

Marcellus split his Decade into three, keeping the odd trooper to accompany himself. The group they were watching in the house of Mary of Cyrene were on the move. A few days had passed from the time when the Decade had started their twenty-four hour watch of the premises. Early in morning, a half dozen people left laden with their luggage. It was clear that at this was no casual journey within the city. This group comprised the man who had stood with the mother and the other women at the foot of the cross - John - with him were his brother James, and the brother's son, Thaddaeus. There were three women, Mary of Nazareth and her militant sister, Salome - and Mary of Magdala. Marcellus sent three men to trail them, with strict orders that they were in no way to interfere - simply to observe.

On the following day there was another departure - this time some of the lesser known members of the Twelve - but he knew them, he had made it his business to do so. Two brothers, Matthew and James, were accompanied by their mother - who was another Mary - and her daughter Susanna. With them were two more men, Simon of Cana and Thomas. Once again, he despatched three men to follow - with the same instructions. The next day saw a repeat of the procedure, Marcellus grew restless, he was running out of men! He was encouraged when he saw that this group was led by the most prominent of the Twelve, Simon. With him was his brother Andrew, together with Philip and Bartholomew. Two others made up the party, Joanna, the wife of Chuza - Herod's steward - and a young boy, whom he recognised as one of the fishermen's sons from Capernaum - another Jonah!

The farewells were prolonged, before Mary of Cyrene and her son retreated into their house. It looked like the final clearance. Marcellus reported to Pilate, who received him with barely concealed irritation.

“The followers of the Galilean have left the city, your Excellency. I have allocated men to follow them.”

“Were they, by any remote chance, carrying with them the body of the man you crucified?”

Pilate’s tone was heavy with sarcasm. He went on.

“Every day brings fresh reports of this living corpse showing himself in the streets - perhaps he’s decided to take a holiday!”

Marcellus stared ahead woodenly.

“I saw nothing of him, your Excellency.”

Pilate sighed.

“I’m not surprised, Marcellus! He wouldn’t be expected to blatantly leave the city in their company. If I might offer a suggestion, I would hurry to catch up with them, so that you can see if he joins them!”

He made it sound as if he was instructing a half-witted child. Marcellus flushed.

“I had that in mind, your Excellency - but I required your permission to leave Jerusalem.”

Pilate sighed and shook his head.

“Initiative, Centurion! Initiative!”

Marcellus made his retreat as soon as was possible. He had cause to hate many men during his army career, but without a doubt, he hated Pilate to the depths of his being! He took his remaining trooper and rode out after the three men who were trailing Simon and his companions. It took little time to reach them, they were traveling on foot, as were the subjects of their scrutiny.

Simon-Peter had elected to lead out the final group, not caring to leave any of the number behind in Jerusalem. Many of those who had remained with the Master on his travels, were scattered around the villages outside of the city - these included the Seventy. Simon had openly taken the northern road to Samaria which led through Ramah and Bethel - the ancient road of the kings. There was no purpose in

concealment, he was fully aware of the three men who had followed them from Mary's house. He had no doubt that they would remain until they reached Capernaum. It would take three days, providing Joanna and the boy could keep up. He looked at them striding along resolutely and wondered how long it would last, the day was still young. This was the road Jesus had followed to come down from the north. How different it had been then - the excited crowds, the marvels and wonders, the equally marvellous and wonderful teaching - so simple, but yet so profound. Now, everything was changed - Jesus had died, and they had thought him lost to them for ever - but he was alive again! Simon glanced back along the road, almost expecting to see him striding along to keep up with them - but Simon was equally convinced that he had gone ahead, as he had promised - he was already in Galilee, waiting for them!

They reached Jacob's Well by the end of the first day, and Simon-Peter was well satisfied, Joanna and the boy had kept up, and they hadn't complained. The town of Sychem lay below them. This was where the townspeople had come out to see the man who knew their hearts better than they themselves. It was not a place to visit, they were already in Samaria and good Jews didn't seek out Samaritans for company! They started out early on the following day, so as to ensure they didn't meet with anyone coming from the town for water. They had seen the light of the fire back along the road where the followers were camped. Simon wasn't sure who they were until he had a report from Judah who had slipped away.

