

# THE INFANCY GOSPEL OF JAMES

The following translation is based on the Greek text printed in Ronald F. Hock's The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas. The text, which provided the basis for the Jesus Seminar's "Scholars Version" translation of the Infancy Gospel of James, has been divided differently than in earlier critical editions to encourage precise notation.

## CHAPTER 1

(1) In the histories of the twelve tribes of Israel, Joachim was an extremely rich man. (2) He always brought a double offering to the Lord, (3) telling himself, "My offering for all the people is from my surplus and my own offering to the Lord God is for forgiveness, to atone for my sins."

(4) As the great day of the Lord was drawing near and the children of Israel were bringing their offerings, however, (5) Reubel stood in his way, saying, "You cannot offer your gifts first because you have not conceived a child in Israel."

(6) And Joachim became extremely frustrated and went away to the history of the twelve tribes of his people, saying to himself, "I will look in the history of the twelve tribes of Israel and see whether I am the only one who has not conceived a child in Israel." (7) And he searched and found that all the righteous people had raised children in Israel. (8) And he reminded himself about the patriarch Abraham and that the Lord God gave his son Isaac to him in his last days.

(9) Then, Joachim was extremely frustrated and did not appear to his wife, but gave himself to the desert and pitched his tent there. (10) He fasted forty days and forty nights. (11) All the while, Joachim was saying to himself, "I will not go down for food or drink until the Lord my God visits me; prayer will be my food and drink."

## CHAPTER 2

(1) Then, his wife Anna mourned and lamented greatly for two reasons, saying, "I lament that I am a widow and I lament that I am childless."

(2) When the great day of the Lord was drawing near, (3) her servant Juthine said to her, "How long are you going to humble yourself? Do you not see that the great day of the Lord is approaching? You are not allowed to mourn. (4) Take this headband which the leader of the activity gave me. I am not allowed to tie it because I am your slave and it has a royal mark."

(5) Then, Anna said, "Get away from me. I did not cause these things, even though the Lord God has humbled me greatly. Perhaps a crafty person has given this to you and you have come to cause me to partake of your sin."

(6) And her servant Juthine said, "Should I invoke a curse on you because you did not hear my voice? The Lord God has shut your womb and he will not give you offspring in Israel."

(7) So Anna also became extremely frustrated and removed her mourning garment, washed her head and clothed herself with her wedding dress. (8) Around the ninth hour, she went down to her garden to walk around. She saw a laurel tree and sat down under it. (9) And after a rest, she petitioned the Lord, saying, "God of my ancestors, bless me and hear my prayer, just as you blessed our mother Sarah and gave her son Isaac to her."

### CHAPTER 3

(1) And Anna looked up to the heavens and saw a nest of sparrows in the laurel tree. (2) Immediately, Anna cried out mournfully, saying to herself,

"Oh me, who gave birth to me? What womb caused me to grow? (3) For I was born cursed in front of the children of Israel. I am reviled and they treat me with contempt and cast me out of the temple of the Lord my God.

(4) "Oh me, what am I like? I am not like the birds of the sky, for the birds of the sky are fruitful before you, Lord.

(5) "Oh me, what am I like? I am not like the domestic animals, for the domestic animals are fruitful before you, Lord.

(6) "Oh me, what am I like? I am not like the wild animals of the earth, for the wild animals of the earth are fruitful before you, Lord.

(7) "Oh me, what am I like? I am not like these waters, for these waters are fruitful before you, Lord.

(8) "Oh me, what am I like? I am not like this earth, for the earth produces its fruit in season and blesses you, Lord."

### CHAPTER 4

(1) Suddenly, an angel of the Lord stood in front of her, saying, "Anna, Anna, the Lord God has heard your prayer. You will conceive and give birth and your child will be spoken of everywhere people live."

(2) And Anna said, "As the Lord God lives, whether I give birth to either a male or a female child, I will bring it as an offering to the Lord my God and it will be a servant to him all the days of its life."

(3) Next, two angels came, saying to her, "Look your husband Joachim is coming with his flocks." (4) 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."

