

The Latin Biography of James the Lesser
from Pseudo-Abdias 6.1–6

Translated by Joseph Gebhardt-Klein, 2023

Based on:

Johann Albert Fabricius, *Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti*, Vol. 2 (Hamburg: Benjamin Schiller, 1703), 591–608.

Preface

This is a translation of the Latin biography of James the Lesser (also known as “James the Just” and “brother of the Lord”) from Fabricius’ 1703 text of Pseudo-Abdias 6.1–6 in volume 2 of his *Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti* (591–608).¹ The biography incorporates material from the Gospel of the Hebrews concerning Jesus’ post-resurrection appearance to James, material from the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* concerning an attack on James in the Temple seven years after the crucifixion (notably changed to “fourteen years” here), and the Hegesippan martyrdom preserved in book 2, chapter 23 of Eusebius’ *History of the Church*.

Text and Translation

I. Simon Chananæus cognomina, ac Judas, qui & Thaddæus, & Jacobus quem fratrem Domini quidam appellant, fratres germani fuerunt, ex Chana Galilææ oriundi, parentibus Alphæo & Maria Cleophæ Filia. Quorum postremus ex eadem matre, sed Patre diverso natus fuit, Josepho scilicet justo, eo cui desponsata beatissima Dei genetrix Maria fuit. Unde & frater	1. Simon, surnamed “the Canaanite,” and Jude, who was also Thaddæus, and James who some call “the brother of the Lord,” were full brothers, coming from Cana of Galilee, of the parents Alphaeus and Mary daughter of Cleophas, the last of whom was born of the same mother, but by a different father, namely Joseph the Just, to whom the most blessed mother of God was betrothed. Hence also he was “the brother of the Lord.”
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¹ Thanks go to Sister Anne Eason O.S.B. of St Cecilia’s Abbey for her consultation on the draft of this translation.

Domini: subintellige quod ad carnem, Jacobus appellatus est: quia Joseph Jacobi Pater, desponsatam verum minime nuptam Mariam virginem habebat, quæ spiritu Sancto postea imprægnata, Salvatorem mundi Christum Jesum Dominum nostrum virgo peperit. Itaque ob hujus vinculi occasionem à Christo inter discipulos tres hi Mariæ Cleophæ Filii recepti sunt, & posterius ad Apostolatus fastigium sublevati. Quorum minor natus Jacobus Christo Salvatori in primis semper dilectus, tanto rursus desiderio in Magistrum flagrabat, ut crucifixo eo cibum capere noluerit, priusquam à mortuis resurgentem videret, quod meminerat sibi & fratribus à Christo agente in vivis fuisse prædictum. Quare ei primum omnium ut & Mariæ Magdalenæ, & Petro apparere voluit, ut discipulum in fide confirmaret: Et ne diutinum jejunium toleraret, favo mellis oblato, ad comedendum insuper Jacobum invitavit. Is mansit post sublevationem Christi in cælum, cum Petro & Joanne Hierosolymis, & Judæis verbum Domini

understand that James was called “according to the flesh,” because Joseph, the father of James, had betrothed, but not truly married, the virgin Mary, who after conceiving by the Holy Spirit, gave birth as a virgin to the Savior of the world, our Lord Jesus Christ. And so, because of this occasion, these three sons of Mary daughter of Cleophas were received by Christ among his disciples, and afterwards raised up to apostleship. The younger of them, James, was an object of special attachment to Christ the Savior, and he was inflamed with so much zeal for his Teacher on the other hand, that he would take no food once his Lord was crucified, and would only eat again when he should see Christ arisen from the dead; because he remembered that when Christ was alive he had given this precept to him and his brothers. That is why he, along with Mary Magdalene and Peter, was the first of all to whom Jesus Christ appeared, in order to confirm his disciples in the faith: and lest he should endure fasting any longer, a piece of a honeycomb having been offered James, he invited him to eat thereof. He remained after Christ ascended to heaven with Peter and John in Jerusalem, and preached the word of

prædicabat. Quod eo facilius etiam
facere poterat, quia in templo
Salomonis publico fungebatur
ministerio.

the Lord to the Jews, which he was able to do
all the more easily, because he filled the public
office of the ministry of the Temple of
Solomon.

