THE
NAG HAMMADI
SCRIPTURES

THE REVISED AND
UPDATED TRANSLATION
OF SACRED GNOSTIC TEXTS
COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME

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INTRODUCTION BY
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THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS

Codex Tchacos 3

Introduced and Translated by Marvin Meyer

The Gospel of Judas, the third tractate in Codex Tchacos, occupies pages 33–58 of the codex, where it follows the Letter of Peter to Philip and James, a version of the First Revelation of James, also found in Nag Hammadi Codex V. The Gospel of Judas was discovered in the 1970s and was first published in 2006, but the title was known from Irenaeus of Lyon (Against Heresies 1.31.1), who denounced the Gospel of Judas in around 180 as a text read by people he called Gnostics and included in his denunciation a brief description of its contents. His précis fits quite well the Coptic translation of the Gospel of Judas from Codex Tchacos.2

The Gospel of Judas is given its title at the conclusion of the tractate. The Coptic title (based on the Greek) is peuaggelion nioudas, the “Gospel of Judas” (58,28–29)—but not the “Gospel According to (kata or pkata) Judas,” as we might expect on the basis of titles of other early Christian gospels. Thus Judas is not designated, pseudonymously, as the author of the gospel. Rather, this is the “Gospel About Judas” or even the “Gospel for Judas,” and his relationship to Jesus and his role in the story of the last days of Jesus are focal points of the gospel.

The Gospel of Judas opens with an incipit that identifies the text as a “secret revelatory discourse” (plogo[s] ethēp ἐνταφοσίας, 33,1–2)3 that Jesus shares with Judas Iscariot shortly before the time of his crucifixion. After the summary of the career of Jesus (33,6–21), a scene is presented in which Jesus comes upon his disciples as they are celebrating a holy meal together, and he laughs (33,22–34,2). Jesus laughs a great deal in the Gospel of Judas, as he also laughs in the Secret Book of John, the Wisdom of Jesus Christ, the Second Discourse of Great Seth, and the Revelation of Peter. Here he maintains that he is not laughing at the disciples,

but at their overly scrupulous desire to do the will of their god. When they profess
that Jesus is in fact the son of their god (34.11-13), Jesus himself begs to differ; it
turns out that their god is the demiurge, the creator of this world, and not the tran-
scendent deity who is exalted over all. The disciples are not pleased by any of this,
but they cannot accept Jesus's invitation to stand before him—with the exception
of Judas, who stands in front of Jesus but turns his eyes away out of respect.4 Judas
then utters the correct profession of who Jesus is. He says to Jesus, “You have
come from the immortal realm (or aeon) of Barbelo, and I am not worthy to
pronounce the name of the one who has sent you” (35.17-21). In Sethian texts,
Barbelo is commonly understood to be the divine Mother, and the Barbelo Aeon
is featured in a number of Sethian Gnostic texts, especially Platonizing Sethian
texts. In the extant portions of the Gospel of Judas, Barbelo is mentioned only
here, and the profession by Judas may be taken to affirm that Jesus is the son or
manifestation of the transcendent deity.5

In the scenes that follow in the Gospel of Judas, Jesus appears several times to
speak with the disciples and at times privately with Judas. Earlier in the text it is
suggested that often Jesus appeared to his disciples not as himself, but perhaps as
a child (33.20).6 Much of the conversation between Jesus and his disciples ad-
dresses, in one way or another, the various groups of human beings and religious
folks that may be distinguished, and Jesus stresses that a particular group of
people is especially blessed. As in other Sethian texts, this group is claimed to
derive from the realms above, and the group is described in the Gospel of Judas as
the generation of Seth and “that generation” (t'genea et'mmau), in a manner that
recalls the references to “those people” (nirôme et'mmau) in the Sethian Reve-
lation of Adam. The disciples report a vision of the Jerusalem temple—or possibly a
visit to the temple—and Jesus uses the occasion to interpret the account of the
disciples allegorically (39.5-43.11). What the disciples have seen in Jerusalem is
interpreted as a foreshadowing of the emerging orthodox church, with its procla-
mation of the sacrificial death of Christ and its commitment to the celebration of
the eucharist and the practice of martyrdom, and the orthodox leaders are de-
picted in terms that are neither flattering nor politically correct. If Irenaeus lashes
out at the people behind the Gospel of Judas, they come back with equal hostility
against him and his friends.