(5) Immediately, Joachim went down and called the shepherds, telling them, "Bring ten lambs without spot or blemish here to me; the ten lambs will be for the Lord God. (6) Bring twelve tender calves; the twelve calves will be for the priests and the elders. (7) And bring one hundred male goats; the one hundred male goats will be for all the people."

(8) Then, Joachim came with his flocks. Anna was standing at the gate. (9) When she saw Joachim coming with his flocks, Anna ran and wrapped herself around his neck, saying, "Now I know that the Lord God has blessed me greatly. See, the widow is no longer a widow and the childless woman has conceived in her womb."

(10) And Joachim rested for the first day he was home.

#### CHAPTER 5

(1) The next day, when he was presenting his offerings, he said to himself, "If the Lord God will be reconciled to me, he will make it clear to me with the priest's metal disc." (2) And Joachim presented his offerings and paid attention to the priest's metal disc until he went up to the altar of the Lord. And he saw no sin in it. (3) Joachim said, "Now, I know that the Lord God has been reconciled to me and has sent all my great sins away for me." (4) And having been justified, he departed from the temple and went to his house.

(5) And his wife's pregnancy came to term. After nine months, Anna gave birth (6) and she said to the midwife, "What is it?"

(7) The midwife said, "A girl."

(8) Anna said, "My soul exalts this day." And she put her baby to bed.

(9) After her days were completed, Anna cleansed her menstrual flow (10) and gave her breast to the child and gave her the name Mary.

#### CHAPTER 6

(1) Day by day, the child grew stronger. (2) When she was six months old, her mother set her on the ground to test whether she could stand. And after walking seven steps, she came to her mother's breast. (3) And her mother picked her up, saying, "As the Lord my God lives, you will not walk on this earth again until I take you to the temple of the Lord."

(4) And she made a sanctuary in her bedroom and would not permit anything common or impure to pass through it. (5) And she called the pure daughters of the Hebrews and they played with her.

(6) When the child's first birthday came, Joachim held a great celebration. He invited the high priests and the priests and the Sanhedrin and the whole nation of Israel. (7) And Joachim brought the child to the priests and they blessed her, saying, "God of our ancestors, bless this child and give her name eternal fame among all generations."

(8) And all the people said, "Let it happen, amen."

(9) And he brought the child to the high priests and they blessed her, saying, "Exalted God, look upon this child and give her a final blessing which will not be succeeded."

(10) And her mother took her up to the bedroom-sanctuary and gave her breast to the child. (11) And Anna composed a song for the Lord God, saying, "I will sing a holy song to the Lord my God because he has examined me and removed my horrible disgrace from me. (12) And the Lord God gave me the fruit of his righteousness, of one nature, but manifold before him. (13) Who will proclaim to the sons of Reubel that Anna nurses a child? Do you hear? Hear this, twelve tribes of Israel: Anna nurses a child!"

(14) And she gave the child rest in the bedroom-sanctuary and went out and served them. (15) When dinner was completed, they departed feeling good and glorified the God of Israel.

## CHAPTER 7

(1) She cared for the child for months. When the child turned two years old, Joachim said, "Let's take her to the temple of the Lord so we can relate the message we were given."

(2) And Anna said, "Let's wait until the third year, so that she will not seek her father or mother."

(3) And Joachim said, "Let's wait."

(4) When the child turned three, Joachim said, "Let's call the pure women of the Hebrews. (5) Let them take up lamps and light them so that the child will not turn back and her heart will never be led away from the temple of the Lord." (6) And they did these things until they went up to the temple of the Lord.

(7) And the priest welcomed her. Kissing her, he blessed her and said, "The Lord God has magnified your name for all generations; (8) through you the Lord will reveal deliverance to the children of Israel in the last days."

(9) And he set her down on the third step of the altar and the Lord God poured grace upon her. (10) She danced triumphantly with her drinks and every house in Israel loved her.

#### CHAPTER 8

(1) And her parents went down, marveling at and praising and glorifying the Lord God because the child had not turned back to look at them. (2) While Mary was in the temple of the Lord, she was fed like a dove and received food from the hand of an angel.

(3) When she turned twelve, a group of priests took counsel together, saying, "Look, Mary has been in the temple of the Lord twelve years. (4) What should we do about her now, so that she does not defile the sanctuary of the Lord our God?" (5) And they said to the high priest, "You have stood at the altar of the Lord. Go in and pray about her. And if the Lord God reveals anything to you, we will do it."

