LIFE FOR GOD

THE GOSPEL OF MARY

Reading edition

EARLY CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA

English translation
Mark M. Mattison

Reading edition · Life for God



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About this edition

The work survives in the Coptic Berlin Codex BG 8502 and two small Greek fragments. Manuscript pages 1–6 and 11–14 are missing. Mary shares a vision of the Savior with the disciples and faces their objections. The title does not establish who wrote the work.

English translation by Mark M. Mattison, dedicated by its translator to the public domain. The independent Russian reading translation uses the Coptic BG 8502 text printed by Christopher M. Tuckett (2007, pp. 86–103), compared with Mattison.

The five sections and paragraph numbers are editorial aids for reading and links, not ancient numbering. Manuscript pages are indicated separately. Square brackets mark gaps and conjectural restorations; / \ mark editorial corrections and parentheses mark editorial additions.

English translation: Mark M. Mattison, Gospels.net. The translator expressly dedicated the translation to the public domain for unrestricted use and modification.

The Russian translation was prepared by Priest Sergey Koudy for Life for God.

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Sources

1. Mark M. Mattison — The Gospel of Mary

2. Christopher M. Tuckett, The Gospel of Mary (Oxford, 2007), pp. 86–103

3. Judith Hartenstein — Gospel of Mary, NASSCAL

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Section 1 · An Eternal Perspective

Pages 1–6 of the manuscript are missing. The surviving text begins in the middle of a conversation.

Manuscript pages 7–8

1. "Then will [matter] be [destroyed], or not?"

2. The Savior said, "Every nature, every form, every creature exists in and with each other, but they'll dissolve again into their own roots, because the nature of matter dissolves into its nature alone. Anyone who has ears to hear should hear!"

3. Peter said to him, "Since you've explained everything to us, tell us one more thing. What's the sin of the world?"

4. The Savior said, "Sin doesn't exist, but you're the ones who make sin when you act in accordance with the nature of adultery, which is called 'sin.' That's why the Good came among you, up to the things of every nature in order to restore it within its root."

5. Then he continued and said, "That's why you get sick and die, because [you love what tricks you. Anyone who] can understand should understand! [1]

6. "Matter [gave birth to] a passion that has no image because it comes from what's contrary to nature. Then confusion arises in the whole body. That's why I told you to be content at heart. If you're discontented, find contentment in the presence of the various images of nature. Anyone who has ears to hear should hear!" [2]

Section 2 · The Gospel

Manuscript pages 8–9

1. When the Blessed One said these things, he greeted them all and said, "Peace be with you! Acquire my peace. Be careful not to let anyone mislead you by saying, 'Look over here!' or 'Look over there!' Because the Son of Humanity exists within you. Follow him! Those who seek him will find him. [3]

2. "Go then and preach the gospel about the kingdom. Don't lay down any rules beyond what I've given you, nor make a law like the lawgiver, lest you be bound by it." When he said these things, he left.

3. But they grieved and wept bitterly. They said, "How can we go up to the Gentiles to preach the gospel about the kingdom of the Son of Humanity? If they didn't spare him, why would they spare us?"

Section 3 · Mary and Jesus

Manuscript pages 9–10

1. Then Mary arose and greeted them all. She said to her brothers (and sisters), "Don't weep and grieve or let your hearts be divided, because his grace will be with you all and will protect you. Rather we should praise his greatness because he's prepared us and made us Humans." [4]

2. When Mary said these things, she turned their hearts [toward] the Good and they [started] to debate the words of [the Savior].

3. Peter said to Mary, "Sister, we know the Savior loved you more than all other women. Tell us the words of the Savior

that you remember – the things which you know that we don't, and which we haven't heard."

4. In response Mary said, "I'll tell you what's hidden from you." So she started to tell them these words: "I," she said, "I saw the Lord in a vision and I said to him, 'Lord, I saw you in a vision today.'

5. "In response he said to me, 'You're blessed because you didn't waver at the sight of me. For where the mind is, there is the treasure.'

