

The Dormition of Mary by Pseudo-John

Dating: 6th century

1. The Mother of God, all-holy, glorious, and ever-virgin Mary, was accustomed to visiting the holy tomb of our Lord to burn incense. There, on her knees, she implored Christ, who was born of her, our God, to come to her.
2. Seeing her frequent the divine tomb, the Jews went to the high priests and told them that Mary went every day to the tomb. The high priests called the guardians, who were charged with not allowing anyone to pray inside the holy tomb; they asked them if it was true. The guardians responded that they had never observed such a thing, for God did not allow them to see Mary when she was there.

APPEARANCE OF THE ARCHANGEL GABRIEL

3. One day, a Friday, Saint Mary went as usual to the tomb. While she prayed, the heavens opened, and Archangel Gabriel descended toward her and said: "Hail, O thou who hast borne Christ, our God! Thy prayer, reaching the heavens to him who was born of thee, has been heard. Soon, as you have requested, you will leave this world and go to the heavens, to your son, for the true and eternal life."
4. Having heard the words of the holy archangel, she returned to holy Bethlehem, accompanied by three young girls who served her. After resting briefly, she arose and asked the young girls: "Bring me a censer so that I may pray." They brought it to her as she had commanded.
5. And she offered a prayer, saying: "My Lord Jesus Christ, you who deigned in your great kindness to be born of me, hear my voice and send me your apostle John, that his presence may bring me the first joys. Also send me your other apostles, whether those who have already reached you or those

still in this age, wherever they may be by your holy command, that I may see them and bless your name celebrated with many hymns. I trust because in all things you hear your servant.”

GATHERING OF THE APOSTLES

6. While she prayed, I, John, arrived, the Holy Spirit having lifted me from Ephesus on a cloud and placed me where the mother of my Lord resided. Entering, I glorified him who was born of her and said: “Hail, O mother of my Lord, thou who hast given birth to Christ, our God! Rejoice, for you leave this life in great glory.”
7. And the holy Mother of God glorified God that I, John, had come to her, recalling the Lord’s word that declared: “Here is your mother!” and “Here is your son!” The three young girls approached and prostrated themselves.
8. The holy Mother of God said to me: “Pray and cast incense!” I prayed thus: “Lord Jesus Christ, who has wrought wonders, work wonders today in the presence of her who gave birth to you: may your mother depart this life and may those who crucified you and did not believe in you be struck with terror.”
9. After the prayer, Saint Mary said to me: “Bring me the censer.” She cast incense into it saying: “Glory to you, my God and Lord, for all that you promised me before ascending to the heavens has been fulfilled: ‘When I leave this world, you will come to me full of glory with a multitude of your angels.’”
10. I, John, said to her: “Our Lord Jesus Christ and our God will come, and you will see him as he promised you.” To this, the holy Mother of God replied, saying: “The Jews have sworn that, when I reach the end of my life, they will burn my body.” But I responded to her: “Your holy and precious body will not know corruption.” She replied: “Take the censer, cast incense and pray.” A voice from heaven then said: “Amen.”

11. I, John, listened to this voice and the Holy Spirit said to me: "John, did you hear this voice that spoke in heaven at the end of your prayer?" I replied saying: "Yes, I heard it." And the Holy Spirit said to me: "This voice, which you heard, is the signal of the imminent arrival of your brothers, the apostles, and the holy Power, for today they will come here."
12. Then, I, John, prayed for them. And the Holy Spirit said to the apostles: "Peter from Rome, Paul from the banks of the Tiber, Thomas from the heart of India, James from Jerusalem, all arriving at the same time on clouds from the ends of the earth, gather in holy Bethlehem, because of the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ who is deeply troubled."
13. Andrew, Peter's brother, Philip, Luke, Simon the Cananean, and Thaddeus, who were already asleep, were awakened from their tombs by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit told them: "Do not believe that it is now the resurrection. But you have been raised from your tomb to go and greet her to whom honor and a wondrous sign are granted, the mother of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, because the day of her departure and her ascent to the heavens has come."
14. Mark, who was still alive, came likewise from Alexandria, with others, as it had been said, arriving from each region.
15. Peter, lifted by a cloud, remained between heaven and earth, supported by the Holy Spirit, together with the other apostles, who had also been lifted on clouds, to meet with Peter. And thus, by the Holy Spirit, as it had been said, all together, they arrived.
16. Entering the presence of the mother of our Lord and God, we said, prostrating ourselves: "Do not be alarmed and do not be grieved. The Lord God, who was born of you, will gloriously lead you out of this world." And she, rejoicing in God her Savior, stood up from her bed and said to the apostles: "Now, I believe that our Master and God comes from the heavens, and I behold him; thus, since I have seen you arrive, I leave this life. Yet, I want you to tell me how you knew of my departure and how you came to

me, from which regions and in how much time you came, since you hurried so to visit me. Indeed, he has not hidden it from me, he who was born of me, our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of all things, for I have always believed, as I still believe, that he is the Son of the Most High.”