Judas also has his own vision in the Gospel of Judas (44.15-46.4). He tells Jesus
that he has seen himself being persecuted by the other disciples—an allusion to
the increasingly negative place of Judas in much of early Christian tradition—
and he asks for the opportunity to be at home in an exalted mansion above. Jesus
responds:

5. On Barbelo, see the Secret Book of John and other Sethian tractates published in this volume as well as the
6. See the note to the translation. The Coptic reads nhrôt, which may be translated "as a child," but conceivably
it could be taken to mean "as an apparition," or it may have some other meaning. Cf. Kasser, Meyer, and Wunt,
No person of mortal birth is worthy
to go into the house you have seen:
that place is kept for the saints,
where sun and moon will not rule,
nor the day,
but they will stand there always
in the eternal realm with the holy angels. (45,14–24)

Yet Judas is the thirteenth—the “thirteenth daimon” (44,21)—and although he
will be opposed and even cursed, in the end (and in the Gospel of Judas) he will
be vindicated.

A central part of the discussion between Jesus and Judas involves Jesus revealing
to Judas, at length, the nature of the divine and the way in which the divine
extends itself through emanations and manifestations down to our world below
(47,1–55,20). The divine light from above shines down into this world, and the
transcendent deity—“the great invisible [Spirit]” (47,8–9), a well-known phrase
used among Sethians to depict the highest deity—comes to expression through
the Self-Generated (Autogenes) and a host of angels, luminaries, aeons, heavens,
firmaments, and even heavenly Adamas and, perhaps, Seth. The four unnamed
angels who come forth to serve as attendants for the Self-Generated (47,18–26) may
bring to mind the four luminaries of Sethian lore: Harmozel, Orioael, Daveithai,
and Eleleth. The massive assemblage of entities, termed the cosmos or universe,
is called “corruption” (50,13–14), and demiurgic powers named Nebro, Yaldabaoth,
and Saklas (or Sakla), familiar from other Sethian texts, set up a bureaucratic
structure and create this world and human beings in this world (50,11–53,7).

Much of this cosmological material in the Gospel of Judas recalls accounts, es-
pecially Sethian accounts, of the evolution, or devolution, of the divine. Close
parallels may be noted between the Gospel of Judas, the Secret Book of John, and
the Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit as well as Eugnostos the Blessed and the
Wisdom of Jesus Christ. Sophia, personified Wisdom, is not presented in this
cosmological revelation of Jesus, although she is referred to once earlier in the
tractate, in a rather fragmentary passage, as “corruptible Wisdom” (44,4). It is theo-
retically possible that she may be lurking in a lacuna in the revelation, but it may
be difficult to find room for her in the available gaps within the text, and there
may be no explicit fall of Sophia recounted in the Gospel of Judas. Further, ex-
cept for a single mention of Christ in the cosmological revelation (52,5–6), the

7. Or the “thirteenth spirit,” the “thirteenth demon.” Judas is the thirteenth in that he was excluded from the cir-
cle of the twelve disciples, and he is also connected with the thirteenth realm or aeon.
8. Here the phrase may also be read “a great invisible [Spirit].”
9. On these demiurgic powers and the interpretation of the story of creation in the book of Genesis, see the Secret
Book of John, the Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit, and other Sethian texts.
10. See the notes to the translation.
11. The text reads “[Se]th, who is called Christ” (ṣēθ peteṣaumou[te e]rof je pekha); although this reading of
the Coptic seems plausible, other readings may prove to be possible.
entire revelation (though placed on the lips of Jesus) is reflective of Hellenistic Jewish thought, and this section may come from a Sethian Jewish account of the transcendent nature of the divine and the origin of the universe. If this is the case, a Jewish mystical or Gnostic source may lie behind this section of the Gospel of Judas, and Jewish speculation may have been taken over and lightly Christianized as the teaching of Jesus in the Gospel of Judas in a way that is reminiscent of the Secret Book of John, which also seems to have been composed as a Jewish text and Christianized as the revelation of Jesus to John the son of Zebedee.  

