

LIFE FOR GOD · APOCRYPHA

AGRAPHA

Sayings and traditions outside the four Gospels · A selection
after M. R. James

From M. R. James's edition
of 1924

Reading edition
Life for God

2026

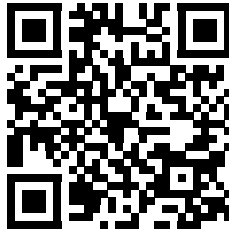
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About this edition

Agrapha are sayings attributed to Jesus and transmitted outside the usual text of the four canonical Gospels. The name literally means “unwritten things,” although the witnesses survive in writing. This is a category of material, not a single recovered ancient book. The present edition follows M. R. James’s broad collection, including manuscript additions, narrative traditions and two comparative quotations. Sections 1–5 represent his group A; 6–18 his group B; 19–20 the concluding parallels. Narrower modern usage may exclude narratives and speech of the risen Christ. Each of the 28 passages identifies its source. The age of a witness, its literary form and its attribution to Jesus are different questions. The collection does not declare every included saying historically authentic or equivalent to the canonical Gospels.

The English basis is M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (1924), Agrapha, pp. 33–37, public domain. The main quoted texts of all items A.1–5 and B.1–13 and both concluding parallels were checked against the printed scan. Russian was translated from this English basis; no independent full collation of the Greek, Latin, Syriac or Coptic witnesses was undertaken. Selected contexts in Justin, Clement and Irenaeus were additionally checked in historical translations on New Advent. Life for God’s explanations and headings are distinct from quotations. James’s editorial glosses within the translation are explained in the notes.

The twenty sections and twenty-eight passage numbers are Life for God’s reading and linking aids, not verses of an ancient book called Agrapha or the numbering of the cited sources. Labels identify the author, work or manuscript reading. Section 6 is canonical Acts testimony; 19 is a Jewish parallel, not speech by Jesus; 20 is a later literary parallel. Parentheses within quotations mainly preserve James’s alternatives and glosses, not a uniform system of manuscript lacunae.

English texts: M. R. James, 1924, public domain. The Russian translation was prepared by Priest Sergey Koudy for Life for God. Introduction, structure and notes: Life for God, 2026. Modern copyrighted translations are not reproduced. The website and PDFs share one text.

Online edition:

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Sources

1. M. R. James — The Apocryphal New Testament (1924), Agrapha, pp. 33-37

Printed scan; the sole basis of the English quotations and Russian translation.

2. Theology on the Web — edition record / описание издания

Bibliographic record and explicit Public domain designation.

3. Luigi Walt — Agrapha of Jesus, NASSCAL, e-Clavis

Reference for the term's scope and differing collections; not a translation source.

4. Justin — Dialogue with Trypho 35, 47 / Иустин — Диалог с Трифоном

Historical translation consulted for context; the book's quotations follow James.

5. Clement — Stromata I.28 / Климент — Строматы I.28

Context of the money-changer and discernment; this translation is not reprinted.

6. Irenaeus — Against Heresies V.33.3-4 / Иринея — Против ересей

Used to check the quotation's boundaries and fuller enumeration; James's selected text is retained.

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1. A place at the table

A manuscript addition after Matthew 20:28 in Codex Bezae and some other witnesses. It belongs to the Gospel's textual transmission, not the usual text of this verse.

Codex Bezae D · addition at Matthew 20:28

1. But ye seek (or seek ye) to increase from smallness and from the greater to become less. And when ye go in and are invited to dine, do not recline in the prominent place lest haply one more illustrious than thou come in, and he that bade thee to dinner say to thee: Go yet lower down; and thou shalt be put to shame. But if thou recline in the lesser place, and a lesser man come in, he that bade thee to dinner will say to thee: Get thee yet higher up; and this will be profitable to thee. ^[1]

2. The man working on the sabbath

A saying in Codex Bezae after Luke 6:4. The conditional contrast between knowing and not knowing is essential to the passage.

