The OTHER GOSPELS

Accounts of Jesus from Outside the New Testament

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The Narrative of Joseph of Arimathea

The Narrative of Joseph of Arimathea, who asked for the Body of the Lord. In Which also are Related the Charges brought against the Two Robbers.

(1) I am Joseph of Arimathea, the one who asked Pilate for the body of the Lord Jesus for burial. For this reason I was shackled and imprisoned by the murderous Jews who wage war against God; even though they cling to the law, they have caused affliction for Moses himself. After infuriating the lawgiver, and being ignorant of God they crucified him, revealing to those who know him that it was the Son of God who was crucified. Seven days before Christ suffered, two condemned robbers were sent to the governor Pilate from Jericho. The charge against them was as follows.

The Two Robbers

(2) The first, named Gestas, use to murder travelers with the sword and he stripped others naked; he hanged women head downwards from their ankles and cut off their breasts; he drank blood from the limbs of infants. He never knew God, did not follow his laws, and showed his violent character from the beginning in deeds such as these.

The charge against the other was this. He was called Demas and was a Galilean by race, the owner of an inn. He used to despoil the rich, but he behaved well toward the poor. He was a thief like Tobit, for he used to bury the poor who died. He tried to rob the multitude of the Judeans by carrying off the law itself in Jerusalem, stripping naked the daughter of Caiaphas who was the priestess of the sanctuary, and removing the mysterious deposit of Solomon that had been entrusted to that place. Such were his deeds.

Judas Arranges the Betrayal

(3) Now Jesus also was arrested three days before the Passover, when it was evening. But there was no Passover for Caiaphas and the multitude of the Jews, but great mourning instead, because of the plundering of the sanctuary by the robber. They called Judas Iscariot and spoke to him, for he was the son of the brother of Caiaphas, the priest. Now he was not openly a disciple of Jesus, but all

the multitude of the Jews had persuaded him by stealth to follow Jesus—not that he might adhere to the signs that he did or confess him, but that he might hand him over to them, as he wanted to catch him speaking a false word. They gave gifts to him for this brave deed, paying him two pieces of gold every day. So he spent two years with Jesus, as one of his disciples named John says.

(4) On the third day before Jesus was arrested Judas said to the Jews, “Come, let us hold a council: for it was not the robber who plundered the law, but Jesus himself. And I am bringing the charge.” But when these words were spoken, Nicodemus entered our midst. He is the one who holds the keys to the sanctuary. He said to all, “Do no such deed!” For Nicodemus held to the truth more than the entire multitude of the Jews. The daughter of Caiaphas, named Sara, cried out: “But he himself spoke before all the people against this sanctuary, saying ‘I am able to destroy this temple and raise it in three days.’”2 The Jews replied to her, “All of us believe you”—for they considered her to be a prophet. And so, once they held their council, Jesus was arrested.

Jesus Put on Trial

2

(1) At three o’clock on the next day, the fourth day of the week, they brought him into the courtyard of Caiaphas. Annas and Caiaphas said to him, “Tell us, why did you carry off our law? And why have you preached against the promises of Moses and the prophets?” But Jesus made no answer. Again a second time, when the multitude was also present, they said to him, “Why do you want to destroy in a single moment the sanctuary that Solomon constructed in forty-six years?” Again Jesus made no answer to these things—for the sanctuary of the synagogue had been plundered by the robber.

(2) When the evening of the fourth day had come to an end, the entire multitude began looking for the daughter of Caiaphas, to burn her at the stake because of the destruction of the law, since they would not be able to celebrate the Pass- over. But she said to them, “Wait, children; let us destroy Jesus: then the law will be found and the holy feast can certainly be observed. Annas and Caiaphas secretly gave Judas Iscariot a large sum of gold and told him, “Say what you told us before: ‘I know that the law was stolen by Jesus.’ Then the accusation will be leveled at him rather than this innocent young girl.” Judas agreed with the plan and said to them, “We do not want the entire multitude to know that you instructed me to level this charge against Jesus. But release Jesus and I will persuade the multitude that this is how it happened.” So they released Jesus by stealth.

