

# **Bethany**

## **The story of**

# **Theophilus**

**Book 16**

**Max Seltmann**

# Recommended chronological reading list:

(with regard to Jesus' life in flesh and Spirit, up to the time of the book of Revelation. All books are written by **Max Seltmann**, unless otherwise indicated. The book marked with **bold**, is the book currently opened.)

1. Childhood years of Jesus (Jakob Lorber)
2. Book 1 – John the Baptist
3. Book 2 – John the Apostle in his youth with Jesus (Love overcomes Part 1)
4. Book 3 – Jesus' Life
5. Book 4 – Jesus' Life
6. Book 5 – Jesus' Life
7. Book 6 – Jesus' Life
8. Book 7 – Jesus' Life
9. Book 8 – Jesus' Life
10. Book 9 – Jesus prepares for His ministry Part 1
11. Book 10 – Jesus prepares for His ministry Part 2
12. Great Gospel of John, Volumes 1 – 10 (Jakob Lorber)
13. Great Gospel of John, Volume 11 (Leopoldt Engel)
14. Book 11 - Good Friday
15. Book 12 - Judas Iscariot in the beyond
16. Book 13 - On the road to Emmaus
17. Book 14 - The Risen One!
18. Book 15 - The New Life in man
- 19. Book 16 – At Bethany – story of Theophilus**
20. Book 17 - Ascension
21. Book 18 - Pentecost!
22. Book 19 - Among the first Christians
23. Book 20 - Divine guidance of the first Christians
24. Book 21 - The chamberlain from the Orient
25. Book 22 - The God-spark and Saul's conversion
26. Book 23 - Awakening the Divine life
27. Book 24 - Experiences with Jacob, Part 1
28. Book 25 - Experiences with Jacob, Part 2
29. Book 26 - Experiences with Jacob, Part 3
30. Book 27 - Experiences with Jacob, Part 4
31. Book 28 - Naeme
32. Book 29 - John the Apostle as a guide (Love overcomes Part 2)
33. Book 30 - John the Apostle as a guide (Love overcomes Part 3)

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# 1. In the house of a Templar - Ruben's dream

A young priest was staggering through the streets of Jerusalem; he was still under the horror of what had happened on Golgotha, and the trembling of the earth as well as the unusual darkness caused a fear in him that almost increased to the fear of death: "Oh Jesus, You have suffered! But today You have shown me my heavy guilt. If only I could make good what I did to You in my inexperience! Oh Jehovah, what if we have now judged an innocent man? How will You punish us!"

Now he came to his parent's house; at his knock his sister opened, looked him in the face, and asked, startled: "Where have you come from, Ruben? Mother is full of anxiety and worry about you and has almost fallen ill!"

"Oh leave me alone, I am like tortured, I need to be alone!"

"But Ruben, mother wants you so much!" - objected Ruth.

"Tomorrow, sister, today I cannot! For I have experienced shocking things at the death of an innocent man! Give my love to mother; good night!"

Now he was alone! Alone with himself and his conscience! Again and again the words of Jesus penetrated tormentingly into his interior: "Father, forgive them! For they know not what they do!" "And this man have we judged? Oh God, oh Jehovah! Why have we been so blind? Why did we believe everything the high priest said?"

Long and anxious hours he spent in this agonized and torn state; always he saw the gaze of Jesus fixed upon him with the silent question: "What did I do to you, that you should rejoice in My pains? "Oh Jesus, forgive me, I did not want to know You!" - he asked aloud - "but now it is too late!"

The old father, however, did not find any rest that night either, for his wife lay as if in a fever, as her son's inner conflict unconsciously settled on her soul. At last the morning dawned, and she immediately called for Ruben.

"Calm yourself, mother, Ruben is still asleep" - said Ruth - "your fear was groundless; soon he will come to you."

Ruth was now preparing the morning meal, when Ruben came into the kitchen and said: "Sister, I must leave you! I feel like Cain and must flee restlessly from myself, for yesterday I helped to murder Jesus! But he was the Son of God!"

"Ruben" - Ruth answered - "we women were never allowed to say anything about the Nazarene you hated so much; and now you have finally reached your goal, are you accusing yourself? Do you know how hard Mother suffered for your sake? Mother deeply revered the Nazarene, and even yesterday said: 'He will crush all His enemies and scatter them like chaff to the winds!' We don't know about Him, since we kept ourselves locked up; but Mother feared so much for you. Now you want to leave us? This would be mother's death!"

"Dear Ruth" - said Ruben - "if you could put yourself in my place, you would say: Yes, flee! Flee from yourself, for you have sinned against the Holy One of God! And this sin demands atonement."

"This I do not understand!" - Ruth replied - "you would have helped to murder Jesus? How can you accuse yourself of that? I think that would surely be for the high priest to determine!"

"Sister, you can only know about the Nazarene by what father and I discussed here in the house; but it was all quite different! In order to understand me, I will open my heart to you, and you may look into it and see how it looks. So: Jesus was condemned! Everyone in the temple rejoiced! I did not like the way they treated the condemned man, but what did I want to change? I followed the procession and saw with cold eyes the horror that many experienced because their friend and helper was taken from them. The wailing of the women did not touch my heart, because it was still dead in me! Finally Golgotha was reached and the crucifixion began. Here I was eager to see how Jesus would behave. But then I experienced something that I had not thought possible: I saw the cross lying on the ground and saw Jesus and trembled at that moment! I saw the crucifixion and wanted to object, but I was paralyzed. When the servants finally raised the cross with much effort, Jesus must have been unconscious, because it took quite a while for His chest to rise and fall again; then He cried out loudly: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!' Then, sister, a bandage fell from my eyes, and my guilt was revealed to me! For a guilty person dies differently. Only one who struggles with people for love and understanding, can die like that! I wanted to sneak away ashamed, but the Roman soldiers would not let anyone go. With a bleeding heart, I had to watch an innocent one suffer horribly just because we thought He was dangerous to the temple! You cannot imagine the fear of those who, out of curiosity, had rushed out to the place of the skulls, when now the earth shook, when it became dark and the three crosses towered heavily in accusation! For it was not dark around the crosses. Can you now understand my brokenness and my fear, how Jehovah will yet judge us?"

"Brother, it is distressing what you have told me!" said Ruth. "But will you not speak to Father? I can only tell you that if the Nazarene has forgiven all, as you told me, He would have forgiven you too! But if you still feel pain and remorse within you, go to the high priest, so that he may give you rest and peace again! But I would ask you to speak first to your father, but keep silent before your mother. And when you leave, remember the obedience you owe to God and to your parents as a servant of Jehovah. And now come, Ruben! Mother will not be quiet until she has spoken to you."

They both entered the bedchamber, and the mother spoke joyfully: "Oh Jehovah! Praise and thanks to You! My son is alive and well! Now I, too, will be more joyful."

Ruben asked lovingly, "Mother, why do you worry for my sake? Are not all our lives in the hand of Jehovah?"

"Yes, my son!" - answered the mother - "but if you had the faith that Jehovah demands, you would have stayed away yesterday, when they captured the Holy One of Jehovah! Now I ask you, Ruben: where is the Holy One of God? And you, have you been spared from His power and strength? Speak! My heart cannot be at rest unless I know the full truth."

"Mother, compose yourself!" - said Ruben earnestly - "Jesus is dead! Has been crucified by the temple. But father and I are just as guilty as the other Templars! Only today I know: he was the Son of God! Innocently he had to suffer this death! Therefore, there is no other verdict left for me: I am partly guilty of His death! I don't know what Father thinks about it, because I haven't seen him since yesterday."

But the door to the adjoining room was open, and the father had heard every word; therefore he now stood among his own and asked: "Of what do you accuse yourself, Ruben? And also me? Here at the bed of your sick mother? Are you even aware of all you have said in your excitement? Not a word escaped me."

"Father," said Ruben, "then I need not repeat what I accuse myself of! If you had experienced what I had to experience yesterday on Golgotha, you would perhaps understand me better; but you are drunk with joy that you have succeeded in destroying this holy One of God! That I have agreed with the great council, I deeply repent and openly emphasize that I will repent until Jehovah makes my heart calm again! Therefore I can no longer remain in the house, no longer in Jerusalem; for the cross of Golgotha is my judge!"

"Ruben!" - soothed the father - "the trembling of the earth and the darkness must have caused this fear and these thoughts to arise in you. Let the Sabbath and post-Sabbath pass, and then you will rejoice as we do that the danger of the Nazarene's poisoning of our sacred teachings has at last come to an end."

"Father!" - replied Ruben excitedly - "you blaspheme God and dishonor the innocent! A man who still has thoughts of pardon for his tormentors and marauders in the most difficult and painful hour of his life, and clothes them in words of noblest intercession, cannot be an enemy of our doctrine of God! But you do not want to see your error; that is why you lay all the blame on this Divine Tolerator! Father, it is always the same thing you accuse Him of! And I, blinded one - I believed you and heartily agreed with your judgment, assuming to do a good service to Jehovah and the people."

"Ruben! You are my son! And I as your father remind you of your duty as a son! You must refrain from any reproach! What the temple has decided, and what we have approved, is right! No-one can stand up and say that we have acted wrongly. Where was Jesus' power and glory? Where were all His friends? Destroyed into nothing! For still the God of our fathers lives, and has given to us, His servants, the office of avenging."

"Father!" - exclaimed Ruben - "it is of no use that we should talk further, for you are all on the side of the temple! But I separate myself from you and will look to others for comfort, forgiveness, and peace! I have looked into the eyes of the dying Jesus and still feel His convicting gaze! And I feel as if more salvation emanates from His gaze and from His eyes than from the whole temple and its servants."

"You stay!" - said Enos sternly - "and do not leave the house! You too are influenced by the Nazarene; you are a nuisance to me! And therefore let us fast today, lest we heap more guilt upon us. You Ruth, stay with your mother, but I will go to the temple."

"Yes, just go to your temple" - said the mother - "what do you ask of yours! To you the temple is everything, but we are nothing to you. You could die, then you will still say: In the temple one is closest to God! With Ruben I can finally speak openly!"

"So I suppose you too are filled with the teaching of the Nazarene?" - replied Enos crossly - "but just wait, soon you will feel the strong fist of the temple! Do not count on consideration, because you are my wife and have borne me children. The only thing missing is that also you, Ruth, say: 'I confess to the Nazarene!'"

Ruth spoke softly: "Father, from your words sound only hate, and in all the last months we have heard nothing else from you. If you had seen Ruben last night, you would have given your words a different expression, for Ruben must have experienced something that

is still incomprehensible to all of us. I cannot confess to the Nazarene, because I have not yet met Him, thanks to your vigilance. But when I consider the hatred that lives in all the servants of Jehovah, then, Father, I am afraid of you! But just go quietly to the temple; I and Ruben will take care of mother."

