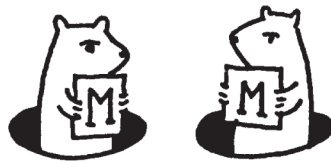


MANNA AND MERCY

A BRIEF HISTORY OF GOD'S UNFOLDING
PROMISE TO MEND THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE



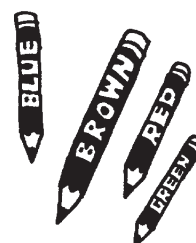
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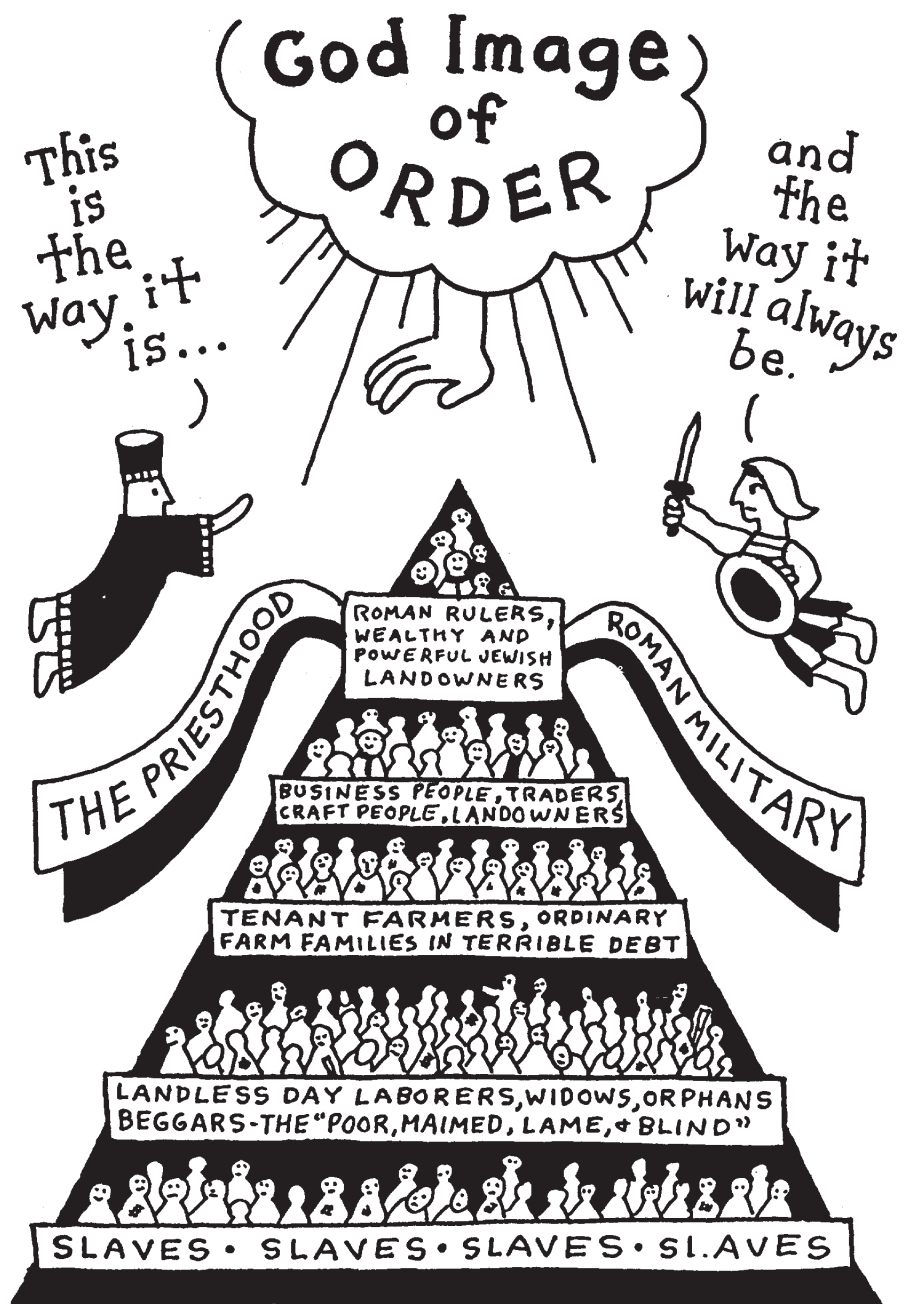
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A suggestion: If we were to return to Bible times, we would meet people whose color would be beautiful shades of brown. Why not buy a colored pencil and fill in the faces and hands and feet of the people in this booklet? If you have to buy a whole set of pencils, use the others to color in clothing, animals, plants, earth, water, and sky. Celebrate!



The wealthy, priestly landowners formed themselves into a party called the **SADDUCEES**. They collaborated with the Roman occupation in order to maintain their riches and power. Because of this alliance the poor people were ground into the dust by both the brutal Roman rulers and the heartless rich of their own people.

