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Bishop of Jerusalem – A Fictionalized Biography of James, The Author of the Epistle that Bears His Name

Glen Williamson

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BISHOP OF JERUSALEM-- A FICTIONALIZED
BIOGRAPHY OF JAMES, THE AUTHOR OF THE
EPISTLE THAT BEARS HIS NAME

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of
Western Evangelical Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
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APPROVED BY

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Bishop of Jerusalem
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INTRODUCTION

Bishop of Jerusalem, a story of James, the Lord's brother, emerged with a certain awesome sense of finality after long periods of study and contemplation. It is a fictionalized biography of a man whom God used (behind the scenes) to interpret truth and provide guidelines necessary to the establishing of the church of Jesus Christ upon the earth.

Admittedly, the writer began with some preconceived notions regarding the man, but with no mental images so deeply engrained they could not dissolve easily in any new light received along the way.

In this study of James, his character, his appearance, his personality, and the unique influence of his life upon his contemporaries evolve naturally from a fast moving narrative that is free from tedious footnotes and argumentive theses.

Early in the research, it became the writer's conviction that James has been the least honored, the most controversial, and, indirectly, the most influential of all the early church leaders. Without such conviction, this work would not have been undertaken.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	Page ii
Introduction	iii
Chapter One	1
Two	15
Three	26
Four	41
Five	53
Six	64
Seven	77
Eight	90
Nine	101
Ten	116
Eleven	128
Twelve	138
Thirteen	148
Fourteen	160
Fifteen	173
Sixteen	183
Seventeen	194
Eighteen	205
Nineteen	215
Twenty	227
Twenty-One	241
Twenty-Two	251
Bibliography	264

Note: When an extra space denoting a change of time or scene occurs at the bottom of a page, the word, (Space) appears.

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BISHOP OF JERUSALEM

by

Glen Williamson

Chapter One

James was five and busy with the possibilities this magic age provides. For instance, he was allowed for the first time to accompany his brother Simeon to the rabbinical school at the synagogue, an institution of which the citizens of Nazareth were justly proud. James was a quiet, handsome lad, whom everyone (except his brother) openly admired. Ironically, to be accepted by Simeon was the one thing James really longed for, but in this he failed completely.

Simeon was nine; a little lad with skinny legs and a narrow face, the narrowness being accentuated by a slender nose that seemed always to be pointing toward a tiny receding

chin. And to the left of his upper forehead, there was a cowlick which no amount of brushing ever conquered. Added to his problem was the solemn fact that he knew he was just plain homely for the children of Nazareth - cruel as children are prone to be - were always telling him so. And they dared to laugh when they did it. Poor, unhappy lad! He was understandably jealous of his younger brother with whom nature had dealt much more generously.

One sultry afternoon in midsummer, the two lads coming from opposite directions approached their home, a flat roofed house standing beside a deserted carpenter shop. To their surprise, a tall handsome man with a full black beard was coming down the steps. The boys knew him as Johanan, the vendor.

Johanan made regular trips to Nazareth. He always led a donkey hitched to a cart laden with all manner of merchandise including toys for boys, and all the children loved him.

"Hey there, boys," he greeted James and Simeon as they approached him. "You had better hurry into the house, for your Aunt Adina has some good news for you."

They ran.

Adina was the only "parent" James could remember clearly. Vaguely, he thought he recalled another house where his mother and father were confined to beds of illness, but he had heard the story so many times it may have only seemed real to him.

The one thing he did remember was his brother, standing by the bed, crying as though his heart was broken.

Then, his Aunt Adina had taken both of the lads upon her lap and told them to go ahead and cry all they wanted to, for their mamma and papa had gone away, and she was going to be their mamma now.

"We'll have lots of good times together," she promised, "and someday you'll understand all about it."

Later, James asked Simeon about the traumatic incident, but the older boy must have been ashamed of his tears, for he flatly refused to discuss it.

None of this mattered now, as the boys stood before their aunt to hear the good news they had been promised.

"Boys," she began with a mysterious air. "How would you like to have a real mother and father, and a little brother to play with?"

James danced with joy, but Simeon became sullen, plainly pessimistic. He didn't like the way things were, but neither did he welcome any change, for he was sure it would be for the worse.

"You boys have heard me talk about your Uncle Joseph who owns this house and shop," Adina stated.

"Yeah, we know," answered Simeon without enthusiasm. "He's the old man who married a real young girl and took her away just before we moved to Nazareth."

"You hear all the gossip, don't you?" Adina observed with a hint of displeasure.

"Well," Simeon went on. "That's what everyone is saying, and that's not all I heard, either."

"That's enough!" Adina snapped, and there was something in her voice that said she meant it. "Now both of you listen, and I'll tell you the good news."

"Your Uncle Joseph took his pretty bride, Mary, to Bethlehem because that mean old king in Jerusalem and the authorities in Rome want more taxes. They are counting the people."

"Well," she went on, "Johanan just came all the way from Judea, and he says that Mary has a baby boy. So, when the family returns to Nazareth, some day, you will have a little brother."

James clapped his hands with glee, but Simeon destroyed his moment of ecstasy, saying, "Aw, quit your clapping. Who wants a baby around anyway?"

"He won't be as much a baby as you think," Adina explained carefully. "He's already more than a year old. He'll probably be running around, talking and laughing, by the time we get to see him."

"Why don't they come home right away?" asked James. "I would like to have a little brother. I could teach him all kinds of things and take care of him and everything."

Simeon sneered. Adina loved both her boys and longed to help the older one to develop a healthy self-image which in turn would solve James' dilemma. But she faced a problem of her own. She was fully aware that when Joseph and Mary returned, her brother would become the undisputed head of the house, and Mary would assume her rightful place as Mother of the family. Adina would be expected to stay on as one of the clan, of course, and for that she was determined to be grateful. Many widows were not situated nearly so well and, besides, she would be close to James and Simeon who would know she was their special friend.

Another month rolled by.

It didn't rain often in late summer in Nazareth, so nearly everyone was happy when a bank of dark clouds appeared in the western sky. Soon there were flashes of lightning followed by rolling peals of thunder, and the first large drops of rain spattered the yellow dust.

James was lonely as he watched the gathering storm, for earlier Simeon had run off with some other boys to play in an open field outside the town. As usual, he had cried back over his shoulder to James, saying, "You can't come with us. You're too young." James might have believed that if one of the fellows hadn't yelled, "Aw, let him come along; he'll be all right," to which Simeon had reacted angrily. It was then

that James hid himself between the house and the shop to give vent to his pent-up tears.

Adina was working in the house when the storm drew near. She heard the first light patter on the roof above her head as she caught the clean, fresh scent of rain. Quickly she climbed the stone steps to the roof-top - a patio, really, where the little family often ate their meals - from where she could see in every direction. Simeon and the boys were far away, but she was certain they would find shelter, so she called to James.

"I'm down here," he cried. "I'll go inside the shop until the rain stops."

"All right," she answered, "but be careful. Don't hurt yourself with the tools in there. Come in as soon as the shower is over."

James opened the door and stepped inside the workroom. There was a heavy wooden bench against the back wall to which was attached a homemade wooden vice. Tools, such as they were, hung from wooden pegs, and a pile of rough boards were stacked neatly on huge brackets which extended out from the wall to the right. The boy pulled a three-legged stool out from under the bench and sat down. With his elbows on his knees, his chin in his hands, he closed his eyes, deciding to think only pleasant thoughts as he enjoyed the sound of the rain that began beating hard upon the roof above him. He tried to believe

that everything was working out well, that soon he would have a little brother. Then he heard steps - running steps in the rain - swiftly approaching the little shop.

Suddenly, the door sprang open and in popped a slender girl whose shawl was dripping water to the floor, as she wiped the moisture from her face and hair. James knew the youngster well enough, and he disliked her. The girl's name was Marta - at least that was what everyone called her - and she was about the age of Simeon. She was about that skinny too, and James was vaguely aware that there was something about her close set eyes and her Roman nose that caused her to resemble his older brother. The children, at their play, often laughed at her as they did at Simeon, for the two unfortunate children did indeed look something alike. This accidental resemblance, however, was not the reason James tended to detest her. The problem was that she liked James and was forever pawing over him and giggling, as he tried to avoid her. And now, he was quite sure he was in for it again there in the little shop that rainy afternoon. So he began to use his excellent five-year-old mind to divert her attention to another. He was not aware that anyone had used that strategy before.

As soon as the silly youngster had shaken the water from her garment, she turned to James with her toothy smile and spoke her little piece abruptly.

"Jamey," she said. "I like you. You know that, don't you? Why don't you like me?"

James looked squarely into her jet black eyes, the only pretty thing about her.

"I guess I don't like any girls," he said. "But I think I know someone who does like you real well."

The lonely girl grabbed the bait. "Who, Jamey?" she asked, unable to conceal her curiosity and hope. "Tell me who it is!"

"It's my brother, Simeon," he answered with great seriousness, and while he was not sure what made him say it, he did think that it was so.

"How come I don't know that?" she asked suspiciously.

"Maybe it's because he's bashful," James suggested.

"Yeah," she answered. "Or maybe it's because he knows I like you."

"Well," she went on, "I do like you, but I like Simeon too. Will you tell him that for me, Jamey?"

"Sure, I'll tell him tonight when we go to bed," the boy promised, and she was sure that he would do it.

Stashed away under the big bench was another three-legged stool exactly like the one James was sitting on. Marta dragged it out, and after wiping away the dust and the cobwebs, she sat down to face the boy with a look of desperate concern. Her coy manner and silly giggling were gone completely.

"Jamey," she said, in a frightened whisper. "I heard something awful this morning. I'm scared, and I haven't told anyone yet."

"What is it?" the little one asked with wide-eyed wonder.

"I was helping Mother clean the synagogue for the Sabbath, and I heard Rabbi Ittai talking real low with Johanan, the vendor with the black beard. Do you know the one I mean?" she asked.

"Yes," the lad answered, speaking barely above a whisper. He moved his stool a little closer to the girl, for he sensed that her concern might have to do with the most important thing in his life, and certainly that was true.

"I never listen to grown-ups when they talk out loud," she said. "But when they whisper, I try to hear everything. Do you do that, Jamey?"

"I guess so, maybe," he answered. "What did you hear?"

"The vendor just came back from another trip to Jerusalem, and he told the rabbi that old King Herod had ordered his soldiers to go to Bethlehem and kill every boy baby they could find! He said that men with huge knives and spears and clubs went from one house to another, slashing and beating little boys to death until he guessed there wasn't even one boy baby left in all that part of Judea!"

"Jamey, what's the matter?" Marta cried. "I didn't mean to scare you. Those bad soldiers aren't coming here,

and they only hurt little babies, anyway. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have told you."

James made no response to the tragic tale. He couldn't. He was stunned by the horror of it and fearful, of course, that the little brother he longed for had died a horrible death. He felt cold; he wanted to cry, but no tears came. He wanted to be alone.

Neither of the children spoke again for several minutes. Then, as suddenly as it came, the storm passed on, and the rain was over.

"I'm going, Jamey," Marta said quietly. "I'm sorry I frightened you. I'm not going to tell another soul what I heard. Good-by."

The boy still did not answer, so she left him there alone.

Slowly he pulled his thoughts together. He wondered if his Aunt Adina knew of this, and if she would tell Simeon and him about it. He shuddered.

James was too young and his life had been too sheltered for him to know anything of the violence that characterized the era in which he was to live his life. He wanted to run and ask his aunt why such an awful thing could happen, but he knew deep down that he would never be the first to talk about it. He wouldn't even try to tell Simeon. If those awful things were true, someone else would be talking about

them soon. Then he might mention what Marta has said that afternoon.

"Ja-a-ames!" Adina was calling. "Come in now; the rain is over."

The boy carefully replaced the stools beneath the big bench and made his way to the house. His aunt seemed to be her usual good-natured self, apparently unaware of the disturbing news the young one carried within his childish breast. Then Simeon came in, and he too showed no signs of having heard the tragic story. He was in a better humor than usual, for the sudden storm had been a welcome diversion from the torrid summer weather.

Later that evening, when it was nearly time for the two boys to go to bed, there came a firm, loud knocking at the door. It was startling, for friends never called at that time of day. Adina tried to hide her concern as she lifted the latch to welcome whomsoever might be standing on the stoop. James found it hard to conceal his avid interest. He felt certain the late visitor was none other than Rabbi Ittai.

He was right: Ittai Bar Natan, a stark figure with his black linen breast scarf; and with the rabbi was Johanan, the bearded vendor. James and Simeon were hurried off to a pallet in the far corner of the room, while Adina and her

callers made their way up the stone stairway to the roof where they could converse in private.

The boys crawled beneath a cover before either of them spoke a word. James was afraid Simeon would ask him if he knew why those men were there, but the older lad could hardly have cared less. The things adults talked about held little interest for him, especially when the rabbi was involved.

Then James remembered that he had a promise to keep.

"Simeon," he said softly. "Do you like girls?"

"I dunno," the other boy answered. "Why?"

"I know a girl who likes you a lot," said James.

The lonely Simeon who thought that no one really liked him was finding it hard to hide his feelings. His curiosity and his hopes were running a close race.

"Who is it?" he asked, failing miserably to sound as though he didn't care.

"It's Marta," James answered softly. "She came into the shop today to get out of the rain, and that was when she told me."

"Well, I don't like her," blurted Simeon, but James was certain he didn't mean it.

When the boys awoke the next morning, the sun was already shining. It was the day before Sabbath, and Adina was calling to remind them that they must hurry off to the synagogue to

dust the benches and see that all was in order. As they were eating the food she had prepared for them, James was watching her closely. Adina may have sensed it, however she was certain he could not know the terrible tales she had heard from the lips of the vendor. She knew she would have to tell the boys something, though, so she sat down by them and tried to speak as calmly as she could.

"Boys," she began. "Do you remember that I told you Mary had a baby boy? Well, I may have been mistaken. Maybe I was wrong, so just try to forget about it, will you?"

Simeon didn't seem to be listening, but James answered her, saying, "Yes, Aunt Adina. We'll try to forget." Then, for the first time since he had heard the awful news, he burst into tears. Adina took him in her arms as Simeon, angry and disgusted, walked away.

That afternoon, though, James managed a broad grin as he watched Simeon and Marta walking together in the narrow street that separated the houses of Nazareth; giggling and playfully pushing one another off the path. That night, both Adina and James noticed a marked change in the older boy's attitude. And for the record, it might be added also, that it marked the beginning of James' entrance into his brother's world which eventually would prove the more beneficial for Simeon. But more importantly, James was already acquiring a

Bishop of Jerusalem
Williamson

-14-

habit of keeping his own counsel; speaking only when spoken to, and peering into the hearts of problems while others groped in darkness.

Chapter Two

The house of Herod the Great was a magnificent palace within the giant protective walls of Jerusalem. And the Temple of Solomon, restored and enlarged by Herod, gleamed white inside the eternal city, a monument indeed to the God of Israel. It was said that it was no less a monument to the king who ordered its restoration and to the architect and builders who saw its completion. The monstrous shrine was also a pretentious symbol of the durability of God's chosen people with the strength to rise from every fall. It was through those chosen vessels that God was revealing himself to Adam's race.

Early one morning, when most of the royal household were sleeping, two elderly slaves were wide awake, talking

in subdued whispers from their hard, thin pallets. High above their heads, a small window was admitting a shaft of pale yellow light from a somber sky. Their dim eyes were unable to penetrate the gloom, but it didn't matter. They had been whispering to one another across this narrow room every morning for more years than they could remember. It was their one chance in the twenty-four hours to communicate, to unburden their troubled breasts. They were not supposed to talk; just work and sleep.

The men were frightened, but this was nothing new for fear had stalked their steps for forty years. From a time when, bound in chains, they had shuffled their way through shifting sands; hence, to be sailed through stormy seas from Athens to Judea, their lives had been in constant jeopardy. Their prolonged "escaping of the axe" had not been accidental. Well they knew that nothing less than constant vigil and unwavering obedience had purchased their survival in the house of Herod. They had seen hundreds of servants - slaves and freedmen - come and go, many of them dying violent deaths for minor misdemeanors at the whim of the angered master.

"Few men there are who know the king as we do," came a measured whisper from the darkness.

"Aye, and he's aging fast, Dictus," the other slave responded. "His head is getting older than his body."

"You're right, Oplacus," countered Dictus. "The very

thing that has kept him alive and on the throne for so long a time is about to do him in."

The men were alluding to the "Slaughter of the Innocents," a decree that even Rome was not expected to condone.

"He will not be with us long," said Oplacus. "Will Antipas succeed him?"

"Not alone," the other responded. "His brothers would kill him, and he knows it. They may all be dead by then, anyway. Herod has had three of his sons assassinated already, you know."

"Yeah, the conceited cowards," observed the first. "No one of the three who are living now is strong enough to oppose the others nor smart enough for Caesar to trust with Herod's domain."

"Interesting, isn't it?" whispered Dictus. "What do you think will happen to us?"

It was then the conversation ceased, for the cautious bondsmen caught the sound of hurried steps on the pavement above them. Moments later, as they were feigning deep slumber, snoring softly as aging servants are expected to do, there came a loud pounding on their door. It brought them to their feet.

"Dictus!" cried an excited voice from without. "The prince wants you at once. He said to tell you his father is beside himself, and you are the only one who can handle him."

Hurry!"

"Tell him I'll be right there," the old one answered, and the steps were heard again speeding up the rough stone stairs, then receding down the marble corridor toward the royal quarters.

"I'm not surprised," whispered Dictus, as he prepared to leave. "Antipas has been sleeping just outside his father's door for several nights. He refuses to trust the post to a servant for fear of being murdered in his sleep. Our young messenger was his new slave who arrived here from Corinth a few days ago. He had been at the prince's side, day and night, with a dagger concealed on his person."

"Be careful," warned his friend.

"Yeah, I'm expecting anything," Dictus answered, and he hurried out the door.

Oplacus had hardly gotten to sleep when a second knocking brought him to his feet again. Pulling a quilt around his aching loins, he limped to the door and opened it to face a handsome, young stranger. It seemed apparent that he was every inch a gentleman, a Greek, who smilingly offered a greeting in the native tongue.

Oplacus studied the young man closely, neither changing his expression nor making any pretense of returning the greeting.

"Don't be afraid," the visitor tried to be reassuring.

"I'm a complete stranger to all that's going on here. I've never been in Judea before. Recently, I sold myself into slavery. I'll tell you about that later. I was purchased for Antipas to be an interpreter in the royal court, but until now I have only been a bodyguard for my most insecure master."

The old man held his ground, a habit born of forty years of servitude in a house steeped in both superstition and suspicion. He trusted no one on sight.

"My name is Philius," the handsome one continued. "I'm the currier who came for Dictus a few minutes ago. I've been on guard outside Herod's private quarters with the prince, and I haven't had a wink of sleep for a long time. With Dictus on duty for awhile, at least, I was told to use his pallet to get some rest. Everything seems to be completely disorganized. No quarters have been assigned to me."

"Hand me your dagger, and you may come in." The elderly slave said sternly.

Philius smiled. "You are the cautious one, aren't you?" he said with a hint of humor. "That is good, and I am glad. We will get along well together. About the knife, I had to leave it with the prince." He drew back his garment to assure his new acquaintance that he was indeed unarmed.

"Come in, come in," whispered Oplacus, expressing both confidence and relief. "But speak quietly. It is only in the

early morning like this that Dictus and I dare to talk at all."

"Thank you," the young man answered, as he closed the door behind him and quickly sought the questionable comfort of the straw-filled tick that was still warm from the body of its former occupant.

"I'm awfully tired," he whispered, "but I have some questions I would like to ask before I go to sleep. That is, if you think it is safe."

"Yes," the old one assured him, "but keep your voice down and your ears open. I assume you must be a man of letters and an excellent athlete," he went on. "I am anxious to know what tongues you speak beside our Greek. Then I'll try to leave the questioning with you."

"Oh, I have no trouble with Aramaic, Latin, and a number of dialects. I've been working on the old Hebrew for a long time, and I do pretty well with that. The traders who come through from India have a difficult lingo, but I can converse with them. If I had a chance to get more practice, I would soon do much better."

"Now, let me get to my problems," he went on. "I think I have convinced Antipas that I have no interest in Judean politics, and I am quite sure he trusts me. That is most important, of course, but I've got to know what's going on here. What's the awful crime the old king has committed that he's babbling about in his sleep?"

"Oh," Oplacus answered, "he's had all the male babies in the town of Bethlehem slaughtered by his soldiers. They didn't dare refuse to carry out the orders so they took care of the nasty business as quickly as they could. They snatched the little ones from their mothers' arms and stabbed and clubbed and beat them until some of the soldiers themselves were as crazy as the one who issued the decree. When they rode back into Jerusalem they were the sickest looking regiment of soldiers in the whole Empire. At least two of them have taken their own lives.

"I tell you, Philius, the old king is crazy - old and crazy! He couldn't have known what he was doing."

"I see," the young man answered, hardly able to believe his ears. "But, why? Even if his mind was affected, something must have stimulated the action. And why would he limit the atrocity to one small town?"

"Well, there was a reason all right," the old slave admitted, "but it was a poor one. Somebody told him that a boy had been born in Bethlehem who was to become king of the Jews, to actually take his throne away from him. Can you imagine an old man like Herod thinking that he could live long enough to have a baby grow up and take his throne away?

"Of course, some say he was thinking of a Herod dynasty, but even so the whole thing was senseless. It takes years for a baby to become a king, and who would know about it,

anyway?"

"The Messiah!" cried Philius.

"Sh-h, not so loud," the old one warned. "And what about this Messiah? I've been hearing about him ever since I came to Jerusalem forty years ago. As I understand it, he's supposed to be a king with an army strong enough to take over the Empire. I doubt if there's a single member of the Sanhedrin who believes that. I think it's a promise to keep the superstitious masses in check. What do you know about him?"

"The prophets said he would be born in Bethlehem," Philius answered simply.

"Oh, I see," mused Oplacus thoughtfully. "Perhaps, then, there was something in the prophetic writings that pinpointed the time too.

"Hm-m-m," he continued. "Maybe you believe in those prophets."

Philius laughed softly. "I don't believe anything I can't see and feel," he answered. "At least, not at this point in my study. Someday I may consider the questions of where we came from and where we're going, but right now my only interest in the religions is limited to their influence upon governments. Where Rome came from and how long she will stand is much more important to me. She will fall, you know."

"Yes," agreed Oplacus. "Rome will fall."

"Multiple gods, like those of Greece and Rome, will

never destroy the Empire," said Philius with conviction. "They are images and idols that kings can destroy. Not only that, but where there are many gods, it is believed that they do not agree amongst themselves.

"But this one god of the Hebrews is something else. The Jews believe he created the universe; that he is demanding, but just; that no man or nation can harm him for he is pure spirit, and he's everywhere at all times, something like the air we breathe. And that isn't all. He's supposed to have all knowledge and unlimited power.

"Do you see why that bothers Caesar? He doesn't believe in this god, of course, but neither can he cope with him. He can only hope to destroy his followers if it should become necessary. But he ought to know this has been tried before. I don't think any king or any army can ever annihilate them, for they are everywhere. There are no less than a quarter of a million Jews right here in the vicinity of Jerusalem so the statistics say, and hundreds of thousands more occupy the provinces all the way from Babylon to Britain.

"According to their teaching, their god will set up his own kingdom upon the earth. To accomplish this, he will send this Messiah we've been talking about. He is supposed to be a mighty leader who has contact with God, and who is strong enough to organize all the Jews into a solid unit.

"Did Herod ever think that he might be the Messiah?"

asked Oplacus.

"If he did," Philius answered, "he has been crazy all along. He isn't even a Jew! The Pharisees hold on to him for two or three good reasons. One is that he knows how to get along with Caesar. Besides that, he married one of their women. That probably makes him some sort of an in-law. The real reason they put up with him, though, is that he rebuilt their Temple."

"Yeah, I know," said Oplacus. "I've been here every day during his entire reign. But you know more about all this than I do and you have never been here before. How is that?"

"I've studied," the young man answered simply.

"Now, I have one more question," he went on. "Did Herod's soldiers succeed in killing the youngster they were after?"

"Who knows?" asked Oplacus. "There is a rumor that his parents were warned and escaped with him before the soldiers arrived."

"His parents?" asked Philius. "Then the baby must have had a father."

"All babies have fathers, you know," said the old one, with a hint of sarcasm.

"Not this Messiah," said Philius. "According to the prophets, he is to be born of a virgin."

"Crazy!" cried Oplacus, under his breath. "You had better get that sleep you're needing."

Bishop of Jerusalem
Williamson

-25-

An hour later, Oplacus arose and went to his work, leaving his new young friend sleeping soundly.

Chapter Three

Five years had passed since Adina first brought her little charges to Nazareth. She was sitting alone at a small table on the roof-top on an early autumn afternoon in 754. (That was the year which much later would be known to all the world as One A.D.) She seemed dejected and a bit confused. She had had a long talk with Johanan, the vendor, again that morning. He had tried to assure her that a recent rumor which proclaimed Joseph, Mary, and their little one alive and well was probably true.

"Since Herod is dead," he had told her, "Joseph will no longer be afraid to bring his little family back to Nazareth, if, of course, they did indeed escape the holocaust. You have been patient for a long time, Adina. The Lord will reward

you."

Johanan is such a good friend, Adina mused. For years he had been making trips to Jerusalem and beyond, bringing home the news and all the rumors, good and bad.

Adina was thinking on these things when suddenly she was aroused from her reverie by the braying of a donkey and the sound of cart wheels. She hurried to the edge of the roof where, looking down, she recognized her brother, Joseph, leading a donkey hitched to a well laden cart. At his side was Mary, holding the hand of a four-year-old boy as they approached the old home together.

Down the stone steps to the pavement below, she ran to greet them. Her words of welcome could hardly have been more sincere, and the happy reunion was everything any of them could have hoped for. Once inside the house, Mary, nearly exhausted, dropped into a comfortable chair that her husband had constructed for her years before, and her son crawled into the chair beside her.

Adina brought cool drinks and some small cakes to the table that stood in the center of the room, as Joseph, taking a chair, glanced quickly with expert eye at the walls and floor and furniture.

"You have kept everything in good order, my sister," he said kindly. "We didn't know if anyone was living here, and we wondered about the condition of the property, of course.

"Thank you, for the refreshment," he went on. "It's good to sit and rest awhile."

"I can see that you all need rest," said Adina. "Excuse me while I fix places for you to lie down."

"Yes," said Mary, "we are tired. It will be good to rest, but first we would like to hear whatever important news there may be. We have been hiding out in Egypt for a long time where Joseph found work making ox carts. We seldom heard anything from Judea, and not one word from Galilee."

"I'll try to fill you in quickly," Adina responded. "I'm sorry to have to start with bad news, but soon after you left for Bethlehem, an epidemic swept through Galilee. It didn't last long, but many people were sick with a strange kind of fever, and there were those who didn't recover. You will remember that I was living with our brother Seth and his family over on the coast. He and his Mary both took sick at the same time. I took care of them for ten days; then on the day after Sabbath, Seth died, and a few hours later Mary was gone too."

The good woman paused. It was plain to see that she was on the verge of tears.

"It seemed there was nothing anyone could do." She tried to continue, but Joseph broke in upon her.

"Don't be blaming yourself, Adina," he said kindly.

"We have no doubt you did everything you could."

"Of course," said Mary softly. "But tell us what happened to their boys?"

"I brought them here," she answered as she dried her eyes and struggled to regain her composure. "The house there was a share-cropper's cottage, you know, so we couldn't stay on."

"The landlord did try to be kind, though," she continued. "He gave us the share Seth had coming, and more. Others helped us too, and I have been doing needle work which a good friend sells for me in Jerusalem. We have gotten along fine; the Lord has been very near."

"We must never cease to praise him," said Joseph. "He has great plans which we don't understand, but he will make them clear in his own time."

"Do you mean special plans?" asked Adina.

"Yes, my sister. He has special plans."

After a brief pause, Joseph expressing a paternal interest in the boys, asked if they were in school.

Adina welcomed a chance to brag a bit about her youthful charges. "Oh, yes," she answered. "They are at the synagogue now. You remember Rabbi Attai, of course. He's an excellent teacher of the Scriptures. And Johanan, the friend I spoke of is a most brilliant scholar. When he is here, he teaches the boys mathematics and, sometimes, he even lectures on

astronomy. The rabbi says that most Jewish schools do not enjoy such privileges. 'They teach about the Creator,' he says, 'but not enough about his creation.'"

Adina paused. Then, changing the subject, she said, "It was Johanan who reported the rumor that you had a little son born in Bethlehem. Then later he told us of that awful thing Herod had done and, finally, that you may have escaped the trouble. Only lately he heard that the three of you were alive and well, so we have been expecting you to come home. Only the boys don't know much about any of this. I disappointed James once. I didn't want to do it again if the rumors were not true."

"James, especially," she went on, "has longed for a little brother. He will be the happiest child in all Palestine when he gets home this evening to find Jesus here.

"Jesus is a good boy," said Mary proudly.

"I'm sure he is," agreed Adina. "The Lord must have his hand upon him.

"James and Simeon will be home in a couple of hours. Now, you must excuse me while I fix your pallets," Adina explained, "for I know how worn you are."

"Don't fix a place for me, now, Adina," said Joseph. "I must feed and water our donkey, and I'm anxious to check the shop to see what I'll have to do to get started working again. I can't sleep in the daytime, anyway."

Adina smiled. This older brother hadn't changed a bit. She could see a nostalgic look in his eyes when he spoke of the shop where he learned his trade and where again he would labor hard and long for his loved ones.

Later she heard him sharpening his tools while his pretty wife was sleeping soundly by her little son. Adina was busy. There were adjustments to be made, problems to be resolved, and she was troubled with mixed emotions. Her burden was for her boys.

James was now eight-years-old, and he hadn't changed much, really. He was still a handsome child, athletic, and extremely quiet; never failing to give the impression that he knew much more than he was saying. He did well in school, for the rabbi and Johanan sang his praises until Adina feared he might become conceited. He didn't. He was quick tempered which, together with his broad shoulders, demanded the respect of the other children. And since he always managed to control his tongue, he lived a remarkably peaceful existence.

Simeon was thirteen. His friendship with Marta was firmly established and beneficial to them both. They played together; they felt secure and wanted.

Marta had developed a yearning for learning, although it was generally conceded that girls could gain whatever knowledge was necessary to their happiness and success within the shelter of their homes. The rabbinical school was an institu-

tion for boys, administered by men.

"It isn't fair!" Marta screamed one day as she and Simeon discussed the issue.

"Well, don't blame me," the boy retorted. "I don't make the rules," and Marta stalked away, leaving him angry and annoyed. It was the nearest the two had ever come to quarreling.

Simeon and James had learned to understand and respect one another, and Adina was more than a little aware that this improved situation could easily be altered, if not actually destroyed. She paused to pray and vowed she would do everything possible to make the new arrangement work. She knew, though, that she could not control the reactions of the boys, especially Simeon's. She had no way of knowing if this older one would accept a little brother into their home. And, more importantly, whether the boys would adjust to a new voice of authority; and to a new mother to be respected, obeyed, and loved. She wondered if Mary had pondered these things, and if she would be strong enough to assert herself without incurring their disfavor. Neither was she sure she could drop into second place without producing a storm of protest from her proteges.

