LIFE FOR GOD

THE INFANCY GOSPEL OF JAMES

Reading edition

EARLY CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA

English translation
Mark M. Mattison

Reading edition · Life for God



2026

LIFE FOR GOD

CHRISTIAN LIBRARY

Books in Russian and English, audio recordings, spiritual conversations and the Preacher’s Workshop.

Website

lifeforgod.church

Open the link or scan the QR code with your phone’s camera.

Read this book online

About this edition

Usually dated to the second half of the second century, the work tells of Joachim and Anna, Mary’s childhood and Jesus’ birth. It is associated with many later subjects in Christian art. The name James in its conclusion belongs to the literary narrative and does not establish the historical author’s identity.

The English text is Mark M. Mattison’s public-domain translation, principally based on Émile de Strycker’s critical Greek text. The new Russian translation was prepared from this English version and checked throughout against ITSEE Greek transcriptions: Bodmer V for chapters 1–17 and 22–25, and Vindobonensis Hist. gr. 61 and Vatopedi 74 for the longer chapters 18–21. Differences in Russian adopted after Greek comparison are noted.

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.

Greek transcriptions: Christopher Jordan, Alison Welsby / ITSEE, University of Birmingham, CC BY 4.0. The Russian translation is a new derivative text; the transcription editors did not author or endorse it.

CC BY 4.0

Read this book at lifeforgod.church

Sources

1. Mark M. Mattison, The Infancy Gospel of James
Public domain, explicitly dedicated by the translator; copied 2026-10-29.

2. Christopher R. D. Jordan and Alison S. Welsby, The Protevangelium Iacobi: transcriptions and apparatus (ITSEE, University of Birmingham; Unicode conversion by Hugh Houghton, 2020)
CC BY 4.0, explicitly stated in each XML teiHeader.
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

The source XML files are unchanged. Derived plain-text extracts join words and line breaks and select the last recorded corrector reading; the Russian text is a new translation, not a transcription.

Contents

About this edition 2
Chapter 1 · Joachim’s Plight 6
Chapter 2 · Anna’s Plight 6
Chapter 3 · Anna’s Lament 7
Chapter 4 · The Lord’s Promise 8
Chapter 5 · Mary’s Birth 9
Chapter 6 · Mary’s First Year 10
Chapter 7 · Mary Goes to the Temple 11
Chapter 8 · Mary Turns Twelve 12
Chapter 9 · Joseph Protects Mary 13
Chapter 10 · The Veil of the Temple 13
Chapter 11 · The Annunciation 14
Chapter 12 · Mary Visits Elizabeth 15
Chapter 13 · Joseph Questions Mary 16
Chapter 14 · Joseph’s Dream 17
Chapter 15 · The Chief Priest Questions Mary and Joseph 17
Chapter 16 · The Test 18
Chapter 17 · The Census 19
Chapter 18 · Time Stands Still 20
Chapter 19 · Jesus’ Birth 21
Chapter 20 · Salome’s Examination 22
Chapter 21 · The Magi 23
Chapter 22 · The Slaughter of the Infants 24
Chapter 23 · The Murder of Zechariah 24
Chapter 24 · Mourning for Zechariah 25

Chapter 25 · Conclusion 26
A Shorter Version of Chapters 18–21 27
Shorter version · Chapter 18 · Joseph Finds a Cave 27
Shorter version · Chapter 19 · Jesus’ Birth 27
Shorter version · Chapter 20 · Salome’s Examination 28
Shorter version · Chapter 21 · The Magi 29
Translation notes 30

Chapter 1 · Joachim’s Plight

1. In the histories of the twelve tribes of Israel, Joachim was a very rich man. And he doubled the gifts he offered to the Lord, saying to himself, “One is from my surplus for all the people, and the other is to the Lord God for forgiveness, to atone for me.” [1]

2. Now the great day of the Lord was approaching, and the people of Israel were offering their gifts. But Reubel stood before him and said, “It’s not right for you to offer your gifts first, since you haven’t had a child in Israel.”

3. And Joachim was very grieved and went to the (history) of the twelve tribes of the people, saying to himself, “I’ll look in the (history) of the twelve tribes of Israel to see whether I’m the only one who hasn’t had a child in Israel.” And he searched, and found that all the just people in Israel had raised children. And he remembered that in the last days of the patriarch Abraham, the Lord God gave him a son, Isaac.