Annoyed, the old priest, without having taken a meal, left the house.

Ruben was bitter with his father and said resentfully: "It's always the same! That is why I cannot stay here with you. But today father will not return so soon, and so we still remain together in love."

The sister admonished him: "Ruben, now don't be so bitter, for it must be a favorable sign for you that you still feel the gaze of the Crucified. Mother and I often talked about Jesus, we could not believe everything we heard about Him from others, but one thing must be true: He never said anything unkind about a person. Therefore, I think, you don't have to reproach yourself, He will have forgiven you too, when He exclaimed on the cross, as you said: "Father, forgive them!" Yesterday, when the maid told us that Jesus had been brought before the high council in prison, we immediately sent her away to learn more; she brought us the message: "He will be crucified!"

Ruben lamented; "Mother, a sorrow lives within me such as I have never felt before. What use is your love to me, since I cannot forgive myself! How often I would have had the opportunity to meet with the Nazarene, but I did not want to, I avoided Him. My instilled hatred made me not take the opportunity, but now it is too late!"

The Mother asked: "Ruben, remember that Jesus' mission cannot be over yet! Even if He is no longer alive, He had made provision and chosen disciples. These disciples will certainly not remain silent about everything. In general, let us wait and see what the whole of Israel thinks of the death of Jesus, for He was the friend and benefactor of all."

Ruben smiled: "Mother, your words are like a balm on my sore heart! You must have been one of those who loved Jesus so much, and you saw in Him the Messiah?"

"Yes, my son" - the mother spoke openly - "I love Him even now, and His death cannot extinguish this love. I have always hoped that I could still convince you of His truly Divine mission! But now He has become a victim of His enemies."

"But you didn't want to convince me, mother" - Ruth said. "True, you sometimes spoke very sweetly and well of Jesus, but of a confessor of Him and His teaching you did not let me notice anything."

The mother sighed: "Child, I had my reasons, fearing father and Ruben. I hoped for a favorable coincidence, but now Jesus is dead, and let us wait and see what may continue to happen."

Late in the evening the father returned home from the temple, but his cold, triumphant look hurt everyone, so they withdrew early.

Ruben underwent a tremendous transformation that night. After struggling with himself for hours, he did not fall asleep until morning, and upon awakening, everything around him seemed so much brighter. "Oh God!" - he asked - "what was I experiencing this night? Where was I in my dreams?"

At the morning meal, without the old father, Ruben told vividly: "For a long time I longed in vain for sleep and had to think again and again about my whole situation; then I suddenly felt the gaze of the Nazarene directed at me again. His eyes looked so mild, but it was as if the silent expression of pain around His mouth wanted to say: "Haven't I suffered enough for you? Then my whole self broke down painfully, and I cried out pleadingly: 'Jesus, can You really forgive me? For also on my hands is Your blood!'

Then it was as if I heard again: 'Father, forgive him, he did not know what he was doing!' Finally, tears of salvation came to me and I sobbed: 'Oh Jesus, if You are still real and can forgive me, I will turn to Your disciples and learn from them how I can make up for my fault.' Then a fragrance went through my room, and now all my pain of soul was breathed away! I feasted on this wondrous fragrance and fell asleep.

And now listen to what I dreamed: I am led by two boys to a high mountain; the sun shines around the whole area, and I see how countless crowds of light-clad beings approach us; I was about to ask the boys, when one of them puts his small hand on my mouth and points with the other to all the crowds that are making a pilgrimage up to us. Where do they all want to go, I think silently, they hardly have room up here?

The boys lead me now to another side of the mountain, and also from there innumerable ones moved upwards, towards us - when the first ones are already quite close to us, suddenly all stand still, turn and look down to the lowland, and only now I also look at the beautiful plain below us!

Then a bright lightning flashes through the whole universe, light-figures come out of the clouds and gather on the earth, at the foot of our high mountain, and suddenly Jesus stands in their midst and calls into the soundless crowd: 'Today your fervent longing is fulfilled! At last the time has come when your love is no longer bound. All of you have seen the empty tomb, have convinced yourselves that death and the night of the grave have no part in Me! What seemed incomprehensible to you all, has been fulfilled: I have overcome death! Overcome for all who are of good and willing heart! As I will now fill brothers in earthly life with this victorious Spirit, so I will fill you with power and wisdom from My Eternal Love! So now continue My work! The whole universe is open to you! There is now no more obstacle; for My Spirit is the victor-Spirit, is the Life, which again and again creates new life! What I gave to the earth as property, you may carry into all worlds, into all suns. Just as a sun now gives you a wonderfully glorious light, so you become light-givers to many suns! You have experienced Love's greatest miracle on this poor earth! Through Me all the poor is now enabled to make the most glorious life their own! So tell everyone about Me and let yourselves be driven by the Spirit that drove Me and complete what I began! My blessing and My love be your portion!'

All had disappeared, only the two boys were still with me; the mountain did not seem so high anymore, and when I looked around, I was on the Mount of Olives. Then the one boy says: 'Marvel at nothing! What you have just seen was a grace granted only to a few! Since you asked for forgiveness and want to make amends, the Lord gave you the proof of His love and the answer that He accepts your love! That we are no longer allowed to show you the supreme is up to you, since your soul is still too firmly connected with the earthly and material. But this grace is not over yet! Therefore come, you too may take a look into the grave, and shall record in the ground of your soul the mightiest of all miracles: He - has conquered death!'

Quickly we have arrived; thousands pass by and look into the tomb; and so I have leisure to look at all these figures; all peoples and tribes must have gathered here, but a deep



silence lies over all of them. Two splendid figures in radiant robes keep everyone in order with their gaze; but from the tomb a bright light shines and softly illuminates the entire environment.

Now also I look reverently into the cave, a fragrance wafts towards us, and I see two young men greeting us friendly. We all gather around the grave; then an angel speaks: 'Listen and hear the word which Eternal Love puts into my heart for you: Love for you and all people was the driving force for this mighty sacrifice! What you did not want to believe, has become reality: The Lord lives and will live forever! And we all may live with Him! But there are conditions to this life, and these are: Live as the Lord lived and follow His teachings in the right spirit of true humility and devotion! Then you will all realize that He is the Lord, and you are called to be His children and bearers of His Spirit! And may the peace of the Lord be yours!'

The two boys lead me a little further along the way, and when we leave, one of them says: 'If you want to make this experience your own, then don't think so much about yourself anymore - but live for Jesus! He also lives for you and created means for your salvation! So adopt these means and live only for Jesus! Then He will soon come out of your grave, in which you laid Him - in you! God's blessing with you!'

I was alone and wanted to hurry to our house, still thinking about all that I had experienced and did not notice how two dark men followed me. When they caught up with me, one of them asked: 'Where did you come from, since you look so happy?' I answered: 'From the tomb of Jesus, which is empty, but guarded by angels.' Then he struck me down and shouted: 'You liar, do you want to tell me fairy tales?' Pleading, I cried out in my distress: 'Oh Jesus help me!' At that moment my little boy was already standing by me, and from his firm, very serious gaze, they both fled! I woke up and still regret that it was only a dream!"

"My son" - said the mother happily - "is not the dream also a gift from heaven? And is it not written that the Lord can also reveal himself through dreams? You have given me much with this, so I thank you and the eternal God for everything you have just heard."

But the father had also heard every word, stepped through the ajar door and spoke excitedly: "You have also given me enough and it is time that I bring you to your senses! Here only one rules and this is I! And I decide about your doing and thinking. Praise be to God that this Nazarene is no longer alive and can do no more harm! You, Ruben, and I, we will go to the temple at once; the high priest will be surprised to meet an apostate in you."

"Father, I go with you" - Ruben spoke earnestly - "to tell you all how deluded and misguided you are! What more can the temple do to me? Has it not poisoned my soul with eternal hatred, threatened me constantly if I did not submit in blind obedience, while the glorious and exalted One brought us a new doctrine that wanted to give us all unspeakable things. You think you have killed Jesus! But He lives and will always live!"

"Silence, you honorless one" - Enos screamed - "I know now: you are all unfaithful and traitors to the Temple! I know but one goal, and that is to kick the Nazarene's poison seed dead, dead forever!"

"Well, Father, do according to your will" - said the son - "but I tell you now in this morning hour, Jesus is already the Victor! For His tomb is empty!"

"Silence!" - thundered the old man again - "my patience is at an end!"

Anxiously, the mother and Ruth were also silent, for they had never seen the father so angry. Then Ruben said - "We will not fear, but hope in the eternal God! I will get ready and go with you to the temple."

## 2. The tomb is empty!

There was great excitement in Jerusalem. The streets were filled with people rushing to the temple; the news spread like wildfire: the tomb of the Savior Jesus is empty!

Father and son hurried silently to the temple, but the old Enos became sultry with these talks and was glad when the gates to the temple opened; but even here there was great unrest, the Templars were waiting for the high priest, who had locked himself in with some elders, because the news: "The tomb is empty" had destroyed all their calculations and assumptions.

Ruben did not join in their conversation, for in his heart was germinating the seed of something nobler; and as the excitement increased, he unobtrusively left the temple and went to the inn on the Mount of Olives, which belonged to Lazarus. The sun was already high in the sky; there were many guests in the large guest-room, but when he entered, all conversation fell silent. He was surprised that they did not offer him the usual honor as a priest.

The innkeeper asked the new guest what he wanted. Ruben, however, recollected himself and said: "Today I do not come as a priest, but I am looking for some friends of Jesus. They could always be met here, but today I see none."

The innkeeper answered: "Dear friend, you must not come here in priestly dress! For Jesus' friends know how much you despise and persecute them! But if I can give you information, I am gladly at your service."

Disappointed, Ruben said: "Yes, it is better that I go again; because nobody believes me that I am no longer a Templar."

The innkeeper looked at him compassionately and said: "Friend, if you have sorrow and grief in you and know not where to go, seek out Lazarus in Bethany! He would be the right comforter for you; there you will certainly not experience disappointment."

New guests came in at the door; one of them called out loudly so that all could hear: "Friends and all of you, hear what I am telling you: The Savior and miracle-man Jesus has risen from the dead!"

The innkeeper, who was standing nearby with Ruben, asked in amazement: "Joseph, what are you talking about here? The Master is alive and has not remained in death?" But Joseph, beaming, answered: "Did you expect anything else from Jesus, dear friend? Didn't He say often enough, 'He who believes in Me will receive eternal life through Me!' Since He Himself is the life and the truth!"