She walked over and stood beside the pallet where Mary, with Jesus' head upon her arm, presented a picture of perfect peace. The mother and child were sleeping the dreamless sleep

of devout and guilt-free children of God, and their beauty reflected something much more sacred than mere filial love and devotion. Adina could not define her emotions, but she was strangely aware that her admiration had melted into an adoration that caused her to bow her head and reverently close her eyes. All her life she had dearly loved the Lord, but never had she felt his presence in such abundance, such awful splendor. It seemed to envelop her - body, soul and spirit - until she dared not move a muscle lest the spell be broken and the moment of ecstasy vanish forever. Then, hearing footsteps, she hurried to the door with her fingers to her lips.

The rabbinical school was especially interesting on this particular day. It was fortunate that no one at the synagogue had noticed the arrival of Joseph and his family, for the excitement would probably have ended the excellent class. Seldom had the boys listened with such rapt attention. Johanan was explaining the movement of the moon and the planets in relation to the sun and the stars. His knowledge of the heavens was amazing even to Rabbi Attai. Usually, only the children of twelve years and older were admitted to Johanan's lectures, but the teacher had asked that even the youngest of the children be allowed to sit in the class that day.

"Remember," he said with great seriousness when the boys

were gathered in a semi-circle before him, "We read in the ancient text that God created the heavens and the earth. Today, we are studying that creation, particularly the heavens.

"Now, before we go any farther," he said, "I want to warn you never to allow anyone to tell you that the sun or moon or stars, in any way, direct our lives or foretell our futures. Neither should we worship them. They do not effect us any more than we effect them. They are a part of God's creation; so are we. But when we see the order they maintain and the beauty they exhibit, God always seems to draw closer to us. He seems more powerful and our faith is strengthened. Doesn't it seem sometimes that we can almost touch him?"

James, who for the first time was sitting at the feet of Johanan, was enthralled. He had a question, but he was quite sure that he wasn't supposed to speak out. And since he almost never spoke, even when he was expected to, something bordering on a miracle would be required to motivate him to voice his query. But be that as it may, James did speak out, for he had to know.

"Why can't we touch him?" he cried. "If he made us and loves us, shouldn't he want us to touch him?"

Johanan glanced at the rabbi who was an excellent man of God, thoroughly schooled in the Scriptures, and (theoretically) always prepared to answer any question asked by even his most advanced students. The question posed by James, however, was

so simple, so fundamental, and yet so hard to answer with any degree of satisfaction, that he was glad it was being directed to Johanan rather than to himself.

Johanan smiled. "God does want his children to touch him," he said, "but not until they have the faith to believe that he is, even without touching him. So we must have faith; faith enough to wait, for when we are ready, God will send the Messiah."

"How shall we know him?" cried another.

Johanan glanced at the rabbi again, who stepped forward immediately to recite and interpret the words of the prophet;

"'He shall grow up as a tender plant, a root out of dry earth,'"* he said. "That means that he shall be born a tiny baby and grow up as other babies do."

Every eye was upon the rabbi as he spoke with deep feeling.

"'When we see him there will be no beauty that we should desire him,'"** he went on. "That doesn't mean that he will be homely and undesirable. It means that he will not appear as a great soldier with gleaming sword and shining medals, but as an ordinary person."

The good man paused to see if his youthful audience was following him. It was.

"'He will be hated and rejected,'" he continued. "'A man of sorrow and grief. He will be wounded for our transgressions,

* Isaiah 53:2a NASB

** Isaiah 53:26 NASB

and bruised for our iniquities, and finally we shall be healed with his stripes. He will be oppressed, but he will open not his mouth. He will appear as a lamb being taken to the slaughter. He will do no violence, neither will there be any deceit in his mouth, yet it shall please the Lord to bruise him, to put him to grief.'"

Pausing again, the man of God saw tears in the eyes of his youthful listeners. Then he concluded his recitation, saying, "'When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.'"*

It was late in the afternoon when the school was dismissed. As the boys were leaving the building, Marta was waiting outside for Simeon, and James heard her ask him what the lecture was about.

Poor Simeon! "I can't repeat it!" he cried honestly. "I wish you would ask the rabbi to let you sit in and listen."

"Oh, I wouldn't dare," she answered, not trying to hide her indignation. Then they were out of range for James to hear any more of the conversation.

It was not that he was eavesdropping. He never did that. He simply overheard what they were saying, and he had often wondered why girls did not attend the classes.

When the Messiah comes, he mused, maybe he will invite

* Isaiah 53:5-9 NASB

them in.

As James rounded the corner, bringing his home into view, he was surprised to see a bearded man busily unloading a donkey cart right in front of the house. At his side was a small boy, bright eyed and alert, trying in vain to help him. But when the boy noticed the older lad approaching, he lost interest in the task at hand, and stepped out boldly as if to greet him.

James was amused and impressed by the calm but aggressive gesture of the youngster who seemed old for his size, and apparently unafraid of strangers.

"I'm James," he said quietly. "I live here. Who are you?"

"James!" the little one cried out with pleasure. "You're my brother. I'm Jesus."

Suddenly James remembered the old rumors that used to make him dream, and he came to the startling realization that his fondest hopes had actually materialized. Great thrills of joy, like hot chills if such were possible, coursed through him in recurring ripples as he put his arm around the younger lad, and together they hurried into the house where Adina and Mary stood smiling their approval. There was little doubt that Jesus had found a friend who would love him, play with him, and teach him; one who had already accepted him as his brother.

Then Simeon came in, wide-eyed with wonder, and plainly disturbed by what was happening to the little household. He resisted change, naturally, and he was unable to hide his feelings. Adina introduced him first to Joseph, who wisely greeted him as though he were an adult - or nearly so - which tended to be disarming, inflating his sagging ego.

Adina was praying silently as she said to Mary, "Now you have still another son." Then, turning to the boy, she smiled in an attempt to hide the tears that were welling up in her hazel eyes. "Simeon," she said, and her voice betrayed her emotions, "Now you have a father and a mother as most of your friends do."

Mary laid her hand upon the lad's thin shoulder, and with only a semblance of a smile, she said, "I like boys, and I guess thirteen is about the best age they ever have. I will be depending upon you to help me with my new responsibilities."

Simeon had made up his mind to dislike Mary, but there was something about her that he couldn't describe. She was so young - so pale and frail - and so openly frank that his boyish heart went out to her in spite of himself. It made him angry at himself, and he vowed secretly to keep his feelings hidden.

"Do I have to call you mother?" he asked sullenly.

"Not unless you want to," Mary answered wisely, "but

it will make me happy if you do."

Forgotten for the moment was the littlest lad, who was standing by, manifesting a childish interest in all that was going on. And since introductions were rituals reserved for grown-ups, he stepped up to Simeon and said, "I'm glad you're my brother. I'm Jesus."

Simeon smiled for the first time since entering the room. He liked Jesus, too, but he was determined never to allow himself to be carried away by anything sentimental, which reminded him that Marta was waiting outside. He knew the length and breadth of her patience.

"Marta is waiting for me, Aunt Adina," he said. "May I. . ."

"Of course," Adina broke in, anticipating his request. "Ask her in at once."

"Who is Marta?" Mary asked, as Simeon went out the door.

"Oh, she's a friend of Simeon's," Adina answered. "They have played together for years. Neither of them have many friends, so they are really good for one another. For Simeon's sake, I'm sure you will be nice to her."

Simeon came in leading Marta by the hand. As usual, there was nothing shy about the girl, and she expressed her pleasure in being invited into the circle by flashing her toothy smile.

Adina carefully explained to her that these new people

were to be father, mother, and little brother to Simeon and James. "I'm sure they would like to be your good friends, if you will let them." she concluded.

"Sure, I want them to be my friends," cried Marta with genuine enthusiasm. Then smiling broadly at the little one, who was studying her with a curiosity that must have been reserved for small boys, she said, "I like you. Do you like me?"

"I like everyone," Jesus answered honestly.

Chapter Four

It was early in the morning in the tiny room where Oplacus and Philius were carrying on another of their carefully guarded conversations. They were sad as they talked about their good friend, Dictus.

The aged slave had stayed with King Herod day and night, tending him through fits of delirium, which together with an advanced senility had turned the ancient ruler from a mere tyrant to a wild and angry beast. Dictus was alone with the raving king the morning of his death, and some of the royal family had accused the faithful slave of failing in his duty. The strain had been too great. Dictus, who had been on duty for a long long time, laid down upon a couch that had been provided for him in Herod's chamber, and there he slept a

peaceful sleep from which he was never to awaken. Philius had taken charge of the body, and he, with Oplacus and two other slaves, had given their aged friend a decent burial.

"Dictus was the best friend I ever had," Oplacus said with sadness. "I will miss him more than anyone can know. The royal household will miss him too, for it shall never know so faithful a servant again."

Philius lay quietly, allowing the old one to ramble on with his reminiscing, for it was good for him to unburden his heart.

"I'll be with him soon, wherever he is," the old one said with resignation. Then, after a pause, he raised his voice again.

"Philius, my friend," he began. "Do you hear me?"

"Yes, of course," the young man assured him. "I've been listening to everything you say."

"Philius," he said, "you have studied; you know all about a thousand things that I have never heard of. Tell me, what do you think is out there?"

"Out where?" the other asked, a bit confused.

"Out there," Oplacus answered firmly. "Old Dictus has to awaken again somewhere, doesn't he? Or don't you believe that?"

Philius was silent for several minutes, then he turned on his pallet to face his friend.

"Oplacus," he said, "I'm a practical fellow. When the sun is shining, and everyone is going about his business in this work-a-day world we live in, it is hard for me to believe that all of life isn't wrapped up in what we see and hear and feel in any given moment. It seems that nothing in the past or future matters; that now is the only time that counts.

"But, sometimes the sun isn't shining," he went on, "and people pause in their pursuits to pay respect to one who has fallen, like we did for our good friend just a few days ago. Then, for the moment, at least, I feel strangely different about it all."

He paused and Oplacus waited silently for Philius to continue. He was anxious to hear him out, and he didn't want to disturb his train of thought.

"Oplacus," the young man went on, measuring his words to fit his thoughts exactly. "There is a theory that when the mind and body dies, one lives on only through whatever influence his life may have bequeathed to the world. This is sort of immortality. If the world were to go on forever which to me is inconceivable, that theory might be relevant. But if the world wears out some day and all of life is ended, all this influence we talk about dies too, and there is no immortality. Not only that, but in that day, there will have been no purpose in the existence of a civilization. It will

have accomplished exactly nothing. And this makes life a sort of silly experiment, ridiculous, unbelievable."

"Yes," the old man answered. "I follow you. Go on, I must hear the rest."

"Our Greek philosophers have come up with profound thoughts on the subject, we know, but they are hardly convincing. It seems to me that these Jews with their simple belief in one living God, may be beating the right drum. This God, whom they say, gave them moral and sacrificial laws through which they may claim their salvation while waiting for the Messiah who will save them from their sins, is so realistic that it's frightening."

"But why," queried Oplacus, "would such a God be interested in only a small segment of his creation?"

"Ah, my friend," the young man answered, "you're more of a thinker than I supposed. Probably no greater question than that was ever asked. When this Messiah comes, he will have to prove himself by extending his promise of salvation to any living soul in all creation who will accept it. If he limits it to the Jews, he will be just another selfish, man-made deity like all the rest."

"Thank you," the old slave shouted with a note of genuine appreciation. "I have not felt this good since I was a little boy."

"You'd better keep your voice down or you may wish you

were a little boy again," said Philius.

"But," the young man went on, "I'm not sure I understand the reason for your joy. Are you planning to become a proselyte and join the House of David?"

"No," said Oplacus, happily. "I don't have to. I believe in that one God you talk about, and if he knows everything, he knows that too. While you were talking, I told him so, and suddenly I could hardly contain myself. And since Dictus and I always agreed on everything, if he were here, he would join me in this as well."

"I see," said Philius thoughtfully. "And since this all-knowing God knows Dictus heart, he will excuse his ignorance. Is that what you are saying?"

"Of course, of course," the old one cried. "I shall be with him again, don't you see? And since God is eternal, we will be immortal. Old Dictus and I will be faithful slaves of God forever."

Philius lay quietly for several minutes, then he raised his head from the pillow he had improvised by folding over the upper end of the pallet. "Oplacus," he whispered. "Are you still awake?"

"Oh, yes," the other answered. "I'm so excited I may never sleep again!"

"I just wanted to say," the young man continued, "that you have given me something to think about, and I want to

thank you. You're faith is astonishing. Don't ever lose it."

When Philius awoke again, the light from the one small window filled the room. Oplacus' bed was empty; the old slave had left quietly and no doubt was already at his post of duty. Philius arose quickly, realizing that he had overslept, but even so he didn't report to the royal household until he had washed his body and carefully groomed himself for the day. He was every inch a gentleman, and he was not about to allow his appearance to deny it.

When he arrived at his post, a sentry informed him that he was to report at once to the prince.

"H-m-m, so the mighty Antipas is about to personally punish his slave for his tardiness this morning," said Philius with a hint of amusement.

"You had better wipe that smile off your face," the sentry warned him. "If you don't the prince will see that someone does it for you."

"Have no fear, my friend and fellow sufferer," the young man answered with exaggerated seriousness. "I shall face his majesty with stark sobriety and humble repentance."

The stony-faced sentry was unable to withhold a smile. "Wait," he said, "I have been instructed to announce you're arrival."

"Announce my arrival?" Philius exploded. "What in the name of Jove and all his cohorts is going on? Whoever heard

of a slave being treated like a visiting dignitary?

"H-m-m, I think I'm beginning to see," he continued thoughtfully. "The haughty master is in a jovial mood this morning, so before he pronounces sentence, he is about to make sport of me to amuse his friends."

"I don't think so," the sentry answered cautiously. "No one knows just what is going on here, these days, but I must say that the prince seemed neither jovial nor angry, but certainly dead serious, as he gave me my instructions about an hour ago."

Moments later, Philius was standing before Herod Antipas as he sat in his father's chair. At his side sat a dignified gentleman, whose appearance fairly shouted that he was some sort of emissary from Rome. And at his side sat a black haired, blue eyed lass of seventeen summers, whom Philius decided quickly must surely be the prettiest damsel in all the mighty Empire. Her expression was one of genuine interest and approval as she met the young man's questioning but apparently fearless gaze.

At least SHE likes me, mused Philius, as he stood wondering what strange fate the next few moments might reveal to him. He didn't have to wait long. Antipas, who was an enigmatic, weak/strong personage in Philius' expert opinion, was doing his best to appear strong and mighty as he questioned this most extraordinary of all his human chattels. But there

was something in Antipas' expression, especially in the area of his mouth and chin, that revealed the sense of insecurity that had plagued him all his life and would follow him to his grave.

"Philius," he said, without explaining who his visitors were, "I must confess that I have been too busy to find out just who you are or what is the condition of your servitude. You were purchased in Athens by my agent, particularly to act as interpreter in the court, for you have something of a reputation as a linguist."

Philius nodded.

"Now, I have reason to believe that you are of a substantial family and background," the prince went on. "Will you explain how you got into serfdom and became my chattel."

"Yes sir," Philius answered without hesitation. "My father was a successful man of commerce for many years, until he made some poor investments and suddenly found himself in deep debt. To save my family's honor and position, I felt it advisable to sell myself into slavery."

"And what is the condition of your servitude?" asked the prince.

"Indentured, I think is the word," the young man answered. "This, I understand, is a rather unusual relationship which means that if I serve with diligence and satisfaction for a period of five years, I will have paid my father's debts and

will receive my freedom."

"Do you think I will grant you freedom at the end of your term?" asked Antipas, displaying a bit of curiosity.

"Yes sir, I do," answered Philius, "providing, of course, I deserve it."

"During my father's reign," the prince observed, "Judea became a great and powerful nation." Then, probably because of the dignitary at his right hand, he added quickly, "That is, under Rome, of course."

"I believe you are right sir," the young slave answered.

"Now I must know just how well informed you are about our political situation," said the interrogator.

"I know little, sir," offered Philius frankly. "My studies have been in other fields and I had never so much as set a foot in any area of Palistine until I entered your service."

"That is good, " said the hopeful ruler. "Now, if I were appointed to take my father's place, you would be loyal to my administration in order to gain your freedom, I presume."

"I would, anyway, sir, as long as I believed you were good for the country."

Antipas studied the young man carefully. "And, I suppose," he said slowly, almost spitting out the words, "if you believed I were bad for the country you would oppose me."

"You are the one who said it, sir," answered Philius.

He was sure the prince expected him to lie and would not believe him anyway, so he had decided to be completely candid.

Antipas looked a bit bewildered. He hadn't expected such frankness, and while he should have been angry, he couldn't help liking the bold young fellow who dared to be honest.

Philus glanced at the other two, who were deeply absorbed in all that was being said. The Roman gentleman was trying unsuccessfully to withhold a smile, and the lovely lass beside him was twinkling like a star from heaven.

"Please, sir," Philus spoke, unable to curb his curiosity any longer. "I am just a slave who was tardy at my post this morning. I'm sorry. I am prepared to receive your reprimand for over-sleeping, and I am sure I deserve it."

The prince ignored the question and turned to the gentleman at his side. "Are you convinced, sir?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," the dignitary answered quickly, "thoroughly convinced. Go ahead and answer the young man's question."

"Philus," said Antipas kindly. "I need a young, well educated man who can speak a variety of languages to represent me, particularly in the capital, and in some other areas as well. For diplomatic reasons, he should be neither Jew nor Roman. He must be one whom I can trust, completely. Most men with those qualifications, and they are few indeed, have opinions and prejudices of such long standing that I dare not use them."

"I must admit," the ambitious host continued, "that I have been favorably impressed by your performance and demeanor, to say nothing of your training and, today, your frankness.

"I have been thinking for weeks, that you may be the man I'm looking for. That is why I invited another to listen in on this interrogation. We are both of the opinion that my former impressions were valid. The pay is good, of course.

"Surely," he continued with a note of finality, "I need not ask if you would accept such a position."

"But you do need to ask me, sir," said Philius quietly. "You see, I could never accept your generous offer unless I were a freed man. As a slave I would be so handicapped on every hand that I could not possibly function with any degree of efficiency."

"You simply beat me to the lance," said Antipas, smiling for the first time. "I was waiting for your affirmative reply before granting your freedom.

"Now that you are no longer in any condition of servitude, it is appropriate, of course, that I introduce you to my friends. This gentleman on my right is Marcus, special advisor to Caesar Augustus on Judean affairs, and with him is his daughter, Rebecca."

Philius acknowledged his introduction to the man from Rome, minding every rule of protocol. Then he turned to meet the sweetest smile he had ever seen, and returning it proved

to be no problem for the handsome young Greek.

Rebecca was asked to remain in the room while the men moved down the corridor to an office to complete the business at hand. When the papers were signed and Philius' freedom became a matter of official record, the man from Rome took over, calmly exerting his authority. Antipas seemed to melt into the background.

"Young man," Marcus said, "you understand that if Judea should come under the leadership of another, which we hope will not occur, you may be without employment, but you will have your freedom."

"Yes sir, it is more than I deserve, sir," Philius answered.

"Now," the man, Marcus, continued. "If you will step outside, we shall discuss the matter of your salary, housing, and other details that will affect you."

"Of course," the young man agreed, wondering for whom, exactly, he would be working.

Chapter Five

Philius went to the room where they had left the lovely Rebecca, but to his keen disappointment, she was not to be seen. He sat down and closed his eyes, trying to pull his thoughts together; to be sure, even, that he wasn't dreaming. Then he heard a soft step on the marble floor. He opened his eyes to meet those of Rebecca who had just reentered the room, and he arose from the chair.

"I suppose you are a free man by now," she said seriously. "I'm glad. A man like you should never be the property of another."

They sat down.

"My father liked you," she said. "And I was glad."

"Thank you," answered Philius. "Tell me more about him

if you can without betraying confidences."

"I don't know too much," she said honestly. "He travels a great deal and, since my mother died seven months ago, I have been going with him. He doesn't say much about his work. I was surprised when he allowed me to stay in the room during your interview this morning. I'm glad he did, though." She smiled.

"Are you an only child?" he asked.

"Yes, and I'm terribly bored and lonely most of the time. I'll be glad when something changes so I can live at home and have real friends again."

"I understand," he answered. "I've spent many lonely hours since I left my family in Corinth."

"There are games tonight at the Xystus. That's the big stadium, you know," he ventured. "Now that I am free, would your father allow me to escort you there? That is, of course, if you wished to go."

"Oh no!" she cried. "It would be great fun, I suppose, but father would never allow it. And I would feel terribly guilty, too. My mother was a Jewess, you know, and she taught me all the things her mother had taught her. She told me many times just how heathenish and awful those games are, and I suppose she was right."

"You know," Philius answered, thoughtfully, "I was hoping you would say something like that."

"Perhaps there will be opportunities for us to be together sometimes though," he added. "Would you mind?"

"Not at all," she answered seriously, and there the conversation ended for the men returned.

"Daughter," Marcus said not unkindly. "You wait for me in your room. I'll be back later and we shall dine together."

"Yes, father," the girl answered, and flashing a semblance of a smile in the direction of her new friend, she made her way to the elaborate quarters provided for her comfort.

Philius turned to the men whose importance he felt so keenly. He was surprised at himself that he sensed no embarrassment in their presence. They had a job for him to do, and he was certain he could do it. It was not a feeling of conceit, but rather an accurate appraisal of himself. He waited for further instructions. He couldn't help but notice how insecure and insignificant the prince appeared to be in the presence of the man from Rome, and he found himself feeling sorry for him. He wondered if the ambitious fellow could ever become a successful leader in the footsteps of his illustrious father. He doubted it sincerely.

Antipas broke the silence. Turning to Philius he said, "A room will be prepared for you to move into later today. It will serve you until better quarters are arranged." Then affecting an air of importance he went on, "My day is full. I must leave now, but I'll see you both at dinner."

He left the room with what Philius interpreted to be an affected strut or swagger. Marcus may have noticed it, too, for he turned to the younger man with a slight but knowing smile.

"Sit down, Philius," he said. "I have many things I must discuss with you."

When they were comfortably seated and beyond hearing distance of everyone, even the servants of the great house, Marcus came right to the point.

"I'm certain you know more about the political situation here in the stronghold of the Jews than you intimated this morning. These Hebrew people are numerous, strong, dedicated, proud, and their religion is such that they consider it an honor to die for their cause.

Philius nodded.

"Now," the man continued, "all this doesn't bother Caesar very much, as long as they live peacefully and productively, which they have been doing rather well for years. Herod was a genius as well as a tyrant. He had his faults, but he was a great man, and no one is about to dispute it. As long as he lived, there was peace; he saw to that.

"There were those who disagreed with him," Marcus went on, "and their number continues to grow. Particularly, there is a band of revolutionaries known as the Zealots, who are determined to set the people free from what they consider

an imperialistic monster that is about to swallow them whole. The monster, of course, is Rome.

"Well, the truth is, Caesar doesn't want to swallow them; they are altogether too distasteful to him for that." He paused to smile at his little joke. Philius smiled too.

"When the time comes that he will be forced to put them down militarily, he can do it, of course, but to avoid such a confrontation as long as possible is in every one's best interest. War with the Jews will be an extremely expensive and bloody conflict, and while Rome will ultimately win, everyone shall be losers."

"Do you believe that such a war is inevitable?" asked Philius.

"Oh yes," he answered. "Caesar himself does not agree with me, but my only hope is to postpone the conflict as many years as possible.

"My work is pretty much under cover. I move about as unobtrusively as possible, trying to keep the ship afloat. I guess you could say that my job is to give directions to the navigator without being suspected of it.

"Now, I'm sure you must be wondering just why and where you fit into the picture. First, you may be sure that your office while Antipas doesn't realize it, was established at my suggestion. Second, your work, at a different level, of course, will resemble mine. Your place will be behind the

scenes, but don't underestimate its importance or its dangers.

"I'm sure you must suspect that Antipas is weak, unable to fill his father's shoes. His two brothers are no better. Actually, Herod's kingdom, is to be divided among the three. Antipas will complain, of course, and he is insanely suspicious of Rome and that includes me. One of your first duties will be to convince him that the dividing of the nation was done to save him from almost certain assassination. His title will be Tetrach of Galilee. He must be made to feel his importance in receiving this central post. Remaining in Jerusalem where his father reigned should please him. My hope is that he will accept your explanation and advice, because he believes you have no motives beyond his best interests, and he is proud that he was the one who found you.

"Remember now, your success will depend upon your ability to maintain his complete confidence, while keeping your ears and eyes wide open. When he sends you to Rome, or if we should call for you, he must never doubt that you are there strictly to represent his interests, which, from a broad view, will be the case.

"Do you have any questions?" Marcus asked.

"Yes sir, I do," said Philius. "Why doesn't Caesar appoint some one else, one who is strong and knowledgeable, who can handle the situation?"

"Ah, if only he could," the older man answered. "The

people would revolt. There is just enough magic in the name of Herod, and ample fear in the name of anyone else, to make it imperative that Antipas be retained."

"I follow you," said Philius. "My only reservation is in having to practice deception. But since it is not to destroy the man, but rather to help him succeed, I will do whatever I can."

"Good," said Marcus, pleased with the success of the little session. "Now, is there any thing else, Philius, before I go to take my daughter to dinner."

"Yes sir, there is one more question, now that you mention Rebecca. She must be lonely, being far from her home and friends so much of the time. When you are here, would you grant me the pleasure of acting as her escort upon occasion. I assure you that her welfare will be my great concern. I will protect her with my life."

"H-m-m," Marcus pondered, with something even more than ordinary filial interest. The girl was everything he had.

"My son," he said, looking the young man straight in the eyes. "I believe you. I will talk with her about it."

There was an area in old Jerusalem where men of means built their mansions, and pretentious palaces of priests and ranking officials graced the rolling parkways. It was there on one of those perfect days in June that Philius and Rebecca

strolled happily, together, the whole world at their finger tips. They were in love; hopelessly, helplessly in love. And the mood of the moment was magnified by a gentle breeze that was barely alive with the sweet thrumming sound from some distant harpist, tinged with the scent of lily and hyacinth.

"Philius," the girl broke the silence. "I have never been so happy in all of my life. I wish I could share my joy with Mother."

"Was your mother happy?" he asked her.

"Oh yes," she answered quickly. "She and Father were perfect companions."

"Perhaps then, you are sharing it with her," he said.

"Who knows?"

"Maybe I am," she answered thoughtfully. "I plan to see her again, you know."

"Philius," she continued, "I wonder how hard it would be to find someone you never saw or heard from in all your life?"

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Mother used to tell me about her brother. She hadn't seen him in years for he lived in Galilee and never came to Rome. He's some kind of a dealer in small treasures, I think, but she said he was quite successful. He did business here in Jerusalem. I wonder if some merchant would know him."

Philius smiled, "I wouldn't want to get your hopes up,"

he said, "but I will do anything to make you happy. In fact, I'm going to be doing that all of my life."

"You mean you will try to find him?" she asked.

"I mean," he answered, "that it is only a little way from here to the shops and bazaars that display the loveliest of treasures from India, Gaul and Britain. And of course, from Athens and Corinth," he added with a smile.

"Will you take me there, please?" she begged. "My uncle is the only relative I have except Father."

So the lovers turned their steps down toward the area of commerce. The shops were nearly deserted - it was that time of day - and many of the merchants were relaxing in chairs behind their counters, as the happy lovers passed their open doors. Sight of the happy carefree couple - potential customers to be sure - snapped them to attention, but there was something about their beady eyes and pointed beards and their stereotyped invitations to come in and see their exquisite merchandise, that caused Philius to ignore them.

"Be patient," he whispered to Rebecca. "We'll find the right one, after a while."

The right one was an elderly hunchback, with full gray beard untrimmed, who, redeeming the quiet time, was pouring over a scroll on a table before him. The couple paused, and the merchant, glancing up from his study, smiled his pleasure.

"Bless you, my children," he said kindly. "I was just

reading from the poet, Joel, who reminds us that the old will dream dreams, and the young will see visions. And that," he smiled, "is followed by a promise: And even on the male and female servants, I will pour out My Spirit in those days."

"Thank you," whispered Rebecca. "My mother, who had better training than most Hebrew women, used to read to me every evening at bedtime. I remember those lines well."

"May the Lord who dwells in Zion bless her soul." the old one spoke fervently. "And it is written, like mother, like daughter." He smiled again, knowing, that he was quoting the ancient phrase out of context.

"Is there anything an old one who has given up to his dreaming, might do to enhance the vision of your youth?" he asked.

"Please," Rebecca spoke with childish faith and hope. "I have an uncle whom I have never met who comes here regularly I'm told. He deals in small treasures, and I am hoping that you may know him."

"Perhaps, perhaps," the merchant answered kindly, "but traders come and go in great numbers, don't you see."

"His name is Johanan," she said. "Maybe that will help you recall him."

"Ah, my lass," he answered sadly. "The name is a common one. There are Johanans from all the great cities who buy and sell in the market daily. How can we single out one you have

never seen?"

"But my uncle doesn't come from a great city," she explained, clinging to one last finger-hold of hope. "He lives in the town of Nazareth in Galilee."

"Johanan of Nazareth!" the old one nearly exploded. "Of course, of course. There is not a merchant on the streets who doesn't know him well. A good man, a great man, and surely he will be dropping by again one day! You may be sure you will get to know your uncle by and by. I'll tell all my friends to watch for him, and we will send him to you."

Rebecca grasped the old man's gnarled fingers as a tear slid down her lovely cheek.

Chapter Six

The household of Joseph and Mary was buzzing with activity. More children had come to them for shelter until the brothers and sisters beneath their roof finally numbered seven. The younger ones were girls, Hulda and Esther. The boys, younger than Jesus, were Jude and Joses.

Mary had taken over the household immediately upon her return to Nazareth with Joseph and her four-year-old son. She managed her growing flock well, partly because she was endowed with excellent good sense, but mostly because the children, including Simeon, loved her.

Adina did her best to keep in the background, and after Jude came, she left to make her home with another widow, a friend named Eunice who lived alone. Then, at Johanan's

suggestion, she opened a small shop where she sold novelties and jewels with which he kept her supplied. Each morning, though, before she opened for business, she went to assist Mary with the heavy work of the day, and the two sisters-in-law could hardly have been better friends.

Simeon had reached the strange, unpredictable age of seventeen. He was still in the awkward stage of youth: too tall for his years, too slim for his height. He longed to quit school, to earn money, to be independent and free. He had taken unusual interest in Johanan's venturesome vendoring. He wanted to try his luck on the road, and there were those who prodded him on. The first was Marta, whose hunger for knowledge had never abated. She had been unable to break the tradition and enroll in the rabbinical school, but with the help of Simeon, James, and Jesus, together with Johanan when he could manage a bit of extra time, she kept pace, with the boys, especially in mathematics. The interpretation of Scripture she was glad to leave with the rabbis - that was their field - but where profit and the genius of buying and selling were involved, she yielded first place to no one. And she was forever telling Simeon that he would be a real success in trading.