Near the end of the Gospel of Judas, Jesus turns to Judas and says, “But you will exceed all of them. For you will sacrifice the man who bears me” (56.17–21). Here Jesus is indicating that Judas will do exactly what Jesus says he will do: the inner person of Jesus—the spiritual person, the true person—will be liberated from the fleshy body, and Judas will turn in the fleshy body of Jesus to the authorities to be crucified. Judas Iscariot, often demonized and marginalized in Christian tradition, is restored to a position at the side of Jesus as a loyal and insightful disciple in the Gospel of Judas, and here Judas is completely devoted to Jesus. Jesus goes on to remind Judas that he has now been fully informed about spiritual things, and he encourages Judas to look up to the heavenly cloud and the divine light and the stars. Throughout the text the role played by the stars seems to presuppose the influence of Platonic thinking upon the traditions within the text. We may think, for example, of the discussion in Plato’s Timaeus 41d–42b on the way in which the creator assigned each soul to a star. Near the conclusion of the Gospel of Judas, Jesus tells Judas, “The star that leads the way is your star” (57.19–20). Judas lifts up his eyes, gazes at the light, and enters the light, and from within the light a voice speaks out and Judas is enlightened. What the voice actually says, alas, is largely lost to the deterioration of the papyrus, but the scene presents what may be described as the transfiguration of Judas or Jesus.  

The Gospel of Judas concludes with the act of Judas handing Jesus over to the high priests and scholars. The text does not include a passion narrative or any account of the crucifixion of Jesus. The last words of the gospel read, “And Judas received some money and handed him over to them” (58.23–26). That, after all, is a primary message of the gospel. Judas, the disciple closest to Jesus does what Jesus declares he will do to the end.  

The text of the Gospel of Judas has also been interpreted in a dramatically different fashion. At an international colloquium on the Gospel of Judas held in Paris in October 2006, April DeConick and John Turner presented papers in which they suggested that Judas in this gospel may be taken as essentially a tragic figure. The key passage that is open to different understandings is the statement in which Jesus declares that Judas “will exceed all of them” (56.17–21). DeConick  


13. Or “For you will sacrifice the man who clothes me” (etphorei τύμνοι).
and Turner have proposed that this might mean that Judas will exceed all of those who sacrifice to the god of this world, Sakla, and who participate in the evil within this world, by actually being more evil than all of them. He, after all, will perform the act of betraying and sacrificing his master. According to this interpretation, the cloud of light that Judas may eventually enter is not the luminous cloud of the divine realm above but rather a lower cloud that is associated with the demiurge. Unlucky Judas, in this analysis of the Gospel of Judas, hears everything from Jesus but still ends up poorly. Whether such a reading of the Gospel of Judas leaves room for any sort of positive message in the gospel remains uncertain. In that understanding of the text, what is the gospel, or good news, of the Gospel of Judas?

In November 2006, at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., Ismo Dunderberg suggested a somewhat more nuanced understanding of the conclusion of the Gospel of Judas. In the gospel, after Jesus says to Judas, “You will sacrifice the man who bears me” (56.19–21), four statements, reminiscent of lines from the Psalms, are added, and these statements appear to reflect the strength of spirit that is necessary if Judas is to hand Jesus over to the authorities. In addition to these observations, it may also be possible to compare the varied ways that Judas is described in the Gospel of Judas with features of the portrayal of the Wisdom of the divine within this world according to the Pistis Sophia, the Books of Enoch, and Irenaeus of Lyon. In the Pistis Sophia, Wisdom, like Judas in the Gospel of Judas derives from the thirteenth aeon, is likened to a daimon, is oppressed in this world, and is destined to return to the thirteenth aeon.

The Gospel of Judas is a Sethian gospel preserved in a Coptic translation that may be dated with confidence to the late third or the early fourth century. Most of the Coptic text has been recovered, thanks to dedicated restoration and conservation efforts. Fragments of papyrus and one-half of a folio of the Gospel of Judas (pp. 41–42) may still be in the hands of collectors or institutions, although some of the text has clearly been lost forever. The work of the additional restoration of lacunae may well continue for some time to come. The Gospel of Judas was originally composed in Greek, and we may date the composition of the earlier Greek version of the Gospel of Judas to around the middle of the second century, before Irenaeus commented on the Gospel of Judas in about 180. This makes the Gospel of Judas an early text in the Sethian tradition and a key text for our interpretation of the Sethian school of thought. The place of composition is unknown.