He returned with the news.

"They're Romans - Roman soldiers - and the Centurion from Capernaum is leading them."

Simon had been about to berate the boy for stealing away, instead his brows knitted.

"How many, Jonah?"

"Five."

"Are they mounted?"

“Two are - I only saw two horses.”

Simon grunted, this was alarming news - Caiaphas and his priests were one thing, Romans were another. He turned to the eager-faced boy, and growled menacingly.

“If you creep away again without telling me - I’ll have your hide - understood!?”

Jonah’s smile faded, he nodded. Simon’s expression softened, he put a hand on the boy’s shoulder.

“I told you last time, this isn’t a game - remember?”

“Yes, Simon.”

“Then, don’t make it a game - we don’t want to lose our little fish!”

“I was careful - more careful than last time.”

Simon nodded, he turned to the silent audience.

“We must be on our way, we’ll cut across to the other road - the more direct one through Scythopolis - let’s get home as quickly as we can!”

The road they had been following led to Sebaste - and ultimately to Nazareth, before turning back to the Sea of Galilee. Simon added.

“I have no desire to pay a visit Nazareth! They didn’t accept the Master in life - less so now in death!”

They bypassed Sychem by taking to the fields to avoid going through the town. They picked up the road to Scythopolis some distance north of the town. Simon smiled grimly, perhaps the Romans trailing them would find the detour a little uncomfortable. He felt a black anger - they were being trailed by the man who had butchered their beloved Master on the cross. He wondered at the relentless spirit which drove such a man.

They came to Capernaum late on the third day, foot-sore and tired. Simon was relieved to find that the others had arrived safely before them. It was already too late for a conference - first came the greeting for his wife, who had every cause to believe that he had abandoned her. At the door of his house Simon parted company with Philip and Bartholomew, who elected to return to their home town of Bethsaida.

Mariamne came to the door as they were about to depart. Simon couldn't read her expression, but there was no way he could test her real feelings while his brother Andrew and Joanna and Jonah were still with them. Andrew lived there, and after a greeting he went to his old quarters. Marianne greeted Simon with a kiss, and he couldn't decide whether it was one of duty or affection. Joanna and Jonah had to be accommodated. Simon pronounced his wishes.

"Joanna can't return to Chuza, for obvious reasons - and Jonah - you remember Jonah? - Jonah has nowhere to go, I thought we would offer him shelter."

Mariamne responded with immediate warmth.

"Joanna, my dear, it's always a pleasure to have your company - and Jonah, how you have grown - but thin, not enough to eat! Yes, of course I remember you - you're welcome too!"

Simon fidgeted until their two guests were escorted to their quarters.

Mariamne seemed to take an inordinate amount of time doing so. He wandered to the door and looked out at the quiet town. It was hard to remember that Capernaum had once been as quiet as this - until the coming of the Master, and then it had become an excited, restless place, with people coming and going. It was perhaps his imagination, but it seemed as if it was watching and waiting. He had no doubt that the news of his return was already circulating, but it remained to be seen what sort of reaction there would be. Marianne came up quietly behind him and touched his arm, he whirled around in shock, staring at her. She said quietly.

"So tense, Simon? So tense that you've forgotten your wife's touch?"

He drew her to him and they rested against each other for a while, then she said softly.

"I've missed you, husband."

He responded shakily.

"And, I've missed you, Marianne."

She drew back from him, staring into his eyes.

“It must have been very bad.”

“You’ve heard then?”

She nodded.

“News travels quickly when it’s bad. They crucified him! Dear God, why?”

Simon responded bitterly.

“Because he was there, because he spoke too openly - and because he was a thorn in their side and a stone to stumble over!”

She stared at him again.

“Is he dead, Simon? There are stories - “

“What stories?”

“He’s been seen - all over the hill country - people swear that they’ve seen him! I thought at first that it was no more than grief, but now the stories are too many.”

Simon exclaimed in elation.

“So, he HAS come before us to Galilee!”

She whispered.