Simeon grew tired of the pressure. It was so unnecessary for what she was advocating was the thing he wanted to do anyway. But she brought it up again.

"All right, all right," he said showing his displeasure. "As soon as we are old enough to get married, we'll start our own business."

"Get married!" she cried, unable for a moment to hide her elation. "This is the first time you ever mentioned it!" Then her expression changed to a scowl. "You haven't ever asked me yet," she pouted.

"I guess I just supposed I didn't have to ask you," Simeon answered sheepishly.

"Well," she snapped, "you do! Every girl wants to be asked."

"All right," he said, "I'll do it now. Will you marry me?"

"No, of course not," she snapped. "We're too young. When we're old enough you may ask me again. In the meantime I'll be thinking about it."

The subject was dropped but both of them knew the matter was settled.

Another one who was anxious that Simeon try his luck as a vendor was Adina. Her deep interest in the lad had never waned, and to see him succeed in life was the burden of her heart. She had been happy as she watched him develop into a thrifty fellow - an important trait in a man of business - but he had a problem which she was certain would tend to defeat him in any vocation he might pursue. He had never learned to make friends.

His adoring aunt reasoned wisely that in the world of commerce, he would be forced to overcome this handicap. Also, she knew that in this field, Marta had the necessary expertise to help him, and she prayed every day that these two who together had forged out a satisfactory childhood, would go on to a happy life in marriage.

So she taught them the trade, allowing one or both to work in her shop in the evenings. She paid them commissions on whatever sales they made, and, as she laughingly said to Johanan, "Progress is progressing."

But her pride and joy, of course, was James. This younger charge of her earlier days escaped the awkward age in adolescence, and having reached his teens, was indeed a young gentleman, broad-shouldered, square-jawed and handsome. And he remained the quiet, unpretentious lad he had always been. For five years, he and Jesus had been nearly inseparable. Jesus adored James, depending upon him for the answers to the questions that startle and confuse the childish mind. Even before he was old enough to attend the rabbinical school, James had taught him, getting him off to an excellent start.

Now that Jesus was nine, the rabbi and Johanan marvelled at the speed with which he advanced in his studies. Academically he was just a notch below James, and there he seemed to remain throughout the remainder of their schooling. He and James memorized so many of the ancient writings - reciting

long portions one to the other, and discussing their hidden truths - that even the scholarly rabbi was embarrassed upon occasion, when his own memory failed him.

While the two boys had much in common, Adina observed one significant difference in them which was hard to define. It showed up only in the reactions of others toward them. She tried to explain it to Johanan.

"Both of them," she said, "are excellent fellows. But James, without trying, is always being praised by his friends. Jesus, without trying, goes unrewarded."

She was right. A lesser individual than James might have been jealous of a younger one who never failed to keep academically abreast of him. He, however, felt nothing but keen and loving admiration for his brother, and everyone remarked about it.

A lesser individual than Jesus might have become conceited because of his rapid progress, but he did not. Yet no one seemed to notice.

James was a good boy who only upon rare occasions needed reprimanding, and his elders were quick to voice their appreciation. Jesus was a perfect lad who never needed to be reproved; and everyone took him for granted. When things went wrong at work or play, James often found it hard to control his temper, but he succeeded well. The other children admired him for it and said so. Jesus faced every situation squarely

with calm assurance, helping solve whatever problem developed. Others seemed to expect it and hardly bothered to thank him.

"There is something extraordinarily good about Jesus," Adina went on, "but everyone takes him for granted. There is something strangely ethereal about him, as he moves quietly in and out among us, but nobody gives it a second thought.

"If it were not for my deep interest in James, I think I would be as unobserving and unmoved as all the rest."

"You are right," said Johanan thoughtfully. "Jesus is a strange lad, without impressing people with his strangeness. I can't say though, that I haven't dwelt upon it. Perhaps there are some things which I ought to share with you since your interest too, has been aroused.

"But first," he went on, "I want to ask you a pointed question: what do you know regarding his birth?"

Adina blushed.

"I know this involves your family," he continued, "and I dislike delving into so personal a matter, but as you shall see, it is most important that I know."

"I'm certain my brother is not the father of Jesus." Adina was forcing herself to answer his question. "Mary was with child when they were betrothed, and Joseph told me at the time that he had not known her. It is all so confusing, but I can't make myself believe Mary ever knew a man. As a girl, she was shy and extremely devout in her religion. It

sounds ridiculous, I know, but this is how I feel; I simply can't help it. Otherwise, my brother's complete resignation to the situation, whatever it is, would have me completely baffled."

"Has either Mary or Joseph ever spoken to you about this?" he asked.

"Not Joseph," she answered. "He has always been so strong and mature, it wouldn't be like him at all to divulge either his feelings or any knowledge he might have. There is one thing certain, though," she added. "He loves Mary very deeply, and his love is without reservation. Mary might talk," she concluded, "but I have never felt free to approach the subject.

"What is it that you want to share with me?" Adina asked.

"I have an old friend by the name of Jeremy," he said. "He is a cripple, who keeps a shop like yours, in Jerusalem, and he is the finest man I have ever known. Even David, in his better moments, never loved the Lord with deeper devotion or greater faith than he, nor do I believe that any teacher has studied the prophecies with a diligence equal to that of my friend.

"Nine years ago now," he went on, "Jeremy was in Bethlehem for the census, even as were Joseph and Mary. It was there, you know, that Jesus was born. He has related to me a strange record of events surrounding that birth, and I have to admit the detailed account fits like a perfect piece into a most

complicated puzzle. That doesn't mean it is any less unbelievable."

"Tell me more," begged Adina.

"Well," Johanan went on. "It happens that I have a niece - a lovely lady whom I never met until Jeremy took me to her - who is married to an exceptional young Greek who serves the government in some rather secret capacity.

"The young man is not a Jew, of course, but he is extremely knowledgeable and friendly and according to Jeremy, he may soon become a proselyte.

"He and Jeremy make a strange team. They are as different as any two individuals can be, except they have a common interest in anything relating to Jesus' birth.

"Now, be prepared for the shock of your life." he said. "The two have been researching the matter together, and, between them, they have come up with a set of the most convincing arguments that Jesus may be the long awaited Messiah."

"Johanan!" Adina whispered. She was visibly shaken as she grasped the edge of a table and stared into space, almost as though some kind of trance had enveloped her.

"Are you all right?" cried Johanan, stepping to her side. "Here, let me help you to a chair."

After a pause, the woman began to speak as much to herself as to her friend. "I've wondered about that a hundred times, but I never dared suggest it."

She paused again, her lips parted, her hands trembling. "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son," she quoted, barely above a whisper. "I wonder if Mary and Joseph suspect such a thing," she went on, hardly aware of Johanan's presence. "Or perhaps they've known all about it from the first," she continued as she tried to shut out the incredulous aspect of a matter she had long kept hidden in her heart.

Then Johanan spoke again. "Perhaps it will please the Lord if we do not divulge our thoughts on such a sacred matter as this purports to be," he said, "until we have had time to study further."

"What about Rabbi Attai?" Adina asked, "Would you feel free to discuss it with him?"

"Not at this time," Johanan answered. "The dear man is like a million other devout Jews; prepared to wait for the Messiah, but not prepared to accept him. As the Romans would say, anything that disturbs the status quo, disturbs him too."

"I agree," Adina said, "that we should not share our thoughts with anyone. But when we go to Jerusalem for the Passover, I would like very much to meet the friends you mention, if that is possible."

"The crowds are so great at the time of the feast," Johanan observed in answer to her suggestion, "it is difficult to locate anyone. But I would like very much to have you meet them. You will love Rebecca and Philius, my niece and her

husband. They are outstanding people."

"Do they have a family?" Adina asked.

"Yes," the man responded. "They have a boy, Lucius, about a year old now, I think, and he's a sharp little fellow, you may be sure.

"And little old Jeremy is an institution in himself. The poor fellow is a hunchback. He stands only four feet tall, but what he lacks in body, the Lord has made up to him in mind and spirit. He is everybody's friend, and no one ever forgets him. He does a tremendous business without trying, and he would be a wealthy man except for one thing."

"I think I can guess what that one thing is," spoke up Adina. "He gives it all away."

"Exactly," agreed Johanan. "He gives it to the poor; especially to the handicapped, and he is the happiest person anyone could meet."

Late in the afternoon, but well before sunset, the family of Joseph and Mary gathered, as usual, for the main meal of the day. Joseph came in from the shop, tired and hungry. He was not a young man, and his arduous labor, necessary to supply sufficient food and clothing for so large a clan, was beginning to take its toll. Mary, still in her twenties, went calmly about her work with discipline and dispatch. She must have been an excellent organizer, for every child had specific chores

which were attended to without urging. It was a warm day, so the meal was served on the roof top. Simeon, being larger than the others, carried a steaming pot of stewed lentils up the stone stairway and placed it on the table. James followed with a platter of boiled fish, and Jesus was right behind him with a plate of hard bread broken into small pieces. Jude, Joses and the two girls had what they believed to be important jobs also, and everyone made a ritual of washing, before they came to the table. When they were seated, Joseph, as always, reverently recited the table grace, assisted by Mary and the children.

Then, together, they ate and talked and laughed, but they never quarreled. Joseph would not allow that, and there was no hint of questioning his authority.

It was during the evening meal, that Joseph loudly cleared his throat, for he had an important announcement to make to the family. It was amazing how quickly he gained the attention of everyone.

"This year," he said, "we shall take all five of you boys with us to Jerusalem to celebrate the passover."

James, who as always was sitting beside Jesus, felt his younger brother stiffen as though he were fighting to control his emotions. The prospect of such a journey was exciting to be sure, but James wondered if Jesus was not overreacting. He had noticed too that during prayers, the young one's face

would seem, sometimes, to shine, as tears welled up in his large gray eyes. And often when the two were memorizing the Psalms, or the Prophecies - even the Law - Jesus would wipe away tears of joy. James glanced quickly and saw the glow on the boy's countenance again, as Joseph went on to give careful instruction in preparing for the journey.

"You girls will remain with Eunice," he said, "You will have great fun while we are gone, and we will bring you gifts from the city. One day you will be old enough to make the trip with us," he promised, and Mary's loving smile helped them shoulder their disappointment.

Simeon remained quiet. He was glad to be going, for he hoped to visit the shops in Jerusalem and meet some of the traders. He was glad too that Adina had said she would take Marta with her on the journey and that Johanan would meet them there and show them around.

That night when the family was bedded down and sleeping, James lay wide awake, staring into the darkness.

"Jesus," he whispered. "Jesus, are you awake?"

"I am now," the younger boy answered.

"Why is it?" James asked, "that you cry when Father is praying?"

"I don't know," Jesus answered. "Except that I love God even more than I love our father. God must be our Father, too; everyone's Father maybe. Do you think so, James?"

"Yeah, I guess so," the older boy answered. "I never thought about it like that before."

Chapter Seven

There was a distinct air of excitement in every corner of Jerusalem. Passover was only days away, and from lookout points atop the great wall, sentries were already reporting the approach of pilgrims from every direction.

Johanan was already there, making provision for his friends from Nazareth. When that bit of business was cared for, he made his way to the rather sophisticated commercial area where Jeremy kept his shop, and he was royally welcomed by his midget admirer.

"Johanan! Johanan!" the wee merchant shouted with glee when he saw his friend approaching. "I knew you would come. Never," he cried, "would you miss the Passover. I have more news for you! Exciting news! And I'm hoping you brought

some of the same for me."

After the men had exchanged their greetings, which to a westerner - even no farther away than Rome - would seem grossly overdone, their conversation took on a serious note. So much so that a Roman soldier - a keeper of the peace - who stood nearby, eyed them with suspicion.

"I have discussed your findings with Adina, the woman you have heard me talk about." Johanan said, speaking barely above a whisper. "I was surprised to discover that she has long suspected, even as you have, that the boy Jesus in the One. She has never told another soul, but she is anxious to meet you.

"Joseph and Mary are bringing the boys, so you will get to see Jesus and talk with him, too." Johanan went on hurriedly.

"Yes yes, be sure that I do," the merchant was pleading. "Tell me, how does the lad impress you?"

"He appears to me to be very sensitive, and he is beginning to ask some pointed questions, but he's still just a boy of nine. He lives the part pretty well, I think. The one really strange thing about him is that he is a perfect youngster, but as Adina pointed out to me, nobody seems to think anything of it. His older brother James is a good boy too, and while he doesn't measure up to Jesus, everyone brags about him."

"Perfect!" the little man cried, clapping his hands.

"Everyone always expects God to be good! Do you see, Johanan? Doesn't it fit?"

"Yeah, everything fits," the tall one answered. Then he asked, "Have you seen my niece and her family?"

"Yes, Rebecca and her little one are here," he answered. "Philius has been in Rome for several weeks, but we expect him back tomorrow. The young man is becoming discouraged with his employment. The royal palace, here, has developed into a house of the worst kind of iniquity, and Herod is too weak to control it. Caesar's palace in Rome is worse, according to Philius, and the mighty Augustus cannot control that either.

"Philius would leave his post at once," Jeremy continued cautiously, "except for three or four good reasons. The first one is that he thinks a great deal of his father-in-law with whom he is secretly associated. He doesn't want to let him down. Also, he is in a strategic position to help delay what he considers a certain confrontation between Jerusalem and Rome. He says that when insurrection comes, Jerusalem will be destroyed completely."

"I see," said Johanan, thoughtfully. "You said there was at least one more reason."

"Ah, and there is!" the small one answered quickly. "If Philius were to leave with all the inside information he has gained, Antipas would have him assassinated before he got through the gates."

"But don't you fear for Philius," he went on. "He is a clever young man. When it is time, he will work out a way to gain his release with Herod's blessing. Wait and see."

"Just now," said Jeremy changing the subject. "You must hurry to visit your niece. She is lonely and afraid. Your appearance at her door will be like a tonic, and the Lord will bless you both."

So Johanan made his way to Rebecca's quarters. Jeremy was right. No one in all the world, except her husband, would have been as welcome as he. Rebecca led him quickly to Philius favorite chair; then she leaned down and kissed his forehead. It was the only way she could escape his full black beard.

"I'm so glad you have come, my uncle," she said. "These are such dangerous days, one doesn't know what to expect from one hour to the next. Actually, the political scene is much, much worse than the people imagine. Sometimes I wish I were not in a position to know so much. I would rest better and enjoy life more.

"Not that I'm unhappy," she hurried on lest she would be misunderstood. "I have the finest husband in all the world. And now, after waiting a long, long time we have our son. Really, I wouldn't change anything."

It was then that a baby was heard to cry in the adjoining room. Rebecca hurried to fetch Lucius, who became so interested

in the great black beard that he stopped crying and held out his hands to Johanan.

The committed bachelor was pleased beyond words as he reached awkwardly for the youngster and set him upon his lap. Lucius grabbed the beard with both of his tiny hands, then he proceeded to pull himself up onto his feet. Johanan groaned audibly for his face and chin were tender, and he grabbed the child beneath the arms to release the pressure. Rebecca, unable to contain her amusement, laughed aloud as she offered to take the little one, but Johanan stoutly refused to give him up. He was a lonesome man, more lonely even than he himself had realized, and the unselfish love of a fifteen-month-old babe awakened tender emotions he had forgotten he possessed.

Then steps were heard on the pavement, and Rebecca ran to the door to fondly embrace her husband who had just returned from Rome.

Johanan visited briefly with the young man, then he excused himself. "There are a couple of questions I wish to ask Jeremy," he said. "Since they may provoke discussion, it will be well for me to go now, and come back later this evening."

"Bring Jeremy with you," said Philius, "and we'll all get in on the discussion. There are many things we must talk over before the great crowds arrive."

"Please do," Rebecca begged. "I will prepare a good meal for all of us."

So Johanan made his way back to the little shop where Jeremy was busy with a line of customers.

The little merchant broke away, though, when he saw his friend. "I will be busy for the next three hours or so," he said, "but I want to see you then."

"Rebecca is preparing dinner for us," Johanan replied. "Philius is home, and we are to meet there."

"All right, all right," the man was aglow with the anticipation of a most pleasant evening. "I will see you then."

Johanan visited with other friends along the street until nearly time for Jeremy to close his shop. Then he went back to his niece and her family.

Philius appeared older to Johanan than he remembered him to be. He was still the same tall, handsome athlete with the spring of youth in his step, but a tinge of gray at the temples and a crease in his brow that no longer vanished when he smiled, had changed him forever from boy to man. He was only thirty, but the secrets he carried within his breast and the awesome responsibilities that rested upon his shoulders were showing through.

"The fact that I have no official position and no authority," he confided to Johanan later when they were comfortably seated on an elaborate portico that overlooked the city, "adds to the weight of my load. Everything I do, is done indirectly."

"I wonder if that isn't how all the real good in the world

is accomplished," said Johanan thoughtfully. "The power to make people respond in specific ways is worthless in the long run, for as soon as the pressure is off, everyone tends to return to his former position."

"My sentiments, exactly," Philius answered. "That philosophy is the only thing that keeps me going."

"And," he continued, broadening the subject to envelop the universe, "the power of the Messiah in whom I have come to believe devoutly will be indirect also, for man, by decree from heaven, is a free agent, master of his destiny."

"The Lord bless you and keep you," quoted Johanan reverently. "Jeremy has told me of your progress. Tell me more."

"Old Jeremy and I have studied long and hard together, and he has filled me in on a thousand facts concerning the sons and daughters of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," Philius said. "We are agreed. His background is most helpful to me, and my background, free from tradition and prejudice, is equally helpful to him. This combination has enriched our study and helped us over some extremely hard places."

"I'm sure it has," Johanan observed soberly. "I wish I could have been in on all of your deliberations."

Philius continued. "We are convinced that the Messiah will not come as a mighty soldier to destroy the armies of earth and the governments they represent, to set up a Jewish kingdom to rule the world. That would be a power which, as

you just stated, would be worthless in the long run."

Johanen nodded his approval.

"The message of the Messiah which will contain power necessary to project itself to all nations, will not be forced. But it will be made available to all, and the love of God will conquer a world that is steeped in sin.

"And, Johanen," the young man went on with a passion, "during the past seven years, I have seen sin in such awful abundance that I think I could write a tale of two cities whose awesome iniquity would equal that ascribed to Sodom and Gomorrah."

"I know," Johanen replied with fervor. "The Messiah shall be what you have conceived from your study. It is written that,

"Unto us a son is given; the government shall be upon his shoulder. . . He shall be called, Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace."*

"Now what about this boy Jesus?" Philius asked with great seriousness. "Jeremy is convinced that he is, indeed, the Messiah. Do you believe that?"

Johanen wanted to be objective as possible without casting a shroud of doubt over a matter of such awful importance.

"Philius," he said. "I have to agree with Jeremy that, up to this point, every bit of evidence stands in favor of the affirmative. How the boy develops will prove or disprove the contention. My mind and my heart are open, and God will reveal

* Isaiah 9:6 KJ

the truth, whatever it is. I pray daily that I will not allow my hopes to blind my eyes."

"I understand your concern," Philius replied. "I am facing the same problem.

"Jeremy is not well; he may not be with us long. I am writing down everything I can that he tells me, especially regarding the boy's birth, so that the account will not become distorted later as we watch Jesus develop."

It wasn't long before Jeremy made his appearance and Rebecca called them to the table. To Jeremy was extended the honor of leading in prayers, after which the discussion - during the leisurely meal - centered around the strange events relating to the birth of Jesus.

"You were in Bethlehem that night," Johanan said to Jeremy. "Tell us again just what you remember about it."

"Well," the old one began. "It was the following morning when I first heard that a child had been born in an underground stable back of the inn. Some sheep-men had come in searching for this babe because a band of angels, so they said, had appeared to them to announce that the Saviour had been born there.

"I didn't put much stock in their story, of course, but there were a lot of people - especially young folk - who did. The innkeeper was frightened - some people said he went into hiding - for sentiment was being aroused against him for failing

to provide a better place for the young mother to bear her babe. I was curious and I got a good look at the woman's husband when he was being questioned on the street. After two days I came back to Jerusalem.

"I probably would have forgotten the whole affair," he went on, "if it hadn't been that, later, in the temple, I met an old acquaintance of mine whose name was Simeon. He was a good man who had served the Lord well, and he was nearly beside himself with joy. He said the Lord had revealed to him that he should live to see the Christ child.

"Then, a young woman, carrying a baby, came into the temple and with her, surely enough, was the man I had seen in Bethlehem.

"You can imagine my astonishment when Simeon ran to them and actually took the baby from the mother's arms and blessing God, he said,

'Now Lord, Thou dost let thy bond servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for my eyes have seen Thy salvation, which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, A light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.'*

"Then he blessed the mother.

"I have related all this in detail to Philius," he continued, "and he has written it all down."

"We want our son to know all this first hand as he grows up," said Rebecca proudly. "We think the Lord has His hand upon him."

* Luke 2:29-32 NASB

"What about the caravan of wealthy noblemen who are said to have come to Bethlehem with gifts for the child?" asked Johanan.

"That's the story of the star," replied Jeremy. "I was not in Bethlehem then, and I only know what I've been told by others."

"We will keep that story in mind," said Philius, but I am not writing it down until we meet some one who was an eyewitness to it. I am prone to believe the account, though, for when I first came to Jerusalem, I had a friend, a slave named Oplacus, who was here when Herod had all the boy babies in and around the little City of David put to death. It was his understanding that Herod had been interviewed by men of such a caravan and had learned from them that the Christ had been born in Bethlehem. Oplacus' last request was that I try to verify the story, and locate the child, if he's still alive."

"If anyone knows, it would be Joseph or Mary, of course," said Johanan, "but they will not discuss any of the details of Jesus' birth."

"We will get to meet Mary and Joseph and the boy Jesus, won't we?" asked Rebecca, fearful that because of the milling crowds, the opportunity might be lost.

"I'll see to it," promised Johanan. "Also, there is an older boy in the family, who is Jesus' special friend. His name is James, and he is an extraordinary youngster. Boys, you know, confide in one another," he went on, "and James may

have some information that would astonish all of us. He is one of my special students when I assist the rabbi with the teaching. But I also know him well enough to doubt anyone could get him to divulge one tiny secret that he and Jesus might be sharing."

"How old is James?" asked Philius.

"Fourteen, I think," Johanan answered, "but, in many ways, he seems older than that."

"Bring him along with the others if you can," said Philius. "I have always found it easy to communicate with boys of that age. I would like very much to have a chance to chat with him."

"I'll do the best I can," Johanan promised.

Old Jeremy had been listening closely, without venturing to interject a word until all had eaten their fill, and Rebecca proceeded to clear the table.

"You have been awfully quiet, Jeremy, it seems," said Philius. "That isn't exactly like you. Perhaps you should tell us what you are thinking."

"I will," the old one answered. "I will. It has come to me that we must exercise caution in our probing, and keep our theories to ourselves. You see, we may be wrong. If Jesus is just an unusual boy, he and a lot of his friends, as well as the very spirit of truth, could be hurt badly by the false rumors we might initiate.

"On the other hand, if he is the chosen one - and I think he is - God will reveal the truth in his own way. He might use us, but we will be usable only as we wait upon him. To step out ahead of his gentle Spirit, can be as harmful as lagging far behind."

"Well spoken," observed Johanan, thoughtfully. "It is important that we continue our search, but at this point, others must not know for what we are searching."

Chapter Eight

Back in Nazareth, everyone was busy packing, preparing for the journey southward. Most of the young people were filled with excitement and joy, but James, aware of the hardships and dangers involved, wanted to share his concerns with Adina. He knew that Mary and Joseph would expect him to accompany and protect Jesus, which was exactly what he intended to do even though he sensed the responsibility he would be shouldering.

He made his way to Adina's little place of business, but she was at home making her own preparations for the journey. She had left Marta in charge of the shop, and the friendly girl smiled broadly as James stepped in from the street.

"Jamey," she cried. "Won't it be fun to go to Jerusalem?"

"I guess so," James answered, which was more even than the girl expected to receive from the quiet lad.

"James," she said, becoming deeply serious. "I'm glad you came in. There is something I want to talk with you about. It's awfully important. There is no one else I can discuss this with - certainly not Simeon - but you will understand. Are you willing?"

"I'll listen," he said. The boy was certain that he was about to hear some gossip, which was altogether distasteful to him, but he sensed that Marta was troubled and needing to unburden her heart to someone.

"I heard Johanan and Adina talking one day when they didn't know I was around, and what they were saying really disturbs me."

"You're always listening in when people talk, aren't you?" James said reprovingly.

"That's not so," she snapped. "I only listen when people start whispering."

James swallowed a smile. "All right," he said. "Tell me what their big secret is, so we can forget it."

"It's about Jesus," she said softly.

James came to attention. "What about Jesus?" he demanded

"Well," she went on mysteriously, "they think he is so perfect that he may be the Messiah. They say he doesn't have an earthly father - just a mother - that God, himself, is

the only father Jesus has."

"That's crazy!" James nearly shouted.

"I know, that's what I thought too, but they were terribly serious about it.

"Jesus is an awfully good boy, she continued, "but everyone has something to be ashamed of. Isn't that true?"

"Jesus doesn't!" James spoke with conviction. "But that doesn't mean he is God. He's just plain decent, all the time, and that's no reason anyone should make up stories about him."

"Aw, he must have some little faults," Marta was begging for a bit of gossip, but it wasn't forthcoming.

"You said Adina and Johanan say he's perfect," argued James. "They are right, that far, but that's all. Don't you start believing anything else, for it isn't so. Is there anything wrong with a boy being perfect?"

"No Jamey, there's nothing wrong with it," Marta agreed, "but it isn't quite natural, do you think?"

She paused, but there was no response.

"Jamey," she said kindly. "You are a good boy too. Everyone says so. You seem perfect enough to me, but are you really?"

"No, of course not!" he cried angrily. Then, as always, he suppressed his agitation and said no more.

"You must keep a lot of things hidden in your heart," the girl said. "Maybe it would be good for you to talk it out to someone. I'll listen to anything you would be willing to say

to me, and I'll never tell a soul.

"Do you remember the time, years ago, when I told you what I heard Johanan say about the babies being put to death in Bethlehem?" she asked. "I promised you that I would never tell another soul, and I never have."

"I know you haven't, Marta," the boy said with a note of genuine appreciation. "I've always been glad, and I should have told you so."

"Yes, you really should have told me," she said. "It would have helped me a lot. Now, I'm going to promise you something else. I'll never tell another soul what I heard Adina and Johanan say. Do you believe me?"

"Yes, Marta, I do believe you," he answered kindly. "Jesus is a perfect boy, but to have a story like that get out would ruin everything."

"Do you believe there will be a Messiah, Jamey?" she asked seriously.

"Of course I do," answered James, "but he won't be my brother!"

Marta smiled, "You're right. That would be hard for anyone to believe, wouldn't it?"

The two stood thinking quietly for several moments, then James broke the silence.

"Marta," he said, "I'm not nearly as good as people think I am. I get angry inside, and I think all kinds of bad

thoughts. Some times I have evil desires and no one knows anything about it, except Jesus."

"Do you tell him?" she asked.

"No, not exactly," he answered honestly. "He tells me, I guess. He seems to know, and he makes me feel awfully ashamed, but he doesn't seem to like me any less."

"Well, of course, that's because he gets angry inside and has bad thoughts too," she explained.

"No, I don't think so." The boy was speaking thoughtfully. "Things like that could bother him maybe, but he doesn't allow them to. He does seem disturbed when he hears someone taking God's name in vain."

"Do you mean that nothing else could cause him to get angry?" Marta's query suggested that such a thing was completely incredible.

"I can't quite explain it," James admitted. "One day last week, one of the fellows about Jesus' size threatened to whip little Jude. I was angry and would have stopped him, of course, but I couldn't have hit him because he was smaller than I am."

"What happened?" the girl asked.

"Well, Jesus sensed that I was angry and I guess he understood the problem. Anyway he asked me to let him handle it."

James paused and shook his head as if he could hardly

believe the story he was relating.

"Would you believe it?" he went on. "Jesus stepped up to the fellow and said, 'I know you are angry with Jude, but you shouldn't hit him. If you have to hit someone, hit me. It's all right,' Jesus said, 'I won't hit you back.'"

"Did he hit Jesus?" Marta cried.

"No," said James. "He just looked a little stupid and said, 'Aw, I don't wanta hit anybody,' and he walked away."

"Did Jesus know he would do that?" she asked.

"Of course not," James answered. "He would have taken the blow without a word. I couldn't have done that, but I'm not as good as Jesus. Don't you see? But that still doesn't mean he doesn't have a father! He's just a good boy, that's all!

The trip to Jerusalem was an interesting one to say the least. The caravan stretched along the way for nearly a mile with the heads of families trying to keep their clans together. By the end of the second day, though, there was a mixing of groups as the people sought out their friends. Teenagers especially, gathered in gangs to laugh and play and fight, throwing caution to the winds.

Simeon and Marta did not join them. They had come to feel older than the others with more mature interests. Their special friend being Adina, they marched along with her as they tried

to keep their eyes on Jude and Joses.

James and Jesus joined in the fun with their friends, running from one end of the long line to the other, but they were always together. Joseph and Mary, leading their donkey laden with tent and bedding, utensils and extra clothing, did their best to maintain constant vigil over all their charges.

It was well that the trip ended when it did, for everyone was tired of the dusty trail. Even the youngsters had ceased their play and trudged along unhappily. Arguments and fights became too common, so, to keep the peace, the parents and guardians gathered their charges around them again as they had tried to do in the beginning. Happy indeed was the moment when those in the front of the long line reached a hilltop where they could view the great white city with its protective walls and marble structures. There was no misunderstanding their spontaneous cries of joy. The unrestrained shouting was so contagious that soon it reached the stragglers at the far end of the procession as everyone found renewed strength to step up the pace for the final lap to their destination.

Through the open gate the line proceeded. Standing just outside the portal, Johanan watched closely for his friends until finally his vigil was rewarded. He led the group, nine in all, to a campsite he had reserved for their convenience.

It was necessarily a small plot, for the city would soon be teeming with more than a quarter of a million people.

All business houses except the meat markets and tailor shops were to be closed during the days of the festival. Sacrificial lambs and doves would be on sale outside the Temple to supply the demand of the visiting worshippers, and it was being whispered that selfish men were making this an enterprise for great gain.

Joseph, with the help of the boys, erected the tent and an outdoor grill upon which Mary proceeded to prepare the evening meal. Only wealthy travelers could afford to rent full accommodations in the city.

When they were settled, Johanan explained that he had friends in the city whom he was anxious for the family to meet. "In the morning," he said, "before there is too much activity in the streets, I will bring them here. Please be sure that all are present." Then he left them to go to his own quarters.

The meeting with Philius, Rebecca, and Jeremy was congenial enough, but something less than satisfactory. Adina, was the only one of the family who knew for sure what it was all about, with Marta and James standing quietly by, filled with suspicion. Philius discovered soon that he was to learn nothing from James, whom he immediately admired, and Jesus

appeared to be little more than a frank, intelligent lad, nine years of age.

Simeon and Marta were impatient, hoping to get an invitation to visit Jeremy's place of business which they had often heard Johanan talk about when he came into Adina's shop. They were not disappointed, for when the visitors prepared to leave, Johanan suggested that Adina and the ambitious young couple come along and see the commercial area that would soon be closing down for the festival. "It may become important to you in the future," he said.

