

LIFE FOR GOD · APOCRYPHA

THE GOSPEL OF THE EBIONITES

Quotations and testimony in Epiphanius's Panarion

From historical translations by
M. R. James and the Moscow Theological Academy

Reading edition
Life for God

2026

About this edition

The Gospel of the Ebionites is a conventional designation for a lost Gospel known through quotations and reports in Epiphanius of Salamis's *Panarion*, heresy 30. No complete manuscript survives. This edition gathers seven commonly considered passages concerning its contents and an introductory report about its name. The main selection follows M. R. James's 1924 edition; the testimony about Jesus' mother and brothers is separately supplied from a historical Russian translation of Epiphanius. The eight sections have ten passage numbers for reading convenience, with some of the transmitting author's comments separated out. Epiphanius writes as an opponent of the teachings he describes; his judgements are not the editorial voice. "According to Matthew" and "according to the Hebrews" are retained as reported titles, without identifying the text with every other work bearing similar names.

The Russian translation was prepared by Priest Sergey Koudy for Life for God. Sections 1-5 and 7-8 use M. R. James's English translation, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (1924), pp. 8-10, checked against the printed scan. Section 6 adapts the historical Moscow Theological Academy Russian translation; Life for God prepared its English version from that Russian basis. No independent full collation of the Greek *Panarion* was performed.

The eight sections and ten passage numbers are Life for God editorial aids, not chapters and verses of the lost Gospel. Labels beginning "Panarion 30..." locate Epiphanius's testimony. Angle brackets in James's excerpts retain his supplements; parentheses retain alternatives and explanations. No lost continuous text is reconstructed. This is a reading edition, not a full modern critical apparatus.

The bases are historical public-domain texts: M. R. James (1924) and the Moscow Theological Academy translation in the collected works of Epiphanius (1863-1883). Modern website introductions and modern commercial translations are not reproduced. The Russian translation was prepared by Priest Sergey Koudy for Life for God.

Selection, the adaptation and English translation of section 6, structure and notes: Life for God, 2026.

Online edition:

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Sources

1. M. R. James — The Apocryphal New Testament (1924), pp. 8-10

Printed basis of sections 1-5 and 7-8; all selected passages checked against the scan.

2. Theology on the Web — catalogue and public-domain status

Bibliographic record and public-domain designation for James's edition.

3. M. R. James — Gospel of the Ebionites, transcription

Working transcription; errors corrected against print and editorial brackets retained.

4. Епифаний Кипрский — Панарий, «Об евионях», гл. 14

Transcription of the Moscow Theological Academy translation in the collected Works of St Epiphanius of Cyprus (1863-1883). Basis of section 6; the individual volume's scan was not collated.

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Epiphanius's report about the book's name and use. This is testimony to the Gospel, not its own narrative.

1. Testimony to the book

Epiphanius. Panarion 30.3.7

1. And they (the Ebionites) receive the Gospel according to Matthew. For this they too, like the followers of Cerinthus and Merinthus, use to the exclusion of others. And they call it according to the Hebrews, as the truth is, that Matthew alone of New Testament writers made his exposition and preaching of the Gospel in Hebrew and in Hebrew letters. ^[1]
^[2]

2. The calling of the Twelve

Epiphanius. Panarion 30.13.2-3

1. In the Gospel they have, called according to Matthew, but not wholly complete, but falsified and mutilated (they call it the Hebrew Gospel), it is contained that 'There was a certain man named Jesus, and he was about thirty years old, who chose us. And coming unto Capernaum he entered into the house of Simon who was surnamed Peter, and opened his mouth and said: As I passed by the lake of Tiberias, I chose John and James the sons of Zebedee, and Simon and Andrew and <Philip and Bartholomew, James the son of Alphaeus and Thomas> Thaddaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the Iscariot: and thee, Matthew, as thou satest at the receipt of custom I called, and thou followedst me. You therefore I will be twelve apostles for a testimony unto (of) Israel.' ^[3]
^[4] ^[5]

