

## CHAPTER 31

### A CROSS ON A HILL

THE VOICES of the people on the ground were muffled. All that could be heard from them were whispers, sighs and sobs. All merged in a sort of muted moan that swayed with the wind, and rose in a wistful penitence as of the whole earth toward the whole sky. Even the Roman soldiers speaking together and the clank of their armor and the click of their dice seemed unreal and far away.

But a voice from any of the three crosses came forth with a palpable clearness as from a sounding board. Not a word but was plainly audible. I noticed this first when the thief on the left railed against Caesar, and ended a moment later with fearful blasphemies.

Then suddenly the air which separated me from Jesus seemed to become almost an entity in itself, vital and friendly, bringing his voice, his very breathing to my waiting ear.

"*I thirst,*" he said so gently that it was hardly more than a breath, yet as distinctly heard as if I had been where the Roman soldier stood who lifted a sponge toward him on a spear. So clear it came that it has been reverberating down the ages ever since. The strange, uncanny air! Can it hold in its folds voices like that to the end of Time?

It almost seemed that this friendly air was bringing even his thoughts to me, thoughts of compassion and love, yes, his very feelings, the bodily vibrations of acute pain and weariness, and the spiritual rhythm of peace and calm, and, above all, that marvelous, transcendent, heavenly forgiveness! I suddenly rose and walked straight toward the crosses. The soldiers were so absorbed in tossing dice that not a one offered to stop me.

I walked under one arm of Jesus' cross, and as I did a drop of blood from the pierced hand struck my garment on my left side, just above the heart. I stared at that little stain, so red, so vividly red. Then I looked up and held my open hands, first one and then the other, under the cross, and caught a glittering drop in each open palm.

Satisfied, I moved back to the place from whence I had come, and not too soon, for several soldiers were coming toward me. But there was something that neither they nor anyone else could take away. Three drops of Jesus' blood! When I resumed my place with the bystanders so far and yet so near the bleeding Christ I looked at my hands. The stain was gone—absorbed almost instantly through my eager pores—Jesus' blood, joined with mine, coursing through my veins. Could it be a blood transfusion such as science has never told us about! Could I, can we, as the ages roll by, absorb that shed blood into our beings until his very heartbeats are ours?

*"Mother, behold thy son."* How tenderly he spoke!

I saw Mary weeping in the arms of John. Then Jesus looked down at him and smiled. "Son, behold thy mother." John alone of all the disciples had remained in this place of peril.

At last the words, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"*

John strode forward and placed his back against the cross, facing the throng, as a minister in a pulpit, and began where Jesus ended. The Roman captain in charge rose and started toward John as though to stop him. To my amazement John merely lifted his hand, as a speaker in an auditorium might call for silence. "I am reciting a psalm the one above me desires to hear before he dies. You won't deny him this, will you?"

The captain glanced toward Jesus whose eyes, gentle and loving, were fixed upon him. As though pierced by an arrow the man stood as one transfixed.

John went on with his recitation: it was a psalm that was not very familiar to me but one I remembered Jesus had been teaching his disciples the last few days.\* John had come to a passage

\*John is here reciting Psalm 22

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that was strangely descriptive of the cynical faces of the Roman soldiers and the Pharisees who made up the major share of the bystanders. John's voice rose strong and clear, fixing his eyes on the Pharisees to his left.

"All who see me mock at me. They toss their heads and sneer, 'He left it to the Lord, let Him deliver him if the Lord cares for him.' "

And now John turned to the noisy crowd on his right and continued in a strong voice, "A brutal hoard besets me, fierce bulls of Bashan hem me in, panting for me open-mouthed, like lions roaring as they rend."

Then looking up at the crucified figure above him, he continued with a sob in his voice, "My strength is weak as water, my throat is dry, my tongue cleaves to my jaws, my hands and feet are pierced. I can count all my bones."

And looking at the Roman soldiers guarding all the ways of escape John continued, "A pack of curs encircle me, a gang of villains surround me, and my foes are gloating over me, dividing up my very clothes already, casting lots for my raiment."