(6) And the priest went in taking the vestment with twelve bells into the holy of holies and prayed about her. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord stood before him, saying, "Zachariah, Zachariah, depart from here and gather the widowers of the people and let each one carry a staff. (8) And the one whom the Lord God points out with a sign, she will be his wife." (9) So the heralds went out to the whole surrounding area of Judea and the trumpet of the Lord rang out and all the men rushed in.

#### CHAPTER 9

(1) Throwing down his ax, Joseph went out to meet them. (2) And after they had gathered together with their rods, they went to the high priest. (3) After receiving everyone's rod, the high priest went into the temple and prayed. (4) When he was finished with the prayer, he took the rods and went out and gave them to each man, (5) but there was no sign among them. Finally, Joseph took his rod. (6) Suddenly, a dove came out of the rod and stood on Joseph's head. (7) And the high priest said, "Joseph! Joseph! You have been chosen by lot to take the virgin into your own keeping."

(8) And Joseph replied, saying, "I have sons and am old, while she is young. I will not be ridiculed among the children of Israel."

(9) And the high priest said, "Joseph, fear the Lord your God and remember what God did to Dathan and Abiron and Kore, how the earth split open and swallowed them because of their rebellion. (10) Now fear God, Joseph, so that these things do not happen in your house."

(11) Fearing God, Joseph took her into his own possession. (12) And he said to her, "Mary, I took you from the temple of the Lord and now I bring you into my house. I am going out to build houses, but I will come back to you. The Lord will protect you."

## CHAPTER 10

(1) Meanwhile, the priests were meeting together, saying, "Let us make a curtain for the temple of the Lord."

(2) And the high priest said, "Call the pure virgins from the tribe of David to me." (3) And the servants went out and sought and found seven virgins. (4) And the high priest remembered that the child Mary was from the tribe of David and was pure before God. (5) So the servants went out and got her.

(6) And they brought the women into the temple of the Lord. (7) And the high priest said, "Cast lots to see who will spin the gold and the pure and the linen and the silk and the violet and the scarlet and the true purple threads."

(8) And Mary was appointed by lot to the true purple and scarlet threads. And taking them, she went to her house. (9) This was at the same time Zachariah fell silent and Samuel replaced him until Zachariah could speak again. (10) Mary was spinning the scarlet thread which she had taken.

## CHAPTER 11

(1) And she took the cup and went out to fill it with water. (2) Suddenly, a voice said to her, "Rejoice, blessed one. The Lord is with you. You are blessed among women." (3) And Mary looked around to the right and the left to see where this voice came from. (4) And trembling she went into her house. Setting down the cup, she took the purple thread and sat down on the chair and spun it.

(5) Suddenly, an angel stood before her saying, "Do not be afraid Mary. You have found grace before the Lord of all. You will conceive from his word."

(6) Upon hearing this, however, Mary was distraught, saying to herself, "If I conceive from the Lord God who lives, will I also conceive as all women conceive?"

(7) And the Angel of the Lord said, "Not like that, Mary. For the power of God will come over you. Thus, the holy one who is born will be called son of the most high. (8) And you will call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

(9) And Mary said, "See, I am the servant of the Lord before him. Let it happen to me according to what you say."

## CHAPTER 12

(1) And she made the purple and the scarlet thread and carried it to the high priest. (2) And taking it, the high priest blessed her and said, "Mary, God has magnified your name. You will be called blessed among all the generations of the earth."

(3) Then, Mary went gladly to her cousin Elizabeth. (4) And she knocked at the door and when Elizabeth heard, she threw down her scarlet thread and ran to the door and opened it for her. (5) And she blessed her and said, "Where have you come to me from? Why should the mother of my Lord come to me? See how the child in me leaps and blesses you."

(6) But Mary had forgotten the mysteries which the angel Gabriel had told her. And looking into heaven she said, "Who am I, Lord, that all the generations of the earth will bless me?"

(7) She spent three months with Elizabeth. (8) Day after day, her womb swelled and she was afraid to go to her house and hid herself from the children of Israel. (9) Mary was sixteen years old when these mysterious things happened to her.