The translation given here is somewhat provisional, and we should anticipate that additional restorations, reconstructions, and interpretations will be proposed as time passes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Gospel of Judas

Opening (33,1–6)

The secret revelatory discourse that Jesus spoke with Judas Iscariot in the course of a week, three days before his passion.

The Life of Jesus (33,6–21)

When he appeared on the earth, he performed signs and great wonders for the salvation of humankind. Some [walked] on the path of justice, but others stumbled in their mistakes, and so the twelve disciples were called. He began to discuss with them the mysteries that transcend the world and what will happen at the end. Many a time he does not appear as himself to his disciples, but you find him as a child among them.

Jesus Discusses the Prayer of Thanksgiving (33,22–34,18)

Now, one day he was with his disciples in Judea, and he happened upon them as they were assembled together, seated and practicing their piety. When he [drew] near to his disciples [34] as they were assembled together, seated and giving thanks over the bread, [he] laughed.

The disciples said to [him], “Master, why are you laughing at [our] prayer of thanksgiving? What is it we have done? This is what is proper.” He answered and said to them, “I’m not laughing at you. You aren’t doing this out of your own will, but because in this way your god [will be] praised.” They said, “Master, you . . . are the son of our god.

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Jesus said to them, “How is it that you know me? [I] tell you the truth,10 no generation will know me among the people who are with you.”

The Disciples Are Angry (34.18–35.21)

When his disciples heard this, [they] began getting angry and hostile and blaspheming against him in their minds.

Jesus recognized that they did not [understand, and he said] to them, “Why has your concern produced this hostility? Your god who is within you and [his powers]11 [35] have become angry within your souls.12 [Let] any of you who is a [strong enough] person bring forward the perfect human being and stand before my face.”

They all said, “We are strong.”

But none of their spirits dared to stand before [him], except Judas Iscariot. He was able to stand before him, yet he could not look him in the eye, but he turned his face away.13

Judas [said] to him, “I know who you are and from what place you have come. You have come from the immortal realm14 of Barbelo,15 and I am not worthy to pronounce the name of the one who has sent you.”16

Jesus Speaks Privately with Judas (35.21–36.10)

Jesus understood that Judas17 was contemplating the rest of what is lofty, and he said to him, “Move away from the others, and I shall explain to you the mysteries of the kingdom, not so that you can attain it, but you will go through a great deal of grief. [36] For somebody else will take your place, so that the twelve [disciples] may be complete once again with their god.”18

Judas said to him, “When will you explain these things to me? And [how]19 will the great day of light dawn for the . . . generation?”

But when he said these things, Jesus departed from him.

Jesus Appears to the Disciples Again (36.11–37.20)

The next day, in the morning, he [appeared] to his disciples.

They said to him, “Master, where did [you] go and what did you do when you departed from us?”

Jesus said to them, “I went to a different generation, one that is great and holy.”

His disciples said to him, “Lord,20 what is the great generation that is exalted over us and is holy, but is not present in these realms?”21

10. Or “Amen (hamēn) I say to you,” here and below.
11. The restoration is tentative; also possible is “[his servants].” 12. Lit., “along with your souls.” 13. Cf. Gospel of Thomas 46. 14. Aeon, here and below. 15. Barbelo is the divine mother and the first emanation of the divine in a number of Sethian texts, e.g. the Secret Book of John. The name Barbelo may derive from Hebrew, and it may mean “God in four”—that is, God as known through the tetragrammaton, the ineffable name of God, Yahweh. 16. Cf. Gospel of Thomas 13:4. 17. Lit., “he.” 18. This seems to be a reference to the appointment of Matthias to replace Judas in the circle of the disciples according to Acts 1:15–26. The reading “You can” remains tentative. 19. The restoration is tentative. Perhaps read “when.” 20. Or “Master” (Coptic pickup). 21. Or “aeons.”
When Jesus heard these things, he laughed and said to them, "Why are you reflecting in your minds about the generation that is powerful and holy? [37]

[I] tell you the truth, [22] no one born [of] this realm [23] will behold that [generation], no angelic host of the stars [24] will rule over that generation, no human of mortal birth will be able to accompany it, because that generation is not from . . . that has come to be . . . The generation of people among [you] is from the generation of humanity . . . power, which . . . powers . . . [through] which you rule."

When [his] disciples heard these things, each one was troubled in spirit. They were speechless.