“Is he still alive, Simon - how did he escape from the Romans?”

“He is alive - he was dead - but now he’s alive again! We’ve seen him - we, the Eleven - we’ve all seen him and spoken to him - and we’ve touched him. He’s alive, Mariamne - alive!”

“Slow down, Simon - slow down, and tell me exactly what happened.”

It was fruitless trying to get him to slow down, the story was garbled, but with a little careful questioning, she got it straight.

“How is that possible - it isn’t possible?!”

“With God - and his Messiah - everything is possible!”

“Why didn’t the others come to tell me?”

“Because I told them to tell no one until we were all here. I needed to feel the mood of the people.”

“They’ve heard the stories too, some believe them, others mock - but that’s nothing new! The town is quiet - “

“But watching and waiting before they make up their own mind.”

“They’re keeping their mouths shut because of the Romans - although I expect they’ve heard the stories too.”

“Now, they have another one to worry about - we were followed home by the Centurion who took over from Phobias - and mark this - he was the one who crucified Jesus. He always hated him - I think he enjoyed it!”

“So, what happens now, Simon?”

“We wait - but not for long, I think. The Master’s here, and he’ll soon come to us now that he knows we’re all back. He reminded Mary of Magdala that he had told us he would go ahead into Galilee - all we must do is wait!”

“Be careful, Simon - the Romans won’t stop watching us.”

“They won’t catch Jesus again - he comes and goes through locked doors!”

She nodded.

“But you can’t Simon - and neither can the others - if they can’t catch Jesus, they’ll come after you!”

Contrary to Simon’s confidence, Jesus didn’t come to him or to the others in the following days. Simon hung around the house, becoming more and more agitated as each day passed. There were brief visits from all of the Eleven, but they could report no visitation either. Simon was conscious of the eyes of the townspeople, he was aware that each visitor was reported to the watchful Centurion, who occasionally took his turn at surveillance. It was a waiting game, and Simon, who was a man of action rather than patience, exploded into rage with increasing frequency. Finally, Mariamne faced him squarely.

“Since when do hire labourers to run your boat while you sit idle at home? Simon Bar Jonah used to be a man who could outfish any other in the town. The whole lot of you

are sitting idle - Salome's complaining - Zebedee's complaining! Who do you think you are, Herod in his palace, with servants to run around after him!? Shift your lazy selves into action!"

Simon's mouth opened, he shifted his glance to Andrew who maintained a diplomatic silence but was grinning broadly. He reared to his feet and towered over his wife. She stood her ground and added more softly.

"If Jesus wants to find you, he'll know where to look - perhaps he expects to find you working, not sitting idle!"

Before he could debate any further, they received an unexpected, and not altogether welcome visit from James - the brother of Jesus.

Simon eyed the angular figure of the Master's brother warily. James had never been a supporter of Jesus, and there had been the occasion when he had wanted to put him away privately because of the problems he was causing to the family by - what James termed - his notoriety. James was accompanied by Judah, another of Jesus' brothers, who, as usual, stood in the background while James conducted the conversation.

James followed the teachings of the Pharisaic school, while Judah leaned towards the Sadducees. Simon had no doubt that this divergence of opinion would have led to some lively discussions when the family was together - especially if Jesus had added his voice on occasions - but that was history - what was of more importance was the reason for the visit.

Simon made the customary greeting.

"Welcome to my house - please enter."

"Peace be upon your house, Simon."

Simon stepped aside to allow his visitors to enter. Mariamne emerged from the rear of the premises and greeted the unexpected guests. Simon gestured to seats at the long table around which they had gathered so many months earlier, when James had urged his brother to go into Judaea 'so that this reputation could be spread wider'. The

suggestion hadn't been meant well, and Jesus had known it, declining to visit Jerusalem for the festival with his brothers.

James began the conversation.

"We had heard of your return from Jerusalem."

Simon nodded without comment. James hesitated.

"We've also heard of the death of our brother."

Again, Simon nodded. James paused.

"We heard also, that he was laid to rest in the tomb of an influential man."

"Joseph of Arimathea."