#### CHAPTER 13

(1) In the sixth month of her pregnancy, Joseph came from his house-building and went into the house to find her swelling. (2) And he struck his face and threw himself on the ground in sackcloth and wept bitterly, "How can I look to the Lord God? What will I pray about her, for I took her as a virgin from the temple of the Lord and did not guard her? (4) Who has set this trap for me? Who did this evil in my house? Who stole the virgin from me and defiled her. (5) Has not the story of Adam been repeated with me? For while Adam was glorifying God, the serpent came and found Eve alone and deceived her and defiled her - so it has also happened to me."

(6) And Joseph got up from his sackcloth and called her and said to her, "After having been cared for by God, what have you done? (7) Did you forget the Lord your God? You who were raised in the holy of holies, you who received from the hand of an angel, do you know how much you have humiliated yourself?"

(8) Then, she wept bitterly, saying, "I am pure and I did not know a man."

(9) And Joseph said to her, "Where did this thing in your womb come from then?"

(10) But she said, "As the Lord my God lives, I do not know where it came from."

#### CHAPTER 14

(1) Then, Joseph was extremely frightened and kept quiet about her, pondering what he should do. (2) And Joseph said to himself, "If I hide her sin, I will be rebelling against the law of the Lord. (3) And if I expose her to the children of Israel . . . well, I am afraid that the child in her might be angelic and I will be betraying innocent blood to a

judgment of death. (4) What then will I do about her? I will send her away from me secretly."

(5) And night overtook him. And suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Do not fear this child. For the child in her is from the Holy Spirit. (6) She will bear a son for you and you will call his name Jesus. For he will save his people from their sins."

(7) And Joseph arose from his sleep and glorified the God of Israel who had given grace to him. (8) And he guarded the child.

#### CHAPTER 15

(1) Then, Annas the scribe came to him and said to him, "Joseph, why have you not appeared to our traveling group?"

(2) And he said to him, "Because I was worn out from the trip and rested my first day back."

(3) And Annas turned and saw Mary pregnant.

(4) And he ran off at top speed to the high priest and said to him, "Look at Joseph, the one you bear witness for. He has broken the law badly."

(5) And the high priest said, "What is this?"

(6) And he said, "The virgin which Joseph received from the temple of the Lord, he defiled her and has stolen her wedding festivities and has not revealed it to the children of Israel."

(7) And he said to him, "Has Joseph done these things?"

(8) And he said to him, "Send a servant and he will find the virgin pregnant."

(9) And the servants went and found her just as he said and they led her with Joseph to the law court.

(10) And the high priest said to her, "Mary, what is this? How have you humiliated yourself? (11) Did you forget the Lord your God, you who were raised in the holy of holies and received from the hand of an angel? (12) You who heard their songs and danced before them, what is this?"

(13) And she wept bitterly, saying, "As the Lord God lives, I am pure before him and I did not know a man."

(14) And the high priest said, "Joseph, what is this?"

(15) But Joseph said, "As the Lord lives, I am pure from her."

(16) And the high priest said, "Do not lie, but speak the truth. You stole your wedding festivities and did not reveal it to the children of Israel (17) and you did not bow your head before the mighty hand that it should bless your seed."

(18) And Joseph was silent.

#### CHAPTER 16

(1) And the high priest said, "Return the virgin which you took from the temple of the Lord."

(2) And Joseph, becoming tearful [...]

(3) And the high priest said, "I will give you the water of the Lord's wrath to drink and it will make your sin clear in your eyes." (4) And taking the water, the high priest gave it to Joseph to drink and sent him out into the desert. And he returned unharmed.

(5) And he made the young girl drink also and sent her out into the desert. And she came back unharmed. (6) And all the people were astonished that their sins were not revealed. (7) And the high priest said, "If the Lord God has not revealed your sins, I will not judge you either." And he released them. (8) And Joseph took Mary and went away to his house, rejoicing and praising the God of Israel.

#### CHAPTER 17

(1) Then, there was an order from the Emperor Augustus to register how many people were in Bethlehem of Judea. (2) And Joseph said, "I will register my sons. But this child? What will I do about him? How will I register him? (3) And my wife? Oh, I am ashamed. Should I register her as my daughter? The children of Israel know that she is not my daughter. (4) This day, I will do as the Lord wants."

