**The Apocalypse of Peter**

*(Translation by M.R. James, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1924 – with minor modernisations.)*

1. **The Akhmim Fragment**

“… **1**Many of them shall be false prophets and shall teach ways and diverse doctrines of perdition. **2**And they shall become sons of perdition. **3**And then shall God come to my faithful ones who hunger and thirst and are afflicted and prove their souls in this life and shall judge the sons of iniquity.”

**4**And the Lord added and said, “Let us go to the mountain (and) pray.” **5**And, going with him, we the twelve disciples besought him that he would show us one of our righteous brethren that had departed out of the world, that we might see what manner of men they are in their form, and take courage, and encourage also the men that should hear us.

**6**And, as we prayed, suddenly there appeared two men standing before the Lord *[to the east]* on whom we were not able to look. **7**For, there issued from their countenance a ray as of the sun, and their raiment was shining so as the eye of man never saw the like; for, no mouth is able to declare nor heart to conceive the glory wherewith they were clad and the beauty of their countenance. **8**Whom when we saw we were astonied; for, their bodies were whiter than any snow and redder than any rose. **9**And the redness of them was mingled with the whiteness, and, in a word, I am not able to declare their beauty. **10**For, their hair was curling and flourishing (flowery) and fell comely about their countenance and their shoulders like a garland woven of nard and various flowers, or like a rainbow in the air; such was their comeliness.

**11**We, then, seeing their beauty, were astonied at them; for, they appeared suddenly. **12**And I drew near to the Lord and said, “Who are these?” **13**He said to me, “These are your (our) righteous brethren whose appearance you desired to see.” **14**And I said to him, “And where are all the righteous? Or of what sort is the world wherein they are, and possess this glory?” **15**And the Lord showed me a very great region outside this world, exceedingly bright with light, and the air of that place illuminated with the beams of the sun, and the earth of itself flowering with blossoms that fade not, and full of spices and plants, fair-flowering and incorruptible, and bearing blessed fruit. **16**And so great was the blossom that the odour thereof was borne thence even unto us.

**17**And the dwellers in that place were clad with the raiment of shining angels, and their raiment was like their land.

**18**And angels ran round about them there. **19**And the glory of them who dwelt there was all equal and, with one voice, they praised the Lord God, rejoicing in that place.

**20**The Lord said to us, “This is the place of your leaders (or, high priests), the righteous men.”

**21**And I saw also another place over against that one, very squalid; and it was a place of punishment, and those who were punished and the angels that punished them had their raiment dark, according to the air of the place. **22**And some there were there hanging by their tongues; and these were those who blasphemed the way of righteousness and, under them, was laid fire flaming and tormenting them.

**23**And there was a great lake full of flaming mire, wherein were certain men that turned away from righteousness; and angels, tormentors, were set over them.

**24**And there were also others, women, hanged by their hair above that mire that boiled up; and these were those who adorned themselves for adultery.

And the men that were joined with them in the defilement of adultery were hanging by their feet, and had their heads hidden in the mire, and said, “We believed not that we should come unto this place.”

**25**And I saw the murderers, and those who were consenting to them, cast into a strait place full of evil, creeping things, and smitten by those beasts, and so turning themselves about in that torment. And, on them, were set worms like clouds of darkness. And the souls of them who were murdered stood and looked upon the torment of those murderers and said, “O God, righteous is your judgement.”

**26**And, hard by that place, I saw another strait place wherein the discharge and the stench of them that were in torment ran down, and there was as it were a lake there. And there sat women up to their necks in that liquor, and over against them many children which were born out of due time sat crying; and from them went forth rays of fire and smote the women in the eyes; and these were those who conceived out of wedlock (?) and caused abortion.

**27**And other men and women were being burned up to their middle and cast down in a dark place and scourged by evil spirits, and having their entrails devoured by worms that did not rest. And these were those who had persecuted the righteous and delivered them up.

**28**And, near to them again, were women and men gnawing their lips and in torment, and having iron heated in the fire set against their eyes. And these were those who blasphemed and spoke evil of the way of righteousness.