4. And Joachim was very grieved, and didn’t go to his wife, but gave himself to the wilderness and pitched his tent there. And Joachim fasted forty days and forty nights, saying to himself, “I won’t go down for food or drink until the Lord my God considers me. Prayer will be my food and drink.”

Chapter 2 · Anna’s Plight

1. Now his wife, Anna, mourned and lamented for two reasons. She said, “I lament that I’m a widow and that I don’t have a child.” [2]

2. Now the great day of the Lord was approaching, and her servant Juthine said to her, “How long are you going to humiliate your soul? Look, the great day of the Lord has

approached, and it's not right for you to grieve. But take this headband which the leader of the workplace gave me. It's not right for me to wear it, since I'm your servant, and it has a royal mark."

3. And Anna said, "Get away from me! I won't do this. The Lord God has greatly humiliated me. Maybe a trickster gave this to you, and you've come to get me to share in your sin."

And Juthine the servant said, "Why should I curse you, since you haven't heard my voice? The Lord God has made your womb infertile, to give you no fruit in Israel."

4. And Anna was very grieved, and removed her garment of mourning, washed her head, and put on her wedding garment. And at about the ninth hour she went down into her garden to walk around. She saw a laurel tree and sat down under it. And after resting, she petitioned the Lord. She said, "God of my ancestors, bless me and hear my prayer, as you blessed our mother Sarah and gave her a son, Isaac."

Chapter 3 · Anna's Lament

1. Anna looked intently to heaven and saw a nest of sparrows in the laurel tree. And Anna lamented, saying to herself,

"Woe is me! Who gave birth to me? What womb bore me? I was born as a curse before the people of Israel and have been despised; they've mocked me and banished me from the Temple of the Lord my God.

2. "Woe is me! What am I like? I'm not like the birds of heaven, because even the birds of heaven are fruitful before you, Lord.

"Woe is me! What am I like? I'm not like the animals, because even the animals are fruitful before you, Lord.

“Woe is me! What am I like? I’m not like the wild beasts of the earth, because even the wild beasts of the earth are fruitful before you, Lord.

3. “Woe is me! What am I like? I’m not like these waters, because even these waters are serene yet churn, and their fish bless you, Lord.

“Woe is me! What am I like? I’m not like this earth, because the earth produces her fruits when it’s time and blesses you, Lord.”

Chapter 4 · The Lord’s Promise

1. And look! An angel of the Lord stood nearby, saying to her, “Anna, Anna, the Lord has heard your prayer. You’ll conceive and give birth, and your offspring will be spoken of through the whole world.”

And Anna said, “As the Lord God lives, whether I give birth to a boy or a girl, I’ll bring it as a gift to the Lord my God, and it will minister to him all the days of its life.”

2. And look! Two angels came, saying to her, “Look, Joachim, your husband, is coming with his flocks.” For an angel of the Lord had gone down to Joachim, saying, “Joachim, Joachim, the Lord God has heard your prayer. Go down from here. Look, your wife, Anna, has conceived in her womb.” [3]

3. And immediately Joachim went down and called the shepherds, saying to them, “Bring here to me ten lambs without spot or blemish, and the ten lambs will be for the Lord God. And bring me twelve tender calves for the priests and the elders. And a hundred male goats for all the people.”

4. And look! Joachim came with his flocks, and Anna stood at the gate. And she saw Joachim coming with his flocks, and

immediately ran and flung herself around his neck, saying, “Now I know that the Lord God has greatly blessed me. For look! The widow is no longer a widow, and look! The one without a child in her womb has conceived.”

And Joachim rested for the first day in his house.

Chapter 5 · Mary’s Birth

1. And the next day, he was offering his gifts, saying to himself, “If the Lord God is reconciled to me, the plate worn by the priest will make it clear to me.” And Joachim offered his gifts and paid attention to the priest’s plate as he went up to the altar of the Lord. And he didn’t see sin in it. And Joachim said, “Now I know that the Lord God has been reconciled to me and has sent all my sins away from me.” And he went down from the Temple of the Lord justified and went into his house. [4]

2. And about six months were completed, and in the seventh month she gave birth. And Anna said to her midwife, “What is it?”

And the midwife said, “It’s a girl!”

And Anna said, “My soul is magnified this day!” And she laid down her child.

