

# The Gospel of John

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## *Introduction and Commentary*

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## About the Author

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## Author's Preface

It would be hard to overestimate the influence of John's Gospel on the history of the Church. Over the centuries of Christian history, individual followers of Jesus Christ have turned to the Fourth Gospel for encouragement, edification, and reassurance in their faith. Theologians have found in the elevated christology of John's Gospel one of the highest and fullest expressions of who Jesus is in the entire Bible. Historians who study the early Church have debated whether and to what extent the Johannine Christians formed an isolated community, and whether or not they differed substantially in belief and practice from early mainstream Christianity.

Above all this, and sometimes in spite of it, the Fourth Gospel stands as a monumental literary work of incredible genius in its own right. Any Bible student who has taken more than a superficial glance at John's Gospel realizes it is filled with language, metaphor, and imagery which grips the readers and transports him or her to the world of the Evangelist. At the same time the text engages the reader with a subtle pressure to adopt the viewpoint of the Evangelist about who Jesus is, forcing the reader to see the decision for or against Jesus Christ as an either/or which ultimately determines one's eternal destiny. As the characters in the narrative choose to follow Jesus Christ and thus choose eternal life (like the Samaritan woman and the royal official from Capernaum in chapter 4 and the man born blind in chapter 9), or reject him and choose eternal darkness (like the obtuse paralytic in chapter 5 or the Pharisees at the end of chapter 9), so the reader of the Gospel is also drawn to make this incalculable choice.

The Gospel of John has fascinated me for years, since as an undergraduate student I committed to memory the entire Fourth Gospel in the New American Standard Bible. Later, as a faculty member at Dallas Seminary, I taught an elective course in the Fourth Gospel for the first time in the spring semester of 1980. One thing led to another, and the need to provide class notes for my students in this elective course, which has been offered about every two years since, led to the ever-growing file of information I have collected on John's Gospel. The present work, in fact, owes its origin to those class notes, edited and improved through countless revisions and updates. Since the course was originally taught from the Greek text, the present work still bears some traces of that, and I beg the reader's indulgence if it gets a bit technical at times. Someone (I have never been able to determine with certainty who) once compared the Fourth Gospel to a pool of water, so shallow at the edges that a child could wade, and yet so deep at the center that an elephant could swim. This is an appropriate illustration, because the Gospel of John is easy to understand at the surface, but has a depth to it that scholars who have spent their entire lives in the study of it have not fully exhausted.

Special thanks are due to my wife Ursula and my children Mark and Rebecca for patiently tolerating my work on this volume over the years. To Hampton Keathley IV and Todd Lingren, who have helped immensely with formatting and technical issues, I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks. I am also grateful to Mr. Richard Cleve of RØHR Productions, Ltd., for permission to use some of his outstanding photographic imagery of the Holy Land to illustrate the present work. Finally, I would like to thank the President of Biblical Studies Foundation, who prefers to remain anonymous, for his vision and commitment in making it possible to offer resources for Bible study and teaching on the Internet for free. It is my hope that the present work will help others to see some of those depths to John's Gospel that they have not previously known, and will encourage them to pursue further study of it with the same enjoyment, edification, and sense of wonder that I myself have known.

W. Hall Harris

Dallas, Texas

October 31, 2001

Reformation Day

## Background to the Study of the Gospel of John

Views on the authorship, origin, and historicity of the Fourth Gospel have changed drastically over the last century and a half. One hundred fifty years ago, if one had asked a New Testament scholar which of the four gospels gave us the most information about the life and ministry of Jesus, the answer would almost invariably have been, “The Gospel of John.” Today if one asks a typical New Testament scholar the same question, the Gospel of John would be the *last* choice as a source of information about Jesus (if it was viewed as having *anything* to say about this topic at all). How has such a drastic shift in opinion regarding the Fourth Gospel come about? In large part it has happened because of a shift in scholarly opinion about the interrelationship of the four gospels which placed John’s Gospel late in the first century (actually, it would have been pushed well into the second century, as F. C. Baur and the “Tübingen School” had proposed around 1835. The discovery of the fragmentary manuscript known as P<sup>52</sup> by C. H. Roberts in 1934 in the John Rylands Library of the University of Manchester, however, led to the late first century date). As a late work John’s Gospel was thus regarded as secondary and derivative, and where John’s version of events differed from that of the synoptic gospels Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it was assumed that John had altered the traditions to suit his own theological ends.

This state of affairs held sway until only about two decades ago. Things have now begun to change again with regard to views on the Fourth Gospel as a legitimate source for information about Jesus’ life and ministry.

The following summary is quoted from Stephen S. Smalley and serves as a useful starting point for a discussion of the Fourth Gospel:

In 1978 Dr. J. A. T. Robinson gave a paper to an Oxford Conference on the Gospels, entitled “*The New Look on the Fourth Gospel*.” In it he suggested that if a new look on John existed, it could be distinguished from an ‘old look.’ He therefore set out what he regarded as the five presuppositions belonging to critical orthodoxy in the first half of the twentieth century so far as the interpretation of John’s Gospel was concerned, and tried to demonstrate that each was in need of and in the process of re-examination.

The five presuppositions listed by Robinson are as follows:

- (I) That the fourth evangelist is dependent on sources, including at least one of the Synoptic Gospels.
- (II) That his background differs from that of the tradition he reports.
- (III) That his work is a serious witness not to the Jesus of history but to the Christ of faith.
- (IV) That he reflects the latest stage of theological development in first-century Christianity.
- (V) That he is neither the apostle John nor an eyewitness.

The most crucial of these assumptions mentioned by Robinson, as indicated already, is the first. Once it is allowed that John to any extent depends on the Synoptic Gospels, it follows that the only way to account for the differences between the Synoptic and Johannine traditions when they are in conflict is to say that the fourth Evangelist has altered his material to suit his own purposes.

And having said that the other assumptions follow. For particular reasons of writing, the Evangelist (it may be claimed) cuts loose from the tradition to which he is presumably indebted, and theologises the ‘history’ he is interpreting. He does this in a developed manner for a late, primarily Hellenistic audience, by which time any eyewitness links have disappeared. In other words, as Robinson himself points out, *the effect of adopting the ‘old look’ on the Fourth Gospel is essentially to drive a wedge between the Evangelist and his tradition. It is to oppose Johannine history and theology, and to make the second superior to the first.*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> S. S. Smalley, *John: Evangelist and Interpreter* (London: Paternoster, 1978), 11-12 [emphasis mine].

Smalley goes on to point out that it is precisely this presupposition of the literary dependence of the Fourth Gospel on the synoptics, with all the implications that follow from it, that is being most widely and seriously questioned by scholars at present. But for these scholars the issue is no longer one of authorship, but of *tradition*—whether the tradition behind the Gospel of John is independent of the synoptic tradition or not.

Let us begin by examining the issue of authorship to see what can indeed be said about the author of the Fourth Gospel:

## 1. Authorship—Who Wrote the Fourth Gospel?

In the popular imagination the author of the Fourth Gospel is normally viewed as the aging Apostle John, but it is important to remember that nowhere in the Gospel does the author actually state his name. This has led to such widespread and thorough discussion in scholarly circles over who the author might be, and when and how the Gospel of John came to be written, that it is almost impossible to group together and summarize the significance of all the different theories that have been advanced concerning the origin of the Fourth Gospel. Nevertheless, that is the purpose of the following paragraphs.

### External Evidence Concerning Authorship

External (that is, historical) evidence regarding the authorship of the Fourth Gospel has been discussed well by Donald Guthrie.<sup>2</sup> More recently, the material has also been discussed by Gary Burge in his introductory volume on interpreting John's Gospel and by Donald Carson in his commentary.<sup>3</sup> There is no writer who mentions the Fourth Gospel or its author before Irenaeus.

**Irenaeus** (born AD 115-142? • died ca. AD 200). Scholars date the birth of Irenaeus between these two dates, chiefly on the basis of whether they give credit to his claims to have known Polycarp. In his work *Against Heresies* he states that the author of the Fourth Gospel was John, the Lord's disciple; that the Gospel was published at Ephesus and that John remained at Ephesus until the time of Trajan.<sup>4</sup>

**Eusebius**, who reported this, says that Irenaeus' authority for these statements was Polycarp, who learned truth from the apostles.<sup>5</sup>

According to Eusebius, Irenaeus himself, in a letter to his friend Florinus, reminisces of their childhood conversations with Polycarp.<sup>6</sup>



**Traditional Grave of St. John at Ephesus**

Irenaeus' testimony has been discounted by many modern scholars, chiefly because they have concluded on other grounds that John the Apostle could not have written the Gospel. They simply claim his memory failed.

<sup>2</sup> D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), 258-63.

<sup>3</sup> G. M. Burge, *Interpreting the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 37-54; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 68-81.

<sup>4</sup> *Adv. Haer.* 2.22.5, 3.3.4 (ca. AD 185).

<sup>5</sup> *Historia Ecclesiastica* [*The History of the Church*] 3.23.3. ff. and 4.14.3-8.

<sup>6</sup> *HE* 5.20.4-8.



However, this presupposes that Irenaeus' *only* source of information was Polycarp. But Irenaeus mentions another anonymous Presbyter (bishop), whom most think was his predecessor as Bishop of Lyons, **Pothinus**, a man born well before the end of the 1st century. (He died in AD 177 at well over 90 years old.) Also, Irenaeus was in close touch with Rome, and must have known the traditions there.

J. Drummond states: "Critics speak of Irenaeus as though he had fallen out of the moon, paid two or three visits to Polycarp's lecture-room, and had never known anyone else...he must have had numerous links with the early part of century."<sup>7</sup>

All writers subsequent to Irenaeus assume the apostolic authorship of the Gospel without question (**Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen**). If they were merely reporting Irenaeus' opinion, they must have considered it *worth* reporting—without suspicion.

The *Muratorian Canon* (a document probably written in the last quarter of the 2nd century with firm ties to Rome) describes the Fourth Gospel as proceeding from John after a vision given to Andrew that John should write and the others revise. (This is problematic for those who hold a late date, though, in light of the probability that Andrew did not survive that long). But this probably indicates John was associated with the Gospel in Rome at the time.

In conclusion, while more might be said, especially concerning theories relating to the early martyrdom of the apostle John, it should be noted that these contradict Johannine authorship *only* if a late date is assumed for the Gospel. Such a late date is by no means certain. Also, there really is not much evidence at all for the early martyrdom of John. The evidence is as follows:

#### ***Evidence for the Early Martyrdom of the Apostle John***

1. The martyrdom is deduced from Mark 10:39. Both James and John are promised that they will drink from the same cup as the Lord (i.e., referring to a martyr's death). Therefore, John must have suffered the same fate as James. If not, it is presupposed, then Mark would have altered his text to reflect the fact that only James "drank from the same cup as the Lord."
2. Two late writers, an epitomist of Philip of Side (5th century AD) and George Hamartolus (9th century AD) report statements supposed to have been made by Papias to the effect that John as well as James was killed by the Jews. George Hamartolus follows this with a citation of Mark 10:39 (see the previous point).
3. A Syrian martyrology (list of martyrs) of AD 411 commemorates John and James on the same day and describes them as 'apostles in Jerusalem'.
4. The Carthaginian Calendar (ca. AD 505) has a similar entry for Dec. 27th but links John the Baptist with James. Many scholars regard this as an error for the Apostle John and claim this as early evidence for the apostle's death.
5. A homily of Aphraates (no. 21) states that apart from Stephen, Peter, and Paul, there were only two martyr apostles, John and James.

The cumulative effect of all this evidence is very small. Guthrie thinks the individual points become even weaker on closer examination.

#### ***Evaluation of the Evidence for the Early Martyrdom of the Apostle John***

1. The prediction of Mark 10:39 does not necessitate martyrdom, only suffering. There are far too many assumptions here, and even if it is granted that Mark 10:39 is a prediction of martyrdom for John, it does not prove that martyrdom was early. Furthermore, the idea that the evangelists would have adjusted the accounts, instead of recording what really happened, is a presupposition of modern critical scholarship.

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<sup>7</sup> J. Drummond, *An Inquiry into the Character and Authorship of the Fourth Gospel* (1903), 348.

2. Neither Philip's epitomist nor George Hamartolus were noted for historical accuracy. Both Irenaeus and Eusebius know of Papias' writings but neither refer to this statement about John's martyrdom. Also, it is questionable whether Papias would have used the late Greek title "the Theologian" for John, as Philip's report says he did. Furthermore George Hamartolus himself did not take the report from Papias seriously, since he also mentions the apostle John's peaceful end.
3. The rest of the evidence may be dismissed, since the martyrologies and the homily by Aphraates are probably confusing John the Apostle with John the Baptist.

### Modern Proposals Concerning the Authorship of the Fourth Gospel

In light of the text's silence on the name of the author, a number of theories have been proposed in recent time as alternatives to the traditional view that the author of the Fourth Gospel was John the Apostle. A short survey of these proposals is given here.

**1. John of Jerusalem was the author.** Existence of a 'John of Jerusalem' who had access into the High Priest's house was first proposed by H. Delff (1889). This John later became influential among Asiatic churches. This does have the advantage of still relying on eyewitness testimony. But no external evidence of any kind supports this theory.

**2. The Fourth Gospel is a pseudepigraphal work.** This view holds that all the eyewitness details are merely a device to create the impression of apostolic authorship, although the work was not really written by an apostle (thus "pseudepigraphal"). But why did an author intending to write a pseudepigraphal work not just mention the Apostle John's name, which would have been much more effective and in harmony with general pseudepigraphal practice? Further, how can this theory explain how the gospel gained acceptance generally? Unless this gospel were *at once* assumed to be genuinely apostolic, it would have had increasing difficulty creating that impression as time went on, especially with the rise of Gnosticism. The Fourth Gospel was a favorite of the Gnostics and if it had not been widely accepted as apostolic, there would have been considerable difficulty gaining later acceptance. There are no known cases of works once recognized as pseudonymous ever losing their pseudonymous ascription at some later time.

**3. The Fourth Gospel was written by John Mark.** Originally Wellhausen proposed John Mark as author of the Fourth Gospel; more recently by J. N. Sanders and Pierson Parker have done so.<sup>8</sup> But in another earlier article Parker had argued for a second edition of the gospel issued fairly late.<sup>9</sup> It is difficult to see how this can be reconciled with his view of John Mark as author—not to mention the complications with traditional ascriptions of Mark's Gospel to John Mark (since the style is so different).

**4. It was written by John the Elder.** A famous statement of Papias has given rise to a widespread conviction among many scholars that there was another John who had associations with Ephesus and had some connection with the production of the gospel. This might be called the 'confusion' theory for interpreting the external evidence. Irenaeus' evidence is easily discounted by assuming that he was really referring to John the Elder.

Papias is quoted by Eusebius as saying: "And again, if anyone came who had been a follower of the Elders, I used to enquire about the sayings of the Elders—what Andrew, or Peter, or Philip, or Thomas, or James, or John, or Matthew, or any other of the Lord's Disciples said (εἶπεν) and what Aristion and the Elder John, the Disciples of the Lord, say (λεγουσιν). For I did not think that I could get so much profit from the contents of books as from the utterances of a living and abiding voice."<sup>10</sup>

The problem concerns the interpretation of Papias' words. Who are the so-called "Elders"? Are they to be identified with the "Disciples" also named, or separated from them? Barrett is convinced the "sayings of the

<sup>8</sup> J. N. Sanders and Pierson Parker, "John and John Mark," *JBL* 79 (1960): 97-110.

<sup>9</sup> Pierson Parker, "Two Editions of John," *JBL* 75 (1956): 303-314.

<sup>10</sup> *HE* 3.39.4.

Elders” consisted of reports of what the named disciples (i.e. apostles) had already said, and Papias only heard these second hand. There would be no question of Papias being a hearer of the apostle John and companion of Polycarp. Thus Papias would be referring to three groups: the apostles (Disciples), their followers the Elders, and the other disciples.

If, however, Papias is describing the apostles as Elders, then there are only two groups (apostles and disciples), and Papias used to enquire directly from the followers of the apostles what the apostles had said. His testimony is therefore closer to Irenaeus’.

But if Papias is describing the apostles as Elders, then it is possible that the “Elder John” is also the Apostle John mentioned earlier. In this case, Papias is distinguishing between what John said in the past and what at the time of Papias’ enquiry he was still saying.

At the same time, the possibility that there may have been two men with the name John cannot be ruled out. It is supported by Eusebius’ interpretation of Papias’ words. But since Eusebius wished to attribute the Book of Revelation to a different John than the author of the gospel, his interpretation may not have been impartial.

In any case, the only other evidence for the existence for an ‘Elder’ John may be the introduction to 2 and 3 John, where the author calls himself this.

But even if there was a second person named John, known as ‘the Elder’, Papias gives no location and no hint of any writings. He merely happens to possess a name which is identical to the person to which the Fourth Gospel is traditionally ascribed, and this makes the ‘confusion’ theory possible.

Of course a possible response to this is that if the later Church mixed up apostles and elders in this way, might not Papias have done so himself? And after all, it is still possible that he was originally referring to only one person himself, and Papias’ words were confused by Eusebius.

**5. Lazarus was the author of the Fourth Gospel.** Floyd Filson proposed Lazarus as author of the Gospel.<sup>11</sup> Lazarus is the one male figure of the Gospel of whom it is specifically said Jesus loved him (φιλειν, φιλος in 11:3, 11, 36; αγαπαν in 11:5). (But referring to the Beloved Disciple, αγαπειν is more frequently used.) Filson argues that the Gospel was meant to be self-intelligible to readers who, without the second century tradition which ascribed the Gospel to John, son of Zebedee, would have understood the Beloved Disciple as a reference to Jesus’ love for Lazarus.

But this argument is valid only if readers were unaware of the author’s identity even before they started the Gospel. This is not so likely if the author were a famous Apostle like John.

Developing the relationship between John and Lazarus even further, K.A. Eckhardt went so far as to suggest Lazarus was a pseudonym for John the son of Zebedee after he was brought back from the dead by Jesus.<sup>12</sup> It seems incredible that if John died during Jesus’ ministry and was resurrected by Jesus, there remains absolutely no trace of this in the Synoptic accounts and/or tradition.

Finally, J. N. Sanders thinks the basis of the Fourth Gospel was an Aramaic work by Lazarus, edited by John Mark, who was the Evangelist.

Now we need to consider the internal evidence of the Gospel regarding authorship.

### Internal Evidence Concerning Authorship

It is important to remember that internal evidence concerning the authorship of the Fourth Gospel is indirect. B. F. Westcott’s “concentric circles of proof,” originally part of the introduction to his commentary are still very helpful here.<sup>13</sup> (They have never really been refuted, merely ignored.) Westcott outlined the evidence for authorship as follows:

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<sup>11</sup> Floyd Filson, “Who Was the BD?” *JBL* 68 (1949): 83-88.

<sup>12</sup> K. A. Eckhardt, *Der Tod des Johannes* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1961).

<sup>13</sup> B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (1881; rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978).

**I. The author of the Fourth Gospel was a Jew.**

**A. He is familiar with current Jewish opinions.**

1. Messianic Expectations —1:21, 4:25, 6:14 ff, 7:40 ff, 12:34 ff.
2. Attitude toward Women —4:27
3. Importance of religious schools — 7:15
4. Disparagement of Jews of the Diaspora (Hellenistic Jews) —7:35
5. Hostility of Jews and Samaritans —4:9

**B. He is familiar with Jewish observances, customs, etc.**

1. Ceremonial pollution of entering a gentile court —18:28
2. Feast of Tabernacles (hinted at) by symbolism of “living water” and the “light of the world”—7:8 and 8:12
3. The last day of the feast was the “great day”—7:37
4. Customs at marriage feast —2:1-10
5. Customs of burial—11:17-44

**C. Vocabulary, sentence structure, symmetry and numerical symbolism, expression and arrangement of thoughts are essentially Hebrew. “The source of the imagery of the narrative...is the OT. The words are Greek words, but the spirit by which they live is Hebrew.” (Westcott, Introduction, vii)**

**D. The Old Testament is the source of the religious life of the author.**

1. Judea was the “home” of the Word become flesh; these people were “his own people”—1:11
2. Judaism is constantly taken as the starting-point for Christianity.
  - a. The writer assumed as axiomatic that Scripture cannot be broken—10:35
  - b. That which is written in the prophets is assumed to be true —6:45
  - c. OT types are mentioned as Christ applied them to himself:
    - i. Serpent —3:14
    - ii. Manna —6:32
    - iii. Water from the Rock —7:37 ff., etc.

**II. The author of the Fourth Gospel was a Jew of Palestine.**

**A. His local knowledge is precise.**

1. Bethany beyond the Jordan (1:28), a place forgotten by the time of Origen, is distinguished from Bethany near Jerusalem (11:18). The location of the latter is given as 15 stadia away.
2. Aenon near Salim (3:23) is not mentioned anywhere else—indicating direct acquaintance of the writer.
3. Topography —especially of Jerusalem—is precise.
  - a. The pool at Bethesda—5:2
  - b. The pool of Siloam—9:7
  - c. The wadi Kidron—18:1

[Points a. - c. are not mentioned in the Synoptics.]

- d. The Pavement (*Gabbatha*) with its raised judgement-seat—19:13
  - e. Allusions to the Temple:
    - i. 46 years in building—2:20
    - ii. Mention of the Treasury—8:20
    - iii. Solomon's Portico—10:22
- B. The author's use of OT quotations shows that he is not dependent on the LXX, and at least suggest he was acquainted with Hebrew:
1. These agree with *both* the Hebrew text and LXX, where both agree (Hebrew text and LXX in agreement):
    - a. 12:38, cf. Is. 53:1
    - b. 19:24, cf. Ps 22:18
    - c. 10:34, cf. Ps 82:6
    - d. 15:25, cf. Ps 34:19
  2. These agree with the Hebrew text *against* the LXX:
    - a. 19:37, cf. Zach. 12:10
    - b. 6:45, cf. Is. 54:13
    - c. 13:18, cf. Ps 41:9
  3. This differs from both Hebrew and LXX where they *both agree*:
    - a. 2:17, cf. Ps 69:9
  4. These differ from Hebrew and LXX where they *do not agree*:
    - a. 12:14-15, cf. Zech 9:9
    - b. 12:40, cf. Is. 6:10
  5. These are *free renditions* (paraphrases?) of various OT passages:
    - a. 19:36, cf. Exod 12:46, Num 9:12
    - b. 7:38, no exact OT quote is parallel
    - c. 1:23, cf. Is. 40:3
    - d. 6:31, cf. Ps 78:24, Exod 16:4, 15
  6. But *nowhere* does a quotation of the OT in the Fourth Gospel agree with the LXX *against* the Hebrew text.
- C. The author's doctrine of the *Logos* is Palestinian and not Alexandrian—he views the *Logos* as representing the divine Will manifested in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Philo, on the other hand, viewed the *Logos* as abstract divine Reason.
- D. Qumran documents have many parallels, which indicate that the Gospel is essentially a Palestinian document. See A. M. Hunter, *Expository Times* 71(1959/60), 166, 202.
- III. The author of the Fourth Gospel was an *eyewitness* of the events he describes:
- A. Descriptions of persons—in minute detail.
    1. Nicodemus—3:1 ff, 7:50, 19:39
    2. Lazarus—9:1 ff, 12:1 ff

3. **Simon, father of Judas Iscariot—6:71, 12:4, 13:2, 26**
4. **Note: The author was aware “Iscariot” was a local or family name; he applies it both to Judas and to his father Simon: 6:71, 13:2, 26, 12:4, 14:22**

**B. Details of time:**

1. **Number of days before the raising of Lazarus—11:6, 17, 39**
2. **Duration of Jesus’ stay in Samaria—4:40,43**
3. **Specific mention of the hour at which events occurred:**
  - a. **“the tenth”—1:40**
  - b. **“the sixth”—4:6**
  - c. **“the seventh”—4:52**
  - d. **“about the sixth”—19:14**
  - e. **“it was night”—13:30, etc.**

**C. Details of number:**

1. **two disciples of John the Baptist—1:35**
2. **six waterpots—2:6**
3. **five loaves and two fishes—6:9**
4. **twenty-five or thirty stadia—6:19**
5. **four soldiers—19:23**
6. **two hundred cubits—21:8**
7. **two hundred fifty-three fish—21:11**

**D. Details of manner or circumstance:**

1. **The boy had barley loaves—6:9**
2. **When Mary poured the ointment, the house was filled with the fragrance—12:3**
3. **The branches used at the triumphant entry were palm branches—12:13**
4. **Roman soldiers come with the officers of the priests to arrest Jesus—18:3**
5. **Jesus’ tunic was seamless—19:23**
6. **The facecloth in which Jesus was buried was wrapped and lying in a place by itself—20:7**
7. **Peter was grieved because the Lord said to him a third time, “Do you love me?”—21:17**

**IV. The author of the Fourth Gospel was *an Apostle*.**

- A. **This is clear from the scope of his descriptions of Jesus’ ministry from the call of the first disciple to the appearances after the resurrection.**
- B. **He is acquainted with the thoughts and feelings of the disciples at critical moments: 2:11, 17, 22; 4:27, 6:19, 60 ff.; 12:16, 13:22, 28, 21:12.**
- C. **He recalls words spoken among themselves: 4:33, 16:17, 20:25, 21:3,5.**
- D. **He is familiar with the places to which they withdrew for time alone: 11:54, 18:1-2, 20:19.**
- E. **He is acquainted with imperfect or erroneous impressions they received initially: 11:13, 12:16, 13:28, 20:9, 21:4.**

**F. He stood very near the Lord:**

1. He knew the Lord's emotions: 11:33, 13:21.
2. He knew the grounds of the Lord's actions: 2:24 ff, 4:1, 5:6, 6:15, 7:1, 16:19.
3. He knew the mind of the Lord in many cases: 6:6, 6:61, 6:64, 13:1,3; 13:11.

**V. The author of the Fourth Gospel was *the Apostle John*.**

- A. John 21:24 assigns authorship to "the apostle whom Jesus loved."
- B. This disciple is mentioned by this title twice in the passion narrative (13:23, 19:26) and twice afterwards (21:7, 21:20).
- C. He is known to the high-priest (18:15).
- D. He stands in close relationship with Peter (13:24, 20:2, 21:7).
- E. From the list in 21:2 of those present, this disciple must have been one of the sons of Zebedee, or one of the two other unnamed disciples present.
- F. The synoptics present Peter, James and John as standing in a special relationship to Jesus. Peter is eliminated (see 20:21), James was martyred very early (Acts 12:2); *this leaves John*.

**VI. Corroboration:**

- A. John is not mentioned by name anywhere in the Gospel.
- B. While John is not mentioned by name, the author is very particular about defining names in his gospel—he frequently qualifies by using additional names; Simon is never called merely Simon after his call, but always by his full name Simon Peter or the new name Peter. But in spite of this tendency, the author of the Fourth Gospel never refers to the Baptist as John *the Baptist* (as the synoptics do) but only as "John."

***Further Remarks on Johannine Authorship: Variations on the Theme***

If one accepts the traditional view that John the Apostle was the author of the gospel which bears his name, there are still some possible variations in the way the composition actually took place, as follows:

1. John the Apostle was the witness and some other person was the author. A parallel to this solution may be found in the traditional relationship between *Peter* and *Mark* in the production of Mark's Gospel. There is no fundamental objection to this theory, but it does involve a rather broad interpretation of γράψας in John 21:24, in the sense of "writing by means of another" (there are probably other NT parallels for this, however). It would not be out of keeping with the external evidence provided the apostle himself held the main responsibility for what was said. Under this theory, the amanuensis would remain anonymous and the apostle would take credit for the Gospel. In this respect it would differ from the Peter-Mark relationship and would suggest John had more of a personal hand in the writing than Peter did in the case of Mark.
2. A further modification (possible but less likely) is that a disciple of John wrote the memoirs of the apostle after his death. According to this theory the substance of the Gospel is John's but not the actual writing. In this case 21:24 would constitute a reference not to John the apostle himself, but to the disciple doing the writing.

While these two theories offer interesting possibilities, there is almost certainly not enough concrete information in the text of the Gospel itself to confirm or deny either one. Furthermore, arguments based solely on stylistics are indeterminative since they are only probability statements.

## **2. Date—When Was the Fourth Gospel Written?**

Given the diversity of opinion concerning authorship of the Fourth Gospel, the consensus on its dating is remarkable. A century and a half ago, F. C. Baur and his adherents, who became known as the "Tübingen School" because they were located at the University of Tübingen in southern Germany, advocated a date late in the second century for John's Gospel (ca. AD 175). They did so mainly on the basis

of the similarity between the Fourth Gospel and Gnosticism, which flourished in the mid- to late second century and was thought by many to be the background for “Johannine” thought. Today no New Testament scholar would advocate such a late date, primarily for two reasons. First was the discovery of a small fragment of papyrus containing a couple of verses from John 18 by a British scholar, C. H. Roberts, while studying fragments of uncatalogued fragments in the John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester in 1934. This fragment, which has become famous as P<sup>52</sup>, is now dated (by a consensus of NT scholars and papyrologists) ca. AD 125.<sup>14</sup> Since no one believes this fragment is actually part of the autograph (the original document), and since it came from Egypt, it is generally conceded that it would take several decades for the Gospel of John to be circulated, copied, carried to Egypt (and end up buried there). This suggests a date for John’s Gospel late in the first century. The second contributing factor to such a date was the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. The scrolls exhibit much of the imagery and symbolism that had formerly been attributed to Gnosticism. For example, the so-called “War Scroll” from Qumran is properly titled *The War of the Sons of Light With the Sons of Darkness*. Concepts which were thought to indicate a late date for John because of their connection with Gnosticism have now turned up in documents written (in some cases) as early as the second century BC.

W. G. Kümmel says:

If John was known in Egypt in the first quarter of the 2nd century, the beginning of the second century is a *terminus ad quem*. On the other hand, John’s knowledge of Luke is extremely probable, so it could not have been written before ca. 80-90. The assumption that John was *written probably in the last decade of the first century* is today almost universally accepted.<sup>15</sup> [my emphasis]

J. A. T. Robinson likewise says:

Indeed one of the facts about the *remarkable scholarly consensus which we shall be noting on the dating of the Johannine literature* is that it cuts across almost every possible division. Those who believe that all five books—the Revelation, the gospel and the three epistles—are by one man, and that man the apostle John, and those who hold to none of these, or to almost every possible permutation of them, find common ground in *dating both the Revelation and the gospel and epistles in the years 90-100*.<sup>16</sup> [my emphasis]

## **External Evidence Regarding the Date of John’s Gospel:**

### **I. That the apostle John lived to a very old age is widely attested:**

A. Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* claims that John lived into the reign of the Emperor Trajan (AD 98-117).<sup>17</sup>

B. Eusebius repeats Irenaeus’ statement about John living until the time of Trajan.<sup>18</sup>

C. Jerome placed John’s death “in the 68th year after our Lord’s passion.”<sup>19</sup>

### **II. That John was the last evangelist to write is also well attested, mentioned by Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* iii.1.1), Clement (according to Eusebius, *HE* 4.14.7), and Eusebius himself (*HE* 3.24.7).**

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<sup>14</sup> The date is usually given as between AD 100 and 150, so AD 125 is usually accepted as the approximate average date.

<sup>15</sup> P. Feine, J. Behm, and W. G. Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (1963); (*Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. A. J. Mattill, Jr. [1965], 246).

<sup>16</sup> J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1976), 254.

<sup>17</sup> *Adv. Haer.* 2.22.5; 3.3.4.

<sup>18</sup> *HE* 3.23.3. ff.

<sup>19</sup> *De vir. ill.* 9 (ca. AD 97 using an AD 30 date for the crucifixion, or ca. AD 100 if AD 33 is used).



III. But that John wrote as a very old man is an inference which only appears later and combined with other statements which cast considerable doubt on its accuracy.

- A. *The Muratorian Canon* (probably ca. AD 180) describing the origin of the gospel (the vision that John should write and the others revise) suggests no date, but it presupposes that John's "fellow-disciples" including Andrew are still alive and with him, and thus argues against a very late period.
- B. *The Anti-Marcionite Prologue*<sup>20</sup> records that "the gospel of John was revealed and given to the churches by John while still in the body" (some manuscripts add, "after writing the Apocalypse"). The *Prologue* also claims the authority of Papias for this statement, and says that John dictated the gospel to Papias. The *Prologue* adds that Marcion (who taught in Asia Minor ca. AD 130) was "rejected" by John (i.e., Marcion's theology was disapproved by the Apostle). However, Eusebius knew Papias' works, and quotes nothing from him about the origin of the Fourth Gospel.<sup>21</sup> It seems unlikely that the gospel was dictated to Papias, and impossible that John knew of Marcion.
- C. *Victorinus of Pettau* (died ca. AD 304) also says that John wrote the Gospel after the Apocalypse, but sees it as written against (among others) Valentinus, a Gnostic who taught in mid-2nd century.
- D. *Epiphanius* (ca. AD 315-403) says explicitly that John, refusing in his humility to write a gospel, was compelled by the Holy Spirit to do so in his old age, when he was over ninety, after his return from Patmos and after living "many years" in Asia.<sup>22</sup> However, this is combined with the confused statements that John's banishment took place "under Claudius" and that he prophesied under that emperor "before his death." Claudius reigned from AD 41-54 (but Epiphanius could be referring to Nero, whose full name was Nero Claudius Caesar Drusus Germanicus).
- E. *George Hamartolus* (9th century) stated, "After Domitian, Nerva reigned one year, who recalled John from the island, and allowed him to dwell in Ephesus. He was at that time the sole survivor of the twelve Apostles, and after writing his Gospel received the honour of martyrdom" (Domitian reigned from AD 81-96).
- F. Note, however, that Irenaeus and Eusebius did *not* say John wrote when a very old man.

This is basically the extent of the external evidence.

J. A. T. Robinson summarized well:

With marginal variation at each end (and even Bultmann goes down as far as 80 for the first composition), the span 90-100 is agreed by Catholic and Protestant, by conservative and radical, by those who defend apostolic authorship and those who reject it, by those who believe that John used the synoptists and those who do not. It includes virtually all those who have recently written commentaries on the gospel, not to mention other interpreters. It is one of the relatively few points at which over a span of two generations Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible* and *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* agree, and the consensus includes now the redaction-critics. Indeed many commentators (e.g. Schnackenburg) scarcely bother to discuss the issue of dating, and the space it occupies in introductions, whether to the New Testament or to the gospel, compared with that of authorship is minimal. Kümmel's two-sentence summary...[mentioned previously] is typical: the question appears to be settled.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> This work is dated ca. AD 400 by Regul, *Die antimarcionitischen Evangelienprologe*.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Eusebius' quote from Papias about the "Elder John" mentioned above (*HE* 3.39.4).

<sup>22</sup> *Heresies* 51.12.

<sup>23</sup> Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, 261.

## Internal Evidence Regarding the Date of John's Gospel

In the opinion of many interpreters, John's use of the synoptics (especially Luke) must indicate a later date (toward the end of the first century). But much scholarly disagreement over the use of the synoptics by John exists, especially over their precise relationship. In any case, John could be written after the synoptics and still be early.

For others, John's highly developed theology and ecclesiology must date from the end of the 1st century. But other books such as Romans and Hebrews have highly developed theology and are not necessarily late. Mention of the "spiritual" significance of sacraments (ordinances) like baptism is characteristic of John's point of view (note the literal/figurative interplay throughout). And John does not even mention the "sacrament" of the Lord's Supper!

John makes no reference at all to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Thus it is assumed this must be far enough removed not to seem as important. But of all the NT writings with the exception of Hebrews and Revelation, the Fourth Gospel is the most likely to contain an allusion to the fall of Jerusalem. The focus of the gospel is on the rejection of Messiah by "his own" (1:11). The visitation and rejection must mean divine judgment.

Ultimately, the temple (2:21) is replaced by Christ himself. Yet in chapter two there is no mention of Jerusalem's fall. Instead, Jesus' prophesy is seen as a prophesy not of what the Romans would do in destroying Jerusalem, but of the events of AD 33—what the Jews would do to Jesus. With an author as reflective as John, it is very strange that he does not see something of the coming doom in all of this.

A possible indication that Jerusalem was still undestroyed at the time the Fourth Gospel was written is found in 5:2, which speaks of the pool of Bethesda (*Bethzatha* according to some manuscripts) with its five porticoes as still standing, using a present tense. The present tense is the only one in the immediate context—the writer uses imperfects for the rest of the description. This appears to give it special significance. Elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel (4:6, 11:18, 18:1, 19:41) John assimilates such topographical descriptions into the context. The natural inference from this use of the present tense is that John is writing while the building is still standing. H. Hoehner thinks that because of this, the city might actually have been under siege, and Bethany (11:18) and Golgotha (19:1 ff.) had been destroyed, but the pool of Bethesda was still there. D. B. Wallace also argued that the present tense in 5:2 is not to be understood as a historical present, and thus provides a significant clue to the early dating of the Gospel.<sup>24</sup> In response to these suggestions, though, it must be noted that (1) while we do have some descriptions in Josephus of the general nature of the destruction in various quarters of the city, we do not know whether a feature like the pool of Bethesda would have survived the destruction or not; and (2) it is possible John, writing after the fall of the city and from a distant location, did not know whether the pool had been destroyed or not, and so naturally wrote as if it were still there, when in fact it may not have been.

Finally, the strong Palestinian influence throughout the gospel also suggests an early date. After John left for Ephesus and lived there for many years, such details would tend to fade and blur in memory.

In conclusion, the Fourth Gospel was probably written shortly before AD 70 and the fall of Jerusalem.

### 3. Literary Point of View

One of the most important developments in the field of literary criticism in the last century or so has been the study of the so-called "literary point of view." For our purposes we can define "point of view" as the position where the author stands in relation to the events he is relating to his readers. It is the "stance" he adopts as he relates his story.

To determine the point of view, one can ask the following questions:

(1) Who is telling the story?

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<sup>24</sup> D. B. Wallace, "John 5:2 and the Date of the Fourth Gospel," *Biblica* 71 (1990):177-205.

(2) From what physical point of view (or angle of narrative) is he telling the story?

(3) From what mental point of view (or *mood* [but not grammatical mood, however]) is he telling the story?

The first question (who is telling the story) is really the least important, since except in the case of an anonymous work it is relatively easy to determine who did write the story. The second question (about the physical point of view) is basically limited to 2 choices:

**1. The author may adopt a first person point of view.** Here the person telling the story is actually an observer of the events he relates. It is like a news reporter on the scene of a story describing what is taking place at the very moment as it happens. [**Note:** This does not necessarily involve the use of 1st person pronouns, just as a news reporter on the scene describing actions in progress may use second or third person pronouns.]

**1 D** Advantage: The first person point of view gives a great feeling of immediacy and closeness with the reader.

**2 D** Disadvantage: It greatly limits the range with which the author can deal with the events—he cannot present himself as knowing another person’s mind or knowing the future, for example.

**2. The author may adopt a third person point of view.** He tells the story as if he were separated from the events which are being described. He describes events like the narrator of a documentary.

**1 D** Disadvantage: this loses the feeling of immediacy and closeness with the reader.

**2 D** Advantages:

**1 E** A greater range of perspective from which to tell the story is available to the author.

**2 E** The writer may include later insights which the characters have received through the perspective of time, upon further reflection.

**3 E** The writer may interrupt the narrative to give his readers additional details and information they could not otherwise have—notes, explanatory glosses, comments, etc.

**4 E** Allows the readers to survey the lives of characters from a height, participating in the privilege of a novelist.

**3. The so-called “Omniscient Author” convention**—with this variation of the third person point of view, the author includes not only information the readers would not have, **but information that even a firsthand observer of the events could not know.** For instance, the writer may give the thoughts and feelings of more than one person at the same time (assuming these were not verbally expressed).

The third question (mental point of view or “mood”) is just as important as the physical point of view. It must be coherent with the physical point of view. The author’s mental analysis of a situation must agree with the physical point of view he adopts. What is meant is this: an author cannot adopt a 1st person point of view and yet tell the story as an “omniscient author” who knows the outcome. That would create a lack of coherence between the physical and mental points of view and would ring false to the reader or hearer.

In summary, we have seen that we may ask three questions to determine an author’s point of view. They are:

(1) Who is telling the story?

(2) What is his physical point of view? (This may be divided into 1st person or 3rd person, and if 3rd person, may involve the “omniscient author” convention).

(3) What is his mental point of view? (This must be consistent with the physical point of view adopted).

Now we will apply the above analysis to the Gospel of John.

**1. Who is telling the story?**

We find the answer to this at the end of the gospel itself— 21:24. The disciple whom Jesus loved (cf. 21:20) is the one who has written these things. From our previous discussion of authorship we concluded that this disciple is most likely the Apostle John.

## 2. What is the author's physical point of view?

*This is the basic difference between John and the Synoptics.* The synoptics are written from a 1st person point of view (as if the author had personally observed all the events) while John is written from a 3rd person point of view (i.e. removed from the events he describes).

While the author claims to be a participant in the events he very carefully separates himself from the events. However clear it is that he was an eyewitness of the life of our Lord, it is no less clear that **he looks back upon it from a distance**. While we see the events through his eyes, we are carefully guided to see through those eyes **not as they saw the events when they happened but as they now see them**. We see more from the position the writer now holds.

We might suspect, even from the opening words of 1:1, the panoramic sweep of John's view of the life of Christ.

There are numerous passages which could serve as an example of John's 3rd person perspective. Four will serve as examples:

- a. 2:17—ἐμνήσθησαν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι γεγραμμένον ἐστίν...
- b. 2:22—ὅτε οὖν ἠγέρθη ἐκ νεκρῶν...
- c. 12:16—ταῦτα οὐκ ἔγνωσαν αὐτοῦ οἱ μαθηταὶ τὸ πρῶτον...
- d. 20:9—οὐδέπω γὰρ ᾔδεισαν τὴν γραφὴν...

In each of these passages it may easily be seen that John has adopted the "post-resurrection" point of view. He looks back on the events and emphasizes the inability of the apostles to understand the things that were happening in their true perspective at the time they occurred. It is only possible for us to understand these things when we consider the resurrection and its significance in God's plan.

***But John has also chosen to use the "omniscient author" convention.***

- 1 C Details he specifically explains to his readers—
- 1 D The place where John was baptizing (1:28)
- 2 D Jewish purification customs (2:6)
- 3 D The state of Jewish-Samaritan relations (4:9)
- 4 D The existence of "secret believers" among the Jewish leaders (because they wanted to retain their positions) (12:42-43)
- 5 D Details of Jewish burial customs (19:40)
- 2 C The disciples' lack of understanding is repeatedly pointed out:
  - 1 D Jesus' exchange with Judas in the Upper Room (13:28-29)
  - 2 D Jesus' teaching concerning the resurrection (20:9)
  - 3 D The disciples did not at first recognize the glorified Jesus (21:4)
- 3 C Explanation of yet future events:
  - 1 D 11:2—Mary mentioned as "the Mary who anointed the Lord" before this takes place (not until 12:9)
  - 2 D The coming of the Holy Spirit mentioned by Jesus (7:39) before Pentecost
- 4 C Things a firsthand observer would not know:
  - 1 D Judas was a thief (12:6)

**2 D** The appropriateness of Caiaphas' prophesy (11:51-52). He spoke "more truly than he knew"

### **3. What is the author's mental point of view?**

It is, in general, consistent with the physical point of view he adopts as omniscient author. The mental point of view chosen by the author has allowed him to choose material which the other gospel writers did not use and to present it with the confidence that his readers, also viewing it from the post-resurrection point of view, would understand it in its true light. Those to whom the teaching was originally delivered did not understand it at the time.

For example, concerning the doctrine of the coming of the Holy Spirit: Jesus relates in 7:38 that "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water". **The following verse gives John's point of view** when he says: "He spoke this concerning the Spirit which those who believed in Him would receive, for the Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified."

Finally, Jesus breathes on the disciples (20:22) and (in some sense) they receive the Holy Spirit. **But believers, looking back with the author, could understand the teaching in 7:38.**

Another example would be Nicodemus in chapter 3. He apparently did not get the point of Jesus' teaching until *after* the conversation some time later. But let the reader understand!

### **4. Conclusions**

This has been a brief attempt to deal with literary point of view in relation to the gospel of John. We have seen that John consistently has adopted a "post-resurrection" point of view, looking back on the events with the benefit of further insight and seeing their theological implications. As an "omniscient author" he uses his access to information that a participant in the events could not have had at the time the events occurred.

### **5. An additional note on the frequency of historical presents in the Fourth Gospel:**

This technique allows the author to use the 3rd person point of view, with the "omniscient author" convention, and still preserve, at the same time, some of the **immediacy** and **vividness** of a first person point of view. Perhaps this is the reason for the large number of historical presents in the Fourth Gospel. Extensive use of the historical present is a characteristic mark of Johannine style.

# Major Differences Between John and the Synoptic Gospels

## Introduction: The Relationship of John's Gospel to the Synoptics.

Two basic positions on the relationship of John's Gospel to the Synoptics are possible:

- If John knew of the synoptics, then he wrote to supplement them. (To say John knew of one or more of the synoptics is not to say, however, that he wrote his gospel with copies of Matthew, Mark, and/or Luke in front of him. John may have been aware of the existence of other written accounts of Jesus' life and ministry without actually having seen them.)
- If John's Gospel is totally independent from the synoptics, he had enough material to choose from that much of it does not overlap with the synoptics (cf. Jn 20:30 and 21:25). This point is strengthened considerably if one accepts the Fourth Gospel's claim to reflect eyewitness testimony about the life and ministry of Jesus (John 21:23-24).

## Major Differences:

### *1. Omission by John of material found in the synoptics.*

John's Gospel omits a large amount of material found in the synoptic Gospels, including some surprisingly important episodes: the temptation of Jesus, Jesus' transfiguration, and the institution of the Lord's supper are not mentioned by John. John mentions no examples of Jesus casting out demons. The sermon on the mount and the Lord's prayer are not found in the Fourth Gospel. There are no narrative parables in John's Gospel (most scholars do not regard John 15:1-8 ["the Vine and the Branches"] as a parable in the strict sense).

### *2. Inclusion by John of material not found in the synoptics.*

John also includes a considerable amount of material not found in the synoptics. All the material in John 2—4, Jesus' early Galilean ministry, is not found in the synoptics. Prior visits of Jesus to Jerusalem before the passion week are mentioned in John but not found in the synoptics. The seventh sign-miracle, the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11) is not mentioned in the synoptics. The extended Farewell Discourse (John 13—17) is not found in the synoptic Gospels.

### *3. Different length of Jesus' public ministry.*

According to John, Jesus' public ministry extended over a period of at least three and possibly four years. During this time Jesus goes several times from Galilee to Jerusalem. The synoptics appear to describe only one journey of Jesus to Jerusalem (the final one), with most of Jesus' ministry taking place within one year.

### *4. 'High' Christology as opposed to the synoptics.*

The Prologue to John's Gospel (1:1-18) presents Jesus as the  $\Lambda\acute{o}\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  become flesh (1:14). John begins his Gospel with an affirmation of Jesus' preexistence and full deity, which climaxes in John 20:28 with Thomas' confession "My Lord and my God!" The non-predicated  $\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omega \epsilon\acute{\iota}\mu\iota$  sayings in the Fourth Gospel as allusions to Exod 3:14 also point to Jesus' deity (John 8:24, 28, 58). Compare Mark who begins his Gospel with Jesus' baptism and Matthew and Luke who begin theirs with Jesus' birth. John begins with eternity past ("In the beginning the Word already was...").

### *5. Literary Point of View: John versus the synoptics.*

The synoptics are written from a third person point of view, describing the events as if the authors had personally observed all of them and were reporting what they saw at the time. Thus they are basically **descriptive** in their approach. John's Gospel, on the other hand, although also written from a third person

point of view, is more **reflective**, clearly later than the events he describes. The author of the Fourth Gospel very carefully separates himself from the events he describes (cf. the role of the Beloved Disciple in the Fourth Gospel). However clear it is that he was an eyewitness of the life of Jesus, it is no less clear that he looks back upon it from a temporal distance. While we see the events through his eyes, we are carefully guided to see the events of Jesus' life not as John saw them when they happened but as he now sees them. We understand more of the significance of the events described from the position the writer now holds than an eyewitness could have understood at the time the events took place. In this sense John's Gospel is much more reflective.

There are numerous passages in John's Gospel which could serve as an example of this later perspective. Four will serve as examples:

- (a) John 2:17—ἐμνήσθησαν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι γεγραμμένον ἐστίν...
- (b) John 2:22—ὅτε οὖν ἠγέρθη ἐκ νεκρῶν...
- (c) John 12:16—ταῦτα οὐκ ἔγνωσαν αὐτοῦ οἱ μαθηταὶ τὸ πρῶτον...
- (d) John 20:9—οὐδέπω γὰρ ᾗδειςαν τὴν γραφὴν...

In each of these passages it may be easily seen that John has adopted the "post-resurrection" point of view. He looks back on the events and emphasizes the inability of the apostles to understand the things that were happening in their true perspective at the time they occurred. It is only possible for us to understand these things when we consider the resurrection of Jesus and its significance in God's plan.

### ***6. Extended dialogues or discourses rather than proverbial sayings.***

John presents his material in the form of extended dialogues or discourses rather than the 'proverbial' or 'pithy' sayings found often in the synoptics: John 3 (with Nicodemus); John 4 (with the Samaritan woman); John 6 (the Bread of Life Discourse); John 13—17 (the Farewell Discourse with the disciples). As L. Goppelt observed:

The Gospel of John passed on the words of Jesus predominantly in another genre than the synoptics; it did not do so in sayings, parables, and controversy dialogues, but in connected or dialogical discourses.<sup>25</sup>

### ***7. Use of symbolism and double meaning.***

John makes more frequent use of these literary techniques than the synoptics. Examples: John 2:25 (temple/body); John 7:37-38 (water/Spirit); John 12:32 (lifted up/exalted).

Much of this symbolism takes the form of dualistic antitheses: light/darkness (1:4; 3:19; 8:12; 11:9; 12:35, 46); truth/falsehood (8:44); life/death (5:24; 11:25); above/below (8:23); freedom/slavery (8:33, 36). Much of this antithetical dualism is also found in the Qumran (Dead Sea Scrolls) texts. See J. H. Charlesworth, "A Critical Comparison of the Dualism in 1QS 3:13-4:26 and the 'Dualism' Contained in the Gospel of John", in *John and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroad, 1990).

### ***8. Use of the "misunderstood statement."***

John makes frequent use of the "misunderstood statement" as a literary technique. Jesus says something to someone which is misunderstood, thus giving Jesus a further opportunity to clarify what he really meant. Examples: John 3 (Nicodemus' misunderstanding of the new birth as a second physical birth); John 4 (the Samaritan woman's misunderstanding of the living water as drinkable water).

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<sup>25</sup> Leonhard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. J. E. Alsup (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 2:293.

## 9. Ipsissima verba versus ipsissima vox.

The long discourses in John's Gospel do not necessarily represent Jesus' exact words (*ipsissima verba*) as long as they give a faithful summary and interpretive paraphrase (*ipsissima vox*) of what he actually said. Jesus' teaching in the Fourth Gospel may be couched in distinctively Johannine style. On the other hand, some of John's style may have been either directly or indirectly inspired by Jesus' own manner of speaking: in Mt 11:25-27 + Lk 10:21-22 Jesus uses language almost identical to that which characterizes his speeches in John's Gospel— "all things have been given to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, nor the Father except the Son and the one to whom the Son wishes to reveal him."

## 10. "Kingdom of God" versus "eternal life."

The emphasis on the Kingdom of God found in the synoptics is largely missing in John (the phrase βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ occurs only twice in John's Gospel (3:3, 5) and the noun βασιλεία only three times (all in 18:36). Instead we find John's emphasis on 'eternal life' as a present reality (John 5:24 etc.). The emphasis on 'eternal life' in John's Gospel is closer to the letters of Paul than to the synoptic gospels, as the following chart shows:

	<u>'Life':</u>	<u>'Kingdom':</u>	<u>Total:</u>
Matthew	7x	55x	62x
Mark	4x	20x	24x
Luke	5x	46x	51x
<u>John</u>	<u>36x</u>	<u>5x</u>	<u>41x</u>
Acts	8x	8x	16x
Paul's Letters	37x	14x	51x
Hebrews	2x	3x	5x
James	2x	1x	3x
Peter	4x	1x	5x
John's Letters	13x	0x	13x
Jude	2x	0x	2x
Revelation	23x	9x	32x
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>143x</b>	<b>162x</b>	<b>305x</b>

## 11. Realized eschatology in the Gospel of John.

The problem of so-called 'realized' eschatology in the Gospel of John (the term was popularized by C. H. Dodd) can be seen in microcosm in John 5:20b-30. On the one hand there are statements that speak of the parousia (second advent) as a future event in the traditional sense: "...for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good to a resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to a resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29 NASB). Alongside these on the other hand are statements that seem to speak of the full realization for believers of salvation in the present (5:20-27): "Truly, truly, I say to you he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" (John 5:24 NASB). There is an obvious tension between these statements that must be reconciled; judgment cannot be both present and future at the same time. Related to John's emphasis on 'eternal life' as a present reality is the stress on judgment as



realized in a person's response to Jesus (John 3:19). In addition John's Gospel does not emphasize the second advent of Christ as a future eschatological event (John 14:3 is about the only clear reference).

### ***12. Differences in grammatical style from the synoptic gospels.***

The Gospel of John is written in a style of Greek quite different from the synoptics. The range of vocabulary is smaller. There is frequent parataxis (use of coordinate clauses rather than subordinate clauses). Asyndeton frequently occurs. Related to paragraph (7) above, there is little difference between the words that are ascribed to Jesus and the words of the Evangelist. Example: try to determine in John 3:1-21 where the words of Jesus to Nicodemus end and the interpretive comments of the Evangelist begin.

## The Prologue (1:1-18)

Some have thought that the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel was composed separately by someone other than the Evangelist. The usual reasons given for seeing the Prologue as a separate composition involve the unique vocabulary it employs: **λόγος** (referring to the preincarnate *Logos*) only in 1:1, 1:14; **πλήρης**, **πλήρωμα** in 1:14, 1:16; and **χάρις** in 1:14, 1:16, and 1:17.

For example, R. Brown states that the Prologue is “an early Christian hymn, **probably stemming from Johannine circles**, which has been **adapted** to serve as an **overture** to the Gospel narrative of the career of the incarnate Word.”<sup>26</sup>

But it is more likely that it is original, because it fits so well with what follows. Why not see it as from the Evangelist himself if it comes from “Johannine circles”? [Brown may prefer the phrase “Johannine circles” because it suggests a later date, although in any case for him this composition would precede the composition of the remainder of the Gospel.]

Some have thought it should be understood as poetry. True, it can be arranged to look like verse. [So can just about any prose unit, including Eph 1:3-14]. **But I have seen no two arrangements which agree, nor any one arrangement which I find particularly convincing.** I think it is better to regard the prologue as **elevated prose**, with a meditative or reflective air about it (like much of the rest of the Fourth Gospel). But this does not make it poetry.

**On the use of δ λόγος:** It is not proven beyond doubt whether the term, as John uses it, is to be derived from **Jewish** or **Greek** backgrounds or some other source. Nor is it precisely plain what the author meant by it. He does not tell us, and we are left to work out the precise allusion and significance for ourselves.

R.P. Casey states regarding the Prologue:

...the principal difficulty lies neither in its style nor in its terminology but in the fact that its author has his feet planted firmly in two worlds: that of the **Old Testament** and that of **Hellenistic philosophy** and he allows his gaze to wander easily from one to the other. **At every important point he has not only two thoughts instead of one, but two sets of allusions in mind.**<sup>27</sup>

*Greek historical backgrounds:* As a philosophical term, **λόγος** meant the ‘world-soul’, the soul of the universe. This was an all-pervading principle, the rational principle of the universe. It was a creative energy. In one sense, all things came from it; in another, men derived their wisdom from it. These concepts are at least as old as Heraclitus (6th cent. BC): the **λόγος** is “always existent” and “all things happen through this **λόγος**.”<sup>28</sup>

*Later Hellenistic thought:* Philo of Alexandria, the Jewish philosopher of the early 1st century, frequently mentions the **λόγος** (it appears over 1400 times in his writings), but he is really concerned with his Platonic distinction between this material world and the real, heavenly world of ideas. It was the Stoics who actually developed the concept of **λόγος**. They abandoned Plato’s heavenly archetypes in favor of the thought (closer to Heraclitus) that the Universe is pervaded by **λόγος**, the eternal Reason. They were convinced of the ultimate rationality of the universe, and used the term **λόγος** to express this conviction. It was the ‘force’ (!) that originated and permeated and directed all things. It was the supreme governing principle of

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<sup>26</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, AB 29 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 1 [emphasis mine].

<sup>27</sup> R. P. Casey, *Journal of Theological Studies* 9 (1958): 270.

<sup>28</sup> *Frag.* 1, 50, 54, 114.

the universe. But the Stoics did not think of the λόγος as personal, nor did they understand it as we would understand God (i.e. as a person to be worshipped).

The Evangelist, then, is using a term that would be widely recognized among the Greeks. But the ‘man in the street’ would not know its precise significance, any more than most of us would understand the terms ‘relativity’ or ‘nuclear fission’. But he would know it meant something very important.

The rest of the Fourth Gospel, however, shows little trace of acquaintance with Greek philosophy, and even less of dependence on it.

John, in his use of λόγος, is cutting across the fundamental Greek concept of the gods: they were detached, they regarded the struggles and heartaches and joys and fears of the world with serene, divine lack of feeling. John uses λόγος to portray a God so involved, so caring, so loving and giving that he becomes incarnate within his creation.

William Barclay summarizes well:

John spoke to a world which thought of the gods in terms of passionless *apatheia* and serene *detachment*. He pointed at Jesus Christ and said: ‘Here is the mind of God; here is the expression of the thought of God; here is the λόγος. And men were confronted with a God who cared so passionately and who loved so sacrificially that His expression was Jesus Christ and His emblem a cross.’<sup>29</sup>

**Jewish Backgrounds:** The ἐν ἀρχῇ of John 1:1 inevitably recalls Genesis 1:1, בְּרֵאשִׁית. But ὁ λόγος also recalls אֱלֹהִים אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ, “and God said...” [cf. also Psalm 33:6, “By the word of Yahweh the heavens were made.”] There was also the “semi-personalization” of **Wisdom** in Proverbs 8:22 ff. And the Targums substitute *Memra* (“Word”) as an intermediary in many places: e.g. in Exod 19:17, “And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God” (MT), the Palestinian Targum reads “to meet the *Word* of God.” Targum Jonathan (containing the former and latter prophets, Joshua to 2 Kings plus the prophets and Daniel) uses this expression some 320 times. Some say this is not significant because *Memra* does not refer to a being distinct from God. It is just a way of referring to God himself. **But this is the point: people familiar with the Targums were familiar with “Memra” as a designation for God.** John does not use the term the way the Targums do, but to those familiar with the Targums it must have aroused these associations, which John would be in agreement with.<sup>30</sup>

**In summary:** William Temple states that the λόγος

“alike for Jew and Gentile represents the ruling fact of the universe, and represents that fact as the self-expression of God. The Jew will remember that ‘by the Word of the Lord the heavens were made’; the Greek will think of the rational principle of which all natural laws are particular expressions. Both will agree that this Logos is the starting-point of all things.”<sup>31</sup>

John was using a term which, with various shades of meaning, was in common use everywhere. He could count on all men catching his essential meaning. **But for John, the Word was not a principle, but a living Being, the source of life; not a personification, but a Person, and that Person divine.**

**Note:** John **never** uses the absolute, specific, unrelated term λόγος outside of the prologue. Elsewhere it is always modified or clarified, and does not occur in the Gospel again in the sense of *the* λόγος. Why not? Probably because in the Prologue we are looking at **pre-existence. 1:14 becomes the point of transition:**

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<sup>29</sup> William Barclay, *Expository Times* 70 (1958/59): 82.

<sup>30</sup> For further information see Martin McNamara, “Logos of the Fourth Gospel and *Memra* of the Palestinian Targum, Exod 12:42” (*Expository Times* 79 [1967/68]: 115-17).

<sup>31</sup> William Temple, *Readings in St John’s Gospel* (London: 1947), 4.

the **Word** is now **Jesus of Nazareth**. Therefore, he is called Jesus from this point on, no longer ὁ λόγος. Jesus and the λόγος are an identity; the λόγος is the pre-existent Christ.

**Strictly speaking, I would prefer *not* to say that John has ‘personified’ the λόγος because this implies that he borrowed the term from philosophical circles like the Stoics.** Perhaps if we could ask John, he would prefer to say the philosophers had (in a sense) ‘de-personalized’ the λόγος into a rational principle, although he really was a person (the pre-incarnate Christ) all along. That is to say, what the philosophers had grasped about the λόγος had some elements of truth, but these were only dim and distant reflections of the pre-incarnate Christ himself. There really was a rational principle behind the universe, but until the coming of this λόγος as Jesus of Nazareth (1:14) there was no way to know anything about him (1:18) except by natural revelation with all its limitations.

## **OUTLINE:**

### **1A The Prologue to the Gospel (1:1-18)**

#### **1 B The Word and Creation (1:1-5)**

#### **2 B John the Baptist’s Testimony about the Word (1:6-8)**

#### **3 B The World’s Reaction to the Word (1:9-13)**

#### **4 B The Church’s Confession about the Word (1:14-18)**

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## DETAILED EXEGETICAL NOTES:

### 1A The Prologue to the Gospel (1:1-18)

#### 1 B The Word and Creation (1:1-5)

**1:1 Ἐν ἀρχῇ** The search for the basic “stuff” out of which things are made is the earliest one in Greek philosophy. It was attended by the related question of “What is the process by which the secondary things came out of the primary one (or ones)?,” or in Aristotelian terminology, “What is the ἀρχῇ (or ἀρχαί) and what is the γεννησιν of the συνθετα?”

In the New Testament the word usually has a **temporal** sense, but even in BAGD the second major category of meaning listed is “the first cause.”<sup>32</sup> For John, the words Ἐν ἀρχῇ are most likely a **conscious allusion to the opening words of Genesis**: in Hebrew, בְּרֵאשִׁית. Other concepts which occur prominently in Genesis 1 are also found in the prologue: “**life**” (John 1:4) “**light**” (John 1:4) and “**darkness**” (John 1:5). Genesis 1 describes the first (physical) creation; John 1 describes the new (spiritual) creation. But this is not to play off a false dichotomy between “physical” and “spiritual”; the first creation was **both** physical and spiritual. The new creation is really a re-creation, of the spiritual (first) but also the physical. In spite of the common understanding of John’s ‘spiritual’ emphasis, we should not overlook the “physical” recreation which occurs in Chapter 2 with the changing of water into wine, in Chapter 11 with the resurrection of Lazarus, and the emphasis of Chapters 20-21 on the aftermath of Jesus’ own resurrection.

**Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν** In the beginning, the λόγος already **was**, i.e., already **existed**. Before the created order as we know it existed, the Word already existed. And ἦν can certainly convey eternal pre-existence, in contrast to ἐγένετο (1:3). There is a possibility of a Johannine double meaning here, since (as already mentioned) ἀρχῇ can also refer to the “first cause.” Tertullian makes reference to the double meaning of ἀρχῇ in the LXX of Genesis 1:1 in his *Argument against Hermogenes*.<sup>33</sup>

**πρὸς τὸν Θεόν** The preposition πρὸς implies not just **proximity**, but **intimate personal relationship**. Marcus Dods states, “Πρὸς implies not merely existence alongside of but personal intercourse. It means more than μετὰ or παρὰ, and is regularly employed in expressing the presence of one person with another.”<sup>34</sup> See also Mark 6:3, Matt 13:56, Mark 9:19, Gal 1:18, 2 John 12. A. T. Robertson says: “the literal idea comes out well, ‘face to face with God.’”<sup>35</sup>

**Θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος** See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, for the significance of anarthrous pre-copulative predicate nominatives and a discussion of Colwell’s Rule.<sup>36</sup> From a technical standpoint, I think it is probably preferable to see something of a qualitative aspect to anarthrous θεός. NEB has a helpful translation: “What God was, the Word was,” meaning the Word was fully deity in **essence**. In modern English “the Word was divine” does not quite catch the meaning; “the Word was fully God” would be more likely to convey the meaning to the average English reader.

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<sup>32</sup> BAGD 112.

<sup>33</sup> *Argument against Hermogenes* xix.

<sup>34</sup> Marcus Dods, “The Gospel of St. John,” in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament* (London, 1897), 684.

<sup>35</sup> A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934), 623, 625.

<sup>36</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 256-63.

**1:3 ὃ γέγονεν** There is a major punctuation problem here: should this relative clause go with verse 3 or verse 4? The earliest manuscripts have **no punctuation** [p<sup>66</sup>, p<sup>75\*</sup>, s<sup>\*</sup>, A, B, Δ]. Many of the later manuscripts which do have punctuation place it before the phrase, thus putting it with verse 4 [p<sup>75c</sup>, C, D, L, Θ, et al.]. Nestle-Aland 25th ed. placed the phrase in v. 3; Nestle-Aland 26th ed. moved the words to the beginning of v. 4.

In a detailed article Kurt Aland defends the change.<sup>37</sup> He sought to prove that the attribution of ὃ γέγονεν to verse 3 began to be carried out in the 4th century in the Greek church. This came out of the Arian controversy, and was intended as a safeguard for doctrine. The change was unknown in the West.

It appears to me Aland is correct in affirming that the phrase was attached to v. 4 by the Gnostics and the Eastern Church; only when the Arians began to use them were they attached to v. 3. But this does not rule out the possibility that by moving the words from v. 4 to v. 3 one is restoring the original reading.

Understanding the words as part of v. 3 is natural and adds to the emphasis which is built up there; while it also gives a terse, forceful statement in v. 4. On the other hand, taking the phrase ὃ γέγονεν with v. 4 gives a complicated expression: Barrett says that both ways of understanding v. 4 with ὃ γέγονεν included ‘are almost impossibly clumsy’: “That which came into being—in it the Word was life”; “That which came into being—in the Word was its life.”<sup>38</sup>

The following stylistic points should be noted in the solution of this problem:

- (1) John frequently starts sentences with ἐν;
- (2) he repeats frequently (“nothing was created that has been created”);
- (3) 5:26 and 6:53 both give a sense similar to v. 4 if it is understood **without** the phrase;
- (4) it makes far better Johannine sense to say that **in the Word was life**, than to say that the created universe (what was made, ὃ γέγονεν) was life in him.

**Conclusion:** The phrase is best taken with verse 3. Schnackenburg, Barrett, Carson, Haenchen, Morris, AV, and NIV concur (against Brown, Beasley-Murray, and NEB). The arguments of R. Schnackenburg are particularly persuasive.<sup>39</sup>

**1:4 ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν** Regarding John’s use of ζωή: John uses the term 37 times. 17 times it occurs with αἰώνιος, and in the remaining occurrences **outside** the Prologue it is clear from context that ‘eternal’ life is meant. The 2 uses in 1:4, if they do not refer to ‘eternal’ life, would be the only exceptions.

Also (as a footnote) **1 John** uses ζωή 13 times, always of ‘eternal’ life.

For the meaning of the verse we should probably turn to Psalm 36:9: “For with Thee is the **fountain of life**; In Thy light we see light.” In later Judaism, 1 Baruch 4:2 expresses a similar idea. **Life, especially eternal life, will become one of the major themes of the gospel.**

**1:5 καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει** Note the change of **tense**. Up till now John has used **past** tenses (**imperfect, aorist**); now he switches to a **present**. The light **continually** shines. Even as the evangelist writes, it is shining. The present here has **gnomic** force; it expresses the timeless truth that the light of the world (cf. 8:12, 9:5, 12:46) never ceases to shine. The question of whether John has in mind here the pre-

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<sup>37</sup> Kurt Aland, “Eine Untersuchung zu Johannes 1, 3-4. Über die Bedeutung eines Punktes,” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 59 (1968): 174-209.

<sup>38</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 157

<sup>39</sup> Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, trans. K. Smyth (New York: Seabury, 1980), 1:239-40.

incarnate Christ or the incarnate Christ is probably **too specific**. The incarnation is not really introduced till 1:9, but here the point is more general: it is of the very nature of light, that it shines.

καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν Here we are introduced to what will become a major theme of John's Gospel: **the opposition of light and darkness**. The antithesis is a natural one, widespread in antiquity. Genesis 1 gives considerable emphasis to it in the account of the creation, and so do the writings of Qumran. It is the major theme of one of the most important extra-biblical documents found at Qumran, the so-called *War Scroll*, properly titled *The War of the Sons of Light with the Sons of Darkness*. Connections between John and Qumran are still an area of scholarly debate and a consensus has not yet emerged.<sup>40</sup>

κατέλαβεν is not easy to translate. "To seize" or "to grasp" is possible, but this also permits "to grasp with the mind" in the sense of "to comprehend" (esp. in the middle voice). We are probably faced with another Johannine double meaning here, but I prefer the sense of "to overcome" rather than "to understand": **one does not usually think of Darkness as trying to understand light**. For it to mean this, we must understand "darkness" as meaning "certain men," or perhaps "mankind" at large, darkened in understanding. But in John's usage, **darkness is not normally used of men or a group of men**. Rather it usually signifies **the evil environment or 'sphere'** in which men find themselves. They loved **darkness** rather than light (3:19). Those who follow Jesus do not walk in **darkness** (8:12). They are to walk while they have light, lest the **darkness** "overtake"/"overcome" them (12:35, same verb as here). For John, with his set of symbols and imagery, darkness is not something which seeks to "understand/comprehend" the light, but **the forces of evil** which seek to "overcome/conquer" it. But they did not succeed.

## 2 B John the Baptist's Testimony about the Word (1:6-8)

1:6 Ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος Note the use of γίνομαι rather than ἔρχομαι here: perhaps it would have been more natural to use ἦλθεν (1:7). But ἐγένετο in 1:3 refers to "**coming into existence**"—the creation. John the Baptist was a created being; there was a time when he was not. In contrast, ὁ λόγος ἦν (1:1); there was never a "time" when the Λόγος did not exist—compare 1:15, where the Baptist testifies of Jesus, ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν.

1:7 οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ "**Witness**" is also one of the major themes of the Fourth Gospel. The verb μαρτυρέω occurs 33 times (compare to 1 time in Matthew, 1 time in Luke, 0 in Mark) and the noun μαρτυρία 14 times (0 in Matthew, 1 time in Luke, 3 times in Mark).

## 3 B The World's Reaction to the Word (1:9-13)

1:9 ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον The participle ἐρχόμενον may be either (1) neuter nominative, agreeing with τὸ φῶς, or (2) masculine accusative, agreeing with ἄνθρωπον.

(1) results in a periphrastic imperfect with ἦν, ἦν τὸ φῶς...ἐρχόμενον, referring to the incarnation.

(2) would have the participle modifying ἄνθρωπον and referring to the true light as enlightening "every man who comes into the world."

(2) has some rabbinic parallels: the phrase כָּל בָּאֵי הָעוֹלָם ("all who come into the world") is a fairly common expression for "every man" (cf. *Leviticus Rabbah* 31.6).

But (1) must be preferred here, because:

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<sup>40</sup> See T. A. Hoffman, "1 John and the Qumran Scrolls," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 8 (1978): 177-21.