2. See Matt. 26:61; Mark 14:48.
Judas Betrays Jesus

(3) Judas came in to the sanctuary at dawn on the fifth day, and said to all the people, "What do you want to give me if I hand over to you the destroyer of the law and the plunderer of the prophets?" The Jews said to him, "If you hand him over to us, we will give you thirty pieces of gold." But the people did not know that Judas was speaking about Jesus, for many of them held that he was the Son of God. Judas took the thirty pieces of gold.3

(4) He went out at ten o'clock in the morning, and at eleven he found Jesus walking on the street. When it was nearly evening, Judas told the Jews, "Give me a contingent of soldiers with swords and clubs, and I will hand him over to you." And so they gave him servants in order to apprehend him. And while they were heading out, Judas said to them, "The one I kiss—arrest him!" For he is the one who plundered the law and the prophets." He then came up to Jesus and kissed him, saying, "Greetings, Rabbi." This was during the evening of the fifth day. They arrested him and handed him over to Caiaphas and the chief priests, while Judas told them, "This is the one who plundered the law and the prophets." They then subjected Jesus to an unfair interrogation, asking him, "Why did you do these things?" Yet he gave no answer.

But Nicodemus and I, Joseph, seeing the "seat of the pestilent" stood apart from them, not wanting to be perish "in the council of the impious."5

Jesus and the Robbers Are Crucified

3(1) They did many other terrible things to Jesus that night, and handed him over to the governor Pilate as the day of Preparation was dawning,6 so that he might crucify him. And all of them gathered together for this purpose. After the trial was over, the governor Pilate ordered him to be nailed to the cross, along with two robbers. And so they were nailed up together with Jesus, Gestas to his left and Demas to his right.

(2) The one on his left began to cry out, saying to Jesus, "See how many evil deeds I have done on the earth! If I had known that you were the king, I would have tried to kill you as well. But why do you call yourself the son of God, when you cannot even help yourself in your time of need? How can you help someone else who prays to you? If you are the Christ, come down from the cross, that I might believe in you." But now I see you not as a human, but as a wild beast,

4. See Matt. 26:48; Mark 14:44.
5. See Psalm 1:1.
destroyed along with me." And he began to say many other things against Jesus, blaspheming and grinding his teeth against him. For the robber was caught in the snare of the devil.

(3) But the robber on his right, named Demas, when he saw Jesus' divine grace, cried out, "I know you, Jesus Christ—you are the son of God! But I see you worshiped as Christ by a myriad of myriads of angels. Forgive my sins that I committed. At my trial, do not allow the stars or moon to come against me when you are about to judge the entire earth, for I carried out my evil plans at night. And the sun that has grown dark because of you, do not move it to speak the evil doings of my heart. For I can offer you no gift for the forgiveness of my sins. Death is already coming upon me for my sins. But expiation belongs to you. Save me from your fearful judgment, Master of all. Do not give the enemy authority to devour me and to inherit my soul, like that of the one hanging to your left. For I see how the devil rejoices, taking his soul, and his fleshly parts are disappearing. Do not order me to depart to the portion allotted to the Jews, for I see Moses and the patriarchs in great weeping, while the devil rejoices over them. And so, before my spirit departs, Master, command my sins to be wiped away and remember me, the sinner, in your kingdom, when upon the great throne of the Most High you shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel, for you have prepared a great punishment for your world, for your own sake."8

(4) When the robber had said these things, Jesus said to him, "Truly, truly I say to you, Demas, today you will be with me in paradise." But the sons of the kingdom, the children of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses will be cast into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. But you alone will dwell in paradise until my second coming, when I am about to judge those who do not confess my name." And he said to the robber, "Go and speak to the Cherubim and the powers, to those who turn the flaming sword, who have been guarding paradise from the time that Adam, the first-formed, was in paradise and transgressed, and did not guard my commandments, whom I cast out from there. None of those who lived before will see paradise until I come a second time to judge the living and the dead." Then he wrote to them as follows: "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came down from the heights of heaven, who came forth from the womb of the invisible God without separating from him, who came down into the world so as to be made flesh and to be nailed to the cross, so that I might save Adam, the very one whom I made, to my arch-angelic powers, the gatekeepers of paradise, servants of my Father. I wish and order that the one who was crucified with me should enter, that he should

10. See Matt. 8:11–12.
receive forgiveness of sins on my account, and that putting on an immortal body he should enter paradise and dwell there where no one at any time has been able to dwell."