II. Igitur nondum elapso quartodecimo
anno a passione Domini, quando Paulus
hunc cum Tito & Barnaba itineris sociis
convenerat, dextrasque Jacobo &
Petro atque Joanni porrexisset,
convenientibus duodecim Apostolis in
Hierusalem ad diem festum Paschæ,
præsidente Jacobo & populo audiente,
breviter exposuerunt singuli, quæ in
locis singulis fuerant per eos gesta. In
quibus diebus Caiphas Pontifex, missis
ad eos Sacerdotibus, rogavit eos, ire
ad se, ut aut rationem docerent, quia
Jesus ipse sit æternus Deus ac
Christus: aut ipse contra doceret, quia
non sit. Constituto igitur die
ascenderunt in templum Apostoli, &
coram omni populo protestari
cœperunt de Jesu, simul & arguere
Judæos de multis, quæ ab his absurde
gerebantur. Et cum starent in gradibus
templi, facto populi silentio, docuerunt

2. Therefore, before the fourteenth year
after the passion of the Lord had passed,
when Paul had met him with Titus and
Barnabas, his companions in the journey, and
had given his right hand to James and Peter
and John, when the twelve apostles
assembled in Jerusalem for the Feast of
Passover, with James presiding and the
people listening, they briefly explained what
things had been done by them in each place.
In those days Caiphas the Chief Priest sent
priests to them, asking them to come to him,
that either they might prove the reason, that
Jesus himself is the eternal God and Christ,
or that he should teach its contrary, that he
is not. So on the appointed day, the apostles
went up into the Temple, and in the presence
of all the people of the Lord began to bear
witness about Jesus, and simultaneously to
charge the Jews with many things which were
being absurdly conducted by them. And when
they stood on the steps of the Temple, the

Sacerdotes de uno solo Deo Christo people having become silent, they taught the
Jesu, Saducæos de resurrectione priests concerning the only one God Jesus
mortuorum, Samaritas de Christ, the Sadducees concerning the
consecratione Hierusalem, Scribas resurrection of the dead, the Samaritans
denique & Pharisæos de regno concerning the sanctity of Jerusalem, the
cælorum: universum vero populum, quia scribes and then the Pharisees concerning
Jesus est Christus æternus, the kingdom of heaven: but truly they
informarunt. Ad ultimum autem informed all the people that Jesus is the
monuerunt, ut priusquam eternal Christ. At last, however, they warned,
progredierentur ad gentes prædicare that before they should go forth to the
agnitionem Dei Patris, ipsi gentiles, to preach the knowledge of God the
reconciliarentur Deo suscipientes Father, they they should be reconciled with
Filium ejus. Alias enim eos nullo modo God, receiving his Son. For they showed that
ostenderunt posse salvari, nisi per in no other way could they be saved, except
Sancti Spiritus gratiam trinæ through the grace of the Holy Spirit they
invocationis dilui baptisate hastened to be washed with the baptism of
properarent, & Eucharistiam Christi the threefold invocation, and received the
Domini sumerent, cui soli de his quæ Eucharist of Christ the Lord, whom alone
docuit credere deberent, ut sic they ought to believe concerning those
æternam salutem consequi things which he taught, so as to merit to
mererentur. attain eternal salvation.

III. Ita igitur cum per septem dies 3. So thus, when throughout seven days they
persuasissent populo & Pontifici, ut had persuaded the people and the Chief
confestim ad percipiendum Baptisma Priest to immediately receive baptism, and
sestinaretur, cumque jam res in eo now, when matters were at the point that
esset, ut venirent & baptizarentur, they should come and be baptized, lo, a

ecce homo quidam inimicus tunc cum paucis admodum ingrediens templum, clamare cœpit, & dicere: Quid facitis o viri Isrælitæ? cur vobis tam facile subrepitur? cur præcipites ducimini ab hominibus infelicissimis, & à mago deceptis? Cumque hæc diceret, & hæc audiretur ac superaretur ab Episcopo Jacobo, conturbare populum & seditiones suscitare cœpit, ita ut ea quæ ab Apostolo dicebantur, plebs minime posset audire. Igitur exagitare cuncta clamoribus, & quæ fuerant multo labore ordinata convellere, simulque incusare Sacerdotes. Et opprobriis atque increpationibus cœpit cunctos accendere. Et veluti furibundus, singules quosque ad cædem concitabat Apostolorum, dicens: Quid agitis? quid cessatis, o segnes & desides? cur non manibus nostris invadimus, & discerpimus hos omnes? Et cum hæc dixisset, primus rapto ex ara usto, cædis fecit exordium. Tum deinde & cæteri videntes eum, simili ferebantur insania. Fit omnium clamor, cædentium pariter & cælorum, & sanguis ubique plurimus funditur, & fuga