17. Peter replied, saying to the other apostles: “Let each tell the mother of our Lord what the Holy Spirit has announced and ordered us.”

18. And I, John, responded with these words: “I was approaching the holy altar, in Ephesus, to serve the Lord, when the Holy Spirit said to me: ‘The time of departure for the mother of your Lord has come. Go to Bethlehem to greet her.’ A luminous cloud lifted me and deposited me at the door of the house where you dwell.”

19. And Peter replied: “And I, being in Rome at dawn, heard a voice coming from the Holy Spirit saying: ‘The mother of your Lord must depart. The time is near. Go to Bethlehem to greet her.’ And behold, a luminous cloud lifted me, I saw the other apostles coming towards me on clouds, and I heard a voice saying: ‘All go to Bethlehem.’”

20. And Paul, in turn, said in response: “And I, being in a city not very far from Rome, in a region by the Tiber, heard the Holy Spirit saying to me: ‘The mother of your Lord is leaving this world for the heavens and is taking the departure of her course. Then, you too, go to Bethlehem to greet her.’ And behold, a luminous cloud lifted me and brought me where you are.”

21. And Thomas, in turn, answered: “And I, while I was traversing the land of India and, by the grace of Christ, the preaching was being established – the son of the king’s sister named Labdanus was about to be sealed by me, at the palace – suddenly, the Holy Spirit said to me: ‘And you, Thomas, go to Bethlehem to greet the mother of your Lord, because she is to be transferred to the heavens.’ A luminous cloud lifted me and brought me to you.”

22. And Mark, in turn, declared: “I was finishing the rite of Terce in the city of Alexandria; during the prayer, the Holy Spirit lifted me and led me to you.”

23. And James, in turn, answered: "I was in Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit commanded me: 'Go to Bethlehem, because the mother of your Lord is departing.' And behold, a luminous cloud lifted me and brought me to you."
24. And Matthew, in turn, responded with these words: "I glorified and I glorify God, for while I was on a ship, battered by the storm, and in a furious sea stirred by waves, suddenly a luminous cloud covered the agitation of the storm, brought back the calm of the sea, and me, it lifted and brought me to you."
25. Those who were already dead responded in turn and recounted how they had arrived. And Bartholomew said: "I was in Thebaid, preaching the word, when the Holy Spirit said to me: 'The mother of your Lord is departing. Therefore, go to Bethlehem to greet her.' And then, a cloud of light lifted me and brought me to you."
26. The apostles told the holy Mother of God everything about how and in what manner they had arrived. Then, she extended her hands toward heaven and prayed saying: "I adore, I praise, and I glorify your famous name, O Lord, for you have looked upon your humble servant, and you, the Mighty, have done great things for me. And behold, all generations will call me Blessed."

MIRACLES OF MARY

26. And, after the prayer, she said to the apostles: "Cast incense and pray." And, while they were praying, thunder came from heaven and a terrible noise sounded like that of chariots. And behold, there was an army of a multitude of angels and powers, and a voice was heard like that of a Son of Man. And the seraphim surrounded the house where the holy and irreproachable Mother of God and Virgin dwelled. And thus, all those who were in Bethlehem saw all the wonders; and they went to Jerusalem and announced all the wonders that had occurred.

27. After the manifestation of this voice, it happened that the sun and the moon appeared suddenly near the house and that the assembly of the very first saints arrived in front of the house where the mother of the Lord dwelled, to honor and glorify her. And I also saw many signs: the blind seeing, the deaf hearing; the lame walking, the lepers being cleansed, and those possessed by unclean spirits being healed. And whoever was afflicted with diseases and infirmities touched the outside of the wall of the house where she dwelled and cried: "Holy Mary, who gave birth to Christ, our God, have mercy on us." And, at that very moment, they were healed.
28. A great crowd of people, coming from all regions and being in Jerusalem for prayer, heard about the Signs that were happening in Bethlehem by the mother of the Lord. They went there to beg for healing from their various infirmities. And they obtained it. There was that day an ineffable joy: the multitude of the healed and the spectators glorified Christ, our God, and his mother. Returning from Bethlehem, all Jerusalem was festive with the songs of psalms and spiritual hymns.

