation event by which Hell is formed, is actually Christ’s intended communion with mankind, (CCC 398, Mt 25:34). It proceeds as planned, but those owning evil will be unable to unite with Christ and suffer the no-go alternative which is Hell.

and these new angels would be made of the dust of the earth. The Father said, ‘We will call the new angels man and woman, and their souls will be fine like your own.’”

“All in Heaven voiced their approval, and all wanted a part in the creation of the new earth angels. To the first man and woman, was given Lucifer as their helper, and he served them well for many years. He was their guardian and he loved the man and the woman.”

Jesus stopped, his face became deadpan as he recalled the advice that Lucifer gave to the woman. All the disciples knew the thoughts of Jesus, and Peter finally said, “Master, why did he tell the woman to sin.”

Jesus recomposed himself and said, “I have little understanding of why he did it.” Jesus paused to consider how to continue then said, “Here among men, an evil work may be described in detail, and all will understand what is being said, and why the evil was intended. In Heaven it is not a matter of words spoken but the will of one heart being known to another’s heart, and one mind being known to another mind. In Heaven also, there is no knowledge of both good and evil as there is on earth.”

Again, Jesus paused looking inward, then continued, “Lucifer kept his heart and mind secret, both before and after his deed simply because no other could read his heart or his mind, because evil is not understood. Even if someone were to know his heart and mind, it would make no sense. It would be as if a foreigner was speaking his tongue in another country.”

“The Son of Man is burdened with observing the evil of the unrighteous here on earth. He can estimate the means, and knows the outcome, and he observes the immediate motivation, but he has little understanding of the motive behind the motivation.”

“The Light Bearer was a most excellent teacher and example to the man and the woman, and both had become the children of God’s heart. Perhaps they had become too fine for Lucifer’s liking. Perhaps he did not like the idea of the dirt man and the dirt woman, both drawn from the dung of the earth...that is what he screams now.”²

² The traditional story of Satan’s fall was that he refused to acknowledge a human incarnation of God, (Jesus). He may have objected to the proposal only, as at the time of Adam and Eve, Jesus was not yet incarnated. The angel Lucifer may have observed that humans are limited in their awareness, understanding and abilities compared to angels. Angels have no need for soap, toothpaste or toilet paper and are always spotless. Humans were acceptable as students, but not as equals, and certainly not as the Son of God. Lucifer may

“Friends, I do not know. To this day he will not speak the truth of it. I fear that the Father’s plan for a man Messiah was not to his liking. Perhaps he desired to be Messiah himself...he could have been Messiah equal to the Son of Man. The Son of Man does not claim exclusive rights as Messiah, indeed he wants all to be so.”

“The Father had plans for his family. Once they were raised to maturity, your God wanted to invite all his children to live in the secret court of his heart. The Father wanted to make communion with his children for their joy, and for his joy. I told you that the fallen angels wanted more than God’s virtues, *I tell you this was planned by the Father*. Friends, the life of the world that you see now, was not so much produced by the fall of man, rather it proceeds in spite of the fall of man. God’s most precious design for communion with man proceeds still.”

“The end for which God produced humanity, was nothing less than that man should share in the very divine life of his God. Your Father watched with the joy of a child as he saw his own children being raised to maturity by their guardians. Just as he once nurtured these guardian angels himself. How his heart was shattered at the downfall of man and woman. How he is still anguished.”

“Yet your God has hope. I tell you that God’s plan for divine union with man and woman will go forward as planned from all eternity. But how will sinful humanity attain communion with God? Such a task would require a Messiah, unlike any imagined.”

“Let us continue. Before the fall, Lucifer had virtues equal to the Son of Man, the only thing he lacked was divine status. You know him only as a demon. But in his maturity, I loved him as a brother. In the communion that was to be offered, he would have shared in the Divine nature. It was for this destiny that all God’s children were created.”³

have viewed submission to a human Christ as being beneath his dignity. Satan was willing to take on humanity as slaves however.

³ The idea is that Jesus Christ was intended from eternity to enact communion with humanity (CCC 398, Mt 25:34), but due to original sin he first had to remediate sin into virtue, then make communion as planned. Since sin was never part of God’s plan, Jesus Christ was not planned as a redemption for sin (sin was never intended), but as God’s instrument of communion. Communion via Christ was not devised by God because of original sin, but proceeded in spite of it.

“Perhaps the evil that Lucifer dwelled upon corrupted his logic. If Lucifer could snare the man and woman, and the other angels by evil, he would be cast out of the kingdom — but also take creation with him. Perhaps he was willing to do this.”

“He did not foresee the redemption, in which what he stole would be taken from him. He did not foresee that all goodness, which he had abandoned, would be reclaimed by the Father, leaving behind only Hell. The goodness that he thought he thieved was held in his hand, but not his heart, and in the end all goodness would find its home in Heaven, leaving him with nothing.⁴ Whatever his plan was, it was unworkable.”

“Friends, let us speak no more of evil, but of love. Help me in the redemption, make acts of selflessness. In doing so, you will draw closer to the Father and his providence. You are in better safety when you act selflessly within the Father, than if you were surrounded by a legion of soldiers. Therefore have no fear of the evil of each day, and do not worry of what tomorrow may bring. If your pilgrimage on earth ends unexpectedly, why be saddened. If you live your days as Messiah, redeeming souls by acts of faith and virtue you shall not even lose your life, but effortlessly continue it in paradise.”

Everyone was exhausted in spirit after the discussion of the fall. Jesus, and all the disciples needed some time alone, and the prophet lead the pilgrims to the next village. Everybody sorted out the lesson as they walked.

Travelers could stay in unused fields near the road in many villages. These public fields were marked by fire pits and other such utilities built by those using them. The land might belong to the king, the village, the synagogue, or an individual. These public fields were not taxed, so it was attractive for an owner to allow a marginally profitable field to be used in this way. Public fields were often located a few miles outside of villages, or between villages, this kept nighttime strangers to a minimum in the villages sponsoring the fields. The ownership arrangement also allowed the owner, or more usually the village elders to evict any unwanted field guests. The police force enforcing such a decision were the villagers themselves if it came to that.

⁴ When Lucifer corrupted man and woman, Hell did not yet exist. This novel proposes that Lucifer knew he would be separated from God by his actions, but he thought he could then dwell in evil pleasure in his separated kingdom of good and evil. This separated world of good and evil is our current world. Lucifer did not foresee that God would redeem humanity from evil and take it into his very divine person, leaving Lucifer only a corrupt universe, (Mt 8:29).

The village of Baca, where the pilgrims were to spend the night, had two wells and two night corrals, one walled of stone for sheep and goats, and a second taller one made of wood slats for larger cattle and camels. The fenced corral also had stakes to tie down the aggressive bulls, or the cows in estrus, both of whom would try to wander away. The sheep and goat corral held the one or two that were owned by each family for wool, milk and meat. Larger herds had a full time shepherd who used his own corral, and not the village corral.

If a family did not want to keep their animals inside their home, they could use the community corral. Each family using the corral took the night shift on a rotating basis. A family took the watch for the entire night. The family was free to arrange the watch in any way, but they were responsible for a corral during hours of darkness. Men, women, and older children would stand watch and a light sitting sleep was permitted according to circumstances and the judgment of the watch man.

Feeding arrangements varied by village. In some villages the watchman would lead the herd out at first light to graze until noon, then return them to the corral for pick up, and go about his own trade. Water for sheep and villagers came from one of the two wells. The two wells were used not because there was an abundance of water, but because there was not. The wells would alternate in use, the other being charged while the first was in use. During a drought, the villagers sometimes had to go on a sort of rolling rationing, whereby the day was divided into time slots for a certain portion of the village to use the well. This prevented the well from being exhausted by a large morning draw of all the villagers.

There was always more to do than time to do it all. Sunset was a blessing, in that most work had to cease. Many men worked both a trade and a field, and the women saw to the children and their schooling. Most Jewish women could read and write, and they used clay tablets to teach the letters and numbers to their children. More advanced learning was available, but not in every village and it did cost.

The glory of a woman was her children. Children of virtue were a crown of virtue for the mother herself. Happiness was also found in being a dutiful wife to a caring husband. Just as a man found joy in constructing a house, or a table, or in making a successful purchase or harvest; a woman found satisfaction in constructing happiness in her home, in building a family of love and bonded functioning. She was responsible for

the highest task, that of forming children of decency, respect, and reverence, and in forming a husband of virtue by her example and gentle admonition. A woman of moral authority was incontestable by any person.

Jesus often spoke of such women having a standing before God equal to the prophets who spoke of the virtues that these women made real. He also spoke to the situation of children who rejected the faith. When this was brought to him as a problem or a question, he would question the parent, who was usually a mother and counsel her accordingly. It was usually the case that a parent speaking of a child straying in faith or morals, had a sound sense of faith and morals himself or herself. In these cases, little reform of the house or family was needed, and Jesus would counsel hope, prayer and perseverance. He was of the opinion that if a person attained Heaven in the end, it was a successful life whatever else occurred.

For those needing to put their house in order, his response always required the elimination of harmful associations and activities, and a return to a structured life centered around the Law of Moses, and daily moral and vocational duties. In the case of adult children he would recommend perseverance in prayer, hope, and works of charity and mediation done for the purpose of the child, noting that God was very much aware the complexities of various family situations.

All in all, they had a good life. It was paced and familiar, but with variations of events, some welcome, some not. The villagers were all relatives by blood, with several interconnected family lines in each village. Wives were usually taken from one's own village or a nearby village. The sons and daughters of Israel even formed villages within non-Jewish cities.

The people of Israel made due without many of the future privileges: rights of man and woman, legal protection and redress, a vote in government, social assistance. Yet in a life measured by happiness attained, they were as successful as many who would have these future innovations. The happiest among them were those who cultivated the life of the spirit, and did not give undue concern to the passing things of their pilgrimage in this life.

In the village of Baca, a woman approached Jesus and bowed to him. Keeping her head low, she began to speak of her son who had died, she was crying but told her

story saying, “Lord, my son has died, and the God of Jacob did not allow him to live. The rabbis speak of health and prosperity to those who follow the Law of Moses. I have always adhered to the Law, and gone beyond in works of charity and compassion, yet my son was not given health. Will you restore him to me Lord?”

Jesus was moved by her request, and said to her, “Woman, I know of your good faith, now believe me that your son is already restored. He lives with the Father in glory, and awaits you to join him. It is you who will be restored to him.”

“Woman, it would almost be an evil if I were to remove him from paradise and return him to the earth. I am sorry, but it will not be.”

“I will give you something much better however, an assignment. Follow me as my disciple. Do it here and now in Baca’s village. Work by faith in perfecting yourself, and bring many with you, and pray always for your son, and all others. The most perfect prayer is peace of soul, brought on by lifting it from the worry and sin of the world and resting in God. This perfection is not denied anyone because of accidents of birth or circumstances. Soon you will hear of the New Covenant of the Messiah, it will be brought again to your village by disciples much like yourself.”

“Be assured that your son is helping you and waiting for you to join him in paradise, but you must first complete your life here as ordained by the Father. Now go in peace.”

Later that day a similar situation occurred. A woman asked Jesus to heal her daughter who was near death.

Jesus looked inward, then spoke, “Woman your daughter will be cured of her affliction. For your part you must not believe any illusions, rather believe in the Son of Heaven.” Jesus then walked away.

The pilgrims left the village and Jesus called John that they might speak. Jesus spoke saying, “Return to the village, and to the woman who asked that her daughter be healed. You will know their home because of the mourners outside. Explain to the mother that her daughter is in paradise, healed of every affliction and never to suffer again. Tell her to put her own affairs in order because she will soon join her daughter in the glory of paradise.”

“If she accuses God or Messiah of false hope in healing, remain with her until she accepts it in understanding and in faith. No person really dies, and her faith will be rewarded forever.”

John returned as instructed and stayed with the woman until her own peaceful entry into paradise.

The pilgrims were in central Galilee, home ground for Jesus. Jesus and the disciples had spent weeks on mission, but now the training was directed towards the disciples themselves. The group was there for instruction and practice in discipline and prayer; of centering on the Father, and stripping of noise and concerns. Jesus had ordered all the food be given away, they had only a small amount of water, which was now consumed.

The group numbered fourteen; Jesus, ten apostles, Suzanna, Mary of Magdala, and Dismas. Their night march through the hill country of Galilee had shaken off pursuers. He had also put the word out that his next appearance would be in Sepphoris, a week hence, and had sent all the others to that city.

They arrived on the west base of Mt. Tabor an hour after sunrise. Jesus made no camp, but dispersed the disciples to the hills for fasting and prayer, with instructions to reassemble at the base of Mt. Tabor at sunrise on the fifth day. He further instructed them saying, “Go out among the hills for prayer and fasting. Do not concern yourself with anything but the Father, he knows what you need even before you ask, he will supply you with all you require. King David was more united by desire and will to his mother as a dependent infant, than as a self supporting warrior. So too must you rely on your God. Know that your greatest requirement is not food or water at your convenience, but to advance in spirit.”

“In your thoughts, consider the purpose of your life, and how you may attain fullness of this purpose. Do not spend long hours in sleep. Do not think of the future or the past. This is not the time to speak to others. Seek solitude that you may be only with the Father.”

Jesus stopped speaking and surveyed the disciples to gauge their understanding. He then completed their orders, “Return here at sunrise on the fifth day. Go now.”

Jesus retained Peter, James, John and the two women. He instructed Peter and James to make their retreat, but return at noon on the fourth day. Peter and James left, and the remaining four; Jesus, John, and the two women made their way up Tabor.

Jesus knew Mt. Tabor well, it was five miles east of Nazareth and he had climbed it often. He found the summit inspiring, the height and the expanse on all sides was conducive to thoughts of Heaven. It helped to put this life in proper perspective.

The four climbed half way and stopped. Jesus spoke to Suzanna and Mary telling them that in the kingdom of God, there was no disadvantage in being a daughter of Abraham. In this life, women counted for little — for that matter, most men also. But this made their faith and perseverance all the more valuable. The women smiled when Jesus told them that the Father had saved his finest creation for last.

The four were always within earshot of one another, but solitude was the arrangement. Suzanna and Mary found it better to remain as one, but engaged in no chit-chat. The fasting retreat could not be forced. The purpose was not to read a commentary, or to make plans for a mission, or even to fast — that was the means.

Jesus was a master of the fasting retreat. He would do nothing at first thought. If he wanted to pray, he would not. He would let prayer find him, and then pray as it found him. No self contaminated his will, the Father would see to everything, and not necessarily as he might have planned it. The fasting could not be a matter of strength of self will — of pushing ahead, of being stronger than thirst or hunger. Such a mindset would indeed cultivate a stronger self will...and defeat the purpose of the fast.

The fasting heightened the senses and the spirit. It lifted one out of a local satisfaction, a self satisfaction. If one was able to forego thought of food, other worldly concerns were more easily subdued. With such fertile ground, free of weeds and ready for planting, thoughts pertaining to the life of the spirit came almost on their own.

Fasting was not difficult for most people, after two missed meals the stomach stopped complaining and strength was regained from reserves. Few in Israel had never missed a day of meals.

There was no report from the other disciples, and none was expected. It rained on the second and fourth days. Everybody in Israel had at one time or another collected

rain water by spreading their cleanest garment over scrub brush, then wringing the water out.

At noon on the fourth day Peter and James returned as instructed. Jesus ascended the mountain with the five disciples. Half way up, Mary grew faint. Jesus asked Suzanna to stay with her, and continue their ascent later if able. At the summit, the three men found suitable areas for prayer. All four became drowsy, Jesus stood and moved about as needed to remain alert, the other three were now asleep. Jesus assumed a kneeling position that required some effort to maintain, and prayed psalms and centering words — “Father...Father...God my Father.” He then sang the psalms from the summit, the women below were privileged to hear him. The women had plans to complete the climb...after the sun had moderated a bit. They actually were slowly ascending, stopping for prayer sessions, and meditating on the vista, which was magnificent.

Jesus became ecstatic. He was integrated with the Father to a degree that all thought and all will was a sharing in the Father. He was aware of none of this, only of the Father. Jesus was not aware of the touch of the ground, or of his own being. This sharing with the unapproachable light of God, shone from his face and garments, which became as the sun. Jesus shared with those others, who shared the common will of the Father, Moses and Elijah stood before him. It was in truth more amazing that Jesus was not *always* in physical ecstasy, as his being was always and fully united to the Divinity.

All this was seen by John who was awakened by the great light. John shielded his eyes, and with effort was able to see the three persons within the light. He kicked Peter who was behind him, and moved to his brother James to awaken him also. The three bowed before the figures of light, observed and prayed that their lives be spared. Jesus looked over at them and said something that caused Moses and Elijah to turn and look also.

A cloud enveloped the summit, and then a voice spoke from the cloud, it was too great to be human, it was loud as thunder but not angry. The voice said, “*This is my beloved Son, listen well to him.*” When the cloud had left, Moses and Elijah were gone, and Jesus alone remained. Peter ran to the master and exclaimed, “Lord, it is fortunate that we are here. We shall build three shelters, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah!”

Jesus was still turned perpendicular to the apostles; he smiled and turned his head to them saying, “Moses, Elijah and your Master have chosen a better dwelling place, and it shall not be taken from us.”

Peter estimated that they had slept for several hours, as the sun was nearing the horizon. Suzanna and Mary appeared, and were afraid that the cloud of thunder might have harmed the four men. Jesus asked the women if they had been sleeping. Both assured the master that they had not. Peter, James and John looked at the master’s feet and eagerly awaited the next topic.

The next topic *was* sleep. Jesus thanked and congratulated them on a most successful retreat, and told them that it was complete, and they should use the night for sleep and to examine the lessons learned in the retreat. They were to spend the night on the summit. Jesus kicked away a few stones on an otherwise smooth area and lay down to sleep. The two women likewise cleared an area for needed sleep. Peter, James and John remained wide awake until the second hour past the mid of night.

Sunrise of the fifth day found thirteen of the pilgrims reassembled at the west base of Mt. Tabor. A well traveled road ran north and south along the west base, and the group had so far completely avoided the usual crowds that encircled Jesus. The pilgrims were waiting on the missing member, who was Jesus.

The disciples were joyous and energized, and were celebrating with whatever they had, in the absence of food John was giving haircuts. Andrew was walking about stroking his newly short hair, undecided as to whether he liked it. The other men told him he was a handsome “Roman”, and Suzanna said that she loved Romans as well as Jews.

John was now using the blade to cut Dismas’ hair. Dismas wanted it cut to the bottom of the ears, “but not too short.” Immediately after giving these instructions, he reversed them saying, “...but not too long.” This was his half-hearted attempt to overcome his former hatred of the Romans, by taking on their short haired appearance.

John used a small curved utility blade, and it seemed to hold an edge very well. Dismas also agreed to a beard trim and John held a piece of leather in the opposite hand to cut the beard against, then shaved the skin itself of the remaining hair.

Jesus finally arrived in camp, none the worse for wear of course. He looked about, counted thirteen, and smiled upon seeing the haircutting operation. Dismas was

done, and he looked very much like a Roman. John asked Jesus if he would like his hair trimmed, Jesus said that he would appreciate a trim.

Jesus gave no specific orders and John cut Jesus' hair in the same manner as he had cut Dismas' hair. When finished John asked Jesus if he would like his beard *shaved*. Jesus said that he wanted a trim only, to which John the theologian replied, "Your beard is very attractive master, and I am not surprised that you are attached to it." Jesus said nothing, and John began to trim the beard as instructed. A few minutes into the operation, Jesus said, "John, shave it off — the beard."

John hid his glee, and began to carefully stroke the blade into the beard, using a bit of overlooked olive oil as lubricant. The others satisfied their curiosity by finding excuses to look in the direction of Jesus, but said nothing. Sometime later, Jesus rubbed his bare cheeks and said, "The student teaches the master, and the man becomes a boy."

He turned, looking at those who were staring at him, then broke into a large smile, which all others were happy to share. Jesus' beard hair was identifiable by its red tint, and some of the disciples attempted to disguisedly gather it as a relic.

Jesus' final comment on the subject was, "Wait until my mother sees me."

Jesus and all the pilgrims were in high spirits. He told them to proceed directly to Sepphoris and he would join them in a few days. Upon arrival they had standing instructions to preach the good news, heal the sick, and cast out devils.

The disciples walked west to the road that passed Mt. Tabor on that side. They contacted a large group on the road who seemed to be looking for the prophet. Peter told the group that the prophet was not with them and that he would next appear in Sepphoris, and they were traveling there to meet him. One man in particular wished to speak with the prophet to ask him to heal his son of a devil who tormented him and caused the boy to thrash, scream, and even overpower others. The boy was with the group, being held by two men, and was not happy about it.

Peter told the father that they had the authority of the prophet to drive out devils, and offered to do so. All the disciples had seen Jesus drive out devils many times, the exorcisms took so many forms that ritual or particular form did not seem to be a factor. Peter approached the boy and reached out to place his hands on the boy's head. The boy lunged to bite and scraped Peter's hand with his teeth. Peter jumped back frightened then

angry. He shouted, “In the name of the Messiah of Israel, I command you to leave this boy!” The boy laughed.

Again, Peter spoke loudly, “Demon leave him now!” The same results were obtained. Peter called all the disciples and said, “Now, everyone will pray to my lead until the Evil One leaves.”

Peter began, and the disciples joined in chanting, “In the name of the Messiah, leave now...In the name of the Messiah, leave now...” And so it was repeated.

Some minutes passed and the boy heckled his assailants from time to time, but remained solidly in place. The perseverance of the exorcism team was admirable, or so thought Jesus who approached the engaged group from behind and placed his hand on Peter’s shoulder. Peter yelled and turned, relieved that it was the master. The disciples stopped their chant and waited for Jesus to speak. The boy’s father was the first to speak saying, “I begged your disciples to cast out the demon, but they cannot.”⁵

Jesus looked askance at the disciples and said, “How long am I to put up with you? Bring the boy here.” The boy was brought the few steps to the Messiah, who rebuked the demon saying, “Evil One...leave him.”⁶

⁵ Matthew chapter 17 tells of the Mt. Tabor expedition, and of the disciples’ attempt to drive out demons afterwards.

⁶ Demonic possession is a case where a devil directly controls a person’s actions, without consent of the victim. Demonic possession is not in itself a sinful state. The gospel gives examples of devils causing illness in persons. Possession is similar but the illness extends to a person’s (normally willed) actions, such as speech and thought. All of the victims faculties are possessed, except for the will, which seems to be suspended during the possession episode. Expulsion of the devil from the body must be made by Christ in person (the faithful), or by office (ordained priests). Many lay saints have expelled devils, and the office of the priesthood may use the rite of exorcism. The demons are at the command of Christ, because they are not bound to the victims moral will. If they were, the victim would be required to make a parallel moral effort.

In this novel scene, Jesus says that *prayer and fasting* are required for a successful exorcism. This is the wording of some very early bibles which present this gospel episode (Mt 17:19-21). The fasting and prayer provide a deeper participation in Christ (by denial of self, then positive union), which in turn provides the authority of Christ needed for the exorcism. The rite of exorcism provides the authority of the office of Christ, even if the priest himself is in mortal sin.

It is sometimes argued the demonic possessions that Jesus exorcised were really cases of mental illness. The reality is that mental illness, and all illness is a situation of demonic influence or (rarely) of demonic possession. The devils cannot repent and will forever corrupt goodness into evil, and disorder in creation retains a link to these devils. Even unwilling disorder retains this link, and the Gospel speaks of it on several occasions.

In Luke 13:10-16 Jesus attributes a crippling illness to the Devil. In Luke 11:14 Jesus drives out a demon causing muteness. Other examples are the many instances of demons protesting as they are removed by Jesus as he heals an illness, (Luke 4:40-41). The apostle Peter was surprised to learn that even disordered

The boy was thrown from the restraining hands and collapsed on the ground, moving slowly, then slowly recovering.

Jesus looked at the apostles and said, "This type requires prayer and fasting."

James said, "Master we have just completed five days of fasting and prayer."

Jesus replied, "So you have."

Jesus and company were happy to accept water and food from the larger group. Both groups then went their ways. Jesus walked with the disciples and explained further their failure to cast out the demon saying, "To attain to the authority needed to cast out demons, you must attain to the Father such as the prophet John did. You need not dwell in the desert as a solitary, but you must have a will solitary in its desire for the virtues of the Father, and for the Father himself. John cast out demons because he had no common desires with the fallen angels. A house not divided cannot fall, to ruin the house of the demons one must separate in total from them and even from the smallest mutual desire."

John said, "Master are we demons, unable to separate from the house of the Devil?"

"Jesus said, "No you are not demons, but until you attain the perfection of John, you will in some small degree, share in the interests of the Evil One. Any such self interest is a hindering imperfection. The crime of the Evil One was, and is self interest. *Self will is separation from God.* In the new kingdom you will be called to deny not only self will, but your very self. Those who will not, shall not share in God."

"No you are not demons, yet any self interest is not inspired by your God, but by your fallen nature. Think of a shared business partnership, the partnership may have two, four, or twelve partners, and what they all have in common is the business. Like the business partnership, twelve persons may share in the disease of soul called self interest. A particular self interest is common to all who share in it, and it is not an inert thing, it harms the soul of everyone who shares in it."

thought retains this link (Mt 16:23). The first sin was not made by Adam or Eve, but by the Devil lying and tempting Adam and Eve into sin, and every sin since retains this connection.

In the case of a medical cure of an illness (by either Jesus or modern medicine), the specific disorder has no willed or moral component. A cure is only a matter of a physical cure, or a physical miracle. There is no moral will to reform, and once the mechanics of the cure are made, the devil is no longer bound to the illness. This is shown in the several cases of devils observed leaving a cured victim. Where there is moral opposition to a cure, Jesus was unable to make it, (Mk 6:4,5).

“Do not seek food, shelter and safe circumstances because you desire them, seek these things because your Father desires them for you. These are legitimate things, which you should obtain by God’s will, not your own. How much less should you seek illegitimate self interest: theft, adultery, intoxication, cursing, irreverence, violence.”

“I tell you who ever does not deny father and mother, home and business and even his own self, cannot be my disciple. Renounce interest, ownership, and title in all these and direct your will to God alone. God will immediately return all these things to your stewardship, and then take an even greater concern in these shared interests.”

“David the king was of a will similar to that of the prophet John. He had much, but was bound to nothing but the God of Israel. David did grow slack, and that is a danger of position and wealth. John was privileged in that he faced no such danger.”

“Do you see, that a five day fast from food is only a beginning. The required fast might last years, and involve discipline in many areas of life...and the fast is only preparatory work for the prayer required.”

Jesus expected perhaps some rolling eyes at this point in the extended explanation, but there were none, the disciples were interested and Jesus continued, “The fasting I speak of frees the soul from the snares of the Devil, but the prayer will raise the spirit to God, the denial of self clears the way, the incorporation of self into God completes the way.”

“Indeed, all that attunes the spirit to God is prayer — joy, reverence, humility, scripture and psalms, virtue of every sort, and of course prayer of word and thought. The Father invites you to share in his very life, and sends his Son among humanity to make it so? The Son shares in the life of the Father, and all who share in the life of the Son will also share in the life of the Father.”

“You should leap and shout for joy, and give no quarter to the enemy whatever the cost. You should elevate your every act to one of prayer, that your continual prayer may raise your entire life to that of God. Finally you should direct all these to the Messiah who is God among you as man. You will become Messiah yourself, and share in the Divine One.”

The disciples were stunned. Everything of the last two years had been suddenly and coherently assembled in their minds, and their spirit. The law of the temple suddenly seemed insufficient. To work exhaustively toward perfection of ever smaller detail, had no appeal when set next to the promise of the Messiah.

Jesus took his leave saying, “I am going my way. You are to continue to Sepphoris where I will join you.” Jesus tugged on John and said, “Come with me.” The two left the road, heading west to Nazareth.

Three hours later Jesus was in Nazareth, he knocked and entered the home of Mary, his mother. The dwelling was empty, it appeared that she had just stepped out. Jesus walked toward the well and saw some women drawing water. Mary stood back a bit waiting. Jesus continued past her, then turned to face her. Mary’s eyes grew large, her mouth went briefly slack and open, she examined the beardless man in front of her and smiled in extreme happiness. She said only, “Son!”

Mary, mother of Jesus was in her thirty-ninth year, she had given birth to Jesus at sixteen years of age, but that was common. Joseph was nineteen years when they were married. Mary looked no older than her son, and as the years progressed she would retain her youthful appearance.⁷ Beginning with the ministry of Jesus, the people of Israel had a love-hate relationship with Mary. Those who opposed Jesus were not kindly disposed to her, but her spouse the Holy Spirit protected her always.

Opinion in Israel was increasingly polarized. As Jesus entered his second then third year of ministry, opinion was that much more confirmed per each individual. Those seeing Jesus as the fulfillment of the Law of Moses, were given another year of such reasons, as were those claiming Jesus to be a heretic Law breaker.

The temple authorities largely objected to Jesus, while most of the common citizens admired him. In Nazareth, this admiration was degraded with skepticism because Jesus was well known from his boyhood as son of Mary and Joseph, and not the Messiah of Israel.

Jesus, Mary and John left the well and returned home. Jesus had stopped with some disciples in Nazareth previously, and Mary remembered John very well. The three went to the roof, where they sat and talked.

⁷ Being free from original sin, by a special grace from God, Mary was not subject to the effects of original sin — corruption of body and soul. She would have grown to her best form at some age, perhaps 33 years and retained this state, not being allowed to corrupt in any way. Her avoidance of physical death is simply an extension of this fundamental incorruptibility. The teaching that Mary never suffered from original or subsequent sin was infallibly declared by the Pope. Aging is a form of corruption of the body and was disallowed by this teaching.

Mary said, “I saw Elizabeth. She thanks you for being in attendance at the death of Ruth. Ruth was waiting upon you before she left this life. My sister says that you arrived on the day of her passing, the first day of the fifth month, and just an hour before she passed. You know that she thought very well of you. Thank you son, you made her last day on earth one of joy.”

Jesus replied simply, “Yes, mother.”

Mary and her son visited until after noon, John listened with joy to their simple and uplifting conversation. In Galilee common topics of conversation included Herod Antipas, taxes, foreigners, Judaea and Romans. These were completely absent among Jesus and Mary, they spoke mostly of relatives and in positive fashion — Ruth, Elizabeth, Joseph of happy memory, and others. Mary recalled events from the younger years of Jesus.

Jesus spoke at length of his time in the Essene monastery, and mentioned that he had been dismissed so to better complete his mission. Mary made little comment, and maintained an optimistic composure. Mary seemed to become aware of something. Jesus continued talking, but slower and he followed Mary as she turned about and walked to the edge of the roof. Just as Jesus looked over the edge, a knock at the door was heard below. Looking up were Beulah and some others. Beulah smiled, bowed to Jesus and said, “Mary, may I speak with your son, please.”

Mary replied, “Yes, Beulah, of course.”

Beulah had come to ask for the prayers of Jesus for her sister who was ill. Jesus asked her sister’s name and assured Beulah that her sister would be in his prayers. He then turned to the others and asked if there was anything that he could do for them.

A heavy and indecisive silence followed. One of the villagers said, “Are you the Messiah?”

Jesus replied, “The Messiah will reward the faith of Israel. He will cure the sick, raise the dead and cast out demons.”

Again, a villager said, “We know you. You are the son of Joseph and Mary, and your brothers and sisters live in Galilee.”⁸ You sold yourself as a servant and now you claim to be the Messiah.”

⁸ The Aramaic word that was used for brother, was also used for cousin. Male siblings of an extended family were all considered brothers. Mary gave birth only to Jesus. She became spouse to the Holy Spirit at the annunciation and conception of Jesus, and would not violate her marriage by having relations with any other.

Jesus turned to Mary and said, “Mother, I have business elsewhere, I will return at sundown, and I leave John with you.” Jesus walked out of Nazareth. Jesus spent the remainder of the day wandering and thinking. He was perturbed at himself that the villagers had driven him from his afternoon with his mother. It would not happen again, and he would have his day with Mary, he might not have many more...in this life.

Jesus had made it a discipline to keep a certain distance from his mother. Abida had given this advice at the monastery, and it was sound. Abida heard the frequent praise that Jesus had for his mother, and reminded Jesus that he had entered into the pursuit of perfection upon becoming an Essene. He further instructed that Mary was not God, and that Jesus should devote all his discretionary efforts, desire, and thoughts to God alone. This detachment extended even to family.

It was a terrible privilege that Jesus had taken — perfection of soul.⁹ From then on, he called her “woman” instead of mother. Jesus recalled a wedding they both attended, he had dutifully refused to consider a superfluous request. Mary had calmly replied to Jesus, “Do whatever He tells you to do.” Jesus knew that “He”, usually meant the Holy Spirit. In the end, Jesus did as “He” instructed. Mary was always right.

Jesus returned just after sunset. His mother asked if everything went well. Jesus said that he had been walking in the hills. He did in fact come across some people at the well, but they were wary of Jesus in the same manner as most others in Nazareth.

Jesus kept it positive, and said that he and John were expected soon in Sepphoris, and they would leave at noon tomorrow. Jesus had purchased a flask of wine, bread, olives, honey and dates, he had also gathered a bouquet of flowers for his mother. He felt it was a justified variance in the discipline that Abida had assigned him. The three stayed up visiting until after midnight, it was the most beautiful evening Jesus had ever lived.

⁹ This novel proposes that the human soul of Jesus grew in virtue during his life, according to his free will. Any act of Jesus was guaranteed to be sinless, but not necessarily the fullness of perfection. Consider that his actions as an infant had not attained the perfection of his actions as an adult. He might also have refused to drink the communion cup, and been blameless, but by doing so, he advanced his virtue of love based self-sacrifice. The spiritual exercises (prayer, fasting) that Jesus undertook were not of neutral effect, but necessarily advanced his human soul.

The following morning, the three visited relatives, then Jesus and John set off to Sepphoris at noon as planned. All the emotions Jesus felt were heightened — hope in the New Covenant, and disappointment at the continual rejection by the temple. He thought of the legions of new disciples, many spoke to him of an expanse of soul that they had not experienced until now. The high priest continued in indecision; but it was more than indecision. The temple did not usually denounce the many false Messiahs, they simply withheld confirmation. The high priest was implicitly saying that there was no Messiah yet in Israel. Jesus must take the next step, he would institute the New Covenant without the high priest. He would do it at the upcoming Passover holy day.

As Jesus and John approached Sepphoris, recollection of his boyhood memories of Sepphoris were inevitable. Joseph and Jesus had often worked in the city; when he was ten years old, hundreds of Zealots in Galilee had been crucified in and around Sepphoris.¹⁰ Joseph, Jesus and all in the city had been forced to walk among the crosses as a warning. Jesus had then thought that if he were to die on a Roman cross, he would bend the wooden arms with his own, and reach down and embrace those who killed him.

In Sepphoris Jesus taught and healed. Sepphoris was typical of the towns of Galilee, half the population was Jewish and the other half were non-Jewish natives. The non-Jewish population had immigrated from the region, mostly from the coast during the Babylonian exile. Also included were Romans, Egyptians, Syrians, and the children of slaves from Spain, Gaul, Africa and Persia. Many of these Gentiles were in attendance at the appearances of the prophet.

In Sepphoris, a Pharisee asked Jesus concerning his disciples saying, “Who are these people who follow you?”

Jesus answered, “They are priests of the New Covenant and they will save many souls from perdition.”

¹⁰ In the year 6AD, a Zealot uprising in Galilee resulted in the crucifixion of 2000 rebels around Sepphoris. Sepphoris is just five miles from Nazareth, and Jesus would have been about ten years old.

The Pharisee observed the women in the group, and Jesus said to him, “Yes, those women are also priests of the New Covenant. All who resemble me share in the one priesthood of the Messiah.”¹¹

The Pharisee said that women do not resemble men, to which Jesus answered, “These men and women resemble me in body and soul. We are one body. All this will happen very soon, when the new covenant is made between God and man. The Messiah is to be all men and women who constitute the Messiah. The body of the Messiah is the assembly of the faithful of the New Covenant. In this way, do all men and all women have resemblance to the Messiah.”

“This one body shall be one priesthood, and those making restitution shall not be lesser than those offering this fruit of the vine. Which is easier to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven’, or to say ‘Rise and walk’? When the Messiah who will be many, commands a cripple to rise and walk, it is because he has reformed the evil that causes the illness, and this is the more difficult task. The Messiah may delegate others to offer this forgiveness, but do not despise those who make such restitution. Indeed this priesthood is common to all who are the Messiah.”

“All who live as the Messiah also resemble the Messiah in spirit. The most profound sharing in me is a sacrificial love. This love is not a product of office or gender, but of will and may be perfected by anyone wishing to do so. In the Covenant of Moses, the priest was superior to the lamb of sacrifice. This shall not be so in the New Covenant. The sacrifice shall not be lesser than he who offers the sacrifice.”

“Many of the priests of Israel are righteous and humble, yet not all. Your calling as a priest of the temple is of no credit to you in itself. Your credit will be assigned by your action in the priesthood that is common to all the faithful. Yes, you too have this assignment, and this assignment is to make reparation by humility for what was lost by pride. Speak of this common priesthood to others, and do not teach the faithful that they

¹¹ Christian theology acknowledges one priesthood of the faithful, a priest being a mediator between God and man. Jesus is a priest mediator and the entire body of Christ is likewise this mediator. Functions within this one priesthood vary. The ordained ministry is tasked with sacramental application of the restorative mediation of the common priesthood.

“These men and women resemble me in body and soul”, is an explanation of Pope Paul VI’s idea that the priesthood necessarily resembles Christ spiritually and physically. The physical resemblance is that Christ is constituted of all men and women who are members of the body of Christ. See also Appendix, “Christology”.

are only spectators of the sacrifice. To do so will produce many spectators, but few mediators of the evil in your world.”

Before the Pharisee could object, Jesus gave further explanation, “Do not be offended at what I say. Consider the army of David, or of the Romans, it is a body of men, but there is one will, that of the commander, it is he who directs the many arms and legs and even the thoughts and will of the many. So shall it be with the Messiah, many shall be the one body of the Messiah and there shall be one will.”

The Pharisee left in anger. John then asked how one person might be made from many persons. Jesus answered, “John, move your right arm.”

It was done and Jesus said, “Move your left arm.” John was now flapping with both arms.

“John, your mind is thinking two thoughts at once, the first moved your right arm and the second moved your left arm, and if you were to move your right leg, you would be thinking three thoughts at once. But rest now and listen.”

“Your one body has two arms, why not three; it thinks two thoughts, why not ten? Why not ten minds thinking ten thoughts, so long as they do not conflict? Instead of five senses perceiving the world, why not five times fifty senses perceiving the world? You see, hear, speak and think all at the same instant, but there is only one person who wills all this.¹²

“Why then is it impossible that under the direction of one will, there be a thousand arms, and a thousand thoughts and observations, what a magnificent person that would be. And what if all these arms and ears occupied more than one body? One will controlling one body that was made of many individual bodies.”

“John, if you were to touch your finger to many different places on your body, you would be aware of many points of perception. Now, the Messiah in Heaven will consist of the many who each have awareness, but no longer will a single awareness equate to a single person. Just as you have many points of awareness, so too will the

¹² In this life, the legal definition of a single person is a single will. Medically conjoined persons may be considered one or two persons according to the number of independent wills. In the final perfection of the body of Christ, each individual will retain his free will, but will be considered a member of the larger single person of Christ, because he or she will share in the absolute will of God. According to Catholic dogma, Jesus had one human will, and one divine will, and was a single divine person, see Appendix, “Christology”.

body of the Messiah in Heaven have many aware individuals as part of his single person.”

“John, what is the higher existence for a hair on your head, to be a single hair, or to be a member of your person? So too shall all individuals who become Messiah, have a higher mode of existence, and it is this higher mode by which they will be acknowledged. In God there are three individuals, yet one God, and it is because God is their highest mode of life. All persons are now asked to set aside what is lesser, to obtain a higher mode of life. This is the good news which you are to bring to others.”

The pilgrims left Galilee, and traveled north as far as Sidon, they then retraced their route south to Joppa, and turned east toward Jerusalem.

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Teachings I

The Mind of God

Teachings on God

Jesus observed some people entering a synagogue for evening services and others remaining outside to attend to their business. He taught those around him saying, “Those persons entering to worship do not benefit God, rather they benefit themselves. The Father has no need for worship, it is man who benefits from it. By worshiping the God of Israel, a man unites himself more surely to God.”

“To approve of a person is to reveal one’s own will, we approve of what we would will of ourselves, and every willful act reinforces one’s will. Praise and desire for God is worship that benefits one’s own soul.”

“In the New Covenant, the deeper one shares in the very life of God, the greater he shares in all of God’s virtues: providence, peace, abilities of all sorts, even to the point of prophecy. And in the next life, such people will be rich in the glory of God.”

In a Phoenician city of the coast, Jesus called attention to some people at worship, and asked the apostles, “Do you see those people worshipping their goddess. There is one thing only that attains Heaven, and that is union with the Messiah. Their religion ends in itself. Make certain your religion does not end in itself, do not make the Law of Moses into your end, it must be your means to the Messiah.” ¹

¹ This comment by Jesus speaks of the core problem of unbelief, that a person’s actions and life has its beginning and end only in itself. Faith is essential in that it is a participation in God (by stages); first in the will of God, then in the human nature of God (Jesus) and finally in the divine nature and person of God. At the maximum extent of salvation even sin made by a person of faith will be remediated as virtue by Christ. While the best work done by an antitheist (different than an atheist), cannot be included into Christ. The essential mortal sin is an active opposition of God.

A Greek thinker said to Jesus, “God is all”.

Jesus said, “My friend, you are incorrect, God is not all.” Those around Jesus were surprised at his statement and waited upon him. Jesus said to the Greek, “Sir, you exist, yet you are not God. Some of the philosophers say that God and the world are one, that good and evil both originate in God, such theories are in error.

But know that pantheism was not enough for your God. Omnipotence was insufficient. God became your creator, and your God was no longer the only power...observe the results, but know that the Messiah turns failure into victory. Once every possible redemption has been made by the Son of Redemption, he will hand over everything to the Father. Then God *will* be All, in all. Today it is heresy to say that God is all, in all things; but in the final fulfillment at the end of this age, it will be an error — if that were possible — to say that God is not All, in All.”²

Jesus taught the disciples concerning the Messiah saying, “Do not think that your God contains a heart of stone, like those worshipped by the Romans and Greeks. Your God is like a love smitten woman who foolishly submits to the abuse of her lover, in hopes of a small return on her love.”

“Her heart surpasses her reason, and she is at fault in giving away her heart to every claimed lover. She learns not, but repeats her failed attempts at love. Her daily bread is rejection and jeering, yet her love compels her to love.”

“I tell you truly that love is the greatest commandment. It commands your God even beyond his good judgment, and even unto death.”

Teachings on Prayer

² 1Cor 15:28, “When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.” The maximum interpretation of this is that all persons and things that are free of sin or disorder will be included into the body of Christ — persons, ideas, even the lion who lies down with the lamb. All will exist within Christ and will share in his divinity, Christ will literally be our life and resurrection (Jn 11:25).