3. John's food

Epiphanius. Panarion 30.13.4 — quotation

1. John was baptizing, and there went out unto him Pharisees and were baptized, and all Jerusalem. And John had raiment of camel's hair and a leathern girdle about his loins: and his meat (it saith) was wild honey, whereof the taste is the taste of manna, as a cake dipped in oil. ^[6] ^[7]

Epiphanius. Panarion 30.13.5 — Epiphanius's objection

2. That, forsooth, they may pervert the word of truth into a lie and for locusts put a cake dipped in honey (sic). ^[8]

4. The beginning of the Gospel

Epiphanius. Panarion 30.13.6

1. And the beginning of their Gospel says that: It came to pass in the days of Herod the king of Judaea <when Caiaphas was high priest> that there came <a certain man> John <by name>, baptizing with the baptism of repentance in the river Jordan, who was said to be of the lineage of Aaron the priest, child of Zacharias and Elisabeth, and all went out unto him. ^[9] ^[10] ^[11]

5. The baptism of Jesus

Epiphanius. Panarion 30.13.7-8

1. And after a good deal more it continues that: After the people were baptized, Jesus also came and was baptized by John; and as he came up from the water, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Holy Ghost in the likeness of a dove that descended and entered into him: and a voice from heaven saying: Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased: and again: This day have I begotten thee. And straightway there shone about the place a great light. Which when John saw (it saith) he saith unto him: Who art thou, Lord? and again there was a voice from heaven saying unto him: This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And then (it saith) John fell down before him and said: I beseech thee, Lord, baptize thou me. But he prevented him saying: Suffer it (or let it go): for thus it behoveth that all things should be fulfilled. ^[12] ^[13] ^[14]

Additional testimony not included in James's selection. The Russian text adapts the historical Moscow Theological Academy translation; the English was translated for Life for God from that Russian basis.

6. Jesus' mother and brothers

Epiphanius. Panarion 30.14.5 — via the Moscow Theological Academy Russian translation

1. But again they deny that he is human, basing this on a saying of the Saviour. When he was told, "Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside," he asked, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Stretching out his hand towards the disciples, he said, "Here are my brothers and mother, who do the will of my Father." [15] [16] [17]

Here Epiphanius reports his opponents' beliefs, then quotes a saying about sacrifices attributed to Jesus. His report and the quotation should be distinguished.

7. Christ and the end of sacrifices

Epiphanius. Panarion 30.16.4 — Epiphanius's report

1. And on this account they say that Jesus was begotten of the seed of a man, and was chosen; and so by the choice of God he was called the Son of God from the Christ that came into him from above in the likeness of a dove. [18]

Epiphanius. Panarion 30.16.4-5

2. And they deny that he was begotten of God the Father, but say that he was created, as one of the archangels, yet greater, and that he is Lord of angels and of all things made by the Almighty, and that he came and taught, as the Gospel (so called) current among them contains, that, 'I came to destroy the sacrifices, and if ye cease not from sacrificing, the wrath of God will not cease from you'. ^[19] ^[20]

8. The Passover meal

Epiphanius. Panarion 30.22.4

1. They have changed the saying, as is plain to all from the combination of phrases, and have made the disciples say: Where wilt thou that we make ready for thee to eat the Passover? and him, forsooth, say: Have I desired with desire to eat this flesh of the Passover with you? ^[21]