And when her days were completed, Anna cleansed her flow of blood. And she gave her breast to the child, and gave her the name Mary. [5]

Chapter 6 · Mary’s First Year

1. And day by day, the child grew stronger. When she was six months old, her mother stood her on the ground to test whether she could stand. And walking seven steps, she came to her mother’s breast, and her mother caught her up, saying, “As the Lord my God lives, you won’t walk on this ground again until I bring you into the Temple of the Lord.”

And she made a sanctuary in her bedroom and didn’t allow anything sacrilegious or impure to pass through it. And she called the pure daughters of the Hebrews, and they played with her.

2. And when the child grew to be a year old, Joachim made a great feast, and called the chief priests, and the priests, and the scribes, and the elders, and all the people of Israel. And Joachim brought the child to the priests, and they blessed her, saying, “God of our ancestors, bless this child and give her a name that’ll be spoken forever among all generations.”

And all the people said, “So be it. Amen!”

And they brought her to the chief priests, and they blessed her, saying, “Most High God, look upon this child, and bless her with a final blessing which can’t be surpassed.”

3. And her mother took her up to the sanctuary of her bedroom and gave her breast to the child. And Anna made a song to the Lord God, saying:

“I’ll sing a holy song to the Lord my God, because God has visited me, and has removed the criticism of my enemies.

“And the Lord God has given me the fruit of God’s justice, singular yet manifold before God.

“Who will report to Reubel’s people that Anna nurses a child? ‘Listen, listen, twelve tribes of Israel: Anna nurses a child!’”

And Anna rested in the sanctuary of her bedroom. And she went and ministered to them. When dinner was finished, they went down rejoicing and glorifying the God of Israel. [6]

Chapter 7 · Mary Goes to the Temple

1. And she cared for her child through the months. When she was two years old, Joachim said, “Let’s take her to the Temple of the Lord, so that we may keep the promise we made, so that the Lord won’t be angry with us and find our gift unacceptable.”

But Anna said, “Let’s wait until her third year, so that she won’t seek her father or mother.”

And Joachim said, “Let’s wait.”

2. And the child became three years old, and Joachim said, “Let’s call the pure daughters of the Hebrews. And let them take their lamps, and let them be lit, so that the child won’t turn back, and her heart won’t be drawn away from the Temple of the Lord.” And they did so until they went up to the Temple of the Lord.

And the priest welcomed her, kissed her, and said, “The Lord God has magnified your name among all the generations. Through you, the Lord will reveal his redemption of the people of Israel in the last days.”

3. And he sat her down on the third step of the altar, and the Lord God poured grace upon her. And she danced on her feet, and all the house of Israel loved her.

Chapter 8 · Mary Turns Twelve

1. And her parents went down, marveling and praising and glorifying the Lord God that the child hadn't turned back. And Mary was in the Temple of the Lord. She was nurtured like a dove, and received food from the hand of an angel.

2. And when she became twelve years old, there was a council of the priests, saying, "Look, Mary has been in the Temple of the Lord twelve years. What should we do about her so that she won't pollute the sanctuary of the Lord our God?" And they said to the chief priest, "You stand at the altar of the Lord. Go in and pray about her, and if the Lord God reveals anything to you, we'll do it." [7]

3. And the chief priest went in, taking the robe with twelve bells into the Holy of Holies, and prayed about her. And look! An angel of the Lord stood nearby, saying, "Zechariah, Zechariah, go out and assemble the widowers of the people, and let them each bear a staff. And whomever the Lord God points out with a sign, she'll be his wife."

And the heralds went down through the whole surrounding area of Judea, and sounded the trumpet of the Lord. And look! All the men rushed in. [8]

Chapter 9 · Joseph Protects Mary

1. And Joseph threw down his axe, and went to their meeting. And when they had all gathered, they went to the priest with their staffs. And having taken all their staffs, he went into the Temple and prayed. And when he had finished the prayer, he took the staffs, went out, and gave them back. But there wasn’t a sign among them. And Joseph took his staff last, and look! A dove went from the staff, and flew upon Joseph’s head. And the priest said to Joseph, “You’ve been chosen to welcome the virgin of the Lord into your own care.”

2. But Joseph refused, saying, “I have sons and am an old man, but she’s young. I won’t be a laughingstock among the people of Israel.”

And the priest said, “Joseph, fear the Lord your God, and remember what God did to Dathan, Abiron, and Kore; how the earth opened and swallowed them all because of their rebellion. And now fear, Joseph, so that these things won’t happen in your house.”