Codex Bezae D · addition at Luke 6:4

1. On the same day, seeing one working on the sabbath, he said unto him: Man, if indeed thou knowest what thou doest, thou art blessed: but if thou knowest not, thou art cursed, and a transgressor of the law. ^[2]

3. Light at the baptism

Two manuscript forms of a narrative, not an isolated saying by Jesus. Following James's broad collection, this is included as associated tradition; the witnesses remain separate.

Codex Vercellensis · narrative addition at Matthew 3:17

1. And when he was being baptized, a very great light shone round about from the water, so that all that had come thither feared. ^[3]

Codex Sangermanensis g¹ · another reading

2. And when Jesus was being baptized, a great light shone from the water, so that all that were gathered together feared. ^[4]

4. Darkness and light at the tomb

A narrative addition in the Old Latin Codex Bobiensis after the words about rolling away the stone in Mark 16:3. This recounts events; it is not a saying of Jesus.

Codex Bobiensis k · addition at Mark 16:3

1. But suddenly at the third hour of the day (or by day) there came darkness throughout all the globe of the earth; and angels came down from the heavens, and rising in the glory (brightness) of the living God they went up together with him, and immediately there was light. Then the women drew near to the sepulchre and saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. ^[5]

5. The Freer Logion

An addition within Mark's longer ending, after Mark 16:14, in Codex W. James's rendering of the manuscript is followed by the related partial text known to Jerome, kept separate.

Codex W · addition after Mark 16:14; opening parentheses and final &c. are James's

1. (Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen) and they made excuse (defended themselves), saying: This age of wickedness and unbelief is under Satan who, by means of unclean spirits, permitteth not men to apprehend the true power of God: therefore do thou now reveal thy righteousness. They, then, said these things unto Christ. And Christ said unto them: The limit of the years of the power of Satan is fulfilled: but other fearful things draw near even upon them for whom, because they had sinned, I was delivered unto death that they may return unto the truth and sin no more: that they may inherit the spiritual and incorruptible glory of righteousness which is in heaven. But go ye into all the world, &c. ^[6] ^[7]

Jerome · Dialogue against the Pelagians II.15 · partial parallel

2. And they excused themselves (lit. made satisfaction) saying: This age of iniquity and unbelief is under Satan who (which) by unclean spirits suffereth not the true power of God to be perceived: therefore now forthwith reveal thou thy righteousness. ^[8]

6. Giving and receiving

Canonical testimony outside the four Gospels. In his address at Miletus, Paul recalls the Lord Jesus's words. This passage belongs to the New Testament; its inclusion here does not make it apocryphal.

Acts 20:35 · canonical source; James's translation

1. It is more blessed to give than to receive. ^[9]

7. In what I find you

A saying Justin transmits as Christ's words. It concerns a person's condition at judgement, not a geographical meeting place.

Justin · Dialogue with Trypho 47 · saying as rendered by James

1. Wherein I find you, there will I judge you. ^{[10] [11]}

8. Asking for great and heavenly things

James gives the full formula from Origen and notes that Clement of Alexandria transmits its first part. The witnesses are not assumed to be verbally identical.

Origen · On Prayer 2; first part also in Clement, Stromata 1.24.158

1. Ask ye for the greater things, and the small shall be added unto you: and ask for the heavenly things, and the earthly shall be added unto you. ^[12]

9. Approved money-changers

The image is a money-changer able to test coinage. In Clement it concerns discerning truth from falsehood, not a recommendation to become wealthy.

Clement of Alexandria · Stromata I.28.177 · saying as rendered by James

1. Be ye approved (or tried) money-changers (bankers). ^[13]
^[14]

10. Lambs among wolves

A dialogue in the work traditionally called Second Clement. The title does not establish authorship by Clement of Rome or make it a transcript of an apostolic conversation.

