

Here's What Happened to Brother Jacob.

A folk-gospel version of The Hidden Book of James.
(<http://www.gnosis.org/naghamm/jam.html> - Ed.)

This book is remarkable not only for its Zen-like instruction on various aspects of the Gnostic Path (see, for example, the discussion on fullness versus diminishment), but also for its radically individualist soteriology. The Jesus of The Hidden Book of James openly mocks his disciples, reiterating the point in a number of places that the best way to achieve the Kingdom and gain the Father's favor is to do it on your own, without getting any help.

From Jacob: Peace, love, grace, faith and life from Blessed Life! When you asked me to write to you about what the Teacher told me and Simon Peter, I couldn't say no, but I also couldn't give you this information directly. So, I wrote it in our language and I'm sending it "for your eyes only." Since you're a minister in our church and for our saints, and since the Teacher didn't tell these things to all twelve of his disciples, be careful about who you tell this to. Anybody you do share this with, though, is very lucky if they believe it. About ten months ago I sent you some other information the teacher told me, and you should treat this the same way you treated that one.

So, the twelve students were all gathered together, going over what we'd been told by the teacher both one-on-one or openly, and writing these teachings in books. While I was writing my book, the Teacher reappeared even though we thought he'd left us. Five-hundred and fifty days after his resurrection, we asked him, "So have you up and left us for good?"

He said, "Not yet, but I'll be leaving real soon. If you want to come along, then come on!"

We all replied, "If you call us, we'll come along."

He replied, "Listen up: Nobody'll get into Heaven simply because I called him. You'll only get in because of your own fullness. Jacob and Peter, come with me. I'm going to fill you up." So he called us, and took us aside, and told everybody else to get back to what they'd been doing.

The Teacher told me and Peter, "You've received mercy that emptied you out, so don't you want to be filled? Isn't your heart drunk? So don't you want to sober up? If so, you should be ashamed of yourselves! Now, whenever you're awake or asleep, you should remember that you've seen the Human Son, and spoken with him and listened to him.

"Too bad for the ones who've seen the Human Son. You're lucky indeed if you haven't seen him or kept his company, or had a conversation with him. You get to live! What you should know is that he healed you when you were sick so that you could be a ruler. Too bad for you if you've rested from your

sickness, because you'll get sick again. The really lucky ones haven't ever been sick, and rested up before their illness. You get the Kingdom of Heaven. This is why I'm telling you: get filled up and make sure nothing empty is inside you, since the one who's on the way is going to make fun of you and laugh at you!"

Then Peter said, "Teacher, you've told us three times to 'be full,' but we are full."

The teacher replied, "I'm emphasizing this because I don't want to see you lessen. Those who lessen can't be saved. Fullness is good, but diminishment is bad. But listen, it's also good for you to lessen and bad to be filled; the filled one is diminished, and the diminished one isn't filled as the one who is lessened is filled, and the filled one completes his fullness. That's why it's good to be lessened while you can still be filled, and filled while it's still possible to lessen, so that you can fill up even more. Here's the key: become full of spirit but empty of reason. Reason, you see, comes from the soul, and is the soul."

So I said, "Teacher, we'll do whatever you say. After all, we've left our fathers and mothers and villages and followed you. So help us escape the evils of the Archon."

He answered, "What good is it to walk the Way of the Father if it isn't given to you to do so while you're being tempted by the Archon? If you're oppressed by the Archon and persecuted for walking the Way, the Father will love you and make you my equal, because he'll know you're with him because of free will, not because he gave you all this help. Won't you stop worrying so much about the flesh and being so afraid of suffering? Or haven't you realized yet that you haven't even really been mistreated, unjustly singled out, imprisoned, unfairly condemned, wrongfully crucified and shamefully buried like I was by the Archon? Do you really want to save your flesh, you who are surrounded by spirit like a wall? When you really think about the world, and think about how much time has come before you and how much will come after, you'll realize that your whole life was one single day, and your sufferings one single hour. Nothing in the world is perfect. Stop focusing on death, and start thinking about life! Think about my cross and my death and you'll live forever!"

I couldn't help but reply, "Teacher, don't talk about the cross and death; that's so far away from us now."

He said, "Look, nobody can be saved unless they know about the cross. The ones who know about the cross will get the Kingdom. So really you should be interested in death, in the same way the dead look for life, because since they're seeking, they'll find it. So why should they worry? When you start to look towards death, you'll know what being chosen means. Here's the truth: if you're afraid of death, you won't be saved. The Kingdom of God belongs to the suicides. You should try to be better than I am; you should be like the son of the Holy Spirit."

