

Divine guidance of the first Christians

Book 20

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. New plans to rescue imprisoned fellow believers

The next morning, a general day of rest was ordered, in order to get to know each other even better with the guests in inner joy. But as the old father Eusebius looked a little sad, Cornelius asked sympathetically whether he was carrying a silent grief? The old man said: "Yes, I fear that I will soon be lonely when my daughter Ruth will leave me through her marriage. She has been sunshine and support to me when it has been dim and 'lightless within me'.

"But, old friend" - Cornelius interrupted him - "do you really think you will lose your daughter? Oh no, you will gain a son, whom you will rejoice in when you have first come to know him properly. Behold, Achibald came to us as a boy, and by his upright character has won the respect and love of all. For fifteen years we have lived together, and I would have cause to feel sorrow, for I am losing a faithful friend and one of my best subordinates. But his happiness is also my happiness! That is why I am glad to have contributed to it!"

As if reflecting, Cornelius then continued: "But now I cannot forget yesterday's order of the angel: 'Acquire as much land as possible!' Therefore I still want to visit the surrounding land of your possessions today with your two sons, with old Elim and Achibald." And so it happened.

After hours of riding, they returned satisfied, and Cornelius discussed with them his new plans to found a colony here. He concluded, "And now, dear Elim, tell us your views on this; you have, after all, gained many experiences on your long journeys."

And Elim said: "Yes, my friends, in this fertile land there is much to be gained in grain, in olive trees and fruit, but it will cost much trouble and much money."

"There will be no lack of laborers," interjected Cornelius - "and let the question of cost be my affair."

Then Elim drew a lovely picture of the future and also gave the necessary explanations how such a plan could be realized here. Cornelius now explained very seriously: "We know that the Templars, out of vindictiveness against the teachings of Jesus, secretly take many of our brothers in faith captive, abandon the older ones to death by starvation, but try to sell the young men and women as slaves. Unfortunately, we Romans cannot oppose these crimes by force, but as human beings and Christians, it is our sacred duty to help these unfortunates. Therefore I think: As far as this terrain is still vacant, I give you the land, which I have the full right to do as representative of the Roman Emperor; and out of my means, dear Achibald, I let you build the necessary buildings and stables.

But to you, Elim, as the most prudent and experienced, I would like to give the office of administrator in gratitude for your services rendered to us. If a settlement is established here under Roman protection, the Templars will have nothing to say. Then we will put a military garrison here, which would have to pay attention to the passing trade and especially to the caravans from Jerusalem. I am sure that the governor will welcome these undertakings joyfully, because they will raise the dignity and prestige of the Empire!"

All the listeners were immediately won over to the plan. After the common meal, Cornelius spoke with the old Eusebius and said: "Now we want to hold once counsel about your and your children's future. See, old age has weakened your strength, you will now rest from earthly work and turn more to your inner life. Your oldest son Joseph will take over your

inheritance and want to bring Bernhart's daughter home as his wife. Your son Joram will gladly go to Bernhart and marry his younger daughter and thus become a faithful support for his father-in-law.

To take care of your Ruth, I take the right, as a representative of the government, to give Achibald all adjacent land, as far as it has no owner yet. From my and the state's funds, the new settlement will be built, which above all may become a new home for our persecuted brothers in faith. Do not worry about the costs or other things, what we start here as Romans, shall be our business."

In the meantime, a caravan had arrived in the courtyard, and the leader, Asa, cheerfully greeted the men he knew: "Hail and blessings and the peace of God be with you!"

Then he turned to Elim: "On behalf of your friend Ursus, I have come to you to deliver back to you, as the rightful owner of all these wagons and animals, your property. In this letter from my lord, dear Elim, you will find all you need to know."

Elim thanked Asa and said, moved: "Oh my friend, what a difference in these few weeks! From all the world of hatred we have entered into a world of peace, and what fullness of life is revealed here!" And Asa confirmed: "Yes, Elim, I too feel happy, being since then the friend and confidant of the honorable Ursus, who will also come here soon."

Elim took the letter and gave it to Achibald with the request: "You, dear friend, take over these former goods of mine, you will still be able to use them well for your charges. I beg you, do not refuse this gift of mine, for without your help and the grace of the Lord, I would not live. But now my life delights me again, and I will gladly be your helping friend in all the great tasks. But you shall not be the recipient of the gift, only the steward, who is chosen by Divine Love to work with it in the right sense of salvation and to create joy!"

Deeply moved, Achibald said: "Oh brother Elim, if you feel this way, I must not disappoint you; so I ask all of you: help us to succeed!"

Asa then asked Achibald: "Lord and friend of my lord! Give orders to unload the wagons; there will be a list of the goods in the letter.

Achibald now loosened the seal of the letter, but handed it to Captain Cornelius, and he read aloud: "My new brother in the Lord Elim! Love urges me to thank you once again for your active help to our brothers in faith who were condemned to lifelong slaves. My heart is still full of rejoicing over the success of this work of liberation and is full of joy because you have joined the ranks of the helpers. Your property is hereby returned to you; the property of the lost Assir can no longer be delivered to him, since he has been condemned in the meantime. Therefore, in the spirit of right wisdom from God, I have exchanged it for all kinds of useful items for the saved. Greet also dear father Eusebius and tell him that I have not forgotten my promise. Thus I offer you, dear Elim, the true greeting in God and remain united to you in spirit. - Ursus."

Cornelius added: "Elim, you can rejoice in this trust that has been given. Truly, I too am delighted with this ransom!"

When the goods were unloaded, everyone went to inspect the many treasures that Ursus sent, and Eusebius also looked at this wealth in amazement.

Bernhart did not want to accept all the gold and silver that Ursus had intended for him, but Cornelius said: "Friends, do not think humanly, but keep in mind the sublime purpose, for

all this perishable goods can be a help to happiness after all, and Ursus has already distributed everything in just order."

2. In Bernhart's house

The next morning they all accompanied Bernhart to his possessions; only Elim had stayed behind to take charge of the house of Eusebius, for whom it was a joy to feel what it was like to be freed from all earthly bustle.

Here, too, Cornelius and the others inspected the surrounding fields and lands for new settlements, saying to Bernhart: "You are a Roman and have a free hand here, and I also give you the authority for the new landed property! Behold, when the enemy makes himself great to destroy, we must lift up our hearts to go about the work of salvation with an even greater will of love. Know that the Almighty cannot give us the will to do it - because this will to act, must be born in ourselves! But everyone who really wants to help his poor fellow men will be equipped with power and wisdom from above. What help you are allowed to give to the needy, can only be given to you by God. But what is given to us by God, carries a thousandfold blessing! Let this realization, my dear Bernhart, become your guiding star, now and always!"

They rode back in silence, and Bernhart was deeply moved by the words of his friend. Still in the house, despite the increased activity, he was inwardly surrounded by such a happy consecration, that he said to his wife: "Elisa, with the friends, the Lord must also have moved in with us! There is such great joy in me that I learn to look at everything around me in a completely different way. Wife, many more unfortunates can find refuge with us, for the Lord Himself yesterday gave me the rich means to do so! Yes, I have a presentiment of what God actually wants from us human beings! It is still only a presentiment, but Cornelius has opened my eyes to it, now it is only necessary that I am also ready for it with my whole heart.

Then his wife said: "Bernhart, you have your holy tasks and your free will to carry them out, but let me also have my worries and troubles with it, because love is unthinkable without concern. And if you bring us another hundred people as housemates, I would like to be concerned for their bodily well-being!" Bernhart was pleased with her understanding of his new duties.

When in the evening all the housemates had gathered for devotion, Cornelius spoke: "My friends! In these days great salvation has befallen us, in that not only with the Father Eusebius, but also here with you, a new spirit has come to life, which wants to have such a happy effect in everything! From the mouth of our Master and His servants we know that where His teaching and His life are realized, He Himself is already invisibly present. Therefore, we ask You, oh Lord and Father, Who blessingly surround us here, strengthen our faith and grant joyful success to our efforts to help many more poor people! Amen."

Deep silence followed - and holy travail flowed through all hearts. Then one of those saved at that time, asked to be allowed to tell something about his experience with Jesus; and Bernhart gladly led him to Cornelius, where he began: "When Jesus once went with His own through our little town and many curious people crowded to see Him, I too felt the desire to watch Him as Savior. I have never attached great importance to words that were only meant to instruct, and so I did not seek Jesus' proximity in order to hear Him, but stood apart. But what I experienced here was so powerful, that I was allowed to recognize Him as the great Savior without having heard His Word.

A mother had her sick child by the hand, modestly she stood aside, while the Savior was surrounded by the many and therefore could not see how the mother stretched out her

hands longingly to Him. He passed by - and weeping, the mother sank to the ground. Then Jesus turned and said: "Not sorrow, but joy will I leave behind! Therefore rejoice, poor woman, let your silent supplication be granted - your child is well!"

Friends - words cannot describe what this action caused in me. He turned back! - He felt within Himself the suffering of the poor mother! His helping love became for me a living proof of His true Divinity. And I believed His glorious words from then on.

How often do we still pass by the misery of others and perhaps are just absorbed in worship of the great God. In our captivity through the infamy of the Templars, we experienced the proof that some can preach very well about God - and yet serve the adversary.

Jesus did not only want to teach us faith in God, not only to describe to us the glory of His kingdom and what great things can still be achieved by us, but He Himself wants to make us a living Word, where every action, every look, every thought already speaks of the majesty of eternal Truth and the holiness of Divine love! Therefore - where Jesus truly lives - there is joy! And where children of God work, there should be no less joy!" After a deep silence, when the essence of Jesus still reverberated vividly in all hearts, everyone went to rest.

3. Achibald's testing

Only Achibald did not come to inner silence. - Horrible images of his past suddenly passed before him and burning huts and dying people came to life in him. Horrible animals reared up before his spiritual eyes and brought his whole interior more and more into turmoil. Where were the glorious impressions of the past day? Where was the blessing hand of merciful love? "Oh Jesus, help me out of these torments which seek to destroy my love for You!"

Then a great beastly figure approached with mighty paws and claws, and the face was that of Assir; the eyes were dazzling red and blue, and it seemed as if it were about to pounce upon him. "My Jesus, help now or I will succumb! Do not let it happen, for I belong to You!" - he fervently prayed.

Then all at once a bright man stood beside him, held up his right hand, and said to the beast: "In the name of Jesus - the Almighty God - dissolve your delusion and show your true self, or what you would do to him will be done to you!"

"But you, my friend, experience how God judges him who often wanted to be a judge to others! Never be afraid! God has mighty servants, and still mightier children, to ward off all enemies! Know: A thought, born of purest love, is a spiritual power and can powerfully repel all evil! But now see how this monster, all rage and hatred, ignites a hellish fire in itself, with which it wanted to destroy the life of God growing in you.

But do not think that now you are redeemed from your adversaries. But you are only redeemed from them when you have become their helper and savior! How you will start this is your own business, because only your free movement of love can make this possible!

And remember: everything that enters your world becomes your belonging; therefore take care that it serves you to become more alive and does not become an unbearable burden! If you shape your further life in the true Spirit of Jesus' love, the judge can no longer dwell in you! As Jesus as Savior worked forgiving and liberating, so be His glorious example the epitome of all that is good and true!

A sign with the hand on the heart - and the light-being was gone, but also the frightening images were gone. The dawn of the rising sun filled his heart with joy; now Achibald could pray with a sigh of relief: "Oh my Savior! My God and Father! How small I seem in the face of Your great grace, which is now revealed to me. The dawn of a spiritual day shows me how full of mercy You must be, since You patiently show me again and again what is not worthy of Your child! Therefore, strengthen me so that I may remain faithful to my purpose and that You may have joy in me! Amen."

So he got up from the bed and went to the stables, where the people were already taking care of the animals. In everyone's eyes he saw a glow, a radiance of peace, and through his heart passed a wave of happiness. Ruth looked at him and asked why he had left home so early: Achibald thoughtfully replied: "This night I had to pass a serious test, because the Lord still had many things to reveal to me out of my inner being. Now I see that I still lack much to be a true Christian, and I fear that I will hardly achieve it, since too many of the old pagan ideas are still stored up in me.

Ruth replied: "Why don't you hand over what is still weighing on you to the Savior Jesus? What do you care about the past? Oh my Achibald, shake off what still wants to push itself between you and the love of the Savior and occupy yourself with what has been given to you anew! He is worthy and has made you worthy for His work. Believe in Him - and be strong! I always want to stand by your side to help you in all trials, because where there is faith in His help, the Lord will also give success."

In the meantime, the other guests had also appeared in the parlor to participate in the early meal. Bernhart was the last to arrive; solemnly and ceremonially, he handed over the chair to old Eusebius, and after a little silence he spoke: "Friends and brothers! The Lord has come to us because our hearts are open to Him. May this new day also be lived in such a way that every hour fulfills its sacred purpose, because every opportunity that is missed, is irreparable! Then each of us will be able to say in the evening: "Lord, only with Your gracious assistance was it possible for me to fulfill my duties in Your Spirit!"

Now let us fortify ourselves with the gifts that Your love and care have intended for us, but only with Your blessing will they bring us salvation! Therefore, oh Lord, we long for Your blessing - so fulfill our request for the sake of Your great work! We will praise Your goodness and praise Your wisdom, but Your love we will make our own! Amen!"

"But now I feel a new power within me. With this I bless you all and this meal, that His holy name may be glorified! Amen!"

Cornelius then had many suggestions to make for the new settlement, and concluded gravely: "According to the latest reports, things are often gruesome in Judea; a certain Saul is said to rage day and night to deliver followers of the doctrine of Jesus into the prisons of the temple. Therefore, everything here is to be made ready as quickly as possible, so that we may yet be able to give some of these unfortunates a new home."

Bernhart again pointed out the many costs, but Cornelius said: "If we only have the firm will to help the innocent suffering fellow believers, and do not spare all work and effort, the Lord will already pave the way for us. Therefore, after my return, I will see to it that you, my dear Bernhart, are provided with as much land as possible and that you can found a Roman colony with means and workers provided by the government.

Bernhart answered gladly: "Oh Cornelius, I admire your great plans and am entirely at your disposal."

"Yes" - Cornelius confirmed - "the possibility of creating here a new Eden for joyful people, has become a sacred life task for me, and our Master will say: "My children have given Me a right joy! My blessing shall be visible in all those who lend a hand to the work and contribute to its success."

4. Ursus' trust in God

Quite unexpectedly, Ursus burst into the courtyard with some companions and was greeted with cheers by his friends.

Cornelius looked with pleasure at the young Roman, still unknown to him, who was to be such a cheerful fighter for Jesus and His high aims.

Eusebius embraced Ursus very warmly and said, "My son! Love gives me the right to call you so, for your great deed of help remains unforgottable to us!"

After all were greeted, Ursus presented a large bale of cloth to Mother Elisa as a special gift, saying: "So that you need not worry, dear matron, when poor naked children come to you, many of whom are now parentless and in need of a true mother. In Jerusalem it is now like a thunderstorm. Almost no-one dares to go out into the streets anymore, for everywhere the Templars are stalking the poor Christians to throw them into their dungeons."

"Oh my God" - cried the mother in horror - "what crime have they committed?"

"Nothing - but that they believe in Jesus, the great Savior" - answered Ursus - "and have recognized that He was innocently put to death, that His suffering and death were accomplished by all means from the temple - and they deny His resurrection! In addition, there are now the great deeds of the apostles, who heal many sick people by laying on of hands and prayer, so that I got the impression that every second person there is already a Christian.

It is terrible that we Romans have to watch idly as the prisons fill up and no-one is allowed to ask: Where have the Christians gone? When I made inquiries with the captain of the city and brought up what I had just said to you, I was told that they had no means of intervening, for according to Jewish law, every traitor to his God is guilty of death.

"Bring me proof" - said the city governor - "that the Templars are blaspheming the Emperor or us, that they are violating our agreements, and they are our prisoners! But thus my hands are tied; indeed, I must still protect their laws and their actions."

Cornelius nodded and said: "Yes, that's true! The greatest move of the Templars, which they wrested from us Romans, was that we must protect their religion and deliver those who act against their religion, to their courts. Therefore, the greatest prudence must be used on our part to get along with the High Council."

Elisa asked: "Is there no-one who can help the Christians in Jerusalem?"

