Part 1: Summary

Of the extant Jeuian texts, the ones most likely containing the earliest material are those that present instructions for purification rituals and ascension of the soul: 1Je, 2Jeu, and 4Ps. These rites or mysteries form the core of Jeuian soteriological belief: even in the texts that lack a ritual focus themselves, reference is made to receiving them as the only way for a soul to be saved. Righteous living and proper belief are not enough, although for such souls reincarnation into a good body that will find the mysteries is promised.

Each of these texts was composed for a different intended audience. 1 and 2Jeu, containing the most extensive and explicit mystery information, were likely composed for priests, instructors, or ritual officiants within the group. Thus, although each baptism or piece of information was probably meant to be imparted to initiates individually over a long period of time, these texts present all of the details needed to successfully complete each purification rite, as well as all of the information for each and every station along the soul’s ascent. They comprise a complete handbook for the innermost mysteries of the group. 4Ps, on the other hand, was probably written for a novice, someone about to undergo his or her first baptism, and thus has much more basic details of the one baptism it describes, and simply hints at the future baptisms to come. It accentuates the fact that the ritual described was given to the disciples by Jesus, with the specific injunction that it be passed on to those who prove themselves worthy, thus providing proof of the rite’s necessity and validity to the potential recipient. This proposed background also explains the inclusion of the mythology and moral injunctions that this text contains, which were necessary preparation for a new initiate, but not in a ritual handbook intended for more experienced members.

As noted above, the fact that there are multiple baptismal or purificatory rituals suggests that there were multiple levels of initiation, with each level being earned over time. 2Jeu in particular highlights the secretive nature of the group, and the stringent code to which one who would receive the mysteries must adhere; doubtless after the receipt of one, the initiate would be expected to gradually prove him or herself worthy of the next level. This notion is supported by statements in the later texts, particularly 3Ps. The reason for all of the rituals being presented in close succession in 2Jeu is related to the text’s purpose as a complete ritual guide.

It is important to note that mystery-ritual and cosmology go hand in hand for this group. The majority of the esoteric information imparted to the mystery recipients consists of knowledge for the soul on how to pass through all of
the regions of the divine and sub-divine realms. Thus, a great deal of space is
dedicated to outlining each region and the beings that dwell in that region. This
type of information makes up the majority of 1 Jeu, with one section devoted to
mapping each treasury and a second focused on providing the seals, ciphers
and names necessary to pass through it; and a large portion of 2 Jeu, which
presents the names of the entities in each material aeon in conjunction with
the password information. The description of the five regions of the Midst
(ⲙⲏⲧⲉ) in 4PSa serves other purposes, both outlining a list of moral or ethical
prohibitions for the righteous, and highlighting the astrological mode of the
cycle of punishment and reincarnation embraced by the group at the time.

These earliest texts also have the simplest overall cosmologies, although the
version found in 4PSa begins a trend toward increasing complexity. The basic
outline consists of the Treasury of Light, also called the place of the right; the
thirteen aeons, or the place of the left; and the Midst (ⲙⲉⲥⲟⲥ), a middle region
dividing these divine and material regions. The Treasury is the destination for
souls who in life received the baptisms and mysteries of the Jeuians, the aeons
are where souls that failed to receive them are stopped and punished, and the
Midst serves as a place of waiting and judgment for souls to be allowed passage
into the higher place of the right, or recast into the world. 4PSa adds to these
the five realms of the Midst (ⲙⲏⲧⲉ), which take the place of the aeons as the
realms of punishment populated with vicious archons.

Each of the main cosmological realms is also home to a number of important
figures in Jeuian mythology: the Treasury of Light is home to Jeu, who populates
the Treasury, organizes the visible cosmos, and oversees the archons of the
aeons; Zorokothora (Melchisedek), who acts as a divine porter, transporting
baptismal waters to earth and light from the places of the left back into the
Treasury; and the Great Sabaoth the Good, whose role in these three texts is
quite vague, although he is placed almost on par with Jeu and Zorokothora in
4PSa. Jeu may have solar associations based on his role in organizing the visible
cosmos, with himself as center and ruler; he is called one of the “two great
lights” in conjunction with Zorokothora Melchisedek in 4PSa, lending further
support to this notion. The ⲉⲙⲉⲥⲟⲥ is home to the Virgin of Light, the judge, who
also has solar connections that grow clearer in the later texts; and the Little
Sabaoth the Good, who appears primarily in association with Zeus/Jupiter,
benefic leader of the planets, and who thus plays a positive role by aiding in the
destruction of evil archons and releasing imprisoned souls. The entities of the
aeons have a different arrangement in 2 Jeu than in the later texts: the standard
arrangement has the invisible god, the Barbelo, and the triple powered ones in
the thirteenth aeon, each of these a polemic addition against the Sethians; and
Sabaoth the Adamas, the head of evil, as ruler of the twelve aeons.