Acts of Pilate: First Greek Form

New Testament apocrypha (2nd–7th century)

SermonIndex.net / Church Fathers

Contents

Prologue **2**

Chapter 1 **3**

Chapter 2 **5**

Chapter 3 **7**

Chapter 4 **8**

Chapter 5 **9**

Chapter 6 **10**

Chapter 7 **11**

Chapter 8 **12**

Chapter 9 **13**

Chapter 10 **15**

Chapter 11 **16**

Chapter 12 **17**

Chapter 13 **19**

Chapter 14 **20**

Chapter 15 **22**

Chapter 16 **25**

Authorship. These books were written in the names of apostles and others long after their time. They are not scripture, and what they tell is legend, not history. They are kept here as ancient writings that show what some early Christians read and believed.

Prologue

The Gospel of Nicodemus. Part I.—The Acts of Pilate. First Greek Form. Memorials of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Done in the Time of Pontius Pilate. Prologue.—I Ananias, of the prætor's body-guard, being learned in the law, knowing our Lord Jesus Christ from the Holy Scriptures, coming to Him by faith, and counted worthy of the holy baptism, searching also the memorials written at that time of what was done in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ, which the Jews had laid up in the time of Pontius Pilate, found these memorials written in Hebrew, and by the favour of God have translated them into Greek for the information of all who call upon the name of our Master Jesus Christ, in the seventeenth year of the reign of our Lord Flavius Theodosius, and the sixth of Flavius Valentinianus, in the ninth indiction. All ye, therefore, who read and transfer into other books, remember me, and pray for me, that God may be merciful to me, and pardon my sins which I have sinned against Him.

Peace be to those who read, and to those who hear and to their households. Amen. In the fifteenth year of the government of Tiberius Cæsar, emperor of the Romans, and Herod being king of Galilee, in the nineteenth year of his rule, on the eighth day before the Kalends of April, which is the twenty-fifth of March, in the consulship of Rufus and Rubellio, in the fourth year of the two hundred and second Olympiad, Joseph Caiaphas being high priest of the Jews. The account that Nicodemus wrote in Hebrew, after the cross and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour God, and left to those that came after him, is as follows:—

Chapter 1

Chapter 1. Having called a council, the high priests and scribes Annas and Caiaphas and Semes and Dathaes, and Gamaliel, Judas, Levi and Nephthalim, Alexander and Jaïrus, and the rest of the Jews, came to Pilate accusing Jesus about many things, saying: We know this man to be the son of Joseph the carpenter, born of Mary; and he says that he is the Son of God, and a king; moreover, he profanes the Sabbath, and wishes to do away with the law of our fathers. Pilate says: And what are the things which he does, to show that he wishes to do away with it? The Jews say: We have a law not to cure any one on the Sabbath; but this man has on the Sabbath cured the lame and the crooked, the withered and the blind and the paralytic, the dumb and the demoniac, by evil practices. Pilate says to them: What evil practices? They say to him: He is a magician, and by Beelzebul prince of the demons he casts out the demons, and all are subject to him. Pilate says to them: This is not casting out the demons by an unclean spirit, but by the god Æsculapius.

The Jews say to Pilate: we entreat your highness that he stand at thy tribunal, and be heard. And Pilate having called them, says: Tell me how I, being a procurator, can try a king? They say to him: We do not say that he is a king, but he himself says that he is. And Pilate having called the runner, says to him: Let Jesus be brought in with respect. And the runner going out, and recognising Him, adored Him, and took his cloak into his hand, and spread it on the ground, and says to him: My lord, walk on this, and come in, for the procurator calls thee. And the Jews seeing what the runner had done, cried out against Pilate, saying: Why hast thou ordered him to come in by a runner, and not by a crier? for assuredly the runner, when he saw him, adored him, and spread his doublet on the ground, and made him walk like a king.

And Pilate having called the runner, says to him: Why hast thou done this, and spread out thy cloak upon the earth, and made Jesus walk upon it? The runner says to him: My lord procurator, when thou didst send me to Jerusalem to Alexander, I saw him sitting upon an ass, and the sons of the Hebrews held branches in their hands, and shouted; and other spread their clothes under him saying, Save now, thou who art in the highest: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. The Jews cry out, and say to the runner: The sons of the Hebrews shouted in Hebrew; whence then hast thou the Greek? The runner says to them: I asked one of the Jews, and said, What is it they are shouting in Hebrew? And

he interpreted it for me. Pilate says to them: And what did they shout in Hebrew? The Jews say to him: Hosanna membrome Baruchamma Adonaï. Pilate says to them: And this hosanna, etc., how is it interpreted? The Jews say to him: Save now in the highest; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Pilate says to them: If you bear witness to the words spoken by the children, in what has the runner done wrong? And they were silent. And the procurator says to the runner: Go out, and bring him in what way thou wilt. And the runner going out, did in the same manner as before, and says to Jesus: My lord, come in; the procurator calleth thee.