**29**And, over against these, were yet others, men and women, gnawing their tongues and having flaming fire in their mouths. And these were the false witnesses.

**30**And, in another place, were gravel-stones sharper than swords or any spit, heated with fire, and men and women clad in filthy rags rolled on them in torment. *[This is suggested by the LXX of two passages in Job: 41:30, his bed is of sharp spits; 8:17, on a heap of stones does he rest and shall live in the midst of gravel-stones.]* And these were those who were rich and trusted in their riches and had no pity upon orphans and widows but neglected the commandments of God.

**31**And, in another great lake full of foul matter (pus) and blood and boiling mire, stood men and women up to their knees. And these were those who lent money and demanded usury upon usury.

**32**And other men and women being cast down from a great rock (precipice) fell (came) to the bottom and, again, were driven by them who were set over them, to go up upon the rock, and thence were cast down to the bottom and had no rest from this torment. And these were those who defiled their bodies by behaving as women; and the women who were with them were those who lay with one another as a man with a woman.

**33**And, beside that rock, was a place full of much fire, and there stood men who, with their own hands, had made images for themselves instead of God, *[And beside them other men and women]* having rods of fire and smiting one another and never resting from this manner of torment …

**34**And yet others near them, men and women, burning and turning themselves about and roasted as in a pan. And these were those who forsook the way of God.

1. **The Ethiopic Text**

The Second Coming of Christ and Resurrection of the Dead (which Christ revealed unto Peter) who died because of their sins; for, they did not keep the commandment of God their creator.

And he (Peter) pondered thereon, that he might perceive the mystery of the Son of God, the merciful and lover of mercy.

And, when the Lord was seated upon the Mount of Olives, his disciples came to him.

And we besought and entreated him severally and prayed him, saying to him, “Declare to us what are the signs of thy coming and of the end of the world, so we may perceive and mark the time of your coming and instruct those who come after us, to whom we preach the word of your gospel, and whom we set over (in) your church, so, when they hear it, they may take heed to themselves and mark the time of your coming.”

And our Lord answered us, saying, “Take heed that no man deceives you, and that you are not doubters and serve other gods. Many shall come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ.’ Do not believe them, neither draw near to them. For, the coming of the Son of God shall not be plain (i.e. foreseen); but, as the lightning that shines from the east to the west, so will I come on the clouds of heaven with a great host in my majesty; with my cross going before my face, I will come in my majesty; shining sevenfold more than the sun, I will come in my majesty with all my saints, my angels (my holy angels). And my Father shall set a crown upon my head, that I may judge the quick and the dead and recompense every man according to his works.

And you, take the likeness thereof (learn a parable) from the fig-tree: as soon as the shoot thereof comes forth and the twigs grow, the end of the world shall come.

And I, Peter, answered and said to him, “Interpret to me concerning the fig-tree, whereby we shall perceive it; for, throughout all its days does the fig-tree send forth shoots, and every year it brings forth its fruit for its master. What then does the parable of the fig-tree mean? We know it not.”

And the Master (Lord) answered and said to me, “Do you not understand that the fig-tree is the house of Israel? Even as a man that planted a fig-tree in his garden, and it brought forth no fruit. And he sought the fruit thereof many years and, when he found it not, he said to the keeper of his garden, ‘Root up this fig-tree, so it does not make our ground unfruitful.’ And the gardener said to God, ‘(Suffer us) to rid it of weeds and dig the ground round about it and water it. If then, it bears no fruit, we will straightway remove its roots from the garden and plant another in place of it.’ Have you not understood that the fig-tree is the house of Israel? Truly, I say to you, when the twigs thereof have sprouted forth in the last days, then shall feigned Christs come and awake expectation saying, ‘I am the Christ, that am now come into the world.’ And, when they (Israel) shall perceive the wickedness of their deeds, they shall turn away after them and deny him [whom our fathers did praise], even the first Christ whom they crucified and therein sinned a great sin. But this deceiver is not the Christ. *[something is wrong here: the sense required is that Israel perceives the wickedness of antichrist and does not follow him.]* And, when they reject him, he shall slay with the sword, and there shall be many martyrs. Then shall the twigs of the fig-tree – that is, the house of Israel – shoot forth; many shall become martyrs at his hand. Enoch and Elias shall be sent to teach them that this is the deceiver that must come into the world and do signs and wonders to deceive. And, therefore, shall they who die by his hand be martyrs, and shall be reckoned among the good and righteous martyrs who have pleased God in their life.” *[Hermas, Vision III.i.9, speaks of “those that have already been well-pleasing unto God and have suffered for the Name’s sake.”]*