certain man who was an enemy, entering the Temple with a few others, began to shout, and to say: "What are you doing, O men of Israel? How are you so easily taken away? How are you led astray by most unhappy men, who are deceived by a magician?" And while he was thus speaking, and had been heard, and refuted by James the bishop, he began to disturb the people and raise a sedition, so that the people might not be able to hear what was said by the apostle. Therefore, by stirring up all with shouting, and to undo what had been arranged with much labor, and simultaneously to reproach the priests, even with insults and rebukes he began to inflame the crowd. And like a madman, he incited each one of them to the murder of the apostles, saying, "What are you doing? Why do you hesitate, O slothful and inert ones? Why do we not seize them with our own hands, and tear them all to pieces?" And when he had said these things, he was the first to seize a stake from off the altar, and began the slaughter. After which the others, upon sight of his doings, were moved with a similar madness, a great cry was made by those that murdered them; much blood was shed, and men ran away in

permixta habetur: cum interim ille inimicus homo, Jacobum adgressus, de summis gradibus præcipitem dedit. Quem cum mortuum credidisset, ultra multare neglexit. In qua collisione, uno pede debilitatus, pessime claudicabat. Hominem vero inimicum Saulum fuisse manifestum est, quem postea Dominus ad Apostolatus ministerium destinavit.

confusion: while in the midst that enemy attacked James and threw him down headlong from the top of the steps. But when he believed he was dead, he cared not to inflict further violence on him. In which collision, with one foot crippled, he limped badly. But it is clear that the man who was an enemy was Saul, whom the Lord later appointed to the ministry of apostleship.

IV. Igitur Judæi postquam Paulus ad Cæsarem, quem appellaverat, a Festo Præside missus est, & frustrates insidias, qua sei intenderant, vident, in Jacobum fratrem Domini, immanitatem nequitiae suæ vertunt. Quem hoc modo adorti sunt. Productum in medium, abnegare eum fidem Christi coram omni populo expectunt. At ille, contra omnium opinionem, voce satis libera, & multo majora quam vellent, coram universe populo, cum omni fiducia profitetur, Filium Dei esse Salvatorem & Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum. Tum illi non ferentes tam grave & tam liberam testimonium viri, pro eo maxime, quod justissimus apud omnes

4. Therefore the Jews, after Paul had been sent by the prefect Festus to Caesar, to whom he appealed, even seeing the plots which they had laid for themselves in vain, turned the enormity of their wickedness against James, the brother of the Lord, whom they revered in this way. Being brought into the midst, they expected him to deny the faith of Christ in the presence of all the people. But he, contrary to the opinion of all, with a voice quite free, and much louder than they wished, in the presence of the whole people, with all his persuasion, professed the Son of God to be the Savior and our Lord Jesus Christ. But they, being unable to bear so serious and so free a man's testimony, especially for one who was considered most

habebatur, ob religiosæ & just of all because of the merits of a continentissimæ vitæ merita, in necem religious and chaste life, turned to his ejus vertuntur, & favente sibi occasione murder, and by the favorable opportunity of temporis, & ex morte Rectoris, alios time, and since the death of the governor, quam plurimos adsciscunt. Contigerat brought along as many others as possible. It tum forte Festum apud Judæam obire, happened then that Festus died in Judea, and ac sine rectore ac principe este the province was without a ruler and a Provinciam. Nam mortis Jacobi modus leader. For although the manner of James' licet à Clemente & aliis fuerit intimatus, death may have been intimated by Clement exploratius tamen de eo Hegesippus, and another, yet Hegesippus, who was qui postea primæ Apostolorum afterwards the first successor of the successionis fuit, quinto apostles, gives a more detailed account of Commentariorum suorum libro his these matters in the fifth book of his verbis refert. Commentaries.