Jesus said, "If a man recites a language without knowing what he says, the words are of no value. So too the words of prayer are of no value in themselves. The Devil could pray and it would not rise to Heaven."

"The meaning of your prayer is not length of words, but the will of the words. When you pray, do not use only your words. Use the eyes of your mind to see the peace between neighbors, or your hands uplifted to the Almighty. Use your will to bring joy or tears to your soul as you pray for your intentions."

"Indeed, the very act of making prayer in your busy day is an act of virtue possibly more valuable than the words you speak. The teaching of this is not to denounce the words of prayer, but to make them powerful by the addition of will to word."

A man told Jesus that he felt prayer to be more a labor than a joy, and wondered if he was at fault in his soul.

Jesus answered, "My good man, your attempts at prayer do much good for yourself and others. Consider that man's fallen nature does not easily conform to the virtues of God. Even a person who attains to virtue will suffer from impatience and frivolous thoughts. Prayer is likewise a virtue, and it also has been damaged by the sin of Adam. Therefore do not be amazed that you achieve only partial success in prayer."

"It is not your God who hides from you, but your illness of soul which obscures God. Your God speaks continually to you, but his voice is overwhelmed by the many other things you attune your ears to. You will advance in hearing as you clean the rubbish that encrusts your soul."

"But know that attempts to love God, are never failures, and the least part of such an effort is your own satisfaction. The greatest part is your will directed toward God. Consider that the sin of Adam which plagues our world, was brought about by failure to direct one's will to God. When your prayer is more labor than joy, see your prayer as a work to be done, and not a pleasure to be accepted. Then complete your work of prayer and be satisfied with the unseen results."

Jesus taught the people concerning prayer saying, "All that you do is prayer, or it is a curse. You have no separate life of religion, because your whole life molds your soul and is counted in its entirety by God. So too, you have no separate life of prayer. Every act that advances your soul, or your spirit, or the kingdom of God is your prayer. All that corrupts these things is a curse and it affects both the world and your soul."

Again Jesus taught about prayer saying, "To advance in prayer involves nothing more or less than advancing in soul. The prayer of the prophets was great because they deeply shared in the Father's virtue, hope, and faith; hence they deeply shared in all his attributes and abilities, including those that are called miracles."

"To advance in prayer one must advance in humility, modesty, faith, reverence, patience, fear and love of the Father; moderation and even fasting."

"The desert solitaries often achieve such a union with the God of Israel, because all that is lesser is given no allowance for. Their mind is upon God, and not even upon someone prodding them; their breathing and beat of heart may even be discarded as of less importance, and they are assumed into union with the Father."

"A man or a woman living with family may also attain to such union. Such people are not called to the extremes of life of the solitaries, but they are called to the same perfection of virtue in their own particular lives and duties. The solitaries have no trials of work or family, they must bring trial upon themselves by fasting and solitude. The accidental form of these trials are of no real importance. Their importance is in their fundamental conquest."

"One may advance grade by grade in prayer, but not by the study of prayer, rather by the study of the Messiah. Make this study an imitation of the Messiah, who is of the same spirit as the prophets of Israel. One may start this study at any time, and in any circumstance, and pursue it in all parts of the day."

In Jerusalem, some of the apostles attempted to cast out a demon. The demon would not be removed and instead chased the apostles, who ran to Jesus. Upon

encountering Jesus the demon fell silent and immobile, and then released the woman at the command of Jesus.

The apostles desired to know why they could not cast out the demon, and Jesus told them in reply, “This type requires a great participation in the Father, which is attained by prayer and fasting.”³

“Fast from every self interest. Now, your life must be a pilgrimage to the Father, have no interest in the accidents of life. Now, eat and sleep not because you wish to, but because it is the will of your Father. Now, all that you do unthinkingly, you must do in its best form. Think yourself to be the Messiah and act as he would.”

“The Messiah casts out demons because he is the life of God and all is at his command, even the demons. Do not think this cannot be done, you will work greater wonders than this, and when fully trained the student may be as the master.”

“Thank the master that such good fortune is extended to you, and take full advantage of it.”

Jesus taught the disciples on prayer, “As you enter a house, wish it peace. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; if not, let your peace return to you.”

Jesus taught further saying, “So it is with every prayer and every grace, and every holy act of baptism. God’s gifts are offered, and will build a person if that person is able to accept the gift in his well formed will. At your entry into the kingdom by means of such grace, every gift is offered to you. Few are able to accept them at that time. Most often they are accepted over years as the soul is purged of self.”

“Therefore, do not tire of prayer and acts of selfless virtue, even if you see little result. Learn from the wicked judge who feared neither God, nor man, nor woman. One such woman approached the corrupt judge asking for good judgment. Being a woman — weak and of no influence — she had recourse only to prayer, and she approached the wicked judge in prayer.”

³ Mt 17:19-21, some early Bible manuscripts include “prayer and fasting”, others only “prayer”. The authority to cast out demons is the authority of Christ. One participates in Christ as one eliminates self, and is incorporated into the body of Christ. Fasting in all its forms is denial of self, and prayer in all its forms is positive union.

“The wicked judge took evil joy in denying everyone good judgment, even to those of nobility and influence. But after continued acts of prayer by the woman, the wicked judge grew weak from her assault of virtue. He said to himself, ‘This woman causes me more pain than any man, and I can no longer bear it. I will relieve myself of this burden and grant her wish. I will abandon my claim and be happy with my remaining plunder.’”

“Thus the mild woman obtained in prayer what no great man had been able to obtain. Therefore pray always in great humility.”

Teachings on Salvation

Jesus said, “You see a man not adhering to the Law of Moses, and you consider him a sinner, and you are correct. And as such he is excluded from Heaven. Consider also that every scribe and Pharisee that will not release the Law from his grasp will not enter Heaven until he does so.”

Jesus taught the crowds concerning the Messiah and his work saying, “The Messiah redeems humanity for love, and not out of obligation. Consider that redemption was not offered to the rebellious angels. Judgment was swift, but those angels not rebelling now participate in the divine nature, while those who did rebel have willfully abandoned all goodness. I tell you this goodness will be gathered by the Father and given to any who seek it.”⁴

⁴ “...those angels not sinning, now participate in the divine nature” (2Pet 1:4). That the angels underwent judgment is certain, and there are other certainties linked to judgment. Judgment is really the act of communion that God planned with his creation from all eternity. God unites (divine wedding in Matthew, chapter 22) with all who he can. Those unable to give up their sin are excluded. This is how the good angels were separated from the bad angels. This salvation via union occurred before the birth of Jesus, and was presumably made by the Son of God directly. Since the angels were either entirely good or evil, no purgation was needed and the good angels had immediate “participation in the divine nature”, (2Pt 1:4).

At the end of time, God will attempt union not only with humanity, but with all of creation. Again when God takes into himself all goodness, what remains is all evil, and Hell will then reach its final form. For now the bad angels experience an internal Hell only, and prowl about our world, (Mt 8:29).

Jesus taught on the necessity of belief saying, “You have read the proverb of Solomon, ‘As a man thinks, so he becomes.’ The Messiah can give no better instruction for salvation. To think favorably of an act or a person is to become in spirit that act or person. If a man thinks favorably of evil, he will do evil, then he becomes evil, and in doing so may not attain to salvation.”

“A man who thinks in accordance with the mind of God, becomes like God in will, and attains salvation. But a man should think not only of the virtues of God, but of God himself, that he may become Messiah. If you become Messiah now in spirit, you will become Messiah in body at the resurrection. Believe in me and you will become Messiah and attain your salvation, and this is the necessity of belief.”

On another occasion, Jesus again taught of the necessity of belief saying, “Belief is the way in which any of your works and virtues have meaning before God. If a man refuses to believe, then his works and virtues end in themselves, and cannot find their end in God, or as a Messiah.”

“Belief may be likened to the efforts of a scholar-king, who wished to educate his people, that they might better themselves. The scholar-king taught on a wide range of topics, and his students learned the lessons to greater or lesser degrees. Some students left the kingdom-school altogether. In time, all of the students were called to become courtiers in the king’s own court.” “The king was most pleased, yet he had not forgotten the many students who had left, or had never applied as students. He told his messengers to go through out the kingdom and bring in all who had even the most basic knowledge required to be citizens of his kingdom. Many even had such knowledge without realizing it, and since the knowledge required was of a practical, rather than an academic sort, many otherwise unlearned people rose to great prominence in the kingdom.”

“Some were unable to enter because they remained loyal to opposing teachers, who sought only to ruin the kingdom of the good scholar-king. These people could only watch from beyond the gates and they were tormented by seeing the joy shared in the kingdom.”⁵

⁵ Faith is more than hope in, or acknowledgement of God, it is actual participation in God. St. Thomas Aquinas speaks of knowledge as the union or participation of that known with the knower. When one thinks of

Jesus taught the apostles saying, “Rejoice in your sufferings. In doing so you fill up what is lacking in the afflictions of the Messiah on behalf of his body, who are the faithful.”⁶

That time was before the Holy Spirit had been sent, and the apostles were without understanding. Jesus instructed them further saying, “Many who seek to be Messiah, desire healing and comfort, others want status or influence. The Messiah on earth is a scapegoat for sin. He suffers in body and soul, all the sin of those wishing to be Messiah. But how many of these good people make effort to suffer their imperfections of body and soul into virtue. Therefore I say that the few must make up for the many who will become Messiah.”

a tree, one becomes that tree to some degree. Unlimited participation in a tree is not a human ability, but to some degree the knower's spirit of mind shares in the spirit (immaterial attributes) of the tree.

Science demonstrates that at an atomic, but real level; that which is known is actually sampled, thereby altering both the known and the knower. Belief is the entry point of faith, in which we have knowledge of God. This knowledge affects both God and our self. This basic knowledge is an initial participation in God, (Mt 7:23). As belief is cultivated into greater faith, we participate in more of God's attributes — patience, reverence, chastity, love, etc. Our final participation is in the very divinity of God, (2Pet 1:4).

⁶ These are the words of the apostle Paul in Col 1:24. After his death, the human nature of Jesus was divinized, this is the destiny of all who are members of the body of Christ, and Jesus was no exception. Once divinized, Jesus could no longer have contact with sin, and redemptive mediation of sin on earth is now conducted by the ongoing Christ, that is the body of Christ who is the entire faithful. In making redemptive suffering, Paul completes the mission of the ongoing Christ, which would otherwise be lacking.

Anyone aspiring to the fullness of Christ (as a member of the body of Christ), acts in perfection of sacrificial love, as did Jesus Christ. Any faithful Christian suffers, and in maintaining his faith he mediates the disorders caused by sin, into virtue. The rejoicing that Paul speaks of adds value to the essential remediation of suffering in faith. Several saints have expressed the idea that if ongoing mediation of sin were to stop, God would bring the world to an end (St. Faustina's diary entry 1434).

A related item is the Eucharist, which is the ongoing communion of Jesus Christ with humanity, via bread and wine. Salvation occurs by union with Christ (the body of Christ), and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ reformed sin into (his own) virtue, allowing this union. Strictly speaking the sacrifice of Jesus Christ lacks nothing, but when Paul (or any member of Christ) reforms sin into virtue, it cannot but clear more obstacles of sin, thereby allowing more persons to attain union with Christ, either “...in this world or the next.”, (Mt 12:32).

Involuntary suffering of humanity is an alternative if the remediation of the ongoing body of Christ is insufficient. The book “The Way of Divine Love”, by Sister Josefa Menendez is a classic exposition of redemptive suffering, by a nun who was led to her cross by Jesus himself.

A woman asked Jesus if there was hope for her son who had died. Jesus replied, “Woman, your son has the hope that you give him.”

Jesus called for all around him to listen and said, “When a carpenter makes a table, it exists first in the mind of the carpenter. This thought is real, the table is complete except for the wood. Indeed without this spirit of the table, the table could not exist later as wood. Woman, your hope for your son, is as a plan for your son to attain to salvation.”

“And what will you now ask, that since your son has died your hope is now of no use to your son? Should you not rather be heroic in faith. Consider all of you, when Herod who called himself great, called for the death of many that he might have mourners, was this not noticed by his God? These murders occurred after his life, yet were accounted as part of his life at his judgment because they were part of his will. You see, man is limited by time, but your God is not.”⁷

Again, when those of wealth write out their last will, concerning arrangements for their wealth and land, for servants and interment, all this is noticed by God. These events that occurred after their lives, are accounted for in this life, because the act of will was made during this life.

Now, if God cares for things of little value, how much more does he care for things of great value. If God takes notice of wealth and land, how much more will he take notice of a plea for a soul. Do not let your good will be bound by time, let it be unbounded by hope.”

“Woman you do well to hope, pray and make acts of charity and reverence on behalf of your son. Make such acts for others also, and your kingdom in Heaven will have many such citizens who are indebted to you. Your prayers made now for your deceased family, are accounted for at their judgment earlier. Therefore make such prayer often.”

⁷ King Herod the Great in his last will, ordered that many leading citizens of Jerusalem be seized and killed upon his death. These people were seized and held, but his sister countermanded the order. The murders did not happen. License is taken to illustrate the point that time is a servant and not an obstacle to God, who made it. A modern example would be someone remotely activating good or evil after his own death, (in a will for example). These acts are counted at judgment even before they occur, because they already occurred in will.

Jesus and his disciples had found work in an orchard of fig trees. The owner of the orchard showed them the trees and told them of what work was required. All of the trees were in need of ongoing pruning, so as to produce the finest fruit. Some trees were in need of dung for fertilizer, other trees needed water rings dug around them to retain the rain that otherwise would run off. Yet some others needed their bark repaired and sealed with pitch. Jesus and the disciples attended to all these things, and the orchard owner asked that they return next year to evaluate the results and work again.

The next year Jesus returned and inspected the orchard. He saw that some of the trees that had received fertilizer were much improved, so too the trees that now drew more water from the moat rings they had dug. The orchard was located in an area of many hazards; men, animals and nature all threatened the trees and some had grown worse or died as a result. To those trees that had shown no improvement, Jesus ordered efforts diverted to those trees that were improving or those that were producing fruit.

He instructed the disciples saying, “You see how additional effort was directed at those trees needing it. You see also those trees that showed no improvement were left to their own resources rather than exhaust the soil and consume the efforts of the workers.”⁸

“The world of man is not unlike an orchard. In the cultivation of souls before harvest, the work master might direct that more assistance be given to those needing it. But a return is expected, and if a return is not given the master might then divert efforts to those making better use of these efforts. Let those with ears hear this.”

Jesus taught the people concerning belief saying, “Belief may be likened to a world in which both a true king and a false king live. The true king was humble and soft spoken and offered his people peace. The false king made much noise and display and offered excitement to all who would listen. The false king knew that he would one day

⁸ Luke 13:7, “...exhaust the soil.”. Moral reform in some way requires the mediation of vice into virtue. If the reformatory efforts of others are used then a return is expected, if not then why “exhaust the soil” on a stubborn plant. St. Monica prayed for her son the future St. Augustine for many years before results were observed.

be removed from the presence of the true king, and would be unable to fulfill his false promises, yet some were deceived anyway.”

“In the kingdom of the false king were people of every sort, just as there were in the kingdom of the true king. Both kingdoms had people who were more or less virtuous, and many had skills that they used in the service of their respective king.”

“In time the false king was revealed as a fraud, and his subjects sought to emigrate into the true kingdom. Many of those who worked their skills for the false king were accepted into the true kingdom, but their work could not be credited to them, since it was all done for the false king.”

“Their desire to live in the kingdom of the true king was fulfilled, yet their lives would have been that much more productive if their work had been done for the true king rather than the false king.”

Jesus ended the teaching saying, “Therefore I tell you, retain nothing for yourself. Self is the false kingdom based on nothing. Emigrate to the true kingdom and become instruments and courtiers of the true king.”

A mother approached Jesus full of distress. Her son had killed himself out of despair and she now worried greatly about his fate.

Jesus gave her hope saying, “Woman, there is no need to believe your son is without hope. To take one’s own life is never within the will of the God of our people; but hope, faith, and love are stronger than any sin or failing.”

“It would not seem that your son was suitably disposed to accept the graces of God, *but be of good hope, this may happen through your efforts.* Woman, why do we pray for our families?”

Jesus continued, “When you pray for others, you are not attempting to soften the hard heart of a God, but the heart of whom you pray for. And how did this heart become hardened in the first place? Was it by design of your Father in Heaven? Certainly not.”

“Rather hearts are hardened by sin, the sin of Adam and all sin since Adam, one’s own sin and the sin of all the world. In this way our decisions have the mark of others also. Just as disease of one’s body may be brought about by another’s sin, so too can diseases of the mind or soul be caused by another’s sin. The despair your son was

afflicted with may have been a disorder of mind rather than soul. Do you understand this?”

The woman said, “I understand a little master, how may my son be saved?”

Jesus continued, “Now, to speak of good hope. Just as a man is necessarily corrupted by all sin, so too does he unavoidably benefit from the good virtue and prayers of others. As his mother, your prayers are not less effective than the distant evil of those unknown.”

“Indeed you would be wrong not to pray and hope. You would be allowing evil to have the final act. If at the tribunal of Heaven, only evidence against your son is presented, he might be in difficult circumstances. But if you wish, he may have many advocates to speak on his behalf. Assign your prayers, hope and increasing virtue to him. Yes, now from earth, and now after his death.⁹ Ask your friends at synagogue to do likewise, and do so for their causes. And most importantly, do all this in certainty not doubt.”

“Do not doubt the power of the Almighty in regards to time. Past or future is no obstacle to he who created time future and time past. Pray not in desperation but in confidence, hope and joy, and be certain that God hears your prayers for your son. The final meaning of a life is entry into the kingdom of the Heaven, and nothing else. If this is achieved, then what else is of consequence. Likewise if this is not attained then what during that life had true meaning. Go mother and be at peace in prayer for your son.”

All who heard this were amazed and filled with hope for their own families and relatives.

⁹ Death is traditionally defined as the event in which the soul leaves the body. Perhaps a better definition is the event in which the body leaves the soul. The soul is the totality of a person's immaterial attributes. The soul governs the body and the mind, and there are two major parts which may be distinguished: the “spiritual soul” (or superior soul) which governs the mind, will, and memory; and the material soul (or inferior soul) which governs the body.

The material soul governs the body as long as it is a living whole; when circumstances such as injury or aging cause the functioning of the body to stop, the body decomposes and is no longer a human body under the control of the human soul. The human soul then lives on without the body, but the spiritual functions (mind, will, memory), are still governed by the soul. Therefore death is more properly defined as the event in which the body leaves the soul, or the event in which the body can no longer be governed by the soul.

Jesus taught the apostles on salvation saying, “In the attainment of the kingdom of Heaven, all those who are not against us, are with us.”¹⁰ The Messiah will joyfully enter any home into which he is invited. Into those homes he is not extended an invitation, he will enter as a cunning thief and plunder souls. Only if the evil master of the house is present will the Messiah-thief be unable to steal a soul. Where ever the Messiah is not opposed he will attempt to make his own home. The Messiah will do so by rights or by theft. It is the right of the Father to keep his children, but he will reclaim by theft, what was stolen from him. Yet no theft is done, as the Father did not renounce title. Only freely willed opposition will keep the Son from claiming what belongs to the Father.”

“You baptize entire families, and their infants. This may be so, because the small ones have no reasoned will at their young age. They have only the unwilling sin of Adam, which the Messiah redeems. Once such children attain an age by which their reason directs their will, they must then offer no willful opposition to the Messiah.”

“I have told you in the past that it is the will and not the intellect that is the entry into the kingdom of Heaven. Even those who have an imperfect understanding of the Messiah, and do not offer a willed opposition may become Messiah.”

“Indeed perfection of knowledge and faith of the Messiah cannot come about in this life. Consider the Evil One. His knowledge of the Messiah is greater than any on earth, but it is of no value to him. Rather, his evil will offers opposition to the Messiah.”

“Among men, those who deny God make all their actions serve only their self. Not even a virtuous act may then have a Godly component. Neither can any overtly sinful act which violates one’s God given conscience, be held in union with God. In making such sinful acts one casts off the voice of conscience and instead serves only self interest. You see without God, there remains only self, which is separation from God. In the battle against self, make frequent acts of denial and humility. Such acts will permeate your entire soul, and draw you closer to the Messiah.”

¹⁰ Mk 9:40; the ideas in this teaching describe the mechanism by which those living before Christ may obtain salvation, likewise unbaptized infants, and those living lives of non-religious virtue, or in a non-Christian faith. This idea of non-sacramental salvation is sound, but it cannot be estimated with certainty at the individual level.

Consecration of the Eucharist is another application of this principle. Bread and wine can in no way willfully seek inclusion into the body of Christ; nor can the bread and wine oppose inclusion. Christ wills it however, and makes it so. See also Appendix, “Christology”.

Jesus said, “In the days of Moses, when those afflicted looked upon the serpent mounted on a pole, they were cured. Soon the Son of Love will likewise be mounted on a pole, and all who look upon him with the eyes of faith will be healed.” ¹¹

Teachings on Heaven, Hell and Purgatory

On one occasion an apostle asked, “Master, what of those who die imperfect?”

Jesus answered, “Those who die imperfect, but free of deadly sin must continue their purgation of sin, and then of self. I, and I alone am their Heaven, their resurrection and their life, there may exist no others with me, self must be torn from anyone seeking me as Heaven. All who would have eternal life must become as I AM, and share in my very being.”

“Those who are like me in virtue at death may be incorporated into me without delay. Those who are like me in desire only, but not yet in practice will remain in my kingdom, but not the royal palace, until ready to join their master.”

“If one lays a foundation, then another builds upon it, he must be careful of how he builds upon it. There can be no foundation other than myself, and if upon this foundation of stone, one builds with wood, hay or straw, its weakness will be revealed by fire. But if one builds upon this foundation with gold, silver or precious stones, then it will stand a trial by fire.”

“If the work stands that someone built upon the foundation, that person will receive a wage. But if someone’s work is burned up, that one will suffer loss. The person will be saved, but only as through fire.” ¹²

After Jesus had taught, Peter asked, “Master, what is the meaning of this teaching?”

¹¹ A common Old Testament punishment was impaling upon a pole. This was likely the method by which the bronze serpent was hung upon the pole in Numbers 21:9. With the serpent (Devil) symbolically killed, the people who desired it were then cured of their poisoning. When Jesus is mounted on a pole, he does so vicariously, bearing the sins of all who offer their sins to him. Sin is crucified in Jesus on the pole, and the people are healed.

¹² This descriptive explanation is based on that of the apostle Paul, 1Cor 3:10-15.

Jesus responded, “Are my priests too without understanding? Here is the meaning. The foundation is the Messiah, who is salvation. The structures of wood, hay, or straw are impure in that they cannot stand the testing and refining flames of the Holy Spirit. All such impurity must be purged by this flame, before a person may be fully united to the Son of Truth. These impurities are falsehood and may be either false or imperfect act or teaching.”

“The structures of gold, silver and precious stones are fine structures with no impurities. The living flame of the Holy Spirit finds no impurities to burn away, just as fine gold has no slag to burn away. Observe also how heated gold may be cast into a variety of useful and beautiful objects, and the underlying value remains the pure gold, and not the form of the object.”

“In this instance, if one acts, he acts well; if one teaches, he teaches the truth. All however must pass through the truth to enter the gates of Heaven. Truth passes easily, but falsity and imperfections cannot. Imperfect Messiahs must have their impurities burned away before entering the paradise of truth. Perfect devils will not be admitted at all.”

“All this is necessary. You will not live alongside me in Heaven, but as me. I AM your Resurrection.¹³ I AM your Heaven. You see why only truth may be joined to Truth. Those who are truth may bring with them more truth or less truth, but none may bring falsehood.”

A disciple asked Jesus regarding Heaven, and what it was to be like. Jesus answered him in word and in spirit, and the disciple was given a vision of Heaven, while hearing the voice of the master.

Jesus told the disciple, “Look up to Heaven where you belong. On earth you are a stranger, and a homeless pilgrim. And just as a pilgrim quickly returns to his homeland, where his dear friends are waiting in longing, so should you also hurry to return to your homeland where people intensely long for your presence. They will greet you lovingly, and unite you to their happy company forever. And if you knew how they want you to

¹³ John 11:25.

struggle bravely in suffering and conduct yourself with valor in all the adversity that they have overcome, all your suffering would be more endurable.”

“The more bitterly you have suffered, the more worthily you will be received. How wonderful the honor feels, how joy races through heart and spirit when a soul receives honor, praise and glory from me in the sight of my Father and all the Heavenly hosts because it suffered so much on earth in its time of struggle.”

“Look there, above the ninth heaven, there is another heaven. This is the glorious court where the Heavenly host dwells. There, surrounded by ineffable splendor stand the eternal thrones from which the evil spirits were cast down and which now belong to the elect. Look how it glitters with hammered gold, how it glows with precious pearls, and is adorned with jewels and translucent crystal, alive with the sparkle of red roses and white lilies. Now look at the beautiful celestial fields, here is the valley of true joy.”

“Here one sees lovers’ glances dart joyfully back and forth. Here are the strains of harps and violins; singing, dancing, and constant joy. Here all wishes are fulfilled, joy without sorrow and complete certainty that it will continue forever.”

“Move quietly forward and see how the sweet Queen of Heaven hovers above the entire heavenly host. Look how her wondrous beauty gives delight and joy to all. See how the Mother of Mercy has her eyes turned kindly toward you and all sinners, and how she powerfully protects them and reconciles them to her beloved child the Christ.”

“Now turn with the eyes of pure intellect and see also how the exalted Seraphim and the loving souls of this choir of angels flame up ardently toward me continually. How the bright Cherubim move in and out of my eternal light; look at the trinity of the second hierarchy, the Dominions, Virtues and Powers, how they in turn bring about the wonderful eternal order in the natural universe. See how the angelic spirits carry forth my messages and announcements. What a wondrous sight! ¹⁴

¹⁴ This description of Heaven is condensed from that given by Christ to St. Henry (Heinrich) Suso. St. Suso also had dealings with the fallen dominions, the angel who was in charge of speech and praise governed the realm of cursing after his fall from grace, and St. Suso spoke with this specific devil. This also shows the linkage of the devils to sin, and explains why when Jesus cured illness, devils were removed at the same time, (Luke 4:40-41, 11:14, 13:10-16). The idea of a devil remaining in charge of a corrupted species of action is reasonable if one acknowledges the many principalities of Heaven being placed in charge of particular orders of creation.

Jesus asked the apostles, "What will Heaven be like?"

The apostles said nothing and awaited upon Jesus to answer. Jesus said, "You are correct in your silence, because the activity of Heaven is not pre-ordained. Recall the words of the God of Creation, to our father and mother, "You may eat any fruit, except that from the tree of good and evil."

"Adam and Eve were free to cultivate any goodness, within the bounds of perfection. Foolish humanity thought that such perfection could be improved upon. God's command is still in effect, and once God's children are reassembled in the perfection of Heaven, they will again be free to cultivate every goodness. Their desires and actions will find no obstacles, but rather fulfillment."

"Heaven will be the clouds of the angels, but also the earth of the farmer. Your enemies on earth will be your friends, both of you having cast off your hatred and failings. The in-laws you avoid will be seated at your own feasting table, and at your invitation. Practice all this now, if you do not have control over the actions of others, you may bring yourself to perfection."

"Gone also will be guilt and sorrow; injury and illness, infirmity and disease. Those who suffer illness of mind or body will shine forth in the perfection that their God planned for them when his thoughts gave first birth to them."

"Lost love will be found, and have unending existence. Lost opportunity and business will be repaid a thousand fold, a thousand times each day. Those of no importance on earth will find their humility as a wreath of victory. Those who conquered their failings will not be less than those who were given much virtue at birth. Who will bestow all these honors? It will be your God himself. The God of the universe will insist that those electing glory be seated at the feasting table, that he may serve them. All will love and allow themselves to be loved."

"Begin now your entry into the kingdom of Love. Do not delay or act half heartedly. Give no undue importance to the things of this life, to do so hinders your entrance into the better life. If you are called to surrender your wealth or even your life, make it an act of love towards God, rather than a tugging match with the Devil. You must leave behind this life, and to do so reluctantly is to give glory to the Fallen One. If you leave this life eager to meet your God, your death will be counted as your highest act of glory. The choice is yours, now and at the hour of your death. Amen I tell you."

After Jesus had cast out a devil, Judas exclaimed, “Master it is good that the demon you cast out, be returned to its prison prepared for it. Now it will harm no others.”

Jesus replied, “Judas, you unknowingly cast dispersion on the goodness of the God of Creation...but fear not, your intentions are good. But know this my friend, that demon is not now chained in the prison of Gehenna, nor was that prison constructed by the God of the Angels.”

Jesus taught further in this regard saying, “Judas, when you come across the ruins of Jericho, or of Babylon, or the ruins of a palace, do you ask of yourself, ‘Why did that king build such ruins?’”

“Of course you do not. You know that the king had built grand structures, and the ruins are the result of enemies or abandonment. So too is the origin of Hell. The dungeon of the self condemned is not one built by the Father, rather it is a grand structure fallen into ruin at the very hands of the criminals who now inhabit the dungeon.”

“In the Fathers perfect creation there was no consideration given to criminals or prison cells to hold them, they were simply not needed. But calamity did occur, and many of the good became criminals, and now prowl about. Gehenna is not a good prison built for bad persons, but a good structure ruined by these evil persons. Your God has no such ability to create evil and ruins, he is not the author of evil.”

“As to the idea of the devils being bound in Gehenna for the safety of the children of light, this is a future promise. Until the last day, the Father will preserve the evil along with the good. Indications of this coexistence abound. One does not even need eyes to see it, every imperfect thought and desire is a result of this strange mixing.”

“At judgment the Father will separate himself and all who share in him, from the criminals. The goodness abandoned by them will be reclaimed by the Father, and all will be taken to the Father’s own palace. The criminals will be left only with their corruption, evil thoughts and acts. They will be left to their own devices as they have requested and there will be no jailers to maintain order among them. They will live in chaos forever, with the most evil among them torturing all others from the promptings of evil will. Nothing is too great a price to pay to avoid this end for yourself and your family.”

The apostle John asked Jesus, “Master do you hate those in Hell?”

Jesus replied, “Beloved, if there was a bond of love between them and me, they would not live in Hell, but in me. John, recall that I taught you of love being a good decision, more so than a good emotion. If love is willful commitment, then hate is willful severance. Both are acts of will, and not emotion. To say that God hates evil, is to say that God separates from evil. Believe me when I tell you, the fullness of Hell will be devoid of the smallest part of goodness. The devils will not even have evil joy, because joy is a goodness.”

“I tell you the corpse of a man is greater in virtue than a living devil. The dead of Adam return to the dust of the earth, the devils take horrible forms, as demanded by their degenerate souls. On earth the devils steal goodness and wrap their evil in it, and thus their corruption appears as goodness. Be thankful not to see their evil undiluted. Yet it would be well for all to see such a sight.”

“If a man abandons goodness, by seeking self rather than God, he will lose even what he thinks he has. At judgment God will reclaim all the goodness the man abandoned. The man will be left without goodness, and retain only the evil which he is willfully bound to. What then in this man, can God love.”

“The Son of Man continues to love to the greatest extent of his will. In this instance that we speak of, the Son of Man may love only the memory of his reprobate children.”

“John, no expense of effort, prayer, or humility is too great to spare one’s family from Hell, where they will gnash at each other and tear at themselves. Secure your family against such evil by heroic acts of virtue and faith. Your God will not forsake the covenant he makes with you. In attending to his interests, he will gratefully attend to yours.”

Jesus taught the people concerning Heaven saying, “You have heard the story of the Prince of Parthia who believed he could take with him all his wealth, when he entered

into his Heaven. Many barons of Israel attended his funeral procession. In this procession were more than 100 cartloads of his wealth, he even disassembled one of his manors and had it in tow.”

“The temple priests tell you that such wealth cannot be taken with you into Heaven. And so this is true...but not fully. Indeed the more vital part of wealth was retained in the Prince’s soul, and he did indeed take this with him. I speak of his desire for wealth, and the importance he attached to it. His wealth in itself was of no importance in the Kingdom of Heaven, but his soul was overflowing with desire and worry for it. His soul would have more profitably been filled with desire for perfection in virtue, humility and faith. Where one’s heart is, so too is one’s reward, in this life and in the next.”

Teachings on Good and Evil

Jesus taught the people concerning good and evil saying, “Your God is the creator of every good. Evil comes about as a lessening of good by self interest.”

“The Devil seeks all goodness, but only for himself. As the Evil One retreats into himself, he necessarily casts off God. He no longer has the template of God’s goodness to rely one, but acts from his core of nothing.” ¹⁵

Jesus told a parable on the necessity of evil having its effect. Jesus said, “A certain man owned a large estate. He owned fields, orchards, servants and everything necessary to operate. This man avoided much misfortune by shrewdly managing his enterprise. If the wheels on two carts failed, he would make one usable cart from the two failed carts, and if a decision failed to bring a profit he would make up for it in a

¹⁵ Evil or sin is essentially goodness which is lacking completeness of design. A perfectly good act must include self, others, and God. In example; a procreative act which actively seeks to exclude: pregnancy, love of other, God, commitment, joy, pleasure is incomplete (evil) to a lesser or greater degree. We must not try to replace God’s design with our own, and declare it good. Evil is any deviation from perfection, by addition or subtraction, commission or omission. Within perfection of design, legitimate personal preferences may be enacted.

profitable area. In these ways business failures were arranged so as to have no apparent effect.”

“This man was himself ordered by his king to make an accounting of every item owned by the enterprise. The man did so, but now the failures became apparent and were reported as debits, and were not relocated since everything had to be accounted for. The owner was in no way blamed, rather he was commended for his shrewd management, but at the final accounting, these failed elements could not be hidden and were counted as losses.”

A man who was bitter at life and would not believe in the Son of Man, or even in the scrolls of Moses asked why the evil often prosper and the good often do not. Jesus offered a parable teaching.

“There was a kingdom in days past, and in this kingdom all was well. The king treated his subjects more as children than as servants, and the people of the kingdom returned the love of their king. One day wicked persons approached the people, this wicked assembly tricked the people into allowing them past the gates. The evil persons then set about destroying many of the good things of the kingdom, plows were blunted, clothing cut short, food made in short supply, even the hearts of the people were affected by such vandalism.”

“The king attempted to arrest these evil ones, but the people remained fooled by them even after the destruction they caused, and they refused to extradite these foes. The king did manage to send agents to minimize the damage, which was ongoing and taking new forms with each generation. When one village suffered famine the king appealed to the next to share. The king arranged for craftsmen and teachers to repair the tools and teach the people. None of the people was worthy of assistance, having freely allied themselves with the enemy of the king, yet the king persevered in his generosity.”

“The remediation was a complex and lengthy task and each generation saw only a small part it. Finally the king was able to restore the former good order, but this time he did it on the grounds of his own palace.”

“Those entering the restored palace of the king, then saw clearly the king’s plan, the deception by the evil ones, and the people deceived and chained to futile service for

the evil occupiers. The people of the new kingdom acknowledged that the good king was going even beyond the duty of his office, and offered to assist. Those who worked for the restoration in the former kingdom were made rulers of five, and ten cities in the new kingdom, as their efforts rescued many from the evil nation.”

Jesus taught saying, “Anyone of you may cultivate a taste for greed, promiscuity, violence, intoxicants and the like. Such behavior is well within the nature of any man or woman. But let your good moral reasoning and ideals be your guide, not your emotions. Your God cannot degrade himself from the ideal, you must raise your soul to the ideal.”

Jesus taught concerning sin, “When a physician poisons a disease, he administers the poison with the utmost care. He knows that the poison will kill the disease, but it also puts at risk all the healthy organs. So too does sin corrupt all parts of the soul.”

“Again, some who would be King or Queen, acquire their office by offering poisoned wine as a false friend. So too does your enemy the Devil disguise the poison he offers you. If the slave knew who the ruler was, he would revolt and no longer offer his servitude.”

“Again, the kingdom of evil may be compared to a poisoned fruit that is offered by a disguised enemy. Both the fruit and the enemy are hidden under the appearance of goodness, but the action of the enemy and the fruit offered are both corrupt.”

Jesus taught the people, “In the assembly of the Evil One, they will gnash their teeth as they tear their skin away seeking to find relief from the flames that burn them without end.¹⁶ They will not share in joy, order, law, or cooperation to the slightest

¹⁶ Does there exist a “body of the Devil”, as a sort of opposite of the “body of Christ”? There would be, but the nature of the Devil is self, and not others or community. Humanity was an inter-affective community as

degree. They will be as bag of fragmented pot shards that cut against one another continuously.”

A man asked Jesus, “Sir, do we now suffer the sins of our parents, or only our own sin?”

Jesus answered, “Whenever sin is made, someone or something must suffer the effects. Consider that even today, all people suffer from the sin of Adam. The deadly sin of Adam brings death to all, even today. You would have reason to despair, if not for the Messiah who brings you life.”

“When evil comes upon persons of goodness, know that their faithful trust in God brings graces upon the world, that are far in excess than the evil they suffer. Such people have a great resemblance to the Messiah.”

Jesus taught, “In Caesarea, the irreverent and the apostates pay to drink in a pub, and listen to lewd women tell evil stories that bring the men to frenzy. Such people are sharing in the thoughts and mind of the Devil. What they share in shall not be taken from them at death. Rather it will be revealed to them stripped of its facade of goodness, and their master will be seen in all his terror. Know this however; joy, pleasure, peace and order of society are attributes of the God of creation and will not be had by those who reject God and his goodness.”

The disciples were arguing that the prophet John was exempt from danger of Hell, and would certainly attain Heaven. The apostle John alone objected and brought the question to Jesus.

created. The evil which affects the entirety of humanity was meant to be shared goodness instead. We observe that the Devil is internally devoid of any goodness, yet he exists in our current world, and not yet in a totally separated Hell, thus his evil is in our world.

Jesus replied, “John remained subject to death and hellfire, not because he did not release sin, but because the Devil will not release sin. Be assured that John will attain to Heaven and avoid hellfire, but it will not be on account of his great virtue, but by the prophet John becoming Messiah.”

“Mans’ fall from life in the garden might have been fully repaired, except for the Devil’s grasp upon evil. The Devil willfully cast off all goodness, now he does not even have the goodness of repentance. The Evil One can therefore never will to release his bondage to sin.”

“All of creation suffered from the first sin. The Devil still corrupts all of creation, and is unwilling to release it; hence the ongoing sentence of condemnation for man and woman.”

“This sharing between all of creation was intended to be a blessing, and not condemnation to Hell. Before their fall, the angels guided man and woman and shared their pristine virtues with the man and the woman. All of creation shared in its own virtue, and it still does; but now creation also shares in the corruption of its own virtue.”

“Do not think it unfair that all of humanity is condemned because of the acts of the first people. Think that it is unfair that the Messiah must suffer evil and death. But it must be so, only he who has no sin, may redeem those under the slavery of sin.”

At another time Jesus again taught the people concerning the Evil One, “The Evil One may be likened to a wise and good scholar whose heart turns evil. He then puts his superior mind to the task of using honeyed speech and twisted logic to entrap unsuspecting souls. When you find yourself in the presence of honeyed speech or any attractive trap of the evil scholar, flee at once and do not engage him. This is your victory, to deny him your presence.”

The disciple Joanna, who was wife of Herod’s steward Chuza, asked Jesus how God judged the severity of sin. Jesus told Joanna to purchase a copper plate. This being done, Jesus examined the plate, it was fine and smooth. He then told Joanna to dent it

slightly with a rock. This was done, and Jesus asked Joanna what she now held in her hands. Joanna replied that she held a dented copper plate.

Jesus then told Joanna to pound the plate into a container able to hold a small measure of wine. Joanna and James pounded a deep indentation into the plate. Jesus then asked what it was that she held in her hands. Joanna replied that she now held a bowl of sorts. Jesus agreed that she now held a bowl of sorts, and also observed that it was no longer a plate.

Jesus said, “In the same way that your dented copper plate was still a plate, an imperfect virtue may remain a virtue, but a damaged virtue. Now recall how you pounded the copper plate until it was no longer a plate, but a different thing. So too if a virtue is damaged to the point that it is no longer a virtue, but a vice, then that vice may now be a deadly vice. If a man is bound to the Messiah by even damaged virtue and faith, he may still enter the kingdom. If he is bound to something that is not recognizable as faith or virtue, then he is not bound to the Messiah and cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

“The Son of Man will enter Heaven, walking joyfully alongside the perfected children of light. He will also have in tow, all those children who are imperfect, but bound to him by his virtues. Recall that I told you when you share in a virtue or a vice, you share in all others who share that virtue or vice. The children in tow cannot fully enter the kingdom until they cut the vices that they themselves have in tow.”

“Those children who have cut instead, the tether that binds them to the Messiah, will not enter into the kingdom at all when the Messiah pulls in his catch of souls.”

Jesus taught, “Evil is like a roach in a grain basket, if it does not appear in one portion, then it must appear in another. The particular appearance of evil may also vary, but it must make its appearance. The grain roach may foul the grain with its droppings, or it may eat the grain that was meant for the children, both are harmful, but one or the other or both will happen.”

Jesus was asked, “Rabbi, how is it that some idolaters have great virtue, while some of Abraham struggle and lack much virtue?”

“Jesus answered, “Friend, you are correct in your observation; faith and virtue are not always found together. Some who have no faith are examples of great virtue. Consider that when God creates a soul, that soul must take on a burden of the disorder of the sin of Adam. Recall that God does not, and cannot create disorder, but when he creates, that creation enters into both the good and the evil shared by creation.”

“As Father of man, God distributes mans’ evil in such a way to bring good out of evil, but the evil must still be suffered. To one soul the Father allows evil to corrupt virtue, and to another he allows evil to corrupt faith. To others both are damaged, and to still others a minimum of damage is inflicted.”

“So you see that all arrangements of good and evil exist, with some of faith lacking virtue and others of virtue lacking faith. You see also how difficult it is for any person to make moral evaluation of others.”

“You must always judge acts, and you can never judge souls. You must judge theft to be wrong, but you cannot fully judge a thief. If you cast the thief into prison, do so with prayer and not hatred.”

“You may be certain that anyone who calls upon the Messiah in faith will be saved, and those who have first claim are those given a great burden. The Son of God will save all he is able to save, but those having great virtue, and reject the Messiah in their hearts are like prize bulls that are strong, but will not obey. Such people cannot enter into that which they reject.”

Jesus taught further on good and evil telling the people, “In the days of Adam the world appeared much as it still does. If man had not fallen, and the sons and daughters of Adam had lived with no burden of disorder, there would still be times of drought, but no hardship would come of these droughts.” “If one village of Adam was in want of food, then another would be called on to provide, and both would live. Likewise if one citizen suffered injury, it would have been the occasion for an expansion of love on the part of the others to help their brother until healed.”

“Such a love is the highest image of your God. Images of stone cannot reach out a hand, or speak to comfort. And those who will not make such acts of love, make such an omission from a heart of stone. But among the children of light this shall not be so.”

“Remember also that the children of light are Messiah himself, and as such they are called to take on the failings of the world and return them to the Father repaired. In your pilgrimage on earth do not seek freedom from suffering, seek freedom from your chains that bind you to a damaged existence that seeks only to propagate itself.”