And he showed me in his right hand the souls of all men. And, on the palm of his right hand, the image of that which shall be accomplished at the last day; and how the righteous and the sinners shall be separated, and how they do that are upright in heart, and how the evildoers shall be rooted out unto all eternity. We beheld how the sinners wept (weep) in great affliction and sorrow, until all that saw it with their eyes wept, whether righteous or angels, and he himself also.

And I asked him and said unto him, “Lord, suffer me to speak your word concerning the sinners: It were better for them if they had not been created.” And the Saviour answered and said to me, “Peter, why do you speak thus, that not to have been created were better for them? You resist God. You would not have more compassion than he for his image; for, he has created them and brought them forth out of not being. Now, because you have seen the lamentation that shall come on the sinners in the last days, therefore is your heart troubled; but I will show you their works, whereby they have sinned against the Most High.

“Behold now what shall come on them in the last days, when the day of God and the day of the decision of the judgement of God comes. From the east to the west shall all the children of men be gathered together before my Father who lives for ever. And he shall command hell to open its bars of adamant and give up all that is therein.

“And the wild beasts and the fowls shall he command to restore all the flesh that they have devoured, because he wills that men should appear; for, nothing perishes before God, and nothing is impossible with him, because all things are his.

“For, all things come to pass on the day of decision, on the day of judgement, at the word of God; and, as all things were done when he created the world and commanded all that is therein and it was done, even so shall it be in the last days; for, all things are possible with God. And, therefore, says he in the scripture, *[Ezk 37]* “Son of man, prophesy on the several bones and say to the bones, ‘Bone to bone in joints, sinew. nerves, flesh and skin and hair thereon *[and soul and spirit]*.’”

And soul and spirit shall the great Uriel give them at the commandment of God; for, him has God set over the rising again of the dead at the day of judgement.

Behold and consider the corns of wheat that are sown in the earth. As things dry and without soul do men sow them in the earth; and they live again and bear fruit, and the earth restores them as a pledge entrusted unto it.

*And this that dies, which is sown as seed in the earth, and shall become alive and be restored unto life, is man. [Probably a gloss.]*

How much more shall God raise up on the day of decision those who believe in him and are chosen of him, for whose sake he made the world? And all things shall the earth restore on the day of decision; for, it also shall be judged with them, and the heaven with it.

And this shall come at the day of judgement on them who have fallen away from faith in God and that have committed sin: Floods (cataracts) of fire shall be let loose; and darkness and obscurity shall come up and clothe and veil the whole world and the waters shall be changed and turned into coals of fire and all that is in them shall burn, and the sea shall become fire. Under the heaven shall be a sharp fire that cannot be quenched and flows to fulfil the judgement of wrath. And the stars shall fly in pieces by flames of fire, as if they had not been created and the powers (firmaments) of the heaven shall pass away for lack of water and shall be as though they had not been. And the lightning of heaven shall be no more and, by their enchantment, they shall frighten the world *[probably: The heaven shall turn to lightning and the lightning thereof shall frighten the world]*. The spirits also of the dead bodies shall be like unto them (the lightning?) and shall become fire at the commandment of God.

And, as soon as the whole creation dissolves, the men that are in the east shall flee to the west, to the east; they who are in the south shall flee to the north, and they who are in the south. And, in all places, shall the wrath of a fearful fire overtake them and an unquenchable flame driving them shall bring them unto the judgement of wrath, to the stream of unquenchable fire that flows, flaming with fire; and, when the waves thereof part themselves one from another, burning, there shall be a great gnashing of teeth among the children of men.