- In the next verse **the light is in the world**; it is logical for verse 9 to speak of its **entering** the world;
- In other passages Jesus is described as “coming into the world” (6:14, 9:39, 11:27, 16:28) and in 12:46 Jesus says: ἐγὼ φῶς εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐλήλυθα;
- Use of a periphrastic participle with the imperfect tense is Johannine style: 1:28, 2:6, 3:23, 10:40, 11:1, 13:23, 18:18 and 25. In **every one** of these except 13:23 the finite verb is first and separated by one or more intervening words from the participle.

In this verse we are introduced to the **κόσμος** for the first time. This is another important theme word for John. Generally, κόσμος as a Johannine concept does **not** refer to the totality of creation (the universe, *das All*) (although there are exceptions at 11:9, 17:5, 24, 21:25) but to **the world of men and human affairs**. Even in 1:10 the world created through the λόγος is a world capable of knowing (or reprehensibly not knowing) its Maker.

Sometimes ὁ κόσμος is further qualified as ὁ κόσμος οὗτος (8:23, 9:39, 11:9, 12:25, 31; 13:1, 16:11, 18:36). This is not merely equivalent to the rabbinic **הַיָּגֶלֶת הַזֶּה** (ὁ αἰὼν οὗτος, “this present age”) and contrasted with the world to come. For John **it is also contrasted to a world other than this one, already existing**; this is the **lower** world, corresponding to which there is a world **above** (see esp. 8:23, 18:36). Jesus appears not only as the Messiah by means of whom an eschatological future is anticipated (as in the Synoptics) but also as **an envoy from the heavenly world** to ὁ κόσμος οὗτος. This **descent/ascent motif** (connected to the Incarnation) will appear in the Prologue (see the chiasmic arrangement for 1:1-18), again in 1:51 and as one of the themes of the remainder of the Gospel. The **descent** is mentioned in 3:13; the **nadir** (rejection by his own) in 12:37; the “**ascent**” is comprised of both crucifixion (predicted in 12:32) and resurrection/ascension (20:17).

**1:11 οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλαβον** There is a subtle irony here: when the λόγος came into the world, he came to his “own” (τὰ ἴδια, literally “his own things,” a neuter form which refers to his own “home”—Israel—or to his own “things”—his messianic office) and his own people (οἱ ἴδιοι), who should have known and received him, but they did not. This time John does not say that “his own” did not **know** him, but that they did not “**receive**” him. (παρέλαβον). The idea is one not of mere recognition, but of **acceptance and welcome**.

**1:12 τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ** A note on John’s use of the πιστεύω + εἰς construction: the verb πιστεύω occurs 98 times in John (compared to 11 times in Matthew, 14 times in Mark [including the longer ending], and 9 times in Luke). One of the unsolved mysteries is **why the corresponding noun form πίστις is never used at all**. Many have held the noun was in use in some pre-Gnostic sects and this rendered it suspect for John. It might also be that for John, faith was an activity, something that men do.<sup>41</sup>

In any event, John uses πιστεύω in 4 major ways:

1. of believing facts, reports, etc., 12 times;
2. of believing people (or the Scriptures), 19 times;
3. of believing “in” Christ” (πιστεύω + εἰς + acc.), 36 times;
4. used absolutely without any person or object specified, 30 times (the one remaining passage is 2:24, where Jesus refused to “trust” himself to certain men).

Of these, the most significant is the use of πιστεύω with εἰς + accusative. **It is not unlike the Pauline ἐν Χριστῷ formula**. It also appears to be a **literal translation** of the Hebrew **בְּיַמְנֵהוּ** (see BDB s.v. יָמַן).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. William Turner, “Believing and Everlasting Life—A Johannine Inquiry,” *Expository Times* 64 (1952/53): 50-52.



Some have argued that this points to a Hebrew (more likely Aramaic) original behind the Fourth Gospel. But it probably indicates something else, as C. H. Dodd has observed: “πιστεύειν with the dative **so inevitably connoted simple credence**, in the sense of an intellectual judgment, that **the moral element of personal trust or reliance** inherent in the Hebrew or Aramaic phrase—an element integral to the primitive Christian conception of faith in Christ—**needed to be otherwise expressed**.”<sup>42</sup>

**1:13 οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων...ἀλλ’ ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν** This describes the origin of the τέκνα Θεοῦ—three times negatively and once positively. The **plural** αἱμάτων has seemed a problem to many interpreters. At least some sources in antiquity imply that blood was thought of as being important in the development of the fetus during its time in the womb: thus *Wisdom of Solomon* 7:1: “in the womb of a mother I was molded into flesh, within the period of 10 months, **compacted with blood**, from the seed of a man and the pleasure of marriage.” In John 1:13, the plural αἱμάτων may imply the action of both parents. It may also refer to the ‘genetic’ contribution of both parents, and so be equivalent to “**human descent**” (cf. BAGD s.v. αἷμα.) Hoskyns thought John could **not** have used the singular here because Christians **are** in fact ‘begotten’ by the blood of Christ, although the context would seem to make it clear that the blood in question is something other than the blood of Christ.<sup>43</sup>

The next phrase, οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σαρκός, is more clearly a reference to sexual desire, but we should note that **σάρξ in John does not convey the evil sense common in Pauline usage**. For John it refers to the **physical nature in its weakness** rather than in its sinfulness. I think there is no clearer confirmation of this than the immediately following verse, where the λόγος became σάρξ.

The third phrase, οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρός, means much the same as the second one. The word here (ἀνηρ) is often used for a husband. Thus, “nor of the will of a husband.” Or more generally, “**nor of any human volition whatsoever**.” Morris may be right when he sees here an emphasis directed at the Jewish pride in race and patriarchal ancestry, although such a specific reference is difficult to prove.<sup>44</sup>

On the contrary, the way the τέκνον Θεοῦ is begotten is by **supernatural divine miracle**. The imagery is bold because the verb γεννάω is commonly used of **the action of the male parent in the reproductive process**.

#### **4 B The Church’s Confession about the Word (1:14-18)**

**1:14** This verse constitutes **the most concise statement of the Incarnation** in the New Testament. 1:1 makes it clear that the λόγος was fully God, but 1:14 makes it clear that he was also fully human. A Docetic interpretation is completely ruled out.

**Note:** Here for the first time the λόγος of 1:1 ff. is identified as **Jesus of Nazareth**—the two are one and the same. Thus this is the last time the word λόγος is used in the Fourth Gospel to refer to the second Person of the Trinity. Henceforth it is Jesus who becomes the focus of the Gospel.

**καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν** The verb here, together with δόξαν in the following clause, makes it clear that John is alluding to the Wilderness experience of Israel. Parallels with Exodus 33 are especially numerous:

**Exod 33:7** How Moses used to take the **tent and pitch it** outside the camp.

**John 1:14** **ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν...**

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<sup>42</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 183 [emphasis mine].

<sup>43</sup> E. C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, 2d ed. (London: Faber & Faber, 1947), 143.

<sup>44</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 101.

- Exod 33:9** . . .the pillar of cloud would **descend**.
- Exod 33:10** When all the people **saw** the pillar of cloud...[they] would arise and worship.
- John 1:14** καὶ **ἐθεασάμεθα** τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ...
- Exod 33:11** Thus Yahweh spoke to **Moses** face to face...
- John 1:17** ὁ νόμος διὰ **Μωϋσέως** ἐδόθη...
- Exod 33:20** “You **cannot see** My face, for **no man can see Me** and live.”
- John 1:18** **Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε**...
- Exod 33:23** “You shall see My back, but My face **shall not be seen**.”
- John 1:18** ἐκεῖνος **ἐξηγήσατο**...

Some would say that John is here presenting **Jesus as the new and greater Moses**. I do not agree, because 1:17 makes it clear that ‘**law**’ came through Moses, while ‘**grace and truth**’ came through Jesus. More likely the allusions here are to **Jesus being presented as Yahweh**: it was Yahweh who dwelt in the Tabernacle; in 1:14 the λόγος tabernacled among men. And Moses never saw God’s face (Exod 33:20) but the λόγος resided in the bosom of the Father ‘and explained’ him. (1:18).

**ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός** “Only begotten” is a bit misleading as a translation here, since in English it appears to express a metaphysical relationship. The word in Greek was used of an **only child** (a son [Luke 7:12, 9:38] or a daughter [Luke 8:42]). It was also used of something **unique** (only one of its kind) such as the mythological **Phoenix** (1 Clement 25:2). From here it passes easily to a description of **Isaac** (Heb 11:17 and Josephus, *Antiquities*, I.222) who was not Abraham’s **only** son, but was **one-of-a-kind** because he was the child of the promise.

In the Johannine literature μονογενῆς is **only** used of Jesus, and some want to see a heightened meaning like ‘begotten’ because of its proximity to the phrase ἐκ Θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν in John 1:13. In this case it would become more or less equivalent to **πρωτότοκος** (Rom 8:29, Col 1:15).

It seems to me that **the unique character of the relationship between Father and Son** is one of the important themes of John’s Gospel which is repeatedly stressed throughout, and so the meaning ‘**unique**’ is perfectly adequate within the Johannine framework.

**1:15 The testimony of John the Baptist:** Οὗτος ἦν is a bit unusual; we might have expected ἐστιν. John the Baptist may be referring back to a previous occasion when he had witnessed about Jesus; but it is also possible that this is a **deliberate allusion** back to 1:1 and the eternal (pre)existence of the Λόγος—this is supported also by the **case** in the final clause in verse 15. This final (causal) clause is somewhat difficult in wording: literally, “because he was first of me.” Most commentators agree it should be understood as a temporal reference, “because he existed before me.” Westcott pointed out that the reference here is not merely to **relative priority**, but **absolute priority**. In other words, the λόγος was not just “former” (prior to John the Baptist) but “first” in an absolute sense.<sup>45</sup> We might paraphrase, “**my successor has taken precedence over me, because he was [existed] prior to me [and to all else]**”.

**1:16** The major problems with verse 16 lie in deciding **whose words they are** (the Baptist’s or the writer’s) and what the sense of the phrase **χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος** is.

Earlier commentators (including Origen and Luther) took these words to be the Baptist’s. Most modern commentators take them as the words of the writer of the Gospel. Some, indeed, see the reference to the

<sup>45</sup> Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 13.

Baptist in 1:15 as one of the rather inept ‘interpolations’ made by the gospel writer into the hymn which comprises the Prologue (1:1-18).

Z. C. Hodges took 1:15-18 as the words of the Baptist.<sup>46</sup> The words do seem to read most naturally this way; it is only on account of the depth of this Christological insight that most today would assign them to the Evangelist. What most overlook is the ‘high’ Christological statement in 1:29, where the Baptist specifically identifies Jesus as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” That John the Baptist had prophetic insight into the Person and Ministry of Jesus is also implied in Luke 1:15-17, where he is said to come “in the spirit and power of Elijah.” If one is willing to acknowledge that the Baptist genuinely had the prophetic gift, **there is nothing inherently impossible in the attribution to him of 1:15-18.** In *addition* to the arguments in favor of this interpretation given by Hodges in his article, it seems to me that several other things favor it:

1. The absence of words like πλήρωμα (1:16) and χάρις (1:16,17) later in the gospel are more readily explained if these are in fact **the Baptist’s terms** for Jesus’ ministry;
2. Knowledge of such sayings by the Baptist on the part of the gospel writer is more believable if John the Apostle were originally a **follower** of the Baptist; and many think he is in fact the unnamed associate of Andrew mentioned in 1:35 and 1:40;
3. 1:14 makes a very appropriate introduction to these words if they are the Baptist’s; in other words, the gospel writer introduces the earthly career of the incarnate Λόγος in 1:14, using terminology echoed in the initial testimony of the Baptist which immediately follows (μονογενής, πατρός, πλήρης, χάριτος, and ἀληθείας);
4. 1:19 is not therefore the point of transition between Prologue and gospel (as usually assumed) but represents **the testimony of the Baptist about Jesus on another occasion**, when he was confronted with representatives from Jerusalem.

In spite of all this, **I am not convinced that 1:16-18 should be understood as a continuation of the Baptist’s testimony** for the following reasons:

1. There is the 2nd plural ἐθεασάμεθα of 1:14 (which are **undoubtedly the words of the Evangelist**) which fits with ἡμεῖς πάντες ἐλάβομεν of 1:16.
2. The repetition of μονογενής in 1:14 and 1:18, as a description of Jesus, would seem to argue that **the Evangelist was responsible for both**—otherwise the Evangelist would have had to have written 1:14 as a deliberate introduction to the quoted words of the Baptist—not impossible, but less likely in my judgment.
3. Perhaps most significant, if there are deliberate allusions to Exod 33 in 1:14 (as we have already discussed) and if M. Hooker is right that 1:16 is an allusion to Exod 33:13 (see below) then **it seems more likely, on the whole, that the Evangelist wrote both 1:14 and 1:16 and was deliberately alluding to Exod 33 in both**, than that it is merely coincidental that 1:14 and 1:16 both go back to Exod 33. (It should also be noted that verses 17 and 18 also contain references or allusions to the Old Testament, particularly Exod 33:23/John 1:18).

**As for the difficult phrase χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος, the sense could be:**

1. love/grace under the New Covenant in place of love/grace under the Sinai Covenant, thus **replacement**;
2. grace “on top of” grace, thus **accumulation**;
3. grace corresponding to grace, thus **correspondence**.

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<sup>46</sup> Zane C. Hodges, “Problem Passages in the Gospel of John—Part 1: Grace after Grace—John 1:16,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135 (1978): 34-45.

Probably the most commonly held view is (2) in one sense or another, and I would think this is probably the preferred explanation. This sense is supported by a fairly well-known use in Philo, *On the Posterity of Cain and His Exile* 145. Morna Hooker has suggested that **Exod 33:13 provides the background for this expression**: “How therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found χάρις (LXX) in Thy sight, let me know Thy ways, that I may know Thee, so that I may find χάρις (LXX) in Thy sight.”<sup>47</sup> Hooker proposes that it is this idea of **favor given to one who has already received favor** which lies behind 1:16, and in my view this seems very probable as a good explanation of the meaning of the phrase.

**1:17 The Old and the New:** Whatever we make of the allusions to Exod 33 in John 1:14-18, verse 17 seems to make it clear that the **Old Covenant** (Sinai) is being contrasted with the **New**. In Jewish sources the Law was regarded as a gift from God (Josephus, *Antiquities* VIII. 338; *Pirke Aboth* 1.1; *Sifre Deut.* 31.4 § 305).<sup>48</sup> The use of ἐγένετο here (which was previously used in relation to the creative activity of the Λόγος (1:3,10) may imply that **Jesus is the Source and Creator** of both χάρις and ἀλήθεια—they came into existence through him.

**Note:** This is the first use of the name Ἰησοῦς ; John uses it 237 times in all (compare 150 times in Matthew, 81 in Mark, and 89 in Luke). This is more than 25% of the NT occurrences (905 times). The compound title with Χρίστος occurs elsewhere in John only in 17:3 (though see 20:31). John uses Χρίστος alone 19 times (compared with 17 times in Matthew, 7 times in Mark, and 12 times in Luke).

**1:18** Notice Θεόν is in emphatic position (as the first word in the clause). What about the Old Testament passages like Exod 24:9-11 that seem to state explicitly that some men have seen God? What John probably means here is that, in his essential being, God has never yet been seen by men. The theophanies described in the Old Testament did not and could not reveal God’s essential being. Calvin said, “When he says that no one has seen God, it is not to be understood of the outward seeing of the physical eye. He means that, since God dwells in inaccessible light, he cannot be known except in Christ, his living image.” Compare Jesus’ words in 6:46 and 14:9.

μονογενῆς Θεός (ὁ μονογενῆς υἱός) The textual problem is a notoriously difficult one! It appears that **only one letter** would have differentiated the readings in some manuscripts, since P<sup>66</sup>, one of the earliest manuscripts (2nd/3rd century), uses the abbreviation ΘC; the alternative would have been ΥC.<sup>49</sup>

The external evidence is difficult to evaluate objectively because it is so evenly split between Alexandrian and Byzantine readings and one’s view toward the relative importance of these two text-types will probably decide one’s evaluation of the external evidence. Internally, υἱός fits the immediate context more readily; Θεός is much more difficult, but also explains the origin of the other reading (υἱός) more readily, because it is difficult to see why a scribe who found υἱός in the text he was copying would alter it to Θεός.

On the whole I do not think either reading seriously alters the meaning of the text. **But I have a preference for Θεός as the older and more difficult reading.**

As for translation, I think it makes the most sense to see the word Θεός as in apposition to μονογενῆς, and the participle ὁ ὢν as in apposition to Θεός, giving in effect **three** descriptions of Jesus rather than only two. The modern translations which best express this are the NEB (margin), TEV, and NET:

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<sup>47</sup> Morna J. Hooker, “The Johannine Prologue and the Messianic Secret,” *New Testament Studies* 21 (1974/75): 53.

<sup>48</sup> For further information see T. F. Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel* (London 1960).

<sup>49</sup> The abbreviation consisted of the first and last letters of the word in the uncial script; the bar over the letters indicated that it was an abbreviation.

*NEB margin:* “No man has ever seen God; but the only one, himself God, the nearest one to the Father’s heart, has made him known.”

*TEV:* “No one has ever seen God. The only One, who is what God is, and who is near the Father’s side, has made him known.”

*NET:* “No one has ever seen God. The only one, himself God, who is in the presence of the Father, has made God known.”

Several things should be noted: μονογενής *alone*, without υἱός, can mean “only son,” “unique son,” “unique one,” etc. (see 1:14). Furthermore, Θεός is anarthrous. As such it carries **qualitative** force much like it does in 1:1c, where Θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος means “the Word was fully God” or “the Word was fully of the essence of deity” [see above discussion under **1:1**].

Finally, ὁ ὢν occurs in Rev 1:4, 1:8, 4:8, 11:17, and 16:5, but even more significantly in the **LXX of Exod 3:14**. Putting all of this together I would suggest the following translation for 1:18: “No one has seen God at any time. The unique One—fully God—the “I am” in the bosom of the Father, that One has explained him fully.”

**In this final verse of the Prologue, the climactic and ultimate statement of the earthly career of the Λόγος, Jesus of Nazareth, is reached.** The Unique One (cf. 1:14), the one who has taken on human form and nature (σὰρξ ἐγένετο, 1:14), who is himself fully God (what God was, the Λόγος was, 1:1c) and is to be identified with the Ever-living One of the Old Testament revelation (ὁ ὢν, Exod 3:14), who is in intimate relationship with the Father, this One and no other has fully revealed what God is like! As Jesus said to Phillip in 14:9, “The one who has seen Me has seen the Father.”

## Chapter 1 ( 1:19-51)

Note L. Morris' suggestion: The opening of the narrative proper might be understood as the account of the happenings of one momentous week:<sup>50</sup>

**Day 1**—The deputation from Jerusalem to the Baptist (1:19-28)

**Day 2**—John the Baptist points out Jesus (1:29-34)

**Day 3**—Two of John's disciples follow Jesus (1:35-40)

**Day 4**—Andrew brings Peter to Jesus (1:41-42) [Presumably on the next day]

[Using the "inclusive" method of calculation:]

**Day 5**—(1<sup>st</sup> day) Philip and Nathanael come to Jesus (1:43-51)

**Day 6**—(2<sup>nd</sup> day) (no events recorded)

**Day 7**—(3<sup>rd</sup> day) “Καὶ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ γάμος ἐγένετο ἐν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας...”

If this is an accurate chronological arrangement we may ask, “What is the significance of this chronology for the Evangelist?” The **deliberate allusion to Gen 1:1** by the phrase ἐν ἀρχῇ in John 1:1 (see Notes on the Prologue) suggests that the framework of John 1:19-51 is also an allusion to the seven creative days of Gen 1. It suggests creative activity—**Jesus is about to engage in a new creation, just as he was active in the original creation** (1:3). Nevertheless, the point should not be pressed too far, because of the omission of recorded events for **day 6** and because John himself does not enumerate the days in this way (cf. 2:1, which the author describes as the **3rd** day, not the 7th).

John the Baptist's testimony does seem to take place over 3 days (cf. the suggested chronology above):

**Day 1**—John's testimony about his own role is **largely negative** (1:19-28)

**Day 2**—John gives **positive testimony** about who Jesus is (1:29-34)

**Day 3**—John sends his **own** disciples to follow Jesus (1:35-40)

C. H. Dodd observed a (triadic) **parallel** between the above arrangement and the **Prologue** (1:6-8) which is probably the **expansion** of the Prologue we would expect if our theory about its nature is correct.<sup>51</sup>

(1) John was **not** the Light (1:8)

(2) John came **to testify to the Light** (1:7) and (1:8)

(3) His purpose for testifying was **in order that all believe** (1:7)

[**Note:** This should not be pressed too far because it does involve a sequential dislocation.]

### OUTLINE:

#### 2 A The Introduction to the Gospel (1:19-51)

##### 1 B The Witness of John the Baptist (1:19-34)

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<sup>50</sup> Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 129 ff.

<sup>51</sup> C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 248.

**1 C John's witness about himself (1:19-28)**

**2 C John's witness about Jesus (1:29-34)**

**2 B Jesus acquires his first disciples from John (John 1:35-51)**

**1 C Two of John's disciples follow Jesus (1:35-39)**

**2 C Andrew finds Peter and brings him to Jesus (1:40-42)**

**3 C Jesus calls Philip (1:43-44)**

**4 C Nathanael and his confession (1:45-51)**

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## **DETAILED EXEGETICAL NOTES:**

**2 A The Introduction to the Gospel (1:19-51)**

**1 B The Witness of John the Baptist (1:19-34)**

The Baptist is the first witness brought forward by the Evangelist to give testimony as to who Jesus is. See the following discussion for further information on the phrase οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι.<sup>52</sup>

**1 C John's witness about himself (1:19-28)**

**1:19ff.** Note again the **triadic** pattern of the roles proposed for the Baptist by the emissaries of the Pharisees:

1. Are you the **Messiah**? (this was not explicitly asked but was certainly implied; note John's denial. )
2. Are you **Elijah**?
3. Are you the **Prophet**?

Note also the increasing curtness of John's replies: (1) ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμι ὁ Χριστός; (2) οὐκ εἰμι; and finally (3) merely οὐ. Perhaps John's patience was wearing a bit thin or, more likely, **he wished not at all to focus attention on himself** but more and more on the One to whom he did come to bear witness.

### **A Note on Jewish Messianic Expectation:**

Apparently, **no uniform Jewish expectation of a single eschatological figure existed**. A majority expected the Messiah. But some apocryphal books describe God's intervention without mentioning the anointed Davidic king; in parts of **Enoch** the figure of the Son of Man, not the Messiah,

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<sup>52</sup> See also R. G. Bratcher, "The Jews' in the Gospel of John," *Bible Translator* 26 (1975): 401-409. This ground-breaking article argued conclusively for a nuanced translation of the phrase into English, a practice now followed by a number of newer translations (e.g., CEV, NLT, NET).

embodies the expectations of the author. **Essenes** at Qumran seem to have expected *three* figures: a **prophet**, a **priestly messiah**, and a **royal messiah**.

### A Note on the Significance of John's Baptism:

In **baptizing**, John was performing an **eschatological** action. It also seems to be part of his proclamation (1:23, 26-27). Crowds were beginning to follow him. He was operating in an area not too far from the Essene center on the Dead Sea. No wonder the authorities were curious about who he was.

**1:20-21** We may now consider John's three responses, i.e., **who John was not**:

**(1) John was not the Messiah**—A 3rd century work, the pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* [1.54 and 1.60 in the Latin text; the statement is not as clear in the Syriac] records that **John's followers proclaimed him to be the Messiah**. We have no clear evidence that they did so in the 1st century, however—but Luke 3:15 indicates some **wondered**.

**(2) John was not Elijah**—According to 2 Kings 2:11, Elijah is still alive. In Mal 4:5 it is said that Elijah would be the precursor of Messiah. How do we reconcile this with Jesus' statements in Matt 11:14 (see also Mark 9:13 and Matt 17:12) that John the Baptist **is** Elijah?

Some have attempted to remove the difficulty by a construction in the Gospel of John which makes the Baptist say that he *was* Elijah. But surely this is playing fast and loose with the text!

According to Gregory the Great, John was *not* Elijah, but exercised toward Jesus the **function** of Elijah by preparing his way. But this avoids the real difficulty, since the question of the Jewish authorities to the Baptist concerns *precisely* his **function**.

It has been suggested that the author of the Gospel here preserves a historically correct reminiscence—that **John the Baptist** did not think of himself as Elijah, although Jesus said otherwise. Mark 6:14-16 and Mark 8:28 indicate the people and Herod both distinguished between John and Elijah—*probably* because he did not see himself as Elijah.

But Jesus' remarks in Matt 11:14, Mark 9:13, and Matt 17:12 indicate that John *did* perform the function of Elijah—John did for Jesus what Elijah was to have done for the coming of the Lord. C. F. D. Moule points out that it is too simple to see a straight contradiction between John's account and that of the Synoptists:

‘We have to ask *by whom* the identification is made, and by whom refused. The Synoptists represent *Jesus* as identifying, or comparing, the Baptist with Elijah, while John represents the *Baptist* as rejecting the identification when it is offered him by his interviewers. Now these two, so far from being incompatible, are psychologically complementary. The Baptist humbly rejects the exalted title, but Jesus, on the contrary, bestows it on him. Why should not the two both be correct?’<sup>53</sup>

**John was not the Prophet**—The reference is to *the* Prophet “like Moses” mentioned in Deut 18:15-18. (Acts 3:22 identifies Jesus as this prophet.)

**1:22-23 Who John was:** According to John 1:22-23, John the Baptist was **the voice crying in the wilderness**. John the Baptist has “telescoped” (paraphrased) the Is. 40:3 quote, which refers to a voice in the desert crying out, “Prepare the Lord's road, make straight his path” (LXX reads here “God's” for “his”).

### 2 C John's witness about Jesus (1:29-34)

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<sup>53</sup> C. F. D. Moule, *The Phenomenon of the New Testament* (London, 1967), 70.



John the Baptist, who has been so reluctant to elaborate his own role, now more than willingly gives his testimony about **Jesus**. For the Evangelist, the emphasis is totally on John the Baptist as a witness to Jesus. No attention is given to the Baptist's call to national repentance and very little to his baptizing. Everything is focused on **what he has to say about Jesus**.

Again the Baptist's witness is 3-fold:

1. Jesus is the **Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world (1:29)
2. Jesus is the **pre-existent One** who has priority over the Baptist (1:30)
3. Jesus is the **One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit** (1:33)

We may give consideration to each of the Baptist's statements about Jesus separately:

### **1:29 (1) Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29)**

There are three major explanations for the symbolism of **the Lamb** in the Baptist's testimony:

#### **(a) The Lamb as the Apocalyptic Lamb<sup>54</sup>**

- There appears in Jewish Apocalyptic literature the figure of a **conquering Lamb** who will destroy evil in the world:
  - ◊ Testament of Joseph 19:8 (Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs) tells of the **lamb** (ἀμνος) who overcomes the evil beasts and crushes them underfoot [although there may be Christian interpolations here, or the entire work may have Christian influence].
  - ◊ Enoch 90:38—At the end comes a horned bull who turns into **a lamb with black horns**.
  - ◊ Revelation 7:17 and 17:14.
- This fits well with the Baptist's eschatological preaching as portrayed in the Synoptics: Matt 3:12, Luke 3:17 ("His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor. He will gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire.")

**Problems** with this view:

- The words used for lamb in John and Revelation are different: John 1:29 employs ἀμνος; Revelation uses ἀρνιον. (But Revelation may simply be using a standard apocalyptic term for Lamb, whereas ἀμνος suggests broader connotations.)
- The descriptive phrase ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἀμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου does not seem to fit an apocalyptic picture. The emphasis lies more with redemption. This is a significant problem for Dodd's view.

#### **(b) The Lamb as the Suffering Servant**

- In this case the symbolism is picked up from Is. 53:7—"Like a **lamb** (LXX ἀμνος) that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so he did not open his mouth."
- This text (Is. 53:7) is applied to **Jesus** in Acts 8:32.
- All the Servant-Songs occur in the second section of Isaiah (40-55). The New Testament associates this part of Isaiah with **John the Baptist** (John 1:23 and Is. 40:3).
- Jesus is related to the **Suffering Servant** elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel (12:38 and Is. 53:1).

**Problem** with this view:

- The Lamb is said to **take away** (αἴρειν) the sin of the world; the Servant **takes on or bears** (φέρειν, ἀναφέρειν) the sins of many. But early Christians would probably not have drawn a

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<sup>54</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 230-238.

sharp distinction as to whether in his death Jesus took away sin or took it on himself (in any case the end result is the same: the κόσμος has its sin taken away).

(c) The Lamb as the Passover Lamb (C. K. Barrett)

In support of this view:

- The passover lamb is a **real lamb**—in the Servant motif the “lamb” idea is only an isolated, incidental element.
- Passover symbolism *is* present in the Fourth Gospel, especially in relation to the death of Jesus:
  - ◇ Jesus is condemned at noon on **the day before the Passover** (John 19:14) at the very time the priests began to slay the lambs in the Temple.
  - ◇ **hyssop** was used to give a sponge of wine (19:29); hyssop was also used to smear blood on the doorposts in the Passover ritual (Exod 12:22).
  - ◇ John 19:36 sees a fulfillment of Scripture in that none of Jesus’ bones were broken—cf. Exod 12:46—**no bone of the passover lamb was to be broken**.

**Problems** with this view:

- The Passover Lamb was not a **sacrifice** per se. But probably by Jesus’ time the sacrificial context began to merge with the symbol of deliverance which was the Passover (note 1 Cor 5:7, “Christ our **passover** has been *sacrificed*”).
- The LXX uses προβάτον, not ἄμνος, for the passover Lamb. But in reply, Isaiah 53:7 LXX places προβάτον and ἄμνος in parallel. Also, 1 Peter 1:18-19 speaks of the blood of an unblemished and spotless lamb, using the term ἄμνος. **The difference in terminology is apparently not decisive.**

Conclusion and Evaluation:

Probably the concept of the apocalyptic Lamb is not to be found in John’s Gospel. But the other concepts, the Suffering Servant and the Passover Lamb, are probably both there. I think the Passover Lamb symbolism is foremost, but there is no reason why John could not also wish to bring to mind for his readers the rich imagery of the suffering Servant in Isaiah 53.

The other important passage to consider is Gen 22:8. In Jewish thought this was held to be a supremely important sacrifice. Geza Vermes states:

“For the Palestinian Jew, all lamb sacrifice, and especially the Passover lamb and the Tamid offering, was a memorial of the Akedah with its effects of deliverance, forgiveness of sin and messianic salvation.”<sup>55</sup>

**1:30 (2) Jesus as the pre-existent one who has priority over the Baptist (1:30):**

(**Note:** The similarity to 1:15 [cf. notes on this verse]; also related to 1:27)

**This is based on the idea that priority in time equals priority in dignity.** According to the author, priority *does* indicate superiority, but despite appearances **Jesus** really was prior to **John the Baptist** because Jesus pre-existed.

This is further supported by verse 31. Why did Jesus allow himself to be baptized by John, if John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance? (Jesus, of course, had no need for repentance.) For the author of the

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<sup>55</sup> Geza Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1961), 225. The Tamid is the continual burnt offering, a male lamb morning and evening (see Exod 29:38-42).

Fourth Gospel, there is no problem of Jesus receiving a baptism of repentance, for **the whole purpose of John the Baptist's baptism consisted in revealing to Israel the one to come.**

### **1:32-33 (3) Jesus is the One upon whom the Spirit descends and who baptizes with the Spirit (32-33):**

John says the Spirit came to rest on (ἔμεινεν) Jesus. **Μένω** is a favorite Johannine word, used 40 times in the Gospel and 27 times in the Epistles (67 together) against 118 times total in the New Testament. The significance of μένω for John is that this term is used **to express the permanency of relationship between Father and Son and Son and believer.**

Here the use of the word implies that Jesus **permanently possesses the Holy Spirit**, and because he does, he will dispense the Holy Spirit to others in baptism. Other notes on the dispensation of the Spirit occur at John 3:5 ff. (at least implied by the word-play), John 3:34, 7:38-39, numerous passages in chapters 14-16 (the Paraclete passages) and John 20:22.

Note the allusion to Isaiah 42:1—"Behold my Servant...my chosen One in whom my soul delights. **I have put my Spirit upon him...**"

**1:34 The summation of John's testimony about Jesus** occurs in 1:34—"He is the Son of God."

## **2 B Jesus acquires his first disciples from John (John 1:35-51)**

This section (1:35-51) is joined to the preceding by the literary expedient of **repeating the Baptist's testimony** about Jesus being the Lamb of God (1:36, cf. 1:29). This repeated testimony (1:36) no longer has revelatory value in itself, since it has been given before; its purpose, instead, is to institute **a chain reaction** which will bring John the Baptist's disciples to Jesus and make them Jesus' own disciples.

In these verses, the Evangelist mentions 5 disciples: **Andrew, an unnamed disciple, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael.**

In the larger section 1:35-2:11 there is a gradual deepening of insight and a profounder realization of who it is the disciples are following. This reaches a **climax** in 2:11 where Jesus has manifested his glory, and the disciples believe in him (note the use of πιστεύω + εἶς).

Note the proliferation of **Messianic titles** given to Jesus in 1:35-37:

vss. 35-42	<b>Rabbi</b> (= Teacher), <b>Messiah</b>
vss. 43-50	The One described in the Law and the Prophets, the Son of God and King of Israel
vs. 51	The Son of Man

Note also the theme of "**following**" Jesus—the mark of true discipleship—mentioned in 1:37, 38, 40, 43 and later in 8:12, 10:4, 27, 12:26, 13:36, 21:19, 22.

In 1:37 the verb ἠκολούθησαν hints that the disciples of the Baptist are **about to become disciples of Jesus**—the Baptist, his mission complete, **disappears** from the scene, and his followers become followers of Jesus.

## **1 C Two of John's disciples follow Jesus (1:35-39)**

**1:35-38** Their relationship with Jesus **began** when they went to him to *see* where he was staying and *stay* with him; it was sealed when they *saw* his glory and *believed* in him (2:11). [**Note:** the relation between *seeing* and *believing* at 20:29]

**1:39** There is a significant problem in verse 39 with the phrase "**the tenth hour**"—what system of time is the author using? Westcott thought John, unlike the Synoptics, was using **Roman** time, which starts at

**midnight.**<sup>56</sup> This would make the time 10 a.m., which fits here. But later in the Gospel's Passover account (19:42, where the 6th hour is on the "eve of the passover") it seems clear the author is using **Jewish** reckoning, which began at **6 a.m.** This would make the time in 1:39 to be 4 p.m. This may be significant: if the hour was late, Andrew and the unnamed disciple **probably spent the night in the same house where Jesus was staying**, and the events of 1:41-42 took place on the **next day** (the 4th day of the "week").

**The evidence for Westcott's view, that the Gospel is using Roman time, is very slim.** The Roman reckoning which started at midnight was only used by authorities as legal time (for contracts, official documents, etc.). Otherwise, the Romans too reckoned time from 6 a.m. [e.g., Roman sundials are marked VI not XII for noon.]

## 2 C Andrew finds Peter and brings him to Jesus (1:40-42)

**1:40** Even though this **probably is on the following day** John the Evangelist does not mention it, so that the connection with the preceding material is not lost.

**1:41** By the time Andrew finds his brother, **he knows Jesus is the Messiah.** Apparently he learned this during his short stay with Jesus, which according to our understanding would have been the evening of the day before.

**1:42** The **change of name for Simon** is indicative of the future role he will play. Only John among the gospel writers gives the Greek transliteration (Κηφᾶς) of Simon's new name, Qéphâ (which is Galilean Aramaic). Neither Πέτρος in Greek nor Qéphâ in Aramaic is a normal proper name; it is more like a **nickname.**

## 3 C Jesus calls Philip (1:43-44)

**1:43** Jesus is best taken as the **subject** of εὕρισκει, since **Peter would scarcely have wanted to go to Galilee.** No explanation is given for **why** Jesus wanted to leave, but probably he wanted to go to the wedding at Cana (about a 2-day trip). Although John thinks of the town as in Galilee (12:21), Bethsaida technically was in Gaulanitis (Philip the Tetrarch's territory) across from Herod's Galilee. There may have been 2 places called Bethsaida, or this may merely reflect **popular imprecision**—locally it was considered part of Galilee, even though it was just east of the Jordan river.

This territory was **heavily Gentile** (which may explain why Andrew and Philip both have Gentile names).

**1:44** Probably ἀπό (1:44) indicates "originally from" in the sense of **birthplace** rather than **current residence**; Mark 1:21, 29 seems to locate the home of Andrew and Peter at **Capernaum.**

## 4 C Nathanael and his confession (1:45-51)

**1:45** Nathanael is traditionally identified with **Bartholomew** (although John never describes him as such). He appears here after Philip, while in all lists of the 12 except in Acts 1:13, Bartholomew follows Philip. Also, Bar-tolmai refers to the "son of Tolmai," the surname; the man almost certainly had another name.

**1:46** This is possibly a local proverb expressing jealousy among the towns.

**1:47** "in whom is no guile" —what provoked Jesus to render this observation? Supernatural insight? More likely, perhaps, Nathanael's **willingness to believe when shown.**

**1:48-49** Nathanael's inquiry and Jesus' reply take on a bit of added significance in the Greek: Nathanael literally asks, **from where** (πόθεν) do you know me? And Jesus answers, "**from under the fig tree.**"

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<sup>56</sup> Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 282.

Many have speculated about what Nathanael was doing under the fig tree. **Meditating on the Messiah who was to come?** A good possibility, since the fig tree was used as shade for teaching or studying by the later rabbis (*Midrash Rabbah on Eccles. 5:11*). Also, the fig tree was **symbolic for messianic peace and plenty**—Mic 4:4, Zech 3:10.

In any case, it seems to me that what impressed Nathanael was that **Jesus was aware that he had been there**. Perhaps there was some special experience he had had with God there, and what Jesus said implied that Jesus was [supernaturally] aware of it.

Seemingly, only something as striking as this would be sufficient to evoke the confession of 1:49.

What is the **significance of the confession** Nathanael makes? Probably, it is **a confession of Jesus' messiahship**. It has strong allusions to Ps 2:6-7, a well-known Messianic Psalm.

**1:50** “You shall see greater things than these”—what are the **greater things** Jesus has in mind? In the narrative this forms an excellent foreshadowing of the **sign-miracles** which begin at Cana of Galilee.

**1:51** Note the plural ὁμίην. Many relate it to Jacob's dream in Gen 28:12, where the angels and ladder represent divine communion with man. **But** this is consummated in the Word become Flesh. **Jesus himself is the point of contact between heaven and earth**. It is probably better to understand the phrase as a figurative way of saying that **Jesus will be the revealer of heavenly things to men**. Angels are divine messengers, and now the Messiah's presence marks the beginning of new comings and goings between heaven and earth. [**Note: Jesus as the revealer of heavenly things to men** is another important theme of John's Gospel, cf. 3:12,13.]

There is special emphasis here on Jesus' heavenly glory and the salvation he came to bring to men. John uses the title υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (Son of Man) 13 times in his Gospel. It is associated especially with the themes of crucifixion (3:14; 8:28), revelation (6:27; 6:53), and eschatological authority (5:27; 9:39).<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> On the use of the term υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου in the Fourth Gospel, see L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, note C, 172, and D. Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1981), 282-290.

## Chapter 2

### OUTLINE:

#### 3 A The Book of the Seven Signs (2:1 - 12:50)

- 1. Water changed into wine (2:1-11)
- 2. Cure of the nobleman's son (4:46-54)
- 3. Cure of the paralytic (5:1-18)
- 4. Feeding of the multitude (6:6-13)
- 5. Walking on the water (6: 16-21)
- 6. Cure of the man born blind (9:1-7)
- 7. Resurrection of Lazarus (11:1-45)

#### 1 B The early months of Jesus' public ministry: from Cana to Cana (2:1-4:54)

##### 1 C Water into Wine: the first Sign at Cana in Galilee (2:1-11)

##### 2 C To Capernaum (2:12)

##### 3 C To Jerusalem: the first Passover (2:13-3:36)

##### 1 D Jesus' cleansing of the Temple (2:13-22)

##### 2 D A Public Response to Jesus: Trust without Trustworthiness (2:23-25)

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### DETAILED EXEGETICAL NOTES:

#### 3 A The Book of the Seven Signs (2:1 - 12:50)

##### 1 B The early months of Jesus' public ministry: from Cana to Cana (2:1-4:54)

##### 1 C Water into Wine: the first Sign at Cana in Galilee (2:1-11)

**2:1** τῆ ἡμέρᾳ τῆ τρίτῃ—this is probably a reference to the 3rd day after the last recorded events, the call of Philip and Nathanael (1:43-51). An interesting point is that if one does take the events of chapter 1 to fill the first week of Jesus' public ministry, and as such to constitute a parallel with Genesis 1 (the old creation versus the new creation) then the wedding at Cana would take place on the 7th day.

We should probably not push the symbolism of the 7th day too far, but it is worth considering. Gen 2:2-3 states that “By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done” [NIV]. In later rabbinic thought [post-NT] the age of the world was divided up into 6 millennia. The 7th millennium was to be the Age of Messiah. Something similar may be behind Heb 4:9, “There remains yet a Sabbath rest for the people of God.”

Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας This was not a very well-known place. It is mentioned only here, in 4:46, and 21:2,



**Khirbet Cana (center) and Netofa Valley**

and nowhere else in the New Testament. Josephus (*Life* 86) says he once had his quarters there. Probable location: present day Khirbet Cana (14 km north of Nazareth) or Khirbet Kenna (7 km northeast of Nazareth).

**2:1-2** We have no clue to the identity of the bride and groom, but in all probability either relatives or friends of Jesus’ family were involved; the presence of Mary and the invitation to Jesus and his disciples suggests this, as does the attitude of Mary in approaching

Jesus and asking him to do something when the wine ran out.

**Note:** Mary, the mother of Jesus, is never mentioned by name in the Fourth Gospel. The connection between Mary and the ‘beloved disciple’ at the foot of the cross (19:26-27) may explain this silence, especially if the beloved disciple is the author of the gospel (as we believe).

**2:3** λέγει ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πρὸς αὐτόν On the backgrounds of this miracle J. D. M. Derrett, an expert in Oriental law, points out among other things the strong element of reciprocity about weddings in the Ancient Near East: it was possible in certain circumstances to take legal action against the man who failed to provide an appropriate wedding gift.<sup>58</sup> The bridegroom and family here might have been involved in a financial liability for failing to provide adequately for their guests.

Was Mary asking for a miracle? There is no evidence that Jesus had worked any miracles prior to this (although this amounts to an argument from silence). Some think Mary was only reporting the situation, or (as Calvin thought) asking Jesus to give some godly exhortations to the guests and thus relieve the bridegroom’s embarrassment.

But the words, and the reply of Jesus in verse 4, seem to imply more. It is not inconceivable that Mary, who had probably been witness to the events of the preceding days, or at least was aware of them, knew that her son’s public career was beginning. She also knew the supernatural events surrounding his birth, and the prophetic words of the angel, and of Simeon and Anna in the Temple at Jesus’ dedication. In short, she had good reason to believe Jesus to be the Messiah, and now his public ministry had begun. In this kind of context, her request does seem more significant.

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<sup>58</sup> J. D. M. Derrett, “Water into Wine,” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 7 (1963): 80-97.

**2:4** γύναι (Jesus' reply to his mother): According to Liddell-Scott-Jones the vocative is "a term of respect or affection".<sup>59</sup> It is Jesus' normal, polite way of addressing women (Matt 15:28, Luke 13:12; in John, 4:21, 8:10, 19:26 and 20:15). But it *is* unusual for a son to address his mother with this term. The custom in both Hebrew (or Aramaic) and Greek would be for a son to use a qualifying adjective or title.

Is there significance in Jesus' use here? Most likely. It probably indicates that a new relationship exists between Jesus and his mother once he has embarked on his public ministry. He is no longer or primarily only her son, but the "Son of Man". This is also suggested by the use of the same term in 19:26 in the scene at the cross, where the Beloved Disciple is "given" to Mary as her "new" son.

τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι (literally, "What to me and to you, woman?") This phrase is a semiticism. The Hebrew expression in the Old Testament had two basic meanings:

(1) When one person was unjustly bothering another, the injured party could say "What to me and to you?" meaning, "What have I done to you that you should do this to me?" Examples: Judges 11:12, 2 Chr 35:21, 1 Kings 17:18.

(2) When someone was asked to get involved in a matter he felt was no business of his, he could say to the one asking him, "What to me and to you?" meaning, "That is your business, how am I involved?" Examples: 2 Kings 3:13, Hosea 14:8.

Meaning (1) implies hostility, meaning (2) merely disengagement. Meaning (2) is almost certainly to be understood here as better fitting the context (although some of the Greek Fathers took the remark as a rebuke to Mary; I feel such a rebuke is unlikely).

οὔπω ἤκει ἡ ὥρα μου In the immediate context the meaning is clearly "It is not yet time for me to act." But John uses ὥρα with greater significance: see the following Note.

*A Note on the Use of ὥρα in the Gospel of John:*

The word ὥρα (literally, "hour"; NET "time") occurs in the Gospel of John in 2:4, 4:21, 23; 5:25, 28, 29; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:25; and 17:1. It is best seen as a reference to the special period in Jesus' life when he is to leave this world and return to the Father (13:1); the hour when the Son of man is glorified (17:1). This is accomplished through his suffering, death, resurrection (and ascension—though this is not emphasized by John). 7:30 and 8:20 imply that Jesus' arrest and death are included. 12:23 and 17:1, referring to the glorification of the Son, imply that the resurrection and ascension are included as part of the "hour". In 2:4 Jesus' remark to his mother indicates that the time for this self-manifestation has not yet arrived; his identity as Messiah is not yet to be publicly revealed.

**2:6** λίθιναι ὑδρῖαι ἕξ Significantly, these *stone jars* held water for Jewish purification rituals. The water of Jewish ritual purification becomes the wine of the new Messianic Age (on the Messianic Age, cf. chronology of chapter 1 and the note above at 2:1).

It may also be, after the fashion of Johannine double meanings, a reference to the wine of the Lord's Supper. A number have suggested this, but there does not seem to me to be anything in the immediate context which compels this; it seems more related to the frequency of references to the sacraments which a given exegete sees in the gospel as a whole.

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<sup>59</sup> LSJ 363 s.v. γυνή.



Each of the pots held 2 or 3 μετρηται. A μετρητης (literally, “measure”) was approximately 9 gallons (39.39 liters); thus each jar held 18-27 gallons (78.8-118.2 liters) and the total volume of liquid involved was 108-162 gallons (472.7-709 liters)!

**2:8 ἀντλήσατε** Because the verb ἀντλέω is normally the one for drawing water from a well, some (e.g. Westcott) have insisted that the water taken to the chief steward was drawn not from the water-pots but from a well. But according to Liddell-Scott-Jones the word is related to ἄντλος, “bilge-water,” and the first meaning is “to bale out a ship.”<sup>60</sup> The verb is used quite generally of drawing water, and it even has figurative senses. Therefore, there is no linguistic reason for insisting on a well as the source of this water. R. Brown thinks those who advance this suggestion are really uncomfortable with such a large quantity of water (see 2:6) being changed to wine; perhaps he is right.<sup>61</sup>

#### *A Note on the Purpose of the Narrative: Changing the Water into Wine*

Many questions are unanswered in the account as John presents it. The conversation between Jesus and his mother appears incomplete. Did she persist in her request in spite of his initial refusal? What did she expect Jesus to do? Catholics have often appealed to this passage to support the power of Mary’s intercession. But this is certainly not the point intended by the author of the Gospel as the reason he includes the account in the narrative.

The author gives the point of the story, as far as he is concerned, in 2:11. He tells us what the sign accomplished: through it Jesus revealed his “glory” and his disciples believed in him. Thus, the *first* sign has the same purpose that all the *following* signs will have: *revelation about the person of Jesus*. Scholarly interpretations to the contrary, John does not put primary emphasis on the replacing of the water for Jewish purification, or on the change from water to wine, or even on the resulting wine. John does not focus on Mary and her intercession, nor on why she made the request or whether she pursued it further after Jesus’ initial response. John does not focus on the reaction of the master of the feast or the bridegroom. The primary focus, as for all the Johannine stories, is on *Jesus as the One sent by the Father to bring salvation to the world*. What shines through is his δόξα, and the only reaction emphasized is that of his disciples when they believed in him.

But this raises one major interpretive question which we need to attempt to answer: how did the miracle at Cana reveal the δόξα of Jesus?

This may be answered under 2 categories:

- (1) How would the miracle at Cana reveal the δόξα of Jesus to the intended readers of the gospel, in the context of the developing narrative? and
- (2) How did the miracle reveal the δόξα of Jesus to the disciples who were witnesses of it?

As for (1), the Evangelist informs his readers in 2:11 that this was the beginning of signs, and by this indicates that the incident at Cana is to be connected with what follows in the Book of the Seven Signs (2:1-12:50). (For a listing of the signs, see the outline at the beginning of this chapter.)

R. Brown states:

...one of the themes of Part II (chs. ii-iv) is the **replacement** of Jewish institutions and religious views; and Part iii (chs. v-x) is dominated by Jesus’ actions and discourses on the occasion of Jewish feasts, often again by way of replacing the motif of the feasts. Jesus is the real Temple; the Spirit he gives will replace the necessity of worshipping at Jerusalem; his doctrine and his flesh and blood will give life in a way that the manna associated with the exodus from Egypt did not; at Tabernacles, not the rain-making

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<sup>60</sup> LSJ 166 s.v. ἀντλέω.

<sup>61</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 100.

ceremony but Jesus himself supplies the living water; not the illumination in the temple court but Jesus himself is the real light; on the feast of Dedication, not the temple altar but Jesus himself is consecrated by God. In view of this consistent theme of replacement, it seems obvious that, in introducing Cana as the first in a series of signs to follow, **the evangelist intends to call attention to the replacement of the water prescribed for Jewish purification by the choicest of wines.** This replacement is a sign of *who Jesus is*, namely **the one sent by the Father who is now the only way to the Father.** All previous religious institutions, customs and feasts lose meaning in his presence.<sup>62</sup>

But (2) how are the disciples who were present supposed to have seen the manifestation of Jesus' glory **without the benefit of seeing the replacement theme worked out in the entire earthly ministry of Jesus?**

Brown again states:

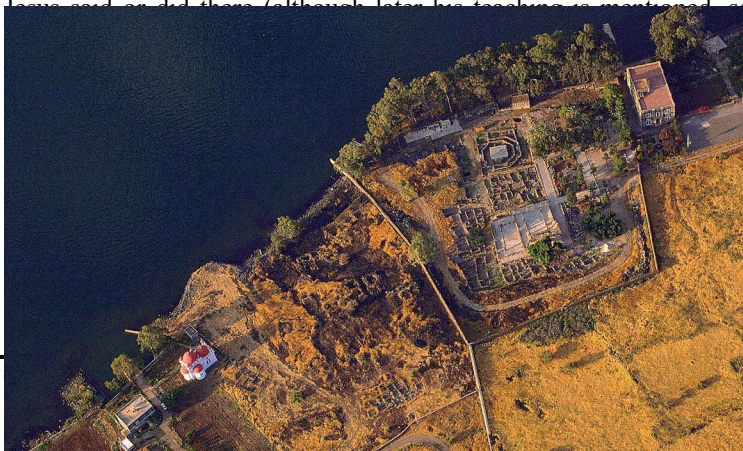
...some of the symbols are familiar and meaningful scriptural symbols that would have been known to the disciples. The dramatic action is set in the context of a **wedding**; in the OT (Isa liv 4-8, lxii 4-5) this is used to symbolize the **messianic days**, and both the wedding and the banquet are symbols on which Jesus drew (Matt viii 11, xxxii 1-14; Luke xxii 16-18). The wedding appears as a symbol of **messianic fulfillment** in another Johannine work, Rev xix 9. Another symbol at Cana is the replacement of water with choice wine, better than the wine the guests had been drinking. In the Synoptic tradition, seemingly in the context of a wedding feast (Mark ii 19), we find Jesus using the symbolism of new wine in old wineskins in order to compare his new teaching with the customs of the Pharisees. ... Thus the headwaiter's statement at the end of the scene, "You have kept the choice wine until now," can be understood as **the proclamation of the coming of the messianic days.** In the light of this theme Mary's statement, "They have no wine," becomes a poignant reflection on the barrenness of Jewish purifications, much in the vein of Mark vii 1-24.<sup>63</sup>

The **abundance of wine**...now becomes intelligible. One of the consistent OT figures for the **joy** of the final days is **an abundance of wine** (Amos ix 13-14; Hos xiv 7; Jer xxxi 12). Enoch x 19 predicts that the vine shall yield wine in abundance; and in II Bar xxix 5 (a Jewish apocryphon almost contemporary with the Fourth Gospel) we find an exuberantly fantastic description of this abundance: the earth shall yield its fruit ten thousandfold; each vine shall have 1000 branches; each branch 1000 clusters; each cluster 1000 grapes; and each grape about **120 gallons** of wine [cf. the quantity of wine in John 2! —*my note* ]. (Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* v 33:3-4...attributes this passage to Papias of Hierapolis who is **intimately associated** with the early traditions about John.)

Through such symbolism **the Cana miracle could have been understood by the disciples as a sign of the messianic times and the new dispensation**, much in the same manner that they would have understood Jesus' statement about the new wine in the Synoptic tradition. [emphasis mine]

## 2 C To Capernaum (2:12)

**2:12** Verse 12 is merely a **transitional note** in the narrative (although **Capernaum** does not lie on the direct route to Jerusalem from Cana). Nothing is mentioned in John's gospel at this point about anything Jesus said or did there (although later his teaching is mentioned, see John 6:59). From the synoptics we know that Jesus was born in Nazareth and grew up there, but he may even be called "his own city" (Matt 23:37) from Capernaum. He may have heard of the city from one of Jesus' disciples. We can



**Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee**

ne]  
s mine]

As far as the reference to **Jesus' brothers**, the so-called **Helvidian view** is to be preferred (so called after **Helvidius**, a fourth century theologian). This is the view that the most natural way to understand the phrase is as a reference to **children of Joseph and Mary after the birth of Jesus**. Other views are that of **Epiphanius** (they were children of Joseph by a former marriage) or **Jerome** (they were cousins). The tradition of Mary's perpetual virginity appeared in the second century and is difficult to explain (as R. Brown points out) if some of her other children were prominent members of the early church (e.g. James of Jerusalem). But this is outweighed by the natural sense of the words.

### 3 C To Jerusalem: the first Passover (2:13-3:36)

#### 1 D Jesus' cleansing of the Temple (2:13-22)

**2:13** Καὶ ἐγγὺς ἦν τὸ πάσχα τῶν Ἰουδαίων This is first of at least three (and possibly four) Passovers mentioned in John's Gospel. If we assume the Passovers appear in the Gospel in their chronological order (and if H. Hoehner's date of A.D. 33 for the crucifixion is accurate), this would be the Passover of the spring of A.D. 30, the first of Jesus' public ministry. There is a clear reference to another Passover in 6:4, and still another Passover in 11:55 (mentioned again in 12:1, 13:1, 18:28, 39, and 19:14). The last one would be the Passover of A.D. 33. There is a possibility that 5:1 also refers to a Passover, in which case it would be the second of Jesus' public ministry (A.D. 31), while 6:4 would refer to the third (A.D. 32) and the remaining references to the final Passover at the time of the crucifixion.

It is entirely possible, however, that we are not intended to understand the Passovers occurring in the Fourth Gospel as listed in chronological sequence. If (as we have suggested) the material of the Fourth Gospel originally existed in the form of homilies or sermons by the Apostle John on the life and ministry of Jesus, the present arrangement would not have to be in strict chronological order (it does not explicitly claim to be). In this case the Passover mentioned in 2:13, for example, might actually be later in Jesus' public ministry than it might at first glance appear. This leads us, however, to a discussion of an even greater problem in the passage, the relationship of the Temple cleansing in John's Gospel to the similar account in the synoptic gospels:

#### *A Note on the Cleansing of the Temple (2:13-17):*

Is this the same event as the synoptic gospels describe, or a separate event?

The other accounts of the cleansing of the Temple are **Matt 21:12-13**; **Mark 11:15-17**; and **Luke 19:45-46**. None are as long as the Johannine account. The fullest of the synoptic accounts is Mark's. John's account differs from Mark's in the mention of sheep and oxen, the mention of the whip of cords, the word κερματιστῆς for "money-changer" (the synoptics use κολλυβιστῆς, which John mentions in 2:15), the "pouring out" of the money (2:15), and the command by Jesus "Take these things from here." The word for "overturned" in John is ἀναστρέφω, while Matthew and Mark use καταστρέφω (Luke does not mention the moneychangers at all). The synoptics all mention that Jesus quoted Isaiah 56:7 followed by Jer 7:11. John mentions no citation of scripture at all, but says that later the disciples remembered Ps 69:9. John does not mention, as does Mark, Jesus' prohibition on carrying things through the Temple (i.e., using it for a shortcut). But the most important difference is one of time: In John the cleansing appears as the **first** great *public* act of Jesus' ministry, while in the synoptics it is virtually the **last**.

The most common solution of the problem, which has been endlessly discussed among New Testament scholars, is to say there was **only one cleansing**, and that it took place, as the synoptics record it, at the end of Jesus' ministry. In the synoptics it appears to be the event that finalized the opposition of the high priest, and precipitated the arrest of Jesus. According to this view, John's placing of the event at the opening of Jesus' ministry is due to his general approach; it was fitting 'theologically' for Jesus to open his ministry this way, so this is the way John records it.

Some have overstated the case for one cleansing and John's placing of it at the opening of Jesus' public ministry, however. For example William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, states: "John, as someone has said, is more interested in **the truth** than in **the facts**. He was not interested to tell men **when** Jesus cleansed the

Temple; he was supremely interested in telling men that Jesus **did** cleanse the Temple” (*loc. cit.*, emphasis mine).

**But this is not the impression one gets by a reading of John’s gospel:** he seems to go out of his way to give details and facts, including notes of time and place. To argue as Barclay does that John is interested in truth apart from the facts is to set up a false dichotomy.

Why should one have to assume, in any case, that there could have been **only one** cleansing of the Temple? This account in John is found in a large section of **non-synoptic** material. Apart from the work of John the Baptist—and even this is markedly different from the references in the synoptics—nothing else in the first five chapters of John’s gospel is found in *any* of the synoptics. **It is certainly not impossible that John took one isolated episode from the conclusion of Jesus’ earthly ministry and inserted it into his own narrative in a place which seemed appropriate according to his purposes.** But in view of the differences between John and the synoptics, in both wording and content, as well as setting and time, it is at least possible that the event in question actually occurred twice (unless one begins with the presupposition that the Fourth Gospel is non-historical anyway).

In support of two separate cleansings of the Temple, it has been suggested that Jesus’ actions on this occasion were **not permanent** in their result, and after (probably) 3 years the *status quo* in the Temple courts had returned to normal. And at this time early in Jesus’ ministry, he was virtually unknown. Such an action as he took on this occasion would have created a stir, and evoked the response John records in 2:18-22, but that is probably about all, especially if Jesus’ actions met with approval among part of the populace. But **later** in Jesus’ ministry, when he was well-known, and vigorously opposed by the high-priestly party in Jerusalem, his actions might have brought forth another, harsher response.

It thus appears possible to argue for two separate cleansings of the Temple as well as a single one relocated by John to suit his own purposes. Which then is more probable? **On the whole, more has been made of the differences between John’s account and the synoptic accounts than perhaps should have been.** After all, the synoptic accounts also differ considerably from one another, yet I am not aware of anyone who has posited four cleansings of the Temple as an explanation for this!

While it is certainly possible that **the Evangelist did not intend by his positioning of the Temple cleansing to correct the synoptics’ timing of the event, but to highlight its significance for the course of Jesus’ ministry,** it still appears somewhat more probable to me that John has placed the event he records in the approximate period of Jesus’ public ministry in which it did occur, that is, within the first year or so of Jesus’ public ministry. The statement of the Jewish authorities recorded by the Evangelist (τεσσεράκοντα καὶ ἕξ ἔτεσιν οἰκοδομήθη ὁ ναὸς οὗτος) would tend to support an earlier rather than a later date for the Temple cleansing described by John, since 46 years from the beginning of construction on Herod’s Temple in ca. 19 BC would be around AD 27. This is not conclusive proof, however, because such an early date is still problematic for an AD 33 date for the crucifixion (see the note below on 2:20). We must now consider the purpose of the Evangelist in including the account of the cleansing of the Temple where he did.

#### ***A Note on the Purpose of the Narrative: Cleansing the Temple***

This time we may look **first** at what the original audience (disciples and Jewish leaders) may have understood from Jesus’ statements and actions, **followed** by the way John as Evangelist has incorporated this account into the narrative.

**(1) Almost certainly both the Jewish leaders and Jesus’ disciples understood Jesus’ activity as prophetic**—resembling the actions of an Old Testament prophet. But what would Jesus’ words *μη ποιείτε τὸν οἶκον τοῦ πατρὸς μου οἶκον ἐμπορίου* have suggested?

Zech 14:20-21 states: “In **that day** there will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, ‘HOLY TO THE LORD,’ and the cooking pots in the LORD’S house will be like the bowls before the altar. And every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the LORD of hosts; and all who sacrifice will come

and take of them and boil in them. And there will no longer be a **Canaanite** in the house of the LORD of hosts in **that day**.” [NASB, emphasis mine]

Zech 14:20-21, in context, is clearly a picture of the millennial (messianic) kingdom. But **note** the word כְּנַעֲנִי (Canaanite). The Brown-Driver-Briggs lexicon lists as a second primary meaning for this word “**merchant, trader**.”<sup>64</sup>

Read in this light, Zech 14:21 states that there will be no **merchant** in the house of the Lord in **that day** (the messianic kingdom). And what would Jesus’ words (and actions) in cleansing the Temple have suggested to the observers? **That Jesus was fulfilling these messianic expectations would have been obvious**—especially to the disciples, who had just seen the miracle at Cana with all its messianic implications.

As if this were not enough, what about the implications of the statement concerning the rebuilding of the Temple? Ezek 40-46 describes the rebuilt millennial Temple, and popular Jewish tradition (the fourteenth of the *18 Benedictions* or *Shemoneh Esreh*, ca. AD 70-85) held that **Messiah would come and rebuild the Temple** (after the destruction of Herod’s Temple by the Romans).

Thus Jesus’ remarks **could** have been understood in terms of **the messianic rebuilding of the Temple**. Further evidence that this is so may be correlated from the synoptics, since in the account of Jesus’ trial in the synoptics the **reference to a messianic rebuilding** seems evident: when the false witnesses recalled Jesus’ statement about the Temple, the high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah?” [Mark 14:61].

Thus the original hearers would most likely have seen **messianic implications** in Jesus’ cleansing of the Temple and his remarks about its rebuilding.

(2) How has John, as author, integrated this into his narrative?

In 2:17, as mentioned earlier, John uses the words of **Psalm 69:9** [69:10 LXX] to refer to Jesus at the cleansing of the Temple. It seems to me that this is a reflection which may have come **later** to the disciples (remember the point of view from which the author is writing). In any case, Psalm 69:8-9, seen as it was by apostolic Christianity as **a reflection of the messianic experience**, has some interesting connections with the narrative:

**69:8** “I have become a stranger to my **brothers**, an alien to my **mother’s sons**.”

**69:9** “For **zeal for Your house** has eaten me up, and the insults of those who blaspheme You **fall upon me**.”

This is particularly interesting in relation to the mention of **Jesus’ brothers** in John 2:12, as well as also in John 7:1-5.

Verse 9b can also be applied to Jesus’ experience in the challenge and confrontation of the Jews.

But John’s theological insights into the incident go deeper—the Temple is not just the **building**, it is **Jesus’ resurrected body**. Compare the **non-localized worship** mentioned in 4:21-23, and also Rev 21:22 (there is to be no temple in the New Jerusalem; the **LORD** and the **LAMB** are its temple). John is pointing to the fact that, as the place where men go in order to meet God, the Temple has been supplanted and replaced by Jesus himself, in whose resurrected Person people may now encounter God (cf. 1:18, 14:6).

**2:14** ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ —a reference to the Temple precincts or courts as opposed to the building proper (cf. 2:19 below).

τοὺς κερματιστάς (the money-changers) —Because of the **imperial Roman portraits** they carried, Roman denarii and Attic drachmas were not permitted to be

<sup>64</sup> BDB 488, s.v. II. כְּנַעֲנִי.



Roman Coin with  
Portrait of Augustus

used in paying the half-shekel temple-tax [the portraits were considered idolatrous]. The money-changers in the Temple courts exchanged these coins for legal Tyrian coinage at a small profit.

**2:15 φραγγέλιον** —a **whip** (note variant reading **ὤς** inserted before φραγγέλιον by  $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ , et al.). The variant reading reflects the Torah tradition accurately—what Jesus made was something **like** a whip. According to tradition no weapons or sticks of any kind were permitted in the temple courts.

**2:18 σημεῖον** —not necessarily John’s usual meaning for the word, “sign-miracle,” since it occurs on the lips of Jesus’ adversaries. To them, it meant a **miraculous apologetic for his actions**— a mark of divine credence. Jesus **never** obliged such a request.

**2:19 λύσατε** —The **imperative** here is really more than a simple conditional imperative (= “if you destroy”); its semantic force here is more like the **ironical imperative** found in the prophets (Amos 14:4, Isa 8:9) = “**Go ahead and do this and see what happens.**”

**2:20 Forty-six years** — According to Josephus [*Antiquities*], work on this Temple was begun in the 18th year of Herod the Great’s reign, which would have been ca. 19 B.C. (The reference in the *Antiquities* is probably more accurate than date given in *Wars of the Jews*). Forty-six years later would be the Passover of A.D. 27. If one holds to a date of A.D. 30 for the crucifixion, this would tend to suggest that the placement of



**Temple Mount (south side)**

the temple cleansing in John’s Gospel, occurring as it does at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, is actually in its approximate place in the chronological sequence of Jesus’ earthly life. If one accepts H. Hoehner’s date of A.D. 33 for the crucifixion, according to the dating discussed above [see note above on the Passovers in John’s Gospel], then this is taking place around the Passover of A.D. 30. In this case it is possible that the figure of 46 years could be approximate, or could perhaps refer to the completion of the Holy of Holies rather than the

beginning of construction, or Josephus’ dates for Herod could be off by several years (he disagrees with himself anyway!).

**οἰκοδομηθή** —a comprehensive aorist, this word sums up the whole action not yet completed—cf. a similar usage in Ezra 5:16 (LXX): “From that time until now it (the Temple) has been under construction (aorist of οἰκοδομέω) and is not yet finished.”

**2:22** Note the point-of-view: John is writing this from the perspective of an omniscient author.

τῆ γραφῆ What is the referent? The **Old Testament in general**? A **prophecy of Jesus' resurrection** (Ps 16:10)? Or an **anaphoric reference to Ps 69:9** [69:10 LXX]? The latter seems best, as I take it that the disciples did not remember Ps 69:9 on the spot either. It was a later insight.

## 2 D A Public Response to Jesus: Trust without Trustworthiness (2:23-25)

**2:23-25** It seems clear to me that this response on the part of the multitudes in Jerusalem at the passover is to be taken as **genuine belief**. There is nothing in the context to suggest that the faith-response of these individuals after observing the sign-miracles [σημεῖα] which Jesus had performed in Jerusalem at the feast was anything but genuine. It seems to me most natural that an unprejudiced reader of the Gospel would understand the faith of these people to be genuine. That is not the end of the matter, however.

This is a **reflective insight added by the Evangelist**. It serves as a transition to the Nicodemus interview, and also as a comment on the general public response to Jesus' ministry at this time. While these might be "believers," they had imperfectly understood the message and ministry of Jesus. The real issue here is not the **genuineness** of these individuals' faith but its **object** and **extent**. The author does not elaborate, but it seems likely that these people had seen the signs and (correctly) interpreted their **messianic significance**. So far so good. But the plan they envisioned was not God's plan which involved **the death and resurrection of Messiah** to accomplish the salvation of the world (cf. 3:17). I suspect that it was this factor in particular that Jesus was not willing to entrust to them. The crowds in their exuberance were probably about ready to try and make Jesus king, and in no way could they have accepted such a revelation about his true destiny. As a matter of fact, it is worth pointing out that Jesus had not even fully and openly entrusted himself to his own disciples at this point, so that in 14:9 he can still say to Philip, "How long have you been with me and have not known me?" Thus the individuals described here had believed in Jesus as Messiah, but the concept of Messiah they had believed in was their own, not that of Jesus. Would this faith save them? To ask this is to ask a question the text does not answer.

What about the **signs** which Jesus performed in Jerusalem at the passover (2:23)?

These probably **included**, but were not necessarily limited to, **the Temple cleansing** (2:13-17). In this case the crowds had correctly understood the **messianic symbolism** which we have discussed above. But other miracles were probably involved as well. The Evangelist tells us explicitly that Jesus did many things which he has not recorded in his Gospel (21:25).

## Chapter 3

### OUTLINE:

[3 C To Jerusalem: the first Passover (2:13-3:36)]

[1 D Jesus' cleansing of the Temple (2:13-22)]

[2 D A Public Response to Jesus: Trust without Trustworthiness (2:23-25)]

3 D A Personal Response to Jesus: Nicodemus comes by night (3:1-21)

4 D The final testimony of John the Baptist: "I was sent before him" (3:22-36)

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### DETAILED EXEGETICAL NOTES:

#### 3 D A Personal Response to Jesus: Nicodemus comes by night (3:1-21).

This is perhaps the most well-known incident in the Gospel, at least at the popular level.

**3:1** Note the phrase in verse 1, ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων—stylistically the word ἄνθρωπος suggests a tie with 2:25. Jesus knew what was in a man (and what follows with Nicodemus is a specific example). It is also instructive for our understanding of the previous paragraph, 2:23-25, to note that Jesus did not fully entrust himself to Nicodemus, i.e., he did not openly reveal his true identity and mission (note in this regard especially 3:12).

Nicodemus appears only in John's Gospel (see also 7:50, 19:39). The name is Greek. The use of the term ἄρχων ("ruler") denotes a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council.

**3:2** νυκτός Possibly Nicodemus came at night because was afraid of public association with Jesus, or he wanted a lengthy discussion without interruptions; no explanation for the timing of the interview is given by the Evangelist. But the timing is significant for John in terms of the light/darkness motif—compare 9:4,



11:10, 13:30 (especially), 19:39, and 21:3. Out of the darkness of his life and religiosity Nicodemus came to the Light of the World. John probably had multiple meanings or associations in mind here, as he often does.

οὐδεὶς γὰρ δύναται ταῦτα τὰ σημεῖα ἃ σὺ ποιεῖς The reference to σημεῖα forms an interesting link with 2:23-25. Those people in Jerusalem believed in Jesus because of the signs he performed. Nicodemus has apparently seen them too. But for Nicodemus all the signs have meant is that Jesus is a great teacher sent from God. His approach to Jesus is well-intentioned but theologically inadequate; he has failed to grasp the messianic implications of the sign-miracles.

**3:3** Nicodemus' greeting is answered by Jesus as if it were an inquiry about entering the kingdom of God. We may be dealing with an incomplete dialogue here (as in chapter 2 at Cana) but this does not have to be the case as suggested by Jesus' reply introduced by ἀπεκρίθη.