Jesus Appears Yet Again (37,20–26)

On another day Jesus approached [them]. They said to [him], "Master, we have had a [vision] of you, for we have seen [dreams] of great power [25] last night."

[He said], "Why have [you] . . . and hidden yourselves away?" [26] [38]

The Disciples Behold the Temple (38,1–39,5)

They [said], "We have] seen a huge [house [27] in which there was a] great altar, and twelve men—they were priests, we would say—and a name. [28] A crowd was in attendance at that altar, [29] [until] the priests [were done presenting] the offerings. We [also] were in attendance."

[Jesus said], "What kind of people are [the priests]?"

They [said], "Some abstain [30] for] two weeks. [Some] sacrifice their own children, others their wives, in praise and humility with one another. Some have sex with men. Some perform acts of [murder]. Some commit all sorts of sins and lawless deeds. And the men who stand [before] the altar call upon your [name], [39] and through all the actions of their deficiency, [31] that [altar] becomes full." [32]

After they said these things, they became silent, since they were upset.

22. Amen. 23. Aeon. 24. The stars are discussed at length later in the Gospel of Judas. 25. Lit., "great [dreams]." 26. This fragmentary section may conceivably be restored to refer to premonitions the disciples experience of the arrest of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane and what happens thereafter, when the disciples run for their lives. 27. Or "building." The reference is to the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. 28. Probably thought to be the name of either God or Jesus. 29. The text inadvertently repeats the phrase "at the altar" (ditography). 30. Or "fast." The restoration is tentative; but see Gospel of Judas 40. 31. Or "their deficient actions," "their faulty actions," "their wrong actions"—the Coptic reads 60t, which functions as a technical term for the deficiency of light in many Gnostic texts. The word 60t may also be translated "sacrifice." 32. If "deficiency" is the preferred translation of 60t, there may be a contrast here between fullness and deficiency.
Jesus Offers an Allegorical Interpretation of the Temple
(39.5–43.11)

Jesus said to them, "Why are you upset? I tell you the truth,33 all the priests who stand at that altar call upon my name. I tell you again, my name has been written on the... of the generations of the stars through the generations of people. They have planted trees in my name, without fruit, in a shameful way."34

Jesus said to them, "You are the ones presenting the offerings at the altar you have seen. That is the god you serve, and you are the twelve men you have seen. And the cattle brought in are the offerings you have seen—they are the multitude you lead astray [40] before that altar. [The ruler of this world]35 will stand and use my name in this manner, and generations of pious people will cling to him. After him another man will come forward from [those who are immoral],36 and another [will] come from the child-killers, and another from those who have sex with men, and those who abstain,37 and the rest of those who are impure and lawless and prone to error, as well as those who say, 'We are like angels'; they are the stars that bring everything to its end. For to the generations of people it has been said, 'Look, God has received your offering from the hands of the priests,'38 that is, a minister of error. But it is the Lord who commands who is the Lord of the All.39 On the last day they will be put to shame." [41]

Jesus said to them, "Stop [sacrificing]... that you have... on the altar, since they are over your stars and your angels and they have already come to their end there. So let them be...40 before you, and let them go...41 generations... A baker cannot feed all of creation [42] that is under [heaven]."

And [when the disciples heard these things], they said to [him], "Lord, help us, save us."

Jesus said to them, "Stop disputing with me. Each of you has your own star,42 and everyone...43 [43] in... that has not come... [spring of water] for the tree... of this realm...44 after a while... but that one45 has come to provide water for46 the paradise of God, and the [race]47 that will endure, because [that one] will not defile the [way of life of] that generation, but... from eternity to eternity."

Jesus and Judas Discuss the Generations of People
(43.11–44.14)

Judas said to [him, "Rabbi"],48 what fruit is it that this generation produces?"