3. And being afraid, Joseph welcomed her into his care, and said to her, “Mary, I’ve taken you from the Temple of the Lord, and now I bring you to my house. I’m going away to build houses, but I’ll come back to you. The Lord will protect you.”

Chapter 10 · The Veil of the Temple

1. And there was a council of the priests, saying, “Let’s make a veil for the Temple of the Lord.”

And the priest said, “Call the pure virgins from the tribe of David to me.” And the officers went out and searched and found seven. And the priest remembered that the child Mary

was from the tribe of David and pure before God. And the officers went out and brought her.

2. And they brought them into the Temple of the Lord, and the priest said, “Cast lots for me to see who will spin the gold and the white and the linen and the silk and the violet and the scarlet and the true purple.”

And the lot for the true purple and scarlet fell to Mary. And she took them into her house. This was the time that Zechariah fell silent, and Samuel took his place until Zechariah could speak. And Mary took the scarlet and was spinning it.

Chapter 11 · The Annunciation

1. And she took the pitcher and went to fill it with water, and look! A voice was saying to her, “Rejoice, blessed one! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women.”

And Mary looked around to the right and the left, to see where the voice might be coming from. And she became terrified and went into her house. And setting down the pitcher, she took up the purple and sat upon her throne and spun the purple. [9]

2. And look! An angel of the Lord stood before her, saying, “Don’t fear, Mary, because you’ve found grace before the Lord of All. You’ll conceive from God’s word.”

And hearing this, Mary questioned herself, saying, “Will I conceive from the Lord, the living God, and give birth like all women give birth?”

3. And the angel of the Lord said to her, “Not like that, Mary, because the power of God will overshadow you, so the holy one who will be born from you will be called the Son of the

Most High. And you'll call his name Jesus, because he'll save his people from their sins.

And Mary said, "Look, I'm the servant of the Lord. May it be to me according to your word."

Chapter 12 · Mary Visits Elizabeth

1. And she made the purple and the scarlet, and she took it to the priest. And taking it, the priest blessed her and said, "Mary, the Lord God has magnified your name, and you'll be blessed among all the generations of the earth."

2. And Mary rejoiced and went to her cousin Elizabeth. And she knocked at the door. And Elizabeth heard, flung down the scarlet, and rushed to the door. And she opened it and blessed her and said, "How is it that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Because look, the one in me leaped and blessed you!"

But Mary forgot the mysteries which Gabriel the angel had told her. And she looked intently into heaven and said, "Lord, who am I, that all the women of the earth will bless me?"

3. And she spent three months with Elizabeth. And day by day, her womb grew larger, and Mary was afraid. She went to her house and hid herself from the people of Israel. She was sixteen years old when these mysteries happened to her. [10]

Chapter 13 · Joseph Questions Mary

1. And she was in her sixth month. And look! Joseph came from his building, and came into the house, and found her pregnant. And he struck his face and flung himself on the ground in sackcloth and wept bitterly, saying, “How can I look to the Lord God? What prayer can I say about this young girl, since I took her as a virgin from the Temple of the Lord God and didn’t protect her? Who has set this trap for me? Who has done this evil thing in my house? Who has defiled the virgin? Aren’t I reliving the story of Adam? For as Adam was glorifying in the hour of prayer, the serpent came, found Eve alone, and deceived her, and now it’s happened to me!”

2. And Joseph stood from the sackcloth and called her and said to her, “God cared for you. Why have you done this? You’ve forgotten the Lord your God. Why have you humiliated your soul? You were nourished in the Holy of Holies and received food from the hand of an angel!”

3. And she wept bitterly, saying, “I’m pure, and I haven’t known a man!”

And Joseph said to her, “Where then did this thing in your womb come from?”

And she said, “As the Lord my God lives, I don’t know where it came from!”

Chapter 14 · Joseph's Dream

1. And Joseph was very afraid and kept quiet about her, considering what to do about her. And Joseph said, "If I hide her sin, I'll be found resisting the law of the Lord, but if I reveal her to the people of Israel, I'm afraid that what's inside her might be angelic, and I'll be found handing over innocent blood to the judgment of death. So what will I do about her? I'll secretly set her free from me."

And night overtook him.

2. And look! An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Don't fear this child, for the one in her is from the Holy Spirit. And she'll give birth to a son, and you'll call his name 'Jesus,' because he'll save his people from their sins."