ἄνωθεν The word has a double meaning, as pointed out by Z. C. Hodges.<sup>65</sup> The word may mean either “again” (in which case it is synonymous with παλίν) or “from above” (s.v., BAGD). This is a favorite technique of the author of the Fourth Gospel, and it is lost in almost all translations at this point. Think of the effect on the contemporary evangelical terminology of being “born again”!

John uses the word 5 times, in 3:3, 7; 3:31; 19:11 and 23. In the latter 3 cases the context makes clear that it means “from above”. Here (3:3, 7) it could mean either but it seems that Hodges is right that the primary meaning intended by Jesus is “from above”. Nicodemus, it seems, understood it the other way, which explains his reply, “How can a man be born when he is old? He can't enter his mother's womb a second time and be born, can he?” John the Evangelist often uses the technique of the “misunderstood question” to bring out a particularly important point: Jesus says something which is misunderstood by the disciples or (as here) someone else, which then gives Jesus the opportunity to explain more fully and in more detail what he really meant.

οὐ δύναται ἰδεῖν Jesus uses the term “see” in the sense of “experience, encounter, participate in”—e.g., “see death” (8:51), “see life” (3:36). Note also in v. 5 the use of εἰσελθεῖν in reference to the kingdom of God, with the same meaning as the phrase here.

But what does Jesus' statement about “seeing the kingdom of God” mean within the framework of John's Gospel? John uses the word βασιλεία only 5 times—3:3, 5; 18:36 (3x). Only here is it qualified with the phrase τοῦ θεοῦ.

The fact that John does not stress the concept of the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ does not mean it is absent from his theology, however. Remember the messianic implications found in chapter 2, both the wedding and miracle at Cana and the cleansing of the Temple.

For Nicodemus, the term must surely have brought to mind the messianic kingdom which Messiah was supposed to bring. But Nicodemus had missed *precisely* this point about *who* Jesus was! It was the Messiah himself with whom Nicodemus was speaking!

Whatever Nicodemus understood, it is clear (as I have already mentioned) that the point is this: he misunderstood Jesus' words. He over-literalized them, and thought Jesus was talking about a second physical birth, when Jesus was in fact referring to new spiritual birth.

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<sup>65</sup> Zane C. Hodges, “Problem Passages in the Gospel of John—Part 3: Water and Spirit—John 3:5,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135 (1978): 206-20.

**3:5** In reply, Jesus answers (verse 5): “Except one is begotten of water and wind [ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος], he is not able to enter into the kingdom of God.”

The concepts of water and wind are linked to ἄνωθεν (v.3), because water and wind come from above. Isa 44:3-5 and Ezek 37:9-10 are pertinent examples of water and wind as life-giving symbols of the Spirit of God in his work among men. Both occur in contexts that deal with the future restoration of Israel as a nation prior to the establishment of the messianic Kingdom! It is therefore particularly appropriate that Jesus should introduce them in a conversation about entering the kingdom of God.

Note that πνεύματος is anarthrous in v. 5. We are not saying that πνεύματος in the verse should be read as a direct reference to the Holy Spirit, but that both water and wind are figures which represent the regenerating work of the Spirit in the lives of men and women, a truth pointed to by the OT passages mentioned above. These were passages which should have been familiar to Nicodemus as “the teacher of Israel” (cf. 3:10).

**3:6** But lest Nicodemus misunderstand again and take the figure literally (!) Jesus adds v. 6 [τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς σὰρξ ἐστίν, καὶ τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος πνεῦμά ἐστίν] to clarify that what he has been talking about is, again, not physical but spiritual (the figures of water and wind being indicative of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit).

What is born of physical heritage is physical. What is begotten by the Spirit is spiritual. (It is interesting to compare this terminology with that of the dialogue in chapter 4, especially 4:23, 24.)

For John the “flesh” (σὰρξ) emphasizes merely the weakness and mortality of the creature—a neutral term, not necessarily sinful as in Paul. This is confirmed by the reference in John 1:14 to the Λόγος becoming σὰρξ. Certainly John would not associate sinfulness with the incarnate Christ.

**3:7** μὴ θαυμάσης This is a rabbinic formula according to Bultmann (*loc. cit.*).

**3:8** Again, the physical illustrates the spiritual (although the force is heightened by the world-play here on wind-spirit). By the final usage of 3:8, however, πνεύματος is intended to refer to the Holy Spirit.

**3:9** Here we have Nicodemus’ answer. It is clear that at this time he has still not grasped what Jesus is saying.

Note also that this is the last appearance of Nicodemus in the dialogue (!). Having served the purpose of the Evangelist, at this point he “disappears” from the scene.

**3:10** There is irony in Jesus’ question here: “you are the teacher of Israel (a spiritual leader) and don’t know these things?”

This carries the implication (at least) that Nicodemus had enough information at his disposal from the Old Testament Scriptures to have understood Jesus’ statements about the necessity of being born from above by the regenerating work of the Spirit.

When we ask what passages Nicodemus might have known which would have given him insight into Jesus’ words, we could return to Isa 44:3-5 and Ezek 37:9-10. But even more astounding is the passage proposed by Z. C. Hodges as the “seed-bed” for the ideas in Jesus’ dialogue with Nicodemus: Prov 30:4-5.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Hodges, “Problem Passages in the Gospel of John—Part 3: Water and Spirit—John 3:5,” *BSac* 135 (1978): 206-20.

“Who has ascended into heaven, and descended [John 3:13]? Who has gathered the wind [John 3:5, 8] in his fists? Who has wrapped the waters [John 3:5] in his garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, or his Son’s name [John 3:15-16]? Surely you know! Every word of God is tested; he is a shield to those who put their trust in him [John 3:15-16].”

**3:11** “We speak what we know and we testify about what we have seen...” Note the remarkable similarity of Jesus’ words to the later testimony of the Apostle John himself in 1 John 1:2—“and we have seen and testify and report to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us”. It seems to me this is only one example of how thoroughly John’s own thoughts were saturated with the words of Jesus (and also how difficult it is to distinguish the words of Jesus from the words of the Evangelist in the Fourth Gospel!).

**3:12** “If I speak to you the things of earth and you do not believe, how shall you believe if I speak to you the things of heaven?” Obviously, τὰ ἐπίγεια and τὰ ἐπουράνια are in contrast, but what is the contrast? What are the things of earth which Jesus has just spoken to Nicodemus? (And we might add, through him to others—this is not the first instance of the plural pronoun, see v. 7 above, ὑμεῖς. Since Nicodemus began with a plural (οἴδαμεν, v.2) Jesus continues it, and through Nicodemus addresses a broader audience.)

It seems best to take this as a reference to the things Jesus has just said (and the things he is about to say, vs. 13ff.). If this is the case (and it seems the most natural explanation) then τὰ ἐπίγεια are not necessarily strictly *physical* things, but are so called because they take place on earth, in contrast to things like v. 16, which take place in heaven.

Some have added the suggestion that the things are called ἐπίγεια because physical analogies (birth, wind, water) are used to describe them. This is possible, but it seems more probable Jesus calls these things ἐπίγεια because they happen on earth (even though they are spiritual things).

In the context, taking τὰ ἐπίγεια as the words Jesus has just spoken fits with the fact that Nicodemus did not believe. And he would not, after hearing τὰ ἐπουράνια, either, unless he first believed in τὰ ἐπίγεια—which included the necessity of a regenerating work from above, by the Holy Spirit.

**3:13** The major difficulty here is the perfect ἀναβέβηκεν, which seems to look at a past, completed event. [Note: This is not as much of a problem for those who take Jesus’ words to end at v. 12, and these to be a comment by the Evangelist, looking back on the ascension.]

On the lips of Jesus, these words are a bit harder to explain. Note however, the lexical similarities with 1:51—“ascending,” “descending,” and “son of man”. Here, though, the ascent and descent is accomplished by the Son himself, not the angels as in 1:51. I see no need to limit this saying to the ascent following the resurrection, however; the point of the Jacob story (Gen 28) which seems to be the background for 1:51 is the freedom of communication and relationship between God and men [a major theme of the Gospel of John]. This communication comes through the angels in Gen 28 (and John 1:51); but here (most appropriately) it comes directly through the Son. Possibly Jesus could be referring to a prior ascent, after an appearance as the pre-incarnate Son of Man. More likely, he is simply pointing out that no one from earth has ever gone up to heaven and come down again; the Son, who has come down from heaven, is the only one who has been ‘up’ there. [In both Jewish intertestamental literature and later rabbinic accounts Moses is portrayed as ascending to heaven to receive the Torah and descending to distribute it to men (e.g. Targum Psalms 68:19). In contrast to these Jewish legends, the Son is the only one who has ever made the ascent and descent.]

The point is the heavenly origin of the Son of Man. And the descent, at least here, seems to refer to the incarnation (cf. 1:14).

**3:14** ὠψοθῆναι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου This is ultimately a prediction of the crucifixion. Nicodemus could not have understood this in its full impact, but John’s readers, the audience for to whom the Gospel is addressed, certainly could have. This seems to constitute a basis for seeing the serpent as a type of Christ.

There is an interesting midrash on Num 21:9 ff in Wisdom of Solomon 16:6-7 (Compare with this John 12:32):

They were troubled for a little while as a warning, and had a **symbol of salvation** to remind them of the precept of your Law. **For he who turned to it was saved, not by what he saw, but by you, the Savior of all.**

**3:15** The reading εἰς αὐτὸν has somewhat better support. See the critical apparatus in Nestle-Aland 26th ed. or UBS 3rd ed.)

Compare Num 21:8—”that he who looks on it (the serpent) shall live”.

**Note:** This is the first use of the term ζωὴν αἰώνιον in the Gospel (although ζωὴ in chapter 1 is to be understood in the same way without the qualifying αἰώνιος).

In these verses (14-15) Jesus really answers Nicodemus’ question of verse 9, “How can these things come about?” A person’s regeneration by the Holy Spirit (which enables that individual to enter the kingdom) can come about only through the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of the Son of Man.

The “lifting up” (ὠψοθῆναι), while it specifically refers to Jesus’ death on the cross, can also include the ascension. (This verb is used in Acts 2:33, 5:31 for the ascension of Jesus.)

*A Note on the Johannine Descent-Ascent Schema:*

In John, being “lifted up” refers to one continuous action of ascent, beginning with the cross but ending at the right hand of the Father. Step 1 is Jesus’ death; step 2 is his resurrection; and step 3 is the ascension back to heaven. It is the upward swing of the “pendulum” which began with the incarnation, the descent of the Word become flesh from heaven to earth (cf. Paul in Phil 2:5-11).

**3:16** This is supposedly the most well-known verse in the Bible.

Compare Isaiah 53:12 (LXX):”He was given up (παράδιδοναι) for their sins.”

**Note:** Here we have another typical Johannine double meaning: God “gave” the Son by sending him into the world, but *also* “gave” him on the cross.

Κόσμος must, in context, refer to the entire world. Compare also 1 John 2:2.

The alternatives presented are only two [again, it is typical of Johannine thought for this to be presented in terms of polar opposites]: ἀπόληται or ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον. In John the word ἀπόλλυμι seems to mean either (1) to be lost (2) to perish or be destroyed, depending on the context.

**3:17** ἀπέστειλεν corresponds to ἔδωκεν in v. 16. Jesus did not come of himself; he was sent, by the Father, on a mission. This mission was the salvation of the world.

Compare vss. 16-19 with John 12:46-48 for similar words and phrases.

This paragraph provides an introduction to the (so-called) “realized” eschatology of the Fourth Gospel: judgment has come; eternal life may be possessed now, in the present life, as well as in the future.

*A Note on Realized Eschatology and the Gospel of John:*

The terminology “realized eschatology” was originally coined by E. Haenchen and used by J. Jeremias in discussion with C. H. Dodd, but is now characteristically used to describe Dodd’s own formulation.<sup>67</sup>

R. Brown summarizes the realized eschatology of the Gospel of John as follows:

In many ways John is the best example in the NT of realized eschatology. God has revealed Himself in Jesus in a definitive form, and seemingly no more can be asked. If one points to OT passages that seem to imply a coming of God in glory, the Prologue (i 14) answers, ‘We have seen his glory.’ If one asks where is the judgment that marks God’s final intervention, John iii 19 answers: ‘Now the judgment is this: the light has come into the world.’ In a figurative way Matt xxv 31 ff. describes the apocalyptic Son of Man coming in glory and sitting on the throne of judgment to separate the good and the bad. But for John the presence of Jesus in the world as the light separates men into those who are sons of darkness, hating the light, and those who come to the light. All through the Gospel Jesus provokes self-judgment as men line up for or against him; truly his coming is a *crisis* in the root sense of that word, where it reflects the Gr. *krisis* or “judgment.” Those who refuse to believe are already condemned (iii 18), while those who have faith do not come under condemnation (v 24...). Even the reward is realized. For the Synoptics “eternal life” is something that one receives at the final judgment or in a future age (Mark x 30, Matt xviii 8-9), but for John it is a present possibility for men: ‘The man who hears my words and has faith in Him who sent me *possesses* eternal life...he has passed from death to life’ (v 24). For Luke (vi 35, xx 36) divine sonship is a reward of the future life; for John (i 12) it is a gift granted here on earth.<sup>68</sup>

Especially important to note is the element of **choice** portrayed in John’s Gospel. If there is a twofold reaction to Jesus in John’s Gospel, it should be emphasized that that reaction **is very much dependent on man’s choice**, a choice that is influenced by his way of life, whether his deeds are wicked or are done in God (vss. 20-21). For John there is virtually no trace of determinism at the surface. Only when one looks beneath the surface does one find statements like “no one can come to me, unless the Father who sent me draws him” (John 6:33).

#### 4 D The final testimony of John the Baptist: “I was sent before him” (3:22-36)

**3:22** This section is related loosely to the preceding by **μετὰ ταῦτα**. This constitutes an indefinite temporal reference; the intervening time is not specified.

**εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν γῆν** In the narrative Jesus has **already** been in Judean territory, in **Jerusalem**. In the context Bultmann (*loc. cit.*) argues that the meaning is that Jesus went out from the city into the country districts of Judea. This seems plausible because there is no real indication of longer amounts of elapsed time, or a departure from Judea back to Galilee followed by a return. It should be remembered, however, that this only a possibility, since the phrase **μετὰ ταῦτα** specifies an indefinite amount of time.

**3:23 Αἰνών, Σαλείμ** The precise locations of these places are unknown.

Three possibilities are suggested:

(1) In **Perea**, which is in Transjordan (cf. 1:28). Perea is just across the river from Judea.

(2) In the **northern Jordan Valley**, on the west bank some 8 miles [13 km] south of Scythopolis. But with the Jordan River so close, the reference to **abundant water** (3:23) seems superfluous.

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<sup>67</sup> See Leonhard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 1:54, n. 10 for further discussion.

<sup>68</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, cxvii-cxviii.

(3) Thus **Samaria** has been suggested. 4 miles [6.6 km] east of **Shechem** is a town called **Sâlim**, and 8 miles [13 km] northeast of Sâlim lies modern **Āinûn**. In the general vicinity are many springs.

Because of the meanings of the names [Αἰνών = “springs” (Aramaic) and Σαλείμ = Salem, “peace”], some have attempted to allegorize here that John the Baptist is *near salvation* (!). Obviously there is no need for this. It is far more probable that the Evangelist has in mind **real places**, even if we cannot be absolutely sure of their locations.

**3:24** οὐπω γὰρ ἦν βεβλημένος εἰς τὴν φυλακὴν ὁ Ἰωάννης It seems best to understand this as a parenthetical note by the Evangelist.

**3:25** First, there is a textual problem here: was the dispute between the Baptist’s disciples and an individual Jew (Ἰουδαίου) or representatives of the Jewish authorities (Ἰουδαίων)? While Nestle-Aland 27th ed. and UBS 4th ed. opt for the singular Ἰουδαίου as the more difficult reading, there is good external support for the plural Ἰουδαίων [π<sup>66</sup>, κ\*, Θ, f<sup>1</sup>, f<sup>13</sup>, 565, it, vg, and others]. In the final analysis it does not make a great deal of difference whether the dispute arose between the Baptist’s disciples and a single representative of the authorities or several.

More of a problem is that again we have incomplete information concerning the event. What was the controversy between John’s disciples and the Jewish authorities? It is not clear. Some have suggested that it was over the relative merits of the baptism of Jesus and John. But what about the “**cleansing**”?

There are so many unanswered questions here that even R. Brown (who does not usually resort to dislocations in the text as a solution to difficulties) proposes that this dialogue originally took place immediately after 1:19-34 and before the wedding at Cana. (Why else the puzzled hostility of the disciples over the crowds coming to Jesus?) Also, the synoptics imply John was imprisoned **before** Jesus began his Galilean ministry.

At any rate, I see no reason to rearrange the material here—I think it occurs in this place for a very good reason. As far as the Evangelist is concerned, it serves as a further **continuation** of the point made to Nicodemus, that is, the necessity of being born “from above”. Note that John the Baptist describes Jesus as “he who comes from **above**” [ἄνωθεν] (v. 31).

There is another lexical tie to preceding material: **καθαρισμοῦ** (3:25)—the subject of the dispute—calls to mind the six stone jars of water changed to wine at the wedding feast in 2:6. I believe this section ultimately culminates and concludes ideas begun in chapter 2 and continued in chapter 3.

It seems to me that one of the major keys to the understanding of the passage lies in 3:25—what was the nature of the dispute over **purification** (cleansing) between the Jews and the Baptist’s disciples? Obviously, they disagreed over something. The word καθαρισμοῦ suggests it was over the **Jewish ritual of purification**. But who said what? The Evangelist just doesn’t tell us.

**However, I suggest this reconstruction:** The disciples of John, perplexed after this disagreement with the Jewish authorities, come to John and ask about the fact that Jesus is baptizing and more and more are coming to him. John (we know from Lk 3:3, Mark 1:4) had been preaching a baptism of **repentance for forgiveness of sin**.

Possibly—and this is speculation—what the Jews reported to John’s disciples was that **Jesus was now setting aside the Jewish purification rituals as unnecessary**. To John’s disciples this might also be interpreted as:

- a falling away from Judaism, and
- a break with John’s own teaching.

That Jesus **could** have said this is very evident from many incidents in his ministry in all the gospels. The thrust would be that **outward cleansing** (that is, observance of purification rituals) is not what makes a person clean. A **new heart within** (that is, being born **from above**) is what makes a person clean.

So John's disciples come to him troubled about an **apparent contradiction in doctrine** though the explicit problem they mention is that Jesus was baptizing and multitudes were coming to him. (Whether Jesus was or was not baptizing really wasn't the issue though, and John knew that because he didn't mention it in his reply. In 4:2 we are told that Jesus was not baptizing, but his disciples. That reference would seem to cover this incident as well, and so the disciples of John are just reporting what **they** have heard, or think they heard.)

The real point at issue is the **authority** of Jesus to "overturn" the system of ritual purification within Judaism. John replies to this question of the authority of Jesus in vss. 27-36. In vss. 27-30 he reassures his disciples, reminding them that if more people are coming to Jesus, it does not threaten him at all, because "heaven" has ordained it to be so. After all, some of these very disciples of John had heard him tell the Jewish delegation that he was not the Messiah but was sent before him. Then John compares himself to the friend of the bridegroom who stands by and yet participates in the bridegroom's joy. **John is completely content in his own position as forerunner and preparer of the way.**

Again with vss. 31-36 there is the problem of **who is speaking**: the Baptist or the Evangelist. Probably it is best to take these as the Evangelist's words concerning the authority that Jesus has to do these things:

- The one who comes from above is over all (31);
- The one who receives Jesus' testimony has set his seal that God is truthful (33);
- The One God sent speaks God's words (34);
- believing in the Son is all-important (35).

**3:34** οὐ...ἐκ μέτρου *Midrash Rabbah on Leviticus 15:2* states: "The Holy Spirit rested on the prophets by measure." Jesus is contrasted to this. The Spirit rests upon him without measure.

This forms the perfect capstone to Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus. (Note the theme of 'replacement' that runs through the end of chapter 4). But it also does something else. It presents Jesus as the fulfillment of Judaism (the whole purpose of ritual purification was the inner attitude of the heart, from the beginning, although by Jesus' day this had been forgotten and emphasis was upon externals). Jesus turns the water into wine. He is the One who has come down from heaven to bring free communication between God and men. He came to save the entire world (3:16-17). But if so, he must reach out beyond the nationalistic and sectarian borders of Judaism. As the fulfillment of Judaism Jesus must fulfill the role Judaism had failed to carry out: to be a witness to the nations.

This, then, forms the transition to chapter 4 and Jesus' conversation the woman of Samaria.

## Chapter 4

### OUTLINE:

#### 4 C Back to Galilee (4:1-45)

##### 1 D Departure from Judea (4:1-3)

##### 2 D Another Personal Response to Jesus: The Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well (4:4-42)

##### 3 D Arrival in Galilee (4:43-45)

#### 5 C The Second Sign at Cana in Galilee: Healing of the Nobleman's Son (4:46-54)

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### DETAILED EXEGETICAL NOTES:

#### 4 C Back to Galilee (4:1-45)

##### 1 D Departure from Judea (4:1-3)

**4:1-3** The **reason** given for Jesus' departure from Judea at this particular time is not at all clear—did he fear **persecution**? Certainly he had openly opposed the Jewish leaders before in the Temple.

John really doesn't tell us **why** Jesus chose this time to return to Galilee. Some have suggested that the Pharisees turned their attention to Jesus because John the Baptist had now been thrown into prison. But the text gives no hint of this. In any case, perhaps Jesus simply did not want to provoke a confrontation at this time (knowing that his "hour" had not yet come).



## 2 D Another Personal Response to Jesus: The Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (4:4-42)

If the story of Nicodemus in chapter 3 is perhaps the best known story in the Gospel (because, among other things, of 3:16), then the story of the woman at the well must be the second best known. Among other things it challenges our preconceived notions about social and ethnic barriers. Jesus was clearly not bound by such conventions in his offer of the free gift of "living water" to the woman in this story. In the bigger picture, the incident also serves to illustrate Jesus' greater purpose in coming into the world [cf. the Prologue, with its statements about the Light coming into the world]. Jesus' purpose went beyond simply being the Messiah of the Jewish people. **He came to be the Savior of the entire world.**

### 2 D Another Personal Response to Jesus: The Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well (4:4-42)

**4:4** ἔδει Such a detour through Samaria was not **geographically necessary**. Although the main route from Judea to Galilee was through Samaria, Jesus, as many Jews did, could easily have gone up the Jordan valley into Galilee through the Bethshan gap, avoiding Samaria. Whenever John uses the impersonal verb **δει** the necessity involves **God's will or plan**: 3:7, 14, 30; 4:4, 20,24; 9:4; 10:16; 12:34; and 20:9.

**4:5** Συχάρ This is somewhere in the vicinity of **Shechem**. Jacob's well is less than 250 ft (75 m) away. Sychar is Shechem according to W. F. Albright. But according to R.D. Potter, **Askar** is to be identified with Sychar.<sup>69</sup> The village of Askar lies about 1 mile (1.5 km) northeast of Jacob's well.

**4:6** Much is often made of the **time of day** (which would be noon, starting at 6 a.m.). Some (e.g. Lightfoot) have seen a connection with the **crucifixion** at the same hour (19:14) when Jesus again expresses his **thirst** (19:28). Others have said that the woman came at this hour because she was ostracized by the other women for her (immoral) conduct. I feel **both** explanations may be reading too much in, but would go with the former (as a type of foreshadowing, a technique John does use) if I had to see a significance in the time reference. It may be that this is simply an eyewitness recollection of the approximate time the events really occurred, without further significance in the narrative.

**4:9** **The Samaritans** are descendants of 2 groups:

- (1) The remnant of **native Israelites** who were not deported after the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC;
- (2) **Foreign colonists** brought in from Babylonia and Media by the Assyrian conquerors to settle the land with inhabitants who would be loyal to Assyria.

There was **theological opposition** between the Samaritans and the Jews because the former refused to worship in Jerusalem. After the exile the Samaritans put obstacles in the way of the Jewish restoration of Jerusalem, and in the 2nd century BC the Samaritans helped the Syrians in their wars against the Jews. In 128 BC the Jewish high priest retaliated and burned the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerazim.

**4:10-11** This serves as a perfect example of John's use of **misunderstanding** as a literary technique. Jesus is speaking of "living water" which is **spiritual** (ultimately this is a Johannine figure for the Holy Spirit, cf. 7:38-39) while the woman thinks he means **physical** water of some sort which will satisfy thirst.

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<sup>69</sup> R. D. Potter, "Topology and Archeology in the Fourth Gospel" in *Studia Evangelica* 1 [= *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 73] (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1959), 329-37.

Note the play on words: while πηγή and φρέαρ are mostly interchangeable, the author has gradually shifted the emphasis so that Jacob's well, which was a πηγή (a naturally-flowing fountain, 4:6) becomes merely a **cistern** (φρέαρ, v.11) and the πηγή now becomes the new source from which springs the water of life (14). **In comparison to Jesus himself, who is the true πηγή, Jacob's well is merely a cistern!**

Of this entire encounter R. Brown states:

**Misunderstanding** (vs. 11), **irony** (vs.12), the **quick changing of an embarrassing subject** (vs. 19), the **front and back stage** (vs. 29), the **Greek chorus effect of the villagers** (vss. 34-42)—all these dramatic touches have been skillfully applied to make this one of the most vivid scenes in the Gospel and to give the magnificent doctrine of living water a perfect setting.<sup>70</sup> [emphasis mine]

**4:14** On the meaning of the living water we need to examine the phrase ἀλλομένου εις ζωὴν αἰώνιον. The verb is used of quick movement (like jumping) on the part of living beings. This is the only instance of its being applied to the action of water. However, in the LXX it is used to describe the “Spirit of God” as it falls on Samson and Saul [Judg 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Kingdoms 10:2, 10 LXX (= 1 Sam 10:6, 10 English text); and Isa 35:6 (note context)].

**Note:** This is further support for the thesis that the “water” mentioned back in 3:5 is also a reference to the work of the Spirit (cf. notes on 3:5).

If it is the water that “leaps up” to eternal life (4:14), it is the Spirit who gives life (6:63).

And finally, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was a mark of Messianic days: cf. Joel 2:28-29, Isa 44:3-5 (!), Ezek 39:29, etc.

That the Samaritan woman finally understands that Jesus refers to water which is more than physical is made clear by 4:28: she leaves her waterpot behind because (at least for the point our author is making) she won't need it to carry the kind of water Jesus now has her interested in!

Notice also the following connections in verses 16-26 with chapter 3, vss. 19-21:

**4:16** Jesus takes the initiative in leading the woman to recognize who he is by referring to her personal life.

**4:17** The woman responds with a deceptive answer as a reaction against further probing.

**4:18** Jesus uses her answer to bring to light her evil deeds. 3:19-21 states that those whose deeds are evil do not come to the light. The woman is now presented with a choice: will she come to the light, or will she shrink back into the darkness?

**4:19-20** The woman “comes to the light” (although she would prefer to divert attention from her personal life). “This mountain” is a reference to Mount Gerazim, where the Samaritan shrine was located.



<sup>70</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*

**4:21-24** Jesus explains that true worship is what the Father really wants, and this must be done in the Spirit and in truth.

**4:25-26** The woman finally recognizes who Jesus is, and Jesus affirms it.

**Note:** Earlier themes are resumed here: the Temple, from 2:13-22; water and Spirit from 3:1-21. Note also how these fit the ‘replacement’ motif of 2:1 - 4:54.

**4:27-42** In the discussion with the disciples which takes place while the woman has gone into the city, note again the misunderstanding: the disciples think Jesus refers to physical food, while he is really speaking figuratively and spiritually again.

Thus Jesus is forced to explain what he means, and the explanation that his food is his mission, to do the will of God and accomplish his work, leads naturally into the metaphor of the harvest. The fruit of his mission is represented by the Samaritans who are coming to him. It has been pointed out that they could have been seen even then from a distance as they made their way through the fields to the well.

In summary, R. Brown (184-5) has an excellent statement:

“John is too good a dramatist to leave the story without a conclusion that would bring together the themes of the two scenes. The woman who was so important in Scene 1 is recalled because it is on her word that the townspeople believe. But the completion of the Father’s work (vs. 34), the harvest of the Samaritans, is to have greater durability; for the townspeople come to believe on Jesus’ own word that he is the Savior of the world. If our story in ch. iv, particularly in Scene 1, has portrayed the steps by which a soul comes to believe in Jesus, it also portrays the history of the apostolate, for the harvest comes outside of Judea among foreigners. We can scarcely believe that the evangelist did not mean for us to contrast the unsatisfactory faith of the Jews in ii 23-25 based on a superficial admiration of miracles with the deeper faith of the Samaritans based on the word of Jesus. Nicodemus, the rabbi of Jerusalem, could not understand Jesus’ message that God had sent the Son into the world so that the world might be saved through him (iii 17); yet the peasants of Samaria readily come to know that **Jesus is really the Savior of the world.**”<sup>71</sup>

Needless to say there is irony here, an irony foreshadowed in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel (1:11): “He came to his own, and his own did not receive him”. Yet the Samaritans welcome Jesus and proclaim him to be not the Jewish Messiah but the Savior of the world.

### **3 D Arrival in Galilee (4:43-45)**

**4:43-45** Again we have a transitional passage, corresponding to 4:1-3 (and in fact being the continuation of that journey).

The major problem in these verses concerns the **contradiction** between the **proverb stated by Jesus** in verse 44 and the **reception of the Galileans** in verse 45. **Origen** solved the problem by referring “his own country” to Judea (which Jesus had just left) and not Galilee.

But this runs counter to the thrust of John’s Gospel, which takes pains to identify Jesus with Galilee (cf. 1:46) and does not even mention his Judean birth.

Brown typifies the contemporary approach: he regards verse 44 as **an addition by a later redactor** who wanted to emphasize Jesus’ unsatisfactory reception in Galilee.

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<sup>71</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 184-85 [emphasis mine].

**Neither expedient** is necessary, though; if we understand *honor* in its sense of **attributing true worth to someone**. The Galileans **did** welcome him, but their welcome was to prove a **superficial response** based on what they had seen him do at the feast. There is **no** indication that the signs they saw brought them to place their faith in Jesus any more than Nicodemus did on the basis of the signs. **But a superficial welcome based on enthusiasm for miracles is no real honor at all.**

#### 5 C The Second Sign at Cana in Galilee: Healing of the Nobleman's Son (4:46-54)

**4:46 τις βασιλικός** The term can designate **either a person of royal blood or a servant to the king**. Here, the latter is almost certainly in view; this man is **a servant of Herod, tetrarch of Galilee**. Capernaum was a border town, so doubtless there were many administrative officials in residence there.

**4:48 ἴδητε** Note the use of the plural. The man is addressed as **representative of all the Galileans**. Note also the connection with the preceding transitional passage; the Galileans had observed Jesus' signs at the Passover in Jerusalem. Contrast the Samaritans; they believed **without** miracles.

**4:51 καταβαίνοντες** Going to **Capernaum** from **Cana** one must go east across the Galilean hills and then descend to the Sea of Galilee. The 20 mile (33 km) journey could not be made in a single day. (Note the familiarity of the author with Palestinian geography.)

**Note: Similarities to the first sign-miracle at Cana (2:1-11):**

That the author wanted us to relate this to the previous incident is clear because **twice** (4:46, 54) he reminds us of the first sign-miracle at the wedding in Cana, at the **beginning** and the **end** of this story. Note the similarities:

- (a) Jesus has just come **back into Galilee**.
- (b) Someone comes to him with a **request**.
- (c) Indirectly Jesus seems to **refuse** at first.
- (d) The petitioner **persists**.
- (e) Jesus **grants the request**.
- (f) This leads another group of people (his disciples, the nobleman's household) to **believe in him**.

#### *A Note on the Place in the Narrative of the Healing of the Nobleman's Son:*

The second sign-miracle at Cana occupies **an important transitional spot** in the narrative: the stress on the necessity of **trusting** in Jesus summarizes and culminates the previous material in chapters 2-4; the stress on Jesus as the **giver of life** introduces one of the most important themes of the next section (chapters 5-10).

We have seen in chapters 2-4 how people have responded to Jesus. While **Nicodemus** responded inadequately (at least at this point) the **Samaritans** showed a proper response. And of course his **disciples** had placed their trust in him at the wedding at Cana (chapter 2).

What we will see in the upcoming section (chapters 5-10) is **Jesus as the giver of life** (though this has been foreshadowed in chapters 2-4, note the introduction of living water in chapter 4). We will see Jesus as **the bread of life** (chapter 6), **the giver of water of life** in chapter 7, and **the light of life** in chapter 8.

Ultimately, too, the return to Cana is a literary device known as *inclusion* (from the Latin *inclusio*) which is used to encircle or enclose material pertaining to a single topic.<sup>72</sup> It is the author's way of indicating that **we have come full circle; we are ready to move on to something new.**

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<sup>72</sup> This figure is also called *epanadiplosis* according to Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, rpt. ed. 1968).

## Chapter 5

### OUTLINE:

#### [3 A The Book of the Seven Signs (2:1 -12:50)]

##### [1 B The Early Months of Jesus' Public Ministry: From Cana to Cana (chapters 2-4)]

#### 2 B Selected Highlights from the Later Part of Jesus' Public Ministry: Conflict and Controversy (chapters 5-10)

##### 1 C The Third Sign, at the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem: The Healing of the Paralytic (5:1-47)

###### 1 D The miraculous gift of restoration to the man at the pool (5:1-15)

###### 2 D The conflict with the Jewish leaders over the right to heal on the Sabbath (5:16-47)

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### DETAILED EXEGETICAL NOTES:

#### 2 B Selected Highlights from the Later Part of Jesus' Public Ministry: Conflict and Controversy (chapters 5-10)

##### 1 C The Third Sign, at the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem: The Healing of the Paralytic (5:1-47)

###### 1 D The miraculous gift of restoration to the man at the pool (5:1-15)

**5:1** The only transitional note we have, again, is in 5:1— μετὰ ταῦτα. We cannot be sure how long after the incidents at Cana this occurred because this temporal indicator is non-specific. As far as the setting goes, there is difficulty because of the textual variants: ἑορτή or ἡ ἑορτή —“a feast” or “the feast”. This may not appear significant at first, but to insert the article would almost certainly demand a reference to the passover. Externally this problem is difficult to decide, but it is probably better to read the word ἑορτή as anarthrous in agreement with Nestle-Aland 26th ed. and United Bible Societies 3rd ed. and thus a reference to a feast other than the passover. The incidental note in 5:3, that the sick were lying *outside* in the porticoes of the pool, makes passover an unlikely time because it fell toward the end of winter and the weather would not have been warm. L. Morris thinks it impossible to identify the feast with certainty.<sup>73</sup>

Jews were obligated to go up to Jerusalem for 3 major annual feasts: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. If the first is probably ruled out because of the time of year, we may also suppose that the last is not as likely because it forms the central setting for chapter 7 (where there are many indications in the context that Tabernacles is the feast in view.) This leaves the feast of Pentecost, which at some point prior to this time in Jewish tradition (as reflected in Jewish intertestamental literature and later post-Christian rabbinic writings) became identified with the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai. Such an association might explain Jesus’ reference to Moses in 5:45-46. This is conjectural, however. The only really important fact for the Evangelist is that the healing was done on a Sabbath. This is what provoked the controversy with the Jews recorded in 5:16-47.

**5:2** The site of the miracle is also something of a problem: προβατικῆ is usually taken as a reference to the Sheep *Gate* near the Temple. Some (Brown, et al.) would place the word κολυμβήθρα with προβατικῆ to read “in Jerusalem, by the Sheep *Pool*, there is (another pool) with the Hebrew name...”. This would of course imply that there is reference to two pools in the context rather than only one. This does not seem necessary (although it is a grammatical possibility). We are not helped by the gender of the words since both are feminine (as is the participle ἐπιλεγομένη). Note, however, that Brown’s suggestion would require a feminine word to be supplied (for the participle ἐπιλεγομένη to modify). The traditional understanding of the phrase as a reference to the Sheep Gate near the Temple appears more probably correct.

A lot of controversy has surrounded the name of the pool itself: the reading of the Majority Text, Βηθεσδα, has been virtually discarded in favor of what is thought to be the more primitive Βηθζαθα or Betzetha (Old Latin). The latter is attested by Josephus as the name of a quarter of the city near the northeast corner of the Temple area. He reports that the Syrian Legate Cestius burned this suburb in his attack on Jerusalem in October AD 68.<sup>74</sup> However, there is some new archaeological evidence (published by Milik in *Discoveries in the Judean Desert* III [1962]): Copper scroll 3Q15 from Qumran seems to indicate that in the general area of the Temple, on the eastern hill of Jerusalem, a treasure was buried in Bef Esdatayin, in the pool at the entrance to the smaller basin. The name of the region or pool itself seems then to have been Bef Esdâ, “house of the flowing”. It appears with the dual ending in the scroll because there were 2 basins.

Βηθεσδα seems to be an accurate Greek rendition of the name, while Milik suggests Βηθζαθα is a rendition of the Aramaic intensive plural Bet Esdatâ. All of this is not entirely certain, but is certainly plausible; if Milik is correct, both the textual variants would refer to the same location, one a Greek rendering of the Hebrew name, the other a Greek rendering of the Aramaic. This would be an unusual instance where two textual traditions which appear to be in conflict would both be correct!

On the location of the pool, we may note: the double-pool of St. Anne is the probable site, and has been excavated; the pools were trapezoidal in shape, 165 feet (49.5 m) wide at one end, 220 ft. (66 m) wide at

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<sup>73</sup> Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 299, n. 6.

<sup>74</sup> *Bellum Judaicum (War of the Jews)* 2.530.

the other, and 315 ft. (94.5 m) long, divided by a central partition. There were colonnades (rows of columns) on all 4 sides and on the partition—thus forming the “5 porticoes” mentioned in 5:2. Stairways at the corners permitted descent to the pool.

Regarding the use of the present tense ἔστιν and its implications for the dating of the Gospel of John, see the previous discussion on the date of the Gospel (pp. 14-15 above) and the article by D. B. Wallace, “John 5,2 and the Date of the Fourth Gospel,” *Biblica* 71 (1990): 177-205.

**5:3-4** The major problem in these verses is over the inclusion of verses 3b-4: few textual scholars today would accept the authenticity of these verses. However, in support of their inclusion, there is fairly broad geographical support. True, a considerable number of important manuscripts (א<sup>66</sup> א<sup>75</sup> א B C D) favor omission, but the standard canon that the older reading is preferred is not always conclusive. The same applies to the shorter reading—and the longer reading can just as easily explain the shorter in the case of accidental omission. Internally, it is argued that the verses are theologically offensive, and that at least 7 of the words are non-Johannine. But such statistical arguments prove little; and if the verse is theologically objectionable that gives strong weight to the probability it was deliberately excluded in some copies.

As far as I can see the text is incomplete without something here to explain verse 7, the reference to the troubling of the water. Most today would say this is what motivated a copyist to add verses 3b-4; but the text as it would stand without the verses in question is *so* difficult that it does not seem consistent with Johannine style elsewhere. It would seem, in fact, either obscure or careless to leave *this* incident unexplained, when elsewhere John goes to such great lengths to add notes and comments to aid readers who might not be familiar with Jewish customs, places, names, etc. Thus at this point I am inclined to think that some portion of verses 3b-4 may be authentic; but sorting out which exact combination of words is difficult and may be impossible given the present state of our knowledge of the history of the text.

It has also been said on the other hand that there was a popular tradition about the stirring of the water by an angel, which the author of the Gospel chose not to include because he regarded it as popular superstition, and therefore left the matter unexplained. It would seem, however, that he could have included the reference while pointing out that it was only legend; but in any case this is sometimes advanced as an argument in favor of the shorter reading.

**5:6** γνώς Supernatural knowledge on the part of Jesus (parallel to 2:25) is implied, though not demanded by this statement. Jesus could also have obtained the information from his disciples or bystanders. But in the context it seems that the author wants his readers to infer that Jesus knew this supernaturally, since there seems to be no time interval at all between the two participles, which indicates that at the moment Jesus saw the individual, he knew this.

**5:9b** ἦν δὲ σάββατον We are given an important note on the time of the healing—it was on the Sabbath. John now goes on to tell us why this was significant, in that it brought about confrontation with the Jewish authorities.

**5:14** ἵνα μὴ χειρόν σοί τι γένηται Later (9:3) Jesus does not hold that sickness or disease is always a result of sin. Here, however, he does seem to imply that some suffering is the result of personal sin. What is the point of the warning? That if the man sinned again, he would be stricken with an even more severe ailment? Probably not. The phrase “something worse” probably refers to what would happen at the man’s judgment (future judgment in this case)—compare 5:29. This would be “worse” than any physical disability by far!

This man is a delightful study in character—so much so that Brown sees it as a mark of authenticity:

...in his obtuseness this man is, for instance, very different from the clever blind man whom Jesus heals in Chapter 9. The personality traits that he betrays serve no particular



theological purpose and are so true to life that they too may have been part of the primitive tradition. If the paralytic's malady were not so tragic, one could almost be amused by the man's unimaginative approach to the curative waters. His crotchety grumbling about the "whippersnappers" who outrace him to the water betrays a chronic inability to seize opportunity, a trait reflected again in his oblique response to Jesus' offer of a cure. The fact that he had let his benefactor slip away without even asking his name is another instance of real dullness. In verse 14 it is Jesus who takes the initiative in finding the man, and not vice versa. Finally, he repays his benefactor by reporting him to "the Jews." This is less an example of treachery (as Theodore of Mopsuestia urged) than of persistent naïveté.<sup>75</sup>

## 2 D The conflict with the Jewish leaders over the right to heal on the Sabbath (5:16-47)

**5:16** Note the plural ταῦτα, which seems to indicate that Jesus healed on the Sabbath more than once (cf. John 20:30). We know this to be true from the Synoptics; the incident in 5:1-15 is thus chosen by the Evangelist as representative.

**5:17** What is the significance of this verse? A preliminary understanding can be obtained from 5:18, noting the Jews' response and the Evangelist's comment. They sought to kill Jesus, because not only did he *break the Sabbath*, but he also *called God his own father*, thus making himself equal with God.

This must be seen in the context of the relation of God to the Sabbath rest. In the commandment (Exod 20:11) it is explained that "In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth...and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

Philo, based on the LXX's translation of שָׁבַת as κατέπαυσεν rather than ἐπαύσατο, denied outright that God had ever ceased his creative activity. And when Rabban Gamaliel II, R. Joshua, R. Eleazar ben Azariah, and R. Aquiba were in Rome, ca. AD 95, they gave as a rebuttal to sectarian arguments evidence that God might do as he willed in the world without breaking the Sabbath because the entire world was his private residence!

So even the rabbis realized that God did not really cease to work on the Sabbath: Divine providence remained active on the Sabbath, otherwise, all nature and life would cease to exist. As regards men, divine activity was visible in two ways: men were born and men died on the Sabbath. Since only God could give life and only God could deal with the fate of the dead in judgment, this meant God was active on the Sabbath.

This seems to be the background for Jesus' words in 5:17. He justified his work of healing on the Sabbath by reminding the Jews that they admitted God worked on the Sabbath. This explains the violence of the reaction. The Sabbath privilege was peculiar to God, and no one was equal to God. In claiming the right to work even as his Father worked, Jesus was claiming a divine prerogative. He was literally making himself equal to God, as 5:18 goes on to state explicitly for the benefit of the reader who might not have made the connection.

There is a thought which occurs frequently in the Church Fathers related to this: God did not rest after creation but only after Jesus' death. Jesus worked during his ministry, but after his death came the Sabbath rest promised to the people of God (cf. Hebrews 4:9-10). This thought is provocative but needs to be modified somewhat. That Sabbath rest does remain; in Hebrews it ultimately refers to the Kingdom of Messiah. But in the Gospel of John, the Messiah is *here* and his kingdom is at hand. The works he works (on the Sabbath) bring about conditions which typify the Greater Sabbath—the Messianic Kingdom. What more appropriate day to make a man whole, than the day which stands as a *reminder*, not just of God's rest from creative activities in the past, but as a *reminder of the permanent rest in the Messianic kingdom*? I don't think the Jews would have seen this—they were too incensed with Jesus' blasphemous (in their

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<sup>75</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 209.

opinion) claim to equality with God. But John's readers, enjoying the advantages of retrospect, could appreciate it.

And it is most significant that in Jesus' reply to the Jews, *both* realized eschatology and final eschatology are blended: realized eschatology in 19-25, final eschatology in 26-30.

Note this tension between present and future: eternal life is a thing to be had now (24a) and the transition from death to life is already made (24b); dead (25) refers to those spiritually dead. But in (29) the (physically) dead come out the tombs at the voice of the Son for a (future) judgment.

**5:19** Jesus is completely dependent on his Father and does none of his works on his own. The Father and the Son are of one essence, and one principle of operation.

**5:20-23** What works does the Son do? The same that the Father does—and the same that the rabbis recognized as legitimate works of God on the Sabbath (see note above on 5:17).

(1) (5:21) Jesus grants life (just as the Father grants life) on the Sabbath. But as the Father gives physical life on the Sabbath, so the Son grants spiritual life (note the “greater things” mentioned in verse 20).

(2) (5:22-23) Jesus judges (determines the fate of men) on the Sabbath, just as the Father judges those who die on the Sabbath, because the Father has granted authority to the Son to judge.)

But this is not all. Not only has this power been granted to Jesus in the present; it will be his in the future as well. In verse 28 we have a reference not to spiritually dead (only) but also physically dead. At their resurrection they respond to the Son as well.

*A Note on the Structure of the Narrative:*

In Chapter 4 Jesus granted physical life to the nobleman's son. But that was only a sign of the life from above (ἄνωθεν) which the Father has given the Son authority to grant.

In 5:1-15 Jesus healed the paralytic, and ordered him to stop sinning. To those who are held in the bondage of death and sin the Son offers life, and the only danger is that one will ignore that offer. To do so would be not to trust in the Son. And something worse would surely befall such a one—at the last judgment (cf. 5:29).

**5:29** Compare Dan 12:2, and note this as a foreshadowing of chapter 11, when Lazarus is called out of the tomb at the voice of the Son of Man. Note the similarity of 5:29 to 3:20-21. Compare 6:29: “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.” See also Carson (258-59) on the individual emphasis here.

**5:32** To whom does ἄλλος refer? To John the Baptist or to the Father? In the nearer context, verse 33, it would seem to be the Baptist. But verse 34 seems to indicate that Jesus does not receive testimony from men. Probably it is better to view verse 32 as identical to verse 37.

Note the multiplicity of testimony to who Jesus is (all of which the Jews were ignoring):

- (1) The Baptist (v. 33)
- (2) The works themselves (v. 36)
- (3) The Father (v. 37)
- (4) The scriptures (v. 39)

**5:35** ὁ λύχνος Sirach 48:1 states that the word of Elijah was “a flame like a torch.” (*The Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach*, also known as *Ecclesiasticus*, is one of the books of the OT Apocrypha.)

**5:37** “You have never heard his voice nor seen his form”—compare Deut 4:12 “you heard the sound of words, but you saw no form—only a voice.” Also see Deut 5:24 ff., where the Israelites asked to hear the voice no longer—their request (ironically) has by this time been granted.

How ironic this would be if the feast is Pentecost, where by the first century AD the giving of the Law at Sinai was being celebrated!

**5:39** The indicative of ἔραυνᾶτε fits the context better (indicative and imperative forms are the same here).

Note the following examples from the rabbinic tractate *Pirke Aboth* (“The Sayings of the Fathers”):

*Pirke Aboth* 2:8—“He who has acquired the words of the Law has acquired for himself the life of the world to come.”

*Pirke Aboth* 6:7—“Great is the Law for it gives to those who practice it life in this world and in the world to come.”

How ironic, again, if this is the feast of Pentecost when the giving of the Law was being celebrated! The reader, of course, recognizes what the Jewish authorities did not: that Jesus himself (not the Torah) is the true source of life eternal (cf. the dialogue with Nicodemus in ch. 3 and the dialogue with the Samaritan woman in ch. 4).

**5:46** The final condemnation will come from Moses himself—again ironic, since Moses is the very one the Jews have trusted in! This is again ironic if it is occurring at Pentecost, which at this time was being celebrated as the occasion of the giving of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai. The statement ἐπιστεύετε Μωϋσεῖ is to be taken literally and relates directly to Jesus’ statements about the final judgment in ch. 5 (5:28-29).<sup>76</sup>

#### *A Summary Note on chapter 5:*

Disbelief in the face of all this testimony must be motivated by pride; it is a deliberate disbelief (5:40). Jesus attacks the roots of this disbelief with vigor. If it were an intellectual problem it could be met by explanation; but it is really a problem of the moral orientation of life and of the love of God, and so it is met by prophetic accusation. What the Jews are rejecting is not one sent from God—they willingly accept self-proclaimed messiahs (5:43). What they are really rejecting is the demand to place their trust in Jesus as Messiah sent from God, as indicated by his divine prerogatives. The failure to accept Jesus, to trust in him, is ultimately to prefer self, and ultimately to reap the consequences for one’s choice. It is a decision to remain in the darkness rather than come to the Light (cf. 3:19-21).

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<sup>76</sup> Cf. Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet King: Moses Traditions and Johannine Christology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), 161.

## Chapter 6

### OUTLINE:

#### [3 A The Book of the Seven Signs (2:1 -12:50)]

#### [2 B Selected Highlights from the Later Part of Jesus' Public Ministry: Conflict and Controversy (chapters 5-10)]

#### 2 C The Fourth Sign, in Galilee: The Multiplication of the Bread (6:1-15)

#### 3 C The Fifth Sign, in Galilee: Walking on the Water (6:16-21)

#### 4 C The Paschal Discourse: Jesus as the True Bread from Heaven (6:22-71)

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## DETAILED EXEGETICAL NOTES:

### 2 C The Fourth Sign, in Galilee: The Multiplication of the Bread (6:1-15)

*Introduction.* With the account in John's Gospel of the Feeding of the Five Thousand, we come face to face with the element of the supernatural in the Fourth Gospel once more, but this time on a far "grander" scale than the changing of water into wine at Cana, the healing of the nobleman's son, or the cure of the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem. This time it is difficult to attribute the sign-miracle to the inventiveness of the Evangelist (as some critics have been inclined to do with the former miraculous signs) because it is the single event in the entire public ministry of Jesus before the Passion Week which is recorded in all four gospel accounts. Thus there are only a limited number of approaches to the miracle which may be taken, and these are well summarized by L. Morris as follows:

This is the one miracle, apart from the resurrection, that is recorded in all four Gospels. We can only conjecture why this story was thus singled out, but obviously it made a strong appeal to the Gospel writers. In this account we see that the reason for the multitude's presence was the attraction of the "signs" that Jesus wrought. John also records Philip's perplexity as to the feeding of the great crowd, and his little piece of mental arithmetic which showed so clearly the impossibility of a solution out of the disciples' own resources. And he tells us that it was Andrew who brought the boy forward. It is in this Gospel that we read of the proximity of the Passover, of the bread as 'barley loaves', of the reason for gathering up the fragments, of the effect on the people, and of Jesus' dismissal of the disciples and of the people in general. Clearly John has quite a lot of information not derived from the Synoptists. Characteristically, John describes what happened as a "sign". The effect of the sign is to make some people think of Jesus as a prophet, and some to wish to make a king out of him.

There are three principal ways of understanding what happened. Some hold that a "miracle" took place in men's hearts. Christ induced the selfish to share their provisions, and when this was done there proved to be more than enough for them all. Others think that the feeding should be understood as a sacramental meal, rather like Holy Communion, wherein each received a tiny fragment. This view has been severely criticized by G. H. Boobyer. Though it is defended by Alan Richardson, for example, it seems to me untenable. Indeed, both the views we have noticed seem to rely too much on presupposition, and to overlook what the writers actually say. It is much better, accordingly, to hold to the third view, that Jesus, the Son of God incarnate, did do something that we can describe only as miracle. Undoubtedly, it inculcates spiritual truth (it is a "sign"). But this does not alter the fact that the Gospel writers speak of something wonderful that actually happened.<sup>77</sup>

In light of the fact that all four of the gospels present the incident as miraculous, it appears clear that any approach which attempts to remove or downplay the supernatural nature of the event does not do justice to the biblical accounts.

6:1 μετὰ ταῦτα Again, we are faced with a vague temporal reference. How Jesus got from Jerusalem to Galilee is not explained, which has led many scholars (e.g., Bernard, Bultmann, and Schnackenburg) to posit either editorial redaction or some sort of rearrangement or dislocation of material (such as reversing the order of chapters 5 and 6, for example).

Such a rearrangement of the material would give a simple and consistent connection of events, but in the absence of all external evidence it does not seem to be supportable. R. Brown says that such an arrangement is attractive in some ways but not compelling, and summarizes well:

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<sup>77</sup> Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 338-39.

No rearrangement can solve **all** the geographical and chronological problems in John, and to rearrange on the basis of geography and chronology is **to give undue emphasis to something that does not seem to have been of major importance to the evangelist.**<sup>78</sup>

**Τιβεριάδος** Only John in the New Testament refers to the **Sea of Galilee** by this name (see also 21:1), but this is correct local usage. In the mid-20's Herod completed the building of the town of **Tiberias** on the southwestern shore of the lake; after this time the name came into use for the lake itself.



**6:2** Note the reference to **other signs** again, not mentioned elsewhere by John (cf. 21:25).

**6:3** εἰς τὸ ὄρος... This phrase does not necessarily refer to a particular mountain or hillside, but may simply mean “the hill country” or “the high ground,” referring to the high country east of the Sea of Galilee (well known today as the Golan Heights).

**6:4** τὸ πάσχα, ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων According to John's sequence of material, considerable time has elapsed since the feast of 5:1. If the feast in 5:1 was Pentecost of AD 31, then this feast would be the passover of AD 32, just one year before Jesus' crucifixion (see the chronological note on references to the passover in the Fourth Gospel at 2:13).

**6:5** Ἐπάρας οὖν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς...καὶ θεασάμενος Compare 4:35 for a similar expression (although Jesus is the subject rather than the speaker here).

**6:11** Note the **similarities** with the various accounts of the **Last Supper**:

**He took loaves** Matthew, Mark, Luke, Paul (1 Cor 11)

**gave thanks** Matthew, Mark, Luke, Paul (1 Cor 11)

**distributed** Matthew, Mark, Luke

**6:13** Note that the fish mentioned previously (in 6:9) are not emphasized here. This is easy to understand, however, because the bread is of primary importance for the Evangelist in view of Jesus' upcoming discourse on the Bread of Life.

**6:15** Jesus, knowing that his hour had not yet come (and would not, in this fashion) withdrew. The ministry of miracles in Galilee, ending with this, the multiplication of the bread (the last public miracle in Galilee recorded by John) aroused such a popular response that there was danger of an uprising. This would have given the authorities a legal excuse to arrest Jesus.

The nature of Jesus' kingship will become an issue again in the passion narrative of the Fourth Gospel (18:33ff.).

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<sup>78</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 236. [emphasis mine]

Furthermore, the volatile reaction of the Galileans to the signs prepares for and foreshadows the misunderstanding of the miracle itself, and even the misunderstanding of Jesus' explanation of it (6:22-71).

### 3 C The Fifth Sign, in Galilee: Walking on the Water (6:16-21) [=Matt 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-52]

**6:17** ἤρχοντο This is a good example of a *conative* imperfect—"they were *trying* to cross the sea...". We are told that their destination was Capernaum.

**6:19** ὡς σταδίου εἴκοσι πέντε ἢ τριάκοντα ("about 25 or 30 stadia"): One stadion (AV "furlong") = 607 feet (182 m); the Sea of Galilee was at its widest point 61 stadia (7 miles or 11.6 km) by 109 stadia (12 miles or 20 km). So at this point the disciples were pretty much in the middle of the lake.

Clearly the Evangelist has a miracle in mind here, regardless of what may be said about the somewhat ambiguous phrase ἐπι + genitive (as in Mark, instead of Matthew's ἐπι + accusative), since Jesus came near the boat, which we have just been told was 25 or 30 stadia at sea. Furthermore, it is implied by the question of the disciples in 6:25 that Jesus crossed the sea in an unexpected way.

**6:21** εὐθέως ("immediately") Again the miraculous seems to be in view here with the sudden arrival of both boat and passengers at the destination.

#### *The Place of the Miracle in the Narrative:*

We need to ask at this point: Why did the Evangelist choose to include this incident, particularly at this point in the narrative? In the versions of this miracle given by Matthew and Mark, Jesus calms the sea (to the amazement of his disciples) and gets into the boat. The miracle is basically a nature-miracle (emphasizing Jesus' sovereignty over nature) in which the disciples are rescued from the storm. But John does not even mention these elements—it is not even clear if Jesus gets into the boat (verse 21 only states that the disciples wanted to receive Jesus into the boat—we may assume he got in, but the text does not explicitly state this).

Why then does John include the miracle? And why *here*, when the Bread of Life Discourse which follows would fit so well with the miraculous feeding in 6:1-15?

It is possible that the story of Jesus walking on the water was linked with the feeding of the five thousand in early Christian tradition, before any of the gospels were committed to writing. It follows the feeding of the five thousand in Matt 14:22-34 and Mark 6:45-52 (although it does not occur in Luke 9). In this case the Evangelist is simply following the traditional association when he includes the account here.

Structurally these verses also serve to explain to the reader how Jesus and his disciples came to be back on the western side of the lake (Capernaum), cf. 6:24, 59.

These explanations, however, do not exhaust the possibilities, and probably are not the primary reason for John's inclusion of Jesus walking on the water at this point in the narrative. More significant is John's use of the term ἐγώ εἰμι (6:35, 41, 48, 51). Jesus is the one who bears the Divine Name (cf. Exod 3:14). For John this story takes on the character of a theophany, not at all unlike the Transfiguration recorded by the Synoptics. The reaction the crowds had made after the multiplication of the bread had been an attempt to crown him king—but on a purely political level. And in the discourse which follows (on the Bread of Life) many even of his disciples will be unable to accept what he has said.

Note: We should not overlook the symbolism of water/sea—in the Old Testament it is the image of evil and chaos, particularly in Isaiah. For John, this could carry similar significance: Jesus' triumph over the sea represents his triumph over the forces of evil.

But to his disciples in the boat (probably to be identified with the Twelve, cf. 6:67), not to the crowds, Jesus manifests that he is much *more* than a political messiah. What he is can be summed up only by the phrase "I

am”. These disciples, of course, knew that; they had placed their trust in Jesus as Messiah; but they needed a reminder that *their* ideas about the person and work of the Messiah were not to be conditioned by the ideas of the general population, to which they had just been witness.

I think we can go beyond this, however, to see that there may be some indications that the Exodus motif (following the Passover) was in the mind of the author as he selected details in composing the narrative. Note the following striking parallels with Psalm 107:

107:4-5	the people wander <b>hungry</b> in <b>desert wastes</b>
107:9	the Lord <b>satisfies and fills</b> the hungry and thirsty.
107:23	some <b>go down to the sea in ships</b>
107:25	the Lord raised up a <b>stormy wind</b>
107:27-28	they <b>cry out to the Lord</b>
107:28-30	the Lord <b>delivers</b> them, <b>calms the sea</b> , and brings them to their desired <b>haven</b> .

**Note:** It cannot be **proven** that Psalm 107 was in the author’s mind when he wrote this section. I merely want to suggest the parallels, which are many and striking. It may be that the Twelve, with the retrospection they demonstrated in other Johannine passages, came to believe that Jesus’ actions were following the pattern described by the Psalm at some point after the resurrection. It may have influenced **all** the accounts, including the synoptic ones. But it would be extremely difficult to prove such influence since there is no explicit citation of Ps 107 in the context.

#### 4 C The Paschal Discourse: Jesus as the True Bread from Heaven (6:22-71)

**The setting.** The previous miracle of the multiplication of the bread had taken place near **Tiberias** (cf. 6:23). Jesus’ disciples set sail for **Capernaum** (6:17) and are joined by the Lord in the midst of the sea. The next day boats from Tiberias pick up a few of those who had seen the multiplication (certainly **not** the whole 5,000!) and bring them to Capernaum. It was to **this group** that Jesus spoke in 6:26-27. But there were also people from Capernaum who had gathered to see Jesus, who had **not** witnessed the multiplication, and it was **this** group that asked Jesus for a miraculous sign like the manna (6:30-31). (This would have seemed superfluous if it were the **same** crowd which had already seen the multiplication of the bread! But some from Capernaum had heard about it and wanted to see a similar miracle repeated.)



**Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee**

**6:25** The people who followed in the boats ask, “Teacher, when did you get here?” Jesus answers **not** their direct question, but the **implication** (again, supernatural knowledge on Jesus’ part is implied—he knows their true motivation for following him).



**6:27** ἐργάσεσθε μὴ τὴν βρῶσιν τὴν ἀπολλυμένην Note the word-play on “**work**” here. This does not imply “working” for **salvation**, since the “work” is later explained (in 6:29) to be “**believing** in the one whom he (the Father) has sent.”

**6:30** The crowd responds to Jesus’ statement about believing in the one whom God has sent by demanding a **sign**—especially something like the manna given in the wilderness. Probably those who had **not** seen the multiplication of the bread had **heard** about it from those who had, and wanted to see something similar.

Note again the Johannine play on the **physical** versus the **spiritual** (32-33)—the food which **perishes** versus the food which **remains** for eternal life. Compare with chapter 4 where the contrast was between the **water** that quenched thirst temporarily versus the **living water** that would satisfy thirst forever.

Note also the interplay between **works** and **faith** in Johannine thought: The crowd asks Jesus (6:28), “What must we do that **we may work** the works of God?” Note Jesus’ reply: “This is the **work of God**: that you believe in the one he sent.” By the very phrase Jesus has shifted the emphasis from a **work of man** to **the work of God**—the initiative which God took in sending the Son into the world. (Θεοῦ is best understood as a subjective genitive in 6:32-34.) Note that at this point the crowd still **misunderstands** the nature of the true bread from heaven: “Lord, give us this bread.” If they conceive of it as something that Jesus **himself** gives them, they have still missed it, because *he himself* is the ‘Bread’ from heaven. (Note in this regard Jesus’ response in verses 35-36.)

**6:35** Note the use of ἐγὼ εἶμι. Also note the parallel structure between the two participles ὁ ἐρχόμενος and ὁ πιστεύων. The concept of “**coming to**” Jesus and “**believing in**” him is the same, and this will be important later, in verse 37.

**6:40** ὁ θεωρῶν This refers to the person who beholds the Son not just physically, but with **spiritual** insight, discerning correctly his identity and mission. This is clear from the context.

**6:41** Note that οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι are singled out here. It would appear that there were some of the Jewish authorities in the crowd which had gathered to listen to Jesus in Capernaum, after the crossing of the Sea of Galilee (6:24).

**6:44** ἐλκύση It is never specifically spelled out by the Evangelist what this “**drawing**” consists of. It is evidently some kind of **attraction**; whether it is **binding and irresistible** or not is not mentioned. But there does seem to be a parallel with 6:65, where Jesus says that no one is able to come to him unless “it has been **granted** to him from the Father.” This apparently parallels the use of Isaiah by John to reflect the spiritual blindness of the Jewish leaders (see the quotations from Isaiah in 9:41, 12:39-40).

**6:52-59** “**Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood...**” These words are at the heart of the discourse on the Bread of Life, and have created great misunderstanding among interpreters. Anyone who is inclined in the least toward a sacramental viewpoint will almost certainly want to take these words as a reference to the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, because of the reference to **eating** and **drinking**. The participle in verse 54, τρώγων, is almost shockingly graphic: it means to eat noisily, often used of animals (“gnaw,” “nibble,” “munch”). When used with reference to people, it often has the idea of enjoyment (Matt 24:38) and close comradeship. Some have thought it refers to a literal feeding, and thus to the Eucharist. But this does not follow: by anyone’s definition there must be a **symbolic** element to the eating which Jesus speaks of in the discourse, and once this is admitted, it is better to understand it here, as in the previous references in the passage, to a personal **receiving** of (or appropriation of) Christ and his work.

**6:60-66 σκληρός ἐστὶν ὁ λόγος οὗτος** Previously we saw indications that Jesus was addressing a crowd of people (verse 24) and some of the “Jews” (verse 41). Now it is evident that some of his own disciples were present and listening as well. And they did not like what they were hearing. **Σκληρός** has the idea of being both “hard” and “harsh”; in this context it is not so much “hard to understand” as “**difficult to accept**”.

It became apparent to some of Jesus’ followers at this point that there would be a cost involved in following him. They had taken offense at some of Jesus’ teaching (perhaps the graphic imagery of “eating his flesh” and “drinking his blood,” and Jesus now warned them that if they thought this was a problem, there was an even worse cause for stumbling in store: his upcoming crucifixion. I take this to be the meaning of verses 61b-62. Jesus asks, in effect, “Has what I just taught caused you to stumble? [What will you do, then,] if you see the Son of Man **ascending where he was before?**” This ascent is to be accomplished through the **cross**; for John Jesus’ departure from this world and his return to the Father form one continual movement from cross to resurrection to ascension.

**6:67-71 ῥήματα ζωῆς αἰωνίου ἔχεις (Peter’s confession)** In contrast to the response of some of his disciples, we have here the response of the **Twelve**, whom Jesus then questioned concerning their loyalty to him. This is the big test, and the Twelve, with Peter as spokesman, pass with flying colors. The confession here differs considerably from the Synoptic accounts (Matt 16:16, Mark 8:29, and Luke 9:20) and concerns directly the disciples’ personal loyalty to Jesus, in contrast to those other disciples (6:66) who had deserted him.

**6:71** This statement is another of the Evangelist’s post-resurrection insights, added for the reader’s help in understanding Jesus’ statement in the previous verse. At least six explanations for the name **Iscariot** have been proposed, but it is probably transliterated Hebrew with the meaning “man of Kerioth” (there are at least two villages that had that name).<sup>79</sup> This is the first mention of Judas in the Fourth Gospel, and he is immediately identified (as he is in the synoptic gospels, Matt 10:4, Mark 3:19, Luke 6:16) as the one who would betray Jesus.

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<sup>79</sup> Cf. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 304.

## Chapter 7

### OUTLINE:

#### [3 A The Book of the Seven Signs (2:1 -12:50)]

#### [2 B Selected Highlights from the Later Part of Jesus' Public Ministry: Conflict and Controversy (chapters 5-10)]

#### 5 C Jesus teaches openly in the presence of his opponents in Jerusalem (7:1-8:59)

#### 1 D Preparation: the attitude of Jesus' brothers as he delays his departure for the Feast of Tabernacles (7:1-13)

#### 2 D Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem (7:14-52)

#### 1 E The Sabbath question renewed (7:14-24)

#### 2 E Public response to Jesus' teaching: who is this One? (7:25-31)

#### 3 E The attempt to arrest Jesus (7:32-36)

#### 4 E Jesus as the Source of living water (7:37-39)

#### 5 E The response of the people (7:40-44)

#### 6 E The response of the Jewish leaders (7:45-52)

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## DETAILED EXEGETICAL NOTES:

### 5 C Jesus teaches openly in the presence of his opponents in Jerusalem (7:1-8:59)

#### 1D Preparation: the attitude of Jesus' brothers as he delays his departure for the Feast of Tabernacles (7:1-13)

**7:1** Again, the transition is indicated by the imprecise temporal indicator *μετὰ ταῦτα*. Clearly, though, the Evangelist has left out much of the events of Jesus' ministry, because chapter 6 took place near the passover (6:4). This would have been the passover between winter/spring of AD 32, just one year before Jesus' crucifixion (see following note).

**7:2** Since 7:2 places these incidents at the Feast of Tabernacles (AD 32) there would have been a 6-month interval during which no events are recorded. The Evangelist is obviously selective in his approach; he is not recording an exhaustive history (as he will later tell the reader in 21:25).

After healing the paralytic on the Sabbath in Jerusalem (5:1-47) Jesus withdrew again to Galilee because of mounting opposition. In Galilee the feeding of the 5,000 took place, which marked the end of the Galilean ministry for all practical purposes. 7:1-9 thus marks the final departure from Galilee.

*ἡ σκηνοπηγία* John's use of *σκηνοπηγία* for the Feast of Tabernacles constitutes the only use of this term in the New Testament.

**7:3** Jesus' brothers (really his half-brothers) were mentioned previously by John in 2:12. [See 2:12 for discussion of the problem of their relationship to Jesus.] They are also mentioned elsewhere in Matt 13:55 and Mark 6:3.

“Depart from here [i.e., Galilee] and go into Judea, in order that your disciples may behold your works which you are doing” Is this to be understood as a suggestion on the part of Jesus' brothers that he should attempt to win back the disciples who had deserted him in 6:66? Perhaps. But it is also possible to take the words as indicating that if Jesus is going to put forward messianic claims [i.e., through miraculous signs] then he should do so in Jerusalem, not in the remote parts of Galilee. Such an understanding seems to fit better with the following verse. It would also indicate misunderstanding on the part of Jesus' brothers of the true nature of his mission—he did not come as the royal Messiah of Jewish apocalyptic expectation to be anointed king at this time.

**7:4** “No one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be publicly recognized.” The phrase amounts to this: “if you're going to perform signs to authenticate yourself as Messiah, you should do them at Jerusalem.” (Jerusalem is where mainstream Jewish apocalyptic tradition held that Messiah would appear.)

**7:5** Apparently Jesus' brothers later did come to trust in him—see Acts 1:14.

**7:8** Although the word is *καίρως* here, it parallels John's use of *ῥῶρα* elsewhere as a reference to the time appointed for Jesus by the Father—the time of his return to the Father, characterized by his death, resurrection, and exaltation (glorification). In the Johannine literature synonyms are often interchanged for no apparent reason other than stylistic variation.

**7:7** Compare 3:19-21, especially concerning the light and darkness imagery.

**7:8** ἐγὼ οὐκ ἀναβαίνω εἰς τὴν ἑορτὴν ταύτην How are we to reconcile Jesus' statement to his brothers with his later action in 7:10? The major explanations that have been proposed are these:

- (1) The use of the present tense does not exclude later action of a different kind. (It does not say anything about the future.)
- (2) Jesus is really denying his brothers' request to perform signs. He will go up to the feast, but not in their way, openly.
- (3) What John means here is that Jesus did not travel up to Jerusalem with the other pilgrims to the feast, an act which would have been conspicuously public, and would have drawn undue attention to himself. Jesus chose to travel to Jerusalem by himself, privately.

The problem with all three of these explanations is that they require the reader to supply some understood word or expression to mean “not at present,” “not publicly,” or the like. This may well be valid but it is difficult to see why the Evangelist left it up to the reader to supply the missing word or phrase.

- (4) One could accept the variant textual reading which substitutes οὐπω for οὐκ. Manuscript evidence is very weighty in favor of this reading: [ⲡ<sup>66</sup> ⲡ<sup>75</sup> B L T W Θ Ψ 0105 0180 0250 f<sup>1</sup> f<sup>13</sup> etc.]. It is true that the reading with οὐκ is the more difficult reading, but it is also easy to see how a confusion of letters could have occurred in uncial script which would have produced the shorter reading: a copyist who saw ΟΥΠΩ confused the ΠΩ for Κ and wrote ΟΥΚ.

The fourth explanation, on the whole, seems preferable because the variant has excellent manuscript support and the reading is consistent with the Johannine tendency to clarify whatever a reader might not easily understand.