Then shall they all behold me coming on an eternal cloud of brightness; and the angels of God that are with me shall sit *[probably: And I shall sit]* on the throne of my glory at the right hand of my Heavenly Father; and he shall set a crown upon my head. And, when the nations behold it, they shall weep, every nation apart.

Then shall he command them to enter into the river of fire while the works of every one of them shall stand before them *[something is wanting]* to every man according to his deeds. As for the elect that have done good, they shall come to me and not see death by the devouring fire. But the unrighteous, the sinners, and the hypocrites shall stand in the depths of darkness that shall not pass away, and their chastisement is the fire, and angels bring forward their sins and prepare for them a place wherein they shall be punished for ever (every one according to his transgression).

Uriel, the angel of God, shall bring forth the souls of those sinners [every one according to his transgression: *perhaps this clause should end the preceding paragraph*] who perished in the flood, and of all that dwelt in all idols, in every molten image, in every (object of) love, and in pictures, and of those who dwelt on all hills and in stones and by the wayside, whom men called gods; they shall burn them with them *[the objects in which they dwelt, or their worshippers?]* in everlasting fire; and after that all of them with their dwelling places are destroyed, they shall be punished eternally.

Then shall men and women come to the place prepared for them. By their tongues with which they have blasphemed the way of righteousness shall they be hanged up. There is spread under them unquenchable fire, which they cannot escape.

Behold, another place; therein is a pit, great and full (of …). In it are those who have denied righteousness; and angels of punishment chastise them and there they kindle on them the fire of their torment.

And again behold *[two: corrupt]* women; they hang them up by their neck and by their hair; they shall cast them into the pit. These are those who plaited their hair, not for good (or, not to make them beautiful) but to turn them to fornication, that they might ensnare the souls of men to perdition. And the men who lay with them in fornication shall be hung by their loins in that place of fire; and they shall say one to another, “We knew not that we should come unto everlasting punishment.”

And the murderers and those who have made common cause with them shall they cast into the fire, in a place full of venomous beasts, and they shall be tormented without rest, feeling their pains; and their worms shall be as many in number as a dark cloud. And the angel Ezrael shall bring forth the souls of those who have been slain, and they shall behold the torment of those who slew them, and say one to another, “Righteousness and justice is the judgement of God. For, we heard, but we believed not, that we should come into this place of eternal judgement.”

And, near this flame, shall be a pit, great and very deep, and into it flows from above all manner of torment, foulness, and issue. And women are swallowed up therein up to their necks and tormented with great pain. These are those who have caused their children to be born untimely and have corrupted the work of God that created them. Over against them shall be another place where sit their children [both] alive, and they cry to God. And flashes *(lightning)* go forth from those children and pierce the eyes of them who, for fornication’s, sake have caused their destruction.

Other men and women shall stand above them, naked; and their children stand over against them in a place of delight, and sigh and cry to God because of their parents, saying, “These are those who have despised and cursed and transgressed your commandments and delivered us to death; they have cursed the angel that formed us, and have hanged us up, and withheld from us *[or, begrudged us]* the light which you have given to all creatures.” And the milk of their mothers flowing from their breasts shall congeal and, from it, shall come beasts devouring flesh, which shall come forth and turn and torment them for ever with their husbands, because they forsook the commandments of God and slew their children. As for their children, they shall be delivered unto the angel Temlakos. And they who slew them shall be tormented eternally; for, God wills it so.

Ezrael, the angel of wrath, shall bring men and women, the half of their bodies burning, and cast them into a place of darkness, even the hell of men; and a spirit of wrath shall chastise them with all manner of torment, and a worm that sleeps not shall devour their entrails; and these are the persecutors and betrayers of my righteous ones.

And beside them that are there, shall be other men and women, gnawing their tongues; and they shall torment them with red-hot iron and burn their eyes. These are those who slander and doubt my righteousness. Other men and women whose works were done in deceitfulness shall have their lips cut off, and fire will enter into their mouth and their entrails. These are the false witnesses *[these are they that caused the martyrs to die by their lying]*.