The host had to confess: "My friend and brother in the Lord! Certainly these are words of the Master! But I took these words purely spiritually and applied them to the life beyond. For often we had to hear that He Himself would also suffer death!"

Joseph said, "You are right, brother! But He is the Lord and knew for sure what He said. If He had remained in death, His doctrine of eternal life would soon, very soon, have been forgotten."

Now the guests crowded to the speakers and listened eagerly to their words; then one spoke: "What the good friend wants to tell, belongs to all of us! Therefore I ask you, give

us more exact information about what you have heard! For it is about Jesus who has been taken from us."

"Calm yourselves, dear friends, all shall be told to you" - Joseph said. "As almost all of you know, I am friends with Mary, the mother of our Lord and Master; I was filled with great sorrow at the cruel fate which had befallen her. So I was also near the tomb today, when two women came to meet me and told me that the tomb was guarded only by two shining young men, who gave us the order to announce to everyone that the Lord had risen! Now I wanted to convince myself of the correctness of these statements and went directly to the tomb; but soldiers had cordoned off everything. I gave the commander a good word and was allowed to look inside, and really, the tomb was empty! Only cloths and bandages were lying there, but I saw nothing of the young men. I hurried here to find His disciples; for I must confess: I believe the women that the Lord lives!"

Ruben listened to everything calmly, but suddenly an urge arose in him, he had to speak: "Friends! Do not be offended by my dress or by the fact that I am a priest; I was driven here because in my inner distress I was looking for someone who could understand me. Since the crucifixion I have been fighting a terrible inner battle, because I had to realize: We have judged an innocent man! With my father I met with incomprehension, yes, I had to bear his contempt! In my inner struggle with myself, I called upon the Lord and God Jehovah for help and asked the Savior Jesus for forgiveness. He was merciful to me, and this night, in a dream, I was allowed to see and hear the Master alive among thousands of angels. Then I was allowed to look into the empty tomb, and two young men announced with shining eyes: 'The Lord is risen!' Friends, I am happy about this message! I don't need to fear Jesus anymore, He is alive!"

Joseph now said in amazement: "You are Ruben, son of Enos! We know you both, you are enemies of the Lord and Master! But if your statement is true, then become our friend! But then you will have to separate yourself from the temple and from your father's house. Only he can become His disciple who has the sincere will to follow Him! Your guilt, which is pressing you, will be forgiven by all those who, in the Spirit of the Master, are committed to His holy cause! Therefore, first put everything in order and then come back. It is enough that the Lord was betrayed by one who professed to be one of His disciples. I do not want to see a second traitor in our midst."

Ruben confessed: "You are right that you do not believe my words without further ado! Therefore I will go and act according to your advice." Ruben left. It was becoming afternoon; the streets had emptied and he was glad to finally be home.

The sister welcomed him saying: "Father was here looking for you! When we told him you were not back yet, he left in a state of excitement; he threatened to have you taken prisoner because you were a traitor!"

"Ruth, do I look like a traitor?" - asked Ruben gently - "Today, when I am about to start a whole new life, father wants to force me to continue living the old life? No! Come what may, no-one will see me in the temple! Don't ask anything useless, I am glad not to feel this great guilt weighing on my conscience anymore. Give me something to eat, I am hungry for food - and for love."

While Ruth prepared the meal, Ruben was able to tell his mother all his impressions of the temple and the inn. "Did you also meet acquaintances at the inn?" - the mother asked anxiously. "That you have made a gross mistake you will not want to see, but how can you openly advertise the Savior in priestly garb, when you know that the henchmen of the temple overhear everything? Had you been disguised, it would have been better for you."

Ruben asked: "Mother, don't worry about anything! Tomorrow morning I will seek out the owner of Bethany; there I will enjoy protection until I have detached myself from the temple. Now that I have this fixed destination, I worry no more, for Jesus has given me proof of His love!"

The knocker sounded. "Father is coming," - Ruth exclaimed, hurrying to open. "Is Ruben here?" - asked old Enos. Ruth answered in the affirmative. "It is good", said Enos; then she noticed that the father was not alone, two more priests entered the house. In the apartment where the mother was with Ruben, Enos now entered with them: "There sits the traitor! Ask him yourself, he was my son for the longest time!"

"Father!" - Ruben exclaimed - "with these words you prove to me anew your blindness and hatred. All the events of that day should have opened your eyes and those of the whole temple! But it seems that they have only made you more bitter and hateful."

"Silence!" - Enos screamed bitterly - "talk to the two commissioners! For I have no more good word for you, you unfaithful one!"

"Ruben" - said now Joab, one of the two priests - "you are accused of no longer representing the interests of the temple and of having joined the confessors of the crucified one. Answer me faithfully and honestly, as befits a servant of Jehovah. But also consider what consequences will befall you if you do not speak according to the truth."

"By what right do you act as a judge between me and my father?" - asked Ruben excitedly - "but if you want to know the truth, it is no longer necessary to ask, for my father knows everything."

Joab continued: "Ruben, not between you and your father, but between the temple and you, are differences of the gravest kind! For you have broken your oath and defiled the house of Jehovah. You also know what consequences await you! We know about your speech in the inn at the Mount of Olives, we also know that you are willing to continue to betray the temple!"

"Joab, you were always one of the most reasonable if someone asked you for advice and help" - Ruben answered - "but you did not want to know anything about the Nazarene - and you went aside, if something should be done against Him! - Unanimously however the last resolution turned out, where the staff over Jesus was broken. You did not think it necessary to ask the absent priests for their opinion; and those invited by the high priest were outspoken opponents of the Nazarene. I, too, was one of them; but when I wanted to gloat over the pain of the hated one, I experienced a turnaround in my feelings! For it became clear to me that it was more than an error, that it was murder, which we committed against the one condemned to death! Full of pain and remorse that I had to count myself among His murderers, I spent a terrible night! But His convicting and also forgiving look overwhelmed me in such a way that I, like once Jacob, had to struggle in fervent prayer for redemption and clarity! And in this struggle with me and in me, it fell like scales from my eyes! And many things became clear to me, which I had never thought about before. In the following night, I experienced that Jesus of Nazareth was no longer in the grave, but alive and appeared to countless angelic beings and also spoke to them. May it have been only a dream! But when in the inn, to which I was drawn by force, the news was revealed: Jesus lives! - then, dear Joab, the last fetter that still bound me to the temple, fell! And tomorrow I would certainly have broken away from the temple."

"Ruben, you may be right when you speak of yourself" - Joab answered him - "but you do not belong to yourself, but to the temple! What the council decided and carried out, must

be free from all criticism. If you had kept silent before everyone, and if you had waited a while longer, you too would have been at peace! But you openly sided with our enemies; and in so doing, you made yourself liable to punishment! For your oath still bound you, and you are still a priest, and so you must bear the consequences!"

"Your words sound as if you were well-disposed toward me" - Ruben replied - "but I also feel your hatred, which you transfer to all who stand by the Nazarene! So let it be said to you and to everyone: The temple has killed in me everything that ever connected me with it! My life no longer belongs to me, but to the Risen One, who gave me proofs of His forgiveness and revived in me the resolve to serve only Him and His cause! Your threats no longer frighten me! Because since Jesus lives, I do not need to fear you and the temple."

The other priest, Hosea, was horrified and said: "Ruben, consider your words seriously and weigh them carefully. It could be that your decision will disappoint you bitterly! For mercy and forgiveness from the temple are not to be counted on; you know, it is sharply seized and no-one is spared, who becomes unfaithful to his God and his faith."

Calmly, Ruben replied: "I am not afraid of you! For your God and your faith became the cover of your actions from the deepest hell. You are no longer human, but hateful and bloodthirsty beasts. But Jesus is alive and has become the victor even over death! And also His doctrine, in spite of the temple and its servants, will remain victorious forever!"

"Now you yourselves hear what you would not believe" - said the father; "instead of repenting, he would have us convert! Therefore do your duty, and take no heed! He is no more my son!"

But now the mother came to the men and said firmly: "But he is my son! - and I, his mother, beg you: Leave our house and do not make it a house of lamentation and mourning! I too feel the truth from Ruben's mouth! Therefore, would it not be more correct, if you would subject his words to a just examination? You, Enos, be ashamed to want to drag your son before the forum of the temple court! For, what once is there, remains there!"

But Enos cried out excitedly: "Silence! And take care that you don't get your turn! For now it must be seized sharply!"

Ruben pleaded: "Mother, calm down and be without fear! Jesus lives! And in these two words lies our salvation and help - but also the ruin of the temple! I am going with you! We can go immediately, because I am without worry and I know for sure: He who has helped thousands, will also help me!"

### **3. In the power of the temple**

Ruben stood before the high council, before the high priest - inwardly calm, and at the question of the eloquent priest: "Do you confess yourself guilty of having betrayed the holiest of the temple - and of having confessed the Nazarenes?" He answered: "Guilty? - Yes! - Guilty of having profaned the holiest, I was as long as I professed you and joined in the fanatical hatred of you dissidents! So long I was guilty! But now, when I was allowed to recognize my and your wrong and sinful way, it is to me as if all guilt was washed away! That I praise the goodness and mercy of the Risen Lord, is my sacred duty! For I should feel like a traitor if I had not done so or were pretending to be one of yours!"

"You speak of the "risen one" and surely mean the stolen corpse - it would still have to be investigated to what extent you are also guilty of this robbery" - Joab now spoke cunningly.

But Ruben cried out excitedly: "Another lie! Everything you say must be corroborated with lies! And always you have understood it well to present your lies palatable as truth to others. Has it never occurred to you that in the end everything will be revealed? Look at the curtain! This is the language of God, that everything must be revealed, even if it is hidden in the holiest of holies! Why are your efforts to repair the damage unsuccessful? Because God wants to show us all that in the Son of God, Jesus, His truth and His Holy Word have come alive to us human beings!"

But Joab said angrily, "No more words are needed; your guilt is proven. Only one thing can save you from punishment: If you recant and try with all diligence to make amends for your guilt."

"You speak of my guilt!" - said Ruben - "I have never felt so well in my life since I overcame all the inner struggles and the thoughts of doubt! And why? Because I caught the look that the great Tolerator gave me! And in that look, there was so much love and forgiveness! This is my confession! Of this, I can revoke nothing!"