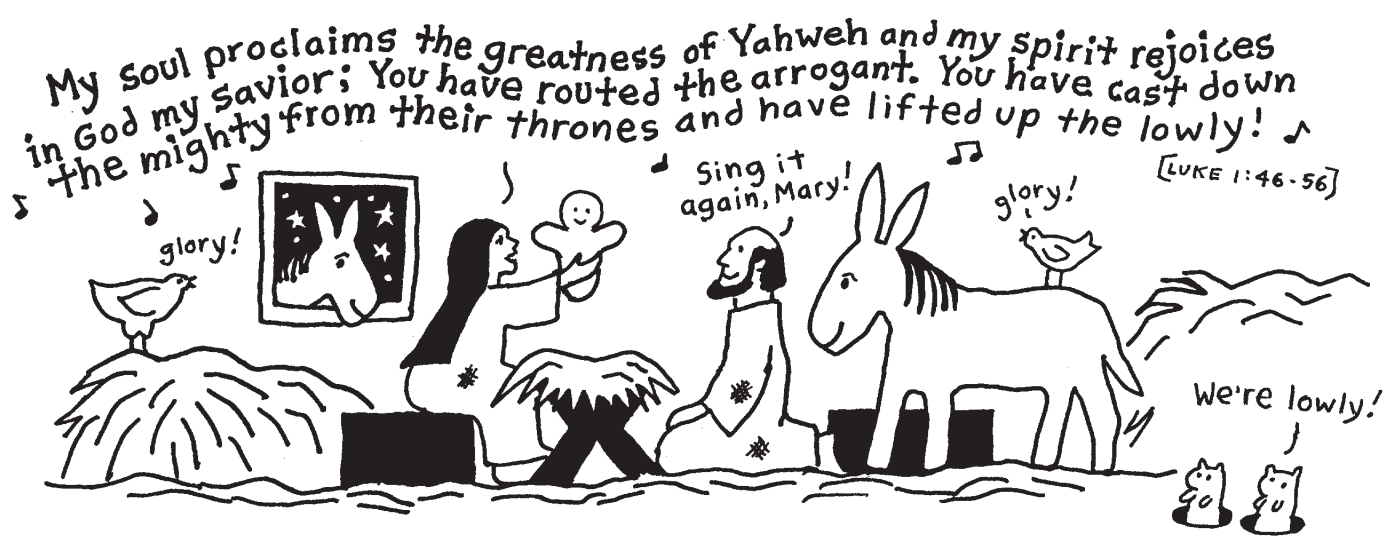
Once again the society of God's precious partner people looked like Pharaoh's Egypt. God's dream of a contrast society - a people practicing justice and mercy, attracting the nations to the manna way - was shattered. The Creator wept, and creation wept. Would shalom ever come to Planet Earth?



The covenant people whom God had rescued from Egypt were now in deep crisis. How did they respond to the terrible oppression? Some of the most desperate followed apocalyptic prophets who announced the end of the world. Others followed self-appointed messiahs who claimed to be God's chosen deliverers. Almost everyone longed for Yahweh's true Messiah who would save the nation (JER 23:5-6).



Mary gave birth while she and Joseph, her fiancé, were lodged in a stable. She held her newborn in her arms and repeated the song she had sung when the child was conceived:



Mary placed the little baby in a feedbox [LUKE 2:1-20]. Angels sang. Animals smiled. The trees clapped their hands, and all creation rejoiced. Lowly shepherds, informed by angels, came and found the child in the feedbox. God smiled. In this baby the creator of the universe was present — with creation, with the poor, one of the poor, good news to the poor! Because of this child God's dream would come true...

MANNA SOCIETY FOR ALL AND A WHOLE NEW CREATION!



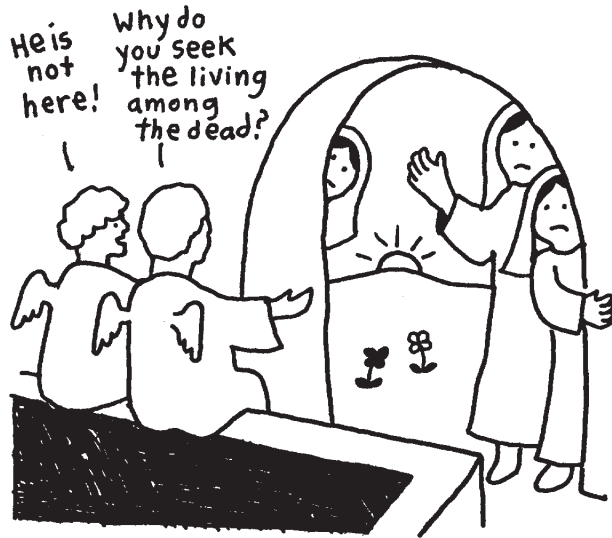
Mary and Joseph named the child Joshua meaning "the one who saves" ("Jesus" in the Greek language-LUKE 2:21). They brought Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem where Anawim people like Anna and Simeon recognized him as the one who would liberate Israel. Simeon was so happy that he sang this song:

**"Now I am ready to die in peace,
for my eyes have looked upon Yahweh's
liberation, God's light to the nations,
and the glory of God's people Israel."**

[LUKE 2:29-32]