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33. Amen. 34. On trees and fruit, cf. also Gospel of Judas 43; Revelation of Adam 76; 85. 35. The restoration is tentative; also possible is "[The... overseer (or bishop)]" or "[The... minister (or deacon)]." 36. Or "[those who fornicate]." 37. Or "fast." Cf. Gospel of Judas 38. 38. Or "a priest." 39. Or "the universe." 40. Possibly restore to read "[ensnared]." "[quarreling]." "[in a struggle]." "[deficient]." "[diminished]." or the like. 41. About fifteen lines missing. 42. This teaching about people and the stars assigned to them seems to derive from Plato; cf. Timaeus 41d–42b. On Judas's star, cf. Gospel of Judas 57. 43. About seventeen lines missing. 44. Aeon. 45. Lit., "he" or "it." The antecedent of the pronoun is unclear. 46. Or, perhaps, "to drink of." 47. Or "[generation]." 48. Coptic [rabbi], which is restored with some confidence because of the other instances of the word "rabbi" in Codex Tchacos. In the Gospel of Judas, the usual word translated "master" as a title for Jesus is Coptic sah.
Jesus said, "The souls of all generations of people will die. When these people, however, bring the time of the kingdom to completion and the spirit parts from them, their bodies will die, but their souls will be alive and will be taken up."

Judas said, "And what will the rest of the generations of people do?"

Jesus said, "Nobody can [44] sow seed on [rock] and harvest its produce. This is also how the [defiled] race and corruptible Wisdom... the hand that created mortal people, and their souls ascend to the eternal realms on high. I tell you the [truth, there is no authority] or angel [or] power that will be able to behold those [realms] that [this great], holy generation [will behold]."

After Jesus said these things, he went off.

**Jesus and Judas Discuss a Vision**

(44,15–46,4)

Judas said, "Master, just as you have listened to all of them, now also listen to me. For I have seen a powerful vision."

Jesus heard this and laughed, and he said to him, "O thirteenth daimon, why are you so excited? Speak your mind, then, and I’ll hear you out."

Judas said to him, "I have seen myself in the vision as the twelve disciples were stoning me and [45] treating [me harshly]. And I also came to the place that... after you. I saw [a house]... and my eyes could not [grasp] its dimensions. Important people moved around it. That house <had> a thatched roof, and within the house there was [a crowd]..... "Master, let me also come in with these people."

[Jesus] answered and said, "Your star has deceived you, Judas." Further:

No person of mortal birth is worthy to go into the house you have seen: that place is kept for the saints, where sun and moon will not rule, nor the day, but they will stand there always in the eternal realm with the holy angels.

"Look, I have told you the mysteries of the kingdom [46] and I have taught you the error of the stars, and... send... on the twelve realms."

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Judas Asks About His Own Fate (46,5–47,1)

Judas said, "Master, is it possible that my seed is subject to the rulers?" 60

Jesus answered and said to him, "Come, that I may... [you, that]... 61 but you will go through a great deal of grief when you see the kingdom and its entire generation."

When Judas heard these things, he said to him, "What advantage is there for me, 62 since you have set me apart from 63 that generation?"

Jesus answered and said, "You will be the thirteenth, and you will be cursed by the other generations, but eventually you will rule 64 over them. In the last days they will... 65 up [47] to the holy [generation]."

Jesus Teaches Judas About the Divine and the Universe  
(47,1–48,21)

Jesus said, "[Come], that I may teach you about the things... [that] no person will see. 66 For there is a great and infinite realm, 67 whose dimensions no angelic generation could see, [in] which is the 68 great invisible [Spirit], 69

which no eye of angel has seen,
no thought of the mind has grasped,
nor was it called by a name. 70

"And a cloud of light appeared in that place. And he 71 said, 'Let an angel come into existence as my attendant.' 72

"And a great angel, the Self-Generated, God of light, came from the cloud. Four more angels came into existence because of him, from another cloud, and they served as attendants for the angelic Self-Generated. And the Self-Generated said, [48] 'Let [Adamas] come into existence,' and [the emanation] came to be. And he [created] the first luminary to rule over him. And he said, 'Let angels come into existence, for adoration [of him],' and ten thousands without number came to be. And he said, '[Let] an eternal being 73 of light come into existence,' and he came to be. He established the second luminary [to] rule over him, with ten thousands of angels without number, for adoration. This is how he created the rest of the eternal beings 74 of light, and he made them rule over them. And he created for them ten thousands of angels without number, for assistance.