And Jesus going in, and the standard-bearers holding their standards, the tops of the standards were bent down, and adored Jesus. And the Jews seeing the bearing of the standards, how they were bent down and adored Jesus, cried out vehemently against the standard-bearers. And Pilate says to the Jews: Do you not wonder how the tops of the standards were bent down, and adored Jesus? The Jews say to Pilate: We saw how the standard-bearers bent them down, and adored him. And the procurator having called the standard-bearers, says to them: Why have you done this? They say to Pilate: We are Greeks and temple-slaves, and how could we adore him? and assuredly, as we were holding them up, the tops bent down of their own accord, and adored him.

Pilate says to the rulers of the synagogue and the elders of the people: Do you choose for yourselves men strong and powerful, and let them hold up the standards, and let us see whether they will bend down with them. And the elders of the Jews picked out twelve men powerful and strong, and made them hold up the standards six by six; and they were placed in front of the procurator's tribunal. And Pilate says to the runner: Take him outside of the prætorium, and bring him in again in whatever way may please thee. And Jesus and the runner went out of the prætorium. And Pilate, summoning those who had formerly held up the standards, says to them: I have sworn by the health of Cæsar, that if the standards do not bend down when Jesus comes in, I will cut off your heads. And the procurator ordered Jesus to come in the second time. And the runner did in the same manner as before, and made many entreaties to Jesus to walk on his cloak. And He walked on it, and went in. And as He went in, the standards were again bent down, and adored Jesus.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2. And Pilate seeing this, was afraid, and sought to go away from the tribunal; but when he was still thinking of going away, his wife sent to him, saying: Have nothing to do with this just man, for many things have I suffered on his account this night. And Pilate, summoning the Jews, says to them: You know that my wife is a worshipper of God, and prefers to adhere to the Jewish religion along with you. They say to him: Yes; we know. Pilate says to them: Behold, my wife has sent to me, saying, Have nothing to do with this just man, for many things have I suffered on account of him this night. And the Jews answering, say unto Pilate: Did we not tell thee that he was a sorcerer? behold, he has sent a dream to thy wife. And Pilate, having summoned Jesus, says to Him: What do these witness against thee? Sayest thou nothing? And Jesus said: Unless they had the power, they would say nothing; for every one has the power of his own mouth to speak both good and evil. They shall see to it.

And the elders of the Jews answered, and said to Jesus: What shall we see? first, that thou wast born of fornication; secondly, that thy birth in Bethlehem was the cause of the murder of the infants; thirdly, that thy father Joseph and thy mother Mary fled into Egypt because they had no confidence in the people. Some of the bystanders, pious men of the Jews, say: we deny that he was born of fornication; for we know that Joseph espoused Mary, and he was not born of fornication. Pilate says to the Jews who said that he was of fornication: This story of yours is not true, because they were betrothed, as also these fellow-countrymen of yours say. Annas and Caiaphas say to Pilate: All the multitude of us cry out that he was born of fornication, and are not believed; these are proselytes, and his disciples. And Pilate, calling Annas and Caiaphas, says to them: What are proselytes? They say to him: They are by birth children of the Greeks, and have now become Jews. And those that said that He was not born of fornication, viz.—Lazarus, Asterius, Antonius, James, Amnes, Zeras, Samuel, Isaac, Phinees, Crispus, Agrippas, and Judas—say: We are not proselytes, but are children of the Jews, and speak of the truth; for we were present at the betrothal of Joseph and Mary.

And Pilate, calling these twelve men who said that He was not born of fornication, says to them: I adjure you by the health of Cæsar, to tell me whether it be true that you say, that he was not born of fornication. They say to Pilate: We have a law against taking oaths, because

it is a sin; but they will swear by the health of Cæsar, that it is not as we have said, and we are liable to death. Pilate says to Annas and Caiaphas: Have you nothing to answer to this? Annas and Caiaphas say to Pilate: These twelve are believed when they say that he was not born of fornication; all the multitude of us cry out that he was born of fornication, and that he is a sorcerer, and he says that he is the Son of God and a king, and we are not believed.