CHAPTER THIRTEEN - A RISEN JESUS, A RISEN PEOPLE

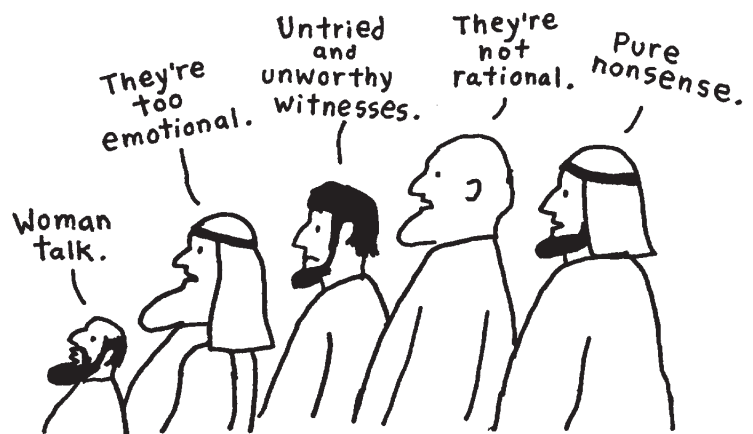
One vote had not been counted - the vote of Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of mercy and compassion. Yahweh entered the tomb and cried **YES**. God cried **YES** to Jesus and to Jesus' way of living and dying. God cried **YES** to Jesus' life of mercy for all and manna for all. God called, "Get up, Emmanuel! Come forth, O Jesus!" Like Miriam and Moses and Aaron coming forth from the Reed Sea, Jesus rose out of the watery depths. He broke the bonds of death and now...



JESUS AND HIS TROUBLE MAKING GO MERRILY ON!

[LUKE 24:1-8]

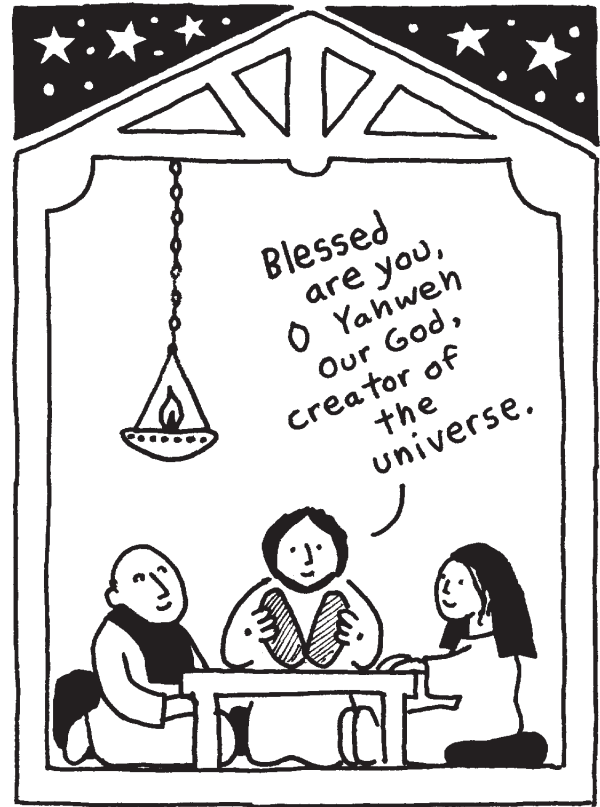
All creation shouted for joy. The trees clapped their hands. The stars danced, and the angels sang. God wept for joy and then danced with the angels around the cosmos. The reign of God had triumphed on Planet Earth. Life had conquered death. Jesus, who had been crucified, was now alive! Then God elected a group of women to serve as the first proclaimers. Empowered by joy and belief, they announced...



[LUKE 24:9-11]

To the other disciples the message of the women seemed like an idle tale [LUKE 24:11]. Maybe they did not want to believe. Maybe news of resurrection seemed too good to be true... or maybe the disciples were frightened. A risen Lord would call them to take up their cross and follow [LUKE 9:23-24].

The Risen One appeared to these other disciples. First he joined two of them as they were walking from Jerusalem to their home town of Emmaus. On the road he explained the scriptures to them. They did not recognize him, however, until he broke bread in their home. Jesus kept his promise! He was present in the meal, in the breaking of bread [LUKE 24:1-35].



Then Jesus appeared to all of the disciples in Jerusalem. There he opened their minds to understand God's plan written in the scriptures:

The Messiah's suffering is the way to glory.
Innocent suffering is the power which ushers
in the reign of God - the new reality of
abundant bread and abundant mercy for all.

[LUKE 24:25-26]

Jesus told the disciples about their future mission. They will tell the nations about God's plan, God's amazing dream. They will tell everyone how God out-suffered, out-loved, and out-lived even the worst that unjust and sinful humans can do. They will invite all people to repent and receive the gift of forgiveness [LUKE 24:47-49]. People of all nations will respond and become a community of the reign of God, a family where there is no hierarchy, no retribution, no hoarding, no oppression - only servant-hood, only abundant manna and abundant mercy for ALL! This people will live as God's unusual people, a contrast society...

A SIGN OF GOD'S PURPOSE FOR ALL OF CREATION!

[EPH 1:9-10, 3:10-11]