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The only known copy of this ancient Apocalypse is found in the fourth-century Nag Hammadi Codex V, discovered in 1945. The manuscript actually contains two books titled "The Apocalypse of James." In order to distinguish them, scholars have dubbed the first one (tractate 3) as "The (First) Apocalypse of James" and the second one (tractate 4) as "The (Second) Apocalypse of James." Besides being copied together, there's no obvious connection between the First Apocalypse of James and the Second Apocalypse of James.

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Sigla

[] Gap in the text or reconstructed text

() Editorial insertion to clarify the text

< > Editorial correction of a scribal error

Bold numerals in the body of the text denote page numbers of the Coptic codex.

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The (Second) Apocalypse of [James]

Introduction

44 This is the speech that James [the] Just delivered in Jerusalem, [which] Mareim wrote down.

A Priestly Relative Urges James' Father to Intervene

One of the priests had spoken to Theuda, the father of "the Just," since he was a relative of his. He said, [Hurry!] Come with [Mary], your wife, and your [relatives ...] 45 So [...] and [...] of this [...] to him. So hurry! Maybe [if] you yourself guide us to [him, he will] understand. Because, look, a crowd is disturbed about his [...] and is extremely angry [with him ...] they pray [...] these words, because [he would speak] them often, and other (things) too.

He used to speak these words while the crowd of people was seated. But (this time) he entered and did <not> sit [down] in his customary place, but he sat above the fifth staircase, [which] is the honored place, while the all the [people ...] the words.

James Begins His Speech

46 "[...] I'm the one who received revelation from the fullness of imperishability; who was first summoned by the one who's great; who obeyed the [Lord]; who passed [through] the [worlds]; who

[...] stripped [himself and] walked around naked; who was found in perishability, though he will be brought up to imperishability. This Lord who's in this place [came] as a son who sees, and as a brother. He was sought while he went up to [...] produced him because [...] and he unites [...] make him free [...] 47 [...] in [...] the one who came [up to ...]

"Now again I'm rich in knowledge [and] I have a unique [understanding] produced only from above, and the [...] comes] from a [...]. I'm the [...] whom I've come to know. What was revealed to me was hidden from everyone, and (yet) it'll be revealed through him. These two who see [...].

"It was once proclaimed, 'he'll be judged with [the unrighteous].' The one who lived [without] blasphemy died through [blasphemy]. The one who was cast out they [...]"

Pay Attention

48 "[... the] flesh [and] I'll come in the [flesh] in [fulfillment]. I'll certainly die, but I'll be found in life. I came to be judged [...] will come out [...] judge [...] I don't blame the servants of his [...] I hurry to set them free, and I want to take them above the one who wants to lord it over them. If they're helped, I'm the brother in secret who prayed to the Father [until he ...] in [...] 49 [...] reign [...] imperishability [...] first in [...] I [am the] first [son] who was born. He'll destroy the dominion of [all] of them. I [am] the beloved. I'm 'the Just.' I'm the son of [the Father]. I speak as [I] have heard. I command as [I] have [received] the commandment. I teach you as I've [found]. Look, I speak so that I may come out. Pay attention to me, so that you may see me! If I've come into existence, who then am I? For I have <not> come as I am, nor will I reveal myself as I am, because I used to exist for a brief period of time [...] 50 [...] since [...] and [...]

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Jesus Appears to James

"One time when I was sitting deliberating, the one whom you hated and persecuted opened the door and came in to me. He told me, 'Hello, my brother; my brother, hello.' As I raised my [face] to stare at him, Mother told me, 'Don't be frightened, my son, because he said to you "my brother," because you (both) were nourished with the same milk. Because of this, he calls me "my mother," because he's not a stranger to us. He's the brother [from] your father [...].'

"He said 51 to me, 'My [brother...], these words [...] great [...] I'll [find] them, and [they'll] come] out. [But] I'm the stranger, and they have no knowledge of me in [their] thoughts, because they know me in [this place]. But it's fitting that others know through you. I tell you, hear and understand! Because a crowd, when they hear, will be faint of heart. But you, understand as I'll be able to talk to you.

"Your father isn't my Father, but my Father has become a father to [you]. This virgin about whom you hear, this is how [...] to me [...] virgin [...] 52 namely, this virgin [...] how [...] to me because [...] to know [...] not as [...] because this one [...] to him, and this [also] is good for you. Your father, whom you consider to be [rich], will grant that you inherit all these (things) that you see. But I proclaim to you that I'll give you what I'll say, if you listen.

The Creator Who Imprisons

"Now, then, open your ears and understand, and walk (accordingly)! Because of you they pass by, activated by that one who's 'glorious,' but who wants to make a disturbance and (seize) power [...] but [...] and [...] 53 [...] he attempted [...] not, nor [...] who were sent out [by] him to make this [creation] in this place. Afterwards, [when he] is put to shame, he'll [be disturbed] that his work, which is far (distant) [from] the realms, is nothing. And his inheritance, which he bragged was great, will be revealed to be small. His gifts aren't blessings. His promises are evil intrigues, because you're not of his compassion, but he does violence against you. He wants to do injustice to us and will lord it (over us) for a time appointed to him. But understand and know the Father who has compassion, who was not given an inheritance, (whose inheritance) is not limited, [nor] (limited) to a number of days; but it's an eternal [day] and [...] it exists [...] 54 [...] perceive [...] and he used [...]