V. Suscepit (inquit) Ecclesiam cum 5. (It is said) that James, the brother of the Apostolis frater Domini Jacobus, qui ab Lord, who was surnamed "the Just" by all, omnibus cognominatus est Justus, ab supported the Church with the apostles, ipsis Domini temporibus perdurans persevering from the time of the Lord right usque as nos. Et multi quidem Jacobi on up to us. And indeed many were called James, but this one was holy from his Sanctus fuit. Vinum & ficeram non biti, mother's womb. He drank neither wine nor sed neque animal manducavit, ferrum intoxicating beverages, but neither did he incaput ejus non ascendit. Oleo non est eat animals, and he did not lift a razor over perunctus, sed neque balneis est usus. his head. He did not anoint himself with oil, Huic soli licebat introire in Sancta but neither did he use (public) baths. He Sanctorum. Neque enim laneo utebatur alone was allowed to enter into the Holy of

indumento, sed tantum sindone. Solus ingrediebatur templum, & jacebat supra genua sua, orans pro populi indulgentia, ita ut orando callos faceret in genubus ad modum Cameli semper genua flectendo, nec unquam ab oratione cessando. Itaque pro incredibili hac continentia, & summa Justitia, appellatus est Justus, & Oblias, quod est interpretatum, munimentum populi, & justitia sicut & Prophetæ indicaverunt de eo. Quidam ergo de septem hæresibus quæ errant in populo, de quibus superius diximus interrogabant eum, quid esset ostium Domini. At ille dicebat: Hunc este Salvatorem. Ex quibus aliquanti crediderunt, quia Jesus est Christus. Illæ autem hæreses, quas supra scriptimus, non crediderunt, neque surrexisse eum, neque venturum, ut retribuatur unicuique secundum opera sua. Qui vero crediderunt, per Jacobum crediderunt. In quibus cum multi etiam ex principibus credidissent perturbation erat Judæorum, dicentium: Nihil jam supersit, quin omnis populus credat in Jesum, quod ipse sit

Holies. For neither did he wear wool clothing, but only a linen-cloth. He entered the Temple alone, and lay prostrate on his knees, praying for the forgiveness of the people, so that when he prayed it made calluses on his knees, after the manner of a camel, always bending his knees, and never ceasing from prayer. And in such a way, because of this incredible continence, and supreme justice, he was called “the Just,” and “Oblias,” which is interpreted, “the Fortress of the People,” and “Justice,” as the prophets also told about him. Some, therefore, of the seven heresies by which the people err, about which we have spoken above, asked him “What is the door of the Lord?” But he said: “He is the Savior.” Some of them believed that Jesus is the Christ. However, those heresies about which we have written above, did not believe that he had risen, nor that he would come to render to each according to his works. But those who believed believed because of James. Since, when even many of the leaders had believed, there arose a tumult of the Jews, who said: “Nothing now remains, except for all the people to believe in Jesus, that he is the Christ.” Therefore, they came together unto James, and said to

Christus. Convenientes igitur ad Jacobum, & dicebant ei: Oramus te, ut revoces populum, quia ecce errat in Jesu, putans quod ipse sit Christus. Deprecamur ergo te, ut suadeas omnibus convenientibus in die Paschæ de Jesu. Tibi enim omnes obtemperamus, & de te, tam nos quam populus testimonium ferimus, quia justus es, & personam ullius non accipis. Tu ergo svade populo de Jesu, ne erret. Tunc omnes tibi obediemus. Adscende itaque in excelsum locum pinnæ temple, ut in edito positus appareas omnibus, & verba tua audiantur à cunctis: quia in diebus Paschæ convenient non solum Judæorum, sed & Gentilium multitudo. Statuerunt igitur supradicti Scribæ & Pharisei Iacobum supra pinnam temple, & voce magna clamantes, dixerunt: Virorum justissime, cui omnes nos obtemperare debemus, quoniam populus errat post Jesum qui crucifixus est, enuncia nobis, quid sit ostium Domini? Tum Iacobus ad eos ingenti voce respondit: Quid me interrogates de Filio hominis? Ecce ipse sedet in cælo à dextris summæ virtutis, & ipse

