

Prologue
The Dust of Time



from *Jerusalem*, by William Blake

Just for the record, we have nothing to produce that can be qualified by ancient professors.

But we can entice you with further investigation. And if you proceed with a sort of lackadaisical inspiration, as if you're searching for a better version of the details that you've been given, then you'll be able to meld these two outlooks together: that of the scholar who has retrieved information from the dust of time, and that of a more personal recollection.

Indeed, there is nothing remaining today that can accurately portray the lives of these ancient individuals. We have no true text that tells us what life then was all about - how the people really lived from day to day. We trust that we've come up with a gallant effort, a true replica of the times. But there's no real way to know the deeper expressions of these people, in all of the honesty of living a human life within the context of that particular time. Life then was nothing like life is now. And so, for us to reach back, to try to retrieve a memory that would match something current, is completely impossible.

A man did not see a woman's value! Even the best of men, even the kindest of them, did not value human life as we do today - not even the lives of their children or their wives. Spouses were replications of their desire to achieve. Very little love was wasted on the relationship between a man and a woman. Men preferred to spend their time actively engaged with other men. Women were reserved, kept at home, to complete that aspect of the man who wished to procreate.

Now, to say that Abraham loved Sarah more than any other wife was accurate, but the love that he felt was not nearly as tactile as if the two were living today. So there is no accurate comparison. We can tell the story, but you can only perceive it from your own direct knowing. You can understand the family unit, but you can never comprehend their interaction. So much has been written as if people of today populated the earth that many years ago. And this simply is not complete.

Emotions were held dear and secret! Tides changed too rapidly to allow yourself that type of exposure. A

wife could be thought of as no longer useful. She had lain with another, or perhaps she was divided in her allegiance. Her children seemed to hold more of her attention than her spouse. And this was cause enough to lay her aside. How would it be for you, a man of Jerusalem, to be seen as one who was brokenhearted over the mere fact that his woman had chosen another, or had chosen to be dishonest in her attentions? You would be seen as lesser in your stature, and this could not be allowed to happen.

When we speak now of Jesus being beholden to a woman of any kind, we seem to think of him as if he was celibate - above and beyond any mortal affection. But in truth, he would appear to be the same as any other man in his company, or indeed as any other man of his time. He would not show his allegiance to a single woman; he would not attract this attention to himself. Mary Magdalene, as an entity, would have known this. She would not have pursued him openly.

And he could not, in any way, have justified his attention to her, even in the vows of matrimony. It simply would not have happened that she was his beloved woman, who traipsed around the countryside, listening and bearing him children. She couldn't have functioned as that, in her times. He would not have kept the respect of his disciples.

It has been said that she financed much of his endeavor. That would have been acceptable. But finding him in her embrace would have meant certain defeat, unless he denied that she was the cause of anything at all in his life. So to revel in the fact that she was his woman, who produced or bore many children, stood by him, marched along, is as ludicrous as the opposite - the story of her as the whore in the street. Yet there is insight to be gleaned from these words, for in a most private setting there could have been much emotion expressed, although it never would have been shown publicly.

If she had been his wife, he still would not have put her in that position, to be following after him from place to place. And she would not have portrayed herself as equal to any man following a master. She would have kept her distance, her discreet nature being prized above all else. To call her *whore* would not change this dynamic. A whore would not have marched along in the company of men, at least not men of the caliber and moral values that we understand these disciples to have been!

Now would John the Baptist have taken his child along? Remember, she was female, broken to bits, and therefore unacceptable in society. A child such as that would have been relegated to being a beggar along the roadside. But for his dynamic personality and his charisma, which did allow him to break the rules of his day, this could not have happened. And there is no mention of it in *any* records of John the Baptist. But here we are, stating that in fact, he did gleefully take along this troubled child, much to his woe. He received sermon after sermon, but his composure was such as to deny the customs of the day. And so, this served him well. He used it as a statement. He propelled himself along through outrageous acts. He displayed his temperament! And through that, he gained attention, acknowledgment and even adoration from those who were so fearful that they crept along through life.

How then can we consider these two men, juxtaposed one to the other? John lived his life publicly and flamboyantly. He crisscrossed himself with every modern day rule and regulation. While keeping himself celibate and in accordance with a very ancient sect, his manners were directly opposed to society. So he melded these two teachings right before the eyes of the general public: ancient tradition, and modern disobedience.

The hub, the center of the universe, for those we are going to reveal in our story, was the city of Jerusalem. There was no place more intriguing; there was no place more inviting. For most people alive in the time of our tale, there was no other goal than to walk through one of the gates that led them into the city. It was ripe, and it was fertile. It greeted the sun each day with throngs of people. I so loved the threads woven together, in the brightest hues a human can imagine.

It's hard to imagine the smell of a city. How could I write that down - using words pertaining to the ancient

ways of disposing of refuse, or to the common-enough manure, or to the dredging of trenches? There were trenches that crisscrossed the city, that allowed produce to be grown within the city walls. There were fields, there were homes, and there was a labyrinth of streets. The marketplace was spread from one end to the other. You could always find what you were looking for - friendship, companionship for barter, hearth and home, peaceful entertainments, devilish and gruesome horrors - all contained within the walls of a single perfect city.

I smelled the dust. The earth produces dust; dust is magical, it carries the quality of rock. It holds the mystic entranced. The dust of the ages is what we are attempting to produce. A fine thing, this dust. And it covers everything, and it covers our recall.

So now, why am I speaking so dearly of this one spot on earth? Because all else emanated from that beginning. You must clearly understand the notion that I'm trying to get across to you: Ancient Jerusalem is still a shining jewel in the crown of many a modern man - the birthplace of their religion. Not all of those religions existed at the same time, but their roots all overlay one another in a rich tapestry, so golden-mellow. I wish I could see it all again, through my *ancient* eyes. To travel there now, to see the city in its death throes, would only entice me to spill out every word and phrase I could summon up from memory. For it was once *my* mission to live my life in that glorious place. The ancient city holds a mystery, and that mystery intrigues us even to this day. Now Jerusalem is being torn down, right before our eyes. But, in fact, we will live to see its rebirth.

Rome was but a figment of the imagination for most common people of that time. They had heard of it, but they cared only that the Roman soldiers passed them by. They didn't care about the politics of the day; who mastered whom was not their concern. Yes, they spoke of rebels, and they spoke of treachery, and they spoke of who deduced what plot. But what made the world go 'round was the man bringing home food to his family.

We speak of Jesus of Nazareth, and he was the man of the hour, who championed the cause of the common man. John the Baptist roused their attentions to their lapsed adherence to the ancient promise of the Lord. He made them feel guilty; he made them want to repent. But this was the magic: he called them to attention, and gave to them that briefest of moments when they truly felt cleansed and worthy.

Most of them forgot it when they left the river. But there were some who carried it home with them, and in their intention to do better, they did produce a better life. They gave to their sons something to grow on, something for them to further themselves with. So he reached out through the generations. And he produced, if you will, a line drawn in the sand. Most crossed it once, but did not have what it took to adhere to their old traditions.

Yet there were those who carried on: we have proof of them here, in this time now. You'll see them in New York City. For they still gravitate to the magic of the ancient city, a place where all can happen. The colors, and the sights, and the scents - all have changed - but the pull remains the same. There is no way, other than through the imagination, that we can retrieve this story. So are you ready to set the stage?