
THE LETTERS OF JESUS AND ABGARUS

INTRODUCTION

Abgar V is said to be one of the first Christian kings, having been converted to the faith by Thaddeus of Edessa, one of the seventy disciples. The church historian, Eusebius, recorded that the Edessan archives contained a copy of a correspondence exchanged between Abgar of Edessa and Jesus; that correspondence consists of Abgar's letter and the answer dictated by Jesus. The [Greek text here presented](#) is Eusebius' translation of those letters in his "History of the Church," published around 313 CE; the [English text](#) is an adaptation of M.R. James' 1924 translation. We also include, in this collection, a provisional version of the [Syriac text](#).

A document appended to these two extraordinary letters explains what happened next, in the '340th Year of Edessa' (probably about 30 CE): Following the crucifixion, St Thomas sent Thaddeus (also called Addai) to Edessa; Addai is called 'one of the Seventy', meaning the 70 disciples sent on missionary work by Jesus (Lk 10:1-24). This Thaddeus/Addai is not the same as St Jude the Apostle, also called Thaddeus; some even doubt that St Addai and Thaddeus of Edessa are the same person but the tradition clearly points to a single person.

AUTHORSHIP AND PROVENANCE

We have no sure way to determine whether or not these letters are authentic - but it is unlikely that a letter written by Jesus would have been 'lost' for over 250 years. However, of this correspondence, there survives not only a Syriac text but an Armenian translation, two Greek versions (shorter than the Syriac), and several inscriptions on stone. Some have argued the legend was written without sources to reinforce group cohesiveness, orthodoxy, and apostolic succession against heretical schismatics; however, several distinct sources, known to have not been in contact with one another, claimed to have seen the letters in the archives, so that argument is suspect.

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ΑΝΤΙΓΡΑΦΟΝ ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗΣ ΓΡΑΦΕΙΣΗΣ ΥΠΟ ΑΒΓΑΡΟΥ ΤΟΠΑΡΧΟΥ
ΤΩΙ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΠΕΜΦΘΕΙΣΗΣ ΑΥΤΩΙ
ΔΙ' ΑΝΑΝΙΟΥ ΤΑΧΥΔΡΟΜΟΥ ΕΙΣ ΙΕΡΟΣΟΛΥΜΑ

¹ Αβγαρος Ούχαμα τοπάρχης Ἰησοῦ σωτῆρι ἀγαθῷ ἀναφανέντι ἐν τόπῳ Ἱεροσολύμων χαίρειν. ² ἤκουσαί μοι τὰ περὶ σοῦ καὶ τῶν σῶν ἰαμάτων, ὡς ἄνευ φαρμάκων καὶ βοτανῶν ὑπὸ σοῦ γινομένων. ³ ὡς γὰρ λόγος, τυφλοὺς ἀναβλέπειν ποιεῖς, χωλοὺς περιπατεῖν, καὶ λεπροὺς καθαρῖεις, καὶ ἀκάθαρτα πνεύματα καὶ δαίμονας ἐκβάλλεις, καὶ τοὺς ἐν μακρονοσίᾳ βασανιζομένους θεραπεύεις, καὶ νεκροὺς ἐγείρεις. ⁴ καὶ ταῦτα πάντα ἀκούσας περὶ σοῦ, κατὰ νοῦν ἐθέμην τὸ ἕτερον τῶν δύο, ἢ ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ θεὸς καὶ καταβάς ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ποιεῖς ταῦτα, ἢ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ ποιῶν ταῦτα. ⁵ διὰ τοῦτο τοίνυν γράψας ἐδεήθην σου σκυλῆναι πρὸς με καὶ τὸ πάθος, ὃ ἔχω, θεραπεῦσαι. ⁶ καὶ γὰρ ἤκουσα ὅτι καὶ Ἰουδαῖοι καταγογγύζουσί σου καὶ βούλονται κακῶσαί σε. ⁷ πόλις δὲ μικροτάτη μοί ἐστι καὶ σεμνή, ἣτις ἐξαρκεῖ ἀμφοτέρους.

ΤΑ ΑΝΤΙΓΡΑΦΕΝΤΑ ΥΠΟ ΙΗΣΟΥ
ΔΙΑ ΑΝΑΝΙΟΥ ΤΑΧΥΔΡΟΜΟΥ ΤΟΠΑΡΧΗΙ ΑΒΓΑΡΩΙ

¹ Μακάριος εἰ πιστεύσας ἐν ἐμοί, μὴ ἑορακῶς με. ² γέγραπται γὰρ περὶ ἐμοῦ τοὺς ἑορακότας με μὴ πιστεύσειν ἐν ἐμοί, καὶ ἵνα οἱ μὴ ἑορακότες με αὐτοὶ πιστεύσωσι καὶ ζήσονται. ³ περὶ δὲ οὗ ἔγραψάς μοι ἐλθεῖν πρὸς σέ, δέον ἐστὶ πάντα δι' ἃ

A COPY OF A LETTER WRITTEN BY ABGARUS THE TOPARCH
TO JESUS AND SENT TO HIM
BY MEANS OF ANANIAS THE RUNNER, TO JERUSALEM

¹ Abgarus Uchama, the toparch, to Jesus the good Saviour that has appeared in the parts (place) of Jerusalem, greetings. ² I have heard concerning you and your cures, that they are done by you without drugs or herbs. ³ For, as the report goes, you make blind men to see again, lame to walk, and cleanse lepers, and cast out unclean spirits and devils, and those that are afflicted with long sickness you heal, and you raise the dead. ⁴ And, having heard all this of you, I had determined one of two things, either that you are God come down from heaven, and so does these things, or are a Son of God that does these things. ⁵ Therefore, now have I written and entreated thee to trouble yourself to come to me and heal the affliction which I have. ⁶ For, indeed, I have heard that the Jews even murmur against you and wish to do you harm. ⁷ And I have a very little city but (and) comely (reverend), which is sufficient for us both.

THE ANSWER, WRITTEN BY JESUS,
SENT BY ANANIAS THE RUNNER TO ABGARUS THE TOPARCH

¹ Blessed are you that have believed in me, not having seen me. ² For, it is written concerning me that those who have seen me shall not believe in me, and that those who have not seen me shall believe and live. ³ But, concerning that which you have

ἀπεστάλην ἐνταῦθα, πληρῶσαι καὶ μετὰ τὸ πληρῶσαι οὕτως ἀναληφθῆναι πρὸς τὸν ἀποστείλαντά με. ⁴ καὶ ἐπειδὴν ἀναληφθῶ, ἀποστελῶ σοὶ τινὰ τῶν μαθητῶν μου, ἵνα ἰάσηταί σου τὸ πάθος καὶ ζωήν σοι καὶ τοῖς σὺν σοὶ παράσχηται.

written to me, to come to you: I must fulfil all things for which I was sent here and, after fulfilling them, should then be taken up to him that sent me. ⁴ And, when I am taken up, I will send you one of my disciples, to heal your affliction and give life to you and those who are with you.