**7:10-13** So Jesus does go up to the feast, but later, in secret (verse 10). Note how John prepares in verses 12-13 for the later debate about the identity of Jesus in verses 25-36, and also keeps before the reader's mind the question, “Who is Jesus?”

## **2 D Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem (7:14-53)**

### **1 E The Sabbath question renewed (7:14-24)**

**7:14** When Jesus *does* go up to Jerusalem, he makes no attempt to remain hidden once he arrives (in fact he makes himself quite conspicuous). This suggests that “going up in secret” (verse 10) meant not so much covertly but that he did not go up with the pilgrim procession (as suggested above at verse 8, perhaps to avoid a premature “triumphal entry” scene).

**7:15-24** Note how the Evangelist, in this section, treats a number of Jewish “objections” to believing in Jesus. Verses 15-18 deal with the question of authority. Jesus does not teach from his own authority but speaks on behalf of the One who sent him. If Jesus had claimed to be his own authority, or said he did not need a teacher, he would have been discredited. Rabbis cited authorities for all significant statements. Likewise, Jesus cites his own authority: the Father who sent him.

There is irony here too: when the Jewish leaders come face to face with the Word become flesh—the pre-existent Λόγος, creator of the universe and divine Wisdom personified—they treat him as an untaught, unlearned person (verse 15)!

**7:20** τίς σε ζητεῖ ἀποκτεῖναι Many of the crowd (if they had come in from surrounding regions for the feast) probably *were* ignorant of any plot. The plot was on the part of ‘the Jews’, which for the Evangelist

here indicates the Jewish leaders. Note how carefully John distinguishes between the leadership and the general populace in their respective responses to Jesus.

**7:21** The “one work” must surely refer to 5:1-47, the healing of the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda. (The Synoptics record other Sabbath healings, but John does not mention them.) It is significant that after the Bethesda incident, the Jewish leaders began seeking to kill Jesus (see 5:18) [although this was probably an unplanned emotional response and did not develop until later into an outright plot.]

**7:23** ἐμοὶ χολᾶτε ὅτι ὅλον ἄνθρωπον ὑγιῆ ἐποίησα ἐν σαββάτῳ The Rabbis counted 248 parts to a man’s body. In the Talmud, *b. Yoma* 85b states: “If circumcision, which attaches to one only of the 248 members of the human body, suspends the Sabbath, how much more shall the saving of the whole body suspend the Sabbath?” So absolutely binding did rabbinic Judaism regard the command of Lev 12:3 to circumcise on the eighth day, that Mishnah *Shabbath* 18.3; 19.1, 2; and *Nedarim* 3.11 all hold that the command to circumcise overrides the command to observe the Sabbath.

This provides insight into Jesus’ relationship to the Mosaic Law (cf. Matt 5:17). “Are you angry with me because I made a whole man well on the Sabbath?” Again we see a contrast between Moses and Jesus (cf. 1:17—”law” versus “grace and truth”). What Moses did in part, Jesus does completely. It is as though Jesus were saying, “I have not done a purifying work to one particular part of him, but have restored his whole body to health and strength. I have not done a work of necessity to one single member only, but a work of necessity and benefit to the whole man.”

But for Jesus, it is not so much a question of *suspension* of the Sabbath as *fulfillment* of it: his actions fulfilled the purpose of the original institution. Such deeds of mercy were not just permissible on the Sabbath, they were obligatory! They looked forward to the state of affairs which would prevail in the final Sabbath rest of the entire world, the messianic Kingdom (see Heb 4:9 and John 2:1).

**7:24** In the light of their own practice of circumcising on the Sabbath, Jesus calls on his hearers to stop judging (present imperative used in a specific instance) according to outward appearance (in this specific instance of his healing the man at the pool), but instead to judge with righteous judgment. (Some manuscripts read the aorist κρίνατε for the second reference to judging [⌘ Θ 0105 0250 f<sup>1</sup> f<sup>13</sup> ].)

## **2 E Public response to Jesus’ teaching: who is this One? (7:25-31)**

**7:25-27** Note the response of the general populace to Jesus’ teaching: it was very favorable. Some of the citizens of Jerusalem say, “Isn’t this the one they are seeking to kill? And see, he is speaking openly and they are saying nothing to him. Perhaps truly the rulers know that this one is the Messiah?” Some people who had heard Jesus were so impressed with his teaching that they began to infer from the inactivity of the opposing Jewish leaders a tacit acknowledgment of Jesus’ claims.

οἱ ἄρχοντες Note how carefully the Evangelist distinguishes the general populace from the “rulers,” otherwise known in the Fourth Gospel as “the Jews”.

**7:27** ὁ δὲ χριστὸς ὅταν ἔρχηται οὐδεὶς γινώσκει πόθεν ἐστίν Further discussion arises, however, over the origins of the Messiah. The view of these people (apparently residents of the city as opposed to pilgrims in Jerusalem for the feast, note Ἱεροσολυμιτῶν in 7:25, in the NT only here and in Mark 1:5) reflects the idea that the origin of the Messiah is a mystery. In Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 97a Rabbi Zera taught: “Three come unawares: Messiah, a found article, and a scorpion.”

Apparently Old Testament prophetic passages like Mal 3:1 and Dan 9:25 were interpreted by some as indicating a sudden appearance of Messiah.

**Note:** It appears that this was not a universal view: the scribes called by Herod at the coming of the Magi in Matt 2 knew that Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. It is important to remember that Jewish messianic expectations in the early first century were not monolithic—a considerable variety of viewpoints existed, not all of them capable of harmonization with one another.

The Evangelist apparently did not consider this objection worth answering. The true facts about Jesus' origins were readily available for any reader who didn't know already. Here is an instance where the Evangelist assumes knowledge about Jesus independent from the material he records.

**7:28** καὶ οἶδατε καὶ οἶδατε πόθεν εἰμί Jesus' response while teaching in the Temple is more difficult—it appears to concede too much understanding to Jesus' opponents. It is best to take the words as irony: “So you know me and know where I am from, do you? Indeed I have not come of myself, but the one who sent me is true, whom you do not know.” On the physical, literal level, they do know where he was from—Nazareth of Galilee (at least they think they know). But on another deeper (spiritual) level, they do not: he came from heaven, from the Father. Jesus insists that he has not come on his own initiative (cf. 5:37), but at the bidding of the one who sent him.

**7:29** Note the contrast with the preceding: ἐγώ is emphatic. *You* don't know him, but *I* know him. This claim to unique, intimate knowledge of the Father is mentioned elsewhere in the Gospel in 1:18; 6:46; 8:25; and 17:25. Note the two-fold claim: I am from him (origin) and that one sent me (mission). The preposition παρά + genitive case has the local sense preserved and can be used of one person sending another. This does not necessarily imply origin in essence or eternal generation.

**7:30** Here the response is on the part of the crowd. They seek to seize Jesus. This is apparently distinct from the attempted arrest by the authorities mentioned in 7:32.

Jesus' claims to intimate knowledge of the Father, intimate fellowship with him, and ultimately identification with him, could not be overlooked. People who are confronted with the claims of Jesus are not able to remain neutral: either they must acknowledge and embrace those claims, or reject them utterly. In the words of C. S. Lewis:

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: “I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.” That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.<sup>80</sup>

Note the reason Jesus' opponents could not touch him: his *hour* had not yet come. This is the hour appointed by God for his **death, resurrection** and **return** to the Father. See the discussion on the use of ὥρα in the Gospel of John at 2:4 above.

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<sup>80</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1943), 55-56.

**7:31** Some of the crowd, faced with Jesus' teaching, respond in faith. "**Whenever Messiah comes,**" they say, "**will he perform more signs than what this one has done?**" This apparently refers again to other miracles besides the seven "sign-miracles" selected for inclusion by the Evangelist. Note that even though this faith is based on signs, we are given no indication that this is less than **genuine** faith. It is better to believe on the basis of miracles than not to believe at all [compare the statement made to Thomas in 20:29].

### 3 E The Attempt to Arrest Jesus 7:32-36

**7:32** Here John specifies what groups are involved: the **High Priests** and the **Pharisees**.

**7:33** Note Jesus' response: "Yet a little time I am with you and I am going to the one who sent me." Jesus again has his **return** to the Father in view.

**7:34** Note the Jews' **misunderstanding** of Jesus' words, as made clear in verses 35-36. They didn't realize he spoke of his **departure out of the world**. This is another example of the Evangelist's use of **misunderstanding** as a literary device to emphasize a point.

When will the events Jesus alluded to in verse 34 take place? Jesus' words in 7:34 may be compared to those of **Wisdom in Proverbs 1:24-29** [NASB]:

"Because I called, and you refused;  
I stretched out my hand, and no one paid attention;  
And you neglected all my counsel,  
And did not want my reproof;  
I will even laugh at your calamity;  
I will mock when your dread comes,  
When your dread comes like a storm,  
And your calamity comes on like a whirlwind,  
When distress and anguish come on you.  
Then they will call on me, but I will not answer;  
They will **seek me diligently**, but they **shall not find me**,  
Because they hated knowledge,  
And did not choose the fear of the LORD."

**Amos 8:11-12** also states:

"Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord GOD,  
When I will send a famine on the land,  
Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water,  
But rather for hearing the words of the LORD.  
"And people will stagger from sea to sea,  
And from the north even to the east;  
They will go to and fro to seek the **word** of the LORD,  
But **they will not find it.**"

Similar themes may also be found in the OT in Job 28:12 ff.; Isaiah 55:6; Deut 4:29; and Hosea 5:6.

**7:35** The Evangelist may be using the term οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι here to refer to **the officers** (note ὑπηρέτας, v. 32) **sent out by the Pharisees and chief priests**. More likely, however, is that the words of verse 35 are spoken by the Jewish authorities among themselves after they receive the report from their servants of Jesus' reply (found in the preceding verse).

### 4 E Jesus as the Source of living water (7:37-39)



### ***The setting for Jesus' discourse at the Feast of Tabernacles:***

L. Morris gives an excellent description of the background of Jesus' words on the last day of the feast:

Tabernacles was a festival rich in symbolism and popular appeal, and the symbolism forms the background to our Lord's saying. The principal features of the observance, in addition to the erection of the leafy bowers in which the people camped out and the offering of the sacrifices, appear to have been these. The people carried with them bunches of leaves, called *lulabs*. There was apparently a disagreement between the Sadducees and the Pharisees over the correct interpretation of Lev 23:40, "And ye shall take you on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm-trees, and boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook..." The former took the words to refer to the material out of which the booths for the observance of the feast were to be constructed, while the latter held them to mean that the worshippers were actually to carry branches of the trees named as they entered the temple. The Pharisaic interpretation prevailed among the people, and accordingly each worshipper, as he marched in procession, would carry a *lulab* in his right hand and a citron in his left. The *lulab* symbolized the stages of the wilderness journey (marked by different kinds of vegetation), and the fruit the fruit of the goodly land that God had given His people. As certain Psalms were recited the worshippers shook their *lulabs*. The rejoicing was marked further by the flute-playing and dancing that went on for most of the feast and by bringing in young willow branches and arranging them round the altar (*Sukk.* 4:5). The tops thus were bent over the altar forming a leafy canopy for it. The reciting of the words, "Save now, we beseech thee, O Jehovah: O Jehovah, we beseech thee, send now prosperity" (Ps 118:25), is probably to be understood as a prayer for rain and fruitful season. On each of the seven days of the feast a priest drew water from the pool of Siloam in a golden flagon and brought it in procession to the temple with the joyful sounding of the trumpet. There the water was poured into a bowl beside the altar from which a tube took it to the base of the altar. Simultaneously wine was poured through a similar bowl on the other side of the altar. These symbolic ceremonies were acted thanksgivings for God's mercies in giving water in past days (probably looking right back to the smiting of the rock in the wilderness and then on to the giving of rain in recent years). They were also an acted prayer for rain in the coming year. It is also significant that the words of Isaiah are associated with these ceremonies, "with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Isa 12:3). The Jerusalem Talmud connects the ceremonies and this scripture with the Holy Spirit: "Why is the name of it called, The drawing out of water? Because of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, according to what is said: 'With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.'"<sup>81</sup>

Jesus' words are to be understood against this background. Up till now nothing has been recorded of His teaching at this feast, for all His words in this chapter hitherto have been replies to the accusations of His foes. But now, at the culmination of the greatest feast of the Jewish year, He unfolds its significance in terms of the life that He came to bring. He takes the water symbolism of the feast and presses it into service as He speaks of the living water that He will bestow. The people are thinking of rain, and of their bodily need. He turns their attention to the deep need of the soul, and to the way He would supply it. In chapter 4 we have had references to the living water, but here only is the explanation given of its significance in terms of the Holy Spirit.

**Note:** The following verses are particularly important for understanding the symbolism of **water** in the Gospel of John.

7:37 τῆ ἑσχάτῃ ἡμέρῃ τῆ μεγάλης There is something of a problem with this reference to the "last day of the feast, the great day": it appears from Deut 16:13 that the feast went for seven days. Lev 23:36, however,

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<sup>81</sup> Morris *The Gospel According to John*, 419-21.

makes it plain that there was an eighth day, though it was mentioned separately from the seven. It is not completely clear whether the seventh or eighth day was the climax of the feast, called here by the Evangelist the “last great day of the feast”. Since according to Mishnah *Sukkah* 4.1 the ceremonies with water and lights did not continue after the seventh day, it seems more probable that this is the day the Evangelist mentions.

Note that once more, **coming** to Jesus (37b) and **believing** in him (36a) are the same, cf. 6:35.

**7:38 ποταμοὶ ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας αὐτοῦ ῥεύσουσιν ὕδατος ζῶντος** These verses have been the subject of considerable scholarly debate. Certainly Jesus picks up on the *literal water* used in the ceremony and uses it **figuratively**. But what does the figure mean? According to popular understanding, it refers to **the coming of the Holy Spirit to dwell in the believer**. There is some difficulty in locating an OT text which speaks of rivers of water flowing from within such a person, but Isa 58:11 is often suggested: “And the LORD will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire in scorched places, and give strength to your bones; and **you will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail**”[NASB]. Other passages which have been suggested are Prov 4:23 and 5:15; Isa 44:3 and 55:1; Exek. 47:1 ff.; Joel 3:18; and Zech 13:1 and 14:8.

The meaning in this case is that **when any man comes to believe in Jesus the Scriptures referring to the activity of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life are fulfilled**. “When the believer comes to Christ and drinks he not only slakes his thirst but receives such an abundant supply that veritable rivers flow from him.”<sup>82</sup> In other words, with this view, **the believer himself becomes the source of the living water**.

This is the traditional understanding of the passage, often called the “Eastern interpretation” following Origen, Athanasius, and the Greek Fathers. It is supported by such modern scholars as Barrett, Behm, Bernard, Cadman, Carson, R. H. Lightfoot, Lindars, Michaelis, Morris (see quotation above), Odeberg, Schlatter, Schweizer, C. H. Turner, M. M. B. Turner, Westcott, and Zahn. In addition it is represented by the following Greek texts and translations: AV, RSV, NASB, UBS<sup>4</sup> and NA<sup>27</sup>.

**Note:** Carson has a thorough discussion of the issues and evidence although he opts for the previous interpretation.<sup>83</sup>

There is another interpretation possible, however, called the “Western interpretation” because of patristic support by Justin, Hippolytus, Tertullian, and Irenaeus. Modern scholars who favor this view are Abbott, Beasley-Murray, Bishop, Boismard, Braun, Brown, Bullinger, Bultmann, Burney, Dodd, Dunn, Guilding, R. Harris, Hoskyns, Jeremias, Loisy, D. M. Stanley, Thüsing, N. Turner, and Zerwick. This view is represented by the translations in the NEB and the RSV margin. It is also sometimes called the “Christological interpretation” because **it makes Jesus himself the source of the living water** in verse 38, by punctuating as follows:

37' ἐάν τι διψᾷ ἐρχέσθω πρὸς με,

καὶ πινέτω

38 ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμέ.

Καθὼς εἶπεν ἡ γραφή,

ποταμοὶ ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας αὐτοῦ

ῥεύσουσιν ὕδατος ζῶντος.

37b If anyone thirsts let him come to Me,

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<sup>82</sup> Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 424-25.

<sup>83</sup> Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 322-29.

and let him drink  
38 who believes in Me.  
Just as the scripture says,  
rivers of living water  
will flow from His belly.

Three crucial questions are involved in the solution of this problem: (1) punctuation; (2) determining the antecedent of αὐτοῦ; and (3) the source of the scripture quotation.

With regard to (1), ϛ<sup>66</sup> does place a full stop after πινέτω, but this may be theologically motivated and could have been added later. Grammatical and stylistic arguments are inconclusive.

More important is (2) the determination of the antecedent of αὐτοῦ. Can any other Johannine parallels be found which make the **believer** the source of the living water? John 4:14 is often mentioned in this regard, but unlike 4:14 the water here becomes a source for others also. Neither does 14:12 provide a parallel. Furthermore, such an interpretation becomes even more problematic in light of the explanation given in verse 39 that the water refers to the Holy Spirit, since it is extremely difficult to see the individual believer becoming the ‘source’ of the Spirit for others. On the other hand, the Gospel of John repeatedly places Jesus himself in this role as source of the living water: 4:10, of course, for the water itself; but according to 20:22 Jesus provides the Spirit (cf 14:16). Furthermore, the symbolism of 19:34 is difficult to explain as anything other than a deliberate allusion to what is predicted here (and also explains why the Spirit cannot come to the disciples unless Jesus “departs” [16:7]).

As to (3) the source of the scripture quotation, Boismard has argued that John is using a targumic rendering of Ps 78:15-16 which describes the water brought forth from the rock in the wilderness by Moses.<sup>84</sup> The frequency of Exodus motifs in the Fourth Gospel (paschal lamb, bronze serpent, manna from heaven) leads quite naturally to the supposition that the Evangelist is here drawing on the account of Moses striking the rock in the wilderness to bring forth water (Num 20:8 ff.). That such imagery was readily identified with Jesus in the early church is demonstrated by Paul’s understanding of the event in 1 Cor 10:4. Jesus is the Rock from which the living water—the Spirit—will flow. Carson (see above) discusses this imagery although he favors the traditional or “Eastern” interpretation.

In summary, it appears that the latter or “Western” interpretation is to be preferred. G. M. Burge has summarized well:

John 7:37 records that Jesus spoke out “on the last day of the feast.” In the Tabernacles setting, on this day the water libations were increased significantly. But the Jewish prayers for water were answered in an unexpected way. The water which would flow from beneath the temple would now flow from Jesus, the new temple (cf. 2:18ff.). R. J. McKelvey remarks that “Jesus’ claim to supply living water could not fail to challenge Jewish readers. It means that the centre and source of the world’s life was no longer the temple of Jerusalem, but himself, the new temple.” The inexhaustible Mosaic supply of life-giving water in the wilderness could now be found in Jesus, the new prophet-like-Moses (7:40). Jesus is the source of the awaited eschatological stream. In the wilderness Moses supplied manna: Jesus is the bread from heaven (6:32ff.). Moses gave water: Jesus is the living water (7:38). Moses led with a pillar of fire: Jesus is the light of the world (8:12). In Jesus’ person one can find the fulfillment of all the Tabernacle expectations.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> M.-E.Boismard, “Les citations targumiques dans le quatrième évangile,” *Revue Biblique* 66 (1959): 374-78.

<sup>85</sup> Gary M. Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 93.

**7:39** οὐπω γὰρ ἦν πνεῦμα Since only B (Vaticanus) and a handful of other NT manuscripts supply the participle δεδομενον [“given”], it would be better to translate this “for the Spirit was not yet”. This is expressed from a human standpoint and has nothing to do with the preexistence of the third Person of the Godhead. The meaning is that the era of the Holy Spirit had not yet arrived; the Spirit was not as yet at work in the world because Pentecost had not yet come.

### **5 E The response of the people (7:40-44)**

**7:40-44** Note the questions and responses (which the Evangelist does not even comment on). Verse 42 is particularly ironic because it was *true* of Jesus: he was of the lineage of David and had been born in Bethlehem (neither of which John records). Here it appears the Evangelist was at least aware that Jesus’ birth narrative *must* have been common knowledge, since he is so thorough about these things elsewhere. For the reader who knows these things, the statements by the crowd can be seen as truly ironic.

Again, the question John holds before the reader’s mind is: “who is this Jesus, who makes these astounding claims?”

### **6 E The response of the Jewish leaders (7:45-52)**

**7:45-47** In response to the question of the high priests and Pharisees, “Why did you not bring him?” the officers merely answer, “Never did a man speak as this man speaks.” They offer no further explanation for their failure to carry out their assignment. Obviously they were deeply impressed by what Jesus had to say.

**7:48-51** At this point, while a few of the rulers or Pharisees may *have* believed, they had not done so openly. An example of this is Nicodemus himself, who speaks up (somewhat dramatically) in defense of Jesus (though he does not commit himself to a position). We should not condemn Nicodemus for his lack of boldness here; in light of the fact that the leaders were already angered, an open witness might have enraged them further. Instead, Nicodemus reminds them of their own law. The question with μή looks for a negative answer; he is sure of his point.

**7:52** But these leaders reply brusquely: “You aren’t from Galilee too, are you? Search and see that a prophet does not arise from Galilee.” This presents some difficulty, because Jonah had been from Gathhepher, in Galilee ( 2 Kings 14:25). Also the Babylonian Talmud later stated, “There was not a tribe in Israel from which there did not come prophets” [B. *Sukkah* 27b].

Two explanations are possible:

- (1) In the heat of anger the members of the Sanhedrin overlooked the facts (this is perhaps the easiest explanation).
- (2) We are to understand this anarthrous noun as a reference to *the* prophet of Deut 18:15 (note the reading of  $\text{P}^{66}$  which is articular). In this case the statement is in accord with the facts. Compare also 7:40.

Either explanation is acceptable. I prefer the latter, but in light of the overwhelming textual evidence for the anarthrous reading, it is impossible to be certain (although a reference to the ‘prophet like Moses’ of Deut 18:15 could still be anarthrous).

**7:53** This verse belongs with the disputed section in chapter 8. Evidence for its omission or inclusion will be discussed along with 8:1-11 (see the following chapter).

## Chapter 8

### OUTLINE:

[3 A The Book of the Seven Signs (2:1 -12:50)]

[2 B Selected Highlights from the Later Part of Jesus' Public Ministry: Conflict and Controversy (chapters 5-10)]

[5 C Jesus teaches openly in the presence of his opponents in Jerusalem (7:1-8:59)]

3 D Jesus remains in Jerusalem after the Feast (8:1-59)

1 E Jesus and the Adulteress: Interpretation of the Mosaic law (8:1-11)

2 E Jesus as the Light of the world (8:12-20)

3 E Response of the Jewish leaders: Who is Jesus? (8:21-30)

4 E Jesus and Abraham (8:31-59)

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### DETAILED EXEGETICAL NOTES:

3 D Jesus remains in Jerusalem after the Feast (8:1-59)

1 E Jesus and the Adulteress: Interpretation of the Mosaic law (8:1-11)

**8:1-11 The Textual Problem:** Should 7:53-8:11 be regarded as genuine, and if so, should it be included in the Fourth Gospel following 7:52? Among modern commentators and textual critics, it is a foregone conclusion that the section is not original but represents a later addition to the text of the Gospel. B. M.

Metzger summarizes: “the evidence for the non-Johannine origin of the pericope of the adulteress is overwhelming.”<sup>86</sup>

#### **External evidence:**

**Omit** 7:53-8:11:  $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ ,  $\aleph$ , B, L, N, T, W, X, Y,  $\Delta$ ,  $\Theta$ ,  $\Psi$ , 053, 0141, 0211, 22, 33, 124, 157, 209, 565, 788, 828, 1230, 1241, 1242, 1253, 2193, etc. In addition codices A and C are defective in this part of John, but it appears that neither contained the pericope, because careful measurement shows that there would not have been enough space on the missing pages to include the pericope 7:53-8:11 along with the rest of the text.

**Include** 7:53-8:11: D, F, G, H, K, M, U,  $\Gamma$ , 28, 700, 892, 1009, 1010, 1071, 1079, 1195, 1216, 1344, 1365, 1546, 1646, 2148, 2174, , etc. In addition E, S,  $\Lambda$ , and  $\Pi$  include part or all of the passage with asterisks or obeli, 225 places the pericope after John 7:36,  $f^1$  places it after John 21:24 or 25, and  $f^{13}$  after Luke 21:38 (!).

In evaluating this manuscript evidence, it should be remembered that in the Gospels A is usually considered to be of Byzantine text-type (unlike in the Pauline epistles, where it is Alexandrian), as are E, F, and G (which are of Western text-type in the Pauline epistles). This leaves D as the **only** major Western uncial witness in the Gospels.

Therefore we could summarize the evidence by saying that almost all early manuscripts of Alexandrian text-type omit the pericope, while most manuscripts of Western and Byzantine text-type include it. But we must remember that “Western manuscripts” here refers **only** to D, a single witness.

Thus it can be seen that practically all of the earliest and best manuscripts we possess omit the pericope; it is found only in manuscripts of secondary importance. But before we conclude that the passage was not originally part of the Gospel of John, **internal evidence** needs to be considered as well.

#### **Internal evidence in favor of the inclusion of 8:1-11 (7:53-8:11):**

(1) 7:53 fits in the context. If the “last great day of the feast” (7:37) refers to the conclusion of the Feast of Tabernacles, then the statement refers to the pilgrims and worshippers going home after living in “booths” for the week while visiting Jerusalem.

(2) The chief priests and Pharisees had just mocked Nicodemus for suggesting that Jesus’ claims might possibly be true. In particular they heaped scorn on Jesus’ Galilean origins (7:52). But far more than a prophet was to come from Galilee, according to Isa 9:1-2 (NASB):

But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walk in darkness will see a great **light**; those who live in a dark land, the **light** will shine on them.

In view of John’s observed fondness for Isaiah, it seems impossible that he was unaware of this prophecy. But if he was aware of it, we might expect him to work it into the background of the narrative, as he has often done before. And that is exactly what we find: 8:12 is the point when Jesus describes himself as **the Light of the world**. But the section in question mentions that Jesus returned to the temple at “**early dawn**” (“ $\text{Ὁρθρου}$ ”, 8:2). **This is the “dawning” of the Light of the world (8:12) mentioned by Isa 9:2.**

(3) Furthermore, note the relationship to what follows: just prior to presenting Jesus’ statement that he is the Light of the world, John presents us with an example that shows Jesus as the light. Once again, this calls to mind one of the major themes of the Gospel: light and darkness (compare especially 3:19-21). Here the woman “came to the light” (although not at first willingly!) while her accusers shrank away into the

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<sup>86</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), 219.

shadows, because their deeds were evil. This could be seen as an appropriate setting for Jesus to follow with the statement of 8:12, “I am the light of the world.”

Internal evidence against the inclusion of 8:1-11 (7:53-8:11):

- In reply to the claim that the introduction to the pericope, 7:53, fits the context, it should also be noted that the narrative reads well without the pericope, so that Jesus’ reply in 8:12 is directed against the charge of the Pharisees in 7:52 that no prophet comes from Galilee.
- The assumption that the Evangelist “must” somehow work Isa 9:12 into the narrative is simply that—an assumption. The statement by the Pharisees in 7:52 about Jesus’ Galilean origins is allowed to stand without correction by the Evangelist, although we might have expected him to mention that Jesus was really born in Bethlehem. And 8:12 does directly mention Jesus’ claim to be the Light of the world. The Evangelist may well have presumed familiarity with Isa 9:12 on the part of his readers because of its widespread association with Jesus among early Christians.
- The fact that the pericope deals with the light/darkness motif does not inherently strengthen its claim to authenticity, because the motif is so prominent in the Fourth Gospel that it may well have been the reason why someone felt that the pericope, circulating as an independent tradition, fit so well here.
- In general the style of the pericope is not Johannine either in vocabulary or grammar. According to R. Brown it is closer stylistically to Lukan material.<sup>87</sup> Interestingly one important family of manuscripts, *f*<sup>13</sup>, places the pericope after Luke 21:38.

**Conclusion:** In the final analysis, the weight of evidence in this case must go with the external evidence. The earliest and best manuscripts do not contain the pericope. It is true with regard to internal evidence that an attractive case can be made for inclusion, but this is by nature subjective. In terms of internal factors like vocabulary and style, the pericope does not stand up very well.

We may go on to ask the question whether this incident, although not an original part of the Gospel of John, should be regarded as an authentic tradition about Jesus. It could well be that it is ancient and may indeed represent an unusual instance where such a tradition survived outside of the bounds of the canonical literature.

*Notes on the content of the Pericope Adulterae:*

**8:3-5** What was the real motivation for the action of the scribes and Pharisees here? A real concern for the Mosaic Law? Probably not, since the statement is made (8:6) that they said this “testing” him, in order that they might have grounds to accuse him.

It is easy to figure out what these grounds would have been. The scribes and Pharisees must have thought they had Jesus in the classic “double bind” situation—they could get him no matter what he did or said. If he upheld the Law and commanded that the woman be stoned, they could bring accusation before Pilate (since the death penalty was not permitted to the Jewish authorities), and this could be combined with the popular acclamations of him as King. If, on the other hand, he overturned the Law, he would be discredited with the people.

**8:5** It is interesting in light of this to note that the accusers themselves misrepresented the Law. The Law states that in the case of adultery, both the man and woman must be put to death (Lev 20:10, Deut 22:22). But the Law as quoted by the scribes and Pharisees said, “Moses commanded us to stone such women” (τοιούτας, feminine pronoun). Why was reference to the adulterer omitted? Perhaps because one of their own number had agreed to trap the woman so that the controversy with Jesus could be provoked (how else could they have caught this woman so conveniently?)

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<sup>87</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 336.

**8:6** Certainly Jesus' response took the accusers by surprise—this was something extremely unanticipated. What did he write with his finger? I have no speculation to offer. But then, why mention that he wrote at all? Probably because the act of writing itself was regarded as a symbolic act. In Exod 31:19, the first set of tablets were inscribed by the finger of God. The first time Jesus stooped to write, it is specifically mentioned that he wrote with his finger (8:6). This may well constitute a symbolic allusion to the person of Messiah: he writes with the same authority as God, because he is God.

## 2 E Jesus as the Light of the world (8:12-20)

### *Setting and Place of the Discourse in the Narrative*

The theory proposed by F. J. A. Hort that the backdrop of 8:12 is the lighting of the candelabra in the Court of Women, may offer a plausible setting to the proclamation by Jesus that he is the Light of the world (8:12).<sup>88</sup> The last time that Jesus spoke in the narrative (if the pericope 7:53-8:11 is not part of the original, as the textual evidence suggests) is in 7:38, where he was speaking to a crowd of pilgrims in the Temple area. This is where we find him in the present verse, and he may be addressing the crowd again. It is more probable, however, that αὐτοῖς refers to the Pharisees since they are mentioned in the following verse. Jesus' statement to them would then be a sort of rejoinder to the charge the Pharisees made to Nicodemus in 7:52 that no prophet comes from Galilee.

Jesus' remark has to be seen in view of both the Prologue (1:4, 5) and the end of the discourse with Nicodemus (3:19-21). The coming of Jesus into the world provokes judgment: a choosing up of sides becomes necessary. The one who comes to the light, that is, who follows Jesus, will *not* walk in the darkness. The one who refuses to come, *will* walk in the darkness. In this contrast, there are only two alternatives. So it is with a person's decision about Jesus.

Furthermore, this serves as an implicit indictment of Jesus' opponents, who still walk in the darkness, because they refuse to come to him. This sets up the contrast in chapter 9 between the man born blind, who receives both physical and spiritual sight, and the Pharisees (9:13, 15, 16) who have physical sight but remain in spiritual darkness.

**8:12** Note that ἐγώ εἰμι occurs twice in this section (8:12, 18). On Jesus' lips in the context it does not appear that this amounts to an explicit claim to identification with Yahweh of the Old Testament at these points; it is just the emphatic way of making the assertion.

But this would be suggestive to the Greek reader of the Gospel, who has encountered the phrase before, as a reminder of who it is who speaks. And it foreshadows the ἐγώ εἰμι of 8:24 and 8:58, where in context a claim to deity is expressed by these words (and so understood—note the response of Jesus' opponents in 8:59). The remainder of chapter 8 shifts from the light/darkness imagery in this verse (resumed in chapter 9) to questions over Jesus' authority.

τὸ φῶς τῆς ζωῆς The "life" Jesus refers to in this phrase is surely a reference to "eternal life" (ζωὴ αἰώνιος), cf. 3:15, 16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24, 39; 6:27, 40, 47, 54, 68; 10:28; 12:25, 50; 17:2, 3.

**8:13** The credibility of Jesus is questioned immediately after his claim to be the Light of the world (compare 1:9 of the Prologue with 1:10-11). Because he testifies concerning himself, his testimony cannot be true.

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<sup>88</sup> F. J. A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, vol. 2, *Introduction; Appendix* (Cambridge & London: Macmillan, 1881), 87-88.



**8:14** Jesus' response to this is that even if he does testify concerning himself, his testimony is true, because of where he came from and where he is going (this recalls the discussion of 7:32-36). (Also compare 3:13—no one has ascended to heaven except the one who descended, the Son of Man; and 6:38, 6:41.) he has come down from heaven, and to the Father who sent him he will return.

This should be enough to confirm his claims. he does not speak on his own initiative, but with the authority of the one who sent him.

**8:14b** ὑμεῖς δὲ οὐκ οἴδατε πόθεν ἔρχομαι ἢ ποῦ ὑπάγω But Jesus' opponents still do not acknowledge his heavenly origin, nor do they know where he is headed (first to the cross and then back to the Father).

**8:15** The Pharisees judge according to appearances (cf. 7:24). Jesus does not judge anything. What was the meaning of Jesus' statement? It is clear that Jesus *does* judge (even in the next verse). The point is that he doesn't practice the same kind of judgment that the Pharisees do. Their kind of judgment is condemnatory. They seek to condemn people. Jesus did not come to judge the world, but to save it (3:17).

Nevertheless, and not contradictory to this, the coming of Jesus *does* bring judgment, because it forces people to make a choice. Will they accept Jesus or reject him? Will they come to the light or shrink back into the darkness? As they respond, so are they judged—just as 3:19-21 previously stated. One's response to Jesus determines one's eternal destiny.

**8:16** But even if Jesus does judge, his judgment is true, because he does not make it alone. His judgment would be in perfect accord with the Father who sent him.

**8:17** ἐν τῷ νόμῳ The reference is to Deut 17:6, 19:15.

**8:19** Here we have another example of misunderstanding in the Gospel of John: the Pharisees are still taking all this on the wrong level—they understood it as a reference to Jesus' earthly father, while he was speaking of his Father in heaven. If they had known who Jesus really was, they would have known his Father also. The Son, for the Evangelist, is the only way to know the Father (as mentioned previously in 1:18; later again in 14:6).

**8:20** ἐν τῷ γαζοφυλακίῳ This was in the Temple treasury, adjoining the Court of the Women. See the following note on the setting of these sections for a description of the treasury. No one was able to seize Jesus because his hour had not yet come.

### 3 E Response of the Jewish leaders: Who is Jesus? (8:21-30)

#### *Setting of the Discourse:*

The previous section closed with the note: "These words he spoke in the treasury, while he was teaching in the Temple." The word does not refer to the storage room, but to the part of the Court of the Women where people came to cast offerings. Thirteen trumpet-shaped collection boxes were located here, each with an inscription denoting the use to which those offerings placed in it would be put.

This is significant in view of the statement in 20b: "No one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come." This part of the Temple was quite close to the hall where the Sanhedrin met. Yet even here no one dared to touch him, because the hour appointed for his glorification and return to the Father had not yet arrived.

**8:21** οὐδὲν πάλιν This expression indicates some sort of break in the sequence of events, but we cannot say how long. We are not told the interval between 8:12-20 and this next recorded dialogue. We know the Feast of Tabernacles is past, and next reference to time is 10:22, where the Feast of the Dedication is mentioned. The interval is 2 months, and these discussions could have taken place at any time within that interval, as long as one assumes something of a loose chronological framework. However, if the material in the Fourth Gospel is arranged theologically or thematically, such an assumption would not apply.

This section recalls 7:33-36, where Jesus also talked about his departure to a place where he could not be found.

The words were a mystery to the Jews who heard them (note verse 22); but the reader of the Gospel will realize that Jesus is referring to his forthcoming departure to be with the Father once more.

The expression ἐν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ ὑμῶν ἀποθανεῖσθε is found in the LXX at Ezek 3:18 and Prov 24:9. Note the singular of ἁμαρτία (the plural occurs later in v. 24). To die with one's sin unrepented and unatoned would be the ultimate disaster to befall a man. Jesus' warning is stern but to the point.

#### *The Place of This Discourse in the Narrative:*

Now we can see the crucial position in the theme of the entire Gospel which this section occupies: Once more Jesus challenges his hearers to a decision before it is too late. He has identified himself as the Light of the world (8:12), and the coming of the light forces people to take the option of seeing, by coming to that light, or of becoming blind by turning away and remaining in the darkness (3:19-21 again). But now there is a note of urgency: for the Jews, there is but a short time to see Jesus, to look for him and find him. A unique opportunity is being given to them and it will not be given again.

Jesus has offered living water (7:38) and the light of life (8:12). If people refuse this gift of eternal life, they will die in their sin. In John's thought there is only one radical sin (what we might call unforgivable sin). This is the one sin of which one's many sins (note the plural in verse 24) are merely reflections. This radical sin is to refuse to believe in Jesus and thus *to refuse life itself*, the free gift of eternal life which God offers.

#### *A Note on Johannine Theology:*

From John's perspective, a person does not go to hell because he/she is a sinner. The death of Christ has changed all of that (1 John 2:2). All sin is atoned for except the one (unforgivable) sin of unbelief. A person goes to hell because he/she does not possess the life of heaven—eternal life. And this person does not possess it because he/she has rejected it as God's free gift. To reject Jesus is to reject this gift of eternal life, which is (in other words) to commit the (unforgivable) sin of unbelief.

**8:23** κάτω...ἄνω Jesus is the one who has come down from above, from heaven, to enable men to be born from above, and thus to enable them to possess eternal life. The contrast here is between heaven, where Jesus is from, and earth, where his opponents are from.

**8:24-30** These verses explain the urgency of Jesus' insistence that, when he goes away, there will be no other possibility of delivering them from sin. When Jesus is lifted up (8:28) in crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, he will draw all people to himself (cf. 12:32), and in that moment it will be clear to those who have eyes to see that he truly bears the divine Name, I AM, and that he has the power of raising people to the Father. But if they refuse to believe—refuse to see—then there is *no other way* (cf. 14:6) that leads to the Father above, and people will go to their graves permanently separated from the gift and Giver of eternal life.

**8:27** οὐκ ἔγνωσαν Note again the Evangelist’s comment that they didn’t understand that he was speaking about the Father to them. This type of comment, intended for the benefit of the reader, is typical of the “omniscient author” convention adopted by the Evangelist, who is writing with a post-resurrection point of view.

**8:30** πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτόν The section concludes with the summary statement that “when he had spoken these things many believed (πιστεύω + εἰς) in him.”

#### 4 E Jesus and Abraham (8:31-59)

**8:31** There is a major problem with the context of verse 31: Jesus apparently speaks to those who trusted him in 8:30, yet it becomes apparent that these are not genuine believers in the Johannine sense. They seek to kill Jesus (8:37, 59); Jesus even says their father is Satan (8:44). There is no obvious change in subject: οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι appears in 8:22, 8:31, 8:48. How can this apparent contradiction be reconciled?

This is one passage that is sometimes used to support the view that the πιστεύω + εἰς construction in the Fourth Gospel does not always refer to genuine faith (along with 2:23ff).

However, we need not be forced to this interpretation. Note that “many” (πολλοί) trusted in him (πιστεύω + εἰς) in 8:30.

8:30 does *not* state that these are the same individuals as οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι of 8:22. Certainly whenever Jesus confronted the Jewish authorities it is virtually certain that it did not take place in private. Thus we might expect a large number of bystanders heard his words, and many trusted in him as a result of what they overheard (8:30).

But some of the Jewish authorities also “professed” to trust in him. Note that the Evangelist is careful at this point to *avoid* the πιστεύω + εἰς construction (8:31). The phrase is πιστεύω + dative. While we might draw the superficial conclusion that the group addressed by Jesus in 8:31 is coextensive with the people who trusted Jesus in 8:30, this is not necessarily so.

Sometimes the Evangelist’s use of the two phrases overlap, but not necessarily always. This does not affect conclusions regarding the use of πιστεύω + εἰς.

In what sense did the Jewish leaders trust Jesus? It is perhaps better to translate this “believe” than “trust”. They had believed his messianic claims (8:25) which he had spoken to them from the beginning. But they had insisted on believing Jesus to be the type of Messiah *they* had anticipated—chiefly political. This is suggested by their refusal to admit that anyone had ever enslaved them (8:33) in spite of the Roman occupation (not to mention the Babylonian captivity).

**8:32** γνώσεσθε τὴν ἀλήθειαν But what did Jesus mean by the statement in 8:32, “you shall know the truth”? This is often taken as referring to truth in the philosophical (or absolute) sense, or in the intellectual sense, or even (as the Jews apparently took it) in the political sense. In the context of John’s Gospel (particularly in light of the Prologue) this must refer to truth about the person and work of Jesus. It is saving truth. As L. Morris says, “it is the truth which saves men from the darkness of sin, not that which saves them from the darkness of error (though there is a sense in which men in Christ are delivered from gross error).”<sup>89</sup>

**Note:** For the Evangelist, the contrast between light and darkness is not epistemological, it is moral—the moral choice between good and evil (cf. 3:19-21 again).

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<sup>89</sup> Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 457.

**8:33** σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ ἐσμεν The Jewish leaders claimed kinship with Abraham as the basis for their privileged position. Note the irony of σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ on the lips of the Jewish authorities, who happen to be addressing the True Seed of Abraham!

**8:34** πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν... “Everyone who practices (present participle) sin is a slave of sin.” Here repeated, continuous action is in view. The one whose lifestyle is characterized by repeated, continuous sin is a slave to sin. That one is not free; sin has enslaved him. To break free from this bondage requires outside (divine) intervention. Although the statement is true at the general level (the person who continually practices a lifestyle of sin is enslaved to sin) the particular sin of the Jewish authorities, repeatedly emphasized in the Fourth Gospel, is the sin of unbelief. The present tense in this instance looks at the continuing refusal on the part of the Jewish leaders to acknowledge who Jesus is, in spite of mounting evidence.

**8:35-37** σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ ἐστε· Compare the discussion in verses 33 ff. of the seed (descendant[s]) of Abraham. This is picked up in verses 37, 39, 40 and 48-59. Given this context we might look for an Old Testament allusion here, and the one that most readily comes to mind is that of Ishmael and Isaac (Gen 21:9) (Compare Gal 4:30 for the similar Pauline thought). The free son, Isaac, remains in the household; while the slave-born son, Ishmael, is driven out. The Jews now claim to be the free sons of Abraham, but in truth they are not, being slaves (not of Abraham but of sin). Hence their status is lost, forfeit.

**8:35** ὁ υἱὸς μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα Who then is the son who remains forever? Jesus, the true σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ and the Son of God.

**8:38** But Jesus does not stop here with the analogy of the son and the slave. Here and in 39-47 Jesus brings out the end of the contrast between himself and the Jews in their lines of descent:

(1) To say that the Jews are descendants of Abraham (spiritually) is *false*; they are seeking to kill a man, Jesus, who has spoken to them the truth he heard from God (40). This Abraham would not have done. Their father is the devil (44).

(2) To say that Jesus is the descendant of Abraham is *true*; but it is inadequate; he is more: his Father is God (42, 47).

(3) As J. N. Sanders (*The Fourth Gospel in the Early Church*) well said, “Conduct is the clue to paternity.” Compare Rom 9:6-9 for similar ideas.

**8:41b** Although the Jewish authorities have not yet caught on to what Jesus is saying about their true father, they realize he is saying it was someone other than God. In effect, they reply: “who are you to talk about paternity? *We* (emphatic ἡμεῖς) were not born of fornication! This implies, of course, that Jesus was. Interestingly the Evangelist allows this charge concerning Jesus’ paternity to stand uncorrected—obviously he assumes that the reader knows Jesus’ true genealogy; thus the statement by the Jewish authorities becomes highly ironic.

The Jewish authorities now trace their own ancestry to God.

**8:42** Jesus’ reply to the authorities is: “If you were truly children of God, you would love his Son”.

Note the forcefulness of the word order: ἐξῆλθον, the departure of Jesus from the presence of God (ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ); ἦκω, the arrival of Jesus in the world (cf. Eph 2:17).

οὐδὲ γάρ, κ.τ.λ. Again, we have a reference to Jesus' mission. Note the absence of any self-seeking or self-will on the part of Jesus. It is the Father who sent him, and it is the Father's will he seeks to do.

**8:43** τὴν λαλιάν...τὸν λόγον Jesus asks his opponents, "Why do you not understand my words (λαλιάν,"speech")? Because you are not able to hear my message (λόγον)". In this chapter alone note misunderstandings at verses 19, 22, 25, 33, etc. Of course there is irony here; the Jewish authorities cannot understand the message (λόγον) of the incarnate Word (Λόγος).

**8:44** ὁμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστὲ Note the contrast: the Father of Jesus is God; the father of these Jews is the devil, who

(1) destroys the life God creates (ἀνθρωποκτόνος) and

(2) denies the truth God reveals (ψεύστης). In particular here the articular τὸ ψεύδος and the singular pronoun αὐτοῦ could be a reference to a denial of the person and work of Christ, ultimately propounded by Antichrist himself—compare 1 John 2:21-23.

**8:46** ἐλέγχει This term may mean either "convict" or "expose"; the context involves confrontation and thus strongly supports the meaning "convict" here.

**8:47** Only the one who is from God hears (= "obeys") the words of God. These Jews are not able to hear the words of God that Jesus speaks because they are not from God but from the devil.

**8:48** Σαμαρίτης εἶ σὺ καὶ δαιμόνιον ἔχεις It is not clear what is meant by the charge. The meaning could be "you are a heretic and are possessed by a demon." Note that the dual charge gets one reply (8:49). Perhaps the phrases were interchangeable: Simon Magus (Acts 8:14-24) and in later traditions Dositheus, the two Samaritans who claimed to be sons of God, were regarded as mad, that is, possessed by demons.

The charge of being demon-possessed is levelled at Jesus in 7:20, 8:48 (here), 8:52, and 10:20.

**8:49** Jesus' reply to the charge is this: the claims Jesus makes for himself are not demented, but mere obedience to his Father. "You fail to give me, as the Son of the Father, the honor due him."

**8:51** Those who keep Jesus' words will not see death because they have already passed from death to life (compare 5:24). In Johannine theology eternal life begins in the present rather than in the world to come.

**8:52** Again the Jews take Jesus' words literally rather than figuratively (i.e., spiritually) and are convinced that he is demon-possessed. This is a further occurrence of the misunderstood statement in the Fourth Gospel.

**8:53** μὴ σὺ μείζων εἶ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἰβραάμ This question expects a negative answer, like the question of the Samaritan woman (4:12). It is ironic, because John's readers know that the true answer is the reverse of the answer presumed by the Jewish authorities.

**8:54** ἐὰν ἐγὼ δοξάσω ἑμαυτόν... In answer to the last question of 8:53 (τίνα σεαυτὸν ποιεῖς), once more Jesus' opponents invert the truth: Jesus does not make himself someone, he empties himself of all personal dignity and emphasizes his obedience to the Father and dependence on him.

**8:56** Ἀβραὰμ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ἠγαλλιάσατο ἵνα ἴδῃ τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν ἐμὴν What is the meaning of Jesus' statement that the patriarch Abraham 'saw' his day and rejoiced? The use of past tenses would seem to refer to something that occurred during the patriarch's lifetime. *Genesis Rabbah* 44:25ff, (cf. 59:6) states that Rabbi Akiba, in a debate with Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai, held that Abraham had been shown not this world only but the world to come (this would include the days of the Messiah). More realistically, I would suggest Gen 22:13-15 lies behind Jesus' words. This passage, known to rabbis as the *Akedah* ("Binding"), tells of Abraham finding the ram which will replace his son Isaac on the altar of sacrifice—an occasion of certain rejoicing. Especially note the reference to the וַיִּשְׂחַק אַבְרָהָם in Gen 22:15.

**8:57** Ἀβραὰμ ἑώρακας This is an instance of misunderstanding again.

**8:58** πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί The meaning of Jesus' statement is: "Before Abraham came into existence I, the "I AM," eternally was, am now, and shall be." Here is an explicit claim to deity, consistent with the Johannine force of ἐγὼ εἰμί in its fullest (non-predicated) sense. Although each occurrence of the phrase in the Fourth Gospel needs to be examined individually in context to see if an association with Exod 3:14 is present, it seems clear that such is the case at this point—note the response of the Jewish authorities in the following verse.

**8:59** The significance of Jesus' words finally comes home to the Jewish authorities, and they undertake to stone him. This clearly shows that they understood Jesus' words as a claim to deity, although they did not accept the claim. They were not able to stone Jesus, of course, since no one could touch him before his hour had come.

## Chapter 9

### OUTLINE:

#### [3 A The Book of the Seven Signs (2:1 - 12:50)]

#### [2 B Selected highlights from the later part of Jesus' public ministry: conflict and controversy (5:1-10:42)]

#### 6 C The sixth Sign, in Jerusalem: the healing of the man born blind (9:1-41)

##### 1 D The miraculous healing (9:1-7)

##### 2 D The response by neighbors and acquaintances (9:8-12)

##### 3 D The investigation by the Pharisees (9:13-34)

##### 4 D Jesus leads the man born blind to spiritual sight (faith); the Pharisees remain in their spiritual blindness (9:35-41)

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### DETAILED EXEGETICAL NOTES:

#### 6 C The sixth Sign, in Jerusalem: the healing of the man born blind (9:1-41)

*Introduction:* The opening words of chapter 9, καὶ παράγων, convey only the vaguest indication of the circumstances. Since there is no break with chapter 8, Jesus is presumably still in Jerusalem, and presumably *not* still in the Temple area. The events of chapter 9 fall somewhere between the Feast of Tabernacles (7:2) and the Feast of the Dedication (10:22).

But in the Evangelist's narrative the connection exists—the incident recorded in chapter 9 (along with the ensuing debates with the Pharisees) serves as a real-life illustration of the claim Jesus made in 8:12, "I am the Light of the world". This is in fact the probable theological motivation behind the juxtaposition of these two incidents in the narrative. The second serves as an illustration of the first, and as a concrete example of the victory of light over darkness.

(**Note:** This is Jesus' first explicit claim to be the light in the Gospel of John, although the light/darkness motif was introduced in the Prologue (1:4-5) and mentioned in 3:19-21.)

The contextual link between chapter 9 and 8:12 (as well as 3:19-21) occurs in Jesus' statement in 9:5: "When I am in the world, I am the light of the world".

C. K. Barrett summarizes the chapter this way:

This...chapter expresses perhaps more vividly and completely than any other John's conception of the work of Christ. On the one hand, he is the giver of benefits to a

humanity which apart from him is in a state of complete hopelessness: it was never heard that one should open the eyes of a man born blind (v. 32). The illumination is not presented as primarily intellectual (as in some of the Hermetic tractates) but as the direct bestowal of life or salvation (and thus it is comparable with the gift of living water (4.10, 7.37 f.) and of the bread of life (6.27)). On the other hand, Jesus does not come into a world full of men aware of their own need. Many have their own inadequate lights (e.g. the Old Testament, 5.39 f.) which they are too proud to relinquish for the true light which now shines. The effect of the true light is to blind them, since they wilfully close their eyes to it. Their sin abides precisely because they are so confident of their righteousness.<sup>90</sup>

At the same time, chapter 9 provides an introduction for Jesus' teaching about the Good Shepherd in chapter 10, where a sharp contrast is made between the good shepherd who gives his life for his sheep and the religious leaders of the day who are nothing but thieves and hirelings and abandon the flock when danger threatens.

One other thing which we should point out about the miracle recorded in chapter 9 is its **messianic significance**. In the OT it is God himself who is associated with the giving of sight to the blind (Exod 4:11, Ps 146:8). In a number of passages in Isaiah (29:18, 35:5, 42:7) it is considered to be a messianic activity:

**Isa 29:17,18**—"Is it not yet just a little while before Lebanon will be turned into a fertile field, and the fertile field will be considered as a forest? And **on that day** the deaf shall hear words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness **the eyes of the blind shall see...**"

**Isa 35:4-5**—"Say to those with anxious heart, 'Take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance; the recompense of God will come, but **he will save you.**' **Then the eyes of the blind will be opened,** and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped."

**Isa 42:6,7**—"I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, and I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations, **to open blind eyes,** to bring out prisoners from the dungeon, and **those who dwell in darkness** from the prison."

It is in fulfillment of these prophecies that Jesus gives sight to the blind. As the Light of the world he has defeated the darkness (cf. 1:5). Thus the miracle recorded here has significance for John as one of the seven "sign-miracles" which he employs to point to Jesus' identity and messiahship. Because light and darkness is such an important theme in the Fourth Gospel, the imagery here is particularly significant.

### 1 D The miraculous healing (9:1-7)

**9:1 ἐκ γενετῆς** This particular phrase does not occur anywhere else in the New Testament, but it is good Greek for "**from the hour of birth.**" In light of the placement of this account in the narrative, it appears that the Evangelist wants to suggest that this man is representative of all humanity. The fact is that mankind is **not by nature receptive to the light** (1:5,10). Rather all mankind is spiritually **blind** from birth. It is the role of the Light who comes into the world to enlighten **every man** (cf. 1:9).

**9:2 ῥαββί, τίς ἥμαρτεν** The disciples assume that **sin** (regardless of who committed it) is the cause of the man's blindness. This was a common belief in Judaism; the rabbis used Ezek 18:20 to prove there was no death without sin, and Ps 89:33 to prove there was no punishment without guilt (see the Talmud, *b. Shabbat* 55a, which, although later than the NT, illustrates this). Thus in this case the sin must have been on the part of the man's parents, or during his own foetal existence. *Midrash Rabbah on Song of Songs* 1:41 (another later rabbinic work) states that **when a pregnant woman worships in a heathen temple the fetus also commits idolatry**. This is only one example of how, in rabbinic Jewish thought, an unborn child was capable of sinning.

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<sup>90</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 354.



ἵνα is one of the clearest examples of a ἵνα indicating **result** in the New Testament. No one would have deliberately wanted this to come about.

**9:3** ἵνα here can indicate either **purpose** or **result**. The question is of grammatical interest but not much theological importance, because from our knowledge of Johannine theology we would not suppose in any case that the man's birth and blindness took place **outside the control** (and therefore the **purpose**) of God. (Compare John's use of the impersonal δεῖ with respect to Jesus.) The ultimate idea is **the manifestation of the works of God** (and through them, the Son of God who does them—compare 9:16, 31).

**9:4** ἡμᾶς δεῖ ἐργάζεσθαι τὰ ἔργα τοῦ πέμψαντός με ἕως ἡμέρα ἐστίν Note the **divine necessity** implicit in δεῖ again. Also note the contrast between **day** and **night**, that is, **light** and **darkness**. What does the saying mean? For John, in view of the identification of Jesus as the Light of the world, **night involves the departure of Jesus from the world**. That departure is drawing near—note the connection with 7:34, 8:21 ff. The Light will soon be withdrawn, and darkness will reign again for a time, but not forever (cf. Prologue, 1:5,10).

**9:5** ὅταν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ᾤ, φῶς εἰμι τοῦ κόσμου We may paraphrase: “as long as I am here on my mission of salvation (3:17) upon which I was sent by the Father (τοῦ πέμψαντός, 9:4), I am the Light of the world.”

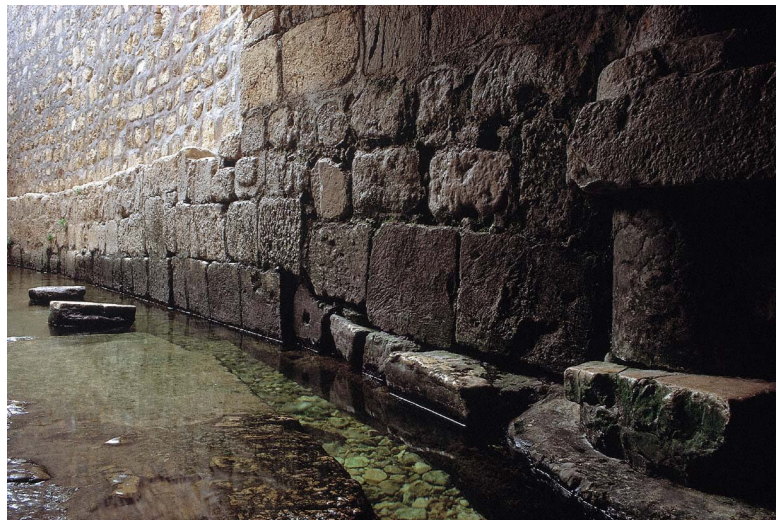
This verse connects the present account with 8:12. Here, seen more clearly than at 8:12, it is obvious what John sees as the **significance** of Jesus' statement. “**Light**” is not a metaphysical definition of the **person** of Jesus but a description of his **effect** upon the κόσμος—**compare 3:19-21** .

**9:6** ἐποίησεν πηλὸν It is impossible to say with certainty **why** he chose to make clay of the spittle. **Spittle** was recognized in ancient times as having medicinal (and even magical) value but this hardly explains Jesus' use here. **To make the clay** was definitely **work** and thus in violation of the Sabbath (cf. 9:19, also the Mishnah, *m. Shabbat* 7:2, where kneading dough or other substances on the Sabbath was prohibited).

**Note:** The textual variant preserved in the Syriac text of Ephraem's commentary on the Diatessaron (“he made eyes from his clay”) probably arose from the interpretation by Irenaeus in *Against Heresies*: “that which the Artificer, the Word, had omitted to form in the womb, he then supplied in public”! This involves taking the clay as an allusion to Gen 2:7, which in my judgment is unlikely.

**9:7** Σιλωάμ (*Siloam*) Why does the Evangelist comment on the **meaning** of the name of the pool? John generally uses ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω synonymously. Here, the significance is: the Father **sent** the Son, and the Son **sends** the man born blind. The name of the pool is applicable to the man, but also to Jesus himself, who was sent from heaven.

The pool's name in Hebrew is שִׁלּוֹחַ (*shiloah*) from שָׁלַח, “to send.” In Gen 49:10 the somewhat obscure שִׁלּוֹחַ (*shiloh*) was interpreted messianically by Jews, and some have seen a lexical connection between the two names (although this is



**The Pool of Siloam**

somewhat dubious). We do know, however, that it was from the **Pool of Siloam** that the water which was poured out at the altar during the Feast of Tabernacles was drawn.<sup>91</sup>

## 2 D The response by neighbors and acquaintances (9:8-12)

**9:8-9** Those who knew the man formerly have difficulty recognizing him as the same individual.

**Note:** The Evangelist's use of ἐγώ εἶμι here means simply "I am he" and obviously has no connection with Jesus' claims. This should be taken as indication that **John has not made the phrase a technical term**. The context of each instance must determine the significance of the phrase and whether an allusion to Exod 3:14 is in view.

**9:10-12** Note that all the man knew about Jesus at this point was his **name**. He didn't even know where Jesus was (9:12). At this point the man seems to have no understanding of **who** Jesus really was, but his insight will grow as the narrative progresses.

## 3 D The investigation by the Pharisees (9:13-34)

**9:13-14** ἦν δὲ σάββατον The Evangelist now inserts a note (9:14) that it was the **Sabbath**, the first indication of this we have been given in the account (cf. 5:9 where a similar note is given). Jesus has again done something which is about to cause controversy—he has performed 'work' on the Sabbath.

**9:15** Note the **subtlety** here: on the surface, **the man is being judged**. But through him, **Jesus is being judged**. But in **reality** (as the discerning reader will realize) **it is ironically the Pharisees themselves who are being judged** by their response to Jesus who is the Light of the world!

**9:16** The initial response to the man's answers: the Pharisees are divided in their opinion. Some assume automatically that **since the Sabbath has been broken, this man Jesus cannot be from God**. But some others are troubled by the facts: how can a man who is a **sinner** perform such miraculous **signs**? This group must have been fairly small, since we hear no more from them in the narrative, and the account proceeds on the premise of the former group, that a man who breaks the Sabbath cannot be from God.

**9:17** The second ὅτι is usually rendered as causal. But Liddell-Scott-Jones offers the meaning "**with regard to the fact that...**" which fits well here.<sup>92</sup>

**προφήτης ἐστίν** —At this point the man, pressed by the Pharisees, admits there was something special about Jesus. But here, since προφήτης is anarthrous and in his initial reply in 9:11-12 the man shows no particular insight into the true identity of Jesus, it is probable that this does not refer to **the prophet** of Deut 18:15, but merely to **an unusual person who is capable of working miracles**. The Pharisees have put this man on the spot, and he feels compelled to say something about Jesus, but he still doesn't have a clear conception of who Jesus is. So he labels him a "**prophet**."

**9:18** Note again the interchangeability of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι (here) with "οἱ Φαρισαῖοι" (9:13). At this point there does not seem to be open hostility; rather the dilemma represented in 9:16 was real: **a man who was**

<sup>91</sup> For further discussion see Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 365.

<sup>92</sup> LSJ 1265 s.v. ὅτι IV.

**good enough to perform the miracle would not have performed it on the Sabbath.** There must therefore be a mistake somewhere, and it was probably in the man's story. So the next step was to interrogate the man's parents. Probably the man was not really born blind in the first place.

**9:19-23** The parents respond to the pressure of the Pharisees quite differently than their son. The parents, fearing that they will be "put out of the synagogue," refuse to have anything to do with the matter. They insist that their son is old enough to speak for himself.

**ἀποσυνάγωγος γένηται** This reference to **excommunication from the Jewish synagogue** for those who had made some sort of confession about Jesus being the Messiah is dismissed as anachronistic by some (e.g., Barrett) and non-historical by others. In later Jewish practice there were at least two forms of excommunication: the **װװװ**, a temporary ban for thirty days, and the **װװװװ**, which was a permanent ban. But whether these applied in NT times is far from certain. We have no substantial evidence for a formal ban on Christians until later than this Gospel could possibly have been written. I suspect we have reference here to some form of excommunication adopted as a contingency to deal with those who were proclaiming Jesus to be the Messiah. If so, we have no other record of the procedure than here. It was probably local, limited to the area around Jerusalem.

**9:24** Deciding that their interrogation of the man's parents was fruitless, the Pharisees switch back to the man himself.

**δὸς δόξαν τῷ θεῷ** —As often noted (cf. Josh 7:19) this is equivalent to "Admit the truth."

Technically, the Jews were correct, there was no doubt that Jesus had transgressed their law, and was a "sinner". Whether they were correctly interpreting that law was entirely another matter. But the emphatic **ἡμεῖς** shows their self-assurance: they know they are right. We should not miss another example of irony here: the Jewish religious leaders, who thought of themselves as **enlightened**, are trying to pressure the man who was **born blind** into denying his certainty that he had received **light** (sight)!

**9:25** But the man born blind, an admirably tenacious sort, won't give up the other side of the dilemma. **It is beyond question that he had received sight at the hands of Jesus.**

**9:26-29** When pressed even further, the man sticks to his story. The Jews are reduced to **mocking** him (v. 28), and the argument on their part becomes completely *ad hominem* (v. 34).

But the significant thing here is the question the man asks of his accusers: **μη̄ καὶ ὑμεῖς θέλετε αὐτοῦ μαθηταῖ** The expected answer of a question asked with **μη̄** is "no," but the key word here is **καί**: by the way he asks the question the man betrays that **he already numbers himself among Jesus' followers.**

#### **4 D Jesus leads the man born blind to spiritual sight (faith); the Pharisees remain in their spiritual blindness (9:35-41)**

**9:35** The story is not over yet. The **Light has shone** and it has created **division** between **those who come to it and those who shrink back** (compare especially **3:19-21**). The Jews have thrown out the man (and thus have also rejected Jesus); however, the man displays admirable tenacity when he refuses to deny the light.

But the man who was healed has not yet understood the full significance of what has taken place. Jesus, as he must, takes the **initiative** in finding the man.

Note the emphatic pronoun **σὺ** (verse 35): Jesus is interested in the man's belief, having seen the disbelief of the Pharisees. "You saw what **they** think; now what do **you** think?"

**9:38** After Jesus' statement of verse 37 the man's response is extremely significant: **he worshipped Jesus**. In the Johannine context the word connotes its full sense: this was **something due God alone**. Note that Jesus does not prevent him. The verb **προσκυνέω** is used in John 4:20-25 of worshipping God, and again with the same sense in 12:20. This is the only place in the Gospel of John where anyone is said to have worshipped **Jesus** using this term. As such, it forms the climax of the entire story of the man born blind.<sup>93</sup>

**9:39-41** Jesus now summarizes: for **judgment** he has come. There is a contradiction, but only a superficial one, with 3:17. Jesus' **mission** is to save the world. He did not come with the **mission** of condemning it. But (as **3:19-21** goes on to explain, as well as the examples of 8:1-11 and here) by the very fact of the **Light coming into the world**, judgment is provoked. As men respond, so they are judged. The presence of the **Light** necessitates a choice—to come to it or to shrink back—and this choice **is** one's judgment.

Jesus' words recall Isaiah's: the **blind receive sight** (Isa 29:18, 35:5, 42:7, 42:18) while the **seeing are blinded** (6:10, 42:20).

The blind man received sight **physically**; this led him to see **spiritually** as well. But the Pharisees, who **claimed** to possess spiritual sight, are **spiritually blinded**. The reader might recall Jesus' words to Nicodemus in 3:10, "Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?"

In other words, to receive Jesus is to receive the Light of the world, to reject him is to reject the light, close one's eyes, and become **blind**. This is the **dire sin** of which Jesus had warned before (8:21-24). **The blindness of such people is incurable since they have rejected the only cure that exists.**

**Summary:** R. Brown (AB 29, 376-77) sums up chapter 9 as follows:

The internal construction of the story shows consummate artistry; no other story in the Gospel is so closely knit. We have here Johannine dramatic skill at its best. ...Before narrating the miracle, the evangelist is careful to have Jesus point out the meaning of the sign as an instance of **light** coming into **darkness**. This is a story of how a man who sat in **darkness** was brought to see the **light**, not only physically but spiritually. On the other hand, it is also a tale of how those who thought they saw (the Pharisees) were **blinding themselves to the light** and **plunging into darkness**. The story starts in vs. 1 with a blind man who will gain his sight; it ends in vs. 41 with the Pharisees who have become spiritually blind.

The care with which the evangelist has drawn his portraits of increasing insight and hardening blindness is masterful. **Three times** the former blind man, who is truly gaining knowledge, humbly confesses his ignorance (12, 25, 36). **Three times** the Pharisees, who are really plunging deeper into abysmal ignorance of Jesus, make confident statements

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<sup>93</sup> Some significant early witnesses (ⱱ75 ⋈\* W et pauci it<sup>b,(l)</sup> sa<sup>ms</sup> ac<sup>2</sup> mf) lack the words, "He said, 'Lord, I believe,' and he worshiped him. Jesus said," (vv. 38-39a). The omission may have been an accidental error of sight on the part of a copyist (both vv. 37 and 39 begin with "Jesus said to him"). The inclusion of the words may have been motivated by use of the passage in liturgy (see Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 375), since the verb **προσκυνέω** (*proskunew*, "I worship") is used in John 4:20-25 of worshipping God, and again in 12:20 with the same sense. Even if these words are not authentic, such an omission does not lessen John's high christology (cf. 1:1; 5:18-23; 14:6-10; 20:28) nor the implicit worship of him by Thomas (20:28). Nevertheless, it is difficult to decide whether the words are original or not. The NET Bible retains the words but places them in square brackets to indicate the degree of doubt as to whether they should be included in the original text of John.

about what they know of him (16, 24, 29). The blind man emerges from these pages in John as one of the most attractive figures of the Gospels. Although the Sabbath setting and the accusation against Jesus create a similarity between this miracle and the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda in ch. v, this clever and voluble blind man is quite different from the obtuse and unimaginative paralytic of ch. v... . The blind man's confutation of the Pharisees in verses 24-34 is one of the most cleverly written dialogues in the NT.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 376-77.

## Chapter 10

### OUTLINE:

**[3 A The Book of the Seven Signs (2:1 - 12:50)]**

**[2 B Selected highlights from the later part of Jesus' public ministry: conflict and controversy (5:1 -10:42)]**

**7 C Jesus as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (10:1-21)**

**1 D The parable of the sheepfold (10:1-6)**

**2 D Jesus as the Door of the sheep (10:7-10)**

**3 D Jesus as the Good Shepherd (10:11-18)**

**4 D The response of the Jewish leaders (10:19-21)**

**8 C Jesus at the Feast of the Dedication in Jerusalem (10:22-39)**

**1 D Jesus as the Messiah (10:22-31)**

**2 D Jesus as the Son of God (10:32-39)**

**9 C Conclusion to Jesus' public ministry: Jesus withdraws across the Jordan to the place where his ministry began (10:40-42)**

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## DETAILED EXEGETICAL NOTES:

### 7 C Jesus as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (10:1-21)

#### *The Place of 10:1-21 in the Narrative:*

The location of this story has often disturbed commentators who fail to see links with what precedes and what follows. Recall that we mentioned at 9:1 that Jesus was still in **Jerusalem** in the 2-month period between the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of the Dedication (10:22). It seems very clear that 10:1-21 is to be related to the **preceding**: no new audience is mentioned or suggested; it seems evident (10:1) that Jesus is continuing his remarks to the Pharisees with whom he had been speaking in 9:41. This is further indicated by 10:21, where some in the audience even recall the healing of the blind man, while others repeat the charges of demon-possession that have been made of Jesus in chapter 8.

It is true that there is an abrupt **change of topic** between chapters 9 and 10, from "**light**" to "**sheep and shepherd**," but although the imagery has changed, 10:1-21 is still a polemic against the Jewish leaders, who are to be identified with the "**thieves and robbers**" of 10:1 and following. In fact, chapter 9 has provided a perfect illustration of these very actions: instead of properly caring for the man born blind, the Pharisees have **thrown him out** (9:34). Jesus, in contrast, as the good Shepherd, found him (9:35) and led him to safe pasture. Just like the sheep in 10:4-5 will not follow a stranger because they do not know his voice, so the man born blind refused to listen to the Pharisees, but turned to Jesus, an illustration of the sheep who recognize the voice of their true master.

But **what about the relationship of 10:1-21 to the incidents at the Feast of the Dedication following (10:22-31)?** Note that 10:26-27, spoken by Jesus at the Feast of the Dedication, recall this section. Also, the Feast itself recalled the **rededication of the Temple** by Judas Maccabeus in 165-164 BC when he drove out the Syrians who had for 3 years profaned the temple by erecting the idol of *Baal Shamem* in it. Some of the high priests of that time, like Jason and Menelaus, had betrayed their office by contributing to the Syrian desecration. These, too, may have been suggested by Jesus' references in 10:1-21 to thieves, robbers, and hirelings who are false shepherds. Finally (and most importantly) however, 10:1-21 serves as a bridge between the Feast of Tabernacles (and its aftermath) and the Feast of the Dedication because of the **messianic allusions** involved. The basic proclamations Jesus makes concerning himself at the Feast of Dedication concern his identity as **Messiah** (10:22-31) and **Son of God** (10:32-39).