And Pilate orders all the multitude to go out, except the twelve men who said that He was not born of fornication, and he ordered Jesus to be separated from them. And Pilate says to them: For what reason do they wish to put him to death? They say to him: They are angry because he cures on the Sabbath. Pilate says: For a good work do they wish to put him to death? They say to him: Yes.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3. And Pilate, filled with rage, went outside of the prætorium, and said to them: I take the sun to witness that I find no fault in this man. The Jews answered and said to the procurator: Unless this man were an evil-doer, we should not have delivered him to thee. And Pilate said, Do you take him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews said to Pilate: It is not lawful for us to put any one to death. Pilate said: Has God said that you are not to put to death, but that I am? And Pilate went again into the prætorium, and spoke to Jesus privately, and said to Him: Art thou the king of the Jews? Jesus answered Pilate: Dost thou say this of thyself, or have others said it to thee of me? Pilate answered Jesus: Am I also a Jew? Thy nation and the chief priests have given thee up to me. What hast thou done? Jesus answered: My kingdom is not of this world; for if my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight in order that I should not be given up to the Jews: but now my kingdom is not from thence. Pilate said to Him: Art thou then a king? Jesus answered him: Thou sayest that I am a king. Because for this have I been born, and have I come, in order that every one who is of the truth might hear my voice. Pilate says to him: What is truth? Jesus says to him: Truth is from heaven. Pilate says: Is truth not upon earth? Jesus says to Pilate: Thou seest how those who speak the truth are judged by those that have the power upon earth.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4. And leaving Jesus within the prætorium, Pilate went out to the Jews, and said to them: I find no fault in him. The Jews say to him: He said, I can destroy this temple, and in three days build it. Pilate says: What temple? The Jews say: The one that Solomon built in forty-six years, and this man speaks of pulling it down and building it in three days. Pilate says to them: I am innocent of the blood of this just man. See you to it. The Jews say: His blood be upon us, and upon our children. And Pilate having summoned the elders and priests and Levites, said to them privately: Do not act thus, because no charge that you bring against him is worthy of death; for your charge is about curing and Sabbath profanation. The elders and the priests and the Levites say: If any one speak evil against Cæsar, is he worthy of death or not? Pilate says: He is worthy of death. The Jews say to Pilate: If any one speak evil against Cæsar, he is worthy of death; but this man has spoken evil against God.

And the procurator ordered the Jews to go outside of the prætorium; and summoning Jesus, he says to Him: What shall I do to thee? Jesus says to Pilate: As it has been given to thee. Pilate says: How given? Jesus says: Moses and the prophets have proclaimed beforehand of my death and resurrection. And the Jews noticing this, and hearing it, say to Pilate: What more wilt thou hear of this blasphemy? Pilate says to the Jews: If these words be blasphemous, do you take him for the blasphemy, and lead him away to your synagogue, and judge him according to your law. The Jews say to Pilate: Our law bears that a man who wrongs his fellow-men is worthy to receive forty save one; but he that blasphemeth God is to be stoned with stones. Pilate says to them: Do you take him, and punish him in whatever way you please. The Jews say to Pilate: We wish that he be crucified. Pilate says: He is not deserving of crucifixion.

And the procurator, looking round upon the crowds of the Jews standing by, sees many of the Jews weeping, and says: All the multitude do not wish him to die. The elders of the Jews say: For this reason all the multitude of us have come, that he should die. Pilate says to the Jews: Why should he die? The Jews say: Because he called himself Son of God, and King.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5. And one Nicodemus, a Jew, stood before the procurator, and said: I beseech your honour, let me say a few words. Pilate says: Say on. Nicodemus says: I said to the elders and the priests and Levites, and to all the multitude of the Jews in the synagogue, What do you seek to do with this man? This man does many miracles and strange things, which no one has done or will do. Let him go, and do not wish any evil against him. If the miracles which he does are of God, they will stand; but if man, they will come to nothing. For assuredly Moses, being sent by God into Egypt, did many miracles, which the Lord commanded him to do before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And there were there Jannes and Jambres, servants of Pharaoh, and they also did not a few of the miracles which Moses did; and the Egyptians took them to be gods—this Jannes and this Jambres. But, since the miracles which they did were not of God, both they and those who believed in them were destroyed. And now release this man, for he is not deserving of death.

The Jews say to Nicodemus: Thou hast become his disciple, and therefore thou defendest him. Nicodemus says to them: Perhaps, too, the procurator has become his disciple, because he defends him. Has the emperor not appointed him to this place of dignity? And the Jews were vehemently enraged, and gnashed their teeth against Nicodemus. Pilate says to them: Why do you gnash your teeth against him when you hear the truth? The Jews say to Nicodemus: Mayst thou receive his truth and his portion. Nicodemus says: Amen, amen; may I receive it, as you have said.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6. One of the Jews, stepping up, asked leave of the procurator to say a word. The procurator says: If thou wishest to say any thing, say on. And the Jew said: Thirty-eight years I lay in my bed in great agony. And when Jesus came, many demoniacs, and many lying ill of various diseases, were cured by him. And some young men, taking pity on me, carried me, bed and all, and took me to him. And when Jesus saw me, he had compassion on me, and said to me: Take up thy couch and walk. And I took up my couch, and walked. The Jews say to Pilate: Ask him on what day it was that he was cured. He that had been cured says: On a Sabbath. The Jews say: Is not this the very thing that we said, that on a Sabbath he cures and casts out demons?