“In giving away that which you are bound to, you release yourself from your jailer’s chains. Those still in chains admire one who has attained fifty years as having a full lifespan. Those in chains consider kings and queens to be persons of wealth. Those who are chained do not seek beyond a full stomach, and a full money bag, and the esteem of their fellows in chains. Such people have little more ambition than the sparrows.”

“The children of light are not to be content to dwell in prison and to wear chains of iron or even of gold. Set your goal as high as Heaven. Truly I tell you, those who attain to the highest Heaven, do so because they first have such a Heaven as their goal.”

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Teachings II

Admonitions and Hope

Teachings on spiritual advancement

Jesus taught saying, “Advancement in spirit is satisfying of itself. When one willingly becomes poor or chaste, obedient or humble for the kingdom of God, this conquest of poverty, chastity, obedience and humility frees the soul from the desire of the vices of these things. One feels richer and more satisfied to cast off the burdens of sin.”

On one occasion the disciples were observing the Pharisees making pious supplication in the temple. Jesus said to the disciples, “How is one to judge the holiness of another?”

None of the disciples answered. Jesus instructed them saying, “You say nothing, and you are correct in your silence, because you are unable to completely judge another. The God of all knowledge alone is capable of passing moral judgment on a person. You must tell a thief that theft is wrong, but you cannot judge the thief, you must judge every act, but never a person.”

“The kingdom of God may be likened to a king who placed his many businesses in the hands of stewards. The stewards were assembled and given coins of gold to trade with. The stewards were also told that thieves had pilfered much of the gold, so no one was given a full share to trade with.”

“Nevertheless, the king distributed the gold coins. To some he gave five talent weights of gold coins, to others ten talents of gold, still to others only one talent of gold. To some stewards, the king issued a debt notice instead of gold, these stewards even had to earn the gold used to trade with.”

“The king then set off to apprehend the thieves who caused such trouble, and left the stewards to carry on his business, and even to make good on the missing gold for which the debt notices were issued.”

“In the king’s absence the stewards used the gold and obtained a range of results. Some stewards squandered the gold and showed a loss. Others began by squandering their gold, but then traded better, and in the end obtained a profit. Many who were given one, five, or ten talents of gold obtained a profit of many fold. But those who owed a debt from the start had great difficulty. These persons had to put forth great effort to obtain the single talent of gold that had been freely given to others. Yet some of these workers traded shrewdly and earned even more than those given the gold talents. They were able to pay off a great debt, yet their total holdings of gold were often less than those who started with much, because they started their trading in debt. The king knew that these workers paid off a large debt, from circumstances of great disadvantage.”

“When the king returned, he settled accounts. Those who had squandered their talents were banished from the sight of the king. Those given talents were judged according to their profit, and finally those who were issued a debt were examined. Some of these stewards worked off the debt and then traded for a profit, and this showed a very great love of the king.”

“The king was able to distribute all these profits to others who had no talents and enlarge his kingdom. Everyone shared in the joy of the king. Those who showed a profit were made governors, and those they released from debtors prison were given them as subjects.”

“Those profitable in small matters will rule in large matters, and those they bring into the kingdom will be under their benevolent rule. These new rulers will have passed the tests of love and wisdom necessary for good rule, and the Son of Man will be the ruler of all the citizens, having brought all of them into the kingdom.”

Jesus said, “To advance in holiness may be likened to a small child who is enthralled with toys and trinkets. As he matures he will either discard the trinkets as an idle waste, or he will seek new ones that will satisfy his mature desire for wasteful pursuits under the guise of luxury, power, and gold.”

“Be as children who expect their meals from their mothers, and have no worry about the next one. They are

wondrous and joyful and live only each moment, and they give no concern to status or gain. People such as this are the highest in the kingdom of God. Become as an infant seeking only the rule of his mother, again such are the highest in the kingdom of Heaven.”

Jesus taught the apostles concerning holiness saying, “You are to be priests of the New Covenant, yet take no joy or satisfaction in this. To be a good priest is not always to be a good Messiah.”

“One must hate all that not Messiah. You must hate father and mother, wealth and poverty, your life and your death. Indeed all who stop short of being Messiah will not attain to Heaven. This must be so, as your Heaven is the Messiah you now behold. To cease your ascent and to grasp any object, be it even apostleship is to cease your ascent to Messiah. Those who take satisfaction or pride in any office less than Messiah, have received all the reward that they may receive.”

“If what you love, be it motherhood, priesthood, wealth, or solitude is taken from you, and you are saddened by its removal, then you have not yet attained to the Messiah. Abandon all these things in spirit, and attain peace of spirit. Then take them up again, but now as a Messiah and a steward of them. Lesser honor will be bestowed upon an apostle who attains greatness, than a upon sinner who becomes Messiah.”

Jesus responded to a question regarding how one might attain perfection of soul saying, “The truest and most effective teaching that you can receive is this. Keep yourself apart from all men, if not in body, then in spirit. Keep yourself free from all unneeded images and words. Free yourself from everything that is accidental, binding or that brings worry. Always direct your spirit to the intimate contemplation of God, keeping me constantly present before your eyes and never turning them away from me. Direct all other exercises, be it poverty, fasting, vigils and all other types of chastisement toward this goal and make use of them to the extent that they advance this end.”

“Do all this and you shall attain the summit of perfection that not one person in a thousand comprehends because they make these exercises their goal and therefore wander about for years.”¹

An apostle observed the mediocre advancement of soul that a certain disciple had attained. Jesus confirmed this estimate of soul, yet told the apostle that the disciple had made greater advancement than many others, even those others who exhibited a higher level of love and virtue.

Jesus further explained saying, "One who is given much, may enjoy a greater degree of virtue than one who is given little but has made great moral stride. Yet the one who makes the greater effort shows a love of God that may be greater than one who does little to increase his already great faith and virtue. Therefore be hesitant to consider oneself greater than a great sinner."

"One must judge acts, but must never judge the actor. A great sinner is like a man who has been cast deep into a dark cave filled with venomous serpents who inject him with poison that pleasantly numbs the senses. He does not even know that he is being poisoned."

The Messiah has assigned him this great trial, but also offers him a rope that he may grasp, and be led out of his darkness and poison. If the man exits the cave, he must then climb the mountain of virtue, upon which some have been already placed. If the caveman succeeds in even exiting the cave, he will show a great love of God, which will not go unrewarded."

Jesus taught concerning the advancement of spirit saying, “In the advancement of one’s spirit, one must not expect satisfaction at first attempt. You will find satisfaction

¹ This teaching is known as “Brief rules for spiritual advancement”, given by Christ to St. Henry Suso, and recorded in “Little Book of Eternal Wisdom”, chapter 22. It is essentially a rephrasing of Christ’s teaching in Mt 22:37, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.”. If our salvation is to become Christ, then every faculty of one’s soul must direct itself to Christ, in order that Christ may then incorporate us into his being. When one’s will is fully functioning as Christ’s will, our actions are then redirected to family, job, daily routine; but now as Christ in the world.

as your repeated attempts form your spirit as renewed character. Many put their hand to the plow, but turn back when they find little satisfaction along the road to holiness.

“Those of this world are accustomed to finding satisfaction in stimulation by wine, trinkets and the praise of others. Their actions find immediate place in their spirit, and satisfy it.”

“Be warned to avoid even pride and satisfaction of holy works or office. Your satisfaction must be in nothing less than your God. The priests and Pharisees often take great pride of office or asceticism, yet such pride remains only pride and is a poison to the spirit.”

“For those seeking the highest Heaven — they have been given a terrible privilege, and they must become Messiah for many others. The Father will give these Messiahs even the sin of others, that it may be returned as virtue and faith.”²

Upon being asked what perfection of soul demanded, Jesus taught, “Perfection of soul may be likened to a wood carver who takes hold of a sharper blade, that he may trim away even more dead wood, thus producing a more accurate likeness. Again, perfection of soul may be likened to the man who prunes his own tree; he more easily prunes away the lower branches, and in doing so he attains a certain increase in fruit. He then says to himself, ‘There are still higher branches more difficult to climb to, yet they also consume the sap which feed the fruit on the good limbs. I shall make the required effort to trim away all the dead wood both high and low, that a better quality of fruit may be yielded from the tree.’”

Jesus taught further saying. “David was granted a terrible privilege when Saul sent him to the forefront of battle. So too is your pursuit of perfection. In the markets of Damascus one will find meat vendors who cater to fine and exclusive tastes. Such a

² As one sheds sin and incorporates virtue, interior peace results, but not at once. The character of the soul is the cycle of habit. Habit causes act which reinforces the habit. To advance in virtue requires moral effort, which is outside of the cycle of habit and its satisfaction. But repeated new act becomes a new habit over time.

This new cycle of habit must be maintained, since the soul is affected by a certain commonality of spirit. Original sin corrupted the entire universe, and ongoing sin weakens virtue (if left dormant), and causes temptation toward sin.

person of fine taste may select a serpent to be prepared as a meal. The serpent is skinned while living, so as to increase the particular value of his flesh.”

“When the Father selects his child for perfection according to his own exquisite taste, that child also must suffer his very person to be stripped away from his living being. The child is crushed that his pride of self may be broken, the child is whipped to and away that he sees the futility of self direction. The child is burned alive by his own selfish will, until this selfish will exists only as ashes. Then the King of exquisite taste may consume the victim into his own being.”

“In the attainment of such perfection no one, no office, no privileges may be spared. Pride of prophet or priest, of King or Queen, must not be allowed to live in a soul. In the destruction of self and pride, the Father will allow this and that trial to assail you. When complete, only your will of wills shall remain. Your inner most will is your very existence and shall never cease, but once it is pure of contamination it may be joined to your God in holy matrimony. It is like a king selecting a leper bride who must first have her poisoned skin stripped away to reveal her true beauty.”

Jesus said, “Many among you call Caesar both God and man; one who is animated by divine wisdom. So it is with the Messiah who is here now. Your Messiah however is given life by true wisdom, unadulterated with falsehood. This same Spirit of Truth is now offered to you. Become Messiah, who is God made man.”³

Jesus taught again concerning the advancement of one’s soul, saying to the disciples, “You will fully love only after you fully hate. This must be so. You must not remain your self, but become a new being, that of my own person. You must first hate your very self, before you may be made love. The Son of Love may only love that which is love.”

³ Once the Caesars became dictating emperors, they declared their own divinity. Some Caesars, and some Roman theologians interpreted this to mean that the human Caesar shared in the divine wisdom and life of the gods by the indwelling of the spirit of a god.

“But how may one cast off one’s very self? One cannot, but one may allow the Author of Creation to do so. The poison of self must be cleaned from every act and thought and desire. Those who remain self, may not become Messiah. The poison of self infects every action and must be burned away just as a physician applies a hot iron to festering skin. Once the infection of self is removed, the patient heals by the unseen power of God.”

“You must become as Job, in your trust of God. You will think that your good fortune to suffer is a punishment from God. You will be abandoned to the darkness of the night, but this too is necessary. You must not work towards a self appointed goal, but you must find your way in faith.”

“You will find yourself at battle with God, who seeks to destroy who you are. You must not seek to triumph over your God; rather consent to your defeat. Unless you are first crushed and enslaved by a God who offers no mercy to who you are, you may not become a freeman.”

“No one attaining to Heaven is spared this discipline, it must be made in this life or the next. To those who enjoy holy discipleship, or motherhood, or even priesthood; all such self joy must be taken from them. Once the poison of self is removed, all these good trades will be returned to those who are no longer priests or mothers, but Messiah-stewards of these things.”⁴

To those who care little about the meaning of their actions, Jesus taught, “The kingdom of Evil may be compared to a ball of twine that falls down steps into a pool of filth at the bottom of the steps. It descends the steps one at a time, no single step being a large distance in itself. So too is your journey of advancement in good or in evil. Every such journey is made in small steps such as this.”

⁴ The saints speak of the dark night of the senses in which material sin is conquered. The dark night of the soul or spirit follows in which all (even legitimate) acts of self are eliminated. Both are necessarily trials, as one eliminates one’s core self. Success in these active measures allow God to fully incorporate a being into his own person, since self is no longer an obstacle. This final action may only be done by God, and is termed the “passive night of the soul”. The final paragraph describes a detachment from self, not a detachment from duty.

For God to allow a person excessive good fortune, even of a religious nature may not promote the conquest of self interest and satisfaction. The saints often speak of the necessary conquest of various trials and of religious dryness or even persecution. See also Appendix, “Spiritual Advancement”.

Again Jesus taught the people saying, “The strength of the weakest link in a chain, is common to the entire length of chain. So too is your weakest virtue common to every act that uses that virtue. Consider that when a chain is used as a weight on a net, the weak link is of no consequence, but when this same chain is used by oxen to haul a tree, their ability is limited by the strength of the chain. In a like manner, you will attain holiness by the perfection of every virtue. When one of your virtues is weak, your holiness may not attain to its completeness.”

“Your fasting must encompass all parts of your life. Fast from all that distracts your will from God. Numbers have no meaning, what must be broken in one’s desire for all that is less than God.”

“Become as an athlete. Those who train in the gymnasium exert themselves to the point of pain, that weakness may leave the body, to be replaced by strength. So to should you make moral effort to the point of discomfort. Moral trial is weakness leaving the soul.”

Jesus came upon a discarded scrap of fishing net. He examined it and said to the disciples, “Take this netting with you, and use it as a framework. Adhere to it, the many things you encounter — both refuse and fine food, both gold and dust.”

The disciples did as they were told, and in the days following they amused themselves in depositing things of all sorts on the net. Coins, mud, food, other netting, and other items were adhered to it. They then presented the encrusted net to Jesus who told them, “Recall the simple framework you started with. Now use violence to strip the netting of all that obscures the core fiber.”

The disciples used many means of force to remove all that encrusted the core fiber and presented it again to Jesus. Jesus examined the clean netting and taught the disciples. “As it is with this scrap, so is it with one’s spirit. The many things, both common and fine that adhered to the core were in no way useful, and served only to add unneeded weight and burden. Indeed, the more deeply encrusted the core became, the

more violence that was needed to restore it. Therefore, avoid all things which smother the life of the spirit, because they are removed only by using force of will.”

Jesus taught, “I command you to forgive. And not only for the sake of others, but for your own benefit. Consider that no evil will enter into Paradise — not that held in a hand, or in a thought, nor even in memory. To enter Paradise while grasping disorder in any form would be akin to a man smuggling a weapon into a peaceful gathering. Therefore do not only forgive, but forget its memory. In this way you shall have no evil in your own temple.”

When observing a woman weaving fabric he taught those around him saying, “The spirit is like the upright threads on a loom, giving support to the cross threads. These cross threads depend on the upright threads, just as action depends on spirit. Therefore make every thought upright, that your actions may be properly formed.”

Jesus said, “Any act of mortification is useful to the degree it unites one with the Father, its value lies in this and nothing else. Indeed any act of this life has its value only as it unites one to God. This union is many fold, in attending to one’s duties, one unites to the Father’s goodness and virtues; in giving reverence to the Father, one shares in the holiness of the Father.”

An ascetic approached Jesus and asked, “Master, what must I do to be perfect.”

Jesus looked with favor upon the man and said, “Azarel, to demand poverty is not better than to demand wealth. In both instances one is controlled by money. Likewise to demand silence is not more meritorious than to demand festive music.

Abstention from food, luxury or anything else has value only to the degree that it assists in mortifying the self, for the end of union with God.”

“To mortify one’s self is not always to mortify one’s body. The most accomplished ascetic is able to live any type of life selflessly, and with full attention to God, whether it be that of a father or mother, a merchant, a king or queen, or a desert solitary.”

“Azarel my friend, your discipline has advanced you far in the life of the spirit. It is my wish that you now leave your solitary life and perfect your spirit by triumph over the obstacles of the world.”

“Stay close to my disciples and teach the life of the spirit to them and to all who seek perfection. The fulfillment of the spirit is now upon all those who seek it. Remember who you see today, for I will soon leave this world.”

Jesus taught the disciples concerning will. “Purify your will, that it may attain to the very life of the God of Holiness. You see the athletes of the gymnasium train their bodies, and you see the Greeks train their logic, and you see the Pharisees train their piety. So too must you train your will,”

“Your training of the will is to conform it to that of the Messiah. The Law is your start, but not your end. You must end as Messiah on earth. Your will must be free of sin, and even free of self. Now wherever there are two wills, they must become one.”

“Learn from the prince’s soldiers. A certain prince commanded a cohort of sentry guards. He would command them to encircle anything he desired: land, seats of government, even other princes. He was always at the center of his roving circle of sentries, and commanded them by his own will.”

“In time a great king offered to share his great kingdom with the prince. The prince thought that his smaller cohort would simply be surrounded by the king’s larger legion. Instead the prince was instructed to join his sentries to the king’s larger circle of sentries. The prince joined the king at the center and together, but as one, they commanded a much greater circle of sentries. The king’s superior judgment had this legion of sentries encircle only the finest objects of desire. In doing so the kingdom that was built was the finest possible.”

“Your faculties of person may be likened to the prince’s soldiers who conquered all that the prince willed. Ensure that you too join all you command to that of the King of Heaven.”

Jesus was confronted by several Zealots who demanded that he speak in support of military action against the Romans. Jesus said, “In killing your oppressors you fight a hydra of Greek legend. You dismember one head but it sprouts nine more in its place. Blood breeds blood, swords breed swords, hate breeds hate, and the newborn hate contains all the previous hate in addition.”

“How can you ever hope to kill the hydra of hate by bloodshed. Rather, do what is necessary to make such a hydra into your friend, then your good efforts will be multiplied nine times.”

Jesus desired to raise the apostle John in holiness and instructed him saying, “Beloved, that you may increase as Messiah, consider:

Those who attain satisfaction in doing nothing are greater than those who find satisfaction in doing much.

Those who attain to holy office need still attain to holy personhood.

Those not given honor now, will be honored later. Those dwelling upon honor now, shall have lesser dwellings later.

Those who accept praise as fleeting, will attain lasting honor.

Those who conquer sin in all its forms may be greater than those who are born in angelic purity.

Those who now demand holiness of silence and poverty, will deny themselves riches in the new kingdom.

Those seeking perfection in the new kingdom, shall be thought of as cowards and imbeciles now. They must give no thought to this; rather their thoughts must be given only to the Son, so as to conform to the Father.

Know beloved, that aged women and meek men shall no longer be the least of me, but rather may be the greatest in the new kingdom. Yet neither shall those given and attaining, wealth or office be denied greatness in the new kingdom.

All shall have equal opportunity. Just as fine wine is produced by straining through a cloth that removes the cast off skins, so shall the new wine which the Father shall enjoy, be produced by straining through the will of the Son. The obstacle of self will shall not pass, even when wrapped in virtue. Only the will of the Father shall pass into the new kingdom.⁵

Teachings on many virtues

Jesus said, "This heaven will pass away, and the one above it will pass away."

"The dead are not alive, and the living will not die. During the days when you ate what is dead, you made it come alive. When you are in the light, what will you do? On the day when you were one, you became two. But when you become two, what will you do?"⁶

⁵ Beyond the faith required for salvation, those wishing perfection must forego every variety and degree of self will, even that under the guise of religion. The first point refers to the work of the desert fathers, mothers, and hermits who advanced to the point where they were satisfied simply to be. Lack of stimulation caused no hardship. In Heaven, those complaining (if it were possible), of inadequate opportunity for spiritual perfection shall be shown the myriad of opportunities in the life they lived.

⁶ This teaching, and the following nine teachings are taken or paraphrased from the Gospel of Thomas. The Gospel of Thomas is a non-canonical collection of 114 short teachings attributed to Jesus of Nazareth, in both Greek and Coptic languages. It was widely used by the early Church, but did not make the canon list. Most estimates of its written compilation vary from the year 40 to 140. The entire Gospel of Thomas may be examined according to Catholic teaching in the author's book, "The Gospel of Thomas, a Catholic Perspective".

Teaching one is Gospel of Thomas saying 11. From Mt 24:35, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."; also Mk 13:31, Lk 16:17, 21:33; 2 Pet 3:10. As to the second part, the only real new teaching is "On the day when you were one, you became two. But when you become two, what will you do?". We have our origin in Christ, we were once an idea internal to Christ, we were then incarnated as persons distinct from Christ, and our intended destiny is to rejoin Christ as members of the body of Christ, (CCC 398). Our creation involves one becoming two (Christ creates us, and there then exists Christ and his creation). What then shall we do after our creation...follow Christ to our intended reunion.

Teaching four is Gospel of Thomas saying 69. To be 'persecuted in heart' is to undergo moral trial of the will. This trial is God reaching out to us, to make us realize our imperfect actions. This minimal realization alone is a sort of repentance. We are then called to correct our thoughts, will and actions. The second part is

similar to “Blessed are the poor”. It could also refer to fasting, which denies even a legitimate self need. This detachment from self facilitates a deepened participation in Christ. Fasting is considered a useful spiritual tool in the Catholic Church.

Teaching six is Gospel of Thomas saying 7. A possible explanation is as follows: the lion is consumed and becomes the man who has the good fortune of being a member of Christ, (the body of Christ). The foul human is someone distant from Christ, and the lion that is consumed enjoys no real increase in stature.

Teaching seven in this novel is the Coptic version, teaching 114. It likely refers to Mary of Magdala. The first paragraph is not a teaching of Jesus, it is an emotional explosion of Peter. The author acknowledges Peter as the best of men, but Peter did make moral mistakes: he abandoned Jesus, and he lied in saying he did not even know Jesus. This saying is another mistaken act of Peter. It is embarrassing, but may be true.

By true or false legend, Mary Magdalene was a notorious prostitute possessed by seven devils, (and just the kind of person Jesus loved). Perhaps Mary applies as a disciple and Peter loudly objects.

We observe that the apostle Thomas of the canonical gospels denied that Jesus had risen after three days, (just as he had promised). Not all the words or actions (even of the apostles) recorded in the canonical gospels are correct or moral. The actions of Judas are recorded, but not all of his actions were good or moral. If Peter's denial of Jesus had not appeared in the canonical gospel, but only in the Gospel of Thomas, we would declare it inauthentic, even though it did in fact happen.

In this Gospel of Thomas saying, Jesus soundly corrects Peter, “LOOK! I will guide her to make her male...” We are to share in the very person of the man Jesus. The larger truth of the body of Christ is that, “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”, (Gal 3:28).

The body of Christ is now all who share in the life and person of The Son of God: Jesus, angels, Eucharist, humans. They all make up the single person of Christ. In this Thomas saying, Jesus grants Peter his gender idea, but says (via Paul) that “We, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually member's one of another.” (Rm 12:5).

Teaching eight in this novel, appears as teaching 18 in the Coptic Gospel of Thomas. In Rev 22:13, we read, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” Jesus says that the one who stands at the beginning knows the end, and will not taste death. We have our beginning as an idea within Christ, we are created as humans and our intended destiny or end is to rejoin Christ as part of his larger body of Christ.

Teaching nine is Gospel of Thomas saying 77. It is sometimes mistaken for pantheism, but is actually the Catholic doctrine of divine omnipresence. Pantheism says that God is everything. The doctrine of divine omnipresence says that God is in everything giving it existence. St. Thomas Aquinas wrote of it, and the doctrine appears in the 1912 Catholic Encyclopedia, which is free, online, and gives a good explanation under the heading “God, attributes of”.

“...God is really present everywhere in creation, not merely in virtue of operation, but in virtue of essence. In other words God Himself, or the Divine nature, is in immediate contact with, or immanent in, every creature – conserving it in being and enabling it to act.”

This saying is not pantheism (God is all things), but divine omnipresence (God is in all things). At a minimum Christ's attribute of being exists in all things. If something did not have the attribute of being, it would not exist, or cease to exist. This attribute of being may be given by extended means, but it must have its origin and its own ongoing existence in God. If God ceased to think of something or ceased to will it, it would cease to be. God not only knows everything (divine omniscience), but God has a presence in everything, and sustains everything, which we call divine omnipresence.

Teaching twelve of the Gospel of Thomas appears on page 317.

Jesus said, "That which you have will save you if you bring it forth from yourselves. That which you do not have within you will kill you if you do not have it within you."

Jesus taught saying, "He who will drink from my mouth, that is he who hears and acts upon my words will become as I am. I myself shall become he, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to him."

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have been persecuted in their hearts: they are the ones who have truly come to know the Father."

"Blessed are those who go hungry, for the belly of him who desires will be filled."

Jesus said, "If those who lead you say to you, 'See, the kingdom is in the sky', then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea', then the fish will precede you. Rather, the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living father. But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty."

Jesus said, "Blessed is the lion which becomes man when consumed by man; and cursed is the man whom the lion consumes, and the lion becomes man."

A disciple said, "Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life."

Jesus said, "How long am I to put up with you? Do you not know that I will make every female into male. Every woman who becomes Messiah will live, and she is worthy of such life."

The disciples said to Jesus, "Tell us, how will our end come?"

Jesus said, "Have you found the beginning, then, that you are looking for the end? You see, the end will be where the beginning is. Congratulations to the one who stands at the beginning; that one will know the end and will not taste death."

Jesus said, "I am the light that is over all things. I am all: from me all came forth, and to me all attained. Split a piece of wood; I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there."

Jesus was approached by a Pharisee sympathetic to him, and was told by the Pharisee, "Rabbi, if you will better acknowledge the Law of Moses, and require your followers to fast as the Pharisees do, you will have support from the temple priests and scribes. Perfection of the Law is perfection in the will of our God."

Jesus answered, "If you fast you will bring sin upon yourselves, and if you pray, you will be condemned, and if you give alms, you will harm your spirits."

"The Pharisees fast and pray, and they give alms, but none of these things can achieve salvation. To make these things your end, is to deny the Messiah. The Messiah himself is salvation, and only a Pharisee who becomes Messiah will attain salvation."

"To fast, to pray and to give alms as a Pharisee is of no value. To fast, to pray and to give alms has value only if done as Messiah. When God and man are two there is not salvation, when the two become one salvation is had."

Jesus said, “I seek some to make excuse for the others, tell me of their misguidance rather than their evil. Speak to me that they are more ignorant then willfully wicked. Bind your good interests to their failings; this is what Abraham did. For my friend Abraham, I spared an evil city because his interests were involved.”

In Judaea, the disciples were passing the night in an abandoned hut. A shepherd entered to claim the hut for use by his sheep, causing much turmoil. Jesus said to the shepherd, “This is not my home, I do not claim it and I will not fight for it.”

Jesus then said to the rude shepherd, “You would do well to discover a better home, than the one which you now dwell in,” and left.

Jesus said to the apostles, “Do you see that man consuming his bread? What would be the meaning if bread were to consume the man? I am the bread of life, and you will be consumed by that who you eat.”

Jesus said, “If you purchase a spare coat, you may be sure that you will require it, as your lack of faith will be fulfilled. Instead, give the money to the poor and your Father will see to it that your one coat suffices.”

Jesus taught saying, “Judge the value of an object by your grasp of it. If your grasp may be broken by a thief; or if by rust, wind and rain it crumbles from your hands, it is of little value. Seek rather, the treasure that does not perish, and will never be depleted.”

Jesus taught the disciples concerning union with the Messiah saying, “If you offered the Messiah your joy and even your leisure, fewer trials would occur, because it is only your union that I am seeking.”⁷

Jesus taught concerning the illusion of status on earth, and of true judgment in the new kingdom saying to the disciples, “How is good judgment made between all the people you see here in the temple? How is one’s office, wealth or gender accounted for?” The disciples were silent and unable to make such a judgment.

Jesus said, “None of these are accounted for at all. Your treasure in Heaven will be where your heart is on earth. The accidents of life are of no account, but only your response to them. Before the court of Heaven one appears stripped of everything except one’s will. The will and its virtues alone shall be judged. In this way no one is privileged as they are on earth.”

“The kingdom of Heaven may be likened to wine of differing quality that is carried in a variety of containers, and every wine is sampled by a great king. Some containers were beautiful to the eye, and made of ivory and hammered gold. Others were copper or clay.”

“The king’s son had instructed the people in the making of fine wine, and he cared only for the fine wine, and not the container. Upon sampling the wine, there was no pattern observed between the quality of the container and the quality of the wine. In fact every old container was to be discarded and replaced with one supplied by the king’s son.”

Jesus explained the meaning of the parable to the disciples saying, “You see that the accidents of life remain only accidents, and have no bearing upon virtue or faith. The bravery of a Zealot will profit him only when done in conformance to the will of the Father. A mother may surpass a Pharisee in faith and humility. A wise priest will use the

⁷ This is a post Biblical teaching from Christ to Gabrielle Bossis, and one of many from her book “He and I”. We gain union with Christ by the conquest of moral trial, but also from all parts of life performed as Christ in the world.

advantages of office to benefit his soul, while a foolish priest will accumulate dust and pride.”

Jesus said, “A master will command his slave to come to him, or to go from him. Regarding the wealth of this world, do not be controlled by it, in its attraction or its repulsion.”

Jesus taught saying, “One who aspires to be Messiah must submit to the cross, and not only the cross of the Romans. Souls are made clean not only in blood, but also in tears and sweat, in moral trial and triumph, in failure and remorse. One who follows me, does so as the Messiah of redemptive sacrifice, and must not expect his glory in this life, but in the life to come.”

Jesus said, “The Father does not bring creation into being by selecting from a preexisting inventory, the Father brings into being by an act of faith and is never depleted.”

After a nights lodging and meals at the generosity of a villager, one of the apostles boasted of relying on the providence of God to provide for their needs. Jesus reprimanded him saying, “Yes, you may count on the God of Providence to give what is needed for life. But you fail to give credit to the family who provided for us last night. They did not have to do so. We were in no danger from hunger, and if they had refused us a meal it would not have been counted against them. Yet they did so, and they did so not by force, but by freely choosing to be instruments of God’s providence. Do not be like the proud pilgrims who claim special standing before God, and lay claim to meals and shelter obtained by the sweat of others. Many people in Israel work in the day’s heat,

raise their families and do not neglect to offer praise, prayer and virtue to God. I tell you truly, their efforts are of more value in the kingdom of Heaven than those of self serving religious pilgrims.”

Jesus taught saying, “Your fate is not fore written by God, but by your own actions. Study the actions of the faithful woman and the woman without faith. The first was told to cook a double portion for dinner so that guests might also be served. She made all she could, but had only the usual amount and no extra for guests. She placed it at table and awaited the guests, devoting the unused time to thoughts of hope, faith, and thanksgiving to the God of Israel, with who she had made a covenant of faith and virtue. The guests arrived, each bringing a meal portion or more, and the woman thanked God in her heart.”

“In the same way, the faithless woman was told to prepare double the usual amount, so that the expected guests might eat also. She too found that she could prepare only the usual amount, and not the extra needed for guests. Her response was to curse the world and God, because the guests were due and she had not enough food. The guests arrived and everything happened just as she had complained.”

“The difference in these same situations was the covenant that one made and the other did not.”

In Jerusalem a disciple asked Jesus concerning salvation saying, “Master, when you speak of a person electing salvation, how is it that anyone, even the most evil would elect the flames of Hell over the paradise of Heaven?”

Jesus replied, “Certainly all persons would elect Paradise rather than Hell. But do all elect God instead of self ? At judgment the difference between Heaven and Hell is plainly known. Those who are evil will certainly choose Heaven, but they will do so out of self interest. In binding themselves to self, they cannot enter Heaven, who is the Messiah. Those who are self, cannot be Messiah.”

“Indeed every will attempts to gain access to Heaven at judgment. Recall however, what your Heaven is — rather who your Heaven is. It is not a matter of walking into an inanimate place, but the union of two wills. The will of wills reveals the motivation for gaining Heaven, and if that will of wills is self, and not God, then access cannot be gained.”

“When I taught you the prayer of the kingdom, you prayed the words, ‘Spare us from the final test.’⁸ Those who are Messiah are not subject to the final test because they are Messiah. Those who are Messiah are spared the entry test to Heaven because the Messiah is Heaven. Self, and self will are forever tainted with evil and may not pass into the new kingdom.”

“Those who are not Messiah will be tested in their attempts to enter, and they will fail. Those who are Messiah, but only to a degree will enter the lower Heavens, but fail when tested in their ability to enter the higher Heavens. Those who are fully Messiah will be spared from this final test of their lives.”

Jesus had obtained entry into the treasury, inside the temple. Many priests and Pharisees followed him about. Jesus observed the many containers of coins, and the scribes who would write out notes of credit or debit. Jesus came upon some workers who were dipping gold jewelry and objects in a large basin of water. The object in question was suspended on a balance with a pure gold counterweight. Jesus inquired into the purpose of the operation and it was explained to him that objects of pure gold would remain balanced when lowered into the water, while gold objects containing impurities of non-gold metals would upset the balance.

Jesus observed the enterprise then spoke to all the people assembled, “Priests and Pharisees, hear me. These men are correct in testing the purity of these objects and assigning a value based on their purity. A high quality gold is obtained only with effort

⁸ “Spare us from the final test.” This is from the Lord’s prayer in Luke, chapter 11. The final paragraph of this teaching uses the terms “lower Heaven” and “higher Heaven”. Such terms are common in Biblical literature and the writings of the saints. All evidence supports the idea of Heaven being a very diverse place, even having specific types and degrees of glory. As used in this teaching lower Heavens refer to Purgatory, which is existence in the human body of Christ. The higher Heavens is existence as the divine body of Christ. Christ himself is not only our literal life and resurrection (Jn 11:25), but our actual Heaven.

and repeated refinement in the flames. The form of these objects is of no account, as their value is determined by their purity.”

“The God of Israel allows only pure gold into his Heavenly kingdom, nothing less will do. The Father will not compromise his taste for only fine gold. The fine gold pieces I speak of are pure souls. Like fine gold, the value of these souls is in their purity, and not their particular form. Do not be scandalized if the lowest in Israel be judged of greater value than a priest of the temple. Yet, neither do the low have advantage over the well born. Every person has ample opportunity and trial to perfect his soul. The rich in Heaven will be those who invested their efforts in becoming as the Son of Man, and not serving selfish interest.”

Jesus taught the disciples concerning the Holy Spirit, “There is only one sin that will not be forgiven in this life or the next, and that is to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit. Do you recall the occasion when the Pharisees spoke against me, saying that I cast out devils because I was a devil? In saying I was a devil, they are saying that I do not act like God, but the devil, and they would not act in such a manner. If they persist in their blasphemy to the end, they may not become Messiah and attain salvation.”

Simon the disciple asked Jesus, “Master, why was King David punished for counting his subjects?”

Jesus answered, “Simon, your question is flawed. Ask rather, ‘Why was David punished for counting God’s subjects?’”

“The people were not David’s to count. They were subject not to David, but to the God of Israel. A man inventories what he owns, and in doing so David was a thief who stole from God. When Caesar counts his people he does no wrong, but Israel was to be the offspring of God alone.” ⁹

⁹ In 1 Chronicles Chapter 21, King David takes a census of Israel, which is an offense against God. The people of Israel belong to God (not David), when David counts them, he is implying that they are his to count. God offers him the choice of punishments: famine, war or plague. David chooses plague which kills 70,000.

“Think of it Simon — the men of Israel...proud, not of themselves, but of their God. The women of God, raising the children of God to virtue and good religion. Just merchants, fruitful farmers, children obedient to the wisdom of their parents. All these people will not be as actors who stop when the staged drama is concluded, but who bring their virtue before their God, who will then give them even more ways to live out the joy of their virtues.”

“Simon, recall the punishment given to David. Think now of the reward that will be given to those who emigrate from the kingdom of Evil into the kingdom of God.”

The women who traveled with Jesus came to him with a question concerning the unjust portion suffered by many women. They asked, “Master, we know that you are a righteous man. However many others are not. In the new kingdom, will men unjustly rule women as they now do?”

Jesus answered, “The injustice you observe was not the will of the Father. Yet do not expect equality on earth or in Heaven. Absence of rule or rulers will not be found in Heaven. In Heaven will be found those who rule, and those who are ruled.”

“Those who will rule over others, will be those best able to. And those best able to rule, will be those who most deeply share in the life, humility, love, and wisdom of the Holy Spirit. In Heaven, all who rule, will rule with incomparable love and they shall be helpmates to all others, and many daughters of Abraham will attain such rule. Just as an infant desires the rule of his mother, so too will all in Heaven desire the rule of goodness. The citizens of Heaven will indeed seek the rule of God, it will not be a burden carried, but a gift sought.”

“On earth, use the abuse you suffer for your own profit. ¹⁰ When you are insulted as being of little value, do not seek vengeance of thought or speech. Seek

The theology of the matter is that as God's particular people they are under Gods greater protection, but as David's people, they do not enjoy the same degree of protection. A criticism of monotheism is that a good God would not deliberately send famine, war or plague. In reality, God cannot make evil of any sort, but as our parent, he does assign our evil (generated from sin), so that the maximum good may come of it. God may make this assignment directly or via natural means.

¹⁰ Christian ethics does not promote inaction, or suffering for the sake of suffering. Every institution and individual act is rather to be cultivated to best form. If attempts at reform fail, then at least one's response should be one of constructive mediation by hope, forgiveness, and human respect. Indeed, such a response will make the sought after reform more likely.

redress in virtue. Just as the Messiah makes your sin into his very virtue, do likewise with those who abuse and insult you.”

“If you wish, you may bind another’s injustice to your own self, but give it new form as virtue. It is a matter of one’s anger becoming another’s patience, of one’s greed becoming another’s contentment, of one’s disbelief becoming another’s reverence.”

“That which exists will never be destroyed. Goodness was not annihilated when it was deformed into evil. When evil is reformed into goodness it does not so much cease to exist, rather it now exists in its perfect form of virtue.”

“All women and all men are now given an unmatched opportunity for achievement, and riches greater than that of Caesar or Cleopatra.”

“The Queen of Sheba who visited Solomon, would roll in the dust and pray the scriptures until mute, if she knew of the gift that was now being offered. But no such extremes are needed, nor even desired by your Messiah. The Messiah wishes you to remain in whatever accidents of life you inhabit, but perfect your spirit in faith, love, and selflessness.”

A disciple had brought a hand scroll of commentary to Jesus and told him of the great insight it contained, and how it had helped him to understand the Law.

Jesus replied, “The will is the entry into the kingdom of God, not the intellect. It is a fine thing to learn from the scrolls of teachers, but consider that many of the prophets of Israel did not even have the skill required to read the scrolls. Yet by their will they attained great knowledge and wisdom.”

“The prophets, and the holy men and women of Israel had a share in their God’s wisdom, due to the share they had in their God’s will. The miracles they produced came not from them, but from their union of spirit with the Almighty of Israel.”

“A spirit deeply united with the Almighty has abilities and knowledge far in excess of many scrolls. The kingdom of God is attained by purchasing less, rather than more. All that is needed has already been provided to each person. Those without ink and quill are at an advantage, if they spend their time disciplining self and praising God.”

On one occasion, Jesus was teaching about the kingdom of God. A well known tax collector had stepped close to hear Jesus and was moved to tears. A Pharisee objected to the words of Jesus and stepped in front of the tax collector to shout his condemnation. Jesus heard him, then walked behind both the Pharisee and the tax collector, both whom turned to see Jesus.

Jesus now stood closest to the weeping tax collector and said, “This man’s tears are the rain that grows holiness. This man is closer to the kingdom of God than you are. You would do well to follow his example.”

Peter asked, “Master...the man who burned in Caesarea, is there hope for him?”

Jesus answered, “It is better to burn in this life than in the next. The store of evil that he accumulated during his life was inflicted upon his body. Let us pray that his soul might be spared these ravages. With our prayers, he may muster sufficient faith and clarity at judgment to elect salvation.”¹¹

Jesus said to the apostles, “Again, understand how you are incapable to judge. Hear the story of the day workers.”

“An employer hired workers as they each arrived asking for work. Those hired early in the day worked longer than those hired later in the day. When the work day had ended, the employer called all the workers to receive their pay. The master called the last hired first. He gave them each a coin, which was the agreed upon wage. Then he gave a bonus payment to each worker. The distribution of the coins had no apparent logic. Some who were hired last received a greater bonus than some who worked longer. Some workers even appeared at the last moment of the work day and they were unable to work,

¹¹ Based on 1Cor 5:5, where sin is inflicted on the body, sparing the soul. On the cross, the bodily suffering Jesus underwent atoned for moral sin. This is an example of sin being reformed into non-moral physical disorder, (thus allowing the owner to be incorporated into the body of Christ). Moral sin may also be reformed into moral goodness by moral trial and triumph. Jesus did this in the Garden of Gethsemane. In the case cited in 1Cor 5:5, the suffering beneficiary does not take on the reformatory suffering voluntarily, nevertheless the effect is the same. The book of Revelation speaks of this reformatory suffering on a world wide scale.

but they were given a wage coin just for the asking. In this manner each worker received his wages and a bonus payment.”

“The first hired complained that some of those hired last had received a greater bonus than those who had worked longer. The employer rejected their argument saying, ‘Why do you question my judgment. Those who bore the greatest burden have received the greater bonus, but I alone am able to know this. Later when I call you to the feast of the workers you will see clearly all this.’”

The apostles noted the apparent unfairness of this manner of pay, and asked that it be explained.

Jesus said, “The workers are the faithful, and those who went to work early did so because their faith was strong; they had been given little burden of the sin of Adam, hence their strong faith.”

“Those arriving later to work did so because their faith was weakened by the sin of Adam, and they did not think clearly to go to work. In order to even arrive and ask for work, such persons had to work through a great burden. Simply in arriving to work, they may have done more labor than those workers who arrived earlier.”

“Know this also. The single coin given to all who applied was a gold coin; this is the salvation that all received. The bonus coins were made of silver, bronze, and copper, these are the coins of virtue, which are not given, but earned.”¹²

On another occasion, Jesus again told the parable of the day workers saying, “The kingdom of Heaven may be likened to a master who calls in the workers, that he might pay them.”

“This master had hired workers throughout the day, as each would apply for work. Some were hired at the first hour and worked the entire day. Others were hired at the third or sixth hour, and still others worked only an hour. Some were even called in as

¹² Salvation is an unmerited gift from God, yet our own efforts in the cultivation of virtue will also follow us to Heaven. Salvation is a sharing in the very life of God, and is depicted as the gold coin given as a gift. Our own merit is rewarded by coins of lesser value. This parable also notes that apparent virtue is not necessarily an accurate measurement of total virtue. Someone given lesser failings, or great office may have greater apparent virtue from the start. While great sinners who reform may put forth great or greater moral effort, showing a love of God which may not be less than those of great apparent virtue.

they walked to the field after being hired, but not yet performing any work. All had agreed to work for the daily wage, yet when the pay was distributed some complained that it was unfair that those who worked the entire day received no more than those who worked only an hour.”

“The master responded saying, ‘Friend, I do not short you in pay. Indeed I give you all I own.¹³ I retain ownership also, and we shall share in all that I own. I give to each worker the whole of my kingdom, and it is not possible to give any worker more. Thus, the equality of wages that are given.”

“Furthermore, you will no longer be called to work in thirst or hunger, or heat or cold. There will be no need to hoard or guard your pay because you now have irrevocable title to my kingdom in its entirety, and you are taken into the royal family. Rethink your objection and consider the great wage you are given.”