Aileen Guilding argued that all the regular readings on the Sabbath nearest Dedication were concerned with the theme of the **sheep** and the **shepherds**.<sup>95</sup> In particular Ezek 34, which is the most important Old

<sup>95</sup> Aileen Guilding, *The Fourth Gospel and Jewish Worship: A Study of the Relation of St. John's Gospel to the Ancient Jewish Lectionary System* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960). Later scholars have called her work into question, however, due to problems dating the materials of the Jewish lectionary.

Testament background passage, served as the reading from the prophets at the time of Dedication in the second year of the cycle.

Thus 10:1-21 has a 2-fold function: as a bridge it looks **back** to chapters 8-9; at the same time it looks **forward** to 10:22-39.

### 1 D The Parable of the sheepfold (10:1-6)

**10:1** J. H. Bernard maintained that the double **ἀμὴν** never introduces a totally new topic in the Fourth Gospel.<sup>96</sup> In both 3:11 and 5:19 it represents only a new stage in Jesus' comments on the same topic already under discussion. This would support our view (discussed above) that the parable and following discussion serves as a bridge between the events of chapters 8-9 and the events at the Feast of the Dedication in chapter 10.

**εἰς τὴν αὐλήν** There were several types of sheepfolds in use in Palestine. Here it seems to be a **courtyard** in front of a house (note the word αὐλή), surrounded by a stone **wall** (often topped with briars for protection).

**10:2-3 διὰ τῆς θύρας** If a man does not enter the sheepfold by the **door** but climbs over the wall, it is clear that he does not belong there. He is a thief and a robber. But the man who enters by the door is recognized as the shepherd, and he does have a right to be there. The doorkeeper opens the door for him because he is known to him. There have been many attempts to identify the doorkeeper, none of which are convincing. It seems more likely that there are some details in this parable which are there for the sake of the story, necessary as parts of the overall picture but without symbolic significance.

Palestinian shepherds, according to Bernard, frequently have pet names for their favorite sheep based on individual characteristics: "Long-ears," "White nose," "Blackie," etc. The sheep recognize their shepherd's voice and respond to his call.

**10:4** Bernard and others have suggested that there is **more than one flock in the fold**, and there would be a process of separation where each shepherd calls out his own flock. This may also be suggested by the mention of a doorkeeper in verse 3 since only the larger sheepfolds would have such a guard. But the Gospel of John never mentions a distinction among the sheep in this fold; in fact (10:16) there are **other** sheep which are to be brought in, but they are to be **one** flock and **one** shepherd.

**10:5 ἀλλοτρίω** When a **stranger** attempts to take the sheep out, however, they will not follow him because they do not recognize his voice. In fact, the opposite is true; the sheep run away from him.

**10:6** Note that the ones to whom the parable is addressed, presumably "the Jews"—the Pharisees of 9:40—do not understand it. Jesus responds with further explanation, first of himself as the **Door** (10:7-10), then as the good **Shepherd** (10:11-18).

**παροιμίαν** John uses this word again in 16:25, 29. This term does not occur in the synoptic gospels, where παραβολή is used. Nevertheless it is similar, denoting a short narrative with figurative or symbolic meaning. Jesus' opponents do not understand it (providing another example of the Fourth Evangelist's use

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<sup>96</sup> J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John* (ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1928), 2:348.



of misunderstanding as a literary technique). But how could Jesus' opponents understand, when they were not of his sheep (cf. 10:26)?

### *Primary Old Testament passages related to the parable:*

(1) The prayer of Moses in **Num 27:15-18**: “May the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation, who will **go out and come in before them**, and who will **lead them out and bring them in**, that the congregation of the LORD may not be **like sheep which have no shepherd**.” So the LORD said to Moses, ‘Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him...’“. Note the significance of the name **Joshua**.

(2) **Ezek 34:1-31**. Note especially verses 2-5, 8-10, and **11-16**. Verses 11-12 state: “For thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, **I myself** will search for my sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for my sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day.’“ The messianic context in Ezekiel chapter 35 talks about the **rebirth of national Israel** and chapter 36 the **new covenant**.

### **2 D Jesus as the Door of the sheep (10:7-10)**

In response to the lack of understanding by his audience (verse 6) Jesus goes on. His remarks do not constitute an explanation of what he has previously said so much as an **expansion**.

**10:7** ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ θύρα τῶν προβάτων The statement is unusual; we would have expected “I am the Shepherd of the sheep.” Verse 9 clarifies the meaning: the point is that Jesus is the **door** through which the sheep pass as they go in and out of the fold.

**10:8** πάντες ὅσοι ἦλθον πρὸ ἐμοῦ The reference to “**all who go before me**” is a little difficult to understand, since the first and most obvious reference would be to Jesus' predecessors, the prophets and saints of the OT. But Jesus could hardly be saying this of them; his attitude toward such people is clear in John 5:46 and 8:56. The use of the present tense εἰσίν is an important clue to the most likely meaning: **the religious leaders of Jesus' own day**, who came in the **darkness** before the **Light**.

**10:9** ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ θύρα Here Jesus clarifies the meaning of his statement in verse 7. He is the **Door** through which the sheep pass in and out of the fold and find pasture. But if Jesus is the Door, we may ask, what does the “going forth and entering in” of the sheep refer to? Note the last phrase, νομὴν εὐρήσει— “they shall find pasture”. In **Ezek 34:13-14**, a **millennial** context, “pasture” refers to the mountain heights of Israel after the restoration of the nation. Ezek 34:15 refers to the **rest** of the Kingdom. The implication is that Jesus here alludes to the fact that **he is the means of entry into the Kingdom**. Through him, through his person and work, his sheep will find **sustenance** (nourishment—cf. 21:15-17) and **rest** (in the Kingdom).

**10:10 Note:** Verse 10 has sometimes been taken to imply that there are various levels of experience within “eternal life”; it seems much more likely, however, that what is being emphasized is merely the **abundant and overflowing quality** of the life which Jesus came to give. Cf. Rom 5:20.

### **3 D Jesus as the Good Shepherd (10:11-18)**

**10:11 Here, the figure changes.** Jesus, who in verses 7-10 was the **Door**, now becomes the **Shepherd**. (Compare Ezek 34:11-12, where **Yahweh himself** is the Shepherd.) At the very mildest Jesus' statement

would constitute a **messianic claim**; at the strongest, it would amount to a claim to **identification with God**—that is, a claim to deity.

Jesus speaks openly of his vicarious death **twice** in this section (10:11,15). Note the contrast: the thief takes the **life of the sheep** (10:10), the good Shepherd **lays down his own life for the sheep**. Jesus is not speaking generally here, but **specifically**: he has his own substitutionary death on the cross in view. For a literal shepherd with a literal flock, the shepherd's death would have spelled disaster for the sheep; **in this instance it spells life for them** (Compare the worthless shepherd of Zech 11:17, by contrast).

**10:12-13** ὁ μισθωτός Jesus contrasts the behavior of the shepherd with that of the **hired servant**. This is one who is simply paid to do a job; he has no other interest in the sheep and is certainly not about to risk his life for them. When they are threatened, he simply runs away.

Note the unusual use of the negative οὐκ with the participle, which seems to add emphasis (the normal negative with participles is μή).

**10:14-15** Here Jesus identifies himself again as the **Good Shepherd**, but he also compares the relationship and mutual knowledge he shares with the sheep to the relationship and intimate knowledge he shares with his heavenly Father.

**10:16** ἄλλα πρόβατα ἔχω This statement almost certainly refers to **Gentiles**. Jesus has sheep in the fold who are **Jewish**; there are other sheep which, while not of the same fold, belong to him also. This recalls the mission of the Son in 3:16-17, which was to save **the world**—not just the nation of Israel. Such an emphasis would seem particularly appropriate to the Evangelist if he is writing to a non-Palestinian and primarily non-Jewish audience.

“**There shall be one flock, one shepherd**” For John, the unity of the one flock is not a given unity, naturally existing, but a unity created **in and by** Jesus. It is the end result of what Jesus has done (cf. Eph 2:11-22).

**10:17** The Father loves the Son because the Son is completely **obedient** to the will of the Father, even up to the point of death. The use of ἵνα here should probably go as far as purpose. Jesus' death, as the ἵνα-clause indicates, is completed by **resurrection** (ἵνα πάλιν λάβω αὐτήν). This reflects the Johannine cycle of **suffering, death, resurrection, and glorification** which is viewed comprehensively as **Jesus' return to the Father**.

**10:18** οὐδεὶς αἴρει αὐτήν ἀπ' ἑμοῦ Jesus explains that his death is **voluntary**. He could not possibly be harmed if it were not [compare 19:11]. Authority to lay down his life and take it up again was given to him by the Father [compare ἄνωθεν, 19:11].

#### **4 D The response of the Jewish leaders (10:19-21)**

**10:19-21** In 10:6 the response of the listeners was lack of understanding. This time it is **division** (σχίσμα). These verses recall previous reactions to Jesus where there was division (7:12, 7:25-27, 7:31, 7:40-41, and 9:16) as well as the charge of demon-possession (7:20, 8:48). Also, it provides a **transition** to Jesus' teaching at the Feast of the Dedication, where again he will meet opposition to his messianic claims. Once more, we see the **judgment** precipitated by the presence of the **Light** (cf. 3:19-21).

## 8 C Jesus at the Feast of the Dedication in Jerusalem (10:22-39)

### *Background and Setting:*

As mentioned before in the discussion of the parable of the sheepfold and the discourse on the Good Shepherd in relation to the following material, the Feast of the Dedication (or **Hanukkah**) was a feast celebrating annually the Maccabean victories of 165-164 BC when Judas Maccabeus drove out the Syrians, rebuilt the altar, and rededicated the Temple on 25 Chislev (1 Macc. 4:41-61). From a historical standpoint, it was the last great deliverance the Jewish people had experienced, and it came at a time when least expected. Josephus ends his account of the institution of the festival with the following statement: “And from that time to the present we observe this festival, which we call the festival of Lights, giving this name to it, I think, from the fact that the right to worship appeared to us at a time when we hardly dared hope for it.”<sup>97</sup>

### *The Place in the Narrative:*

As far as the Gospel of John is concerned, we are nearing the end of Jesus’ public ministry; the final scenes are being played out. In them we see the ultimate and final rejection by the Jewish authorities of Jesus and all that he stood for. There is a two-fold emphasis in 10:22-39 on the revelation of who Jesus is: he is **Messiah** (22-31) and **Son of God** (32-39).

### 1 D Jesus as the Messiah (10:22-31)

**10:22 τὰ ἐγκαίνια** The Greek name for the Feast literally means “renewal” and was used to translate *Hanukkah* which means “dedication.” The Greek noun, with its related verbs, was the standard term used in the LXX for the consecration of the altar of the Tabernacle (Num 7:10-11), the altar of the Temple of Solomon (1 Kgs 8:63; 2 Chr 7:5), and the altar of the Second Temple (Ezra 6:16). The word is thus connected with **the consecration of all the houses of God in the history of the nation of Israel.**

**χειμῶν ἦν** The feast began on 25 Chislev, in November-December of our modern calendar.

**10:23 ἐν τῇ στοᾷ τοῦ Σολομῶνος** This was a **portico** or **colonnade**. It was a roofed structure supported on columns or pillars, and would have given shelter from the wind in the winter weather.

**10:24 τὴν ψυχὴν ἡμῶν ἀρῆεις** The primary point this section is found in 10:24: the Jewish authorities gathered around Jesus and said to him, “How long (literally) will you ‘take away our life’? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.” The use of the phrase τὴν ψυχὴν ἡμῶν ἀρῆεις meaning “to keep in suspense” is not well attested, although it certainly fits the context here. In modern Greek the phrase means “to annoy, bother.” Hoskyns suggests that John here may intend a word-play on the literal sense (which the speakers, of course, are not aware of)—although Jesus **lays down his own life** for those who follow him (cf. 10:11,15) He also provokes judgment and thus **takes away the life** of those who reject him.

The basic question the Jewish authorities were asking concerned **whether Jesus was indeed the Messiah.**

**10:25** Note Jesus’ response to their question in two parts in this and the following verse: 10:25 (here) “**I told you** and you do not believe.”

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<sup>97</sup> *Antiquities* 12. 316-325.

**10:26** Jesus' reply continues: "the **reason** you do not believe is because you are not of my sheep" (cf. 10:14).

**10:27** The sheep hear (ἀκούω, in the sense of "obey") their shepherd's voice: this aspect of the sheep-shepherd relationship has already been stressed in 10:3, 4, 5, and 16.

**10:28** ζῶην αἰώνιον The gift which Jesus gives to those who are his own is "**eternal life**". This is not a new concept for the reader of the Gospel, who will have encountered it before. Note the strength of the negative in the phrase οὐ μὴ ἀπόλωνται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα—"they shall **not possibly** perish for ever". We are not told **who** it is who might try to snatch the believer out of Jesus' hand, but the implication is that **the forces of evil** are actively at work: ἀρπάζω has the idea of grabbing or snatching violently.<sup>98</sup> The believer has Jesus' assurance, however, that this attempt will not succeed.

**10:29** ἐκ τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ πατρὸς Now the image changes slightly: the flock is no longer in Jesus' hand, but **in the Father's hand**. This gives added assurance, because the Father is greater still. Those in the flock are eternally secure, kept by the Father's power.

**10:30-31** Jesus' identification with the Father in verse 30 seems to be understood clearly by the Jewish authorities—note their response in verse 31: they took up stones **to stone him for blasphemy**. They had done this once before, in 8:59.

ἐν ἑσμεν This is a significant assertion with trinitarian implications. ἐν is neuter, not masculine, so the assertion is not that Jesus and the Father are one **person**, but one '**thing**'. Identity of the two persons is not being asserted, but **essential unity** (unity of essence) is.

Jesus' identification with the Father also provides the transition to the second phase of Jesus' self-revelation at the feast (see the following section).

## 2 D Jesus as the Son of God (10:32-39)

**10:32** διὰ ποῖον αὐτῶν ἔργον ἐμὲ λιθάζετε In the past (5:17-18, 8:58-59) statements of Jesus intimately associating himself with God have provoked the Jewish authorities to attempt to kill him. Jesus here answers [ἀπεκρίθη] their attempt by recalling the works he has been doing; however, their objection is not to his works but to his blasphemous words (verse 33).

**10:33** περὶ βλασφημίας This is the first time the official charge of **blasphemy** is voiced openly in the Gospel (although it was implicit in 8:59).

**10:34** The problem in this verse concerns Jesus' quote from **Psalm 82:6**. It is important to look at the Old Testament context: the whole line reads, "**I say, you are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you.**" Jesus will pick up on the term "**sons of the most high**" in 10:36, where he refers to himself as the **Son of God**. The psalm was understood in rabbinic circles as an attack on unjust judges, who, though they have been given the title "gods" because of their quasi-divine function of exercising judgment, they will die just like other men.

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<sup>98</sup> BDAG 134 s.v. ἀρπάζω.

What is the argument here? It is often thought to be as follows: if it was an Old Testament practice to refer to men like the judges as gods, and not blasphemy, why do the Jews object when this term is applied to Jesus? This really doesn't seem to fit, since if that were the case, **Jesus would not be making any claim for "divinity" for himself over and above any other man.** It seems more likely that this is a case of **arguing from the lesser to the greater.** The reason the Old Testament judges could be called gods is because they were **vehicles of the word of God** (cf. 10:35). But granting that premise, Jesus deserves much more than they to be called God. He is the **Word incarnate**, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world to save the world (10:36). In light of the prologue to the Gospel of John, it seems this interpretation would have been most natural for the Evangelist. If it is permissible to call men "gods" because they were the vehicles of the word of God, how much more permissible is it to use the word "god" of him who **is the Word of God?** This type of argument from the lesser to the greater was a common form of rabbinic argument.

**10:35 οὐ δύναται λυθῆναι ἡ γραφή** Not only does Jesus appeal to the OT to defend himself against the charge of blasphemy, but he also adds that the Scripture cannot be "broken". In this context he does not explain precisely what is meant by "broken," but it is not too hard to determine. Jesus' argument depends upon the **exact word** used in the context of Ps 82:6. If any other word for "judge" had been used in the psalm, his argument would have been meaningless. Since the Scriptures **do** use this word in Psalm 82:6, the argument is binding, because they cannot be "broken" in the sense of being shown to be in error. This is an important text in the discussion of the **inerrancy** of the Bible.

**10:36 ἀπέστειλεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον** Once again Jesus refers to **his divinely-appointed mission:** it was the Father who "set him apart" (ἡγάσεν) and "sent" him into the world (compare 3:16-17).

**10:37-38 κὰν ἔμοι μὴ πιστεύητε, τοῖς ἔργοις πιστεύετε** Jesus says that in the final analysis, the **works he does** should indicate whether he is truly from the Father. If the authorities cannot believe in him, it would be better to believe in the works he does than not to believe at all. Note the double use of γινώσκω in the phrase ἴνα γνῶτε καὶ γινώσκητε: the aorist is best taken as ingressive, with the meaning "come to know," while the present is progressive—"and keep on knowing."

**10:39 Ἐζήτουν οὖν αὐτὸν πάλιν πιάσαι** Once again we have the response: the Jewish authorities sought to **seize** Jesus. It is not clear whether they simply sought to "arrest" him, or were renewing their attempt to stone him (cf. 10:31) by seizing him and taking him out to be stoned. In either event, Jesus eluded their grasp. Nor is it clear whether we are to understand Jesus' escape as a miracle. If so, the text gives little indication and even less description. What is clear is that until his "**hour**" comes, Jesus is completely safe from the hands of men: his enemies are powerless to touch him until it is permitted them.

#### **9 C Conclusion to Jesus' public ministry: Jesus withdraws across the Jordan to the place where his ministry began (10:40-42)**

**10:40 εἰς τὸν πόπον ὅπου ἦν Ἰωάννης τὸ πρῶτον βαπτίζων** This refers to **Bethany** which was **beyond the Jordan River** (cf. 1:28). The author of the Gospel goes to some length to describe the location as the same one where John was baptizing at the first. These verses deliberately form an **inclusion** with the opening scene of Jesus' ministry in 1:19-29.

**10:41 πάντα δὲ ὅσα εἶπεν Ἰωάννης περὶ τούτου ἀληθὴ ἦν** The statement is interesting in light of the fact that Jesus had not yet **shown** himself to be the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world (1:20) or **baptized** with the Holy Spirit (1:33) since the Spirit was not yet (7:39). Possibly this is still **proleptic**, looking ahead to the hour of Jesus' glory which will soon begin. More likely, the things the multitude

remembers that John bore witness to should be limited to Jesus' **messianic claims**. That is, John testified that "after me comes one whose sandal-thong I am not worthy to untie (1:27)." Note again how John's role was entirely one of **bearing witness to who Jesus is**.

**10:42** καὶ πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν ἐκεῖ Note the response. Many of **these people** (in contrast to the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem) **trusted in him** there. After coming to his **own** and being **rejected** (cf. 1:11) Jesus returns once more "across the Jordan" and ironically **finds the faith that was lacking in his own country**.

Furthermore, for the Evangelist, this section serves to show **how completely Jesus controlled his own destiny**. He would not be killed by mob violence; when he would return to Jerusalem he would do so of his own accord and with the certain knowledge he was going up to Jerusalem to die. It was not until the final Passover that the **hour** appointed by the Father would come.

# Chapter 11

## OUTLINE:

### [3 A The Book of the Seven Signs (2:1 - 12:50)]

#### 3 B Days of Preparation: Jesus advances toward the hour of death and glory (11:1-12:36)

##### 1 C The seventh Sign, in Bethany: Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead (11:1-44)

###### 1 D Jesus hears of and responds to the sickness of his friend Lazarus (11:1-10)

###### 2 D Jesus reveals that Lazarus has died (11:11-16)

###### 3 D Jesus and his disciples arrive at Bethany (11:17-19)

###### 4 D Martha comes out to meet Jesus: Jesus reveals himself as the Resurrection and the Life (11:20-27)

###### 5 D Mary comes out to meet Jesus: Jesus weeps (11:28-37)

###### 6 D The miracle at the tomb: Lazarus is raised from the dead (11:38-44)

##### 2 C The response: the Sanhedrin condemns Jesus to death (11:45-57)

###### 1 D The meeting of the Jewish leaders (11:45-48)

###### 2 D Caiaphas addresses the Sanhedrin (11:49-53)

###### 3 D Jesus withdraws to Ephraim (11:54)

###### 4 D The crowds in Jerusalem seek Jesus (11:55-57)

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## DETAILED EXEGETICAL NOTES:

### 3 B Days of Preparation: Jesus advances toward the hour of death and glory (11:1-12:36)

#### 1 C The seventh Sign, in Bethany: Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead (11:1-44)

**Introduction:** R. Brown gives an excellent summary of the significance of the miracle in chapter 11 for the Evangelist and its place in the structure of the narrative:

We suggest that here we have another instance of the pedagogical genius of the Fourth Gospel. The Synoptic Gospels present Jesus' condemnation as a reaction to his whole career and to the many things that he had said and done. In the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, we are told in Luke xix 37 that, much to the discontent of the Pharisees, the people were praising Jesus because "of all the mighty miracles they had seen." The Fourth Gospel is not satisfied with such a generalization. It is neither sufficiently dramatic nor clear-cut to say that all Jesus' miracles led to enthusiasm on the part of some and hate on the part of others. And so the writer has chosen to take *one miracle* and to make this the primary representative of all the mighty miracles of which Luke speaks. With a superb sense of development he has chosen a miracle in which Jesus raises a dead man. All Jesus' miracles are signs of what he is and what he has come to give man, but in none of them does the sign more closely approach the reality than in the gift of life. The physical life that Jesus gives to Lazarus is still not in the realm of the life from above, but it is so close to that realm that it may be said to conclude the ministry of signs and inaugurate the ministry of glory. Thus, the raising of Lazarus provides an ideal transition, the last sign in the Book of Signs leading into the Book of Glory. Moreover, the suggestion that the supreme miracle of giving life to man leads to the death of Jesus offers a dramatic paradox worthy of summing up Jesus' career. And finally, if a pattern of sevens had any influence..., the addition of the Lazarus miracle gave the seventh sign to the Book of Signs.<sup>99</sup>

Note also another effect that the sequence of the sign miracles chosen by the Evangelist has produced. In 11:37 the Jews recall the healing of the man born blind (chapter 9). There are some interesting parallels between the two miracles. In chapter 9 the healing of the blind man was a dramatization of Jesus as the Light of the world (8:12); the raising of Lazarus in chapter 11 is a dramatization of Jesus as the Life (cf. 14:6). Note that these two themes, **light** and **life**, were both used in the Prologue (1:4) to describe **the relationship of the Word to men**. Just as the preincarnate Word gave physical life and light to men in creation (1:2), so Jesus as the Word incarnate gives **spiritual** life and light to men who come to him.

#### 1 D Jesus hears of and responds to the sickness of his friend Lazarus (11:1-10)

**11:1** There is no specific time note at the beginning of 11:1. I suspect the incident described here took place some time **before** the final Passion week, which would help to explain its absence from the synoptic accounts (which deal primarily with the Passion week). Since Peter is not mentioned between John 6:68 and 13:6, some have suggested that he remained behind in Galilee and did not arrive in Jerusalem until just

<sup>99</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 429-30 [emphasis his].



before the week of the Passion. Peter's absence from the scene may also be suggested by the observation that Thomas, not Peter, serves as spokesman for the Twelve in 11:16. If Peter were absent, it may further explain the absence of this miracle from the synoptic accounts, especially if we take Mark to be the personal reminiscences of Peter, and Matthew to be dependent on Mark at this point. This still does not explain the absence of the miracle from Luke's account, but Luke is probably giving us selected episodes like John rather than a full account. I do not think this answers all the questions over the absence of the raising of Lazarus from the synoptic gospels, but it helps.

**Λάζαρος ἀπὸ Βηθανίας** R. Brown thinks **Lazarus** is probably symbolic of all Christians, that is, all whom Jesus love (11:3, also 11:11).<sup>100</sup> He points out that 3 John 15 uses this title (οἱ φίλοι) for Christians in general. (This does not mean that he denies the basic historicity of the account, however, as some do who take the account to be fictional.) There may be something to be said for this idea. In fact, **from the beginning the author of the Gospel points out the symbolic significance of the miracle**—to insure that none of his readers will miss it. Just as he pointed out in 9:3 that the **blindness** of the man was for the purpose of having God's works revealed in him, so in 11:4 Jesus points out that Lazarus' **sickness** is for God's glory; God's glory will be manifested **only when the Son is glorified** (note how this prepares for the Book of Glory, chapters 13 -20). Note the Johannine wordplays: The reason the sickness is not to end in **death** (11:9) is because Jesus will give **life**, that is, physical life as a **sign** of eternal life. The miracle will **glorify** Jesus, not so much in that people will praise him for it, but in the sense that it will lead to his **death**, which is a stage in his **glorification** (12:23-24; 17:1). To the extent that Jesus gives **eternal life** to all whom he loves, i.e., Christians, Lazarus can be seen as representative in that Jesus gives him physical life.

**11:2 ἦν δὲ Μαριὰμ ἡ ἀλείψασα τὸν κύριον μύρω ...** It is a bit surprising that John here identifies Mary as "the one who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair," since this event is not mentioned until later in 12:3. Many see this "proleptic" reference as indication that John expected his readers to be familiar with the story already, and go on to assume that in general the Evangelist in writing the Fourth Gospel assumed his readers were familiar with the other three. Whether the Evangelist assumed actual familiarity with the synoptic gospels or not, it is probable that he did assume some familiarity with Mary's anointing activity.

**11:3 ἀπέστειλαν οὖν αἱ ἀδελφαὶ** The sisters sent word to Jesus that their brother was ill. They do not specifically ask him to come, perhaps because they realize the danger involved in coming so close to Jerusalem at this time (cf. 11:8). But it seems clear that this is a request for some sort of help, even though it is not specific.

**11:4 αὕτη ἡ ἀσθένεια οὐκ ἔστιν πρὸς θάνατον** Here Jesus plainly states the **purpose** of Lazarus' illness in the plan of God: the end of the matter would not be **death**, but the **glorification** of the Son. Johannine double-meanings abound here: **death** will not be the end of the matter, but Lazarus is going to **die**; and ultimately his death and resurrection will lead to **the death and resurrection of the Son of God** (11:45-53). And furthermore, the **glorification** of the Son is not praise that comes to him for the miracle, but **his death, resurrection, and return to the Father** which the miracle precipitates (note the response of the Jewish authorities in 11:47-53).

**11:6 τότε μὲν ἔμεινεν ἐν ᾧ ἦν τόπω δύο ἡμέρας** We are told that when Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick, he **remained** in the place where he was **two days**. Some have suggested that the **οὖν** indicates that Jesus deliberately waited for Lazarus to die. But we are told in 11:39 that when Jesus had reached Bethany,

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<sup>100</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 431.

Lazarus had been dead for **four days**. So he may have been dead already by the time the messengers reached Jesus. It may be that Jesus waited longer so that it would be unmistakably clear that a miraculous resurrection, rather than simply a resuscitation, had taken place; but there is nothing in the narrative that implies this was the reason for the delay. Perhaps it is better to understand this simply as an indication that Jesus' timing was always deliberate and in the will of God.

**11:7-8** ἔπειτα μετὰ τοῦτο These words put a bit more emphasis on the time delay discussed in the preceding verse.

**11:9-10** τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου τούτου βλέπει "...if anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees **the light of this world**." What is the "**light of this world**" (11:9)? Literally, of course, it is the sun, but the reader of the Gospel would recall **8:12** and understand Jesus' symbolic reference to **himself as the Light of the world**. There is only a limited time left (δώδεκα ὥραί εἰσιν τῆς ἡμέρας) until the Light will be withdrawn, and the one who walks at **night** will **stumble** (compare the departure of Judas by night in 13:30).

Several things in verses 7-10 (also verse 16) tie the story to the preceding chapters, particularly the attempts to **stone** Jesus (compare especially 10:31), and his taking refuge by **leaving Judea and going across the Jordan**. Compare 11:9-10 with 9:4, where there is the same emphasis on taking advantage of the **light** while it is available.

## **2 D Jesus reveals that Lazarus has died (11:11-16)**

**11:11** The disciples misunderstand Jesus' reference to Lazarus' **sleep** (11:11) and to a journey to wake him (that is, raise him from death). As usual, the **misunderstanding** leads Jesus to explain "**plainly**" what he means (11:14) and to give more of the theological significance of what is taking place (11:15). The explanation is the same as 11:4, but in verse 4 the relation of the miracle to God and to the Son of God is emphasized (**glory** to God and the **glorification** of the Son) while in verse 15 the relation of the miracle to the disciples is pointed out: **belief**. Note how this relates to the miracle at Cana (2:11): "This beginning of signs Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his **glory**, and his disciples **believed** in him. Thus, within the structure of the narrative there is an **inclusion**: the first sign and the seventh sign are related.

**11:14** Λάζαρος ἀπέθανεν Jesus' open statement to the disciples about the death of Lazarus is best understood as another example (compare 2:25 and 4:18) of his supernatural knowledge, since the messengers only brought word that Lazarus was sick.

**11:15** καὶ χαίρω Jesus' statement that he "**rejoices**" over the death of his friend still comes as something of a shock, as it must certainly have been for his disciples. Yet he rejoices on their behalf, because he knows that the outcome of Lazarus' **death**, the miracle which he is going to perform, will become the occasion of the disciples' **belief**.

ἵνα πιστεύσητε Why does Jesus make this statement? **It seems necessary to understand the disciples' belief here in some developmental sense, because there are numerous references to the disciples' faith previous to this in the Gospel**, notably 2:11. Their concept of **who Jesus is** is continually being expanded and challenged; they are undergoing spiritual growth; the climax is reached in the confession of Thomas in 20:28, which involves not just messiahship or kingship, but Jesus' deity.

**11:16** ἄγωμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς ἵνα ἀποθάνωμεν μετ’ αὐτοῦ One gets the impression from Thomas’ statement that he is something of a pessimist resigned to his fate. And yet his dedicated loyalty to Jesus and his determination to accompany him at all costs is commendable. Nor is the contrast between this statement and the confession of Thomas in 20:28, which forms the climax of the entire Fourth Gospel, to be overlooked; certainly Thomas’ concept of **who Jesus is** has changed drastically between 11:16 and 20:28.

### **3 D Jesus and his disciples arrive at Bethany (11:17-19)**

**11:17** Ἐλθὼν οὖν ὁ Ἰησοῦς There is no description of the journey itself. We are simply told that when Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb **four days**. He was buried some time before this but probably not very long (cf. Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:6,10 who were buried immediately after they died, as was the common practice of the time). There is some later evidence (early 3rd century) of a rabbinic belief that **the soul hovered near the body of the deceased for three days**, hoping to be able to return to the body. But on the fourth day it saw the beginning of decomposition and finally departed (*Leviticus Rabbah* 18.1). If this belief were as old as the first century, it might suggest the significance of the four days: after this time, resurrection would be a first-order miracle, an unequivocal demonstration of the power of God. It is not certain if the tradition is this early, but it is suggestive. Certainly the Evangelist does not appear to attach any symbolic significance to the four days in the narrative.

**11:18** ὡς ἀπὸ σταδίων δεκαπέντε Here we find a typical Johannine note to the reader: the location of this Bethany is given precisely as **15 stadia** from Jerusalem. This would be about 1.75 miles (2.7 km).

**11:19** πολλοὶ δὲ ἐκ τῶν Ἰουδαίων The nearness of Bethany to Jerusalem also explains why “many of the Jews” came out to console Mary and Martha upon their bereavement. At least some of these would have probably been opponents of Jesus.<sup>101</sup>

### **4 D Martha comes out to meet Jesus: Jesus reveals himself as the Resurrection and the Life (11:20-27)**

**11:20** Μάρθα...Μαριάμ Notice the difference in the response of the sisters: **Martha** comes out to meet Jesus, while **Mary** stays in the house. It is similar to the incident in Luke 10:38-42. Here again we find Martha occupied with the responsibilities of hospitality; she is the one who greets Jesus.

**11:21** κύριε, εἰ ἦς ὧδε Martha’s statement to Jesus is a **commendable expression of faith**: she believed that had Jesus been there, he would have healed her brother. We are not told whether Martha knew of the two days Jesus delayed in coming, but she would have known approximately how long it took for the message to reach him. Still, there appears to be no indication of **rebuke** in the statement, but only genuine **regret**.

**11:22** ἀλλὰ καὶ νῦν οἶδα ὅτι ὅσα ἂν αἰτήσῃ τὸν θεὸν δώσει σοι ὁ θεός This statement by Martha presents something of a dilemma, because she seems to be suggesting here (implicitly at least) the possibility of a resurrection for her brother. Martha’s statement in 11:39, “Lord, he already smells (i.e., his body is already decomposing) because he has been dead four days,” makes it clear that she had no idea that a resurrection was still possible. How then are we to take the words in 11:22? It seems best to take them as

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<sup>101</sup> See however R. G. Bratcher, “The Jews’ in the Gospel of John,” *Bible Translator* 26 (1975): 401-409.

**a confession of Martha's continuing faith in Jesus even though he was not there in time to help her brother.** She means, in effect, "Even though you weren't here in time to help, I still believe that God grants your requests."

**11:23** Jesus' remark to Martha that Lazarus would rise again is another example of the **misunderstood statement**. Martha apparently took it as a customary statement of consolation, and joins Jesus in professing belief in the general resurrection of the body at the end of the age. However, as Jesus goes on to point out in 25-26, **Martha's general understanding of the resurrection at the last day is inadequate for the present situation**, for the gift of **life** that conquers death is a **present** reality to Jesus. This is consistent with the Evangelist's perspective on **eternal life** in the Fourth Gospel: it is not only a **future** reality, but something to be experienced in the **present** as well. It is also consistent with the so-called 'realized eschatology' of the Fourth Gospel.

**11:25a** ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωὴ Note in particular: first Jesus says "I am the **resurrection**"—this is the direct answer to Martha's profession of 24 and (while not **excluding** the final resurrection) tells her of the **present** realization of what she expects on the last day. Second, Jesus says, "I am the **life**" (cf. 14:6). It is probably not too much to see significance in the use of **ἐγώ εἰμι** here (cf. 6:35, 8:58). Jesus does not simply say that he **gives** resurrection and life, but that he **is** resurrection and life. **In him the life of the age to come, after the resurrection, is already present and available.**

**11:25b-26** These two statements are **expanded** in 25b and 26. Jesus is the **resurrection** in the sense that whoever believes in him, although he dies **physically**, will live spiritually. Jesus is the **life** in the sense that whoever **lives spiritually**—whoever has received the gift of life through belief in Jesus—will never **die** a **spiritual** death.

**Note:** Some have understood 25-26 otherwise, notably Bultmann, Lagrange, and Hoskyns:

**11:25** Belief, despite physical death, will lead to eternal life;

**11:26** **physical life** combined with belief will not be subject to death.

More accurately, though, in light of John's consistent use of **ζωή** to refer to **spiritual** life:

**11:25** The one who believes, even if he dies physically, will live spiritually.

**11:26** The one who believes, who is **alive spiritually**, will never **die spiritually**.

The second interpretation is held by Bernard, Dodd, Brown, and Carson. This seems to fit much better in the framework of Johannine thought. As such, it is **a powerful statement of the believer's security** (cf. 10:28).

**11:27** κύριε, ἐγὼ πεπίστευκα ... Here we have Martha's response: She has believed Jesus to be the **Messiah**, the **Son of God**. Probably we are to understand this to be a **significant** but still **inadequate** concept of **who Jesus is**: it is good for a beginning, but Martha doesn't realize the full force of "the One who comes into the world"—that in the person of Jesus the incarnate Word, the **Life** and **Light** have **already** come into the world (cf. Prologue 1:4,9). **Eternal life**, instead of being something remote in the world to come, is **here now** in the person of Jesus! So Jesus, to make Martha (and the others) understand that he has the power **to give life now**, will act out a drama of the gift of life by raising Lazarus. He is not rejecting her traditional titles, but demonstrating the deeper truth that lies behind them concerning his own person and work.

## **5 D Mary comes out to meet Jesus: Jesus weeps (11:28-37)**

**11:30** οὐπω δὲ ἐληλύθει The Evangelist here gives us another parenthetical note: Jesus had not yet **entered** the village of Bethany proper, but was still in the place where Martha went out to meet him (11:20) while the preceding conversation took place.

**11:31** When Mary heard that Jesus was calling for her, she got up and left quickly (**ταχέως**). The Jews who were with her consoling her, thinking that she was going to the tomb to weep there, followed her. The effect of their action was to ensure that the following miracle had many witnesses and would therefore be publicized widely.

**11:32** Note the similarity of Mary's words to Jesus to those of her sister (11:21).

**11:33** ἐνεβριμήσατο τῷ πνεύματι How do we explain the **reaction** of Jesus? The verb **ἐνεβριμήσατο** (repeated in 11:38) indicates a strong display of emotion, somewhat difficult to translate—"shuddered, moved with the deepest emotions." In the LXX, the verb and its cognates are used to describe a display of **indignation** (Dan 11:30, for example—see also Mark 14:5). Jesus displayed this reaction to the **afflicted** in Mark 1:43, Matt 9:30. Was he **angry** at the afflicted? No, but **he was angry because he found himself face-to-face with the manifestations of Satan's kingdom of evil.**<sup>102</sup> Here, the realm of Satan was represented by **death**.

καὶ ἐτάραξεν ἑαυτὸν The verb **τάρασσω** (11:33) also occurs in similar contexts to that of **ἐνεβριμήσατο**. John uses it in 14:1 and 27 to describe the reaction of the disciples to the imminent death of Jesus, and in 13:21 the verb describes how Jesus reacted to the thought of being betrayed by Judas, into whose heart **Satan** had entered.

**11:35** ἐδάκρυσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς The word used here for Jesus' weeping is different from the one used to describe the weeping of Mary and the Jews in verse 33 which indicated loud wailing and cries of lament. This word simply means "to shed tears" and has more the idea of quiet grief. **But why did Jesus do this?** Not out of grief for Lazarus, since he was about to be raised to life again. Morris (558) thinks it is grief over the misconception of those round about. But it seems to me that in the context the weeping is triggered by the thought of Lazarus in the tomb: this was not personal grief over the loss of a friend (since Lazarus was about to be restored to life) but **grief over the effects of sin, death, and the realm of Satan**. It was a natural complement to the previous emotional expression of anger (11:33). It is also possible that Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus because he knew there was also a tomb for himself ahead.

#### **6 D The miracle at the tomb: Lazarus is raised from the dead (11:38-44)**

**Introduction:** Note how the stage has been set: 11:36 recalls that Lazarus is the **beloved**. 11:37 calls to mind the healing of the **blind man**—and the theme of Jesus as the **Light** of the world. 11:40 ties together the theme of **belief** which Jesus spoke to Martha about in 11:25-26, and the theme of **glory** from 11:4. This mention of **glory** gives an **inclusion** within the chapter. But it also forms (together with 11:4) an **inclusion with the Cana miracle** (2:11) bringing together the first and last of the **signs**. And it serves as a transition to the Book of Glory, the second half of the Gospel.

After his prayer of thanksgiving, Jesus calls Lazarus out. Characteristically, John's account is brief (compare the account of the wedding feast at Cana, 2:1-11); the details of the miracle itself are unimportant.

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<sup>102</sup> For those familiar with the works of C. S. Lewis, it is instructive to compare Ransom's reaction to the mutilated animals in chapter 9 of *Perelandra* (New York: Macmillan, 1944), 108-111.

What **is** important is that Jesus has given **physical life** as a sign of his power to give **eternal life** in the **present** (realized eschatology) and **as a promise that on the last day he will raise the dead** (final eschatology).

Compare chapter 11 with 5:26-30 —

<b>11:17</b>	Lazarus is in the <b>tomb</b>
<b>11:43</b>	Jesus cries out in a loud <b>voice</b> , “Lazarus, <b>come out!</b> ”
<b>11:25</b>	“I am the <b>resurrection</b> , and the <b>life</b> .”

**5:28-29** - “An hour is coming when those who are **in the tombs** will hear his **voice** and will **come forth**, those who have done what is right to a **resurrection of life**...”

Although there is a sense in which the raising of Lazarus could be seen as the fulfillment of 5:28-29, it is important to remember that the miracle in chapter 11 is but a **preliminary and limited demonstration of that which will be universally true in the future**. To conceive of Johannine ‘realized eschatology’ in such a way that chapter 11 represents the **total** fulfillment of 5:28-29 is to misunderstand the significance of the miracle as a proleptic ‘sign-miracle’ designed to point out **who Jesus is** by demonstrating that he can do what only God can do.

**11:39** ἦδη ὄξει, τεταρτάτος γάρ ἐστιν Although all the details of the miracle itself are not given, those details which are mentioned are important. The statement made by Martha is extremely significant for our understanding of what actually took place. We are left in no doubt that Lazarus had really died, because the decomposition of his body had already begun to take place since he had been dead for **four days**.

**11:40** ὄψη τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ Note Jesus’ reference to the revelation of **the glory of God**. For him (as for the Evangelist) this is the primary purpose of the miracle. Compare 11:4—it appears that this statement recalls the words of Jesus to the messengers who brought word of Lazarus’ illness. There Jesus linked the glory of God with **the glorification of the Son** which the miracle is going to precipitate (see notes on 11:4).

**11:41-42** ἤκουσάς μου It appears that when Jesus prays audibly, he refers to a prayer already made and answered (εὐχαριστῶ σοι ὅτι ἤκουσάς μου). The audible prayer of thanksgiving is for the benefit of the bystanders—in order that they might **believe that God had sent him**.

**11:43** φωνῆ μεγάλης ἐκραύγασεν The purpose of the “loud voice” was probably to ensure that all in the crowd could hear—compare the purpose of the prayer of thanksgiving in verses 41-42.

**11:44** ἐξηλθεν ὁ τεθνηκώς Many have wondered how Lazarus got out of the tomb if he was still bound with the graveclothes. The Evangelist does not tell us, and with a miracle of this magnitude, it is of no importance that we know. If Lazarus’ decomposing body was brought back to life by the power of God, then it could certainly have been moved out of the tomb by that same power. Others have suggested that the legs were bound separately, which would remove the difficulty, but the account gives no indication of this. What may be of more significance for the Evangelist is the comparison which this picture naturally evokes with the resurrection of Jesus, where the graveclothes **stayed in the tomb** neatly folded (20:6-7). Jesus, unlike Lazarus, **would never have need of graveclothes again**.

## **2 C The Response: The Sanhedrin condemns Jesus to death (11:45-57)**

### **1 D The meeting of the Jewish leaders (11:45-48)**

**11:45-46** The **response** to the miracle is mixed. We are told that many of those Jews who witnessed it **believed** in Jesus (ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτόν). But others went to the Pharisees and reported the things which Jesus had done. In the context there can be no doubt that they did so out of hostility to Jesus. The result (οὖν, vs. 47) was a gathering of the chief priests and Pharisees to consider what to do about Jesus.

**11:47 συνέδριον** The **συνέδριον** which they gathered was probably an informal meeting rather than the official **Sanhedrin**. This is the only occurrence of the word συνέδριον in the Gospel of John, and the only anarthrous singular use in the NT. There are other plural anarthrous uses which have the general meaning “councils”. The fact that Caiaphas in 11:49 is referred to as “a certain one of them” supports the unofficial nature of the meeting; in the official Sanhedrin he, being high priest that year, would have presided over the assembly. Thus it appears that an informal council was called to discuss what to do about Jesus and his activities.

**11:48** The consensus of those meeting together was that if Jesus were left alone, “all will put their trust in him” (πιστεύουσιν εἰς αὐτόν). This was probably an exaggeration on their part, but it indicates the Jewish leaders’ fear. And if a majority of the general populace were caught up in a frenzy of messianic expectations, the Romans would not stand idly by.

## 2 D Caiaphas addresses the Sanhedrin (11:49-53)

**11:49-50** ἀρχιερεὺς ὧν τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ ἐκείνου Some (e.g. Bultmann) have held that the reference to Caiaphas being high priest “**that year**” betrays a lack of knowledge about Palestinian customs, since the high priest was appointed for life, and the statement in this verse sounds as if he were appointed to a yearly term of office. But the genitive phrase τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ ἐκείνου is better understood as a genitive of the time “during which” he was high priest.<sup>103</sup> It was during that fateful year that Caiaphas was the high priest.

συμφέρει ὑμῖν ἵνα εἷς ἄνθρωπος ἀποθάνῃ ... Caiaphas’ words constitute a case of “**unconscious prophecy**” —as the author’s explanatory note in 11:51-52 points out. In his own mind Caiaphas was giving voice to a common-sense statement of political expediency. Yet he was unconsciously echoing a saying of Jesus himself (cf. Mark 10:45). Caiaphas was right; the death of Jesus **would** save the nation from destruction. Yet Caiaphas could not suspect that Jesus would die, not in place of the political nation Israel, but on behalf of the true people of God; and he would save them not from physical destruction but from eternal destruction (cf. John 3:16). The understanding of Caiaphas’ words in a sense Caiaphas could not possibly have imagined at the time he uttered them serves as a clear example of the way in which the Evangelist understands that words and actions can be invested retrospectively with a meaning not consciously intended or understood by those present at the time.

**11:52** οὐχ ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἔθνους μόνον The Evangelist in his comment expands the prophecy to include the Gentiles as well—this is a confirmation that the Fourth Gospel was directed, at least partly, to a **Gentile** audience. There are echoes of Pauline concepts here (particularly Eph 2:11-22) in the stress on the unity of Jew and Gentile (συναγάγη εἰς ἓν).

**11:53** ἐβουλεύσαντο The parenthetical remark by the Evangelist concludes at the end of 11:52. Now the Evangelist returns to the decision of the council: from that day forward they sought for ways and means of putting Jesus to death, as a way to resolve the problem.

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<sup>103</sup> See BDF § 186.2.

### 3 D Jesus withdraws to Ephraim (11:54)

**11:54** εἰς Ἐφραὶμ λεγομένην πόλιν There is no certain identification of the location to which Jesus withdrew in response to the decision of the Jewish authorities. Many have suggested the present town of Et-Taiyibeh, identified with ancient **Ophrah** (Joshua 18:23) or **Ephron** (Joshua 15:9). If so, this would be 12-15 miles (19-24 km) northeast of Jerusalem. Jesus apparently did spend some time there (ἔμεινεν) with his disciples.

### 4 D The crowds in Jerusalem seek Jesus (11:55-57)

These verses form the transition to the scenes of chapter 12.

**11:55** τὸ πάσχα τῶν Ἰουδαίων This is the final passover of Jesus' ministry. We are now on the eve of the week of the Passion. Some time prior to the feast itself, Jerusalem would be crowded with pilgrims from the surrounding districts (ἐκ τῆς χώρας) who had come to **purify themselves** ceremonially before the feast.

**11:56** οὐ μὴ ἔλθῃ εἰς τὴν ἑορτήν Questions asked with **μὴ** anticipate a negative response, while the Greek double negative **οὐ μὴ** indicates strong negation. The force of the question here is, "Surely he [Jesus] won't be so foolish as to come to the Feast, will he?"

**11:57** δεδώκεισαν...ἐντολὰς The danger for Jesus is underscored by **the order which the religious authorities had given**: anyone who knew anything of where Jesus was must report it, so that he might be arrested.

We are now practically at the close of Jesus' public ministry. Many of the events of the Passion week took place privately, in the Upper Room, and are recorded in chapters 13-17. The transition to these events takes place in chapter 12.



## Chapter 12

### OUTLINE:

#### [3 A The Book of the Seven Signs (2:1 - 12:50)]

##### [3 B Days of Preparation: Jesus advances toward the hour of death and glory (11:1-12:36)]

##### 3 C Final preparations for the hour of death and glory (12:1-36)

###### 1 D Jesus is anointed for burial at Bethany (12:1-8)

###### 2 D The Jewish leaders plot to kill Lazarus (12:9-11)

###### 3 D Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (12:12-19)

###### 4 D The coming of the Gentiles (Greeks) marks the coming of the hour (12:20-26)

###### 5 D Jesus predicts his upcoming death by crucifixion (12:27-36)

##### 4 B Conclusion to the Book of Signs (12:37-50)

###### 1 C The response to Jesus by his own people (12:37-43)

###### 2 C Jesus summarizes his mission and message (12:44-50)

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## DETAILED EXEGETICAL Notes:

### 3 C Final preparations for the hour of death and glory (12:1-36)

#### *A Note on the Place in the Narrative of the Incidents in Chapter 12:*

We have now come to the end of Jesus' public ministry. Notice the temporal reference in 12:1: we are told that Jesus came to Bethany, where he had raised Lazarus from the dead, "**6 days before the Passover.**" Of the final events of that public ministry before the Passion week, the Evangelist has selected **three**: (1) Mary's anointing of Jesus at Bethany, (2) the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and (3) the coming of some Greeks to visit Jesus. Each has significance within the narrative. The 'Book of Signs' then concludes with an appeal to Isaiah 53 to explain why some did not believe, followed by a summarization of the mission and message of Jesus in his own words. The events of chapters 13-17 which follow are not public but private, intended for Jesus' disciples.

#### 1 D Jesus is anointed for burial at Bethany (12:1-8)

12:1-2 πρὸ ἕξ ἡμερῶν τοῦ πάσχα The scene is set in these two verses. Jesus, **acting precisely according to his own timetable**, which is to say according to the Father's timetable, arrives back in Bethany **six days prior to the Passover**. This village of Bethany was located about 1.75 miles (2.75 km) from Jerusalem (cf. 11:18), near enough to bring Jesus into danger from the religious authorities there. But Jesus knew exactly what he was doing.

ὅπου ἦν Λάζαρος We are reminded in verse 1 that Bethany was the village of **Lazarus**, whom Jesus raised from the dead—recalling the last of the seven Signs, the miraculous resurrection of ch. 11. This is significant because 11:47-53 gave the response of the religious authorities in Jerusalem to this miracle: **unbelief** leading to the plan to put Jesus to death. In contrast to their response, we have the response of Mary's **faith** in 12:1-8. **Both events** foreshadow Jesus' death in the week ahead.

We find Martha in her usual capacity of **servicing** in 12:2 (cf. Luke 10:40). Lazarus is present as well.

12:3 λίτραν μύρου νάρδου πιστικῆς This is actually when the incident mentioned previously at 11:2 takes place. **Μύρον** is usually made of **myrrh** (from whence the word derives) but here John uses it in the sense of **ointment** or **perfume**, since he tells us this μύρον was made of **nard**. Nard or spikenard is a **fragrant oil** from the root and spike of the nard plant of northern India. The adjective **πιστικῆς** is difficult with regard to its exact meaning; some have taken it to derive from πίστις and relate to the purity of the oil of nard. More probably it is something like a brand name, "pistic nard," the exact significance of which has not been discovered.

The Evangelist also goes out of his way to indicate the quantity and the cost. **Λίτρα** is a Latin loan-word, *libra*, the word for a Roman pound, which weighed 12 ounces (327.45 grams). The word also occurs in rabbinic literature. **This was a large amount of ointment.**

ἔξέμαξεν ταῖς θριξίν αὐτῆς τοὺς πόδας τοῦ Ἰησοῦ Wiping Jesus' feet with her hair is probably indicative of Mary's abject humility and personal commitment. It would be a bit unusual for the oil to be wiped off, but we are given no explanation for this by the Evangelist.

ἡ δὲ οἰκία ἐπληρώθη ἐκ τῆς ὀσμῆς τοῦ μύρου With a note characteristic of someone who was there and remembered, the Evangelist adds that **the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil**. In the later rabbinic literature, *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 7.1.1 states "The fragrance of good oil is diffused from the

bedroom to the dining hall, but a good name is diffused from one end of the world to the other.” If such a saying were known in the first century, this might be John’s way of indicating that Mary’s act of devotion would be spoken of throughout the entire world (compare Mark 14:9).

**12:4-5** ὁ μέλλων αὐτὸν παραδιδόναι· We are told in verse 4 that Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus’ disciples, was **the one who was about to betray him**. Again we see John using the “omniscient author” convention, writing from the perspective of one who knows the end from the beginning, and having access to information that he as an eyewitness on the scene would not have known.

**τριακοσίων δηναρίων** The cost of the oil was **300 denarii**—very costly indeed! This amounted to almost a year’s wages for an average laborer of the time.

**12:6** κλέπτης ἦν The Evangelist now gives a parenthetical note concerning **the character of Judas**. This is one of the indications in the gospels that Judas was of bad character **before** the betrayal of Jesus. John tells us that he was a “**thief**” and had responsibility for the finances of the group. More than being simply a derogatory note about Judas’ character, **the inclusion of this note at this particular point in the narrative may be intended to link the frustrated greed of Judas here with his subsequent decision to betray Jesus for money**. The parallel accounts in Matthew and Mark seem to indicate that after this incident Judas went away immediately and made his deal with the Jewish authorities to deliver up Jesus. Losing out on one source of sordid gain, he immediately went out and set up another.

**12:7-8** εἰς τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ ἐνταφιασμοῦ μου This incident, along with the interwoven references to Judas, forms part of the foreshadowing of the passion narrative to follow in chapters 18-19. Mary’s action in anointing Jesus’ feet is **interpreted by Jesus as preparation for his burial**. In this regard it is interesting that John is careful to point out in verse 3 that it was **Jesus’ feet** that she anointed. Normally one would not anoint the feet of a living person (rather the head—cf. Mk 14:3) but one could anoint the feet of a corpse while preparing it for burial. **Thus Mary performed (unconsciously) a prophetic or symbolic action—one which Jesus understood but which the disciples almost certainly did not at the time**.

## 2 D The Jewish leaders plot to kill Lazarus (12:9-11)

**12:9** ὁ ὄχλος This could be the crowd who witnessed the raising of Lazarus in chapter 11, but more likely includes others who had merely heard about it. The implication is that Lazarus had become something of a celebrity, and those who had heard about the miracle were eager to get a look at him.

**12:10-11** οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς ...πολλοί...τῶν Ἰουδαίων On account of the raising of Lazarus many of “the Jews”—the Evangelist’s usual description for those who were **opposed** to Jesus—were going over to Jesus and **believing in** (ἐπίστευον εἰς) him. This provokes the “high priests” (οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς) to plan drastic action (notice that the **Pharisees** are not mentioned in regard to this particular decision). Not only did they want to put Jesus to death, but they plotted that they might **also** (καί) have Lazarus killed. This plot against Lazarus apparently never got beyond the planning stage, however, since no further mention is made of it by the Evangelist.

## 3 D Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem (12:12-19)

**12:12** Τῇ ἐπαύριον is a typical Johannine note of time; it refers to the previous note in 12:1. When the crowd of pilgrims who were coming to Jerusalem for the passover (cf. 11:55) heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, they hurried out to meet him. By this time Jesus’ reputation was well known.

**12:13 τὰ βᾶία τῶν φοινίκων** The Mosaic law stated (Lev 23:40) that palm branches were to be used to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. Later on they came to be used to celebrate other feasts as well (1 Macc. 13:51, 2 Macc. 10:7).

**ᾠσαννά** in the quotation from Ps 118:25-26 was probably by this time a familiar liturgical expression of **praise**, on the order of “Hail to the king,” although the underlying Aramaic expression (ܐܢ ܥܫܢܢ) and the Hebrew (אנ עשׂנו) meant “O Lord, save us.” As in Mark 11:9 the introductory ᾠσαννά is followed by the words of Ps 118:25, **εὐλογημένος ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου**, although in the Fourth Gospel the Evangelist adds for good measure **καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ**. **In words familiar to every Jew the Evangelist is indicating that at this point every messianic expectation is now at the point of realization.**

It is clear from the words of the Psalm shouted by the crowd that **Jesus is being proclaimed as messianic King.**<sup>104</sup>

**12:14-15 εὐρῶν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὄναριον** The Evangelist does not repeat the detailed accounts of the finding of the donkey recorded in the synoptic gospels. He does, however, see the event as **a fulfillment of Scripture**, which he indicates by quoting Zech 9:9. For the significance of the quotation, see the discussion below of the significance of the triumphal entry in the narrative.

**12:16 ταῦτα οὐκ ἔγνωσαν αὐτοῦ οἱ μαθηταὶ τὸ πρῶτον** Here we have another note by the Evangelist to inform us that Jesus’ disciples did not at first associate the prophecy from Zechariah with the events as they happened. This came with the later (post-resurrection) insight which the Holy Spirit would provide after Jesus’ resurrection and return to the Father. Note the similarity with John 2:22, which according to our understanding follows another allusion to a prophecy in Zechariah (14:21).

**12:17-18 ἐμαρτύρει οὖν ὁ ὄχλος** Now a different segment of the crowd is mentioned. At this point those people from Jerusalem who had been in Bethany mourning the death of Lazarus and had **seen** Jesus perform the miracle speak up, testifying to what they had seen (note the use of μαρτυρέω). The testimony of this group of eyewitnesses appears to provoke further people to go out to meet Jesus as he enters the city. This latter group, referred to as **ὁ ὄχλος** in verse 18, are probably not the **pilgrims** mentioned in verse 12, but **residents of Jerusalem** itself.

**12:19 ἴδε ὁ κόσμος ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ ἀπήλθεν** The **response of the religious authorities** (in this case the **Pharisees**) is one of pessimism. Their statement, while an exaggeration, is warranted by the diverse groups of people who have joined in the multitudes welcoming Jesus at the triumphal entry, as indicated in verses 12, 17, and 18.

### ***The Significance of the Triumphal Entry in the Narrative:***

Note that many of the details given by the synoptic gospels—such as the sending of the disciples to find the donkey—are omitted by John. John does not mention the crowd casting their garments before him, or the casting of the palm-fronds—apparently they just hold them in hand. This suggests, however, the procession at the Feast of Tabernacles where the worshippers carried the *lulabs* as they went up to the temple—a very appropriate (and suggestive) setting!

<sup>104</sup> See E. Lohse, “ᾠσαννα,” *TDNT* 9:682-84.

This leads to the next question: **what does the triumphal entry signify for John?** The coming of Messiah, yes, but not the **nationalistic** Messiah the people expected! It is instructive to look at Zech 9:9-11 (NASB, note that Zech 9:9 is quoted in verse 15):

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!  
Shout [in triumph], O daughter of Jerusalem!  
Behold, your king is coming to you;  
He is just and endowed with salvation,  
Humble, and mounted on a donkey,  
Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.  
And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim,  
And the horse from Jerusalem;  
And the bow of war will be cut off.  
And **he will speak peace to the Gentiles** [or, nations];  
And **his dominion will be from sea to sea,**  
And **from the River to the ends of the earth.**  
As for you also, because of **the blood of [my] covenant with you,**  
I have set your prisoners free from the **waterless** pit.”

Notice that in 9:10 the king who comes proclaims **peace to the Gentiles, and his dominion is from sea to sea.** The next section of chapter 12 (vss. 20-26) deals with **the coming of the Gentiles!** One of the major emphases of John’s Gospel is that Jesus came on a mission of salvation not to the Jewish people only, but to **the entire world (from sea to sea; to the ends of the earth).** Zech 9:11 goes on to relate this to **the blood of the covenant,** which suggests the blood of the **new covenant.** And the prisoners are set free from a **waterless** pit—just as Jesus offers the ‘**living water**’ of the Spirit which flows freely from himself (7:38-39). Recall that the Evangelist has alluded to messianic prophecies in Zechariah before (Zech 14:20-21 with John 2:16) and note that he will do so again (Zech 13:7 with John 16:32, Zech 12:10 with John 19:37).

Finally, compare Rev 7:9-10: “After these things I looked, and behold, **a great multitude,** which no one could count, **from every nation and tribes and peoples and tongues,** standing before the throne and **before the Lamb,** clothed in white robes, and **palm branches in their hands;** and they cry out with a loud voice saying, ‘**Salvation to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.**’”

#### **4 D The coming of the Gentiles (Greeks) marks the coming of the hour (12:20-26)**

John’s use of Zech 9:9 is suggestive in light of this incident which immediately follows and the way Jesus responds to it. According to Zech 9:10, Messiah would proclaim **peace to the Gentiles**—and here they come (representatively, of course). Jesus has said that he would **lay down his life** (10:17) and that he had **other sheep not of the fold** (10:16). The appearance of these Gentiles wishing to see Jesus indicate that it is **time for him to lay down his life**—the **hour** of his glory has come (i.e., his return to the Father through death, resurrection, and exaltation). **This point is so important for the Evangelist that we are never actually told if the Greeks get to see Jesus or not!**

**12:20** Ἕλληνές τινες These **Greeks** who had come up to worship at the feast were probably “**God-fearers**” rather than **proselytes** in the strict sense. Had they been true proselytes, they would probably not have been referred to as Greeks any longer. Many came to worship at the major Jewish festivals without being Jewish proselytes, for example, the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:27, who could not have been a proselyte if he were physically a eunuch.

**12:21 οὗτοι οὖν προσήλθον Φιλίππῳ** These Greeks approached Philip, although it is not clear why they did so. Perhaps they identified with his Greek name (although a number of Jews from border areas had Hellenistic names at this period). By “see” it is clear they meant “speak with,” since anyone could “see” Jesus moving through the crowd. We are not told what they wanted to speak with Jesus about.

**12:22 τῷ Ἀνδρέᾳ** Philip appears to have been uncertain how to handle their request, so he approached Andrew. Together they both spoke to Jesus.

**12:23 ἐλήλυθεν ἡ ὥρα ἵνα δοξασθῇ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου** Jesus’ reply is a bit puzzling. As far as the Evangelist’s account is concerned, Jesus totally ignores these Greeks and makes no further reference to them whatsoever. It appears that his words are addressed to Andrew and Philip, but in fact they must have had a wider audience, including possibly the Greeks who had wished to see him in the first place. The words ἐλήλυθεν ἡ ὥρα recall all the previous references to “**the hour**” throughout the Fourth Gospel (see the notes on 2:4). There is no doubt, in light of the following verse, that Jesus refers to his death here. On his pathway to glorification lies the cross, and it is just ahead.

**12:24 ἔὰν μὴ ὁ κόκκος τοῦ σίτου πεσὼν εἰς τὴν γῆν ἀποθάνῃ** As Augustine stated, “He spoke of himself. He himself was the grain that had to die, and be multiplied; to suffer death through the unbelief of the Jews, and to be multiplied in the faith of many nations.”<sup>105</sup>

**12:25 ὁ φιλῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἀπολλύει αὐτήν ...** Jesus himself is the supreme example of the person who does not “love his own life” but “hates it in this world.” The saying itself has broader application, however, to everyone. Note the use of ἀπολλύει (usually translated “loses”): the person who **loves** his life, seeking to retain it, really **destroys** it. Self-interest and self-preservation are ultimately self-defeating. The harder one tries to live for self, the less of life one really has, until at the end there is nothing left of it at all, and one has nothing to show for it. As C. S. Lewis well stated,

There is no safe investment. To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least to the risk of tragedy, is damnation. The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell.<sup>106</sup>

**12:26 ἔὰν ἐμοί τις διακονῇ, ἐμοὶ ἀκολουθεῖτω** This is really the point of the saying in 12:24-25. The one who **serves** Jesus is the one who gives up his claim to life in the present world out of love for and allegiance to Jesus: to serve Jesus is in effect to “hate” one’s own life. In the latter part of verse 26 Jesus makes it clear that such a person will be **where he is**, participating in his glory, and will receive **honor** from the Father. This is what Jesus’ servants will receive for following him.

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<sup>105</sup> *Homilies on the Gospel of John* 51.9.

<sup>106</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1960), 169.

## 5 D Jesus predicts his upcoming death by crucifixion (12:27-36)

**12:27** σώσον με ἐκ τῆς ὥρας ταύτης We are now told that Jesus' **hour** has come—the hour of his return to the Father through crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension (see 12:23). This will be reiterated in 13:1 and 17:1. Jesus states (employing words similar to those of Ps 6:4) that his soul is troubled. What shall his response to his imminent death be? A prayer to the Father to deliver him from that hour? No, because it is **on account of this very hour that Jesus has come**. His sacrificial death has always remained the primary purpose of his mission into the world. Now, faced with the completion of that mission, shall he ask the Father to spare him from it? The expected answer is no.

**12:28** ἦλθεν οὖν φωνὴ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ In response to Jesus' prayer that the Father glorify his name came **the Voice from heaven**. It was the very Voice of God himself. Why are both the aorist and the future tenses together used for the two occurrences of δοξάζω? Some have suggested a reference to Jesus' baptism by John, or to the transfiguration. In both of these instances the synoptics record a voice from heaven, as here. The problem is that John records neither event. I would suggest the aorist refers to **the entire earthly ministry of Jesus, including the coming of the "hour," which has just taken place**. Everything Jesus did and said while on earth **glorified the Father**—cf. the Prologue, 1:14. The **future glory** will be accomplished by the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus—that part of his earthly ministry which still lies ahead at this point.

**12:31a** νῦν κρίσις ἐστὶν τοῦ κόσμου τούτου What is the **judgment of this world** which Jesus says is at hand? Compare **3:19-21**. As it is the response of men to the Light which has come into the world that **provokes judgment**, so the actions of men in crucifying him who was that Light **constitute** the judgment of this world. What they are about to do to him will **confirm their judgment**.

**12:31b** νῦν ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου ἐκβληθήσεται ἔξω This must refer to Satan's loss of **authority** over this world. This must be **in principle** rather than in immediate fact, since 1 John 5:19 states that the whole world (**still**) lies in the power of the evil one. In an absolute sense the reference is proleptic. The coming of Jesus' hour (his crucifixion, death, resurrection, and exaltation to the Father) marks the end of Satan's domain and brings about his defeat, even though that defeat has not been ultimately worked out in history yet and awaits the consummation of the age.

**12:32** πάντας ἐλκύσω πρὸς ἑμαυτόν This verse must be taken with **6:44**. There no one comes **unless the Father draws them**; here, Jesus says **he will draw all men** (but of course, not all will come). What are we to make of the statement? In what sense does Jesus draw all men, since not all come? It seems there are two possibilities:

- (1) "all" does not really mean "all," but only "those who are to be drawn by the Father" (6:44);
- (2) "all" means "all men" but since not all come to Jesus, then not all respond to the "drawing" which Jesus speaks of here. In this latter case the "drawing" does not correspond to the efficacious call, but rather speaks of a "potential" open to anyone who will.

Which of these is the more probable? I am inclined to prefer the former view, because I see the "all" as a reference not to **every single individual person** (as in Rom 8:29-30), but as a reference to "**all classes of men**"—men from "every nation and tribe and people and tongue" (cf. Rev 7:9-10). See also the notes on the significance of the triumphal entry at 12:19 and **4 D The coming of the Gentiles (Greeks) (12:20-26)**, both of which suggest that it is **classes** of individuals that are responding to Jesus. Note how this interpretation fits with the mention in 12:23 of the coming of Jesus' **hour**, which was also the subject of 12:27, 28, 29, 30, 31, and the present verse.

**12:33 σημαίνων ποίω θανάτω** This is an explanatory note by the Evangelist. The words ὑψωθῶ ἐκ τῆς γῆς in the previous verse are explained as a reference to Jesus' **crucifixion**.

**12:34 ἡμεῖς ἠκούσαμεν ἐκ τοῦ νόμου ...** In contrast to what Jesus has just said, we have the answer of the crowd in verse 34. The force of their statements is along these lines: "You have just said...but we have heard...". It is difficult to pinpoint the passage in the Mosaic **law** to which the crowd refers. The ones most often suggested are Ps 89:36, Ps 110:4, Isa 9:7, Ezek 37:25, and Dan 7:14. None of these passages are in the Pentateuch per se, but "**law**" could in common usage refer to the entire OT (compare Jesus' use in 10:34). Of the passages mentioned, **Ps 89:36** is the most likely candidate. This verse speaks of David's "seed" remaining forever. Later in the same Psalm verse 51 speaks of the "**anointed**" (Messiah), and the Psalm was interpreted messianically in both the NT (Acts 13:22, Rev 1:5, 3:14) and in the rabbinic literature (*Midrash Rabbah* 97 on Genesis).

What the crowd made of Jesus' reference to being "lifted up" is not entirely clear either. They may have understood it to refer to his **death**, which would of course be an obvious contradiction to the teaching in the law that Messiah was to remain forever. But I am not sure it is necessary that they understood the reference to being "lifted up" as a reference to death; they may have taken it as an ascension to heaven of some sort, like Elijah or Enoch. This would still create a contradiction with the idea that Messiah was to remain forever.

The last question, "**Who is this Son of Man?**," presents the crowd's dilemma. If Jesus (whom they believe to be the Messiah—recall that this occurs just after the triumphal entry) identifies himself with this Son of Man who is to be taken up or taken away, how can this be reconciled with their belief that Messiah, when he comes, remains forever? Notice how the Son of Man imagery corresponds to the Son of Man in Daniel 7 who is taken up in the clouds and presented before the Ancient of Days (an exaltation/enthronement motif) and given a kingdom. This Jesus is about to fulfill through his glorification/exaltation on the cross.

**12:35 τὸ φῶς ἐν ὑμῖν ἔστιν** Notice the stress on "**light**" in verses 35-36. The noun φῶς occurs five times in these two verses. The phrase ἔτι μικρὸν χρόνον recalls 7:33, and the ideas are similar, since Jesus is speaking here (as he was there) of his physical presence in the world. The reference to **light** recalls 8:12, where Jesus identified himself as the Light of the world, and especially **3:19-21**, where the judgment consists of the Light coming into the world and provoking a response from men, who either come to the **light** or shrink back into the **darkness**. Here that same imagery is amplified, because we are now reminded that the Light is in the world only for a limited time (i.e., there is a limited time in which to **respond** by coming to the light, or as here, by **walking** in that light). Those who refuse or delay will be **overtaken by the darkness** which is coming after the light is taken away. The person who tries to walk in the darkness is unable to see and thus **does not know where he is going**.

**This warning operates on at least two different levels.** (1) To the Jewish people in Jerusalem to whom Jesus spoke, the warning is a reminder that there is only a little time left for them to accept him as their Messiah. (2) To those later individuals to whom the Fourth Gospel was written, and to every person since, the words of Jesus are also a warning: there is a finite, limited time in which each individual has opportunity to respond to the Light of the world (i.e., Jesus); after that comes darkness. One's response to the Light decisively determines one's judgment for eternity.

**12:36 πιστεύετε εἰς τὸ φῶς** Here it becomes even clearer that Jesus is speaking of himself under the imagery of the previous verse. Now his hearers are exhorted to "**believe in the light**" which is a reference to trusting in him. Those who do will become "**sons of light**" (cf. Luke 16:8, Eph 5:8, and 1 Thess 5:5). The phrase is a semitic idiom for someone who is characterized by the quality in question (cf. the explanation of Barnabas' name in Acts 4:36).

The final part of verse 36 mentions that when Jesus had spoken these things he **departed and was hidden from them**. It is clear from this that the response of those whom Jesus had just addressed was **unbelief**—



**the people Jesus had addressed chose to remain in the darkness, and the Light was withdrawn from them.** The Evangelist will see in the following section the reason for that response.

#### **4 B Conclusion to the Book of Signs (12:37-50)**

##### **1 C The response to Jesus by his own people (12:37-43)**

The **unbelief of the Jews** is here seen to be predicted by the prophet **Isaiah** (53:1, 6:10). This response of unbelief resulting in the rejection of Jesus has been a recurring theme throughout the Fourth Gospel, as foreshadowed in 1:11 of the Prologue.