And Joseph arose from his sleep and glorified the God of Israel, who had given grace to him. And he protected her.

Chapter 15 · The Chief Priest Questions Mary and Joseph

1. And Annas the scribe came to him and said to him, "Joseph, why haven't you appeared among our traveling group?"

And he said to him, "Because I was weary from the trip and rested the first day back."

And Annas turned and saw Mary pregnant.

2. And he quickly went to the priest and said to him, "Joseph, about whom you bore witness, has acted very lawlessly."

And the priest said, "What's this?"

And he said, “The virgin that Joseph took from the Temple of the Lord, he’s defiled her and has stolen her wedding and hasn’t revealed it to the people of Israel.”

And in response the priest said, “Has Joseph done this?”

And Annas the scribe said to him, “Send officers, and you’ll find the virgin pregnant.”

And the officers went and found her just as he said. And they led her together with Joseph to the court. [11]

3. And the chief priest said to her, “Mary, why have you done this? Why have you humiliated your soul and forgotten the Lord your God? You were raised in the Holy of Holies, and received food from the hand of an angel, and you heard its hymns and danced before it. What is this that you’ve done?”

And she wept bitterly, saying, “As the Lord God lives, I’m pure before God, and I haven’t known a man!”

4. And the priest said, “Joseph, what is this that you’ve done?”

And Joseph said, “As the Lord my God lives, and the witness of God’s truth, I’m pure toward her.”

And the priest said, “Don’t bear false witness, but tell the truth. You stole her wedding and didn’t reveal it to the people of Israel, and you haven’t bowed your head under the mighty hand that should bless your offspring.”

And Joseph fell silent.

Chapter 16 · The Test

1. And the priest said, “Return the virgin you took from the Temple of the Lord.”

And Joseph was tearful.

And the chief priest said, “I’ll give you the water of the Lord’s rebuke to drink, and it’ll reveal your sin in your eyes.” [12]

2. And taking (the water), the priest gave it to Joseph and sent him into the wilderness. And Joseph returned unharmed.

And he gave it to Mary and sent her into the wilderness. And she returned unharmed.

And all the people were amazed that their sin wasn’t revealed.

3. And the priest said, “If the Lord God hasn’t revealed your sin to you, neither do I judge you.” And he set them free.

And Joseph took Mary and went to his house, rejoicing and glorifying the God of Israel.

Chapter 17 · The Census

1. Now an order went out from Augustus the king to register how many people were in Bethlehem of Judea.

And Joseph said, “I’ll register my sons. But what should I do about this child? How will I register her? As my wife? I’m ashamed. As my daughter? But the people of Israel know she’s not my daughter. This is the day of the Lord; I’ll do whatever the Lord wants.” [13]

2. And he saddled the donkey, and sat her on it, and his son led it, and Samuel followed.

And as they neared the third mile, Joseph turned and saw that she was sad. And he was saying, “Likely the one inside her is troubling her.”

And again Joseph turned and saw her laughing, and he said to her, “Mary, why are you like this, that I see your face laughing at one time, but then sad?”

And she said to him, “It’s because I see two people in my eyes. One is crying and mourning, and one is rejoicing and exulting.” [14]

3. And they came to the middle of the journey, and Mary said to him, “Joseph, take me down from the donkey, because the one who’s inside me is pushing to come out.”

And he took her down from the donkey and said to her, “Where will I take you and shelter you in your awkwardness? This place is a wilderness.”

Chapter 18 · Time Stands Still

1. And he found a cave there, brought her (to it), and stationed his sons with her and went to look for a Hebrew midwife in the region of Bethlehem. [15]

2. Now I, Joseph, was wandering but not wandering. And I looked up to the dome of heaven and saw it standing still, and into the sky, and I was astonished to see that even the birds of heaven were still. And I looked at the ground and saw a bowl lying there, and workers reclining, and their hands were in the bowl, and they were chewing but not chewing, and they were picking up food but not picking up food, and they were bringing it to their mouths but not bringing it to their mouths. Rather, all their faces were looking up.

And I saw sheep being driven, but the sheep stood still. And the shepherd lifted his hand to strike them, but his hand was raised. And I looked into the torrent of the river and saw

young goats, and their mouths were in the water but not drinking.

And suddenly, everything resumed its course.