And another Jew stepped up and said: I was born blind; I heard sounds, but saw not a face. And as Jesus passed by, I cried out with a loud voice, Pity me, O son of David. And he pitied me, and put his hands upon my eyes, and I instantly received my sight. And another Jew stepped up and said: I was crooked, and he straightened me with a word. And another said: I was a leper, and he cured me with a word.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7. And a woman cried out from a distance, and said: I had an issue of blood, and I touched the hem of his garment, and the issue of blood which I had had for twelve years was stopped. The Jews say: we have a law, that a woman's evidence is not to be received.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8. And others, a multitude both of men and women, cried out, saying: This man is a prophet, and the demons are subject to him. Pilate says to them who said that the demons were subject to Him: Why, then, were not your teachers also subject to him? They say to Pilate: We do not know. And others said: He raised Lazarus from the tomb after he had been dead four days. And the procurator trembled, and said to all the multitude of the Jews: Why do you wish to pour out innocent blood?

Chapter 9

Chapter 9. And having summoned Nicodemus and the twelve men that said He was not born of fornication, he says to them: What shall I do, because there is an insurrection among the people? They say to him: We know not; let them see to it. Again Pilate, having summoned all the multitude of the Jews, says: You know that it is customary, at the feast of unleavened bread, to release one prisoner to you. I have one condemned prisoner in the prison, a murderer named Barabbas, and this man standing in your presence, Jesus, in whom I find no fault. Which of them do you wish me to release to you? And they cry out: Barabbas. Pilate says: What, then, shall we do to Jesus who is called Christ? The Jews say: Let him be crucified. And others said: Thou art no friend of Cæsar's if thou release this man, because he called himself Son of God and king. You wish, then, this man to be king, and not Cæsar?

And Pilate, in a rage, says to the Jews: Always has your nation been rebellious, and you always speak against your benefactors. The Jews say: What benefactors? He says to them: Your God led you out of the land of Egypt from bitter slavery, and brought you safe through the sea as through dry land, and in the desert fed you with manna, and gave you quails, and quenched your thirst with water from a rock, and gave you a law; and in all these things you provoked your God to anger, and sought a molten calf. And you exasperated your God, and He sought to slay you. And Moses prayed for you, and you were not put to death. And now you charge me with hating the emperor. And rising up from the tribunal, he sought to go out. And the Jews cry out, and say: We know that Cæsar is king, and not Jesus. For assuredly the magi brought gifts to him as to a king. And when Herod heard from the magi that a king had been born, he sought to slay him; and his father Joseph, knowing this, took him and his mother, and they fled into Egypt. And Herod hearing of it, destroyed the children of the Hebrews that had been born in Bethlehem.

And when Pilate heard these words, he was afraid; and ordering the crowd to keep silence, because they were crying out, he said to them: So this is he whom Herod sought? The Jews say: Yes, it is he. And, taking water, Pilate washed his hands in the face of the sun, saying: I am innocent of the blood of this just man; see you to it. Again the Jews cry out: His blood be upon us, and upon our children. Then Pilate ordered the curtain of the tribunal where he was sitting to be drawn, and says to Jesus: Thy nation has charged thee with being a

king. On this account I sentence thee, first to be scourged, according to the enactment of venerable kings, and then to be fastened on the cross in the garden where thou wast seized. And let Dysmas and Gestas, the two malefactors, be crucified with thee.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10. And Jesus went forth out of the prætorium, and the two malefactors with Him. And when they came to the place, they stripped Him of his clothes, and girded Him with a towel, and put a crown of thorns on Him round His head. And they crucified Him; and at the same time also they hung up the two malefactors along with Him. And Jesus said: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And the soldiers parted His clothes among them; and the people stood looking at Him. And the chief priests, and the rulers with them, mocked Him, saying: He saved others; let him save himself. If he be the Son of God, let him come down from the cross. And the soldiers made sport of Him, coming near and offering Him vinegar mixed with gall, and said: Thou art the king of the Jews; save thyself.

And Pilate, after the sentence, ordered the charge made against Him to be inscribed as a superscription in Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, according to what the Jews had said: He is king of the Jews. And one of the malefactors hanging up spoke to Him, saying: If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us. And Dysmas answering, reproved him, saying: Dost thou not fear God, because thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the fit punishment of our deeds; but this man has done no evil. And he said to Jesus: Remember me, Lord, in Thy kingdom. And Jesus said to him: Amen, amen; I say to thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the earth until the ninth hour, the sun being darkened; and the curtain of the temple was split in the middle. And crying out with a loud voice, Jesus said: Father, Baddach ephkid ruel, which is, interpreted: Into Thy hands I commit my spirit. And having said this, He gave up the ghost. And the centurion, seeing what had happened, glorified God, and said: This was a just man. And all the crowds that were present at this spectacle, when they saw what had happened, beat their breasts and went away. And the centurion reported what had happened to the procurator. And when the procurator and his wife heard it, they were exceedingly grieved, and neither ate nor drank that day. And Pilate sent for the Jews, and said to them: Have you seen what has happened? And they say: There has been an eclipse of the sun in the usual way.