"In fact, he's not from them. Because of this he [curses]; because of this he brags, so that he

may not be reproved. That's why he's superior to those who are below, who were looked down upon, to be perfected in them.

"After he imprisoned those from [the] Father, he bound them and shaped them to resemble himself, but they exist with him. I saw those (things) that happened from the height, and I've explained how they happened; and they were visited while they were in another form. And while I was watching, [I] came to know the way I am through those whom I know.

The Good Door through James

"Now before those (things) [have happened], they'll make a [...] I know [how] they attempted to come down to this place 55 [so that] he might approach [...] the little children. [I] want to reveal [...] through you and the [Spirit of power], and he'll reveal [to those] who are yours. And those

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who wish to come inside may open the good door [through] you, and turn around so that they may walk in the way that (leads) before the door. And they follow you and come inside, [and you] accompany them inside and give each one their share of the reward, because:

You're not the redeemer
nor a helper of strangers.
You're an illuminator and a redeemer
of those who are mine,
but now those who are yours.
You'll reveal (to them),
and you'll bring good among them all.
You [they'll] admire for [every] power (of yours).
You're the one the heavens bless.
You he'll envy, [who] called himself the [...]
56 [those who] receive instruction about these (things) with [you].

Because of you they'll be taught [about these (things)], and come to rest.
Because of you they'll reign, [and will] become kings.
Because of [you they'll] pity those whom they'll [pity].

Because just as you first clothed yourself,
you're also the first who will strip himself,
and you'll become as you were before you stripped."

And he kissed my mouth and hugged me. He said, "My beloved! Look, I'll reveal to you those (things) which the heavens don't know, nor their rulers. Look, I'll reveal to you those (things) which he didn't know – the one who [bragged ...] 57 [...] other after me. Am I not alive? Because I'm a father, [don't] I [have power] over all things? Look, I'll reveal all things to you, my beloved. [Understand] and know them, [so that] you may come out just as I am. Look, I'll reveal to you [what's hidden]. But now, stretch out your [hand]. Now, embrace me!"

[And] then I stretched out my [hands], and I didn't find him as I thought. But afterward, I heard him say, "Understand and embrace me!" Then I understood, and I was afraid. And I rejoiced with a great joy.

James Warns the Crowds

"Because of this I tell you, you who judge – you've been judged. And you didn't spare, but you've been spared. Be sober and [...] 58 you didn't [know].

He was [the one] who wasn't [seen] by the one who created the heaven and the earth and dwelt in it.

He was the one [who] is the life.
He was the light.

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He was the one who will be, and who again will provide [an] end of [what] was begun,
and a beginning of what will come to an end.
He was the Holy Spirit
and the Invisible One, who didn't come down on the earth.
He was the virgin, and what he wishes happens to him.
I saw that he was naked, and there was no garment clothing him. What he wills happens to him
[...]

59 "[Turn] from this difficult way which is so motley [and] walk in accordance with the one who
wants you to become free people [with] me, after you've passed above every [lord], because he
won't [judge] (you) for those (things) you've done, but he'll have mercy on you; because you didn't
do them, but it's [your] lord (who did them). He [wasn't] wrathful, but was a kind father.

But you've judged [yourselves],
and because of this, you'll remain in their chains.
You've burdened yourselves,
and you'll repent,
(but) you won't profit at all.
Look at the one who speaks,
and look for the one who's silent.
Know the one who came to this place,
and understand who went out.
I'm 'the Just,' and I <don't> judge.
I'm not a lord, then, but I'm a helper.

"He was cast out before he stretched out his hand. I [...] 60 and he lets me hear. And play your
trumpets, and your flutes, and your harps [for this house]. It's the Lord who's taken you captive
from the Lord, closing your ears so that they may not hear the sound of my speech and you [will be
able to pay] attention in your hearts [and] call me 'the Just.' Because of this I tell you:

"Look, I gave you your house, which you say God has made, through which the one who dwells
in it promised to give you an inheritance. This I'll abandon to destruction and (the) derision of
those who are in ignorance."

The End of the Priest's Report

Look, those who judge are deliberating [...] 61 [on] that day. All the [people] and the crowd were
disturbed, and they showed that they weren't convinced. And he arose and went out after speaking
in this [way].

But he came on that day and spoke a few hours. But I was with the priests, and I revealed
nothing about our relationship, [since] all of them were saying with one voice, "Come, let's stone
'the Just!'"

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The Execution of James

And they arose and said, "Yes, let's kill this man, so that he may be taken out of our midst,
because he'll be of no use to us at all."