(5) And he saddled his donkey and sat her on it and his son led and Samuel followed. (6) And they arrived at the third mile and Joseph turned and saw that she was sad. (7) And he said to himself, "Perhaps the child within her is troubling her." (8) And again Joseph turned around and saw her laughing and said to her, "Mary, what is with you? First your face appears happy and then sad?"

(9) And she said, "Joseph, it is because I see two people with my eyes, one crying and being afflicted, one rejoicing and being extremely happy."

(10) When they came to the middle of the journey, Mary said to him, "Joseph, take me off the donkey, the child pushing from within me to let him come out."

(11) So he took her off the donkey and said to her, "Where will I take you and shelter you in your awkwardness? This area is a desert."

## CHAPTER 18

(1) And he found a cave and led her there and stationed his sons to watch her, (2) while he went to find a Hebrew midwife in the land of Bethlehem.

(3) Then, Joseph wandered, but he did not wander. (4) And I looked up to the peak of the sky and saw it standing still and I looked up into the air. With utter astonishment I saw it, even the birds of the sky were not moving. (5) And I looked at the ground and saw a bowl lying there and workers reclining. And their hands were in the bowl. (6) And chewing, they were not chewing. And picking food up, they were not picking it up. And putting food in their mouths, they were not putting it in their mouths. (7) Rather, all their faces were looking up.

(8) And I saw sheep being driven, but the sheep were standing still. (9) And the shepherd lifted up his hand to strike them, but his hand remained above them. (10) And I saw the rushing current of the river and I saw goats and their mouths resting in the water, but they were not drinking. (11) And suddenly everything was replaced by the ordinary course of events.

## CHAPTER 19

(1) And I saw a woman coming down from the mountain and she said to me, "Man, where are you going?"

(2) And I said, "I am seeking a Hebrew midwife."

(3) Replying, she said to me, "Are you from Israel?"

(4) And I said to her, "Yes."

(5) Then, she said, "And who is giving birth in the cave?"

(6) And I said, "The one who has pledged to be married to me."

(7) And she said to me, "She is not your wife?"

(8) And I said to her, "She is Mary, the one who was raised in the temple. I won her by lot to be my wife. (9) She is not yet my wife, but has a fetus from the Holy Spirit."

(10) And the midwife said, "Really?"

(11) And Joseph said to her, "Come and see."

(12) So the midwife went with him. (13) And they stood near the cave and a dark cloud was hovering over the cave. (14) And the midwife said, "My soul glorifies this day, for today my eyes have seen a miracle: salvation has come to Israel."

(15) And immediately, the cloud withdrew from the cave and a great light appeared in the cave so that their eyes could not bear it. (16) And a little while later the same light withdrew until an infant appeared. And he came and took the breast of his mother, Mary.

(17) And the midwife cried out and said, "How great this day is for me, for I have seen this new miracle."

(18) And the midwife departed from the cave and met Salome and said to her, "Salome, Salome, I have to describe this new miracle for you. A virgin has given birth, although her body does not allow it."

(19) And Salome said, "As the Lord my God lives, unless I insert my finger and investigate her, I will not believe that a virgin has given birth."

#### CHAPTER 20

(1) And the midwife went in and said, "Mary, position yourself, for not a small test concerning you is about to take place."

(2) When Mary heard these things, she positioned herself. And Salome inserted her finger into her body. (3) And Salome cried out and said, "Woe for my lawlessness and the unbelief that made me test the living God. Look, my hand is falling away from me and being consumed in fire."

(5) And Salome dropped to her knees before the Lord, saying, "God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, (6) do not expose me to the children of Israel, but give me back to the poor. (7) For you know, Lord, that I have performed service and received my wage from you."

(8) Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared, saying to her, "Salome, Salome, the Lord of all has heard your entreaty. (9) Stretch out your hand to the child and lift him up and he will be salvation and joy for you."

(10) And Salome went to the child and lifted him up, saying, "I worship him because he has been born a king to Israel." (11) And at once Salome was healed and left the cave justified.