"Unfortunately, no! The citizens of Jerusalem should have become Roman subjects before, but they have no confidence in us and still consider us their enemies from whom the Messiah should deliver them. The merciful love of Jesus, however, now shows us completely new ways to alleviate these sufferings, and unconsciously you, dear Ursus, have revealed to me a new thought of love, in that you have already chosen the mother Elisa to be the mother for many foreign children. We will also build a beautiful house for orphaned children there in the mountains, so that we can make up for the guilt caused by false knowledge or infernal zeal.

The great plan to help, arises more and more vividly in me. Life reminds us more and more urgently not to slacken our efforts so that a dam and protective wall may be built in the midst of God's enemies. I will see to it that the great military roads are guarded day and night, and that every trade caravan must identify the goods it is carrying. And woe to those who then knowingly seek to deceive us!"

"Do it!" - said Ursus briskly - "I, too, overtook a convoy on the way here, which I am sure was carrying people as prisoners. The craftiness of the accompanying temple priest was proof enough for me, but I had no hand, nor people, to oppose them."

A new idea ripened in Cornelius - suddenly he stood up and said: "Let's go outside, it's getting too crowded for me here!" Outside, he said to Achibald: "Will you try to help these prisoners? You are still a soldier and could act on behalf of your superior!"

"Gladly - if it were possible" - replied Achibald - "but I have only a few comrades at my disposal here."

"That will do!" - said Cornelius - "You shall also only try to bring them help, since success always depends on God. Arrange that you may ride off at once, but make no fuss. Ursus may tell you the place where he met this caravan, but avoid any fight!" Achibald soon had his men ready to ride off; provisions were stowed on two pack horses, a brief farewell, and now "with God" out into the afternoon.

Cornelius and Ursus remained quite silent until the evening, so as not to deprive the possibilities that occupied all their minds, of their blessing powers by unnecessary talking.

After supper, Ursus told of his experiences since he had moved on from Eusebius at that time: "I have experienced great joy in the guards and the priest who entered our service. Now that they know that their distant future is assured and that they have nothing to fear from the temple, they develop abilities that amaze me! But they cannot yet believe in the teachings of Jesus; they do not get over the cliff that the great God did not grant His Son the necessary protection to spare Him the death on the cross! Such doubts are now for me, as well as for you all, admonitions to the right patience with their souls, since innate and acquired things cannot be changed so easily.

Others, too, who may once have had the good fortune to see and hear Jesus as a man, are now - since the tidings rushed through the lands that He died on the cross - hardly to be convinced of His high mission; and His faithful apostles have the heavy office of carrying confidence and enlightenment to where the temple begins its persecution of the new doctrine.

As I passed through Samaria to visit our settlements, I experienced the following: A small congregation of the Jesus teaching, which met regularly on pre-Sabbaths, was led by an old brother, but he was no match for the new priest there and now had to witness how the wolf in sheep's clothing was doing great damage to the souls of his believers. The innkeeper of my inn told me that the old leader, who was so rich in inner experiences, had almost lost the ground of his certainty of faith and was only praying and pleading that God should help, while his opponent, the new priest, was carrying his head higher and higher.

Soon this old man came to us in the hostel, and I listened to his sufferings and disappointments once again. Here I experienced the faithful love of a leader for his community, who in his concern for the souls entrusted to him, forgot his high duty: to remain an example for his faithful!

To remedy his need, I asked about the sick in the village - there were many of them - but a healer and helper was missing, because no-one dared to perform this holy service of love by laying on hands and prayer, because this is apostleship!

I asked: "Can you arrange for your believers to come to the synagogue tomorrow morning with their sick? I would like to meet your priest to prove to him that Jesus is still alive today, and that He wants to help His faithful even now!"

The old man became uncertain - but then, when I made it clear to him that the ever-helping Savior demands such services from us, he promised to do his utmost. The next morning, the new priest was happily surprised by the large audience; he chose Psalm 74 as his text and interpreted it in such a way that God would finally punish His adversaries, the Nazarenes, in order to set up His kingdom, and showed with proofs how foolish it was to continue to listen to a deceiver and a seducer of the people. He showed how foolish it was to believe a deceiver and a seducer of the people any longer.

Those who believed in the Savior became restless, but the others rejoiced because their priest had finally found the right language against the enemies of the temple. I prayed for strength, for enlightenment, and as if carried by heavenly powers, I rose up and asked to be heard. The priest himself took me to his side, rightly suspecting me to be a Roman, and allowed me to speak.

"My friends" - I began - "I am speaking to you here because I am inwardly impelled to do so. We have just heard a testimony of the power and majesty of your eternal God, who knows how to get rid of His enemies and wants to chastise with rods those who violate His sanctuary. I may be a stranger to you on the outside, but I am your friend on the inside. I have experienced much suffering, but even more joy, but the most beautiful thing was: I got to know your God, a God who is holy, but also just and wise! I know your Moses and your prophets! I know your Divine laws - but also your inner lukewarmness!

Your God, who has holy mercy on all sinners, sent His Son, the Messiah, to all those who had gone astray, in order to strengthen their faith in Him anew and to revive their trust in His help. Many were delighted by His teaching: love for God and neighbor, and recognized in Him the fulfillment of all promises. But those who could not or would not believe, were your priests and ministers of God."

Here the young priest interrupted me excitedly: "Have you come to disturb the peace of this house? Or what intention do you have, since you violate my dignity? I stand here in the holy place, in God's stead, and have the right and duty to preserve the honor of this house!"

"It is good that you remind me that you are a priest" - I replied - "The peace of this house is also sacred to me. But since I have chosen your God as my God also, I cannot understand that you regard as an enemy him who wants to serve Him, and want to destroy the great Savior Jesus, who after all preached only love for God and all people, together with His teaching. Therefore help me, friends! Help me, you who are called to it, how shall I find my way out of this contradiction, so that I will not be misled about your God? But only facts can be proofs for me!"

There followed a silence - then I said aloud: "As once Elijah could not defend himself against the enemies in any other way than to ask his God to reveal His power visibly to all, so may we also ask our God here to reveal Himself visibly in His great power and goodness in order to protect His own!"

If your God is pleased with the destruction of His enemies, as this Psalm taught us today, He must have greater joy if He can show Himself as a helper to His faithful. There are several sick people here! Therefore - in the face of God's holiness - and the presence of His church here, I urge you, who stand here as God's representative, to move your God to help these sick people! God, who has proved Himself in a thousandfold proofs to your people as the ever faithful One, will not deny you the right assistance and the power and enlightenment for it, if you want to prove yourself as His servant!"

Quite incensed, the priest cried out: "Lord! take back your word! We shall not tempt God! I will no longer take part in this sacrilegious game! If God gives suffering, He will also give strength to bear it!"

"Oh - sacrilege you call it, if I stand up for the honor of my God and expect from Him a visible sign against His adversaries? You do not know the great God very well, and yet you dare to fight the holy faith in His messenger? (I knew: only because I was a Roman, nothing could happen to me, therefore I continued:) Behold, as my God will help these sick people now, so He might punish you. But the Almighty is patient and of great kindness, and His longsuffering with all who err, knows no bounds. Through Jesus, His love as Father is revealed to us, His children. He wanted to heal all our sickness and commanded us to do the same. Therefore, I ask you to bring your sick here now, so that our God may show Himself to be the great Helper and a kind Father toward His suffering children."

Hesitantly, seven came, afflicted with all kinds of ills, and kneeling they awaited what was coming.

Then I stood before these sick people and asked aloud: "Do you believe that God alone can make you truly well, answer me!"

"Yes - we believe that!" - they answered earnestly.

"You know that no man can heal you:" I said, moved - "but God's goodness wants to reveal itself to you today - and so I say to you: In the name of God, the eternal Father, and His Son Jesus Christ - be well! - He alone has helped you! Now praise and glorify His holy name! - Amen!"

The sick stood up - they were healthy, healed by the power of faith! Healthy because He wanted to glorify Himself as the One who is glorified in all the heavens! Loudly the believers rejoiced. Thanking and praising, the healed ones left the room.

But I approached the priest again and said: "Who is a friend of God - you or I? It can not be both of us, otherwise we would be of the same mind. God and His angels and His friends want only good, want not only to be loved, but also to lead others with forgiving love to the great God of love and mercy. This is what Jesus of Nazareth did! What did you do? See that His hand does not punish you."

So we left the room, but later we met again in the inn.

All those present had listened to the words of Ursus with tension and emotion, and he continued: "Look, dear friends, the times are not over when Jesus helps visibly, but He wants to give us real opportunities to testify to His helping love, wisdom and mercy for Him from His power at any time. Therefore, do not avoid the work for Jesus, but seek it! For on the shoulders of His children He now lays the office which was intended for His angels since eternity. Conquer the hearts of your fellow men so that they also believe in the great

Jesus, then you have prepared a place for Him from which He can work visibly! May His blessing and the power of His love be yours! Amen."

After a long silence, Elisa said, "Dear Ursus! I want to possess your faith too! This clear consciousness: 'God is my part!' - must be a different knowledge than ours, because we often do not experience an answer to our requests. I would never dare to say in front of a crowd: 'The Lord will make you well now! If these seven had remained sick, and God had only wanted to test your courage, what would you have done?'

"Mother Elisa" - Ursus replied - "now you have not given great honor to your indwelling God! For either you trust in the great goodness of your God and can firmly rely on Him, or you only know God - as you may know me. See, I too had to struggle until my own ego was silenced, and only then did God's voice become clearly audible to me. All talking and preaching, all hoping and asking to hear this clear voice within oneself is mostly fruitless as long as one's own ego, which is always pushing forward with all its desires, does not learn to be silent!

You can love the Savior Jesus and pray to Him fervently, you can believe all His words, but the conditions for the working of Divine healing powers are only half fulfilled.

But if you can enter into His high intentions of love, into the Spirit made so evident to us in all His words, then you will be seized by His holy life and can let Him work through you. Remember: It was not I who wanted to speak and testify there, but His Spirit in me urged me to testify for Him! It was the Holy Spirit who was promised to all by the Master before He visibly left the earth, and, dear Elisa, His words: 'When I will no longer be here, the Spirit of Truth will come to you and teach you the right wisdom!' - will surely come true!

I experience His word within! But His word makes me free from all inhibitions. It makes me strong and alive. It makes me a servant of His merciful love.

When my thoughts wander up to the glorious starry worlds or into the depths of the surging sea or into the colorful life and hustle and bustle of people, I say to myself the words: 'You glorious Father, all this tells me but little of their inner life. But now that I have found You in me, all these visible things tell me so much of the wonders of Your greatness and wisdom, for everything now reveals itself to my spirit as holy life from You.'

This is what my experiences teach me. But this life can only be recognized from the completely New Spirit, which Jesus has given us. If you and others have not yet had this experience, it is only because your own ego, which pushes itself forward, can still conceal this innermost life from God. God lives in everyone, but according to our faith and desire, He reveals Himself to us."

The mother Elisa replied: "But my brother, I do not understand that it should be up to me if God does not give me what I pray for. I can only ask, as you and others pray, and yet - how often our prayer remains unfulfilled."

"My dear mother and sister Elisa! There is still a mystery hidden here, the darkness of which must be cleared before you can understand my way of praying. The eternal God is only One in power and glory, but in you He can only be - what your soul makes of Him.

Your faith may be greater than mine, but whether your God in you is as glorious, as overflowing with love and mercy as the God in me, cannot be judged, since this lies deeply locked in the chamber of your heart. Only in the effect of His Divine fullness through us, this becomes obvious!

Therefore rejoice in your God, as I always rejoice in Him! To one it is given to provide for ten, to another for a thousand. But therefore no envy among ourselves, for all that we give, must first be received from Him. The more glorious my God lives in me, the more glorious the exhibition of His life through me! The more limited God in man, the less the living out. The more glorious the conception of His Love-Spirit, the greater His sphere of power in the breast of His child."

"Brother Ursus, stop" - Elisa cried excitedly - "I am overwhelmed by the glory of your Father! Compared to this, our concepts are but quite small. But you have taught me of the greatness of your God in man, and for that I thank you!"

5. Divine guidance

Meanwhile, Achibald rode eastward with his comrades on bad sandy paths and said to the oldest of his men: "This is my last service, and so I leave the leadership to you already today!" He wanted to gather his thoughts in order to be awake and pay attention to the Divine guidance within him. After a few hours of sharp riding, a small inn invited him to stop. Achibald asked for some bread and wine, and since the innkeeper served his guests himself, he asked him how much farther the next village was - "I suppose we have taken a wrong road."

"There are no larger towns here in the wide radius, only small settlements" - replied the innkeeper - "because in former times there was almost no traffic to Syria. Only in the last few months have trade trains from the hinterland passed through here more often; but I have never been able to find out what goods they were actually loaded with."

Achibald listened, he considered, and then asked: "When do you think the last wagons passed this way?"

"Just today a caravan passed by, but only the leader, who was a Templar, stopped in."

Achibald rose suddenly, a hunch telling his alert senses that he was on the path he sought, and with his companions rode hastily after the wagons. After only an hour, they noticed in the distance a group of people in that lonely region, and on rapid approaching, they saw two young prisoners being cruelly whipped by other men.

"Stop!" - cried Achibald indignantly - "What is happening here? Who gave you the order to do this?"

A defiant silence followed, then one of the prisoners said: "Lord, a God must have sent you! We are prisoners, and they wanted to ravish my wife, so we defended ourselves, and that's why this punishment!"

"Is this your right" - Achibald asked sternly - "to punish two defenseless people so severely? Quickly, tie up these tormentors!" - he commanded his companions, who had already been waiting. And turning to the beaten men, he learned that their caravan had already gone ahead with other prisoners, soon to encamp. So the horsemen followed them with the prisoners and soon reached them.

"Are you the one in charge of this train?" - Achibald asked a scowling Templar. "Did you give the order for their flogging?"

The latter was startled at the sight of the Romans, but then said defiantly: "Yes, I am! - And it is my right, so I punish as I see fit. These criminals deserve no leniency because they have transgressed against my orders."

Achibald said: "As far as I know, no one who has the task of transferring goods or people from one hand to another may impose punishments on his own authority, but he has to report the offence to his authority only at the destination. But I have the task to intervene against such leaders who knowingly transgress our Roman laws! Since you arbitrarily had this cruel punishment carried out on the two prisoners, I declare you relieved of your office!"

He ordered his companions: "Quickly, bind his hands and feet, I will hand him over to our captain!" The order was carried out immediately. But there were still 10 guards standing apart, who were afraid of the Romans. Achibald ordered them: "Bring your weapons here! Nothing will happen to you if you have a clear conscience, but for now, you too are our prisoners."

Now he turned to the innocent prisoners and asked: "Why are you bound? What crime have you committed?" Said one: "Dear lord, because the Templars surprised us at an evening meeting where we were singing praises to the great Savior Jesus and wanted to strengthen our faith in Him by His words, they captured many of us - for no other reason - and have loaded us and still others bound onto these wagons; but our future is unknown to us."

Achibald immediately had all the prisoners freed and said: "You are free! For according to our law, you have owed nothing that banishes you from your homeland!" Tears stood in his eyes as he hailed the men, whooping with joy, as his friends; then he spoke further: "But now consider, where will you go?"

And one said: "Our homeland is closed to us, therefore it would be all the same to us where we go, only not back to Judea!"

Then Achibald said: "So I will take care of you." He went to the two beaten men who were being cared for by the others and asked: "Where is your wife? Why have not the women come to us?" He received in reply, "Lord, you must forgive them; the women are almost all stripped of their outer garments and are ashamed to come before the eyes of strange men."

"So get them their clothes" - commanded Achibald; and went back to his comrades. He had the chained Templar and the guards taken to the wagons and chained their feet, as they had treated their prisoners before. In the meantime, the women came, dressed in light cloths, and thanked him with tears of joy for their deliverance from severe distress.

Achibald said to his people: "See here - if the opportunity is used to make needy people happy, how beautiful life can be! I have now thought it best that we stay here this night, and early in the morning we bring the whole wagon company to Bernhart; then our Cornelius may decide on everything else."

He negotiated with the owner of the wagons and animals, and they agreed on turning back to Bernhart's house. Soon the cooking fires were blazing, the animals were grazing, and then everyone sought rest after this so eventful day.

Already in the morning they set out; it was a difficult way back - but finally, when the sun was already setting, they arrived tired but happy at Bernhart's property.