**12:37 οὐκ ἐπίστευον εἰς αὐτόν** In spite of the many sign-miracles (σημεῖα) which Jesus had performed before them, the response of the Jews is still hardened **unbelief**. They were **not believing** in him (note the progressive, continuing aspect of the imperfect tense here: they were **continuing** in their unbelief).

**12:38 ἵνα ὁ λόγος Ἰσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου πληρωθῇ** This response of unbelief is interpreted by the Evangelist as a fulfillment of the prophetic words of Isaiah (Is. 53:1). The phrase **ὁ βραχίων κυρίου** is a figurative reference to **God's activity and power** which has been **revealed** in the sign-miracles which Jesus has performed (compare the previous verse).

**12:39-40 διὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἠδύναντο πιστεύειν** The Evangelist explicitly states here that the Jews **were not able to believe**, and quotes Isaiah 6:10 to show that **God had in fact blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts**. This OT passage was used elsewhere in the NT to explain Jewish unbelief: Paul's final words in Acts (28:26-27) are a quotation of this same passage, which he uses to explain why the Jewish people have not accepted the gospel he has preached. A similar passage (Is. 29:10) is quoted in a similar context in Rom 11:8.

**12:41 εἶδεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ** The **glory** which Isaiah saw in 6:3 was **the glory of Yahweh**. Here John speaks of the prophet seeing **the glory of Jesus** since the next clause "and he [Isaiah] spoke concerning him" can hardly refer to Yahweh, but must refer to Jesus. On the basis of statements like 1:14 in the Prologue, the Evangelist probably puts no great distinction between the two. Since for the Evangelist Jesus is fully God, it presents no problem to him to take words originally spoken by Isaiah of Yahweh himself and apply them to Jesus.

**12:42-43 πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτόν** Having said that the Jews persisted in their unbelief, the Evangelist now adds as a clarification that some of them did in fact believe: **ὅμως μέντοι** functions as a strong adversative ("nevertheless"). These were **ἀρχόντων** which probably indicates members of the **Sanhedrin** (cf. Nicodemus in 3:1 and 7:50; according to Mark 15:43, Joseph of Arimathea was also a member, and Luke 18:18 probably refers to another). On account of **the Pharisees** these were not willing to admit their faith in Jesus publicly.

**ἠγάπησαν γὰρ τὴν δόξαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων** The Evangelist's evaluation of these men is given in verse 43: the reason they would not confess their belief in Jesus publicly was because **they loved the glory of men rather than the glory of God**. Here "glory" has the meaning "praise"—these members of the Sanhedrin were more interested getting praise from men than getting praise from God—but there is also in the context the reference to Jesus' own glory (vs. 41) and its connection with God's glory. **This is a case of truly mistaken priorities.**

## 2 C Jesus summarizes his mission and message (12:44-50)

**12:44-45** εἰς τὸν πέμψαντά με To **believe** in Jesus, to place one's trust in him, is also to place one's trust **in the Father who sent him**. Likewise, to **look upon** the Son is to look upon the Father who sent him (cf. 1:18 of the Prologue and Jesus' reply to Philip in 14:9).

**12:46** ἐγὼ φῶς εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἠγήλυθα Once again we have the contrasting imagery of **light** and **darkness**. For Jesus' identification of himself as the Light of the world see 8:12, 9:5, and 12:46. The contrasting imagery goes back to 1:4-5 in the Prologue. And there are links in the context to the passage which is to some extent the key to the entire Fourth Gospel, **3:16-21**. Jesus as the **Light** has come into the world, and this provokes judgment, because the way a person responds to him determines the person's destiny. But as here, the **purpose** of Jesus as the Light in coming into the world was not to judge the world but to save it (here, "**that everyone who trusts in me should not remain in darkness**").

**12:47** οὐ γὰρ ἦλθον ἵνα κρίνω τὸν κόσμον... Here we find even further analogies to **3:16-21**. The **mission** of Jesus in coming into the world is the same: **he did not come to judge** (i.e., condemn) **the world, but to save it**.

τῶν ῥημάτων is a reference to the spoken sayings of Jesus, including the "I am" statements of the Fourth Gospel, "I am the Bread of Life," "I am the Light of the world," "I am the Good Shepherd," "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," etc.

**12:48** ὁ ἀθετῶν ἐμὲ This is a strong expression, referring to the one who "rejects" or "refuses to recognize" Jesus deliberately. Again we see the polarizing emphasis of the Evangelist in his recounting of these words—a person either **accepts** Jesus, trusting in him, or a person **rejects** him utterly, leading to eternal ruin.

**12:49** ἐγὼ ἐξ ἑμαυτοῦ οὐκ ἐλάλησα Jesus states that he is not the originator of the message. he is on a mission from the Father and it is the Father's words he speaks.

**12:50** ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ ζωὴ αἰώνιος ἐστίν Note that Jesus does not say here that **keeping** the Father's commandment leads to eternal life, but that the commandment itself **is** eternal life. This is the commandment concerning what he is to say (verse 49) that the Father has given to Jesus. The words and works of Jesus that result from the commandment the Father has given him are the source of eternal life in the world.

**This brings to a close the public ministry of Jesus. *Nothing more is said in the Fourth Gospel of anything spoken by Jesus to the people at large.*** The majority of the remainder of the Gospel concerns Jesus' words to his disciples in the Upper Room in preparation for his departure and return to the Father and the account of his arrest, trials, crucifixion, and resurrection.

## Chapter 13

### OUTLINE:

- 4 A The Book of Glory: Jesus accomplishes his return to the Father (13:1-20:31)**
  - 1 B Introduction to the Book of Glory (13:1)**
  - 2 B The Last Supper: Jesus prepares his disciples for his departure (13:2-17:26)**
    - 1 C The Meal (13:2-30)**
      - 1 D Jesus washes the feet of his disciples as an example of humble service (13:2-20)**
      - 2 D Jesus predicts his betrayal by Judas Iscariot (13:21-30)**
    - 2 C The Last Discourse (13:31-17:26)**
      - 1 D Jesus speaks of his departure and the disciples' future (13:31-14:31)**
        - 1 E The arrival of the hour of Jesus' glorification (his departure) (13:31-33)**
        - 2 E The new commandment: love one another (13:34-35)**
        - 3 E Jesus predicts Peter's denial (13:36-38)**
        - 4 E Jesus presents himself as the Way to the Father for those who believe in him (14:1-14)**
        - 5 E Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to his disciples after his departure (14:15-31)**

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## DETAILED EXEGETICAL NOTES:

### 4 A The Book of Glory: Jesus accomplishes his return to the Father (13:1-20:31)

**Introduction.** The previous major section of the Fourth Gospel, which we have labelled *The Book of Signs* (1:19-12:50) following R. Brown and others, was primarily concerned with the **seven sign-miracles** which the author of the Fourth Gospel has selected as representative of Jesus' ministry and demonstrative of who he is. Included were the public discourses and debates with his opponents which followed from the sign-miracles. Although there were a few private conversations (Nicodemus in ch. 3, the Samaritan woman in ch. 4), most of the words and works of Jesus were aimed at a wider audience in both Galilee and Judea. Central to the Book of Signs was the idea (found especially in 3:16-21) that the coming of Jesus into the world provokes **judgment**: a person's destiny is determinate upon one's response to Jesus. His coming provokes a *crisis* in the truest sense of the word. And over and over in chapters 1-12 we saw this happening in the way people responded: some "came to the Light" and believed, while others "shrank back into the darkness" and refused to believe in him, thus confirming their judgment.

However, the second book of the Fourth Gospel, *The Book of Glory*, is addressed **only to those who believed**. This book chronicles the coming of Jesus' "**hour**," the hour of his crucifixion, death, resurrection, and exaltation to the Father. Why then should we include as part of the Book of Glory chapters 13-17, the so-called "Upper Room Discourse," containing the accounts of the Last Supper and Jesus' Farewell Discourse? In the previous Book of Signs, the discourses of Jesus generally **followed** the sign-miracles and interpreted them. But in the Book of Glory, the Last Supper and the Last Discourse which **precede** the hour of Jesus' glorification serve to interpret for the disciples (and for us) that hour with its events from God's perspective.

### 1 B Introduction to the Book of Glory (13:1)

**13:1** Πρὸ δὲ τῆς ἑορτῆς τοῦ πάσχα According to the Evangelist, the events of this discourse including the meal itself take place **before** the Passover (in spite of J. Jeremias, who tried very hard to prove otherwise).<sup>107</sup> Thus the meal, for John, was not the Passover meal proper. The evening of this meal (from 6:00 p.m. Thursday evening) and the next day (Friday) on which Jesus will die, are the **Passover eve**.

<sup>107</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 3rd rev. ed. (New York: Scribner's, 1966).

εἰδὼς ὁ Ἰησοῦς Jesus was not taken by surprise by the coming of the “hour.” The circumstantial participle εἰδὼς may be understood either temporally or causally, but in either case the fact remains that Jesus knew. The time for his departure from this world to the Father had arrived. This led him to act on behalf of his disciples.

εἰς τέλος ἠγάπησεν αὐτούς For the Evangelist, this has a double meaning: the obvious “**utterly, completely,**” but also “**to the very end of life itself,**” that is, up to the point of **death**. Note the phrase τετέλεσται (“it is ended”) **spoken by Jesus from the cross** in 19:30. This statement in 13:1 foreshadows Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross. He loved his own enough to die for them. This is what it meant to love them “to the uttermost” (εἰς τέλος) (compare 15:13).

## **2 B The Last Supper: Jesus prepares his disciples for his departure (13:2-17:26)**

### **1 C The Meal (13:2-30)**

#### **1 D Jesus washes the feet of his disciples as an example of humble service (13:2-20)**

**13:2** τοῦ διαβόλου ἤδη βεβληκότος εἰς τὴν καρδίαν ἵνα παραδοῖ αὐτὸν At this point the devil (τοῦ διαβόλου) had already “cast into the heart” (βεβληκότος εἰς τὴν καρδίαν) of **Judas son of Simon Iscariot**, that he should betray Jesus. Barrett thinks this is a reference to the idea entering the devil’s own heart, but this does not seem likely.<sup>108</sup> More probably Judas’ heart is meant, since the use of the Greek article (rather than a possessive pronoun) is a typical idiom when a part of one’s own body is indicated. Judas’ name is withheld until the end of the sentence for **dramatic effect** (emphasis). This action must be read in light of 13:27, and appears to refer to a preliminary idea or plan.

**13:3** εἰδὼς... The subject of verses 2-4 is never expressed, but in context it can only be **Jesus**. His knowledge of the situation and of his mission and destiny are clearly indicated. For Jesus, not one of these events happened by accident, nor did any take him by surprise.

**13:4** ἐγείρεται ἐκ τοῦ δείπνου Note that ἐγείρεται is a historical present, adding vividness to the scene which is about to take place. The plural τὰ ἱμάτια is probably a reference to more than one garment (cf. 19:23-24). If so, this would indicate that Jesus stripped to a loincloth, like a slave. He would have wrapped the towel (λέντιον) around his waist (διέζωσεν ἑαυτὸν) for use in wiping the disciples’ feet. Λέντιον is a Latin loanword (*linteum*) which is also found in the rabbinic literature.<sup>109</sup> It would have been **a long piece of linen cloth**, long enough for Jesus to have wrapped it about his waist and still used the free end to wipe the disciples’ feet.

**13:6** ἔρχεται οὖν πρὸς Σίμωνα Πέτρον It appears there was complete silence until Jesus came to Peter. It is probable that Peter was the last, since in v. 10 Jesus, after finishing Peter’s feet, pronounces them all clean. Peter’s being last also heightens the **dramatic effect** of the exchange between him and Jesus, since he has been watching all that has gone on up to this point (probably with increasing agitation).

**13:7** γνώση δὲ μετὰ ταῦτα Jesus made it plain to Peter that what he was doing Peter would not understand at the time, but that at some later time (μετὰ ταῦτα is an indefinite reference) Peter would come

<sup>108</sup> Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 365.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. BAGD 471 s.v. λέντιον.

to understand the significance of what Jesus had done (compare 12:16). This is an allusion to the **post-resurrection insight** that would come to all the disciples when Jesus had been raised from the dead.

**13:8** ἐὰν μὴ νίψω σε, οὐκ ἔχεις μέρος μετ’ ἐμοῦ Peter’s protest brought Jesus’ response that unless Peter allowed him to **wash his feet**, he had no share (μέρος, “heritage,” “inheritance”) in Jesus. As we might expect, **wash** in the context has a deeper significance than the literal washing of the disciples’ feet might indicate. Verse 10 seems to imply that **cleansing from sin** is ultimately in view.

**13:10** ἀλλ’ ἔστιν καθαρὸς ὅλος Thayer’s lexicon (a translation of Grimm’s revision of Wilke’s work) offers the following explanation of v. 10:

...the idea which Christ expresses figuratively is as follows: ‘he whose inmost nature has been renovated does not need radical renewal, but only to be cleansed from every several fault into which he may fall through intercourse with the unrenewed world’.<sup>110</sup>

The inference is that the “bath” Jesus referred to is the initial cleansing from sin, which necessitates only “lesser, partial” cleansings from sins after conversion. This makes a fine illustration from a homiletical standpoint, but is it the meaning of the passage? To me this seems highly doubtful. Jesus stated that the disciples were “**already clean**” except for Judas (verses 10b, 11). What they needed was to have their feet washed by Jesus. In the broader context of the Gospel the significance of the foot-washing seems to point not just to an example of humble service (as most understand it) but something more—**Jesus’ self-sacrificial death on the cross** (see the discussion of this below at 13:20 under “*Significance of the Footwashing in the Narrative*”). If this is correct, then the foot-washing which they needed to undergo represented **their acceptance of this act of self-sacrifice on the part of their master**. This makes Peter’s initial abhorrence of the act of humiliation by his master all the more significant in context; it also explains Jesus’ seemingly harsh reply to Peter (above, verse 8; compare Matt 16:21-23 where Jesus says to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan”).

**13:11** οὐχὶ πάντες καθαρὸί ἐστε The “exception clause” at the end of v. 10 refers to **Judas Iscariot** who was about to betray Jesus, as the Evangelist explains in verse 11.

**13:15** ὑπόδειγμα γὰρ ἔδωκα ὑμῖν Jesus tells his disciples after he has finished washing their feet that what he has done is to set an **example** for them. In the previous verse he told them they were to “**wash one another’s feet**”. What is the point of the example? If it is simply an act of humble service, as most interpret the significance, then Jesus is really telling his disciples to **serve one another in humility rather than seeking preeminence over one another**. If, however, the example is one of **self-sacrifice up to the point of death**, then Jesus is telling them to **lay down their lives for one another** (see note on εἰς τέλος in 13:1 and compare 15:13).

**13:18** ἐγὼ οἶδα τίνας ἐξελεξάμην Jesus again speaks of his betrayer Judas as he did at the end of verse 10. Jesus **knew whom he had chosen**, and the **choosing** was the important thing. Once again the divine initiative is in view here. The words of Psalm 41:9 are seen to be **fulfilled** in the betrayal of Jesus by Judas.

**13:19** λέγω ὑμῖν πρὸ τοῦ γενέσθαι Jesus has told the disciples of his betrayal beforehand, in order that when it happens their faith may be strengthened. (That they **already** believe seems clear from numerous previous statements in the Gospel, like 2:11.) **What** they will believe when they look back upon the

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<sup>110</sup> J. H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 312, s.v. καθαρός.

prediction of betrayal is given by the concluding ὅτι- clause—ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι. The expression here is almost certainly to be taken as an absolute statement without predicate, as in 8:28. Upon later (post-resurrection) reflection concerning Jesus' prediction of his betrayal, the disciples will come to see that he was in complete control of the situation as **only God himself could be**.

**13:20** ὁ λαμβάνων ἅν τινα πέμψω ἐμὲ λαμβάνει The section concludes with Jesus' statement identifying his followers whom he sends with himself, and himself with the Father who sent him.

### ***Significance of the Footwashing in the Narrative:***

Many who approach this passage are satisfied with the symbolism of **humility** suggested in 13:12-20, and see no further meaning in the incident (e.g., Chrysostom, Theodore-Mopsuestia, Bernard, Michl).

But we should consider the following points:

(a) According to 13:6-10 what Jesus has done in the footwashing is **essential** if the disciples are to gain a **heritage** (μέρος) **with him** (13:8), and the action seems in context to refer to the **cleansing of their sin** (13:10).

(b) Verse 7 states that they will **only understand later** (i.e., after the resurrection) but verses 12 and 17 imply that **understanding is possible now** (as we would expect if **only** an example of humility is involved).

Thus we suggest the following: **in humiliating himself to wash the disciples' feet, Jesus was acting out beforehand his humiliation in death**, just as Mary in 12:1-8 acted out beforehand the anointing of his body for burial.

The footwashing is an act of humble **service** for others, symbolic of the humiliating **service** Jesus will render in **laying down his life** for others—which is why the footwashing is **necessary** if the disciples are to have a share in him (13:8). Naturally, though, the disciples would not have understood the full significance of this until after his death. This throws new light, too, on 13:14-15—the **example** Jesus has given is not **just** one of humble service, but of **humble service to the point of death**. This is expected of his followers as well: compare, for example, the parallel statements in 1 John 3:16, 4:11.

Μέρος (13:8) is used by the LXX to translate the Hebrew גִּלְגָּל, used to describe the **heritage** of national Israel. Each tribe had its “share” (μέρος) in the promised land (except Levi)—Num 28:20, Deut 12:12, 14:27. Jesus' death (which the **washing** symbolized) was a prerequisite for the disciples having a share (μέρος) in the kingdom. Their **inheritance in the kingdom** was secured by his sacrificial death.

## **2 D Jesus predicts his betrayal by Judas Iscariot (13:21-30)**

**13:21** εἶς ἐξ ὑμῶν παραδώσει με Jesus has alluded to his betrayal twice before in chapter 13 (vss. 10, 18). These were more general references. Now he tells his disciples specifically that **one of them is about to betray him**. Jesus says that his spirit is **troubled**—the verb (ταράσσω) is the same one used in 12:27 used to describe his reaction to the coming of the “hour”. Jesus is in complete control of the situation (cf. 13:3), yet **he is not emotionally oblivious to the events which have come upon him**.

**13:22** ἀπορούμενοι The disciples, taken by surprise, began looking at one another, **uncertain** as to whom Jesus meant. Certainly we may expect they were surprised by Jesus' explicit reference to his betrayal.

**13:23** ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς Here we are introduced for the first time to the **Beloved Disciple**. This individual also is mentioned in 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, and 21:20. Some have suggested that this disciple is to be

identified with **Lazarus**, since the Fourth Gospel specifically states that Jesus loved him (11:3, 5, 36). From the terminology alone this is a possibility; the Evangelist is certainly capable of using language in this way to indicate connections. But there is nothing else to indicate that Lazarus was present at the Last Supper; Mark 14:17 seems to indicate it was only the Twelve who were with Jesus at this time, and we have had no indication in the Fourth Gospel to the contrary. Nor does it appear that Lazarus ever stood so close to Jesus as the later references in chapters 19, 20 and 21 seem to indicate. When this is coupled with the omission of all references to **John son of Zebedee** from the Fourth Gospel, it seems far more likely that we should understand the references to the Beloved Disciple as references to him.

ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ People taking part in such a meal reclined on the left side. The left arm was used to support the body, leaving the right arm free for use in eating. The disciple on Jesus' right would have his head immediately in front of Jesus and could be described as "lying in his bosom". The position of highest honor would, however, have been to the **left** of the host according to Roman custom (see also 13:24 below).<sup>111</sup>

The only other use of this phrase in the Fourth Gospel is in 1:18. This suggests that we are to compare the intimacy shared by Jesus and the Beloved Disciple with that shared by Jesus and the Father. However, Barrett's comment that "the specially favoured disciple is represented as standing in the same relation to Christ as Christ to the Father" is probably pressing this comparison a bit too far.<sup>112</sup>

**13:24** Σίμων Πέτρος It is not clear where **Peter** was seated. If he were on Jesus' **left**, in the place of highest honor, it is difficult to see why he would not have asked the question himself. It would also have been difficult to beckon to the Beloved Disciple, on Jesus' right, from such a position. So apparently Peter was seated somewhere else. It is entirely possible that **Judas** was seated to Jesus' left in the position of highest honor. Matt 26:25 seems to indicate that Jesus could speak to him without being overheard by the rest of the group. Judas is evidently in a position where Jesus can hand him the morsel of food (13:26). It may well be that **Jesus gave the position of highest honor to Judas as a last appeal to him**—which would heighten the **irony** of Judas' betrayal even further.

**13:25-26** ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν ᾧ ἐγὼ βάψω τὸ ψωμίον καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ In response to Peter's gesture, the Beloved Disciple asks Jesus who it is who will betray him, and Jesus replies that he will **indicate by an action** who the traitor is. It seems likely that these words were not spoken loudly to the entire group, but only to the Beloved Disciple. It also appears that Jesus preferred that the group as a whole not know at this time the identity of the betrayer. The others who had not overheard the question and the remark by Jesus would have interpreted the giving of the morsel as a sign of honor, if anything. This would be further heightened if Judas actually was seated in the most honored position (see above on verse 24).

**13:27** ὁ σατανᾶς This is the only time in the Fourth Gospel that **Satan** is mentioned by name. Luke 22:3 uses the same terminology of Satan "entering into" Judas but indicates it happened before the Last Supper at the time Judas made his deal with the authorities. This is not necessarily irreconcilable with the Johannine account, however, because John 13:2 makes it clear that Judas had already come under satanic influence prior to the Supper itself. We are probably to understand the statement here to indicate that Judas at this point came under the influence of Satan even more completely and finally. It marks the end of a process which, as Luke indicates, had begun earlier.

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<sup>111</sup> Pliny (the Younger), *Epistle* 4.22.4.

<sup>112</sup> Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 446.



**13:28-29** τοῦτο δὲ οὐδεὶς ἔγνω τῶν ἀνακειμένων πρὸς τὴν εἶπεν αὐτῷ At this point the Evangelist explains to the reader that **none of the disciples at the Supper understood at that time the true meaning of Jesus' words to Judas** at the end of verse 27. To illustrate this further the Evangelist includes verse 29, where two of the disciples' speculations concerning the meaning of Jesus' words to Judas are given. Some of them thought that since Judas was treasurer for the group and kept the common purse, Jesus was indicating that he should buy what was necessary for the feast, or give alms to the poor.

**13:30** ἦν δὲ νύξ “Therefore after he had taken the morsel, that one [Judas] departed immediately. And **it was night.**” These details are indicative of an eyewitness account. Notes about the time certain events occurred are common throughout the Fourth Gospel. But ἦν δὲ νύξ is more than a simple note of time—it recalls all the **light—darkness** imagery of the Gospel, starting with the Prologue (1:5). Judas has become one of those who **walks by night and stumbles, because the Light is not in him** (11:10).

R. Brown summarizes the significance of the coming of **night** thus:

With Jesus' permission to Judas and the solemn entrance of Satan into the drama, the hour of darkness (night) has come. In the closing days of his ministry Jesus had warned: “Night is coming” (ix 4); “If a man goes walking at night, he will stumble because he has no light in him” (xi 10). Judas is one of those who “have preferred darkness to light because their deeds were evil” (iii 19). John's “It was night” is the equivalent of the words of Jesus reported in Gethsemane by Luke xxii 53: “This is your hour and the power of darkness.” Yet even at this tragic moment in Jesus' life as the darkness envelops him, there is the assurance of the Prologue: “The light shines on in the darkness, for the darkness did not overcome it” (i 5). If this optimistic note was true of the situation caused by the first sin in the world, it was also true in the night of Jesus' passion. The long night that now descends upon the earth would have its dawn when “early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb” (xx 1).<sup>113</sup>

## 2 C The Last Discourse (13:31-17:26)

*A Note on Literary Genre: The Farewell Speech*

The farewell speech is well-established as a literary genre in the OT and the apocryphal books of the intertestamental period. There are numerous examples, like the blessings of Jacob to his children in Gen 47:29-49:33, the farewell of Joshua to the nation of Israel in Josh 22-24, and David's farewell speech in 1 Chr 28-29. In the OT apocrypha we have the farewell speech of Tobit from his deathbed in Tobit 14:3-11. The entire Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs are farewell speeches patterned after Jacob's in Genesis. The book of *Jubilees* gives farewell speeches for Noah (ch. 10), Abraham (chs. 20-22), and Rebecca and Isaac (chs. 35-36). Josephus includes a farewell address for Moses.<sup>114</sup>

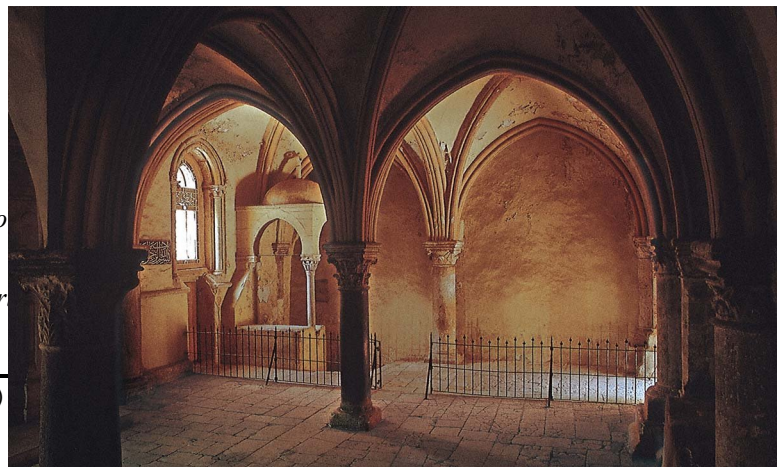
In the NT Paul makes a farewell speech to the elders at Ephesus in Acts 20:17-38, and the Pastoral Epistles in their entirety might be thought of as farewells, especially 2 Timothy. Correspondingly, 2 Peter is Peter's farewell discourse.

T. F. Glasson pointed out that Deuteronomy is the farewell discourse of Moses, and that in these chapters of the Fourth Gospel there are many allusions to Deuteronomy.<sup>115</sup> This is one way in which the Evangelist sees Moses as a helpful way of understanding the significance of Jesus.

<sup>113</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to*

<sup>114</sup> *Antiquities* 4.8.45-47.

<sup>115</sup> T. F. Glasson, *Moses in the Four*



The Upper Room, traditional site

The common situation in almost all of these instances is that of a prominent person who gathers his followers (children, disciples, or the entire nation of Israel) just before his death or departure to give them final instructions which will help them after he is gone.

R. Brown (AB 29A, 598-601) has listed thirteen features of major OT and intertestamental farewell speeches which are shared in common with the Last Discourse in the Gospel of John.<sup>116</sup> It seems conclusive that the Evangelist has given us in chapters 13-17 the farewell speech of Jesus to his disciples.

## **1 D Jesus speaks of his departure and the disciples' future (13:31-14:31)**

### **1 E The arrival of the hour of Jesus' glorification (his departure) (13:31-33)**

**13:31** νῦν ἐδοξάσθη ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου This is a repetition of the statement in 12:23, but there is no contradiction. The coming of the Greeks marked the beginning of Jesus' glorification, since they foreshadowed all the men who would be drawn to Jesus once he had been lifted up to the Father (12:32). But on the other hand, the betrayal of Judas (13:27) actually inaugurated the process of Jesus' return to the Father.

**13:32** εὐθὺς δοξάσει αὐτόν Notice the imminent nature of this act of glorification to which Jesus refers: it is to take place immediately (εὐθύς). The departure of Judas indicates that the death, resurrection, and return of Jesus to the Father are at hand.

**13:33** ὅπου ἐγὼ ὑπάγω ὑμεῖς οὐ δύνασθε ἐλθεῖν Jesus makes plain the reference to his impending return to the Father (verse 32) by telling his disciples that he is going where they cannot follow. Just as this statement puzzled the Jews to whom Jesus had said it in 7:33 and 8:21, so now it puzzles the disciples. In their current state they are not able to follow him in death nor to his resurrection and ascension (this does not rule out, however, that they will later be able to do so).

### **2 E The new commandment: love one another (13:34-35)**

**13:34-35** Ἐντολὴν καινὴν The idea that love is a commandment is interesting. In the Old Testament the Ten Commandments have a setting in the covenant between God and Israel at Sinai; they were the stipulations that Israel had to observe if the nation were to be God's chosen people. In speaking of love as the new commandment for those whom Jesus had chosen as his own (13:1, 15:16) and as a mark by which they could be distinguished from others (13:35), John shows that he is thinking of this scene in covenant terminology.

But note that the disciples are to love "just as I have loved you" (13:34). The love Jesus has for his followers cannot be duplicated by them in one sense, because it effects their salvation, since he lays down his life for them: it is an act of love that gives life to men. But in another sense they can follow his example (recall εἰς τέλος, 13:1; also 1 John 3:16, 4:16 and the interpretation of Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet). Thus are Jesus' disciples to love one another: they are to follow his example of sacrificial service to one another, to death if necessary.

**13:35** ἐν τούτῳ The love of Christians for one another should be the distinguishing mark by which the world recognizes them as followers of Jesus. This kind of sacrificial love is what F. A. Schaeffer has referred to as "the final apologetic."<sup>117</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 598-601.

<sup>117</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1970), 138.

### 3 E Jesus predicts Peter's denial (13:36-38)

**13:36-38** κύριε, ποῦ ὑπάγεις Note the contrast with the preceding statement by Jesus in verse 33 that where he is going the disciples will not at present be able to follow. Peter makes a hasty statement that he is willing to die—to”lay down his life” (verse 37). The words Peter uses, τὴν ψυχὴν μου ὑπὲρ σοῦ θήσω, are almost identical to those used by Jesus in 10:11 when he spoke as the Good Shepherd. This may well be another example of Johannine irony: Peter is not yet ready to follow this path on behalf of his Lord, although one day he will be (ἕστερον, compare 21:18). Instead, before this can happen, Peter will deny Jesus three times, as Jesus tells him. The fulfillment of this prediction is recorded in 18:27. Furthermore, ironically, it is not Peter who is about to die for Jesus, but Jesus who is about to die for Peter, as the reader of the Gospel well knows.

## Chapter 14

### OUTLINE:

- [4 A The Book of Glory: Jesus accomplishes his return to the Father (13:1-20:31)]
  - [2 B The Last Supper: Jesus prepares his disciples for his departure (13:2-17:26)]
    - [2 C The Last Discourse (13:31-17:26)]
      - 1 D Jesus speaks of his departure and the disciples' future (13:31-14:31)
        - [1 E The arrival of the hour of Jesus' glorification (his departure) (13:31-33)]
        - [2 E The new commandment: love one another (13:34-35)]
        - [3 E Jesus predicts Peter's denial (13:36-38)]
      - 4 E Jesus presents himself as the Way to the Father for those who believe in him (14:1-14)
      - 5 E Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to His disciples after His departure (14:15-31)

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## DETAILED EXEGETICAL NOTES:

### 4 E Jesus presents Himself as the Way to the Father for those who believe in Him (14:1-14)

**14:1** Μὴ παρασέσθω The same verb is used to describe Jesus' own state in 11:33, 12:27, and 13:21. Jesus is looking ahead to the events of the evening and the next day—his arrest, trials, crucifixion, and death—which will cause his disciples extreme emotional distress.

πιστεύετε...πιστεύετε The translation of the two uses of πιστεύετε is difficult. Both may be either indicative or imperative, and as Morris points out, this results in a bewildering variety of possibilities.<sup>118</sup> To complicate matters further the first may be understood as a question: "Do you believe in God? Believe also in me." Morris argues against the AV (KJV) translation which renders the first πιστεύετε as indicative and the second as imperative on the grounds that for the writer of the Fourth Gospel, faith in Jesus is inseparable from faith in God. But it seems to me that this is precisely the point that Jesus is addressing in context. He is about to undergo rejection by his own people as their Messiah. The disciples' faith in him as Messiah and Lord would be cast into extreme doubt by these events, which the Evangelist makes clear were not at this time foreseen by the disciples. After the resurrection it is this identification between Jesus and the Father which needs to be reaffirmed (cf. 20:24-29). Thus it seems best to take the first πιστεύετε as indicative and the second as imperative, producing the translation "You believe in God; believe also in me." (**Note:** Both could be taken as imperatives without substantially altering this meaning if the first is understood as a conditional imperative.<sup>119</sup>)

**14:2** There are four major difficulties in this verse: (1) what is the meaning of τῆ ὀκίῃ τοῦ πατρὸς μου, (2) what is the meaning of μοναί, (3) should the ὅτι be included or omitted, and (4) what is the meaning of the last clause with or without the ὅτι? We shall attempt to deal with these in order:

<sup>118</sup> Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 637.

<sup>119</sup> See BDF §387.2.

(1) What is the meaning of τῆ οἰκίᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου? Jesus is probably using traditional terminology at this point. Morris states that the phrase “clearly refers to heaven” without elaborating,<sup>120</sup> and this is supported by a similar use in Philo referring to heaven as “the paternal house.”<sup>121</sup> Below we will consider the possibility of a typically Johannine double meaning.

(2) What is the meaning of μοναί? Many have associated it with the Aramaic ܡܢܝܐ, which can refer to a stopping place or resting place for a traveler on a journey. This is similar to one of the meanings the word can have in secular Greek.<sup>122</sup> Origen understood the use here to refer to stations on the road to God. This may well have been the understanding of the Latin translators who translated μονή by *mansio*, a stopping place. The English translation “mansions” can be traced back to Tyndale, but in Middle English the word simply meant “a dwelling place” (not necessarily large or imposing) with no connotation of being temporary. The interpretation put forward by Origen would have been well suited to Gnosticism, where the soul in its ascent passes through stages during which it is gradually purified of all that is material and therefore evil.

It is much more likely that the word μονή should be related to its cognate verb μένω, which is frequently used in the Fourth Gospel to refer to the permanence of relationship between Jesus and the Father and/or Jesus and the believer. Thus the idea of a permanent dwelling place, rather than a temporary stopping place, would be in view. Luther’s translation of μοναί by *Wohnungen* is very accurate here, as it has the connotation of a permanent residence.

(3) Should the ὅτι be included or omitted? The external evidence is almost equally divided. Most Alexandrian and Western manuscripts favor inclusion (it is unusual for the Alexandrian to favor the *longer* reading!) while most Byzantine manuscripts favor omission (again unusual!). Complicating things is the reading of Ɔ66, which aligns with the Byzantine. Because of the strength of a papyrus reading aligned with the Byzantine, and because the shorter reading is out of character for the Byzantine text, the shorter reading could certainly be authentic.

If the ὅτι is included, there are no less than four possible translations of the phrase:

- (a) “Otherwise I would have told you [= warned you], because I am going to prepare a place...”
- (b) “Otherwise would I have told you so, because I am going to prepare a place...?”
- (c) “Otherwise I would have told you that I am going to prepare a place...”
- (d) “Otherwise would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place...?”

The first option (a) can be understood only if “otherwise I would have told you” is a **parenthetical** statement, and the ὅτι-clause goes with the preceding “There are many dwelling places in my Father’s house...”. We should probably rule out (b) and (d) because they imply a **previous** statement by Jesus that either (b) there are many dwelling places in his Father’s house or (d) He was going off to prepare a place for them. There is no indication anywhere in the Fourth Gospel that Jesus had made such statements prior to this time. Finally, (c) is understandable—if there were no dwelling places Jesus would have told them that he was going off to make dwelling places. But the following verse makes clear that Jesus’ departure is not hypothetical but real—he is really going away.

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<sup>120</sup> Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 638.

<sup>121</sup> *De Somniis (On Dreams)* 1.43, line 256.

<sup>122</sup> Pausanias 10.31.7.

Thus all the possibilities for understanding the verse with the inclusion of ὅτι present some difficulties. It seems that Brown is right when he states: “all in all, the translation without ὅτι makes the best sense.”<sup>123</sup> Thus the following translation seems best: “**Otherwise, I would have told you (= warned you). I go to prepare a place....**”

(4) What is the **meaning** of the last clause with or without the ὅτι? One of the questions that must be answered here is whether or not τόπος is to be equated with μονή. In Rev 12:8 τόπος is used to refer to a **place in heaven**, which would suggest that the two are essentially equal here. Jesus is going ahead of believers to prepare a place for them, a permanent dwelling place in heaven (the Father’s house).

**In conclusion:** Now at last we must consider the possibility of a **Johannine double meaning** to the saying. So far we have understood the reference to “my Father’s house” as a reference to **heaven**, and the μοναί and τόποι as the **permanent residences of believers there**. This seems consistent with the vocabulary (see above discussion) and the context, where in verse 3 Jesus speaks of **coming again** to take the disciples to himself. However, when we look for the phrase τῆ οἰκίᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου in the Fourth Gospel, we find it was used previously in 2:16 to refer to the **Temple** in Jerusalem. The Evangelist in 2:19-22 then reinterpreted the Temple as **Jesus’ body**, which was to be destroyed in death and then rebuilt in resurrection after three days. Even more suggestive is the statement by Jesus in 8:35, “Now the slave does not remain (μένει) in the household (τῆ οἰκίᾳ) forever, but the son remains (μένει) forever.” If in the imagery of the Fourth Gospel τῆ οἰκίᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου is ultimately a reference to Jesus’ body, the relationship of μονή to μένω suggests **the permanent relationship of the believer to Jesus and the Father as an adopted son who remains in the household forever**. In this case the “dwelling place” is “**in**” Jesus himself, where he is, whether in heaven or on earth. The statement in verse 3, “I will come again and receive you to myself” then refers not only to the parousia, but also to Jesus’ post-resurrection return to the disciples in his glorified state, when **by virtue of his death on their behalf they may enter into union with him and with the Father as adopted sons**. Needless to say, this bears numerous similarities to Pauline theology, especially the concepts of **adoption as sons** (υἰοθεσία) and being “**in Christ**” (ἐν Χριστῷ). It is also important to note, however, the emphasis in the Fourth Gospel itself on the present reality of eternal life (5:24, 7:38-39, etc.) and the possibility of worshipping the Father “in the Spirit and in truth” (4:21-24) in the present age. There is a sense in which it is possible to say that the future reality is present now.<sup>124</sup>

**14:3** ἵνα ὅπου εἰμι ἐγὼ καὶ ὑμεῖς ἦτε The ἵνα gives the **purpose** of Jesus’ departure and return to receive believers to himself: it is in order that where he is, they may be also. That this is true in more than one sense and refers not only to the future parousia, but also to Jesus’ post-resurrection return to the disciples, has been discussed above under the **conclusion** to the preceding verse. By virtue of the believer’s identification with the risen and glorified Jesus, it is accurate to say that where Jesus is now, the believer is **with him**. This will be just as true when he returns in the future.

**14:4** Πτὴν ὁδὸν ἢ καὶ τὴν ὁδὸν οἴδατε Once again there is a difficult textual problem in this verse. The division of the external evidence is similar (although not identical) to the evidence for the inclusion or omission of ὅτι in verse 2. Either assertion on the part of Jesus would be understandable: “**you know the way where I am going**” or “**you know where I am going and you know the way**.” In this case the shorter reading is basically Alexandrian; the primary Western uncial D sides with ⲓ66 and the Byzantine text in

<sup>123</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 620.

<sup>124</sup> For further discussion see James McCaffrey, *The House with Many Rooms: The Temple Theme of Jn. 14,2-3* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1988). See 3:17 for a further discussion of “realized eschatology” in the Fourth Gospel.

favor of the longer reading. On the basis of the external evidence, the alliance of  $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$  with the Western and Byzantine text-types, the longer reading is probably to be preferred.

Jesus had spoken of his destination previously to the disciples, most recently in 13:33. **Where** he was going was back to the Father, and they could not follow him there, but later he would return for them and they could join him then. The “**way**” he was going was via the cross. This he had also mentioned previously (e.g., 12:32) although his disciples did not understand at the time (cf. 12:33). As Jesus would explain in verse 6, although for him the “way” back to the Father was via the cross, for his disciples the “way” to where he was going was Jesus himself.

**14:5** Λέγει αὐτῷ Θωμᾶς Jesus’ statement in verse 4 causes Thomas to reply in perplexity to both points: “Lord, we don’t know **where** you are going; how can we know the **way**?” This lack of understanding, directly stated, leads to Jesus’ statement in the next verse.

**14:6** ἐγὼ εἶμι ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ἡ ζωὴ What is the meaning of this well-known statement?

Initially we might suspect a copula with three predicates: ὁδός, ἀλήθεια, and ζωή. The first would be similar to John 10:7, 9: “I am the door”—that is, **the way of entrance**. The second would relate to Jesus’ statement in 8:31-32, “you will know the **truth**, and the **truth** will make you free.” The third sounds similar to 11:25, where Jesus says “I am the resurrection and the **life**.”

However, the context suggests that the three ideas are **not** strictly coordinate. The next statement (“no one comes to the Father except through me”) seems to relate primarily to the first predicate, “I am **the way**”. Thus we suggest that the two remaining predicates, the **truth** and the **life**, are exegetical or explanatory to the first: “**I am the way, that is, the truth and the life.**”

But what does this mean? Jesus is the **way**—the only avenue of access to the Father and thus to salvation (the “door” of 10:7, 9)—because he is the **truth** (the sole revelation of the Father who is the end and goal of the journey—cf. 1:18). Note that this is not, in context, an ontological statement but a statement of **who Jesus is in relation to men**.

Jesus is also the way because he is the **life**—the **source** and **giver** of the **life** from above. Just as in the original creation he was the giver of physical life (cf. 1:3-4), so in the new creation he is the giver of life from above (cf. 3:5-8). Again, this is a description of Jesus in terms of **his relation to men** (10:10). Brown remarks: “It is noteworthy that ζωή, “life,” which occurs **thirty-two times** in the Book of Signs, occurs only **four times** in the Book of Glory. Now that “the hour” is at hand, life is actually being given and need not be talked about.”<sup>125</sup>

**14:7** ἐγνώκατέ...γνώσεσθε vs. ἐγνώκειτέ...ἐγνώκειτε Again there is a difficult textual problem: the statement reads either “If you have known (ἐγνώκατε) me, you will know (γνώσεσθε) my Father” or “If you had really known (ἐγνώκειτε) me, you would know (ἐγνώκειτε) my Father”. The division of the external evidence is difficult, but would appear to favor the first alternative, since there is an Alexandrian-Western alliance supported by  $\mathfrak{P}^{66}$ . In this case (a first class condition) Jesus promises the disciples that (assuming they have known him) they will know the Father. Contextually this fits better with the following phrase (7b) which asserts that “**from the present time you know him and have seen him**” (recall 1:18 of the Prologue).

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<sup>125</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 620.



**14:8** κύριε, δεῖξον ἡμῖν τὸν πατέρα... It is clear from Philip's request ("**Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us**") that he (if not all the disciples, as is probably the case) has **misunderstood** the statement of Jesus in verse 7. In what sense could they have seen the Father?

**14:9** ὁ ἑώρακὼς ἐμὲ ἑώρακεν τὸν πατέρα Philip's misunderstanding gives Jesus the opportunity to explain once more **his relationship to the Father**. Because Jesus and the Father are one (cf. 10:30), Jesus is able to say "**the one who has seen me has seen the Father**" (cf. 1:18 again).

**14:10** ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ἐν ἐμοί ἐστίν The mutual interrelationship of the Father and the Son ("**I am in the Father and the Father is in me**") is something that Jesus expected even his opponents to recognize (cf. 10:38). The question Jesus asks of Philip (οὐ πιστεύεις...) expects the answer "yes." Note that the following statement is addressed to all the disciples, however, because the plural pronoun (ὑμῖν) is used. Jesus says that his teaching (the words he spoke to them all) did not originate from himself, but the Father who **permanently remains (μένων) in relationship with Jesus performs his works**. We would have expected "**speaks his words**" here rather than "performs his works"; many of the Church Fathers (e.g. Augustine and Chrysostom) identified the two by saying that Jesus' words **were** works. But there is an implicit contrast in the next verse between words and works, and verse 12 seems to demand that the works are real works, not just words. It is probably best to see the two terms as related but not identical; there is a progression in the idea here. Both Jesus' words (recall the Samaritans' response in 4:42) and Jesus' works are **revelatory of who he is**, but as the next verse indicates, **works** have greater confirmatory power than **words**.

**14:11** πιστεύετέ μοι In the first part of this verse Jesus appeals to the disciples to believe in the permanent interrelationship he has with the Father based on his **words**. In the latter half of the verse (εἰ δὲ μή...) he calls on them to believe on account of his **deeds**.

**14:12** μείζονα τούτων ποιήσει Jesus then promises the disciples that the person who believes in him will **do the works he does**, and will do **even greater works than Jesus did**, because he is going to the Father.

What are the **greater works** that Jesus speaks of, and how is this related to his going to the Father? It is clear from both 7:39 and 16:7 that the Holy Spirit will not come until Jesus has departed. After Pentecost and the coming of the Spirit to indwell believers in a permanent relationship, believers will be empowered to perform **even greater works** than those Jesus did during his earthly ministry. When we examine the early chapters of Acts we find that from a numerical standpoint, the works of Peter and the other Apostles surpassed those of Jesus in a single day (the day of Pentecost). On that day more were added to the church than had become followers of Jesus during the entire three years of his earthly ministry. And the message went forth not just in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, but to the farthest parts of the known world. It seems more probable that this is what Jesus meant by "greater works" than that he referred to greater works in the sense of "more spectacular miracles." Certainly miraculous works were performed by the Apostles as recounted in Acts, but these do not appear to have surpassed the works of Jesus himself in either scope or number.

**14:13-14** καὶ ὃ τι ἄν αἰτήσητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου τοῦτο ποιήσω What are we to make of verses 13-14, which appear to be a promise to grant **any request** so long as it is asked in Jesus' name? Similar statements appear in other places in the Last Discourse: 15:7, 15:16, 16:23, 16:24, and 16:26. The key to understanding this and similar statements lies in the phrase ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου: to ask in Jesus' name is to ask in his will, because it is to be **in union with him**. Brown offers a useful summary:

...Johannine theology has introduced into prayer in Jesus' name an emphasis that goes beyond the use of a formula. A Christian prays in Jesus' name in the sense that he is in

union with Jesus. Thus, the theme of asking “in my name” in xiv 13-14 continues and develops the indwelling motif of 10-11: because the Christian is in union with Jesus and Jesus is in union with the Father, there can be no doubt that the Christian’s requests will be granted.<sup>126</sup>

### 5 E Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to His disciples after His departure (14:15-31)

**14:15** τὰς ἐντολὰς τὰς ἐμὰς τηρήσετε· A close parallel is to be found in 1 John 5:3—”For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments....” This verse provides the transition between the promises of answered prayer which Jesus makes to his disciples in verses 13-14 and the promise of the Holy Spirit which is introduced in verse 16. **Obedience** is the proof of genuine love.

**14:16** ἄλλον παράκλητον Jesus says that in response to his disciples’ love, as shown by their continued obedience, he will ask the Father, who will send “**another paraclete**” (ἄλλον παράκλητον) who will be with them forever. This implies that a paraclete has **already** been with the disciples; it seems best to understand this as a reference to **Jesus himself**, since the **other** paraclete is coming when he departs. **1 John 2:1** presents Jesus as a paraclete in his role as intercessor in heaven; here the implication is that Jesus has also been a paraclete to the disciples during his earthly ministry. Much is often made of the use of ἄλλος here, that it should be understood to mean “another of the same kind”. It should be noted that not all commentators agree on a sharp distinction between the two words ἄλλος and ἕτερος in this context. But on the whole it may be said that Jesus, although he has not spoken of himself in the Fourth Gospel as a παράκλητος, has generally performed actions for his disciples which a παράκλητος would perform.<sup>127</sup>

The translation of παράκλητος into English as “**Comforter**” is traditional; apparently it is as old as J. Wycliffe. Most would agree that this is not the idea, but would not agree on how in fact it should be translated. One of the better suggestions is that made by E. J. Goodspeed who concludes that the word meant a person called to someone else’s aid in court, a helper, intercessor, pleader, or character witness.<sup>128</sup> ‘**Defender**’ comes very close to being equivalent, but more than just a defense witness is in view. Jesus’ statements about the coming paraclete teaching and reminding the disciples go beyond this meaning and call for a broader translation. Goodspeed suggests ‘**Helper**’ for a translation in the Fourth Gospel and ‘**one who will intercede for us**’ in 1 John 2:1.

εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἦ Note that the Paraclete, when he comes to the disciples, will remain with them **forever**. The statement is indicative of a permanent presence.

**14:17** τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας Here Jesus describes the Paraclete as “the Spirit of truth”. Since according to 16:13 it is the Spirit who **reveals** truth to the disciples after Jesus’ departure, it is best to see the genitive here as **descriptive** of a characteristic: it is the Spirit who **produces or communicates truth** to the disciples.

ὃ Although **neuter** pronouns are used to refer to the Spirit in this verse, agreeing with the gender of πνεῦμα, later in the Gospel **masculine** pronouns are used (*constructio ad sensum*) at 15:26, 16:7, 8, 13, and 14.

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<sup>126</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 636.

<sup>127</sup> For more discussion of the debate over whether Jesus is the “other” paraclete, see Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 648, note 42.

<sup>128</sup> E. J. Goodspeed, *Problems of New Testament Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1945) 110 ff.

ὁ κόσμος οὐ δύναται λαβεῖν The world will not be able to receive the Spirit, because it neither sees him nor knows him, but the disciples know him, because he remains **with** them and will be **in** them. Both γινώσκετε and μένει are present tense, but we should probably understand these as **futuristic presents**.<sup>129</sup>

**14:18** ἔρχομαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς Jesus has spoken in 14:3 of going away and coming again to his disciples. There, as we saw, the reference was **both** to the parousia and to the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus to the disciples. Here it is probable that **the post-resurrection appearances** are primarily in view, since Jesus speaks of the disciples “seeing” him after the world can “see” him no longer in the **following** verse.

But many commentators have taken verse 18 as a reference to **the coming of the Spirit**, since this has been the topic of the **preceding** verses. Still, verses 19 and 20 appear to contain references to Jesus’ appearances to the disciples after his resurrection. It may well be that another **Johannine double meaning** is to be found here, so that it is true that Jesus ‘returns’ to his disciples in one sense in that he appeared to them after his resurrection, but in another sense he ‘returns’ in the person of the Holy Spirit to indwell them.

**14:19** ὅτι ἐγὼ ζῶ καὶ ὑμεῖς ζήσετε Because Jesus “**lives**” after his death, his followers are assured that they too will “**live**” in the same sense that he does. This involves both (1) the experience of “eternal life” already in this life (cf. 5:24) and (2) the experience of “eternal life” in the life to come.

**14:20** ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ This could be a reference to the **parousia**. But the statement in 14:19, that the world will **not** see Jesus, does not fit. It is better to take this as the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus to his disciples (which has the advantage of taking μικρόν in verse 19 literally).

Compare the statement in Acts 10:40-41: “God made him manifest, **not to all the people, but to us who were chosen as witnesses.**”

**14:21** ὁ δὲ ἀγαπῶν με ἀγαπηθήσεται ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς μου Remember that this is in a context of discipleship (or what we might call **extended relationship** with the Father and the Son). Keeping Jesus’ commandments is not here made a condition of salvation. **Obedience is simply the proof of love.**

**14:22** ἡμῖν μέλλεις ἐμφανίζειν σεαυτὸν The statement by Jesus raises a question from Judas (not Judas Iscariot—he has already departed in 13:30). Judas (and probably the other disciples as well) cannot understand what has happened that Jesus is going to **manifest himself** to them and not to the world. We should probably take this as an indication that the disciples, on the night before the crucifixion, **still did not understand** what lay ahead, and were expecting Jesus to reveal himself to the nation and the world as Messiah.

**14:23-24** ἐάν τις ἀγαπᾷ με τὸν λόγον μου τηρήσει As Jesus has done before in the Fourth Gospel (3:5, 4:13), he does not answer the question posed by Judas directly. What he says, however, when properly understood, does constitute an answer. He explains what he meant in verses 19-21 about manifesting himself to the disciples and not to the world, and expands it to include his earlier statement to Philip in verse 9, “he who has seen me has seen the Father.” To the person who **loves** Jesus, as demonstrated by his keeping of Jesus’ words, both **Jesus** and the **Father** will come and take up **permanent residence** (μονήν παρ’ αὐτῷ ποιησόμεθα). Conversely in verse 24, lack of love is indicated by lack of obedience, and once again Jesus affirms that his words have not originated with himself but with the Father.

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<sup>129</sup> See BDF §323.

**14:25** Ταῦτα λελάληκα These words by Jesus recur six more times in the Last Discourse, in 15:11, 16:1, 16:4, 16:6, 16:25, and 16:33.

**14:26** ὁ δὲ παράκλητος, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον Here the **Paraclete** is specifically identified as the **Holy Spirit** whom the Father will send in Jesus' name. The ministries of the Paraclete are described as **teaching** the disciples all things and **reminding** them of all the things Jesus said to them. "**All things**" may refer, as Morris suggests, to "all you will ever need to know."<sup>130</sup> However, in light of the connection with "all the things" Jesus said to them, it is more likely that the teaching function of the Holy Spirit **is not intended to reveal exhaustive truth to the disciples, but rather the full significance of what Jesus did and said while he was with them.** In this sense the second clause is parallel and exegetical or explanatory to the first.

**14:27** Εἰρήνην ἀφίημι ὑμῖν In spite of appearances, this verse does not introduce a new subject (**peace**). Jesus will use the phrase as a greeting to his disciples after his resurrection (20:19, 21, 26). It is here a reflection of the Hebrew שָׁלוֹם (*shalom*) as a farewell. But Jesus says he **leaves** peace with his disciples. We should probably understand this in terms of **the indwelling of the Paraclete**, the Holy Spirit, which has been the topic of the preceding verses. It is his presence, after Jesus has left the disciples, which will remain with them and comfort them.

**14:28** ὑπάγω καὶ ἔρχομαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς Jesus refers once again to his upcoming **departure** and **return** to the disciples, a topic he mentioned in 14:3 and returned to in 14:18-20 (see above, verse 18 and following).

ὅτι ὁ πατὴρ μείζων μου ἐστίν This phrase has caused much christological and trinitarian debate. Although the Arians appealed to this text to justify their subordinationist christology, it seems evident that by the fact Jesus **compares** himself to the Father, his divine nature is taken for granted. There have been two orthodox interpretations:

- The Son is **eternally generated** while the Father is not: Origen, Tertullian, Athanasius, Hilary, etc.
- As **man** the incarnate Son was **less** than the Father: Cyril of Alexandria, Ambrose, Augustine.

In the context of the Fourth Gospel the second explanation seems more plausible. But **why should the disciples have rejoiced?** Because Jesus is on the way to the Father who will **glorify** him (cf. 17:4-5). During his mission on earth he is **less** than the One who sent him, but his departure now signifies that the work the Father has given him is completed (cf. 19:30). Now Jesus will be glorified with **that glory that he had with the Father before the world was** (cf. 17:5). This should be a cause of **rejoicing** to the disciples because when Jesus is glorified **he will glorify his disciples as well** (17:22).

**14:29** ἵνα ὅταν γένηται πιστεύσητε Jesus tells the disciples that he has told them all these things before they happen, so that when they do come to pass the disciples will **believe**. We are not to understand this as if they had not believed prior to this time; over and over the Evangelist has affirmed that they have (cf. 2:11 etc.). But when they see these things happen, **their level of trust in Jesus will increase and their concept of who he is will expand.** The confession of Thomas in 20:28 is representative of this increased understanding of who Jesus is.

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<sup>130</sup> Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 656.

**14:30** οὐκέτι πολλὰ λαλήσω μεθ' ὑμῶν Jesus does not have much more to say to them. Although this would certainly suit the end of the Discourse, it does not (as some who wish to rearrange chapters 13-17 maintain) require it. The reason Jesus gives that he does not have much more to say is that the **ruler of the world** is coming. Jesus has already used the descriptive title ὁ τοῦ κόσμου ἄρχων in 12:31 to refer to Satan. The soldiers and Judas who are coming to arrest Jesus represent the coming of the Evil One, and it is possible in light of the statement in 13:27 (that Satan “entered into” Judas) that for the Evangelist, **the coming of Judas indicates the coming of Satan himself.**

**14:31** ἐγείρεσθε, ἄγωμεν ἐντεῦθεν Some have taken it that at this point Jesus and the disciples **get up and leave the room** where the meal was served and begin the journey to the garden of Gethsemane. If so, the rest of the Last Discourse takes place **en route**. This is possible, but not really necessary. Jesus could simply have **stood up** at this point (the disciples may or may not have stood with him) to finish the discourse before departing (in 18:1). In any case it may be argued that Jesus’ refers not to a literal departure at this point, but to **preparing to meet the Enemy who is on the way already in the person of Judas and the soldiers with him.**

## Chapter 15

### OUTLINE:

- [4 A The Book of Glory: Jesus accomplishes his return to the Father (13:1-20:31)]
  - [2 B The Last Supper: Jesus prepares his disciples for his departure (13:2-17:26)]
    - [2 C The Last Discourse (13:31-17:26)]
      - 2 D The relationship of the disciples to Jesus and to the world after his departure (15:1-16:33)
        - 1 E Jesus exhorts his disciples to remain in him as the True Vine (15:1-17)
          - 1 F The Vine and the branches (15:1-10)
            - 2 F The elevation in status of the disciples: from slaves to friends (15:11-17)

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### DETAILED EXEGETICAL NOTES:

- 2 D The relationship of the disciples to Jesus and to the world after his departure (15:1-16:33)
    - 1 E Jesus exhorts his disciples to remain in him as the True Vine (15:1-17)
- A Note on the Background of the Vine and Branches Imagery:*

There are numerous Old Testament passages which refer to **Israel** as a vine: Ps 80:8-16, Isa 5:1-7, Jer 2:21, Ezek 15:1-8, 17:5-10, 19:10-14, and Hos 10:1. The vine became symbolic of Israel, and even appeared on some coins issued by the Maccabees.

The Old Testament passages which use this symbol appear to regard Israel as faithless to Yahweh and/or the object of severe punishment. Ezek 15:1-8 in particular talks about the worthlessness of wood from a vine (in relation to disobedient Judah). A branch cut from a vine is worthless except to be burned as fuel. This appears to fit more with the statements about the disciples than with Jesus' description of himself as the vine.

Ezek 17:5-10 contains vine imagery which refers to a **king of the house of David**, Zedekiah, who was set up as king in Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah allied himself to Egypt and broke his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar (and therefore also with God), which would ultimately result in his downfall (17:20-21). Ezek 17:22-24 then describes the planting of a cedar sprig which grows into a lofty tree, a figurative description of Messiah. But it is significant that **Messiah himself** is not described in Ezekiel 17 as a **vine**, but as a cedar tree. The vine imagery here applies to Zedekiah's disobedience.

### 1 F The Vine and the branches (15:1-10)

**15:1** Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἄμπελος ἡ ἀληθινὴ Jesus' description of himself as the "**true Vine**" in John 15:1 ff. is to be seen against this background, but it differs significantly from the imagery we have surveyed above. It represents **new imagery which differs significantly from OT concepts**; it appears to be original with Jesus. The imagery of the vine underscores the importance of fruitfulness in the Christian life and the truth that this results not from human achievement, but from one's position in Christ. Jesus is not just giving some comforting advice, but portraying to the disciples the difficult path of faithful service. To some degree the figure is similar to the Head-Body metaphor used by Paul, with Christ as Head and believers as members of the Body. Both metaphors bring out **the vital and necessary connection which exists between Christ and believers**.

ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ γεωργός ἐστίν Notice Jesus' characteristic reference to the **Father**. Jesus is never portrayed as independent from his Father in the Gospel of John; they are always co-operating in every activity (cf. 5:19-23).

#### *A Note on the Use of Ἐγώ εἰμι in 15:1 and 15:5:*

Once again we have another of the Ἐγώ εἰμι statements of the Fourth Gospel. It occurs with a predicate as also in 6:35 and 6:48 ("I am the Bread of Life"), 8:12 ("I am the Light of the world"), 10:7 and 10:9 ("I am the Door"), 10:11 and 10:14 ("I am the Good Shepherd"), 11:25 ("I am the Resurrection and the Life"), 14:6 ("I am the Way"), and here and 15:5 ("I am the Vine"). Only in the last two uses (here in chapter 15) is there further development of the affirmation by additional predication: "my Father is the gardener" in 15:1 and "you are the branches" in 15:5. The stress in all these statements where predicates are included is not solely on the "I," because the predicate in each instance tells something about what Jesus is in relation to mankind. Each affirmation tells something of what was involved in the Father's sending of the Son into the world. Jesus appears in these statements as **the source of eternal life** (resurrection, life, vine), as **the means of entry into life** (door, way), as **the guide who leads people to life** (shepherd), as **the source of nourishment for eternal life** (bread), and as **the illumination which lights the way in the darkness** (light).<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> For fuller discussion of the Ἐγώ εἰμι statements of the Fourth Gospel see Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, Appendix IV, 533-38.

**15:2** πᾶν κλῆμα...μὴ φέρον καρπὸν αἶρω αὐτό The verb αἶρω can mean “**lift up**” as well as “**take away**,” and it is sometimes argued that here it is a reference to the gardener “lifting up” (i.e., propping up) a weak branch so that it bears fruit again. In Johannine usage the word occurs in the sense of “lift up” in 8:59 and 5:8-12, but in the sense of “remove” it is found in 11:39, 11:48, 16:22, and 17:15. In context (theological presuppositions aside for the moment) the meaning “**remove**” does seem more natural and less forced (particularly in light of verse 6, where worthless branches are described as being “cast out”—an image that seems incompatible with restoration).

One option, therefore, would be to understand the branches which are taken away (verse 2) and thrown out (verse 6) as **believers who forfeit their salvation because of unfruitfulness**. This interpretation encounters problems with the Johannine teaching on the security of the believer, however, especially 10:28-29. Thus it is appropriate to turn to other possibilities for the meaning of the removal of branches.

This leaves two basic ways of understanding Jesus’ statements in 15:2 and 15:6 :

- These statements may refer to **an unfaithful (disobedient) Christian**, who is judged at the judgment seat of Christ “through fire” (cf. 1 Cor 3:11-15). In this case the “removal” of 15:2 may refer (in an extreme case) to the physical death of a disobedient Christian.
- These statements may refer to someone who was **never a genuine believer** in the first place (e.g., Judas and the Jews who withdrew after Jesus’ difficult teaching in 6:66), in which case 15:6 refers to eternal judgment.

#### **Evaluation:**

- In either instance it is clear that 15:6 refers to the fires of **judgment** (cf. OT imagery in Ps 80:16 and Ezek 15:1-8). But view (1) requires us to understand this in terms of the judgment of believers at the judgment seat of Christ. **This concept does not appear in the Fourth Gospel**, because from the perspective of the Evangelist, **the believer does not come under judgment**: note especially 3:18, 5:24, 5:29. The first reference (3:18) is especially important because it occurs in the context of 3:16-21, the section which is key to the framework of the entire Fourth Gospel and which is repeatedly alluded to throughout.
- A similar image to this one is used by John the Baptist in Matt 3:10— “And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; **every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.**” Since this is being addressed to the Pharisees and Sadducees who were coming to John for baptism, it almost certainly represents a call to initial repentance. More importantly, however, the imagery of being cast into the fire constitutes a reference to eternal judgment, a use of imagery which is much nearer to the Johannine imagery in 15:6 than the Pauline concept of the judgment seat of Christ (a judgment for believers) mentioned in point [a].
- The use of μένω in 15:6 also supports view (2). When used of the relationship between Jesus and the disciple and/or Jesus and the Father, it emphasizes the **permanence** of the relationship (6:56, 8:31, 8:35, 14:10). The branch who has **not remained** is **Judas**, who departed in 13:30. He did not bear fruit, and is now in the realm of darkness, a mere tool of Satan. His eternal destiny, being cast into the fire of eternal judgment, is still to come.

We conclude, therefore, that the branches who do not bear fruit and are taken away and burned are not genuine believers. They are those who profess some sort of allegiance to Jesus but who in reality do not belong to him. In the Gospel of John, the primary example of this category is **Judas**. In 1 John 2:18-19 the “antichrists” fall into the same category; they too may be thought of as branches that did not bear fruit. They departed from the ranks of the Christians because they never did really belong, and their departure **shows** that they did not belong.

πᾶν τὸ καρπὸν φέρον καθαίρει αὐτὸ Consistent with our conclusions above, this statement would then refer to **the Father’s work in the lives of believers** to make them more “productive.” Καθαίρει is not the word we would have expected here, but it provides the transition from the vine imagery to the disciples—



there is a word-play (not reproduceable in English) between αἶρει and καθαίρει in this verse. While the **purpose** of the Father in cleansing his people is clear, the precise **means** by which he does so is not immediately obvious. This will become clearer, however, in the following verse.

**15:3** ἤδη ὑμεῖς καθαροί ἐστε Now it becomes clear what καθαίρει in the preceding verse means: it refers to cleansing from **sin**. This phrase occurs elsewhere in the Gospel of John **only at the washing of the disciples' feet in 13:10**, where Jesus has used it of the disciples being cleansed from sin. There we also find further confirmation for our understanding of 15:2 and 6 (discussed above) since **Judas is specifically excluded** from this statement.

**15:4** μείνατε ἐν ἐμοί How are we to understand the imperative and the statement by Jesus about himself which follows it? Morris takes the following statement as a continuation of the command: “Remain in me, and see that I remain in you.”<sup>132</sup> However, the Evangelist has used a **conditional imperative** in a similar construction before, in 2:19: “Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” It seems best to understand the same conditional force here: “**If you remain in me, then I also will remain in you.**” The point is that the relationship between Jesus and the disciple is reciprocal: if as genuine believers they remain in him, then he promises to remain in them also.

τὸ κλῆμα οὐ δύναται καρπὸν φέρειν ἄφ' ἑαυτοῦ The branches will produce nothing unless they remain connected to the vine, from which their life and sustenance flows. As far as the disciples are concerned, **they will produce no fruit from themselves if they do not remain in their relationship to Jesus**, because the eternal life which a disciple must possess if he is to bear fruit originates with him; **he is the source of all life and productivity for the disciple.**

**15:5** οὗτος φέρει καρπὸν πολύν What is the **fruit** mentioned here and in 15:2, 4, and 8? One's initial impression is to interpret the imagery in terms of **good deeds** or **character qualities**, relating it to passages elsewhere in the NT like Matt 3:8 and 7:20, Rom 6:22, Gal 5:22, etc. This is not necessarily inaccurate, but we must remember that for John, to have life **at all** is to bear fruit, while one who does not bear fruit shows that he does not have the life (once again, **conduct** is the clue to paternity, as in 8:41; compare also 1 John 4:20—“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen”).

**15:6** συνάγουσιν...βάλλουσιν The general meaning of this verse was discussed under verse 2 above. We are not told **who it is** who does the gathering and casting into the fire, but it is probable in light of the passives ἐβλήθη and ἐξηράνθη that συνάγουσιν and βάλλουσιν are **actives substituted for passives**. Although some claim that **realized eschatology** is so prevalent in the Fourth Gospel that no references to final eschatology appear at all, the fate of these branches seems to point to the opposite. The imagery is almost certainly that of **eschatological judgment**, and recalls some of the OT vine imagery which involves divine rejection and judgment of disobedient Israel (Ezek 15:4-6, 19:12).

**15:7** ὃ ἐὰν θέλητε αἰτήσασθε Jesus is addressing his own again, the **disciples** from whom the traitor Judas has already departed (13:30). They are **already clean** (cf. 13:10). Thus there is a change to a more positive note from the “**if anyone**” (ἐὰν...τις) of verse 6 to “**if you**” (ἐὰν μείνητε) in the present verse. Once again Jesus promises the disciples that they may **ask whatever they will**, and it will be done for them. This recalls 14:13-14, where the disciples were promised that if they asked anything **in Jesus' name** it

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<sup>132</sup> Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 670.

would be done for them. The two thoughts are really quite similar, since here it is conditioned upon the disciples' **remaining in Jesus** and **his words remaining in them**. According to our understanding of μένω in the Gospel of John and the Johannine Epistles (see the discussion under verse 2 above) the first phrase relates to the **genuineness of their relationship with Jesus**. The second phrase relates to their **obedience**. When both of these qualifications are met, the disciples would in fact be **asking in Jesus' name** and therefore according to his will.

**15:8** ἵνα καρπὸν πολὺν φέρητε How are we to understand the ἵνα-clause? It is best to take it as **substantival in apposition** to ἐν τούτῳ at the beginning of the verse. The Father is glorified when the disciples bring forth abundant fruit. Just as Jesus has done the works which he has seen his Father doing (5:19-29) so also will his disciples.

γένησθε [γενήσεσθε] The original reading is difficult to determine, because the external evidence is rather evenly divided. The aorist subjunctive γένησθε is supported by most Alexandrian manuscripts including (apparently) ⲡ<sup>66</sup>, along with the Western uncial D. The future indicative γενήσεσθε is supported by Ⲭ and the majority of manuscripts of the Byzantine text-type (Ⲙ). On the basis of the external evidence alone the second reading has some credibility because of the unusual alliance between Ⲭ and the Byzantine text. Some who accept the future indicative see a consecutive (or resultative) sequence between φέρητε in the ἵνα-clause and γενήσεσθε, so that the disciples' bearing much fruit **results** in their becoming disciples. It seems more likely, however, that the second verb (regardless of whether it is read as aorist or future) is to be understood as coordinate in **meaning** with the previous verb φέρητε.<sup>133</sup> **Thus the two actions are really one and the same: bearing fruit and being Jesus' disciple are not two different actions, but a single action.** The first is the outward sign or proof of the second—in bearing fruit the disciples show themselves to be disciples indeed (cf. 15:5). As far as the textual reading is concerned, it appears preferable to accept the aorist subjunctive reading (γένησθε).

**15:9-10** μέινετε ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ τῇ ἐμῇ Jesus begins in verse 9 by affirming his love for the disciples (comparing it to the Father's love for him). He then commands the disciples to **remain** (μεῖναι) in his love (cf. 15:4). In verse 10 Jesus goes on to explain what he means by remaining in his love: it is indicated by **obedience to his commands. Obedience and love are inseparably linked and are mutually dependent upon one another.** A similar idea may be seen in 1 John 4:20 ("If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen"), when we realize that loving one's brother involves obeying the command to "love one another" (John 13:34, 15:12, 17). Thus 1 John 4:20 is really addressing an attempt to **separate** obedience to God's commands and love for God, much as Jesus is talking about **keeping his commandments** and **remaining in his love** being interrelated here.

καθὼς ἐγὼ τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ πατρὸς μου τηρήρηκα... Jesus illustrates his statements to the disciples about **the interrelationship of love and obedience** by comparing their love for him and obedience to his commands to his love for the Father and his obedience to the Father's commands.

## 2 F The elevation in status of the disciples: from slaves to friends (15:11-17)

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<sup>133</sup> M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963), §342.

**15:11** ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡ ἐμὴ ἐν ὑμῖν ᾗ The **purpose** for Jesus saying these things to the disciples is so that his joy may reside in them and their joy may be complete. Although it is mentioned only in passing here, the theme of **joy** will be resumed again at greater length in 16:20-24.