They were amazed at the endless array of jewels and novelties displayed by the many merchants along the busy thoroughfare, and their visit to Jeremy's shop was an unforgettable experience. It was neat and clean and orderly. The little man possessed exquisite taste and a flair for merchandising, which impressed Marta, especially. She was certain that therein she had found the secret of the old one's success, and she longed for a chance to imitate him. She whispered as much to Simeon, who said he hadn't noticed.

"Some day you may fix up a shop any way you like," he said. "My job will be to buy the merchandise for as little as possible."

"Good," she said. "Then I'll sell it for all I can get."

"But," she went on, "there is one thing I'm afraid neither of us will be willing to do."

"What is that?" Simeon asked her.

"Adina says that Jeremy gives away all the money he makes. He gives it mostly to poor cripples who can't make a living for themselves."

"Well, we're supposed to tithe, you know," said Simeon. "We can start out with that."

Marta could barely believe her ears. This was the first time in all her life she had heard Simeon say anything that sounded religious.

"Of course," she answered, carefully hiding her amazement. "We'll take our tithe to the synagogue every Sabbath."

Later that day, Johanan and Jeremy visited again with Philius and Rebecca in their lovely home, as they watched the milling crowds on the streets below.

"I'm afraid we learned little from our interview this morning," observed Jeremy as he studied his young companion. "I hope you were not too disappointed."

"On the contrary," said Philius, "I'm sure I learned some things that are most important."

"Explain, explain!" the old one begged.

"First," he said with a smile, "we met some people who are smarter than we gave them credit for being. People with some first hand information and smart enough to keep it to themselves until they have sufficient evidence to clearly

document it.

"Second, we learned that the boy Jesus is an unusually brilliant lad who is able and willing to express perfect humility. And that, my friends, must characterize the Messiah, whoever he is, whenever he comes.

"Third, the boy James has heard rumors relating to Jesus, and he knew why we were probing. He was unable to cover it up. Once he became terribly angry, but he had the necessary strength of character to keep it from bursting its bonds. I'm quite sure he doesn't believe a word of what is being suggested, and, at this point, I probably would think less of him if he did."

"Is that all?" asked Johanan, smiling his appreciation of his young friend's ability to analyze character and interpret emotions.

"No," Philius went on. "There is one more thing I learned, and I'm certain it's the most important of all.

"Our job is to continue our study; to keep completely objective; to seal our lips and wait for the Lord to give us the answer, whether it be yes or no."

"Amen," said Jeremy. "You are right, but it won't be easy. I wish I could be with you when the answer comes. As it is," he smiled, emitting what seemed to the others to be a little bit of heaven, "I think I shall know long before you do."

Chapter Nine

Back in Nazareth, Joseph, who was past fifty, was working in his shop from dawn to dark. He was an excellent craftsman, and there was more work than he could handle. Simeon, was old enough and large enough to be of real assistance to him, but he had precisely no aptitude for carpentry. Wisely, no demands were placed upon him, and Joseph made other plans.

One afternoon, when James and Jesus came home from the synagogue, Mary met them at the door.

"James," she said, "your father wishes to see you, and I need Jesus to help me move some jars."

Jesus stepped into the house without a word, while James made his way quickly to the shop. "You wanted to see me,

Father?" he asked.

Joseph looked up from his planing. "Yes, son," he answered as he laid down his tool. "I have reached the place where I must have help with my work, and someone needs to be ready to carry on when I give it up completely. You have never showed much interest in woodworking, but you are strong. Now that you are nearly fifteen, I would like to teach you the trade."

"Yes sir," said James. "I thought you would be asking me. It isn't what I would like to spend my life doing," he went on, honestly, "but I'll do my best to help you."

"Fine," said Joseph. "I will start you in easy, and we'll see how you do. I will expect you here every afternoon as soon as your lessons are over. You will begin tomorrow. I'll have some work laid out for you, and I will always be on hand to help you.

"It may be that you will find the work satisfying even as I do. It's a wonderful feeling to create pieces of furniture and useful implements out of boards, to make doors and window frames and steps for houses, and wheels for wagons and carts. I'll be anxious to see how quickly you catch on."

James worked hard, doing as he was told, and he was never without an audience. If Joseph wasn't watching his every move, Jesus was, which tended to magnify any little

mistake he made. He was diligent but bored, thorough but slow. Joseph, whose experienced eye missed nothing, was amazed that he never complained.

Jesus was always at his brother's elbow, watching, learning, and longing to get his hands on the tools. He was in danger of getting hurt, which was a great concern to Joseph. So, being a wise father, instead of scolding the lad, he built a small bench in the far corner of the shop where Jesus could work on small utensils for his mother and toys for the younger children. And it was discovered at once that he was the one who some day would be willing and ready to take over the family enterprise.

The next three years rolled by quickly. By then, James was spending less time in the shop and more time purchasing lumber, drumming up business, selling and collecting. This was an area in which he excelled, and the work he thoroughly enjoyed. Jesus, who had just turned twelve, while still too small to do the heavy work, was fast, and efficient. He loved every minute he spent in the shop, and Joseph was justly proud of the craftsmanship he displayed.

But first in the interest of both James and Jesus was their memorization of Scripture and their daily discussions of what God was really saying to man. This theme led them naturally to seasons of meditation and prayer together.

Simeon, at twenty, had quit school. He was traveling with Johanan who reported regularly to Adina that the young man was learning the business at a steady and satisfactory pace. Marta, also twenty, had all but taken over Adina's shop, leaving the older woman free to return to her fine needlework which, with two salesmen on the road, was fast becoming a lucrative venture in itself.

Jude was ten. Joseph had put him to work at the small bench built for Jesus several years before, and he was doing well. The work was definitely to his liking. Joses was nine; the girls were eight and seven. The family of Joseph and Mary, happy and contented, was greatly admired in Nazareth, an excellent example for all the people.

So it happened that once again at the dinner table (it was an annual occurrence) Joseph called for attention to announce the coming journey to Jerusalem for the Passover. This time the girls were to be included.

"There is one problem," the father explained. "For certain reasons, it will be necessary for one member of the family to remain at home this year. I hesitate to make an arbitrary selection," he went on, "so if someone will volunteer to make such a sacrifice, I will be greatly relieved."

It was James who responded. "I am the one who should remain at home," he said. "Jesus is old enough to take care of himself; Jude and Joses will be under the care of Adina

and Marta. The girls will be with Mother, and Simeon has said that he would like to accompany Johanan.

"Anyway," he concluded, "I will appreciate the time alone. I have some catching up to do."

Mary smiled. James was an excellent son, and, next to Jesus, she loved him most dearly.

"Thank you, James," said Joseph with appreciation. "Now it is up to everyone to assist with the preparations."

Johanan and Simeon left early to make arrangements for the others and, upon reaching the city, they made their way to Jeremy's shop. They had been seeing him during the year and were well aware that their friend was failing fast.

The little man was sitting at his counter but he had no scroll unrolled before him. His eyes could no longer focus on the sacred writing. When his friends stepped through the doorway, he was unable to recognize them until they spoke. His voice was weak when he responded.

"I'm so glad you're here," he said, "for I have some important things to say. You see, I may not be here the next time you come to Jerusalem."

"Ah, my friend," Johanan spoke with deep affection. "I have come prepared to stay with you, if you need me."

"Yes, I need you very much," the old one agreed. "But there is something more we must discuss while there is time."

"I have a good business here, you know, and an excellent location. I want you to have it Johanan. We will make up the necessary papers today. Whatever money is left after I'm gone, I want you to give to a widow and her crippled son, but everything else, including the stock, is yours. Please tell me you will accept it."

"You are most generous, Jeremy," said Johanan, gratefully. "And I promise to continue giving to your needy friends."

Then he turned to Simeon. "Do you feel that you can take over the work on the road by yourself?" he asked. "I'm afraid I will be tied down closely here."

"I'll try," the young man answered. "I'm afraid I may lose some of your customers, though. If I could make the trip one month and you make it the next, it might be better."

Johanan and Jeremy both appreciated Simeon's honest appraisal of his ability, and they said so.

"I think you have a good associate, Johanan," said Jeremy after a moment's deliberation, and those words probably did more for the introverted young man than anyone will ever know.

"I have a plan in mind," said Johanan with an air of mystery and doubt. "It may be wishful thinking, Simeon, but I'll explain it to you later to get your reaction."

"We must go now to see Philius and Rebecca," he said to Jeremy. "We'll be back later this evening."

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Rebecca and Lucius met the two men at the door.

"Come in," Rebecca cried. "We've been expecting you. Philius will be here any moment.

"Shake hands with our friends," she said to her little son. "Tell them your name and how old you are."

The bright eyed youngster held out his tiny hand and said, "I'm Luke. I'm four." There was no reason, apparently, for wasting words.

Johanan picked up the boy and held him in his arms.

"He can't say Lucius," his mother explained, "so we've been calling him Luke. Philius says it's a real good name and I like it too."

"I'm busy with the dinner," she continued. "Why don't you men wait on the portico."

Soon the men were seated with the magnificent view of the Temple and its surrounding area before them. Johanan cleared his throat to bring up an embarrassing subject.

"Simeon," he said, "everyone assumes that you and Marta will be announcing your betrothal soon. Do you mind telling me if that is true?"

"Yes, it's true," the young man answered. "We haven't decided exactly when, but it will not be long."

"Well," the older one went on awkwardly. "I suppose that comes naturally enough to one of your age. But to an

old bachelor like me it's a frightening thought."

"I suppose it is," Simeon observed, wondering what his friend had in mind. "Why does it concern you?" he asked.

"Then you haven't guessed?" said Johanan, glad that his full black beard was hiding his blush.

"No, I haven't the slightest idea what you are getting at." Simeon answered honestly.

"That's part of my trouble," the other one went on. "If you haven't guessed it, probably no one else has either."

"All right," said Simeon. "Tell me what's bothering you. Get it off your chest."

"Well," Johanan responded slowly, gazing off across the city to avoid the enquiring eyes he knew were focused upon him. "For a long time I have been thinking that some day I might propose marriage to your Aunt Adina."

"Great!" shouted Simeon. "Just great! I never thought of it, but I'm naive. Don't judge others by me."

"I don't suppose she has ever thought about it either," said Johanan. "She's a lovely lady and I care about her very much. My fear is that she will turn me down."

"That's a chance you will have to take," said Simeon. "But why are you telling this to me?"

"It has to do with our futures - yours and mine - since Jeremy is turning his business over to us," explained Johanan.

"To you," stated Simeon firmly. "He didn't mention me."

"I know, but my idea is this. We might form a partnership. Marta could manage the shop in Nazareth and Adina. . . ." he stammered, and Simeon broke the embarrassing silence.

"I understand. Go on with your plans."

"Well, if she would have me, she could manage the shop here. Then, as you suggested. We could take turns making the road trips. Do you see?"

"That would be wonderful," said Simeon with genuine enthusiasm. "Neither of us would be away from home too much of the time; it would be a perfect arrangement."

"If Adina says no," Johanan went on, "as she probably will; and if she doesn't want to leave Nazareth, you and Marta might take over the shop here, and I would continue on the road as always."

"Oh, no," said Simeon. "That wouldn't work well at all. We don't have enough experience to handle so great a responsibility. Besides, Marta's aunt is old and poorly. She couldn't be left alone, and she would never leave her home."

"You muster up your courage to ask Adina to be your wife." Simeon smiled. "If you don't mind taking a bit of advice from someone less than half your age," he went on, "you better not mention either the business deal or our discussion. Just tell her you love her and propose. The rest can come later. Women are touchy about such things."

"Thank you," said Johanan nervously. "We won't mention

it again until I tell you how it all comes out. Are you agreed?"

"Agreed," Simeon answered solemnly.

It is hard to explain the close friendship that had developed between these two men, and Johanan was amazed by it himself.

"Simeon," he said. "You have changed a great deal in the last few years. Certainly it has been all for the better. How do you account for that?"

"It's because of Jesus, I guess," he answered thoughtfully. "He's a strange boy. He's never openly critical and he makes me feel I'm his special friend. He makes everyone feel that way. And he makes me ashamed whenever I do something, or say something, or even think something, I know I shouldn't."

"Interesting," said Johanan. "Interesting, indeed." Then he leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes in deep meditation.

The weather had been unseasonably pleasant for several weeks and the greatest crowds ever converged upon the Holy City for the Passover. It was nearly impossible for old friends to find one another and, when they did, it was equally difficult for them to get alone to visit.

Johanan, nervous and ill at ease, tried awkwardly to

suggest to Adina that they retreat from the milling throng to enjoy a private conversation. However, the whole idea was so far fetched he was sure he could not make himself sound casual. He gave it up.

Then came the final morning when he knew the caravan from Nazareth had begun its journey homeward. By midafternoon, the congestion having subsided, the good man went into the Temple where he was surprised to meet Philius and Rebecca.

"Did you know the boy Jesus is still here?" Philius asked. "He's been asking questions of some of the great scholars of the law. You must go in and listen; it is most amazing, and he is giving the best of them a bit of trouble. We are going in again now. Come along."

Johanan followed and, surely enough, the twelve-year-old lad was deeply engrossed with the elders.

By then, however, the tables had turned and the doctors were asking questions of Jesus. It was apparent from his forthright answers that he was not about to be stumped. Particularly impressive to Johanan was the self-confidence the boy displayed in a beautiful spirit of humility. In many points he was not in agreement with the scholars, but it was apparent he was arousing neither envy nor anger in his interrogators.

Evening was closing in, which brought the session to a close.

One of the priests of the Sanhedrin who was chairing the meeting arose to address the body.

"This has been a most unusual and profitable assembly," he stated clearly. "We shall meet again in the morning.

"Young man," he said, turning to Jesus. "It is my sincere hope that you will continue in our discussion."

"I will be most happy to remain," said Jesus simply.

Jesus saw Johanan with his friends and hurried to them.

"I'm afraid I'm stranded here," he said. "The caravan left hours ago, and I was unable to let my family know that I was occupied. It may be some time before they miss me. If they do not come back or send someone for me, perhaps I can make the trip to Nazareth with you, Johanan."

"They will be back," the friendly vendor assured him.

"In the meantime, you may stay with me, of course."

It was not until evening that Mary became concerned about Jesus. Joseph, himself, walked the full length of the caravan searching, only to report that the boy had not been seen by anyone.

"We shouldn't have left James at home," he said, blaming himself for their trouble. "He would not have allowed Jesus out of his sight."

"There is nothing we can do until morning," said Simeon, who was likewise assuming blame in the matter. "At daybreak,

I shall start back. The rest may go on. I'll find him and bring him home."

"No," cried Mary who was on the verge of tears.

"It's too dangerous to travel without a group."

"I've done it a number of times with Johanan," the young man spoke assuringly. "I'm not afraid."

"Thank you, Simeon," said Joseph, showing his appreciation. "I'm sure you could do it but it would be many days before we would know if you found him. All of us would worry, don't you see? We shall go back together."

The following evening, the family, including Adina and Marta, hurried through the gate into the city, again. Darkness was falling; it was too late to do any searching so they bedded down until dawn. Then Joseph gave them instructions.

"We shall stay together," he said. "That means everyone. First we will ask Simeon to lead us to Jeremy's shop. Johanan will probably be there and he may have Jesus with him. If not, we will go next to the Temple. Does everyone understand?"

Jeremy's shop was closed. The days of the festival had been tiring for the little man. So the searching clan made its way to the Temple, and there they found Jesus,

deeply involved with the doctors.

Mary, upon spying her boy, ran through the august group to throw her arms around him. Most boys would have been embarrassed but Jesus merely smiled and he fondly caressed his adoring mother.

"Why have you treated us this way?" she asked reprovingly. "Your father and I have been anxiously looking for you."

"Why?" he asked mysteriously. "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house, about his business?"

"He speaks in riddles," Joseph said to Mary later. "This is another of those things we must accept until the truth is made plain to us."

Johanan was in the audience. He hurried to Adina, and since the great crowds were gone, he had no problem getting alone with her.

"What is it you want of me?" Adina asked. "Is it about the shop?"

"Not this time." The bearded vendor was plainly ill at ease. "Adina," he said. "You and I have been friends for a long time."

"Yes, Johanan," she answered. "Real good friends for a long, long time."

Her cheerful response made it easier for him to continue.

"You've been a widow for years, and I've been a bachelor

all my life, and for the past year or more, I've been wanting to suggest - to ask you - that is, to see what you would think. . .

"Oh, what's the use?" he stammered.

"Why Johanan," Adina answered him with a chuckle she was unable to control. "Are you trying to propose to me?"

"I knew you would laugh," he said miserably. "I'm sorry. I just thought maybe. . . Oh well."

"Johanan," she said with great seriousness, taking his hand in her's. "I'm sorry I hurt you. I've been wondering if you were ever going to ask me."

Chapter Ten

Rome was in mourning. Caesar Augustus, who had turned a republic which wasn't ready to govern itself into an empire that he was ready to govern, was dead at the age of seventy-nine. His reign, for the most part, had been a popular one, for he had put an end to conquest, waged war only when no alternative solution to a major problem was available, and provided work for thousands of freed men in his reconstruction program. Even so, he was ruthless.

He had his enemies, of course, and with good reason. He spent millions making Rome (or a part of it) a city of marble, while doing nothing to improve conditions in the deteriorating slums which were also within its walls. His family was a disgrace to the nation.

Tiberius, son of Augustus' second wife, Livia, by a former marriage, ascended the throne, and there was little doubt that there were stormy days ahead for the Empire.

The impact of the change was felt keenly in Jerusalem. Herod Antipas, insecure at best, was beside himself with imaginings and fear.

Philius, who had just received the news of the emperor's passing, sat with his head in his hands on the portico of his lovely residence. Rebecca and Luke, (the boy was ten) were careful not to disturb him. Then steps were heard and Rebecca, opening the door with great caution, cried out in delight as she fondly embraced her aging father. She hadn't seen him for more than a year.

Philius came running, and soon the family was engaged in a conference, talking barely above whispers, with ears alert to any sound of voice or fall of foot beyond their walls.

"We're in deep trouble," Marcus explained to his son-in-law. "Tiberius has long been suspicious of anyone whose office even hints of secrecy if he is not in on the secret. Actually, our services are needed more than ever now, but he will never believe it. I'm not sure how well acquainted he may be with our operation, but he will soon know enough to suspect that Augustus retained us to thwart any changes in policy that the new administration may try to affect.

"Now," he went on hurriedly, "one thing of importance has

happened and I have not had opportunity to inform you. About a month ago, when I became certain that Augustus had only a short time to live, I quietly retired because of my age. I explained to my immediate superior that I was unable to carry on physically which was true enough, and I suggested the office might well remain vacant, at least for a time, since a change in administration was imminent. He agreed and signed me out and paid me off. It was as simple as that.

"Technically, you are in the employ of Herod and my hope is that he has not become suspicious of your further function even though it has often kept him out of trouble.

"Tell me," he continued at the same rapid pace, "do you have any reason at all to think that he may have any such suspicions?"

"No," whispered Philius. "I have been very careful to represent his interests and as far as I can tell he trusts me completely. I will do anything though, to get released from his service without difficulty."

"I'm sure you will," said Marcus. "I think you should seek an audience with him and ask to be relieved of your duties. You will know how best to present your request. If you can get him to release you quietly, you can take your family away. You will find employment, I'm sure."

"Yes. . . " Philius began to speak, but Marcus stopped him.

"We haven't time to talk further. I must leave at once. Do not try to contact me, but when you leave Jerusalem leave a message for me with some person I can approach without suspicion.

"I will," said Philius, and he quickly scribbled the name, Adina, and the address of the shop that had once belonged to Jeremy, and handed it to his father-in-law.

Marcus kissed his daughter, patted the shoulder of his only grandson, and quietly made his way to the street below.

"Do we have to move away, Father?" queried Luke anxiously.

Rebecca tried to smile. "Luke has been playing doctor, as usual, with his friends. He doesn't want to move away from his patients."

"I want to make them all so well that they will live forever," the imaginative lad explained.

Philius was in no mood to smile, but he listened with interest.

"Luke," he said, "just such a physician as that will appear, one day. He will not be my son, but he may be a friend, an acquaintance. We shall see.

"What would you say if I were to tell you we may move to Athens where you might become a real doctor some day?" he asked.

The boy was overjoyed. "Father, Mother!" he cried. "Could we, please. When can we go?"

"It is late," his mother said. "Right now you must go to bed. As soon as your father and I have any news, we will tell you."

The following morning, Philius appeared at the royal palace. He was well known there, of course, and the guard listened closely to the instruction he gave him.

"Get through to Herod as quickly as possible," Philius said with great seriousness. "Be sure my message reaches him exactly as I give it to you. Say, 'Your honor, your servant Philius, requests immediate audience with his king. It is a matter of dire importance.'"

Philius was certain he would not be kept waiting long. He was right, for moments later he was ushered into a private conference with the superstitious and insecure leader who appeared as though he had been without sleep for a long long time.

"I'm afraid you bring bad tidings," he nearly wailed. "Tell me quickly whatever it is you think I should know."

Philius felt greatly encouraged, for Herod's words left him free to speak both truthfully and diplomatically with at least an even chance of gaining his objective.

"The tidings are not all bad," said Philius, "at least, not for you and your people. I have reason to believe that Tiberius is pleased with the measure of peace the Empire enjoys with Judea, and it is certain he gives credit for it to your

leadership."

Antipas was deeply relieved, and he showed it.

"Go on," he said hoarsely.

"There is a potential problem of which you may not be aware. That is why I have come."

"You have been a faithful servant," the leader said. "Explain the problem, please."

"My father-in-law, Marcus whom you know well, retired from his office some time ago because of age. As soon as he heard of Augustus' death, he got the following information to me in order that I might pass it on to you - secretly, of course."

"Of course," the ruler was clinging to every word the younger man was saying.

"Tiberius," Philius continued, "is insanely jealous. He will destroy anyone whom he thinks shared any secrets with Augustus of which he was unaware. And even if he would not, we may be sure his mother, Livia, would do it for him."

Antipas shuddered. Well he knew the designing woman's tactics in manipulating the affairs of Rome to accomplish her personal objectives. Tiberius, himself, would not be on the throne except for her willingness to commit cold-blooded murder to clear the way for her son's appointment.

"There will be investigations of all provincial governments," Philius went on, "and that will include your own. I am deeply disturbed, but as a former slave and humble servant, I hesitate to offer advice to my king."

The distracted leader brushed the thought aside.

"I have placed you in a position to secretly observe many things," he said. "Your advice to me has always been a part of your responsibility. Please go on."

"Well," said Philius, "my fear is this: When the investigators begin probing, they will discover that my office has been one through which your interests in Rome have been represented with a certain amount of secrecy which may not be good. While I would probably be viewed as a small cog in a big operation and merely reprimanded and dismissed, Tiberius' suspicions might place your rule in jeopardy or worse."

"Go on," growled Herod.

"I have been in your employ for a long time sir, and I shall miss the pleasant relationship we have maintained."

"Do you mean you wish to resign your post?" asked Herod with what Philius feared was a hint of distrust. If it were, he knew he was losing ground.

"Oh, no sir," he answered quickly. "That would do no good at all."

"Then what are you suggesting?" the ruler demanded.

"Just this," said Philius. "That you dismiss me from your service and close out my office before the operation has been uncovered. Then, if you are interrogated concerning it, you will be free to explain that with the advent of a strong, young emperor at the helm of the Empire, who has only the best interests

of his entire domain and all his subordinates at heart, you could find no reason to continue my services or to maintain any similar office."

Antipas smiled with pride and appreciation.

"Excellent," he said. "I will miss you. And you may rest assured that a handsome bonus will accompany your final payment for service."

Philius thanked him, but again his experienced eye caught an expression of doubt that clouded the countenance of the naturally suspicious Herod.

He's wondering about the information I carry and what I may do with it, mused Philius with alarm, and the ruler's next question confirmed his fears.

"Where will you go, and what are you going to do?" he asked with a sternness which in itself constituted a serious indictment.

Philius fought to maintain his former expression and composure.

"Sir," he said with a calmness that belied his anxious fears. "I think it would be best for everyone concerned if I were to leave the area and divorce myself from Judean politics completely, to go where no embarrassing questions will be asked of me.

"I would like to take my family to Athens, where I will work as an interpreter and place my son in a school of medicine

as soon as he is old enough to be accepted. He seems to have special aptitude in that field. We would make the move immediately.

"Unless, of course," he added diplomatically, "you have another suggestion."

"Oh, no." The troubled ruler actually smiled, for his fears had melted away again.

It was not yet noon when a special courier stood at the door of Philius' home with a carefully sealed document in his hand. As soon as he was gone, Philius broke the seal, scanned the contents, and exploded with a shout of pure joy that brought his family running. Herod Antipas, a cruel, unstable, insecure leader who could not be trusted by his closest friends, had indeed signed a statement of dismissal, together with a glowing recommendation of his servant. Enclosed also was the severance pay and a most liberal bonus.

"Complete the packing quickly," Philius demanded. "Herod's mind changes more rapidly than the wind. We must be on our way in the early hours tomorrow."

Rebecca and Luke were dancing with joy.

"I will go at once to report the whole matter to Adina," Philius went on. "She will pass the information to your father. Perhaps he will come to live with us."

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When Philius entered the shop which had been the pride of his old friend Jeremy and was now no less the pride of Adina and her adoring husband, he came face to face with James who was attending the counter for his Aunt.

"Adina is out, doing a bit of shopping on her own," James explained. "She will be back shortly. We are expecting Johanan later this afternoon. He has been to Nazareth. I'm in the city on business, and will be starting toward home tomorrow."

Philius smiled. He was fond of James, who, in his characteristic, quiet manner, had answered his questions politely, fully, and without one wasted word.

James, at twenty-two had developed into a man of stature, physically, intellectually, spiritually. Except for maturing, he had changed very little from the child of other days. Philius had once described him to Rebecca as "well built and handsome, personable but quiet, with the brain of a sage. One feels immediately that he knows much much more than he has any intention of revealing."

I would say the same today, he mused, as he quietly surveyed his young friend.

"Thank you, James," he said. "My family and I are leaving for Athens tomorrow. I have terminated my employment here.

"I presume you know that Caesar is dead," he added.

"Yes," James replied, but he gave no hint of his reaction to the news.

"Tiberius has assumed the emperorship," Philius continued.

"I was sure he would," said James, and again, no one could have guessed whether he was pleased or disturbed. But neither would anyone have assumed that he held no strong opinions, that he didn't know nor care.

"Since we will be out of close touch with your family," said Philius, "I would appreciate being brought up to date regarding their welfare. Are they all well?"

"Father has been poorly for some time," James answered, giving the other a feeling that he appreciated his interest. "We fear he is failing. Mother is well, but deeply concerned. The girls are a great help to her."

"How is Jesus?" Philius asked as casually as he could.

"Fine," said James, "He is eighteen now. He enjoys his work, for the shop also gives him opportunity to visit with many people. He is deeply interested in others."

"Jesus and you have been very close, I'm told," ventured Philius.

"Yes," said James. "We studied together for years. Jesus has keen insight and a remarkably practical mind. He also exercises perfect discipline. We have spent hundreds of hours discussing the law and the prophets, interpreting and contemporizing them, a task at which Jesus is especially adept."

"There are many problems, I presume," said Philius.

"Indeed," James responded, "but I marvel at Jesus' almost uncanny ability to strike through to the core, explaining every paradox. Many times I have a feeling that he is teaching me."

"Do you ever disagree?" Philius asked.

"Yes, temporarily, but we always come to see alike after a discussion." James smiled. "I should say, I guess, that I always come to see as he sees."

James had opened up so well to the questioning, that Philius decided to take full advantage of the opportunity to draw him out.

"How do you account for Jesus' unusual life and grasp of truth?" he asked.

"How does one account for anybody being sharper and better disciplined than another?" countered James. "If you are alluding to some rumor that there is something supernatural about my brother, I want you to know that I don't believe it, not for a minute."

The little interview was over, partly because there seemed to be nothing more to say, mostly because Adina came walking into the shop.

Chapter Eleven

Early the following autumn, Joseph died. There was deep mourning throughout Nazareth and beyond, for the good man had been popular with the people and a never failing friend to his family. He had known no enemy. Johanan once pictured him as being one of those rare individuals who, though unpretentious, never go unnoticed. His sons and daughters described him as a disciplinarian who needed never more than mildly reprimand them, for to obey him was as natural as the simple life they lived.

It was Jesus, however, who startled his mother with a simple pronouncement as they stood sadly beside the cot on which their loved one lay.

"It was in knowing him," he said, "that I have come to

understand my Father in heaven."

Simeon and Marta who lived in the house her aunt had left them when she died, stood silently in the background, holding their two little boys. They had lovingly named them Joseph and Johanan.

"James," said Simeon, sadly, "I wish I had been a better son."

James took charge of the simple arrangements. There was no religious ceremony - only family prayers - and in a matter of hours, the deceased was properly laid to rest. Then, sorrowing, the sons escorted the women back to the house with its great stone steps that led to the roof-top - steps hewn by the hands of Joseph.

Mary's grief was great. She had reason to believe that no better, stronger man had ever lived than he, who, under circumstances strained and strange, had taken her as his lawful wedded wife. But Mary was strong too and with her loyal, loving family, she calmly carried on.

Then James, assuming his task as head of the house, gathered the little group around him to give careful instructions.

"Since Adina now lives in Jerusalem," he began, "and Marta with more than her share of responsibility in caring for her boys as well as the shop when Simeon's gone, there are only ourselves to assist Mother with her work. She must have the

full cooperation of all, for her load will be extra heavy now."

Mary spoke up quickly to assure her loved ones that all would be well.

"Hulda and Esther have completed their studies with Marta which leaves them free to assist me," she said. "And Joses does the heavy chores each morning. If we get behind with our work, we'll let you know."

James smiled his appreciation. He loved his family.

"Jesus," he said, "you are a good carpenter. Father taught you well. Even so, at nineteen, you will be assuming heavy responsibility, for the shop is now in your hands. Do you think you can handle it?"

"If it were not for Jude," he answered without hesitation, "I couldn't do it. But he is almost as large as I, and we have learned to work together well. It seems a bit strange but true that in the areas where I am weak, he is strong."

"And vice versa," broke in Jude.

"We will do the work," said Jesus, "if you will continue to provide us with orders and materials to fill them."

"I will do more than that," James promised. "I will be busy with many things, but I will do my best to fill our father's shoes as head of the house of Joseph. But I must have the same cooperation he enjoyed, or I will fail."

"James, dear," said Mary, "you shall have it, never fear."

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Simeon and Johanan continued to take their turns, traveling their zig-zagging trade route from Nazareth upward to Capernaum, then southward through Tiberius, hence across Jordan into Bethania, down through Gilead and across the river again to Judea, touching towns of importance along the way.

Their trips were fraught with danger, for they carried merchandise of value, and thieves were prone to lurk in the shadows. The men attached themselves to traveling caravans whenever possible, and both were sincere in their belief that the protecting hand of the Lord was upon them, for never did they encounter serious trouble.