Cornelius was shocked by the misery of the young Christians, and Ursus and Elisa sympathetically took care of their accommodation. All of them were immensely grateful for the love shown to them after the days of suffering they had endured, for they had never experienced such care.

In order to give a consecrated conclusion to all the experiences of that day, Ursus suggested that they camp together in the open air, so that the souls might refresh themselves in the great love of Jesus; and so he told them of his first encounter with the risen Jesus. Deeply impressed by this special gift, everyone concluded this beautiful evening in devotion and praise of all the wise Divine guidance.

The new day brought many decisions. Eusebius moved back home with his children. Cornelius and Ursus took leave of their friends, and all looked forward to seeing them again at the wedding. The prisoners came to Capernaum for judgment under strict Roman guard.

Those rescued from severe hardship, were temporarily incorporated into the community of Bernhart's house, to settle later also in the new Roman colony, and could thus look forward to a peaceful future.

6. The weddings

In the house of Eusebius there was increased enthusiasm for work. According to Elim, roads and paths were immediately laid out on the newly acquired land. Many workers and craftsmen were busy, building one house after another, and God's blessing visibly rested on such joyful activity.

Achibald now lived in Bernhart's house to supervise the work for the new Roman colony. Cornelius had sent large caravans from state funds with builders and all the necessary material, and after three months, it could already be reported that the great work was nearing completion.

The wedding day could be fixed. Cornelius and Ursus received the invitation. And then Mother Elisa and her daughters prepared to leave for Father Eusebius, and Achibald accompanied them.

A day before the celebration, Captain Cornelius arrived with various Roman officials who were his friends but not yet followers of Jesus, accompanied by a Roman priest who had embraced the Christian faith and was to perform the three wedding ceremonies.

Cornelius inspected the new settlement in detail and thankfully shook Elim's hand for all his efforts and care.

In the meantime new guests had arrived, namely Ursus with a caravan from Bethany, since many brothers and sisters from there wanted to establish their own home in Achibald's new settlement.

As a special surprise, Mary, the mother of Jesus, had come along, as well as Lazarus with his sister Mary, and to the greatest joy of all, the two disciples John and Peter. Ruth was very happy to meet the mother of Jesus; the men gathered around the two apostles and listened devoutly to their testimonies of Jesus' life on earth, which also made a deep impression on the Roman priest.

For the new home of his Achibald, Cornelius himself had undertaken the entire furnishing; it was to be his wedding gift, and therefore none of them was to visit it beforehand.

The next morning, when all the wedding guests had gathered after the meal, they marched with joyful songs of praise to Achibald's new home, where all the festivities were to take place. At the head of the procession walked old Eusebius between Cornelius and Bernhart; they were followed by the three young men Achibald, Joseph and Joram. Between the two Marys walked the mother Elisa and behind them, the three brides in festively adorned dresses. Behind them, Ursus with the two apostles and then the other guests.

At the border of the settlement up to the new home, Roman soldiers had lined up, their weapons flashing in the sun, and with raised arms, they greeted the wedding procession. At the entrance of the house, Elim was waiting for the arrivals with two Roman heralds; and at his signal, five trumpet fanfares each came from the right and left to greet the guests.

Elim asked for the office of unlocking the new home now, and then the first to enter were the three fathers. Surprised, the guests looked into the beauty of a large hall and at a tall

ivory cross decorated with flowers, behind which stood seven lighted candlesticks. The heralds asked all to be seated.

All eyes were now on the imperial official, who presented the young husbands with Roman charters granting them extensive powers over their settlements; and the mother Elisa was appointed superintendent of the newly built orphanage.

After that, the priest performed the three marriage ceremonies according to the Roman rite, and with prayer and a blessing from the Psalms, this simple ceremony was concluded.

The priest now asked the apostle John to give this feast still the right consecration, and John went with Peter to the altar and began: "My beloved friends, brothers and sisters! Through this rare feast, given to us by Divine Love, we are gathered here - and as a wedding congregation, have received the blessing of our great God, our true Father from eternity. We, as called witnesses of His Son, our Master Jesus Christ, have yet to deliver to you in this consecrated hour a supreme testimony of His love for His human children, and so I ask you: Reach out your hands to one another, let us join together in intimate union, so that the holy current of His love-power may permeate us all!" (All join hands, thus forming a chain among themselves and listened expectantly to what is now coming).

"Jesus, the kind Savior of all people, loves us so dearly that He Himself in this hour wants to consecrate this your feast by His visible presence, in order to renew the holy covenant of heart with all of you and to strengthen it for the trials of life!"

Peter then took a step to the left, and between the two apostles, the shining white figure of Jesus became visible to all!

Deeply moved in devotion, all eyes looked at Him! No-one could escape the holiness of this moment. After a consecrated silence, John continued: "Even if His mouth is silent, even though everyone would like to hear words from Him, the Glorious One, His will be our law!

But His holy will is to communicate with His true children only in their hearts! How gladly He, as the purest Love, wants to speak with every human child, as soon as it decides to enter into an innermost heart-covenant with Him!"

Blessingly, the Lord now raised His hands - at that moment everyone was seized by a strong current of Divine power and clarity. Each one felt the blessing hand of the great Savior resting on him. But after a moment of soundless silence - His visible figure had disappeared.

Minutes passed - then John continued: "As a gracious gift of our kind Master I may now announce to you: Never in your life will you be able to forget this holy sight! And if ever hard things come upon you to test your trust in God, remember this hour when Jesus visibly established a covenant with you as proof of His constant presence, which wants to flow through us with Divine power, if we remain aware of His helping love!

And now listen further: You Achibald, Joseph and Joram - from now on be far from any fear! Imbued with the creative victorious Spirit, His glorious assistance wants to cooperate in all your activities, invisible to the world, but His blessing shall become apparent to all believers.

May you three young women be given the gift of bringing help to the sick and the spiritually distressed. May His holy will of love always make it evident to your hearts to what extent help is appropriate. What your hands bless, shall be blessed!

To you, dear congregation, I say: Not a day may pass when you do not consciously distribute something of this blessing love that Jesus gave you today. Now Brother Peter may continue to speak as a faithful witness of Jesus' redeeming love."

And Peter began: "Dear brothers, dear friends! This hour was indeed for all of us a new link in the chain of His proofs of grace. Jesus, who sacrificed Himself on Golgotha for humanity that had fallen away from God - and rose from the dead as the Victor over death, has made us, His disciples, bearers of His Redeeming Spirit, in order to lead back all who have erred and strayed to the truly Divine Being and Life.

Let no-one say: I cannot and must not approach Him, because I was too deeply immersed in the worldly, but let everyone be aware: this realization of His redemptive intention, should be an incentive for us to awaken also something of this redeeming Spirit in us! But not only to possess it, but to realize it in our neighbor and to glorify Jesus through it.

The radiant light in His teachings should show us new, luminous ways for the activity of our neighborly love, and His assistance will give us the clarity and strength for any success. What true, selfless love wants through you is as if God wants it, and already bears the stamp of Divine blessing.

So now accept the gift of this great joy for the exercise of your love for your neighbor and contribute to the awakening in others of such joy of heart in voluntary helping! Amen."

Cornelius then asked those present to partake of the feast and led them upstairs, where a wedding table was laid out such as no-one had ever seen. White-robed servants were waiting for the guests and directed them to their places. Two harpists sat on a raised platform and accompanied the festive mood with delicate singing.

Cornelius stood up, folded his hands and said: "My children, friends and brothers! Before my inner eye, the figure of Jesus comes alive again. In His Spirit of loving service, I had this feast prepared for you, and now we want to thank Him Who so lovingly revealed Himself to us, and so join with me in the petition: "Lord! You have again poured out Your love in abundance and want to make us happy with Your gifts, and You have also laid this table in abundance! Therefore we thank You from the depth of our hearts and ask You: Be present! Be our guest! And bless also these gifts, as You have blessed us! Amen."

The harp singers sounded their melodies, and it became a joyful meal for all.

At the end, Elisa asked Mary the mother, to tell some more stories about the childhood of Jesus, and so scenes from the daily life with His parents were unrolled before them, as no one knew it yet. Mary concluded: "There is not a day in the life of Jesus when He forgot His holy task, His great goal!

What I could not recognize at that time, shines to me today as His earnest striving for unity with God. What were all our worries, struggles and fears about Him? Nothing more than too little faith and trust. While Jesus wrestled with inner temptations and longed for love and understanding, we clung more to what the temple taught as right and wanted to teach Him.

Yet we never heard a rebuke from Him about our failure to understand His high purposes. And when I suffered from the discord of our different views, He always found the right word of comfort, and His tender understanding for our inadequacy was like a balm. He stood high above our human weaknesses, but for all of us He was the Helping and Redeeming One! For all of us, the eternally pleasing One!

I am not blessed because I was His mother, no, blessed are all those who lovingly prepare their hearts as a dwelling place for Him and have only one concern: Never to grieve Him, but are joyfully ready to live for Him, and if it is necessary, also to die for Him! What a tremendous love He had for His brethren is evident from His word, when, dying, He said to me: "Behold, this is now your son!" Only this legacy has made me more clearly aware of my tasks! For in every human child, I now see the desire for right, understanding motherly love!

Dear friends! The world still resists against this selfless, even sacrificing Spirit of understanding love. But the time will come once again when this Spirit will put a stop to all destructive powers in order to fully realize His kingdom of peace. Rejoice, dear ones, all of you who are called to cooperate in His great work! For from now on there is no higher service of love and no greater joy than to help one's neighbor and to acknowledge Jesus as the Most High."

Mary was silent - her every word was received with holy emotion - but now those who sought Him least of all, wanted to know even more. But Mary explained to them: "In the serving love for your neighbor, His Spirit already comes to meet you. Experience this first, and your concepts of His nature will also expand."

Cornelius now ordered a rest for all, but in the evening they wanted to conclude this festive day with a common devotion. The men gladly visited the house, yard and garden; and Elim, as appointed steward, had much to explain.

Lazarus promised to send still some useful people to help, which he had so many of, because Bethany had become a refuge for so many persecuted ones.

The mother Mary had joined the women. Elisa felt like a child in her silent blessing.

The father Eusebius had never experienced so much love as today and said in a joyful tone to his friend Bernhart: "My brother, how the good God has transformed the night of terror of that time into the greatest blessing! We may well rejoice over it forever."

When evening came, the servants invited the guests back into the large dining room. John said the blessing and concluded: "You look into our hearts, into our thoughts, and these announce to You our heartfelt thanks, which we as Your children now want to offer You. Your will be done always! For Yours is the kingdom and the power and all glory! Amen."

The harp-singers softly intoned solemn melodies, and after the meal, Cornelius adjourned the guests to the roof of the house for an evening devotion. Elim had arranged comfortable seats for everyone, the altar from the lower hall was now up here, and the seven candlesticks were already burning.

The harpists on each side of the altar introduced the evening blessing with soft chords, and Ruth wanted to sing a psalm of sorrow and of the great joy of salvation. She began in a beautiful voice, accompanied by both harps, Psalm 126, which can still show us today how we are freed from the captivity of our erroneous concepts, from selfishness and self-will through all the Divine guidance in our lives.

When Ruth sat down again on her place next to Achibald, John rose, went to the altar and spoke: "Faded away are the sounds, faded away our song of praise, but tones and praise live on as vibrations in our hearts. A great day, a day of joy and fulfillment of many desires lies behind us, but more importantly, a day that united us intimately with the Lord!

My friends, we, as His disciples, have the task to bear witness to everything that can glorify our Lord and Master Christ Jesus, because He is the only Lord of all worlds! Out of love for His lost creatures, the Almighty Creator Himself became a man in Jesus. He wanted to free this earth and its inhabitants from all the fetters of self-love and distance from God, which is the cause of all suffering. Again and again Jesus showed us the great Creator as Father and His glorious intentions with the guidance of human souls towards their perfection. But the inhabitants of this earth often forgot about their Creator and Sustainer and wanted to arrange their living together according to their own laws. How clearly Jesus revealed to us the true nature of the Godhead and His intentions with the creation of this earth. It would have been the duty of every human being to at least examine His revelations and then accept their truths - or not. But only a few took the trouble to understand His high mission, to understand something of the essence of God - and these became His friends. All others, however, rejected this truly rare man without hesitation - and became His most bitter enemies. As Jesus' greatness, His power and the glory of His teaching increased, so did the will of His enemies to destroy Him. And this true friend and Savior of all poor and sick let these enemies apparently triumph over Him. But He wanted to show us a new way how every human being learns to overcome his self-love through struggle and suffering in order to be able to bless even his enemies and thereby become more like God. Thus He revealed to us the glory of the Kingdom of God' in our own inner world. And that is why today you shall look into such a person for a moment, into whom we are not allowed to penetrate otherwise, but who nevertheless projects into our outer being on earth. Thus I say now according to the will of the Lord - "Hephata!" - open up!"

7. Stephen

Light-clouds surround the listeners - another light begins to shine, and in this brightness, a beautiful landscape suddenly lies before everyone's eyes. In the distance a temple becomes visible, it is as if it were coming towards them. The domes shine like gold, and now the open temple door is already so close that they look into the inner hall and immediately step inside. Their goal has been reached, they are all now visitors of this temple. Through another entrance many white-clothed happy people come in, but these do not yet see the earthly people. They all take their places, the female visitors on the left and the male visitors on the right. In a gallery, a choir of children stands next to the organ, on which a youth is playing, and with bright, joyful voices, they begin to sing a song of praise, thanksgiving and adoration.

Now a priest comes - it is Stephen, who was stoned by the temple-henchmen. His first look greets the visitors from earth, and so he speaks to them: "Brothers and sisters, who are allowed to stay today in this present world of mine by the grace of God, I greet you! What I as a human being could not have imagined, could not have understood, here it is reality! It was difficult for me to settle into these beauties, into this unspeakable splendor, while a nightmare from the earthly still weighed on my soul, but my Jesus Himself introduced me to this world, as my home.

When I asked: How many such beautiful heavens are there? He said: "These are without number! But your world exists only once, because everything that you find here, you yourself have formed so beautifully through your love for Me and for your neighbor. It is a great joy to Me that you want to share your world with those who also had to leave their earthly life for the sake of My name, and create for them a home worthy of My true children."

So I think only in melancholy of my earthly brothers who still sigh under the heaviness of the worry and the suffering and do not suspect what waits for them once. The greatest bliss is the carelessness in which we all live here, since we now recognize the wise intentions of God with all our guidance. Here, the slightest thought or wish finds its fulfillment in the shortest time.

Admittedly, we also work and create here, but it does not make us tired, but only more powerful and joyful. In this world of mine, we all feel so free and happy, because no longer the slightest pull to the lower, constricts the own inner life. Look around, everywhere is order and harmony, and in this radiance, the great God reveals Himself to us as the Source of all light and life.

Out of love for you - now arises in my heart the desire to give you a proof of this experience into your earthly world. Therefore, I will give each of you a drink that will make your inner spirit stronger, and you shall always feel the delicious taste again, as we think of each other and meet on the spiritual level.

Stephen called out a name, then a young man came with a jar and cup of transparent gold. Stephen took both and handed the filled cup to everyone, first to the mother Mary. With each one, he said short words of blessing, but all saw: the jar did not become emptier. "It is a gift of grace of Eternal Love" - he said in conclusion - "I may distribute as much as I want, and it is immediately replaced, be it bread, be it wine, be it fruit - the storerooms are always filled.

Oh My brothers! Never forget this holy hour when you were allowed to stay in your brother's heaven. I still see questions in you, so I say for consolation: Not only in heaven is the eternal Father at home, but also with His still struggling children on your earth; and it makes Him happy, if they do not shy away from the struggle for the highest. You will find Him in you, if your hearts are inflamed with love. Let yourself still be blessed by me: His Spirit come over you! Let Him be your inner Guide and give your spirit the testimony that you are His children! Amen!"

Through these words of Stephen to his earthly brothers, the others present in the temple were first informed of this, and so they now also saw these visitors, who, although in their astral bodies, nevertheless looked exactly like those living in the flesh. There were also acquaintances of them, such as the mother Mary, Lazarus, John and Peter, and the desire arose in the departed ones to speak with them.

Then Stephen said: "It is also the desire of our Holy Father that you exchange words with your brothers on earth, therefore everything is prepared before the temple. Let every trait of love for one another find its fulfillment." And so the celebration was over.

