

THE (SECOND) APOCALYPSE OF JAMES

Translated by Charles W. Hedrick

The **Second Apocalypse of James** (in this context "apocalypse" means *revelation* or *vision*) is one of the Gnostic Gospels, part of the New Testament apocrypha. It is believed to have been written around the 2nd century CE, and then buried and lost until it was re-discovered amongst 52 other Gnostic Christian texts spread over 13 Codices by an Arab peasant, Mohammad Ali al-Samman, in the Egyptian town of Nag Hammadi late in December 1945.

Although the text is gnostic, it is quite restrained, containing many Jewish-Christian themes, making many scholars think it to be one of the earlier texts, originally from the early or mid 2nd century. One of the most curious features of the second apocalypse of James is that this range of dating, of its original text, assigned to it by scholars, requires that it was written *before* the *First Apocalypse of James*.

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This is the discourse that James the Just spoke in Jerusalem, which Mareim, one of the priests, wrote. He had told it to Theuda, the father of the Just One, since he was a relative of his. He said, "Hasten! Come with Mary, your wife, and your relatives [...] therefore [...] of this [...] to him, he will understand. For behold, a multitude are disturbed over his [...], and they are greatly angry at him. [...] and they pray [...]. For he would often say these words and others also."

"He used to speak these words while the multitude of people were seated. But (on this occasion) he entered and did <not> sit down in the place, as was his custom. Rather he sat above the fifth flight of steps, which is (highly) esteemed, while all our people [...] the words [...]."

"[...] I am he who received revelation from the Pleroma of Imperishability. (I am) he who was first summoned by him who is great, and who obeyed the Lord - he who passed through the worlds [...], he who [...], he who stripped himself and went about naked, he who was found in a perishable (state), though he was about to be brought up into imperishability. - This Lord who is present came as a son who sees, and as a brother was he sought. He will come to [...] produced him because [...] and he unites [...] make him free [...] in [...] he who came to [...]."

"Now again am I rich in knowledge and I have a unique understanding, which was produced only from above and the [...] comes from a [...]. I am the [...] whom I knew. That which was revealed to me was hidden from everyone and shall (only) be revealed through him. These two who see I <...> (and) they have already proclaimed through these words: "He shall be judged with the unrighteous". He who lived without blasphemy died by means of blasphemy. He who was cast out, they [...]."

"[...] the flesh and it is by knowledge that I shall come forth from the flesh. I am surely dying, but it is in life that I shall be found. I entered in order that they might judge [...] I shall come forth in [...] judge [...] I do not bring blame against the servants of his [...]. I hasten to make them free and want to take them above him who wants to rule over them. If they are helped, I am the brother in secret, who prayed to the Father until he [...] in [...] reign [...] imperishability [...] first in [...]."

I am the first son who was begotten. -

He will destroy the dominion of them all. -

I am the beloved.

I am the righteous one.

I am the son of the Father.

I speak even as I heard.

I command even as I received the order.

I show you even as I have found.

Behold, I speak in order that I may come forth. Pay attention to me in order that you may see me!

"If I have come into existence, who then am I? For I did <not> come as I am, nor would I have appeared as I am. For I used to exist for a brief period of time [...]."

"Once when I was sitting deliberating, he opened the door. That one whom you hated and persecuted came in to me. He said to me, "Hail, my brother; my brother, hail." As I raised my face to stare at him, (my) mother said to me, "Do not be frightened, my son, because he said 'My brother' to you (sg.). For you (pl.) were nourished with this same milk. Because of this he calls me "My mother". For he is not a stranger to us. He is your step-brother [...]."

"[...] these words [...] great [...] I shall find them, and they shall come forth. However, I am the stranger, and they have no knowledge of me in their thoughts, for they know me in this place. But it was fitting that others know through you.

"<You are> the one to whom I say: Hear and understand - for a multitude, when they hear, will be slow witted. But you, understand as I shall be able to tell you. Your father is not my father. But my father has become a father to you.

"This virgin about whom you hear - this is how [...] virgin [...] namely, the virgin. [...], how [...] to me for [...] to know [...] not as [...] whom I [...]. For this one (masc.) [...] to him, and this also is profitable for you. Your father, whom you consider to be rich, shall grant that you inherit all these things that you see.

"I proclaim to you to tell you these (words) that I shall speak. When you hear, therefore, open your ears and understand and walk (accordingly)! It is because of you that they pass by, activated by that one who is glorious. And if they want to make a disturbance and (seize) possession [...] he began [...] not, nor those who are coming, who were sent forth by him to make this present creation. After these things, when he is ashamed, he shall be disturbed that his labor, which is far from the aeons, is nothing. And his inheritance, which he boasted to be great, shall appear small. And his gifts are not blessings. His promises are evil schemes. For you are not an (instrument) of his compassion, but it is through you that he does violence. He wants to do injustice to us, and will exercise dominion for a time allotted to him.

"But understand and know the Father who has compassion. He was not given an inheritance that was unlimited, nor does it have a (limited) number of days, but it is as

the eternal day [...] it is [...] perceive [...]. And he used [...]. For in fact he is not one (come) from them, (and) because of this, he is despised. Because of this he boasts, so that he may not be reproved. For because of this he is superior to those who are below, those by whom you were looked down upon. After he imprisoned those from the Father, he seized them and fashioned them to resemble himself. And it is with him that they exist.