And behold, when these words were spoken, Jesus handed over his spirit, on the day of Preparation at three o’clock. Darkness came over all the earth; and a large earthquake struck, causing the sanctuary to fall, along with the pinnacle of the temple.¹¹

Joseph is Imprisoned and Freed

4

(1) I, Joseph, requested the body of Jesus and placed it in a new tomb where no one had ever yet been laid. But the body of the robber to his right could not be found; the one on his left had the appearance of a dragon—that is what his body looked like.

Because I requested Jesus’ body for burial, the Jews were borne away by zealous anger and locked me in prison, where force is used against those who have done evil deeds. This happened to me when it was evening on the Sabbath, when our nation was violating the law. And behold, our nation itself endured terrible afflictions on that Sabbath.

(2) When it became late on the first day of the week, at around eleven at night, Jesus came to me in prison with the robber who had been crucified on his right side, whom he had sent into paradise. There was a great light in the building. And the house was suspended by its four corners, and the place was destroyed; so I went out. I recognized Jesus first, and afterwards the robber who was bringing a letter to Jesus. While we were making our way in Galilee a great light shown, more than the creation could bear, and a great sweet aroma from paradise exuded from the robber.

The Letter of the Cherubim

(3) When Jesus sat in a certain place, he read out from the letter, as follows: “We the Cherubim and the Six Winged Creatures who were commanded by your divinity to guard the garden of paradise are declaring this through the robber who was crucified with you according to your plan. When we saw the mark of the nails on the robber crucified with you and the splendor of your divine being in the letter that was sent, the fire that is here was extinguished, as it could not bear the brightness of the mark; and we were terrified, overcome with great fear—for we heard that the maker of heaven, earth, and all creation moved his

¹¹. See Matt. 27:51.
dwellng from the heights to the lowest regions of the earth, on account of Adam, the first formed. For when we saw the undefiled cross shining like lighting through the robber, its light seven times brighter than the shining sun, trembling overtook us, while we held fast the upheavals of the netherworld. With a great cry, the ministers of Hades, together with us, cried out, ‘Holy, holy, holy, the one who is in the beginning, in the highest places.’ And the powers sent forth a cry, ‘O Lord, you have appeared in heaven and on earth, and provided joy to the ages, having saved your own creation from death.’”

**Jesus, Joseph, the Robber, and John in Galilee**

(1) When I had seen these things I proceeded into Galilee with Jesus and the robber; and Jesus was transformed so that he no longer appeared as he did before he was crucified, but was entirely light. Angels were constantly ministering to him, and Jesus was speaking with them. I spent three days with him; but none of his disciples was with him, except the robber alone.

(2) When the Feast of Unleavened Bread was half over, his disciple John came; and we could no longer see what the robber was like. John asked Jesus, “Who is this? For you have not allowed me to appear to him.” Jesus gave him no answer. Then he fell before him and said, “Lord, I know that you loved me from the beginning. Why do you not reveal this man to me?” Jesus said to him, “Why do you seek after what is hidden? Are you still ignorant? Do you not recognize the sweet smell of paradise that fills the place? Do you not know who this was? The robber from the cross has become the heir of paradise. Truly, truly I tell you, it is his alone until the great day arrives.” John replied, “Make me worthy to see him.”

(3) While John was still speaking, the robber suddenly appeared. Greatly astonished, John fell to the ground. But the robber did not appear as he did at first, before John had come; he looked like a king in great power, and he was wearing the cross. The voice of a great multitude came forth, “You have come to the place of paradise that has been prepared for you. We have been appointed by the one who sent you, to serve you until the great day.” When this voice spoke, both the robber and I, Joseph, became invisible, and I was found to be in my own house, but I no longer saw Jesus.

(4) When I had seen these things I wrote them down, so that all may believe in the crucified Jesus Christ, our Lord, and no longer serve the law of Moses, but may believe in the signs and wonders that occurred through him—that by believing we might inherit eternal life and be found in the kingdom of heaven. For to him are due glory, power, praise, and greatness unto all the ages. Amen.