

THE GOSPEL OF PETER

The four gospels are the principal sources for those in the Church and out who wish to research the life of Jesus. There are other gospels which are widely regarded as inferior sources or even worse pure fantasy.

One of those gospels is the Gospel of Peter which dates from the Second Century (page 17, The Newly Recovered Gospel of St Peter). The Bishop of Antioch wrote a bit about it in 180 AD (page 390, The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail). The Gospel betrays a fragmented knowledge of the New Testament Gospels which shows that even when the Church began to issue the historical parts of the gospels she still did a lot of censoring.

One of the thieves nailed with Jesus stands up for him and the Gospel says, "And having become irritated at him, they ordered that there be no leg-breaking, so that he might die tormented." The gospels say that Jesus' alone didn't have the legs broken and that was because he died before they had a chance. Perhaps the truth was Jesus was not broken like this so that he might die exceptionally badly as an example to anybody else willing to commit the capital crime of claiming to be king of the Jews. Or did they put the wrong body in the tomb? If Jesus had no broken legs and the buried man did???????

The author made the mistake of saying that Joseph asked for Jesus' body to bury him even before Jesus was crowned with thorns contradicting Mark. The author has the absurdity of Joseph asking Pilate and Pilate asking Herod for permission to release the body. The gospel says that Jesus was totally silent on the cross and seemed to be in no pain. And Jesus yelled that his power had deserted him and then died. And the Jews were said to have allowed Joseph to take his dead body and he washed him (proving that the shroud of Turin was not known). The gospel says that Jesus was buried in Joseph's Garden and that the Jews repented their sin in killing Jesus. The elders of the Jews allegedly went to Pilate for guards at the tomb and they rolled a huge stone across the door of the tomb and on Sunday morning they saw the tomb open by itself after two glowing men came down from Heaven and they saw three men leaving the tomb and the middle man was taller than the other two flanking him and a talking cross followed behind.

They went off to Pilate who told them to say nothing. The rest is about Magdalene and other women finding the empty tomb but no visions of Jesus are mentioned and the rest of the text is lost. It makes you wonder why it is cut off virtually where Mark's Gospel is. Neither gospel has any candidate that can suit as the missing material.

Strangely, the women are described as terrified of being seen. They feared the Jews. Did they not know there were supposed to be guards there? If the tomb was near the city as the New Testament says they had to be seen. If they were that scared then how did their story get out? The story about Jesus rising would only have appealed to the gullible if only bits of the tale were being told.

The Gospel of Peter is like the Gospel of Mark in the sense that there is nothing about Jesus appearing to his friends. The women run away. The disciples go back to their fishing career. The real empty tomb tale in Peter is when the tomb is seen opening and it is vacated then. The women coming and finding the tomb empty is not another empty tomb narrative. It is only a discovery.

It ends with, "Now it was the final day of the Unleavened Bread; and many went out returning to their home since the feast was over. But we twelve disciples of the Lord were weeping and sorrowful; and each one, sorrowful because of what had come to pass, departed to his home. But I, Simon Peter, and my brother Andrew, having taken our nets, went off to the sea. And there was with us Levi of Alphaeus whom the Lord ..."

It is interesting that it virtually cuts off the same way as Mark does. Mark has the women saying nothing and this expands on that. The apostles knew nothing and went back to their careers.

The angel told the women, " For he is risen and gone away to there whence he was sent." So Jesus has returned to Heaven. This indicates he was not going to appear for he had gone home. The context supports that interpretation.

The Peter gospel contradicts the four in several matters. The four deny that Jesus was silent on the cross or that he said he lost his power or that he was seen rising.

The Peter gospel incorporates ancient traditions and some contemporary ones. The primitive Church would have believed that Jesus lost his power for it was confused about the unexpected death. The silence on the cross does not mean that Jesus felt no pain but matches the earliest tradition reflected in Mark that Jesus said nothing on the cross. Later writers would have preferred Jesus to say something.

Two men come down from Heaven and enter the tomb and come out supporting an unnamed person who we may assume was Jesus. Why did Jesus need help?

Jesus being seen rising according to the Peter account was a new idea for after the resurrection story would be well-known people would want to know if it was seen happening and would not be content if there were no witnesses. It arose after the four gospels were written for even they did not go that far. Fables get more bizarre in the telling. There was no reason for the author to contradict any New Testament gospel. He wanted it to match them in popularity and so he would have expanded one of them with his own vision.