Second Clement 5.2-4 · quoted dialogue

1. For the Lord saith: Ye shall be as lambs in the midst of wolves. And Peter answering saith unto him: If then the wolves tear the lambs in pieces? Jesus said unto Peter: Let not the lambs fear the wolves, after they are dead. And do not ye fear them that kill you, and can do nothing unto you, but fear him who, after ye are dead, hath power over soul and body, to cast them into the hell of fire. ^[15]

11. You and your soul

An excerpt reporting a Valentinian interpretation. The formula is transmitted within a particular doctrinal exposition, not offered here as a universal Christian definition of salvation.

Clement of Alexandria · Excerpts from Theodotus 2

1. As the Valentinians say ... on this account the Saviour saith: Be thou saved (or Save thyself, thou) and thy soul. ^[16]

12. Testing and faithfulness

Two related testimonies with different wording and attribution. Tempted can refer to being tested, not only to an inducement to sin.

Tertullian · On Baptism 20 · narrative context and saying

1. The disciples were tempted because they fell asleep, so that they forsook the Lord when he was taken, and even he who abode with him and used the sword, so that he even denied thrice: for the saying had gone before, that: No man that is not tempted shall obtain the kingdom of heaven. ^[17]

Didascalia 11.8 · parallel attributed to “scripture”

2. The scripture saith: A man that is not tempted is not approved. ^[18]

13. Near the fire

Origen himself qualifies the saying’s origin. His uncertainty is retained with the quotation rather than replaced by an unqualified attribution.

Origen · Homilies on Jeremiah, Latin homily 3.3, as cited by James

1. I have read somewhere that the Saviour said—and I question whether some one has assumed the person of the Saviour, or called the words to memory, or whether it be true that is said—but at any rate the Saviour himself says: He that is near me is near the fire. He that is far from me is far from the kingdom. ^{[19] [20]}

14. The weak and the strong

A literary scene from the Apostolic Church Order. The work assigns speech to apostles, Martha and Mary; this is its own attribution, not an established record of their conversation. A second form of Mary's reply follows separately.

Apostolic Church Order · Greek and Latin forms as represented by James

1. Peter said: We have gone too fast in making ordinances: let us signify accurately concerning the offering of the body and the blood.

John said: Ye have forgotten, brethren, when the Teacher asked for the bread and the cup, and blessed them, saying: This is my body and my blood, that he permitted not these women to be (stand) with us. Martha said: It was because of Mary, because he saw her smiling. Mary said: I laughed not yet (or I laughed no more): for he said unto us before that: That which is weak shall be saved by means of that which is strong. ^[21]

Apostolic Church Order · Syriac form of Mary's reply, abbreviated by James

2. I did not verily laugh, but I remembered the words of our Lord, and was glad: for ye know that he said unto us aforetime, when he taught us, that, &c. ^[22]

15. The mystery and the household

Two forms of a saying about a mystery. The first witness invokes “the prophet” and then “a certain Gospel”; the second explicitly attributes the saying to the Lord and Teacher.

Clement of Alexandria · Stromata V.10.63

1. For the prophet saith: Who shall understand a parable of the Lord save he that is wise and knowledgeable and loveth his Lord? For it is given to few to contain all things: for it is not as grudging (saith he) that the Lord commanded in a certain Gospel: My secret (mystery) for me and for the sons of mine house. ^[23]

Clementine Homilies XIX.20 · separate form

2. For we remember our Lord and Teacher, how he charged us saying: Ye shall keep my secrets (mysteries) for me and for the sons of mine house. ^[24]

16. Divisions and false teachers

Two statements quoted together by Justin. The first combines familiar Gospel images; the second is a short formula about divisions.

Justin · Dialogue with Trypho 35 · first quotation

1. For he said: Many shall come in my name clad outwardly with sheep skins, but within they are ravening wolves. ^[25]

Justin · Dialogue with Trypho 35 · second quotation

2. And: There shall be divisions (schisms) and heresies. ^[26]

17. Above and below, right and left

Two symbolic sayings from apocryphal narratives. Their wording differs; they are not combined into a reconstructed common text.