6. "I said to him, 'Lord, now does the one who sees the vision see it /in\ the soul /or\ in the spirit?' [5]

7. "In response the Savior said, 'They don't see in the soul or in the spirit, but the mind which [exists] between the two is [what] sees the vision [and] it [that …]

Section 4 · Overcoming the Powers

Pages 11–14 of the manuscript are missing. The beginning of the soul's ascent is lost.

Manuscript pages 15–17

1. "And Desire said, 'I didn't see you going down, but now I see you're going up. So why are you lying, since you belong to me?'

2. "In response the soul said, 'I saw you, but you didn't see me or know me. I was to you just a garment, and you didn't recognize me.' When it said these things, it left, rejoicing greatly.

3. "Again, it came to the third power, which is called 'Ignorance.' [It] interrogated the soul and [said], 'Where are

you going? In wickedness you're bound. Since you're bound, don't judge!'

4. "[And] the soul said, 'Why do you judge me, since I haven't judged? I was bound, even though I haven't bound. They didn't recognize me, but I've recognized that everything will dissolve – both the things of the [earth] and the things of [heaven].'

5. "When the soul had overcome the third power, it went up and saw the fourth power, which took seven forms:

6. The first form is Darkness;
The second, Desire;
The third, Ignorance;
The fourth, Zeal for Death;
The fifth, the Kingdom of the Flesh;
The sixth, the Foolish 'Wisdom' of Flesh;
The seventh, the 'Wisdom' of Anger. [6]

7. "These are the seven powers of Wrath.

8. "They ask the soul, 'Where do you come from, you murderer, and where are you going, conqueror of space?'

9. "In response the soul said, 'What binds me has been killed, what surrounds me has been overcome, my desire is gone, and ignorance has died. In a [world] I was released from a world, [and] in a type from a type which is above, and from the chain of forgetfulness which exists only for a time. From now on I'll receive the rest of the time of the season of the age in silence.'" [7]

10. When Mary said these things, she fell silent because the Savior had spoken with her up to this point.

Section 5 · Conflict over Authority

Manuscript pages 17–19

1. In response Andrew said to the brothers (and sisters), 'Say what you will about what she's said, I myself don't believe that the Savior said these things, because these teachings seem like different ideas."

2. In response Peter spoke out with the same concerns. He asked them concerning the Savior: "He didn't speak with a woman without our knowledge and not publicly with us, did he? Will we turn around and all listen to her? Did he prefer her to us?"

3. Then Mary wept and said to Peter, "My brother Peter, what are you thinking? Do you really think that I thought this up by myself in my heart, or that I'm lying about the Savior?"

4. In response Levi said to Peter, "Peter, you've always been angry. Now I see you debating with this woman like the adversaries. But if the Savior made her worthy, who are you then to reject her? Surely the Savior knows her very well. That's why he loved her more than us.

5. "Rather we should be ashamed, clothe ourselves with perfect Humanity, acquire it for ourselves as he instructed us, and preach the gospel, not laying down any other rule or other law beyond what the Savior said." [8]

6. When [Levi said these things], they started to go out to teach and to preach.

The Gospel According to Mary

Translation notes

1. 1:5 The text is damaged at the transition from manuscript page 7 to page 8. Russian leaves a gap; Mattison supplies a conjectural restoration in brackets.

2. 1:6 Russian renders the disputed Coptic expression as “be obedient”; Mattison chooses “be content at heart” and notes obedience as an alternative.

3. 2:1 “Son of Humanity” renders the Coptic expression “son of the human”; Russian uses the familiar “Сын Человеческий”.

4. 3:1 Mattison’s “(and sisters)” is an editorial addition. Russian keeps the literal “brothers” and “made us humans”.

5. 3:6 Angle brackets in Russian and / \ in English mark the accepted editorial correction. “Mind” renders the Greek loanword nous in Coptic.

6. 4:6 “Zeal for Death” corresponds to an ambiguous Coptic phrase rendered more literally as “jealousy of death” in Russian.

7. 4:9 “Type” renders typos. The close of the speech juxtaposes chronos, kairos and aiōn; the unusual wording is retained rather than resolved into an interpretation.

8. 5:5 “Perfect Humanity” corresponds literally to “the perfect human”, retained in the Russian wording.

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