**15:12** Αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολὴ ἡ ἐμὴ Now the reference to the **commandments** (plural) in 15:10 have been reduced to a singular **commandment**: the disciples are to **love one another**, just as Jesus has loved them. This is the **new commandment** of 13:34, and it is repeated in 15:17. The disciples' love for one another is compared to Jesus' love for them. **How has Jesus shown his love for the disciples?** This was illustrated in 13:1-20 in the washing of the disciples' feet, introduced by the statement in 13:1 that Jesus loved them to the **end** (εἰς τέλος ἠγάπησεν). In the Notes on 13:1 it was explained how in context this constitutes a reference to **Jesus' self-sacrificial death on the cross on their behalf**; the love they are to have for one another is so great that it must include a self-sacrificial willingness to die for one another if necessary. This is exactly what Jesus is discussing here, because he introduces the theme of his sacrificial death in the following verse. In 10:18 and 14:31 Jesus spoke of his death on the cross as a **commandment** he had received from his Father, which also links the idea of **commandment** and **love** as they are linked here.

One final note: it is not just the **degree** or **intensity** of the disciples' love for one another that Jesus is referring to when he introduces by comparison his own death on the cross (that they must love one another **enough** to die for one another) but the very **means** of expressing that love: it is to express itself in **self-sacrifice** for one another, sacrifice up to the point of death, which is what Jesus himself did on the cross (cf. 1 John 3:16).

**15:13** ἵνα τις τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ θῆ In the context this must refer primarily to Jesus' own self-sacrificial death on the cross on behalf of his followers, whom he will describe in the next verse as his **friends**. Some have questioned whether love for enemies is not greater than love for friends, but that is not the point here, since in the context in which Jesus is speaking these words only **friends** are present (recall that Judas departed in 13:30).

**15:14** ὑμεῖς φίλοι μου ἐστε This verse really explains 15:10 in another way. Those who **keep Jesus' commandments** are called his **friends**, those friends for whom he lays down his life (verse 13). It is possible to understand this verse as referring to a **smaller group** within Christianity as a whole, perhaps only the **apostles** who were present when Jesus spoke these words. Some have supported this by comparing it to the small group of associates and advisors to the Roman Emperor who were called "**Friends of the Emperor**." Others would see these words as addressed **only** to those Christians who as disciples were **obedient** to Jesus. In either case the result would be to create a sort of "inner circle" of Christians who are more privileged than mere "believers" or average Christians. In context, it seems clear that Jesus' words must be addressed to **all** true Christians, not just some narrower category of believers, because **Jesus' sacrificial death, which is his act of love toward his friends** (verse 13) **applies to all Christians equally** (cf. 13:1).

**15:15** οὐκέτι λέγω ὑμᾶς δούλους There is a sense in which the follower of Jesus may legitimately be thought of as a **servant** (δοῦλος); this is what Jesus in Luke 17:10 taught the disciples to call themselves, and this is a term which Paul commonly applies to himself and to others in his letters. But here Jesus is talking about more than just **service rendered**; here he is talking about **intimacy with God**. From this perspective the Christian is far more than just a servant, because he has been taken into God's confidence in an **intimate relationship** (cf. 1:12 in the Prologue, along with 1:18). Everything Jesus has heard from his Father he has passed along to the disciples. Thus they have a privileged relationship with him and with the Father; they are no longer servants but friends (see the note above on the previous verse).

**15:16** ἀλλ’ ἐγὼ ἐξελεξάμην ὑμᾶς If the disciples are now elevated in status from servants to friends, they are **friends who have been chosen by Jesus**, rather than the opposite way round. Again this is true of **all** Christians, not just the Twelve, and the theme that Christians are “chosen” by God appears frequently in other NT texts (e.g., Rom 8:33; Eph 1:4ff.; Col 3:12; and 1 Peter 2:4). Putting this together with the comments on 15:14 we may ask whether the Evangelist sees **any special significance at all for the Twelve**. Jesus has said in 6:70 and 13:18 that he chose them, and 15:27 makes clear that Jesus in the immediate context is addressing those who have been with him **from the beginning**. It seems most probable that in the Fourth Gospel the Twelve, as the most intimate and most committed followers of Jesus, are presented as the **models** for all Christians, both in terms of their election and their mission.

ἵνα ὑμεῖς ὑπάγητε καὶ καρπὸν φέρητε The purpose for which the disciples were appointed (“commissioned”) is that they **go and bear fruit**, fruit which remains. The introduction of the idea of “going” at this point suggests that the fruit is **something more than just character qualities in the disciples’ own lives**, involving fruit in the lives of others, i.e., Christian converts. There is a **mission** involved (cf. 4:36). The idea that their fruit is **permanent**, however, relates back to verses 7 and 8, as does the reference to **asking the Father in Jesus’ name**. It appears that as the imagery of the Vine and the branches develops, the “fruit” which the branches produce shifts in **emphasis** from **qualities in the disciples’ own lives** in 15:2, 4, 5 to the idea of **a mission which affects the lives of others** in 15:16. The point of transition would be the reference to fruit in 15:8.

**15:17** ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους This verse is a restatement of the idea of 15:12 (see discussion above). This brings to a close the parable of the Vine and the branches.

## 2 E The hatred of the world for Jesus and his disciples (15:18-16:4a)

**15:18** Εἰ ὁ κόσμος ὑμᾶς μισεῖ In contrast to Jesus’ love for his disciples is the world’s hatred for them. There is no doubt at all that the world **will** hate the disciples of Jesus; as E. Hoskyns states, “The implacable hatred of the World for the friends of Jesus is the sign of the verity of that friendship.”<sup>134</sup> Or as R. Brown states, “To belong to Jesus is not to belong to the world, and the world can love only what belongs to it.”<sup>135</sup> **There will be a point at which the disciples’ loving obedience to Jesus makes them so much like him, that the world will respond to them just as it responded to Jesus himself. This will mean persecution.** As L. Morris states, “It is not without its significance that the disciples are to be known by their love, the world by its hatred.”<sup>136</sup>

This same theme (the world’s hatred for Jesus, and because of their likeness to him, for his disciples as well) was foreshadowed by Jesus’ words to his unbelieving brothers in 7:7.

**15:19** ἀλλ’ ἐγὼ ἐξελεξάμην ὑμᾶς ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου Two themes are brought together here. In 8:23 Jesus had distinguished himself from the world in addressing his Jewish opponents: “You are from below, **I am from above**; you are of this world, **I am not of this world**.” In 15:16 Jesus told the disciples “You did not choose me, but **I chose you** and appointed you...”. Now Jesus has united these two ideas as he informs the disciples that **he has chosen them out of the world**. While the disciples will still be “in” the world after Jesus has departed, they will not **belong** to it, and Jesus prays later in 17:15-16 to the Father, “I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” The same theme also occurs in 1 John 4:5-6: “*They* are from the world; therefore *they*

<sup>134</sup> E. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, ed. F. N. Davey, 2d ed. (London: Faber, 1947), 479.

<sup>135</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 692.

<sup>136</sup> Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 678.

speak as from the world, and the world listens to *them*. *We* are from God; he who knows God listens to *us*; he who is not from God does not listen to *us*".

Thus the basic **reason** why the world hates the disciples (as it hated Jesus before them) is **because they are not of the world**. They are born from above, and are not of the world. For this reason the world hates them.

**15:20** οὐκ ἔστιν δοῦλος μείζων τοῦ κυρίου αὐτοῦ Jesus now recalls a statement he has made to the disciples before, in 13:16. **As the master has been treated, so will the servants be treated also**. If the world has persecuted Jesus, then it will also persecute the disciples. If the world has kept Jesus' word, it will likewise keep the word of the disciples. In this statement there is the implication that the disciples will carry on the ministry of Jesus after his departure; they will in their preaching and teaching continue to spread the message which Jesus himself had taught while he was with them. And they will meet with the same response, by and large, that he encountered.

**15:21** ὅτι οὐκ οἶδασιν τὸν πέμψαντά με Now the reason for the world's rejection of the disciples' message and its persecution of them becomes clear: **it is because they do not know the one who sent Jesus into the world**. In the final analysis it is the world's ignorance of God that causes them to respond to Jesus and to his followers so. Jesus came into the world to reveal the Father to men (1:18, 14:9); in rejecting him they have rejected the Father also. But had they known the Father (had they been open to revelation from God—had "the Jews" in 8:42 been true sons of Abraham—) then they would have received Jesus and his revelation of what God is like gladly. Instead they rejected him, and in so doing **showed that they did not know the one who sent him**. Here Jesus has extended to "the world" the same charge he made against "the Jews" in 5:37 and 7:28: **they are ignorant of God**.

**15:22** νῦν δὲ πρόφασιν οὐκ ἔχουσιν περὶ τῆς ἀμαρτίας αὐτῶν Jesus now describes the **guilt** of the world. He came to these people with both words (15:22) and sign-miracles (15:24), yet they have remained obstinate in their unbelief, and this sin of unbelief is **without excuse**. Jesus is not saying that if he had not come and spoken to these people they would be sinless; rather he is saying that **if he had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of the sin of rejecting him and the Father he came to reveal**. Rejecting Jesus is the **one ultimate sin** for which there can be no forgiveness, because the one who has committed this sin has at the same time rejected the only cure that exists. Jesus spoke similarly to the Pharisees in 9:41—"If you were blind, you would **have no sin** [same phrase as here], but now you say 'We see' **your sin remains**."

**15:23** ὁ ἐμὲ μισῶν... **Hatred** of Jesus amounts to **hatred** of his Father as well. The opposite was stated positively in 13:20.

**15:24** εἰ τὰ ἔργα μὴ ἐποίησα ἐν αὐτοῦς ἃ οὐδεὶς ἄλλος ἐποίησεν Jesus continues his description of the world's guilt for its rejection of him and the One who sent him. It seems that the **sign-miracles** he performed are particularly in view here. Had Jesus **not** done these things, which testified to who he was, the world would again **not** be guilty of rejecting him and the Father who sent him. **But now they have seen and rejected, and their sin remains upon them unatoned. The world has both seen and hated Jesus, and in him it has seen (and hated) the Father too**.

**15:25** ἵνα πληρωθῇ ὁ λόγος ὁ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ αὐτῶν γεγραμμένος... The ultimate reason for the world's rejection of Jesus and his revelation of the Father is found in the OT scriptures: the word which is **written in their law** must be fulfilled. As a technical term νόμος is usually restricted to the Pentateuch, but here it must have a broader reference, since the quotation is from Ps 35:19 or Ps 69:4. The latter is the more likely

source for the quoted words, since it is cited elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel (2:17 and 19:29, in both instances in contexts associated with Jesus' suffering and death).

**15:26-27** ὁ παράκλητος...ἐκεῖνος μαρτυρήσει περὶ ἐμοῦ· The world has rejected Jesus and the one who sent him, even though it has heard his words and seen his works. But when Jesus departs from the world, he will not leave it without a continuing **witness**. In fact, there will be two: the **Paraclete** whom Jesus will send will continue to testify concerning him (verse 26), and the **disciples** will also continue to testify to the world (verse 27). These two witnesses in combination will produce even further hatred and hostility by the world (16:1-4a).

ὄν ἐγὼ πέμψω ὑμῖν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς Jesus said in 14:16 that the **Father** would send the Paraclete in answer to Jesus' prayer, and in 14:26 Jesus said that the **Father** would send the Paraclete in Jesus' name. Now in 15:26 Jesus says that **he himself will send the Paraclete from the Father**. What are we to make of these seeming discrepancies in the accounts? They are probably merely indicative of the intimate union between the Father and the Son—the two are so closely identified in their activities in sending the Paraclete that this degree of interchange is possible.

ὃ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται What does this phrase say about the **eternal procession** of the Holy Spirit? Probably not too much—the context is not concerned with the eternal mutual interrelationships of the persons of the Trinity, but with **the continuation of the mission of the Son** once he has departed from the world. B. F. Westcott is most likely correct when he states that had the eternal procession of the Spirit been in view here, the preposition used would have been ἐκ, indicating **source**, rather than παρὰ, which indicates **relationship** (cf. 1:1).<sup>137</sup> The preposition παρὰ is used in 16:27 and 17:8 to describe the mission of the **Son**.

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<sup>137</sup> B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 224-25.

## Chapter 16

### OUTLINE:

- [3 A The Book of Glory: Jesus accomplishes his return to the Father (13:1-20:31)]
  - [2 B The Last Supper: Jesus prepares his disciples for his departure (13:2-17:26)]
    - [2 C The Last Discourse (13:31-17:26)]
      - 2 D The relationship of the disciples to Jesus and to the world after his departure (15:1-16:33)
        - [1 E Jesus exhorts his disciples to remain in him as the True Vine (15:1-17)]
        - 2 E The hatred of the world for Jesus and his disciples (15:18-16:4a)
        - 3 E The coming of the Holy Spirit: his work (16:4b-15)
          - 1 F The Holy Spirit's work with respect to the world (16:4b-11)
          - 2 F The Holy Spirit's work with respect to the disciples (16:12-15)
        - 4 E Jesus' return to his disciples will cause their sadness to turn to joy (16:16-24)
        - 5 E The disciples claim to understand who Jesus is and from whence he has come (16:25-33)

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### DETAILED EXEGETICAL NOTES:

*Introduction:* Chapter 16 does not begin with a clear break in thought from the preceding chapter. As the outline indicates, the section which began in 15:18 continues through 16:4a. The theme of the world's hatred for the disciples and its persecution of them which Jesus discussed in 15:18-25 reappears here, after the interlude in 15:26-27 which introduced the work of the Holy Spirit in the world, who will bear witness concerning Jesus to the world. In 15:18-25 the primary emphasis was on the world's hatred for the

disciples, which stands in stark contrast to Jesus' love for them in 15:11-17. In 15:27 the disciples also are told that they will bear witness to Jesus, and now 16:1-4a picks up this theme as Jesus tells them the things the world will do to them to eliminate their witness.

## **2 E The hatred of the world for Jesus and his disciples (15:18-16:4a)**

**16:1** Ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν This phrase occurs seven times in the Last Discourse, in 14:25, 15:11, here in 16:1, 16:4, 16:6, 16:25, and 16:33. Here and in 16:4 Jesus gives the purpose for his telling the disciples about coming persecution. He does so in order that when it happens, the disciples “may not be caused to stumble” (μὴ σκανδαλισθῆτε) which in this context would refer to the confusion and doubt which they would certainly experience when such persecution began. There may have been a tendency for the disciples to expect immediately after Jesus' victory over death the institution of the millennium, particularly in light of the turn of events recorded in the early chapters of Acts. Jesus here forestalls such disillusionment for the disciples by letting them know in advance that they will face persecution and even martyrdom as they seek to carry on his mission in the world after his departure. It is also clear that, whatever the disciples may have thought about the course of future events, Jesus himself is well aware of the future course of history, even beyond the cross (which he has mentioned many times in the Fourth Gospel).

**16:2** ἔρχεται ὥρα Jesus now refers not to “his hour” as he has frequently done up to this point, but to the disciples' hour. They will be excommunicated from Jewish synagogues. There will even be a time when those who kill Jesus' disciples will think that they are offering service to God by putting the disciples to death. Because of the reference to service offered to God, it is almost certain that Jesus has in mind Jewish opposition here in both cases rather than Jewish opposition in the first instance (putting the disciples out of synagogues) and Roman opposition in the second (putting the disciples to death). Such opposition materializes later and is recorded in Acts: the stoning of Stephen in 7:58-60 and the slaying of James the brother of John by Herod Agrippa I in Acts 12:2-3 are notable examples.

**16:3** ὅτι οὐκ ἔγνωσαν... The reason why those of the world will persecute the disciples so thoroughly is because they do not know either Jesus or the Father. Ignorance of Jesus and ignorance of the Father are also linked in 8:19; to know Jesus would be to know the Father also, but since the world does not know Jesus, neither does it know his Father. The world's ignorance of the Father is also mentioned in 8:55, 15:21, and 17:25.

**16:4a** ἀλλὰ ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν The first half of verse 4 resumes the statement of 16:1, ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν, in a somewhat more positive fashion, omitting the reference to the disciples being caused to stumble. Instead, Jesus tells the disciples that he has informed them of these things so that when the hour of persecution comes, they will remember that he had foretold them. He did not want them to be taken by surprise.

## **3 E The coming of the Holy Spirit: his work (16:4b-15)**

### **1 F The Holy Spirit's work with respect to the world (16:4b-11)**

**16:4b** Ταῦτα δὲ ὑμῖν ἐξ ἀρχῆς οὐκ εἶπον This verse serves as a transition between the preceding discussion of the persecutions the disciples will face in the world after the departure of Jesus, and the following discussion concerning the departure of Jesus and the coming of the Paraclete. Jesus had not told the disciples these things from the beginning because he was with them. As Jesus goes on to explain in the following verse, he is going to depart and return to the Father who sent him, so he must now inform the disciples of these things.



**16:5** ὑπάγω Now the theme of Jesus' impending departure is resumed. It will also be mentioned in verses 10, 17, and 28 of this chapter. Jesus had said to his opponents in 7:33 that he was going to the one who sent him; in 13:33 he had spoken of going where the disciples could not come. At that point Peter had inquired where he was going, but it appears that Peter did not understand Jesus' reply at that time and did not persist in further questioning. In 14:5 Thomas had asked Jesus where he was going.

Νῦν δὲ ὑπάγω Now, in contrast to these former questions, none of the disciples asks Jesus where he is going, and the reason is given in the following verse: grief has overcome the disciples as a result of the predictions of coming persecution that Jesus has just spoken to them in 15:18-25 and 16:1-4a. Their shock at Jesus' revelation of coming persecution is so great that none of them thinks to ask him where it is that he is going.

**16:6** ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν On this phrase see the note at 16:1 above.

**16:7** συμφέρει ὑμῖν ἵνα ἐγὼ ἀπέλθω Jesus now tells the disciples that in fact it is better for them if he goes away. They must have seen Jesus' talk of departure (verse 5) as a disaster for themselves, and this added to their grief (verse 6) at the thought of persecution. Again this thought resumes an earlier statement by Jesus in 14:28, "If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father." There we pointed out that Jesus' return to the Father signified the completion of his work and his glorification by the Father (cf. 17:5). The disciples should see this as a cause of rejoicing because when Jesus is glorified he will glorify them too, as he later informs them (17:22). Here it is better for the disciples if Jesus goes away not because he will glorify them if he does, but because of the sending of the Paraclete to be with them.

ἐὰν γὰρ μὴ ἀπέλθω, ὁ παράκλητος οὐκ ἐλεύσεται πρὸς ὑμᾶς Why must Jesus go away before the Paraclete can come to the disciples? In 7:39 the Evangelist noted that the Spirit was not yet [given] because Jesus had not yet been glorified. Jesus' glorification, as we have discussed before, consists in his death on the cross as well as his resurrection, ascension, and exaltation in the presence of the Father. It is Jesus who must go in order to send the Spirit (πέμψω αὐτὸν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, here in 16:7), but it is also the Spirit who is to take the place of Jesus here on earth (cf. 15:26).

But why is it better for the disciples to have the presence of the Paraclete than the presence of Jesus himself as they do now? Because the Paraclete will not only be with them as Jesus has been, but *in* them as well (cf. 17:23, 26).

**16:8** ἐκεῖνος ἐλέγξει τὸν κόσμον... Jesus now tells his disciples that when the Paraclete comes, he will convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. Περί is used in 16:8-11 in the sense of "concerning" or "with respect to". But what about the verb ἐλέγχω? The basic meanings possible for this word are (1) "to convict or convince someone of something"; (2) "to bring to light or expose something"; and (3) "to correct or punish someone". The third possibility may be ruled out in these verses on contextual grounds since punishment is not implied. The meaning is often understood to be that the Paraclete will "convince" the world of its error, so that some at least will repent. But S. Mowinckel ["Die Vorstellungen des Spätjudentums vom heiligen Geist als Fürsprecher und der johanneische Paraklet," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 32 (1933): 97-130] has demonstrated that the verb ἐλέγχω does not necessarily imply the conversion or reform of the guilty party. This means it is far more likely that we are looking at conviction in more of a legal sense here (as in a trial). The only certainty is that the accused party is indeed proven guilty. Further confirmation of this interpretation is seen in 14:17 where it is stated that the world cannot receive the Paraclete and in 3:20, where it is said that the evildoer deliberately refuses to come to the light, lest his deeds be exposed for what they really are (significantly, the verb in 3:20 is also ἐλέγχω).

However, if we wish to adopt the meaning “prove guilty” for the use of ἐλέγχω in 16:8 we are still left with a difficulty: while this meaning fits the first statement in 16:9—the world is ‘proven guilty’ concerning its sin of refusing to believe in Jesus—it does not fit so well the second and third assertions in verses 10 and 11. R. Brown (AB 29a, 705) argues that the meaning of ἐλέγχω must be similar in all three of the phrases and suggests the more general meaning ‘prove wrong’ which would fit in all three cases. This may be so, but there may also be a developmental aspect to the meaning, which would then shift from verse 9 to verse 10 to verse 11. (This discussion continues in the Notes on the following verses.)

**16:9** ὅτι οὐ πιστεύουσιν εἰς ἐμέ The three functions of the Paraclete introduced in verse 8 are elaborated in the following three verses (9-11). It is difficult to determine whether ὅτι should be understood as causal or appositional/explanatory: Brown and Bultmann favor the latter, while Barrett and Morris prefer the former. I suspect that if we are forced to choose, a causal idea would be preferable here, since it also fits the parallel statements in verses 10 and 11 better than an appositional or explanatory use would. In this case Jesus is stating in each instance the reason why the world is proven guilty or wrong by the Paraclete.

Here in verse 9 the world is proven guilty concerning sin, and the reason given is their refusal to believe in Jesus. In 3:19 the effect of Jesus coming into the world as the Light of the world was to provoke judgment, by forcing men to choose up sides for or against him, and they chose darkness rather than light. At the very end of Jesus’ public ministry in the Fourth Gospel (12:37) the Evangelist offers this summary observation concerning the world’s response to Jesus’ ministry: “But as many sign-miracles as he performed among them, they kept on refusing to believe in him” (ἐπίστευον, iterative or customary/habitual imperfect).

**16:10** περὶ δικαιοσύνης δέ Now the world is proven wrong concerning righteousness. There are two questions that need to be answered: (1) what is the meaning of δικαιοσύνη in this context, and (2) to whom does it pertain—to the world, or to someone else?

(1) The word δικαιοσύνη occurs in the Gospel of John only here and in verse 8. It is often assumed that it refers to forensic justification, as it does so often in Paul’s writings. Thus the answer to question (2) would be that it refers to the world. L. Morris states, “The Spirit shows men (and no-one else can do this) that their righteousness before God depends not on their own efforts but on Christ’s atoning work for them” (*The Gospel According to John*, 699, emphasis mine). Since the word occurs so infrequently in the Fourth Gospel, however, we must look very carefully at the context here. The ὅτι-clause which follows provides an important clue: the righteousness in view here has to do with Jesus’ return to the Father and his absence from the disciples. It is true that in the Fourth Gospel part of what is involved in Jesus’ return to the Father is the cross, and it is through his substitutionary death that men are justified, so that Morris’ understanding of righteousness here is possible. But more basic than this is the idea that Jesus’ return to the Father constitutes his own δικαιοσύνη in the sense of *vindication* rather than forensic justification. Jesus had repeatedly claimed oneness with the Father, and his opponents had repeatedly rejected this and labelled him a deceiver, a sinner, and a blasphemer (5:18, 7:12, 9:24, 10:33, etc.). But Jesus, by his glorification through his return to the Father, is vindicated in his claims in spite of his opponents. In his vindication his followers are also vindicated as well, but their vindication derives from his.

Thus we would answer question (1) by saying that in context δικαιοσύνης refers not to forensic justification but vindication, and question (2) by referring this justification/vindication not to the world or even to Christians directly, but to Jesus himself.

Finally, how does Jesus’ last statement in verse 10, that the disciples will see him no more, contribute to this? It is probably best taken as a reference to the presence of the Paraclete, who cannot come until Jesus has departed (16:7). The meaning of verse 10 is thus: when the Paraclete comes he will prove the world wrong concerning the subject of vindication, namely, Jesus’ vindication which is demonstrated when he is glorified in his return to the Father and the disciples see him no more (but they will have the presence of the Paraclete, whom the world is not able to receive [14:17]).

**16:11** περὶ δὲ κρίσεως In this verse, the world is proven wrong concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. Jesus' vindication (justification) before the Father, as proven by his return to the Father, his glorification, constitutes a judgment against Satan. This is parallel to the judgment of the world which Jesus provokes in 3:19-21: as we have pointed out so often before, Jesus' presence in the world as the Light of the world provokes the judgment of those in the world, because as they respond to the Light (either coming to Jesus or rejecting him) so are they judged. That judgment is in a sense already realized. So it is here, where the judgment of Satan is already realized in Jesus' glorification. This does not mean that Satan does not continue to be active in the world, and to exercise some power over it, just as in 3:19-21 the people in the world who have rejected Jesus and thus incurred judgment continue on in their opposition to Jesus for a time. In both cases the judgment is not immediately executed. But it is certain.

Now having looked at 16:8-11 we may consider one last question: who are the objects of the work of the Paraclete in proving the world guilty concerning their sin of rejecting Jesus (16:9), proving the world wrong concerning the justification of Jesus (the vindication of his claims) before the Father (16:10), and proving the world wrong concerning the judgment of Satan, the ruler of this world (16:11)? The people in the world, i.e., non-believers, or the disciples, i.e., believers? In spite of the long tradition (going back at least to Augustine) of understanding this passage to refer to the work of the Holy Spirit in convicting the world (i.e., non-believers), the context of chapter 16 concerns Jesus' reassurance to the disciples in the light of coming persecution (15:18-25 and 16:1-4a). Yet it is also true that in 15:26-27 Jesus tells the disciples that the Paraclete will bear witness concerning him, and they too will bear witness. The first instance could be understood to refer only to the disciples and not to the world, but the second, the witness of the disciples themselves, must refer to the world, and the parallelism between the two suggests strongly that the Paraclete also bears witness to the world. Thus it appears best to say that both the people in the world and the disciples (i.e., both non-believers and believers) are to be the objects of the Paraclete's work as described here.

## 2 F The Holy Spirit's work with respect to the disciples (16:12-15)

From the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the world, Jesus now turns to the work of the Spirit in relation to the disciples. Verse 12 serves as something of a transition.

**16:12** “Ἐτι πολλὰ ἔχω ὑμῖν λέγειν In what sense does Jesus have “yet many things” to say to the disciples? Does this imply the continuation of revelation after his departure? This seems to be the case, especially in light of verses 13 and following, which describe the work of the Holy Spirit in guiding the disciples into “all the truth”. Thus it would seem reasonable to understand Jesus to say that he would continue to speak to the Twelve, at least, after his return to the Father. He would do this through the Holy Spirit whom he was going to send. Revelation could potentially continue until the death of the last apostle. Although it is possible that an audience broader than the Twelve is addressed, this seems unlikely in context since other statements made by Jesus appear to be directed to those present when he spoke.

**16:13** ὁδηγήσει ὑμᾶς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ πάσῃ Three things of importance must be noted here.

(1) When the Holy Spirit comes, he will guide the disciples into all the truth. What Jesus had said in 8:31-32, “If you remain in my word you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free,” will ultimately be realized in the ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit to the disciples after Jesus' departure.

(2) The things the Holy Spirit speaks to them will not be things which originate from himself, but things he has heard. This could be taken to mean that no new revelation is involved, as R. Brown does (AB 29a, 714-15). This is a possible but not a necessary inference. The point here concerns the source of the things the Spirit will say to the disciples (ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ) and does not specifically exclude originality of content.

(3) Part at least of what the Holy Spirit will reveal to the disciples will concern things to come, not just fuller implications of previous sayings of Jesus and the like. This does seem to indicate (*contra* Brown) that

at least some new revelation is involved. But the Spirit is not the source or originator of these things—Jesus is the source, and he will continue to speak to his disciples through the Spirit who has come to indwell them.

This does not answer the question, however, whether these words are addressed to all followers of Jesus, or only to his apostles. Since in the context of the Last Discourse Jesus is preparing the Twelve to carry on his ministry after his departure, it seems best to take these statements as specifically related only to the Twelve. Some of this the Holy Spirit does directly for all believers today; other parts of this statement are fulfilled through the apostles (e.g., in the giving of the Book of Revelation the Spirit speaks through the apostles to the Church today of things to come). One of the implications of this is that a doctrine does not have to be traced back to an explicit teaching of Jesus to be authentic; all that is required is apostolic authority.

**16:14** ἐκεῖνος ἐμὲ δοξάσει Just as Jesus will say that he glorified the Father by revealing him to men (completing the mission on which he was sent by the Father, 17:4), so here the Holy Spirit will glorify Jesus by revealing him to men (revealing Jesus' words to the disciples). It is important to note that the Holy Spirit's ministry does not draw attention to himself at all, but rather to Jesus, whom he glorifies.

**16:15** πάντα ὅσα ἔχει ὁ πατήρ Now the Father himself is mentioned. Everything the Father has belongs to Jesus also, so when Jesus has just said in the previous verse that the Spirit will receive from Jesus and proclaim it to the disciples, this includes the things of the Father as well. The closeness of the interrelationship between Jesus, the Father, and the Spirit is evident here. The Spirit will continue to declare what the Father is like, just as Jesus himself came to do (cf. 1:18). In revealing Jesus to the disciples (see the preceding verse) the Spirit will also be revealing the Father, just as Jesus did.

#### **4 E Jesus' return to his disciples will cause their sadness to turn to joy (16:16-24)**

**16:16** οὐκέτι θεωρεῖτέ με Jesus once more refers to his impending departure, his return to the Father through death, resurrection, and exaltation. He has said virtually the same thing to them earlier, in 14:19. The phrase καὶ ὄψεσθέ με is sometimes taken to refer to the coming of the Holy Spirit after Jesus departs, but (as at 14:19) it is much more probable that it refers to the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus to the disciples. There is no indication in the context that the disciples will see Jesus only with "spiritual" sight, as would be the case if the coming of the Spirit is in view.

**16:17** τί ἐστὶν τοῦτο ὃ λέγει ἡμῖν The disciples appear not to have understood the majority of what Jesus has said. The statements which have caused them the most difficulty were in verse 16 ("a little while and you will not behold me, and again a little while, and you will see me") and verse 10 ("because I am going to the Father and you will no longer behold me"). These appear to be mutually exclusive: how can Jesus say that he will disappear for a while and then reappear, and on the other hand say that he is going to the Father and thus they will see him no more? This is the first time the disciples have spoken since Judas (not Iscariot) spoke of his confusion in 14:22.

**16:18** τὸ μικρόν These words really represent the heart of the difficulty for the disciples. They do not understand how Jesus is going to depart in only a little while, and then reappear to them a little while after that.

**16:19** Ἐγὼ ὁ Ἰησοῦς... The Evangelist informs us that Jesus anticipated their question. Supernatural knowledge of what was in the minds of the disciples is a possible, but not a necessary, inference here. The disciples had been speaking openly to one another, and Jesus repeats part of the questions they are asking among themselves. Their perplexity was probably evident.

Interestingly enough, when Jesus repeats the phrase μικρόν καὶ οὐ θεωρεῖτέ με, καὶ πάλιν μικρόν καὶ ὄψεσθε με he does not repeat the exact wording of his own statement (in verse 16, where the negative is οὐκέτι) but the wording of the disciples' repetition of his statement (in verse 17).

**16:20** ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν... Jesus' answer to the unasked question of the disciples begins here. Jesus, as often in the Fourth Gospel, does not answer their specific question about the time element (μικρόν) involved in his impending departure. Rather Jesus addresses what for the disciples is the real issue, their emotional distress at his departure. Jesus contrasts the response of the disciples to his death by crucifixion with the response of the unbelieving world. The disciples will mourn and grieve, but the world will rejoice to see the end of Jesus (compare the response of the world in Rev 11:10-11 to the deaths of the two witnesses).

**16:21** ἡ γυνὴ ὅταν τίκτη λύπην ἔχει Jesus now compares the situation of the disciples to a woman in childbirth. Just as the woman in the delivery of her child experiences real pain and anguish, so the disciples will also undergo real anguish at the crucifixion of Jesus. But once the child has been born, the mother's anguish is turned into joy, and she forgets the past suffering. The same will be true of the disciples, who after Jesus' resurrection and reappearance to them will forget the anguish they suffered at his death on account of their joy.

**16:22** καὶ ὑμεῖς οὖν νῦν μὲν λύπην ἔχετε Jesus now repeats the points he had made before the illustration (verse 20) with additional details. The disciples' grief is already present (νῦν ...ἔχετε) as they struggle with the idea of Jesus leaving them. Jesus tells them he will see them again, once more a reference to the post-resurrection appearances he will make to the disciples. At that time no one will take their joy from them. The idea of permanence attached to the disciples' joy at this point suggests more than just their joy in recognizing that Jesus has overcome death itself (20:20). They will also experience the permanent presence of the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, as a result of Jesus' departure (cf. 14:17).

Verse 22 is an allusion to Isa 66:14 LXX: "Then you shall see, and your heart shall be glad, and your bones shall flourish like the new grass; and the hand of the LORD shall be made known to his servants, but he shall be indignant toward his enemies." The change from "you shall see [me]" to "I shall see you" places more emphasis on Jesus as the one who re-initiates the relationship with the disciples after his resurrection, but verse 16 ("you will see me") is more like Isa 66:14. Further support for seeing this allusion as intentional is found in Isa 66:7, which uses the same imagery of the woman giving birth found in 16:21. In the context of Isaiah 66 the passages refer to the institution of the millennial kingdom, and in fact the last clause of 66:14 along with the following verses (15-17) have yet to be fulfilled. This is part of the tension of present and future eschatological fulfillment that runs throughout the NT, by virtue of the fact that there are two advents. Some prophecies are fulfilled or partially fulfilled at the first, while other prophecies or parts of prophecies await fulfillment at the second.

**16:23-24** Καὶ ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ... There are two thoughts here. Jesus first tells the disciples that in that day they will ask (ἔρωτήσετε) him nothing. This most likely refers to the questions the disciples had had concerning Jesus' departure. They will have no need to ask him anything any more, because the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, will be residing in them permanently (verse 22, compare also 14:26 and 16:13), and he will give the disciples full understanding.

ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν... A further thought is then introduced by Jesus' use of ἀμὴν ἀμὴν. Whatever they ask the Father in Jesus' name, the Father will give them. In 15:7 Jesus had promised, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you." The disciples will remain in intimate union with Jesus (note the consistency with the interpretation of μένω in chapter 15),

because they will have the permanent indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Thus they will be so intimately acquainted with the Father himself, that they will be able to ask him directly and expect an answer.

### **5 E The disciples claim to understand who Jesus is and from whence he has come (16:25-33)**

**16:25** Ταῦτα ἐν παροιμίαις λελάληκα ὑμῖν This statement by Jesus gives the impression that his remarks to the disciples are drawing to a close. There is some difficulty in defining παροιμίαις precisely: a translation like “parables” does not convey accurately the meaning. BAGD (629) suggest in general “proverb,” “maxim,” but for Johannine usage “dark saying,” “figure of speech, in which especially lofty ideas are concealed”. In the preceding context of the Last Discourse Jesus has certainly used obscure language and imagery at times: 13:8-11; 13:16; 15:1-17; and 16:21. In the LXX this word is used to translate the Hebrew מָשָׁל (*mashal*) which covers a wide range of figurative speech, often containing obscure or enigmatic elements.

ἔρχεται ὥρα Jesus tells the disciples that a time is coming when he will no longer speak to them with this kind of figurative language, but will speak to them openly (παρρησίᾳ) concerning the Father. When will this take place? In light of the following verse where Jesus returns to the theme of the disciples asking the Father in his name, this would seem to refer to the situation of the disciples after the resurrection of Jesus.

**16:26** ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου αἰτήσεσθε Here the theme of the disciples asking the Father directly is resumed from verses 23b-24. They will ask the Father in Jesus’ name themselves; they will not need Jesus to intercede for them. The reason for this is given in verse 27 following.

**16:27** αὐτὸς γὰρ ὁ πατήρ φιλεῖ ὑμᾶς The reason why the disciples will be able after Jesus’ resurrection to petition the Father directly with their requests is because the Father himself loves them. This in turn is because the disciples have loved Jesus and believed that he has come from God. The Father is ready to hear and answer the prayers of the disciples because of their relationship to Jesus.

**16:28** ἐξηλθον... This verse is a summary of the entire Gospel. It summarizes the earthly career of the Word made flesh, Jesus of Nazareth, on his mission from the Father to be the Saviour of the world, beginning with his entry into the world as he comes forth from God and concluding with his departure from the world as he returns to the Father. At this point in the discussion this statement explains further the statement in verse 27 that the Father is ready to hear the prayers of the disciples because of the relationship in which they stand to Jesus. Jesus is the mediator, the intermediary, between man and God, and this is the point of including the summary of his career in the present verse.

**16:29-30** ἴδε νῦν ἐν παρρησίᾳ λαλεῖς How are we to take the disciples’ reply to Jesus that now they understand what he is saying to them? “Now you are speaking openly (ἐν παρρησίᾳ) and no longer with figurative language (παροιμίαν),” said the disciples. These words seem a bit impulsive. It is difficult to believe that the disciples have really understood the full implications of Jesus’ words, although it is true that he spoke to them plainly and not figuratively in 16:26-28. The disciples will not fully understand all that Jesus has said to them until after his resurrection, when the Holy Spirit will give them insight and understanding (16:13).

**16:31** ἄρτι πιστεύετε Jesus’ evaluation of the disciples’ response (verses 29-30) indicates that it was indeed premature. It does not imply that their faith in him is non-existent, but rather that at the present time it is inadequate. They have believed that he is the Messiah (cf. 2:11). They have yet to believe that he is

both Lord and God (cf. 20:28). This expansion of their conception of who Jesus is cannot take place until after his resurrection.

**16:32** ἰδοὺ ἔρχεται ὥρα The proof of Jesus' evaluation of the disciples' faith is now given: Jesus foretells their abandonment of him at his arrest, trials, and crucifixion. This parallels the synoptic accounts in Matt 26:31 and Mark 14:27 when Jesus, after the Last Supper and on the way to Gethsemane, foretells the desertion of the disciples as a fulfillment of Zech 13:7—"Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." Yet although the disciples abandon Jesus, he reaffirms that he is not alone, because the Father is still with him.

**16:33** ἵνα ἐν ἐμοὶ εἰρήνην ἔχητε The purpose for which Jesus has told these things to the disciples is in order that they might have peace. Although the world will persecute the disciples (cf. 15:18-25 and 16:1-4a), they can take courage in the knowledge that Jesus has overcome the world (ἐγὼ νενίκηκα τὸν κόσμον). This is the only occurrence of the verb νικάω in the Fourth Gospel, although it occurs 6 times in 1 John, including similar phrases such as 5:4, and 17 times in Revelation.

The Last Discourse proper closes on this triumphant note, which recalls 1:5 of the Prologue: "the Light shines on in the darkness, and the darkness has not mastered it". Jesus' words which follow in chapter 17 are addressed not the the disciples but to his Father, as he prays for the consecration of the disciples.

## Chapter 17

### OUTLINE:

**[4 A The Book of Glory: Jesus accomplishes his return to the Father (13:1-20:31)]**

**[2 B The Last Supper: Jesus prepares his disciples for his departure (13:2-17:26)]**

**[2 C The Last Discourse (13:31-17:26)]**

**3 D Jesus' concluding prayer (17:1-26)**

**1 E Jesus asks the Father to glorify him (17:1-5)**

**2 E Jesus prays for the disciples the Father has given him (17:6-19)**

**3 E Jesus prays for the ones who believe in him on account of the testimony of the disciples (17:20-26)**

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## DETAILED EXEGETICAL NOTES:

### 3 D Jesus' concluding prayer (17:1-26)

*Introduction.* Jesus' prayer now marks the conclusion of the Last Discourse. As we noted above at 13:31 in the Note on the literary genre of the Last Discourse it appears to be organized after the pattern of a farewell speech, and it was not uncommon for farewell speeches to include closing prayers. Deuteronomy, for example, contains both a prayer in chapter 32 and a blessing of the people in chapter 33.

It is common to refer to chapter 17 as the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus. C. K. Barrett did not like this designation because it “does not do justice to the full range of the material contained in it.”<sup>138</sup> Whatever else may be said, such a label does emphasize the consecratory emphasis of the prayer with regard both to the disciples and to Jesus' own work, which is now accomplished as he looks forward to his impending death on the cross.

Actually John does not use the term “high priest” to describe Jesus. However, in context, Jesus has promised “another Paraclete” (14:16) and since the range of meaning for this word includes “advocate” (cf. 1 John 2:1 and the Notes on 14:16) it may well be that here the Evangelist shows Jesus interceding for his disciples as Advocate/Paraclete.

### 1 E Jesus asks the Father to glorify him (17:1-5)

**17:1** καὶ ἐπάρας τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν Jesus also did this before his prayer in 11:41. This was probably a common posture in prayer; according to the parable in Luke 18:13 the tax collector did not feel himself worthy to do this.

ἐλήλυθεν ἡ ὥρα Jesus has said before that his “hour” had come, both in 12:23 when some Greeks sought to speak with him, and in 13:1 where just before he washed the disciples' feet he is said to have known that his hour had come. It appears best to understand the “hour” as a period of time starting at the end of Jesus' public ministry and extending through the passion week, ending with Jesus' return to the Father through death, resurrection, and exaltation. The “hour” begins as soon as the first events occur which begin the process that leads to Jesus' death.

δόξασόν σου τὸν υἱόν Related to the coming of the “hour” is the glorification of Jesus. In 13:31-32 Jesus had said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him; if God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and immediately he will glorify him.” Now in 17:1ff. Jesus prays for this to be carried out.

ἵνα ὁ οἶος δοξάσῃ σέ The glorification of the Son and the Father are closely related. Jesus' own glorification (his return to the Father through death, resurrection, and exaltation) is not an end in itself; even this is to the greater glory of the Father, as is everything the Son does.

**17:2** ἔδωκε αὐτῷ ἐξουσίαν πάσης σαρκός Jesus has been given authority by the Father over all people. This probably refers to the authority to judge (cf. 5:27) since the next phrase makes it clear that Jesus does not give eternal life to everyone indiscriminately, but only to those whom the Father has given him.

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<sup>138</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 500.

πάν ὃ δέδωκας αὐτῷ Jesus gives the gift of eternal life only to those whom the Father has given him. Once again there is the thought (seen before in 6:44 and 6:65) that although the gift of life is offered freely, a person does not accept it unless the Father has predestined that person to come to Jesus and believe in him.

**17:3** αὕτη δέ to introduce an explanation is typical Johannine style; it was used before in 1:19, 3:19, and 15:12. The Evangelist here defines “eternal life” for the readers. It is not just unending life in the sense of prolonged duration. Rather it is a quality of life, with its qualitiveness derived from a relationship with God. Having eternal life is here defined as being in relationship with the Father, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom the Father sent. Χριστός is not characteristically attached to Jesus’ name in the Fourth Gospel; it occurs elsewhere primarily as a title and is used with Jesus’ name only in 1:17. But that is connected to its use here: the statement here in 17:3 enables us to correlate the statement made in 1:18 of the Prologue, that Jesus has fully revealed what God is like, with Jesus’ statement in 10:10 that he has come that people might have life, and have it abundantly. These two purposes are really one, according to 17:3, because (abundant) eternal life is defined as knowing (being in relationship with) the Father and the Son. The only way to gain this eternal life, that is, to obtain this knowledge of the Father, is through the Son (cf. 14:6). Although some have pointed to the use of γινώσκω here as evidence of Gnostic influence in the Gospel, there is a crucial difference: for John this knowledge is not intellectual, but relational. It involves being in relationship.

**17:4** ἐγώ σε ἐδόξασα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς Jesus now states that he has glorified the Father on earth by completing (τελειώσας is best understood as a circumstantial participle of means) the work which the Father had given him to do. The idea of Jesus being sent into the world on a mission has been mentioned before, significantly in 3:17. It was even alluded to in the immediately preceding verse here (17:3). The completion of the “work” the Father had sent him to accomplish was mentioned by Jesus in 4:34 and 5:36. What is the nature of the “work” the Father has given the Son to accomplish? It involves the Son’s mission to be the Saviour of the world, as 3:17 indicates. But this is accomplished specifically through Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross (a thought implied by the reference to the Father “giving” the Son in 3:16). It is not without significance that Jesus’ last word from the cross is τετέλεσται, “it is completed” (19:30).

Jesus can thus speak proleptically, as if his work (including even the work of the cross) is already completed, since the “hour” has already come and his departure is at hand.

**17:5** καὶ νῦν δόξασόν με σύ In 17:1 Jesus prays for the Father to glorify him. Now he repeats the request and defines the glory for which he prays more specifically as the glory which he had with the Father before the world existed. The use of παρά twice in this verse looks back to the assertion in 1:1 that the Word (the Λόγος, who became Jesus of Nazareth in 1:14) was with God (πρὸς τὸν θεόν). Whatever else may be said, the statement in 17:5 strongly asserts the preexistence of Christ.

## **2 E Jesus prays for the disciples the Father has given him (17:6-19)**

**17:6** Ἐφάνερwsά σου τὸ ὄνομα Now Jesus turns his attention to the disciples. He begins by asserting that he manifested the Father’s name to them. The mention of the Father’s name will occur again in chapter 17 in verses 11, 12, and 26, but it is not often mentioned elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel (only in 5:43, 10:25, 12:28). What are we to make of this? In one sense the name represents the person (cf. 1:12) and thus Jesus in saying that he has made known the Father’s name is saying that he has fully revealed who God is and what he is like (cf. 1:18 and 14:9). But there is probably another meaning as well in the Fourth Gospel: Jesus himself is identified with God repeatedly (10:30, 14:11, etc.) and nowhere is this more apparent than in Jesus’ absolute uses of the phrase ἐγώ εἰμι without a predicate (8:24, 8:28, 8:58, and 13:19). The name of the Father which Jesus has made known to men is thus the Divine Name revealed to Moses in Exod 3:14.

οὐς ἔδωκάς μοι Once again there is the idea of the Father's predestination (see 17:2).

τὸν λόγον σου τετήρηκαν In 8:55 Jesus said that he kept his Father's word; this is the one time in the Fourth Gospel that the disciples are said to keep it.

**17:7** Only now (νῦν) have the disciples begun to understand. The finite verb ἔγνωσαν is best understood as an ingressive aorist which looks at entry into the state of knowledge or understanding. Previously it has been clear that the disciples did not understand the uniqueness of the relationship between Jesus and the Father (cf. 14:8-10). Now as a result of the coming of Jesus' "hour" (which includes his exaltation as well as his death and resurrection) Jesus affirms here in his prayer that the disciples are finally beginning to understand.

**17:8** ὅτι τὰ ῥήματα ἃ ἔδωκάς μοι δέδωκα αὐτοῖς Jesus now explains the reason why the disciples have come to know that the source of everything Jesus has received is the Father: it is because Jesus has faithfully communicated to the disciples the words he has received from his Father. The disciples have received these words and thus have come to know that Jesus has come forth from the Father, who sent him. Jesus, who is himself the Word of God, is also the vehicle for the words of God, that is, divine revelation and communication to men (cf. discussion at 10:34).

If as we have pointed out in verse 6 above the name which Jesus has made known to the disciples is the Divine Name revealed to Moses in Exod 3:14, then we might see here a comparison with Moses, who transmitted the words he received from God (the Torah) to Israel. As a matter of fact, Jesus' statement here in 17:8 (τὰ ῥήματα ἃ ἔδωκάς μοι δέδωκα αὐτοῖς) may be taken as a direct allusion to Deut 18:18—"I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you [Moses], and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him."

**17:9** οὐ περὶ τοῦ κόσμου ἔρωτῶ Jesus now specifies that his prayer is for the disciples, not for those in the world. Once again there is the note that the disciples "belong" to the Father (cf. 17:6), and he has given them to Jesus (see note on 17:2 for a brief discussion of this theme of predestination, which appears repeatedly in Jesus' prayer in chapter 17).

**17:10** καὶ τὰ ἐμὰ πάντα σὰ ἔστιν καὶ τὰ σὰ ἐμὰ Once again, Jesus affirms that everything that belongs to him also belongs to the Father, and all that belongs to the Father belongs also to him. This theme was mentioned earlier in 16:15.

δεδοξασμαι The theme of glory with which Jesus began this prayer in 17:1-5 now recurs. Jesus says that he has been glorified in his disciples, but in what sense is this true? Jesus has manifested his glory to them in all of the sign-miracles which he has performed, beginning with the miracle at the wedding-feast in Cana (2:11). He can now say that he has been glorified in them in the light of what he has already said in verses 7-8, that the disciples have come to know that he has come from the Father and been sent by the Father. He will, of course, be glorified in them further after the resurrection, as they carry on his ministry after his departure.

**17:11** καὶ οὐκέτι εἰμὶ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ In what sense is Jesus at this point no longer in the world? In verse 13 he seems to speak as if he is still in the world. Yet both here and in verse 13 he says that he is coming to the Father. Jesus' departure from the world is so near that he can speak here as if he has already left the world, and he does so to contrast his own situation with that of the disciples, who are still in the world.

τήρησον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου In 17:6 Jesus said that the disciples had kept the Father's word. Now Jesus prays that the Father would keep them during and after his departure from them, since he is coming to the Father.

ἵνα ὧσιν ἐν καθὼς ἡμεῖς The ultimate object of Jesus' request here is the unity of the disciples. He will return to this theme in verses 21-23. This unity is compared to the unity which exists (and has been mentioned frequently in the Fourth Gospel, cf. 10:30) between the Father and the Son.

**17:12** ἐγὼ ἐτήρουν αὐτοὺς...καὶ ἐφύλαξα Jesus now mentions that he guarded and protected the disciples while he was with them. The imagery here is suggestive of the Good Shepherd imagery of chapter 10, especially verses 27-30 (10:30 also deals with the theme of the unity between the Father and the Son, and thus relates to the request for the disciples' unity in the preceding verse). In 10:28 Jesus says that he gives eternal life to his own, and they shall never perish (ἀπόλωνται). Here Jesus affirms that indeed none of them have perished (ἀπώλετο) except one, the "son destined for destruction" (ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας), that is, Judas Iscariot.

ἵνα ἡ γραφὴ πληρωθῇ This appears to indicate that some OT passage predicted Judas' betrayal and defection. The exact passage is not specified here, but in 13:18 Psalm 41:9 is explicitly quoted by Jesus with reference to the traitor, suggesting strongly that this is the passage to which Jesus refers here. The previous mention of Ps 41:9 in 13:18 probably explains why the Evangelist felt no need for an explanatory parenthetical note here.

**17:13** πρὸς σε ἔρχομαι Jesus reiterates that he is coming to the Father, as he had stated before in 17:11. Yet while he is still in the world he is speaking these things for the comfort of his disciples. He has told them these things in order that they might have his joy fulfilled in themselves. This echoes earlier statements about the disciples possessing Jesus' joy in 15:11 ("These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be made full") and 16:24 ("Ask, and you will receive, in order that your joy may be fulfilled").

**17:14** καθὼς ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου Although Jesus is still in the world, preparing to leave it and return to the Father, he is not of the world (ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου) as he now makes clear. Once again he returns to the theme of the world's hatred for the disciples (cf. 15:18-25, 16:1-4a). The reason Jesus gives here for the world's hatred of the disciples is that they (like he) are not of the world. This was the same reason given for the world's hatred in 15:19—"If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

In the case of Jesus himself it is easy to see how he is not "of the world": he came down from heaven on a mission from the Father. But in what sense can it be said that the disciples to whom he refers are not "of the world"? They are not of the world in that their allegiance was to Jesus.

**17:15** οὐκ ἐρωτῶ ἵνα ἄρῃς αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου Jesus now clarifies further his request for the disciples: he does not ask the Father to take them out of the world, but rather to protect them as they remain in the world from the evil one.

τοῦ πονηροῦ The genitive noun is ambiguous with regard to gender: it may represent the neuter τὸ πονηρὸς, "that which is evil," or the masculine ὁ πονηρὸς, "the evil one," i.e., Satan. In view of the

frequent use of the masculine in 1 John 2:13-14, 3:12, and 5:18-19 it seems much more probable that the masculine is to be understood here, and that Jesus is praying for his disciples to be protected from Satan.

**17:16** ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου οὐκ εἰσὶν This is a repetition of the second half of verse 14. The only difference is in word order: verse 14 has οὐκ εἰσὶν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου, while here the prepositional phrase is stated first: ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου οὐκ εἰσὶν. This gives additional emphasis to the idea of the prepositional phrase, i.e., origin or source. See the discussion above under verse 14.

**17:17** ἁγιάσον αὐτοὺς Jesus now prays for the disciples' sanctification. The word translated "sanctification," ἁγιάζω, is used here in its normal sense of being dedicated, consecrated, or set apart. The sphere in which the disciples are to be set apart is in the truth (ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ). In 3:21 the idea of "practicing" (literally "doing") the truth was introduced; in 8:32 Jesus told some of his hearers that if they continued in his word they would truly be his disciples, and would know the truth, and the truth would make them free. These disciples who are with Jesus now in the Upper Room have continued in his word (except for Judas Iscariot, who has departed), and they do know the truth about who Jesus is and why he has come into the world (17:8). Thus Jesus can ask the Father to set them apart in this truth as he himself is set apart, so that they might carry on his mission in the world after his departure (note the following verse).

**17:18** καθὼς ἐμὲ ἀπέστειλας Jesus now compares the mission upon which he is sending the disciples to his own mission into the world, upon which he was sent by the Father. As the Father sent Jesus into the world (cf. 3:17), so Jesus is sending the disciples into the world to continue his mission after his departure. The nature of this prayer for the disciples as a consecratory prayer is now emerging: Jesus is setting them apart for the work he has called them to do. They are, in a sense, being commissioned.

**17:19** ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἐγὼ ἁγιάζω ἑμαυτόν Now Jesus says that on behalf of the disciples he sanctifies himself, in order that the disciples themselves also may be sanctified in the truth (which was Jesus' request in verse 17). In what sense does Jesus refer to his own sanctification here? In 10:36 Jesus referred to himself as "the one whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world," which seems to look at something already accomplished. Here, however, it is something he does on behalf of the disciples (ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν) and this suggests a reference to his impending death on the cross. It seems that there is in fact a Johannine word-play here based on slightly different meanings for ἁγιάζω. In the sense it was used in 10:36 of Jesus and in 17:17 and here to refer to the disciples, it means to set apart in the sense that prophets (cf. Jer 1:5) and priests (Exod 40:13, Lev 8:30, and 2 Chr 5:11) were consecrated or set apart to perform their tasks. But when Jesus speaks of consecrating/setting apart/dedicating himself on behalf of the disciples here in 17:19 the meaning is closer to the consecration of a sacrificial animal (Deut 15:19). Jesus is "setting himself apart" to do the will of the Father, that is, to go to the cross on the disciples' behalf (and of course on behalf of their successors as well).

### **3 E Jesus prays for the ones who believe in him on account of the testimony of the disciples (17:20-26)**

**17:20** Οὐ περὶ τούτων δὲ ἐρωτῶ μόνον Now as his prayer is drawing to a close Jesus goes on to pray for those who will believe in him on account of the disciples' testimony. Although πιστευόντων is a present participle, it must in context carry futuristic force. The disciples whom Jesus is leaving behind will carry on his ministry and in doing so will see others come to trust in him. This will include not only Jewish Christians, but other Gentile Christians who are "not of this fold" (10:16), and thus Jesus' prayer for unity is especially appropriate in light of the probability that most of the readers of the Gospel are Gentiles (much as Paul stresses unity between Jewish and Gentile Christians in Eph 2:10-22).

**17:21** ἵνα πάντες ἐν ὧσιν The model for this unity is the unity which exists between the Father and the Son, a unity which allows for diversity of persons while maintaining essential unity. The ultimate result of such unity among believers will be that the world comes to believe that the Father sent Jesus (ἵνα ὁ κόσμος πιστεύῃ ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας, compare ἵνα γινώσκῃ ὁ κόσμος ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας καὶ ἠγάπησας αὐτοὺς καθὼς ἐμὲ ἠγάπησας in verse 23).

A parallel structure may be seen in verses 21-23, as follows:

21a ἵνα πάντες ἐν ὧσιν

21b καθὼς σύ, πάτερ, ἐν ἐμοὶ κἀγὼ ἐν σοί

21c ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ὧσιν

21d ἵνα ὁ κόσμος πιστεύῃ ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας

22b ἵνα ὧσιν ἐν

22c-23a καθὼς ἡμεῖς ἐν· ἐγὼ ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ σύ ἐν ἐμοί

23b ἵνα ὧσιν τετελειωμένοι εἰς ἓν

23c ἵνα γινώσκῃ ὁ κόσμος ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας καὶ ἠγάπησας αὐτοὺς καθὼς ἐμὲ ἠγάπησας

The first and second ἵνα in each case deals with the unity of believers, as illustrated both times by the unity which exists between the Father and the Son (the καθὼς clauses). The third ἵνα in each case looks at the effect of this unity on the world.

**17:22** τὴν δόξαν Jesus now says that he has given to those who believe on account of the disciples' testimony the glory which the Father had given to him, that they may be one. This again is proleptic, since these people to whom Jesus speaks of giving glory have not even come to believe in him yet. They will do so later on account of his disciples' continuation of his ministry.

**17:23** ἵνα ὧσιν τετελειωμένοι εἰς ἓν Jesus now requests that these people who believe on account of the disciples' testimony may be completed into one (τετελειωμένοι εἰς ἓν) which again (as in verse 21) will result in the world coming to know that Jesus had been sent by the Father.

Thus Jesus' gift of glory to believers (22a) results in their unity (22b-23a) which has the ultimate result of confronting the world once more with the claims of Jesus (23b).

**17:24** ἵνα ὅπου εἰμὶ ἐγὼ κἀκεῖνοι ὧσιν μετ' ἐμοῦ Jesus' prayer is now reaching its final conclusion. His closing request is that the ones whom the Father has given him be with him, where he is, so that they may see his glory. This glory was given by the Father to Jesus because of the Father's love for Jesus before the foundation of the world (πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου). Once again the pre-existence of the Son is mentioned in connection with the relationship he shared with the Father in eternity past (cf. 17:5).

**17:25** πάτερ δίκαιε Jesus addresses the Father directly again, as he did in 17:11. He states that the world does not know the Father, but he does, and then he affirms that these believers for whom he prays (both the disciples and those later believers who come to trust in Jesus on account of the disciples' word) have come to know that he was sent by the Father.

**17:26** καὶ ἐγνώρισα αὐτοῖς τὸ ὄνομά σου καὶ γνωρίσω Jesus now states that he both made known and will make known the Father's name to these believers, so that the love with which the Father loved Jesus

(cf. 17:24) will be in them and in fact Jesus himself will be in them. The theme of the manifestation of the Father's name is picked up from 17:6 and refers to Jesus' revelation of the Divine Name of Exod 3:14 in his person (see additional discussion at 17:6).

καὶ ἔν αὐτοῖς The concluding statement of the entire prayer appropriately reflects the presence of Jesus dwelling permanently in believers after his resurrection and return to the Father (cf. 14:18, 20). He will not leave them alone and forsaken, but will be in them forever.

## Chapter 18

### OUTLINE:

- 3 B The Passion: the arrest, trials, death, and burial of Jesus (18:1-19:42)**
  - 1 C Jesus is arrested in the garden (18:1-11)**
  - 2 C Jesus is interrogated by Annas (18:12-27)**
    - 1 D Jesus is brought before Annas (18:12-14)**
    - 2 D Peter gains entry to the courtyard of the high priest and denies Jesus for the first time (18:15-18)**
    - 3 D Annas questions Jesus and sends him to Caiaphas (18:19-24)**
    - 4 D Peter denies Jesus for the second and third times (18:25-27)**
  - 3 C Jesus is brought before Pilate (18:28-19:16a)**
    - 1 D The Jewish leaders present their accusation to Pilate (18:28-32)**
    - 2 D Pilate questions Jesus concerning his kingship (18:33-38a)**
    - 3 D Pilate seeks to release Jesus but the crowd cries out for Barabbas instead (18:38b-40)**

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## DETAILED EXEGETICAL NOTES:

### 3 B The Passion: the arrest, trials, death, and burial of Jesus (18:1-19:42)

**Introduction.** The Johannine Passion narrative is found in chapters 18 and 19. Several matters of emphasis distinguish the account in the Fourth Gospel from the parallels in the synoptics. (1) The complete sovereignty of Jesus as he undergoes these events, his complete control of the situation, is repeatedly evident. Nothing that happens to him happens by accident or outside of his control, and one gets the distinct impression he could put a stop to the process at any moment if he so chose. Jesus comes across not so much the willing victim as the Orchestrator of events. (2) There are many details included in the Johannine account which are not recorded in the synoptics, and this has caused many critical scholars to regard these details as non-historical fabrications of the Evangelist for dramatic effect. Upon closer examination, however, it seems more likely that the purpose of such detail is not so much purely dramatic effect as theological significance. Almost every detail which John records about the crucifixion of Jesus, for example, has some symbolic and theological meaning. If as we believe the Fourth Gospel represents eyewitness testimony, the divergences from the synoptic accounts are better explained as resulting from selectivity than from originality. (3) There is significant emphasis on the role of the Jewish leaders ("the Jews") as perpetrators of the plot to execute Jesus with less stress on the role of the Roman authorities, which some would attribute to an apologetic tendency on the part of the Evangelist. One's view of the exact role of the Jewish authorities will be influenced to some extent by one's understanding of Jesus' "trial" before Annas in John 18:13-24. This appears to have been more of a preliminary inquiry than an actual trial per se. The more formal trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin recorded by Matthew (26:59-68) and Mark (14:55-65) would take place later in the night, between John 18:24 and 28. This trial was probably not strictly legal because it was held at night; such proceedings which involved the death penalty were not permitted to be conducted on a single day under later Mishnaic law. No details of Jesus' trial before Caiaphas are given in the Fourth Gospel.

### 1 C Jesus is arrested in the garden (18:1-11)

**18:1** Ταῦτα εἰπὼν Ἰησοῦς This appears to be a natural transition from the Last Discourse, the farewell speech of Jesus to his disciples in 13:31-17:26, including the final prayer in 17:1-26. We are told that Jesus “went out” (ἐξῆλθεν) together with his disciples, a probable reference to their leaving the Upper Room where the meal and discourse described in chapters 13-17 took place (although some have seen this only as a reference to their leaving the city, with the understanding that some of the Last Discourse, including the concluding prayer, was given *en route*, cf. 14:31). They crossed the wadi Kidron (Kidron Valley; τοῦ χειμάρρου means “flowing in the winter” and refers to a **wadi**, a stream bed which contains flowing water only in the rainy season) and came to a **garden**, identified in Matt 26:36 and Mark 14:32 as **Gethsemane**. The name is not given in Luke’s or John’s Gospel, but the garden must have been located somewhere on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives.



**Kidron Valley and Temple Mount**

χαιμάρρου means “flowing in the winter” and refers to a **wadi**, a stream bed which contains flowing water only in the rainy season) and came to a **garden**, identified in Matt 26:36 and Mark 14:32 as **Gethsemane**. The name is not given in Luke’s or John’s Gospel, but the garden must have been located somewhere on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives.

**18:2** “Ἦιδει δὲ καὶ Ἰούδας The Evangelist now gives us a parenthetical note to the effect that **Judas**, the one who was about to betray him, **was also**

**familiar with the place**. The reason for this familiarity is also given: Jesus came there often with his disciples. This parallels Luke’s statement in 21:37 that by day Jesus taught in the Temple, but by night he would go out to the Mount of Olives.

**18:3** ὁ οὖν Ἰούδας...ἔρχεται Judas took no chances; he came with a large and well-armed group to arrest Jesus. Accompanying him were **soldiers of the Roman cohort and the temple police**.

τὴν σπεῖραν This is a technical term for a Roman **cohort**, normally a force of 600 men (one tenth of a legion). It was under the command of a χιλιάρχος (verse 12). Because of the improbability of an entire cohort being sent to arrest a single man, some have suggested that σπεῖραν here refers only to a **maniple**, a force of 200. But the use of the word here does not necessarily mean the entire cohort was present on this mission, but only that it was the cohort which performed the task (for example, saying the fire department put out the fire does not mean that every fireman belonging to the department was on the scene at the time).

These Roman soldiers must have been ordered to accompany the temple police by Pilate, since they would have been under the direct command of the prefect or procurator. It is not difficult to understand why Pilate would have been willing to assist the Jewish authorities in such a way. With a huge crowd of pilgrims in Jerusalem for the passover, the Romans would have been especially nervous about an uprising of some sort. No doubt the chief priests and Pharisees had informed Pilate that this man Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah, or in the terms Pilate would understand, King of Israel.

ἐκ τῶν ἀρχιερέων καὶ ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων ὑπηρέτας The group which accompanied the Roman soldiers and Judas are literally called “the servants of the chief priests and Pharisees,” but this is a reference to the **officers**, who were under the orders of the Sanhedrin. In 7:32ff. these officers had made an

unsuccessful attempt to arrest Jesus, and perhaps this is part of the reason why their leaders had made sure they were accompanied by Roman soldiers this time. No more mistakes were to be tolerated.

μετὰ φανῶν καὶ λαμπάδων The mention of the lanterns and torches suggests a detail remembered by one who was an eyewitness, but in connection with the **light/darkness** motif of the Fourth Gospel, it is a vivid reminder that it is **night**; the **darkness has come at last** (cf. 13:30).

**18:4** Ἰησοῦς οὖν εἰδὼς πάντα τὰ ἐρχόμενα ἐπ’ αὐτὸν Here again Jesus **knows all the things which were coming upon him**, a reference to his foreknowledge of events, a theme mentioned previously in the Fourth Gospel (6:6, 13:1). He is in **complete control of his fate**; he does not attempt to run away or hide, but comes forward boldly to meet the soldiers and police, asking whom it is they are seeking.

**18:5** ἀπεκρίθησαν αὐτῷ We are not told precisely **who** from the group of soldiers and temple police answered Jesus at this point. It may have been the commander of the Roman soldiers, although his presence is not explicitly mentioned until verse 12. It may also have been one of the temple police. To the answer given, “Jesus the Nazarene” Jesus replies “I am” (ἐγὼ εἰμι). Before we are told the response to Jesus’ identification of himself, the Evangelist inserts a parenthetical note that **Judas**, again identified as “the one who was betraying him” (cf. verse 2), was standing with the group of soldiers and temple police. Many commentators have considered this to be an awkward insertion, but in fact it heightens the dramatic effect of the response to Jesus’ self-identification in the following verse, and has the added effect of informing the reader that along with the others **the betrayer himself ironically falls down at Jesus’ feet**.

**18:6** ἀπήλθον εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω καὶ ἔπεσαν χαμαί Now we are told the response of those who came to arrest Jesus: **when he said to them “I am” they retreated backward and fell to the ground**. L. Morris says that “it is possible that those in front recoiled from Jesus’ unexpected advance, so that they bumped those behind them, causing them to stumble and fall.”<sup>139</sup> Perhaps this is what in fact happened on the scene. However, the theological significance given to this event by the Evangelist implies that more is involved. The reaction on the part of those who came to arrest Jesus comes in response to his affirmation that he is indeed the one they are seeking, Jesus of Nazareth. But Jesus makes this affirmation of his identity using a formula which the reader has encountered before in the Fourth Gospel, e.g., 8:24, 28, 58. Jesus has applied to himself the Divine Name of Exod 3:14, “I AM”. This amounts to something of a **theophany** which causes even his enemies to recoil and prostrate themselves, so that Jesus has to ask a second time, “Whom are you seeking?” This is a vivid reminder that **even in this dark hour, Jesus holds ultimate power over his enemies and the powers of darkness, because he is the One who bears the Divine Name**.

**18:7** πάλιν οὖν ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτούς Again a second time Jesus asks the soldiers and temple police whom they are seeking, and again they reply, “Jesus of Nazareth”.

**18:8** εἶπον ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι Again a second time Jesus replies, “I told you that I am *he*,” identifying himself as the one they are seeking. Jesus also adds, **“If then you are seeking me, let these go.”** Jesus has successfully diverted attention from his disciples by getting the soldiers and temple police to admit (twice) that it is only him they are after. Even in this hour Jesus still protects and cares for his own, giving himself up on their behalf. By handing himself over to his enemies, Jesus ensures that his disciples go free. From the perspective of the Evangelist, this is an acting out beforehand of what Jesus will actually do for his followers when he goes to the cross.

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<sup>139</sup> Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 743-44.

**18:9** ἵνα πληρωθῆ ὁ λόγος This action of Jesus on behalf of his disciples is interpreted by the Evangelist as a **fulfillment** of Jesus' own word: **"From those whom You have given to me I have lost no one."** It is interesting to notice that here it is **Jesus' own words**, rather than the OT scriptures, which are being quoted. This same formula will be used by the Evangelist again of Jesus' words in 18:32, but the verb is used elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel to describe **the NT fulfillment of OT passages** (12:38, 13:18, 15:25, 17:12, 19:24, and 19:36).

It is a bit difficult to determine the exact referent, since the words of Jesus quoted in this verse are not an exact reproduction of a saying of Jesus elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel. Although some have identified the saying with 6:39, the closest parallel is in 17:12, where the betrayer, Judas, is specifically excluded. The words quoted here in 18:9 appear to be a free rendition of 17:12.

**18:10** Σίμων οὖν Πέτρος...εἴλκυσε αὐτὴν καὶ ἔπαισεν τὸν τοῦ ἀρχιερέως δοῦλον καὶ ἀπέκοψε αὐτοῦ τὸ ὠτάριον τὸ δεξιόν The incident mentioned in this verse again contains details which imply eyewitness testimony. It is mentioned in all three of the synoptic gospels, but only John records that the disciple involved was **Peter**, whose impulsive behavior has already been alluded to (13:37). Likewise only John tells us the name of the victim, **Malchus**, who is described as "the servant of the high priest." John and Mark (14:47) both use ὠτάριον, a double diminutive, to describe what was cut off, and this may indicate only part of the right ear (for example, the earlobe).

**18:11** εἶπεν οὖν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τῷ Πέτρῳ Jesus' immediate response to Peter's action is to rebuke him: **"Put the sword into the sheath!"** This was not the time for heroics.

τὸ ποτήριον Jesus then continues with what most would take to be a **rhetorical question expecting a positive reply**: "The cup which the Father has given me to drink, shall I not drink it?" The **cup** is also mentioned in Gethsemane in the synoptics (Matt 26:39, Mark 14:36, and Luke 22:42). In connection with the synoptic accounts it is mentioned in Jesus' prayer; this occurrence certainly complements the synoptic accounts if Jesus had only shortly before finished praying about this. Only here in the Fourth Gospel is it specifically said that the cup is given to Jesus to drink by the Father, but again this is consistent with the synoptic mention of the cup in Jesus' prayer: **it is the cup of suffering which Jesus is about to undergo.**

## **2 C Jesus is interrogated by Annas (18:12-27)**

### **1 D Jesus is brought before Annas (18:12-14)**

**18:12** συνέλαβον τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ ἔδησαν αὐτὸν We are told that **the cohort and the Roman commander and the temple police arrested Jesus and bound him.** Why does John mention the **binding** of Jesus, a detail omitted by the synoptics, especially in light of the Johannine portrayal of the arrest as something that Jesus permits to take place? Surely under these circumstances there was no question of escape; everything in the account suggests that Jesus accompanies his captors willingly. It may well be that the Evangelist is suggesting an allusion to another willing victim: Isaac, who in Gen 22:9 allowed himself to be **bound** to the altar.