The Roman captain turned to me and asked, "Is that in the Hebrew scriptures?"

"I think so," I replied.

Then looking toward the sky in a voice of appeal John cried, "O blessed Father, be not far from me; O Strength of mine, make haste to help me, pluck my unhappy soul from these wild oxen's horns."

And now John was taking in the entire assembly and a triumphant note was creeping into his voice. "Then shall I tell my fellows of Thy fame and praise Thee in our gathering. Praise the Lord, ye His worshipers, glorify Him all ye sons of Jacob, for He has not hidden His face from me, He is answering my appeal for help."

And now John was looking straight at me, and as I lifted up my eyes I beheld Jesus also looking at me.

"A seed shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the next generation. They shall come and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, yes, born in the future, that He hath done it."

Jesus was still looking down at me—no, not at me alone but through me at all the unborn generations. His breath was coming hard but he smiled. John ceased speaking and came to the side of Mary. Jesus suddenly turned his eyes toward the sky and in a loud voice, strong and firm, spoke:

*"Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit."*

He closed his eyes and his head dropped limp upon his breast. The soldiers stopped casting dice. The mob ceased its scoffing. One of the Pharisees began to tremble violently. A deathlike silence fell upon all. The Roman captain in charge of the entire event, now plainly overcome with emotion, exclaimed, "*Certainly this was a righteous man!*"

## CHAPTER 32

### THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

FOR TWO DAYS I wandered the streets of Jerusalem stunned and stricken. If only I might find John or Peter or Nathanael, or any of the disciples, I knew they could help pull me out of the gloom which engulfed me. But I couldn't find a single disciple anywhere. They were truly scattered. And then it was I met Cleopas. Never was I more glad to see anyone.

"I was just about to run away from Jerusalem," I said, "to Bethany—or anywhere! I felt I couldn't stay another hour in this city of darkness and doom."

"I am on an errand to a little village about seven miles away," he said.

"Would you care to go with me?"

"You are an answer to prayer," I said.

The day was strangely dark and overcast. One had to peer closely at those who passed on the road to distinguish Jew from Samaritan and Arab from Jew. But we were paying little attention to people. I was pouring out my feelings about Jesus, describing the great loneliness that I always felt in his absence.

"How I long for him!" I sighed. "I would have him always with me if I could, every day of my life, as long as I live!" Somehow I felt I could be very frank with Cleopas.

A stranger, walking rapidly, had overtaken us and was passing on our right. He held his mantle close about his face, and paid no apparent heed to us.

"I also," said Cleopas, "have at times felt almost overwhelmed with a sense of loneliness without him. That is why I came up to Capernaum seeking him that day I first met you. Today I felt as leaden and dull as the sky above us," and he looked up at the heavy clouds that reached from horizon to horizon. "But there is a bright side to all this! (I could see Cleopas was trying his best to cheer me.) I was talking with Matthew yesterday. He says that Jesus was not someone for this age only, but for all Time. Therefore his death is as significant as his life. The prophecies in Isaiah of the suffering servant fit him perfectly. Matthew is a careful student of the prophets and he saw in every act of Jesus a fulfillment of prophecy. He says he came out of the past and joins us to the future. He was not of Time but of Eternity."

"What is this you are debating as you walk?" inquired the stranger, checking his pace to accommodate ours. We slowed almost to a stop, both plainly embarrassed by his question. We stared down at the ground, wondering how much to tell him.

Then Cleopas burst out, "Are you a lone stranger in Jerusalem, not to know what has been happening there?"

"And what is that?" asked the stranger, still holding the mantle close to his chin.

"All about Jesus of Nazareth!" exclaimed Cleopas as we resumed our journey. "To God and the people he was a prophet, strong in action and utterance, but the high priests and rulers delivered him up to be sentenced to death and crucified him. Our own hope was that he would be the redeemer of Israel. But he is dead, and that is three days ago."

"O foolish men with hearts so slow to believe after all that the prophets have declared!" spoke the stranger. "Had not the Christ to suffer thus, and so enter into his glory?"