Acts of Philip 34 · words attributed to the Lord by the narrator

1. For the Lord said unto me: If ye make not that which is below in you to be above, and the left hand things to be right, ye shall not enter into my kingdom. ^[27]

Martyrdom of Peter, attributed to Linus, 17

2. The Lord said in a mystery: If ye make not the left hand as the right and the right as the left, and the things that are above as those that are below, and the things that are before as those that are behind, ye shall not know the kingdom of God. ^[28]

18. The abundance of the coming kingdom

Irenaeus transmits a tradition through the elders, John and Papias. His report alternates attributed speech, transmission history and explanation. A separate parallel from Hippolytus follows.

Irenaeus · Against Heresies V.33.3–4 · tradition associated with Papias; James cites V.33.3

1. As the elders remember, which saw John the Lord's disciple, that they heard from him how the Lord taught concerning those times, and said: The days shall come wherein vines shall grow each having ten thousand branches, and on one branch ten thousand shoots, and on every shoot ten thousand clusters, and in every cluster ten thousand grapes, and every grape when it is pressed shall yield five and twenty measures (metretes) of wine. And when any of the saints taketh hold of one of the clusters, another will cry out: I am a better cluster, take me, through me bless thou the Lord.

Likewise also he said that a grain of wheat shall bring forth ten thousand ears, and every ear shall have ten thousand grains, and every grain shall yield five double pounds of white clean flour; and all other fruits and seeds and plants according to the agreement that followeth with them (sc. in the same proportion): and all animals using those foods which are got from the earth shall be peaceable and in concord one with another, subject unto men with all obedience.

These things Papias also, a hearer of John, and an associate of Polycarp, an ancient man, testifies in writing in the fourth of his books—for he wrote five. And he adds, saying: But these things are credible unto believers. And, he says, when Judas the traitor believed not, and asked: How then shall

these growths be accomplished by the Lord? the Lord said: They shall see who shall come thereto. ^{[29] [30] [31]}

Hippolytus · Commentary on Daniel IV.60 · separate parallel

2. So when the Lord was telling the disciples about the future kingdom of the saints, how glorious and wonderful it should be, Judas was struck by his words, and said: Who then shall see these things? And the Lord said: These things shall they see who are worthy. ^[32]

19. A parallel from the Apocalypse of Baruch

Comparative material from 2 Baruch 29:5. This is a Jewish apocalyptic text, not a saying of Jesus. James places it alongside the Papias tradition.

2 Baruch 29:5 · comparative quotation, not words of Jesus

1. The earth also will yield its fruit ten thousand fold, and on one vine there will be a thousand branches, and each branch will produce a thousand clusters, and each cluster will produce a thousand grapes, and each grape will produce a cor of wine. ^[33]

20. A later picture of Paradise

A later literary parallel from an Encomium on John the Baptist falsely attributed to John Chrysostom. It quotes an apocalypse attributed to James: an attribution within the narrative, not a verified work by the Lord's brother. James summarizes Thomas's question about the fruit of Paradise and quotes this reply.

Pseudo-Chrysostom · Encomium on John the Baptist · later literary parallel; James after Budge, *Coptic Apocrypha* (1913), p. 348

1. The Saviour said: I will hide nothing from you about the things concerning which ye have questioned me. As regardeth the vine, concerning the fruit of which ye have asked, there are ten thousand bunches of grapes upon it, and each bunch will produce six metrites (the same word as in Irenaeus) of wine.

As regards the palm-trees in Paradise, each cluster yieldeth ten thousand dates, and each cluster is as long as a man is high. So likewise is it in the matter of the fig-trees: each shoot produceth ten thousand figs, and if three men were to partake of one fig, each of them would be satisfied. On each ear of the wheat which is in Paradise there are ten thousand grains, and each grain produceth six measures of flour. And the cedars also are on the same scale: each tree produceth ten thousand cones and is of a very great height. And the apple-tree and the thourakion-tree are of the same height; there are ten thousand apples on each shoot, and if three men were to partake of one apple, each of them would be satisfied. ^[34] ^[35] ^[36]

Translation notes

1. 1:1 — Life for God. The first sentence is difficult: James retains both an assertion and an imperative. The movement from small to great and great to small is preserved without correction. Compare the meal scene with Luke 14:8-10; the wording is not identical.