The high priest now came close to Ruben and said: "Deluded one! Do you really want death and destruction? You know our laws well enough! What you want to know about the "risen one" are fairy tales. What the Nazarene was, is proved: a mortal man, like every other! In order to rise from the dead, he would not have had to be killed first. There at the cross was opportunity to prove us his strength and power! But he himself cried out in despair with pain: "My God! Why have you forsaken me?" See, we are the keepers of Jehovah, and had to soberly examine and oversee these things; therefore hear my admonition: examine yourself earnestly and seriously, and then I will hear you again! But until then, stay in the temple, in safe custody."

"So I am imprisoned and cut off from all the world" - said Ruben. "Well, I cannot defend myself now, but I will pray to God, the Eternal and Glorious, that I may be completely filled with that which lives and moves in God! The truth of God must be revealed one day! Until then, the call is now to persevere!"

He was taken to a safe place, where there was only a table and a bench, as a prisoner. Then he was alone for a long time. In this silence, he prayed fervently: "Great and holy God! Cut off from all the world and from my own, I find myself here and now I want to reflect on all my errors and mistakes! Since I have always had good times so far, it will be difficult for me to endure these days of trial! There I ask you from the deepest foundation of my heart for support and help! As You led Job through suffering, so You also lead me

and prove Yourself to me as the One who can help and save! As You filled Jesus with power, so fill me also, so that I can always praise and glorify You! But hold Your strong hand over my parents and sister - for the sake of Jesus' love! Amen!"



## 4. In doubt and anguish of heart

In the house of Enos, however, sorrow and grief had entered: the son had been living imprisoned in the temple for three weeks, and the mother could not overcome this pain, although Ruth tirelessly tried to comfort her, who in her fever kept calling for her son. Old Enos therefore repeatedly petitioned the high council for his son's release, but his pleas were denied! In this inner discord with the temple, he became insecure, and now the words of his son had an effect: "You are no longer human in your boundless hatred!" He now had to experience in himself how hard and unloving the lords of the temple could be.

Again it was near midnight, the mother called in fever for Ruben, but the cooling hand of Ruth failed. In her anguish, she called the father, who was frightened by the appearance of his wife, who cried out to him: "Go away, you unnatural one! You alone are to blame for all misery and wretchedness! Go only to your temple and rejoice that you can drive innocents to death! But there is still a watchman over Israel! What do you still want here with us? See to it that Ruben returns, or it is finished with me! Then you will not only have your son on your conscience, but me as well!"

"Miriam, calm down! I will try to make up for everything, I will try once again to get Ruben's freedom back" - the old man said, but a tremor came over him, so that Ruth asked anxiously: "Father, do you really believe that everything can still be all right?"

"My Ruth," said the father - "I now believe that I did you wrong! How often have I tried to get him released, even to the high council, but in vain! They told me that Ruben should recant! But this he does not do. I myself can no longer ask, nor can I pray to Jehovah! I lack true faith for that! If you knew the hard doubts I have already fallen into in this trouble! As long as I served the temple and preached God and God's word, this was only a matter of the head based on my ability. I would never have thought it possible that one could get into such distress of heart! But the saddest thing is that I never did anything to earn your love and trust! We are priests! All our ways of acting seemed to be right, and nobody had a right to condemn them! Thus I grew old and remained always the same, and if this Nazarene had not come, all could be well!"

Ruth spoke softly: "Father, we will not save mother and Ruben with the past! If you still carry a spark of love for them in your breast, then hurry, hurry! If mother dies, then, father, you bear the guilt of her death!"

"Stop it, child! I will try everything" - with that, the old Enos hurried into the temple, inwardly and outwardly a broken man.

The high priest was not present, but many others were, and it had been decided once again to guard the Nazarenes with stern eyes, for the voices were multiplying, proclaiming that Jesus was truly alive! Then the old Enos came, stood before the council and asked again sincerely for the release of his son. "Be it but for a few days! My wife will die if I do not bring her son back! Take me as a hostage, keep me in his place, but give my son leave!"

"Is it that bad?" - asked Hosea, who was after all a friend of the house - "or is it only a morbid whim of your wife?"

"See for yourselves!" - said Enos - "but let me see my son once! After a long back and forth, finally it was permitted to the father to visit his son. The friends Joab and Hosea went to Miriam.

Doubts had come into Ruben's mind; his prayers lost strength; the nights became more and more agonizing, and it gnawed in him: Did I do right or not? If I want to benefit Jesus, I need above all my freedom, but how to obtain it? The narrow, dark room almost crushed him, and the boredom made life unbearable for him. He often prayed: "Oh Lord Jesus, if You are alive, why don't You help me? Why do You allow me to sit imprisoned?" But everything in him and around him remained silent! He took no more food, life was nothing to him! In such a gloomy mood, his father came to him.

Ruben asked wearily: "You come to see if I am not yet ready to say yes and amen to everything? Verily, your means are good to soften stones! Oh, to despair it is here!"

"Ruben, hear me" - begged the father - "I come to you today to bring you sad tidings. Your mother is seriously ill and wants you! To save her, it is necessary that you come home, even if only for a few days. I have offered myself as a hostage so that you can leave prison for a few days. There is nothing left in me, because my trust in the temple is almost shaken! Never would I have believed that hard-heartedness could hurt so much! And where I had hoped that the temple would be only a little accommodating to me, I had to learn that the Templars do not know any accommodation at all! To put it in a few words, I have become disgusted with the temple."

"Father!" - Ruben called out - "it is too late for you to get away from the temple, for your whole being is fused with it! Behold, I am now almost as far as the temple will have me! I am at the end of my strength! I can no longer muster the courage to fight for and endure a cause for which I lack the evidence! I certainly cannot forget the look of the dying Jesus! And this is the only thing for which I have proofs! But the others are experiences, which can also be wrong. How I have wrestled, tested and prayed, prayed with a torn and bleeding heart, - but in me and around me it has remained silent! I can't stand it here much longer, and then I would do something completely different out of despair."

"My son," said Enos, "if you tell the high council what you have just told me and consider your experiences as an error, then nothing will stand in the way of your release! And for your mother you would be the saving angel."

"Father, but if my experience was not an error, what then?" - reflected Ruben - "might I ever raise my voice and praise the love and patience of the dying Jesus? As yet I revoke nothing; for as yet, the risen Lord can bring me freedom."

"And your mother?" asked Enos sadly; "I would beg you, make this sacrifice for the sake of your mother and sister!"

"Father, I am suffering for Jesus' sake" - Ruben replied firmly - "and I am still waiting for Him! Even if I could recant and then return to freedom', the struggle within me would not be at rest! But I do not begrudge the temple the triumph of having brought me back to its old ways! For I freeze, if I only think of the temple and of all its servants with their stony hearts! - I would rather make an end."

Suddenly the door was opened and two servants came and told them to come to the high council. "What has happened?" asked Enos of the servants; but they could give no information, and so they went and entered the council chamber. The deputy high priest came to meet them and said: "Ruben! - You are still a priest and servant of the temple, and

through two witnesses we have received knowledge of what you have just revealed to your father, a proven priest and servant of Jehovah! It is a joy to us that you have come again to where we desire to see you! But beware in the future of ever again dwelling among Nazarenes, for then all the severity of the temple would have to befall you. We are still waiting for the two priests who are looking after your mother; if it is urgently desired, then nothing more stands in the way of your going to your parents' house!"

Enos wanted to answer something, but Joab and Hosea came back in a hurry and said: "Highest haste is necessary" - and so father and son were quickly dismissed under the best wishes! Ruben was tired and feeble, old Enos no less; sorrowfully they hurried home, for it was necessary to save the mother. At last, at last home! Ruth led the two to the mother, and their coming worked wonders, for a new life awoke in the mother! As if in a dream, she said: "Now you are back! But black ravens circle around you, which would like to peck out your eyes! But you, Enos, have brought some night owls with you!"

Ruben spoke excitedly: "Father! Since when does mother talk mad?"

"No, this is not talking mad, but I am only telling you what I see around you!" declared the mother.

"Mother, look at us and not what you see around us as an appearance! For I want to see you healthy again and I have come, thanks to the grace of God, to take care of you! Look full of trust to the great God! Then you will be happy and light! But now sleep, while I stay with you!" But the old father saw to it that Ruben regained his strength.

The next day, Joab and Hosea came and were pleased that everything had changed for the better in the house. The father asked: "Tell me, friends, how was it that all at once there was nothing to hinder the release? While I so often took the greatest pains and even made the sacrifice of remaining there as a hostage!"

"Enos" - said Hosea - "when you went to the temple yesterday, you were already being watched, and we knew how things were with you, for your whole demeanor betrayed distress and grief. We agreed among ourselves that something had to be done for you, but the high priest would not hear of it. Since he has been absent for several days, we decided to help you as soon as your son showed the will to repent of his folly! While you were with your son, two priests overheard you; since we heard from them how Ruben is now adjusted, it became clear to us that we achieve more here by mildness than by severity!"

Enos said: "But friends, it is not yet proven that my son will fully turn to the temple again! Now he is not available for anything, since the captivity has exhausted him very much; I myself am also not well, therefore you can expect nothing from us today!"

"Brother Enos!" - said Hosea - "everything passes! These past days also ye shall forget, and shall be the same as before!"

Ruben asked excitedly: "Do you think I could ever forget the sorrow, grief, and inner struggles I have encountered these past weeks? But I assure you of one thing: From now on, I will see everything with different eyes! Never again will I be as tractable as before! Because another, a more powerful one has become active in me and urges me to search and to investigate what was completely strange and unknown to me until now. In age you tower above me twice over; I wish you also had the necessary experience, then I could ask you for enlightenment and for clarity about that which in me longs for light and enlightenment!"

Hosea wanted to pacify: "My Ruben! Do not go astray on paths that you do not have to go! Be content with what the temple and the Scriptures give you, and you will be well. What now presses in you for clarification, will gradually come into balance again; no-one has come yet, who confesses: Since I separated from the temple, I am happier! Therefore take my advice, which springs from affection for you, and remain faithful to the temple and to Jehovah!"

Ruben replied: "I ought to thank you for the fatherly manner you use toward me, but I cannot! For a new thing has come upon me, which I cannot resist. I know that I must not speak of it to you, but you are our friends, so allow me only one question and give me a frank answer: do you believe that Jesus of Nazareth was guilty?"

"Guilty or not!" - said Hosea - "he deserved death, since he separated the people from the temple and made us obsolete with his teaching."

"This answer cannot satisfy me" - replied Ruben - "since it expresses that only for the sake of your interests, Jesus had to die! Could it not be possible that the temple erred and made a wrong judgment? Here lies my doubt! Here I am not convinced of your right! And through my imprisonment, my doubts have only increased! Is Jesus guilty? Then I cannot explain how He could still show love and forgiveness to those who took His life in such a cruel way! But if Jesus is innocent, I do not understand why there was no-one in the temple council who openly stood up for His innocence. Give me light and clarity! Without this, I cannot find any peace!"