(12) Suddenly, there was a voice saying, "Salome, Salome, do not proclaim what a miracle you have seen until the child comes to Jerusalem."

#### CHAPTER 21

(1) Now, Joseph was about to depart to Judea when there a great commotion in Bethlehem of Judea. (2) For astrologers had come, saying, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star in the East and came to worship him."

(3) And when Herod heard, he was shaken up and sent servants to the astrologers. (4) And he also sent for the high priests and questioned them in his palace, saying to them, "What has been written about the messiah? Where will he be born?"

(5) They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written." (6) And he let them go.

(7) And he questioned the astrologers, saying to them, "What sign did you see about the one who has been born king?"

(8) And the astrologers said, "We saw a star shining with incredible brilliance amidst the constellations and making them seem dim. And so we knew that the king had been born in Israel and we came to worship him."

(9) And Herod said to them, "Go and search. If you find him, report to me so that I also may come and worship him."

(10) And the wise men departed. Then, the star which they had seen in the east led them until they came to the cave and stood over the head of the child. (11) And when the astrologers saw him with his mother Mary, they took gifts out of their bags: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

(12) And having been warned by the angel not to go into Judea, they returned to their country by another road.

## CHAPTER 22

(1) When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the astrologers, he flew into a rage (2) and sent his executioners, telling them to destroy all the infants that were two years old or younger.

(3) And when Mary heard that all the children were being destroyed, she was afraid and took the child and wrapped him up and put him in a stall of cows.

(5) And when Elizabeth heard that John was being sought, she took him and headed for the hills. And she looked around to find where she could hide him, but there was not any good place. (7) Then, as Elizabeth sighed, she said with a loud voice, "Mountain of God, take me, a mother with her child." For Elizabeth was too afraid to go up higher. (8) And at once, the mountain split open and received her. And there was light shining through the mountain to her. (9) For an angel of the Lord was with them, guarding them.

## CHAPTER 23

(1) But Herod continued seeking John. (2) And he sent his servants to Zachariah at the altar, saying to him, "Where did you hide your son?"

(3) But he replied, saying to them, "I am here as a servant of God and am serving in his temple. How should I know where my son is?"

(4) And his servants departed and reported to him all these things. Outraged, Herod said, "Is his son destined to rule Israel?"

(5) And he sent his servants again, saying to him, "Tell me the truth? Where is your son? Do you know that your blood is under my hand?"

(6) And the servants departed and reported these things to him.

(7) And replying, Zachariah said, "I am a witness of God. Have my blood. (8) The Lord will receive my spirit because you are shedding innocent blood at the entrance of the temple of the Lord."

(9) And around daybreak, Zachariah was murdered, even though the children of Israel did not know that he had been murdered.

#### CHAPTER 24

(1) Then, at the hour of greeting, the priests departed and the blessing of Zachariah did not greet them as usual. (2) Expecting Zachariah, the priests waited to welcome him with prayer and to praise the most high God.

(3) When he failed to come, they were all afraid. (4) One of them courageously went into the sanctuary and saw hardened blood next to the altar of the Lord (5) and heard a loud voice saying, "Zachariah has been murdered and his blood will not be wiped away until vengeance comes."

(6) When he heard these words, he was afraid and went out and told the priest what he had seen and heard. (7) And gathering up their courage, they went in and saw what had happened. (8) And as the panels of the temple cried out, they ripped their robes from the top down. (9) And they did not find the corpse, but they found his blood which had turned to stone. (10) And fearing, they went out and reported to the people that Zachariah had been murdered. (11) And all the tribes of the people heard and they mourned and wept for three days and three nights.

(12) Then, after three days, the priests deliberated about who they should appoint to take the place of Zachariah. (13) And the lot went to Simeon. (14) For he was the one to whom it had been revealed by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he saw the messiah in the flesh.

#### CHAPTER 25

(1) I, James, wrote this history when there was unrest in Jerusalem, at the time Herod died. (2) I took myself into the desert until the unrest in Jerusalem ceased. (3) All the while, I was glorifying God who gave me the wisdom to write this history.

(4) And grace will be with all who fear the Lord. Amen. Birth of Mary Revelation of James Peace to the writer and the reader. Lk. 1:20.