In Johanan's absence, Adina was the only female shopkeeper along the avenue, but there was little doubt she was doing her share of business. When Johanan was in Jerusalem, which was five weeks of every two month period, he kept the shop, giving her much needed rest and time to pursue other interests. Their marriage had worked out well. They were happy and contented but the years were creeping up.

The political climate was changing too. The Zealots, members of a militant Jewish order, were making their ambitions public, and their veiled threats were not unknown to the authorities in Rome. There were rumors that Tiberius was unhappy with the Jewish situation under the three young Herods, and that a governor probably would be appointed to keep the

peace. This riled the Zealots, put fear in the heart of Antipas, and provoked a spirit of unrest in people generally, but the many months became several years with little if any change appearing on the surface.

These years, however, were doing something to Jesus as he went quietly about his work in the carpenter shop. According to Jude, he became progressively introverted, listening more, speaking less. He went regularly to the synagogue but he seldom raised a question or spoke a word as he watched and listened closely to the people - all the people.

But it was James who was running into trouble. James, the quiet, shy lad who had lived such an excellent life, had never learned to release his tensions. Now that he was a grown man in his late twenties, it seemed impossible for him to change. He was, by nature, a spiritual person. He loved God, but he found it impossible to identify with him in the meaningful way he desired. He longed for peace. He sought for it in the synagogue of Nazareth, in the Temple of Jerusalem, and alone in the fields along the roads he trampled in Galilee. He sought peace in the blazing sunset, in the lonely hours of the night, in the freshness of dawn. Mary became concerned and told him so, but she found no words of weight to help him. Jude, Joses, and their sisters did everything in their power to lift his spirits, but it was all to no avail. Simeon and Marta felt completely helpless although Simeon tried in various

ways to close the breach that had separated him from his brother in their boyhood days. Jesus studied James, that was all.

James showed no resentment toward those who tried to help him. He appreciated the efforts of his family and friends and said so, but it seemed that nothing would lift the depression that settled like a shroud upon his sensitive soul.

Jesus is the only one who understands, he mused, but he says nothing, for he knows I will have to work out my problem by myself.

Then Johanan came into Nazareth on one of his regular visits. The great full beard that had been a glossy black was nearly white, and he appeared unusually tired as he entered the little shop to be greeted by Simeon and Marta. When he had rested, he sought out James and asked him to accompany him back to Jerusalem.

"It will do you good," he said. "Spend a few days with us and forget your troubles. Adina begged me to bring you to her. You happen to be a favorite of her's you know."

So James went along with the aging vendor. It was on the second day out of Nazareth that he first sensed the oldster's mounting problem.

"Johanan," the younger man said gently. "I think the time has come for you to turn all the travel duty over to Simeon. I presume you are strong for your age, but your age is showing. Your step is slow and uncertain. I hadn't realized this before."

"I cannot take Simeon from his family so much of the time," explained Johanan. "It would not be pleasing to the Lord."

"Neither is it pleasing to the Lord for you to kill yourself," James answered. "There must be another answer."

"There is," said Johanan, after a brief pause. "There is a way, but I am not sure whether it will be acceptable to all concerned."

"Perhaps if you would share it with me, I could help you work it out," suggested James.

"Perhaps I should," Johanan said thoughtfully. "The shop in Nazareth," he explained, "has never been a lucrative enterprise. It has produced a good living for Simeon and Marta, but that is all. If it were not that we have kept it supplied with merchandise ourselves on our regular trips, it would have failed long ago."

"I sometimes wondered about that," said James, "but since it was none of my business, I didn't say anything."

"Very typical of you, James," the old man observed kindly. "You are right about my age. Adina and I should be looking forward to retirement. We have saved for that, of course. We can handle the shop for a few more years, but the travel will have to end soon."

"Go on," said James.

"The ideal situation would be to close the shop in Nazareth, and for Simeon and Marta to take over the business in Jerusalem."

It has always been a flourishing enterprise - old Jeremy built it up, you know - and we could turn over our trade route to some young man who needs a job."

"That sounds like an excellent idea to me," James answered with more enthusiasm than he usually manifested. "What is the problem?"

"I'm not sure that Simeon and Marta will want to leave Nazareth. Living there is pleasant and peaceful compared to life in Jerusalem, and they have been there practically all their lives. Mary and the family will be disappointed, for the two little boys have really won their hearts."

"I think I have a solution," said James, and, for the moment, the depression that plagued him took wings. It is always so, when I'm helping someone else, James mused. But it always re-
turns.

"What is your plan?" asked Johanan.

"Talk this over with Simeon and Marta," James answered, "suggesting they be prepared to move to Jerusalem several years from now, so it will not come as a sudden shock. And to lighten the load for both families, why don't you teach Joses to handle the route. He needs a job and would probably do all right."

"Quite possible," agreed Johanan. "When I was a single man, I did very well with the route. The shop in Nazareth was opened merely to give Adina something to do."

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Adina was deeply concerned with James' emotional problem.

"It is not at all like you," she said, "to give in to any kind of pressure. From the time you were a little child you have been strong and exceptionally level headed."

"But this, I can't handle," James answered with a hopeless gesture. "I can't fight it, because I can't see it; I can't get my hands on it. It's driving me to distraction."

"Could it be Jesus?" Adina asked. "He is an unusual fellow, and the two of you have been the best of friends for years." After a pause, she went on thoughtfully. "Could it be that you have come to feel you cannot measure up to his high standard of perfection. Does he make you feel inferior?"

"Oh, I feel inferior," said James, "but Jesus doesn't say anything to cause it. It isn't what he says; it's what he is!" he nearly wailed. "And lately there has been something mystical developing about him; he's different than others. I can't hide anything from him. He seems to know, even, what I am thinking. Sometimes my thoughts are evil, and I'm ashamed, especially when I see it makes him unhappy, but he doesn't say a word."

"Could it be?" she asked, measuring her words carefully, "that he is different than others because he is someone special in the sight of God?"

"Of course not," answered James. "He's just an extraordinary person, and it bothers me that he and I no longer have that close fellowship we always enjoyed. I am no longer comfortable in his

presence."

"James," Adina spoke with great seriousness. "I think you should go away for awhile. Meet new people; try to forget your problem. Maybe it will disappear."

"Thank you," he answered. "That is exactly what I needed to hear. You see, I have been thinking the same thing for some time."

Chapter Twelve

James was thirty-two years old the day he came back to Nazareth, leading a donkey laden with what his bachelor life required on the road. For two years he had traveled, seeking a peace of mind and heart that was altogether too elusive for him to grasp.

He had spent several months with the Essenes, a radical sect of Jews whose principle commune was located in the area west of the Dead Sea. For a time, the disciplined lives of these monastic people looked good to him. Their central treasury always had sufficient funds to supply their needs, not because the arid region where they farmed provided them with more than the most meager returns for their labor, but because their simple life style required so little.

Everyone worked. They ate only the simplest food, all of which they produced themselves, and each member of the order was allowed no clothing except that which he was wearing. They bathed in cold water, spent the early hours preceding dawn in prayer, and worked until the sun had set each evening.

They practiced universal celibacy, which meant that since they didn't marry, the continuance of the sect depended upon the gaining of "converts." They cared for orphaned children, enough of whom remained in the ranks to keep the population somewhat stable. Elderly people, who were poor and who no longer desired the common pleasures of life, often found refuge in the communes. Occasionally, one in middle age or younger, who had become disillusioned with life, found a certain masochistic pleasure in adopting the stern discipline of the Essenes.

James, who had always lived a carefully disciplined life found the Essenes way more tolerable than did most men his age. They came in for a season, then moved on again. He would have remained for life if only he had found the peace for which he sought. But, alas, the restlessness that gnawed at his vitals and dogged his steps was strangely immune to the therapy the "way" promised to provide.

He went next to live among the people of Samaria, whom he had always been told he should shun with a vengeance. He was certain that Jesus held no such prejudices. But again, he found no balm to heal his wounds and relieve his troubled mind.

He had always feared the Zealots, the militant sect of the Jews. Their methods of gaining what they believed to be the proper objective of the "chosen race," and the life style they adopted was exactly opposite of that of the quiet, peace-loving Essenes.

James, in his desperation, went to them also, and at first was pleased with their enthusiastic efforts to affect necessary change. But soon he saw their methods could lead only to unbridled terrorism and eventual war with the legions of Rome, and this was contrary to everything he and Jesus had agreed was pleasing to the Lord.

The Sadducees he avoided, for while the law of Moses was sacred to their system, the materialistic views they held were repugnant to his sensitive nature. He saw them as legalistically devout, but not spiritual. They rejected the idea of an angelic realm, a resurrection, and the prophetic promise of a Messiah. They were the aristocratic society of the Jews who controlled the temple and were diametrically opposed to the doctrinal positions of the Pharisees who exalted the prophets of antiquity.

James was fully aware that the Pharisees whom he believed were right in their interpretation of the deity, had in large measure lost touch with the Lord. Renewal was their need: a spiritual revival that would put their hearts as well as their heads in tune with God. This, James longed to see. This, he

believed, would bring peace to the world. This, he believed, would bring peace to his troubled soul, but he had no idea how such a movement could be initiated.

So it was that James, tired and distressed, reached his home in Nazareth after two long and what he believed were fruitless years of searching. His welcome was overwhelming. Mary hurried to care for his immediate needs as his brothers and sisters bombarded him with questions. He tried hard to keep a smile on his face and express his appreciation.

After a good meal and two hours of much needed rest, James arose and made his way to the shop where Jesus, who at twenty-eight appeared strong, mature, and deeply serious. He was busily shaping a yoke for a poor sharecropper who worked the fields with oxen.

"I can see you are doing an excellent job," James remarked with interest. "That takes a lot of work. I hope your customer can pay you well."

Jesus nodded. "For this," he said, "I shall be given the best reward a laborer ever receives."

"I know," said James, "you are doing it gratis for some poor fellow who has no money. But his smile of appreciation will bring you greater joy than could possibly be provided by the shekels the job is worth."

"Right," said Jesus. "Not only have you learned your

lessons well, but I see your many months of roving have not made you forget them."

He carefully put his tools away and dusted off the bench where he was working.

"Are you quitting for the day?" James asked,

"For an hour or two at least," said Jesus as he reached for the three-legged stools that James remembered well. "Let us sit and discuss your travels."

"I was seeking peace," said James with a note of sadness. "I didn't find it."

"Where did you seek?" queried the younger brother.

James related in detail the story of his search. Jesus listened with rapt attention, interjecting countless questions as the account unfolded.

"So none of the systems you observed provided the answers you were looking for?" he asked.

"No," said James. "Each in turn displayed certain virtues, but in the end they all failed."

"Are you giving up?" asked Jesus.

"I suppose you might call it that," the elder one agreed. "I am convinced, I think, that life holds no answers to my problem. I am determined to keep the commandments, to serve the Lord with diligence, and wait for death to bring the peace I crave."

"I have no doubt," said Jesus, "that our Father in heaven,

through his Spirit, is leading you, and I wouldn't want to suggest anything at this point that would hinder the process.

"I will say, though, that I suspect you will find the peace you're searching for in due time, and long before the body dies."

"Thank you," said James with what sounded like a faint glimmer of hope. "You have always been right. I shall try to believe that you are right again.

"Tell me," he went on, "about your own plans. I can't believe this little shop will hold you forever."

"The shop has been a great blessing," said Jesus. "Pungent truths have come to me as I have meditated while I worked, I have met all kinds of people: men, women, youngsters in adolescence, and little children. Not one of them came and went again without teaching me something important.

"But you are right, James. I do have further plans. I shall be leaving soon, and I too will follow the route that you have trod. I want to meet, first hand, the people you have described. I want also to meet men and women of every profession and trade: fishermen, weavers, merchants, accountants, sales people, teachers, laborers, bond and free. I want to see priests in their pulpits, kings in their castles, and princes at their play."

"Then you will journey to Rome and beyond." said James.

"No, my brother," answered Jesus. "In Galilee, Samaria, and Judea, I will find them all. I shall need to go no

further,"

"And what will you be seeking?" queried James.

"My search will be for people," he said. People who shall help me establish a kingdom upon the earth."

"You've been dreaming," cautioned James.

"No, my brother," Jesus continued with conviction.

"Dreams fade and die. Of this kingdom there shall be no end."

"Can I help you, Jesus?" James inquired seriously.

"Not until you have found the peace for which you have been seeking," Jesus answered. "You are on the right road, for you say you are determined to keep the commandments and serve with diligence. That is good, but it shall be your faith that will make you whole."

At the table, the following afternoon, Jesus, who was sitting as usual in the place where Joseph and later James had sat, called for attention. He was the undisputed head of the house.

"You have heard me say that some day I shall launch a ministry. I shall, but that day has not yet come. However, now that James has returned, I too am about to make a journey, a part of my preparation for the work the Father in heaven is calling me to do.

"Jude will carry on the work of the shop - he is well prepared - and Joses shall assist him.

"Rabbi Attai," Jesus went on, "is very old, and James has

consented to help him with the teaching. Classes are being carried on by Marta for the girls of the community, and we shall be expecting good reports. Hulda and Esther shall assist her. James will take his place again as the head of the house, and he will see that Mother's every wish is carried out.

"Are there questions?" he concluded.

"How long will you be gone?" Joses asked.

"A year or more, maybe two," he answered. "You will learn to get along without me in the home, even as we learned to get along without James when he left us many months ago.

Three days later Jesus bade the family good-by.

A badly needed rain was falling, cooling the sultry atmosphere. Jude and Joses were working in the shop as James hurried in from the street, shaking the water from his flowing hair and outer garment he had draped over his shoulders like a shawl.

"I guess Simeon and I are the only men in the family who failed to qualify as carpenters," he said. "You are a craftsman of the first order, Jude. It is no wonder business is booming."

"Thank you James," the brother responded. "You may not be a carpenter, but you have certainly succeeded at everything else."

"That is hardly true," said James with a note of sadness.

"Our brother, Jesus, set a perfect example that I have failed miserably to live up to. And it is not because I haven't tried.

"What do you fellows think Jesus meant by 'a kingdom upon earth?'" he asked.

"Jude and I have talked about it many times," said Joses. "We don't know. One thing we do know is that, recently, Jesus became more and more absorbed with his thoughts until sometimes he seemed to live in another world."

"During the months that you were away," Jude added, "he seemed to become involved in some sort of mysticism. Sometimes he would look up from his meditation and ask us if we believed in him. We didn't know how to answer."

"I know," said James, "and that worries me. He and I had always been close companions. Now we're miles apart in spirit. Tell me, do you think his mind is affected?"

"No," said Jude. "There never was a moment when he didn't seem to have full control of all his faculties."

James stood quietly for several minutes, carefully weighing his thoughts. Finally he spoke.

"You fellows probably never heard about it for you were quite young, but years ago someone started a ridiculous story about Jesus being the promised Messiah. It made me angry - still does - and I was glad the rumor got hushed up soon.

"I wonder now," he went on, "if Jesus heard it, and if

that could have affected his thinking."

"I doubt that, said Jude. "He was always too mature and sharp merely to get carried away by someone else's imagination."

"If you had heard it, what would have been your reaction?" James asked.

It was Joses who finally ventured an opinion.

"I might have believed it," he said. "Being younger, I always looked up to Jesus with simple adoration. He was so perfect in every way."

"I see," said James. "And I, being older, looked upon him with simple admiration, because he was such an excellent young brother."

"That sounds logical enough," observed Jude. "But let me pose a pointed question. What are your reactions to the rumor now?"

"Absurd, idiotic," said James.

"I agree," said Joses, "but only because he is our brother. If he were a stranger, and I were to meet him today for the first time, I would not be so quick to discount the theory."

"What you are saying," said Jude, "is that while you cannot accept the rumor as being true, neither can you find any argument with which to refute it. Is that the way it is?"

"That's near enough," answered Joses.

"Bosh," said James.

Chapter Thirteen

Life in Nazareth went on with more than enough excitement to break the monotony. Simeon and Marta were looking forward to the day when they would take over the larger, busier shop in Jerusalem. Johanan had retired from traveling duty, which was being carried on by Simeon and Joses taking their turns. Jude ran the carpenter shop, with Joses' help when he was home. James, in addition to his other work, assisted the aging rabbi at the school. He was an excellent teacher. The rabbi remarked to Mary that no one except Jesus had learned the Scriptures so well, or could explain them so clearly. James was happiest when teaching, but the old problem continued to plague him, and it seemed to increase with the passing months.

Mary was only in her middle forties, but the busy life she lived and the burdens she carried were speeding the aging process. However, the tiny wrinkles that appeared when she smiled, and the tinges of gray at the temples, seemed only to enhance her natural beauty.

Hulda was betrothed to a quiet young man who had won favor also with her family and friends. Esther was hopeful, and Joses was beginning to talk about a young lady in Jerusalem who sometimes tended the counter for Adina. Even Jude, who was as introverted and shy as James, had been seen on several occasions, talking with Michal, the daughter of Stephen the tailor, whose shop was down by the synagogue.

A year passed by with no word from Jesus. It was Marta who first noticed that Mary's concern for her twenty-nine-year-old son was something more than she thought was natural. The mother was spending more and more time in prayer; she smiled less, and she spoke one evening to James of a strange foreboding of evil. She continued to manage the household well enough, but she was leaving much of the work to Esther. Hulda, of course, no longer lived in the home. In the months that followed, Mary failed visibly until she was spending much of her time in bed, and she was given to reminiscing.

Again she called James to her side, saying, "I must confide in you. There are secrets I have carried in my heart for a long, long time. Will you listen?"

She's delirious, he mused sadly.

"Yes, Mother," he said. "I'm listening."

"It's about Jesus," she said slowly, and my betrothal to Joseph."

"Please," James pleaded. "You are dreaming. Why don't you close your eyes and rest."

"No James," she went on. "I must unburden my heart. I was already with child, but I had never known a man."

James laid his hand on her forehead. He was certain she had developed a fever that was causing her mind to wander. He was almost sorry to find that her brow felt cool to his touch.

"Mother," he said softly. "I know that once there was such a rumor abroad, but I wasn't aware you had heard it. You have allowed it to obsess you."

"No, James," she said. "I didn't know about the rumor."

She told him of a visit from an angel who informed her of the child she was to bear. She talked of the painful journey to Bethlehem and the baby's humble birth, closing with the account of the wise men who brought expensive gifts to Jesus, and the subsequent sojourn in Egypt.

"Thank you, for listening, James," she said. "I am tired now. I must rest."

James walked out into bright sunlight. His mind was closed. Tomorrow she will remember nothing of her wild

imaginings, he assured himself.

He refused to dwell upon a recurring suggestion to his troubled mind that the story might be true. His depression deepened.

Mary regained her strength after relating the strange account, and she never mentioned the subject again. It was that silence which James accepted as ample proof that she remembered nothing about it.

Another year rolled by. It was a delightful day in spring. The birds were singing in the trees; children were playing in the streets, and women were working in their tiny gardens. Esther called the family to dinner. The circle seemed small. Joses was on his route, leaving only Mary, Esther, James and Jude at the roof-top table. After prayers, they were eating and visiting when footsteps were heard ascending the great stone stairway. Then, bringing joy unspeakable to their hearts, Jesus appeared before them. He was tanned, a veritable picture of health. His hair was long, he had grown a small brown beard, and he was plainly pleased at the reception he received.

"Will you be staying home now?" Mary asked hopefully.

"For only a few days," Jesus answered. "The time has come for me to begin my ministry. But I will see you from time to time. I am hoping you will all be present when my labors bring me close to home."

Then he ate his fill and rested.

"Did you meet the people as you planned?" James asked him later.

"Yes, I did," he answered. "I know now just who to look for in choosing my team of helpers."

"You know who they are?" queried James.

"Not who, but what," Jesus explained. "I shall take them from various walks of life, each one an individual completely unlike any of the others, and I shall train them to be my disciples." He paused.

"I see you haven't found the peace you have long been seeking for, my brother," Jesus observed quietly.

"I thought you would ask me, but instead you have told me," James answered soberly.

"I'm glad you still keep the commandments and serve our Father with diligence," said Jesus. "But you do not find it in your heart to believe in me."

"I know of nothing more to do," cried James in desperation. "I cannot pretend."

"Of course you can't, and therein will be the secret of your success. One day, your faith will make you whole. Your eyes will be opened. Your weakness will be your strength, and you shall live to quietly bless the world. For you, such faith will not come easily nor quickly, for you stand already in the clear, bright light of eternal truth. One who knows

but little and who sins in ignorance will grasp the hand of faith more readily than you will, Brother James, but it will come."

"His words should have made me happy," James said to Rabbi Attai later, "but I know only darkness and despair."

"Be patient, my young friend," the old one spoke with conviction. "Patience, even when hope is gone, is the hallmark of the chosen ones of Yehwah. There shall be fires and floods, dungeons and death, but the patience of our people shall never be exhausted."

Jesus talked with Mary when the two were alone that evening.

"Mother," he said with gentle kindness that revived her spirits. "You are great among women. Tribulation shall be your portion, a lady of sorrows. But undying love shall be your forte, and your strength will be the strength of millions who will rise up to call you blessed."

She pondered these things in her heart.

Then came the day Jesus left his home again. Down the dusty road from Nazareth he walked alone, sandals on his feet, and with only the clothes he was wearing. He carried neither stave nor scrip, neither bread nor money, and his face was set as a flint. He did not look back. He was headed for a

particular area on the west bank of the Jordan River where his cousin John was preaching repentance, baptizing believers, preparing the way for him and his ministry.

He had not met his vociferous relative - his advance man, whom Isaiah had called, a voice in the wilderness - but he would know him, even as in that moment he knew what trails to take to find him. Slowly he had come to know and accept his own identity, his place in the cosmic order of things designed by the Father, illuminated by the Spirit. To complete the work of redemption and rise to return to the fullness of his stature in the eternal Godhead, he had only to follow the Spirit's leading. And that he knew would take him through life and death and hell. If he, as son of man, were allowed any decision in the matter, he had already made it; his step was firm.

It was time for the evening meal again in the house of Joseph. James and Jude and Joses had come in at the call of Esther, and they all sat down with their Mother to enjoy this special hour of their busy day. James led the prayers as usual, then Mary made a solemn request.

"The daughter of one of my oldest friends who lives in Cana is getting married," she said. "We are invited to the wedding feast, and I would like very much to go. Will someone take me?"

"We have all been working hard," said James. "It will be good for us to get away and help the newlyweds enjoy their festival. We shall go together."

Cana was a small town only a few miles to the north of Nazareth, so the brief journey posed no great problem. And when the little group arrived, their joy was greater even than they had expected, for Jesus and some of his newly acquired friends were present too. It was the first time they had seen him since he left Nazareth.

The families of the betrothed were poor, but they had provided ample food and wine for as many guests as they anticipated. Alas, the numbers continued to grow. Mary was quick to sense the host's embarrassment and she discovered soon that the wine was gone, with several guests still unserved. She was sorry for she understood the predicament; her family had always been poor too. Instinctively she turned to Jesus. She wasn't sure why, for she knew, of course, there was no more wine available, but it seemed the natural thing to do.

"The wine is gone," she whispered.

Jesus appeared hesitant, but Mary quickly told the servants to follow his instructions whatever they might be.

"Fill the water pots with water," he commanded.

The servants did as they were told and soon it was discovered that the water had turned to wine. Hence, the first of the recorded miracles of Jesus became history.

James was disturbed deeply. and the confusion in his mind defies description. To use magic or to deceive people in any way was altogether unlike the Jesus he had watched grow up and mature through more than a quarter of a century. Dwelling upon it only aroused his anger, but as usual, he contained it, carefully tucking it away with a thousand other trapped emotions within his breast. His depression continued to deepen.

It was Passover time again. Mary was afraid the trip to Jerusalem would be over-taxing, so she and Esther agreed to remain in Nazareth. Joses decided he too would stay at home since he made regular trips to the city anyway.

"Jude," he said. "You need to get away. Why don't you go with James. I'll work in the shop."

Simeon and Marta were home also; partly because their boys were small; mostly because Simeon, like Joses, was tired of the road.

So James and Jude joined a small caravan that was starting early. This was to their liking for it travelled faster than the larger groups and it gave them time to visit with Adina and Johanan before the great crowds arrived.

Adina, of course, was overjoyed to see them, especially James. Johanan, whose hair and beard had turned to a snowy white was no less honored by their visit than was their adoring

aunt.

"Will Jesus be here?" he asked.

"We have no way of knowing," James answered. "He left home some weeks ago, and he's traveling around Galilee, preaching and gathering disciples, so we're told."

"We're worried about him," said Jude. "He's doing magic, and we're told that when anyone asks him where he gets his power, he refuses to answer."

Johanan and Adina exchanged glances. "Have you seen him do any of his magic?" Johanan asked.

"Yeah," said James. "We were at a wedding in Cana when they ran out of wine. We don't know how he did it, but he made some with water and it was good."

"The family went with him then to Capernaum," Jude explained, but he had changed so much that we left soon and returned to Nazareth."

"What does Mary think about all this?" Adina asked.

"Well," said James, "Mother doesn't understand it, but somehow she doesn't seem to be confused or offended by it, either."

"She's not too well," he went on. "Some weeks ago she was sick in bed. She's stronger now, but she didn't feel like making the trip to Jerusalem this year."

"Hey!" cried Johanan. "Look who is coming in the door!"

Quickly they turned to meet the smiling faces of Philius,

Rebecca, and an especially sharp appearing young man, whom no one recognized.

"Do you remember our son, Luke?" asked Philius. "He's twenty-two now. He just completed his studies in medicine in Athens."

"This is our first trip back to Judea," said Rebecca. "We wanted Luke to witness a Passover, and we are anxious to renew old acquaintances, of course."

"My one hope," said Philius, "is that no one from the royal household will recognize me. It's hard to tell what Herod's imagination might come up with. We keep in touch with affairs both here and in Rome, and the only news we get is bad."

"It's bad," agreed Johanan. "You know, of course, that Rome has appointed a governor - procurator of Judea, he's called. His name is Pilate. He holds the power, but he leaves the affairs of the Jews to Herod as much as possible. He has moved his headquarters here from Caesarea, and there is terrible unrest."

"Yes, I know," said Philius. "I understand the Zealots are pushing insurrection more than ever. Jerusalem is not a good place to live these days, I fear."

"No, it isn't," agreed Johanan, "but this is our city; the Temple, our home. We will not leave."

Young Luke was listening closely to every word. "The prophets had much to say about the city," he observed. "While

we are here I would like to talk with some scholars who can explain the hidden meaning in some of the writings that are hard to understand.

"I am told there is a great teacher in Jerusalem named Gamaliel," he went on. "How difficult would it be to get an interview with him?"

"It would be practically impossible," said Johanan, especially at Passover time.

"But if all you want is a clear understanding of what the ancient writers were saying, James, here is the man to talk with. He's no Gamaliel to be sure but, except for his brother, Jesus, you'll find no one better qualified for this job than he." Johanan paused to smile and lay his hand on his friend's shoulder. "He's shy, and doesn't offer much information on his own, but he can answer your questions."

"I'll vouch for that," said Philius. "I remember James, real well." Then he turned his attention to his son.

"Luke," he bragged, "is not only a physician, but he is a natural born historian. He is forever doing research, seeking interviews, and tabulating the results."

The young man was embarrassed by his father's words of praise. James was quick to notice it, for he had just experienced some of the same emotions when Johanan was making his little speech. But again he carefully hid his feelings.

"Will you help me, James?" asked Luke.

"Perhaps," James answered.

Chapter Fourteen

James and Jude were waiting at the gate when the large caravan from Nazareth entered the city.

"You seem unusually anxious, Jude," his brother observed. "Who are you expecting?"

James could hardly be called naive. He was aware of Jude's shyness so he played innocent, even when the younger one feigned surprise as he caught sight of Stephen the tailor with his daughter Michal.

"I believe I should help Stephen get located," Jude remarked as casually as he could. He didn't mention the daughter.

James smiled. "Yes, you do that," he said. "The old man can use some 'strong arm' assistance.

"I'll be going now," he continued. "Luke is expecting

me to show him through the Temple."

James was deep in thought as he made his way toward the point where he had promised to meet his new young friend. He was certain that, one day soon, the sons and daughters of the house of Joseph, except himself and possibly Esther, would be leaving Nazareth. Jude and Joses both talked of seeking work some day in Jerusalem where opportunities were greater than those offered by the smaller towns. Hulda and her husband planned to make their home, eventually, in Capernaum, and Jesus had already adopted a nomadic way of life.

Mother will be lonesome and unhappy with so many gone,
James mused with a touch of sadness. She will want to live
in Jerusalem too.

The problem posed was not an easy one. James had never considered marriage for himself, so naturally he assumed Mary's welfare would be his responsibility, and this he would never shun.

He prayed silently as he hurried along through the busy thoroughfare. "Speak peace to my troubled heart," he pleaded, but there was no peace.

Luke was waiting when James arrived, so immediately they made their way to the Temple. What an unusual pair they were. Luke, extroverted, personable and observing, stood out in bold relief to the quiet, bashful James. They made an excellent team, however, for both were intellectual, handsome, and deeply

serious with important interests in common. And Luke was able to get his quiet friend to talk where others might have failed. As they approached the gleaming white Temple with its milling crowds, James was surprised to see no booths along the street where men in other years sold animals and birds for sacrifices. Then, as they entered the building, he stopped, staring in dismay, for there within the sacred shrine were seated the merchants and money changers at their tables doing a lucrative business.

His swiftly mounting anger at this unbelievable sacrilege was almost more than his calm exterior could contain. His face flushed crimson as he stood with fists tightly clenched and lips creased to a narrow line in a noble effort to maintain his composure.

Luke was aware of his friend's agitation, wondering if he would give way to his feelings. Quickly he glanced at others around him to catch their reactions. Some, who were there for the first time, were not aware they were witnessing a recent innovation in the Temple festivities. There were those who showed little interest in the matter, probably glad for the convenience the new arrangement provided. There were devout Jews like James, who, visibly disturbed, were not sure what to do about it. One man, standing alone, his hands busily occupied tying knots in small pieces of rope, held Luke's attention for several moments. James was too preoccupied to

notice the strange fellow, and having suppressed his anger, he turned to his young friend to remark that the Temple was being desecrated.

Then, suddenly, a strange disturbance caused a shifting of the crowds. Frightened women were clutching their babies and dragging their children by the arms to safety.

"What's going on?" cried James, but Luke had no time to answer. The man he had been watching brushed by them with resolute steps; his eyes focused hard upon the innovators. Held high in his right hand was the whip Luke had seen him contriving. Before anyone could stop him he grabbed the first table and turned it over, scattering stacks of coins in every direction. The angry banker turned upon him, but after one glance at the stern countenance and menacing whip, he dropped to the floor and crawled away on his hands and knees. By then the second booth had become a shambles. Birds loosed from their cages, took flight, and the frightened vendor, trying to escape, upset the next table with its ill-gotten gains. The man with the whip pursued his course. Nothing could stop him. One little fellow, who had just set up his counter and stacked his coins in three neat piles, flashed a desperate look of fear and defeat. Then he deliberately upset the table himself and walked away. In a matter of minutes, the destruction was complete.

Then throwing down the whip, the man faced the frightened

crowd and said, "Make not my Father's house anhouse of merchandise. . . Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."*

"Who is that ?" demanded Luke, expressing his amazement.