And beside them, in a place near at hand, on the stone, shall be a pillar of fire, and the pillar is sharper than swords. And there shall be men and women clad in rags and filthy garments, and they shall be cast thereon, to suffer the judgement of a torment that never ceases; these are those who trusted in their riches and despised the widows and the woman with fatherless children … before God.

And into another place hard by, full of filth, do they cast men and women up to the knees. These are those who lent money and took usury.

And other men and women cast themselves down from a high place and return again and run, and devils drive them. *[These are the worshippers of idols]* and they put them to the end of their wits *(drive them up to the top of the height)* and they cast themselves down. And they do this continually and are tormented for ever. These are those who have cut their flesh as *[apostles]* of a man; and the women who were with them … and these are the men who defiled themselves together as women. *[This is very corrupt: but the sense is clear in the Greek.]*

And beside them *[shall be a brazier?]* … and beneath them shall the angel Ezrael prepare a place of much fire; and all the idols of gold and silver, all idols, the work of men’s hands, and the semblances of images of cats and lions, of creeping things and wild beasts, and the men and women who have prepared the images thereof, shall be in chains of fire and shall be chastised because of their error before the idols, and this is their judgement for ever. *[In the Greek, they beat each other with rods of fire, and this is better.]*

And beside them shall be other men and women, burning in the fire of the judgement, and their torment is everlasting. These are those who have forsaken the commandment of God and followed the *[persuasions?]* of devils.

And there shall be another place, very high *[corrupt sentences follow; some render, doubtfully: There shall be a furnace and a brazier wherein shall burn fire. The fire that shall burn shall come from one end of the brazier]*. The men and women whose feet slip shall go rolling down into a place where there is fear. And again, while the fire that is prepared flows, they mount up and fall down again and continue to roll down. *[This suggests a narrow bridge over a stream of fire which they keep trying to cross.]* Thusly shall they be tormented for ever. These are those who did not honour their father and mother and of their own accord withheld (withdrew) themselves from them. Therefore, they shall be chastised eternally.

Furthermore, the angel Ezrael shall bring children and maidens to show them those who are tormented. They shall be chastised with pains, with hanging up (?) and with a multitude of wounds that flesh-devouring birds shall inflict upon them. These are those who boast themselves (trust) in their sins and do not obey their parents and do not follow the instruction of their fathers, and do not honour them who are more aged than they.

Beside them shall be girls clad in darkness for a garment and they shall be sorely chastised and their flesh shall be torn in pieces. These are those who did not keep their virginity until they were given in marriage; and, with these torments shall they be punished, and shall feel them.

And again, other men and women, gnawing their tongues without ceasing, and being tormented with everlasting fire. These are the servants (slaves) that were not obedient unto their masters; and this then is their judgement for ever.

And hard by this place of torment shall be men and women dumb and blind, whose raiment is white. They shall crowd one another and fall on coals of unquenchable fire. These are those who give alms and say, “We are righteous before God,” whereas they have not sought righteousness.

Ezrael, the angel of God, shall bring them forth out of this fire and establish a judgement of decision. This, then, is their judgement. A river of fire shall flow and all judgement (they that are judged) shall be drawn down into the middle of the river. And Uriel shall set them there.

And there are wheels of fire and men and women hung thereon by the strength of the whirling thereof. And they who are in the pit shall burn; now, these are the sorcerers and sorceresses. Those wheels shall be in all decision (judgement, punishment) by fire without number.

Thereafter shall the angels bring my elect and righteous who are perfect in all uprightness, and bear them in their hands, and clothe them with the raiment of the life that is above. They shall see their desire on them that hated them, when he punishes them, and the torment of every one shall be for ever according to his works.