Chapter 19 · Jesus' Birth

1. And look! A woman was coming down from the mountain, and she said to me, "Man, where are you going?"

And I said, "I'm seeking a Hebrew midwife."

And in reply she said to me, "Are you from Israel?"

And I said to her, "Yes."

Then she said, "And who's the one giving birth in the cave?"

And I said, "My betrothed."

And she said to me, "She's not your wife?"

And I said to her, "Mary was nurtured in the Temple of the Lord, and it was decided by lot that she would be my wife, yet she's not my wife; but she's conceived from the Holy Spirit."

And the midwife said, "Really?"

And Joseph said to her, "Come and see."

And the midwife went with him.

2. And they stood in front of the cave, and a bright cloud overshadowed the cave. And the midwife said, "My soul is magnified today, because my eyes have seen something wonderful. Salvation has been born to Israel!"

And immediately the cloud withdrew from the cave, and a great light appeared in the cave, so that their eyes couldn't bear it. And a little later, the light withdrew until an infant

appeared. And he came and took the breast of his mother, Mary.

And the midwife cried out and said, “How great today is for me, that I’ve seen this new miracle!”

3. And the midwife went out from the cave, and Salome met her.

And she said to her, “Salome, Salome, I have to describe a new sight to you. A virgin has given birth, which is against her nature!”

And Salome said, “As the Lord my God lives, unless I examine her condition, I won’t believe that the virgin has given birth.” [16]

Chapter 20 · Salome’s Examination

1. And the midwife went in and said, “Mary, position yourself, because there’s no small test coming concerning you.”

And Salome examined her. And Salome cried out and said, “Woe because of my lawlessness and my unbelief! Because I’ve tested the living God, and look! My hand is on fire and falling away from me!”

2. And she dropped to her knees before the Lord, saying, “God of my ancestors, remember me, that I’ve descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Don’t make an example of me to the people of Israel, but give me the back to the poor, because you know, Lord, that in your name I’ve healed people, and I’ve received my wages from you.” [17]

3. And look! An angel of the Lord appeared, saying to her, “Salome, Salome, the Lord of All has heard your prayer.

Bring your hand to the child and lift him up, and you'll receive salvation and joy."

4. And Salome joyfully went to the child and lifted him up, saying, "I worship him, because a great king has been born to Israel." And immediately Salome was healed, and she left the cave justified.

And look! A voice was saying, "Salome, Salome, don't report the wonderful things you've seen until the child comes into Jerusalem."

Chapter 21 · The Magi

1. And look! Joseph prepared to go out into Judea when a great commotion arose in Bethlehem of Judea. For magi came, saying, "Where is the king of the Jews? For we saw his star in the East and have come to worship him."

2. And when Herod heard, he was disturbed, and he sent officers to the magi, and sent for the chief priests and questioned them in his palace, saying to them, "What has been written about the Christ? Where will he be born?"

They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what's written." And he set them (the chief priests) free.

And he questioned the magi, saying to them, "What sign did you see about the one who's been born king?"

And the magi said, "We saw an immense star shining among the other stars and dimming them so much that they weren't even visible. And so we knew that a king had been born for Israel, and we came to worship him."

And Herod said to them, "Go and search, and if you find him, report to me so that I can also come and worship him."

3. And the magi went, and look! The star they had seen in the East led them until they came to the cave, and it stood over the head of the cave. And when they saw him with his mother Mary, the magi took gifts from their bags: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

And having been warned by the angel not to go into Judea, they returned to their country by another way.

Chapter 22 · The Slaughter of the Infants

1. When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he was angry. He sent out his killers, telling them to kill all the infants two years old and younger.

2. And when Mary heard that the infants were being killed, she was afraid. She took her child, wrapped him in cloths, and put him in a manger for cows.

3. And when Elizabeth heard that John was sought, she took him up into the hills and looked around for somewhere to hide him, but there wasn't a hiding place. Then Elizabeth groaned and said, "Mountain of God, take a mother with her child," because Elizabeth was unable to go up higher. And immediately, the mountain split and took her, and a light shone through the mountain for her. For an angel of the Lord was with them, protecting them.

Chapter 23 · The Murder of Zechariah

1. But Herod asked for John and sent officers to Zechariah, saying to him, "Where are you hiding your son?"

But he replied, saying to them, "I'm a minister of God, and I sit in God's Temple. How should I know where my son is?"

2. And his officers went away and reported all these things to Herod. And Herod was angry, and said, “His son is about to be king over Israel!”