60. Archons. 61. A line and a half missing. 62. Lit., "What is the advantage that I have received?" 63. Or "for." 64. Lit., "you will come to rule." 65. This remains a difficult passage, and it may be possible to understand that Jesus is telling Judas that the others will try to do something to him so that—as the text seems to say—"you may not ascend up to the holy [generation]." 66. The reading is uncertain. Perhaps read "has seen?" 67. Aeon, here and below. 68. Or "a." 69. The highest expression of the divine is frequently called the Great Invisible Spirit in Sethian texts. 70. Cf. 1 Corinthians 2:9; Gospel of Thomas 17; Prayer of the Apostle Paul A. 71. Or "it"—i.e., the Spirit. 72. Or "assistant," "helper," here and below. 73. Aeon. 74. Aeon.
Adamas, Luminaries, Heavens, Firmaments (48.21–50.11)

"Adamas was in the first cloud of light, which no angel could see among all those who are called ‘God.’ And he [49] . . . that . . . [after] the image . . . and after the likeness of [this] angel, he revealed the incorruptible [generation] of Seth to the twelve [luminaries], twenty-four . . . . He revealed seventy-two luminaries in the incorruptible generation, by the will of the Spirit. The seventy-two luminaries in turn revealed three hundred sixty luminaries in the incorruptible generation, by the will of the Spirit, so that their number would be five for each.

Their father consists of the twelve eternal beings75 of the twelve luminaries, and for each eternal being there are six heavens, so that there are seventy-two heavens for the seventy-two luminaries, and for each [50] [of them five] firmaments, [in order that there might be] three hundred sixty [firmaments]. They were given authority and a [great] angelic host [without number], for honor and adoration, [and in addition] virgin spirits [as well],76 for honor and [adoration] of all the eternal beings77 and the heavens and their firmaments.78

Cosmos, Chaos, Underworld (50.11–51.23)

"Now, the multitude of those immortal beings is called ‘cosmos,’ that is, corruption, through the Father and the seventy-two luminaries with the Self-Generated and his seventy-two eternal beings.79 There80 the first human appeared, with his incorruptible powers. The eternal being81 that appeared with his generation, the one in whom are the cloud of knowledge82 and the angel, is called [51] E]83 . . . realm . . .

"After these things . . . said, ‘Let twelve angels come into existence [to] rule over chaos and the [underworld].’ And look, from the cloud an [angel] appeared, whose face blazed with fire84 and whose countenance was fouled with blood.85 His name was Nebro,86 which is interpreted as ‘rebel,’ but others name him Yaldabaoth. And another angel, Sakla,87 also came from the cloud. So Nebro created six angels, with Sakla, to be attendants, and these produced twelve angels in the heavens, and each one received a share in the heavens.88

Rulers and Angels (51.23–52.14)

"And the twelve rulers89 talked to the twelve angels: ‘Let each of you [52] . . . and let them . . . generation . . . . . .90 [five] angels.’

The first is [Se]th, who is called Christ.
The [second] is Harmathoth, who is . . .
The [third] is Galila.
The fourth is Yobel.
The fifth is Adonaios.

These are the five who ruled over the underworld, and first over chaos.91

The Creation of Humanity (52.14–53.7)

"Then Sakla said to his angels, 'Let's create a human being after the likeness and after the image.'92 They formed Adam and his partner Eve, who in the cloud is called Zoe. For all the generations seek him under this name, but each of them calls her with their own names. Now, Sakla93 did not [55] [command] . . . except . . . the generations . . . this . . . And the [ruler]94 said to him, 'Your life is extended for a time, along with your children.'"

Jesus and Judas Discuss the Destiny of Adam and Humanity (53.8–54. top)

Judas said to Jesus, "[What] advantage is there for a human being to live?"

Jesus said, "Why are you concerned about this, that Adam, along with his generation, has received the length of his life with a designated period of time,95 in the place where he has received his kingdom, with a designated period of time with his ruler?"96

Judas said to Jesus, "Does the human spirit die?"