It is interesting that the closeness of Pilate and Joseph and Joseph owning the crucifixion site mentioned in the gospel would if true, mean that a hoax was likely.

It is interesting that the Peter gospel says that the soldiers said nothing about what happened at the tomb and became sincere believers which would be an earlier tradition than Matthew's that they said that the disciples stole the body because they were bribed to say it. The bribe is not mentioned in Peter. Peter's tradition is earlier than the Matthew one because it is simpler and more believable for saying nothing does no harm where lies or truth would.

The Gospel of Peter according to Ehrman's Lost Christianities "arguably at least as popular as one of the Gospels that did make it into the New Testament, the Gospel of Mark. It is worth observing that the Gospel of Mark itself is hardly ever cited in the early centuries of Christianity, even in the writings of the proto-orthodox." And "the archaeological finds of early Christian manuscripts bear out the conclusion that the Gospel of Mark was not widely read."

THE TEXT OF THE GOSPEL TRANSLATED BY RAYMOND BROWN

[1] But of the Jews none washed his hands, neither Herod nor one of his judges. And since they did not desire to wash, Pilate stood up. [2] And then Herod the king orders the Lord to be taken away, having said to them, 'What I ordered you to do, do.'

[3] But Joseph, the friend of Pilate and of the Lord, had been standing there; and knowing they were about to crucify him, he came before Pilate and requested the body of the Lord for burial. [4] And Pilate, having sent to Herod, requested his body. [5] And Herod said: 'Brother Pilate, even if no one had requested him, we would have buried him, since indeed Sabbath is dawning. For in the Law it has been written: The sun is not to set on one put to death.'

And he gave him over to the people before the first day of their feast of the Unleavened Bread. [6] But having taken the Lord, running, they were pushing him and saying, 'Let us drag along the Son of God now that we have power over him.' [7] And they clothed him with purple and sat him on a chair of judgment, saying: 'Judge justly, King of Israel.' [8] And a certain one of them, having brought a thorny crown, put it on the head of the Lord. [9] And others who were standing there were spitting in his face, and others slapped his cheeks. Others were jabbing him with a reed; and some scourged him, saying, 'With such honor let us honor the Son of God.'

[10] And they brought two wrongdoers and crucified the Lord in the middle of them. But he was silent as having no pain.

[11] And when they had set the cross upright, they inscribed that THIS IS THE KING OF ISRAEL. [12] And having put his garments before him, they divided them up and threw as a gamble for them. [13] But a certain one of those wrongdoers reviled them, saying: 'We have been made suffer thus because of the wrong that we have done; but this one, having become Savior of men, what injustice had he done to you?' [14] And having become irritated at him, they ordered that there be no leg-breaking, so that he might die tormented.

[15] But it was midday, and darkness held fast all Judea; and they were distressed and anxious lest the sun had set, since he was still living. [For] it is written for them: Let not the sun set on one put to death. [16] And someone of them said: 'Give him to drink gall with vinegary wine.' And having made a mixture, they gave to drink. [17] And they fulfilled all things and completed the sins on their own head. [18] But many went around with lamps, thinking that it was night, and they fell. [19] And the Lord screamed out, saying: 'My power, O power, you have forsaken me.' And having said this, he was taken up.

[20] And at the same hour the veil of the Jerusalem sanctuary was torn into two. [21] And they drew out the nails from the hands of the Lord and placed him on the earth; and all the earth was shaken, and a great fear came about. [22] Then the sun shone, and it was found to be the ninth hour. [23] And the Jews rejoiced and gave his body to Joseph that he might bury it, since he was one who had seen the many good things he did. [24] And having taken the Lord, he washed and tied him with a linen cloth and brought him into his own sepulcher, called the Garden of Joseph.

[25] Then the Jews and the elders and the priests, having come to know how much wrong they had done themselves, began to beat themselves and say: 'Woe to our sins. The judgment has approached and the end of Jerusalem.' [26] But I with the companions was sorrowful; and having been wounded in spirit, we were in hiding, for we were sought after by them as

wrongdoers and as wishing to set fire to the sanctuary. [27] In addition to all these things we were fasting; and we were sitting mourning and weeping night and day until the Sabbath.