And His acquaintances were standing at a distance, and the women who came with Him from Galilee, seeing these things. And a man named Joseph, a councillor from the city of Arimathæa, who also waited for the kingdom of God, went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. And he took it down, and wrapped it in clean linen, and placed it in a tomb hewn out of the rock, in which no one had ever lain.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12.

And the Jews, hearing that Joseph had begged the body of Jesus, sought him and the twelve who said that Jesus was not born of fornication, and Nicodemus, and many others who had stepped up before Pilate and declared His good works. And of all these that were hid, Nicodemus alone was seen by them, because he was a ruler of the Jews. And Nicodemus says to them: How have you come into the synagogue? The Jews say to him: How hast thou come into the synagogue? for thou art a confederate of his, and his portion is with thee in the world to come. Nicodemus says: Amen, amen. And likewise Joseph also stepped out and said to them: Why are you angry against me because I begged the body of Jesus? Behold, I have put him in my new tomb, wrapping him in clean linen; and I have rolled a stone to the door of the tomb. And you have acted not well against the just man, because you have not repented of crucifying him, but also have pierced him with a spear. And the Jews seized Joseph, and ordered him to be secured until the first day of the week, and said to him: Know that the time does not allow us to do anything against thee, because the Sabbath is dawning; and know that thou shalt not be deemed worthy of burial, but we shall give thy flesh to the birds of the air. Joseph says to them:

These are the words of the arrogant Goliath, who reproached the living God and holy David. For God has said by the prophet, Vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord. And now he that is uncircumcised in flesh, but circumcised in heart, has taken water, and washed his hands in the face of the sun, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just man; see ye to it. And you answered and said to Pilate, His blood be upon us, and upon our children. And now I am afraid lest the wrath of God come upon you, and upon your children, as you have said. And the Jews, hearing these words, were embittered in their souls, and seized Joseph, and locked him into a room where there was no window; and guards were stationed at the door, and they sealed the door where Joseph was locked in.

And on the Sabbath, the rulers of the synagogue, and the priests and the Levites, made a decree that all should be found in the synagogue on the first day of the week. And rising up early, all the multitude in the synagogue consulted by what death they should slay him. And when the Sanhedrin was sitting, they ordered him to be brought with much indignity. And having opened the door, they found him not. And all the people were surprised, and

struck with dismay, because they found the seals unbroken, and because Caiaphas had the key. And they no longer dared to lay hands upon those who had spoken before Pilate in Jesus' behalf.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13. And while they were still sitting in the synagogue, and wondering about Joseph, there come some of the guard whom the Jews had begged of Pilate to guard the tomb of Jesus, that His disciples might not come and steal Him. And they reported to the rulers of the synagogue, and the priests and the Levites, what had happened: how there had been a great earthquake; and we saw an angel coming down from heaven, and he rolled away the stone from the mouth of the tomb, and sat upon it; and he shone like snow, and like lightning. And we were very much afraid, and lay like dead men; and we heard the voice of the angel saying to the women who remained beside the tomb, Be not afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here: He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay: and go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and is in Galilee.

The Jews say: To what women did he speak? The men of the guard say: We do not know who they were. The Jews say: At what time was this? The men of the guard say: At midnight. The Jews say: And wherefore did you not lay hold of them? The men of the guard say: We were like dead men from fear, not expecting to see the light of day, and how could we lay hold of them? The Jews say: As the Lord liveth, we do not believe you. The men of the guard say to the Jews: You have seen so great miracles in the case of this man, and have not believed; and how can you believe us? And assuredly you have done well to swear that the Lord liveth, for indeed He does live. Again the men of the guard say: We have heard that you have locked up the man that begged the body of Jesus, and put a seal on the door; and that you have opened it, and not found him. Do you then give us the man whom you were guarding, and we shall give you Jesus. The Jews say: Joseph has gone away to his own city. The men of the guard say to the Jews: And Jesus has risen, as we heard from the angel, and is in Galilee.

And when the Jews heard these words, they were very much afraid, and said: We must take care lest this story be heard, and all incline to Jesus. And the Jews called a council, and paid down a considerable sum of money, and gave it to the soldiers, saying: Say, while we slept, his disciples came by night and stole him; and if this come to the ears of the procurator, we shall persuade him, and keep you out of trouble. And they took it, and said as they had been instructed.

Chapter 14

Chapter 14. And Phinees a priest, and Adas a teacher, and Haggai a Levite, came down from Galilee to Jerusalem, and said to the rulers of the synagogue, and the priests and the Levites: We saw Jesus and his disciples sitting on the mountain called Mamilch; and he said to his disciples, Go into all the world, and preach to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be condemned. And these signs shall attend those who have believed: in my name they shall cast out demons, speak new tongues, take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall by no means hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall be well. And while Jesus was speaking to his disciples, we saw him taken up to heaven.