"I had no idea that our brother was known to him."

"Jesus was known to a great many people, James - Joseph was one of them."

James nodded.

"I see - "

There was an awkward silence. Simon broke it.

"If you want to know the details of Jesus' death, John and your mother were at the execution!"

James flinched a little. He murmured.

"A sordid way to die - crucifixion - a sordid death."

"That's one way of describing it I suppose."

James eyed him warily.

"Our mother hasn't returned to Nazareth, we've heard she is staying with her sister."

Simon was short.

"She prefers Capernaum to the jeering of her neighbours in Nazareth!"

Judah intervened for the first time.

"She can be assured that none of our neighbours have troubled us - they've kept their distance."

"Of that I'm quite certain!"

There was another prolonged pause. James seemed uneasy.

“You are no doubt aware of the rumours sweeping the countryside?”

“Rumours?”

Judah chimed in again.

“Stories that Jesus has appeared to certain people - they swear they are true!”

“I’ve heard something of it.”

James asked directly.

“I ask you straight, Simon - do you believe it?”

Simon stared at him and then nodded.

“I believe it!”

Judah insisted.

“If he’s dead, how can he have appeared to others?”

Simon leaned back.

“You Sadducees don’t believe in the resurrection, do you?”

Judah didn’t answer, James stared at the big fisherman.

“Are you suggesting that Jesus died, but is now alive again?”

“Why don’t you use the word you’re both trying to avoid - resurrected!?”

“Very well - resurrected. Has he come back from the dead, Simon?”

Simon held the eyes of Jesus’ brother.

“Yes, he has - he’s been seen by women in our company, by two men who recognised him - and, by myself and the other ten who were closest to him - does that answer your question, James?”

James leaned back and closed his eyes. His breath was measured enough to be heard.

“Yes, that does answer my question - and now you can add another witness - he’s been seen by me!”

Simon maintained his stare.

“Jesus appeared to you - why to you?”

“Perhaps, because we’re brothers.”

Simon turned to Judah.

“Did he appear to you as well - and to Joseph and Joses?”

Judah shook his head.

Simon leaned back.

“That would seem to eliminate the reason of being his brother!”

James looked unhappy.

“He told me that he would have need of me - and that I was to come to you and tell you that when you return to Jerusalem, I’m to follow.”

Simon was short.

“I’ve no plans to go back to Jerusalem.”

James held his gaze.

“And, I had no plans to visit you, Simon!”

There was another silence which Simon broke.

“You’re quite certain it was Jesus - you weren’t dreaming?”

“I was awake - late in the evening - looking at the accounts for the business - which is in a deplorable state! I looked up, suddenly aware that someone was with me in the room - and there was Jesus standing close by and smiling at me. I confess, I thought he was a spirit, but - but, he touched me - he even embraced me, and I can testify to the fact that he was flesh and blood.”

“Which I dispute, for he’s able to pass through a solid door - but go on!”

“I stammered out a greeting, and he sat in the chair opposite me. He told me to come to you, for I’m to go with you to Jerusalem where there’s work for me to do. He didn’t define what I was to do, saying that I would learn later.”

Simon turned to Judah.

“Why are you here, Judah - I’ve never known you to agree with your brother on spiritual matters before?”

“Is this a spiritual matter, Simon? I found it hard to believe James when he told me, and I had the same reaction as yourself - he was dreaming. In fact, I still believe he was dreaming. To answer your question, I came with him, so that together, we can plead with our mother to return to Nazareth with us.”

“I wish you luck!”

There was little more to be gained from the strained interview with the big fisherman. James was all too aware that Simon didn't like him, but at least, he had listened and hadn't ridiculed him for the wild story that he had been visited by a man they both knew to have died. James was comforted by the fact that he was not alone in this, and that Jesus had appeared to others - and that Simon was prepared to believe that he had risen from the dead. He walked silently the short distance from the house of Simon to that of Zebedee. Judah paced silently beside him. In a strange way, the silence irritated James - Judah was always silent - watching and waiting ready to pounce on any point which could be disputed.