"Why, it's my brother, Jesus," answered James.

Later, when James and Luke were discussing the traumatic incident with Johanan and Philius, Adina joined them.

"I wish you would start from the beginning," she said.

"I just heard about the strange foray and I can't believe it."

"I've known Jesus since he was four years old," said James, "and I never saw him lose his temper before. It wasn't like him at all. He was beside himself."

"You're right," agreed Johanan. "He has taken leave of his senses."

Philius looked at his son. He detected that the young doctor was not in agreement with the conclusion reached by the men who knew Jesus so well.

"Give us your opinion, Luke," his father said.

The young doctor was hesitant. It was true he did not agree with James and Johanan, and to say so would be impolite. However, he considered it his professional duty to correct the error, and the method he used was a masterpiece of diplomacy.

"James," he said, "I think you were deeply agitated when

* John 2:16, 19 KJV

you saw the booths in the Temple. Am I right?"

"Yes," he answered. "I was very angry."

"Let us assume for a moment that you gave vent to your feelings. Could you have run the wicked traders out as Jesus did?"

"Of course, I could," said James. "I'm larger and stronger than Jesus."

"What would you have used for a weapon?" asked Luke.

"I don't know. The first thing I could have gotten my hands on, I'm sure," James answered honestly.

"And if there was nothing appropriate available, what would you have done?"

"I would have waded in with my fists," said James.

Luke smiled. "If you had, I dare say there would be some men in Jerusalem nursing black eyes and broken noses."

Adina was trying to imagine what the results would have been. "I shudder to think about it," she said. "Jesus got by with it, but James would be in jail."

The men were silent. Luke had opened up a whole new avenue of contemplation.

"What would you say," asked Luke, "if I were to tell you Jesus didn't lose his temper at all?"

James closed his eyes to re-visualize the fracas. "If Jesus didn't give way to his anger, what did he do?" he asked.

"I think I can tell you." The young physician was about

to give the results of his expert diagnosis. "I didn't know who he was, but I had been watching him prior to the tirade," he said. "He was making a rather wicked looking whip by tying knots in some pieces of soft rope. It took him some little time to perfect it, and it wouldn't have hurt anyone if he had hit them with it.

"Would you have taken time to do that, James?" Luke asked seriously.

"No," James answered slowly. "I could never have done that."

"I'm beginning to follow you," spoke up Johanan. "You are suggesting that we have been mistaken, not about Jesus' action but about his motivation."

"Exactly," said Luke. "Jesus was justifiably indignant with the disgraceful scene before him and he was determined to erase it. But, apparently, he didn't blame the men involved in the sacrilege any more than the people who stood idly by condoning it."

"You mean that Jesus was as unhappy with me," said James, "as with the money changers."

"In principle, yes," Luke answered, "and with me, plus scores of others who were looking on.

"It was as though he was saying, 'I hate sin and I am here to destroy it, but the sinner I have come to save.'"

Adina was standing by, quietly thinking on the things she was hearing.

"James," she said, finally. "Jesus seems to have undergone a great change. Can you tell us anything about that?"

"I guess you would say he's doing the things he has always been thinking. I haven't heard him preach, but my guess is he's saying the same things he and I have been studying and discussing for years.

"What disturbs me," James went on, "is this new aggressiveness. Jesus is bound to run into serious trouble. He will have everyone against him. The Sanhedrin will condemn him; Rome will do anything to avoid an insurrection; Jesus' followers will scatter to the four winds to save their hides; and Herod will have him killed. So what can he accomplish?"

"It depends upon who Jesus really is," said Johanan. "He may have resources to draw upon we don't know about."

Luke remarked later that the various reactions to the old one's statement presented an interesting study. James registered mild disgust. Jude's countenance was one big question mark. Adina was aglow, and Philius expression registered strong opinion but no comment.

James and Jude arrived back in Nazareth to discover that word of Jesus' cleansing of the Temple was already noised abroad. And every time a visitor came into town, more stories of Jesus preaching to great crowds and performing more miracles were told and retold - often exaggerated - until most of the

natives considered the whole thing a hoax.

Then, one Sabbath morning, quietly and unexpectedly, Jesus came walking up the dusty road toward Nazareth. A boy on a donkey passed him on the trail. He hurried into town to tell of his approach, and the news was received with mixed emotions. Mary and Esther quickly prepared for Jesus' arrival, putting meat on the fire and sweeping the steps to the roof-top. James, Jude and Joses waited inside the house, expecting him to come there first. Then steps were heard and the door swung in, but it was Simeon.

"If you are waiting for Jesus," he said, "you are in the wrong place. He is headed for the synagogue, and half the town is following him."

So the family, a bit disappointed, got into line, and soon they entered the crowded building. Jesus was standing, accepting a scroll from an attendant. He opened it and began at once to read from the Prophet Isaiah:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He anointed Me to preach
the gospel to the poor.
He has sent Me to proclaim
release from the captives,
And recover sight to the blind,
To set free those who are
downtrodden,
To proclaim the favorable year
of the Lord."*

James was amused to see him reading, for he and Jesus had

* Isaiah 61:1,2a, as quoted in Luke 4:18,19.

memorized every word Isaiah wrote. A moment later, though, he was amazed as Jesus sat down and spoke to the people, saying;

"Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Most of the people were pleased, up to this point.

But when he continued speaking, they began to express anger.

"Is this not the son of Joseph and Mary?" they asked, knowing of course, that it was he.

Jesus continued:

"No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me. 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your home town as well.'" And he said, "Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his home town. But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."*

By the time he had finished, the people were filled with rage. James stood with his head bowed, his own anger mounting fast. Who does he think he is? he mused hotly, for he recognized as did the others that Jesus was painting a word picture - veiled, but unmistakable - of his own townspeople, including James himself.

* Luke 4:23-27 NASB

As always, he contained his feelings, and quietly convinced the family that they should return to the house. There was nothing else to do. Others, of course, were not so charitable. Strong men took Jesus by the arms and led him out of the city, followed by the crowd, as a growing "mob mania" blinded them completely. Up a hill to a high cliff they marched him, fully intending by the time they reached the summit, to cast him over the precipice.

But they didn't achieve their evil purpose, for they were dealing with the man of miracles, whose time had not yet come. He walked away unharmed.

James' depression continued to deepen. He loved Jesus as he had never loved another, but an ever widening chasm was separating them. He honestly believed that this extraordinary brother of humble spirit and remarkable mind had lost his humility, if not his senses, and was about to lose his life. When he was told how the townspeople had marched him to the brink of the precipice, he wept.

"I deserted him!" he cried in agony. "I went with the family, leaving him alone. If Jesus had died at the foot of the cliff, I would have been to blame. His blood would be on my hands."

Then came a day that Johanan came into Nazareth again,

making his way first to the shop where Simeon and Marta were busily checking their inventory.

"Business has been good," Marta told him. "We hope you have brought us a lot of merchandise."

"My donkey is heavily loaded," he answered, "but he and I are both growing old. We will be happy when you are living in Jerusalem and these journeys cease."

Then Marta turned to her older boy and said, "Joseph, hurry and fetch James. He asked us to let him know when Johanan gets to town."

The boy, proud to be useful, soon returned, holding his uncle's hand.

"I'm sure you are looking for news," said Johanan. "About Jesus, I have only heard rumors of large crowds and mighty miracles."

"But I have disturbing news of this baptizer they call John. He claims to be Jesus' advance man by divine decree. You know about him, of course."

"I know there was such a man preaching down by the river," James answered. "But I have heard nothing about him being in trouble."

"Well, he's in a lot of trouble now," said the vendor. "The fellow uses no tact, and he throws caution to the wind. He has openly criticized Herod for taking his brother's wife and that, as I'm sure you know, is nothing less than an act of

suicide."

"Did Herod have him executed?" asked James with alarm.

"No," Johanan answered, "but only because he feared the people. This John is being heralded as a prophet. He has been jailed in Jerusalem, and there is little hope of his being released."

And Jesus will be next, mused James, sadly.

Chapter Fifteen

There were two other sets of brothers about the ages of James and Jesus, who lived in Bethsaida of Galilee.

First were Andrew and Simon, sons of a poor but honest fisherman named Jonas. From their father they learned the mechanics - the hard labor - of the fishing business. Andrew, the elder, was a quiet, spiritual fellow who longed for peace. When he heard that a prophet was preaching repentance and baptizing believers, he hurried to attend the brusharbor meeting on the bank of the Jordan river. He liked what he heard and saw.

Simon, hardly resembled his brother in any way. He was a large, strong, rugged individualist, who found it easy and to his liking to direct the activities of others. He

was a natural born leader, a foreman, a bellowing bossman, who could be depended upon to get maximum production from his men.

In a more sophisticated area of Bethsaida lived the second set of brothers, James and John. They were sons of a kind, affluent man of business in the fishing industry, whose name was Zebedee. The boy's mother, Salome, unlike her husband, was a proud, aristocratic woman with servants to do her work, who looked with contempt upon the poorer, less cultured families of which Andrew and Simon were a part.

James and John, influenced by Salome, developed snobbish attitudes and came to consider themselves several notches up the socio-economic ladder from the sons of Jonas.

When they were in their twenties, their father set them up in the fishing business in Capernaum. He had the money to buy boats, nets, and other equipment necessary to a successful enterprise. (Simon by then had married and taken residence in Capernaum too).

James resembled his younger brother except that he was an unobtrusive, retiring fellow, whereas John was aggressive, with the making of an executive. Neither of the men had the talent nor experience necessary to direct the labor force, even though it involved a minimal number of men.

John, the executive, watching fishermen at their work, had seen in Simon one to whom he could delegate responsibility,

one who would get the work done. He wasn't sure, though, that he could handle the impetuous fellow. He talked it over with James.

"If we hire him," he said, "he may quit and walk off the job before the end of the first week."

The older brother quietly considered the situation for some moments. "Isn't there some way we can make Simon and his brother junior partners in the business?" he asked. "That would make Simon feel important and by sharing in the profits at the end of the year, they may stay with us."

"Excellent," shouted John. "I'm fortunate to have so brilliant an idea man right at my side."

James brushed away the compliment. "There's one problem in that they are poor," he observed thoughtfully. "They won't have money to invest in the enterprise. But," he went on, "that may be to our advantage. They will not be projecting themselves into decision-making, and we can hold out a small part of their salaries each month to help them build up an interest in the business."

So it was arranged. Theoretically, John became superintendent; Simon became foreman. At Capernaum, on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, fishing was at its best and the partnership succeeded.

It was well though that John was capable of keeping hands off after delegating responsibility, for Simon was not a man

to be dominated by anyone. It soon became evident to all that he was the boss; he made the decisions; he gave the orders. John conceded, for Simon was not only knowledgeable, but one who exercised excellent judgment, and the business prospered through several years.

Back in Nazareth, James, Jude, Joses, and Simeon sat around the table on the roof-top, deep in thought and discussion of their brother Jesus, who was forever making news in Galilee.

"Where did he pick up this gift of magic?" asked Simeon. "He never toyed with that sort of thing as a child."

"I don't know," answered Jude, "but he has a crowd at his heels, constantly, demanding that he use it. That part is easy enough to understand, but the success people claim for him is something else."

"His fame is spreading fast and far," observed Joses, who had just returned from Jerusalem. "The Sanhedrin has been in special session to discuss his activities and some of the older radicals are accusing him of blasphemy.

"One of the stronger voices, though," he continued, "is a man called Nicodemus. He is said to be defending him. Johanan says the problem will get worse until Jesus will be in deep trouble."

"Is there any way we can help him?" asked Simeon.

"I'm afraid it's too late," Jude answered. "Perhaps

James will repeat something he was telling me this morning that may help us understand the situation."

James frowned. It was clear to all that he preferred to keep silent, but he decided it was best to share his knowledge and concern with his brothers.

"I have been secretly attending some of Jesus' meetings where large crowds gather," he began. "I stand back where I cannot be seen easily, but I always have a feeling that Jesus knows I'm there. It's probably my nerves.

"There is nothing new in what he's preaching. He and I have discussed those same truths for years, but it is plain to me that he is getting ready to claim Messiahship. He has always been so humble, so unpretentious. He still appears that way except that, when he refers to himself, he seems terribly conceited. I am this and I am that, and nobody can find salvation except through me, and on and on. That's what he is saying.

"I can hardly stand to listen to him, when he gets on that line. Then after he speaks, he starts doing his magic. That's when I sneak away. I don't want any part of that."

James paused. Seldom in his life had he made a speech as long as this one. He amazed himself.

"It's no wonder the Sanhedrin is concerned," said Simeon. "If what you tell us is true, then he is guilty of blasphemy. The priests will have him executed."

"That isn't all," James went on. "The people are begging him to set up his kingdom. That, to Rome means insurrection, a capital offence. He can't win, and I don't see how we can help him."

"Is there anything else you should tell us?" asked Simeon.

"Only a word about the men he is calling to be his disciples. Such a motley crowd you never saw. They are everything from a rough, ragged fisherman to a crooked collector of revenue. Some of the men have belonged to the Zealots, and none of them seem to have any proper background of instruction or experience to commend them as teachers.

"I remember, though," he went on, "that Jesus told me months ago he would be selecting just such men as these as long as they showed potential for leadership.

"The only thing they have to commend them that I can see," James concluded, "is their dedication to Jesus and the cause they presume to represent."

"One can hardly help admiring them," said Jude, "and I can't accept the fact that Jesus, of all people, would deliberately lead them to their destruction."

There was a prolonged silence around the little circle until James, hesitatingly, spoke again.

"I think we should all four go together and ask Jesus to leave the area. If he comes back to Nazareth again, no one knows what the people might do. It certainly places us in an

embarrassing, if not a dangerous, position."

"Do you think he would listen to us?" asked Joses. "He knows that we do not approve of what he is doing."

Then Jude came up with a suggestion that met with general approval.

"Why not take Mother with us," he said. "She seems to be confused by what she's hearing, but she has never uttered a word of condemnation. For some inexplicable reason, she seems to believe in him, and there is little doubt he knows that. Perhaps we can reach him through her."

So came a day when news reached Nazareth that Jesus was ministering to a great crowd not many miles away. And weird tales of his casting out devils and openly warning the scribes and Pharisees of their lost estate accompanied every announcement regarding his prophetic preaching.

James quickly rounded up his brothers and the four approached Mary with their plan. She was hesitant.

"I will go with you," she said, "for I want very much to see him again. But I can't promise I will ask him to leave."

"We will listen to him preach," suggested Jude. "Then you may decide what you will do."

A multitude was standing on the side of a hill upon which Jesus and his inner-circle of friends were seated. Jesus was speaking in a firm, positive tone - not shouting,

but his resonant voice carried well. His mother and brothers were nearly lost out on the periphery of the great circle, and they were quite sure they had not been recognized by anyone.

"The large man with the dark brown beard is Simon, the fisherman," James explained to the others. "The one sitting next to Jesus is John. The story is that he and Simon with their brothers were partners in Capernaum. until they left their boats to follow Jesus."

At that point his little guide-lecture was interrupted for some scribes and Pharisees were demanding that Jesus show them a sign to prove his power. It was then that an overly excited woman in the throng began waving her arms and shouting to Jesus:

"Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you were nursed!" she cried so everyone could hear.

Mary's face was aglow, but her countenance fell and the glow disappeared as Jesus mildly rebuked the woman, saying, "But no! Rather it is they who hear the word of God and observe it who are blessed!"

Mary was hurt as any normal mother would have been. It was not what he said, but that which he did not say that filled her soul with sorrow.

"You are right James," she said sadly. "We must ask him to leave the area."

No sooner had she expressed herself, however, than a

sense of remorse overtook her. She was sorry she had spoken so hastily. She wanted to say so, but James was already giving a messenger instructions to tell Jesus that his mother and brothers were present and they wished an audience with him.

The messenger was unable to get through the surging crowds however, so he asked the people to pass the word along. It took some little time, but finally those in the front rows received the message and shouted it to Jesus. Then it was he who experienced mixed emotions. He loved his mother more than any son, before or since, has ever loved a parent. To hurt her in any measure was to hurt himself infinitely more, but to compromise truth for the sake of sentiment was out of bounds. He had no option to consider. He must hurt her temporarily, and make it up to her later; there was no other way. In so doing, his message would ring down through the centuries to the end of the age.

Jesus asked simply, "Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?" Then he gestured to the eager crowd. "These," he stated firmly, "for whosoever will do the will of my Father in heaven, he is my brother and my sister and my mother!"

Mary and the brothers heard him with unbelieving ears. James was so filled with anger that he was afraid his blood would burst its vessels as he fought to find control.

The family returned to Nazareth.

Jesus, with his disciples: Andrew and Peter, James and

John; Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew; James, Jude, Simon and Judas moved on to other locations wherever increasing crowds gathered to hear the Gospel.

Chapter Sixteen

The periods of depression that had been afflicting James for years came with increasing regularity and greater devastation as the months rolled by. More and more stories of Jesus' miraculous powers - healing the blind, walking on water, raising the dead - tended to worsen his condition.

Then came news of John the Baptist's beheading at Herod's command, and of intense opposition to Jesus, which James knew could end only in disaster. This was more than he could handle with any degree of grace. He still loved and appreciated Jesus as much as he ever had, but he could neither comprehend nor condone the dramatic change that had come over him.

"I can't understand him," he said to Jude. "The Jewish leaders hate him, and the Roman leaders fear him. If they take

his life, I'm afraid I will lose my will to live."

Then everything began to change. First, Joses, having just returned to Nazareth from one of his scheduled journeys, announced at dinner that he was going to make his home in Jerusalem.

"I'm going to work out of the larger city," he explained. "It will be better that way. When Simeon and Marta have moved there and this shop in Nazareth is closed, I'll shorten my route and spend more time in Jerusalem."

"Of course," said Jude with a knowing smile. "It's not good to be away from home too long at a time."

"Why don't you go jump in the lake of Gennesaret," Joses snapped.

James was about to add to the young man's embarrassment with a few well chosen words, but Mary came to the rescue.

"Joses," she said kindly, "I think your brothers are intimating that your friendship with the young lady who works for Adina has developed into something quite serious.

"If that is true, son," she went on, "I want you to know that we are all happy for you. Why don't you tell us about it."

"Well," Joses answered with a sheepish grin. "I was going to tell you later. Right now, I just wanted you to know I wouldn't be living here much longer, so that Jude could find another helper."

Then it was Jude's turn to blush. Trying hard to sound

matter-of-fact, he turned to Joses and said, "It's all right. I'm about to change occupations myself, so I guess the carpenter shop will soon be closed."

"What are you going to do?" asked James seriously. "I didn't know you had other plans."

"For quite some time now," Jude explained, "I have been spending many of my evenings learning a new trade which I like very much. I was sort of planning on surprising you but it's too late for that now."

This time it was Esther who donned a prim little smile of comprehension.

"You wouldn't be trading in your hammer and saw for a set of needles, would you?" she asked.

Jude bristled; then with resignation, he said, "All right, Esther, I guess the lake is big enough for both of us." After a pause he continued. "I may as well divulge my plans. Old Stephen is getting so stiff in the joints that he can no longer work with needle and thread. Soon he will have to be lifted in and out of bed. Michal is not strong enough to care for him, so I shall be moving in with them. She is a good tailor and will teach me what I do not know. And I am sure she shall make me an excellent wife."

James sighed. "Well, Esther," he said, "It looks like you and I are the only ones left. And since I have decided to move to Jerusalem, and have no plans to alter my bachelor status,

I will suggest that you come along and be my housekeeper.

There we can make a home for Mother if she concurs."

"I'll be most happy to be my brother's keeper," Esther answered, smiling her appreciation.

"How do you feel about it, Mother?" she asked.

Mary smiled sadly. "I'm worried about Jesus," she said. "I've wished that he would settle right here, but I have always known he would leave me one day. I don't feel that I can make final plans until I know what is going to happen to him.

"In the meantime," she continued, "I will be happy to live with you and James."

The months rolled by with Passover time approaching again. The plans of the various members of Mary's family had all worked well. Simeon and Marta with their two growing boys had moved to Jerusalem. They were living in a small house back of the row of shops where they labored. Adina and Johanan, who had been living there, purchased a home from one of their friends, where they retired in comfort. Joses and his bride found rooms also, which would be adequate as long as they had no children. James closed the house in Nazareth. He, Mary, and Esther found temporary lodging in Jerusalem where he hoped to purchase a home near the Temple after the festival, but he failed to find the peace for which he had been seeking.

(space)

Then, to the happy surprise of all, Doctor Luke from Athens arrived in Jerusalem. He immediately contacted Johanan and Adina. Hardly could he have been more welcome.

"What word do you bring from your father and mother?"

Adina asked as soon as she was able to get his attention.

"They are well, and extremely busy. They send their greetings, of course," Luke answered. "My coming again this year was mostly their doing," he went on. "Father is so deeply concerned about the man Jesus that he wants me to bring back all the first-hand information I can gather.

"I hope you can help me," he concluded.

"There is a lot to tell," said Johanan. "It is mostly hearsay for I have not been able to join the throng that follows Jesus everywhere. James will be here soon, I'm sure. He is always the one who can help us for he has continued to secretly attend the great gatherings.

"Do your parents still believe that Jesus has been sent by God?" Johanan asked.

"Oh, yes, more profoundly than ever," Luke answered

"And you?" asked Adina.

"Well," the brilliant young man answered carefully. "Head knowledge is all I have to go on, really. I have written down everything my father has told me and I must admit it has become a most convincing document. I'm certain I could argue the case with considerable success, assuring others of Jesus' Messiahship,

while entertaining strong doubts myself.

"What about James?" he asked. "Does he still contend his brother is merely an unusual fellow?"

"James has never accepted Jesus as anything more than just that," Adina answered. "And he has become a most unhappy man. There are times when I'm concerned for his sanity."

The young doctor nodded. "The problem doesn't affect me that way, of course, but to be completely candid I'll have to stand with James at least for the present. My years of research, though," he concluded, "have caused me to keep an open mind."

Jude arrived in Jerusalem with a group of pilgrims from Nazareth. (Michal was unable to leave her father). Then Hulda and her husband appeared with a large caravan from Capernaum so that all the living members of the house of Joseph, except Jesus, were present at a serious reunion just outside the Temple. It was the morning after Sabbath.

Mary was anxious to meet a relative, the mother of two of Jesus' disciples, whose name was Mary also. She asked James to help her. "Surely Jesus and his friends will come," she said hopefully.

Joses was not so sure. "There is so much sentiment against him, he may not dare enter the city again," he said.

"Sentiment will not deter him," argued Jude. "If he thinks

he should be here, he will come."

"The money changers must not be expecting him," James spoke with a hint of anger. "They are setting up their tables inside the Temple again."

"There are Roman soldiers everywhere," observed Esther. "What does that mean?"

"It means," James answered, "that Rome fears sedition if not outright treason, and she is dedicated to the keeping of the peace."

"We must be prepared for anything," he added sadly.

Mary laid her hand upon his arm.

At that very moment, Jesus with his disciples, was in Bethany, a few miles out of Jerusalem. And it was noised abroad that Lazarus, a friend whom Jesus, allegedly, had raised from the dead was with him. Great numbers of Jesus' admirers were pouring into the little town, anxious to get a look at the healed and the healer together.

Also there was a well-founded rumor that the Sanhedrin was planning to have both Jesus and Lazarus executed to put an end to the trouble the Nazarene's popularity was causing. This popularity, which was fast developing into a mighty surge of emotionalism, warned the angered priests, though, that the time was not ripe to carry out their evil designs, so they waited.

Jesus was neither disturbed by the dangers he faced, nor elated by the enthusiasm of his friends. His time had come and he knew it, so he calmly announced he was going into the city. The crowd was ecstatic. Since it was customary for large bands of people to go forth to greet important persons or groups, and conduct them into Jerusalem with singing and ceremony, such was the last minute plan for Jesus' triumphal entry into the Holy City.

He didn't object. His immediate burden was to preach to the hordes in the Temple; an extremely important, climacteric close to his earthly ministry. Therefore, the temporary protection the presence of the people provided him was probably providential.

Up the road from Bethany to the summit of the Mount of Olives, then down its western slope to finally enter the city near the northeast corner of the Temple, Jesus made his way. He was surrounded by the singing, shouting hordes, who believed he was the Messiah.

It was along this route, as the procession approached the ancient village of Bethphage, that he called two of his disciples to him.

"Go into the village," he said, "and immediately on entering it, you will find a colt tied, upon which no man has yet sat; loose it, and bring it. And if anyone say to you, 'What are you doing?' you shall say that the Lord has need of it, and immediately he will send it here."

The two men hurried into the village as word of Jesus' command spread quickly through the already jubilant crowd. The reaction was unbelievable. Now the triumphal entry would be complete. As soon as the men returned with the animal, coats were removed and placed upon its back for a saddle, while others were thrown upon the pathway as a carpet for its feet.

Jesus mounted the beast and the procession proceeded toward the city. As it approached the great wall, branches that had been broken from trees that lined the roadway, were strewn upon the path. The excited crowd lost all restraints as the people cried out, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

No one in the shouting hordes, not even the disciples, knew what lay ahead. Neither did the Pharisees, the priests of the Sanhedrin, nor, with one exception, the people who lined the streets of the Holy City.

There were those who thought Jesus was mad, suffering under an illusion that he was about to organize an army of untrained soldiers to face the legions of Rome. Others were just as certain that their leader had full command of his senses and, under God, was about to win a political battle over his adversaries and peacefully establish his kingdom upon the earth. What his enemies were thinking no one knows, except that they were fully persuaded that he must die at the earliest

possible moment.

The young doctor, who usually exhibited an amazingly clear comprehension of the actions of men, was completely baffled. He turned to James with whom he felt a close kindredship; one whom, if anyone, he believed could throw some light on the hopeless situation.

"Why! Why?" he cried. "How does he ever expect to get out of this alive?"

"He doesn't," said James with a gesture of utter despair. "He is carrying out what he and I have long believed to be the true interpretation of the prophetic writings."

The poor man was nearly beside himself with grief. "Jesus is my brother and I love him," he stated simply. "He actually believes that he is the Messiah, and he will believe it to his last breath. How he became so deluded I can't explain." James paused, fighting to control his emotions.

"I'm sorry," said Luke. "I shouldn't have asked you these questions, especially at such a time as this."

"It doesn't matter," James answered with great effort. "Nothing can make it any better or any worse. But I must go into seclusion or lose my mind. Please keep me informed of what happens and ask Jude to help Mother locate her relative. It will be well for the two to be together."

James was indeed the most miserable of men as he got alone

with his thoughts. No man on earth, except Jesus, knew or understood the God of Israel as well as he and none had served him better. Yet none, he was sure, save Jesus, suffered deeper depression and greater agony of soul. He groaned aloud, wishing he were dead, as the only contemplation that brought him any sense of peace were thoughts of self-destruction.

Chapter Seventeen

Luke was deeply concerned about his friend's mental health, but he didn't consider him suicidal at that point of time. James' excellent physical condition together with his faith in God were certainly in his favor. The young doctor, being convinced that a couple of days alone might give James opportunity to work out his own problem, decided not to appear at his hide-out until the second evening.

When he did arrive there, he found his friend a veritable picture of despair. He was greeted without the semblance of a smile. Deep dark lines beneath the eyes and a certain pallor about the cheeks and lips, together with a trembling of hands, told him at a glance that James' condition was worsening fast.

"I'm glad you have come," the unhappy man said with a note

of sincerity. "Come in and tell me what awful things are happening."

The doctor studied him soberly. "The only awful things up to this point," he said, "seem to be happening to you."

"You look terrible," he went on. "You probably expect me to tell you to quit worrying; that you are being very foolish and immature, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"Is it that bad?" asked James.

"No," Luke answered seriously. "It's worse than that. I'm not about to tell you to stop worrying, for you can't stop it. I might as well tell the wind to stop blowing. Some day a chemist, somewhere, will concoct a potion that will relieve a person who is disturbed as you are, but he hasn't shown up yet."

"So," the doctor continued, "I'll give you the best medicine available. Sit down, put your feet up and listen, while I tell you what you're missing by being absent from the Temple."

James reaction was exactly what his friend hoped for. The blunt assertions, made without benefit of "honey-coating" or "cover-up" must have been what the distracted man was needing. He did as he was told and he relaxed - ever so little - but he relaxed.

"Well, Jesus didn't disappoint us," Luke began. "He walked into the Temple today and proceeded to drive out the merchants and money changers exactly as he did before; and you should have seen them scatter."

James was listening so intently that, for the moment, he forgot himself completely.

"Then what happened?" he asked with a hint of genuine amusement.

"You shouldn't find this hard to believe," Luke answered quickly. "He cried out, 'It is written that my house shall be a house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of robbers!'

"Then he walked away, even as the priests and magistrates were whispering plans to destroy him. He and his friends left the city immediately, and some one said they were headed for Bethany where they are spending their nights.

"Next a man stood up and announced that Jesus would be preaching in the Temple tomorrow."

"You will be there, I'm sure," said James.

"Will you go with me?" Luke asked.

"No, not tomorrow," James answered. "I will need every ounce of energy you can help me muster to face the awful days ahead.

"Tell me, where are you going tonight?" he asked.

Luke smiled. "First I'm going to get some food, the kind I think you need, and we will eat together. Then I shall spend the night here. I can see too many lonely hours are not good for you."

"Yeah," admitted James. "I do feel better than I did before you came."

(space)

Late the following afternoon Luke returned to the hide-out again and found his friend feeling a little better. The rest he was getting, and the pleasant association with Luke was paying off. But, once more, his eyes registered dark forebodings as he asked what news the day brought forth.

"Nothing startling," Luke told him. "Jesus has been speaking most of the day and he never lacks for listeners. The chief priests and scribes keep trying to catch him with pointed questions, hoping I suppose, to make him say something that will turn the crowd against him but he is much too smart for them."

"I know, " said James. "He and I used to try to catch each other by asking questions hard to answer. We made a game of it and we learned a great deal. Not once did I stump him."

"I can believe that," observed Luke. "Jesus has a way of turning a question back to his adversaries. For instance, today while all the people were listening, one of the priests asked him on what authority he stands. I was worried for I was afraid He was being tricked into making some disparaging remarks about Moses or his statutes.

"I have to admit I was amazed to hear him use a strategy that is certainly well known to the doctors of the law. He answered with a question as though He were establishing a point upon which both sides were agreed. 'Answer me this,' he said, 'and I will divulge my authority.'

"His question was whether the baptism of John was from heaven or from men."

"I get it," said James. "The crowd believed that John was a real prophet, and he's the man who introduced Jesus as divine. If the priests said his baptism was from God they would have no case against him."

"Right," said Luke. "And if they said, 'from men,' the people would have gone wild."

"That is a stratagem he often used with me when we were studying together," James remarked thoughtfully.

Luke was pleased to note that his friend's depression lifted when they discussed Jesus, so he pursued the course.

"Allow me to ask that question of you, James," he said with a smile. "Was John's baptism of God or men?"

James smiled for the first time in days. "It's fortunate that I don't have a hostile crowd ready to pounce upon me, isn't it," he said.

"Well," he went on, "my answer is that it was of men. I'll stand on that until God himself shows me I am wrong."