The elders and the priests and Levites say: Give glory to the God of Israel, and confess to Him whether you have heard and seen those things of which you have given us an account. And those who had given the account said: As the Lord liveth, the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we heard these things, and saw him taken up into heaven. The elders and the priests and the Levites say to them: Have you come to give us this announcement, or to offer prayer to God? And they say: To offer prayer to God. The elders and the chief priests and the Levites say to them: If you have come to offer prayer to God, why then have you told these idle tales in the presence of all the people? Says Phinees the priest, and Adas the teacher, and Haggai the Levite to the rulers of the synagogues, and the priests and the Levites: If what we have said and seen be sinful, behold, we are before you; do to us as seems good in your eyes. And they took the law, and made them swear upon it, not to give any more an account of these matters to any one. And they gave them to eat and drink, and sent them out of the city, having given them also money, and three men with them; and they sent them away to Galilee.

And these men having gone into Galilee, the chief priests, and the rulers of the synagogue, and the elders, came together into the synagogue, and locked the door, and lamented with a great lamentation, saying: Is this a miracle that has happened in Israel? And Annas and Caiaphas said: Why are you so much moved? Why do you weep? Do you not know that his disciples have given a sum of gold to the guards of the tomb, and have instructed them to say that an angel came down and rolled away the stone from the door of the tomb? And the priests and the elders said: Be it that his disciples have stolen his body; how is it that the

life has come into his body, and that he is going about in Galilee? And they being unable to give an answer to these things, said, after great hesitation: It is not lawful for us to believe the uncircumcised.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15. And Nicodemus stood up, and stood before the Sanhedrin, saying: You say well; you are not ignorant, you people of the Lord, of these men that come down from Galilee, that they fear God, and are men of substance, haters of covetousness, men of peace; and they have declared with an oath, We saw Jesus upon the mountain Mamilch with his disciples, and he taught what we heard from him, and we saw him taken up into heaven. And no one asked them in what form he went up. For assuredly, as the book of the Holy Scriptures taught us, Helias also was taken up into heaven, and Elissæus cried out with a loud voice, and Helias threw his sheepskin upon Elissæus, and Elissæus threw his sheepskin upon the Jordan, and crossed, and came into Jericho. And the children of the prophets met him, and said, O Elissæus, where is thy master Helias? And he said, He has been taken up into heaven. And they said to Elissæus, Has not a spirit seized him, and thrown him upon one of the mountains? But let us take our servants with us, and seek him. And they persuaded Elissæus, and he went away with them. And they sought him three days, and did not find him; and they knew he had been taken up. And now listen to me, and let us send into every district of Israel, and see lest perchance Christ has been taken up by a spirit, and thrown upon one of the mountains? And this proposal pleased all. And they sent into every district of Israel, and sought Jesus, and did not find Him; but they found Joseph in Arimathæa, and no one dared to lay hands on him.

And they reported to the elders, and the priests, and the Levites: We have gone round to every district of Israel, and have not found Jesus; but Joseph we have found in Arimathæa. And hearing about Joseph, they were glad, and gave glory to the God of Israel. And the rulers of the synagogue, and the priests and the Levites, having held a council as to the manner in which they should meet with Joseph, took a piece of paper, and wrote to Joseph as follows:— Peace to thee! We know that we have sinned against God, and against thee; and we have prayed to the God of Israel, that thou shouldst deign to come to thy fathers, and to thy children, because we have all been grieved. For having opened the door, we did not find thee. And we know that we have counselled evil counsel against thee; but the Lord has defended thee, and the Lord Himself has scattered to the winds our counsel against thee, O honourable father Joseph.

And they chose from all Israel seven men, friends of Joseph, whom also Joseph himself was acquainted with; and the rulers of the synagogue, and the priests and the Levites, say to them: Take notice: if, after receiving our letter, he read it, know that he will come with you to us; but if he do not read it, know that he is ill-disposed towards us. And having saluted him in peace, return to us. And having blessed the men, they dismissed them. And the men came to Joseph, and did reverence to him, and said to him: Peace to thee! And he said: Peace to you, and to all the people of Israel! And they gave him the roll of the letter. And Joseph having received it, read the letter and rolled it up, and blessed God, and said: Blessed be the Lord God, who has delivered Israel, that they should not shed innocent blood; and blessed be the Lord, who sent out His angel, and covered me under his wings. And he set a table for them; and they ate and drank, and slept there. And they rose up early, and prayed. And Joseph saddled his ass, and set out with the men; and they came to the holy city Jerusalem. And all the people met Joseph, and cried out: Peace to thee in thy coming in! And he said to all the people: Peace to you! and he kissed them. And the people prayed with Joseph, and they were astonished at the sight of him. And Nicodemus received him into his house, and made a great feast, and called Annas and Caiaphas, and the elders, and the priests, and the Levites to his house. And they rejoiced, eating and drinking with Joseph; and after singing hymns, each proceeded to his own house. But Joseph remained in the house of Nicodemus.