Jesus told a parable to the people, that they might understand the Messiah and the kingdom of Heaven. Jesus taught saying, “A certain prince lived in poverty until he could claim his kingship. In the kingdom were workshops of every sort, but they were all owned by a greedy man. This man was so greedy that he did not even pay his workers, but made continual and outrageous promises of wealth to the workers.”

“The prince went among the workers observing their work. Some of the workers were most skilled and produced beautiful objects of every sort. Others however had little skill and produced flawed items. From these workers, both skilled and unskilled, the prince gathered the discards of their work. The prince recovered the

¹³ A literal understanding of our membership in the body of Christ, brings a new interpretation of the oft cited parable of the vineyard workers (Mt 20:1-16). This interpretation is not one of social justice, but the gift of divine participation. The same wage given to all is a sharing in the very life of God, which cannot be divided or given by degree.

This gift is given out of love and necessity. Because original sin has infected all of creation, and the devil is unable to repent, all of creation will be forever corrupted by sin. Therefore it is necessary that God offer a sharing in his very life as the means of salvation. God is the only thing that is forever free of the corruption of sin, and therefore the only refuge for his children. The same wage given to all workers is the absolute life of God which is not a matter of degree of greatness, but of absolute goodness. God cannot distribute portions of God who is indivisible.

In this novel, Jesus tells two variants of the vineyard workers parable. The first emphasizes individual merit alongside divine unmerited gift, and the second speaks the absolute value of the gift of participation in the divine nature of God, which incredibly has the appearance of being unjust.

discards of potters, wood carvers, and spinners, and shaped the unclaimed material into beautiful objects, which he gave to his father the king.”

“The king was very pleased with his son the prince. The prince, who desired even more material to mold and carve into gifts for his father, sold himself into servitude to pay the price for all the material he could obtain from the greedy shop owner.”

“In time some of the workers realized that they were being made fools of by the greedy shop owner. They hired themselves out to the good king instead, and the king paid the workers in gold, not false promises.”

“In time the prince paid off the greedy shop owner for all the workers he hired away from their false contract. In the end, all those workers of skill were employed by the prince who was given his kingship by his grateful father.”

Jesus and his disciples were resting alongside a road; people passed by and Jesus called to a man, “Sir, where do you come from, and where are you going to?”

The man stopped. He observed the disciples and Jesus, and replied, “I come from the west and am bound for Jerusalem.”

Jesus rebutted, “No sir, you come from Truth, and return to Truth. We are pilgrims like yourself, join us and find the Truth that you seek.”

Jesus and the disciples were traveling among the villages in Galilee. Jesus began to speak of the value of every act of virtue, even the smallest. Jesus told the disciples that one who had conquered his large failings and was advanced in spirit, might have only small faults and vanities remaining. Jesus therefore spoke of the conquest of these small faults as having great value in the new kingdom.

Jesus then spoke of the cumulative effect of good or evil. As the disciples walked, Jesus had one of the women give portions of lamb’s wool to each disciple. Jesus instructed each disciple to speak of small virtues they had made, and to use their palms to twist the wool into a single long thread as they spoke. Jesus showed the group that a single thread, pulled by a single man could not lift another man.

Jesus then gathered all the threads and weaved them into a thick and strong rope. He then showed the disciples that the strong rope, when pulled by all the others was able to lift any man.

After a period of much rejection and failure in the mission, one of the disciples spoke to Jesus of the wasted effort. Jesus replied, “Alongside the failure you observe is also much success, and the fruit of this success will be used for the highest purpose, and credited to your account in Paradise. The success is this, you put forth good intention from your heart, which in itself builds the kingdom of Heaven; you then saw your efforts become the victim of irreverence and greed. You did not give in to cynicism and despair, and I instructed you not to. In maintaining faith you have made lead into gold, and failure into success. The disordered parts of the failure — irreverence, indifference, greed, were indeed felt by you, but you reformed them into hope, and forgiveness.”

“Know this, the world of the spirit is every bit as real as the world you see and touch. Spirit forms matter, spirit forms spirit, spirit forms events; all this being ordained by the God of creation. That which you see and touch, and even the order of events, and their cause and effect are the product of their underlying spiritual framework. Every moral act you make reshapes the world of man.”

“This being true, seek to reform the world and souls by your acts of virtue. Just as the evil of our first parents had to be felt in the world, so to must your virtuous acts have effect. Remember when you see no result of your virtuous acts, it is because the God of redemption uses this reformed virtue for the highest purpose, which is the salvation of souls.”

Jesus was questioned by the scribes as to the authenticity of his knowledge. The scribes found no record of Jesus attending any temple school, and no teacher anywhere claimed him as a student.

Jesus replied to their questioning saying, “Know this learned scribes, true will must precede true knowledge. When one forges one’s will into truth, all others parts of that person shall also become true. I am the truth. The truth is in me and I am in the

truth. I may only act, and know the truth. Do not be amazed that truth is known apart from your schools. When one dwells within the God of Truth, there is no need for further schooling. Therefore I tell you, put first the kingdom of God, and all else will be freely added.”¹⁴

“You scribes are half truths, but you are now called to become fully truth. You are scribes of the letter and the Law, but your greater fortune lies in being scribes of the will.”

Jesus was reclined on the ground, and drawing circles in the dust. He called to a disciple and instructed him to trace in the dust, a circle as large as a man. He then rose and taught all the disciples concerning the Messiah saying, “You see the circle, and how the beginning meets the end. So it was for Adam, until sin corrupted the union.”¹⁵

Jesus instructed a disciple to break the union of the circle. Jesus then stood in the circle such that his own person now repaired, and joined the broken section and restored the union with his own person. Jesus then continued speaking saying, “Now see how the Messiah restores the union with his own person. In doing so, those restored to union with their God, now also share in the Messiah who restores the union.”

“In this world, when a servant admits to a fault he suffers chastisement. In the new kingdom, when one admits his fault to the Messiah, that person will be held in honor, and advanced.”

Jesus taught a parable concerning the value of every action made as a new Messiah saying, “There was a certain king, and this king pursued many interests. He was

¹⁴ Those who more deeply participate in the virtues and life of God, more deeply share in God's perfect design for creation, and even in God's own perfection. Those who stray from perfection, obtain imperfect circumstances simply because they are further from perfection. This is the core story of the Old Testament, and the Covenant between God and Israel, and it still applies.

¹⁵ Jesus takes license here, in that the original union Adam and Eve enjoyed with God did not include participation in the human or divine nature of Christ, (2Pet 1:4). They shared in the virtues of God, but not his person.

a statesman, ruler, scholar and father to many children, but he would often attend to interests not usually pursued by a king. He could be found working alongside his subjects. He was a master woodcarver and farmer. He was a strong and accurate stonemason. He was even equal to the wisdom and goodness required to raise children, and would gladly perform all the required tasks.”

“Newcomers who visited the kingdom were surprised to see the great king cooking and cleaning, laboring and working every at every task. Those who knew the king, also knew that the nobility, authority and influence of the king was in no way diminished by his varied pursuits. As newcomers came to know the great king, they too agreed that the king’s worth was inherent in himself and any particular task that the king laid his heart or hand to was ennobled by the king taking it upon himself.”

“The king adopted all his subjects as his own children and put no limits upon their nobility. Indeed the king judged all his citizens only on their love and dedication to himself. Courtiers and field workers were judged by this same standard. In this way the king cultivated the finest kingdom possible.”

Jesus then explained the parable to those around him saying, “Your Father in Heaven is the wise king, and desires you to perfect yourself, by perfecting your every action. Do not satisfy your self desire by pursuing noble tasks only, but know that every task performed without self satisfaction, and for your God is a perfect task. This perfection comes from the perfect will that performs the task.”

“You know the virtues of God — modesty, chastity, honesty, justice, compassion, respect and reverence, joy and temperance. It is not your hand that cultivates these virtues, but your will. You shall advance in the kingdom of God as you perfect your will. As a new Messiah in Israel, others will advance as you yourself advance.”

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Miracles and Prophecy

Generosity and Admonitions

In Sepphoris, a wealthy man invited Jesus to dine with him. It was the custom of the man to provide elaborate robes for his guests, and precious collar pieces. Prior to the meal being served, the man invited the guests to don their robes and collar pieces. The servants placed these items on each guest then held a polished silver reflector before them, that each guest might arrange his ornate clothing to his satisfaction.

As the head servant walked about supervising all this, he moved behind Jesus and stopped to observe his reflection in the silver mirror that was held before him by a servant. The head servant gasped and was astonished, seeing that the reflection of the guest Jesus was without flaw, while anyone else using the silver metal mirror had only a dull and distorted reflection. The dinner host approached to see this phenomenon, and was likewise astonished.

Knowing what their surprise was about, Jesus said to the host and servant, “The Son of Man is a true reflection. Anyone aspiring to become as the Son of Man must polish to perfection, his thoughts and actions. Then he too will perfectly reflect the truth.”

Jesus prophesied concerning moral laxness in the days before the Antichrist.

“Families will gather around the Devil’s messenger, which will appear as light. Each home will have a box of light, and they will attend to it nightly and daily. They will admit this stranger into their homes; and he will tell disrespectful, irreverent, unchaste and violent stories; he will challenge their beliefs and values. They will be fooled, and not offended, and this stranger will be invited into their homes again, even the next day. This play actor will become the opium of the people, dulling their sense of morals, and promoting a habit for sensation, rather than a longing for peace of soul. Just as the

Roman arenas and amphitheatres offer violence and lustful stimulation, so too will every man, woman and child be offered such spectacle in their very homes.”

“Lustful images such as are sold in Caesarea will be offered to every child, every woman, and every man, these will be images made of light that will enter every home in a way similar to the stranger of light. Many people will consider it their right to view such images, and those who object will find their pleas rejected by the judgment of law courts. They should know that their God will not praise them for allowing any person to view as they will. The laws of their nations are not the same as the laws of the kingdom of God.”

“In the last days much of humanity will be fed on self indulgence, and not the sacrifice that constructs noble character. Such people and nations will bring harm upon themselves, its citizens will give lessening attention to their souls and increasing devotion to their stomachs and their machines of pleasure.”

“Their machines of war will be as the scorching sun in power and they will not satisfy themselves to fight their own wars, but even fight the wars of others. Nations will arm themselves mightily, like none before. Their great armies will allow them to fight extended wars. Their own peoples will pay the cost. They will arm themselves with weapons of extreme energy and heat. They will fool themselves that no such weapon could ever be used by rational kings, but their own corruption ensures the failure of nation deterring nation. Depravity and not sound thought will rule, even in the thoughts of leaders.”

“They will indeed have to reap on the battlefield, what they plant in corrupt laws and acts. Their lack of faith will compel them to place their hope in their own devices, and since they abandon God, such a course will be their only option.”

“Many of those who plea for peace, will destroy with the left hand what they seek to build with the right hand. They will scream “Peace!”, but do evil, as to ruin their own goals. Brotherhood will not come about so long as the larger society wrecks the underlying spirit of peace by acts of irreverence, intoxication, lust, fornication, and killing of those unborn. I will save those who will elect it, by allowing cup after cup, and bowl after bowl of inequity to afflict their world, instead of their souls.”

“The end will finally come after they use their sunburst weapons. First in the clouds to disable communication, after many such weapons have been used, the resulting

famine will leave an army of antichrist's numbering 200 million which will remain in the world, along with those who will be martyred.¹

Again Jesus prophesied, "In the future, every person will enjoy a quarter part of an hour in having moral authority. Persons will strip the natural laws of morality of this or that part, and will wear it as a banner of righteousness. They will denounce poverty and war, but will do little to prevent the root causes of these evils, which is human sin."

"They will fight tooth and nail for perverse license and call it the rights of man."

"They will cling to this life at the expense of the next."

"They will threaten war to those crossing their national boundaries, yet allow, even invite moral corruption of every sort to cross the boundary of their will, and enter their souls."

"They will seek physicians to destroy the children their women carry in the womb."

"They will claim that any ill act they are predisposed to is that way from God."

"They will form ideals based on corrupted ideas. They will not seek God through discipline of soul and act, but construct their god in their own image."

"Those who wish a chaste society will be obstructed by their very courts and laws. Just as the serpent said that knowledge of evil must not be suppressed, so too will evil seek to be equal to the good. I tell you truly, there exists a society in which knowledge of evil is not thought of as good. Seek this society."

¹ This paragraph fictionally proposes that the army of 200 million mentioned in the book of Revelation will be worldwide survivors of a nuclear war that started with a single EMP (electro magnetic pulse) attack on the United States. A nuclear detonation high above the U.S. will destroy much of the countries soft infrastructure. The power grid will be damaged or destroyed depending on the severity of the attack, and the amount of EMP hardening made beforehand. Microelectronics in cars, banks, stores, computers will likewise be destroyed. Transportation, fuel refining, farming, commerce will all be impaired, to a degree great or small. Worst case is that a survivable single attack on the U.S. will snow ball as retaliatory strikes against North Korea or Iran affect China and Russia causing them to launch their own EMP strikes, then ground bursts. An extreme but possible death rate is 90%, which reduces a population of 6 billion, to 600 million, of which 200 million are pursuing the other 400 million. It is proposed that the 200 million is not the Chinese army, but an army of antichrists (1Jn 2:18) that pillages the destroyed world.

Jesus spoke of the Pharisees saying, “Consider Judas, that God is love. The Pharisees are content to attend to the small parts of God, and as such may never attain to the whole of God, which is Love.”

“Be warned also, that in the future many will again pick out pieces of virtue. Many will cultivate a love limited to creation, health, diet, equality, wealth, rights of man and woman at the expense of the rights of God. Unless such love encompasses their creator, their selected moment of moral superiority will last only a quarter part of an hour.”

Jesus worked many miracles in the area around Sidon by the Sea. A leader of the Jews in that area approached Jesus and told him that he was investigating reports of many miracles, and wished to speak with Jesus concerning them.

Jesus said, “Those of this world will investigate events which are exceptions to the norm. Why have you waited until now to investigate? You would have done better to investigate as to why no miracles were occurring.”

“Participants in the Truth will perform mightier miracles than these. Those who have true belief will handle serpents as if they were rope, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not harm them; they will lay their hands on the sick, who will recover, and those attaining to the fullness of Love will bear the wounds of the Messiah.”²

“Sir if you had seen to the Jews in Sidon, such miracles would have been the normal order. But fear not, an even greater opportunity is now offered to you. Enter into the new kingdom which is now being populated, and bring your people with you.”

² Jesus speaks here in an exaggerated manner as he often did. However this strange situation continues even today. Leaders will investigate miracles because they are unexpected, but it is unheard of that a bishop investigate as to why miracles and prophecy *do not* occur, (Mk 16:17-18) Paradoxically, if no falsehood existed there would be no real need for the multiplication of food, or the healing of the sick. In fairness, many reported miracles are determined to be natural phenomena or fraud under the necessary investigation.

Regarding “...wounds of the Messiah”: This refers to the stigmata (five wounds of Christ), which the apostle Paul may have had (Gal 6:17). Dozens of authentic stigmata cases have been documented. The theory is that the fullest participation in Christ is one in which a perfected soul becomes a sacrificial soul, as was the case for Jesus Christ. The soul of this perfect victim is then manifested in his or her body as the stigmata. Their perfect union with Jesus Christ is apparent in the soul and the body. The stigmata is a functional manifestation of sacrificial love, the stigmata is not decoration but actual wound.

Jesus was approached by a woman who had been ejected from the home of her husband because she followed Jesus as a disciple. Jesus sought to ease her worries saying, “I did not come to bring peace, but a sword that carves away the living flesh from the dead flesh. Do not return to your husband until he attains faith. Stay with us, we have many who offer us assistance of every sort, and believe me woman, your husband will suffer an affliction that will cause him to recall you, and he will ask for your prayers. Give him your prayers, and address them to the Messiah, and then the living flesh will be rejoined to the dead flesh, and both will live.”

Jesus said, “Tell me Peter, when the Father allows the Devil, who is the Antichrist to come upon the people, what will he seek?”

Peter replied, “The Devil has always sought to be God. I suppose that if he comes as a man, he will seek the office of the High Priest...or the Messiah.”

Jesus said, “Remember this well Peter, for it will happen just as you have foretold. When the one will of the Messiah on earth becomes many wills, the Devil is active.”

“Do not become anxious or deceived, the end is still far off, and the end will come about as the Father becomes weary of justice by which men and women throw themselves into Hell. The scales of justice will be delayed by the Father withholding the earned wages of the good workers to place on the scale, to balance the injustice of the workers of evil.”

“In killing those who elect to become Messiah, those doing so bring more and not less calamity upon themselves. When the Messiah has been eradicated from the world, the world will fill up in justice, that which was withheld by the Messiah being on earth.”

On occasion, Jesus spoke in a way that resembled the Father of Heaven, more so than the Son of Heaven. On one such occasion Jesus spoke of his mother saying, "I shall tell you four secrets of the Mother of the Son of Heaven."

"First, the Mother is one flesh with her spouse, who is the Spirit of Heaven. Think of the full meaning of this, then multiply it by the meaning of God. What is true of the Spirit is also true of the one flesh of the Spirit."

"Second, the spouse of the Mother is the purified love of the Father and of the Son. Yes, purified. The love between the Father and the Son has no need of purification, yet I tell you the impossible was done."³

"Third, in creating the flesh for the Spirit, who is my own mother, I have left her with a woman's weakness. Her love exceeds her prudent reason."

"Fourth, all who become Messiah, become sons and daughters of the Mother of Heaven. I say this not in drama, but in truth. The Mother of Heaven enters into a covenant of protection with her children. She allows her Messiah children to be persecuted by the world, but never to the loss of their souls, and all who suffer in faith will shine as stars of glory in Heaven."⁴

³ Is the Holy Spirit the static and proportional revelation of God? This novel proposes that the Holy Spirit is not the *proportional* whole will and love of God, but weighted toward mercy and communion (salvation). When Jesus says "purified", he means "selectified".

⁴ The four teachings in order: (1) The theory that Mary, mother of Jesus is the human incarnation of the Holy Spirit is accepted as a possibility, but not yet defined as dogma. St. Maximilian Kolbe wrote of this theory. The idea is that at the conception of Jesus, Mary was completely joined (matrimony) to the Holy Spirit as one flesh, (Mk 10:8, Gen 2:24), in a full and permanent union. The divinity of the Holy Spirit was given to Mary, and then passed onto Jesus. The further meaning of this is that not only is Jesus fully divine and fully human, but so is the Holy Spirit. The difference is that the Holy Spirit is united only to sinless humanity in Mary, whereas Jesus is united to sinners. (2) The Holy Spirit is the person resulting when the Father and the Son think of, and desire each other. Their mutual admiration concentrates (purified love) on the highest love: sacrifice, mercy, salvation; rather than on punitive justice (which is a legitimate part of God). The resultant person of the Holy Spirit is weighted toward love and beauty, and this is incarnate in Mary. (3) When this mercy is further focused through "Mary's weakness", the result is an unjustified mercy resulting in the salvation of many. (4) If we are literally Christ, as the body of Christ, then Mary is our literal mother. Mary consents to her son's death knowing that many will be saved through it, and in our suffering we must realize that we are not abandoned, even though this is a necessary emotion, (Mt 27:46), which may be triumphed over.

Jesus was with his disciples near Sidon by the sea, and one of the disciples, Paphnitius by name had just completed a fast of seven days, and thought to himself, "Which of the prophets am I like?"

A voice was revealed to his ears only which said, "In the village of Micas, which is a day's walk north of here and along the coast road, you will find a man and his wife. You have not yet reached their degree of sanctity. Go now and ask your master that you may travel there and speak with them."

The disciple approached Jesus and was not able to speak because the master said, "Go on a day's journey north from here at once."

The disciple set out and went into the village of Micas. Having inquired, he found the home of the man and his wife. The disciple estimated the owner to be a man of some influence, as he had a large house and servants. The wife Miriam greeted the disciple who said to her, "I have been sent by the new prophet to speak with your husband."

The wife Miriam insisted that the disciple first rest from his journey and called for water, food, and wine to be brought. She said that her husband wishes to greet guests himself, but also said that he was away at the time, and sent a servant to inform her husband of their visitor.

The owner Merimose returned and offered the disciple dinner and lodging, but the disciple said, "The new prophet called Jesus has sent me to inquire about your devotion to God, and the perfection of spirit that you have attained. I shall not eat until you have told me about your manner of living."

Merimose was shaken by this prophecy and insisted that he was an unworthy sinner, and regretted that he was not far advanced in holiness. The disciple was then struck by prophecy and said, "Merimose, if you do not tell me of your ways, then I will tell you of them; for the God of Israel has revealed your way of life to me...and of the perfection you have with your wife for thirty years now."

Merimose then knew that the disciple had been sent from God, and fully told his story:

"It is now thirty years since a bond of continence was agreed between me and my wife and no man knows of it. I have had by her three sons; for them only have I known my wife, nor have I known any other but her, nor herself now at all."

“I have never ceased to entertain strangers and in such fashion that I let no one go to meet the coming guest before myself. I have never sent a guest from my house without provision for his journey. I have despised no man that was poor, but have supplied him with the things he needed. If I sat in judgment, I have not respected the person of my own son, in detriment of justice. The fruit of another man’s toil has never come into my house unjustly.”

“If I saw a quarrel, I have never passed by until I brought those who were at odds to peace. No one ever caught my servants in a fault. Never have my herds injured another man’s crops. Never did I forbid any man to sow in my fields, nor did I choose the richer field for myself, and leave the more barren to another. As such as in me lay, I never suffered the stronger to oppress the weak. Early in my life I sought that no one should be sad because of me. If I were judge in a suit, I condemned no one, but sought to bring the dissidents to peace. And this, as God gave it, has been my way of living until now.”

The disciple was amazed and returned to Jesus, who asked, “Who did you find when you journeyed to the north?”

The disciple replied, “Master, you know that I found the sanctified Merimose and Miriam, and it was revealed to me that they surpass me in their sanctity.”

Jesus said, “Know this my friend, Merimose and Miriam perfectly conform to God’s will in more difficult circumstances than yours, thus their perfection is of a higher degree. You are called to be a priest of the Messiah, and this is in many ways not as difficult as the lives of those you will minister to. Now be happy to fulfill God’s will for you in whatever way he deems best, and do not be like those who are overly proud of conquering small obstacles.”⁵

⁵ Paraphrased from, “The Desert Fathers”, by Helen Waddell. It is the story of five persons, each of no lesser virtue than the great desert monk St. Paphnitius, who was ordered by Christ to seek out the other four. The desert monk Paphnitius excelled in the life of the spirit, about the year 400, and thought to himself, “Which of the saints am I like?”. Christ answered him, telling him to seek out four specific others, and to know that they were his equal in holiness. Paphnitius first encountered a thief turned beggar/singer. The beggar revealed that as a thief he had saved a virgin from defilement, and later given his own profits for the release of strangers from debtors prison, then he gave up the life of banditry. Paphnitius then met the village leader Merimose and his wife Miriam. Finally he encountered a rich and pious merchant who gave much to charity. If they are all equal in holiness then the proposal is that they have equally strong love of God, or at least virtue. The beggar makes as much moral effort as Paphnitius, even if his accomplishment may appear less than the venerable monk St. Paphnitius. This may be the only way to judge one’s love of God, when compared to the infinite love of God. Concerning the 30 year celibacy, of Merimose and Miriam, the sex they had was completely whole, it included love of other, God, and self, it conformed to the human purpose which was reproduction, all without any self seeking. In Heaven sex will not be viewed as more spectacular than

Jesus told of the last days, during the rule of the Antichrist: “My judgment shall come upon all people suddenly and when not expected. Watch the sun and the moon and the stars, when they appear greatly disturbed, know that the day is close.”

“Keep your windows well covered. Do not look out. Light a blessed candle. Pray with outstretched arms, or prostrate on the ground, in order that many souls may be saved. Do not go outside the house. Provide yourself and your animals with sufficient food. Nature shall tremble, mountains shall crumble and seas shall heave. Fire shall fall from the heavens.”

“Blessed candles will give light in the homes of the faithful. Nothing shall extinguish them. I will preserve the property of the elect, including the animals. Let no one go across the yard, even to feed the animals, he who steps outside will perish! Cover your windows carefully. Talk to no one outside the house. The darkness will be filled with prowling demons, who will be hideous in form. My elect shall not see my wrath, because the anger of God is holy. Have confidence in me, and I will be your protection.”

“My angels, who are to be the executioners of this work, are ready with their pointed swords! Hurricanes of fire will pour forth from the clouds and spread over the entire earth! Storms, bad weather, thunderbolts and earthquakes will cover the earth for two days. An uninterrupted rain of fire will take place! It will begin during a very cold night. Lock all the doors and windows. Kneel down and be sorry for your sins, and beg my Mother’s protection. Do not look outside. Those who disregard this advice will be killed instantly. The wind will carry with it poisonous gases which will be diffused over the entire earth. Those who suffer and die innocently will be martyrs and they will be with me in my kingdom.”

“After three nights, the earthquake and fire will cease. On the following day the sun will shine again. Those who survive this chastisement will begin anew. They will

breathing, or any other function. For whatever reason, they decided to stop child bearing after two children, and therefore had no more conjugal relations. Some saintly couples have many children and others none, or few. They may sense God’s individual calling for them.

realize the futility of abandoning God and will allow themselves to be led by the Spirit of God.”⁶

Jesus was teaching on the steps of the temple on one occasion, and heard the crying of a child. The child was quite distressed and would not be consoled. Jesus asked that the child be brought to him. The mother of the child told Jesus that her daughter had a butterfly that had died and then fallen from her grasp, and it was now causing her great anguish. Jesus swept some dust from the steps and into his hand, which became a butterfly when released into the air.

The people were amazed, but Jesus said, “Do not be amazed at such things. These acts are not supernatural to those who are Messiah. Rather such acts are entirely within the nature of all who aspire to become Messiah. Those who follow me in faith will make even greater acts.”

John, beloved of Jesus ransomed a lamb destined for slaughter. The lamb followed the pilgrims for some time, before being stolen. A search for the lamb was made, and his fleece and bones were found next to a fire pit. The apostles were saddened, but did not disturb Jesus about the lamb. Jesus inquired as to the whereabouts of the lamb. He was told, and he then ordered that the remains be brought to him. The remains were laid out before him. He looked at the apostles and asked, “What shall be done?”

The apostles could not reply. Jesus then arranged what bones were left into a skeleton and prayed silently to the Holy Spirit. The lamb took form in the viewing of all. Jesus held the lamb and warned him to remain close to those who cared for him, and not to stray again.⁷

⁶ “Three Days of Darkness” prophecies have been made by a dozen or more saints, for many centuries. Different versions substantially agree, and it seems to be a descriptive warning of the last three days of the rule of the Antichrist. It is not necessarily an account of the last three days of the world’s existence. The prophecy used here is a paraphrasing and compilation of several such existing prophecies. Days of darkness and other tribulations are prophesied by Jesus in Matthew chapter 24.

⁷ This story is based a miracle of St. Francis of Paola.

On another occasion Jesus made payment to ransom a yearling lamb bound for slaughter. The lamb stayed with the pilgrims and served in many ways. Those sleeping excessively would receive wake up notice from the butting lamb, and those whose mind wandered at prayer would be scolded by a loud bleating from the lamb, who somehow had such insight. The lamb found water, trampled serpents, and allowed her wool to be sheared for use.

Sometime later, a disciple found that the lamb had been taken during the night for meat. He brought the remaining fleece to Jesus who was saddened by the event. Jesus brought no blame against those who sought food, but mounded some earth into a pile and told the disciple to drape the fleece over the mound of earth. Jesus prayed silently, then stroked the fleece saying, “Awaken, loyal servant.” The mounded fleece became again a lamb kneeling on the ground. The lamb then bleated and threw herself into the arms of Jesus. Many of the disciples saw the miracle, and the lamb was shortly afterwards given to a family for whom it provided milk and wool for many years.

Jesus was anguished that the chief priests of the temple were opposing him as Messiah. He called to a small girl saying, “Suffer the child to come to me, and speak prophecy to these men.”

The girl was seized with prophecy and spoke saying, “Fathers of the Law, if you fail to recognize this time of your visitation, then the Almighty will make his home elsewhere. When your God leaves this temple, it will fall into ruin at the hands of the impious.”

“When the children of light see legions approaching Jerusalem, they are to assemble in Pella, to the east of Judaea.”⁸

⁸ After the death of Jesus, before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70AD, prophecy was made for the early Christians to flee to the city of Pella.

Jesus made prophecy to a disciple, speaking of a distant future relation, linked by blood to her. Jesus said, "He will be an apostle two millennia hence, and will die in bed; his successor will die in prison, and his successor will die a martyr in the public square. His successor will pick up the shards of a ruined society and slowly help rebuild civilization, as the church will do so often in human history." ⁹

Jesus was at table in the court of a large inn. Impious men decided that he was the prophet that all of Israel was speaking about. One such man shouted over to the apostles and Jesus, "Prophet, if you are holy, then make my water into wine, such as you did in Cana". The impious men all raised their cups and toasted as they laughed and drank deeply. Soon all the impious men were asleep at table from their wine, which they were not aware of. Jesus rose to leave, but turned to the sleeping men and said, "You ask for goodness from our Lord, yet when it is given to you, you corrupt it at once." As Jesus left, the other men and women of the inn descended on the sleeping men and stripped them of all they had.

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⁹ This is a near quote made by Cardinal Francis George in 2010. He was observing the moral decline of society and the necessary consequences.

The Temple

Decision

The temple of Jerusalem was the pride of Israel. It was on the scale of the Colosseum of Rome (70A.D.), or the Acropolis temples of Athens. The Jerusalem temple was a mile in circumference, it had a footprint of thirty-five acres, and nearly all of its area was available to worshippers. Temple business was conducted under covered porticoes, which ran the perimeter of the walls, and in corridors running underneath the court level. Israel prided itself that its God could not be contained within a stone image, and the inner most room of the temple — the Holy of Holies — was empty.

The sacrificial system was unmatched by any other temple. Thirty-four cisterns of water washed away the blood of sheep and cattle in a continuous manner. Stray blood, hide or muscle was not to be found. Shifts of over 500 priests saw to this industry, and the temple employed perhaps 10,000 priests, administrators, musicians, police, tailors, and workers of every sort, in a city of 100,000 permanent residents.

The temple was not only a sacred site, it was an industry, and the largest single industry in Israel. The temple of Jerusalem was the recipient of a small temple tax, but also of a tenth part of the produce and income of four million faithful Jews in the empire. Actual theft from the large temple treasury was rare...largely because the money could be obtained by sanctioned means.

Jesus was teaching in the temple daily. He deliberately found a corner or an alcove, or some similar place to speak, lest the priests accuse him of interfering with the operation of the temple.

On one such occasion he came upon a certain woman Anna, daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived seven years with her husband, and then as a widow. She never left the temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer. From her deep dedication to the Lord, she made prophecy to the children of Israel.

Anna had prophesied on the occasion that the infant Jesus had been brought by his parents to the temple for dedication to the Lord. Now she was one hundred and seventeen years of age. She did not seek to satisfy her curiosity, and made no special attempt to observe the prophet...indeed she had seen him years prior. She was of the belief that the Lord would give her all that was needed, and she was content not to seek any other person or knowledge. Jesus had noticed her piety and was aware of her good actions, and now approached her.

Jesus spoke to Anna saying, “Most honored daughter of the Lord, it is I, Jesus the prophet who speaks to you now. Recall mother, how years ago you testified of me as Messiah. It is now so.”

Jesus paused and knelt down to Anna, took her hand but remained silent, waiting.

Anna was in thought and recollection, but then spoke, “Master, all of Israel has awaited you, since the days of Solomon and before. You are the Messiah long awaited who will redeem Israel and all the world. My spirit soars, and my salvation is at hand. My labors will soon cease and my time of rest will quickly be upon me. Know this my son and my God, that you have lived a life of virtue until now, never knowing sin. You will soon become the very sin you are to redeem. You will enter into sin as the lamb of the Passover, which is soon to be celebrated. The sin that you will become, will not triumph over the eternal virtue that you are. The two will cause struggle, and even those men you walk with will abandon you.”

“You will call on your men to stand watch in prayer, but they will sleep. I will assist you with my poor prayers on that night watch. In your communion with humanity you will share not only in sin, but also in the virtue of those who care to help you. Your moral struggle will not be less than your cross of wood, but both will bring many into your kingdom.”

Anna was then silent, and then tears came to her eyes. Jesus spoke briefly thanking her, then left.

Jesus went about the temple areas teaching and healing, many priests and Pharisees followed, and observed him closely. Jesus observed the many money changers and the sellers of birds and sheep for sacrifice. He observed that the people were exchanging silver shekels of Roman, Greek and Phoenician origin for a temple coin required to purchase the animals. The temple coins were bronze or copper and were

required for every temple transaction. Neither Gentiles nor their money could proceed past the court of the Gentiles.

The people had long complained about profiteering in exchanging silver for copper, and the premium prices for lambs and pigeons for sacrifice. The temple coins were also non refundable. There was no redress available, as the temple authorities themselves were complicit in the abuse.

Jesus approached a row of money changers and spoke loud prophecy at them saying, “You are thieves of the good fortune the Father gives to you. This holy temple was intended to be a place of prayer, where one might raise his soul to God. You have made it a den of thieves who steal from the poor and the faithful. You are unworthy stewards and the Father now reclaims that which he gave you in trust!”

Jesus quickly strode to a man and wife who were concluding an exchange of coins with a money seller. Jesus imposed himself to warn the two, “Sir, please examine your new coins, they are false. You have been robbed by this thief. Do no more business with him, he is not authorized to exchange money in the temple.”

Jesus then turned and spoke to the others who had exchanged their coins saying, “Good people, examine your coins, they are forgeries. You have been cheated. These money changers have been discharged from office by the God of the Temple of Israel. Be warned to avoid doing business in the Temple of God.”

All the coins that the people now held were dull lead, or rusted iron; some seemed to be as painted sand, which crumbled in their hands. The people were enraged. The temple priests placed many burdens on them and this insult was intolerable.

All those holding the false coins encircled the money changers and demanded their Roman shekels back. The money changers were unable to do so, because even these had become false coins. The people overturned the tables and broke open the strong boxes searching for their money.

The temple guards were called out, but not before the money changing operation was destroyed, and the money changers chased from the temple. The temple captain promised that each person cheated would receive a temple lamb at no cost. The victims were many, as everyone who was still holding the exchanged money, even from the morning, had found that it had turned false. The lamb, sparrow, and pigeon stalls were completely emptied by the victims given the false coins.

Jesus too was enraged, the temple authorities were seeking to arrest him now for his prophecy. Jesus turned to the Pharisees and the priests and inveighed against them saying:

“Woe to you temple priests and Pharisees. You boast of your asceticism, yet you live a life of privilege and delegate tasks that you say will defile you. You claim that the tasks of the temple do not allow you time to work for your bread. Instead you tax the poor, and use much of your day attending to your own profit and not the souls of the faithful. Many are the poor who work in the day and pray at night, it is you who should donate to them!”

“Woe to you because you are filled with a high estimate of self worth, but self has no worth, if you had advanced into a selfless life, you would not later find yourself eaten alive by the flames of Hell.”

“Woe to you scribes, you speculate endlessly on the wording of the Law, as if the scrolls are God come to earth, and yet your offense is the least of many.”

“Woe to you elders who make the temple a place of profit. If only you collected virtue in the same amounts as gold. You loan the donations of the poor to those already rich, and you reap interest on this money of others, and return none of it to them. Your gold talents will be chained to your neck and pull you down into the pit of scoundrels and usurers.”

“Woe to you elders who dine with your own kind that you may praise one another. Will you find praise on the day of judgment.”

“Woe to you elders who take many wives when they are young, and discard them by divorce, saying ‘I have only few wives.’

“Woe to you Pharisees, you are like a dog sleeping in the manger of oxen, for neither does he eat nor does he let the oxen eat.”

“Woe to you who grow fat, while others are weak from want of bread.”

“Cursed are you, because now when a prophet appears, you call evil the good that he does. You are like serpents that hide among the scrolls of the Law, ready to poison anyone who steps near. You are like spiders that weave a web so complex that only you know the way through it. So be it, and I am glad that only you find the way, because your exit will not be into Paradise.”

Jesus finished chastising the priests and the Pharisees, and stormed out of the temple. He descended the stairs leading to a western gate and stopped at the top of the steps, just outside the temple. He was no longer directed and purposeful, but frayed and

shaking and wiping his tears. The disciples noticed on other occasions that such scolding drained him severely. Jesus stepped slowly toward the bottom of the stairs and rested.

In time Jesus recovered. He remained sitting and observed the row of beggars nearby. The beggars attempted to position themselves as near as they could to the several temple entrance portals. One of the beggars was sitting at an angle against the wall, he looked to be asleep at best, and ill or dead at worst. Jesus noticed him, but remained in place, and in thought.

After a time, Jesus sent a disciple over to assess the sleeping man. The disciple returned and told Jesus that the man was dead, and that the other beggars estimated that he had died an hour ago.

Jesus was slow to speak, but finally said, "That man died ten years ago."

The disciples expected some kind of action from Jesus, or orders for themselves. Jesus said, "We must bury him."

It was decided that since the group had no spades or donkey to carry the body, they would bring the body with them as they searched for a solution. The pilgrims had friends in Jerusalem who might help.

Two tunics were laid out, head to head, the sleeves were tied to each other to form a sort of stretcher, which was gripped at the opposite hems by two men. The front part of the tunic stretcher was draped over the body, as if the dead man was now wearing it.

The burial party set off. It was slow going, and it was a mistake. They wished that they had remained at the wall with the body and sent out people to obtain help. For an hour the men traveled with the body, but for one reason or another they were no better off than when they started. Jerusalem was a stronghold of extra pious persons. Many kept the Law in scrupulous fashion, and a dead body was a source of defilement. Whatever it touched became unclean: persons, homes, animals, even the ground. The party of do-gooders was jeered and threatened, and Jesus was expecting Pharisees and temple guards soon.

Another attempt at obtaining help had just failed, no one answered their knocks at the door. Peter said, "Master we can carry this body no further. Something else must be done."

Jesus considered the situation and said, “Yes.” He ordered the body stretched out where it was. He knelt at the side of the body, closed his eyes, and after some time said, “Repent Enoch...the kingdom of God is upon you. Repent and rise now.”

The beggar Enoch became alive. He sat up and looked at the man who had returned him to life. Jesus said, “I am the one who spoke to you. Take this water, then tell me the story of your death.”

Enoch recounted the ordeal with choked words and much anguish and sorrow. “I was in a court of judgment, it was revealed to me that I had died, and my judgment was at hand. When I had fully understood this three people arrived, angels they seemed. One spoke, one was a scribe, and the other observed. One of them appeared to be a woman, but they were all more than human.”

“The scribe spoke, but also revealed to my mind, my entire life. Every act was laid before me, the good and the evil I had done. I saw my early life, my parents who guided and guarded me. I saw the particular burden of faults that I had to bear in my life. I saw how they influenced what I did and even mitigated my evil actions. I also saw that they could be overcome, even if it required years to do. What was not to be excused was my wallowing in them, and allowing my faults to feed upon themselves, and growing to predominate my will.”

Enoch looked at the prophet hoping perhaps that he would be allowed to end his story. Jesus said flatly, “Tell me the entire event Enoch, you are allowed to live and recount this that others might learn from it, and it is a small price to pay for a second chance at life.”

Enoch continued, “Yes Rabbi. I saw my own wife and family, and how my unfaithfulness to her, and my lack of remorse and change brought my ruin. After she died, my children suffered from my indifference, and lack of moral guidance.”

“All these sins were known by the court that I stood before, and it was made clear to my conscience that I alone was responsible for them, even if others participated. The angel in the middle spoke, sometimes pointing out times when I thought with a clearer head and resolved to live a better life, but never carried through.”

The angel then said. “Enoch we will now wait upon another event.”

Enoch said, “I thought this next event would be my condemnation to Hell. I dreaded it, but I knew in my heart that I could not approach God. I do not know how much time passed, but I heard your voice, and at that moment I found the courage to

repent of my evil and do whatever I had to do to make things right. Nothing in this life is worth an eternity in Hell. It was also revealed to me that the faith and prayers of my mother, made years ago when she lived, had in large part obtained me this grace.”

Enoch fell silent. It was a sobering story. He was given some money and set off to find his family, and start a new life.

Jesus spent most afternoons and evenings in the temple. He remained almost exclusively in the court of the Gentiles, which was by far the largest open area of the temple. The priests thought it was bad enough that the Jews called Jesus “Son of David”, and now the Gentiles were choking this large court and calling him “Son of Zeus”. The temple started charging a small entrance fee for Gentiles.

One such afternoon Jesus was encouraging the people to faith, and noticed a young woman clinging to the wall and moving from pillar to pillar. She seemed most preoccupied and worried, but Jesus continued to speak to the people.

The woman was the wife Hannah. She entered the temple for several reasons. She shrewdly thought that she could hide in the crowd from her pursuers, and she knew that she would not be stoned on sacred ground, she had heard that the prophet was teaching in the courtyard and if all else failed she might throw herself at his feet and ask that her life be spared. Her lover had just been relieved of his own life.

Hannah remained within sight of the prophet but as far back in the portico as possible. The thought flashed that she should like to die in the arms of the prophet. She resolved then, that if she was allowed to live she would make a new life. Not that she had a choice, her lover was dead and she would be driven from the city and left to...whatever it was that fallen women were left to.

By now Hannah’s father-in-law had assembled over thirty men to search for his son’s harlot wife. They believed that she had entered the temple and posted one man at each gate, and were searching inside with the others. Hannah guessed that every servant of her husband and father-in-law would be searching for her, and all of them knew her by sight.

Hannah thought again about her predicament. If she did escape capture she would have to leave Jerusalem, it was a matter of banishment either way. Her husband was powerful and if he insisted upon honor, banishment would not be enough. Would the prophet publicly forgive her, and force her survival?

She felt exposed, and wanted to move to another spot. She looked slowly from side to side, viewing each face, then quickly turned and...Wham!...ran into the chest of her father-in-law. Malachi grabbed a fistful of hair, yanked her head back and shook her from top to bottom.

The prophet stopped speaking and all eyes turned to the large man and the girl. Malachi was unapologetic, but did not want to do business then and there, and pulled Hannah in front of him, in order to lead her out.

Jesus boomed, “Malachi, what crime do you charge this woman with!”

Malachi was pushing his way out, and did not break his stride when he shouted back his answer, “Adultery!” He then attempted to make better time by walking under the portico. Malachi and Hannah disappeared into the portico, and others of the search party began to arrive, including several temple priests and Pharisees. Jesus and the disciples walked to this last location, where Malachi entered the portico.

Malachi’s plan was thwarted by a crowd choking the portico passage, and he returned the way he left, back into the courtyard. The disciples guessed the physical plan afoot and cleared a path for Malachi and Hannah, right to Jesus.

Malachi would not be judged by any pretended Messiah, and confronted the waiting Jesus, the Pharisees also waited to see the justice of Jesus. Again Jesus asked to be told the charges against the woman. Malachi was pleased to make the accusation and to offer witnesses on the spot.

