LIFE FOR GOD

THE UNKNOWN GOSPEL

Reading edition

EARLY CHRISTIAN APOCRYPHA

English translation
Mark M. Mattison

Reading edition · Life for God



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About this edition

Fragments of an unidentified early Christian gospel survive in Greek in Egerton Papyrus 2 and the joining Cologne fragment P. Köln VI 255. The author and ancient title are unknown. This edition presents four faces of the first two fragments: a debate about the scriptures, an attempt to seize Jesus, a healing, a question about payments to kings and a damaged episode beside the Jordan. Missing text is not replaced with a continuous retelling.

English translation by Mark M. Mattison, expressly dedicated to the public domain. The new Russian reading translation is based on this English version, with selected expressions in fragment 1 checked against an available Greek transcription. It is not represented as an independent translation of a complete critical Greek edition; checks and textual features are documented below.

The four sections correspond to fragment faces in the selected edition. Section and paragraph numbers are editorial navigation and linking aids, not ancient chapters and verses. Recto (→) and verso (↓) identify papyrus faces and the direction of writing relative to the fibres. Square brackets mark loss and proposed restoration; [...] marks an unrestored gap. Russian bracket placement accommodates translated word order.

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 Unknown Gospel: Egerton Papyrus 2
The complete English text of this reading version, expressly dedicated by its translator to the public domain. Mattison identifies Andrew Bernhard’s Greek edition as his textual basis.

2. British Library — Egerton Papyrus 2
Catalogue identification of the papyrus fragments and their relationship to P. Köln VI 255, with a link to digital images.

3. Universität zu Köln — P. Köln VI 255, Inv. 608
The university catalogue entry for the Cologne fragment belonging to the same papyrus codex.

4. K. C. Hanson — Papyrus Egerton 2: Fragments from a Gospel Codex
An accessible Greek transcription of fragment 1, consulted for selected expressions concerning cleansing, priests and Moses. Hanson’s modern English translation is not reproduced here.

5. Lorne R. Zelyck — Egerton Gospel, NASSCAL
Scholarly bibliography and survey of the fragments. Proposed reconstructions of damaged episodes are not imported into this reading text.

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Section 1 · Fragment 1, verso (↓)

1. [...] to the lawyers ["...all] the wrongdoers [...] and not me [...] how does he do it?" [1]

2. [Then he turned] to [the] rulers of the people and made this statement: "Search [the] scriptures; [you think] you have life in them. They [testify] about me. Don't [think] I've come to accuse [you] before my Father. [The one who accuses] you is Moses, in whom [you] hope." [2]

3. But they [said,] "We know [well] God [spoke] to Moses, but you -- we don't know [where you're from."]

4. Jesus [told them] in reply, "Now [you] stand accused because [you don't believe those who've been approved] by him; because if [you believed Moses,] you'd believe [me, for] he [wrote] about me to your ancestors [...]" [3]

Section 2 · Fragment 1, recto (→)

1. [...] stones together [so they could stone him.] And the [rulers] laid their [hands] on him [so that] they might seize him and [deliver him] to the crowd. But they [could] not seize him, because the hour of his arrest [had] not yet [come.] So the Lord escaped [from their hands] and withdrew from [them.]

2. And look, someone with leprosy approached [him] and said, "Teacher Jesus, while I was [traveling] with [others] who had [leprosy] and eating at the inn [with them,] I [contracted leprosy] myself. But if [you want to,] you can cure me." [4]

3. Now the Lord [told him, "I want to:] be cured." [And immediately] the leprosy left him. [5]

4. Then Jesus [told] him, ["Go] and show [yourself] to the [priests] and offer [what Moses ordered for] your cure, and don't sin anymore [...]" [6]

Section 3 · Fragment 2, recto (→)

1. [...] to him, examining him to test him: "Teacher Jesus, we know that you've come [from God,] because the things you do [testify] above and beyond all the prophets. [So tell] us: is it right [to give] kings what belongs to them? [Should we pay] them, or [not?"] [7]

2. But since Jesus knew what [they] were thinking, [he scolded them] and asked [them,] "Why do you pay me lip service as a Teacher but [don't do] what [I say? Isaiah] accurately prophesied [about] you when he said:

3. [These people honor] me with their [lips,]
[but] their [heart] is [far] from [me.]
[They worship me pointlessly,]
[... rules ...] [8]

Section 4 · Fragment 2, verso (↓)

1. [...] enclosed in the [place ...] being subjected uncertainly [... its] weight unweighed [...] but [while] they were puzzled [as] to [his] strange question, Jesus walked and stood [on the] bank of the Jordan [river.] And reaching out with [his] right hand [...] and he sowed [on] the [...] and then [...] water [...] the [...] and [...] he produced [...] fruit [...] [9]

Translation notes

1. 1:1 The opening is badly damaged. The surviving words do not establish the full accusation or question. The gaps remain open.

2. 1:2 The statements about searching the scriptures and Moses have close parallels in John 5:39 and 5:45–46. These references aid comparison and do not by themselves settle literary dependence.

3. 1:4 Much of “you don’t believe those who’ve been approved” is restored in the edition followed by Mattison. Square brackets distinguish proposed restoration from surviving wording.

4. 2:2 “Leprosy” is the conventional translation in this ancient narrative; the text does not establish a modern medical diagnosis. The speaker connects his illness with travelling and eating with others.

5. 2:3 Greek katharisthēti means “be cleansed”. Russian retains the language of cleansing here and in the surrounding exchange; the English reading version renders it as cure.

6. 2:4 The Greek transcription has the plural “priests” and the command to sin no more. These features are retained without replacing the passage with a similar canonical account.

7. 3:1 The question concerns “kings”. Neither Caesar’s name nor the familiar answer about rendering to Caesar occurs in this surviving passage, and neither is supplied.

8. 3:3 The quotation is related to Isaiah 29:13. Gaps and restorations follow the English basis; its missing ending is not supplied from a familiar biblical version.

9. 4:1 This side is especially damaged. The difficult opening remains as fragmentary as in the English basis. References to the Jordan, a right hand, sowing, water and fruit do not yield a securely reconstructed narrative. What was sown and how the miracle occurred are not supplied.

10. This edition reproduces all four fragment faces translated in the selected Mattison version. Small remains of fragment 3, not presented there as a continuous translation, are not included. This is not an edition of every surviving papyrus letter.

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