And on the following day, which was the preparation, the rulers of the synagogue and the priests and the Levites went early to the house of Nicodemus; and Nicodemus met them, and said: Peace to you! And they said: Peace to thee, and to Joseph, and to all thy house, and to all the house of Joseph! And he brought them into his house. And all the Sanhedrin sat down, and Joseph sat down between Annas and Caiaphas: and no one dared to say a word to him. And Joseph said: Why have you called me? And they signalled to Nicodemus to speak to Joseph. And Nicodemus, opening his mouth, said to Joseph: Father, thou knowest that the honourable teachers, and the priests and the Levites, see to learn a word from thee. And Joseph said: Ask. And Annas and Caiaphas having taken the law, made Joseph swear, saying: Give glory to the God of Israel, and give Him confession; for Achar being made to swear by the prophet Jesus, did not forsware himself, but declared unto him all, and did not hide a word from him. Do thou also accordingly not hide from us to the extent of a word. And Joseph said: I shall not hide from you one word. And they said to him: With grief were we grieved because thou didst beg the body of Jesus, and wrap it in clean linen, and lay it in a tomb. And on account of this we secured thee in a room where there was no windows: and we put locks and seals upon the doors and guards kept watching where thou wast locked in. And on the first day of the week we opened, and found thee not, and were grieved exceedingly; and astonishment fell upon all the people of the Lord until yesterday. And now relate to us what has happened to thee.

And Joseph said: On the preparation, about the tenth hour, you locked me up, and I remained all the Sabbath. And at midnight, as I was standing and praying, the room where you locked me in was hung up by the four corners, and I saw a light like lightning into my

eyes. And I was afraid, and fell to the ground. And some one took me by the hand, and removed me from the place where I had fallen; and moisture of water was poured from my head even to my feet, and a smell of perfumes came about my nostrils. And he wiped my face, and kissed me, and said to me, Fear not, Joseph; open thine eyes, and see who it is that speaks to thee. And looking up, I saw Jesus. And I trembled and thought it was a phantom; and I said the commandments, and he said them with me. Even so you are not ignorant that a phantom, if it meet anybody, and hear the commandments, takes to flight. And seeing that he said them with me, I said to him, Rabbi Helias. And he said to me, I am not Helias. And I said to him, Who art thou, my lord? And he said to me, I am Jesus, whose body thou didst beg from Pilate; and thou didst clothe me with clean linen, and didst put a napkin on my face, and didst lay me in thy new tomb, and didst roll a great stone to the door of the tomb.

And I said to him that was speaking to me, Show me the place where I laid thee. And he carried me away, and showed me the place where I laid him; and the linen cloth was lying in it, and the napkin for his face. And I knew that it was Jesus. And he took me by the hand, and placed me, though the doors were locked, in the middle of my house, and led me away to my bed, and said to me, Peace to thee! And he kissed me, and said to me, For forty days go not forth out of thy house; for, behold, I go to my brethren into Galilee.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16. And the rulers of the synagogue, and the priests and the Levites, when they heard these words from Joseph, became as dead, and fell to the ground, and fasted until the ninth hour. And Nicodemus, along with Joseph, exhorted Annas and Caiaphas, the priests and the Levites, saying: Rise up and stand upon your feet, and taste bread, and strengthen your souls, because to-morrow is the Sabbath of the Lord. And they rose up, and prayed to God, and ate and drank, and departed every man to his own house. And on the Sabbath our teachers and the priests and Levites sat questioning each other, and saying: What is this wrath that has come upon us? for we know his father and mother. Levi, a teacher, says: I know that his parents fear God, and do not withdraw themselves from the prayers, and give the tithes thrice a year. And when Jesus was born, his parents brought him to this place, and gave sacrifices and burnt-offerings to God. And when the great teacher Symeon took him into his arms, he said, Now Thou sendest away Thy servant, Lord, according to Thy word, in peace; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all the peoples: a light for the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel. And Symeon blessed them, and said to Mary his mother, I give thee good news about this child. And Mary said, It is well, my lord. And Symeon said to her, It is well; behold, he lies for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign spoken against; and of thee thyself a sword shall go through the soul, in order that the reasoning of many hearts may be revealed.