Hannah began to speak, and would not stop, she spoke passionately about her husband’s crimes, thinking that she in turn would be at less danger of being stoned. Hannah pleaded to Jesus and laid her own charges before the Prophet: “Lord, consider not only my guilt, but that of my husband. He has many wives, and many women who are continually betrothed to him. He marries for their dowry, but he satisfies himself with women who are concubines and harlots. When he finds such a woman, he betroths her for a time, then pays her dismissal with money from the other dowries.”

“It is all done according to the Law, and the priests give their blessings on such matters, but all the wives are done an injustice. Is it any wonder that they seek revenge and satisfaction elsewhere. Lord, if I am judged, then so must my husband be judged for the same crime.”

Hannah clung to Jesus, thinking that her chances were better with him than with Malachi or her husband Gershon. The Pharisees also awaited the judgment of Jesus. Jesus considered them both, then said to Dismas, “Bring me a large stone.”

All waited. Dismas returned with a large block of building stone suspended by his arms. Jesus took the block and raised it over his head saying, “Let us begin judgment according to the Law.”

He turned his stance not to Hannah, but to her husband and said loudly, “Gershon, you have taken many women, you say that you betroth them, but you break the betrothal by divorce after a year. You give them a settlement, and send them off to the next baron, while taking your next betrothed from them. The difference between you and Hannah is only a matter of payment given, and silence kept.”

“Gershon, I judge you guilty of adultery and sentence you to death according to the Law of Moses.”¹

Jesus shifted back a leg and the stone above his head, readying it. He looked afar, and hurled the stone into the temple wall some sixty feet away where it shattered, leaving a pit and showering those nearby with fragments and dust. The women near the impact screamed and ran, and everyone who saw this knew what had happened was impossible.

Jesus continued speaking, “Your sentence remains Gershon, until you repent of your evil and offer mercy to your wife Hannah, in the same manner that your Messiah has offered mercy to you.”

Jesus then spoke to all the people saying, “I say to all of you, you cannot receive that which you reject. If you reject mercy as given by you, you reject mercy given to you. Only one who is here now is free of sin, and is in need of no mercy, yet he offers mercy. If you wish the King of Heaven to have mercy on you, give it so that you may in turn receive it.”

“You know how Solomon built his temple, how he had all the blocks, beams and posts, and all parts cut to fit before assembly, away from the sacred building site. A beam would only fit into a receptacle previously cut. Any part not finding a pre-hewn area

¹ Jesus would have been blameless in administering justice by the Law, rather than mercy.

could not find its place in the temple. So too is it with all graces given by God. Those who do not carve out mercy for others will not accept it on their own day of judgment.”

Jesus continued speaking to all assembled, “As for the wife Hannah, let he among you who rejects mercy cast the first stone.”

Jesus waited some time, but no one stepped forward. Jesus turned to the three persons of primary role and said, “Gershon, Hannah, Malachi...go and sin no more.”

There was silence among all as the three left. Some Pharisees then stepped closer to Jesus and objected that what he had done was a failure to keep the laws of Moses. The Pharisee Saul was very vocal in this and said, “Man of Israel, how is it that you release the woman, that the Law of Israel has justly sentenced.”

Jesus was not to have a respite between battles. He looked at Saul and said, “Sir, who am I speaking with?”

“I am Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee of this temple and I am disappointed that a Messiah would fail to heed the Law of Moses.”

Jesus responded, “As for the Law of Moses, I fulfill it. How then is that an infraction. Consider rather, that the temple priests and scribes twist it and turn it, so that it now resembles a river flowing where it should not.”

“Saul of Tarsus, why do you persecute me? Month upon month, and year upon year, you imprison me and exclude me, you discharge me from employment and seize my homes. My children are cursed by the priests, and my wives are scorned in the marketplace.”

Saul retorted, “Are you mad? I have never spoken to you before now. But I have heard many fables of you.”

Jesus called for a stool. Judas brought him one. Jesus said as he sat, “Friends you exhaust me, but let us continue in discussion. Saul let us begin at the beginning, what objections do you have?”

“The woman should have been stoned. If not, then she should have been divorced and exiled. She should not have been released...”

Without a break Jesus extended Saul’s statement, “...into her husband’s arms — to receive, and to give forgiveness. Saul what is God if not forgiveness? The history of Israel is one of repentance and forgiveness.”

Jesus paused, held up a hand, then continued, “Saul my friend, mercy is the New Covenant. It is not really a new covenant at all, it is the fulfillment of the existing covenant between God and man. It must be this way.”

“You say that she does not deserve mercy. I agree with you, she does not *deserve* mercy, but death by stoning. Saul...mercy is not given because it is deserved, but only when it is not deserved. Mercy is not justice, but forgiveness and it is the highest form of love.”

Jesus paused before speaking again, then said, “Saul tell me, do you have any participation in blasphemy?” Saul was of course taken back in offense, and speechless.

Jesus continued, “No you do not. You neither offer such insult, nor do you receive it. If it occurs it is rejected and reprimanded by you, and well done for it.”

“You see, that which is given and that which is accepted must first have form in one’s soul. If irreverence does not first exist in one’s soul, then blasphemy is unable to enter that soul. If irreverence is already present, then blasphemy easily enters and proceeds from such a person.”

“Therefore if one does not offer mercy, it is because the spirit of mercy does not exist in one’s soul. Therefore when mercy is offered it will find no home. Mercy will not be accepted, and that person will not enter into Heaven.”

“You have seen men, more like islands, who make every effort to reject any offering of love. These people will likewise never offer love. If one’s soul is closed to a virtue, then the closed soul may neither give such a virtue, nor will it be able to accept such a virtue when offered to it. The importance of offering mercy is therefore that one may receive mercy, and those who refuse mercy may not enter into the new kingdom.”

Saul was not one to deny the truth where ever he found it. He was also the shrewdest of men, and sought to reinforce his essential position, that the man Jesus was nothing more than a do-good, self-serving, magician-false prophet who was not even aware of any of this, a man who fooled himself first, then the people. Saul said, “Rabbi tell us, how are we to know the true Messiah from the many false Messiah’s who plague Israel?”

Saul immediately regretted asking the question, the answer from Jesus would certainly support himself as Messiah. Better to *tell* and not ask, what the true Messiah was to be like.

Saul quickly changed the topic. He looked at Judas and said, “I see that you have deceived even one of our own. This man Judas is a Pharisee of the temple. Judas you are to return at once to the temple.”

Judas replied, “I am in the temple.”

Saul was seldom outwitted, but he had been today, and more than once. He had not advanced his cause, Jesus had matched him point for point. He had the privilege of ending the conversation, and did so saying, “Rabbi, we will talk again.”

Jesus replied, “South of Damascus perhaps.”

Later that day Jesus was again teaching in the temple. He began to walk about the crowds exhorting them to virtue and faith, he came upon a woman bent over, unable to stand erect. A Pharisee was watching intently in order to defame him before the crowd.

Jesus took the woman’s arms and asked, “Do you want to be healed?”

The woman replied, “Yes teacher.”

Jesus grasped her wrist and said, “Then woman, you are set free of your infirmity.”

The woman shuddered and grasped at Jesus who increased his grip. Demons came out of the woman shouting and cursing and saying, “We have no part in you, Son of God! You now occupy this woman and we are without a home!”

As this had occurred on the Sabbath, the Pharisees who continually watched Jesus objected strenuously. Jesus was angry at their lack of compassion and sternly chastised them saying, “Hypocrites, in healing this woman who Satan has held bound for eighteen years, I keep the Law of the Sabbath! ² The Law requires one to rest from one’s labors. This woman has labored under a heavy yoke for eighteen years and I remove it on the Sabbath as you require.”

² Luke 13:16; the woman’s illness was in some way caused by sin, and Satan is bound to all sin. In healing the woman, Jesus reforms the sin into virtue, which Satan cannot be bound to, and therefore leaves. The observability of this is of course miraculous. Many saints have observed a specific devil associated with sin or illness. St. Suso observed the persons of Heaven delegated by God to operate creation. He also saw a fallen angel, once in charge of good speech but now the devil of blasphemy.

Jesus continued railing at the Pharisees, “It is you who fail to keep the Sabbath laws! For six days you pick at people, you wear upon them as a millstone, yet you do not cease even on the Sabbath! You make great effort to appear as holy, and belittle others to increase your own stature. You do not have the strength to lift a heavy load, so you content yourself to carry only the finest portions of the Law. Many times I have called your attention to these things, but you continue in them. You fail to reform your actions, because the dead cannot hear and attend to their master, only the living are able to do this.”

Both parties — Jesus and the Pharisees — were enraged yet again. The Pharisees had been too tolerant and for too long. The mud builder from Nazareth must be stopped. Not now, not by a few Pharisees, but by the Law enforced by the Sanhedrin.

The Pharisees stormed out, leaving a scribe to state their case. The scribe spoke loudly to all, “One Jew in a hundred thinks himself the Messiah. When the Messiah comes he will unmistakably reveal himself to the nation, and his hallmark will be perfection in the Law. Jesus the Nazarene has divided our nation, those who keep the Law are criticized and those who do not are praised. It is this behavior that called God’s wrath upon Israel. The Assyrians, then the Babylonians, the Greeks, and now the Romans are allowed to subjugate us. If we fail to keep the Law, even worse will come upon us. The man Jesus is destroying our nation, and we must not let it continue. The Sanhedrin has the duty, not only of recognizing the Messiah, but of rejecting every false claimant, and we declare now that the man Jesus is not the Messiah, and is indeed a blasphemer. The faithful are to make no further association with him.”

Jesus too had come to wits end. He could no longer — would no longer — be a renegade sect of Judaism. The New Covenant had to be established, and he would not delay another year hoping to be the Messiah of the temple. The scribe who had just spoken did not have the authority of the Sanhedrin or of the high priest to banish Jesus, but this was now likely to happen. Until now Jesus had more offered, than declared himself to be Messiah. He must now make the claim and demand recognition as Messiah. He must tell of the consequences of the Sanhedrin failing to recognize him as Messiah. Most importantly, he must make the New Covenant. He would do all this at Passover week.

He would make only one more appearance in the temple, and he would speak plainly the truth of the Messiah. He would have Judas tell the temple captain of all this, and he would call as an audience those who were most open to his message — the Essenes.

The sermon to the Essenes would be decisive, it would be the event that turned the majority of the Sanhedrin decisively against Jesus. He knew it would be so — had to be so — because in this final public sermon he would explicitly say that the Law of Moses could not save a soul, that only he, the Messiah could save a soul, that this salvation requires a person to become Messiah, and finally that as the Messiah, he is God made man.

Jesus would give the sermon in the temple itself, he knew that the sermon would be carefully recorded and witnessed, and he expected charges of blasphemy to be brought against him. He would give the sermon in the temple at sundown on the Passover. He would immediately after, conduct the Passover meal and initiate the new covenant. He would not be arrested in the temple in the presence of the faithful. The Sanhedrin would follow its own rules, they would convene the next day, and issue an order for his arrest. The Father would see to it that the New Covenant was made. After that, come what may.

Jesus had Judas detail the proposal. Jesus would speak only one more time in the temple. He would speak plainly as to his status as Messiah. He would do so on Passover eve, and invite the Essenes of Israel, and all others were welcome to attend. The temple agreed to the proposal. Jesus sent out notice eleven days in advance to all the Essene communities.

In Jerusalem a man spoke to six others, “Then it is decided. Jesus of Nazareth will be seized and forced to proclaim himself King of the Jews, and order the Roman occupiers to be expelled from Israel. If he refuses, he will be killed in the temple courtyard by our men disguised as Roman soldiers. Either way a general uprising will be led by our men in Judaea and Galilee. Roman garrisons will be attacked as we have outlined this evening.”

The speaker continued, “Everyone here is obligated to support this plan as it has been decided upon. Any man unable to do so must speak now.” All this was spoken by Zuriel, leader of the Zealots in Judaea. Zuriel looked about, allowing ample time for any

man to opt out. None did. In five days, the false prophet would speak to the entire temple assembly, and they had much to do before then.

The summarized plan spoken of, was the product of much debate and a final decision was put off as long as possible. The Zealots, like the Sadducees and the Pharisees could only conclude that Jesus was not the Messiah. Whatever else he was — prophet, impostor, holy man — he could not be the Messiah. The Messiah was promised as the greatest king in Israel, and as such his first order of business would be to reclaim the borders and government of Israel. The man from Nazareth had made no attempt to do this for three years. In fact he spoke of tolerance and love for the Romans. The Romans could not have provided a more skilled detractor from the fight for freedom, than this Jew Jesus. It was a growing opinion that Jesus was in fact a plant and puppet for the Romans.

The Zealots *had* waited, hoping that Jesus would be the Messiah who would lead Israel to freedom, but it was now clear that his sympathies were with the existing order — the Roman occupation. Few of the Zealots expected Jesus to proclaim himself king and order the Romans to be put to flight...even with a sword at his back. The second option had a good chance of fermenting a revolt however.

The plan had been proposed as a last resort, and not a preferred option, but everyone had to commit to it. Jesus would be seized and threatened just prior to speaking by Zuriel the Zealot leader, and three others, one a chief priest of the temple and two temple guards of the Zealot family. Hopefully other sympathetic temple guards would be nearby, and efforts would be made to assure their presence at the time when Jesus was to speak.

If Jesus would not take kingship with a sword at his back, and declare the free state of Israel, then those Zealots disguised as Romans would have to do their work. Twenty-two Zealots had been outfitted with full Roman uniforms, weapons and armor. They would seize Jesus and publicly murder him. The people would rise in anger against the “Romans” who had murdered their prophet, and the revolt would then be led by the Zealots.

It was decided that the platoon would split into four squads, and station themselves on each of the four walls, near a gate. They would be hidden to the extent possible, as Roman legionaries were allowed in the court of the Gentiles.

If it became apparent that Jesus was not cooperating, then the squads would move in and make the kill. If Jesus tried to leave the temple, one squad would be near

enough to stop him...that was the theory. In any circumstance, the squad making contact would be supported by the other three moving to that position.

There was much that might go wrong. If they were exposed for too long, they would be found out by the Romans themselves, and it was not difficult to imagine several “Roman” Zealots dead at the hands of the crowd. Roman legionaries were allowed in the Court of the Gentiles, but the disguised Zealots would not stand up to examination by any authentic Roman, or even many Jews. The temple authorities themselves would shut down the operation if they became aware of it. This general plan had been discussed for over a year. It had been waiting for two conditions to activate it, Jesus of Nazareth’s definitive refusal to oppose the Roman occupation, and the necessary setting.

The public nature of the temple, and the hundred thousand pilgrims present on Passover eve would supply the manpower needed. If Jesus accepted the kingship, he would proclaim it solemnly next to a high priest, in front of much of Israel. The temple would become the historical backdrop, and the moral authority for Jesus taking kingship.

If the false prophet had to be killed, again it would be done in front of much of Israel. The people would be overcome with fury at the death of their prophet, and hurl themselves at the Romans. If it came down to the “Roman” Zealots taking action, it would make their escape difficult, but Zealots risked their lives for lesser targets.

Passover eve arrived. The temple would shut its gates at sun down, the faithful were expected to be under roof with posts painted at that time. The temple allowed the indigent faithful to remain on the grounds for the Passover night, but they would be locked in. In Israel’s days of past glory, no one was on the streets after dark on Passover eve, but now even in Jerusalem there were Romans and even Israelites walking about.

It was an hour before sundown and the prophet was nowhere to be seen. The apostles told the temple captain that Jesus would speak as promised before the sun set. The head of the temple guard wanted to disburse the assembled who filled the court of the Gentiles, so they might have time to return home before sunset. The chief priests agreed in theory, but they felt obligated to allow the full day for the false prophet to speak. If he did not show, all the better; the “Prophet” was welcome to disgrace himself by his absence.

The Prophet did show, and the temple authorities did not like it. The sun was low over the temple walls, and light was had only past the edge of a growing shadow cast by the walls. They would now have to endure the speech, but it would be dark before he

would finish. A major exception would have to be undertaken to allow the faithful to wander home in the dark on Passover eve. The good news was that the thorn from Nazareth would condemn himself, if he spoke as promised.

Jesus had entered the temple hours earlier, he wanted to pray and meditate, and avoid the expected crowds at the gates later. Judas was still enrolled as a temple Pharisee and he had found some solitary areas in the corridors beneath the court level for Jesus to use.

The temple authorities were most accommodating for what they perceived to be Jesus' last visit to the temple. Jesus was offered all the resources of the temple, and he had even obtained the services of some temple musicians.

The priest Amariah, who was to offer the Zealots ultimatum to Jesus, had found Jesus and did so...he believed. Amariah had wanted to make the ultimatum on the spot just before Jesus was to speak. If he made it too soon, Jesus might agree then, but back out later. As it happened Amariah was talking with Jesus, and the conversation slid into the ultimatum topic.

Amariah told Jesus that he was to claim himself to be King in Israel, and order the immediate expulsion of the Romans. He spoke of the larger Zealot plan to consolidate power, and of the consequences of Jesus failing to declare his kingship.

Jesus replied that he intended to declare himself to be ruler of Israel and he would eliminate the Godless Roman rule. He said something nonsensical about his impending death at the hands of the Romans and by the hearts of the faithful. Amariah thought Jesus was speaking lies, philosophy, or simply irrationally. He tried to make Jesus repeat a specific pledge word for word, but the man returned to his meditation and had nothing else to say.

Jesus entered the court from a service stairway, avoiding most of the record crowd. The prophet had with him John, Judas and five men with strings and wind woods. The crowd parted for him and he made his way to the light, which seemed to somehow wait for him. Jesus mounted some steps and surveyed the crowd, which came to order. The warm sun imparted its light to his clothing. He wore a new coat and cloak, they were not bleached, but natural and clean. His clothing had a simple but distinct adornment of office — simple tassels, and embroidery at the neck and sleeve hems. His mantle was

substantial in construction and size. He lifted his mantle with his arms, looked toward Heaven, and began to sing. The musicians likewise joined, each in turn. Jesus chanted two psalms of David.

The prophet's voice was dominant and beautiful. The warm, low sun engulfed him in light and his mantle moved and glowed as his arms remained raised. He lowered his eyes a bit to view the far end of the assembly of people. The stings and the flutes deepened the emotion of his chant. Many were brought to tears. The chant ended...all too soon, but all were now eager to hear the words of the prophet.

Jesus now addressed the people:

"Friends, I thank you for hearing me this evening. May the peace of the Lord of Israel be upon all here."

"For centuries, all of Israel has eagerly awaited the advent of the Messiah. This hope is now fulfilled. The Messiah is here now, it is he who is speaking to you. I am both prophet and Messiah in Israel."

"What is the meaning of the Messiah, and how shall he rule Israel? The Messiah is indeed priest, prophet and king, and yet much more, and all that the Messiah is, he offers to you. Those who share in me, will share in all I AM. Those who share in me will share in the very life of the God of Israel."

The Pharisees were in satisfied horror, they had proof of the blasphemy of Jesus, and he offered no proof as Messiah. But even falsely claiming to be Messiah, was secondary to falsely claiming to be God. Every listener had witnessed both blasphemies this day. The Lord God of Israel was One. The God of Israel was not a man any more than he was a golden calf, and the God of Israel was *not* a mud builder from Galilee.

Jesus continued, "The Law cannot give life beyond this, because I am this life. I do not reject the Law, I now fulfill it, and your fulfillment must be in me."

The Pharisees would have seized him, but now wanted him to hang himself with his own words. Three sets of scribes were busy recording his words, so as to have two and even three witnesses at his trial.

Jesus continued, "I will be given as fulfillment only to those who seek me in desire and in faith. You will not stand *alongside* me in Heaven, but *as* me, and as one with all in Heaven. You too will be Messiah."

Some of the Pharisees could no longer contain themselves and made their way toward the steps shouting. The temple guards were under strict orders to allow the false

prophet to speak uninterrupted, and stopped the group of advancing Pharisees. The scribes continued inscribing, but were crying in angst and anger and held their sheets away from their falling tears.

Jesus responded to the Pharisees, “Will you arrest all who are Messiah? What prison is large enough? After tonight this temple alone will not be sufficient to contain the Messiah. In truth, it is all who are not Messiah that will be cast into prison.”

The Pharisees were beyond anger, their blood was now cool and thin, and their thoughts even and calculating. It would be a mistake to stop this man who so solidly built the case against his own self. Some of them now smiled and nodded as each new bit of evidence came from the mouth of Jesus.

Jesus continued speaking, “The Pharisees are like the Greek Zeno, who could not reach the end, by splitting its length endlessly. The Pharisees split the Law into more minute requirements, then split it again, and all the while do not reach the end. The Law cannot be the end because the Law of Moses is not your salvation, rather it is your guide to salvation, and it points to me. I am your life, your very Heaven, and your Resurrection.”

Many Pharisees actually admired Jesus, but none could substantially align themselves with him. In appearance, the entire community of Pharisees rejected Jesus. Jesus spoke of this policy.

“The Pharisees are like a hungry barking dog that guards a storehouse, it does not eat, nor will it allow the people to eat.”

“The Pharisees are like fine glass merchants who have an inventory of finely shaped glass pieces. But when a storm destroys their inventory they lack the ability to restore their stock. They do not advance beyond counting their wares, and learn the ways of the glass maker.”

“I tell you these things that you might not share in the error of the Pharisees. They reject the Messiah of Israel, and tell you to reject the Messiah. Do not reject the Messiah who is now among you. The miracles and prophecy I make are evidence of the Messiah. Those elders who reject me, do so that their wealth and status might remain intact. Their fear is groundless, the Messiah does not want their wealth, only their love.”

Jesus continued speaking, “The Law of Moses is constituted of two components, the moral laws and the religious laws, neither will be discarded and both will be fulfilled. The moral laws are inherent to the correct functioning of all parts of creation. These provide for peace instead of war, for health instead of sickness, and harvest instead of famine.”

“To disregard the natural moral law would be akin to willing a stone to fall upward instead of down, or that water parch the throat instead of cool it. No one can cause a rock to fall upwards, because God does not assign that ability to a person. But by virtue of a person’s free will, one may violate the moral laws of nature and bring illness, famine, poverty and war. *Indeed* these things must happen in response to sin. Disorder of the cause will produce disorder of the effect.”

“It is now offered to you that disordered cause be remediated, and the restored effect be nothing less than a share in the very life of God. I am the restoring act and the fulfillment effected.”

“Many of you listening are of the Essene order of men and women. You live in houses of religion and make the worship of God your first task, and I say well done to those who do this. In praising God you voice your approval and desire of God. You are in desire, what God is in essence. Do not however expect an absence of trials, rather expect them for your greater good and surmount them in faith.”

“If your abbot tells you to catch the stars of the night in a bucket, do this to the best of your ability, and do not think that you have failed if you have not caught any. Rather you have made a great success. Your obedience to those God assigns over you will bear the fruit of salvation. Consider that salvation was lost when obedience was lost.”

“The religious laws given to Moses are those governing reverence and piety and the unique laws of the Jews, those defining diet and days of observance. The Pagans say that such laws have no practical meaning. They are correct, such laws have no practical value, their value is much greater. Those observing these laws, adhere to them for love of God alone. Those observing these laws do so with no self interest, and in doing so they deepen their union with the God of Israel. As any person draws nearer to God, the whole of Israel and the world draws closer also.”

“No longer will you return a lash for a lash, or a word for a word. By returning good for evil you will be stealing from the Devil. Make such theft often and with joy. Those wishing the highest perfection in the kingdom of God, must share first in its restoration. Selfless acts of all sorts will allow your spirit to ascend to God, rather than to be bound to the imperfections of this life. A spirit of poverty allows pilgrimage in this life and not citizenship, for your true citizenship is of Heaven. As citizen of Heaven, you need no longer fight the Romans for land or government on this earth, and there is no reason to acquire and store up on earth what will soon be abandoned. Your only impatience need be toward perfection of soul.”

“And what does such perfection consist of, and how is it arrived at? Your perfection of soul is simply a deeper sharing in the life and soul of the Messiah of Israel, who is now among you. Your Messiah is the very Son of God, who offers you a sharing in his own life. Indeed no one is rejected on account of his nation. Romans and Greeks will rejoice at their good fortune. This privilege is properly offered to the children of Israel first. Your reward will be great because you have safeguarded the Law and the faith for generations, until this moment.”

All in the audience were deeply moved by the words of the prophet. The listeners were of two poles in their understanding and their acceptance. Even a few Pharisees had unknowingly entered into the sermon. When Jesus paused they came to, and returned to their calculations.

Jesus too was lifted — by his words, the ideals, the faithful, the sun that was suspended low in the sky. It had ceased its progression toward the horizon. A second gift from the Father on this Passover.

Jesus continued, “The Messiah will be the cause of the fall and of the rise of many, and no one will rise unless he is first fallen. In days past, in the army of David, when one sought to become a soldier in the army of the king, he first had to prove himself in training. He was first unmade. All he had was stripped of him, first his home and parents, then his habits; he no longer slept until dawn, but was up hours earlier. He no longer drank water when he was thirsty, but when he was ordered to do so. Even before he trained with the sword and spear, he trained his will. Only after he had fallen in such a way could he rise as a soldier of the king. So too must you be stripped of all that is you. Only then will you rise as Messiah.”

“The Messiah asks that you make the effort to take on the lighter burden, and the lesser yoke. Yes, my burden is light and my yoke is gentle. But you must make the effort to cast off your heavy burden.”

“The burden in the attainment of wealth and power consumes the life of the spirit, and these things are of no importance in the kingdom of Heaven. Rather, work towards perfection of love, reverence, and hope in whatever circumstances you find yourself.”

“Many in Israel have thought it unfair that the priests and scribes attain honor, while the many who are of poor birth, or the weak sex, or unskilled in letters or numbers are relegated to lesser status. Now it is offered to you to become the very Messiah awaited by Israel. What higher office, or what greater opportunity could be offered? Know however that the Messiah will not have glory in this life, but only in the next. All who attain to Messiah must take up his cross daily.”

Jesus continued in such a manner. He spoke of discipline of spirit producing advancement of soul, and it was to be done as Messiah. Jesus spoke of the trials of this life; the trials of family, the burden of kings and taxes, the injustice that was so often and so bitterly felt. Jesus spoke of pilgrimage in this life, and trust in God for things greater than this life.

A man Achan, had passed by the temple and noticed the crowd outside, and inquired as to the reason. He was told that the new prophet was inside speaking. Achan was a Jew...of sorts, and if he was not fully willing to pursue his faith by trail and triumph of will, he was at least open to inspiring sermons, and from every account the new prophet was inspiring. Achan was a physician's assistant delivering supplies to an Egyptian physician, specifically three vipers held in a leather shoulder bag.

Achan joined the pressing crowd that had choked one of the Huldah gates. The gate was a set of stairs that rose from ground level, and entered the higher temple platform. Achan felt it was his right to hear holy inspiration since he made the effort to seek it, and calculated a method of furthering his penetration of the opposing crowd. He was an adept serpent handler and allowed a viper's snapping tail to extend from the bag.

So as not to cause undue alarm, Achan spoke softly, “Please I have a delivery to make to the temple physician, let me through.” He held the moving tail in front of him, and effectively made his way forward. He was soon inside the gate, the sentries had

given up their attempts to close the gates, as the pressing humanity was just too dense. Achan continued to induce his way deeper into the temple court.

The physician's assistant grew lax in his handling and a vipers head appeared. The serpent was angry and strong, and was out of the bag and then on the paving stones. A staff hit the bag, and three vipers were now at large and seeking escape through the hostile, kicking crowd.

Jesus noticed this commotion occurring near the gate, just after he had finished addressing the crowd of faithful. He was offering his personal intentions for families at Passover, and assuring the people that the light would not fail them on their way to their homes. After this point of speech, the crowd exploded.

From where Jesus stood, the mass of faithful pushed outward to form a slowly enlarging void. Jesus was unsure why, but guessed that someone or something was threatening them at that area, but he did not see any force of temple guards that might be the cause. There was no smoke to be seen and he could not make out the words of the shouting, and there was no way he could get to the area of commotion.

Jesus could not see it, but the vipers were moving among the feet of the people, biting at many. The vipers quickly used all their stored venom, but still they drove the people to a crushing push toward the gates. Those unfortunate who were crushed or asphyxiated or who had their children ground away from their grip faced certain death on the pavement as the crowd pushed itself toward the gates. No one intentionally stepped on another, but it was unavoidable as one could only move, and had to move, as the mass moved.

Time and exhaustion weakened the collective movement of the assembly. Within ten minutes the court of the Gentiles was mostly empty. Those remaining were dead, wounded, or tending to and searching for victims on the pavement. There was no reason, and no justification for all the deaths, which made the sorrow and the waste that much more bitter to bear.

Jesus walked to the middle of the area, weeping. He dropped to his knees, gripped his head and ground his face into the pavement in anguish. He had summoned these people here, and now they were dead! Jesus sobbed, running his palms over his face, smearing his own blood which arose from his scrapped forehead.

There were a hundred or more dead, dying and injured lying on the pavement of the Temple of Jerusalem. The temple guard and the Roman garrison were now arriving in force, but for no real purpose. The sun that had miraculously held its position in the sky, now was quickly setting below the horizon. The temple captain ordered the gates shut, the dead would remain in the temple until morning. The chief priests were in assembly to decide if it was lawful to gather the dead now that the holy day of Passover had begun.

The disguised “Roman” Zealots never got close to Jesus. They had been told that Jesus had agreed to proclaim himself King, and they were to wait until he had concluded his speech. The twenty-two pretended Romans had either been pushed out of the temple by the exiting crowd, or killed by the advancing authentic Roman force.

Jesus rose, wiped the blood from his face and shouted for Dismas and Judas. The two apostles ran to the master and were given orders. They were to go into the adjoining fortress Antonia and seek out the executioner. They were to use money to purchase a new cross piece and have a title for it written in the name of “Jesus of Nazareth, of 33 years”. Lastly they were to quickly return with the purchase. Judas and Dismas left at once to find the executioner.

Jesus went into an alcove to pray and to wait for the return of Judas and Dismas, and posted men to watch for them. Half of an hour later Judas returned with two men carrying the cross piece. Jesus was also told that Dismas had been arrested in the fortress.

Jesus examined the title, and the cross piece. It was new and unused as ordered, and had several pre-drilled holes for wrist spikes. He took a skin of water from the pavement and a moistened a cloth, then wiped the drying blood from his face, and painted the cross piece with it. The Prophet had the cross piece positioned centrally in the area of the victims. There were a thousand people now in the temple court, families tending to victims, priests and temple workers, and some Roman legionaries.

Jesus and John lifted a dead woman and carried her to the cross. “Drape her over the cross piece,” Jesus instructed John. The woman was laid over it, arched and facing up. Jesus began to shout to the many who were weeping over their dead.

“Hear me, all you who mourn and pray. The promise of Passover is fulfilled. In this fulfillment however you will no longer use the blood of lambs, but the blood of the

New Covenant that God makes with Israel. The New Covenant is the person of the Messiah, and death will pass over all who share the cross of the Messiah.”³

The temple guards moved to quell the perceived new trouble.

Jesus looked at the approaching temple guards, then at the woman. The prophet stretched his arms level before him and shouted, “Woman arise!”

The woman’s chest heaved as she gasped air, arching her back still further. She rolled onto her side, still breathing heavily and looked about. Standing upright, she fell again, but now at the feet of the Messiah before her. Remaining on her knees, she looked up at the master and spoke, “Master, you are the Messiah in Israel, all who pass over your cross will find life.”

Jesus said, “Woman are there any now who accuse you.”

The woman answered, “No master, all those who become Messiah, are free of guilt, no accusation can be brought against them and they may pass from death into life.”

The gathering priests shouted, “Arrest him!”

As the guards seized Jesus, he shouted to the apostles, “Bring all the dead to the cross!”

The guards now attempted to seize the cross piece, but could not move it from its place on the pavement, it was somehow fixed in position. Pairs of apostles were

³ In this event, Jesus is simply resuscitating the dead to life, as he had done on other occasions. He is not resurrecting the dead into the afterlife. Three objections will be answered:

(1) *Jesus could not bleed or be harmed.* Being free from original sin, until taking it on at the last supper/first communion, Jesus was not subject to death and seemed to be free from attempts on his life, (Lk 4:29). Did he ever cut himself in the carpenters shop? The answer is unknown. Jesus would have certainly bled at his circumcision, (which was a command from God, and not a threat upon him). Here Jesus is in anguish and unintentionally scrapes his forehead, and therefore bleeds.

(2) *Jesus could not experience anguish or self blame.* Being free of original sin, and being God; Jesus was perfect and could not sin. However, emotional responses (such as portrayed here) can be neither virtue nor sin, both of which are acts of the will, (prolonged, willed emotion enters into the realm of will). The Gospel records Jesus as experiencing anguish at the death of Lazarus. The self blame that Jesus briefly feels is an emotional (not a reasoned) observation of a *mistake*. Jesus in fact made no mistake, as crowd control was not his responsibility. Therefore the author proposes that the scene in this novel is not impossible.

(3) *Jesus did not provide redemption from sin until he died on the cross.* Jesus forgave sin throughout his ministry, and raised several dead people. Jesus provided reformation of sin throughout his life. When he encountered poverty, irreverence, and death in his daily life (even before his mission), he restored it by acts of faith, piety, and hope.

The resuscitation portrayed here is different from the resurrection later. The reason for the life and ministry of Jesus was communion with humanity. The cross was the necessary means to this end. Forgiveness of sin is not the same as incorporation into the body of Christ, which is salvation. Forgiveness is the necessary precondition to membership in the body of Christ, hence the restorative mediation (virtuous suffering) of the cross. The next chapter examines this idea.

carrying victims to the crosspiece. Four guards were tugging on the wood, other guards blocked Philip and Thomas and the body they carried. The next pair of apostles slipped by and successfully dropped their victim on the cross, who slid between the now seven guards who were attempting to lift the cross piece. The body touched the cross, gasped, put out his arms and rolled off all in one motion. The guards withdrew.

Apostles, and now those who mourned their dead, were carrying bodies to the cross. Peter called for the apostles to stop their recovery efforts and organize the approaching body bearers into a line, so as not to cause another stampede. Jesus broke the slackened grip of his arresting detail and instructed that the injured also approach the crosspiece. The one line became two as people now approached the beam at both ends. Families lifted the hand of their dead or injured to touch the crosspiece. Joanna, Mary Magdalen and Suzanna were attending to the children. They brought several to the cross. Infants regained life and suckled their mothers as their small bodies were draped over the bloodied cross piece.

Jesus shouted to those within earshot, “The dead are to be carried to the cross by the living, and those who are not strong enough to approach the cross themselves are to be assisted by those who are.” Jesus had one body set aside, and dealt with it after all others were resuscitated.

When all others were restored to life, Jesus looked intently at the body that had been set aside, it was the body of Achan the physician’s assistant who had used his serpents to move aside the crowd. Jesus spoke loudly, “Achan you have done evil in allowing killing serpents into the house of God. You used the influence and fear they generate to promote your selfish interests. You gladly drink of me as from a well that gives wine, yet the morning after your intoxication, you do nothing to instill goodness into your own life, because it requires a discipline of the spirit which you willfully lack.”

Jesus fell momentarily silent as he looked at the people, then continued saying, “Achan, you also will I purchase. I will pay the price, so I tell you now that you may enter into life. You now regain the life of the body, and I implore you to enter into the life of the Spirit. Lay him upon the cross.”

The disciples stretched the body of Achan over the crosspiece and he returned to life. He seemed to know what had happened, and what his predicament was. He looked at Jesus, who dismissed him without further comment.

The events seemed to be completed, until Andrew and a boy approached Jesus. The three dead serpents were contained in a bag held by the boy. The boy opened the bag and Jesus viewed the dead vipers. He then turned to Andrew and said, “Andrew, lay hold of these serpents and heave them from this spot into the pit of Gehenna.”

Andrew did not move, but finally began to stammer out an objection. Jesus over spoke him, “Andrew, do as I say, throw these serpents into the refuse pit...do it now. Cast the entire bag away.”

The boy tied the bag securely and handed it to the apostle, who looked in the direction of the Gehenna pit, then again at Jesus. Jesus spoke sharply, “Andrew, you seem to have more confidence in the killing serpents than in the God of Israel. Heave them away with all your strength, do so now!”

Andrew drew back his arm with the bag, but returned to a standing posture and said to Jesus, “Master, I cannot throw the bag that far.”

Jesus said, “Then I will.” Jesus took the bag, and spun it overhead by its rope, and released it toward the Gehenna pit, which was outside the city gates and on the far side of Jerusalem. The bag rippled over the walls of the temple — into the valley of Gehenna.

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C o m m u n i o n

Body of Christ

Nicodemus beheld Jesus in a dream saying, “On the afternoon of the feast of the unleavened bread, you will have need of water. When your servant walks to the well, two of my disciples will follow him to your home. They will ask you to show them the guest room, where they will make preparations for the Passover that I will share with the apostles.”

Mathias and Amos did not attend the sermon in the temple. They were tasked with preparing the Passover meal. They found the home according to the prophecy of Jesus, but there was little for them to do, as Nicodemus and his servants were happy to perform the necessary tasks to prepare for the master and the twelve.

The household of Nicodemus grew worried as the sun neared its setting, and the master had not yet arrived. They had no choice but to wait. Nicodemus decided against sending servants out to find the master, as sunset was near. For an hour all waited, and the sun did not set.

Jesus and the twelve finally arrived. Nicodemus knew something of importance had occurred, but did not ask further. Nicodemus then showed the men to the upper room where all was waiting.

Nicodemus saw the blood stained garments that Jesus wore and called for a basin of water and new garments. These were brought and Jesus thanked the servant. Jesus removed his outer garments, remaining in only a loin cloth, and began to wash.

Jesus was slow in his movements and turned inward to his thoughts. He finished cleaning himself and turned to the apostles. Jesus said, “The Son of God needs no further washing, but all others do. Even if I were to clean the dust from your feet, you would still not be clean enough to enter the palace of Heaven. You must be clean of soul to share in Heaven who is the Messiah.”

“You have sin that you do not even know about — the sin of Adam — and it keeps you from Heaven. I will not clean the sin of Adam with a cloth, but with my own

blood. You yourselves will bring this sin to me, and it will in turn bring death to me. Yet one of you will betray me, by withholding the sin of Adam from me. Now the master will wash the dust from your feet. Stay where you are, I will remove your sandals.”

It became the time for Simon Peter to be washed, but Simon objected.

Jesus said, “Unless I wash you Simon, you will have no share in me.”

Simon Peter drew his lips tight, then exclaimed, “Master, then I beg you to wash not only my feet, but my head and hands also!”

After washing, Jesus arose, pulled the fresh tunic over his shoulders and said to the apostles, “Do you understand what I have done for you. Do you understand what you must do for others, and what you must teach others to do?” Surveying his apostles he said, “No, you do not, but later you will understand.”

Jesus looked sorrowfully at the apostles and said, “Just as I wash you of your sins, so too must you and all disciples wash others. I did not serve you at table. I did not serve food for the body. I washed your souls of sin; now by humility, and tomorrow on a cross of wood.”

“And for what purpose do I clean you? It is so the two may become one. I have told this to the children of Israel for three years. This night God will join his life to his children. I will not be with you much longer, but you will bring the Messiah to many others. Do so with great humility, as you yourselves are not greater than those you serve. Now hear the parable of the healing wine.”

“The people of a great kingdom had fallen ill, the king sent his son, the prince to heal those who were ill. The prince produced a healing wine that had great healing powers; every wound it was poured upon was restored. To better distribute the healing wine in the large kingdom, the prince trained physicians to use the wine to restore the people to health. The prince even gave the people the opportunity to join with him in producing the wine that restored so many to health.”

“The wine was the product of sacrifice, skill, and patience of workers in many disciplines; some tended the grape vines, some watched late into the night for thieves, others rid the vineyard of weeds, suffering the heat and dust of the day. Others plowed or planted, some spun flasks to hold the wine or transported it. Many did all this work while raising a family or caring for parents. The physicians, so as to devote themselves to

distribution of the healing wine, did not take upon themselves the great tasks of family life.”

“The king was very pleased with the results. He called for the physicians in order to thank and honor them. The physicians accepted the honors of the king, and told the king of the other workers who were equal partners in the enterprise of the healing wine. The king insisted that they too be called in that he might also honor them.”

“The king was very pleased with the assembly of the workers, many of whom had themselves benefited from the healing wine, and went on to produce it themselves. The king made each of them a governor over the people that they had healed, and the workers governed with great humility, having themselves once been in need of healing. There came a time when all sickness was eradicated from the kingdom, and the king, the prince, the physicians and all the workers were united in the great kingdom of peace.”

Jesus continued, “You are to be priest-physicians in the new kingdom, the New Covenant which God makes with man. As in the parable you will be my instruments in restoring the souls of the people. The New Covenant is to be offered to all people. Until now it is offered first to the eldest children of the Father, but very soon I will send you out to deliver to all peoples their invitation into the kingdom of God.”

“You will offer in sacrifice my very body, and use the restorative efforts of the entire Messiah in the sacred act of forgiveness. Be my instruments, but do not be hollow men, giving graces to others but doing little to acquire them yourselves.”

“Know this my friends, the share in the divine life of the Father is not given in exchange. It is a gift that cannot be earned. Yet to ask for and to accept this gift requires effort of faith and resolve. Recall also that the good prayers and efforts of the many, restore faith in this world. You are to encourage many to this effort, and to set a high example yourself. Leadership of the New Covenant will be taken away from Jerusalem. Will it scandalize you to hear that Rome will rule over you, at my command?”

The Passover feast, and all feasts were events of celebration; meat, wine and music was served, stories told and dance was made. Jesus knew this was his last night before death, he also knew that the twelve would follow the mood that he set. Jesus had all recline and the servants poured cups of wine.

For two hours the men celebrated. It was humor of sorts, that among the many Jewish dietary rules was a tradition requiring several cups of wine to be drunk at the

Passover meal. At past meals, Jesus had shared in the wine, but not tonight, there was just too much going through his head and his heart. As always, he had no pretense, but his emotions were bi-polar. He knew what the communion cup meant.

Jesus spoke, “Your communion with the Messiah tonight will not be the first. The Father’s first communion with mankind was limited, and could not extend to you. My mother and myself alone participated with the Holy Spirit of God, in humanities first communion with the God of Creation. In this way the Virgin and her Son remained free of sin. But now I will exchange sinless virtue for your failings.”

“Soon I will be in communion with you, my sinful friends. I am happy to do so, but not so immediately. In our communion, I will take on your sins, and they will not lie dormant, I will mediate them into virtues of faith and purity. In exchange for your sins given to me, I will allow you to share in my very being — all of it, even to the point of divinity. You will acquire these gifts as your soul is able to accept them.”

Nicodemus had gotten word that all temple Pharisees were to report immediately to the temple, by command of the High Priest Caiaphas. No further details were given. Nicodemus and Judas were both Pharisees of the temple and had to leave at once, or so it was relayed to the master.

Jesus did not dispute the order and said to Judas, “Go and do quickly what you must do.”