"What do you mean?" asked Cleopas.

"In order to reach men everywhere on the inner plane, do you not realize that he had to disappear from the outer plane?"

"I would gladly believe that if I knew how," said Cleopas. "I was just remarking to my friend here that Jesus seems to connect us up with all the past and all the future. He belongs not to Time but to all Eternity."

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"You say truly," replied the other. "He especially joins together the inner dreams and yearnings of the people of the past and projects them with new hope of fulfillment to join the dream and cravings of the people of the future."

"Can you explain that further?" I asked.

"Beginning with Moses," he went on, "the people of Israel were always dreaming of a Savior. This dream found partial fulfillment in Moses, who delivered them from their captivity to the Egyptians into the comparative freedom of the Promised Land. But just as Moses couldn't go *into* the Promised Land, neither could his message carry his people *into* the *inner* promised land of the *inner soul*."

"I do not understand," Cleopas broke in, "Moses gave them the Ten Commandments and hundreds of other rules to govern the religious life of the people, did he not?"

"Yes, many rules, and to those rules the scribes and Pharisees added a thousand more. But the world will not be saved by rules and laws alone. After Moses came the prophets, who talked not of rules but of dreams and visions. Moses brought into manifestation the things he aspired to do, while the prophets aimed higher but could not in their time see the fulfillment of their dreams. What the prophets did was to plant seeds. The great things that God plans for his people have first to be dreams in the hearts of man; these dreams must grow and flourish for hundreds of years before the season of harvest arrives. The vision of Jesus must wait for hundreds of years before its full harvest will truly appear."

"Hundreds of years!" whispered Cleopas aghast.

"Yes, my friend. The Sons of Israel were slaves to the sons of Pharaoh for over four hundred years before Moses appeared. Cannot we wait a few centuries for a greater dream to be realized?"

"God's dreams," he continued, "do not come true until they are shared for awhile in the hearts of men, just as a child is not born until the yearning that lies in the heart of a man is shared for a while in the body of a woman."

"So God's dream for the deliverance of the Jews out of Egypt had to reside for more than four hundred years in the hearts of the oppressed sons of Israel before the fulfillment in the form of Moses appeared. Little did the people realize that because of their persistence in holding fast to this dream the mother of Moses was moved to hide her baby in the bulrushes near the palace. Little did they realize that the very force of their dream led the footsteps of the daughter of Pharaoh to the spot where the infant lay. Little did they realize that the warmth in their dreams stirred a warmth in the heart of the princess to take the child and train him under the wise men of Egypt. Then Moses sojourned in the wilderness and his experience at the burning bush was ordained of God and shaped and molded and matured by the dreams hidden deep in the hearts of the people of Israel."

"Then after Moses stepped out of this world, the prophets planted in the hearts of Israel another dream—the dream of a Redeemer who was to come someday and save Israel and the entire world from the suffering and the sin in which it is so deeply involved. Job cried out, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.' Isaiah proclaimed 'And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.' Motherhood became sacred in the eyes of all the Hebrews because every woman dreamed of someday becoming the mother of the announced One. Every prophet scanned the horizon to see him approaching."

"And because the Father in heaven dreamed that dream, and because it was pictured in the hearts of the people as the figure of a mountain is reflected on the surface of a lake, and because that reflection persisted for thousands of years, the fulfillment had to come."

Jesus, the fulfillment of the dream of the Old Covenant, himself dreamed another dream of a New Covenant. After a few thousand years his dream will also come true."

"And what is that dream?" I asked.

"The dream of the Kingdom of heaven coming into being within the hearts of men."

"And when that dream is accomplished," I urged, "and there are enough people with the Kingdom of love and peace in their hearts and lives, should not, they, also, get together and dream of the very heaven itself coming down to earth, spreading perfection and harmony everywhere?"

"Verily, they should," he answered.

"And what should we do now?" asked Cleopas.