Jesus said, "This is the reason why God commanded Michael to give the spirits of people to them on loan, for adoration, but the Great One commanded Gabriel to give spirits to the great generation without a king— the spirit and the soul. Therefore, the [rest] of the souls [54] . . . .98

Jesus Discusses the Destruction of the Wicked with Judas and Others (54, top–55,20)

". . . light . . . .99 around . . . spirit within you,100 [which] you have made to dwell in this [flesh] among the generations of angels. But God caused knowledge101 to

91 Cf. Secret Book of John II, 10–11; Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit III,57–58. In the list in the Gospel of Judas, the second angelic power is Harmathoth; in the Secret Book of John and the Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit, the first two are Athoth and Harmas. Further, the apparent correlation of Seth and Christ as the first angelic power is unusual in the context of other Sethian texts.92 Cf. Genesis 1:26–28.93 Here the name is spelled "Sakla."94 Archon, though the restoration is tentative.95 Here and below this phrase reads, lit., "in a number." Could the first instance of this phrase be a case of dittography?96 The meaning of this sentence is uncertain.97 Or, "the kingless generation," "the generation with no ruler over it"—that is, the seed or offspring of Seth.98 One line missing.99 About two lines missing.100 Plural.101 Gnosis.
be [granted] to Adam and those who are with him, so that the kings of chaos and the underworld might not dominate them.”

Judas said to Jesus, “Then what will those generations do?”

Jesus said, “I tell you [102] the truth, [103] the stars above all bring matters to their end. When Sakla completes his time designated for him, their first star will shine with the generations, and they will bring to completion what has been mentioned. Then they will do immoral things [104] in my name and slay their children, [55] and they will . . . and . . . . [105] [in] my name, and [106] your star will rule over the [thir]teenth eternal realm.” [107]

And afterward Jesus [laughed].

[Judas said], “Master, [why are you laughing at us]?”

[Jesus] answered [and said], “I’m not laughing [at you] but rather at the error of the stars, because these six stars wander around with these five warriors, and all of them will be destroyed, with their creatures.” [108]

Jesus Speaks of the Baptized, and of Judas’s Act of Turning Him In (55,21–57,20)

Judas said to Jesus, “Those who have been baptized in your name, then, what will they do?”


“But you will exceed all of them. [113] For you will sacrifice the man who bears me.” [114]

Already your horn has been lifted up, and your anger has flared up, and your star has burned brightly, [115] and your heart [116] has [grown strong], [117] [57]

“[I tell you] the truth, [118] your last [days] . . . become . . . . [119] grieve . . . . [120] the ruler, [121] since he will be overthrown. And then the image of the great generation of Adam will be magnified, for before the heaven, the earth, and the angels, that generation from the eternal realms [122] exists.

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102. Plural. 103. Here the text reads αἰθής rather than ἁμέν. 104. Or “fornicate.” 105. About six and a half lines missing. Cf. Gospel of Judas 38, 40. 106. Here the word “and” may be repeated (a case of dittoigraphy). 107. Aeon. 108. The wandering stars are usually understood to be the planets. Here the six wandering stars are probably the five known planets (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn) and the moon. 109. Aïthēs. 110. About nine lines missing. 111. Aïthēs. 112. Three lines missing. 113. Probably the other disciples. 114. Or “that clothes me” (Coptic οπφορι τομοι). Judas will help Jesus to rid himself of the fleshly body so that the true spiritual person within may be liberated. 115. Or “passed by,” “grown dim.” The meaning is uncertain. 116. Or “mind.” 117. These lines recall passages from the Psalms. 118. Aïthēs. 119. About two and a half lines missing. 120. About two lines missing. 121. Archon. 122. Aeons.
“Look, you have been informed of everything. Lift up your eyes and behold the cloud and the light that is within it and the stars that are circling it. And the star that leads the way is your star.”

Transfiguration (57:21–58:9?)

Judas lifted up his eyes and beheld the cloud of light, and he entered it. Those who were standing on the ground heard a voice coming from the cloud and saying, [58] . . . great generation . . . image . . . and . . . .

Conclusion: Judas Turns Jesus In (58:9?–29)

. . . [Now], their high priests murmured because [he] had stepped into the guest room for his prayer. But some scholars were there watching closely in order to lay hold of him during the prayer, for they were afraid of the people, since he was regarded by them all as a prophet.

And they came over to Judas and said to him, “What are you doing in this place? You are Jesus’s disciple.”

He answered them in accordance with their wish.

And Judas received some money and handed him over to them.

The Gospel of Judas

123. Here Professors Sasagu Arai and Gesine Schenke Robinson suggest that “he” may refer not to Judas, but to Jesus (private communication). If that is the case, the transfiguration that takes place in the Gospel of Judas is that of Jesus, and it may be understood in the text that the spiritual person of Jesus returns through the transfiguration to the realm above and his fleshly body that is left behind in this world below is turned over to the authorities to be crucified.