They were totally un-alike - Judah, extravagant and polished - a typical Sadducee, inclined to pompousness and self-assurance that every word he spoke originated at the throne of God, while James was more austere, a disciplinarian who liked to believe that he kept the family together and prosperous in the face of the lack of interest Jesus had always displayed in matters of business. Perhaps, that was the wrong way of describing it, but there was no denying that it was James who concerned himself with unpaid accounts and the efficient running of the carpenter's shop, while Jesus was preoccupied with his own thoughts. James fought a battle with himself, it sounded as if he was complaining - even in his thoughts - and perhaps he was!

When later, they continued their journey back to Nazareth, the silence was maintained. Judah had allowed him to do all the talking after exchanging greetings with their mother.

It hadn't been a private interview, Salome and John being very conspicuous in their determination not to leave Mary alone.

James had broached the subject as delicately as he could.

"We had hoped you would return with us to Nazareth, mother. You can be assured that our neighbours will keep their peace."

Mary smiled slightly.

"As they did when I became pregnant with Jesus at the age of fifteen, I suppose. I remember their peace - nothing ever said to my face, but always behind the hands - and then the coarse jokes and ribald comments in the tavern! Comments such as: Joseph testing the waters before plunging in - and many others less capable of being repeated!"

Judah had been moved to a scandalised outburst.

"Mother! That was so long ago - it's all forgotten!"

She turned to him and eyed his flushed face.

"Such matters are never forgotten - they are always hidden under the dirty linen to be pulled out and aired at the right time."

James interjected grimly.

"If I hear such talk they'll answer to me!"

Mary sighed and nodded.

"I have no doubt you will try, James - but you won't silence them. Look at what they have to add now! Something like this perhaps: 'You remember the scandal of Mary and her first child? Now, he's been taken by the Romans and executed like a common criminal! I always said nothing good would come of him - parading around the countryside pretending to be a prophet and a healer, while all the time he was plotting against the priests and Rome. Well, he's come to a proper end, just as I said he would!'"

She looked to her two sons in turn - they remained silent.

“I love all my sons - not just one - believe me - but I won’t come back to Nazareth. I have no place there.”

James responded.

“Then, where is your place mother - if not with us?”

John interjected.

“Her place is with me, James - it was as Jesus wanted it. Almost the last thing he said was: ‘Mother this is your son, son this is your mother.’ She remains with me, because Jesus wished it so. Where I go, she will go - and I’ll care for her for the rest of her days!” Mary placed her hand over his, and he looked down at her with obvious love. James’ mouth tightened - Jesus had thought so little of him and his other brothers, that he had entrusted their mother to a cousin! There was no point in argument - time would prove whether the arrangement would hold.

He tried one more time.

“Mother, Jesus has - appeared to me! He told me to go to Jerusalem with Simon, James and John and the others when they go. He told me he has work for me there.”

He stared into the eyes of John, whose gaze didn’t waver. James continued.

“I know you won’t believe me - “

Mary smiled slightly.

“What is there not to believe - that you are to go to Jerusalem - or that Jesus appeared to you? He’s appeared to many - listen to the rumours.”

James gazed into her eyes.

“Has he appeared to you, mother?”

The smile widened and her eyes sparkled.

“That is between him and me!”

On the way back to Nazareth, there was so much that could have been said, but Judah maintained his aloof silence. James glanced at him once or twice, but it was hard to read behind the Sadducee complacency.

The meeting with James made Simon even more restless. He prowled around the house in a black mood, trying to fathom out what James had meant by 'going with them to Jerusalem'. Simon had told the plain truth when he had rejected the idea. The remaining eleven disciples had only just returned safely from the city, which was fraught with danger for them, and he had no intention of returning. It wasn't long after that John and his brother James came to report that Jesus' brothers had visited the house of Zebedee. John repeated the conversation, and their question was the same as Simon's - what had James meant when he had said he was to go with them to Jerusalem?

There were other visitors that same evening - Thomas, the Twin, and Nathaniel and Philip. Once again the story was repeated and once again the reaction was one of dismal fearfulness at the prospect of going back to the city from which they had just escaped. Thomas summed it up in his usual gloomy way.