And he sent his officers again, to say to him, “Tell me the truth. Where’s your son? You know that your life is in my hand.”

And the officers went away and reported these things to him.

3. And Zechariah said, “I’m a martyr of God if you shed my blood, because the Lord will receive my spirit, since you’ll be spilling innocent blood at the entrance of the Temple of the Lord.”

And around daybreak, Zechariah was murdered, and the people of Israel didn’t know that he was murdered. [18]

Chapter 24 · Mourning for Zechariah

1. But at the hour of greeting, the priests came, and Zechariah didn’t meet them to bless them as was customary. And the priests stood around for Zechariah, waiting to greet him with a blessing and to glorify the Most High God.

2. But when he delayed, they were all afraid. But one of them gathered the courage to go into the sanctuary and saw blood clotted beside the altar of the Lord. And a voice was saying, “Zechariah has been murdered, and his blood won’t be wiped away until his avenger comes!”

When he heard this saying, he was afraid, and he went and reported to the priests what he had seen and heard.

3. And they gathered their courage and went and saw what had taken place. And the panels of the Temple cried out, and they (the priests) ripped their clothes from top to bottom.

And they didn’t find his corpse, but they found his blood had turned to stone. And they were afraid, and they went out and reported to all the people that Zechariah had been murdered. And when all the tribes of the people heard, they mourned him and wept three days and three nights. [19]

4. And after three days, the priests held a council about who should replace Zechariah. And the lot fell to Simeon, for he was told by the Holy Spirit that he wouldn’t see death until he saw the Christ in the flesh.

Chapter 25 · Conclusion

1. Now I, James, wrote this history in Jerusalem when there was a commotion over Herod’s death. I went into the wilderness until the commotion in Jerusalem had died down. I was glorifying the Lord God, who gave me the wisdom to write this history. [20]

2. And grace will be with all who fear the Lord. Amen.

A Shorter Version of Chapters 18–21

This appendix reproduces Mark M. Mattison’s shorter version. Its Russian translation was made from that English version and compared with the Greek transcription of Bodmer V; differences are identified in the notes.

Shorter version · Chapter 18 · Joseph Finds a Cave

1. And he found a cave there, brought her (to it), and stationed his sons with her and went to look for a Hebrew midwife in the region of Bethlehem.

Shorter version · Chapter 19 · Jesus’ Birth

1. And he found (and) brought (her) coming down from the mountain. And Joseph said to the midwife, “Mary is my betrothed, but she’s conceived from the Holy Spirit, nurtured in the Temple of the Lord.”

And the midwife went with him.

2. And they stood in front of the cave, and a dark cloud overshadowed the cave. And the midwife said, “My soul is magnified today, because my eyes have seen something wonderful today. Salvation has been born to Israel!”

And immediately the cloud withdrew from the cave, and a great light appeared in the cave, so that their eyes couldn’t bear it. And a little later, the light withdrew until an infant appeared. And he came and took the breast of his mother, Mary.

And the midwife cried out, “How great today is, that I’ve seen this new miracle!”

3. And the midwife went out from the cave, and Salome met her.

And she said to her, “Salome, Salome, I have to describe a new sight to you. A virgin has given birth, which is against her nature!”

And Salome said, “As the Lord my God lives, unless I insert my finger (and) examine her condition, I won’t believe that the virgin has given birth.”

Shorter version · Chapter 20 · Salome’s Examination

1. And she went in and positioned her, and Salome examined her condition. And Salome cried out, “I’ve tested the living God, and look! My hand is on fire and falling away from me!”

2. And she prayed to the Lord, and the midwife was healed in that hour. [21]

3. And look! An angel of the Lord stood towards Salome, saying, “Your prayer has been heard before the Lord God. Go and touch the child, and you’ll receive salvation.”

4. And she did this, and Salome was healed. As she worshipped and left the cave, look! A voice of an angel of the Lord said, “Salome, Salome, report the wonderful things you’ve seen until the child comes into Jerusalem.” [22]

Shorter version · Chapter 21 · The Magi

1. And look! Joseph prepared to go out into Judea when a great commotion arose in Bethlehem of Judea. For magi came, saying, “Where is the king of the Jews? For we saw his star in the East and have come to worship him.”

2. And when Herod heard, he was disturbed, and he sent officers and sent for them (the magi), and they told him about the star.