2. 2:1 — Life for God. The saying makes its judgement conditional on the agent's knowledge; it does not call every sabbath violation good. Luke 6:4 identifies the addition's location in Codex Bezae, not the usual wording of the verse.

3. 3:1 — Life for God. This is narrative tradition rather than an isolated agraphon in the narrower sense. Both Latin forms represented by James are retained, including the difference between "a very great light" and "a great light."

4. 3:2 — Life for God. James compares the story with fire in the Jordan in Justin (Dialogue 88), light over the water in Ephraem, and the baptism in the Gospel of the Ebionites. A shared motif does not establish identical works or direct dependence.

5. 4:1 — Life for God. The pronoun "with him" follows the selected translation without invented narrative detail. James compares the resurrection in the Gospel of Peter; this is a parallel, not an established attribution of the Bobiensis addition to that Gospel.

6. 5:1 — Life for God. The opening parentheses give Mark 16:14 as context. "Go ye into all the world" returns to Mark 16:15; &c. is James's abbreviation. The entire paragraph must not be represented as one continuous added logion.

7. 5:1 — Life for God. The Freer Logion is an addition within Mark's longer ending, not a name for all of Mark 16:9-20. Its presence in W does not make it the reading of every manuscript. This version presents it as speech of the risen Christ.

8. 5:2 — Life for God. Jerome supplies the corresponding part of the disciples' excuse, not the complete W addition. His wording is not inserted into W. James's who (which) reflects uncertainty about the syntax; Russian follows the connection with Satan without claiming it is the only possible construction.

9. 6:1 — Life for God. Acts 20:35 is in the New Testament canon. “Outside the Gospels” does not mean “outside the New Testament.” This edition quotes the saying in James’s English; it does not label the whole collection as a Synodal Bible translation.

10. 7:1 — Life for God. Wherein concerns the person’s condition or manner of life. Dialogue 47 discusses repentance and falling away, not physical location. This context was additionally checked in the historical translation hosted by New Advent.

11. 7:1 — Life for God. James notes several transmissions and a report attributing the words to Ezekiel. This does not authorize printing the saying as a verbatim verse of canonical Ezekiel. Distinguish the quoting source from the proposed original speaker.

12. 8:1 — Life for God. Compare Matthew 6:33 and Luke 12:31. The priority and the added things are analogous, but this double formula contrasts great/small and heavenly/earthly. Canonical wording is not substituted for it.

13. 9:1 — Life for God. The money-changer tests coinage. In Stromata I.28 the image is explicitly associated with rejecting some things and retaining the good; that context was additionally checked. The translation retains approved/tried, with the professional image explained here.

14. 9:1 — Life for God. James compares 1 Thessalonians 5:21 and calls Paul’s words a comment on the saying. Here they are treated as a semantic parallel: resemblance alone does not prove that Paul knew and commented on this precise formula.

15. 10:1 — Life for God. Peter’s question and the reply form a distinctive dialogue. Compare Matthew 10:16, 28 and Luke 10:3; 12:4–5. “After they are dead” refers to the lambs: the wolves can no longer harm them.

16. 11:1 — Life for God. James already abbreviates the quotation with an ellipsis. The source is discussing Valentinian teaching. The distinction between “you” and “your soul” belongs to that setting, not an agreed Christian account of the human person.

17. 12:1 — Life for God. Tempted is rendered with Russian terms for testing and temptation. In context the issue is faithfulness under trial, not deliberately seeking danger or occasions for sin. Compare Mark 14:38.

18. 12:2 — Life for God. The second formula is introduced as “scripture,” without explicitly naming Jesus in this excerpt. It must not automatically become another verbatim statement by Jesus. Approved denotes acceptance after testing.