The two men left, and the Passover commemoration continued. A hymn was sung, all kept rhythm by palming their chests or the table, and Philip worked his flute. When the hymn was completed Jesus said, “Friends, sit up and listen to me. Your God calls you to himself in communion. I have often spoken of a man becoming Messiah, and of the necessity of this. Now, this event is upon you.”

Jesus surveyed the elaborate room and table setting provided by Nicodemus. Jesus gave no importance to wealth or lack of it, but it was now somehow proper that the finest ornamentation be present at the inaugural of the New Covenant.

Each year Nicodemus celebrated the Passover with much joy and generosity, and he would free a servant-slave each year in commemoration. Such a slave was usually purchased for the event, as none of his own servants desired to leave the house of Nicodemus.

Nicodemus had provided gold wine goblets for each guest, and for the master of the feast — Jesus — was provided a larger chalice inlaid with gems. The thought came to Jesus that the chalice was indeed a worthy vessel for the libation of blood, even more so than the apostles. Yet his heart cared nothing for the fine wine goblets, but only for his children. He would now make the poor apostles worthy of union with their God.

Taking the unleavened bread, he gave thanks, broke it and gave it to the disciples saying, “Take and eat, this is my body, which is given up for you.”

Then taking a cup of wine, he blessed it, and gave it to his disciples saying, “This is my blood, which is poured out for many, for the forgiveness of sin. Drink of it, and do so again, in memory of me.”

The apostles were aware that this breaking of bread was different, very different, but this awareness was still mostly theory. They consumed the bread and the wine, which was somehow the body and blood of the master. Nothing was felt. They searched their souls for a deeper meaning but could not yet find it.

Jesus likewise had not yet felt the full effects of this communion. But he knew what must now happen. He had now consented to his own death at the hands of the apostles.¹ Jesus knew that the produce would be greater than the labor. The apostles had gained unending life as the Messiah himself. First however...the labor. Until the produce, the wine would be exceedingly bitter, poisonous even. Jesus was overcome by emotion and stumbled among his many thoughts. He wanted to warn the apostles of his death by poisoning that he must now undergo, but also of the glory that was to be had.

Jesus said, “I shall not drink the fruit of the vine until the day that I drink it with you, new in the kingdom of my Father. Until that day this wine I must drink will be bitter. You yourselves make it so. I am the vine and you are the branches that bear the fruit of the vine. This fruit will become sweet only if I first taste its bitterness.”

¹ The death of Jesus was a consequence of entering into the original sin of the apostles, (and all humanity, which held this sin in common). Such entry into sin was not optional if he was to commune with, and save sinful humanity. In his communion with the apostles, he had to first rid them of sin — “he became sin”, (2Cor 5:21), but remediated it into virtue, thus allowing incorporation of the sinner into Christ.

Clearly, the communion event of the last supper was Christ’s entry into sin for the purpose of redemption, it was the cause of his death just hours later. For the prior three years, attempts to kill or imprison him had repeatedly failed. All this points to the communion event as more than mere symbolism. The communion is real because the communion bread is really the body of Christ.

“Each *new* Messiah will at first think the sweetness of the vine is bitter, but with effort it will grow sweet. Every branch that produces bitter fruit and sap will be pruned away. Later you will understand all of this. It is enough now that you remain united and steadfast in faith.”²

The apostles were at a loss of understanding. The master had just told them that the wine was his own blood, but he now said it was bitter. Jesus looked about. He did not have the heart to do any teaching or explaining. Teaching the apostles seemed trivial compared to what was now happening. This was the very heart of the New Covenant. It was happening now.

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² The wine served is bitter because it is the instrument for communion with the apostles. The apostles' sins make it bitter. Jesus does not drink the wine, but the apostles drink the wine which is now Christ's blood; Christ therefore shares in the sin of the apostles. Christ mediates their sin into his own virtue. The apostles in turn are offered a literal sharing in Christ, but the corresponding required moral effort is bitter to their taste.

“Every new Messiah...”, each novice member of Christ must purge him or her self of disordered will, even legitimate self will. This is at first distasteful, but becomes sweet as the old nature is cast off.

Trial and Execution

God the Father Tears his Garments

The Zealot temple plot had failed just hours earlier, Jesus was to be either a puppet king, or dead by now. Jesus was neither the new king, nor a dead prophet and catalyst for a popular uprising. Zuriel, the Zealot leader in Judaea had another idea, he had to. The key to the uprising was the Jewish population, not the Zealots. The Zealots themselves just did not have the numbers, if they had these plans would not be necessary.

The idea of the Romans fulminating an uprising by killing the peoples' prophet could still work, but it had to be real Romans this time, and not disguised Zealots and Passover was the time to do it. Jerusalem was swollen to four times its normal population, and whatever fraction of these people joined the revolt, they would be that many more now than after Passover. Many had come to Jerusalem to see and hear the new "Prophet of Israel", and his death at the hands of the Romans would excite them to rebellion. The traitor Jesus had to be taken tonight, and tried and executed by the Romans tomorrow. After Sabbath the Jewish pilgrims and even Pilate would leave the city. Jesus would then be held awaiting trial, which would likely never happen.

All the elements needed were at hand. Several confederates in the temple guard could be mustered, as well as some guard commanders and temple priests and Pharisees. Temple authorities opposing Jesus were numerous, available and willing.

Only the Romans could execute the Nazarene, legally and practically. Practically, the people would rebel against anyone killing a prophet in Israel. The Zealots and the temple must not appear as the aggressors. The Roman governor Pilate would only judge persons brought before him by his own men or by the Sanhedrin, and then he would not pass judgment on Jewish religious matters.

It was complex, and much could go wrong. To obtain the Roman execution of Jesus, the temple guard must find him tonight, arrest him in the presence of twelve or more followers, present him to the Sanhedrin, and finally before Pilate on a capital violation of Roman law.

The first task might very well make or break the entire plan; how could Jesus of Nazareth be located before morning? The false prophet was within arm's reach in the temple just a few hours ago, but now his location was unknown.

Some men were available to patrol the streets, although on Passover eve few in Jerusalem would be out, and certainly not a pious Jew. One option was to send criers down the streets of the city. Would Jesus respond?

The new plan relied almost entirely on the Sanhedrin and the temple. The earlier plan had the Zealots themselves forcing or killing Jesus. Now the Zealots had to maintain a degree of separation from the Romans by placing the Sanhedrin between them. In fact once the Sanhedrin bought into the idea, it was in their hands because they would have Jesus in custody.

Still it was the only practical solution to the problem of Jesus. If it were known that the Zealots killed Jesus, the Zealots themselves would become the object of the wrath of the people. Years of patient work might be undone. The commander of the temple guard was a Zealot supporter, and Zuriel would discuss the plan with him at once.

Zuriel and the Eliakin the guard commander, decided that two efforts would be mounted to find Jesus. The first effort was a two part call message. Both calls would be put out to all temple personnel, who would be instructed to propagate the call to as many in the city as possible.

First a call would be put out for Jesus to report to the Sanhedrin, to discuss his mission and his claim as Messiah. A second call would be propagated for all temple Pharisees to report to the temple immediately. Judas was a temple Pharisee, as were other disciples of Jesus, and if one of them got the word he might respond and lead them to Jesus. These calls would be relayed by word of mouth, not by street crier. No such recall could be devised for any of the disciples other than Judas, all the others were fishermen or simple men.

The second effort would consist simply of every available man patrolling for Jesus or his men starting at daybreak, certainly one of them would be spotted. Pilate would probably leave tomorrow to return to Caesarea, and would then be unavailable to judge Jesus. Caiaphas would be asked to delay Pilate as long as possible.

Nicodemus quickly got the word to report to the temple. He was hosting the Passover meal for Jesus and his disciples. He had his suspicions but told his guest Jesus

that he and Judas were required at the temple immediately. Jesus thanked Nicodemus and told Judas to leave and do quickly, what he must do.

At the temple, as a Pharisee arrived he was escorted to a scriptorium and asked to sign a rule document that did not seem overly pressing. Judas and Nicodemus were further detained and brought before the commander of the temple guard; three others were likewise presented to the commander, and held in a room.

The commander told Nicodemus and Judas of an attempted assassination of Jesus in the temple just hours ago. Yes, the rumors were true, and the threat was still extant. Did any of them know where Jesus was now?

Judas and Nicodemus both smelled conspiracy and tried to stall, and also sought a better understanding of any threat against the master. Judas asked, "Commander, the Roman soldiers are said to have been Zealots in disguise."

The commander replied authoritatively, "If that turns out to be true, then the threat against a prophet of Israel is even greater. Zealots out number and out think the Romans in Israel. The master would be in even greater danger...you must tell us where he is."

Judas' hesitation and interest confirmed to the commander that he knew the location of Jesus. But the commander also knew that Judas was not likely to betray his master.

The commander continued, "The master may hide from the Romans, but not from the Zealots. They are seeking him now, tonight. They know the country and the people, and one person in four is a Zealot informer."

Again the commander paused to allow Judas to mentally confirm what had been presented then continued, "Judas, we want to escort the master to the palace or the temple where he will be safe, until the threat can be disarmed. Tell us where he is. I am sorry, but he has little choice, he will be contacted by either the Zealots, or our own temple guard, and you will make the decision for him."

Judas was silent, deadpan, and looking at the commander's chest. Nicodemus played much better, projecting joint concern for the prophet *wherever* he might be.

"Judas, your master is one who obeys those who have authority over him, and he expects this same lawful obedience from all in Israel. I have sent for the master of your order of Pharisees. He too will insist that you answer in truth the questions that will be asked of you."

The commander of the guard continued, “Judas, for what reason will you tell us the location of the master; to save his life, or to obey his wishes that you withhold no truth? If we wait until others reveal his location, he will be dead at the hands of the Zealots. Have there not been enough dead prophets in Israel?”

The commander waited, but only briefly then said to the four sentries in the room, “See that they go nowhere,” and left the room.

The commander returned with the chief Pharisee Aaron, of the order that Judas belonged. He said, “Judas, I order you to tell us where your master Jesus the Nazarene is.”

Judas told Aaron the Chief Pharisee, that Jesus was holding Passover at the home of the Pharisee Nicodemus. The commander and Aaron looked at Nicodemus who was sitting next to Judas, eyes closed and in prayer. Nicodemus confirmed what Judas had said.

Judas was brought along, with two temple guards holding his belt. The party was of three parts, with two of them paralleling the main force on the adjacent streets. The party arrived to find Jesus and the apostles gone. The game was played again, Judas was ordered to tell them where in his estimation Jesus would now be. He replied that the most likely place was the orchard of Gethsemane.

Fifty men were now marching to the orchard. Judas had view of the entire Jesus “rescue” party. In addition to the temple guards, the other two columns had fallen in to one line, and were completely composed of Zealots. Jesus was to be arrested by the Zealots *and* the temple guard, and the one was not going to protect Jesus from the other.

At midnight Jesus had left the home of Nicodemus and lead the apostles to Gethsemane’s orchard. They left by a southern gate and walked around the city, through the valleys Hinnom then Kidron. Gethsemane orchard was on the Hill of Olives, and a half mile from the Kidron Essene house. It was ancient, but now owned by the Kidron Essenes and Jesus had spent many days there tending the trees and harvesting their fruition.

The pilgrims arrived and Jesus was uncharacteristically disturbed. There was no known reason for his anxiety, but the last thing the disciples were was alert. Everyone had taken the customary several cups of Passover wine and were ready for sleep.

Jesus took Peter and Andrew to the praying rocks toward the rear of the property, and said something strange to him, “You share your sins with me, now offer me your prayer. Stay with me, watch and pray.”

Jesus was sweating and trembling now. Jesus prostrated himself with his head in his hands and prayed in torment. Peter did likewise, but was soon asleep.

Jesus was not at peace. He was probed mostly by blasphemous thoughts.¹ He was dripping blood, not from a cut, but from his entire body. He rose and left an outline of blood on the ground. Jesus pushed and scraped against the rocks, trying for some awareness or sensation other than the moral anguish that beat and burned him.

The sin was poison, he now knew why the Devil disguised it. Who would willingly seek it? Jesus hated sin now more than ever. Why had he drank the cup of communion? How stupid was he? He thought it, and now he spoke it, “Father let this cup pass from me. Father I beg you...” Jesus did not articulate it as such, but he was dying.

His stomach was sour and its contents rose to his throat, then returned. Jesus had bent over to empty his stomach, but now felt horror at what he had thought and said. He knelt erect and spoke as forthrightly as he could, “Father let this cup be given according to your will, not mine.”

¹ Jesus is suffering the sin of humanity. Distasteful ideas of every type were necessarily presented to Jesus for remediation into virtue and faith. Disordered emotions are not sin if they are not consented to, and may even become virtue if our response is one of faith and virtue. This is what Jesus did, and in doing so, our sin becomes his virtue — we become a part of Christ. We become fully Christ as each of our moral elements is perfected and we are fully incorporated into Christ.

At its core, sin is rebellion against God. Blasphemous thoughts against God are undisguised sin coming to the surface to be dealt with. It must then be consented to, or rejected. Many saints write of such thoughts against God in the advanced stages of spiritual advancement, (St. Faustina’s diary, entry 77). Such thoughts against God is original sin in its core form, after all the accidental forms (greed, sensuality, pride, etc.) have been conquered by the individual.

Jesus was not remediating his own sin, but humanities’ sin. As God, Jesus could not sin. This did not make the suffering any better, but even worse. Being sinless, he could not take satisfaction in the disordered thoughts being presented to him. Emotion in itself has no component of will, and is neither virtue nor sin. If one consents to the emotion, it becomes an act of will.

Concerning the phrase, “Jesus pleaded to God who had abandoned him in his sinfulness”; at this moment in the life of Jesus, every element was sin except his will, (2Cor 5:21). Jesus took as part of himself the distasteful sins of humanity, he really experienced these sinful emotions, but his perfect moral will reformed them into virtue — his own virtue. Christ saves us by making us part of himself. Jesus could feel the Father’s rejection of the sin he internalized (God hates sin; hate is willful severance just as love is willful commitment). Jesus felt emotional separation from God, but was in reality still the human person of God, and absolute in the integrity of his will.

Jesus wanted to start over and suffer correctly...neatly. He called for Peter, hoping for some relief, but Peter slept on. He pressed his head into the waist high rocks and muttered repeatedly, "Father, Father, why have I abandoned you? Forgive me, forgive me, forgive me..." It was no use, his life until now had not been suffering — poverty, servitude, fasting — yes, but none of it entailed the suffering that now disemboweled him. He looked back on all of it with longing, but he could not hold the thoughts, his head was slow and heavy and burned at its core. Slight head movements produced intense pain. Jesus wiped the sweat from his face, but smeared blood instead...Jesus had become sin.

After some minutes Jesus was aware of movement at his ankle, he looked to see a dog licking his wounds. He was happy to have a companion, even if it was a vulture, and returned to prayer. Jesus turned his thoughts to the journey he planned, after Passover he intended to take the twelve to Alexandria in Egypt, many Jews lived there. Even this momentary relief was taken, "...but why, why visit anyone, they hated him, and he...No...Father, no!"

It came on again...worse than before. Blasphemous thoughts occurred. Jesus pleaded to God who had abandoned him, "Father save me! Father help me!" Jesus was operating from his exposed core.² He could not sin, and the sin could not be further deflected, it had to be dealt with now — all of it. Again he called, "Peter...Andrew, pray with me!" They were not to be seen.

Jesus arose, and walked from tree to tree gripping each. He had extreme nausea, he cramped and could not walk fully upright. He vomited again, but now had nothing left.

In the Temple of Jerusalem, not even a mile away, the Prophetess Anna tore off her head shawl, rolled it and screamed into it. Anna felt hatred toward God, but shuddered at this thought and begged forgiveness. The sin was without mercy or let up, it bent her and tossed her, she too sought relief by any means, but found none. She was in

² The core of Jesus is absolute God. Jesus could not sin. At their core Adam and Eve were nothing, they had been drawn from nothing by God. They were created from nothing, and given independent virtue and free will. These virtues were perfect, but they were not absolute. Perhaps it was inevitable that they eventually sinned.

an alcove alone and scraping her flesh along the stones, moving to the extreme rear of it. She was in communion with Jesus and taking her part as co-redeemer.³

Anna had only hours to live. Later that morning an escaped cockerel that a pilgrim had brought to the temple as a holocaust offering crowed several times, and Anna passed from this life.

An hour before dawn the torment was beginning to be broken by periods of lesser intensity. During such moments, Jesus would look about, but still the others were nowhere to be seen. Had they left, or had he somehow moved away during his night of agony. He likely had moved away. Several times he had walked about the orchard, stopping when it hit him, doubling over then moving on — anywhere.

He could just discern the lighter area of the horizon through the trees, knowing this direction he walked toward the entry of the orchard, hoping to find the others. He found them and they were just arising and looking about. A third party now came into the orchard, it was the temple guards. Jesus stopped where he was.

No one noticed him, although it was he that was being asked for by the arresting party. Judas was the first to see Jesus, and ran to the master. Judas embraced the master, kissed him and spoke into his ear, “Master these men mean you harm, flee now, we will prevent them from following you! Master, go now, they are upon you. They made me tell them where you were.”

“You betray your master with a kiss, Judas. Yet you alone do not betray me, but all who seek the forgiveness of my blood and tears are my executioners.”

³ A co-redeemer is a person who in any way, assists in the redemption of souls. Only Jesus may incorporate a soul into himself, but the requisite reformation of sin and selfishness prior to this may be done by anyone. Anyone who prays or makes remediation is a co-redeemer. If the efforts of Jesus alone would save “X” number of people, and the efforts of others will result in “X + Y” people saved then those others are acting as real co-redeemers, and their efforts make the difference between Heaven and Hell. Jesus called on the apostles to help in this task, but they slept on. In this novel Anna responded. In this novel Anna responded. At this moment Christ is no longer Jesus alone, but the entire body of Christ, and Anna (like Jesus) is acting as a mediator of sin. The “hatred she feels is emotional hatred (sin of others), and not willful hatred arising from herself.

Mary, mother of Jesus had no participation in original sin, (which is why she did not attend the last supper, and enter into original sin, as Jesus did). Mary was (and remains) a co-redeemer on the positive end, by offering virtues of hope, trust, forgiveness. Any disorder she encountered was external only. Before Jesus participated in original sin, his encounters with sin were external only.

A lieutenant of the temple guard was in command, and shouted toward the gathering group of apostles, to Judas, and the man he was with, "Which of you is the man Jesus!"

No one answered, or perhaps understood. He shouted the question again loud and distinct. Jesus pulled away from Judas and shouted back, "I AM."

The arresting party did hear and understand Jesus' reply, but somehow they were having difficulty advancing toward Jesus. Jesus had now forgotten his earlier suffering, and had returned to full abilities. He advanced toward the lieutenant and said, "I AM Jesus. I AM Messiah in Israel. You seek my harm, I allow it now."

The men overcame their hesitation and made their final advance on Jesus. Jesus stood his ground, and was immediately seized and placed in iron cuffs. The apostles pushed toward him to release him, but Jesus shouted that they stop. The captain ordered them all taken, but Jesus shouted again that he would not resist if the others were let free. The captain's orders were to arrest Jesus, this was done leaving behind the groggy apostles.

Some of the Zealots stayed long enough to threaten the apostles, telling them to disperse and not to assemble again, that to do so would be at the risk of their lives. The apostles quickly left by different routes as instructed.

Jesus was brought to the home of Caiaphas. Caiaphas often made business at his mansion, it gave him a home ground advantage. Tonight it was out of practical necessity that Jesus was brought here. Caiaphas donned his ornaments of office and had the blasphemer brought before him in his hall.

Caiaphas was the High Priest of Israel and as such, leader of the Sanhedrin, which was the supreme governing body of Jews in Israel. There were laws against blasphemy, and Caiaphas had expected Jesus to have been arrested long ago, but had never issued a direct order to do so. He did not have to; temple authorities had actively attempted to arrest him several on several occasions. Caiaphas knew that one day Jesus would stand before him, and that day had now come.

But what of it? The Sanhedrin had no authority to award severe punishment and not exile or death, and Caiaphas did not want to. To kill or imprison the prophet of the people would have to be done by the Romans. The risk of revolt was real, and if it happened, the Romans would be suitable victims, not the Sanhedrin.

Charges of treason must be prosecuted against the man Jesus, and it must be done in a Roman court having authority to inflict a punishment commensurate to the crime. The penalty for both treason against Rome and blasphemy against God was death. Caiaphas called for an immediate meeting of the entire Sanhedrin.

The outcome of the Sanhedrin trial was never in doubt. When asked under the oath of the covenant if Jesus was the Son of God, he replied “I AM.” Few in Israel thought that the coming Messiah was to be divine — God made man — but Jesus had said as much on several occasions, and said so now to the entire Sanhedrin. But this confession to the Sanhedrin was of little practical value, he must be tried by the Romans.

The Sanhedrin requested an immediate audience with Pilate, they informed Pilate that their judges had found a man guilty of treason against Rome, and desired that Pilate judge him by Roman law. Pilate asked some preliminary questions and was surprised to learn that the man was the Jewish prophet from Nazareth.

Pilate made the effort to monitor major influences in Judaea, and Jesus was certainly a significant influence, and as such he had been closely monitored for three years. Pilate could not fault the prophet’s teachings to respect the Romans, pay the taxes, and live a constructive life, and ordered that so long as this philosophy was what Jesus preached, the garrisons were not to interfere with him. Pilate was distraught however that Jesus had raised the ire of many in the Sanhedrin. Many also blamed Jesus for the destruction of the “street of the damned” in Caesarea, but Pilate’s investigation of the matter could not lay blame for the fire on Jesus.

Pilate heard all of the evidence the Sanhedrin representatives brought. The representatives seemed most eager and insistent that the man Jesus be tried, and suggested that to ignore such a clear threat would be a failure of governance.

Pilate granted a trial. Pilate offered legal counsel to the accused, and suggested that he accept Marcus Curtius Blaesus as council. Marcus had met Jesus in the first months of his mission and had convinced Pilate of his benevolence. Jesus refused council on his behalf three times, and Pilate retained Marcus as a witness. Pilate had Jesus stand before him. Caiaphas was not present but was in the temple that adjoined the fortress Antonia, in which the trial was being held.

Pilate acted as judge and called the accusers to state the offense. The Sanhedrin party was to act as prosecutor and said, “Prefect, we bring this man before you, he is a criminal against Rome. He claims to be King of Judaea. To effect this claim, he raises an

army of followers and incites them against Rome. We are witness to all this, as are many others.”

The man before him appeared common enough, composed and non combative. Pilate did not speak Aramaic, but was told that Jesus did speak Greek. Pilate remained seated and addressed Jesus in Greek saying, “You are the Jewish prophet. I have known of you for three years. Until now I have not been aware of any crime against Rome on your part. These men now tell me that you plot revolt against Rome.”

“The Sanhedrin itself brings these charges against you. I am obligated to investigate them now, and to determine your guilt or innocence of them. How do you answer your accusers?”

Jesus was silent.

Pilate implored him to offer a defense, but Jesus said nothing. Marcus stepped forward and spoke to Jesus, “Rabbi, if you will not accept council to defend yourself, do at least speak the truth in answer to questions. You have always given that council yourself.”

Pilate continued, “I now order you, the accused to answer in truth all questions put to you.”

Jesus finally spoke, “Governor, I offer the unbiased witness of the many who have heard me. They will testify to my words and my actions. You have merely to ask them. As to the truth that you say you seek, look no further. It is now upon you.”

Pilate sought to engage Jesus in more informal conversation, hoping that he might indirectly draw some information out of him. Pilate changed the topic from law to theology and said, “What is truth?”

Jesus was flustered. Truth literally stared Pilate in the face, but he was not aware of it. Jesus closed his eyes and prayed.

Pilate demanded again that Jesus speak, and demanded again. He then appointed Marcus to speak in his place.

Marcus started to recount the many times Jesus had spoken of obedience to Roman rule. The prosecuting witnesses objected saying that Marcus should be limited to speaking in defense of specific charges and events, which they would now recount to the court.

Pilate told the prosecutors that if they wanted to proceed in this manner, he as judge would have to presume the accused’s innocence and the burden would be for them,

the prosecutors to prove his guilt. The prosecutors conferred and agreed to these terms. They produced a record of “offenses” perpetrated by Jesus, it was a detailed account of his words, his violations of the laws of Moses, and any remarks that might be taken as civil treason, along with names of witnesses to each. Some were prefaced with a red mark, Marcus estimated that these might be the civil charges that formed the core of the prosecution’s case.

The prosecutors listed three counts of treason, detailing the words of Jesus and offering the dates, location and names of witnesses.

Marcus slowly stepped in front of Jesus, placing himself before Pilate and declared that the present court had no jurisdiction in these matters because they all occurred in Galilee, and the accused himself was a citizen of Galilee and therefore a subject of the tetarch Herod, and not of the Prefect of Judaea.

Pilate asked Jesus if this was true, but was not answered, then turned immediately to the prosecuting party and asked if Jesus was from Galilee. The prosecutors answered that they could not speak for the accused, but they had many other charges that occurred in Judaea, and that the accused was still under Roman law as a citizen of the greater Roman province of Syria.

It may have seemed that Pilate was a bit reluctant to prosecute Jesus, and he spoke forcefully that the accused must be brought before Herod, along with any accusations. He ordered Jesus to be held and Herod informed.

The prosecutors told Pilate that they had custody of the prisoner and respectfully asked that they be allowed to bring him before Herod at once, as he was in the city for Passover, and staying at his father’s former palace in the upper city. Jesus was marched before Herod.

Herod had suffered in condemning the Baptist. His dealings with many in Galilee were now cold and difficult, the priests in Judaea had no complaint, but that was of no benefit to Herod in Galilee. Herod saw Jesus but was not treated to any miracles, still he did not want to kill any more prophets. He spoke to the Sanhedrin party through an agent. It was firmly alluded to that Herod would not judge Jesus, if pressed he would command them to bring Jesus before the Roman governor of Syria, as matters of empire took priority over matters of Galilee.

Jesus was returned to Pilate, who was also given a writ of accusation on behalf of the Governor of Syria. In it Pilate was cited as the governor’s standing judge because

of the undue delay and expense in transferring the prisoner. The writ was signed by the “Governor of the Sanhedrin of Judaea, in Syria; Caiaphas”.

A new set of people now appeared before Pilate, the Sanhedrin party now included officials from Syria and Egypt. All demanding that the accused be tried at once because he and his army of revolt was an immediate and unmitigated threat. Some claimed the all encompassing title “Counselor to the Governor of Syria”.

The prosecutor’s presentation was impressive. Jesus was deliberately placating the Roman authorities, which allowed him to secretly build an army. He spoke of tolerance, which is why he was allowed to continue to speak. The time is coming however that Jesus will preach justice against the Romans, and he will do so to his enormous following which he gathered under false pretenses. Specific examples of the harsh justice Jesus had spoken against non believers and idolaters was cited. The scope of his influence in Israel was examined, and the depth of individual commitment to Jesus was given by examples.

The last argument portrayed Jesus as a man who assumed the office of Messiah. The Messiah, was to be king of restored Israel — a self governing Israel. The Canaan campaign of Joshua was cited as the presumed will of God, which the Messiah would again wage against the occupiers. Examples from scripture were presented, showing the awaited Messiah to be the greatest king in Israel, and in the case of Jesus he claimed this kingship without the authorization of Rome. The Sanhedrin party assured Pilate that they considered themselves to be joint rulers of Israel and were happy to leave concerns of empire to Caesar.

Marcus spoke in defense, he was at somewhat of a disadvantage since he was to answer to specific charges and events only. He did not have a scroll listing the contextual meaning of the teachings of Jesus. He just did not have at hand any witnesses who interpreted the teachings of Jesus in a benevolent manner, and could not offer his own witness since he was considered bias toward the accused, being his agent.

The prosecutor Omar recounted several instances of Jesus claiming to be a king and inviting the listeners to join his new kingdom. Marcus replied, “The kingdom this man claims, is the kingdom of Heaven, not of Rome. He is to be the Messiah of those who rise to Heaven, not of those now on earth. I must respectfully say Prefect, the kingdom of Heaven is again, outside the jurisdiction of this court.”

Pilate turned to the prosecutors who had ready a rebuttal, “The kingdom of Heaven is indeed the providence of Rome, and all within the empire are required by law to respect this, and not challenge it.”

Omar paused to let this statement sink in, then continued, “The king of Heaven is the divine Caesar of Rome, and no other person. All who take the office of Caesar acknowledge his own divinity, and require all citizens to refrain from challenging it.”

Marcus showed no emotion, but was exceedingly engaged in arranging a rebuttal, but found none. This was a good time for Jesus to continue in his silence. What would he say, other than he was indeed the King of Heaven.

The prosecutors continued, “The accused claims for himself not only what is Caesar’s in Heaven, but what is his on earth. This man Jesus, claims the office of Messiah of Israel. This long awaited Messiah must be king in Israel, the greatest king. But as king in Israel he must be confirmed by Caesar, and Caesar does not confirm him. Caesar rejects all forced claim of kingship in the empire, and holds those making such claims as treasonous.”

“Further, this man Jesus entered Jerusalem while his army of rebels hailed him as ‘King of the Jews’. The accused proceeded to address the crowd, while not renouncing this treasonous title, but embracing it. The crowd hailed him as their king, and the Jesus addressed these people as their king. This man builds an army of revolt and arms it. Swords were found in his camp and among his followers when he was arrested.”

“Noble Prefect, the people of the empire have stated our case against this man who speaks treason, and seeks revolution against Rome. Prefect, we now rest, and we will send Caesar records of our evidence for his own examination.”

Pilate held up his hand to silence anyone attempting to speak. At length he said, “I have heard enough, I will now make my decision. You will have it within the hour.”

Pilate was torn three ways, first he respected the man Jesus and knew that he had done no wrong. He had no interest in shutting down a man who spoke of tolerance toward the Romans. He also just did not want to condemn an innocent man.

The idea of Jesus secretly raising an army under their own noses was a possibility, but for three years there had not been a shred of evidence for this...but more cleaver plots had been devised before now. Pilate thought about it, what if Jesus himself *was* peaceful enough? He must also consider the successor to Jesus, such a person would

be inheriting an enormous, and loyal nation of people...for good or for evil. He had not considered it until now, but what if the Zealots were to assume leadership from Jesus, some of his disciples were said to be reformed Zealots...reformed perhaps until the opportunity arose to take the reins from the prophet. ⁴

The other two parties that Pilate had to maintain relations with were the Sanhedrin who brought Jesus to him for condemnation, and the people themselves who looked to Jesus as their own prophet.

Pilate took the full hour to think over his decision, which was now turning into a complex plan. He talked at times with his second, then returned to the hall where all were still waiting. He told them that he would announce his decision to the people from the Great Porch.

The fortress Antonia had been built by King Herod the Great, as a fortified palace, with the emphasis on fortification. Its great porch was elevated and could be used to address a large assembly while keeping the speaker out of their hostile range. It was ideal for the task at hand.

Pilate, the prisoner, and the court participants assembled on the Great Porch, and Pilate had another prisoner brought up, it was Barabbas the Zealot. Pilate quieted the crowd, which was mostly temple personnel who had been quickly assembled when it was suspected that Pilate was to release a prisoner...and condemn the other. The temple guard was delaying or denying strangers from entering the area, ensuring an audience of loyal temple priests and workers.

Pilate announced that there were two condemned prisoners, Jesus and Barabbas. He would now release a prisoner selected by the people. The people demanded the release of Barabbas. Jesus was ordered flogged and crucified.

Jesus was taken into the courtyard of Antonia Fortress to be flogged. There were wrist shackles installed on several heavy wood posts set ten feet out from a wall. The courtyard was fully paved with stones, and they were heavily discolored with blood, as were the posts and the nearby walls. He was shackled between two posts and the

⁴ Organized assemblies of people, even for peaceful purposes are an age old concern for dictators. A modern example is the Chinese persecution of the Falun Dafa group, which is purposefully peaceful and apolitical. The Chinese leaders know this, but are afraid of mission creep of its 100 million members into the political realm. Religions are likewise required to be registered and agree to follow a state written program, or lose their registration.

scourging began. The leather cords were tipped with lead and bone shards, and cut his back into strips. Jesus prayed for those scourging him, he recited verses from the Song of Songs, which told of God's love of man.

In the end he could not stand, and hung from the shackles. He had been scourged front and back, top to bottom. A soldier removed him from the posts and two others dragged him to a cell. Jesus had regained consciousness and continued to pray. By the time they reached the holding cell, the guards were quite covered in blood from the victim, and one of the soldiers noticed that he had regained hearing in his left ear, which he had lost to a fever many years prior.⁵

The centurion in charge of executions obtained triple the usual four soldier escort. On this day there were three for execution. Each was forced to carry his own cross piece, which was required to be thick enough that the hand spikes would sink securely into the holes, such thickness made for a heavy piece. The outstretched arms of each were roped to the crosspiece, starting at one elbow, and wrapping around the board to the other, the chest was double wrapped in the process. Clothing was removed prior to attaching the crosspiece since it could not be easily done later. The victim was normally paraded naked to the execution post, and ridiculed and humiliated for his rebellion against Rome. In Israel, the Sanhedrin had obtained a standing exemption against the naked display of prisoners, and all the condemned were allowed a loin cloth.

Among the three for execution today was a Roman, or rather a former Roman. Romulus was a soldier in the Jerusalem cohort, and was just more trouble than he was worth. He had an extended history of infractions, and now he had raped a Jewess. After the event, a mob had assembled outside of Antonia demanding that the soldier be turned over to the Jewish courts for trial and execution, with an exception allowing this. Caiaphas and others met with Pilate on the steps and they were not of a mind to negotiate. Unless retribution was made more blood would flow, and Romulus was condemned for crucifixion at the next event.

Dismas was being nailed to his cross when Jesus arrived. Dismas had been recognized as a Zealot and arrested the day prior as he and Judas were carrying out their

⁵ Miracles not involving moral will (such as bodily healings) may not be impeded by lack of faith (Mark 6:1-6). Jesus prayed for his persecutors, and the touch of his blood completed the healing.

masters instructions for the purchase of the cross beam — the crossbeam which Jesus was now carrying.

In Jerusalem, the posts were located outside the city, so as not to defile the city itself. Because the posts were outside of the city walls, the bodies were at greater risk from large carnivores or packs of dogs, it was not unheard of that a lion or bear would stretch to obtain a body on a post. This was only theory now, as all such animals had been captured for use in the games at the amphitheater in Caesarea. Smaller animals however, would climb the post, and hawks and vultures would swarm the victim dead or alive. It was an act of charity to obtain the service of an archer against these threats.

The “holy women of the condemned” were on hand as usual. These women assisted those undergoing crucifixion and prayed for them. They brought water, wine, myrrh and towels, meant for the victims but used also by the Romans, which is why they were allowed close access. The temple priests could have provided useful service to the condemned, but contact with the dead, the irreverent, pagans and most anyone being executed would defile them, the women were therefore allowed the task of assisting the condemned. Being women they were already disallowed in most holy places, so contact and defilement made little difference.

Jesus was crucified next, and was the only one who had been flogged in preparation. The centurion himself finally had to drive the spikes. The actual crucifixion was carried out by hired local men, so as to absolve the Romans — that was the theory. As the hammer blows drove the spikes, the entire earth shook; giving pause, then halting the crucifixion. It was completed by the centurion, who was “not superstitious”.

Romulus had been flogged four days prior, but had largely recovered. Romulus arrived just behind Jesus and his wrists were already nailed to his cross piece and the arms securely roped, he was considered a flight risk. By noon all three were hanging from posts, but they might last a full day or more.

For two hours, Romulus spoke...of his innocence and of his hatred for the Romans and the Jews. Jesus was spent, his chin rested on his chest and he spoke only occasionally. Dismas, disciple of Christ who had never fully renounced his fight — at least his will to fight — against the occupying Romans, raised his head and turned left to see his master, who looked even closer to death. Dismas wanted to speak, but did not know of what, there was just too much.

The last hour was like no other. The sun darkened, the earth shook, the temple shifted, and the animals howled. Pilate regretted his decision...or the mob's decision. It was a mistake, he would not be pushed into it; how did it ever get this far? Why was he crucifying the only Jew in Palestine who spoke favorably of the Romans?

Pilate wished it had occurred to him earlier, but why not make an alliance with the man? Jesus seemed to be open to friendship with anyone; he had moral authority with everyone; he was a real asset — who was now bleeding to death on a cross. There was still time to reverse his decision.

The streets were choked with people, it was as night outside and stalled commerce had clogged the roads near the gates. Most of the gates had in fact been closed, it was standing orders to close them at dark, and the gate keepers did so when the midday darkness came upon the city. Pilate sent two couriers with written orders to stop the execution.

Romulus spoke, "If you are the Messiah, save yourself and us." The plea was one of hopelessness not hope, of self and not of faith.

Dismas spoke a hope filled rebuke to Romulus — the Roman who had raped, "We have been justly condemned, for our sentence corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal." Then to his master Dismas said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus turned his lowered head to Dismas and said, "Today, you will be with me in Paradise."

Dismas spoke again to Romulus, but no one heard what was said, Romulus was howling and cursing in episodes as he mustered the energy. None of the three had strength for extended speech however.

Romulus was going in and out of consciousness, and before he stopped breathing, he shouted to the degree that he could, "My God...forgive me!" The holy women resumed silent prayer, moving more or less from one cross to the next, at the distance allowed them.

Jesus was increasingly numb. He had not the strength to muster emotions, and was diminishingly aware of the Romans striking the post on which he was hung. As Jesus would come to complete stillness on the cross, a sentry would strike or kick the

post and search the victim for a response indicating life. Jesus had gone through four such cycles. Each time he awoke, he was aware that he was still alive.

Jesus remained still and numb, but slowly reconsidered this thought. The night before in the garden, sin had turned his emotions against his will. Now, in his final moments, Jesus felt a clarity of emotion and a strength of will. Jesus attempted to raise his head.

Mary saw this, but it ruptured her heart. The movement of Jesus was slow and slight. His coordination was that of an infant. His head bobbed upward then returned to his chest.

Jesus had no more life to give. He died, commending his soul into his Father's hands. Jesus died in profound humility, as a sheep knowingly lead to slaughter.

One of the messengers from Pilate arrived as the bodies were being dismounted for claiming by relatives, if any. He gave the written order to the centurion in charge of the execution, who inspected Jesus for life, then sent a return message to Pilate, including the names of those claiming the body of Jesus. Because of the blocked streets, the spooked horses and darkness, the two messengers from Pilate continued on foot and by different paths. The second messenger arrived a few minutes after the first, carrying his message which was likewise given to the distraught centurion.

John and Joseph of Aramathea wrapped the body of Jesus in a large length of cloth that was available and lifted the body onto a horse for transport to Joseph's own hewn tomb.

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Resurrection

One Who is Many

Many in Jerusalem thought that the darkness, the earthquake and the howling animals were signs of God's sorrow and anger at the death of Jesus the Messiah. Many others denied any connection.

Other strange phenomena were also reported. During the execution wood beams and posts in the temple and elsewhere swayed and groaned. The stones of the temple wept salt water, and for days afterward, dogs and sheep licked the dried salt from the walls. At the ninth hour, people of every sort in the temple became alert, some set their faces as flint, while others beat their breast and wept.

It was reported to Caiaphas that the curtain of the inner sanctuary had been torn from top to bottom at the time of Jesus' death. Caiaphas recalled the words of Jesus during his trial, he had said that both the living and the dead would tear their garments in grief. Caiaphas stood by his decision against Jesus in principle, but now wished he had sought the exile of Jesus, instead.

Caiaphas was shaken, so too the entire Sanhedrin. Most wavered, some changed their opinion. Caiaphas was now undecided at his core, but sought to bring stability to the group asking, "What has changed to reverse our judgment?", and then answering, "Nothing!" The full Sanhedrin met the Sunday following the execution and then again four days following.

It was also reported to Caiaphas that hundreds of dead persons had been raised from their tombs. In the days following, Caiaphas had many interviewed, and many were known personally to him. Many reported that the prophet Jesus appeared to them as they waited in limbo.¹ All reported that the prophet Jesus was indeed the Messiah, and that they had to follow him as disciples.

¹ Catholic/Orthodox teaching is of four afterlife states: Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, Limbo. 1Samuel 28:15 tells of the prophet Samuel in the afterlife of Limbo. Limbo is the natural paradise of the just and purified awaiting the full Heaven of Christ. Heaven is a supernatural paradise in which all in Heaven (Heaven being Christ

Caiaphas was too committed to his understanding of who and what the Messiah would be, to consider Jesus...even in the face of mounting evidence, and much of it coming from friends raised from the dead.

Pilate returned to Caesarea, and meeting him enroute were messengers telling of isolated attacks on Roman garrisons, occurring in Galilee. They had been successful to a degree, but not sustainable. Initial report attributed the attacks to the Galilean Zealots...who else?

The Zealots in Judaea did not obtain a people's uprising as they had predicted. It was hoped that the anger at the Romans for executing the people's prophet would be so intense that revolt would be an unavoidable result. The theory was that an intense wave of anger would smash into every Roman garrison and outpost, the Zealots were to lead an army that appeared in an instant and that already surrounded and outnumbered every Roman in Israel. The darkness and the earthquakes gave pause to every enterprise and emotion in Judaea that day, and the Zealots just never mustered a following.

Two Zealots did stumble across Judas the morning after the execution and hung him from a tree, out of mixed motives. He was not found for two more days, and his body burst upon being cut down.

All involved were slowly realizing that Jesus was gone, and the Messiah was yet to come. The twelve — now eleven — were cowering at the home of Nicodemus. They were more scared than actually hunted for. No order had gone out to arrest anyone else involved, there was no need. None of the apostles wanted to continue, but no one would break ranks before the last minute of the third day. They owed that to the master. He had promised his own resurrection on the third day.

The temple also knew of this promise and was committed to maintaining the guard at least until then. A major topic at the Sanhedrin council was the idea of moving the body to a remote or a secret location.

himself), "participate in the divine nature", in a glorious state. With the advent of Christ, the merely natural paradise of Limbo no longer exists, because all past and present dead are incorporated into Christ. Christ is now all who constitute the body of Christ. The body of Christ is one divine person, with many individual members, with those on earth being the human nature of Christ (just as Jesus was the human nature of the divine person Christ); see also Appendix, "Christology". At the end of time, Christ will consummate all goodness into himself, what remains outside of Christ will be de void of goodness and this will be the final formation of Hell.

There was an unspoken amnesty being observed. Few were interested in pursuing the matter, which continued to divide the faithful. As the rumors and the “miracles” ceased, Jesus would cease to be a matter of concern. A generation from now, he would be just another of the many false Messiahs. Hopefully this lesson would not have to be learned again.

The third day after the Friday execution, was the Roman day of the divine Sun. The Roman guard was still at the tomb, as were temple guards and some others from the temple. Several Pharisees had observed the body of Jesus being sealed in the new tomb owned by Joseph the Aramathean, who was a Pharisee of the temple.

The apostles were seized with indecision, the master was gone and he had left only the prophecy of his execution, and no real instructions. Peter wanted to split the group into three squads, if one or two groups were arrested, the other would survive.