HATRED OF THE JEWS

29. The priests of the Jews and with them their people were furious because of all that had happened. Overwhelmed with violent jealousy, and after having held counsel again in insolent thought, they decided to send people against the holy Mother of God and the holy apostles who were in Bethlehem. When the crowd of Jews, which had set out for Bethlehem, was about a mile away, an appalling vision occurred and their feet were bound. Then, they turned back, returned to their compatriots, and recounted the entire appalling vision to the high priests.
30. Even more angered in their wrath, they went to the governor, crying out and saying: "The Jewish nation is destroyed because of this woman: chase her from Bethlehem and from the province of Jerusalem." But the governor, astonished by the miracles, said to them: "I will not chase her

neither from Bethlehem nor from any other place.” But the Jews insisted, crying out and imploring him, in the name of the safety of Tiberius Caesar, to remove the apostles from Bethlehem: “If you do not do this, we will report the matter to Caesar.” Thus compelled, the governor sent a chiliarch against the apostles in Bethlehem.

31. But the Holy Spirit said to the apostles and to the mother of the Lord:

“Behold, the governor has sent a chiliarch (head of a unit of 1000 men) against you because the Jews have caused trouble. Therefore, leave Bethlehem and do not be afraid, because I will transport you on a cloud to Jerusalem. The power of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is with you.”

32. The apostles rose immediately, left the house carrying the litter of the Mistress, Mother of God, and set out for Jerusalem. But suddenly, as the Holy Spirit had told them, they were lifted on a cloud and found themselves in Jerusalem at the house of the Mistress. And standing, for five days, we sang hymns without interruption.

33. When the chiliarch arrived at Bethlehem and found neither the mother of the Lord nor the apostles, he arrested the inhabitants of Bethlehem and said to them: “Is it not you who came to tell the governor and the priests all the signs and miracles that had occurred and how the apostles had arrived from all regions? Where are they then? Come on, come to the governor at Jerusalem.” Indeed, the chiliarch did not know that the apostles and the mother of the Lord had withdrawn to Jerusalem. The chiliarch then took the inhabitants of Bethlehem and appeared before the governor, to whom he reported having found no one.

34. But, five days later, the governor, the priests, and the whole city knew that the mother of the Lord was with the apostles in her house in Jerusalem, because of the signs and wonders that were happening. A multitude of men, women, and young girls gathered, crying out: “O Holy Virgin, who gave birth to Christ, our God, do not forget mankind.”

35. Then, faced with these events, the people of the Jews as well as the priests, driven by their hatred, took wood and fire and advanced, intending to burn the house where the mother of the Lord dwelled with the apostles. The governor, however, watched the spectacle from afar. When the people of the Jews reached the door of the house, behold, a jet of high flames came out from the inside by the work of an angel and burned a great multitude of Jews. The entire city was seized with great fear, and they glorified the God born of Mary.
36. The governor, who had seen what had happened, addressed the whole people in a loud voice, saying: "Truly, he who was born of the Virgin, whom you wanted to chase away, is the Son of God. Indeed, these signs are those of a true God." The Jews began to disagree among themselves: many believed in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, because of the signs that had occurred.

DEPARTURE OF MARY'S SOUL TO HEAVEN

37. After all these wonders happened through the intermediary of the Mother of God and ever-virgin Mary, the mother of the Lord, while we, the apostles, were with her in Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit said to us: "You know that it was a Sunday that the good news was announced by the archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary; a Sunday that the Lord was born in Bethlehem; a Sunday also that the children of Jerusalem went out to meet him with palm branches saying: 'Hosanna in the highest, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'; a Sunday again that he rose from the dead; a Sunday that he must come to judge the living and the dead; and a Sunday finally that he must come from heaven to glorify and honor the departure of the holy and glorious virgin who bore him."
38. That same Sunday, the mother of the Lord said to the apostles: "Cast incense, for Christ comes with an army of angels." And behold, Christ appeared, seated on the throne of the cherubim. And, while we were all in

prayer, there appeared an innumerable multitude of angels and the Lord, arrived above the cherubim with great power. And behold, a burst of light fell upon the Holy Virgin by the coming of her only Son. All the heavenly powers prostrated themselves and adored him.

39. The Lord called his mother and said to her: "Mary!" She replied: "Here I am, Lord!" And the Lord said to her: "Do not be distressed, but let your heart rejoice and be glad, for you have obtained the favor of beholding the glory that was given to me by my Father." The holy Mother of God looked up and saw in him a glory that no human mouth can tell or grasp.

The Lord, remaining beside her, said to her: "Behold, now your precious body will be transferred to paradise, while your holy soul will be in the heavens in the treasures of my Father, in a brightness beyond that, where there are peace and joy among the holy angels and even more."