Stephen had joined Eusebius and said: "Brother, he who enters here into the hereafter, first learns to know the Lord's infinite love. But it is difficult to speak to you of it, because our words come from the spirit-life and are also understandable only for your spirit. As soon as it is enlightened by the spiritual life here, then comes the urge to create and thereby to ever new glories. Therefore use your earthly days properly, because you find every active love-thought here as delicious fruit; and from it, a new creation arises in your own eternal world.

Now greet your wife there, who is conversing with your children, but remember that this hour is a delicious gift of God's great grace!"

Eusebius hurried to where his children and Achibald were conversing with a lovely creature. It cost him trouble to say even a word, but his wife greeted him: "Eusebius! Rejoice in this hour of grace, which I have often longed for, to prove to you how God rewards. Our life together is not over, but only interrupted to pass into a higher existence. I look forward to when we shall again serve His great work together." And to Achibald she said: "But to you, my son, who today have confessed your God-given wife, I say: keep each other dear out of the Spirit of Jesus, who only wants to make happy, then there will be blessing on your life. But you, Joseph and Joram, accept also these words, that they may be to you a hint to that love, which can also die for Jesus!"

John now took Stephen by the hand and said: "Brother, this time here is over, the Lord is calling us back to earth. But your love will remain unforgotten to us."

Slowly the beauties of this world disappear, slowly the thoughts go back to the earthly reality, and as if a veil tears - all see themselves united again on the roof.

After a long silence - and when all eyes were focused on John, he spoke: "When we fully understand the importance of this day and this hour, only then will we realize how a Divine Father seeks to educate us as His children. We have dwelt in soul and spirit in the sphere of our departed brother and have seen his world and have experienced the power of love that could make us experience such things in order to realize more joyfully all the tasks that approach us."

And John spoke further: "Now I see the Lord coming to us! Over His eyes is a glow, and He speaks to you now - through me: Not without reason I have chosen this earth and lived

here as a man, and not without reason I still stay on this earth seeking, helping and redeeming, as this hour gives you all the proof. I have indeed ascended for your eyes from the earthly, and some ask: 'If I could see You only once!'

My Father's heart wants to fulfill every request, but My children should develop freely in their faith and in their love. They should build their inner world out of their own will. My children should carry My life within themselves, interweave My I with their own I, in order to be citizens of heaven for all the world as an example already on earth.

Therefore, sanctify yourselves even more in order to be strengthened when the enemy of all inner life tries again and again to desecrate Me and you!

Children! The world demands your commitment, demands the last in order to deprive you of the most glorious! But it makes you ripe for My grace. Therefore, free yourselves from the old love for everything transient, in order to unfold the highest of My life in you! But only so much of it can be given to you as you sacrifice to the others. But if you live in My love and in the righteous order, My blessing will be visible - revealed to all the world through you. Amen!"

Then John lifted his hands and said: "According to His holy will, receive His blessing, so that you may become more alive in love for Him and for your neighbor! Remain in Him, so that He may also remain in you! Amen. Amen. Amen." The celebration was over. And deeply moved, all the guests wandered back to the house of Eusebius.

On the next morning, Cornelius, Ursus and Bernhart accompanied the young couple to their new home and thus to their new life. Elim and the priest awaited Achibald there as the new lord and owner, and Elim said: "The order from God commands me to give you the keys to your home now. I will always be a faithful friend and just steward. The grace of the Lord and His blessing be with you!"

Then the workers belonging to the new settlement appeared with their relatives, and to them too, for the sake of order, the keys to their homes were solemnly handed over, although they were already living in them.

Achibald greeted each one and then said to them: "My friends and companions! I ask you all to help me in this beginning work of charity, to build a new home for many unfortunates. Let the guiding principle of our life together be: 'Faithfulness for faithfulness!' Let no-one leave the others in joy nor in sorrow - then Jesus, as the Lord of heaven and earth, will also visibly bless our covenant."

Ruth looked full of love at her Achibald, then she said to all: "The loving action of our God has placed me at the side of your lord, who wants to be brother and father to all of you. I ask you: Let us stand in right trust to each other, as the Savior taught us. Come quietly to me when love drives you, I would so gladly be a sister and mother to you all!"

8. Theophilus with John

Bethany was still the only place of refuge, where true comfort and right help was given to all persecuted. Lazarus was imbued with the power of holy love for all people, and felt inwardly united with Him who had made him so rich and exalted above all petty things, for not a day passed in which new proofs of Divine love and miraculous guidance were not revealed to him.

One morning, when Lazarus was about to go to Jerusalem with some servants to sell oil and fruits, Theophilus came and asked to be allowed to go with him to spend a few hours with the disciples.

On the way, Lazarus said: "Dear Theophilus, it pleases me to talk to you alone for once. You know, I became acquainted with new friends in the north of Galilee through Ursus a short time ago. The nature of their work is similar to ours, only they lack further instruction in our teachings of faith. Would you like to work there as a teacher and priest with some like-minded people? I know that a lot of material things are done by the Roman friends, but in the end it is important that the congregation is initiated into the deeper understanding of the teachings of Jesus. And so I think you would be the right person to do that."

Theophilus considered - then he said seriously: "Dear Lazarus, what you advise me here is as if the Lord is saying it to me. Therefore I thank you from my heart and will ask the Lord to make me worthy of this service in His name. You can organize all that is necessary for this and appoint the brothers who are to go with me, for the most important thing is that we all be imbued with the true Spirit of Jesus, so that the holy Word of God may have a reviving effect on their hearts and the concepts of His teaching may have an ever more real and glorious effect in the earthly."

Lazarus was pleased about the quick approval and explained: "I often experience it with the newcomers that they, although they did not know Jesus in His life on earth, still give room to quite human ideas of Him, which can once lead to great errors.

Today, when since His visible departure from us the Lord and Master is purely divinized, His humanity must not push itself into the foreground of our concepts, since thereby His eternal Father-Spirit would be concealed. Therefore, my Theophilus, this my provision for the new settlements of our friends."

"I understand you perfectly, dear Lazarus," answered Theophilus, "and if you are convinced that I am the right one, then my departure from you can no longer be difficult for me. I feel a proof of Divine grace in being able to benefit my brothers and also our Jesus in this way."

From afar they saw Jerusalem. The traffic was particularly lively on this side, and Lazarus was struck by the fact that many more soldiers of the temple were to be seen than before. "This is not without significance" - he therefore said to Theophilus - "the temple is making efforts to maintain its prestige! One must pay attention to everything that is going on in our immediate as well as wider environment. Outwardly, Roman law protects us, but if something inside us deviates from the right life, it always strengthens the opponent.

It sure is right to be completely imbued with the consciousness: I am under the protection of the Most High! But this knowledge presupposes the greatest caution. The more the

temple is prepared, the clearer we must be within! Then the conditions are fulfilled, where God, the Father of us all, can redeem His Word and His promise: that He will not leave us nor forsake us."

What has not come to us in the last year, and you know it, my Theophilus, all suffering has always found a glorious solution."

"You are right, dear Lazarus. But when we think of all those who suffer for the sake of Jesus and languish in the prisons somewhere, what shall we actually do about it? Nothing can be done by force, and our prayers do not bring them the longed-for freedom either."

"My dear Theophilus" - said Lazarus seriously - "do not leave the ground on which Eternal Love has placed you! Have you not experienced in yourself that God has many ways and means to save His faithful. Our prayers may not save a brother from the prisons of the Templars, but we give them strength so that they become calm and trusting, and then God, as true Love that brings salvation, can help. As painful as it is to know brothers in faith in prisons, for those living in tribulation, every good thought is a light, a ray of sunshine. How much more is the heart filled with strength when I know that I am not abandoned, God is with me!

Always remember, everything has its wise reason and must serve the development upward and inward. The more you devote yourself completely in this sense to your holy task in life, the clearer your view will become, and you will see things in a completely different light than before. The time has passed when Jesus as a man was still concerned about our well-being, about our peace and security. Now that we know the means He gave us, and since we may carry His Spirit within us as a true Comforter and inner Guide, we ourselves are to shape our destiny and future being by our inner conduct.

It is our Lord's and eternal Father's greatest joy when a child of His love makes full use of all the gifts that make us free, happy and strong. All the powers of the deep finally melt into nothing, and all hostilities become fruitless. This is my faith and my knowledge, my comfort and my confidence."

Theophilus looked at Lazarus for a long time, then he said: "Brother, whoever hears you speak is also convinced of the truth of your words; they are life and give us life."

To this Lazarus answered: "Dear Theophilus, I have gotten into the habit to speak as little as possible. But when I speak, I always pursue a certain purpose, and this can be achieved only if I speak from a convinced heart. In the future, always remember what glorious tasks you have been given! For every human heart is called to be a dwelling place for the Lord and a refuge for poor, seeking souls. The disciples will reveal many things to you today, so that your spirit may learn to move more freely in order to perceive the glories of the inner life. And see, this cannot be revealed to you as from without, since only through the activity of your love, can your inner experience be opened up to you!"

Both were silent - then they came into the city, where Lazarus was well-known with young and old and returned many a greeting.

Theophilus got off the wagon and hurried to Mary's house, which used to be his parents' house. Only the mother of Jesus and John were present. After the warm greeting, Mary anxiously asked him: "Dear Theophilus, if possible, do not come to Jerusalem so often anymore! It is dangerous here for all who are known to be followers of the New Doctrine. Only when the necessity arises, and then not alone, always go on the road in threes if

possible, because caution, coupled with the necessary prudence, is a life-necessity. In the evening the disciples do not go out at all, lest their lives be endangered!"

"But dear Mother" - Theophilus replied incredulously - "it surely can't be that bad, the temple likes to cloak itself in the appearance of piety."

But Mary explained to him: "Believe a mother who has experienced the worst of the temple, it is now monstrous in the city of God! People disappear - no-one knows whereto; the relatives can turn to all authorities, they learn nothing.

Just a few days ago, two young women came to me for comfort for their grief, their husbands have not returned from an outing. All questions were useless, the temple itself wanted to do everything possible to bring light into the darkness, but I know it is only hypocritical speech. Nicodemus was here, he has resigned all his offices because he must feel complicit in these bad conditions."

Theophilus now asked Mary and John about various acquaintances whom he would have liked to visit once, but was answered that they could no longer have any interaction.

John said: "Brother, it would be irresponsible to use our house as a meeting place. We are indeed under Roman protection, but we are more closely guarded than thieves and robbers, so only those driven by love or need may come.

How often we are asked: 'Yes, how can the Lord allow all this?' Then I can only say again and again that the Lord is always with us and takes a full part in our destinies, but He cannot visibly inhibit or promote all developments because He has placed us on an elevated level of knowledge and freedom through His teachings. Only he who is united in himself with His Holy Spirit and can already grasp all the advantages that develop from it, can also protect himself, since every hostility, every intended harm is revealed to him beforehand by the inner voice.

To 'walk in the ways of the Lord' does not mean to only lead a pious and righteous life in the external sense, but also to be very attentive to the Divine spark within ourselves that gives us light and clarity, that becomes a cautioner and judge, even a guide for us, and always seeks to promote our free independence. He who regards his life as one given by the grace of God, will bear a much greater sense of responsibility than one who lives only because he is a human being. Behold, since we consider our life on earth as a grace from the Most High Being, our spirit has already become much more active and is concerned to create an ever richer inner life for itself. Therefore, I look with a calm heart and clear eyes at the present time, which is destined for every follower of the Lord to first prove his inner worth through trials!

Brother Peter was imprisoned, chained, but the next day he preached about the power of the Lord, which was revealed in him, to the horror of his tormentors, who did not know how he had escaped from prison. (Acts 5) This event proves that the enemies fear those who have become one with the Lord more than the other way around.

Therefore my advice, dear Theophilus: act consciously only according to the impulses of your spirit living in you! Rejoice in the great grace and rejoice even more in the glorious task which has been assigned to you through Lazarus!"

"Brother John, I marvel, as I have so often done, at your knowledge of all things, and almost fear that I shall not be able to stand before all those to whom I am to be something.

Of course, according to your words, all fear is useless, since the Spirit of the Lord gives to each one what will be needed."

"Dear Theophilus, do not worry about anything, not even about giving something extraordinary to your sisters and brothers; but all your experiences, your own experiences are enough. In addition, you experience the grace and love of God anew every day. With the thought: only to serve and only to please, you give room to the true Spirit out of God and create possibilities for Him to give ever greater and more glorious things from the Source, which is again His very innermost.

But we don't want to talk about that, because you will find the truth of all this in yourself. I keep it with the love, which only wants to make free and happy, and in this love, the Lord is the very nearest to me. If you carry the Spirit of the Lord as the highest and most precious thing in you, Eternal Love also has wonderful means to preserve your life here!"

"Oh dear John" - exclaimed Theophilus enthusiastically - "I wish I could be like you, so strong, so clear and good! Near you one is highly delighted. But how are you when you are alone?"

"I am never alone, because in my soul I am connected with so many - through charity. After all, every good thought is the true bread of life for one who lives in my soul, or as the Lord always said, who lives in our own world, and there are truly many of them. The more the Spirit of light receives living space in us, the more spiritualized becomes that which lives in your soul. The less of the lower lives in you, the more your spirit enters into free activity. So you see that I am always connected with heaven, although I still live here on earth. It is so beautiful, this double life - and to know: I am loved and I am allowed to love."

Mother Mary brought some refreshments, then Theophilus took his leave to meet Lazarus at the inn.

John spoke in anticipation: "Dear Theophilus, I feel as if I must tell you - stay here! Lazarus does not expect you to come."

But Theophilus said: "I feel as if I must go to him, as if someone is waiting for me -"

"So go in the Father's name, and His grace and blessing be with you!"

Mary also blessed him in spirit - and with a "Peace be with you", he cheerfully left.

9. In Jerusalem

Hurriedly, Theophilus walked through the streets, recognized by some with amazement. Suddenly, a man in a priest's robe kindly extended his hand to him and asked: "Are you really Ruben? - Or am I mistaken?"

"Yes, it is I" - Theophilus replied, delightedly recognizing his former friend Jonah. "But as you can already see from my clothes, I no longer belong to the temple, but by the great grace of God am now a free man. I am doing better than expected, and so are my parents."

"Ruben! I have not seen you for five years, because I had to work in Persia. What may have happened to make you part with the temple? You were, after all, one of its most obedient servants."

"My dear Jonah, this cannot be discussed in the street. But if you will come with me to the inn of Lazarus, there we can talk undisturbed."

"Gladly, Ruben - after all, the temple leaves its servants free to spend their time as they please." And soon they were both sitting there in a room alone. Theophilus related: "I am not only a different man in dress, but also in spirit" - and described to his attentively listening friend the recognition of his dead faith, his severe suffering thereafter, and his deliverance from all dangers through the miracle-working love of the Savior.

Hours passed thereby; at the end, Jonah took his hand: "So Theophilus is now your name! I thank you for your clear presentation about Jesus, but I cannot understand all this yet. What have we to do with the Nazarene? He is dead for us, and for the temple He remains dead! I am completely dependent on the temple, my support for my wife and child is guaranteed, and that is also important.

"Dear Jonah, that is your conception of the outer life; but I tell you, I have only known a happy life since I was able to separate myself from the temple. My sphere of activity is now richer in responsibility and inner duties, but how rich also in peace and joy. Dear Jonah, you have not met Jesus of Nazareth, perhaps you have only heard about Him, His teachings and deeds and you will have thought doubtfully: As long as I do not experience it myself, I do not believe anything.

Know that since Jesus, the One who rose from death, intervened in my proud, cold life, looked into the deepest part of my soul and brought us only love, help, power and peace, I feel intimately connected with Him! After His death, this Jesus, as a spiritually indestructible light-entity, gave proof to all His disciples and followers that not only He, but also His great love and mercy will continue to work until eternity. Therefore, I ask you to test the spirit in Bethany once and the lives of all those who believe in Jesus as the Risen One and entrust their whole lives to Him."

"Ruben, listen to me - I would like to believe you, but today I can only say: I will follow your suggestions. I have heard many things about Jesus of Nazareth also in Persia, but I was bound by my oath to the temple-faith, and we Jews had no right there to judge people of other faiths. But I thank you from my heart - it is enough for today. Give my regards to your father Enos, but let us both keep silent about this conversation towards everyone." And with a firm handshake, the two friends parted.