"Ruben" - said Hosea - "you ask many questions and worry about nothing. Why did you not vote against it, if you cared so much about the innocence of the Nazarene? What is done is done! And by clarifying whether guilty or not, this crucifixion cannot be undone! This Nazarene us a lot of worries anyway! Therefore, it is incumbent upon us, as the representatives of the House of Jehovah, to stand together earnestly and faithfully and not be troubled by the question: Was the Nazarene guilty or not?"

"Friends, let me be silent!" - said Ruben humbly. "I must see that I alone can cope with myself. God, the Eternal and Holy One, in whom I now fervently believe, alone can help me!" Both priests were glad that Ruben ended the conversation and soon took their leave.

When they had left the house, the father asked sorrowfully: "My son! Do you really want to go back to the temple prison, since you are so openly making yourself a defender of the Nazarene? Be glad that they were so accommodating to you and set you free again; I would not be surprised if they took you back again soon."

"Father" - said Ruben - "for now I am still free and I will be careful not to wait here for those who can only listen! Do you think the priests wanted to know whether the mother or us are better? I rather believe that they only let me go so as not to lose you. I know nothing more about Jesus than what I experienced! But that there must have been more, I heard from the speeches of Hosea, because he spoke of so many sorrows. Father, I will secretly leave the house and go to foreign protection, since I must detach myself from the temple; for between me and the temple stands the Crucified One!"

Enos heard his son's words in silence; - long, long he struggled with his old faith, then he spoke earnestly: "Ruben, my son! Go with God! And I tell you, you stand between me and the temple!"

"Me?" - said Ruben, affected - "why me, my father? Have you not always treated us as strangers - and was not the temple everything to you?"

"Precisely because the temple was everything to me" - replied Enos bitterly - "and I respected family happiness and life as nothing, that is why I must have experienced this gratitude of the Templars when I so often made my request to get you free! If only one of them had said: "Enos vouches for his son with his sentiment" - see, that would have been my thanks! But so only hard-heartedness, unkindness, and hatred were their thanks!"

"Father, let us speak no more of this" - said Ruben - "since we have only just found each other in this hour when we must part! Let me take leave of mother and Ruth. I believe that when I am safe, mother will be calmer too!"

When the mother heard from Ruben's mouth that his freedom and safety were endangered, she spoke humbly: "My only son! Yes, go before it is too late! And take Ruth with you, that I may know that you are safe! For you have a definite destination in mind, or you would not be able to think of setting out in such haste!"

"Yes, Mother, I am going to Bethany, hoping to find shelter and refuge there with the owner. If I do not find what I am looking for in Bethany, I will return and remain a priest in the temple. But if I find what I need so much, then you shall not remain in uncertainty; then I will become a priest - for Jesus!"

## 5. On the run

After an hour, two young human children quietly left the parental home through a small gate; Ruben in disguise and Ruth made unrecognizable by a veil. Hastily they sought only side streets and came unseen to the gate, which, since it was noon, was completely unguarded. With beating hearts they passed through the gate and hurried as fast as possible to the Kidron valley, in order to get from there to the Mount of Olives. Once more they looked back toward the gate of Stephen and toward the City of God, and Ruth said: "Brother, I wish I were a man! Never again would I return to the places of lies and hatred, seeking only the salvation that would satisfy me fully!"

"Ruth" - said Ruben - "it is not easy for me, since I am going into the unknown! I do not know the lord of Bethany, and I do not know whether he will offer me a home and protection. We young Templars were kept like prisoners and were never allowed to visit far away with the older ones. If, as I hope, my wishes are granted, I will soon be free of the temple! But let us go forth, so that we may reach Bethany without danger."

On the road, merchants accompanied by soldiers were going to Jericho; there the two wanderers joined them and so it was not noticeable that they avoided any encounter. A vehicle met them and they learned that Lazarus, the Lord of Bethany, was sitting in it. Startled, they both looked at each other, and Ruben said regretfully, "Oh, so we will not find the lord at home."

"But someone will be there!" - comforted Ruth. "Then I'll just have to stay the night, like I told my mother."

From a distance Bethany was seen lying to one side; but they wandered on, not knowing whether scouts from the temple were on the way; and it was good, for the Templars kept a close watch on who went to and from Bethany. Only from the north side did they both walk through flowering gardens and greening fields to Bethany, and the sun was setting as they both entered the great courtyard, weary.

## 6. In Bethany!

Across the courtyard, a friendly young man came to meet them, welcomed them both and invited them to stay. How pleasant it was for both of them to be so kindly invited; but it made them even happier when Mary later greeted them: "Be welcome in Bethany, whoever you may be! Consider yourselves as belonging to the house and feel at home. It is true that my brother is not present now, but he will return today. But in the Spirit and in the love of Jesus we want to become as one!"

Ruben said: "If already at the first words of our meeting your love is so palpable, then already all our worries have disappeared; I am a refugee! Not only from the temple and from the parental home, but also from myself I fled here in the hope to find what my heart - in general my whole being - longs for so much!"

The young man who led the two of them, spoke invitingly: "Strengthen yourselves and rest properly, Bethany is consecrated to love and every longing, if it lies in our strength, will be satisfied. It is love's highest desire to heal all suffering and sorrow, to make the restless heart calm again, so that it may be able to receive the new and gracious life from the Spirit of Jesus, our Lord and Master!"

"Ruth" - Ruben said with emotion - "this is a different tone from Jerusalem! I feel as if I am in the kingdom of heaven."

Now Martha also came and greeted the brothers and sisters in an equally cordial manner. Bread and wine were quickly on hand, everyone took a seat at a table, and the sisters now introduced the young man as the disciple John. Now Ruben told about everything that weighed down his soul.

But John spoke encouragingly: "My dear, dear brother! If you want to stay here until the Lord and Master Himself paves new ways for you, and you recognize in yourself that you then also have to fulfill new tasks, then I would like to call you Theophilus from now on; for it is not only that a man possesses a name, but a right name should also possess a man! You want to be a fighter and a fulfiller, therefore bear this new name and be assured that at this moment, when you truly want the new and glorious, everything past in you will be as if erased! With the will for the truly good, you will also recognize more and more the Lord and Master Jesus, who, although dead, nevertheless lives and has even instructed us several times anew not to slacken in the activity for the good and true! All of us here in Bethany and many, many friends know: The Lord is alive! - He is truly risen from death!"

Theophilus spoke with joy: "Oh I thank you, John, for your words, which make me so happy inside! But I feel even more happy, since I received a new name from your mouth! And it seems to me as if you can already see in me a different person than I was before! Who had to live so long in coldness, in unkindness and bossiness like I did, heaven opens up for him when he comes into your sphere! How richly I have been compensated for the bitter imprisonment in this one hour! And I hardly dare to think that I may remain in this happiness! Oh Sister Ruth! How depressed I am at the thought that you must go home to mother and father, while I may remain here!"

"Little sister," said Martha, "nurse your mother to the point where she too can soon come to Bethany! Then there will be no more need to worry! Here with us there is room for many."

"You people here in Bethany" - Ruth said in amazement - "what special life do you have in you, in that you immediately want to help everyone who comes to Bethany, even to make him happy? For me it is a miracle to meet such people! And at a time when selfishness, envy and hatred reign everywhere! My father and also my brother are priests, thus servants of God! But they could never rise to a tone of love and happiness for others. I often talked with my mother about Jesus of Nazareth, and we admired His power as well as His affection for all poor and sick people. Today, however, I experience something new, which I find quite natural! And it makes me unspeakably happy that my brother can become truly happy in your midst. Oh, if only my parents could enjoy this happiness for once!"

"Dear Ruth" - said Mary - "your father has often been to my brother's house, but he has not noticed this spirit and the life here. On the contrary, full of resentment and cursing he left Bethany, and why? Because only he can feel everything as beautiful, good and happy, who carries beautiful, good and happy things in himself. From Jesus, our glorious Master, we know that only those hearts are enabled to act truly and faithfully in the Divine sense of love, who have recognized that self-love and selfishness are the great obstacles that bring a human heart to a standstill in the striving for the good and the true! Only when one has now seriously freed oneself from these fetters, one experiences how little one has really lived up to now! For your brother this hour shall be the first proof of the truth of our teaching! For we do nothing without a definite reason. The main reason of our actions is always: How do I win over my fellow man and neighbor, so that I may become one with them in spirit? For I know that every heart, when it feels united with me, also wants to acquire this spirit and love-trait that includes others in the heart- and life-community."

"I understand you well" - Ruth answered - "but does it not happen that unworthy people receive your love and reward you with ingratitude? Are you not disappointed? And do not thoughts come there where you repent of having done good and love to them?"

"Sister," said Mary, "for a true deed of love there is never anything to regret! For not for the sake of prestige or thanksgiving, but truly only for the sake of love, do we practice and cultivate this spirit which has already brought us so much, so rich and glorious! If it happens, as for example with your father, that he does not respect and pay attention to our love and our concession, then we always ask ourselves: Have we still been lacking something? And we are reassured only when the approval comes in our hearts: You have done right in the spirit of love! Believe it, dear Sister Ruth - love, no matter how small, carries within itself the seed of heavenly glories and rewards and rewards both the receiver and the giver! Of course, I must not wait while no fruit of the sown love will show itself. All of us here in Bethany have only the desire to act in all things as much as possible as the Master would have acted! His love, which so highly surpasses all human love, is the model for us in all things! Therefore, whoever wants to come, Bethany is and remains a place of care for His great love!"

Then Mary, the mother of Jesus, entered the door with Mary Magdalene; John introduced those who entered to the brothers and sisters, and the greeting was just as warm. But when Theophilus learned that this was the mother of Jesus, he confessed deeply moved: "Oh, how lost I was! I have caused this mother so much grief and pain!"

But the mother of Jesus comforted: "My dear brother! Now that all suffering is overcome, there is no more reason to complain! But as the Son of Man Jesus has forgiven all His enemies, the Son of God Christ Jesus will not act differently! But we cannot and must not face with unkindness those who thought they had done a right service to the world and the temple with His death; it is our duty to convince them with double love and attention that



they robbed themselves of the best, namely the Savior and Prince of Peace! He lives! This is our joy! He lives! Let this be your happiness in the future and your support in all difficult days! Only what lives can be something to us! And what lives cannot remain hidden! That is why He has revealed Himself to so many who carried in their hearts the great longing to see Him! He has also appeared to us and has given us the proof that death has left no traces on Him! On the contrary, now He carries an indestructible body and is Lord over all time and space."