"We all know we were followed home by Romans - and we know they're still watching us - what do you think they'll do when we start walking back to Jerusalem? I'll tell you, they'll arrest us for sure - and crucify us the same way as they did the Master!"

Mariamne had had enough! She stood at the foot of the table with her hands on her hips and glared at her husband.

"I thought I told you to do something useful! It's a good night - take the boat and do what you're best at doing - and take these pessimists with you - and the boy too!"

Jonah's face brightened, he'd been listening to the conversation from a corner of the room, becoming more and more anxious as the gloom had developed. Simon stared into Mariamne's resolute face and rose hastily. He gestured to the others to follow.

Mariamne's face softened as she watched them flee to the shore of the sea. They were troubled men - out of their depth - and they needed something else to think about.

Simon glanced at the sky and out over the water. He muttered:

"If you ask me, we'll be wasting our time!"

Andrew came running after them. Simon turned to him.

“Did she kick you out too?”

His brother nodded.

“Told me to go fishing.”

Simon muttered.

“What do women know about fishing - we’ll waste our time.”

They pushed the boat out - there was nowhere else to go and nothing else to do.

Simon’s pessimism was justified - everything was wrong, the light wind, the still water, the oppressive atmosphere. They were forced to row the boat out on to the sea, rather than use the fitful wind to fill the sail. They fished all night and caught nothing.

Towards morning, they rowed the boat inshore. A man was standing on the beach looking out towards them. They were some way south of the town - between Capernaum and Magdala. The man called out to them across the water.

“Friends - haven’t you caught anything?”

They looked at each other, they didn’t know him, he was a stranger.

Simon called back.

“We caught nothing!”

The man nodded, as they drifted closer to the shore.

“Shoot the net out to starboard and you’ll make a catch.”

Simon glanced at the others, he could see nothing and neither could they, but at a certain angle of the light, it was sometimes possible to see a shoal of fish from the shore

Simon shrugged.

“What have we got to lose?”

They threw out the net to the starboard side, and almost immediately, the boat started to tilt to that side. Andrew yelled.

“Pull it in before we roll the boat!”

The eight of them tried to haul the net on board. Simon roared.

“The net will break!”

He threw off his fisherman’s coat, which was drenched and restricting his movements, and worked naked. The others did the same. John cried out to Simon. “It’s the Lord!”

Simon stared at him wide-eyed and then back to the man on the shore. He wrapped his coat around him and plunged into the sea, wading towards the shore. The rest of them gave up trying to haul in the net, instead, rowing the ship towards the beach. They were only out about a hundred yards. Simon emerged from the water and threw himself at Jesus feet. Jesus pulled him up and smiled at him. He had lit a charcoal fire, and there were already some fish laid on it. He said to Simon.

“Bring some of your catch - and come and have breakfast.”

Simon ran back to the boat and helped the others to beach it. They dragged the net to the shore, it was full of large fish - they counted one hundred and fifty-three. Despite the size of the catch the net wasn’t damaged.

Jesus waited for them as they joined him at the fire. Jonah shrank into the background, suddenly sure that he wasn’t supposed to be a part of it. Jesus smiled and drew him forward without a word. He took bread and broke it and gave it to them, and then took the fish and distributed it in the same way. They ate without conversation, but after breakfast, Jesus said to Simon.

“Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me more than anything else?”

Simon looked startled and little self-conscious. He murmured.

“Yes, Lord - you know that I love you.”

Jesus nodded.

“Then, feed my lambs.”

There was a short silence, then Jesus said to Simon.

“Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?”

Simon jerked to attention, and stared Jesus straight in the eye. He spoke louder this

time.

“Yes, Lord - you know that I love you!”

Again, Jesus nodded quietly, but he leaned forward.

“Then, tend my sheep.”

Again, there was a shuffling silence, the other disciples looked at each other. Jesus stared at Simon hard.

“Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?”

Simon turned brick red, he blinked his eyes to get rid of the tears, he almost shouted.

“Lord, you know everything; you know I love you!!”

Jesus nodded again, still staring into Simon’s eyes.