Jonah left hurriedly without entering the inn, Theophilus waited pensively for some time, then he went to the tenant and asked for Lazarus. But he was told that Lazarus had long since departed; he was to spend the night with Mother Mary, but not to come to Bethany alone. Lazarus had received bad news and advised to great caution.

Theophilus went to the guest room, a maid brought him a bowl of vegetables and a piece of bread and a cup of wine. While eating, he observed the guests, almost all strangers, but no Templars. He was glad and inwardly thanked the Lord for this grace.

Since Theophilus also understood other languages, he heard that again a great agitation against Nazarenes had taken place, and many were surprised in a secret meeting, captured and imprisoned. Theophilus would sure have liked to learn more details, but the insistent words of the tenant; 'Lazarus urges great caution', soon made him leave the inn to go to the home of Mother Mary. Still engrossed in the talk of the strangers, he did not notice two men following him at a short distance. And as he walked through an alley to buy something for Mary, he unsuspectingly entered a store to look at the larger selection. But suddenly he felt that he was in danger, and when he turned, he received hard blows on the head from the two men, so that he collapsed unconscious.

"That was successful" - said one to the seller - "no-one noticed anything! Quickly into the cellar with him, that we have no inconvenience!" In a few minutes, Theophilus was lying on a bundle of old rags in the cellar and was left to his fate.

When he awoke again after a long time, his head ached, he reached around and had to think about what had happened to him. He wanted to sit up, but he felt too weak; so he lay down again and continued sleeping.

Night came. In Mary's house, the hope was that Theophilus was in Bethany - and in Bethany, Theophilus was believed to be in good protection with Mary and the brothers.

But Ruth was so troubled inside; long after bedtime, she went to the sisters Mary and Martha and lamented her concern about Theophilus. Mary sought out her brother and asked: "Lazarus, come and see us sometime. Ruth cannot be reassured; she thinks that some misfortune has befallen Theophilus."

Without losing a word, Lazarus followed his sister and was, as he saw Ruth, also immediately convinced that a harm must have happened to Theophilus. But he said reassuringly: "Dear Ruth, keep your worry quietly to yourself, lest your parents and the others also be troubled; you can entrust yourself only to the Lord. But tomorrow in the morning I will go to the city to get certainty. Our lives are in God's hands, without His will, not a hair can be harmed on all of us and also with Theophilus. But should you feel right, then cheer up and unite all powers to render the evil ineffective."

"Dear Lazarus" - Ruth replied - "your words are well meant, but they do not penetrate my heart because pain for Theophilus lives in it."

"Dear Ruth" - Lazarus answered confidently - "believe in the Savior's love, power and glory, and all will be well. The Lord tests no-one in vain and has helpers in abundance who are at His service. But if you stand doubting before the Lord's power, then the adversary will have an easy time, because we, as human children, are the will-bearers of our God and Father. Do not deviate from the knowledge with any thought: The Lord is with us in spirit and with all those who love Him and look to Him with faith! Go now to rest - tomorrow we shall have enlightenment."

Lazarus went - and arrived in his chamber, he looked still long into the starry sky and prayed: "Oh my Jesus, You my love! When will the suffering come to an end? Hatred is growing against You and Your opposition is growing, and you do not want to strike back where your own are being struck. When will You truly be able to triumph over Your enemies?"

"My brother" - it rings back in him - "for Me there are no more enemies, since I have gone so far in My love and have made provision that all will still find themselves with Me. People are enemies to themselves, but I only want their good! You should want the same! This is what Eternal Love says to you, Who knows no enemy, but only the lost."

Early in the morning, Lazarus was already on his way to Jerusalem with two servants; his hunch was right: Theophilus was not in Mary's house, and the innkeeper told him that Theophilus had left at the third hour in the afternoon to go to Mary's home.

"Should Jonah, who was with Theophilus in the upper room, have performed any bad thing?" - Lazarus doubtfully asked.

"I think not" - answered the innkeeper confidently - "for Theophilus showed true satisfaction in conversing with his former friend. Also, I know Jonah from before, and I know that he is a good character."

Lazarus said goodbye; in him the concern for Theophilus was pressing. So he hurried to the Roman commandant's office and also met the city captain, with whom he had been friends for a long time. The latter promised to look for the missing man, but he doubted that he would succeed, since the temple caste and the city administration were secretly supporting each other.

Depressed, Lazarus finally came home again, because he could not bring any good news. Miriam and Ruth were inwardly broken, while the father Enos said calmly: "Why then despair, since God has not withdrawn His help from us? We know that my Theophilus has not yet returned, but that is all. I have received the Lord's word: "I am salvation - and rescue!" And what He said to me is also true for others. Therefore I wait quietly until the time of fulfillment comes."

Lazarus was amazed at this greatness of faith and said praisingly: "Enos, keep your faith! The Lord is rewarding you, and you will be able to rejoice still."

Thus a few days passed; the others also suffered from the disappearance of Theophilus, a proof of how dear he had become to all. Ruth had become calmer, caring for her mother, who was sick with excitement, but this calm was something rigid.

It was on the pre-Sabbath when Jonah unsuspectingly came to Bethany to visit Theophilus and Enos; he knew that at this time no-one was working in the field or in the garden. Lazarus saw him coming from afar, went to meet him and greeted him kindly.

"Many thanks for your welcome" - said Jonah, "I know I am a Templar and not welcome in Bethany, but I want to visit my former friends Enos and his son Ruben, now Theophilus, for I seek advice and enlightenment from them."

"Then you are right with us:" - Lazarus replied - "but Theophilus has not returned since I last saw you; I even suspected you of being complicit in Theophilus' disappearance."

Jonah was deeply frightened and said: "Oh friend Lazarus, with great hope I directed my steps to Bethany, for life here suddenly became unbearable to me. Since Theophilus opened my eyes and told me many things I never thought of before, I have honestly fought with myself and got all prejudices out of me and have observed the life and goings-on in the temple as an inwardly free man. It cries out to heaven what all is being done now! Saul of Tarsus is filled with deepest hatred against all Nazarenes and persecutes them cruelly (see Acts 8). He has received the rights to do so from the temple, and all praise his zeal. I seek counsel and succour from you, but now sorrow has come to you as well."

Answered Lazarus: "Dear Jonah, therefore Bethany remains nevertheless a refuge for searching hearts, and you are just as welcome to us as if no misfortune had fallen with us. Enos is at your disposal at once, but I beg you to keep him from renewed agitation; his soul is so far calm and full of confidence." Both went into the house to inform Enos that a dear friend had come.

Jonah still spoke, surprised by the friendly reception: "Dear friend Lazarus, your welcome did my heart so much good! Though I come as a priest, you have greeted me as a friend, but truly the temple does not have the best of intentions for you."

"For this very reason, all who come to me from the temple are so dear to me, because through them I always receive new proofs of the great grace of God. If you had come with bad intentions, you would not be here, my dogs would not have let you through at all."

"Dogs? I haven't seen any" - Jonah replied - "do you want to tell me about them then? Strange, they haven't said a word about it in the temple."

Answered Lazarus: "You will see them - but you will also keep silent! Because they were a gift from the Lord Jesus when He was here on a visit."

Enos came, greeted Ruben's old friend warmly and said: "Jonah, what drives you as a priest to the traitor? Do you wish to reproach us, or does love for your friend drive you?"

Jonah said: "My old, faithful Enos, neither of these - but the need of my heart. Your son has torn the bandage from my eyes, and now I am faced with important choices. Either I remain what I am and make my good living, or I do as you do, turn my back on the temple and become a free man."

"Jonah, in all friendship, I can only advise you, decide on the latter!" - said Enos. "We have many Roman friends who will gladly pave the way for you to a new profession."

Jonah related: "The last days have been severe inward trials for me, and where should I turn for clear counsel? For Jesus your Savior alone, I cannot yet find."

Answered Lazarus: "Also we can show you the inner way to Him and with just this request: Love your neighbor and help him in all his needs!

Only when you come to a clear understanding of what God wants from us humans through such active love, will the Lord and Savior come to meet you! Of course, not as a visible person, but in your own heart feeling as joy, peace and undreamed-of bliss. All beginnings are difficult, but they are not possible without a free and serious will. For us, Jesus is the most perfect life. We are His friends and followers of His teachings of love. Consider my words - and come again with pleasure. But the Master can come only to those who seek Him in full earnest!"

"It is enough, dear friends" - said Jonah - "your love is known by all in town and country, and what you counsel me, I will obey."

The sister Martha brought ripe figs, bread and wine, that the guest might strengthen himself, but then Jonah wanted to go back to Jerusalem and said: "I have become considerably more peaceful around you, but if you want, still show me your dogs, they interest me."

As Lazarus and Enos accompanied their guest from the court, Lazarus whistled to his faithful guards, who immediately came running, wagging their tails. With their loyal eyes they looked at their master, as if they wanted to ask: Does the stranger also belong to us? Jonah, however, was startled to a halt and said: "I have never seen such animals; I would not like to make acquaintance with their teeth."

"These animals do no harm to anyone" - said Lazarus - "only those who come with bad intentions are not allowed in. By their barking we know that they are not friends, and we are immediately warned, and this is of the highest value. But now, for the time being, keep silent that you were in Bethany. God be with you! May His blessing rest on everything you do!"

The two turned back with the dogs, but Jonah wandered on. There was hope in him that it would also become light and clear in and around him, but the disappearance of Theophilus now caused him greater concern. On the way he met a crowd of men and women who also wanted to go to Jerusalem. He asked: "Where are you going? The sun has set, and Jerusalem is still an hour away.

Said one: "Sir, we want to go to the city and tomorrow to the temple, because our priests commanded us to pray in the holy place."

"You do well then -" Jonah replied - "but is not your synagogue as holy as the temple in the city of God? Jehovah sees you just as gladly in your little place consecrated to Him as in Jerusalem. Have not your priests given you the right information about this, or what do you expect in Jerusalem?"

"Sir" - said another - "we have many sick in our congregation; our priests are at a loss, saying that unless help comes from Jerusalem, we will all perish."

"I understand! Well, it is right that you have come, and you will also be helped. Go to the inn of Bethany, there I will meet you again, and I will gladly discuss everything else with you. But I must hurry, I have important things to do."

Thinking, he went quickly on his way, the plight of these men and women occupying his soul. With what faithful hopeful expectations they come to the holy city, and what will they experience? Oh God, Jehovah! Is there no way out to spare the seekers these disappointments? Oh God, give me the opportunity to help these people! With these thoughts he hurried to his home, where his wife greeted him with joy, but he said: "I must go away again! I have an important errand, a lot depends on it." And after a little refreshment, he went to the inn Bethany.

He asked the innkeeper for an interview. He recognized Jonah and was surprised to see a priest who seemed to be the opposite of the Templars, but he did not really trust him and said because of the reported guests: "Jonah, we help where we can, but do not be surprised if I hesitate. We are Romans and independent of the temple, but I do not want to

have him as a direct enemy. I will send a servant to the gate, and he can bring the people to us."

Jonah explained: "Listen, dear landlord, don't be offended by the fact that outwardly I am still a servant of the temple, inwardly I am no longer, and so I ask you: in the meantime have you heard anything from my friend Theophilus?"

"No, I could not hear a word on it. Here the Templars are reticent, since they only want to spy, but perhaps you could learn something in a purely Temple hostel."

"You give me good advice, which I will follow up immediately, so have thanks and trust my words."

Jonah went to a priestly hostel near the temple, where he was already known. There were discussions and questions, and at the neighboring table one told about the deeds of Saul of Tarshish. Jonah just listened and asked the one sitting next to him where the prisoners were actually staying, because he had not seen any in the temple yet.

"Yes, the temple council has become cautious" - the asked man - "since the Romans forbid it to use police power. That is why this is done quite secretly, but all the more sinister. Yes, it has even offered rewards for major arrests that have been kept quiet. If you feel like it, you can join such a procession undertaken by the temple militia."

"I am less in favor of this - but to get an insight into the life of the Nazarenes, I would be quite happy to join once, i.e. it should not be dangerous, since I do not love a fight."

"It is never dangerous, dear friend, for the Nazarenes are downright cowardly; they do not resist in the least and expect all help from their invisible Savior."

Jonah asked: "When could I come along, and in what garb does one go?"

"Only in the priestly garb, for this is the most respected. Come here tomorrow at the first watch of the night, and then we will talk further, since we must rely on our spies who have become Christians for appearances."

"All right, I will come, for I want to be a true servant of God."

He went back to his home, but a greater and greater ache burned in his heart. His wife looked at him anxiously, he spoke briefly: "I have important things to think about - I feel as if I am living among all the criminals.

"Jonah, let me share your sorrows!" - said his wife. "Your father's blessing to me was: 'Where you go, I will also go, and your God shall also be my God. I will keep to this in all circumstances.'"

"Yes, it is right that you think so, my Pura, but leave me alone for a few days, so that I can examine myself and then also decide about our future."

Pura said: "I feel what is going on in you, you are tormented by your priestly profession. You seek Divine truth and cannot find it in the temple. Your wise father once said to me: 'If the hour ever comes when Jonah no longer finds satisfaction in his profession as a priest, then seek to understand him. For the temple has departed from the ways of God, and the Word of God is but an empty semblance. Only a Messiah could make the holy Word again a nourishing bread for our life's tasks!'"

"Pura, your word falls like dew on my sore heart! Behold, today already I want to tell you: I am on the way to become a Christian, but I still have a difficult task to fulfill, but I must keep silent about it, since I have given my word to my friends."

Jonah remained alone - he considered again the words of Lazarus, for and against, but his whole inside fought against the behavior of the Templars. "If I had only the smallest proof of the existence of the Risen One, my decision would be an easy one!" - he said to himself, and wanted to reach for the scrolls of Isaiah - but he desisted. "What use are written words to me, I need living ones! But where to find them?" Now he went up to the balcony and looked for a long time into the radiant starry sky - then he prayed more fervently than ever before in his life: "Lord God of hosts! You can no longer hide Yourself from the distress I feel within me! I am poorer than Jacob, who had to flee from his brother, and to him You have shown Yourself. Let me experience only for a single moment that You are there, otherwise I must perish! Lord, as You have helped others, so help me!"

He was silent and waited. But nothing moved in him - nor around him. Then he asked himself: "Yes, what do I want to wait for? God is God and not a man or a visible being. It is folly to wait for something that is not visible. But how did Ruben-Theophilus say? He lives! And let Him be visible to those who believe in Him. Is it not presumption to demand proofs from the one in whom I do not believe?"

How did Lazarus say? When I have come to a better understanding, the Savior will meet me. Yes - what is the quickest way to reach this insight? Not by brooding over words! Therefore I will go to bed and wait for everything else calmly.

10. The Harp-player

Meanwhile, the innkeeper had sent a messenger to the gate to guide the reported strangers to the inn. When he met a troop of men and women there, he greeted them kindly and asked about their destination. "We will pray in the temple and satisfy our longing in the holy place where God dwells; but we wish to stop at the inn of Bethany."

"So I will lead you and spare you unnecessary questioning, for on the day before Sabbath, everyone loves rest" - the messenger replied.

Delighted, they came along. The innkeeper offered them food and wine. They were quiet, serious people, full of deep longing and holy desire for Divine grace. After they had visited their chambers, the innkeeper could ask more openly: "So you want to pray tomorrow in the temple - and you want a priest to work for you at the sacrificial table for the sake of your sick; so you still believe in help and healing from the side of the temple?"

"Good friend, for a man who dwells in the city of God, this is a whimsical speech. If we did not believe, we would not have come after all. Alas, the days are gone when a Savior healed the sick."

"By no means, dear friends" - replied the innkeeper - "the healing power of the good Savior Jesus still lives in His disciples; but these apostles can only go where there is a real need for their help. If you have already experienced times when the great Savior made you happy with His help, why do you no longer believe in His healing power today?"

"Dear friend" - replied the interrogated man - "why do you ask about it? You must know that a dead Savior can no longer help! And none of His disciples has been with us, but we have not asked for any, because our two priests gave us what we needed."

"Friends" - said the innkeeper - "I hear from your speeches that you do not know the Savior Jesus properly! For all those who have embraced this glorious Savior in their hearts, still cling to Him today with the same love as if He were still among us. That He could not stay with us, we all knew from His mouth; but we do not miss Him either, since He is still alive among us in spirit. Of course, whoever allows himself to be led away from Him by the priests, should not be surprised if the sick do not get well. The true followers of Jesus would rather be imprisoned than turn away from Him and pay homage to the Templars."