They were not aware of the fact that there was no bounty or warrant issued against them. If they were not welcome, they were essentially free to move about. Instead they sent the women out — to find safe houses, to find food, to retrieve news of any sort. The apostles waited for the master to appear as promised. It was now dawn on the third day, and they waited.

The women set out at daybreak with burial items: water, spices, linen. They made their way to the cemetery; it was located near the junction of the valleys Kidron and Hinnom. The area was mostly gently graded, with stone outcroppings. In former centuries, it had been a quarry and much of the softer stone used for home construction in the city had come from this quarry. It was here that Jesus was entombed.

The women found the tomb, or what they believed was the tomb of Jesus. Mary thought momentarily that the bodies lying prostrate were recently dead awaiting burial...but they more resembled sleeping, or unconscious people. The women stepped toward the tomb, which was open, the huge boulder disk that normally sealed the entrance had been rolled aside. The women crept forward and peered inside. Cut into the wall were places for two bodies, the tomb was new and intended for Joseph and his wife, but it contained only a burial shroud. The shroud was bloody in every location, it had to be that of Jesus who was likewise lacerated on all parts of his body.

By now Mary Magdalene had fully entered and the others were just inside. Their hearts jumped into their necks when a voice spoke from behind, “Daughters of Israel, why do you seek the man Jesus among the dead? Do you not know that he will be found among the living?”

The women seized each other and turned. Suzanna was now closest to the voice, which had come from a young man who looked like an angel. The man turned to leave, the women looked at each other, and then again at the angel, who was now gone.

The bodies were still lying about, but no body of the master. The women were still joined in a mutual defense pact, arms around one another, and were looking about. They started making their way out the way that they had come in. Along this path a man came into view in the distance. He was a grounds keeper and had a spade, the women ran to him with their questions, but the man gave them the same abstruse answer that the angel had given. The man could have been the brother of Jesus, there was a distinct resemblance, which served to confuse the situation that much more.

Mary Magdalene would not release the man from her questioning, or her stare. She now realized that this man was the master. She exclaimed it, “Master!” All three now saw Jesus and exclaimed likewise.

Mary Magdalene seized the Christ with a strength of grip she did not realize, and would not release him. “Lord, do not leave us!” she exclaimed repeatedly, her white knuckles now contrasted next to her red finger tips. Jesus tried to step away from her grip, but she moved with him, telling to him all the reasons why he must stay with his disciples.

Finally he spoke firmly, “Mary, release me...Mary do not hold me, I must return to the Father!”

Mary rebutted, “No Lord, I am bound to you alone, and nothing else. This is at your command.”

Her theology was correct, and Divine command did not relax her grip...something else must effect his freedom. Jesus pried up one of her fingers with three of his own, bringing upward pressure on her finger tip, and downward pressure on the middle knuckle. Mary released her grip and bent her knees to avoid the increasing pressure on her finger joint. The technique freed the Christ and brought Mary to listening status.

Jesus now spoke gently, “Go now, and tell my disciples that I am risen. All who die as Messiah will also rise as Messiah. Tell them all to go to Galilee where I will meet them.”

In the weeks following the resurrection of Jesus, he appeared to many persons, or more correctly the Christ appeared to many. The Christ was now all who were the Christ — the body of Christ — and reports had the Christ appearing as faithful Jewish men and women, and even non-Jews of virtue. There was even news from Alexandria of the Christ appearing there.

The high priest Caiaphas was exasperated, it was a very fluid situation in more than one way, and he was unable to control it, or even lay hold of it. Several of his deceased friends, were now walking about Jerusalem! They had been raised from their graves the day that Jesus had died; the ongoing aftershocks continued to split the earth and crack open tombs. Each day a few more of the former dead reported in to their families!

The synagogues were overflowing, and there was hardly enough water to baptize the many seeking it. Two weeks ago this would be considered a windfall from Heaven, but it was the apostles that the new faithful were seeking, not the temple priests. It was the words of Jesus, and not of Moses that Jews, Samaritans and Romans wanted to hear.

Sixteen members of the Sanhedrin were now asking that Jesus be recognized as Messiah. A leading Pharisee in Israel, Gamaliel was advising that the new faith be left alone. The governor Pilate was demanding the body of Jesus, and demanding that the temple authorities take control of the Messiah sect, which was seen as a growing unknown quantity.

Caiaphas was wavering. He refused to call for any more meetings of the full Sanhedrin, it would only be a conference to reexamine their role in the death of Jesus and to revise their opinion of him as prophet or Messiah; more members would defect and it would not serve the ends that Caiaphas still wanted — a return to the order of three years prior.

Caiaphas started fresh. He cleared his mind of all assumptions and walked through the situation anew. He made some new conclusions and wrote out a statement to be read in the temple and in every synagogue. The statement read:

“It is acknowledged that rumors are occurring regarding the former rabbi Jesus, and they were not without some basis in fact. The basis however is not in any idea, teaching or resurrection of the Messiah, as the Messiah is still awaited by Israel. There have been resurrections around Jerusalem, and possibly in other locations. These were expected and are greeted with joy. These resurrections are a sign from our God that the teaching of the Law, the Prophets, and the temple priests is accurate. The authority of the Sanhedrin to confirm the Messiah when he is revealed is likewise confirmed.”

“The resurrections of the deceased faithful, are just that — Jewish faithful obtaining the resurrection predicted by our Jewish Pharisees. Other important ideas of these same Pharisees are obedience to the Law of Moses and awaiting the Messiah, who will one day lead Israel.”

“As to the false claimant Jesus of Nazareth, he was executed by the Romans, and without permission of the elders of Israel. His body was stolen but recovered, and is now in a sealed and guarded tomb to prevent another attempt at theft. Reports of his posthumous appearance are simply instances of the previously mentioned Jewish faithful who have been resurrected. This heretical sect is now disbanded and any reference to Jesus of Nazareth, is a mistaken reference to James of Nazareth, brother of Jesus, who would have assumed leadership of the now defunct sect.”

Caiaphas was certain that firm perseverance in their decisions made would prove to be the correct and best plan for Israel. Most reports put Jesus...or James of Nazareth in Galilee. It was difficult for the Sanhedrin to do business in Galilee, it was ruled by Herod Antipas, he was an occasional Jew, with regret over killing John the baptizing prophet. He had allowed Jesus complete freedom to operate in Galilee, mostly in order to spite the Sanhedrin. He would not now allow any type of search and seizure. These could be done, but not in a maintained fashion, or on a large scale.

In Galilee, the apostles were worried that they did not know where to seek the risen master, but it was then decided that he would find them. They remained together, and largely waited upon the master to appear. They made some fishing excursions in the boats of Peter, James and John.

Jesus met the disciples in Galilee, he appeared to them at the lake and stayed with them most of the day, for several days. He told them that he would soon ascend to

the Father, and that they were to carry on the mission. He assigned a large task, but gave little specific instruction as to it. The apostles were to go to all the world to witness, teach, baptize the people and establish the new faith.

The apostles were increasingly on their own. A new and necessary sense of command was instilled in the apostles. The master stayed with them for much of five days, then much less frequently. When he did appear, he would make allusion to the ongoing mission, which the apostles were to continue. He would speak of his children in distant places awaiting the good news, or tell them to expect opposition when they revisited Jerusalem.

Now the master did not teach in public as he had done continuously for the previous three years. He would not take organizational questions, and would give a philosophical answer such as, "Let it be done according to your will." He did however answer questions concerning the faith, and proactively so when it was needed. He encouraged the apostle's efforts in planning and preaching; he would often appear in the evenings and ask, "What did you decide upon today?"

Again the old concerns of arrest were raised among the apostles, but now it was a real possibility. Three weeks after the master's resurrection, the Sanhedrin put out arrest warrants for all the apostles and incredibly for Jesus, and they threatened with charges of blasphemy anyone who spoke of Jesus as Messiah. The Sanhedrin preferred to avoid a new persecution of the disciples of Jesus, but it was not possible. Hundreds witnessed the resurrected Messiah, and over a thousand had been baptized in Galilee since then.

Depending upon which direction the apostles literally looked, the mission seemed to be on the verge of collapse into failure, or explosive success. The apostles taught and baptized the many who still gathered, and the temple guards would work through the same crowd dispersing and arresting.

The *growing* mission would benefit from an administrative locus; but the *threatened* mission might be bagged in its entirety if such a central location were used. The evolving opinion was that the desired headquarters must be located outside of Judea or Galilee. It was a matter of distance and dispersion to avoid the arrest of the entire group. Equally necessary was the need for the apostles to be on site in the new faith

communities that were being founded at diverse locations. Alexandria, Damascus, Antioch and other cities were already sending representatives to the apostles asking for instructions now that the master was gone. Everybody saw that their small ecclesiastical structure was already inadequate, and Peter called a general meeting.

The meeting was held at a disciple's large home in Bethsaida. Bethsaida was not part of Galilee, much less Judaea and it was thought that they might be more secure there. Much had to be decided, finished and started. The new faith did not even have a name, and already the apostles were baptizing many non-Jewish citizens in the area, it was becoming more than a sect of Judaism.

As had happened before, many of the Pagan polytheists simply sought to add the god-man to their household inventory of gods. The apostles were not aware of the scale of industry their master had become. In Alexandria, enterprising clay workers were producing idols of "Jesus, son of the gods". The solution was instruction of the new members in the basics of monotheism, which would hopefully eliminate demand for the objects.

At council, Peter put forth questions and all of these were decided upon, and all attending were of one mind. It was decided that:

— Each apostle was to work within a specific area or with a specific population. Half were to work inside Judaea and Galilee and half elsewhere. This was the survival mechanism long wanted by several. James, brother of Jesus was to minister to the Jews of Judaea. Peter was chief overseer, with duties in all areas as needed.

— The apostles would take with them current disciples as needed, including those of the 72 who were still available.

— The apostles were to establish themselves with the authority of the Messiah in their areas, as reports of profiteering false apostles were already being received. This had been a problem even during the life of Jesus, but less so due to his unquestioned authority.²

² When a person or idea attains influence, the corrupt steal a leadership position to elevate or enrich themselves. Such fraud does not take centuries, but occurs as soon as the corrupt become aware of a potentially profitable enterprise. Religion especially is susceptible.

— Peter would retain his overall leadership, but directly rule all churches west of Jerusalem, while James would lead all churches in Jerusalem and to the east.³ James was also to be Peter's director in the development of doctrine and relations with the Jews.

— Jews observing the New Covenant may retain the dietary laws, but these would not be imposed on non-Jewish members.

— It was decided that to avoid piecemeal assimilation, the New Covenant would be lead from someplace other than the temple, even if invited. Several worried that as the new way grew in membership, the temple might feign its acceptance in an attempt to undermine it from within by assuming its rule.

Matthew, the organizational genius, restated the need for a central administrative location. This idea was immediately enlarged into a proposal for a temple of New Covenant. This need was conceded by all, but a location had to be found away from Judaea or Galilee, and the project was put on hold, awaiting environmental developments.

That evening the master appeared and asked, "What was decided today?" Peter spoke for the group as usual, and detailed the decisions arrived at, including the plan to split the apostles into local and regional missions.

Jesus said, "You do well to bring the faith to the world, but remain together until I have returned to the Father."

Jesus' smile beamed, and he walked about the group speaking more or less chit chat for once. He brought around the bowl of dates for any wishing to have some. He led them in prayer and hymn, then left, walking out the door. The apostles knew that he was gone from sight already, just outside the door. He would appear and then disappear according to no plan of the apostles.

It was more difficult to apprehend the apostles in Galilee than in Jerusalem, but the attempts continued. The large synagogue in Capernaum served as a regional Sanhedrin for Galilee, and it had armed men at its disposal if needed. Caiaphas was

³ This proposal makes sense of Peter's delegation of authority to James at the first council of Jerusalem. Early writings which mention James refer to his ability and personal sanctity, and do place him as bishop of Jerusalem. Prior to his Christian status, he was a knowledgeable and pious Jew, and a good candidate for doctrinal development, and this is exactly what he does at the council of Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15.

furious that the arrests were so slow in coming, the apostles would often speak publicly but still the arrests were not occurring.

Finally Peter was arrested. The following day Jesus appeared to the apostles and told them that the work of God was not exempt from the obstructions of the Devil, it was not so for Adam, and would not be so for them. The disciples said to Jesus, “Peter is imprisoned, and awaiting execution...we know that you will depart from us and return to the Father. Who is to be our leader?”

Jesus said to them, “You have already decided upon this. James of my own blood was appointed by Peter to serve in such circumstances.”

Jesus looked at James and said, “Wherever you are, you are to go to James the righteous, for whose sake Heaven and earth came into being.”⁴

Jesus said, “Friends, the time has come when I must return to the Father. Come, let us go to Jerusalem. Go there and wait for me at the orchard of olives, and I will be with you there.”

⁴ This episode is based on the Gospel of Thomas verse 12. This is a sound bite, of which we do not know the surrounding facts. It is usually seen as a denial of Peter as the first leader. Several valid scenarios are possible which retain Peter as Pope, and James as a leader in the early Church:

(1) The time is post resurrection and Jesus appears to some disciples, as he does in the canonical gospels. These disciples (not apostles) are within the jurisdiction of the bishop of Jerusalem (who is historically James the Just), and are simply told to obey their bishop, to whom Jesus has delegated authority.

(2) Post resurrection again, Peter has been arrested and incommunicado. By prior decision of Peter, leadership reverts to James if Peter is unable to lead.

(3) Again, post resurrection Jesus is talking to some unknown number of disciples, who may or may not be apostles. He may be talking to half of the apostles and telling them to place themselves under the leadership of James, because Peter has split Christendom into the area west of Jerusalem, (lead by Peter), and the area east of Jerusalem (lead by James), with both areas under the ultimate leadership of Peter. This scenario meshes exactly with the gospel account in Acts 15, where James, the bishop of Jerusalem, takes local command.

This saying in Thomas does seem to have Jesus in a post resurrection appearance. It is unlikely that Peter or James made large scale leading when Jesus was alive.

The Acts of the Apostles does show Peter delegating much authority to James at the council of Jerusalem, (Acts 15). Two things are known of Peter's papacy: (1) he was the first Pope; (2) at some point his papacy was terminated because of death, health or decision. It is possible that James was Pope at some point after Peter, although the three scenarios proposed retain James as bishop of Jerusalem, and any other areas or responsibilities designated by Peter.

There is much more unknown about the structure of the early church than is known. It is possible that Peter tasked the capable James with development of doctrine, with Peter as the ultimate overseer. Peter seems to have delegated such authority to James at the council of Jerusalem in Acts 15.

The eleven set out from Galilee, and arrived after three days. They assembled in the orchard of Gethsemane and waited upon the master. Jesus walked into the clearing and greeted the eleven and said, “Come with me to the rocks at the summit. From there I will return to the place that I am from.”

Jesus gave final instructions, “Go out to all the world and make disciples of all people. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. Cure the sick, raise the dead, and offer the New Covenant to all who will listen.”

“The life I have, I offer to you, and you are to offer it to others. Now for a second time, life is breathed into man. This life is greater than the life given to Adam at his creation, it is the life of the Father, and is given by his most Holy Spirit.” Jesus then breathed on the apostles.

“Be of good cheer now, for after I go, I will send your advocate, the Holy Spirit who will be your guide and protector. Remember that just as I suffered the evil of the world, so too must you. The Holy Spirit is the guardian of your soul, as one day you must give up the life of your body. But this too will be restored to you at the resurrection of the just.”

It occurred to Peter that he had not spoken an apology for abandoning the master. He wanted to do so now, but was not finding the correct moment. Jesus looked at Peter, then all the others and said, “I love you all, and I will be with you until the end of time and beyond.

Jesus looked upward, extended his arms to the Father, and ascended to Heaven.

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END

Appendix A: Essenes

The Essenes at the time of Jesus were Jewish religious communities and ascetic individuals. Most were rural farmers, sometimes adopting orphans. Artifact writings indicate that there were about 4000 Essenes in Israel at the time of Jesus. The first century Jewish historian, Josephus spent some time in his youth as an Essene and left an instructive account of them as follows.

(From “The Jewish Wars”, Book II. Chapter 8; by Flavius Josephus, from the Gutenberg Project free library).

For there are three philosophical sects among the Jews. The followers of the first of which are the Pharisees; of the second, the Sadducees; and the third sect, which tends toward a severe discipline, are called Essenes. These last are Jews by birth, and seem to have a greater affection for one another than the other sects have. These Essenes reject pleasures as an evil, but esteem continence and the conquest over one’s passions to be virtue. They reject wedlock, but adopt other children while they are still pliable and fit for learning. They consider them to be of their kindred, and form them according to their own manners. They do not absolutely deny the fitness of marriage, and the succession of mankind thereby continued.

These men are despisers of riches, and so very communal as raises our admiration. Nor is there any one to be found among them who hath more than another; for it is a law among them, that those who come to them must let what they have be common to the whole order, insomuch that among them, there is no appearance of poverty, or excess of riches, but every one's possessions are intermingled with every other's possession. So there is, as it were, one patrimony among all the brethren. They think that oil is a defilement; and if any one of them be anointed without his own approbation, it is wiped off his body; for they think to be sweaty is a good thing, as they do also to be clothed in white garments. They also have stewards appointed to take care of their common affairs.

They occupy no one certain city, but many of them dwell in every city; and if any of their sect come from other places, what they have lies open for them, just as if it were their own; and they go in to such as they never knew before, as if they had been

ever so long acquainted with them. For which reason they carry nothing at all with them when they travel into remote parts, though still they take their weapons with them, for fear of thieves. Accordingly, there is, in every city where they live, one appointed particularly to take care of strangers, and to provide garments and other necessities for them. But the habit and management of their bodies is such as children who are in fear of their masters. Nor do they allow a change of garments or of shoes till be first torn to pieces, or worn out by time. Nor do they either buy or sell any thing to one another; but every one of them gives what he hath to him that wanteth it, and receives from him again in lieu of it what may be convenient for himself; and although there be no requital made, they are fully allowed to take what they want of whomsoever they please.

And as for their piety towards God, it is very extraordinary; for before sunrise they speak not a word about profane matters, but put up certain prayers which they have received from their forefathers, as if they made a supplication for its rising. After this every one of them are sent away by their curators, to exercise some of those arts wherein they are skilled, in which they labor with great diligence till the fifth hour. After which they assemble themselves together again into one place; and when they have clothed themselves in white veils, they then bathe their bodies in cold water. And after this purification is over, they meet together in a room of their own, into which entry is not permitted to any of another sect. They go in a pure manner into the dining-room, as into a certain holy temple, and quietly set themselves down; upon which the baker lays before them loaves in order; the cook also brings a single plate of one sort of food, and sets it before every one of them; but a priest says grace before meals; and it is unlawful for anyone to taste of the food before grace be said. The same priest, when he hath dined, says grace again after; and when they begin, and when they end, they praise God, as he that bestows their food upon them; after which they lay aside their [white] garments, and betake themselves to their labors again till the evening; then they return home to supper, after the same manner; and if there be any strangers there, they sit down with them. Nor is there ever any clamor or disturbance to pollute their house, but they give everyone leave to speak in their turn; which silence thus kept in their house appears to foreigners like some tremendous mystery; the cause of which is that perpetual sobriety they exercise, and the same settled measure of food and drink that is allotted them, and that such as is abundantly sufficient for them.

And truly, as for other things, they do nothing but according to the injunctions of their curators; only these two things are done among them at everyone's own free will, which are to assist those that want it, and to show mercy; for they are permitted of their own accord to afford succor to such as deserve it, when they stand in need of it, and to bestow food on those that are in distress; but they cannot give any thing to their kindred without the curators. They dispense their anger after a just manner, and restrain their passion. They are eminent for fidelity, and are the ministers of peace; whatsoever they say also is firmer than an oath; but swearing is avoided by them, and they esteem it worse than perjury for they say that he who cannot be believed without [swearing by] God is already condemned. They also take great pains in studying the writings of the ancients, and choose out of them what is most for the advantage of their soul and body; and they inquire after such roots and medicinal stones as may cure their distempers.

But now if any one hath a mind to come over to their sect, he is not immediately admitted, but he is prescribed the same method of living which they use for a year, while he continues excluded; and they give him also a small hatchet, and the fore mentioned girdle, and the white garment. And when he hath given evidence, during that time, that he can observe their continence, he approaches nearer to their way of living, and is made a partaker of the waters of purification; yet is he not even now admitted to live with them; for after this demonstration of his fortitude, his temper is tried two more years; and if he appear to be worthy, they then admit him into their society. And before he is allowed to touch their common food, he is obliged to take tremendous oaths, that, in the first place, he will exercise piety towards God, and then that he will observe justice towards men, and that he will do no harm to any one, either of his own accord, or by the command of others; that he will always hate the wicked, and be assistant to the righteous; that he will ever show fidelity to all men, and especially to those in authority, because no one obtains the government without God's assistance; and that if he be in authority, he will at no time whatever abuse his authority, nor endeavor to outshine his subjects either in his garments, or any other finery; that he will be perpetually a lover of truth, and propose to himself to reprove those that tell lies; that he will keep his hands clear from theft, and his soul from unlawful gains; and that he will neither conceal any thing from those of his own sect, nor discover any of their doctrines to others, no, not though anyone should compel him so to do at the hazard of his life. Moreover, he swears to communicate their doctrines to no one any otherwise than as he received them himself; that he will abstain from robbery, and

will equally preserve the books belonging to their sect, and the names of the angels [or messengers]. These are the oaths by which they secure their proselytes to themselves.

But for those that are caught in any heinous sins, they cast them out of their society; and he who is thus separated from them does often die after a miserable manner; for as he is bound by the oath he hath taken, and by the customs he hath been engaged in, he is not at liberty to partake of that food that he meets with elsewhere, but is forced to eat grass, and to famish his body with hunger, till he perish; for which reason they receive many of them again when they are at their last gasp, out of compassion to them, as thinking the miseries they have endured till they came to the very brink of death to be a sufficient punishment for the sins they had been guilty of.

But in the judgments they exercise, they are most accurate and just, nor do they pass sentence by the votes of a court that is fewer than a hundred. And as to what is once determined by that number, it is unalterable. What they most of all honor, after God himself, is the name of their legislator [Moses], whom if any one blaspheme he is punished capitally. They also think it a good thing to obey their elders, and the major part. Accordingly, if ten of them be sitting together, no one of them will speak while the other nine are against it. They also avoid spitting in the midst of them, or on the right side. Moreover, they are stricter than any other of the Jews in resting from their labors on the seventh day; for they not only get their food ready the day before, that they may not be obliged to kindle a fire on that day, but they will not remove any vessel out of its place, nor relieve themselves thereon. Nay, on other days they dig a small pit, a foot deep, with a paddle [which kind of hatchet is given them when they are first admitted among them]; and covering themselves round with their garment, that they may not affront the Divine rays of light, they ease themselves into that pit, after which they put the earth that was dug out again into the pit; and even this they do only in the more lonely places, which they choose out for this purpose; and although this easement of the body be natural, yet it is a rule with them to wash themselves after it, as if it were a defilement to them.

Now after the time of their preparatory trial is over, they are parted into four classes; and so far are the juniors inferior to the seniors, that if the seniors should be touched by the juniors, they must wash themselves, as if they had intermixed themselves

with the company of a foreigner. They are long-lived also, insomuch that many of them live above a hundred years, by means of the simplicity of their diet; nay, as I think, by means of the regular course of life they observe also. They condemn the miseries of life, and are above pain, by the generosity of their mind. And as for death, if it will be for their glory, they esteem it better than living always; and indeed our war with the Romans gave abundant evidence what great souls they had in their trials, wherein, although they were tortured and distorted, burnt and torn to pieces, and went through all kinds of instruments of torment, that they might be forced either to blaspheme their legislator, or to eat what was forbidden them, yet could they not be made to do either of them, no, nor once to flatter their tormentors, or to shed a tear; but they smiled in their very pains, and laughed those to scorn who inflicted the torments upon them, and resigned up their souls with great alacrity, as expecting to receive them again.

For their doctrine is this: That bodies are corruptible, and that the matter they are made of is not permanent; but that the souls are immortal, and continue forever; and that they come out of the most subtile air, and are united to their bodies as to prisons, into which they are drawn by a certain natural enticement; but that when they are set free from the bonds of the flesh, they then, as released from a long bondage, rejoice and mount upward. And this is like the opinions of the Greeks, that good souls have their habitations beyond the ocean, in a region that is neither oppressed with storms of rain or snow, or with intense heat, but that this place is such as is refreshed by the gentle breathing of a west wind, that is perpetually blowing from the ocean; while they allot to bad souls a dark and tempestuous den, full of never ceasing punishments. And indeed the Greeks seem to me to have followed the same notion, when they allot the islands of the blessed to their brave men, whom they call heroes and demi-gods; and to the souls of the wicked, the region of the ungodly, in Hades, where their fables relate that certain persons, such as Sisyphus, and Tantalus, and Ixion, and Tityus, are punished; which is built on this first supposition, that souls are immortal; and thence are those exhortations to virtue and dehortations from wickedness collected; whereby good men are bettered in the conduct of their life by the hope they have of reward after their death; and whereby the vehement inclinations of bad men to vice are restrained, by the fear and expectation they are in, that although they should lie concealed in this life, they should suffer immortal punishment

after their death. These are the Divine doctrines of the Essenes about the soul, which lay an unavoidable bait for such as have once had a taste of their philosophy.

There are also those among them who undertake to foretell things to come, by reading the holy books, and using several sorts of purifications, and being perpetually conversant in the discourses of the prophets; and it is but seldom that they miss in their predictions.

Moreover, there is another order of Essenes, who agree with the rest as to their way of living, and customs, and laws, but differ from them in the point of marriage, as thinking that by not marrying they cut off the principal part of human life, which is the prospect of succession; nay, rather, that if all men should be of the same opinion, the whole race of mankind would fail. However, they try their spouses for three years; and if they find that they have their natural purgation's thrice, as trials that they are likely to be fruitful, they then actually marry them. But they do not use to accompany with their wives when they are with child, as a demonstration that they do not marry out of regard to pleasure, but for the sake of posterity. Now the women go into the baths with some of their garments on, as the men do with somewhat girded about them. And these are the customs of this order of Essenes.

But then as to the two other orders at first mentioned, the Pharisees are those who are esteemed most skillful in the exact explication of their laws, and introduce the first sect. These ascribe all to fate [or providence], and to God, and yet allow, that to act what is right, or the contrary, is principally in the power of men, although fate does co-operate in every action. They say that all souls are incorruptible, but that the souls of good men only are removed into other bodies, but that the souls of bad men are subject to eternal punishment. But the Sadducees are those that compose the second order, and take away fate entirely, and suppose that God is not concerned in our doing or not doing what is evil; and they say, that to act what is good, or what is evil, is at men's own choice, and that the one or the other belongs so to everyone, that they may act as they please. They also take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishments and rewards in Hades. Moreover, the Pharisees are friendly to one another, and are for the exercise of concord, and regard for the public; but the behavior of the Sadducees one towards another is in some degree wild, and their conversation with those that are of their

own party is as barbarous as if they were strangers to them. And this is what I had to say concerning the philosophic sects among the Jews.

Appendix B, **God, Spirit, Christ, Heaven, Hell, Purgatory**

God is all that is absolute existence. As absolute existence, God is necessarily uncreated. God's existence is not conditional upon any person, thing or act. As absolute existence, there are no conditions under which God cannot exist. Absolute existence does not preclude God from having other attributes, and we shall see that our own attributes of awareness, intellect, and free will existed first in the principle of our creation — God. This article examines God incrementally, beginning with God as pure existence.

It is impossible that God not exist. If anything exists, it is either unconditional existence (God), or a creation of God, since there could be no other source. Either way God exists. God is not the world or ourselves, because both of these were brought into being, and are not unconditional existence.

God is both the cause and the effect of his own being. We observe that God's essence (to be), is the same as his existence (to be). This is quite different from the essence of a human (rational, physical being), or the existence of a human, (to be created from others). If we trace back the traits of essence and existence of all things to their source, we arrive at God.

It is impossible that something arise from nothing.¹ All creation depends upon the previous step of creation, but an endless chain of cause and effect could not include

¹ Nothing is the complete absence of any being, (being is anything that exists: matter, energy, ideas, virtues, emotions). Nothing has no quality or quantity; no spirit, matter or idea; it cannot be measured or even thought of. The vastness of outer space is not nothing, because it can be measured, observed and described — it has qualities. From this we see that something cannot arise from nothing; existence cannot be derived from non-existence.

CCC 297 speaks of creation from nothing. This is understood to mean that God creates upon a foundation of nothing, but nothing remains nothing. When God first created, God alone existed. God could not take preexisting matter or spirit (other than himself) to form into creation. God 'donates' his attributes to creation, forming creation in his own image around its own core of nothing. Creation is the detached attributes of Christ. Scripture often states that without God, man is nothing.

an absolute and uncreated being. Absolute being must therefore be outside of any creation chain. Scientific investigation into creation supports the idea of our finite universe arising from an infinite source. Regressing back to the point of creation shows that our many dimensions (spatial, logical, mathematical, spiritual, physical) existed once as a single super dimension. This super dimension is traced back to an infinite single point of being, which has no prior cause.

The key element of God is eternal or absolute being. *Eternity is the unified existence of cause and effect, God is the cause, and God is the effect.* Internal to God this absolute being may be *revealed* as distinct ways, and even divine persons.

Among the many attributes we observe in creation are awareness, intellect, and free will. All these necessarily had their origin directly or indirectly, in the principle of creation. Therefore the Principle of creation (God), is an aware and intelligent being of free will. God is not an unaware force of nature. God is a free, aware, and intelligent being — a divine person.

God cannot increase in ability or virtue, nor be corrupted or lessened in any way. Sin and evil are corruption of God's perfect and complete design in creation. Sin is the lacking of goodness, which was once present. Sin is the perfect made imperfect.

We necessarily have our origin, (via direct or extended means) in God. We shall see that God made all of creation for its own benefit and for God's joy, with the intended goal of full union with God. It was to have been that simple, but sin entered into creation, and with it came new alternate possibilities.

Spirit

The topic of spirit should be dealt with before most other topics, since spirit is the “mechanism” as created by God by which creation operates. Events in creation are not a consequence of God pulling strings from Heaven, they are a consequence of humanity pushing levers on earth. These interconnecting levers are spirit: respect, moderation, reverence, love, hate. Just like matter, spirit is a creation of God. God is not a creation of the spirit world; rather, God creates and what he creates is first of all, spirit.

Spirit is intangible but as real as matter; and it has real effect. Spirit is immaterial being. Being is anything that exists: a rock, an idea, energy, emotion, logic, a person. Patience, respect, hate, reverence, morality, memory, free will are all spirit, and all have real effect in our world. Spirit is the underlying framework of all creation, and corruption of the willed moral virtues degrades the operation of all creation.

Spirit forms matter, spirit forms spirit, spirit forms events. Consider that anything that can be described in terms of logic, will, virtue, act, emotion, mathematics or physical law has these same immaterial spirits or qualities as its foundation. It is commonly known that energy and matter are the same substance in different configurations. Spirit, matter and events, likewise have an equivalence. Gospel accounts of this equivalence are the episodes in which Jesus makes bread, arms, legs (Mt 15:31), from nothing but his will; even events may be formed, the many biblical prophecies by Jesus and others link moral action to distant future events. Immaterial acts are real, and have real effect in our world, beginning with ourselves. “Spiritual efficacy” is the principle of the real effect of spirit.²

Spirit by definition has no finite boundaries, will is the boundary for spirit—God’s will, man’s will. Because of moral free will, virtue may be corrupted into vice. ***God is not the origin of evil; abuse of virtue by moral beings is the origin of evil.*** Deviation from the original perfection of God’s moral design necessarily causes disorder in our world. Any deviation from perfection can only be degradation.

We might observe that the material world is the real and normal order of creation, but before our material world existed, spirit alone was the medium of existence, (as with the community of the angels). This spiritual universe was no less real, and cause and effect were real within this spiritual realm. Indeed the world of matter is more like an overlay for the world of spirit. Spirit is the unseen framework of the entire universe, and was created as such by God. The practical consequences of this are that acts of

² At a human societal level, most legal systems include the idea of moral infractions, (which are increasingly less enforced). The idea is that a person's character is the core from which his actions derive, it is his own personal spiritual framework, and no less real than body or property. Therefore an attempt to corrupt a person's morals is a type of assault on the real character, will and soul of that person. Harming the character of a person will result in harmful acts in the future. Ancient Israel took severe steps to remove such immaterial threats to their society, as commanded in the Law of Moses.

patience, moderation, justice, generosity, chastity are real with real effects. The vices of these virtues are also real with real effect in our world. Spirit forms matter; spirit forms spirit; spirit forms events.

The idea that everything has a spirit is a necessary truth because everything has some immaterial qualities: logical or mathematical descriptions, willed moral virtues, time, emotion. Hundreds of years ago, St. Thomas Aquinas spoke of any *thing* having an underlying spirit that is mineral, vegetable or animal in nature. Disorder in our world is actually virtue which has become (partially) corrupted due to a lacking or misproportion. This corruption by misproportion comes about by willed mischoice by humanity.

We must give correct attention to God, ourselves and others in all our actions. If we fail in this, the resultant act is usually weighted towards self, at the expense of God or others. Sin is a misproportion of virtue, leaving a relative lacking of some virtue.

To take the quality of respect for example; we observe that when we give undue effort to self, dignity is corrupted into arrogance. If we fail to give proper moral effort to God, then irreverence results. If we fail to give others their due, then disrespect results.

In this example, if the student increased awareness of his own dignity, he would do well. But if he fails to also increase his efforts toward God's virtue of humility, then a relative lacking and resulting arrogance might result.

From this we see that moral corruption is a matter of lacking or deficit of what should be present. A lack of effort toward God leaves a relative predominance of self. The results are not theoretical, but take the forms of war, poverty, famine and disease.

Spirit interacts directly with spirit according to common elements. The biblical ideas of a family or a nation sharing in the effects of virtue or vice are examples. If a virtue is corrupted by a person of ancient Israel (to take a common biblical example), then all who share common virtues will suffer to some degree. Persons who are of the same: family, tribe, nation, world will all feel the effects of another's good or bad action.

This is the basis for the Biblical belief that children benefit or suffer from their parent's virtue or sin. It was true for Adam and Eve, and it is still true today. *This communal nature of spirit was created by God to benefit humanity.* but with the advent of the disorder of sin, disorder was shared in addition to goodness.

God's good judgment is also a factor by which spirit affects other spirit, matter or events. God is incapable of creating evil, but as our parent he does assign the evil of our sin to creation, according to his good judgment. In assigning the evil created by humanity, its disorder must be felt, but God could not assign evil with only an evil outcome possible.

A criticism of monotheism is that God seems to punish people by directing disorder (war, famine) upon them. In reality the evil of sin generated by humanity *must be effected within creation* (absolute divinity cannot be corrupted), God simply assigns our evil. God as our parent directs our evil according to his good judgment, for the highest goal — the salvation of souls. It is not a matter of God punishing our bad behavior, but of God assigning our disorder. This assignment may be made directly, or by extension, by the workings of nature for example. 1Cor 5:5 describes our evil being effected in this life, sparing condemnation in the next.

Just as goodness may be mediated into evil, evil may be mediated into goodness. It is a matter of anger being morally mediated into patience, greed mediated into moderation and trust, indifference into piety.³

The human soul is a spirit; the soul is a “form”, which gives function and purpose to one's body and actions. A human person might be thought of as a soul to which the property of physicality had been added. ***One's soul is the totality of one's immaterial attributes, and the operating principle of one's being.***

Animals are considered to have a soul (though not immortal as in humans), which governs their operations. The human soul has traditionally been partitioned into that part which governs moral activities (superior partition or spiritual soul), and that part which governs non-moral activities and the body, (inferior partition or material soul).

It is thought that the human soul is created by God using both direct and indirect

³ The matter/energy equivalence is common science, with matter being a particular configuration of energy. Energy (gravity, light, etc.) is immaterial and considered spirit, but not all spirit has a direct equivalence with matter. Moral spirit has an equivalence with action and events, not matter. Patience or anger has no direct physical form, but modifies the action of moral being (anything that has existence is being, and moral being is simply willed action). Moral being may also affect non-moral being. Irreverence may equate to drought, which is the degraded action of proper rain.

means. Those faculties of the soul which govern the body are created at conception by biological means. Those faculties of the soul having a moral dimension are thought to be created directly by God.⁴

The human soul is not static, but has the ability to “grow”, and change. We may know our soul by observing our will, which in turn governs our thoughts and actions. Intellect, will and memory are properties of our soul.

Injustice and suffering in our world may only be truly eradicated by restoring its damaged spiritual foundation, which is the cause of evil. To give assistance after the fact is good, but even better is to prevent the disorder by avoiding those moral acts that degrade the spiritual foundations of our world and its people. This prevention is difficult to observe, because we are attempting to observe that which is prevented.

There is not a lack of good ideas in our world, but these do not take root in hearts because of moral disorder (sin) which corrupts will, faith, brotherhood and reasoning. War, hatred, greed and even disease, catastrophe and natural disasters are caused by the ongoing damage to the spiritual foundation of our world.

God the Trinity

We cannot speak of God creating any part of himself, but God does progressively reveal himself, to humanity and even to his own self. The Trinity is three divine persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Not three Gods, but three divine persons, the three of which constitute the one God. The Trinity of God is a mystery—not fully understood, and incapable of full understanding by any human.

Godhead is undifferentiated, unexpressed, absolute and singular being. Godhead is the simple, essential, unified, core God. Godhead is the necessarily first and fundamental revelation of God. Every movement of God — every act of thought, will and love further reveals and defines God. “When” Godhead acts in such a way as to

⁴ We mention multi-path metaphysics here. Metaphysics concerns itself with spiritual cause and effect. In proposing or defining the metaphysical path to an end, we too often assume only one path. For example we may say that God created Adam and Eve directly, or that God created Adam and Eve by way of evolution. The unlikely possibility exists that God used one method to create Adam and another to create Eve. It is possible that God will fulfill every good possibility during his eternal career, using every possible way, then create more projects.

reveal the divine Son, Godhead reveals himself to be God the Father. God makes revelation simply by thinking or willing. When God thinks of himself, his image the Son of God is revealed.

The Trinity is eternal, but far from static. In the Nicene creed, we read that Christ was begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. “Before” God was revealed as the Trinity, God was revealed as undifferentiated Godhead. Even today Christ adds members to himself as the body of Christ grows.

The revelation of Godhead as the three distinct persons of the Trinity is thought to be non-optional. “When” Godhead thinks, he “first” thinks of himself, (what else, no creation yet). In doing so, Godhead reveals the trait of intellect, beyond the trait of pure being of the Godhead. When Godhead thinks of himself, he generates the complete image of himself who is the Son of God; and Godhead is now God the Father. The Son of God is the fullest expression of God. The Son of God himself is not yet *fully* revealed; the human children of God are called to be yet more expression of the Son of God, as the body of Christ.

The first and non-optional act of the newly revealed God the Father and God the Son is to love each other. The Father and the Son directing their wills toward each other generates the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit may be thought of as the bond of love (commitment) between the Father and the Son.

In example, think of two people having a common pursuit; this might be marriage or a business perhaps. As this pursuit is cultivated it becomes a real separate entity, this third entity becomes more than words. A marriage or a corporation is given a certain legal status and rights of its own. The efforts of the two people give real form to the third entity.

This example is necessarily inadequate. When God thinks and wills however; it is as real as it gets. The love of the Father and the Son toward each other is divine, selfless, full, intense, real, and permanent. Included in these thoughts is the possibility of creation outside of God. The Holy Spirit who results is divine, independent, full, intense and permanent.

The Holy Spirit is the acting agent of creation, sent by the Father and the Son, and is a real and complete divine person. The Holy Spirit is the result of the mutual willing of the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is not necessarily God's *proportional* will. It is possible, even likely that the Holy Spirit is God's compete, but weighted will, with favoritism toward mercy, joy and peace.

Jesus Christ

Jesus is the created human nature of the Trinitarian Son of God. Jesus is the Son of God extended into creation. The doctrine concerning the divine and human natures of Jesus is summarized in the Catechism, CCC 464-483. Existing dogma of this hypostatic (underlying) union limits itself to declaring that in the single divine person of Jesus Christ there existed a complete man, and complete God. Jesus had a human body, soul, intellect and will; and every faculty of God was part of Jesus, including the divine intellect and will. These existed in the one divine person of Jesus Christ; distinctly and functionally, without confusion or opposition.⁵

The *distinct* faculties of soul of Jesus and the Son of God — will, awareness, intellect — are shown by the many instances of Jesus exhibiting will, knowledge and consciousness distinct from God, (Mt.26:39, Jn.6:38, Jn.5:30, Mt.24:36).⁶

⁵ The early Christian Council of Chalcedon (AD451), declared that the two natures Jesus Christ — the human nature of Jesus, and the divine nature of the Son of God — each retains its own properties and are united in one person of Christ. "Christ" is a title, which has become a name for the entire body of Christ, which now consists of Jesus and many others.

⁶ Definitions must be understood when speaking of the person of Christ:

- "Person" is the title given to a moral being. A person is considered human or divine according to his highest mode of existence. Jesus was a complete human man, and completely God. Since Jesus' highest mode of existence is divine, he is considered a divine person.

- "The Son of God" is the second person of the Trinity of God, also called the Trinitarian Christ. The Son of God may include others into his person, and does just this in enlarging the body of Christ. Jesus was not included into the Son of God, but originated from the Son of God.

- "Christ" is all who share in the life of the Son of God. Firstly, the Son of God, then angels, human Jesus and the faithful. Christ is a royal title for all children of God starting with his own Son, and ultimately including all things: Eucharist, the lion who lies down with the lamb, all else. Christ is the beginning and the end of all creation.

- "Jesus" is the man Jesus, who is now the pre-eminent individual of the person Christ. "Jesus of Nazareth" describes the human nature of Jesus. "Jesus Christ" describes the divine nature of Jesus. When Christ incarnates directly, Jesus results. When Christ incarnates indirectly, using his attributes to form nothing into something, humanity and all creation results.

We have likely never considered the idea of one man having two intellects and two wills, (human and divine no less!) which operate seamlessly. There is no dogma as to this operation, but we may feel out an explanation.

We routinely think multiple thoughts. We might be cooking, ironing or even driving while our thoughts are fixed on our family, job or monthly budget. Likewise for our will; we routinely exert our will in two areas simultaneously. We may now envision two minds and two wills working seamlessly within the single person of Christ who had both human and divine natures.

One way to envision this arrangement is to recall the Trinitarian Son of God (who we call Christ), as having a will that was absolute in its principles. The Son of God then extends himself into creation as the human Jesus. Along with the human body, is given a human mind and will. *The human will of Jesus was a subset of the divine will.* Jesus was free to use his human free will within the bounds of the perfect divine will of the Son of God.

The human free will of Jesus was absolute in its core principles. It was not his human body or reasoning that made Jesus divine, but his (divine) will which was contained within the absolute will of God.