Translation notes

- 1. 1:1** — This is a report by Epiphanius, writing against teachings he regarded as heretical. His judgement and book titles should not automatically be treated as an independent description of a surviving manuscript.
- 2. 1:1** — “According to Matthew” and “according to the Hebrews” belong to Epiphanius’s testimony. The title of this collection is a conventional designation. It does not establish identity with other works called the Gospels of the Hebrews or the Nazarenes.
- 3. 2:1** — The description “falsified and mutilated” is Epiphanius’s judgement. The Gospel quotation begins with the man named Jesus. It retains the disciples’ narrative perspective: “chose us”.
- 4. 2:1** — James places Philip, Bartholomew, James son of Alphaeus and Thomas in angle brackets as an editorial supplement to the list. The brackets are retained; these names must not be quoted as continuously preserved wording of the fragment.
- 5. 2:1** — “Chose us” and the address to Matthew are features of the narrative, not proof of authorship by the historical Matthew. The alternative unto (of) Israel is James’s.
- 6. 3:1** — In the transmitted quotation John’s food is wild honey, whose taste is compared with manna and a cake in oil. It should not be silently replaced with the canonical wording about locusts and wild honey in Matthew 3:4 and Mark 1:6.
- 7. 3:1** — The manna imagery recalls Exodus 16:31 and Numbers 11:8. James’s commentary compares the Greek words *akris* (“locust”) and *enkris* (“cake”). This explains a possible play on words; it is not an independently surviving Gospel manuscript.
- 8. 3:2** — This separate paragraph is Epiphanius’s polemical objection, not a saying of Jesus or a continuation of the Gospel quotation. James prints “honey” here but “oil” in the preceding passage; the difference and his *sic* are retained.

9. 4:1 — Epiphanius explicitly calls this the beginning of the book. Our sections follow the historical edition's sequence of excerpts rather than reconstructing the order of a complete Gospel.

10. 4:1 — The angle brackets around Caiaphas and the introductory words about John are retained from James. They are editorial supplements in the chosen English basis, not markers of damaged pages in a manuscript available to us.

11. 4:1 — The combination of Herod, Caiaphas, descent from Aaron and the baptism of repentance is retained as transmitted. It can be compared with Luke's opening and Luke 3:1-3; chronological difficulties are not removed by rewriting the text.

12. 5:1 — "After a good deal more" is Epiphanius's introduction: there is material between the quoted passages that is not transmitted here. It is not permission to supply a connecting narrative.

13. 5:1 — "Descended and entered into him" is retained, rather than merely "descended upon him". The voice has several formulations, including "This day have I begotten thee" (compare Psalm 2:7), and a great light appears. These differences are not harmonized into one canonical account.

14. 5:1 — Suffer it (or let it go) is James's alternative. The final phrase concerns "all things" being fulfilled; it is not replaced by "fulfil all righteousness" from Matthew 3:15.

15. 6:1 — This passage is absent from James's chapter. It is supplied here as a reading adaptation of the historical Moscow Theological Academy Russian translation, published in the collected Works of St Epiphanius of Cyprus (1863-1883), using its online transcription. Life for God translated this passage into English from that Russian basis; it is not James's translation.

16. 6:1 — The selected Russian basis lists brothers and mother in the final saying; no further members of the list have been supplied. Archaic wording is modernized and quotation marks added for clarity. No full independent collation of this passage against Greek editions was performed.

17. 6:1 — Here Epiphanius cites the Saviour's words as an argument used by his opponents, without explicitly introducing them as "written in their Gospel". The passage is therefore labelled testimony. Compare Matthew 12:46-50 and Mark 3:31-35.

18. 7:1 — This is Epiphanius's account of others' teaching, not a verbatim Gospel quotation. His reports about Jesus' human origin, Christ and the Spirit's descent have not been editorially combined into a consistent system.

19. 7:2 — The discussion of creation and angels belongs to Epiphanius's report. The direct quotation from the Gospel they used begins "I came to destroy the sacrifices". The sentence does not give the work's title.

20. 7:2 — The saying concerns sacrifices. This short quotation cannot by itself establish a complete body of teaching or attribute it to every group ancient authors called Ebionites.

21. 8:1 — The accusation of altering the text is Epiphanius's. Jesus' answer is a question expecting denial, materially different from the affirmative statement in Luke 22:15. "Flesh" refers to the Passover meal; the question has not been turned into a direct assertion.