"I saw from the height those things that happened, and I have explained how they happened. They were visited while they were in another form, and, while I was watching, they came to know <me> as I am, through those whom I know.

"Now before those things have happened they will make a [...]. I know how they

attempted to come down to this place that he might approach [...] the small children, but I wish to reveal through you and the spirit of power, in order that he might reveal to those who are yours. And those who wish to enter, and who seek to walk in the way that is before the door, open the good door through you. And they follow you; they enter and you escort them inside, and give a reward to each one who is ready for it.

For you are not the redeemer nor a helper of strangers.

You are an illuminator and a redeemer of those who are mine, and now of those who are yours.

You shall reveal (to them); you shall bring good among them all.

You they shall admire because of every powerful (deed).

You are he whom the heavens bless.

You he shall envy, he who has called himself your Lord.

I am the [...] those who are instructed in these things with you.

For your sake, they will be told these things, and will come to rest.

For your sake, they will reign, and will become kings.

For your sake, they will have pity on whomever they pity.

For just as you are first having clothed yourself,

you are also the first who will strip himself,

and you shall become as you were before you were stripped."

"And he kissed my mouth. He took hold of me, saying, "My beloved! Behold, I shall reveal to you those things that (neither) the heavens nor their archons have known.

Behold, I shall reveal to you those things that he did not know, he who boasted, "[...] there is no other except me. Am I not alive? Because I am a father, do I not have power for everything?" Behold, I shall reveal to you everything, my beloved. Understand and know them, that you may come forth just as I am. Behold, I shall reveal to you him who is hidden. But now, stretch out your hand. Now, take hold of me."

"And then I stretched out my hands and I did not find him as I thought (he would be).

But afterward I heard him saying, "Understand and take hold of me." Then I understood, and I was afraid. And I was exceedingly joyful.

"Therefore, I tell you judges, you have been judged. And you did not spare, but you were spared. Be sober and [...] you did not know.

He was that one whom he who created the heaven and the earth and dwelled in it, did not see.

He was this one who is the life.

He was the light.

He was that one who will come to be.

And again he shall provide an end for what has begun, and a beginning for what is about to be ended.

He was the Holy Spirit and the Invisible One, who did not descend upon the earth.

He was the virgin, and that which he wishes, happens to him.

I saw that he was naked, and there was no garment clothing him.

That which he wills, happens to him [...].

"Renounce this difficult way, which is (so) variable, and walk in accordance with him who desires that you become free men with me, after you have passed above every dominion. For he will not judge (you) for those things that you did, but will have mercy on you. For (it is) not you that did them, but it is your Lord (that did them). He was not a

wrathful one, but he was a kind Father.

"But you have judged yourselves, and because of this you will remain in their fetters. You have oppressed yourselves, and you will repent, (but) you will not profit at all. Behold him who speaks and seek him who is silent. Know him who came to this place, and understand him who went forth (from it). I am the Just One, and I do <not> judge. I am not a master, then, but I am a helper. He was cast out before he stretched out his hand. I [...].

"[...] and he allows me to hear. And play your trumpets, your flutes and your harps of this house. The Lord has taken you captive from the Lord, having closed your ears, that they may not hear the sound of my word. Yet you will be able to pay heed in your hearts, and you will call me 'the Just One.' Therefore, I tell you: Behold, I gave you your house, which you say that God has made - that (house) in which he promised to give you an inheritance through it. This (house) I shall doom to destruction and derision of those who are in ignorance. For behold, those who judge deliberately [...]."

On that day all the people and the crowd were disturbed, and they showed that they had not been persuaded. And he arose and went forth speaking in this manner. And he entered (again) on that same day and spoke a few hours. And I was with the priests and revealed nothing of the relationship, since all of them were saying with one voice, 'Come, let us stone the Just One.' And they arose, saying, 'Yes, let us kill this man, that he may be taken from our midst. For he will be of no use to us.'

And they were there and found him standing beside the columns of the temple beside the mighty corner stone. And they decided to throw him down from the height, and they cast him down. And they [...] they [...]. They seized him and struck him as they dragged him upon the ground. They stretched him out and placed a stone on his abdomen. They all placed their feet on him, saying 'You have erred!'

Again they raised him up, since he was alive, and made him dig a hole. They made him stand in it. After having covered him up to his abdomen, they stoned him in this manner. And he stretched out his hands and said this prayer - not that (one) which it is his custom to say:

'My God and my father,
who saved me from this dead hope,
who made me alive through a mystery of what he wills,
Do not let these days of this world be prolonged for me,
but the day of your light [...] remains
in [...] salvation.

Deliver me from this place of sojourn!

Do not let your grace be left behind in me,
but may your grace become pure!

Save me from an evil death!

Bring me from a tomb alive, because your grace -
love - is alive in me to accomplish a work of fullness!

Save me from sinful flesh,
because I trusted in you with all my strength,
because you are the life of the life!

Save me from a humiliating enemy!

Do not give me into the hand of a judge who is severe with sin!

Forgive me all my debts of the days (of my life)!

Because I am alive in you, your grace is alive in me.
I have renounced everyone, but you I have confessed.
Save me from evil affliction!
But now is the time and the hour.
O Holy Spirit, send me salvation [...] the light [...] the light [...] in a power [...].'
"After he spoke, he fell silent [...] word [...] afterward [...] the discourse [...]."

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