[28] But the scribes and Pharisees and elders, having gathered together with one another, having heard that all the people were murmuring and beating their breasts, saying that 'If at his death these very great signs happened, behold how just he was,' [29] feared (especially the elders) and came before Pilate, begging him and saying, [30] 'Give over soldiers to us in order that we may safeguard his burial place for three days, lest, having come, his disciples steal him, and the people accept that he is risen from the death, and they do us wrong.' [31] But Pilate gave over to them Petronius the centurion with soldiers to safeguard the sepulcher. And with these the elders and scribes came to the burial place. [32] And having rolled a large stone, all who were there, together with the centurion and the soldiers, placed it against the door of the burial place.

[33] And they marked it with seven wax seals; and having pitched a tent there, they safeguarded it. [34] But early when the Sabbath was dawning, a crowd came from Jerusalem and the surrounding area in order that they might see the sealed tomb.

[35] But in the night in which the Lord's day dawned, when the soldiers were safeguarding it two by two in every watch, there was a loud voice in heaven; [36] and they saw that the heavens were opened and that two males who had much radiance had come down from there and come near the sepulcher. [37] But that stone which had been thrust against the door, having rolled by itself, went a distance off the side; and the sepulcher opened, and both the young men entered. [38] And so those soldiers, having seen, awakened the centurion and the elders (for they too were present, safeguarding). [39] And while they were relating what they had seen, again they see three males who have come out from the sepulcher, with the two supporting the other one, and a cross following them, [40] and the head of the two reaching unto heaven, but that of the one being led out by a hand by them going beyond the heavens. [41] And they were hearing a voice from the heavens saying, 'Have you made proclamation to the fallen-asleep?' [42] And an obeisance was heard from the cross, 'Yes.' [43]

And so those people were seeking a common perspective to go off and make these things clear to Pilate; [44] and while they were still considering it through, there appear again the opened heavens and a certain man having come down and entered into the burial place. [45] Having seen these things, those around the centurion hastened at night before Pilate (having left the sepulcher which they were safeguarding) and described all the things that they indeed had seen, agonizing greatly and saying: 'Truly he was God's Son.'

[46] In answer Pilate said: 'I am clean of the blood of the Son of God, but it was to you that this seemed [the thing to do].'

[47] Then all, having come forward, were begging and exhorting him to command the centurion and the soldiers to say to no one what they had seen.

[48] 'For,' they said, 'it is better for us to owe the debt of the greatest sin in the sight of God than to fall into the hands of the Jewish people and be stoned.' [49] And so Pilate ordered the centurion and the soldiers to say nothing.

[50] Now at the dawn of the Lord's Day Mary Magdalene, a female disciple of the Lord (who, afraid because of the Jews since they were inflamed with anger, had not done at the tomb of the Lord what women were accustomed to do for the dead beloved by them), [51] having taken with her women friends, came to the tomb where he had been placed. [52] And they were afraid lest the Jews should see them and were saying, 'If indeed on that day on which he was crucified we could not weep and beat ourselves, yet now at his tomb we may do these things. [53] But who will roll away for us even the stone placed against the door of the tomb in order that, having entered, we may sit beside him and do the expected things? [54] For the stone was large, and we were afraid lest anyone see us. And if we are unable, let us throw against the door what we bring in memory of him; let us weep and beat ourselves until we come to our homes.'

[55] And having gone off, they found the sepulcher opened. And having come forward, they bent down there and saw there a certain young man seated in the middle of the sepulcher, comely and clothed with a splendid robe, who said to them: [56] 'Why have you come? Whom do you seek? Not that one who was crucified? He is risen and gone away. But if you do not believe, bend down and see the place where he lay, because he is not here. For he is risen and gone away to there whence he was sent.' [57] Then the women fled frightened.

[58] Now it was the final day of the Unleavened Bread; and many went out returning to their home since the feast was over. [59] But we twelve disciples of the Lord were weeping and sorrowful; and each one, sorrowful because of what had come to pass, departed to his home. [60] But I, Simon Peter, and my brother Andrew, having taken our nets, went off to the sea. And there was with us Levi of Alphaeus whom the Lord ...