"How pleasant these words sound from your mouth" - said Theophilus - "and I feel as if in them there is already the confirmation that He has also forgiven me! How I have struggled for this confirmation! But how it remained so mute in my heart when I cried out that Jesus might help me and be my Helper!

But now all is well; Oh You good God, how shall I thank You that I may be glad again! Let me become like these, that I may have nothing more to regret!"

"Dear brother" - said John - "first of all get to know Jesus better, so that you may become familiar with His nature and His attributes. Examine seriously, but do not rush! And be open to us, for we are glad to help you! But always remember: Here it is about a completely new life, about the true and eternal life of your soul! See that soon this earthly existence is gone, then we stand before a pure-spiritual life, which however must take its beginning here in the earthly existence fundamentally and determiningly! Know that is why God's great love for us human beings was made so vividly apparent to all of us through grace, that we learned to observe this new life in the perfect human being in all its power and glory!

You are priests and know the Scriptures! But you are content with the outer letter-sense of the word! But the inner sense in the Word of God, which is light and life and creates new life, is still foreign to you! But we are permeated by this holy life in every word, which was revealed to us through the Word made flesh, Jesus! But you must first experience all this in yourself and possess it as your own knowledge, so that you will be spared further unnecessary struggles! Now rest sufficiently with your sister! It will be more correct if brother Lazarus takes your matter in hand; he will certainly find the right thing. If you wish, you can now go out with me into the great garden, where we can still employ many workers; but your sister will prefer to stay with the women."

"With all my heart" - Ruth said - "at least I can learn a lot for our mother about the Savior, whom we were never allowed to hear."

"I will gladly go with you" - said Theophilus - "since I will not be able to rest until I know my future fate.

How astonished he was at the large garden, through the middle of which passed a broad, beautiful road, and to the right and left, vegetables and fruit bushes, well tended, delighted the eye!

"Oh what order in this garden" - he said admiringly - "there one sees how love was active! In my father's garden, on the other hand, it does not look very beautiful; after all, it is tended by strangers."

"Brother" - John replied - "all and every single thing gives back what was received before. We know that if we perform every task with love and joy, gratitude and joy will also return to us! Look at these fig and date trees, with what delight they fill the heart, since they have already set so much fruit! To whom, do you think, the harvest belongs?"

"Well, to the owner Lazarus after all" - replied Theophilus - "for the garden will not likely have a second owner!"

"Bad guess, Brother Theophilus!" - smiled John. "Everything, as far as you can see, is the property of the love that has come to us through Jesus! This yield is firstly destined for the poor and needy; but there further to the left, where the olive trees stand, lies the precious ground of this property. All the houses you see here are dwellings, and behind them are the stables. Each family lives by itself with its children, and yet we are all just one family! The single people live there in front to the left of the big dwelling house and are fed by the master of the house. The large storehouses and barns are at the very back, and even in them, the blessing is the most telling proof that we could employ a thousand more workers without the slightest worry!"

"How big are the properties of this philanthropist? And how many workers are employed here?"

"Brother Theophilus, how large the possessions are is beyond my knowledge. Look, even half of the Mount of Olives belongs to us, and more than 500 workers are likely already employed here, and everyone feels comfortable and satisfied. It is also a special sign of our brotherhood that we do not have supervisors, but only workers; for there is no-one more and no-one less, but in the right sense everyone is actually a co-owner. Joy shines from all eyes when Lazarus or his two sisters stop by their people; can you now understand what it means: Bethany - a nurturing place of great love!"

"Dear John" - said Theophilus - "you always call me brother! But I have not yet given proof that I am your brother! You offer me your time and dispose of it as if you were master of your time; is it really the same to the Lord and owner whether you are active or not? According to what guidelines, then, is all your activity actually structured?"

"Brother Theophilus! Your questions are justified, since you are facing the choice of becoming a resident and worker in Bethany. So listen: We always act according to the law of love, which says: Everything that you want done to you, do first to the other! Further, we act according to the glorious example of our Master, who showed us practically that we have to use our whole being only to serve and to make happy and satisfied! This is all told to you in few words! But one human life is not enough to accomplish these high tasks! So we all strive every day to become executors of His will! And His blessing truly comes to us visibly!"

"Brother John! Now I call you brother, too!" - replied Theophilus - "If that is so, then I gladly lay down my priesthood and remain with you as the least worker. What peace and carefree being everyone lives here, while there in the temple ..."

"Brother, speak no further!" - interrupted John earnestly - "and cast not shadows but only light upon all that is perverse! All that we are and may be is grace upon grace! It is, after all, the eternally merciful Love itself, which revealed and exemplified to us this life on earth in its true sense! And only through this are we in great advantage over all those who have not yet been allowed to understand and recognize this life and work of eternal true love. It is not only that in our earthly life we have become aware that we were allowed to behold the great power and glory of God in our Master! But we have experienced and still experience daily this wonderful and inexpressible of His great love, which wants to make us human beings recipients of His most glorious gifts of grace!"

"Brother John" - Theophilus replied - "I feel as if I have been pulled out of a world of hate and envy - and may now experience a world of joy and heavenly peace. Say only this one

more: Are really all here with the people's friend Lazarus so happy like you, or are there nevertheless also still dissatisfied ones here?"

"Brother! Do not think that this inner peace and happiness of our activity here in Bethany is only an addition because we recognized the Lord and Master" - John replied. "Only a daily holy struggle with ourselves can produce this peace in us. Holy struggle, I say, because it is about the holiest, namely about our life and existence for eternity! But if you have made up your mind to these great, glorious ideas and thoughts of life, then the consequence comes by itself! You will then be driven by the new life never to let your hands and feet rest in this existence, but to create and work out of this spirit, since only this activity can give us true happiness. Therefore, my brother, as I said before, get to know Jesus! For He is! He lives in this life! He is all our love and bliss! But such a life would be unthinkable for us without Him!"

From the south, sounds like from a horn sounded; then John said: "Someone is calling for the common meal behind the dining house. Let us now leave this conversation, for you too must first process within yourself what has been handed to you in all abundance today. Do you see how the brothers leave their work and go to the meal? It is a beautiful custom to eat together! In the large dwelling house the table is set for the many guests, while for the workers and many helpers, the meal is cooked and served in the dining house."

Both now went back to the dwelling house; then Theophilus said: "Brother! I thought we were going to the dining house; but this way we direct our steps to the house where we stopped?"

"Yes, brother, you two are our dear guests now! Martha and Mary would not tolerate that I lead you to the dining house, although there is the same food. First brother Lazarus must put everything in order before you belong to the house. Look, there in the yard again new guests seem to have arrived, yes, it is a whole troop of wagons and horses."

"But then we are inopportune!" said Theophilus, "when so many guests arrive! For we are still strangers after all."

"Brother, why do you doubt our love, which, after all, in serving wants to give the last? You must never do this again if any future ministry is to be of any success" - John replied. "For us there are no strangers, but only brothers, even those who do not yet know us! Look, Lazarus has also come, let us welcome him."

But Lazarus saw from afar that John had someone else with him whom he did not know; therefore he went to meet the two and greeted Theophilus with the words: "Welcome, my brother, in the name of the Lord! May Bethany give you what you silently hope for! Now, however, make yourself at home!"

"I wish I could thank you as my inner self would have it" - Theophilus replied - "but I lack the right words."

"Then thank the Master with your heart! For words alone do not! But look, John, again glorious brothers have arrived! There you see Demetrius and there in front Ursus, already two capable supporters for the Master! But excuse me still, so that also the many animals come into their order."

The house was more lively; Mary and Martha were surrounded by those who had arrived; there was rejoicing and questioning. Then John came with Theophilus, approached Demetrius and Ursus and said: "My brothers, what a joy to welcome you to Bethany! We

have already heard of you, but first take your seats; a great joy still awaits you, which I will now prepare for you."

John went out and asked after the mother Mary; there she came along with Mary Magdalene and Ruth and asked: "My son, who then has come with Lazarus? Why, a whole caravan has entered the courtyard."

"Mother, come and see for yourself! They are hearts longing for love, and here in Bethany they want to experience the most sacred secret of love!"

Now they came with John into the room, and Mary, giving her hand to the old Demetrius, greeted him kindly: "In the name of Jesus I welcome you and your son to Bethany, this nurturing place of true Jesus-love! May you experience and live here the most holy life of love, so that you too may receive the Spirit that animates us all! But to you, my young brother" - turning to Ursus - "I would put a longing in your heart that wherever your steps lead you, you may build a Bethany!"

Then Lazarus also came and said: "Dear ones! With the Lord's help, all things are already put in order; now give yourselves to the holy rest of your hearts, for now Love cares for you!"

The supper was served; industrious, helpful hands brought in a short time all that was possible: fruits of all kinds, honey, bread, cold meat, and enough wine to satisfy hunger and thirst; and after a short prayer, all joined cheerfully in the meal. Lazarus conversed quietly with Ursus and Demetrius, having his place between them. Theophilus, however, sat next to John, who took his meal in silence; he often looked at Ruth and sought her gaze, but Mary still discussed many things with her. All tasted the good but simple food, only Theophilus could not eat anything; it lay like a veil before his eyes; he would have liked to go out to hide his deep pain. John watched his protégé, but kept silent, knowing that the Spirit of the Lord was working mightily on him!

Then Ursus the Roman noticed that something was wrong with Theophilus inside and asked Lazarus: "How is it that this brother is so unfree here? Does he bear heartache and sorrow?"

Lazarus answered: "Brother, it is a new guest; I have only greeted him briefly. That he has grief and sorrow is already proven by that he has come to Bethany! For years Bethany has been a refuge for all depressed and sorrowful hearts! Here it is easy to recognize who are old or new friends. In the time that you will still stay here, you can experience many such fates and learn from them! For it has become the glorious task of all of us to help, to alleviate and to heal! When the meal is over, let us try to make him happier."

"Dear Lazarus, are only your friends coming to Bethany?" - asked Ursus again - "or perhaps also strangers who intend to harm you?"

"There I am quite without worry!" - replied Lazarus - "the Lord has bequeathed us a gift which is incorruptible, namely doubly large dogs. From afar they already scent the fluid of anyone arriving, and friends or people of good, honest will can approach unhindered; but if there are strangers, templars or even enemies coming, no-one may dare to take a single step closer; by tremendous barking they announce the arrival of such strangers, and we are warned and then act in the Spirit of the Lord, so that we are spared any reproach."