"Dear innkeeper" - said one of the strangers - "what you tell us of Jesus sounds great and mighty; no-one has ever spoken to us like that! Behold, we believed our priests, admittedly without much thought, and now all this shall not be right? Give us proofs of your words! Can you bring help to our sick? Or do you know someone who could heal them in Jesus' name? We will go to him immediately and are ready for great sacrifices."

"Friends, give to the poor from your abundance, then you act in the sense of the Divine Master. To believe in Him, means to do the will of God revealed to us by Him. Then everyone will find Him in spirit and in truth, and you too will feel as if He were still among us. If you feel the desire, you could sure meet here with a disciple of the Lord. But remember: it is not possible to hope for help from the Templars on the one hand and, if it is not successful, from a disciple. For be clear about this: whoever is the Savior's friend will be ruthlessly treated as an enemy by the temple. I will leave you now; tomorrow is the Sabbath, there is still time enough to speak of your matter."

When the host had departed, they eagerly discussed among themselves what they had heard, but they could not quite agree and thoughtfully sought their beds.

Early in the morning they were awakened by glorious psalms of praise and thanksgiving, which the family of the innkeeper offered to the Lord every morning. The strangers listened with great emotion; they had never heard such beautiful singing. A harpist and his young daughter had been staying at the inn for several days, and they had accompanied the morning singing.

When all were gathered in the inn, the harpist called David: "Let us pray and praise His love, that we may be completely filled with His spirit!" He played a few chords, then they both sang: "Holy, holy, holy, You have come to us, You faithful God and Father of Your children here. My spirit urges me to praise You in all places, and praise Your love, Your goodness now and forever. When we were still living in the dark night, no ray of joy animating us, You, Jesus, brought us the light, so that my heart trembled deeply with joy. In Your light I may see Your miracles of love, through Your grace - trust in You! All my actions shall only be a testimony: I am Your child and I want to be eternally, eternally - eternally - eternally! Through Your love alone - You have become Father to me! You want to be Father to all! Rejoicing, it rings in my heart: 'All that is - is Yours! Yours forever!'"

The chords gently died away. All were moved inwardly, then the host said to the harpist: "We would like to keep you here for a long time, dear David, so that the joy of your soul may spread to many hearts still deeply troubled."

When the simple morning meal was finished, David and his daughter Salome went out into the fresh morning; but one of the strangers with his wife went after them and asked: "Are you the player and singer who this morning already gave glory to God and awakened in our hearts such a great desire for Him?"

"I am, but I only give back what Eternal Love and mercy gave me before. It is necessary for both of us not to be sparing with praise, for whoever possesses such a God as we do, can joyfully sing from the heart: 'It is a God - it is a God to whom I only cling, He leads me out of every distress into true joy. He is my God, who will shape my life free from trouble, and therefore I will always cling only to His love.'"

Then the stranger said to him: "My name is Ephraim, and this is my wife Lydia. I am the leader of a community up in the north of Galilee. We are in great distress of heart and seek help here. We may once have seen happy times, but they have faded, for many among us are sick, and before us life lies desolate and hopeless. If help does not come soon, we will all be seized by the evil pestilence. Dear David, we would ask you to stay with us fully today, and with your glorious harp playing, lift our hearts to God and drive away all sorrow."

"Oh Ephraim" - David replied - "do not expect too much of us; I am only a travelling singer, but not a physician. I do indeed have a Savior who fulfills my every request, so that it may be a blessing to us, and so that our love and our life may help Him to spiritual activity here on earth. For if you are deeply moved by His Spirit, then you will also want to live out His Savior's life!"

In the meantime, Salome spoke softly to Lydia, who was crying: "But why cry, when you are already on the way to the greatest happiness? What we want and do is work for the Lord. You too are the Lord's property, and He has never yet forgotten you; therefore leave your sadness, for joy is on the way to you!"

"Oh child, you must be happy" - Lydia answered - "that your mouth speaks such words!" Now they rejoined the others, who were already full of expectation and joyfully welcomed the two singers, for the sound of the strings had touched their hearts!

"Friends, dear brothers and sisters, be patient" - said the singer - "let us first become quiet and give our hearts full rest, so that the Lord's love may be felt and sensed. So let us pray!" And he took his harp, gave a hint to his daughter with soft chords, and she sang in a heartfelt voice: "Oh Lord, with quiet steps we approach You and want to praise Your goodness, which You have promised here in this hour by Your love. When we are moved by the suffering of our brothers and their need goes to our hearts, You are gladly ready to help, You want to alleviate all pain. With ardent gratitude and a joyful spirit we ask in this hour: Oh come You in Your Spirit and give us glad tidings. We wait for You, Lord Jesus Christ, because You give wings to Your love, because You are the faithful Father and You want to bring peace to Your children. Holy Peace - come to us, Holy Peace - fill the house! Holy Peace - pervade us, and Holy Peace - go out from us always! Amen!"

"Now that our thoughts have reached the right silence, where everything in us is silent - and before us the new life wants to reveal itself. You seek help from Him who can help all, and He alone is our God! But where do you look for this God, dear brothers? Do you find Him in the temple or in nature or in people? It is difficult to answer this question for those who blindly or indifferently pass by all the evidences of Divine Love. God cannot be found with the eyes! Visible to us are only the traces of His omnipotence and greatness, His orders - and His love!

We all have His Word through Moses and the prophets, but what have people made of this Word? Therefore The Word became - flesh - and taught us - as man - and showed us the Father as the merciful Love, so that His life may also become our life."

"But what was the use of Jesus' coming to you, if you only accepted His benefits, but did not want to fulfill the conditions for a new life, with which you should become aware - that the Word of God made flesh - can also have an effect in you!"

David now continued to play, and while the notes were rejoicing in full purity, Salome said: "Men and women, I may be the youngest of you all, but I cannot resist the urging of the Spirit within me, and I must tell you: When once the great event occurred and you and I were allowed to see and hear Jesus of Nazareth and were graced by His love, there was no longer any doubt for us about Him. God gave us the opportunity to examine and recognize the Divine good and true in Him. His suffering and death and His resurrection from the night of the grave, gave us the highest certainty about the great grace that was given to all the world in the man Jesus, which, although veiled, is now made more and more evident to all those who believe that He was the true Redeemer and Son of God.

Listen further, dear men and women! Jesus, the high, pure One, the One who loves all people, the One who helps all who suffer, has gone from the earth into His kingdom of the true perfection of all existence, but His Spirit - He left here! His Spirit blows around us like the fragrance of the most beautiful flowers, but I must believe in Him and His mission. Without faith, this purest Spirit cannot be recognized and understood by us. Go to the temple, listen to their beautiful words, but test the spirit, from which intention they are given to you, and only then decide - and act!

Ephraim said with emotion: "Oh daughter of Zion! Your words were bread for my soul. But we will not so easily become free from the temple and from our priests, in whose bondage we stand. Could you perhaps arrange for us to meet with a disciple of the Lord?"

"This we could do" - Salome answered - "but if you do not show them the right faith, neither can they help you."

Then Lydia, his wife, took Salome's head in both hands and said, deeply moved: "Child, for these words I want to thank you! Now I have the certainty that everything will still be all right; for I see into the grace-guidance of our eternally wise God."

11. Jonah at the crossroads

In the meantime, Jonah had come to the hostel and had listened to all these words in an adjoining room, which illuminated his decision more and more clearly. He could have rejoiced, the new life was already moving in him. And without being seen, he left the inn again, for he now had the right courage to go upright to the temple. His soul prayed to the Savior Jesus for help and for forgiveness of his complicity, which became clearer to him in all that he now heard from the Templars. Today, the Sabbath, the halls of the temple were overflowing, rich sacrifices were offered, and abundant were the promises in return.

Jonah, as priest, passed quietly through the worshippers, but then he listened as an old priest told the listening people that a rumor had been brought to the temple of the return of the Crucified One. He asked every believer to immediately report to the temple who was spreading such rumors, so that such seducers of the people would not escape their just punishment.

Jonah was painfully touched by this revelation of their uncharitable thinking, he avoided the priests, mingled with the people, and at last he went to the well-known temple hostel, where the priest Abia also soon invited him to join the arranged secret walk. Three more priests and some armed temple servants went along, and when they reached a larger old house, they knocked sharply on the heavy door. But it seemed that no-one heard, so they pounded louder until slow footsteps approached; the door was opened, and Abia shouted at the old man, who held a light in his hand: "Where are the visitors to the meeting?"

"I know nothing of visitors" - he was answered - "seek them yourselves if you suspect any."

"As always, no-one knows what's going on in the house! Quickly, search the rooms, but woe to you if we find anyone!" The residents did not seem afraid as the Templars searched the rooms but found no assembly.

"Into the garden" - Abia ordered - "they must be here, I had received the message after all!"

But again, no-one was found. Enraged, Abia wanted to take revenge on the master of the house, but he said sternly: "You seem to have forgotten that you are in the house of a Roman. If you don't leave the house with your people right now, I will call for fire so that the military will come to my aid. But I will remember your face, and I will have you held responsible for disturbing the peace during the night!"

Abia necessarily had to give the order to leave, because he was visibly uncomfortable with the fact that the landlord was invoking Roman help. He had no idea that the friends of Jesus had already rushed into the neighbor's house at the first knock and were thus saved.

"I know another place where we will find Nazarenes" - Abia said proudly - "you will be amazed!" Inside the city they reached a large house, knocked three times as an appointed sign, and also immediately heard shuffling footsteps until the door was opened. "What are our charges doing?" - asked Abia sharply. The old man smiled into his beard and said scornfully: "They seem to like it - strange people, your fosterlings."

They went down a half-dark corridor, then down the stairs, and an iron grate was unlocked. In the poorly lit basement room, a dull air hit them. Jonah saw about twenty people lying

on straw and old rags, pretending to sleep. Abia stepped over the foremost, stopped in front of one of the prisoners, and asked challengingly: "Well, Ruben, how are you satisfied with the exchange? In Bethany you must have dreamed better of the glory of your Nazarene - than here!"

Jonah was deeply startled; he knew this could only be Theophilus. He turned his face away so that he would not be recognized, for he was ashamed for Theophilus' sake. Abia also spoke to others in a similar manner, then they left the room and all went home without a word. When Jonah saw that the others had left, he went back and looked at the house again to recognize it exactly.

When he arrived at his home, his wife received him: "Oh God be praised that you have come, Jonah! I have suffered much anxiety for you today. Couldn't you send me a message as you usually did?"

"Yes, Pura, praise and thanks be to God! It was a terrible day, but still necessary for my development. I have experienced heavenly harmonies, but I have also had to walk through hells - but let me be silent until my work of love is complete.

"I still have to write a letter to the city captain and I ask you to bring it to him in the morning, since I myself have to go to Bethany in the morning."

Jonah reported about what he had experienced during the night, and that Roman subjects were imprisoned by Templars with brutal force in dull cellars. He asked for help - and concluded: that as of today, he would put himself and his house under Roman imperial protection. Then Jonah put his things in order. He had to leave Jerusalem. And when he was calmer inside, he said earnestly but full of love to his wife: "Pura, with this new day, a whole new life begins for us. Let us pray together to God for the success of the work we have undertaken. I did not know that although I am a priest, I lived without God, only now I realize what it means: to live with God!"

When Jonah had left the house in civilian clothes, Pura knelt down again and prayed, for she was a pious priest's child, and commended Jonah to the greatest grace of God. Again and again she talked with God and praised His grace, which made everything in her heart joyful and sunny.

In the meantime, Jonah hurried out to the gate, and when it became day, Bethany was also already visible. Now he had to stop his step to become calm and asked God again for full success.

Lazarus was already waiting for Jonah at the gate entrance, he felt inwardly that today would bring an event. "Jonah, you bring good news", he greeted him.

"Yes, I bring it, but whether you can help?"

Lazarus spoke delightedly: "We will try - in Jesus' name! But come into the house and report to us!" And Jonah described how he had found Theophilus, that he had written to the city captain asking for help, and that as of today, he was placing himself under Roman protection.

Lazarus praised: "You are doing a great work for the Lord in helping our captive brothers. Enjoy the simple morning meal with us, while I prepare everything else, but keep silent yet, so that vain hopes are not raised! But we know that our God shows Himself helpful to all those who fully trust in Him."

Then both went to Jerusalem, where Lazarus was immediately greeted by the city captain Benno: "You surely come because of a difficulty, dear Lazarus, but whatever it may be, I will gladly help you."

"I thank you, my friend Benno" - said Lazarus - "but it is better that Jonah, as an eye-witness, though a Roman only since this morning, should tell you all."

The centurion had jumped up at the account of all the night's experience and said bitterly: "All this is almost beyond belief! Yet my people are out day and night and know nothing of it? But it is not enough for me to save only your friends, I must also catch those who commit such crimes! How many people have simply disappeared lately, nobody knows where! But now at least I have a clue."

A soldier suddenly ushered in a young woman, as she certainly did not want to be turned away. It was Pura, who wanted to hand over the important letter, but was now very surprised to see her husband already here.

Jonah explained: "Yes, sir, it is my wife. The letter says almost the same thing I just told you, it was only meant to be a precaution in case I was also in danger."

"Well" - said the captain kindly to Pura - "since you are already here, you can stay with my wife until we return." And he led her upstairs himself, saying: "Verona, take care of this sister for a few hours, since her husband must go away with us on important business."

Then the captain gave some more special orders to his under-captain, and without any ado, he let Jonah lead him to the known house where the prisoners were.

Jonah knocked, but no-one opened; he knocked harder and harder until at last footsteps were heard, and a man asked: "What are you looking for here at this hour of the morning? I am alone in this big house."

"Open! Or I will have the door broken down" - the sub-leader ordered sternly - "I have little time!" The door was slowly opened, but when the old man wanted to close the door again, the Roman ordered: "The door remains unlocked as long as I am in this house."

"What do you want here, disturbing my peace?" asked the old man. The sub-leader explained to him: "Listen, we suspect that in this your house are people who are reported missing. It is my duty to ask you: are there prisoners in this house?" The old man denied. In the meantime, however, three soldiers entered, and seeing these soldiers, he anxiously said: "Sir, I will confess to you: Yes, there are prisoners here, but such as have transgressed against Jehovah and His servants. But I am innocent of them, for this house belongs to the temple, and I am only the watchman."

"This facilitates our service" - said the Roman - "let us enter your room!" Full of fear, the old man spoke: "Lord, any moment servants of the temple and priests can come, who care for the prisoners and bring them their food. Afterwards, the prisoners can go into the courtyard for an hour, and you can see for yourself that everything is going in just order until the temple court has spoken."

"Do you speak the truth?" - asked the sub-leader sternly.

"Yes, Lord, as I believe in the eternal God!"

"Can you so conceal us that we shall not be seen, and yet we overlook all? It shall not be to your harm!"

"Stay quietly in this room with me. I am not on the best of terms with the Templars anyway, and I hate to see them come, but there is nothing I can do about it."

The Roman looked around, he could see into a courtyard adjacent to a garden, but impassable by a high fence. A pure prison! The temple truly has nothing to fear here, no man can see what is going on. After a few minutes there was a knocking at the door. The old man wanted to leave, but the Roman held him back: "The door is open, so stay here! Call out that it is open!"

Before the old man could call out, the Templars had already entered the house and, not caring about the old man, went down the hallway, down the stairs.

"Does the cellar have another exit?" - the Roman asked. "No, only the one entrance; the grate downstairs has only been in place for a year." Without saying a word, the Roman went out of the room, placed two soldiers by the stairs, and ordered them: "Let no one out! - Now I will call the others."

After a short whistle, ten more soldiers entered the house and all went into the cellar, which was dimly lit by a small lamp. But one Templar noticed the soldiers and shouted loudly: "Treason! - The Romans are here!"

The Templars came to the grate, then the Roman called sharply: "Open - and come out one by one! I have a mission to bring light to your dark activities." Abia came first - he wanted to resist, but in an instant he was bound; the others huddled together, but also had to surrender. The Roman ordered his men, "Into the room where the prisoners are!" And the Christians knew: Now comes the liberation!

Jonah looked for Theophilus - and he fervently embraced his friend: "Theophilus, I am happy to see you again! I have been looking for you for days, but only with God's help have I found you here!"

"Jonah! We owe you - our deliverance? Then you have broken with the temple?"