He paused a moment, waiting for a comment which was not forthcoming. Then he asked, "How do you answer it?"

It was Luke's turn to smile. "As you know," he said, "you and I have always stood together regarding the question of Jesus' Messiahship which some of our best friends contend for strongly. Well, James, I'm still with you but what I've

seen and heard the past few days is causing me to weaken.

"Jesus will stand by and let them kill him!" James went on with a slight shudder.

"He has been intimating that he will be raised from the dead," Luke answered. "There seems to be some connection between that and a statement he made about the Temple being destroyed and rebuilt in three days. Anyone I asked about it was plainly puzzled, so I got nowhere. I am hoping you can shed some light on the riddle if that's what it is."

"Yeah," said James. "When it comes to the Messianic prophecies, Jesus has never agreed with the accepted rabbinic teaching. He has been seeing beyond what the teachers see ever since he was eleven years old. We discussed it many times. Jesus does not anticipate an earthly kingdom which would involve wars and hatred. He had always claimed that Isaiah meant what he was saying when he pictured the Messiah as the Prince of Peace, and the coming kingdom to be the kingdom of heaven."

"Were you in agreement?" Luke asked.

"Yes," said James, "I was. I agreed with him in every instance until he began to project himself into the picture."

"I see," said Luke. "But I'm still in the dark regarding the tearing down and the replacing of the Temple."

"It's very simple," answered James. "The Temple is a symbol of God upon earth. Now he thinks that he is the object of that symbol. So, he will quietly submit to his adversaries

and die as peacefully as he lived, actually believing that he will be resurrected on the third day.

"I tell you, Luke, it is more than I can stand. I'll be as bad off as he is by the time this is all over. I will die too!"

Events leading up to Jesus' arrest and trial reached James in his hide-out by way of the faithful Luke who continued to spend the nights with his friend.

Then came the morning of the day before the Sabbath. James and Luke had both awakened early. For more than an hour they discussed the possibility of Jesus being arrested and indicted, completely unaware that the nasty business had already been accomplished while they slept.

Luke intended to leave early, but James was in no condition to be left alone for any extended period. So it was nearly mid-morning when he finally made his way to the Temple. There was an air of excitement everywhere. No ring of laughter could be heard; not a smile of greeting came from anyone for somber indeed were the faces of all the people.

As Luke approached the Temple gate, he caught sight of Jude and Joses trying in vain to comfort the two Marys. Then by ones and twos, others of the family made their appearances and a third Mary known as Magdalene, joined the band of weeping mourners. Little by little the ugly story of Jesus' capture

and mock trial was pieced together for the young doctor who listened with amazement and growing anger. Then a waiting crowd announced the approach of the saddest procession the world will ever witness.

Jesus, bleeding and bruised, could barely be recognized as he bent beneath the weight of a heavy wooden cross. Doctor Luke had witnessed the severest of suffering often enough, but never had he seen pain and desperation equal to that expressed by the blood spattered countenance of Jesus upon whose brow was pressed a crown of sharp and ugly thorns. Some of his accusers even, were shedding tears as they watched him stagger beneath his burden, nearly falling with every step.

"I must go to James," Luke whispered to Jude, and off he ran to the secret hiding place. Once inside, he poured out the horrid truth to his wretched friend, trying in vain to present the devastating picture as he had seen it.

"James," he begged, "you must come with me! He needs you! Your mother needs you! So do Esther and Adina and all the others. They have learned to lean upon you; you must not let them down in such an hour as this!"

James shuddered, clearly sensing his responsibility as head of the house of Joseph. Always he had been the calm, level-headed son and brother to whom everyone looked for leadership; now his thoughts condemned his soul.

"I'll go, of course," he said, trying visibly to pull

himself together. "My shame is more than I can bear."

"This is no time to think either good or bad of yourself," cried Luke. "Hurry, we must not lose a moment!"

Jesus was already hanging between the two condemned criminals when James and Luke arrived to join his loved ones at the foot of the cross. Nails - not ropes - held the man of sorrows suspended well above the heads of the motley crowd.

There, the only perfect man the world will ever know was agonizing in distress too great for any earthly symbols to describe. His eyes, ablaze with pain yet soft with compassion, were fixed upon friend and foe alike, with equal love and devotion. Since the slowly dying man could barely move his blood stained countenance from side to side, the area of his view was limited to but one small sector of the sea of somber faces that gazed upward to him in horror and suspense.

Among those whom he could see were most of his twelve apostles and, near them, Mary with his brothers and sisters and some of his oldest friends.

Occasionally but sparingly, he spoke, and so profound were his utterances that none could fully comprehend their meaning.

For hours, Jesus did not appear to focus his gaze particularly upon anyone or any group, suggesting that both his dying words and body was for the benefit of all men everywhere. But

as he weakened, he did indeed look with tender love upon Peter, John, and each of his inner-circle friends.

Then, for an instant, his eyes expressing love and sorrow plus another element, indistinct and strangely allusive, rested upon his brother James whose cheeks were wet with tears. Automatically the latter signaled a response. Moments later Jesus turned his gaze to meet the tender, loving eyes of Mary, whose grief was more than she could bear. Near her, in the shadows, stood one of the disciples, sorrowful and confused, who one day would be known to all the world as "John, the beloved."

"Behold thy son," Jesus said to Mary. Immediately adjusting his gaze to John, she and all the others were made aware of whom he was speaking.

"Behold thy mother," he said to John, who turned with tender compassion to the lady of sorrows, signifying that he fully accepted his responsibility. Mary, without a word, went to him.

James' heart was broken. "I'm leaving," he whispered to Luke. "I cannot remain another moment."

"Then I shall go with you," said his friend.

"No," commanded James. "Stay until the end, then come to me. I must be alone for a while but I'll be waiting for you."

Adina, who had bravely maintained her composure throughout the trying hours, burst into tears as she watched James leave the scene defeated, a picture of despair.

Johanan put his arm around her. "Let us talk with Luke,"
he whispered.

Chapter Eighteen

"Is he dead?" asked James, when Luke returned to the hide-out. There was a coldness about his gaze which told the doctor an affirmative answer could trigger an act of self-destruction.

"Yes," he answered firmly. "It was his wish. His body was properly prepared for burial, then placed in a tomb and sealed. Outside, a detail of soldiers are guarding it lest his friends remove the body and falsely claim a miracle of resurrection."

He paused, but there was no response.

"You are to come with me at once to the home of Adina and Johanan," he said.

Luke might have told him they could give the friendly care he needed, but he was much too smart for that. Instead, he said Adina needed him very much (which was true, of course).

"It seems that you have been very special to her since you were a little child," he said. "Johanan asked me to take you to her. We are both to stay with them for several days at least."

"If my aunt needs me, I will go," James responded after a pause.

Johanan and Luke left Adina with James through most of the Sabbath and the first day of the week, finally bringing home the earth-shaking news of the empty tomb. The elderly couple could hardly contain their joy; Luke remained noncommittal, but James lapsed into darkness greater than he had known.

The following morning, after Luke and Johanan left the house, James explained to Adina that a walk in the cool air might be good for him. "Do you mind being left alone for a time?" he asked.

"No, James," she answered nervously, for she feared what he might do. "But don't be gone long," she added. "I need you, and I will be counting the minutes until you are home again."

Hour upon hour passed by, however, until the lonely lady was nearly beside herself with worry. She feared the worst, blaming herself for not insisting that she go along to keep her nephew company. She prayed, then gave way to weeping,

pacing the floor, and groaning in desperation. Thus her husband and Luke found her when they returned.

They were afire with an amazing report that there were those who claimed to have seen Jesus alive again, risen indeed as he had promised! But in their concern for Adina, they held their tongues as they ministered to her, and soon she was able to express her fears for James.

"I'll go search for him," said Luke, but at the doorway he stopped abruptly, for he caught a glimpse of James walking at a brisk pace homeward. Quickly the young doctor gave careful instructions to his friends.

"Don't let him know you have been overly concerned," he said. "Greet him as calmly as you can. Then, Johanan, I think you should proceed to tell the exciting news that we have heard."

He had no time to say more, for James was coming up the steps. The three friends played their parts well. Adina busied herself about the house; Johanan sat down to relax in a favorite chair as was his custom, and Luke greeted his friend with a casual word remarking calmly that he was just in time to hear an exciting account of the day's activities.

But there was no need for the little pantomime. James was aglow with news of his own.

"Are you going to tell me that Jesus has appeared to some of his friends?" James asked Johanan.

"Yes," the old man answered, trying to control his excite-

ment. "I didn't see him, but there are those who claim they did. And while some of them are confused and unbelieving, it is being said that no argument or threat will cause the others to recant."

Luke was watching James. "You and I have always considered such a thing incredible," he said. "We are anxious for your reaction now."

"It is true!" James cried. "How could I have been so blind? so stubborn?"

"Have you seen him?" asked Luke.

"I have! I have!" James answered with neither hint of hesitancy nor note of doubt. He spoke to me, and suddenly we were the same old friends we used to be."

"Tell us more," Adina begged.

James was fighting to control his enthusiasm, even as he had always controlled his temper. He succeeded, so once again he became his old self: quiet, unpretentious, giving the impression that he knew much more than he was saying. The depression that had dogged his steps for years lifted, and his smile was beautiful to behold.

"Jesus spoke only a few words to me," he said, "but it doesn't matter. His every thought was conveyed to me in an instant."

"Go on," the three friends cried in unison.

"I know now that it was necessary that I suffer," he said

quietly. "I am prepared to take my place, to face the future without flinching, to live as he lived and die as he died."

He paused and smiled upon Adina and her husband. "Only your faith and friendship has sustained me," he said with genuine appreciation. "For years, against the greatest odds, you believed that Jesus was the Son of God. It was your faith and that of dear old Jeremy that won the hearts of Philius and Rebecca. It is my hope that our faith now will win the heart of Luke."

James turned to his young friend with love in his eyes, exuding from his smile, compelling, irresistible. Later, Johanan said, "Together, we witnessed the miracle of the new birth as the youthful doctor's countenance began to glow with a peace that passed all understanding."

Language has no symbols to describe the ecstasy of such a hallowed moment. Neither can such a scene be fully recollected, and only those who experience the magic of its power have any hope of accepting its reality.

Luke bade his friends good-by. He was due back in Athens and he had a story to tell that wouldn't keep.

James rested quietly and waited upon the Lord for several days before he made his way to meet the members of Jesus' apostolic band, and a host of believers, who were milling

about the streets of Jerusalem. On his way he passed the shop where Simeon and Marta, with shining faces beautiful to behold, were explaining to their boys the great good news of the Gospel. Together they rejoiced.

At the Temple, James was told where he might find some of Jesus' friends, and seeking, he met the two sets of brothers, Andrew and Simon, James and John.

As he approached them quietly, wondering how cordially he would be accepted, he was recognized by John who greeted him saying: "You are James, our Lord's brother. I have wanted to meet you, for I sensed that you were hurt when your mother's care was charged to me, which I assure you, I neither anticipated nor understood."

"Do not be in the least embarrassed," answered James kindly. "At the moment I did not understand but I was still an unbeliever, don't you see. Not so now, however, which is why I have come to join you.

"And," he added, "henceforth, never will I refer to Jesus as my earthly brother, but only as my Lord and Saviour."

His humble, sincere words were received with deep appreciation by the four good men who welcomed him to the growing fold. One by one, he was introduced to the remaining seven, and quietly he listened to their discussions of Jesus, the truths he spoke, and the commission to which he had ordained them."

(space)

James could hardly believe the diversity of opinion and varying interpretations of truth that tended to divide the little band that Jesus had entrusted with the Gospel. At the same time, there was no end to his appreciation of their openness and honesty, their dedication and desire to serve, and their faith in the face of recurring doubts and dangers.

They argued sometimes until their faces flushed with rage. Only the memory and example of their long-suffering teacher who still appeared among them at the most unexpected times, succeeded in keeping them from splitting up to go and preach, each according to his own dogmatic views of truths eternal.

James, alone, of all the believers, was not confused. He knew that he could properly interpret the sayings of the Lord for Jesus and he had been down a long, long road together. He was tempted, of course, to project himself into the discussions, to set the record straight, but he knew that he would only add another dimension to the big debate.

When it is time for me to speak, he told himself, I will know it.

So, as always, he held his tongue, waiting to be spoken to, while praying to the Father, in the name of the Son, for the help of the Spirit.

He recalled certain statements that Jesus had made to him that were fast becoming much more meaningful than before. In the carpenter shop, one day, he had said, "I have no doubt that

our Father in heaven, through His Spirit, is leading you, and I wouldn't want to suggest anything at this point that would hinder the process."

James now considered those words carefully and wondered just how much of the future had been revealed to Jesus at that point in his life. At a later time he had said, "My search will be for people who shall help me establish a kingdom upon the earth."

"You are dreaming!" James had countered.

"No, my brother," Jesus had corrected him. "Dreams fade and die. Of this kingdom there shall be no end."

James smiled to himself as he recalled how he had asked seriously if he could help him, and Jesus had answered, saying, "Not until you have found the peace for which you have been seeking." As James dwelt upon those words, ecstatic thrills coursed through his being, bringing tears of pure joy.

He whispered, "I have found it!" Then the rippling thrills were wonderfully renewed as he remembered Jesus saying it was good that he continued to keep the Commandments and serve with diligence, "but, it shall be your faith that will make you whole."

So James moved in and out among the apostles and friends of the Lord Jesus, studying each with care and patience. There is something these believing people need, he mused, that only God can give them. Whatever it is, I need it too, and it shall come.

(space)

Luke was not in Jerusalem, of course, to witness the Ascension and Pentecost for he had returned to Athens some weeks earlier. Years later, however, after painstaking research prior to a surge of divine inspiration which wonderfully documented all which he had heard, he discussed the strange events with James.

"It is the will of the Father that I remain ever in the shadows," James told him. "My work is to give direction where direction is needed, without benefit of fanfare or the blaring of a bugle. Please do not refer to me in telling the story."

Luke respected those wishes later, when he penned a paper addressed to a Gentile friend and convert, Theophilus, in which he gave an accurate account of all that happened.*

Sometime during the forty day period following Jesus' resurrection the disciples went into Galilee. This was according to the Lord's instructions. They asked James to accompany them but he did not feel that he should go.

"I have many things to care for," he told them. "I'll be waiting for you when you return."

He felt a great need to get alone in prayer and meditation in preparation for the inobtrusive but important part he was to play in the initial stages of establishing Christ's church upon the earth. He thought of Philius, who for years played just such a role in the kingdom of Judea, and he smiled at the strange but apt comparison.

* The Acts of the Apostles, Chapters 1 and 2. NASB

Forty days after the resurrection, Jesus appeared to his friends in Jerusalem one more time and led them out of the city to the Mount of Olives. James was with them, still amazed at their inability to agree as to what and where the kingdom was to be, or when it would be established.

Surely, he mused, the answers to the problems will be spelled out soon. and everyone will understand.

Then Jesus issued last minute instructions, commanding them to wait for the promise of the Father. "John baptized with water," he said, "but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."*

James rejoiced, but the others, still in semi-darkness, asked Jesus if at that time he would restore the kingdom to Israel. James rather expected a sharp rebuke, but the Lord quietly explained that it was not for them to know. Then he looked upon them and said, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even unto the remotest part of the earth."**

And they saw him lifted up to disappear in the clouds above them.

* Acts 1:5 NASB

** Acts 1:8 NASB

Chapter Nineteen

The loneliness that overtook the band of believers following Jesus' ascension is hard to measure or describe. The people sensed that he had gone to the Father as he had said he would do, that he would appear to them no more in the manner they had seen him during the past few weeks. Two angels assured them that he would come again as he had left them, but no one seemed to know when such a return would take place or what it meant. It was Simon (whom Jesus called Peter) that the others looked to for leadership.

"He told us to tarry in Jerusalem," Peter reminded them.
"Follow me."

Peter led them into the city to a large room where one-hundred-twenty believers gathered, including Mary and her

family, every one, and there they waited.

"Something is happening here," James whispered to Simeon and Marta. "All seems to be in accord for the first time since Jesus came out from the tomb. I haven't seen the people, even the apostles, enjoy such close fellowship before."

"Do you mean they are finally agreed in everything?" Marta asked.

"No," answered James, "I don't think so. Such may never come to pass in his church upon the earth - perhaps it shouldn't - but it does mean that his grace is greater than the differences the people have been manifesting. Such grace must abound for he said he would build his church and the gates of hell will never over-power it."

Peter was asked what kind of power Jesus meant they would receive with the coming of the Spirit. He admitted quickly that he did not know the answer. One of the younger apostles spoke up quietly to say that up until then, he had supposed the new movement was to become powerful enough to defeat the legions of Rome, but now he was confused.

John the beloved, quietly studied James who was engaged in a serious conversation with his mother. It was plain that the current question did not bother James at all, so the apostle directed a question to him.

"You were well acquainted with Jesus long before we were," he said. "Can you explain this power he spoke of?"

James' answer, clothed in humility, was firm with neither hesitation nor reservation. "It shall be a power to witness effectively," he said.

"I see," observed John thoughtfully. "One will have power in preaching, another in teaching, still another in counseling, and on and on, each according to his talent, but all will be used to win souls."

"Exactly," answered James, and he turned his attention again to Mary.

Peter, looking on, was deeply impressed with the humility of this man who displayed such wisdom and calm assurance.

Then, finally, the day of Pentecost was fully come.

Peter, filled with the Spirit, stepped outside and began to preach. A great crowd gathered as one-hundred-nineteen other disciples, likewise filled with the promised power, moved in and out among the throng, lending support, answering questions, pressing for decisions. The message was not a long one, but who can measure its effectiveness? Three thousand souls accepted the Saviour! Then, in the afterglow, five thousand more joined the fellowship of believers - the militant church of Jesus Christ.

It is not easy to imagine the frustration in the days that followed Pentecost. One-hundred-twenty potential workers were saddled with eight thousand new converts to baptize, nurture,

teach, and organize into some semblance of a society. If the leaders could have claimed the Temple as their private shrine - their headquarters - their work might have been simplified. It also might have been hindered.

But something had to be done quickly or the infant church, headed in many directions, would destroy itself.

There was no time, no way, and, fortunately, no need to elect a leader. Simon Peter assumed the role as naturally as he had always accepted leadership. There was no opposition. The first bit of business was that of choosing a twelfth apostle to replace the one who, after betraying Christ, had taken his own life. Peter immediately called a meeting of the little group and delivered a brief but pointed keynote address in which he fully honored the Holy Spirit.

"We have no choice but to enlist as many leaders as we can and give them charge over as many of these believers as each can care for," he said. "Questions will arise. There will be differences of opinion, and heresies will develop. We must meet regularly with the pastors to pin-point the problems and settle differences in doctrine and practice according to our understanding of truth, taught us by the Master and illuminated by the Spirit.

"We will meet sometimes in the Temple, but mostly in the homes of the people. Every believer will see himself as a winner of souls and our numbers shall grow. Some of our

people," he continued, "will be migrating to areas near and far. We must be sure they go teaching Christ crucified and risen from the dead, preaching faith and repentance and the promise of our Lord's return.

"If there are no questions," he concluded, "you may go. We shall meet again the first day of the week."

Peter discovered soon that his job was not an easy one. There was no end to the procession of pastors who came to him with questions raised by the people placed in their care. All too often he was unsure of the answers he gave, which deeply disturbed him. He prayed constantly for the leadership of the Holy Spirit, but he feared the cohorts of Satan who came as angels of light to delude him.

"Why didn't I ask these questions of Jesus when he was with us?" he cried in spirit. He discussed his burden with John whose humility, following Pentecost, approached perfection. He too admitted his inability to cope with the problem, but agreed that Jesus had told them the Comforter would lead them into all truth.

Then the two good men knelt together at their chairs and prayed to the Father in the name of the Son. Immediately they sensed the presence of the Spirit as their petitions, freighted with power, poured forth from honest hearts. There was an electrifying of the atmosphere, an ecstasy that enveloped them

as they earnestly approached the throne with ease and assurance.

How long they prayed they were never sure but when with tears they stood together, aglow with victory yet to be fully manifested, they heard a gentle rapping at the door.

"Come in," said Peter, and into the room stepped James, the brother of the Lord.

Some days later, James sat with Johanan discussing the infant church.

"What are your plans?" asked Johanan.

"First, I must make a home for Esther," James responded. "Then there is the matter of making a living, of course. As far as the church is concerned I will keep myself available, that is all. I'm not a dynamic speaker, I'm certainly not a writer, and I have no desire for any position that men might call important. Simon Peter made it plain he would like me to be free for him to call upon when he needs me. All I can do will be to enlighten him on how Jesus might react in certain situations. I may be able to interpret some of the veiled assertions Jesus made, through knowledge gained during our years of growing up together.

"Many times, already," James went on, "Peter has asked me how Jesus would handle a certain problem if he were with us still. The answers are never hard, it seems, and I am glad that I can help him. Beyond that, I have no ambitions except

to be a loyal brother in the work."

Johanan smiled, "I understand that Jesus made a statement regarding those who choose a place at the foot of the table," he said.

"It's really a pleasant place to be," James observed honestly.

"Perhaps," Johanan continued, "but he didn't promise that one would remain there forever."

It may have been fortunate for the budding church that those who forced the execution of Christ assumed their troubles were over when they saw him die. His followers being few in number did not particularly disturb his enemies. Let them mourn and wail and preach, they decided, for without their leader they will soon give up their struggle.

How wrong they were! Testifying through tears of joy, the disciples were winning souls in such abundance that serious inroads into the Jewish community were in evidence everywhere.

The Pharisees, especially, were angry, disturbed beyond measure. Christ was dead - they were sure of that - but to arrest the movement, his followers would have to be put to death as well. There was no other way. This resulted naturally enough in organized efforts to get on with the gruesome task without delay.

One such organized effort was headed by a prodigiously

intelligent fellow known to his friends as Saul of Tarsus. Stories of the escapades into which he led his murderous marauders were rampant enough to strike fear to the hearts of believers wherever they assembled. And, by then, there were assemblies as far from Jerusalem as Rome and beyond in every direction.

But Saul, singly impressed to the point of overwhelming conviction by witnessing the martyrdom of a man named Stephen, was converted following a miraculous appearance of Jesus. Later, his name was changed to Paul.

No Pharisee of his day had been better tutored than he in the ancient Hebrew texts, the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the early writings, the Apocrypha, especially The Wisdom of Solomon, and in other non-canonical works including those of Philo, a contemporary. And none possessed the talent and motivation necessary to produce much needed material basic in the teaching of the early church.

Christ had written nothing. His apostles could, and some of them would, write down those words of Jesus brought to their remembrance by the Spirit, as well as details they recalled of their labors, but that was far in the future. The need for a record including a system of theology for the new order was imminent, and Paul sensed this as his mission.

The nearly insurmountable task before him was one of adaptation, to justify the new theology of which he knew so

little with the ancient writings which he knew so well. Wisely, he decided to find a rendezvous with God where, in prayer and meditation, he might receive divine assistance in his quest for truth before his mind and heart were forced to wrestle with the many and varied views of men.

He went alone to Arabia. There he worked at his trade of tent-making while immersing himself in the Spirit. Also, he listened quietly to the testimonies of traveling believers, weighing their witness and picking up the established terminology. For three years he sojourned in that northern area before he made his way to Jerusalem to meet the leaders of the church.

His first interview with Peter was less than satisfactory. The two men were so much alike in a few important areas and, ironically, so unlike in all others that any congenial companionship appeared impossible.

Paul, extroverted and ambitious, educated and dogmatic, posed a real threat to Peter. The latter, likewise extroverted and ambitious, untutored but self-assertive, posed a threat to Paul. Each was constantly on his guard. Little differences developed quickly into mountains of difficulty. Neither one was about to give in to the other until finally, Peter sent for James.

Paul was impressed with this quiet, handsome disciple whose manly features and physique were the envy of his friends.

What wouldn't the man from Tarsus have given for such definite advantages as these. His own small body, wiry and strong but hardly ready to win a prize, was handicapped with a certain impediment from which he longed to be delivered.

Paul's appreciation of James climbed higher still as he heard him quietly, logically, explain how both he and Peter were right and both were wrong. "Jesus always acted on principle," so James said, "but he would bend a rule when common sense dictated that such was the better part of wisdom." He cited the hypothetical case of the ox in the pit which Jesus used to justify a bending of the fourth commandment. Then, hardly realizing what he was doing, James quietly rebuked the brethren for allowing their strength to become their weakness. Paul never forgot that little sermon and, years later, when writing about the impediment for which he found no help in prayer, he stated firmly: "When I am weak, then am I strong."*

After two weeks and many serious discussions with Peter and James, Paul prepared to leave Jerusalem to visit his old home in Tarsus. The day before he departed, he got alone with James for several hours to talk about the future of the church and their own peculiar callings.

"We have much in common," Paul stated firmly. "Much more, I think, than either of us has with any other. For you see," Paul explained, "both of us were well acquainted with the Scriptures from boyhood. Neither of us became disciples

* II Cor. 12:10b NASB

of Jesus until after his resurrection. We both feel a divine call to set forth truth in perfect accord with Jesus' teachings to ward off heresy. And, because of our backgrounds, we certainly complement one another. Or don't you agree?"

"Oh yes," answered James. "You are right."

"What I am leading up to," Paul went on, "is this. I feel that I must write, get these truths on paper, and it seems to me that you should do the same."

"But I am not a writer," countered James. "I do not feel that writing is my calling."

"What is your calling?" asked Paul.

"It's very simple," James responded. "There are now no less than twenty thousand believers in fellowship right here in Jerusalem. With the exception of John's brother, who happens to be my namesake, the apostles are all here acting as pastors and leaders every day. My work is behind the scenes, to keep peace among the brethren, and to see that they are teaching exactly as Jesus taught."

"It is working well," he continued. "Disciples of Christ have been going out from Jerusalem to all the nations, and they know and teach the truth."

"Good," said Paul. "You have been a great help to me. I must write but the time has not yet come. I will be back sometime to share with you again; then I shall write."

"Please pray daily that I shall grow in grace and not

Bishop of Jerusalem
Williamson

-226-

launch out ahead of the Spirit's leading."

The two friends said good-by. They understood each other well.

Chapter Twenty

On one of those sultry, sleepy, summer afternoons that tire the body and stifle the spirit, James was sitting in Simeon's and Marta's shop. They had gone with their boys to the games. The street was empty; some of the shop keepers had closed their doors for the day, and James was deep in melancholy thought. The lonely man was being tempted to indulge in self-pity for so many of his plans, it seemed, had failed to materialize.

He had wanted to care for Mary in her old age but years had come and gone since John had been given that responsibility. He had planned to make a home for Esther, but Mary, having never fully recovered from the shock of the crucifixion, needed Esther at her side, so his sister had gone to John's

house too. His brothers and Hulda all had homes and families of their own, so, except for Simeon and Joses, he seldom saw them.

James wiped away a tear as he thought of the sorrow he had borne two years earlier, after Johanan suffered a stroke. Adina, whom he loved more than any other living soul, had asked him to help her care for her dying husband and thereafter to make his home with her. He recalled how needed and wanted he felt, but alas! Only days before Johanan slipped away, Adina, whose heart was never strong, died in her sleep. Since then James had lived by himself in the house they left him; a lovely home, but its luster was lost in the sad recollections of the loved ones it brought to mind. But even as he sat with head in hands that afternoon, his temptations fled for, as always, his yielding was temporary. In the wake of the tempter came victory as James realized anew that he was of all men most blessed. He had known Jesus from childhood, a wonderful privilege! He had seen him in the resurrection, no doubt could assail him! He had been present when the Spirit was poured out upon the believers, no power could be denied him! His own death - whenever, however - could only translate him!

"Forgive me, Father," he prayed. "I'm sorry and ashamed."

Then he heard steps on the pavement. Philius and Rebecca were approaching the door of the shop. James had not seen them

in years. Philius would soon be sixty years old. His hair was white but he was still the handsome athletic fellow of other days and Rebecca, whose silky, raven tresses retained their luster, seemed lovelier than ever. And they were equally impressed with James whose excellent body and mind were well preserved. The reunion was a happy one.

James closed the shop and took them to his home.

"Adina and Johanan have gone to be with Jesus," he said. "They left me their home. I hope you will make it yours as long as you remain in Jerusalem."

After the three friends had dined together, James, at Rebecca's request, brought them up-to-date news of the church at its headquarters. Then Philius disclosed the reason for their visit to the Holy City.

"The confrontation between Rome and the Jews which we feared when I worked with Rebecca's father is approaching swiftly now," Philius explained. "I have been drawn back in to the service, but Antipas doesn't know it. He must be replaced as early as possible. You know, of course, that Tiberius' death was cold-blooded murder."

"I heard that only recently," said James. "The word here is that the new emperor is a despot. Is that true?"

"Ah, therein lies the trouble," said Philius. "Caesar Gaius, Caligula, is young, temperamental, headstrong, and cruel. He started off fairly well, championing the cause of

the masses, but he seems now to be mentally deranged. He demands the assassination of friends and foes alike at the slightest provocation. His own sister, he has banished from Rome.

"You would be surprised to know how many followers of Christ live in the great capital," Philius went on. "Some of them, even are servants - others slaves - in the royal household, concealing their identity. Caligula hates the movement which he considers to be merely a revolutionary sect of the Jews. Not only does he have believers assassinated, but, to the delight of bloodthirsty audiences, he has them torn to pieces by wild beasts that are crazed with hunger. In his madness, he is capable of waging war on Jerusalem any moment, hoping to exterminate the whole Jewish race, and that is the great concern of earnest men who would advise him well if he would listen.

"Those men have long been aware that such a conflict is imminent, and our burden as in the old days, is to promote peace as long as possible for the mutual benefit of all.

"Now," Philius became emphatic. "We must postpone the holocaust until the Church of Jesus Christ is on its feet, strong enough to endure even when Jerusalem is laid flat - walls, Temple, and all - which is bound to come."

"I see," said James thoughtfully. "It is strange how naive one like me, who doesn't travel, may become. I've

been assuming that the future would be simply an extension of the present, even though I know that can't be true.

"How long do you think it will take for the church to become that well established?" James went on to ask with great seriousness.

"That is a question I am hoping you can answer," said Philius.

"It is hard for me to judge," answered James. "It is certain that the church on the periphery must become so strongly united in its teaching and practice, that it can propagate itself after the nucleus has been destroyed. You see, all I know of the church beyond Jerusalem is what I hear from travelers like yourselves and opinions differ."

"I understand," said Philius. "And since my knowledge of the church is limited strictly to the fellowships far out from the center, it is well that we have opportunity to compare notes."

"Years have passed since the resurrection," Philius continued. "I am anxious to know what has happened to the apostles whom Jesus trained to carry on his work."

"Well," said James. "With the exception of John's brother, who left immediately following Pentecost and has not been heard from since, they are all alive and well right here in Jerusalem. They constitute the most interesting, diversified and singly successful group of men the world will ever know."

Each with his own talent, projects a particular aspect of Jesus, and each occupies a place that he alone can fill. I know them well for I work closely with them all."

"That, I think, is the most interesting and provocative description I ever heard," said Philius seriously. "I supposed the men had scattered in various directions to raise up churches far and near."