They say to the teacher Levi: How knowest thou these things? Levi says to them: Do you not know that from him I learned the law? The Sanhedrin say to him: We wish to see thy father. And they sent for his father. And they asked him; and he said to them: Why have you not believed my son? The blessed and just Symeon himself taught him the law. The Sanhedrin says to Rabbi Levi: Is the word that you have said true? And he said: It is true. And the rulers of the synagogue, and the priests and the Levites, said to themselves: Come, let us send into Galilee to the three men that came and told about his teaching and his taking up, and let them tell us how they saw him taken up. And this saying pleased all. And they sent away the three men who had already gone away into Galilee with them; and they say to them: Say to Rabbi Adas, and Rabbi Phinees, and Rabbi Haggai: Peace to you, and all who are with you! A great inquiry having taken place in the Sanhedrin, we have been sent to you to call you to this holy place, Jerusalem.

And the men set out into Galilee, and found them sitting and considering the law; and they saluted them in peace. And the men who were in Galilee said to those who had come to them: Peace upon all Israel! And they said: Peace to you! And they again said to them: Why have you come? And those who had been sent said: The Sanhedrin call you to the holy city Jerusalem. And when the men heard that they were sought by the Sanhedrin, they prayed to God, and reclined with the men, and ate and drank, and rose up, and set out in peace to Jerusalem. And on the following day the Sanhedrin sat in the synagogue, and asked them, saying: Did you really see Jesus sitting on the mountain Mamilch teaching his eleven disciples, and did you see him taken up? And the men answered them, and said: As we saw him taken up, so also we said.

Annas says: Take them away from one another, and let us see whether their account agrees. And they took them away from one another. And first they call Adas, and say to him: How didst thou see Jesus taken up? Adas says: While he was yet sitting on the mountain Mamilch, and teaching his disciples, we saw a cloud overshadowing both him and his disciples. And the cloud took him up into heaven, and his disciples lay upon their face upon the earth. And they call Phinees the priest, and ask him also, saying: How didst thou see Jesus taken up? And he spoke in like manner. And they again asked Haggai, and he spoke in like manner. And the Sanhedrin said: The law of Moses holds: At the mouth of two or three every word shall be established. Buthem, a teacher, says: It is written in the law, And Enoch walked with God, and is not, because God took him. Jairus, a teacher, said: And the death of holy Moses we have heard of, and have not seen it; for it is written in the law of the Lord, And Moses died from the mouth of the Lord, and no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And Rabbi Levi said: Why did Rabbi Symeon say, when he saw Jesus, “Behold, he lies for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign spoken against?” And Rabbi Isaac said: It is written in the law, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall go before thee to keep thee in every good way, because my name has been called upon him.

Then Annas and Caiaphas said: Rightly have you said what is written in the law of Moses, that no one saw the death of Enoch, and no one has named the death of Moses; but Jesus was tried before Pilate, and we saw him receiving blows and spittings on his face, and the soldiers put about him a crown of thorns, and he was scourged, and received sentence from Pilate, and was crucified upon the Cranium, and two robbers with him; and they gave him to drink vinegar with gall, and Longinus the soldier pierced his side with a spear; and Joseph our honourable father begged his body, and, as he says, he is risen; and as the three teachers say, We saw him taken up into heaven; and Rabbi Levi has given evidence of what was said by Rabbi Symeon, and that he said, Behold, he lies for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign spoken against. And all the teachers said to all the people of the Lord: If this was from the Lord, and is wonderful in your eyes, knowing you shall know, O house of Jacob, that it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth upon a tree. And another Scripture teaches: The gods which have not made the heaven and the earth shall be destroyed. And the priests and the Levites said to each other: If his memorial be

until the year that is called Jobel, know that it shall it endure for ever, and he hath raised for himself a new people. Then the rulers of the synagogue, and the priests and the Levites, announced to all Israel, saying: Cursed is that man who shall worship the work of man's hand, and cursed is the man who shall worship the creatures more than the Creator. And all the people said, Amen, amen.

And all the people praised the Lord, and said: Blessed is the Lord, who hath given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He hath spoken; there hath not fallen one word of every good word of His that He spoke to Moses His servant. May the Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers: let Him not destroy us. And let Him not destroy us, that we may incline our hearts to Him, that we may walk in all His ways, that we may keep His commandments and His judgments which He commanded to our fathers. And the Lord shall be for a king over all the earth in that day; and there shall be one Lord, and His name one. The Lord is our king: He shall save us. There is none like Thee, O Lord. Great art Thou, O Lord, and great is Thy name. By Thy power heal us, O Lord, and we shall be healed: save us, O Lord, and we shall be saved; because we are Thy lot and heritage. And the Lord will not leave His people, for His great name's sake; for the Lord has begun to make us into His people.

And all, having sung praises, went away each man to his own house, glorifying God; for His is the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Source. English translation from the ***Ante-Nicene Fathers*** (edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson and A. Cleveland Coxe; New York, 1885–1896; public domain), translated by Alexander Walker, as transcribed by volunteers of English Wikisource. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Footnotes are left out. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it, and no modern English version has been made.

Licence. The translation is in the public domain (published before 1929). The Wikisource transcription is offered under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike licence; we credit it here.