"Yes, my Theophilus, now I belong to you - I dread the temple and its servants." In the meantime, the prisoners had gone into the courtyard, and it was a touching picture when the captain of the city arrived with Lazarus, and everyone wanted to thank them.

The centurion said: "Listen, dear people, on account of your faith in the Nazarene, you were treated as criminals by the Templars. We Romans, however, may only offer help to those who place themselves under our safe protection! I suppose you agree to be accepted as Roman subjects at this hour. Follow me now to the city hall, so that the necessary arrangements can be made for your further protection. But we Romans will hold court over your tormentors!" Finally, he gave the sub-leader further orders for the captured Templars - and breathing a deep sigh of relief, the freed people departed.

Verona and Pura, who had become fast friends, wept at the sad sight of the weary Christians staggering along the road, escorted by Roman soldiers. Immediately they were strengthened with bread and wine, and their expressions became more joyful when Lazarus offered them Bethany as their new home.

With tears in her eyes, a young woman said: "Lazarus, you noble friend! You have made us an eternal debtor! But we can only ask: May the Lord reward you, and may His blessing visibly touch your footsteps!"

Said Lazarus: "My sister and all of you listen: Do not thank me, for I am only the administrator of Eternal Love and goodness. All that I am and have is from Him, the eternal God, who taught me as Jesus, as a human brother, to live in His Spirit, to serve and help in His Spirit, and to let myself be guided by His Spirit. Therefore, do not become lukewarm in loving, serving and helping! For these three things open every heart so that Jesus can enter into us and make His will known to us, His joy and His power! Then we carry His peace within us and to all around us - for the salvation of all.

Jonah was moved and said to his wife: "Pura, we have arrived at the right source! Pura answered: "Jonah, your God is also mine! Let us do together as the lord of Bethany commended us, and he also will receive us into his house."

Lazarus, hearing this confession, immediately said, "You too are welcome in our so richly blessed home; it will bring also you joy and blessing. Your abode is not in Jerusalem anymore, for the temple will never forgive you this act of yours."

Since the freed people were now to go to Bethany, Lazarus asked for military escort; but they all went first to his inn to have a hearty midday meal there.

12. Returning home to Bethany

The newly arrived strangers had not come to go to the temple on the Sabbath, as had been intended, but had listened with the greatest interest to the stories of David and his daughter, who had so many convincing things to say about Jesus' teaching of love.

The next day they witnessed the arrival of all the wretched who had been freed from prison with Theophilus and found such a warm welcome in this inn. Lazarus came later, having hurried to the mother Mary to tell her of Theophilus' rescue. As the father of the house, he sat down with all the others at the set tables, and by way of introduction, David and Salome sang Psalm 118 in a joyful mood: "Give thanks to the Lord! - For He is kind, and His goodness endures forever!"

All hearts were elated, and Lazarus said to David: "Dear friend a more beautiful praise even I could not have brought to the Lord! While our hearts were full of sorrow for our brother Theophilus, the kind Father so gloriously rewarded our full trust in His help that twenty more brothers in faith could be rescued from captivity together with him. Truly, God's guidance has again been wonderfully revealed before our eyes!"

After the midday meal, Lazarus spoke the blessing and added still: "Dear friends and also you dear unknown guests here, we are now strengthened in body and soul and now want to go under Roman protection to Bethany. I would like this homecoming of ours to be quite festive, and so I ask you, dear David: will you accompany us there with your daughter? Your harp would still find room on my chariot."

And turning to the freed ones: "When you are at home again and in full strength, then the Lord will show us the right thing for your future, because you cannot go back to your relatives yet."

"Dear Lazarus, we are so glad to go with you" - he was answered - "for Jerusalem means certain death for us."

Now Ephraim, the leader of the strangers, came to Lazarus and asked if they might also visit Bethany on their return journey? But Lazarus invited them all kindly to come along immediately, in order to for once get to know the new life in the Spirit of Jesus also in practical reality; and this was also accepted with joy.

Lazarus drove ahead with his light chariot, in order to arrange the necessary for all the arrivals. His sisters came hurrying to meet him along with Ruth. He joyfully exclaimed: "The Master has guided everything gloriously! All sorrow has been turned into joy. Ruth, hurry to your mother - Theophilus is already on his way here with new friends!"

Lazarus now looked for the old Enos and brought him the glad news of the homecoming of his son and the arrival of Jonah with his wife. "Enos" - he said further - "this Jonah I lay especially to your heart, since you came out of the same priest-training; you will be the best guide for him to the experience of our Master. Now, however, let us both go to meet the arrivals. Unfortunately, I could not send them wagons, since we are in the middle of the harvest, but I hope they will gladly accept the trouble of this trek here."

Enos said: "Dear Lazarus, I trust firmly that the holy Father directs all this evil nevertheless to the best for all. It is just not clear to me why He allowed this? Theophilus is shrewd enough and knows the tricks of the temple."

"Dear Enos, only in time will all this become clear to us! But we are again richer in proof that God leads even the hopeless to a good goal and often even makes use of His opponents for this purpose, if we only trust Him quietly and firmly and lay all worries at His feet".

From afar they saw the arrivals. Ruth hurried to meet her brother, the great joy making her mute. Theophilus took her in his arms, and the bystanders rejoiced with them. Meanwhile, Lazarus and Enos greeted the new guests, and without stopping, they headed for the new home. Mary and Martha joyfully awaited Theophilus with all the others. Miriam stayed in her little room, she wanted to have her son alone at this reunion. Theophilus hurried to her: "Here I am again, mother! It sure has been hard days for us, but God in His great mercy has brought everything to such a wonderful end, that we can only praise and give thanks."

"My Ruben! Once again God has given you to me, and therefore I am happy! This uncertainty was hard, but it was even harder not to despair. Ruth fought a giant battle and yet was silent. She suffered twice, partly for you and partly for me. How she may have struggled with the Lord for your sake, and how she thanked Jesus when the message came that you were already on your way to us. But now go to the others, I want to be alone to be able to thank my Savior properly!"

"Mother, I have seen father, but I have not yet spoken to him. You will surely come to the large dining room later. There were twenty Christians in the prison with me, who will now be received in Bethany; and other strangers are coming with me, invited by Lazarus. There are also women among them, whom you will certainly have to take into your care, for Bethany actually lacks a mother."

"Now go, my son, I will come soon. My heart needs silence to be able to thank our beloved Jesus for everything." Miriam took him in her arms and again said: "My Ruben, this hour has already made up for all adversity! God is good! He knows how to direct and guide everything so that every heart becomes joyful and free again."

Meanwhile, Lazarus had led all into the dining room where a soup together with bread and fruit was handed to them as first snack. Enos talked with Jonah and his wife and let himself be described how he had found Theophilus. The others listened quietly. When his narration was finished, old Enos said: "Brothers, I have belonged to this temple-institute all my life and I still do not understand that I never had any doubts about such a service of God, in spite of everything that happened around me. I lived in the calm consciousness of having done what the called of Jehovah required of me. Today, as I stand on the threshold of eternity, it is only through God's love, grace and mercy that the right service of God is revealed to me. How I hesitated to go to Bethany to get to know a whole new life here; I think man must sometimes be struck with blindness. Oh how grateful I can be to the Lord every day to be able to enjoy so many joyful hours here!"

Now Theophilus entered, went to his father and said: "Father, by the wonderful guidance of the great and holy Love, I have come home again, Jonah served the Lord as an instrument, and the other prisoners the Lord has given us in addition. Yesterday some of them almost wanted to become despondent, then I could tell them: I only hope in the Lord! He alone knows best how much a child is capable of enduring. Only when the need has risen to the highest, will He always be there with His help! I feel the streams of strength that go out from those who pray for us, and this keeps me going. So now we are here and may rejoice in the grace and love of God."

Enos said: "My Theophilus, I was always at your side in spirit. As painful as it was to know that you are separated from us, so certain was the confidence: you will come back! You have returned, and a host of other unfortunates have been freed with you and may be happy here again. And behold, your suffering became a tremendous blessing for many. We know from the Lord that when His life pulsates in us, we come out of all hardships safe and sound, but only tried people are worthy to experience this highest in themselves! Therefore, all of you, listen to my words with your heart and keep them until the hour of your 'trial' too!"

Some asked whether there was also enough work for them all? Lazarus answered: "No-one need fear that he will be a burden to us; the property God gave me is not small. The more we work and create on it, the more we can give love. Therefore, do not worry, all of you will be able to be useful here."

After that, the rescued were assigned their living quarters, into which they moved with gratitude. At the end of the day, the bell rang as a signal to go to the dining room, and the new guests entered the decorated hall in great astonishment. On the tables, which were pushed together like a cross, there were burning lamps. At the very head of the cross, an altar was erected with seven burning lamps. Farthest to the left was the harp, as a place for David and Salome. On the far right, in front of the places for Mary and Martha, was a large red chalice. When all were seated, Lazarus gave the sign for inner contemplation, to be prepared for the blessing to be received.

Then he spoke: "My friends, brothers and sisters! When the day's troubles and burdens are behind us, we need a moment of silence, so that the Spirit of the Savior's love blow around us and we feel that we are connected with the Eternal. So, for the time being, let us strengthen ourselves with the earthly meal, for which the Holy Father gave us everything, and let us pray: 'Great God! You our Father! You most pure merciful Love! We thank You that we are called to be Your children and as such may now ask: Bless this meal for us! Be among us in the Spirit of Your all-love, and strengthen our hearts that we may know and feel You in our midst! Amen'."

After the meal, David took his harp and played quiet chords; everything that moved his heart, he put into these melodies, and when the tables were cleared, Salome sang a psalm. Quietly the notes faded away - all hearts had become still - then Lazarus said to Theophilus: "Brother, now you give us news of what is forming in your inner life - as thanksgiving to the Father."

Theophilus came to the altar, prayed silently and began: "Dear friends! Holy is the silence of this hour, where the merciful Father-love becomes palpable in our hearts. Yes, by His hand of grace, we are so richly blessed that it makes us shiver! Yesterday, how heavy were our sufferings, how fervently did we cry out to God, how did we plead: "Come and help us!"

And today - heaven is open to us, because God has helped! We may again live freely and joyfully with you, and immerse ourselves even more deeply in His holy Redeemer's love. Even if life often seems like a hard struggle, it may be full of suffering for the individual at this time, but whoever is on the path where one meets God, one will overcome all difficulties more easily. Oh you Holy Life with God! You give us joys without number! How sad that not everyone wants to walk on your ways!

My brothers! I have seen the Lord in His greatest sacrifice of love, which He brought to enable people to glorious life with Him! In His eyes - I experienced this miracle! My cold, arrogant heart was shaken before the greatness of His love, which even wanted to protect

the tormentor. My proud, self-confident being broke into ruins. But new miracles were still revealed to me, and so I became a joyful confessor for Jesus, Who loves all people so much, Who wants to make us such joyful workers for His kingdom.

When I became the victim of sinister hatred a few days ago, I did not yet know that this, too, was Divine guidance. But even those deluded Templars could not have known that, despite their hatred, they were to be an instrument of God. For my soul would never have been able to experience all the wonderful things in the spirit that I experienced when I lay senseless in the dull cellar. I was allowed to see how God, in His eternally great love, holds only delights and bliss in readiness for those who suffer but are faithful to Him.

You too, dear unknown guests, who are here today, decide for the true life with God! God cannot give us this holy-new spiritual life, but we must recognize that this life of our spirit can awaken in us and gain room for growth only in living faith and trust in Him and in the free, sacrificial doing of His will of love for all those in need of help. If you take in the life of the Godhead, which surrounds you like the shining light of the sun, only then you can also reveal something of this holy-new life! Therefore, oh Father, let me thank You that my mouth was allowed to confess what You have so richly revealed to me! Let it bear fruit, to your glory, but to the true blessing of us all! Amen."

Lazarus rose, his eyes shining, and so he said: "My dear brothers and sisters! In memory of this rich day of grace for all of us, let us bind ourselves even more firmly to one another in the spirit of true Jesus-love. In this new life, heavenly bonds enclose us from now on. And you, who are leaving Bethany again, should take with you a reminder of these consecrated hours. The Holy Father's call now resounds to you and invites you to our love feast! Mother Miriam and Father Enos, I ask you to pass the wine and the bread in my place at this hour of the evening, in faithful remembrance of our Master Jesus, who holds His blessing hands over all of us in the Spirit.

He calls to us: "Abide in Me, that I may abide in you! What is past, I take under the care of My redeeming love, but what lies before you, I trustingly place in the care of your love. What was once Mine, I give to you and you give to Me - what belongs to you!" This is My request for you! If you can do this, we will never separate again, because for My children's new life, I put My life into the sacrificial scales. Now enjoy My love-feast united with Me, it shall renew our hearts' union."

Lazarus raised his hands in blessing for the cup and the bread, then Enos took the wine and Miriam the bread, and Ruth followed with the filled jar. Holy silence filled the large room. All hearts were open expectantly for the blessing from above - David took his harp, and softly sounded very tender, pure sounds, which lifted this consecrated silence so heavenly that in all hearts, this connection with the glory of the Spirit of Jesus was felt.

When this love-meal was finished, Lazarus spoke: "My friends, it is enough of the experience in the community; let us go to rest with this holy feeling in all silence, so that every soul still remains united with its God and Father. Rest in the awareness that God Himself watches over all of us. And the peace of God be yours in all! Amen."

Full of gratitude in their hearts, they quietly parted, only Jonah went with his Pura to Enos, saying: "In me everything is still too agitated, I must come to full inner clarity, help me with this!"

"Dear Jonah" - said Enos - "we will stay here together for a long time. Everything must first grow until it is consolidated in you, and you can take on a new task. But the one word

I give you both at this hour, which has already brought me so much clarity and blessing: Jesus, the All-merciful, is salvation - redemption - and true peace!"

Theophilus sought out Ruth, for he had not yet been able to speak a word to her alone. "My Ruth" - he said as he enclosed her in his arms - "this last experience was again a great struggle of faith for me, but I knew you too were praying for me, and your love gave me strength to endure. Now we are reunited until we are faced with new tasks according to the Lord's will. I have come back inwardly differently and will try to offer my thanks to Jesus to a greater extent. No pain must ever separate us from Him, for we belong to Him forever!"

Ruth said, "Ruben, I know you have yet to pass this fiery trial. The Lord has destined greater things for you! And so I will be quiet and wait until the Lord also calls me to new tasks. But let us go to the parents for a few minutes."

When they entered their house, Jonah and Pura wanted to say goodbye, but Theophilus said: "Brother Jonah, now we are at home and well protected, the temple's arm does not reach as far as Bethany!"

"Oh Ruben, I can confess to you, since today I live only with the consciousness: Oh of the great folly of our former life! I believe in Jesus, the Crucified, who as the Risen One will also help me on in my difficult situation." With that, he left.

The brothers and sisters experienced another hour of consecration with their parents, then Theophilus said: "Father and mother, now I will not stay in Bethany much longer, the Lord's love and goodness obliges me to work diligently for Him and for my fellow men. I feel the urging of the Spirit within me, I must have an increased field of activity, and Lazarus has actually already offered it to me. After what lies behind me, I now belong entirely to the Lord."

Said Enos: "My son, if God needs you, then we gladly agree to it, because we know His leadings - they are always guided beyond asking and understanding! But now let us rest in His blessings. Amen."

13. Tour of the large facilities at Bethany

When the bell sounded for the early meal the next morning, the new guests gathered in the dining room. The residents, however, had been at the harvest from early on and were not expected until the evening for a common devotion. David sang with his daughter a morning psalm and created thereby the right consecration for the morning devotion. Lazarus remembered in a few words all those who wrestle and plead for help and strength, remembered those who are imprisoned and separated from their loved ones and need influx of strength; but he remembered also the many enemies to whom he wished insight into the merciful love of God and then blessed all present as well as the early meal.

After completion of the meal, Lazarus said to the guests: "Today I leave you all to the guidance of brothers Enos and Theophilus to get to know our Bethany more closely. And you friends, who want to go to your homeland, I ask, stay still here today, so that the spirit of Bethany becomes more familiar to you! Such a day brings many a knowledge to new work, and so consider my request as a call from God. But I go with brother Jonah - your rescuer - to Jerusalem to arrange his things there, for as long as this place is a stronghold of the enemy of all truth, every hour there must be used."