And all those who are in torment shall say with one voice, “Have mercy on us; for, now we know the judgement of God, which he declared to us before, and we did not believe.” And the angel Tatirokos *[Tartaruchus, keeper of hell: a word corresponding in form to Temeluchus]* shall come and chastise them with yet greater torment, and say to them, “Now do you repent, when it is no longer the time for repentance, and nought of life remains.” And they shall say, “Righteous is the judgement of God; for, we have heard and perceived that his judgement is good; for, we are recompensed according to our deeds.”

Then will I give to my elect and righteous the washing *[baptism]* and the salvation for which they have besought me, in the field of Akrosja *[Acherousia, a lake in other writings, e.g. Apocalypse of Moses, where the soul of Adam is washed in it]*, which is called Aneslasleja *[Elysium]*. They shall adorn with flowers the portion of the righteous, and I shall go … I shall rejoice with them. I will cause the peoples to enter in to my everlasting kingdom and show them that eternal thing *[life?]* whereon I have made them to set their hope, even I and my Father who is in heaven.

I have spoken this to you, Peter, and declared it to you. Go forth, therefore, and go unto the land (or city) of the west. *[Some omit the next sentences as unintelligible, others render: and enter into the vineyard that I shall tell you of, in order that by the sickness (sufferings) of the Son who is without sin the deeds of corruption may be sanctified. As for you, you are chosen according to the promise that I have given you. Spread, therefore, my gospel throughout all the world in peace. Truly, men shall rejoice; my words shall be the source of hope and of life, and suddenly shall the world be ravished.]*

And my Lord Jesus Christ our King said to me, “Let us go to the holy mountain.” And his disciples went with him, praying. And behold there were two men there, and we could not look upon their faces; for, a light came from them, shining more than the sun, and their raiment also was shining, and cannot be described, and nothing is sufficient to be compared unto them in this world. And the sweetness of them … that no mouth is able to utter the beauty of their appearance; for, their aspect was astonishing and wonderful. And the other, great, I say *[probably: and, in a word, I cannot describe it]*, shineth in his (sic) aspect above crystal. Like the flower of roses is the appearance of the colour of his aspect and of his body … his head *[was a marvel]*. And on his (their) shoulders *[evidently, something about their hair has dropped out]* and on their foreheads was a crown of nard woven of fair flowers. As the rainbow in the water, *[probably: in the time of rain – from the LXX of Ezk 1:28]* so was their hair. And such was the comeliness of their countenance, adorned with all manner of ornament. And, when we saw them on a sudden, we marvelled. And I drew near unto the Lord (God) Jesus Christ and said unto him, “O my Lord, who are these?” And he said to me, “They are Moses and Elias.” And I said to him, “Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the rest of the righteous fathers?” And he showed us a great garden, open, full of fair trees and blessed fruits, and of the odour of perfumes. The fragrance thereof was pleasant and came even unto us. And thereof *[of that tree]* … I saw much fruit. And my Lord and God Jesus Christ said unto me, “Have you seen the companies of the fathers?

“As is their rest, such also is the honour and the glory of them who are persecuted for my righteousness’ sake.” And I rejoiced and believed and understood what is written in the book of my Lord Jesus Christ. And I said unto him, “O my Lord, do you wish that I make here three tabernacles, one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elias?” And he said to me in wrath, “Satan makes war against you, and has veiled your understanding; and the good things of this world prevail against you. Your eyes, therefore, must be opened and your ears unstopped, that a tabernacle, not made with men’s hands, which my heavenly Father has made for me and for the elect.” And we beheld it and were full of gladness.

And behold, suddenly there came a voice from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; my commandments.” And then came a great and exceedingly white cloud over our heads that bore away our Lord and Moses and Elias. And I trembled and was afraid; and we looked up and the heavens opened and we beheld men in the flesh, and they came and greeted our Lord and Moses and Elias and went into another heaven. And the word of the scripture was fulfilled, “This is the generation that seeks him and seeks the face of the God of Jacob.” And great fear and commotion was there in heaven and the angels pressed one another that the word of the scripture might be fulfilled, which says, “Open the gates, you princes.”

Thereafter was the heaven shut, which had been open.

And we prayed and went down from the mountain, glorifying God, who has written the names of the righteous in heaven in the book of life.