Next I asked him, "How can we prophecy to people who ask us to prophecize for them?"

He replied, "Don't you know that the head of prophecy was cut off with John the Baptist?"

I said, "Teacher, how could the head of prophecy possibly be removed?"

He answered, "When you learn what I mean by 'head,' and how prophecy comes from it, then you'll know what I mean by 'it's head was removed.' I used to tell you stories and you didn't get it. Now I'm speaking openly with you and you still don't get it. Still, you are, to me, a story wrapped in stories and what is visible out in the open.

"Try to be saved without having to be reminded. Be ready on your own and, if possible, be saved before I am. If you can, the Father will love you.

"Despise hypocrisy and wicked thoughts. Thought births hypocrisy, and hypocrisy is nowhere near the truth.

"Don't let the Kingdom of Heaven wither away inside you. It's like a date palm shoot that drops its fruits. When the leaves bud after the fruit drops, it loses its fertility and fruitfulness. It's also like a fruit that comes from a single root. When the fruit ripens, it gets collected by many harvesters. It would sure be good if we could produce these new plants now, because then you'd find the Kingdom of Heaven.

"Since I've already been glorified, why do you people try to keep me here when I'm ready to leave? You've already asked me to stay eighteen more days just to explain these parables. Some people were fine with just paying attention to what I was saying the first time, when I told you about 'The Shepherds' and 'The Seed' and 'The Building' and 'The Virgins and Their Lamps' and 'The Workers' Wages' and 'The Double Drachma' and 'The Woman.'

"You should be excited about the Word! The Word's first condition is faith, the second love and the third work. From these things comes life. The Word is like a grain of corn. When somebody sows it, he 'believes' it will grow; when it sprouts, he 'loves' it because he looks forward to its seeding; and when he 'works' it, he's saved, because he'll be well-fed from it. Then he leaves some kernels aside to sow. Of course, this is also how it's possible for you to come to the Kingdom of Heaven: unless you receive it through gnosis, you won't find it.

"So this is why I'm telling you, be sober! Don't leave the Path! I've told you plenty of times when we were all together-- and also when you and I were alone, James-- to be saved! I've told you to do as I do, and I taught you how to act when the Archons are around. See how I've come down, spoken, concerned myself and received my crown by speaking to you. I came down

to live with you so that you can eventually live with me. Then I found out that your houses didn't have any ceilings, so I lived in houses that could take me in when I descended.

"So do what I say, my brothers. Understand the Limitless Light. The Father doesn't need me; the Father doesn't need a son, but a Son needs a Father. I'm going to him, because I don't need you!

"Listen well to the Word. Understand gnosis. Love life. Do these things, and you'll be your only oppressors.

"You terrible, unfortunate liars! You false Gnostics! You sinners against the spirit! How dare you listen now, when you should have been speaking since the beginning? How dare you sleep now, when you should have been awake since the beginning so you could be received by the Kingdom? I'm serious about this: it's easier for somebody holy to be defiled, or for someone enlightened to sink into darkness, than for you to reign. Or even not to reign!

"I remembered your tears and sadness and mourning, but they're long gone. Now, you who aren't in the Father's will, you should go ahead and wail and cry and shout the good news, since the Human Son will be leaving. Listen up-- if I'd been sent to people who would actually listen to me, and if they were the ones to whom I had to speak, I'd never have come down in the first place. So go ahead and feel sorry because of them.

"Okay, I'm going to leave. I'm going because I don't want to stick around here anymore, ujust like you all. So, follow me, as soon as you can! I've come down here for you. You are the beloved, and you are going to save so many people. Pray to the Father. Pray to him often, and he'll give you what you ask. The people who see you with the Father when the angels and Aeons and Saints are the lucky ones! You get to live! Be happy and celebrate that you're God's children! Follow his Way so that you'll be saved. Listen to what I'm telling you, and save yourselves. I'm speaking to the Father for you, and he'll forgive you."