Lazarus and Jonah drove with two wagons to the city captain in Jerusalem and asked protection and assistance for themselves, because of the Templars. The Roman captain presented the document to Jonah as an imperial subject, then he himself went with Jonah and military escort to the latter's dwelling, since he might still be in for trouble. And indeed some priests had already arrived to clear the rich house. Jonah, however, energetically asked: "What are you doing here in my property?"

If the Romans had not come along, Jonah might well have been in trouble, but so the centurion had the priests arrested because they had entered the property of a Roman subject without permission.

Jonah had only the bare necessities loaded onto the wagons and taken to Bethany, together with the maid. With four soldiers carrying Persian gold, silver and valuable items, the centurion and Jonah went to the temple to use it to get the high council to release him from his oath.

This happened quicker than expected, and so Jonah was a free man within two hours. Lazarus was joyfully astonished, when both found themselves in the inn of Bethany, where Jonah handed over his house to the captain for use in the sense of true charity. Lazarus and the tenant signed the donation document. Thus a covenant was made with the centurion - and the wife of the centurion worked beneficially, according to the measure of her active love, in the house of Jonah still many years.

When the sun began to set, the chariots entered Bethany; the soldiers were refreshed and began the return march. None of the guests were to be seen, for Enos and his son were showing them around the extensive plantations and grounds. The strangers were amazed at the great order and how everything was so well organized; whereupon Enos said: "Friends, if everything were not wisely ordered, and if this order were not strictly observed, we would cease to be a living community. Consequently, each one has to fit into this order in such a way that by himself, every rebuke becomes unnecessary!"

But Ephraim, the leader of the strangers, replied: "Brother Enos, I see all this with great interest, but people are so different in character, does it not happen that some cannot categorize themselves?"

"Certainly" - replied Enos - "that also happens, but Lazarus, who does not consider himself the owner, but only the administrator, makes it very clear to all that such a large family as here can only remain in the right cohesion through order. Everyone must adapt to the order, then the work is halved - and the blessing, doubled. Most of them soon fit in willingly and gladly, but the others have to move on; the latter, however, has rarely happened. There are no wages here, but everyone's life is carefree. Only Lazarus has worries, and he overcomes them through his firm trust in the Lord. What you have seen today, is only a small part; much more land and large herds of cattle belong to Bethany."

Ephraim asked in amazement: "But how can Lazarus take care of all this?"

And Enos answered: "See brother, precisely because everything goes its orderly course. Here no-one is master and no-one servant, everyone is co-administrator and carries his sense of responsibility within himself. I tell you that Lazarus cares for every single one and is very concerned that they are completely satisfied not only in body, but also in soul. What is possible within the framework of love, is done here - and this is based on reciprocity."

"Brother" - said Ephraim - "you hereby give me a whole new, great knowledge. So this - is what the teaching of the Savior Jesus looks like in practical execution! Oh How far behind we still are in our community! How much trouble it is for me to gain the trust of my people, so that at least there is openness. You know, brother Enos, this day gives me more inspiration than all the sermons and songs. Since childhood, we only ever hear what we should do, or what the law forbids. But here I see a completely natural life with each other, which is still too non-descriptively called love. Now I would like to know: where are your old people, because people don't always remain able to work?"

Enos said: "Come, let me show you the most beautiful part of Bethany. They came to a large open space where many children were playing happily. They suddenly came running towards them and greeted the guests, especially to father Enos. "This is our children's home" - he explained - "here is sunshine and joy and new life! There are also many orphans here, but they do not lack father and mother, because the caring spirit here also cares for them in true love."

The premises were inspected, then Enos went over to the right, where a ground-level house became visible in the midst of tall trees. In the shade, old fathers and mothers sat on comfortable resting benches, lovingly tended by young girls. "Come and greet our old people and those bent by old age, and ask yourselves how they are and what they need!"

About this visit, the old ones were visibly pleased, and Ephraim was deeply moved by the way in which Lazarus was also concerned for them.

But Enos explained to him: "Here I experience my beautiful hours of consecration! They all have overcome the worldly and know only one longing: to experience that the Lord also wants to redeem His Word with them: 'Behold - I come soon!'

Now come on, I will still show you the place where our dear dead will be handed over to the earth." Moved, they stood at the great archway that bore the inscription, "I live - and you shall live too! Jesus."

A small group of decorated graves became visible, and a cross with the simple name professed whose shell lay buried here. Ephraim said in amazement: "Brother Enos, this is quite against our way of decorating graves! This is what the pagans do."

"Brother, only love does this" - Enos replied - "We do not ask who else does this besides us? But it is necessary for us to make this place consecrated as well. It is uplifting to know that also that little spot of earth is sanctified, where our temporary house is given back to Mother Earth. It is a consecration hour and a blessing for all who perform this last service of love here. It also gives strength to me, if I may say the blessing, if necessary, when Lazarus is absent from Bethany for days and weeks."

Ephraim apologized: "Brother, do not be displeased if I express an opinion that does not go with you. I well see, Bethany has won the grace of God and is an example for all the churches(?). But tell me, where does Lazarus take the means from? Without money, all this is not possible!"

And Enos relate: "Many animals, fruits and oil are sold, partly against exchange of goods, which we would have to buy, or for money. Lazarus supplies to Persia and Damascus; trade caravans stop gladly with us and bring or receive goods against the fair price without any haggling and trading. For this purpose, of course, Lazarus has certain people who are knowledgeable in trading and have sufficient knowledge of the goods."

Then they went slowly back to the mansion, and when they met Lazarus, Ephraim grabbed his hand and said full of admiration: "Dear friend, you great brother of man! I thank you for the love that made me experience your Bethany this day! Jerusalem has faded for us! Everything we have heard about the temple, belongs to the past. In the future, only what we have experienced here in Bethany, shall remain! Tomorrow we will move on, we have seen enough and experienced even more! We only wish that it will soon be the same with us!"

"Brother" - Lazarus replied - "if you awaken the right will in you, the fulfillment will also come! Of course, from today to tomorrow not, because patience, wisdom and again patience are necessary for it.

I have already spoken with the innkeeper and David, and I know your needs well enough. So I can give you the best consolation and the good hope that the Savior and Master Jesus wants to meet your wishes and will take care of your sick. We will send you a disciple of the Lord as soon as possible, that he may instruct you further, and, according to the grace of the Lord, help your sick also."

"Brother, may we still hope for this grace? For the Lord Himself once healed our sick and removed all hardships, but we were doing just too well, so we left the high level of faith on which the Savior Jesus placed us, and today we have more sick people than ever and great difficulties with the priests."

Said Lazarus: "Certainly you may hope for His mercy, because the Lord does not act like humans who repay like with like, but He seeks to bring back those who have turned away from Him, so that happiness and blessing may grow from Him, and His eternal kingdom may take root in His becoming children.

If you in the future will look at all the experiences here with clear insight, you will realize how wisely you have all been led. But the Lord also demands a clear decision! And only there, where His great saving truth is decisively stood up for, there His blessing and His holy peace are your share. We alone are nothing, but with Him, a mighty factor with which

the world and all opponents of His light must reckon! Therefore, I advise you and all, decide: for Him - or against Him! There is no middle way. With Him - life fulfillment, without Him - slow but sure downfall!"

"Brother Lazarus, I thank you for your well-meant words. It will be my earnest endeavor to live with Him! If only I had first certainty that the Lord forgives us our lukewarmness, for I painfully feel myself complicit in it."

Lazarus laid both his hands on Ephraim's shoulders and said: "Brother, in His holy name I say to you, rejoice! He who, like you, recognizes and confesses his faults, and hopes in the Lord's mercy, will be fully forgiven! Enough means will be given to you to make amends! But if the Lord is close to you, giving you help, do you think He could still hold a grudge against you? Oh no! He will look with favor on the work of your hands and your love! As long as you are still burdened by guilt, you are hindered. But if you have the firm belief: my Savior and Benefactor, my Jesus as Redeemer, has set right for me what I was not able to do, then all work will be easy for you and you will gladly look for new, greater tasks that lie in the nature and spirit of Jesus' love."

"See there our friend Jonah, with whom Enos is talking, he was still a templar yesterday, today he is already free of it and one on whose work the Lord surely still counts. Do you think that he could rise to such tasks, if he keeps dragging past mistakes into the present? Behold, if the Lord has put in order something that was wrong in us, we have only one duty: to fulfill the tasks of the present consciously, thankfully, joyfully and eagerly. Want nothing for yourself, want everything for the helping love for your neighbor, then you will work in the Divine order, and your brothers will also find you in order! But you can never please your enemies and adversaries anyway. What you experience as higher guidance, as special grace, be the acquittal of our holy Father! But what still lies ahead of you as a holy task, confirm to you the trust that the eternal God has placed in you. Make yourself worthy of these tasks and of His trust: to save precious human souls from great errors! Recognize this as your special work! The Lord strengthen you for this with double love-power! Amen."

14. Justification of Divine guidance

In the meantime, the guests gathered in the large dining room, where a great surprise was given to all, as Mother Mary, John and Jacob came in the door. The joy that Theophilus had been saved with many prisoners, had drawn them to Bethany.

Lazarus prayed in his heart: "I thank You, Father, that You so gloriously grant even our most silent wishes." All joyfully surrounded those who had arrived, then they sat down around the set tables, and Lazarus asked John to bless the meal.

Solemn silence had followed this request, as even the guests knew this was the apostle whom the Lord held most dear - and all eyes were on him.

John stood up, he raised his hands and said: "Dear Father! By Your grace we are here in this place so dear to You, and all eyes are upon You, Who in Your love, have blessed us again so abundantly with joys of the soul. We would miss the best if You were not in our midst! Therefore, we ask You to be among us in the Spirit of Your holy being and fill each heart with the awareness that You are with it, around it and in it! All our thanks belong only to You and also our weak and still small love. Bless also food and drink, that our hearts may expand and become ever more alive to the salvation and blessing of all people. Amen."

After that David took his harp, and softly sounded the tender notes. But when his soul felt freed, he played and sang to his heart's content, while the others refreshed themselves at the meal.

When it became dark, Lazarus invited the guests to go to the lighted hill, where the inhabitants of Bethany already waited with longing for this evening celebration.

A great joy and gratitude had awakened in Theophilus that he could be with all those friends again, and lovingly he saw to their comfortable places.

In the meantime, David played and then sang with Salome in great intimacy the psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want! He feeds me in green pastures, and leads me beside fresh waters. He restores my soul with His everlasting Word, and leads me in His ways toward His truth, and toward the knowledge of all His wise loving deeds!" Once again the harp rejoiced - but then the vibrations quietly faded away.

Lazarus had never heard this Psalm - which was sung so much and often - so beautifully and intimately, and gratefully, he nodded to David and Salome.

Then John went to the small altar on which seven candlesticks were burning and began: "Dear brothers and sisters! In the name of Eternal Love I greet you and convey to you the grace and peace of the Lord! I am deeply moved with joy at this solemn hour of the evening, when I may bring to you the Word of the Lord that gives life. Since we have only recently overcome many hard trials victoriously, the Master of true life wants to point out to us today the purpose of the many guides of His paths of grace for each one of us.

His Spirit in me urges me to justify before you all the measures that were necessary to educate us to be His children and faithful witnesses of His Fatherly love for all people, so that we could all again take up residence in this house, in which the Lord as man so gladly dwelt - and can still dwell - in the Spirit of His everlasting love!

And so hear this His message - as revelation from distant times: 'At your own request you came as human on this earth. You did not want to be absent when the eternally true Lord and God as Son of Man crushes the serpent's head and wanted to experience the rejoicing that comes back as an echo from all heavens and worlds when the Son of God proclaims His 'It is finished!' Then you wanted to stand in the ranks of those who, as true heirs of His immeasurable spiritual treasures, know only one desire: to live, do and act just as He to whom they owe this rich inheritance.

As people of this earth, you had forgotten all this and lived here completely according to your own small earthly concepts and desires.'

But God forgets nothing, and His ever-watchful love over you ordered your ways in such a way that you had to get into trouble and distress and had to think about His only helping mercy.

Behold, now the wise love of the Lord has succeeded that you, as if of your own accord, raise your hands to Him in supplication and let the request rise from your heart: 'Lord, just do not forsake us, for without You, we feel completely abandoned!'

But once you realize how little you would be abandoned by Him, then a thankfulness will awaken that will make you true children again!

Thus we experience this holy hour, when all the splendor of the heavens pales against the beauty that your now newly awakened love for the Lord reveals. And in all the heavens, the blessed are filled with joy, since the rays of your young love reach there.

But in everything - we thank the Lord, Who at this moment will be visible to you at my side as your heart's love presents Him to you, and who lets you say through me: 'Behold, I am with you all the days, and not an hour passes when I do not walk and wait with you in hope, and even watch over your sleep at night! Child, it is hard for a loving father's heart to know that his own is in the dragon's den! The power and strength of the enemy of all life and light is broken, and it would be easy for My true children to cut off every supply of life from him. But you yourselves, partly in ignorance, partly in lukewarmness and inertia, feed My adversary and give him the rights that belong only to Me.

But from My bitter struggle with him and from My wounds, you receive the Spirit that makes you joyful fighters. I keep My promise - and I am there when My child calls Me! But are you also aware that you are also bound to your promise, if you are to receive My blessing, My strength and help?

As great as the rejoicing is in My eternal kingdom over the happiness of My little children - even greater is the sorrow, if they forget Me, their Father full of love and mercy.

Hold on to My love shown to you! May My Word be your guide and leader, and may My holy life in you be your reward for time and eternity. Amen!'"

After a pause, John continued: "You, Ephraim and Lydia, become the right leaders of yours! What you ask for them in My name, will be granted. But put on the garment of humility, so that I may reveal My love and grace and My peace to you even more clearly. I am with you all days! So go your way, but never let My peace be stolen from you again!"

"But you, who remain here, who eat your bread at this table which I blessed especially, do not forget that where someone remains in Me - I can also remain in him.

Holy be My life, which has now risen in you! Keep it as a true sanctuary of your own, then no enemy can harm you anymore. For where I come to rule, peace, joy and heavenly co-existence grow. My blessing be with you all! Let My peace be your peace, and let My love be the love of your brothers. Amen! - Amen!"

"Amen!" thanked the mightily moved listeners - and quietly, then more and more strongly, the harp tones rushed through all hearts, fading out to the praise-song of David, seized with bliss: "Hallelujah - Amen! Amen! - Hallelujah! -

Praise the Lord in His sanctuary! Praise Him - in the firmament of His power!

Praise Him - in His deeds! - Praise Him - in His great glory!

Praise Him with all your heart! - Praise Him with psalms and with the harp!

Praise Him in all your love! - Praise Him by day - and also by night! -

All that has breath - praise the Lord! -

Hallelujah! - Hallelujah! - Amen!

- Amen! - Amen!"

And long reverberating, the strings faded away...

When all was silent - Lazarus said: "My brothers and sisters! The Lord's love is again so gloriously revealed to us in this hour. Believe now these holy words, which the Lord gave you through the mouth of His disciple! Let them be proof to you: The Lord loves you, and nothing more stands between Him and you! And what His mouth could not say to you, you may read in His eyes at any time. Now go home in peace, carried by the awareness: The Lord has truly let us experience miracles! Then it will continue to sound in you: The Lord also loves us!"

And now, Father Enos, give us all another blessing."

Enos arose, his eyes shone as if unearthly, he raised his hands to heaven and prayed: "Holy God and most faithful Father! Conscious of Your love that makes us so blessed, we thank You for the new proof of Your great goodness and mercy. You have taken from us everything that was still weighing on our souls as fear and worry or helplessness and have strengthened our faith anew. Therefore, I ask You to continue to strengthen us! Yes, permeate me with Your life forces, so that as Your child, I can bless my brothers and sisters.

So be blessed by the love, grace and power of Jesus, that you may become freer and filled with His Spirit! May His life be in you! May His blessing carry you and make you happy in good days and in hard days! Amen."

The celebration ended. Those who belonged to Bethany went quietly to their homes, but the guests talked for a long time with the young people and Mary.

Also the celebration of the farewell at the morning meal made an impression, and Ephraim received the promise that John and Jacob would soon come to them. With praise and thanksgiving, the happy ones left the hospitable place of Lazarus.

No eye remained dry when John called out to them: "Little children, remain in His love, then this love will be a salvation for you and also for your fellow people! But the greatest is yet to come for you - when the power of your love becomes a miracle for others! Amen!"