“Feed my sheep.”

He paused before going on.

“I tell you this plainly: when you were young you fastened your belt around you and walked where you chose to go; but when you’re old you’ll stretch out your arms, and a stranger will bind you fast, and carry you where you’ve no wish to go.”

Simon stared at him without comprehension. Jesus smiled a little and added.

“Follow me!”

Simon looked around and saw John, the disciple Jesus loved, and the one who had leaned back on his breast to whisper the question: ‘Lord, who is it that will betray you?’.

Simon asked.

“Lord, what will happen to him?”

Jesus looked at him sharply.

“If it’s my will that he waits until I come, what has it to do with you?”

Follow me!”

This answer circulated amongst the followers, who took it to mean that

John wouldn’t die. Jesus didn’t say that, he only said: ‘If it is my will that he waits until I come, what has it to do with you?’

The disciples stayed in Galilee for some weeks, before returning to Jerusalem. Those who had fled Jerusalem with Simon, now returned with Simon and the others, and this time, Mariamne couldn't be persuaded to remain behind.

"You are my husband, Simon - my place is with you - and I sense we won't return to Galilee for a long time. Your days as a fisherman are over, as they are for James, John and the others."

The other James, the brother of Jesus, and surprisingly, Judah the Sadducee accompanied them.

Marcellus and his Decade watched them and followed, but they did nothing to impede them - and so, they returned to Jerusalem, to the home of Mary of Cyrene.

Simon's confidence had grown over the forty days since the death and resurrection of Jesus, who had appeared to the Eleven frequently, reinforcing the doctrine they had been taught in earlier days. Sometimes he appeared to Simon-Peter alone and patiently answered his questions. Constantly, he emphasised one point.

"You must wait here in Jerusalem, for the fulfillment of the promise made by my Father, about which I've told you. John, as you know, baptised with water, but you'll be baptised with the Holy Spirit - and it'll happen within the next few days."

One morning, they met him on the Mount of Olives - just the Eleven - no others with them. Someone asked the question:

"Lord, is this the time when you are to set up again the kingdom of Israel?"

He looked at them intently, his face very solemn.

"It isn't for you to know about dates and times, which are only set within the Father's control. But you'll receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you'll bear witness for me in Jerusalem, and all over Judaea and Samaria, and away to the ends of the earth. The Father has given me full authority in heaven and on earth. I tell you to go forth and make all nations my disciples; baptise men everywhere in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to follow all that I've

commanded you. You can be confident of this: - I am with you always, to the end of time!

Faith will bring with it these miracles: believers will cast out devils in my name and speak in strange tongues; if they handle snakes or drink any deadly poison, they'll come to no harm; and the sick upon whom they lay hands will recover."

The Mount was shrouded in mist, which ebbed and flowed around them in damp fingers. Simon shivered, but it wasn't the enveloping cloud. He sensed a finality, something was about to happen.

Jesus lifted his hands over them in a blessing; and in the act of blessing them he parted from them. As they watched dumbly, Jesus lifted gently from the ground, and he drifted upward to be enveloped in the cloud.

They stood spellbound trying to penetrate the mist to see where he was. Quite suddenly, two men stood beside them, they were clad in spotless white robes. One asked:

"Men of Galilee, why do you stand there looking up into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken from you up to heaven, will come in the same way as you've seen him go."

As abruptly as they had come, the two men were gone. Simon turned to the others, he was shaking with tension. His companions looked no better.

He rasped.

"You heard the Lord's instructions, we go to Jerusalem!"

They trudged back down the hill, and as they did so the mist evaporated. Simon looked back at the brow, which had been shrouded only minutes earlier, but there was no sign that anything extraordinary had taken place. When they entered the city they went to a room set aside for them in Mary of Cyrene's house. With them were the group of women who had always followed the Lord, together with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

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The following words are taken from two passages at the end of John's gospel:

John 21:25 and John 20:30.

'There is much else that Jesus did. If it were all to be recorded in detail, I suppose the whole world could not hold the books that would be written. There were indeed many other signs that Jesus performed in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.'