The Testament of Our Lord Jesus Christ

The Testament, or words which our Lord, when He rose from the dead, spoke to the holy Apostles, and which were written in eight books by Clement of Rome, the disciple of Peter.

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THE FIRST BOOK

It came to pass, after our Lord rose from the dead, He appeared unto us. Thomas, Matthew, and John touched Him, and then we all believed that our Master was truly risen from the dead.[1] We fell on our faces and blessed the Father for this new Age, our God who had saved us by Jesus Christ our Lord. We were greatly afraid, waiting prostrated like babies who cannot speak. But our Lord Jesus put His hand on each one of us separately, lifted us up, and said, “Why is your heart heavy, and why are you astonished? Do you not know that He who sent Me can do glorious things for the salvation of those who have believed in Him with their whole heart? Don’t just stand there like astonished men, slothful, but as Sons of Light, ask My Father, who is in heaven, for the Spirit of counsel and might, and He will fill you with the Holy Spirit and grant you to be with Me forever.”

1 Receiving the Holy Spirit

We responded to the Lord saying, “Who is the Holy Spirit that you told us to pray for and what is His power?” Then the Lord said, “I say unto you that you cannot truly be the Sons of Light except by the Holy Spirit.” Then we said, “Lord, give us this Spirit.” Jesus immediately breathed on us. After we received the Holy Spirit, He said unto us, “Truly I say unto you, you who have been made disciples unto the kingdom of heaven, who have believed in Me with an undoubting heart, and who have cleaved unto Me, shall be with Me. All those who, through you, know and do the will of My Father, who keep My words and know My sufferings, shall be made holy. They shall dwell in the habitations of My Father and

[1] See Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 3.36 and Ignatius’ *Romans* 4. This may indicate that Ignatius considered this manuscript to be genuine. Ignatius was martyred in AD 95, which means it was a well-known document in the mid to late first century.

shall be delivered from the evil days that are coming; and I will be with them, teaching them My ways in which they shall live.[2]

2 Teaching Prophecy

Then Peter and John asked Him, “Lord, tell us the signs of the end, and what will take place to those living at the end of this Age, so that we may teach the signs to those who believe in Your Name in all the nations, and those generations may remember them and live. Jesus replied, “Didn’t I tell you some things about the end before I suffered for those that dwell on the earth?” We answered, “Yes, Lord, but now we want to know more about the signs of the end of this Age, if our Lord has judged that it is fitting for us to know — for us, and for those who will listen.”

3 Jesus’ Introduction to the End Times

Jesus replied, “When I was in the world, before I was glorified, I told you about the signs that occur when the end is near — that all over the earth there will be famines, pestilences, turmoil, and unrest, nation rising against nation, and the other things that I taught you. I commanded you to watch and pray.[3] Now listen, Sons of Light, My Father who has sent Me to His inheritance has predetermined in His foreknowledge, that in the last days, out of the last generation(s), there should be vessels of grace, holy, honored, and elect. Therefore, I will make known unto you the things which will be and when that Son of Perdition, the Enemy, the Adversary, shall arise.

4 Signs of the Birth Pangs

These signs will be seen when the kingdom is approaching. After the famines, pestilences, and turmoil among the nations, rulers will

[2] They will be “made holy” or glorified. This will happen when they are “delivered,” or Raptured, before the Evil Day. This is when they “dwell with the Messiah” at the marriage supper of the Lamb. This is a clear reference to a pre-trib Rapture using the same phraseology as in the Didache 16. If the Didache, written AD 50-100, is quoting this document, then it existed and was thought genuine in the mid first century AD.

[3] We should always be focused on studying (watching for) prophecy.

arise to power who love money, hate truth, and kill their brethren. They will be liars, haters of the faithful, proud, lovers of gold, allied by relationship but not allied in counsel, for each one wishes to destroy the life of the other. But great affliction and bloodshed shall be in their troops.[4]

5 The Western King

There shall arise in the west a king of foreign race,[5] a prince of great craft, godless, homicidal, a deceiver, a lover of gold, great at giving reasons for what he wants, a hater of the faithful, and a persecutor. He shall bear rule also over barbarous nations and shall shed much blood. At that time silver will be despised but gold will be honored; and in every city and every country there shall be spoiling, robbery, and bloodshed.

6 Signs in Heaven

Then there shall be signs in heaven: A bow shall be seen, a horn, and lights; noises out of season, strange sounds, the sea raging, and the earth roaring.