"No, that would not have worked well at all," James explained carefully. "If they had done that, each fellowship would now reflect the personality and prejudices of the apostle who founded it. If the church is to survive, it must reflect the Son of God. New disciples, now being nurtured here in Jerusalem through the combined influences of these men who traveled with Jesus during his ministry, are extremely well rounded, prepared to deal faithfully and intelligently with all kinds of people."

"In short," observed Philius, "the original apostolic band must continue as one until the church, everywhere, is saturated with leaders who were schooled by a faculty trained by the Lord himself."

"Exactly," answered James.

Rebecca, who was as sharp and knowledgeable as either of the men, had been listening with great interest.

"Where do you fit into that picture, James?" she asked.

"I don't," James answered honestly. "I'm the least of

all the brethren. When Jesus appeared to me in the resurrection, he made it plain to me that such was his desire. I don't project anything. My only responsibility is to interpret Jesus' sayings to these men and, in turn, of course, to their congregations."

Philus glanced at Rebecca. James wondered why they smiled.

"I'm glad for this discussion," Philus said. "It seems to make everything fall into place." He paused to collect his thoughts. "The church in Rome," he went on, "could easily have gone off on a tangent. In fact, Rebecca and I have discussed it with our son, wondering what has kept it from doing exactly that. There were times when it seemed that such was about to happen, but always the dangerous trend was reversed. I see now that the influence of well established pilgrims from Jerusalem made the difference," Philus continued. "Luke maintains that someone must put the whole system down on paper, making the interpretations of the ancient records and the teachings of Jesus available to the churches everywhere."

"Luke is right, of course," James responded. "He and I, too, have talked about that. I wish you and your son could meet a friend and brother named Paul, a missionary extraordinary. He visited Jerusalem again recently to compare notes and exchange testimonies with the apostles who had been with Jesus during his earthly ministry. Paul considers himself one

of them (an apostle born out of season) by virtue of his having been with Jesus in the resurrection. His spirit and walk are such that even Peter concurs. He is a highly trained Pharisee who was wonderfully converted several years ago, and it appears certain that the Lord has just such a ministry as you suggest in store for him.

"I hope too," James went on, "that Luke will write, for he is certainly gifted with the pen."

"He has been taking notes on everything he has seen and heard for a long, long time," observed Rebecca proudly. "If he ever does write, it will probably be a well researched history. He is something of a perfectionist in that area."

"Yes, I know," James smiled.

At Passover time, Mary and all her children with their families got together for a happy reunion at James lovely residence. As they feasted together, the brothers and sisters lovingly recalled incidents from their childhood days in Nazareth when they were growing up with Jesus. After the meal, Philius and Rebecca joined them.

That year, with many Jewish Christians coming into Jerusalem from outlying churches, a growing controversy (faith versus law) was getting an excellent airing, fanned by the influx of Gentile converts. It came up for discussion, naturally enough, at the family gathering and James was expected, of

course, to have all the answers. It didn't take him by surprise for he had studied the question well. The news of Paul's dogmatic utterances had already reached Jerusalem. The problem was neither as simple as Paul was prone to make it nor as complicated as some of the Jewish Christians would have one to believe, and James understood this.

Paul, who had been a "Hebrew of the Hebrews," a Jew in the best Pharisaical tradition, was converted to Christ in one simple act of faith. Hence, salvation by faith alone had become the hallmark of his missionary message.

There were other devout Jews who accepted Christ as the Messiah contending that salvation was contingent upon the observance of the laws of Moses.

Peter was a Jew, but since his background was that of fisherman - neither a student nor a theologian - the issue was not too important to him. He was saved; he knew when and where it happened, and that was the way he preached it.

James, like the others of his family, was an "old school" Hebrew, so the laws of Moses were particularly precious in his sight. But James remembered that his adherence to them had failed for years to bring him any semblance of peace. Only his acceptance of Jesus in one short moment had accomplished that.

Now, his growing responsibility in the church made it imperative that he always be certain of the will of God, and

he was of all men most conscientious. By nature he had never been impetuous and he was not about to jump to a conclusion in any controversial matter. Because of this, he had given himself for weeks to prayer and fasting.

Jude was deeply concerned by the trouble, for he feared it would split the church and he said so.

"Tell us James," he said, "just how we should answer questions regarding the importance of faith and works?"

James was glad for an opportunity to present his case to his loved ones before he would be forced to take a stand in the face of belligerent opposition. This, to him, was a chance to practice so he made the most of it.

"We who constitute Jesus' family," he began, "knew him from childhood. Mother miraculously bore him without aid of human assistance, and the rest of us worked and played by his side for years. He and I studied our lessons together, discussing every phase of the law, the prophecies, and the history of the race.

"Jesus always separated the Mosaic code into two categories: the moral and the sacrificial. Since he alone of all creation kept the whole law perfectly, he became our sacrifice for sin. No one else could have done that. Thus we are free from the burden of offering up lambs and doves at the altar as the unconverted Jews are doing today in the Temple. He did not destroy the law; he fulfilled it. That is a quote

from his teaching.

"We ought not criticize an honest Jew who wants to keep a part or all of the sacrificial law if it gives him a sense of satisfaction. I still do. But we must help him see that after he accepts the Lord as Saviour, the necessary sacrifice has been made for him. It is the gift of God."

James paused, but his little audience pressed him to continue.

"Salvation is free," he went on. "We can't purchase it. for it was purchased and paid for in full on the cross. Neither can we earn it by our good works for we can't live well enough to atone for our past sins, even if we were able to live so well that we would never displease heaven again.

"A visitor from Antioch told me yesterday that Brother Paul is teaching that we are saved by grace, not of works. When I see Paul I shall suggest that he add to his statement, saying, 'we are saved by grace through faith,' lest someone interpret his words to mean we have no part in the process, that our salvation is an arbitrary decision made by God.

"I shall ask him what he means by works. If he is referring to the keeping of the sacrificial law, I think he should say so, for his statement is well taken. If he includes in good works the keeping of the moral law, which is summed up in loving your neighbor as yourself, a bit of explanation will help. Anything that displeases God is sin, so we may be

sure that all of us are guilty in his sight every day. But we are guilty in our own sight only when we yield to a temptation to do that which we know is wrong. Likewise, one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin."*

"Then you are saying that one must never yield to a temptation," said Jude. "I'm afraid I do not measure up to such a standard."

"Neither do I, nor anyone," James conceded. "I must say that I try daily to live such an exemplary life as that, but often I fail. Sometimes the pressures are devastating, Satan is strong, temptation is overpowering, and the flesh is weak. It is then that I catch myself entertaining evil thoughts, saying that which I should not have said, and, even doing that which I shouldn't do. Invariably, I am filled with remorse, sorry for my sin."

"I think I must be the chief of sinners," said Simeon, honestly. "With me, it is one constant battle."

"You have come a long way, my brother," said James kindly. "It's your faith that makes you whole. It is your faith and your love that make you sorry for your sins, and your sorrow is honored in heaven. That is why you determine not to fall again. And that is why you are doing so much better today than you were doing a year ago."

"Peter, in his preaching, calls the process, growth in

* James 4:77 NASB

grace," James continued, "and I know of no way to state it more clearly than that. It is the one who grows in grace that is full of good works. That is why I preach that one who claims to have faith but sins without sorrow is not telling the truth.

"What use is it, if a man says he has faith, but he has no good works? Can that faith save him? If a brother and sister are without clothing and in need of daily food, and one says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet does not give them what is necessary for their bodies, what use is that?*

"It is for that reason that I say, 'show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.'**

"Is it true, then," asked Jude, "that Paul, and perhaps Peter, do not agree with you in this?"

"No, no," said James. "On the contrary, Paul and Peter and I are all in perfect agreement. If Paul's words, spoken to a particular audience, seems to contradict me, one needs only to look at his life. He is overflowing with good works. There is none better than Paul and his sermons are bursting with rules for good Christian conduct.

"And there is none better than Peter. His impulsive nature used to get him into all kinds of trouble. You have heard him tell of that awful night when he denied Jesus. Then he wept in godly sorrow. Peter still has his problems, but he has come so far that it is hard to believe now that

* James 2:14 NASB ** James 2:18b NASB

once he was a harsh and headstrong sinner.

"Jesus referred to the Christian way," James went on, "as 'straight and narrow.' One thing he meant was that some will wander off in one direction claiming salvation simply because they are charitable and honest. Paul, preaching to Gentile converts has been running into this error, and he bears down hard upon their need of a simple faith in Jesus. Others move away in the other direction, claiming faith, but living in sin without sorrow or repentance. I, in preaching to converted Jews, often have this to face which is why I bear down on their need of good works."

Mary sat listening, deeply interested in the discussion. Her age was showing, but her mind was exceptionally clear, and a kind, loving spirit never failed to possess her.

"My children," she said. I knew from the beginning that Jesus was a special creation. I didn't understand sometimes what that meant, but there was one thing about him that always impressed me."

"It must have been that he was such a good boy," suggested Esther.

"No," the mother answered. "That I took for granted. It was the common sense he never failed to possess."

Chapter Twenty One

During the months that followed, Philius went quietly and secretly about the work he had been commissioned to carry out. Political changes were taking place at amazing speed. Antipas was indeed banished to far off Lugdunum at the order of Caligula. Then to the surprise of nearly everyone, a flighty, unstable grandson of Herod the Great was appointed to the tetrachy vacated by Antipas. His name was Agrippa, who, at his grandfather's request, had been brought up in the royal palace in Rome.

Agrippa took the reins with all the might his limited powers permitted. He tackled his job with the unbridled zeal of a headstrong man in middle-age, coupled, fortunately, with a natural flair for diplomacy. He quieted the Jewish Zealots

and certain ambitious soldiers of Caligula and all other agitators whose ambitious activities led toward war.

No one ever knew how great a part Philius played in affecting the peace that prevailed, but, with mission accomplished, he was called back to Rome.

Then, Caligula, after four stormy years, was assassinated by one of his soldiers, putting an end to the reign of terror in the great capital. He was succeeded by Caesar Claudius, a most unimpressive man in middle-age, physically afflicted with a marked impediment in his speech. It was fortunate for Rome that his mind - to the surprise of his subjects - was clear and agile.

Claudius was well acquainted with Agrippa and pleased beyond measure that he had steered his craft into quiet waters. And the emperor at the suggestion of Philius, dared to gamble that by loading the inexperienced ruler with responsibilities heavier than he should bear would keep him at his task and out of trouble for an extended period. His subsequent announcement that he was making Agrippa king over all the territory his illustrious grandfather had ruled so long, provoked the ire of jealous critics from every corner of the Empire.

But Agrippa did well. For five years of nearly unbelievable success, he won the acclaim of both his people and his peers.

Even the Christians,* who could in no wise condone

* A new name given to the fellowship of believers at Antioch.

Agrippa's life style, appreciated his peaceful reign until one act of violence saddened their hearts. John's brother, son of Zebedee, had surprised his old friends by returning to Jerusalem. Alas! For some unknown reason, he provoked the king's anger and became the first martyr among the members of Jesus apostolic band, dying by Agrippa's sword. Philius was mortified but there was nothing he could have done to prevent it.

How long the new king with all his faults of sycophancy and ostentation could have kept the peace was never known. While attending a festival in Caesaria in honor of Claudius, he was seized with devastating pain in the abdomen - probably acute appendicitis - a malady from which he was not to recover.

Agrippa I was succeeded by his seventeen-year-old son, Agrippa II. Claudius knew better than to retain Judea as a kingdom with an inexperienced boy at the helm, so he quickly reinstated the procuratorial government. All might have gone smoothly, at least for awhile, except for a national misfortune. Serious crop failures harrassed the new administration for which, naturally enough, the young ruler was blamed by many of the people. With Philius assistance - working behind the scenes - the lad succeeded in keeping the bark afloat. Claudius, however, was deeply disturbed. He knew well that the seeds of revolution take root easily in the fertile soil of economic disaster which meant that war with the Jews was

imminent again. Let the militant Zealots feel the first pangs of hunger and nothing would stop them.

Philius was summoned to Rome for consultation but he returned soon to take permanent residence in Jerusalem, where his work was well laid out for him. James begged his friends to share his home, but Philius declined. "We must not identify ourselves with any group," he explained.

There was grain enough stored away in bins to see the troubled area through the first months of famine, but even children on the streets were aware that by another season they might be starving.

Fortunately, the situation which developed was not as severe as predicted but hard times and hunger did afflict the nation.

The church in Jerusalem was greatly concerned by the recession into which all Judea was about to be plunged so Peter called the leaders together.

"Each of you," he stated firmly, "must lead the people in your charge to prayer and supplication! Surely the Lord Jesus will take our petitions to the Father! He will care for his own."

James, carefully studying the troubled men, failed to see any expression of hope in their drawn faces. He knew how faithfully Peter had spoken but he sensed a weakness in his

earnest plea which he wanted to correct. His shyness, however, was showing through. He tried hard to maintain his silence, but the urge to speak possessed him until he was certain the Holy Spirit was prodding him on. It was only then that he signaled for attention.

Satan, of course, was also about his nasty business. "If a great man like Peter cannot impress them," the tempter was saying, "what can a simple soul like you accomplish?"

James was human enough to listen, but the expectant faces that waited for his words were more than he needed to send the tempter on his way.

"Brethren," he said, "you have heard our leader and he has spoken well. Allow me to add to his request. Let us call our people to prayer and fasting, to intercede for all this troubled land: Jews and Gentiles; saints and sinners; weeping mothers; hungry children; despairing fathers. Let us pray this time for the good rain to fall upon the just and the unjust, the great and the small. And let us not forget that of all people we are most blessed, for we have faith to sustain us while others falter. . ."

He would have gone on, but Peter fell to his knees, crying out to heaven. In a moment every knee was bowed and every heart was boldly beseeching the Throne of Grace as the Spirit provided power to pray effectually with fervor, availing much. Even so, James feared that he had been too bold in speaking out

in the presence of Peter and the other apostles. He quietly begged heaven to forgive him.

Paul and a co-worker named Barnabas were laboring with marked success in Antioch when word of the impending famine in Judea reached them. Paul became concerned immediately.

"What's the matter?" Barnabas asked him. "Those people are not in trouble yet. Anyway, what can we do?"

"I don't know," Paul answered, "but they must be praying for help. Seldom has my heart been as heavily burdened as it is right now."

"All right," said Barnabas. "When the people gather in to hear you preach tonight, tell them what you just told me. When they sense your anxious fears (and they shall) money will be provided for us to relieve the situation in Judea. It's the Lord's way of accomplishing the divine purpose, one of the first lessons I learned from you."

The deep concern of the Christians in Jerusalem was soon swallowed up in victory for they prayed believing. Hence, it was no great surprise to them when Paul and Barnabas came trudging into the city with the relief funds provided by the church at Antioch. And their joy was greatly enhanced by their knowledge that God, through his omnipresent Spirit, was carrying out the promises Jesus had made in the days of his public

ministry.

Barnabas had a wealthy aunt who lived with an only son, John Mark, in a lovely, commodious home in Jerusalem. Mark was a brilliant young fellow with a flair for writing, whom Peter had led into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Peter loved the young man as he might have loved a son in the flesh, something a spiritual father is often prone to do. And he became, at once, a father-image to Mark, whose real parent had died when he was a small child. His mother claimed that her son came barely short of worshipping Peter and was always taking notes on his sermons.

In deference to her nephew Barnabas, the good woman opened her home to a meeting of the apostles and close friends, called by Peter to express their appreciation to the missionaries. Following several gracious speeches made amid great rejoicing, Peter, as usual, asked if any further business needed to be cared for.

It was then to the surprise of all that one of the apostles, Bartholomew, who seldom spoke in the presence of his peers, stood up to gain attention.

"Brethren," he said. "There is little doubt that the time is coming soon, when many of our band will feel the call to move out into other lands with the Gospel as our brother Paul and his friend Barnabas are doing.

"Now that there are so many Christians in Jerusalem, and

younger, less experienced pastors will be taking charge of the fellowships, would it not be wise to elect, officially, a chief elder or bishop to give oversight to all the workers here in the Jerusalem church?"

Having spoken his mind, the apostle resumed his seat. After a brief pause, Andrew, who likewise usually remained quiet in any kind of situation, arose and looked into the serious faces of his brethren.

"Men," he said, "Brother Bartholomew has spoken well. It is evident that he has given this matter much consideration. I think he should tell us just what qualifications we should look for in the bishop we elect, and who he may have in mind."

Seldom had Peter felt so bewildered. It was true that he wanted to travel, and it would be a relief for him to be free from the responsibilities he had shouldered so long. But if he were to go, he wanted to resign his position and at least be begged by the brethren to reconsider the request. To be voted out was unthinkable.

For a moment, being ministered to by a certain spirit, he felt better, but the comforting angel was from the wrong camp. "Don't worry, Peter," the specter whispered, "you will be elected. Who else could fill the place you've held so long?"

Then his bitter fears returned, and the wretched imp began to chirp again.

"If the men who owe so much to your excellent leadership

decide to elect another, you can walk out, you know. Let them see their mistake. Let them learn the hard way."

Paul too was a bit perplexed by the sudden turn of events and wondered who Bartholomew had in mind for the honorable office. Then the little imp that had frustrated Peter (or perhaps one of his wicked colleagues) suggested to the mind of Paul that perhaps he was about to be drafted as chief pastor of the swiftly growing flock. The thought was a pleasant one, not that he would accept the position for he had other commitments, but he would enjoy the honor of being elected. Also, there would certainly be something satisfying about unseating Peter by whom he had always felt more than a little threatened. And certainly it would be a thrilling experience to stand and thank the brethren for their vote of confidence, then quietly resign. He smiled to himself.

James sat quietly mulling over in his mind the men who might be viable candidates for the job. It must be John, he decided finally, and he hoped so. He felt that John was the only one of the original twelve, except Peter, who was capable of filling so important a post, and John would be easy to work with.

Suddenly everyone turned his attention again to Bartholomew who was slowly rising in response to Andrew's suggestion.

"There is one man among us," he began, "who has the qualifications and the spirit for the position under consideration.

He has the love and respect of all, and his disciplined life is above reproach. His preaching is positive and kind. His counsel is sought by everyone, and his knowledge and understanding of truth is astounding."

He paused. "Brethren," he concluded. "I nominate our Brother James, who was also the brother of our Lord, as Bishop of Jerusalem."

Shouts of approval filled the air. Peter was happy because it wasn't Paul. Paul was happy because it wasn't Peter, and both of them were happy because they held James in highest esteem.

The good word passed quickly to the thousands of Christians across the city. Simeon and Marta prepared and served a feast to celebrate the happy occasion with Mary and Esther seated on either side of the honored guest. All the brothers with their wives and Hulda with her husband were there too. So were the apostles and a host of friends, including Paul and Barnabas.

James was stunned.

Chapter Twenty Two

It was midday; spring was in the air. Birds were singing; children were laughing. But it was a somber wayfaring stranger who stood at the gates of Ephesus begging permission to enter the city.

"My name is Luke," the traveler told a surly guard. "I'm a missionary doctor, and I seek a friend named John. I was told that he is chief of the pastors here."

"Is he new in the city too?" the guard asked sharply.

"No sir," answered Luke. "He is said to have come here from Judea in the early days of the war, long before the destruction of Jerusalem."

"Do you plan to remain here?" growled the official.

"No sir, unless there are those who suffer and need my

services," the doctor answered. "My mother is a widow, living in Alexandria. I plan to make my home with her."

The guard seemed satisfied that the visitor was some kind of harmless servant who posed no threat to the peace of the city. "Do you see that red-roofed house?" he pointed.

"Yes," said Luke, "I see it."

"It's a good man who lives there," remarked the guard. "I know him well. He is said to be a Christian. He will help you locate your friend."

Luke expressed his thanks and proceeded through the gate.

"Of course, I know John," the man who answered the door responded to Luke's anxious inquiry. "He doesn't live far. I will take you there."

"So John is a friend of yours," the fellow continued. "I'm not surprised, for he is the friend of everyone."

"I can believe that," Luke answered. "I have known him for a long time. Tell me, does he live alone?"

"Oh no," the man exclaimed. "We are so privileged at Ephesus! Our Lord's mother lives with John. Mary is old. Her daughter, Esther, cares for her. Do you know them too?"

"Yes," said Luke. "I know them well. Thank you for your assistance. I will see you again."

John was well past seventy, but Luke noticed at once how

well preserved he appeared to be. And Mary, approaching ninety, was aglow with that inward beauty which never fails to reflect a life well lived for others. Esther, a prim efficient spinster, went quickly about the task of preparing food for the tired traveler. She heated water for his bath and unrolled a pallet on which, for hours, he slept the dreamless sleep of one whose body nears exhaustion, but whose conscience knows no condemnation.

Then Luke awakened, refreshed and strong. He had come to exchange bits of distressing information with his friends: tales of tribulation and torture. He despaired, for he carried in his case no balm to sooth nor drug to deaden the pain and sorrow that had been heaped upon the house of John the Beloved. He would do what he could.

"I have seen the destruction of Jerusalem," he began sadly. "There is nothing left but broken walls and utter waste. The Temple lies flattened to the ground and thousands of people perished. I'm glad my father didn't live to see it, for he spent much of his life helping to postpone the needless slaughter. He died in Alexandria, but not until he knew the church would survive the holocaust.

"I suppose you know, John, that you have now outlived all your colleagues of the apostolic band."

"Yes," John answered. "We were told recently that Phillip was stoned and crucified in Hierapolis; and poor, quiet,

Bartholomew was flayed and beheaded. It has been reported that Thomas was stabbed to death while on his knees in prayer. But we do not know what happened to Matthew. Perhaps you can tell us."

"Matthew was martyred in Alexandria," said Luke. "After reading Mark's account of Jesus and his ministry as recalled by Peter, he proceeded to prepare a more extensive gospel record. He said he was so inspired that he would have quenched the Spirit if he had not obeyed.

"You are aware, I'm sure, that I too have produced such a document," Luke continued. "I gathered material from every possible source for many years, much of it even before I became a Christian. I felt the Lord's hand directing me every step."

"Yes, I know," said John. "Apparently the Lord is anxious that the record be well documented. I, too, have long felt called to write my own version of what took place and what it all means. In fact, it is nearly completed.

"But let me ask you," John went on, "were you with Peter and Paul in Rome?"

"Yes, I surely was," Luke answered sadly. "Both of those dear brothers died there; willing martyrs for the cause of Christ. They were strong, determined men who knew no fear.

"The one I lost track of," Luke continued, "is my good friend Andrew."

"I can enlighten you regarding him," spoke up John.
"He came here and stayed with us awhile. In fact, he helped me with my writing. Then he went to Greece, and word came back to us that there he was crucified."

After a brief pause, Luke turned to Mary. He had put off the unpleasant task of talking about her family as long as possible.

"About the house of Joseph," he began with hesitation, "I have only the saddest news to report."

But there was no justification for his fears. Mary's smile was like the Spirit's whisper. Heaven seemed to fill the room.

"I know," she answered softly. "My boys are all together again. I suffered, then rejoiced, with each of them in spirit as they went to rejoin Jesus."

"Did you know that Marta is living in our old home in Nazareth?" Mary asked. "She is teaching a class of girls there. The older boy, Joseph, is a carpenter and is doing well in the shop. Johanan, the younger one, has gone to Spain with the Gospel. Simeon dearly loved his family. He and Marta reared their boys well.

"Hulda," she went on, "lives with her family in Capernaum, and Esther has remained at my side through all the years. Life has been good."

Luke looked upon the aging woman with love and adoration. "Mary," he said, "you are truly a lady of sorrows. Sadness has been your portion but I sense only the deepest peace and joy when you speak, and your smile reflects the pure light of heaven. Surely the perfect example you present to all the mothers of the world shall endure through the ages."

Mary smiled. "My peace," she said, "proceeds from a precious promise. I too shall be going soon to be with Jesus and all the others who claim him as their own."

It was some moments before anyone spoke. Then Esther turned to Luke and said, "You were a special friend of James. Please tell us about that. He was a favorite of mine, you know."

"Yes," Luke answered. "And James was the best friend (beyond my family) I ever knew. He and I had much in common. We both accepted Jesus as our Saviour on the same day, and each of us were equally ashamed for having waited so long."

"James greatly admired my father who held an important post in government but who went about his work so unobtrusively - under cover - that Roman historians may not even mention him. James often said his work in the new kingdom was like that, and he begged me not to exalt his name in any writing I might do. I am honoring his request, of course," continued Luke. "Other writers promised him the same, so

I've been told."

Luke paused for a moment, then went on to say that he had been gone so much during the years of James' leadership that he had gotten out of touch with the Jerusalem church. "Part of my reasons for coming here now is to get all the first-hand information John can give me regarding the activities of the apostles under the leadership of the Holy Spirit," he said. "I promised my friend Theophilus that I would prepare such a record, and I am anxious that it be accurate in minute detail.

He turned to John. "Why don't we begin with your impression of James after he became the bishop of Jerusalem?"

John cleared his throat, changed his position, and after a moment's deliberation, began to tell his story.

"James never left Jerusalem after the resurrection," John explained. "And not for one moment did he lose his humility. He saw himself as servant of all, the least of the church leaders, yet he was every inch a bishop. Perfect in piety, he pastored his people, sending them forth to preach the Gospel to all the world.

"Shortly before his death, he became deeply concerned for the Jewish Christians who were leaving Jerusalem. It was reported that many of them were living sinful lives without repentance, so he prepared a paper to be distributed among the tribes. It was not a letter, just a series of excerpts

from his sermons - pungent truths that pertained particularly to their needs.

"One strange thing about James was that even with his shy, retiring nature, he seemed never to fear Peter or Paul or any strong personality who happened to come under his direction. He was slow to project himself into any matter of controversy - he was not in the least impulsive - but when he spoke, his word was law.

"I remember one occasion," John went on by way of example, "when we were met in council in Jerusalem. There were certain converted Pharisees who maintained dogmatically that Gentiles seeking Jesus must be circumcised in order to be saved.

"Paul and Barnabas had just arrived, having seen many such converts being used of God; men and women who knew little of the Mosaic law and observed no part of it. Paul was determined, of course, that the Gentiles be free from the Jewish code.

"The council was divided into three groups," continued John. "There were those who agreed with the Pharisees; those who stood by Paul and Barnabas, and the remainder who were undecided. An interesting debate got underway, but with every speech, a decision in the matter seemed more and more remote.

"Everyone was waiting for James as leader of the Jerusalem church to voice his sentiments, but as usual he was biding his time.

"Peter, who was definitely on Paul's side in the controversy, may have been a bit uncertain where James would stand

if he were pressured into making a judgment. He may have thought too, that only a dynamic speaker like himself could hope to win the day.

"Whatever Peter was thinking," John continued, "he demanded the floor and launched out in his typical style to batter down the walls of opposition.

"'Why do you put God to test by placing upon the necks of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?' he cried.*

"He finished in a blaze of oratory, but no one seemed ready to change his position. Peter was chagrined.

"Then James stood up and I tell you, Luke, it suddenly became so quiet in there it was frightening.

"James was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, who diligently kept the whole law, and everyone knew it. The party advocating circumcision for the Gentile converts were more than hopeful, of course, that he would tip the scales in their favor."

John paused to catch his breath. He wanted to be sure he was expressing exactly what he felt.

"Go on," said Luke with a smile. "You can't stop here."

"Well," said John, "James did exactly as you would expect. Quietly, without show of emotion, he stated his position and recited several paragraphs from the prophets.

"Then he said, 'Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles.'

* Acts 15:10 NASB

"With that statement," John explained. "everyone knew that he had decided against the necessity of Gentile circumcision.

"But," John went on, "James was also a diplomat of the diplomats. Having made a most important judgment in favor of the liberals, he quickly made two much lesser judgments that pleased the conservatives, and everyone was happy."

Esther smiled broadly. She had thoroughly enjoyed the interesting interchange. "James was like that from the time he was a child," she said. "Adina told me one time how he played matchmaker, using a bit of strategy to bring Simeon and Marta together, when he was only five years old."

"Did he ever change?" asked Luke.

"Never," said John. "He moved quietly, steadily along, keeping the fragile craft afloat, right on its intended course. By the time the war became imminent, and many leaders of the church were being martyred, James was convinced that the body of Christ had gained sufficient strength to stand after the Holy City had fallen.

"It was then he began to preach more sternly than ever, especially to the Jews. His favorite expression became, 'Jesus is the door of the sheepfold, the way of life!'

"He preached with conviction, winning great numbers of converts. The Sanhedrists, dismayed and disturbed, finally dispatched a deputation from their 'Seven Sects' to enquire

of him, 'Who is the door of Jesus?'

"When he answered, 'Jesus is the Saviour,' many more sinners came to repentance. Then the priests began to fear that all the people would turn to Christ, causing them to plan a different strategy to stem the tide. Instead of fighting James, they decided to use him. Pretending to reverence him, they sent another deputation to pay him compliments on his excellent leadership, offering to assist him.

"To think that James would be fooled by flattery was absurd to us who knew him, but no one could ever guess what he was thinking.

"In ignorance, his adversaries accepted his silence as consent to cooperate in the plan they were boldly launching. They told him that he, being the greatest of the great, would stand high above the people on one of the tallest pinnacles of the Temple when the Passover crowds had filled the city. From that vantage point, so they explained with elaborate praise, he would further enhance his powerful position by warning the people - Jews and Gentiles - lest they be carried away with the Jesus movement.

"Well," John continued without a pause. for he was being carried away himself with the traumatic tale, "James was well aware that his work on earth was coming to a close. He saw an unprecedented opportunity to reach the multitudes with the Gospel in one final effort through the diabolical

planning of the scribes and the Pharisees.

"Without a word, he allowed them to place him upon a pinnacle where everyone could see his face and hear his voice. Never had anyone faced so great a congregation.

"Then, one of the scribes, addressing James as the Just One, cried, 'It is you we should obey, since so many of the people are following Jesus, the crucified. Tell us, who is the door to Jesus?'

"It was a trick," John explained, "but James was a master at turning the tables.

"'Why do you ask me again about Jesus, the Son of man?' he cried loudly enough to be heard by all. 'He sits in the heavens on the right hand of the Mighty Power, and he will come on the clouds of heaven!'

John sighed. "You should have seen the reaction," he said. "That great host of people glorified God, crying, 'Hosanna, the Son of David!'

"James looked like Gabriel himself as he stood high above the heads of the adoring crowd, proudly representing Jesus, the Lamb of God.

"Then his enemies rushed him, but he did not resist them. They flung his body to the ground, far far below. He was badly injured, but, painfully, he pulled himself up onto his knees, and prayed: 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

"Then they began to throw stones but one of their number, acting in mercy, put an end to his suffering with one firm blow of a heavy club.

"Later, one of the Christians who stood beside the lifeless body, said 'There was a hint of a smile on his lips, and again I felt that he knew much much more than he was saying.'"

John paused and bowed his head. The others followed. Heaven came down. Later, not one of the four good friends could recall how long the silent vigil lasted.

It was John who finally broke the silence, lifting his voice in benediction:

"'Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love him.'"

He was quoting from that single document that had been bequeathed to the militant church of Jesus Christ by James, the Just One, brother of our Lord, Bishop of Jerusalem.

The End

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