him: "We entreat you to call the people back, for lo, they have erred concerning Jesus, thinking that he is the Christ. We beg you, therefore, to counsel all who come together on the day of the Passover concerning Jesus. For we all pay heed to you, and both we and the people bear witness concerning you, that you are just and do not accept anyone's person. You, therefore, advise the people concerning Jesus, so that they may not err. Then we will all obey you. Go up, therefore, to the high place of the pinnacle of the Temple, so that you may appear before all, and your words may be heard by all: because in the days of the Passover there is a multitude not only of Jews, but also of gentiles." Therefore the aforementioned scribes and Pharisees stood James up on the pinnacle of the Temple, and crying out with a loud voice, said: "Most just of men, to whom we all must pay heed, since the people have gone astray after Jesus who was crucified, tell us, what is the door of the Lord?" Then James answered them with a loud voice: "Why do you question me about the Son of man? Lo, he is sitting in heaven at the right hand of the Supreme Power, and he is about to come on the clouds

venturus est in nubibus cœli.

of heaven.”

VI. Cum hac responsione & testimonio Jacobi multis satisfactum esset, & libenter audivissent, quod Jacobus sic de Christo foret protestatus, cœperunt glorificare Deum, & dicere: Osanna Filio David. Tum rursus ipsi Scribæ & Pharisæi cœperunt ad invicem dicere: Male fecimus, ut tale is testimonium præstaret de Jesu. Sed adscendamus, & præcipitemus illum deorsum, ut cæteri terreantur, & non credant ei. Simul & voce magna clamaverunt, dicentes: O o, & Justus erravit. Et compleverunt in hoc scripturam, quæ in Esaia scripta est, dicentem: Auferamus Justum, quoniam inutilis est nobis, propterea fructum operum suorum manducabunt. Adscenderunt ergo, & præcipitaverunt eum, & dicebant ad invicem: Lapidetur homo iste. Et his dictis, cœperunt Beatum Jacobum lapidibus urgere. Qui dejectus non solum mori non potuit, quin conversus & super genus sua

6. When many were satisfied with this response and testimony of James, and were pleased to hear that James had thus protested concerning Christ, they began to glorify God, and to say: “Hosanna to the son of David.” Then again the scribes and the Pharisees themselves began to say to one another: “We have done wrong to let him give such testimony concerning Jesus. But let us go up and throw him down, so that the others will be frightened and will not believe him.” Immediately and with a loud voice they cried out, saying: “Oh, oh, even the Just One has erred.” And in this they fulfilled the scripture that was written in Isaiah, saying: “Let us take away the just one, because he is useless to us, therefore they will eat the fruit of their works.”² Then they went up and threw him down, and said to one another: “This man must be stoned.” And having said these things, they began to throw stones at the blessed James.” He who, being cast down, did not only not die, but turned and prostrated himself upon his

² Is 3:10.

procumbens, dicebat: Rogo Domine Deus Pater, demitte eis peccatum, non enim sciunt quod faciunt. Cumque eum talia orantem desuper lapidibus perurgerent, unus des Sacerdotibus, de Filiis Rechabitarum (de quibus protestatur Hieremiæ Propheta) exclamavit dicens: Parcite quæso, quid facitis? Pro vobis orat Justus iste, quem lapidates. Et unus ex ipsis fullo, arreptum fustem, in quo res exprimere solent, cerebro ejus inlisisit. Ita Beatus Jacobus, cui Justi cognomentum fuit, tali tandem martyrio consummates est, ac sepultus in eodem loco prope templum. Atque hic ille est, qui extitit Veritatis testis Judæis & Gentibus, quia Iesus est Christus, Filius Dei vivi, qui cum Patre & Spiritu Sancto dominator & regnat in cuncta sæcula sæculorum.

knees, saying: "I beseech you Lord, God the Father, forgive them their sin, for they know not what they do." And when they stoned him while he was praying, one of the priests of the sons of the Rechabites (of whom Prophet Jeremiah testified) cried out, saying: "Please have mercy: what are you doing? The Just One, whom you stone, prays for you." And one of them who was a fuller, seized a club, with which was used to beat cloth, and struck his head. Thus the blessed James, who was surnamed "the Just," was finally consummated by such martyrdom, and was buried in the same place beside the Temple. And this was he who stood among the Jews and the gentiles as a witness of the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, who reigns and governs with the Father and the Holy Spirit forever and ever.