"What should you do? Why, simply continue to dream the dream of Jesus. Step right into the body of that dream of a Kingdom of heaven on earth. Dream of it first as an inner experience of peace and love and harmony in your own heart, holding you in perfect adjustment and in perfect harmony with all people with whom you deal. Next, dream of its coming into manifestation in groups; and then in nations as they adjust themselves to all the groups within themselves, and to all the nations around them."

"Will that actually help to bring the Kingdom of heaven into the affairs of earth?" I said.

"Will that actually! Oh ye of little faith! If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed in the power of a dream in the hearts of people—a dream that has taken its rise in the Heart of God! If you had that faith there is no power on sea or land, in heaven or on earth, that could prevent the dream from coming into realization exactly as God planned it."

And so our conversation continued until we reached the little town of Emmaus. The stranger would have gone farther, but it was growing late and we constrained him to stop at the village inn at least long enough to dine with us. His conversation on the road had done more to bring healing to our souls than anything that had happened since the crucifixion.

As we placed ourselves around the table all set with food, the stranger took up the bread and blessed it and broke it and handed it to us. A servant, just then came into the dimly lit room with a bright candle. The light fell full on the face of—Jesus of Nazareth!

"My Lord and Saviour!" I cried.

And at that instant he vanished out of our sight. Cleopas turned to me, gasping in amazement. "Did not our hearts burn within us when he was talking to us in the road, opening up the scriptures to us?"

We finished the meal, but only because he had blessed it.

"Oh, that I could hear him again!" I breathed.

"Let us carry the news to the disciples at once," said Cleopas.

## CHAPTER 33

### CHRIST LIVES

WHAT FOLLOWS is almost too holy to be put into any book. We found the disciples in the same upper room where they had shared the last supper together—a completely revived, revitalized group of men. It was thrilling to see the new joy and radiance in their faces, especially in the face of Peter.

"He lives! We have seen him!" he almost shouted as Cleopas and I entered the room. We told them of our experience and then in our joy we all seemed to be talking at once. Suddenly we fell silent at the same moment. For in the vacant place at the center of the table stood Jesus.

I was so overcome by the glow of his presence that I can recall little of what he first said. All I remember is his "Peace be unto you," and then something about all the promises in the prophets and the psalms being fulfilled. As he had achieved victory over death, he said, they were to proclaim, beginning right at Jerusalem, that through repentance and forgiveness everyone could achieve victory over sin.

"And remember that I will send the promise of my Father. But stay in the city until you are endowed with power from on high."

One of the disciples was now kneeling at his feet, his head upraised and arms spread wide, saying in a loud voice, "My Lord and my God." Jesus smiled down upon him and said, "Thomas, because you have seen me you believe; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Then almost as in a trance we all retraced the steps that the disciples had taken out of the city and up the hill of the Garden of Gethsemane, but now in joy and not in gloom, for now he was with us. When we reached the crest of the hill we saw Jesus rise above the others and ascend slowly into the heavens. Far as he was away from us, I could see his love-filled eyes looking down upon us.

No longer would he walk with us up the road that led from Nazareth to Jerusalem. No longer could I sit and hear his voice as he spoke to us from the boat or from the mountain top. A great yearning came to call him back, but he was gone.

I turned again to the vast spaces of Eternity—the Power that had brought me here. "Take me to Jesus!" I cried. "Oh, take me to Jesus!"

And then, while standing with eyes uplifted, once more I was picked up and carried through Time and Eternity on an odyssey of the soul impossible to describe. For it was not Space that flitted past me as I felt myself rising into the air, but men and flowers and living things; yet this time, all, all were growing with the speed of light, passing from bloom to ripened fruit, the fruit in turn bearing more seeds, which again bore fruit, the seeds ever springing into new fulfillment, until the vastness and the increase could not be measured.

Suddenly I was aware that I was back in the modern world from which I had come. The clock was purring on the mantle shelf, its hands pointing to almost the same hour when I was looking at them last. Had this return to Jesus been reality or merely a dream? It mattered not to me whether my journey were dream or actuality, whether I sat here in modern America or walked the roads of ancient Palestine. Only one thing mattered now, and that could never be taken from me.