"So this gift from the Lord has a very good purpose to fulfill after all" - Ursus replied. "As also with Mark, as well as in the fishing village, it seemed as if the Lord, with such gifts, thought more of the future than of the present!"

"So it is" - answered Lazarus - "but with the time when the Lord's Spirit and love would be neglected or denied, these blessings also come to an end!"

"So the Spirit of the Lord works invisibly everywhere" - said Ursus - "and so I now understand that He was not absent from you, and that even His death could not shake your faith in Him!"

"Yes, my brother!" - replied Lazarus seriously. "We missed Him from morning till night. Even though we knew that He was near us in spirit, the days of His presence were always glorious feasts! First, He took care of everything, and second, we ourselves were relieved of everything earthly! What did He do, if we did not sleep? He strengthened us with wonderful freshness! What harm was it if we forgot to eat? He satiated and strengthened us by the inflow of His power! And many, many times we lived in heaven while angels did our earthly service!"

"Brother Lazarus" - asked Ursus - "do you not long to return to the time when the Lord and Master made a retreat in your home and gave you such joys?"

"My dear brother! Listen to what I say to you now, and dig these words firmly into the ground of your heart" - Lazarus answered - "I no longer long for that time, since my relationship with Jesus has become a much, much more glorious one! As long as He was still man, I have often felt in my human senses the need and the longing to be with Him again, even if only for hours! Why, you will ask. Because the Lord met our weakness, our longing, and removed all the evils in us that made us weak and longing! But behold: He made the most painful sacrifice of love for the sake of all our eternal happiness, and now left us all His glorious Spirit forever, which is to effect in us all that He did before personally in His love to us all. Before we were the takers, but now we are the givers! I know that I may now be His living instrument, His child serving His love! Therefore I am happy, because I may be what His love made me worthy of."

"It will be some time before I make this view my own" - Ursus said thoughtfully - "since I have had to forego the happiness of enjoying such bliss with Him as you and others have."

"Do not say that, brother Ursus!" - replied Lazarus - "the Lord knows about everything, knows also about your love! Therefore live completely to the presence in this love! In it the Lord is present!"

The meal, which lasted much too long for Theophilus, was finished; then Lazarus spoke to him: "Dear young friend and brother! Come with me to the resting place under the big tree, there we both want to become one, so that you are relieved of your burden and I find opportunity, as mediator of the Lord, to give you a helping hand."

Theophilus answered delightedly: "Gladly I come along! But I ask that my sister Ruth also be invited, since she cannot stay here but must return to Jerusalem."

Lazarus agreed, and with a friendly greeting, the three left the meal.

"Now both of you be quite open, as my heart is open to you!" - spoke Lazarus invitingly - "But may our Lord Jesus let us find what is right!"

Theophilus told at first haltingly, then fluently everything what oppressed him so, what he experienced and had to suffer, and Lazarus also did not interrupt him. But when Theophilus had finished, Ruth told about the life in the parental home, and how hard and unloving the father was with the mother and her: "Only the temple was his love and the temple was his life! We will perish if this condition continues; therefore help us, you good people of Bethany!"

Lazarus spoke comfortingly: "Yes, we want to help and we will also! But what about your father? Behold, my help does not reach Jerusalem! Therefore you must move to Bethany; there is room and work enough here! But you must do it voluntarily, since I may not force you! You Ruth, go home tomorrow morning and have your mother brought here as soon as possible, so that she may get well, since, as I see it, she has an unhealthy love for your brother. If she wants to stay, then fine! You all have your free will. But you, my Theophilus, if you want to make yourself worthy of the grace and love of Jesus, then break with your past and gain a new birth in the spirit and in the light of the truth of Jesus!

No-one can help you, if you do not first put your own hand to the work! But everyone of us can support you, so that your will becomes a living deed. Behold, until now you have been under the discipline of the law! But from now on you stand under the caring and sorrow-relieving love! From now on, however, your goals should no longer be directed towards physical well-being, but towards doing the will of God! His will is: Love your neighbor! For He too, just like you, is a child of His Love! So let us go in; we easily forget that others are also waiting for us!"

When they entered the large room, Ruth and Theophilus were astonished about how many still had come, who listened breathlessly to the narrations of Demetrius, and what all happened with the old Mark, when Ursus almost became ill with longing to see the Lord! At the entrance of the three, Demetrius was now silent, but Lazarus asked: "Only continue telling and delighting our hearts, for we all have a hearty joy as new proofs of the Lord's love are revealed!"

But Demetrius replied: "My friends, that is enough for today! Let us now also experience something that fills our hearts with new love for Him. We are like a hungry person who cannot be satisfied and always asks for new food. See brother Lazarus, your messenger to the healing bath of Mark has told us so much about the miraculous days in Bethany that we could not resist the pull of our hearts to travel here. Now we are here in the place so filled with glorious memories, since His foot sanctified this earth!"

"My brothers" - Lazarus began - "there is nothing we like better than to bear witness to Him to whom we owe all thanks! But where shall we begin and where shall we end? For all was grace, was His visible love! Behold, Jesus never came to give us testimony of His power and might, but to initiate us into the glorious Spirit of His love, which was His perfect life, and to lead us into this kingdom of His love and great glory! The most glorious thing I have to testify to you is: where the Lord stayed, heaven and earth were merged into one! For the Lord there was only one goal; to show us all how we too can reach this perfection! But in order to show us the high value of the right perfection in man, we experienced things which must seem completely unbelievable, almost foolish to a worldly-minded person striving for earthly things! Therefore, dear brother, we want to take our time with the telling, because I hope to have you here for a long time! But we do not hang on these miraculous things in the least; only His love and His perfect inner life are to speak here in Bethany, and that by all our actions!

Once, when the Lord was sitting alone with me up on the balcony, I said: 'Lord! Eternities are not enough to express to You the gratitude that I and all of us owe You for what You have shown and given us, both in earthly and spiritual goods.' Then the Lord said: 'Brother Lazarus, you are indeed right! But I have not come to make you debtors by revealing My power, strength and glory to you, but to spur you on to live like Me a new, more perfect life, which is rooted and anchored in the eternal original life of God!

This life is then holy and restores the order of all things. Therefore, all the glorious qualities in man - be it love, wisdom, earnestness and will, must be in order, yes, must be pure order! Only then does one complement the other in you, and then the transformation has already taken place in you, as if by itself, as the great, hotly disputed goal: becoming one with the Eternal! If this innermost connection with the great life of God has taken place in you, then everything you do is now your work! Why your work? Because God, in His glorious Fatherly love, is pleased to regard everything as the work of His loving and grateful child! If you want to speak of gratitude, I should also speak of gratitude! But I believe that this is no longer necessary, since we know each other and everything that is Mine is now also yours."

Behold now, dear brothers, in this sense we arrange our life here and thus experience His love and presence anew every day."

Ursus could not focus his senses enough on Lazarus, so that no word escaped him; but when Lazarus wanted to be silent now, he asked: "Oh do not stop to describe the picture of His love! Already the hearing makes me inwardly so glad and happy! Yes, we happy people! And this happiness has your people, have your tribesmen not recognized? Now I understand the Lord completely, as He said: 'Let my Spirit be the true driving force in you! It will lead and guide you into all truth'".

Lazarus replied: "Yes, my dear brothers! In spite of everything, we are still struggling for His Spirit, when we are confronted with so many adversities, when we have to prove that the Spirit of the Lord is in us! And therefore it is good that the Lord still wants to dwell among us alive in the spirit! But only for a short time, which the Lord Himself has measured out, then we are completely dependent on the Spirit as the sole guide and comforter within us!"

Demetrius asked: "What does a short time mean? Surely the Lord is risen and lives His own glorious life. Is He not there where longing, loving, grateful human children are, and can come to the rescue when He wills?"

"Brother Demetrius" - Lazarus answered thoughtfully - "even to us it is not yet fully clear what the Lord still intends to do with us, His disciples; for He gave command on His last visit to Jerusalem, where the disciples and still some friends regularly meet together, that they should remain together in love and constant prayer until He had ascended to His eternal original home, from where then the glorious Comforter and Guide shall first be given to us for our own!"

"So the Lord's mission is not yet complete?" - asked Demetrius -, "since the Lord still has certain processes He wants you to accomplish?"

John rose and spoke with gentle words: "Friends, brothers and sisters! The Lord's love has become our portion! And this is sufficient for all times to make us happy and to make us blessed! But we, too, are not yet completely reborn human beings and carry parts within us that are still completely unredeemed. For how soon do we also fall back into our old, former life of our own and how quickly do we sometimes forget that we want to be

disciples of the Lord! In the always holy struggle with ourselves and with our environment, we have already become so much that we can say: through the Lord's help and assistance we have been able to overcome many things!

But now there is another circumstance, which we do not like to take into account, but which is very important for all of us! Namely, for as long as we know that the Lord is with us with His whole personality and supports us with His influence, it is made very easy for us to work in His love and to disarm the enemies in us and around us!

But if we stand alone on the ground where our love should be active, then it is much more difficult to act and walk worthy of a true child of God. If, however, the will of God were placed as a certain law in every soul, we could only give back to Him what we once received! The Eternal Love, however, does not want to see the law, but a completely new, free love-life blossom out of His children! That is why our glorious Father, in provident and far-seeing wisdom, has placed His life and His all-pervading Spirit-spark deeply veiled in the human heart, so that now every child awakening in the Spirit and in the love of Jesus, must find completely within himself in what way he wants to exercise his love and also defeat his enemies! Therefore, for every God-seeker, in the important time of his inner decision, there must come a dark time when he feels completely alone and the Eternal Love remains completely invisible to him, so that the faithful children may find everything, even the smallest thing, by themselves and the germinating seed of their own love-activation may receive its free development!

We have here a new but also glorious proof of this in our brother Theophilus. In deep distress and doubt he prayed to God for a long time; but everything remained silent and dark; then he found in himself the thought to go where the followers of the Master often stayed, and there he received the news of the Lord's resurrection! Further, he found in himself the cold and unkindness that had been his element until then, and now he finds in himself that his whole life was a perverse and unworthy one! The Lord let Himself be known and gave him proofs of His love and forgiveness! But, brothers, his further inner development to perfection can only be born out of his free love-activity!

The same is true of you, Sister Ruth! Everything you do now, you must do as if out of your love! In this way you will become more certain and conscious, and your actions will be far more valuable than if the Lord were only standing beside you and whispering to you: 'Do this or that!' How else would we want to proclaim the Lord's teaching and truth in the future than only in the awareness: 'You Lord are the true life in me! Your Spirit leads me into this certainty and clarity of all things, so that I can recognize the intentions of the enemy and his followers already from afar!'