7 Signs on Earth

But there will also be signs on the earth. Both mankind and wild beasts will birth genetically altered offspring.[6] Young women, newly married, shall bring forth babies who speak perfectly. In these last times many will pray for death.[7] Newborn babies shall look very old and shall be gray headed. Because of the divination they practice by speaking with familiar spirits while their babies are still in the womb, some women will bear deformed babies,[8] some will bear stillborn, but some will successfully bear the

[4] Like Islamic factions constantly trying to destroy one another.
[5] Since the Antichrist arises in chapter 9, this prince is a precursor. Maybe the Pope of Rome? Compare to Gad 1-2.
[6] The seed of dragons or demonic seed.
[7] Revelation 9:6
[8] This part of the text seems garbled. Literally “four-footed.” This is probably an idiom meaning animalistic as in “filled with rage” or “deformed” physically.

progeny of unclean spirits. There will also be many other horrible signs.

8 Evil in the Church

There will arise much turmoil in churches of all nations. Evil shepherds shall arise that love pleasure, gain, and money above all else. They will prove to be unjust, slothful, greedy, talkative, boastful, haughty, gluttonous, perverse, rash, given to delights, and egotistical. They will oppose the ways of the Gospel and flee from the strait gate. They will protect themselves from persecution by never speaking about My death. They will reject all the words of truth, slander all the ways of piety, and refuse to repent of their sins. Therefore, they will be the reason why the nations do not believe and hate the brotherhood. Wickedness, bitterness, slothfulness, envy, hatred, strife, theft, oppression, drunkenness, debauchery, lasciviousness, licentiousness, fornication, and all things that are contrary to the commandments of life will prosper because of them. Many will put away repentance, gentleness, peace, meekness, modesty, piety, and compassion because the shepherds, who knew these things, did not practice them.

They make themselves examples of wickedness to the nations by not practicing My commandments. But the time will come when some of them who deny Me will stir up confusion in the earth and put their trust in a mortal king. But those who endure in My Name unto the end shall be saved. Then they shall ordain man-made commandments unlike the Book and the commandments in which the Father is well pleased. They will reject both My elect and My holy ones calling them the polluted. Yet these upright ones who are pure, modest, merciful, quiet, kind, and are always looking for Him who dwells in them,[9] shall be called psychotic because of Me, who saved them.

[9] Or always looking for He who dwells in them. i.e. Looking for the return of the Lord.

It shall come to pass also in those days that My Father shall gather together[10] out of that generation the pure ones, even the pure and faithful souls, those to whom I will appear, and with whom I will make My habitation, and I will send them the ability to truly understand knowledge, truth, and holiness, and they shall not cease praising and giving thanks to their God, My Father who sent Me. They shall always speak the truth and teach those whose spirits they have tried and are found walking upright and worthily toward the kingdom. They shall instruct them in knowledge, strength, and prudence. Those who suffer persecution because they live in piety shall receive the reward of their praise.

In those times all the kingdoms of the earth shall be disturbed and see affliction and want. The whole world shall come to nothing. All of its possessions shall be destroyed by many destroyers. There shall be great scarcity of crops, and the winter shall be very severe. The rulers, who are few in number, will control the gold and silver. They are the ones rich in worldly things, the children of this world who maintain their wealth by controlling the buying and selling. They will afflict many, and many will call upon God for deliverance because of them. Blessed are they who are not alive at that time; and blessed are those who live and endure to the end. For when these things shall come to pass, then soon she who travails will bring forth, for that time will be fulfilled.

9 Rise of the Antichrist

Then shall come the Son of Perdition, the Adversary, who boasts and exalts himself, working many signs and miracles, that he may deceive the whole earth, and overcome the innocent, My holy ones. Blessed are they who endure in those days. But woe to those who are deceived.

[10] The Rapture

10 Syria, Turkey and Lebanon

Syria shall be plundered and shall weep for her sons. Turkey[11] shall lift up her neck until He who judges her shall appear. The Daughter of Babylon shall arise from the throne of her glory, that she may drink that wine which is mixed for her. Cappadocia, Lycia, Lycaonia[12] shall bow down the back, for many multitudes shall be depraved by the corruption of their wickedness. Then the barbarian camps shall be opened, for many chariots shall go forth so as to cover the face of the earth. In Armenia, Pontus, and Bithynia[13] the young men shall fall by the sword, and the sons and the daughters shall be captives. Lycaonia shall be mingled in blood. Pisidia[14] which boasts, and trusts in her riches, shall be overthrown even to the ground. The sword shall pass through Phoenicia,[15] because her inhabitants are children of corruption. Judaea shall clothe herself with lamentation and shall be made ready for the day of destruction, because of her uncleanness.

Then shall she[16] gather together the abomination of desolation. The East shall be opened by him;[17] also, the ways shall be opened by him. Sword and flame [are] in his hands: he burns with anger and fiery indignation. This is the armor of the judgment of the corruption of them that are born in the earth; the extermination of the faithful, the way of bloodshed; for his way is in error and his power is to blaspheme, and his hand for deception, his right hand in misery, and his left hand in darkness.