Jesus can be thought of as the absolute will of God, enveloped with created human attributes. Around his absolute core is non-absolute flesh, emotions, awareness and reason. His human free will was free within the bounds of the divine will. Jesus is the human nature of the Son of God.⁷

– “God” is all that has absolute existence and being. It is impossible to become God, because God cannot be brought into being. However, God is free to include others into his person, and does this via Jesus who is the human nature of God.

– “Divine” refers to all who are fully included into the absolute being of God, via the body of Christ. This idea of divinization has been spoken of by the apostles and saints for 2000 years. The idea of our divinization is supported in catechism and scripture, (2Pet 1:4, 1Jn 3:2, Lk 6:40, 16:26; CCC 260, 398, 460, 795, 1988), St. John of the Cross also spoke of this idea. The book “Mystical Evolution” by Fr. John Arintero, is an extensive study of spiritual advancement from humanity to divinity and is still in print.

⁷ The will of Jesus was divine and incorruptible. The human body and soul of Jesus was created like Adam, in that it was fully human but had no contact with sin and its corrupting effects. At the last supper, Jesus enlarged his person into the body of Christ, by including the apostles along with their sin. At this point the humanity of Jesus was corrupted and ended in death. His divine will remained incorruptible and mediated the apostle’s sin into virtue, allowing their inclusion into his larger body of Christ.

Under the control of the divine will of Jesus, was a human mind, body, emotions and reasoning. All these operated under the divine will, and without the distortion of sin. It will be seen that the sacrifice of Jesus was to enter into the sin of humanity and remediate it into his own virtue. This sin corrupted all except the divine will of Jesus, allowing him to morally reform sin in all the varieties that it was presented under.

The divine will of Jesus did not micromanage his human actions, rather he used his human will, which operated within the larger bounds of the divine will. Jesus' human will was used for human actions, while he had recourse to his divine, all powerful will in supernatural acts, to perform miracles for example. Likewise, the divine intellect of Jesus was used in prophetic knowledge, rather than in his work as a carpenter.

Christ is now the entire body of Christ. It is no longer a matter of one divine intellect and one human intellect. The entire body of Christ has millions of human minds and wills, not to mention its angelic members. We begin our participation in the body of Christ as a member of the human Christ. The human Christ is now the many fallible members who constitute the *ongoing Christ* on earth. We work toward perfection, in hope of one day sharing in the divine nature of God, (2Pet 1:4, 1Jn 3:2, Lk 6:40, 16:26; CCC 260, 460, 795, 1988).⁸

Our participation in the body of Christ is first in the human nature of Christ (which explains why we are not divine in this life), then finally in the divine person of Jesus Christ in Heaven. It is Catholic doctrine that the faithful are the literal person and body of Christ, (CCC 795, 789; 1Cor 12:27, Rm 12:5, 1Cor 1:2, 1Cor 6:15). The Catholic Church uses the term “mystical body of Christ”, with mystical meaning mysterious, but not symbolic. The single person Christ is now all who are members of the body of Christ. The faithful on earth constitute the human nature of Christ, and those

⁸ The destiny of every member of the body of Christ is divinization, (CCC 398). The human Jesus is no exception. Jesus (who is the human nature of God), is now fully divine. Jesus is now fully divine and has no contact with sin. The human nature of the Son of God is now the ongoing Christ on earth—that's us. God relies on the ongoing Christ to continue the redemptive mediation of sin into virtue, so that new members may be incorporated into the body of Christ. The one person of Christ is made of many individual members. Members each have a particular function, Jesus is the head directing the work of the members who now remediate sin into virtue. When the person of Christ (body of Christ) makes someone's sin into his virtue, that person now exists within Christ.

in the fullness of Heaven are the divine nature of Christ. The single divine person of Christ is constituted of many, many human and angelic members.

Jesus did not require salvation—that is membership in the body of Christ—because he was a member of the body of Christ at his creation. We in comparison, are *adopted* into the body of Christ.

In summary:

- The body of Christ is no longer Jesus alone, but all who constitute Christ, as the body of Christ.

- The human nature of Jesus was divinized, and the task of remediation of sin now falls on the ongoing human Christ on earth, that us. This enlarged body of Christ has perfected and divinized members in Heaven, while the ongoing human Christ on earth works toward this goal.

- Our initial membership in Christ is in this ongoing human Christ on earth. Jesus now awaits us in Heaven where we will be incorporated into his divine nature.

Eucharistic Christ

Just as Jesus is the Son of God in the form of man, the Eucharist is the Son of God in the form of bread and wine. Just as Jesus had created and divine natures, so does the Eucharist have the limitations of its created form, while sharing in the unlimited Divinity. The Eucharist is not the single person of Jesus, but one member of the entire body of Christ.

To understand the Eucharist one must understand that Christ is now the entire body of Christ. Christ is a title, become a name for the many who are now the entire body of Christ. Christ is not Jesus alone, but includes angelic members, bread and wine, and in the final consummation, when God will be All in all (1Cor 15:28), Christ will even be the lion who lies down with the lamb. When all this is considered, it becomes easier

to envision that part of the divine body of Christ exists in the forms of bread and wine.

The Eucharistic host alone is simply non-divine bread, but the Eucharistic host does not exist alone, any more than the human Jesus was limited to non-divinity. The Eucharistic host is a non-human member of the body of Christ. It is this particular member which we receive in communion. Short of a miracle, we do not receive human flesh, because the Eucharist is divinized bread and wine, not divinized flesh.

The bread and wine however are not isolated from Jesus, and because of the communion of the entire body of Christ, we receive Jesus and all members when we receive the Eucharist.⁹ During a Eucharistic miracle, the body of Christ may be manifested as the flesh of Jesus, and not bread. During a Eucharistic miracle, the member of Christ physically received is Jesus.

The Eucharist has its localized limitations. The Eucharist for instance has no powers of perception, yet the larger body of Christ does, and it is aware of all its members. The Catholic Church recognizes prayer to the Eucharist as legitimate, because the Eucharist does not exist alone as bread and wine, but as a member of the divine body of Christ. We may address our prayer to the Eucharist, or a saint, but we necessarily pray to the single person of Christ, who is the entire body of Christ.

The bread and wine are not *created* into Christ, but become Christ by inclusion into Christ, who is God. Even God cannot create God, and any thing or any person becoming part of the divine body of Christ does so by inclusion or adoption. Bread and wine offer no moral opposition to inclusion into Christ, unlike humanity.

The Eucharist was intended only as a sharing of the person of Christ with his children. But with the advent of sin, it too was shared. ***The death of Jesus was a consequence of his entering into the sin of the apostles via the Eucharist.***

⁹ The physical member of Christ consumed is bread, not Jesus. Therefore the answer to the oft asked question "Is the Eucharist cannibalism?", is 'no'. We eat Eucharistic bread (which is a member of the body of Christ); not the human flesh of Jesus.

When considering new ideas which stretch our current understanding, consider how mystical our standard dogma is: God became a man; we are called to share in the very divinity of God (CCC 398); matter, spirit and time exist in whatever form God chooses; etc.

When incorporating the apostles into his own person, Jesus had to remediate their sin into virtue. Every part of the human Jesus except his will suffered the effects of sin — “he became sin”, (2Cor 5:21). The human will of Jesus was a subset of the divine will. It was absolute in its principles and could not be corrupted, all else: emotions, body, reasoning were subject to corruption by the sin of humanity, which Jesus took on. This incorruptible will of Jesus remediated his now corrupted human senses, emotions, even reasoning into virtue. Jesus was presented with our sin, by communion with humanity. He did not (could not) incorporate it into his will. He suffered it passively, and also remediated it by active moral effort of his will.

It was the communion cup pouring into his soul, its sin and his battle against it that made him sweat blood, and beg “let this cup pass from me”. He appealed to the apostles in communion with him to share in his fight, but they slept on. Note that before his participation in original sin, Christ could not be killed (Lk 4:29-30), just hours after his participation in sin however, he could not avoid death.

Clearly, the communion event of the last supper was Christ’s entry into sin for the purpose of redemption, it was the cause of his death just hours later. For the prior three years, attempts to kill or imprison him had repeatedly failed. All this points to the communion event as more than mere symbolism.¹⁰

We observe that our salvation is to become a member of Christ, the body of Christ, and two sacraments accomplish this: baptism and Eucharist. But why two? If we reflect on the principle of “original intended divinization”, and the sacraments themselves we arrive at the answer.

Baptism provides forgiveness of sin and inclusion into Christ, but sin was never intended. What was intended was our human development culminating in our divinization in this life. Eucharist was the intended sacrament for our membership into Christ, and our final divinization. With the onset of sin, baptism (sacramental or desired) is now also a necessary sacrament for our salvation.

¹⁰ As to the idea that the sacrifice of Christ on the cross was made “once and for all”, thus allowing no sacrificial quality in the Eucharist: The fullness of any act includes all causes and all effects, even extended in time before or after the “act” itself. The Eucharistic sacrifice and communion includes all who have and who will partake in it. The Eucharistic sacrifice includes the redemptive mediation of the entire body of Christ, past, current and future.

In baptism, we are forgiven by Christ making our sin into his very virtue, we become part of Christ. In Eucharist we become part of Christ, and in doing so, Christ reforms any sin into his very virtue.

Body of Christ

By his own generous act, Christ is irreversibly all who participate in him. Early Church writers coined the term “Whole Christ” to designate the entire body of Christ. The Whole Christ includes non-human members as well — angels, and the Eucharist.

Christ (the body of Christ) is the origin and end of all creation. Inclusion of all creation into Christ was not intended as a rescue operation, but as a normal course of life. It is as close as God may get to making more of the best thing in the universe — God.

All of creation comes from Christ, and all is intended to return for inclusion into Christ. The first member of the body of Christ was the Trinitarian Son of God.

Inclusion of the good angels, thrones and dominions was next.¹¹ The third form of the body of Christ was the addition of Mary, mother of Jesus, when she became spouse of the Holy Spirit at the conception of Jesus.

The fourth expansion of the body of Christ was Jesus at his conception. This event in the body of Christ was unique because it was not a matter of incorporating persons from outside, but an expansion emanating from the Trinity itself. The third and fourth expansions are traditionally thought to have occurred simultaneously.

The fifth communion of Christ was at the last supper, when a sharing in Christ was offered to all humanity. This is the first expansion in which sin had to be mediated.

The sixth expansion of the body of Christ includes all non-person members. The Eucharist is bread and wine become the body of Christ, it retains all of its attributes, but gains divine status and becomes a non-human member of Christ (the body of Christ).

¹¹ Adam would not be considered as being a member of the body of Christ *at his creation*. Adam and Eve were perfect in virtue, but this virtue was their own and not under willful control of Christ. If original humanity *had* directly participated directly in the body of Christ, it would not have been necessary for Christ to institute the New Covenant, for the inclusion of humanity into the body of Christ. Adam and Eve were of course intended for eventual incorporation into the body of Christ.

The final expansion will be made at the general judgment, at the end of time. Christ will attempt union with his entire creation, so that God will be All in all (1Cor 15:28). All things will exist in and as Christ (Heaven), or without Christ and any part of his goodness (Hell). In this final formation of the universe everything that exists: the new Heaven and earth, will have new and glorious existence in and as Christ. Christ is the literal resurrection of all things, (Jn 11:25).¹²

A literal understanding of our membership in the body of Christ, brings a new interpretation of the oft cited parable of the vineyard workers, (Mt 20: 1-16). This interpretation is not one of social justice, but the gift of divine participation. The same wage given to all is a sharing in the very life of God, which cannot be divided or given by degree. The same wage given to all workers is the absolute life of God which is not a matter of degree of greatness, but of absolute goodness.

Catholic teaching on the angels is unjustifiably sparse. We may deduce with confidence that those angels not sinning have attained salvation as members of the body of Christ, and now participate in the divine nature of Christ, (2Pet 1:4). They are members of the larger body of Christ, and not just helpful outsiders.

God intends divine union with all his creation, this was part of God's plan from the beginning. God did not want to keep humans as pets, but wanted them as his mature equals who will freely return his love, so too the angels. The human Jesus did not then exist, and communion with the angels was made by the Trinitarian Son of God.

¹² It is often wondered if one's pet will exist in Heaven. Animal souls do not have the attribute of immortality, and their souls are thought to cease existence at death. It is possible however, even likely that they will be rejoined to their masters. The unique idea of any pet exists always in God's mind, and he may create another anytime he wishes. If this is the case, the recreated pet in Heaven will then have an immortal soul, in accordance with never ending existence in Heaven. Pope Paul VI (not Pope Francis) made non doctrinal teaching that our pets will exist with us in Heaven. Catholic theology acknowledges that if God wants former pets in Heaven, God may make it so.

In a related matter it might be asked if primitive evolutionary humans will exist in Heaven, Hell, or not at all in the afterlife, (assuming human evolution is true). It *might* work like this: primitive humans prior to Adam and Eve had mortal souls only, so neither Heaven nor Hell is a possibility. Their souls would be expected to cease at the expiration of their bodies, like those of animals. But animals will almost certainly exist in the resurrection. Since Heaven is the realm of perfected individuals (human, animal, inanimate), there will not be found non-perfected intermediate stage humanoids. As always it's God's call.

Ongoing Christ

“Ongoing Christ” is a useful name for those members of Christ on earth. Jesus is now fully divine and can no longer provide remediation of sin, this must be done by those members of Christ still not divinized, that’s us on earth.¹³

Our intended destiny is nothing less than to share in the divine nature of God. The human nature of Jesus is no exception. The human nature of Jesus was divinized. *Jesus is now fully divinized and cannot internalize sin for its reformation, and now relies on the ongoing body of Christ on earth for this function.*

The primary task for Christ (the body of Christ) on earth is restorative mediation of sin into virtue. It is a matter of making anger into patience, excess into moderation, cynicism into faith. It is not Jesus Christ, but rather Paul Christ who urges this in Colossians 1:24, “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.”.

A careful reading of Col 1:24 reveals in order: 1. Paul really turns sin and disorder into rejoicing faith. 2. This is his part in the larger body. 3. Since Jesus is no longer human but divine, he cannot take on sin, and other members must remediate affliction into virtue.

Jesus instituted the ongoing Christ and its remediative task in John 13:1-17, when he washed the feet of the apostles and told them to do the same to others. Jesus did not serve at table, he washed the apostles of sin saying, “Unless I wash you [of sin], you have no part in me.”; he then told the apostles to do the same to others.

The ongoing Christ on earth is the current human nature of the Son of God, and is God’s instrument for the remediation of sin. Our inclusion into Christ requires us to

¹³ In Mt. 5:13, Jesus refers to his disciples as the ongoing body of Christ that gives God reason to keep the world in existence. More recently Christ has said this to St. Faustina, St. Gemma Galgani and others, using the term “victim soul”.

first be free of (mortal) sin. This is the more difficult portion of salvation and it depends upon the ongoing Christ to do it.¹⁴

Those fully divinized (Jesus, citizens of Heaven, angels, thrones, dominions, (Col 1:16)), give positive mediation only. Those in Heaven live the ideal only, and can have no contact with sin or suffering, and make positive acts of virtue and prayer rather than remediation of sin into virtue. The angels who may not make redemptive suffering, envy (if it were possible) those on earth who can. This restorative mediation is enactment of the fullest love of God, which is sacrificial love.

Those in Purgatory give evidence that they may pray and perhaps make good action according to their current state, but they may not gain in virtue or sin. Their efforts do have an effect on our world however, and many saints have called on them. Out of justice, they suffer in part their sins committed, and willingly so rather than propagate them on earth.

Purgatory

Purgatory is the state of existence as the body of Christ, which is short of full divine union. Our Purgatory begins now on earth, if necessary we may, (must) continue our purgation after the death of our body. We advance in the body of Christ as we rid our soul of self interest.

The Heavenly wedding feast that Christ speaks of is our full divine union, we shall participate in the divine nature, (2Pet1:4). This divine union as the fullness of Christ cannot occur until we are free of all traces of sin and self. ***We cannot become Christ if we remain self.*** From 1John 3:2-3 we read, "...we shall be like Him [God], for

¹⁴ In Luke 5:23 Jesus says, "Which is easier to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you, or to say, get up and walk'?" The harder part is making this moral remediation of sin. The easier part is to say, "Get up and walk.", meaning "Moral effort by someone has reformed sin into virtue. Your disease is removed and your health restored, now get up and walk". We as the ongoing body of Christ make the reformation. Jesus, who is head of the body of Christ determines in what manner the reformation will be applied.

In the absence of remediation of sin by the ongoing Christ, the effects of sin (war, famine, disease, etc.) must be effected on the world. The sin is exerted, rather than remediated. 1Cor 5:5 is an example of this exertion; the book of Revelation speaks of this on a worldwide scale.

we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope purifies himself, just as He [God] is pure.”. Because God offers to share his life with man (2Pet 1:4), anyone joining God in his life must be free of every imperfection. If Christ forgives our sins of impatience for example, we are not turned into a perfectly patient person. Forgiveness is more than a declaration, it is real reformation of soul.

Biblical accounts of purification between death and Heaven occur in 2Maccabees 12:38-46, where Judas Maccabeus offers expiatory sacrifice for his fallen soldiers. Prayer for the dead implies a state other than Heaven or Hell, since intercessory prayers for either of these populations is of no value. Jesus as a pious Jew would have prayed Qaddish — prayers for the dead.

The apostle Paul speaks in some detail about a state of purgation after death in 1Cor 3:10-15. Here Paul speaks of building upon an existing foundation of Christ, (salvation). If a quality structure (gold, silver, gems), having no impurity is constructed it will stand at judgment. If an imperfect structure is built, that will combust when subjected to the flames of the Holy Spirit, (wood, straw), then it and the builder (the student and instructor), will need purgation by this fire prior to Heaven. Here purgation due to erroneous teaching is discussed, but willful moral imperfection also requires reformation before the attainment of Heaven

Catholic teaching is of four afterlife states: Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, Limbo. 1Samuel 28:15 tells of the prophet Samuel in the afterlife of Limbo. With the coming of Christ, the holding area of Limbo was no longer needed, those able to entered Heaven, those needing purgation entered Purgatory. Limbo no longer seems to be operational.

This system of active and passive events; purgation and divinization is discussed in more detail in the last section of this book, on spiritual advancement.

Heaven

There is frustratingly little description of Heaven in Catholic literature. St. Henry Suso was privileged with one such vision. Christ himself was his guide saying, “Look up to Heaven where you belong. On earth you are a stranger, and a homeless pilgrim. And just as a pilgrim quickly returns to his homeland, where his dear friends are

waiting in longing, so should you also hurry to return to your homeland where people intensely long for your presence.¹⁵ They will greet you lovingly, and unite you to their happy company forever. And if you knew how they want you to struggle bravely in suffering and conduct yourself with valor in all the adversity that they have overcome, all your suffering would be more endurable.”

“The more bitterly you have suffered, the more worthily you will be received. How wonderful the honor feels, how joy races through heart and spirit when a soul receives honor, praise and glory from me in the sight of my Father and all the Heavenly hosts because it suffered so much on earth in its time of struggle.”

“Look there, above the ninth heaven, there is another heaven. This is the glorious court where the Heavenly host dwells. There, surrounded by ineffable splendor stand the eternal thrones from which the evil spirits were cast down and which now belong to the elect. Look how it glitters with hammered gold, how it glows with precious pearls, and is adorned with jewels and translucent crystal, alive with the sparkle of red roses and white lilies. Now look at the beautiful celestial fields, here is the valley of true joy.”

“Here one sees lovers’ glances dart joyfully back and forth. Here are the strains of harps and violins; singing, dancing, and constant joy. Here all wishes are fulfilled, joy without sorrow and complete certainty that it will continue forever.”

“Move quietly forward and see how the sweet Queen of Heaven hovers above the entire heavenly host. Look how her wondrous beauty gives delight and joy to all. See how the Mother of Mercy has her eyes turned kindly toward you and all sinners, and how she powerfully protects them and reconciles them to her beloved child the Christ.”

“Now turn with the eyes of pure intellect and see also how the exalted Seraphim and the loving souls of this choir of angels flame up ardently toward me continually.

¹⁵ This sentence is a remnant of Christ’s original plan of proactive divinization of humanity. What we now know as salvation is really God’s original plan for communion, but now with the obstacle of sin to be overcome. The original plan was not to rescue man from Hell, but to cultivate his life into full union with God. We do not wait for Heaven, but work now toward our intended divine fulfillment, (Ws 4:13-14).

How the bright Cherubim move in and out of my eternal light; look at the trinity of the second hierarchy, the Dominions, Virtues and Powers, how they in turn bring about the wonderful eternal order in the natural universe. See how the angelic spirits carry forth my messages and announcements. What a wondrous sight!”

Christ speaks of his own person as our resurrection (Jn 11:25), and so he is. It is then no surprise that the very person of Christ is our Heaven also, (CCC 260, 460, 1026; Mt 4:17, John 14:6). Heaven is an individual’s spiritual union with God, as the body of Christ. The resurrection is this union extended to the body.

Hell

Catholic theology affirms the idea of Hell, just as Jesus spoke of it, but cannot say with certainty if anyone actually exists in eternal Hell. This article details the standard model of Hell, then the idea of universal salvation.

When the angels cast themselves away from God, they did so with full knowledge of their act. They may not have had perfect knowledge of all consequences, but they knew perfectly that their action was in opposition to God.

Acting against the will of God in itself did not cast the angels into Hell. Hell is an unintended by product of failed final communion. Just as humanity was created for the purpose of divine inclusion into Christ (CCC 398), so too were the angels. In making this inclusion into the divine Christ, no sin could be allowed.

What we call judgment, was this communion of Christ and the angels. Trinitarian Christ (human Jesus did not yet exist), made the communion, taking all goodness into himself. All evil and those owning it were unable to make union into Christ, which now became the larger body of Christ.¹⁶

¹⁶ Christ’s communion with the angels makes Christianity as old as this first communion. The date for Christianity is pushed back thousands of years prior to Jesus. We recall that Christianity at its core is communion into Christ. We are certain that the angels were judged, with some not making their intended union with the divine Christ. This judgment was actually their intended communion into Christ, just like humans are intended for divine communion from the beginning, (CCC 398). The necessary conclusion is that other angels did make their intended union with Christ; this dates the formation of the extended body of Christ to a time earlier than the last supper, with the first communicants being the angels, rather than the apostles.

Left behind was evil and those owning the evil...this was the formation of Hell. Those angels left behind had absolutely no goodness in them, they were unable to reach beyond self, and certainly could not reach out to God. They existed in a self-perpetuating cycle of evil. Even God's attempts to penetrate their existence of total selfishness were futile. They had truly condemned themselves to existence without God.

From this we see that Hell is a rejection of union with God, rather than God rejecting anyone. In fact Hell exists as a failure of final communion. God cannot make an act that has only an evil outcome, and condemning a person to Hell is an act with no possible final good.

Hell is produced by the condemned themselves and it occurs in two degrees. *The first degree of Hell* is internal to a soul, and occurs at judgment when that soul rejects and abandons God. The result of this willful separation is total *internal* corruption as goodness is abandoned. Catholic terminology for this first degree is the "particular judgment". These condemned now share creation with the living on earth, but have no virtue or goodness, and prowl the earth causing evil, (Mt 8:29).

The second degree of Hell is yet to come. This is the general judgment when God unites with all goodness from creation. God will take with him all the goodness abandoned by the reprobate, what remains will exist undiluted with goodness, this will be the final Hell. This Hell is what remains after God reclaims all goodness abandoned by angels and humanity.

Again the *personal communion* planned by God is now corrupted by sin into the personal judgment, and now with Hell as a possibility. The *general communion* is now the general judgment with Hell as a possibility. This general communion was Christ's desire to reunite and fulfill all of creation. Everything comes from Christ, (Jn 1:3), and all is intended to rejoin Christ, even the lion who lies down with the lamb in divine Heaven.

We cannot speak of a “body of Antichrist”, such as we speak of a “body of Christ”. Those in Hell are entirely self. It is possible there are many, but there can be no community. Respect, organization, joy and fulfillment are virtues of Christ, and will not be found in the final assembly of the Antichrist. There is no master plan for Hell, and its inhabitants will be left to their own devices. From 1John 2:18, we learn that the Antichrist is not only a singular Devil in the end times, but all who share now in the corrupted spirit of the Antichrist.

As originally planned, all created goodness was to finally share in the very divinity of God. God would incorporate the goodness of creation into his own being. This plan has not changed, all goodness will have its final destiny in the divine life of God. Left behind will be all remaining evil, which will be physical Hell.

The preceding article makes a strong case for eternal damnation, yet the possibility of *universal salvation* does exist in the Catholic Church, in that we are just not certain that anyone is in eternal Hell. Pope, now saint John Paul II states in the Vatican newspaper, L’Osservatore Romano, August 4, 1999.

“Eternal damnation remains a real possibility, but we are not granted, without special divine revelation, the knowledge of whether or which human beings are effectively involved in it.”

The possibility of ultimate salvation of all persons comes down to the decision and actions of Christ and the entire body of Christ: 1.Christ has the ability, even to force the salvation of a person, even upon a devil;¹⁷ 2.Christ has the authority to make any necessary exceptions; 3.Christ has the desire to do this, (1Tm 2:4).

¹⁷ This is usually done indirectly. The real life example of St. Monica praying for her son St. Augustine brought graces of good action (actual graces) upon Augustine. These were imposed upon Augustine without his consent, but they led to a change in his free will toward God and salvation. We observe that the devil acts within the willful boundaries allowed by God. Exorcism of devils is God’s will enforced over the objections and will of demons.

In Exodus 9:12, the Lord hardens Pharaoh’s heart; created sin is justly assigned to whoever God desires, and in a form according to God’s good judgment. In this case corrupted spirit is assigned without the consent of the victim, (Pharaoh). It works the other way also; God may assign virtue to anyone, in whatever form, even for salvation. Catholic Bishop Robert Barron gives video lectures on the idea of uninhabited Hell and many other topics on YouTube.com.

In the end, evil is not stronger than good, and God retains authority over the Devil. Universal salvation necessarily remains a possibility. The Church encourages us to hope and pray for the salvation of all persons, and without regard to time of death.

It is possible that our prayers now, saved an angel prior, by making his Hell into a purgatory. St. Pio once explained that his prayers now for his deceased uncle were applied to his *salvation* prior. The science of relativity has time being unique for every entity, and theology understands God as omnipotent.

It is possible that the prayers and sacrifices of the faithful for the salvation of others are in fact completely successful, when joined to the sacrifice of Christ. In taking this positive view, we add that much more hope to our prayers, which has great power in salvation.

Hope is like a blueprint for a project. Without hope, the project cannot proceed. Hope in universal salvation is a worthy and commendable act, and should be made by all the faithful. If there is no hope in the ultimate salvation of all, then it will not happen. Christ is thankful for our prayers for the salvation of all.

Spiritual Advancement

Spiritual advancement is simply a deeper sharing in the life of God, who is Christ. This occurs as we eliminate self will, allowing a deeper indwelling of God's own spirit, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is our likeness and union with God.

It sounds daunting and mystical, but it's no more mystical than living a just life as a first century carpenter. To deny one's self does not require abandoning family, food, sleep, or even the enjoyments of life, rather these are had according to God's will, not our own.

Personal spiritual advancement promotes social justice, and even salvation for others. We observe how original (and subsequent) sin introduced mistrust, greed, and hatred. These may be reformed by the mediation of spiritual advancement. When we suffer anger into patience, and greed into trust, individuals and nations are bettered, and the corruption is no longer suffered as social disorder.

The science of elimination of self is well developed; religious orders have for centuries molded their member's wills away from self, and toward God. These religious orders exist as practical aids to spiritual advancement, and their techniques may be used by anyone according to their circumstances. The seemingly pointless discipline they require has real results in mastering self will: uniforms, schedules, endless rules...there is little room for individual will. This selflessness becomes a habit, and over time a character of the soul. The sacraments they have received act with fuller effect, drawing them closer to God as self is mortified.

Conversely, our world is geared toward satisfaction, growth and indulgence of self...all to the detriment of our souls. We are told to eat richly, drink well, purchase, pleasure ourselves, get honor, find fault and demand our rights. Jesus had a different mindset. How would Jesus live if he were a reformed sinner, rich, bed ridden, a mother? Read the lives of the saints.

Purgative, Illuminative, Unitive ways

Jesus speaks, "The truest and most effective teaching that you can receive is this. Keep yourself apart from all men, if not in body, then in spirit. Keep yourself free from all unneeded images and words. Free yourself from everything that is accidental, binding or that brings worry. Always direct your spirit to the intimate contemplation of God, keeping me constantly present before your eyes and never turning them away from me. Direct all other exercises, be it poverty, fasting, vigils and all other types of chastisement toward this goal and make use of them to the extent that they advance this end."

"Do all this and you shall attain the summit of perfection that not one person in a thousand comprehends because they make these exercises their goal and therefore wander about for years."

This teaching of the prior two paragraphs, is known as "brief rules for spiritual advancement", given by Christ to St. Henry Suso. It is essentially a rephrasing of Christ's teaching in Mt 22:37, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your

soul, and all your mind.”. This phrasing by Jesus seems more attractive than the phrasing of the same idea, given to St. Suso. Suso’s is perhaps more useful because of its detail.

Catholic teaching is of four afterlife states: Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, Limbo. 1Samuel 28:15 tells of the prophet Samuel in the afterlife of Limbo. With the coming of Christ, the holding area of Limbo was no longer needed, those able to entered Heaven, those needing purgation entered Purgatory. Limbo no longer seems to be operational.

To think of, and be Christ 24/7 sounds burdensome and impossible, but it’s not. We do not become a first century carpenter, but a present day member of Christ, who is now the entire body of Christ: a mother, worker, student, unemployed, reforming sinner. We do not really have to learn more, or do more, or even be more. The less we cling to the accidents of this life, the deeper our participation in Christ. On the proactive side, the sacraments are essential, as they are the agents of our incorporation into Christ, as we clear the way of selfishness.

Spiritual advancement typically proceeds in stages and in a generally predictable pattern. Our efforts to free our soul of its illegitimate attachments is termed the Purgative way. Cultivation of virtue is the Illuminative way, and elimination of self for the purpose of union with Christ is the Unitive way. At any time our efforts are made predominantly, but not exclusively in one of these stages.

Our starting point depends on many factors, including the burden of original sin assigned to us; some have a greater burden to work through than others, (Luke 15:7). Most start their spiritual advancement in the Purgative way, and by repeated effort substantially eliminate sin from their lives.

The Illuminative stage is characterized by a virtuous and pious life, of legitimate undertakings in job, family, and all areas. The years of grinding perseverance have paid off for this person of virtue. Those courageously attaining the illuminative state, might expect a linear progression forward, but there is a necessary twist that occurs here, termed by St. John of the Cross “the dark night of the soul”. It is almost always misunderstood

by those entering into the Unitive stage, and may be a pitfall if not properly understood.

Spiritual trials now occur, by consent or initiative of God with the goal of eliminating the legitimate self will of the student. These trials are misunderstood as punishments, given for reasons that cannot even be determined. These trials feel like anything other than the blessing they are. To participate fully in Christ, we cannot stop at virtuous self; self must go, that we may become Christ.

An extreme example may be found in the book of Job. Job was scrupulous and perfect in his obedience to the decrees of God, and was richly rewarded. God sought to advance Job's soul by stripping him of his good fortune, leaving only faith in his life. He was to maintain faith and virtue, simply for the sake of God. Job had no part in sin, now he was tasked with eradicating even legitimate self interest. Job persevered and in the end he had no attachment, to this life, he fundamentally detached from it (Lk 14:26). His love of God was undiminished. Through this active and passive combination Job attained perfection...and his former joys were restored to him.

More commonly the casualty is not our material life as Job suffered, but our legitimate material and spiritual attachments. Until now the soul had attained conformity to God by degree, and now over an extended period may attain actual union with God—we become Christ.

Active and Passive Nights of the Soul

Another framework for this same process of spiritual advancement distinguishes sensual acts from spiritual acts, and active acts from passive acts. Overeating is a sensual act, while impure day dreams are spiritual acts. Active actions are undertakings of our own initiative. Passive actions originate from God, and are his act of deepening our inclusion into himself. St. John of the Cross first observed this four stage process of spiritual advancement. He wrote of it as literature, and not as a laid out system, because of this interpretations vary somewhat.

The pattern is: we rid our soul of sin and imperfection by our active moral efforts in both sensual and spiritual acts. As this is done we then advance in Christ passively, that is Christ takes the lead. This advancement is a deeper participation in his

will and his very person, (CCC 789), and it's done by Christ, our part is simply to clear the way.

The sacraments are essential. Sacraments are Christ's instruments by which we advance, but sacraments cannot do their job unless they are allowed to.

In the active night of the senses the student takes the initiative in properly forming habits involving physical acts, drives and emotions. Habit is the key to one's character or one's soul, and reforming existing lesser habits involves repeated trial, error, and finally triumph. Not only must the illegitimate rule of the emotions be eliminated, but even legitimate emotions must be made subservient to the moral will.

The passive night of the senses occurs in parallel to the active night of the senses. As we actively free ourselves of sin, bad moral habits, pride and worry, we also advance in Christ in a passive manner. We see these former things as the chains that they are. We now share in Christ's own will and values. The sacraments bring this sharing in Christ, our part is making the moral effort. We clear a space for Christ in our soul.

Our emotions might be thought of as sense organs for our virtues. They react accordingly to virtue or corruption, proactively, or after the fact as in remorse. The proper place for emotions is under control of our will. Such

control will not diminish joy, but help perfect it. Emotions are the primary driving force in many people, but the goal of Christian spiritual advancement is to attune our will to the perfect moral principles of Christ, rather than emotions.

In the active night of the spirit, the student takes the initiative in the proper formation of the moral will, and of faith. Our actions here are all actions with no material component: faith, love, patience, joy, imagination. These have little or no sensory component, but they are real acts with real effects, and there is a right way, a wrong way, and God's way to do each.

To this point, self (self is separation from God), has been presented disguised and as our own particular failings. In the advanced stages, the saints report unexpected feelings of abandonment, and dissatisfaction against God, (St. Faustina's diary, entry 77).

Sin is now presented to the student in its core form — rebellion against God. This undisguised rebellion may be presented alongside incomplete work from the previous stages, and our guide (in part) is our own imperfect soul, which we are trying to correct. Doing this cold turkey in a convent is easiest, but most people must take the home study curriculum.

We must forge ourselves into the Christ, and we do it on the cross. In the depths of the night of the spirit, the student feels abandoned, rejected, useless, sinful, purposeless, stupid. All this is unsatisfied self seeking, which must be mediated into good form and faith.

The turning point often occurs when the student finally sees the plan for him, and submits. All along has been the unfelt *passive night of the spirit*, but now it predominates. The trials are no longer meaningless, but purposeful, and the student finally joins in and rapid progress may be made. Near the end, God takes command. The student has largely gone as far as he can. God proceeds to strip away the last remnants of self, for the purpose of divine union.

The Divine union is the final stage of our existence within the body of Christ. This is the wedding feast that Jesus spoke of. It is the spiritual marriage that the saints participate in. It is our divinization and it was intended to occur in this life on earth.

Miracles, prophecy, ecstatic contemplation are all common in the divine union. The divinized student now has the unlimited ability of the divine Christ, the student is the divine Christ.

The divine union may be achieved in this life. It occurs when every attribute under willful control is free of disorder, this allows the willful whole to be incorporated into the divine Christ. The body, which is not fully under our willful control undergoes death. The Divine doctor himself conducts this soul transplant as the final stage of the passive night of the spirit.

This divine union on earth was the original plan for humanity, and everyone was to have attained it in this life. No afterlife was even planned; just a perfected, divine continuation of our current existence. Day trips to Heaven to visit the angels would be allowed, but Jesus would not have died on the cross, and we would all know him here on earth. Our world would have been a sort of spiritual utopia, with perfected, divinized elders (no wrinkles or arthritis) leading the upcoming generations to their intended divinization.¹⁸

For our spiritual advancement, we might construct a three stage program, which we repeat until holy:

(1.) We identify and examine the problem and our foolish attachment to it. We do this in both structured mediation and on our feet as we encounter problems. We hold the temptation at arm's length to break the emotional cycle which feeds itself. This emotional cycle usually proceeds away from perfection and towards self: pity, indulgence, destruction.

We recall our goal (incorporation into Christ) and our reasons. We compare our proposed action to the person Christ, and not only the first century Christ, but the present day Christ: the mother, the worker, the person at leisure, danger or trouble. We think of our past failings in which we fail at the peak of temptation, only to kick ourselves later.

(2.) We ride out the peak and steamroll to virtue on the downside. We do not worry about the consequences, God will arrange those. We maintain focus on the only thing that lasts or has value, our participation in Christ.

(3.) Cultivation of peace is the next (and necessary) event. We must not eliminate vice, pride and worry, only to complain of boredom. Our calling is to express

¹⁸ Those we call saints have often attained this spiritual marriage, or divinization on earth; they are our divinized elders guiding us. Because of original sin, this divinization on earth is of the soul only and not the body, because one's body is largely not under the control of the will, even a divinized will, (even the saints died). Blessed Virgin Mary was an exception, she had no legacy original sin, that would corrupt her body, she was fully incorporated into the Holy Spirit at her marriage, which we call the annunciation. St. Maximillian Kolbe wrote of her as being the human incarnation of the Holy Spirit, because of her total and permanent union with the Holy Spirit.

ourselves as Christ in the many ways open to us. Christ seeks to express himself in every legitimate art or enterprise, and “non-religious” acts are not less than religious acts. Indeed, to carve out a part of life for religion, implies that the other part does not seek inclusion into God. In ancient Israel there was no divide (in theory) between God, government, business, family. They were all God’s enterprises under our stewardship. With the advent of Christianity, we are not stewards for Christ, but Christ himself, and this life is our productive training ground.

Spiritual advancement is not so different from quitting: smoking, overeating, addiction, pornography, depression, and other imperfections.¹⁹ In fact conquering any of these things or others is spiritual advancement. In redirecting our will from one self centered habit to another ideal derived habit we break the hump and cultivate the habit. Again, we repeat until holy. This is what every saint has done, and we are called to divine perfection in this life.

Not just temptation to sin, but decisions also should be given this program of scrutiny. A good decision may be made better by it, and we advance as Christ. Idle thoughts are not so idle, (Mt 5:28). We can and should practice the best possible thought. This is the core value of prayer, it is proactive good thought and will which has great meaning for eternity.

The ten commandments are in order of importance. God comes first; separation from God only brings a corresponding separation from God’s good design for our world. Praise of God implies an association of wills with God. Positive prayer joined to acts of selflessness advance our incorporation into God, and our families and the world benefit. Lack of external resources does not prohibit great influence in our world.

Spiritual advancement is not primarily a matter of reading or study, but of doing and not doing. Most who have made the effort (and were literate) used only the Gospel

¹⁹ In the case of genetic or chemical predisposition to any imperfection, we cannot (short of miraculous intervention), stop the disposition, because our chemistry is not really under our willful control. However, our will may be developed stronger than our imperfections. The imperfection is controlled, rather it controlling us. The saints have conquered every sort and degree of imperfection, and so can we. As the body of Christ, we need not rely only on our mere human strength, we have the entirety of Christ to help us.

and the Holy Spirit as guides. Confirmation is the sacrament for spiritual advancement, and adult evening classes are available.

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Recommended Reading

All books listed are in still in publication as of this writing.

“Mystical Evolution”, or “The Mystical Evolution in the Development and Vitality of the Church” by Fr. John Arintero. Two titles, same book. This book is the standard for spiritual advancement. Volume one covers will, virtue, grace and more in a general manner. Volume two applies it to personal spiritual advancement. The several steps of spiritual advancement and grades of prayer are examined, from purgation of sin, to ascetic attainment, to mysticism. Extensive selections from the writings of the saints on the specific steps are included in each section.

“Padre Pio, the True Story”, by C. Bernard Ruffin. Biography of St. Pio, (1881-1968). Inspiring and motivating, as are all lives of the saints. Incredibly, Padre Pio was persecuted for decades by the very church that declared him a saint. He conquered it all and greatly advanced in soul. He worked hundreds of well documented miracles and healings. His recent and well documented life and miracles are evidence that God is still at work in our world today. Get the revised edition.

“He and I”, by Gabrielle Bossis (1874-1950). Revelations by Christ to Frenchwoman Gabrielle Bossis. Nearly 400 pages of inspiring and optimistic advice given to Gabrielle by Christ. The book rings authentic and is better than pills to instill hope and meaning in one’s life.

“Theological Dictionary” by Karl Rahner. Mini encyclopedia of theological terms and ideas. It contains the core ideas without the fluff.

“Catholic Encyclopedia”, on CD. Many sources publish an out of copyright edition, for only a few dollars. Still exceedingly relevant, especially articles on metaphysical topics such as the Trinity, truth, eternity, soul. Also available free and online at www.newadvent.com.

“Encyclopedia of Theology”, by Karl Rahner. Academic level articles on ideas of theology, 1800 pages.

“Butler’s Lives of the Saints”, different editors and editions. Mini biographies on hundreds of saints. Give a copy to spouse or children.

“Secular Saints”, by Joan Carroll Cruz. Thick book of spiritual biographies of 250 secular saints. No priests or nuns living in a vacuum here. These men, women, and children conquered their selves, then the challenges of faith, job, and family.

“Right and Reason”, by Austin Fagothey. This is a classic textbook on Catholic ethics and morality. It has gone through many editions over the years.

“An Exorcist Tells His Story”, by Fr. Gabriele Amorth. Stories from the Vatican’s chief exorcist. Thoughtful and instructive, examines the Devil and his workings. Also, “The Rite” by Matt Baglio; documents the training and practice of a Catholic priest sent to Italy for training in the rite of exorcism. Much insight into the dangers and limitations of the Devil.

“Wife, Mother and Mystic”, by Albert Bessieres. Spiritual biography of eighteenth century Roman wife, Anna Maria Taigi. Anna shared in God’s life in the most trying circumstances: coarse husband and in-laws, seven children. Anna cultivated heroic virtues of prayer and patience, foretold the future, saw distant events, made miraculous healings. Inspiring book for anyone living the challenges of daily life.

“General Metaphysics”, by Noonan. Introductory textbook on Metaphysics. Metaphysics is the science of spiritual being and an understanding is useful in the spiritual life. This text is often used in college and seminary courses.

“Our Sunday Visitor’s Encyclopedia of Catholic Doctrine”, edited by Russell Shaw. Useful and readable 700+ pages.

“The Dialogue”, by St. Catherine of Sienna. Christ’s revelations to St. Catherine concerning the spiritual life. Many versions in print for hundreds of years; get ISBN 0-8091-2233-2, as it uses modern English.

“The Desert Fathers”, by Helen Waddell. Lives of the desert ascetics about 400AD. Different circumstances than most live in, but instructive and inspiring.

“Raised from the Dead”, by Fr. Albert Hebert. 400 resurrection miracles by the saints. Presented in a positive, clean, and inspiring manner. Examines the potential of faith in this life.

“The Way of Divine Love”, by Sr. Josefa Menendez (1890-1923). Sr. Menendez was called by Christ to share in his redemptive sufferings. She died at age 33 after years of heroic suffering, and love. Christ guided her to the altar of sacrifice, and she recorded his advice and revelations.

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