19. 13:1 — Life for God. The reference follows James’s printed citation: Latin homily on Jeremiah 3.3. Numbering may differ in other editions. Origen’s doubt concerns whether the words truly belong to the Saviour; it is part of the testimony.

20. 13:1 — Life for God. Compare Gospel of Thomas, saying 82. James also cites Didymus on Psalm 88:8 as a Greek witness. The shared formula alone does not establish which book Origen had read.

21. 14:1 — Life for God. The dispute over women’s presence belongs to a literary church-order scene. It is not presented as an established historical decision by Jesus or a rule binding present-day communities. Martha, Mary, Peter and John are the work’s speaking characters.

22. 14:2 — Life for God. James quotes the Syriac reply separately and prefers its sense. His &c. points back to the weak/strong saying already given; it is an editorial abbreviation, not a reported gap in the Syriac manuscript.

23. 15:1 — Life for God. “The prophet saith,” Clement’s explanation and “a certain Gospel” belong to the transmitting author. Only the final formula is introduced here as a Gospel command; the entire paragraph must not be attributed to Jesus.

24. 15:2 — Life for God. James points to Greek Isaiah 24:16 behind the mystery formula. The household’s sons are an image of belonging. Russian uses “тайна” for both secret and mystery, preserving the singular/plural distinction.

25. 16:1 — Life for God. Compare Matthew 7:15 and 24:5. Justin combines coming “in my name” with sheep’s clothing. Resemblance to the Gospels does not make his quotation an exact match for a single verse.

26. 16:2 — Life for God. The divisions, schisms and heresies belong to Justin’s discussion of conflict. The brief formula is not a list of modern denominations and does not automatically transfer ancient polemical judgements to them.

27. 17:1 — Life for God. Above, below, right and left are symbolic. Compare Thomas 22; shared motifs do not prove a single source. This witness says “enter,” whereas the following one says “know.”

28. 17:2 — Life for God. Linus is the traditional attribution of this Martyrdom of Peter; it does not establish authorship by the historical Linus. Keep the two readings distinct rather than freely rewriting a common saying.

29. 18:1 — Life for God. The opening presents the elders’ recollection of John; Irenaeus then cites Papias’s book. This is the source’s transmission claim, not independent verification of the entire chain. The excerpt spans V.33.3–4; James gives the opening reference V.33.3.

30. 18:1 — Life for God. The historical Irenaeus translation on New Advent has a fuller sequence of branches and shoots than James. This edition explicitly retains James’s selected wording. Numbers are neither recalculated nor harmonized with other versions.

31. 18:1 — Life for God. Metretes, double pounds and other measures remain the source’s units. The extravagant abundance belongs to an expectation of the coming kingdom, not an agricultural forecast or a promise of earthly wealth to every reader.

32. 18:2 — Life for God. Irenaeus has “they who shall come thereto”; Hippolytus has “those who are worthy.” These are distinct witnesses. Do not silently substitute one for the other or invent a common original reply.

33. 19:1 — Life for God. This quotation is not attributed to Jesus. James uses it as a Jewish parallel to the abundance imagery. Cor is a unit of volume. Its thousandfold branches, clusters and grapes differ from Irenaeus’s ten thousand; the difference is retained.

34. 20:1 — Life for God. Chrysostom and James occur in the later work’s attributions. James rejects Chrysostom’s authorship and does not treat the claimed Jerusalem-library discovery as verified provenance. This later witness is separated from the earlier Papias tradition.

35. 20:1 — Life for God. The parenthetical “the same word as in Irenaeus” is James’s explanation, not speech by the Saviour character. The metretes measure wine; the six and twenty-five in different witnesses are not artificially harmonized.

36. 20:1 — Life for God. Thourakion is transliterated in Russian. The selected excerpt does not explain its botanical identification, so no modern tree name is substituted. It is a retained source term, not an encoding error.

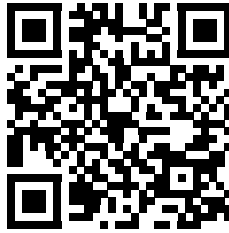
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