And they were there, and they found him standing beside the pinnacle of the temple, beside the

stone which is the mighty cornerstone. And they decided to cast him down from the height, and they cast him down. But [...] they [...] 62 They seized him and [struck] him, dragging him on the ground. They stretched him out and placed a stone on his abdomen. They all placed their feet on him and said, "You've gone astray!"

They raised him up again since he was (still) alive, made him dig a hole, and made him stand in it. When they had covered him up to his abdomen, they stoned him in this way.

James' Last Words

But he stretched out his hands and said this prayer – not the one he was accustomed to say:

"My God and my Father,
who saved me from this dead hope,
who made me alive through a mystery of what he desires,
don't let these days of this world be prolonged for me,
but the day of your light [...] remains in [...] 63 [salvation].
Free me from this [place of] sojourn!
Don't let your grace be left behind in me,
but let your grace become pure!
Save me from an evil death!
Bring me from a tomb alive, because your grace is alive in me,
the longing to complete a work of fullness.
Save me from a sinful flesh because I've trusted you with all my strength,
because you are the life of life.
Save me from an enemy who would humiliate me!
Don't give me into the hand of a judge who is severe with sin!
Forgive me all the debts of my days.
Because I'm alive in you, your grace is alive in me.
I've renounced everyone,
but you I've openly 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 [...]"

Conclusion

After he [spoke, he] fell silent [...] word [...] afterward [...] the speech [...]"

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Notes

Page 44 ... [which] Mareim wrote down. One of the priests had spoken to Theuda ... Following Funk. Alternately, Hedrick translates, "[which] Mareim, one of the priests, wrote down. He had spoken to Theuda ..." But see Veilleux, 159.

Page 47 I have a unique [understanding] (eime), following Hedrick. Funk restores the lacuna as (SW_R), "Deliverer / Redeemer" or "Savior."

Page 48 I'll come in the [flesh] in [fulfillment] (outeliwsis), following Funk. Hedrick proposes "knowledge" (ougnwsis) instead of "fulfillment."

Page 50 One time ... the one whom you hated and persecuted opened the door and came in to me, following Funk. Hedrick translates, "Once ... [he] opened [the] door. That one whom you hated and persecuted came in to me."

Page 55 [who] called himself [...] Funk, “the [jealous one]”; Hedrick, “your [Lord].”

Page 57 Am I not alive? Because I’m a father, [don’t] I [have power] over all things? Funk (2007) translates, “I am alive, because I am a father. Don’t I have [power] over everything?”

Page 60 It’s the Lord who’s taken you captive from the Lord. Many scholars regard this sentence as “a problem” (cf. Hedrick, 140), but Samuel Zinner has pointed out in personal conversation that the idiom is perfectly biblical, as in Genesis 19:24, which states that “the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD” (NRSVue).

Page 63 ... the longing to complete a work of fullness. Literally, “the love to work a work of fullness.”

Page 59 ... which is so motley. Literally, “which has a multitude of forms” (cf. Funk, 1991). Hedrick translates, “which is (so) variable,” and Funk (2007) translates, “which is so irregular.”

Addenda: Whose Line is it Anyway?

In two key passages of this Apocalypse, it’s unclear who the speaker is:

1. James or Jesus?

The first passage is the discourse on pages 48 and 49, corresponding to the section I’ve titled “Pay Attention.” Because several lines of text are missing at the bottom of page 47 and the top of page 48, it’s impossible to know whether the speaker has switched from James to Jesus. Translators and interpreters generally make a theological judgement that the speaker is Jesus; the speaker is clearly an exalted spiritual being, and the text is clearly informed by key New Testament texts about Jesus.

On the other hand, the notion of James as an exalted being is also attested, most notably in Thomas 12, where Jesus’ disciples ask him who will be their leader after he leaves; Jesus replies that

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“Wherever you are, you’ll go to James the Just, for whom heaven and earth came into being.” Additionally, on page 49, the speaker identifies himself as “the Just.” Finally, as Jesus’ brother, there is a degree to which what is said of Jesus can also be said of James, and vice-versa. On page 55, Jesus explains his intention to reveal the truth through James, whom he calls an illuminator and redeemer.

My primary intention in setting off this passage in its own section is to bypass the question of who the speaker is. This translation thereby preserves the ambiguity created by the missing lines, leaving it to the reader to make a determination based on the overall flow and content of the tractate.

2. James or God?

The second passage is James’ prophetic pronouncement of judgement in 60,14-22, corresponding to the last paragraph under the section I’ve titled “James Warns the Crowds.” James is the speaker, but are the words his, or God’s? Hans-Martin Schenke (Review of Böhlig-Labib, *Koptisch-gnostische Apokalypsen*, OLZ 61 [1966], col. 31) proposed moving the phrase “from the Lord” in line 7 to line 14, which would then read, “Because of this I tell you from the Lord” (Hedrick, p. 141). However neat this hypothetical emendation may seem, there’s no evidence supporting it in the text. It’s still possible that James is essentially “quoting” the Lord in lines 14-22, but these lines could also reflect an exalted view of James. In this translation, I’ve sought to preserve the ambiguity simply by setting it off as a separate paragraph.

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