When he told us all this, we were extremely happy. We'd been pretty down because of what he'd told us before. Of course, when he saw how happy he was, he said, "You're in trouble if you need someone to speak on your behalf! You're also in trouble if you're depending on grace! The lucky ones are those who spoke freely and produced their own grace. You should be like foreigners-- how are they treated in your city? Why are you so worked up when you cast yourselves from your own city? Why is it that you left your house, leaving it vacant for squatters? You exiles and fugitives: you're going to be caught! Or maybe you think the Father loves humanity? Or that you can somehow change his mind by praying? Or that he's nice to someone because another asks? Or that he sticks around and supports the earnest seeker? He knows what the flesh wants-- the flesh doesn't seek after the soul. Without the soul, the body doesn't do any wrong, and the soul can't be saved without the Spirit. But if the soul is saved when it's no longer evil, and if the Spirit is saved, too, then the body becomes free from sin. The Spirit

animates the soul, but the body kills it-- so the soul kills itself. The Father isn't going to forgive the soul's errors, or the flesh's guilt. Nobody who has ever worn the flesh will be saved. Do you really think they've found the Kingdom of Heaven? The Lucky One is the person who's seen himself as the fourth one in Heaven."

These things really worried us. When the Teacher saw how freaked out we were, he said, "Look, I'm telling you these things so that you Know Yourselves! The Kingdom of Heaven is like an ear of corn that sprouted in a field, ripened, scattered its fruit and in turn filled the field for another year. So learn from this: you should want to try to reap yourselves an "ear of life" so you can be filled with the Kingdom!

"As long as I'm here, listen up and do what I say. But when I leave you, remember me! Remember me because when I was with you you never really knew me. The ones who've known me are lucky, but the ones who have heard and haven't believed are in trouble. The lucky ones are those who never saw me but still know what I mean.

"Once again, here's a story. I'm shown to you building a huge house that shelters you, but also supports your neighbors' houses when they're about to tumble. You're in trouble if I was sent down here to help you! You're lucky if you're going to ascend to the Father. Those of you who are had better make sure you're like those who aren't, so you'll join the ones who aren't.

"Don't let the Kingdom of Heaven become a wasteland within you. Don't become arrogant because of enlightenment. Instead, be for yourselves what I am to you. I've cursed myself to save you.

Peter replied to this: "Sometimes you prod us forward to the Kingdom, but sometimes you turn us away. Sometimes you urge us to faith and promise us eternal life, but sometimes you threaten to kick us out of the Kingdom. What's with this?"

The Teacher answered, "I've given you faith again and again. Even more, I've revealed myself to you all, but you haven't really known me. I've also seen you celebrating over and over again. When you're excited about the prospect of life, are you still down and sad? And are you worried and upset when I teach you about the Kingdom? But you've received this life through faith and gnosis. So stop paying attention to rejection; instead, when you hear the promise, be happy! Listen, the person who receives life and believes in the Kingdom will never leave it, *even if God decides to kick him out!*

"I'm telling you these things for now. But, it's time for me to return to the place from whence I came. When I was excited about leaving, you drove me out, and instead of coming along with me, you've chased after me. Pay attention to the glory that's waiting for me; please open your ears-- can't you hear the hymns that are waiting for me in heaven? Today I've got to sit at my Father's right hand. Now that's the last thing I have to say to you. I'm leaving. A chariot of spirit has taken me up, and I'm casting away my clothing so that I

can put on my robes. Listen, listen: the ones who spoke about the Son before he came down so that he could return when he descended are blessed. Thrice-blessed are those who were spoken of by the SON before they came into being, so that you can share with them."

When he finished speaking, he vanished. Peter and I dropped to our knees and shouted thanks, and sent our minds into the skies. We heard and saw visions of wars and great trumpeting calls and chaos.

Then our minds ascended past the place of chaos, further and further, and we saw and heard beautiful and angelic hymns and praises and celebration, and the voices of the Aeons, and we celebrated.

After this, we wanted to send our spirits even higher, to the Limitless Light, but then, just before we were able to see or hear anything, the rest of the disciples dragged us back down, calling out to us, "Hey, what did the Teacher tell you?" and "What did he say?" and "Where did he go?"

So we told them, "He's ascended. He's promised eternal life to us, and for our children whom we love, since we're going to be saved for their sake."

When the disciples heard this, they believed, but were angry that they'd have to share salvation with people who hadn't even been born. Seeing a potential for scandal, I split them up and sent them all to different places. I headed to Jerusalem, praying that I'd be saved with those loved ones who are yet to come.

And I pray that you are one of the ones to start this, so that I can be saved. You see, they'll be enlightened by my faith (and the faith of one better than I, for really mine is insignificant in comparison). Work hard, then, to become like them, and pray that you'll be able to join them. That's everything the Teacher told us, and so we're telling you this for their sake, those children who will come after us and will be saved according to the will of the Teacher.

- Eleleth