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[11] Lit. Cilicia

[12] Lit. Cappadocia (NE Turkey), Lycia (SW Turkey), Lycaonia (central Turkey)

[13] Pontus and Bithynia (NE Turkey that borders on the Black Sea); Armenia (directly east of Turkey)

[14] Pisidia (SW Turkey)

[15] Lebanon

[16] Israel or the Daughter of Babylon?

[17] The Antichrist

11 Antichrist Described

These are the signs of Son of Perdition: he will be hot-headed; publicly he will be seen as seeking justice but privately he will delight in injustice;[18] he will be impious but have an air of wisdom coupled with an appearance of humility. He will invade places that are not his to take and by his authority he bruises and flattens, this is the Abomination of Desolation.

12 Sons of Light

Therefore, I say unto you, Sons of Light, when the time is at hand, the harvest will be ripe to harvest sinners in judgment and to many the Judge shall arise as one who is kind and shall impute to them their own works. When He shall be at hand, a sign shall be given to the elect, who keep the law of My Father.[19]

13 Trust the Lord

Then those who honor My words and do them in truth and with a faithful mind, shall watch and pray without ceasing, reckoning continual supplication as a work. They will not become distracted by the things of the world or become anxious, because they have a sincere soul and a mind that doesn't doubt. They daily take up their cross and do the will of My Father which is in heaven, with a meek heart. The Lord is anxious for those who trust in the truth. He cares for them and sends them those things which are right and fitting — those things which He knows by the hands of them whom He knows.

14 Ending

I have told you these things so that wherever you go, you can test those souls to see that they are holy and teach them those things which are fitting and right, those things which will be, and all those things which I gave you as commandments before I was glorified.

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[18] He will cause craft/deceit to prosper and destroy many with the talk of peace, Daniel 8:25

[19] The sign of the Rapture of the holy ones is for the elect of Israel?

Notes from James Cooper D.D. the 1902 translator

Rahmani's 1899 translation used the following manuscripts:

(1) A codex now in the library of the Uniat [Western] Syrian Metropolitan of Mosul, on the Tigris. This contains the Bible and the "Syrian Octateuch" (see below, § iii.), the first two books of which are our Testament. This codex was written by one Behnam in the monastery of the Syrian saint of that name, near Mardin in Mesopotamia, in the year 1654 A.D.

(2) A codex now in the Borgian Museum at Rome, but coming from Mount Lebanon, and dated A.D. 1576.

(3) The St. Germain manuscript (Codex Sangermanensis 38). It is much more ancient than the above manuscripts, being referred to the eighth century. It contains extracts only from the Testament, but those extracts are taken from all parts of the book, and it is clear that the translation of James of Edessa lay complete before the scribe.

In addition to these three Syriac manuscripts, Rahmani has used a translation made through Coptic into Arabic, the manuscript of which is in the Borgian Museum at Rome; he promises also to publish this translation, and to his present book the notices of it in this volume are entirely due. The date of the translation into Arabic is the year "643 of the martyrs, which agrees with the year 313 of the Hegira."

Besides these authorities used by Rahmani, there are Syriac texts in the Malabar Bible of the University of Cambridge, and in a book of Church Ordinances in the Laurentian Library at Florence; and there are two copies of an Ethiopian translation of uncertain age, perhaps made from the Coptic or from the Arabic, in the British Museum. But none of these are published.

There is a very short fragment of the apocalyptic prelude in a Latin translation in a manuscript at Treves (Codex Treverensis 36). This

fragment has been published by Dr. M. E. James in Apocrypha Anecdota, pp. 151-154 (Cambridge Texts and Studies, ii. 3, 1893). This has been taken to be the original form of the prelude.

Very important for our purpose is an independent Syriac version of the prelude in a Cambridge manuscript (Cod. Cantab. Add. 2919), published by Dr. Arendzen in the Journal of Theological Studies for April 1901 (J.T.S. ii. 401 ff.).

The question of the date of the Testament is made extremely difficult by its almost entire dependence on internal evidence. We need not wonder, then, that different writers have ascribed it to different ages. Mgr. Rahmani considers that it belongs to the age of Irenaeus, the end of the second century.

Notes from Ken Johnson

Notes from the original of this book are located at the Cornell University Library. Published AD 1902
http://www.archive.org/cletails/cu31924029296170

The Greek version of this text is dated to approximately AD 200. James of Edessa made a Syriac translation of the Greek in the late eighth century. The full Syriac text of the testament was published, along with a Latin translation, by the Patriarch Ignatius Ephraem II. Rahmani, at Mainz in 1899. An English translation of the Syriac version was compiled by James Cooper, September 1902. I have modernized the English of the first 14 chapters and added some footnotes.

The work consists of two books. Chapters 1-14 professes to be the words of Jesus to the Apostles during the forty days between His resurrection and His ascension.

> To whom also He shewed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:3 KJV)

Chapters 15-47 are a liturgy and rule for governing the church added much later. Book 2 has 27 chapters and deals only with the church liturgy and rule for church government.