40. The mother of the Lord replied to him: "Place your right hand on me, Lord, and bless me." The Lord stretched out his pure right hand and blessed her. She took his pure right hand, kissed it, and said: "I venerate this right hand that created heaven and earth. I invoke your most celebrated name, Christ God, king of the ages, only Son of the Father, receive your servant, you who deigned to be born of me, the humble, to save mankind according to your ineffable design. To every man who invokes, supplicates, or utters the name of your servant, grant your aid."

41. While she was saying this, the apostles, approaching her feet and prostrating themselves, said: "Mother of the Lord, leave a blessing to the world, because you are leaving it. You have blessed it and raised it from its ruin, by giving birth to the light of the world." The mother of the Lord then prayed thus:

"O God, in your great goodness, from heaven you sent your only Son that he might dwell in my humble body, you who deigned to be born of me, the humble, have mercy on the world and on every soul that invokes your name."

42. And, again, she prayed and said: “Lord, king of heaven, Son of the living God, receive every man who invokes your name so that your birth may be glorified.”

And again, she prayed and said: “Lord Jesus Christ, who are all-powerful in heaven and on earth, by this invocation I implore your holy name: in every time and place where my name is remembered, sanctify that place and glorify those who glorify you through my name, accepting from them every offering, every supplication, and every prayer.”

43. After she had prayed thus, the Lord then said to his mother: “Rejoice, and let your heart be glad for all grace and all glory will be granted to you by my Father who is in heaven, by me, and by the Holy Spirit. Every soul that invokes your name will not be confused, but will find mercy, consolation, protection, and courage in this age and in the future, before my Father who is in heaven.”

44. Then, the Lord turning to Peter said to him: “The time has come to chant the hymn.” When Peter chanted the hymn, all the powers of heaven responded with the Alleluia. Then, the face of the mother of the Lord shone brighter than the light. And, rising, she blessed each of the apostles with her own hand. And all glorified God. The Lord, extending his pure hands, received her holy and irreproachable soul.

45. And, while her irreproachable soul was departing, the place was filled with an indescribable perfume and light. And behold, a heavenly voice was heard saying: “Blessed art thou among women.” Peter and I – John – with Paul and Thomas, we hastened to embrace her precious feet to be sanctified. The twelve apostles then placed her precious and holy body in a bier and carried it away.

OUTRAGE OF JEPHONIAS

46. And behold, as they were carrying it, a Hebrew named Jephonias, vigorous in body, rushed forward and seized the bier carried by the apostles. And behold, an angel of the Lord, by an invisible force, with a sword of fire, cut off both his hands, leaving them hanging in the air near the bier.

47. After this marvel, all the people of the Jews, who had seen, cried out: "He is a true God, the son who was born of you, Mary, Mother of God, ever-virgin!" Jephonias also, summoned by Peter to make known the miracles of God, rose behind the bier and cried out: "Holy Mary, you who gave birth to Christ God, have mercy on me." And, turning around, Peter said to him: "In the name of him to whom she gave birth, your hands will reattach to your arms, which were removed from you." And, at that very moment, according to the word of Peter, the hands, which were hanging near the bier of the Mistress, moved back and reattached to Jephonias. And he believed and also glorified Christ God to whom she had given birth.

TRANSFER OF MARY'S BODY TO PARADISE

48. After this miracle had occurred, the apostles carried the bier and placed the precious and holy body in Gethsemane, in a new tomb. And behold, a delicate perfume emanated from the holy tomb of our Mistress, the Mother of God. And, for three days, voices of invisible angels were heard glorifying Christ, our God, born of her. And, the third day having ended, the voices were no longer heard. From then on, we all knew that her irreproachable and precious body had been transferred to paradise.

VISIT OF THE APOSTLES TO PARADISE

49. After it was transferred, behold, we all saw Elizabeth, the mother of Saint John the Baptist, and Anne, the mother of the Mistress, Abraham and Isaac as well as Jacob and David, who chanted the Alleluia, while all the choirs of the saints venerated the precious remains of the mother of the Lord.

And we saw a luminous place; nothing was brighter than that light brighter than any other light. And an abundant perfume rose from this place, where her precious and holy body had been transferred, in paradise.

And there also rose the song of those who celebrated with their hymns him who had been born of Mary. To the virgins alone was it given to hear this song so sweet that one could not be satiated by it.

50. We, the apostles, having seen the sudden and precious transfer of her holy body, glorified God, who showed us his wonders on the occasion of the departure of the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. May her prayers and her intercession be granted to us all, her protection, her support, and her help, in this age and in the future. We render together glory at all times and in all places to her only Son with his Father and the Holy Spirit, for the ages of ages. Amen!