'Fear not! For it is I!' were the words of the transfigured Master! And only in our fearlessness does His life, His influence, His will and His power spring up in us! And I can only prove through this: The Lord and Master lives! And I live in Him and through Him! To know this makes us His true disciples, helpers and promoters of His great redemptive ideas. But it is just as wonderful to experience how this certainty and this strength grows in us when we refrain from everything that could ever grieve the Lord."

"You have spoken well, dear brother John" - said Ursus - "it gave me full satisfaction. But if I ask you rightly, tell us something else about the Lord and Master, namely, what I am particularly longing for: How did the Lord behave on the last day of your being together, since He would certainly know what would happen to Him and to you?"

"My brother!" - answered John very earnestly - "we did not understand the Lord when He said to us: 'We will go up to Jerusalem, that in the Son of Man all things may be



accomplished which were written through the prophets! For He will be mocked, scourged, even killed - but on the third day will rise again!' We did not understand Him! And why? With every fiber of our hearts we resisted even the thought that such a thing could happen to Him! No-one thought that it could ever become so. The Master Himself was calm and left us alone in our conversations; we hoped for some providence by which everything would be clarified!

When His command came to me and brother Peter to prepare the passover lamb in the city, I knew: a change has taken place with the Lord! For never before did we need to take care of anything, since He Himself took care of everything. We prepared the passover lamb in the usual way and were by ourselves in the small hall, according to His will, but could not notice that the Master was sad. So we remained alone until the evening, when He said: 'I am going home to the Father to prepare the place for all those who have found salvation and new life in Me! I leave you alone, so that My life of God, which is power and will, may prove itself in you.' Then we knew: this supper with the significant farewell speeches, is the last one! But we could not believe it! Only when we saw how a great sadness came over His soul and the Master spoke the shattering words: 'One among you will betray Me!' - then I held on to the Lord and asked fearfully: 'Betray, betray You, Lord? You who have opened the whole heaven within us!'

'Impossible! Impossible!' - the brothers also said in horror. 'Who is it, Lord? Is it I?' - cried several at the same time. 'It is he who is now diving into the bowl with Me!' - said the Lord to me, but then aloud: 'But you, My Judas, what you want to do, do it soon!' We were dismayed at these words; but when Judas actually went out, I had to lean on the Lord and say: 'Lord and Master! I am deeply saddened by the brother Judas that he is able to leave us now! But one thing I do not understand is that You did not restrain the brother Judas from putting his stray human ideas into practice!' Then the Lord answered: 'John and you My brothers, listen: Precisely, in order not to judge the blinded one, he must get rid of what has accumulated in him against Me! None of you knows as well as he about the power and glory of God in man! And he wants that these treasures shall benefit all his tribesmen, but only according to his recognition! Therefore, do not despise him and do not be offended by his ways of acting! Know that millions of years ago, he asked Me for a special service! But today, when he stands before the fulfillment of his desire, he acts in the wrong way! That is why the Scriptures speak of him!'

Jacob said: 'Lord, if You will, I will seek him, and will try to bring his perverse actions before his eyes!' The Lord answered: 'And yet, if you all go, you would not succeed in getting him to repent, since his pursuit of power and possessions has completely blinded him! He is now the tool of hostile forces! And so the Scripture must be fulfilled in all that God's Spirit once already proclaimed through the mouth of prophets!' Then the Lord continued in melancholy: 'The hour has come when I must separate from you, My brothers! You John, you Peter and you Jacob, you would be the ones whom I let look most deeply into the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. You are the spiritual pillars of My teachings, which are to prove yourselves in love, faith and trust in all situations of life! Therefore, all of you build on this foundation, which these three brothers symbolically represent, and erect a house for Me in spirit, deserving and worthy of Me! For I have loved you and will love you forever! I will come again and give you new things, when I have finished the work which demands fulfillment.'

But we could not understand the Lord's words; so we remained in deep silence around the Lord for another hour, none of us daring to speak a word. We were under an unknown spiritual pressure and were all frightened when the Lord said: 'Let us go! The time has come when the Son of Man must glorify the life of God dwelling in Him.'

Then brother Philip said: 'Lord and Master! Stay with us! Your Father-Spirit will show You another way, which will not cost You such sacrifices! And then, Lord, are not all things possible to You? One breath, and Your enemies are no more. How many times You have proved Your might, power and glory! Do it also today!'

'My brothers' - answered the Lord - 'My heart is sore and wounded, because you, whom I have called as witnesses of My great task, which I must and want to accomplish, are so uncomprehending! Know that the sacrifice which I am willing to bring, is the last act of obedience, which the Son of man owes to God! Only through this, is it possible that a way is opened for all who strive for redemption from matter and for the dignity of a child of God! Therefore do not stop Me! The will to enter into the will of God, must not raise any doubts!'

We went out of the city over the brook Kidron, and in the Garden of Gethsemane, the last and most difficult struggle of the Master took place, which we again could not really understand!"

Now Ursus stood up and spoke in his genuine Roman attitude: "Forgive me, dear brothers and sisters, that I interrupt and ask you brother John: Has none of you found the courage to say: 'Lord, if You want to make a sacrifice, then I also want to make a sacrifice and die at Your side! If we have experienced Your love, power and glory in good days, if we have stood by You as Your witnesses at all times, then we belong inseparably together and even death cannot separate us!' Do not think, dear brother John, that I want to reproach you! But how can a faithful servant leave his master in the hour of need and bitter struggle? The Lord gave me a few minutes, but in this gift of grace, there is something so great and powerful for me that I would go to my death for Him without batting an eye."

John calmly answered him: "Brother Ursus, I understand you completely; and your zeal only corresponds to your love! But the Lord did not want us to put ourselves in danger! When brother Peter wounded a warrior servant with his sword, He immediately healed the wound and commanded us to put the sword aside! He just had to bring the greatest sacrifice of all! Behold, now that all that has happened is behind us, we also know why He was concerned for our safety! Because He still wants to equip us with power from on high and make us emissaries for His great, mighty work of redemption!"

John was silent and all the others also; then the mother Mary said: "Brother Lazarus! It has become very late; it will be more proper for us women to go to the chambers and give ourselves up to rest. Also I still have some things to discuss with my protégé, since I may not get to see her for weeks."

"You are right, Mary" - Lazarus replied - "our guests will also need rest! But you, dear brothers, when you hear the sign for the early meal, then rise from your beds. But You, Lord Jesus strengthen our love and our will and give us Your blessing. - Amen."

"Amen," said the others. Then all departed; but Lazarus accompanied his guests to their rooms, and blessed them still as they parted.

Mary said to Ruth: "Come, my child, your resting place is in my room; you will need to talk about many things. Think of me as your mother and at the same time as your sister."

Then Ruth replied: "Oh, how my mother will long for a report from us! It is the first night that I spend away from my parents' house; but again, how precious was today with all its experiences! How happy I must be to have experienced all this; it is a different life, a whole new world that has revealed itself to me here! Tell me only this, dear Mother Mary:

If you have such great love and such a need to help other unfortunate people, how great must have been the love of Jesus, who could die for others?"

Mary lovingly explained to her: "My child, for this love, the earth still has no expression! If all tongues praised this love, it would still be far too little! Look upward once, to the firmament. Star to star! Light to light! And yet it is only a fraction of creation that has its existence, thanks to the Lord and Creator! Just as human mouths cannot sing of the whole of creation in its splendor and grandeur, so no mouth can portray the love of the Lord and Master for us humans! But, my child, embrace this love in your heart, then you too will experience what thousands have experienced. Tomorrow, take with you on your way the word: 'His love won the victory' - and you too will be victorious in such genuine love. So, now rest! Love also watches over your sleep! And as I love you out of His love, so you also practice it! Then love is also your part! And peace and joy your reward! Now sleep peacefully, my child - God's love watches!"

"Dear Mother Mary" - Ruth still said - "how I thank you for this loving word! I will often long for these hours I have experienced. Oh, if only my parents, especially my father, could grasp the spirit that lives here in Bethany! But could you also forgive my father as you forgave my brother? It will be difficult to convince my father of your forgiving love! But if I know beforehand that you do not bear a grudge against anyone in Bethany, then I can be much more certain and safe and have a holy weapon in my hand! For it will probably still cost a lot of struggle! Bless me, dear Mother Mary, since I am willing to take up this fight! And I will not rest until my father also realizes that his whole life, his whole marriage and our childhood were a ruined life. Now that I have experienced Bethany, the home where love and peace dwell, I know what I will struggle for! I don't know - I am imbued with a will, with a joyful strength that I don't even know in myself!"

"My child, you see how changeable life is" - said Mary. "First you wept with sorrow, then with happiness, and now you are already filled with the Spirit of the Lord, who wants to make everyone free and joyful! This is the answer of the Lord and Master Jesus in your heart! Therefore rejoice, you too are chosen."

At that moment, the two sisters Mary and Martha came and looked at the young girl; and when they saw her beaming with happiness, Martha said: "Little sister, come back soon! We long for you! Your happiness is also ours, but your sorrow will also be our sorrow. We already know that you will succeed in convincing your parents that here with us, everyone can enjoy his life in real joy! And there is room for many more in Bethany! Now, dear Ruth, we want to say goodbye; for early in the morning there is plenty of work. Therefore we say to you: Come back soon, we are waiting for you! But if you need help and advice, send a messenger, we will gladly give you what you need; or, if you can, come yourself!"

"You good people" - Ruth said, touched - "your love is like the fragrance of many beautiful roses! More and more you become imbued with the supernatural beauty and supernatural love here! How often I shall think of you!"

Now the girls kissed each other and wept with joy at the happiness that they had learned to find each other through the love of the Master!

But Mother Mary said: "Now, children, rest! The day had its burdens and troubles, and as a reward, it put our sister Ruth to our hearts. The coming day will bring new troubles, and strength is needed. So be blessed from the Spirit of Jesus and guarded by love until awakening!"

Another handshake, and Ruth was alone with Mother Mary. "Now, child, take another kiss from me! Remember this hour often, for it shall be and remain holy to you! If you have a hard time and do not know where to go, remember this hour! The Lord and Master gave me in His merciful love so infinitely many treasures, that I can always and at any time distribute from the treasury of His love according to my will! Remember that you too are now gifted to be appointed as a steward of His sanctuaries. Do not disappoint your Lord and God, your Savior and Redeemer! Remain childlike, always remain pious and pure! Then my Jesus will also be your God and Father! So rest in peace! And His peace be your portion. Sleep peacefully, Love watches! Amen!"

Thus ended that day in Bethany.