3. And look! They saw stars in the East. And they (the stars) led them (the magi) until they came to the cave, and it (the star) stood over the head of the child. And when the magi saw him with his mother Mary, they took gifts from their bags: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

And having been warned by the angel, they returned to their country by another way. [23]

Translation notes

1. 1:1 “The histories of the twelve tribes” is the narrator’s own designation, not an established reference to an identified surviving history.

2. 2:1 Anna’s “widowhood” here describes her situation after Joachim’s departure; the story does not report his death.

3. 4:2 Bodmer V reads “has conceived” (εἴληφεν), as does Mattison. A future “will conceive” also occurs in the manuscript tradition; the selected version’s reading is retained.

4. 5:1 The Greek πέταλον denotes a thin plate or leaf, here associated with priestly dress. The reference of the pronoun in the statement about seeing no sin is ambiguous; Russian follows Mattison here.

5. 5:2 The seventh month follows Bodmer V and the selected English version. Other Greek witnesses place the birth in the ninth month; the readings have not been harmonized.

6. 6:3 At the end of the verse, Greek ἀνέπαυσεν αὐτήν means that the mother laid the child to rest; Russian therefore differs from “Anna rested.” The final address to the twelve tribes follows Mattison and is absent from the Bodmer V transcription. The difficult phrase about the singular yet abundant fruit refers to Anna’s child.

7. 8:2 The Greek says that Mary reached the age of twelve while living in the Temple. Russian does not interpret this as twelve years spent there.

8. 8:3 The instruction that each widower bring a staff follows the longer tradition and Mattison. It is absent from this line in Bodmer V, although staffs appear in the next chapter.

9. 11:1 Greek θρόνος can mean a seat, chair or throne. Russian uses “seat” in context; Mattison uses “throne.”

10. 12:3 The age of sixteen follows Bodmer V and Mattison; some other Greek witnesses read fifteen.

11. 15:2 Literally, “stole her wedding”: an accusation of a concealed marriage without public announcement. It is the characters’ allegation, not the narrator’s finding.

12. 16:1 The water of rebuke recalls the ordeal in Numbers 5:11–31. Russian retains the Greek plural ὑμᾶς (“you,” plural).

13. 17:1 Augustus is retained from Mattison. The name is corrupt in Bodmer V and the Greek tradition has variant readings; no independent reconstruction is claimed here.

14. 17:2 Greek δύο λαούς means “two peoples.” Russian conveys this sense rather than “two persons.” Samuel is present in Bodmer V and has not silently been replaced with Joseph.

15. 18:1 The main chapters 18–21 follow Mattison’s longer version, compared with Vienna61 and Vatopedi74. Bodmer V’s much shorter narrative is presented separately in the appendix; these are different textual forms, not gaps to fill from each other.

16. 19:3 The main text retains the reading “examine her.” The shorter Bodmer V version explicitly mentions inserting a finger. The readings are kept separate.

17. 20:2 “Give me back to the poor” is Salome’s plea to be restored to her service; the reading is attested in Vienna61 and Vatopedi74. The source’s English typo “give me the back” is retained in the reproduced text.

18. 23:3 Greek μάρτυς primarily means “witness” and can also carry the sense “martyr” in Zechariah’s death scene. Russian retains “witness of God,” whereas Mattison uses “martyr.”

19. 24:3 Φατνώματα are recessed ceiling panels or coffers. Their cry belongs to the text’s figurative narrative.

20. 25:1 “I, James” is the work’s internal authorial claim; it does not by itself establish historical authorship. Chapter 25 is present in Bodmer V.

21. Appendix 20:2 The sentence about healing “in that hour” follows Mattison’s English appendix. It is absent from the downloaded ITSEE transcription of Bodmer V, where the prayer proceeds directly to the address to Salome. The appendix is therefore identified as Mattison’s version, not a literal translation of one XML witness.

22. Appendix 20:4 The shorter version has the positive “report,” while the longer has “do not report.” Bodmer V’s corrected ἀνάγγειλον has no negation. The difference is retained rather than harmonized.

23. Appendix 21:3 The shift from plural “stars” to singular “star” is retained from the shorter source.

LIFE FOR GOD

CHRISTIAN LIBRARY

Books in Russian and English, audio recordings, spiritual conversations and the Preacher’s Workshop.

Website

lifeforgod.church

Open the link or scan the QR code with your phone’s camera.

Read this book online