*Jesus is real!* And nothing henceforward can take him from me. For now that Jesus had stepped out of the world in the body, it seemed that his presence was here more apparently than ever before. He had vanished from earthly sight but he would never again vanish from our heavenly gaze. Only to lift our eyes high enough, only to yearn in our heart toward him greatly enough, and he would be in our midst. And as I became aware of it and got quiet in the contemplation of it, that presence became more penetrating until it was overwhelming in its power. Everyone I had met in

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Palestine became so lovely and so dear that I wondered how such a heaven could exist on earth. Even their mistakes became precious and valuable. The denial by Peter in the courtyard and the wistful yearning that followed it became as beautiful as a pearl set in a ring of gold. Even Judas' betrayal and the agonizing remorse that drove him to a rope on a lonely tree took on the aspects of a mother's bringing her child to birth. The agony of Mother Mary at the foot of the cross as her son was projected into heaven was more magnificent than her agony in the manger that projected him as a babe into this world. It was precious for a child to be born in a manger; it was more precious for a God to be born on a cross.

And as my thoughts went ahead to my own world, everyone I had ever met or ever would meet became so lovely and so unbelievably dear that I could hardly await the time that I should rejoin them and share with them the experience that I had had.

And the joy that came upon me, that almost overwhelmed me with its intensity, was the absolute knowledge that I *could* share the experience, yes, *all* of it, if they would only understand how simply it could be done.

For we would need only to get still together, then get a little more still. Then when our bodies had dropped their tensions, when our minds had gotten so quiet that all thought of fear, doubt, jealousy or anger had completely disappeared, and all silly intruding cares of worldly things had slipped from us like ballast, then in that inner silence amid those great quiet spaces there would emerge the Presence of Christ.

Then I knew, and no one or no event could ever take the knowledge from me, that when two or three come together and love each other and trust each other and get silent with each other, Christ will be in their midst. When two minds agree, they invoke the Master Mind of Christ just as truly as a man and a woman produce a child.

Henceforth I knew, and no one could ever take it from me, that all I need do was to ask for that Presence, and Christ would be walking by my side, sitting with me in my study, counseling me, guiding me, protecting me, loving me.

Greater than that, even great as that was, was the consciousness that Jesus Christ henceforth abode in me and I in him. I could not escape him if I would, and I would not if I could. Henceforth, whenever I claimed this blessed privilege, he would think through me, talk through me, love through me, bless through me. Yes, he is writing these very words that are being put into this book. It is he looking through me, right now, seeing every man, woman and child in all the world as infinitely precious, ecstatically beautiful, each one so valuable to himself, his family and the world, that nothing but the highest love I am capable of is worthy for me to send to them and to him.

I cannot be content again to live one moment less than my utmost for his very highest.

To experience the power of Jesus Christ even for one moment is to experience him forever. One can never be the same again. All pettiness, triviality and self-importance fall like drops of water from the shaking aspen leaves. Nothing henceforth is without meaning to one who has seen the Christ, for everything henceforth is bathed through and through with the Love of God, partaking of the eternal values of heaven itself.

The touch of Christ had for me, and hence could do the same for all, changed ashes to roses, restored all the wasted years that the locust had eaten, transformed this world of war and hate into a heaven of love and all because Christ had been here in the body, and all because he is here in Spirit, and all because we who follow him and grow quiet with him can have him ever with us, now and forevermore.

Yes, I have permanently returned to Jesus. That is the one real thing I derived from this precious journey and what I hope you who shared this journey will continue to share with me. It is the one thing I am sure of and will remain sure of through all Eternity. For neither death nor life,

nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth nor any other creature can separate us from the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. And every one who has truly returned to Jesus can verify what I say. Henceforth I shall go up and down the roads of America, yes, of the entire world, proclaiming the good tidings that Jesus is a living Christ, and today in this twentieth century he is the most real figure in all the world. And so I say to you who have followed me on this pilgrimage, let us put our commands upon Space and Time that they may make easy the way for us as we all answer the ringing call of Jesus,

*"Come, follow me."*