Egyptian, Arabic, and Ethiopian versions also exist.

Evidence to this Manuscript's First Century Existence.
Eusebius' Church history, AD 325, has two chapters that identify this manuscript as being in existence in the late first century.

Ignatius

In Book 3 section 36, Eusebius writes that in Ignatius' Epistle to the Smyrneans 3, Ignatius records that all the disciples touched Jesus not Just Thomas. Then he says

> I am not sure where this is recorded (Eusebius 3.36)

because it is not in any of the four Gospels. He is either referring to this manuscript or church father Papias.

Papais

In Book 3 section 39, Eusebius writes about church father Papias. Papias is said to have recorded what the disciples of the Apostles told him what they has learned directly from the Apostles.

> Papias was the first to write down these, and other accounts, from oral tradition. He also records specific unwritten parables of our Lord with His interpretation and other incredible things. (Eusebius 3.39)

both of these accounts gives us a good historical note that something like this manuscript did indeed exist. There is no proof that this one is the real one or that it has not been tampered with. It will be very interesting to compare this manuscript from the the one that is supposed to exist in the Ethiopian Bible.

This was later garbled and added to and exists in the form called the *Epistle of the Apostles*. The only interesting is a reference to the Second Coming being at the 120th Jubilee.

> I shall come upon earth to judge the quick and the dead. We said unto him: Lord, after how many years shall this come to pass? He said unto us: When the hundredth part and the twentieth part is fulfilled, between the Pentecost and the feast of unleavened bread. (Epistle of the Apostles 17 Latin fragment)

Notes on Chapter 7

For comparison I wanted to compare Dr. James Cooper's translation with mine so you can see where I came up with my translation.

Dr. Cooper's Chapter 7

> But on the earth shall be signs; the birth of dragons from mankind, and likewise also of wild beasts; and young women newly wedded shall bring forth babes who speak perfectly and announce the last times and pray to be put to death. And their looks shall be the looks of [men] far advanced in years; they shall be gray headed when they are born. Also, women shall bear babes with four feet: some shall bear spirits only, and some shall bear their progeny with unclean spirits. Others [there] shall [be who] practice divination in the womb and shall speak with familiar spirits; and there shall be many other horrible signs.

Notes on Chapter 11

Dr. Cooper translated chapter 11 word for word, as I do in the rest of the chapters, but I felt that chapter 11 is a string of idioms, so I translated it thought for thought for that chapter.

Dr. Cooper's Chapter 11

> And these are the signs of him: his head [is] as a fiery flame: his right eye shot with blood, his left [eye] blue-black, and he hath two pupils. His eyelashes are white; and his lower lip is large; but his right thigh slender; his feet broad;
>
> his great toe [finger] is bruised and flat. This is the sickle [abomination] of desolation.

A "head of fire" usually denotes a hot temper. The "right side" usually denotes the "proper or public way of doing something

while the “left side” would refer to the underhanded things being done in private, out of the public’s view. “Red eyed” can mean “seeking revenge instead of seeking justice” like our idiom of “seeing blood.” “Blue-black” seems to be a corruption of “delighting in being sinister.” Having “two pupils” or “double eyed” is the opposite of being “single-eyed” [20] meaning righteous or dedicated to God. The Antichrist will be the opposite of pious. “White eyelashes” can mean great age/wisdom and a large lower lip can portray sadness and, therefore, humility.

The word “sickle” seems to be a corruption of the word “tower.” So, a tower of abomination would be an object standing in the Holy Place, in other words *the* “abomination of desolation.” “Broad feet” denotes much travel but in a evil sense “broadening your feet” can mean invading an area. Most people were right handed so they carried their swords on the left side of their body. You would disarm to talk peace but a treacherous man would conceal a thin dagger on his right side. So assassins would be treacherous by being “thinly right thighed.”In some ancient texts “thin-thighed” also came to mean “paranoid.” Both of these idioms stem from the same ideas. He does have to fight many wars to take full control of his kingdom (Daniel 11:41). a King pointing his index finger can mean life or death. It denotes power and authority. The text says this points to the Abomination of Desolation. These idioms are why I translated the text this way,

Ken Johnson’s Chapter 11

> These are the signs of Son of Perdition: he will be hot-headed; publicly he will be seen as seeking justice but privately he will delight in injustice;[21] he will be impious but have an air of wisdom coupled with an

[20] Compare to Matthew 6:22 KJV and Luke 11:34 KJV; single eyed is dedicated to God, righteous, and full of light. So, he is divided, evil, and full of darkness.
[21] He will cause craft/deceit to prosper and destroy many with the talk of peace, Daniel 8:25

appearance of humility. He will invade places that are not his to take and by his authority he bruises and flattens, this is the Abomination of Desolation.