ὁ χιλιάρχος In Greek this term literally describes the "commander of a thousand," but it was used as the standard translation for the Latin *tribunus militum* or *tribunus militare*, the **military tribune** who commanded a **cohort** of 600 men.

**18:13** πρὸς Ἄνναν They took Jesus first to **Annas**. Only the Gospel of John mentions this pre-trial hearing before Annas, and that Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who is said to be **high priest in that year**. Caiaphas is also mentioned as being high priest in 11:49. But in 18:15, 16, 19, and 22 Annas is called high priest. Annas is also referred to as high priest by Luke in Acts 4:6. Many scholars have dismissed these references as mistakes on the part of both Luke and John, but as mentioned above, John 11:49 and 18:13 indicate that John knew that Caiaphas was high priest in the year that Jesus was crucified. This has led others to suggest that Annas and Caiaphas shared the high priesthood, but there is no historical evidence to support this view. Annas had been high priest from AD 6 - AD 15 when he was deposed by the Roman prefect Valerius Gratus (according to Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.2.2). His five sons all eventually became high priests. The family was noted for its greed, wealth and power.

There are a number of ways the references in both Luke and John to Annas being high priest may be explained. Some Jews may have refused to recognize the changes in high priests effected by the Roman authorities, since according to the Torah the high priesthood was a lifetime office (Num 25:25). Another possibility is that it was simply customary to retain the title after a person had left the office as a courtesy, much as we continue to refer to retired ambassadors as “Mr. Ambassador” or ex-presidents as “Mr. President”. Finally, the use of the title by Luke and John may simply be a reflection of the real power behind the high priesthood of the time: although Annas no longer technically held the office, he may well have managed to control those relatives of his who did hold it from behind the scenes. In fact this seems most probable and would also explain why Jesus was brought to him immediately after his arrest for a sort of “pre-trial hearing” before being sent on to the entire Sanhedrin.

**18:14** ἦν δὲ Καϊάφας This verse is an explanatory note by the Evangelist reminding the reader that **Caiaphas** is the same Caiaphas who counselled the Jewish authorities in 11:49-50 that it was expedient for one man to die for the nation. His prophecy is about to be fulfilled, but in a way he did not expect.

## **2 D Peter gains entry to the courtyard of the high priest and denies Jesus for the first time (18:15-18)**

**18:15** Ἠκολούθει δὲ τῷ Ἰησοῦ Peter and another unnamed disciple followed Jesus after his arrest. Because that disciple was known to the high priest (a reference to **Annas**, see the note on verse 13 above) he was allowed access to the courtyard of the high priest.

*The identity of the unnamed disciple in 18:15.* Many have associated this unnamed disciple with the Beloved Disciple, that is, John son of Zebedee, mainly because the phrase ἄλλος μαθητής which occurs here is also used to describe the Beloved Disciple in 20:2, 3, 4, and 8. Peter is also closely associated with the Beloved Disciple in 13:23-26, 20:2-10, 21:7, and 21:20-23. But other identifications have also been proposed, chiefly because verse 16 states that this disciple who was accompanied by Peter was **known to the high priest**. As Barrett points out, the term γνωστός is used in the LXX to refer to a close friend (Ps 54:14 LXX [55:14 English text]).<sup>140</sup> This raises what for some is an insurmountable difficulty in identifying the “other disciple” as **John son of Zebedee**, since how could the uneducated son of an obscure Galilean fisherman be known to such a powerful and influential family in Jerusalem? E. A. Abbott proposed that the “other disciple” who accompanied Peter was **Judas**, since he was the one disciple of whom it is said explicitly (in the synoptic accounts) that he had dealings with the high priest.<sup>141</sup> E. A. Tindall suggested the disciple was **Nicodemus**, who as a member of the Sanhedrin, would have had access to the high priest’s palace.<sup>142</sup> Both of these suggestions, while ingenious, nevertheless lack support from the text of the Fourth Gospel itself or the synoptic accounts. W. Wuellner argued that the common attitude concerning the low

<sup>140</sup> Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 525.

<sup>141</sup> E. A. Abbott, *Expository Times* 25 (1913/14): 149-50.

<sup>142</sup> E. A. Tindall, *Expository Times* 28 (1916/17): 283-84.

social status and ignorance of the disciples from Galilee may in fact be a misconception.<sup>143</sup> Zebedee is presented in Mark 1:20 as a man wealthy enough to have hired servants, and Mark 10:35-45 presents both of the sons of Zebedee as concerned about status and prestige. John's mother appears in the same light in Matt 20:20-28. Contact with the high priestly family in Jerusalem might not be so unlikely in such circumstances. Others have noted the possibility that John came from a priestly family, some of which is based upon a statement in Eusebius quoting Polycrates that John son of Zebedee was a priest.<sup>144</sup> For further information on possible priestly connections among members of John's family see the discussion in L. Morris.<sup>145</sup> None of this can be proven beyond doubt, but on the whole it seems most probable that the disciple who accompanied Peter and gained entry into the courtyard for him was **John son of Zebedee**.

**18:16** ὁ δὲ Πέτρος εἰσῆκει πρὸς τῆ θύρᾳ Although the "other disciple" is permitted into the courtyard, **Peter was left standing outside**. So the "other disciple" came back out and spoke to the servant-girl who kept the gate (the noun θυρωρός may be either masculine or feminine, but the article here indicates that it is feminine). She then permitted Peter to enter the courtyard.

**18:17** ἡ παιδίσκη ἡ θυρωρός This was the maid servant to whom the "other disciple" spoke when he gained entrance for Peter into the courtyard (18:16). Her question to Peter, "You also are not one of the disciples of this man, are you?" provokes **Peter's first denial of Jesus**. Since the question is preceded by μή it expects a negative answer. Perhaps Peter was caught a bit off guard by the question and, since it was phrased to anticipate a negative answer, he found it easy to give one. But having given this denial, it would be hard to go back and admit the truth. It is very possible that the Evangelist wants us to contrast the response of Peter here and in 18:25, οὐκ εἶμι, with Jesus' confession in the garden in 18:5 and 8, ἐγὼ εἶμι. Jesus confessed openly who he was in order to protect his disciples (see above, verse 8), while Peter was not even able to admit openly that he was one of Jesus' disciples.

**18:18** καὶ ὁ Πέτρος μετ' αὐτῶν After the first denial Peter remained in the courtyard, warming himself near the charcoal fire with the servants and officers of the chief priests. Some of these latter (οἱ ὑπηρέται) would have been members of the party that arrested Jesus and brought him to Annas' residence. Certainly some of these might have seen Peter in the garden, but the danger might not have been as great as some have supposed, since it was dark and shadowy. Charcoal fires do not give off a great deal of light.

### 3 D Annas questions Jesus and sends him to Caiaphas (18:19-24)

**18:19** Ὁ οὖν ἀρχιερεὺς ἠρώτησεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν Annas, referred to here as the **high priest** (cf. note on verse 13; verse 24 implies that Caiaphas was not present), interrogated Jesus in two areas: **concerning his disciples** and **concerning his teaching**. The nature of this hearing seems to be more that of a preliminary investigation; certainly normal legal procedure was not followed, for no indication is given that any witnesses were brought forth at this point to testify against Jesus. True to what we know of Annas' character, he is more interested in Jesus' disciples than in the precise nature of Jesus' teaching, since he inquires about the followers first. He really wanted to know just how influential Jesus had become and how large a following he had gathered. This was of more concern to Annas than the truth or falsity of Jesus' teaching.

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<sup>143</sup> W. Wuellner, *The Meaning of "Fishers of Men"* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967).

<sup>144</sup> *Ecclesiastical History* 3.31.3.

<sup>145</sup> Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 752, n. 32.

**18:20** ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ Ἰησοῦς Jesus' reply centered on the second line of Annas' questioning and ignored the first. Perhaps he was still protecting his own, just as in the garden (cf. 18:8), when he directed the attention of the authorities away from his disciples.

ἐγὼ παρρησίᾳ λελάληκα τῷ κόσμῳ Jesus' reply to Annas that everything he had said had been said **openly**, not in secret, agrees with previous statements in the Fourth Gospel: in 7:26 the people noted that Jesus spoke openly and wondered if the authorities were giving tacit approval to what he was saying because they did nothing to stop him. 11:54 also seems to imply that Jesus' normal procedure prior to this point near the end of his public ministry had been to walk openly among the Jews as he taught. This does not mean that there was nothing obscure about Jesus' teaching (10:24 makes it plain that some of the Jews wished Jesus to speak more plainly about his messianic claims), but simply that **Jesus did not attempt to press his messianic claims in secret**. Obviously he had private conversations; the Fourth Gospel records two significant ones (with Nicodemus and with the Samaritan woman at the well). It may well be that Annas in his questioning of Jesus was really concerned with whether he was a revolutionary plotting a rebellion against the Romans. In regard to this Jesus could say that he had engaged in no secret plots; his teaching was done openly and in public for the most part, for all to hear.

**18:21** τί με ἐρωτᾷς At this point **Jesus becomes the questioner**: he asks Annas, "Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard what I said to them; behold, these know what I said." It may well be that Jesus is here refusing to answer a self-incriminating question and instead demanding to be tried with witnesses, as the Law provided. This may be a further indication that the interrogation by Annas was not a formal trial.

**18:22** εἷς παρεστηκὼς τῶν ὑπηρετῶν ἔδωκεν ῥάπισμα τῷ Ἰησοῦ Jesus had taken the initiative in his question to Annas in verse 21, and this was understood by one of the officers of the temple police standing by as an insult to the high priest. The officer responded by **slapping Jesus across the face**. The force of the officer's question to Jesus implies a rebuke: "**Is that any way to answer the high priest?**" Implicit is a reference to Exod 22:28, which states: "You shall not curse God, nor curse (say something wrong about) **a ruler of your people.**"

**18:23** ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ Ἰησοῦς Jesus replied to the indignity thus: "If I have spoken **wrongly**, testify concerning the wrong [say what it is that I have done]; but if [I have spoken] **rightly**, why do you strike me?" Jesus demonstrated such an attitude toward sin in 8:46: "Which of you convicts me of sin?" Jesus knew that according to the Law he was entitled to have witnesses brought in (Deut 17:6, 19:15), and he had done nothing wrong in insisting that the Law be followed.

**18:24** ἀπέστειλεν οὖν αὐτὸν ὁ Ἄννας Perhaps because the preliminary inquiry was getting nowhere, or because Jesus was insisting on a formal hearing with witnesses according to the Law, Annas **sent** Jesus bound **to Caiaphas**. Where was Caiaphas located? Did he have a separate palace, or was he somewhere else with the Sanhedrin? Since Augustine a number of scholars have proposed that Annas and Caiaphas resided in different wings of the same palace, which were bound together by a common courtyard through which Jesus would have been led as he was taken from Annas to Caiaphas. This seems a reasonable explanation, although there is no conclusive evidence.

#### **4 D Peter denies Jesus for the second and third times (18:25-27)**

**18:25** Ἦν δὲ Σίμων Πέτρος Here δέ could be translated "**meanwhile**"—the Evangelist is now returning to the events taking place outside in the courtyard while Jesus was being interrogated inside the palace by Annas. The phrase ἐστὼς καὶ θερμαινόμενος is repeated from verse 18 and indicates the connection with the scene of the previous denial. This time the questioners are not specified but we may presume from the

bystanders mentioned in verse 18 that they were either servants of the high priest's household or officers of the temple police who had participated in Jesus' arrest in the garden. Again, as in the previous question by the maidservant which occasioned Peter's first denial (verse 17), the question to Peter presupposed a negative response, which Peter quickly gave.

**18:26** λέγει εἷς ἐκ τῶν δούλων τοῦ ἀρχιερέως Again a third time a question is raised concerning Peter's allegiance, and the Evangelist specifies that **this time it was a relative of Malchus** (whose ear Peter had cut off in the garden, cf. verse 10) who asked. Here was someone who had a real interest in Peter's identity, since he was related to the man Peter had injured. His question, unlike the first two, is phrased with οὐκ so as to anticipate a positive response; he is more confident of the charge he is putting forward: "**Did I not see you in the garden with him?**"

**18:27** πάλιν οὖν ἠρνήσατο Πέτρος For the third time Peter denies his association with Jesus. This time his words are not recorded by the Evangelist, but only the statement that **he denied Jesus**. No indication is given of Peter's emotional state at this third denial (as in Matt 26:74 and Mark 14:71) or that he remembered that Jesus had foretold the denials (Matt 26:75, Mark 14:72 and Luke 22:61), or the bitter remorse Peter felt afterwards (Matt 26:75, Mark 14:72, and Luke 22:62).

εὐθέως ἀλέκτωρ ἐφώνησεν Immediately after Peter's third denial **a cock crowed**. It seems most likely that this refers to a real cockcrow, although a number of scholars have suggested that this is a technical term referring to the trumpet call which ended the third watch of the night (from midnight to 3 a.m.). This would then be a reference to the Roman *gallicinium* (in Greek, ἀλεκτοροφωνία) which would have been sounded at 3 a.m.; in this case Jesus would have prophesied a precise time by which the denials would have taken place.<sup>146</sup> In any event natural cockcrow would have occurred at approximately 3:00 a.m. in Palestine at this time of year (March-April) anyway.

### 3 C Jesus is brought before Pilate (18:28-19:16a)

The Fourth Gospel does not deal at all with the trial of Jesus before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, but alludes to it in 18:24 and 28. Much more attention is devoted to the Roman trial before Pilate. The Evangelist goes to great lengths to point out that Pilate himself testified to Jesus' innocence (18:38, 19:4, and 19:6) and would have freed him had it not been for the manipulation of the Jewish authorities.

#### 1 D The Jewish leaders present their accusation to Pilate (18:28-32)

**18:28** Ἀγουσιν οὖν τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ Καϊάφα Who are "**they**" who led Jesus to Pilate from Caiaphas? Some of the officers of the chief priests, certainly; but it also appears likely that **some members at least of the Sanhedrin who had been present at Jesus' trial before Caiaphas** must have accompanied him to Pilate to present their charges against him to the Roman governor. Their refusal to enter the praetorium lest they incur ceremonial defilement and Pilate's accommodation in coming out to meet them both suggest that there were some influential people in the group.

εἰς τὸ πραιτώριον The permanent residence of the Roman governor of Palestine was in **Caesarea** (Acts 23:35). The governor had a residence in Jerusalem which he normally occupied only during principal feasts or in times of political unrest. The location of this building in Jerusalem is uncertain, but is probably one of

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<sup>146</sup> For more details see J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, 2:604.



two locations: either (a) **the fortress or tower of Antonia**, on the East Hill north of the Temple area, which is the traditional location of the Roman praetorium since the 12th century, or (b) **the palace of Herod** on the West hill near the present Jaffa Gate. According to Philo Pilate had some golden shields hung there.<sup>147</sup> According to Josephus the later Roman governor Florus stayed there.<sup>148</sup>

ἵνα μὴ μιανθῶσιν It is not precisely clear what type of **ceremonial defilement** was in view here. Acts 10:28 states that it was “unlawful” for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit such a person, but the exact nature of the defilement is not specified. Some have thought John to be in error here about the statement concerning the eating of the Passover on the next day since the type of ceremonial impurity the Jewish leaders would have incurred here could be removed by a bath at the end of the day. But this presumes to know the exact nature of the defilement; if it was connected to contact with a corpse, it would have lasted seven days. This may indeed be the case, since the Gentiles were suspected of burying their dead in or beneath their houses.<sup>149</sup>

**18:29** ὁ Πιλάτος Pilate is not here identified by the Evangelist as the Roman governor for the benefit of the readers. It is reasonable to assume that from the earliest times Christians who had heard the apostolic preaching were familiar with his name.

τίνα κατηγορίαν φέρετε Pilate’s first words to Jesus’ accusers were a question: “**What accusation do you bring against this man?**” In light of the fact that Pilate had cooperated with them in Jesus’ arrest by providing Roman soldiers, the Jewish authorities were probably expecting Pilate to grant them permission to carry out their sentence on Jesus without resistance (the Jews were not permitted to exercise capital punishment under the Roman occupation without official Roman permission, cf. verse 31). They must have been taken somewhat by surprise by Pilate’s question, because it indicated that he was going to try the prisoner himself. Thus Pilate was regarding the trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin as only an inquiry and their decision as merely an **accusation**.

**18:30** ἦν οὗτος κακὸν ποιῶν The real charge which the Jewish authorities wanted to bring against Jesus was **theological**, not political (this comes out finally in 19:7; cf. 10:33). But this would not stand up in a Roman court, and they knew it. (Perhaps they were caught somewhat unprepared by Pilate’s announcement that he intended to try the prisoner himself, see the previous verse.) So the Jewish authorities made a general statement that Jesus was an **evildoer** (ἦν οὗτος κακὸν ποιῶν, a semitic idiom) without mentioning a specific crime.

**18:31** λάβετε αὐτὸν ὑμεῖς καὶ κατὰ τὸν νόμον ὑμῶν κρίνατε αὐτόν We may assume that Pilate, as the chief representative of Rome in a troubled area, was in Jerusalem for the passover because of the danger of an uprising (the normal residence for the Roman governor was in Caesarea as mentioned in Acts 23:35). At this time on the eve of the feast he would have been a busy and perhaps even a worried man. It is not surprising that he offered to hand Jesus back over to the Jewish authorities to pass judgment on him. It may well be that Pilate realized when no specific charge was mentioned that he was dealing with an internal dispute over some religious matter. Pilate wanted nothing to do with such matters. As far as the Evangelist is concerned, this points out who was really responsible for Jesus’ death: the Roman governor Pilate would

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<sup>147</sup> *Embassy to Gaius* 38 [299].

<sup>148</sup> *Jewish War* 2.301; 328.

<sup>149</sup> This practice is alluded to in the *Temple Scroll* from Qumran, 1st century BC; cf. Y. Yadin, *BA* 30 (1967): 137.

have had nothing to do with it if he had not been pressured by the Jewish authorities, upon whom the real responsibility rested.

ἡμῖν οὐκ ἔξεστιν ἀποκτεῖναι οὐδένα The Jewish authorities raised an objection, however, when Pilate tried to give Jesus back over to them for trial: **they were not permitted to carry out the death penalty.** The historical background behind this statement is difficult to reconstruct. Scholars are divided over whether this statement in the Fourth Gospel accurately reflects the judicial situation between the Jewish authorities and the Romans in first-century Palestine. It appears that the Roman governor may have given the Jews the power of capital punishment for specific offenses, some of them religious (the death penalty for Gentiles caught trespassing in the inner courts of the Temple, for example). It is also pointed out that the Jewish authorities did carry out a number of executions, some of them specifically pertaining to Christians (Stephen, according to Acts 7:58-60; and James the Just, who was stoned in the 60s according to Josephus).<sup>150</sup> But Stephen's death may be explained as a result of "mob violence" rather than a formal execution, and as Josephus in the above account goes on to point out, James was executed in the period between two Roman governors, and the high priest at the time was subsequently punished for the action. Two studies by A. N. Sherwin-White have tended to support the accuracy of John's account.<sup>151</sup> He concluded that the Romans kept very close control of the death penalty out of fear that in the hands of rebellious locals such power could be used to eliminate factions favorable or useful to Rome. A province as troublesome as Judea would not have been likely to be made an exception to this.

**18:32** ἵνα ὁ λόγος τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πληρωθῇ Here we have a parenthetical note by the Evangelist, who sees Jesus' trial and execution by the Romans as **a fulfillment of Jesus' own words concerning the nature of his death.** The "word" of Jesus to which the Evangelist refers must be recorded in 12:32, because 12:33 contains exactly the same explanatory phrase found here: τοῦτο δὲ ἔλεγεν σημαίνων ποίῳ θανάτῳ ἤμελλεν ἀποθνήσκειν. If the Jewish authorities had been able to execute Jesus themselves, they would have done so by **stoning.** For Jesus' prophetic words concerning the manner of his death (being lifted up from the earth, 12:32) to be fulfilled, he would have to be executed by the Romans, not by stoning but by **crucifixion.**

## 2 D Pilate questions Jesus concerning his kingship (18:33-38a)

**18:33** Εἰσηλθεν οὖν πάλιν Pilate at this point went back inside the praetorium to question Jesus (it is not clear whether Jesus himself had been brought inside the praetorium prior to this). He asked Jesus, "**Are You the King of the Jews?**" It is difficult to discern Pilate's attitude at this point. Some have believed the remark to be sarcastic or incredulous as Pilate looked upon this lowly and humble prisoner: "So *You're* the King of the Jews, are You?" Others have thought the Roman governor to have been impressed by Jesus' regal disposition and dignity, and to have sincerely asked, "Are You *really* the King of the Jews?" Since it will later become apparent (verse 38) that Pilate considered Jesus **innocent** (and therefore probably also harmless) an attitude of incredulity is perhaps most likely, but this is far from certain in the absence of clear contextual clues.

**18:34** ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς As with Annas (18:21) Jesus again becomes the Questioner. He asks Pilate, "**From yourself do you say this, or have others spoken to you concerning me?**" What is the significance of Jesus' question? It would be important to know whether Pilate was asking from his own initiative or not, because it would determine to some degree how Jesus should reply to his question about being King of the

<sup>150</sup> *Antiquities* 20.9.1 [200].

<sup>151</sup> A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 1-47; also "The Trial of Christ" in *Historicity and Chronology in the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1965), 97-116.

Jews. If Pilate came up with this question on his own initiative, he was probably asking whether Jesus was a political conspirator, to which the answer would be that he was not. But if the question came to Pilate from the Jewish authorities, then it concerned whether or not Jesus was the messianic King, to which the answer would be yes.

**18:35** ἀπεκρίθη ὁ Πιλάτος Pilate replied to Jesus' question with another question of his own: **"I am not a Jew, am I?"** Many have seen in this reply the Roman contempt for the Jewish people. Some of that may indeed be present, but strictly speaking, all Pilate affirms is that he, as a Roman, has **no firsthand knowledge of Jewish customs or belief**. What he knows of Jesus must have come from the Jewish authorities. **They are the ones ("Your own nation and the chief priests") who have handed Jesus over to Pilate.**

τί ἐποίησας Finally Pilate asks Jesus directly, **"What have You done?"** in order to get to the bottom of this. Pilate at this point really wants to know whether an offense against Roman law has taken place; then he can proceed to dispose of the case.

**18:36** ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς Jesus does not answer this last question of Pilate, but the former one, **"Are You the King of the Jews?"** (verse 33). He answers it affirmatively, since he does indeed have a **kingdom**. But Jesus qualifies his reply to make clear to Pilate that he is no political revolutionary: **his kingdom is not of this world**. This recalls Jesus' prayer concerning his disciples in 17:11 and 16: both he and his disciples are **in** the world, but are not **of** the world. Jesus' kingdom is a **heavenly** kingdom; it does not arise from the world but **breaks in from outside the world**, just as Jesus himself came down from heaven on a mission from the Father (cf. 1:14, 3:17, 16:28, etc.).

Jesus now supports his statement that his kingdom is not of this world by pointing out that **if it were, he would have subjects who would have attempted to fight** (ἠγωνίζοντο, conative imperfect) on his behalf. The absence of military resistance to Jesus' arrest should indicate to Pilate that Jesus' kingdom was **not from here** (ἐντεῦθεν). Actually Peter did try to resist (18:10-11), but Jesus ordered him to stop.

**18:37** οὐκοῦν βασιλεὺς εἶ σύ Pilate infers on the basis of Jesus' remarks that he is indeed some sort of **king**. How then are we to understand Jesus' reply, "You say that I am a king" (σὺ λέγεις ὅτι βασιλεὺς εἰμι)? Is it to be understood as **affirmative** or **negative**? It seems best to understand it as a **qualified affirmative** reply. Jesus will not deny the conclusion of Pilate that he is a king, but points out, "It is you who have said it, not I". Jesus goes on to explain his mission into the world in terms that he would prefer to use: **"For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, in order that I might bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."** Jesus had affirmed similar ideas previously in his teaching (8:32, 14:6).

**18:38a** τί ἐστὶν ἀλήθεια With his reply **"What is truth?"** Pilate dismissed the matter. It is not clear what Pilate's attitude was at this point, as above at verse 33. He may have been sarcastic, or perhaps somewhat reflective. We do not have enough information in the narrative to be sure.

### **3 D Pilate seeks to release Jesus but the crowd cries out for Barabbas instead (18:38b-40)**

**18:38b** ἐγὼ οὐδεμίαν εὐρίσκω ἐν αὐτῷ αἰτίαν Pilate now makes his first attempt to have Jesus released. The Roman governor had satisfied himself that this man Jesus, whatever strange statements he might make about his origin and purpose, was no dangerous revolutionary. He could be released without further threat to Rome. So Pilate went back outside the praetorium to the Jewish authorities who were

waiting and pronounced his judgment: “**I find no case [no cause of guilt] against this man.**” Pilate’s verdict of “not guilty” will be repeated two more time in 19:4 and 19:6.

**18:39** ἔστιν δὲ συνήθεια ὑμῖν Pilate then offers to release Jesus, reminding the Jews that **they have a custom that he release someone for them at the passover**. There is no extra-biblical evidence to support the practice. It is, however, mentioned in all the synoptics, which describe it as a practice of Pilate (Mark 15:6, Luke 23:17) or of the Roman governor (Matt 27:15). These references may explain the lack of extra-biblical attestation: the custom to which Pilate refers here (18:39) is not a permanent one acknowledged by all the Roman governors, but one peculiar to Pilate as a means of appeasement, meant to better relations with his subjects. Such a limited meaning is certainly possible and consistent with the statement here, since Pilate says “You have a custom *that I release* one [prisoner] for you at the passover”.

**18:40** μὴ τοῦτον ἀλλὰ τὸν Βαραββᾶν The crowd outside the praetorium (speaking up for the first time in the context; πάλιν may well have a meaning like “**thereupon**” here) refuse Jesus and ask for **Barabbas**, described by the Evangelist in a parenthetical note as a “**robber**” (ληστής). This word is used a number of times by Josephus to describe the revolutionaries or guerrilla fighters who, from mixed motives of nationalism and greed, kept the rural districts of Judea in constant turmoil.<sup>152</sup>

ὁ Βαραββᾶς The name **Barabbas** itself in Aramaic means “**son of abba**,” that is, “**son of the father**” and presumably the man in question had another name (it may also have been Jesus, according to the textual variant in Matt 27:16, although this is uncertain). It is probable that for the Evangelist this name held ironic significance: **the crowd was asking for the release of a man called Barabbas, “son of the father,” while Jesus, who was truly the Son of the Father, was condemned to die instead.**

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<sup>152</sup> *Jewish War* 2.13.2-3 [253-54].

## Chapter 19

### OUTLINE:

- [3 B The Passion: the arrest, trials, death, and burial of Jesus (18:1-19:42)]**
  - [3 C Jesus is brought before Pilate (18:28-19:16a)]**
    - 4 D Jesus is scourged and mocked by the Roman soldiers (19:1-3)**
    - 5 D Pilate again seeks to release Jesus, but the crowd cries out for crucifixion (19:4-7)**
    - 6 D Pilate questions Jesus a second time, concerning his identity and authority (19:8-11)**
    - 7 D Pilate yields to the demand of the Jewish leaders to crucify Jesus (19:12-16a)**
  - 4 C Jesus is crucified, dies, and is buried (19:16b-42)**
    - 1 D The crucifixion of Jesus (19:16b-18)**
    - 2 D Pilate and his inscription (19:19-22)**
    - 3 D The soldiers divide Jesus' garments and cast lots for his tunic (19:23-24)**
    - 4 D Jesus gives the care of his mother to John (the beloved disciple) (19:25-27)**
    - 5 D Jesus cries out in thirst and is given wine (19:28-29)**
    - 6 D Jesus gives over the Spirit (19:30)**
    - 7 D Jesus' side is pierced (19:31-37)**
    - 8 D Jesus' body is buried by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (19:38-42)**

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## DETAILED EXEGETICAL NOTES:

### 4 D Jesus is scourged and mocked by the Roman soldiers (19:1-3)

*Introduction.* Pilate has failed in his first attempt to free Jesus (18:38b-40). It appears that his actions in having Jesus scourged are best explained as another attempt on his part to release Jesus by giving the authorities the satisfaction of seeing Jesus subjected to flogging and public ridicule. Probably Pilate hoped that this would be enough for them, and they would then consent to Jesus' release. But Pilate failed to understand the depth of hatred which the authorities had for Jesus or the lengths to which they were willing to go to see him killed.

**19:1** ἐμαστίγωσεν Literally, of course, this was not done by Pilate but his officers, who took Jesus at Pilate's order and scourged him. The Evangelist's choice of wording here may constitute an allusion to Isa 50:6, "I gave my back to those who scourge me..."

Three forms of corporal punishment were employed by the Romans, in increasing degree of severity: (1) *fustigatio* (beating), (2) *flagellatio* (flogging), and (3) *verberatio* (scourging). The first could be on occasion a punishment in itself, but the more severe forms were part of the capital sentence as a prelude to crucifixion. The most severe, *verberatio*, is what is indicated here by the Greek verb μαστιγῶ. Men died on occasion while being scourged; frequently it was severe enough to rip a person's body open or cut muscle and sinew to the bone.

**19:2** πλέξαντες στέφανον ἐξ ἀκανθῶν After the scourging Jesus was mocked by the Roman soldiers who had scourged him. They wove a crown of thorns and placed it on his head, and cast about him a cloak of royal purple.

στέφανον ἐξ ἀκανθῶν This was a crown plaited of some thorny material, intended as a mockery of Jesus' "kingship". Traditionally it has been regarded as an additional instrument of torture, but it seems more probable the purpose of the thorns was not necessarily to inflict more physical suffering but to imitate the spikes of the "radiant corona," a type of crown portrayed on ruler's heads on many coins of the period; the spikes on this type of crown represented rays of light pointing outward (the best contemporary illustration is the crown on the head of the Statue of Liberty in New York harbor).

ἰμάτιον πορφυροῦν John here specifies only a “purple garment,” but according to Matt 27:28 this was a χλαμύς, the outer cloak worn by governmental officials and soldiers.

**19:3** καὶ ἤρχοντο πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ ἔλεγον Repeatedly (note the imperfect tense) the soldiers came up to Jesus and mocked him with the exclamation, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and gave him slaps (cf. 18:22).

#### **5 D Pilate again seeks to release Jesus, but the crowd cries out for crucifixion (19:4-7)**

**19:4** Καὶ ἐξῆλθεν πάλιν ἔξω It appears that the scourging took place inside the praetorium, since Pilate went out to the Jewish authorities in 18:38 and presumably came inside again in 19:1 for the scourging. Now he went out again. He said to the Jewish authorities, “Behold, I am bringing him outside to you, in order that you may know that I find no case [no cause of guilt] against him.” This is the second time Pilate has proclaimed Jesus “not guilty”; the first was in 18:38.

**19:5** ἐξῆλθεν οὖν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἔξω So Pilate had Jesus brought out, still wearing the thorny crown (τὸν ἀκάνθινον στέφανον, cf. the phrase in 19:2) and the purple cloak. Pilate presented Jesus before the crowd outside the praetorium saying, “Behold the man!” (ἰδοὺ ὁ ἄνθρωπος). Pilate may have meant no more than something like “Here is the accused!” or in a contemptuous way, “Here is your king!” Others have taken Pilate’s statement as intended to evoke pity from Jesus’ accusers: “Look at this poor fellow!” (Jesus would certainly not have looked very impressive after the scourging). For the Evangelist, however, Pilate’s words may constitute an unconscious allusion to Zech 6:12, “Behold, a man whose name is [the] Branch...”. In this case Pilate was (unknowingly and ironically) presenting Jesus to the nation under a messianic title!

**19:6** σταύρωσον σταύρωσον This time the reaction of the high priests and officers of the temple police is even more hostile than in 18:40, where they cried out for Barabbas. This time they insist that Jesus be crucified. This should come as no surprise to a reader of the Fourth Gospel, since Jesus spoke of his death by crucifixion in 12:32-33; these words of Jesus were alluded to again in 18:32.

λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Πιλάτος In answer to this call for crucifixion, Pilate said to them, “You take him and crucify him.” How are we to understand Pilate’s words? Was he offering a serious alternative to the priests who wanted Jesus crucified? Was he offering them an exception to the statement in 18:31 that the Jewish authorities did not have the power to carry out a death penalty? Although a few scholars have suggested that the situation was at this point so far out of Pilate’s control that he really was telling the high priests they could go ahead and crucify a man he had found to be innocent, this seems unlikely. It is far more probable that we should understand Pilate’s statement here as one of frustration and perhaps sarcasm. This seems to be supported by the context, for the Jews make no attempt at this point to seize Jesus and crucify him. Rather they continue to pester Pilate to order the crucifixion.

**19:7** ἡμεῖς νόμον ἔχομεν Realizing that they must be more direct in their charges against Jesus if they are to succeed in their plan to have Pilate crucify him, the Jewish authorities finally admit their real grievance against Jesus: he was worthy of the death penalty because he had broken the law (i.e., blasphemed) by making himself to be Son of God. The law to which they refer was not the entire Pentateuch, but one specific law, the law against blasphemy (Lev 24:16) which called for the death penalty for offenders.

It is now clear that the real accusation against Jesus was theological: it concerned his claim to be intimately related to God. The Jewish authorities had reacted violently to this claim before (cf. 5:18, 8:59).

#### **6 D Pilate questions Jesus a second time, concerning his identity and authority (19:8-11)**

**19:8** Ὅτε οὖν ἤκουσεν ὁ Πιλάτος τοῦτον τὸν λόγον, μᾶλλον ἐφοβήθη... The Evangelist has not explicitly stated before that Pilate was afraid. But there is a hint of fear in the hesitancy Pilate had already exhibited in dealing with this man whom he thought at first to be just another revolutionary. There are a number of possible explanations for Pilate's apprehension, but it seems best to regard him as superstitious. He appeared to have been impressed with Jesus when he talked with him earlier (18:33-38), and now when he hears that his prisoner has made claims of divinity, he is really worried.

**19:9** καὶ εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸ πραιτώριον πάλιν... In verses 4 and 5 Pilate had brought Jesus out and presented him before the crowd. No mention is made of Jesus going back inside the praetorium, but it is reasonable to assume that Pilate, in the face of the shouting (verse 6) had him brought back inside.

καὶ λέγει τῷ Ἰησοῦ Now Pilate began to question the prisoner again. His interest in Jesus' origin is easily explained by the statement of the Jewish authorities in verse 7 that he made himself to be Son of God. So Pilate asked Jesus, "Where are You from?" For the moment Jesus was silent; he gave Pilate no answer to this question (although he will speak again in verse 11). Had Jesus answered this question of Pilate it is unlikely Pilate could have, or would have, believed it.

**19:10** ἔμοι οὐ λαλεῖς Pilate's reaction is understandable. He has been frustrated by the Jewish authorities in his attempt to release Jesus; twice he has told them he has found the prisoner "not guilty" and their reaction has become progressively more vehement. Now his prisoner adds to his frustration by what must have appeared to Pilate as a stubborn refusal to reply to a reasonable question. So, not surprisingly, Pilate reminds his prisoner who he is, and that he (Pilate) as the bearer of the *imperium* (the imperial power of Rome) has the power of life and death over the accused.

**19:11** οὐκ εἶχες ἐξουσίαν κατ' ἐμοῦ οὐδεμίαν εἰ μὴ ἦν δεδομένον σοι ἄνωθεν Pilate has reminded Jesus that he bears the *imperium*, the imperial power of Rome, on behalf of Caesar. Now Jesus tells Pilate that he would have no authority over him at all unless it came to him not from Caesar but from God. (On the word ἄνωθεν see the notes on 3:3; note that 3:27 also expresses a very similar thought: "A man can receive nothing, unless it has been given to him from heaven".)

ὁ παραδούς μέ σοι We might take this as a reference to Judas at first; but Judas did not deliver Jesus up to Pilate, but to the Jewish authorities. The singular may be a reference to Caiaphas, who as high priest was representative of all the Jewish authorities, or it may be a generic singular referring to all the Jewish authorities directly. In either case the end result is more or less the same.

μείζονα ἁμαρτίαν ἔχει Because Pilate has no authority over Jesus except that which has been given to him from God, the one who handed Jesus over to Pilate is guilty of greater sin. This does not absolve Pilate of guilt; it simply means his guilt is less than those who handed Jesus over to him, because he is not acting against Jesus out of deliberate hatred or calculated malice, like the Jewish authorities. These are thereby guilty of greater sin.

#### **7 D Pilate yields to the demand of the Jewish leaders to crucify Jesus (19:12-16a)**

**19:12** ἐκ τούτου The meaning of this prepositional phrase is temporal ("from this time") but may in context have causal or inferential force (cf. 6:66 for a similar use with similar ambiguity). Pilate was further convinced of Jesus' innocence, and made further efforts to have him released. He appears to have gone back outside to speak with the Jewish authorities. They would have none of this, however, and began to cry out,



“If you release this one, you are no friend of Caesar. Everyone who makes himself to be king opposes Caesar.”

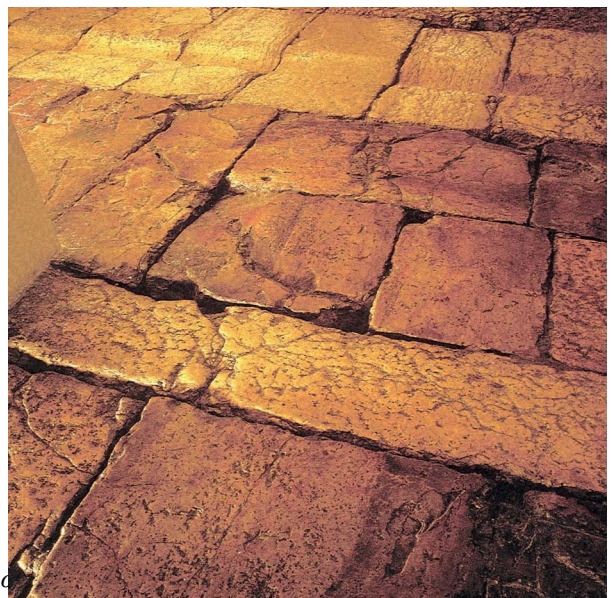
φίλος τοῦ Καίσαρος Is the Evangelist using the phrase in a technical sense, as a title bestowed on people for loyal service to the Emperor, or in a more general sense merely describing a person as loyal to the Emperor? L. Morris thinks it is “unlikely” that the title is used in the technical sense.<sup>153</sup> Bernard argues that the technical sense of the phrase as an official title was not used before the time of Vespasian (AD 69-79).<sup>154</sup> But there appears to be significant evidence for much earlier usage.<sup>155</sup> E. Bammel listed significant and convincing arguments that the official title was indeed in use at the time.<sup>156</sup>

Granting that the title was in use during this period, what is the likelihood that it had been bestowed on Pilate? Pilate was of the equestrian order, that is, of lower nobility as opposed to senatorial rank. As such he would have been eligible to receive such an honor. It also appears that the powerful Sejanus was his patron in Rome, and Sejanus held considerable influence with Tiberius. Tacitus quoted Marcus Terentius in his defense before the Senate as saying that close friendship with Sejanus “was in every case a powerful recommendation to the Emperor’s friendship.”<sup>157</sup> Thus it seems quite likely that Pilate held this honor.

Therefore it appears that the Jewish authorities were putting a good deal of psychological pressure on Pilate to convict Jesus. They had, in effect, finally specified the charge against Jesus as treason: “Everyone who makes himself to be king opposes Caesar”. If Pilate now failed to convict Jesus the Jewish authorities could complain to Rome that Pilate had released a traitor. This possibility carried more weight with Pilate than might at first be evident: (1) Pilate’s record as governor was not entirely above reproach; (2) Tiberius, who lived away from Rome as a virtual recluse on the island of Capri, was known for his suspicious nature, especially toward rivals or those who posed a political threat; and (3) worst of all, Pilate’s patron in Rome, Sejanus, had recently come under suspicion of plotting to seize the imperial succession for himself. Sejanus was deposed in October AD 31. It may have been to Sejanus that Pilate owed his appointment in Judea. Pilate was now in a very delicate position. The Jewish authorities may have known something of this and deliberately used it as leverage against him. Whether or not they knew just how potent their veiled threat was, it had the desired effect. Pilate went directly to the βῆμα (bēma, “judgment seat”) to pronounce his judgment.

**19:13** ὁ οὖν Πιλάτος ἀκούσας Thus, when Pilate heard that the charge against Jesus was now treason, and realized that if he did not crucify Jesus as the Jewish authorities were wanting him to do, they would report to Rome that he had released a political prisoner who was a traitor, his fear overcame his reservations about Jesus’ innocence. He brought Jesus outside and took his seat on the bēma to pronounce sentence.

Λιθόστρωτον (Liqostrwtōn) This is something of a generic term for “stone pavement” (it was used in the LXX of 2 Chr 7:3 to describe the pavement of Solomon’s temple). The precise location is still uncertain, although a



**Roman Pavement in Jerusalem**

<sup>153</sup> Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 798.

<sup>154</sup> Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, 1:100.

<sup>155</sup> Some of this evidence is given in BAGD, 395 s.v.

<sup>156</sup> E. Bammel, *Theologische Literatur Zeitung* 77 (1952): 205-10.

<sup>157</sup> *Annals* 6.8.

paved court on the lower level of the Fortress Antonia has been suggested. It is not certain whether it was laid prior to AD 135, however.

Γαββαθά (*Gabbatha*) The Evangelist does not say this is the Aramaic (or Hebrew) translation for Λιθόστρωτον. He simply points out that in Aramaic (or Hebrew) the place had another name. A number of meanings have been suggested, but the most likely appears to mean “elevated place”. It is possible that this was a term used by the common people for the βῆμα itself, which always stood on a raised platform.

**19:14** ἦν δὲ παρασκευὴ τοῦ πάσχα The term παρασκευή, “the day of preparation,” appears in all the Gospels as a description of the day on which Jesus died. It could refer to any Friday as the day of preparation for the Sabbath (Saturday), and this is the way the synoptic gospels use the term (Matt 27:62, Mark 15:42, and Luke 23:54). John, however, specifies in addition that this was not only the day of preparation of the Sabbath, but also the day of preparation of the passover, so that the Sabbath on the following day was the passover (cf. 19:31).

For a survey of the various options in reconciling the Johannine account with the synoptics, see L. Morris.<sup>158</sup> It seems that his solution, that different calendrical systems were being followed by John versus the synoptists, is the best, although it is not without problems. A more recent discussion at much greater length which adopts essentially the same solution as Morris is that of I. H. Marshall.<sup>159</sup>

ἦν ὥς ἕκτη John also records that Jesus’ condemnation took place about the sixth hour. It does not appear likely that the Fourth Gospel is reckoning from midnight (Roman legal time) as B. F. Westcott believed (cf. the note on 1:39). Thus, counting from 6:00 a.m., the time would be around noon.

This creates a problem with the time of the crucifixion given in Mark 15:25, which specifies the third hour. Under the same reckoning this would be around 9:00 a.m. A number of proposals have been made which attempt to resolve the difficulty short of dismissing either John’s or Mark’s account. Barrett mentions a possible transcriptional error resulting from confusion of the Greek characters for 3 [Γ] and 6 [δixαμμα].<sup>160</sup> This is interesting, but obviously there is no way to discover if such a confusion actually took place. (Barrett himself thinks John altered the time for theological reasons.) It seems simplest to say that neither Mark nor John were giving precise time references (such were impossible in a world where time was reckoned by the approximate position of the sun in the sky). John, by the inclusion of ὥς (“about”), makes it clear that his reference is only approximate. The difference between sometime late in the third hour and sometime early in the sixth would be only about 15° of arc. Both expressions could easily refer to sometime later in the morning, just prior to noon.

For John, the time is especially important. When the note concerning the hour is connected with the day, the preparation of the passover, it becomes apparent that Jesus is going to die on the cross at the very time that the passover lambs are being slain in the temple courts. Exod 12:6 required that the passover lamb be kept alive until the 14th Nisan, the eve of the passover, and then slaughtered by the head of the household at twilight (literally, “between the two evenings”). By this time the slaughtering was no longer done by the heads of households, but by the priests in the temple courts. But so many lambs were needed for the tens of thousands of pilgrims who came to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast (some estimates run in excess of 100,000) that the slaughter could not be completed during the evening, and so the rabbis redefined “between the two evenings” as beginning at noon, when the sun began to decline toward the horizon. Thus

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<sup>158</sup> Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, “Additional Note H: The Last Supper and the Passover,” 774-86, which also includes basic bibliographic information on a variety of studies on the problem (785-86).

<sup>159</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord’s Supper* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981).

<sup>160</sup> Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 545.

the priests had the entire afternoon of 14th Nisan in which to complete the slaughter of the passover lambs. According to the Fourth Gospel, this is the time Jesus was dying on the cross.

Ἴδε ὁ βασιλεὺς ὑμῶν So Pilate spoke once more to the Jewish authorities, saying, “Behold, your King.” Perhaps Pilate was using one last bit of mockery as a final attempt to gain sympathy for Jesus’ release. But for the Evangelist, there is irony in Pilate’s words: Jesus really was their King (cf. 1:11).

**19:15** ἄρον ἄρον, σταύρωσον αὐτόν The crowd’s response was swift and vocal: “Away [with him]! Away [with him]! Crucify him!” The cry for crucifixion is again raised as it was in 19:6. There may be a Johannine word-play in the cry of the crowd, since the verb αἰρέω means both “to take away” and “to raise up,” in which case the crowd is crying out for Jesus to be raised up on the cross.

Pilate asked one final question: “Shall I crucify your King?,” to which the Jewish authorities (here specified as the high priests) responded, “We have no King except Caesar,” a reminder to Pilate of the difficult position in which he found himself (see discussion at vv. 12-13).

**19:16a** Τότε οὖν παρέδωκεν αὐτὸν αὐτοῖς So Pilate “handed him over to them in order that he be crucified”. The nearest antecedent of αὐτοῖς is the high priests in the preceding verse, but it seems clear that the Jewish authorities did not carry out the sentence. John 19:23 makes it plain that Roman soldiers were involved (as in all three of the synoptic accounts). The point is that Pilate handed Jesus over to their will; that is, the Jewish authorities got what they had wanted all along: the order for Jesus to be crucified.

#### **4 C Jesus is crucified, dies, and is buried (19:16b-42)**

##### **1 D The crucifixion of Jesus (19:16b-18)**

**19:16b-17** Παρέλαβον οὖν τὸν Ἰησοῦν It was the Roman soldiers (and not the high priests, cf. αὐτοῖς in the previous verse) who took charge of Jesus at this point, as becomes clear in verse 23.

βαστάζων ἑαυτῷ τὸν σταυρὸν As was customary practice in a Roman crucifixion, the prisoner was made to carry his own cross. In all probability this was only the crossbeam, called in Latin the *patibulum*, since the upright beam usually remained in the ground at the place of execution. According to Matt 27:32 and Mark 15:21, the soldiers forced Simon to take the cross; Luke 23:26 states that the cross was placed on Simon so that it might be carried behind Jesus. A reasonable explanation of all this is that Jesus started out carrying the cross until he was no longer able to do so, at which point Simon was forced to take over.

εἰς τὸν λεγόμενον Κρανίου Τόπον Jesus was led out to that place which is called ‘the Place of the Skull’ where he was to be crucified. It is clear from verse 20 that this was outside the city. The Latin word for κρανίον is *calvaria*, from which the English word ‘Calvary’ comes (cf. Luke 23:33 in the Authorized Version).

ὃ λέγεται Ἐβραϊστὶ Γολγοθα The Aramaic behind the Greek transliteration would have been ܩܠܘܬܐ, or the Hebrew קלגלג.

**19:18** αὐτὸν ἐσταύρωσαν The Evangelist does not elaborate on the details of the crucifixion. For the readers of the first century this would not have been necessary.

καὶ μετ' αὐτοῦ ἄλλους δύο Here the two men who were crucified with Jesus are also mentioned, although John does not tell us anything about them.

## 2 D Pilate and his inscription (19:19-22)

**19:19** ἔγραψεν δὲ καὶ τίτλον ὁ Πιλάτος We should probably understand ἔγραψεν in a causative sense, as with Jesus' scourging in 19:1. Pilate gave orders for this to be done. The inscription read "JESUS THE NAZARENE THE KING OF THE JEWS." John says simply that it was placed "on the cross" (ἐπὶ τοῦ σταυροῦ). Luke 23:38 says the inscription was placed "over him" (Jesus), and Matt 27:37 that it was placed over Jesus' head. On the basis of Matthew's statement Jesus' cross is usually depicted as the *crux immissa*, the cross which has the crossbeam set below the top of the upright beam. The other commonly used type of cross was the *crux commissa*, which had the crossbeam atop the upright beam. But Matthew's statement is not conclusive, since with the *crux commissa* the body would have sagged downward enough to allow the placard to be placed above Jesus' head.

The placard with Pilate's inscription is mentioned in all the gospels, but for John it was certainly ironic. Jesus really was the King of the Jews, although he was a King rejected by his own people (cf. 1:11). What Pilate's own motivation for placing the title over Jesus was is considerably more obscure. He may have meant this as a final mockery of Jesus himself, but Pilate's earlier mockery of Jesus seemed to be motivated by a desire to gain pity from the Jewish authorities in order to have him released. More likely Pilate saw this as a subtle way of getting back at the Jewish authorities who had pressured him into the execution of what he considered to be an innocent man.

**19:20** τὸν τίτλον πολλοὶ ἀνέγνωσαν τῶν Ἰουδαίων We are told that many of the Jews read the placard that Pilate had written, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city. This seems to indicate clearly, as mentioned above at verse 17, that the site was outside the city walls.

Ἑβραϊστί, Ῥωμαϊστί, Ἑλληνιστί Pilate's inscription was written in three languages, so that anyone could read it. The Kingship of Jesus, denied so vehemently by the Jewish authorities, was being proclaimed to the entire world. Only John records that the inscription was written in three languages. This eyewitness reminiscence symbolized for the Evangelist the universal scope of Jesus' reign (cf. 4:42, 12:20-26).

**19:21** οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς τῶν Ἰουδαίων Nowhere else in the Fourth Gospel are these two expressions combined. Earlier in 19:15 the chief priests were simply referred to as οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς. It seems likely that this is another example of Johannine irony, to be seen in contrast to the inscription on the cross which read "ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων".

Predictably the chief priests did not like the placard which Pilate had ordered to be written and placed upon the cross. So they were trying to tell Pilate [ἔλεγον, a conative imperfect] to change the inscription from "THE KING OF THE JEWS" to "THIS ONE SAID 'I AM THE KING OF THE JEWS.'"

**19:22** ὃ γέγραφα, γέγραφα Pilate refused to change the inscription, however, saying with an air of finality indicated by the double use of the perfect tense, "What I have written, I have written."<sup>161</sup> There is probably additional Johannine irony in the fact that Jesus, rejected as King and Messiah by his own people, the Jews, has now been proclaimed to all the world as King by a Gentile. Now that he has been lifted up from the earth, Jesus has begun to draw all men (men from every nation) to himself, just as he predicted in 12:32.

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<sup>161</sup> See BDF §342.4.

### 3 D The soldiers divide Jesus' garments and cast lots for his tunic (19:23-24)

**19:23** ἔλαβον τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐποίησαν τέσσαρα μέρη The soldiers who had crucified Jesus took his garments and made four shares, one share to each soldier. The Fourth Gospel is the only one to specify the number of soldiers involved in the crucifixion. This was a *quaternion*, a squad of four soldiers. It was accepted Roman practice for the soldiers who performed a crucifixion to divide the possessions of the person executed among themselves.

καὶ τὸν χιτῶνα The outer garments are referred to as τὰ ἱμάτια, which the soldiers divided. But the undergarment, the χιτῶν, a long tunic worn under the outer clothing, was seamless (ἄραφος), woven from the top down in a single piece.

**19:24** λάχωμεν περὶ αὐτοῦ Rather than tear the seamless tunic into four parts, the soldiers cast lots for it. This is interpreted by the Evangelist as a fulfillment of Ps 22:18 [22:19 LXX].

#### *A Note on the significance of the seamless tunic for the Evangelist:*

Many interpretations have been proposed, including the completeness or oneness of Jesus' teaching (Origen), the unity of the church (Cyprian), or the virgin birth of Jesus (Cyril). Several possibilities warrant further consideration: (1) the symbolism may be intended to suggest the clothing of a priest, and thus point out that Jesus died a priest as well as a king. The LXX uses χιτῶν to translate the Hebrew כִּתְוֹן in Exod 28:4 and Lev 16:4 as a reference to the linen undergarment worn by the high priest. This is not explicitly said to be a seamless garment in Exod 28:4 and Lev 16:4, but Exod 39:27 states that the tunic was woven linen. Josephus, however, describes the tunic of the high priest as one single woven piece of cloth.<sup>162</sup>

(2) This does not explain, however, why the Evangelist makes a point of the soldiers' decision not to divide the tunic. The verb used by the soldiers to describe the tearing of the tunic is σχίζω, and the cognate noun σχίσμα is used to describe factions or divisions among people in 7:43, 9:16, and 10:19. This has led to the suggestion that the Evangelist wants to stress the unity of Jesus' followers (cf. 17:21). This is far from certain, however, since the verb used here is the normal verb for tearing something and is so used of the fishermen's nets in 21:11.

(3) Perhaps it is best to consider this simply an eyewitness recollection, and the mention of the seamless design of the χιτῶν is an explanation of why the soldiers did not divide it. The fact that they did not divide it, but cast lots instead, is seen as a fulfillment of scripture (Ps 22:18).

### 4 D Jesus gives the care of his mother to John (the beloved disciple) (19:25-27)

**19:25** Εἰστήκεισαν δὲ παρὰ τῷ σταυρῷ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ The Evangelist now shifts the scene to the people present at the foot of the cross. Several women are mentioned, but it is not easy to determine how many. It is not clear whether "his mother's sister" (ἡ ἀδελφὴ τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ) and "Mary the wife of Clopas" (Μαρία ἡ τοῦ Κλωπᾶ) are to be understood as the same individual (in which case only three women are mentioned: Jesus' mother, her sister Mary, and Mary Magdalene) or as two different individuals (in which case four women are mentioned: Jesus' mother, her sister, Mary Clopas' wife, and Mary Magdalene).

It is impossible to be certain, but when John's account is compared to the synoptics it is easier to reconcile the accounts if four women were present than if there were only three. It also seems that if there were four women present, this would have been seen by the Evangelist to be in juxtaposition to the four soldiers present who performed the crucifixion, and this may explain the transition from the one incident in 23-24 to

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<sup>162</sup> *Antiquities* 3.7.4 [161].

the other in 25-27. Finally, if only three were present, this would mean that both Jesus' mother and her sister were named Mary, and this is highly improbable in a Jewish family of that time.

If there were four women present, the name of the second, the sister of Jesus' mother, is not mentioned. It is entirely possible that the sister of Jesus' mother mentioned here is to be identified with the woman named Salome mentioned in Mark 15:40 and also with the woman identified as "the mother of the sons of Zebedee" mentioned in Matt 27:56. If so, and if John the Apostle is to be identified as the Beloved Disciple, then the reason for the omission of the second woman's name becomes clear; she would have been John's own mother, and he consistently omitted direct reference to himself or his brother James or any other members of his family in the Fourth Gospel.

**19:26-27** Ἰησοῦς οὖν ἰδὼν τὴν μητέρα καὶ τὸν μαθητὴν παρεστῶτα From the cross Jesus saw his mother standing nearby, and the Beloved Disciple also standing nearby. He commended his mother to the care of the Beloved Disciple, speaking to both of them directly. The phrase ἀπ' ἐκείνης τῆς ὥρας might be understood to mean that the Beloved Disciple led Jesus' mother away so that she did not witness the death of her son, but it does not necessarily have to mean this. More probably all it means is that from that moment on, the Beloved Disciple cared for Jesus' mother as his own.

#### **5 D Jesus cries out in thirst and is given wine (19:28-29)**

**19:28** εἰδὼς...τετέλεσται After the commendation of his mother to the care of the Beloved Disciple, Jesus knew that all things had already been completed (τετέλεσται). All the work that the Father had given him to do was now finished (cf. 4:34, 5:36, and 17:4; see especially the Notes on 17:4 for further discussion of this concept).

ἵνα τελειωθῇ ἡ γραφή But Jesus was still completely in control of the situation, even as he hung upon the cross. In order that the scripture might be fulfilled [τελειωθῇ, a word-play on the previous statement that all things were completed (τετέλεσται)], he said, "I thirst". The scripture referred to is probably Ps 69:21, "They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink". Also suggested, however, is Ps 22:15, "My tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth, and You [God] lay me in the dust of death". Psalm 22:1 reads, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?," a statement Jesus makes from the cross in both Matt 27:46 and Mark 15:34. In light of the connection in the Fourth Gospel between thirst and the living water which Jesus offers, it is highly ironic that here Jesus himself, the source of that living water, expresses his thirst. And since 7:39 associates the living water with the Holy Spirit, Jesus' statement here in 19:28 amounts to an admission that at this point he has been forsaken by God (cf. Ps 22:1).

**19:29** σκεῦος ἕκειτο There was a jar of cheap wine standing nearby, so they put a sponge soaked in the wine on some hyssop, and lifted it up to Jesus' mouth.

ὄξους The cheap wine was called in Latin *posca*, and referred to a cheap vinegar wine diluted heavily with water. It was the drink of slaves and soldiers, and was probably there for the soldiers who had performed the crucifixion.

ὕσσωπον The hyssop used to lift the wet sponge may have been a form of reed (κάλαμος is used in Matt 27:48 and Mark 15:36); the biblical name can refer to several different species of plant (at least eighteen different plants have been suggested).

#### **6 D Jesus gives over the Spirit (19:30)**

**19:30** ὅτε οὖν ἔλαβεν τὸ ὄξος... When Jesus had taken the wine, he said, "It is finished" (τετέλεσται). And bowing his head, he gave over his spirit (παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα). Many of the themes of the Fourth Gospel are summed up here. Jesus has now signified that the work the Father had given him to do has been accomplished (see the Notes on 17:4 for extended discussion of this). He has obediently fulfilled his Father's will (cf. 18:11). Jesus was in complete control of events up to the very end; not until he indicates by this cry that all is completed does his death come, and it is spoken of as "handing over his spirit," indicating he voluntarily gave up his life (10:18). Now that Jesus has finished his work and been lifted up from the earth, he will begin to draw all men to himself (12:32).

παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα suggests also the giving of the Holy Spirit [cf. 7:39], although it does not take place at this very moment. The reference is proleptic, looking ahead to 20:22, which in turn looks ahead to Pentecost.

#### 7 D Jesus' side is pierced (19:31-37)

**19:31** Οἱ οὖν Ἰουδαῖοι...ἠρώτησαν τὸν Πιλάτον The Jewish authorities, because this was the day of preparation for the Sabbath and the passover (cf. 19:14), requested Pilate to order the legs of the three who had been crucified to be broken. This would hasten their deaths, so that the bodies could be removed before the beginning of the Sabbath at 6:00 p.m. This was based upon the law of Deut 21:22-23 and Josh 8:29 which specified that the bodies of executed criminals who had been hanged on a tree should not remain there overnight. According to Josephus this law was interpreted in the first century to cover the bodies of those who had been crucified.<sup>163</sup> Philo of Alexandria also mentions that on occasion, especially at festivals, the bodies were taken down and given to relatives to bury.<sup>164</sup> The normal Roman practice would have been to leave the bodies on the crosses, to serve as a warning to other would-be offenders.

**19:32** ἦλθον οὖν οἱ στρατιῶται Thus the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two men who had been crucified with Jesus. This breaking of the legs was called in Latin the *crurifragium*, and was done with a heavy mallet.

**19:33** ἐπὶ δὲ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐλθόντες When the soldiers came to Jesus to carry out the *crurifragium*, they saw that he was already dead, so they did not break his legs. This will be seen by the Evangelist in verse 36 below as a further fulfillment of scripture.

**19:34** λόγχῃ αὐτοῦ τὴν πλευρὰν ἔνυξεν One of the soldiers thrust his spear into Jesus' side. If it was obvious to them that the victim was already dead it is difficult to see why one of the soldiers would try to inflict a wound. The verb itself, *νύσσω*, can indicate anything from a slight prod to a mortal wound. It seems probable that one of the soldiers gave an exploratory stab to see if the body would jerk. If not, it was really dead. We may suppose this thrust was hard enough to penetrate the side, since the Evangelist states that blood and water came out immediately.

*A Note on the significance for the Evangelist of the blood and water:*

What are we to make of the reference to the blood and water that came forth from Jesus' side? It seems probable to connect them with the statements in 1 John 5:6-8. In both passages water, blood, and testimony are mentioned. The Spirit is also mentioned in 1 John 5:7 as the source of the testimony, while here it is one

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<sup>163</sup> *The Jewish War* 4.5.2 [317].

<sup>164</sup> *Flaccus* 10 [83].

of the disciples (v. 35). We have already noted in the preceding context the connection between the Spirit and the living water with Jesus' statement of thirst just before he died (see the discussion at 19:28 above). It seems most probable to understand the reference to the water which flowed out of Jesus' side as a symbolic reference to the Holy Spirit who can now be given because Jesus is now glorified (cf. 7:39); he has now departed and returned to that glory which he had with the Father before the creation of the world (cf. 17:5). The mention of blood recalls the motif of the passover lamb as a sacrificial victim (see the discussion at 19:14 above). Later references to sacrificial procedures in the Mishnah appear to support this: *m. Pesahim* 5.3 and 5.5 state that the blood of the sacrificial animal should not be allowed to congeal but should flow forth freely at the instant of death so that it could be used for sprinkling, and *m. Tamid* 4.2 actually specifies that the priest is to pierce the heart of the sacrificial victim and cause the blood to come forth.

**19:35** καὶ ὁ ἑωρακὼς μεμαρτύρηκεν This is a statement confirming that the account of the crucifixion as described above is eyewitness testimony. Thus although the events described have theological significance for the Evangelist, we are to understand that they actually occurred, and were not composed simply to make a theological point.

**19:36-37** ἐγένετο γὰρ ταῦτα ἵνα ἡ γραφή πληρωθῆ The Evangelist now quotes two passages from the OT which he understands to have been fulfilled in the crucifixion.

The first, "Not a bone of him shall be broken," may be quoted from a number of different OT passages: Exod 12:10 LXX, Exod 12:46, Num 9:12, or Ps 34:20. Of these, the first is the closest in form to the quotation here. The first three are all more likely candidates than the last, since the first three all deal with descriptions of the passover lamb. We have discussed already the significance of this symbolism for the author of the Fourth Gospel (see the extended discussion at 1:29). It seems very probable that this is the symbolism in view here.

The second quotation, "They shall look upon the One whom they have pierced," is easier to locate; it is a citation of Zech 12:10. Here a single phrase is quoted from Zech 12, but the entire context is associated with the events surrounding the crucifixion. The "Spirit of grace and of supplication" is poured out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the first part of verse 10. A few verses later in 13:1 Yahweh says "In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity." The blood which flowed from Jesus' pierced side may well be what the Evangelist sees as the connection here, since as the shedding of the blood of the sacrificial victim it represents cleansing from sin.

Although the Jewish authorities and Roman soldiers certainly "looked upon him whom they had pierced" as he hung on the cross, the Evangelist may also have in mind the *parousia* here. The context in Zech 12-14 is certainly the second advent, so that these who have crucified Jesus will look upon him in another sense when he returns in judgment.

#### **8 D Jesus' body is buried by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (19:38-42)**

**19:38** Μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα After these events Joseph of Arimathea, described here as a secret follower of Jesus for fear of the Jewish authorities, went to Pilate and asked for permission to remove Jesus' body from the cross. See the Notes on 19:31 above.

**19:39** ἦλθεν δὲ καὶ Νικόδημος With Joseph of Arimathea came Nicodemus. The Evangelist reminds the readers in a parenthetical note that it was the same Nicodemus who had first come to Jesus by night (3:1, see also 7:50). Nicodemus brought a mixture spices for the burial of Jesus' body. From the extraordinary amount he brought we may assume Nicodemus was a wealthy man. He brought about a hundred pounds of this mixture of spices. This would be about 75 pounds (34 kg) by present standards, since the Roman pound (λίτρα) weighed about 12 ounces (340.5 grams).



**19:40** ἔλαβον οὖν τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ The Evangelist states that Joseph and Nicodemus prepared Jesus' body for burial according to Jewish custom (they may or may not have been assisted by unmentioned servants from their respective households). Jewish burial custom dictated that the body be washed, anointed with oil, and bound up with the spices.

καὶ ἔδησαν αὐτὸ ὀθονίοις The Fourth Gospel uses ὀθονίοις to describe the wrappings, and this has caused a good deal of debate, since it appears to contradict the synoptic accounts which mention a σινδών, a large single piece of linen cloth. If one understands ὀθονίοις to refer to smaller strips of cloth, like bandages, there would be a difference, but diminutive forms have often lost their diminutive force in Koine, so there may not be any difference.<sup>165</sup> The plural could refer to the separate headcloth and the main wrapping together.

**19:41** καὶ ἐν τῷ κήπῳ μνημεῖον καινὸν Joseph and Nicodemus then placed the body of Jesus in a garden tomb near (ἐν) the place where he was crucified. John makes special note of the fact that this was a new tomb, one in which no one had ever been buried before. It is possible that by mentioning this, along with the quantity of spices brought for the burial by Nicodemus, the Evangelist wants us to see the burial of Jesus as a royal burial, one befitting a king.

**19:42** ὅτι ἐγγύς ἦν τὸ μνημεῖον The reason for choosing this particular tomb is given: it was nearby, and the evening was approaching. The passover and the Sabbath would begin at 6:00 p.m., so those who had come to prepare and bury the body could not afford to waste time.

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<sup>165</sup> BDF §111.3.

## Chapter 20

### OUTLINE:

- 4 B The Resurrection: Jesus conquers death (20:1-29)**
  - 1 C The discovery of the resurrection of Jesus by the disciples (20:1-18)**
    - 1 D Mary Magdalene discovers the empty tomb and summons Peter and John (20:1-2)**
    - 2 D Peter and John visit the empty tomb and find Jesus' graveclothes (20:3-10)**
    - 3 D Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene (20:11-18)**
      - 1 E Mary looks into the tomb and sees two angels (20:11-13)**
      - 2 E Mary turns and sees Jesus but does not at first recognize him (20:14-17)**
      - 3 E Mary goes and informs the disciples (20:18)**
  - 2 C The appearances of Jesus to the disciples (20:19-29)**
    - 1 D Jesus appears to his disciples, shows his wounds, and commissions them (20:19-23)**
    - 2 D Jesus appears to the disciples, including Thomas, and Thomas declares Jesus to be Lord and God (20:24-29)**
- 5 B Conclusion to the Book of Glory: the purpose of the Signs (20:30-31)**

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## DETAILED EXEGETICAL NOTES:

### 4 B The Resurrection: Jesus conquers death (20:1-29)

#### 1 C The discovery of the resurrection of Jesus by the disciples (20:1-18)

##### 1 D Mary Magdalene discovers the empty tomb and summons Peter and John (20:1-2)

**20:1** Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ ἔρχεται πρωί We are told that **on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early, while it was still dark, to the tomb** where Jesus' body had been buried by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus on the previous Friday evening, just before the beginning of the passover and the Sabbath at 6:00 p.m.

Τῆ δὲ μιᾶ τῶν σαββάτων This would be early Sunday morning. The Sabbath (and in this year the passover) would have lasted from 6:00 p.m. Friday until 6:00 p.m. Saturday. Sunday would thus mark the first day of the following week.

Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ John does not mention that Mary was accompanied by any of the other women who had been among Jesus' followers. The synoptic accounts all mention other women who accompanied her (although Mary Magdalene is always mentioned first). Why John does not mention the other women is not clear, but it seems probable that Mary becomes the focus of the Evangelist's attention because **it was she who came and found Peter and the Beloved Disciple** (whom we have identified with John son of Zebedee) **and informed them of the empty tomb** (20:2). Mary's use of the plural in v. 2 (οὐκ οἴδαμεν, "we do not know") indicates there were others present, in indirect agreement with the synoptic accounts.

πρωί σκοτίας ἔτι οὐσης This statement appears to conflict with Mark 16:1-2, which states that when the women came to the tomb, the sun had already risen. There are several possible explanations for this which would not be contradictory, however. It is possible that the tomb and the pathway to it were still in darkness

for a short while after the sun had actually risen. Some have thought that John's note refers to the time Mary departed from her house, while Mark's refers to the time the women actually arrived at the tomb. Perhaps more likely is the suggestion that the women came in groups or individually, not in a single group, all arriving around sunrise.

καὶ βλέπει τὸν λίθον ἠρμένον ἐκ τοῦ μνημείου Mary Magdalene, when she saw **the stone moved away from the tomb**, did not wait to investigate further. The obvious conclusion was that the body had been stolen, and she immediately ran off to find Peter and the Beloved Disciple to tell them of this ultimate indignity. It appears that she did not actually look into the tomb at this time, but did so later (20:11).

**20:2** πρὸς Σίμωνα Πέτρον Peter and the Beloved Disciple were both present during at least part of Jesus' trials (cf. 18:15-18; 25-27) and the actual crucifixion (19:26-27). While some have thought that Mary sought Peter out because he was the leader of the apostolic band, it may be simply that she knew where to find him, along with the Beloved Disciple, whereas the other disciples had scattered.

καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἄλλον μαθητὴν ὃν ἐφίλει ὁ Ἰησοῦς Here for the first time the **"other disciple"** of 18:15 is identified as the Beloved Disciple (**"the disciple whom Jesus loved"**) of 13:23-26 and 19:26-27.

ἦραν τὸν κύριον Mary does not specify **whom** she thinks had taken Jesus' body. ἦραν is impersonal ("they") and may be the equivalent of a passive ("the Lord has been taken") or it may be a reference to the authorities who had brought about the crucifixion in the first place.

Mary's use of the plural οὐκ οἶδαμεν ("we do not know") indicates that she was not in fact alone when she had gone to the tomb. The Evangelist has not mentioned the other women who accompanied her, but this is probably because she is the focus of the account as she comes to inform Peter and the Beloved Disciple. If we are correct in our identification of the Beloved Disciple with John son of Zebedee as the author of the Fourth Gospel, it is easy to see why Mary Magdalene became the focus of the account, since she is the one who came and told the author for the first time of the empty tomb.

## **2 D Peter and John visit the empty tomb and find Jesus' graveclothes (20:3-10)**

**20:3** Ἐξηλθεν οὖν ὁ Πέτρος καὶ ὁ ἄλλος μαθητῆς Peter and the Beloved Disciple went out and were coming (ἦρχοντο, imperfect tense) to the tomb. It is not explicitly mentioned here that Mary Magdalene accompanied them back to the tomb (probably because the following verse states that they set out running), but Mary apparently followed along after them. She is back at the tomb in verse 11.

**20:4** ἔτρεχονδὲ οἱ δύο ὁμοῦ Peter and the Beloved Disciple **started out running together** (ὁμοῦ, "at the same time as," "in company with"). The Beloved Disciple **ran on ahead more quickly than Peter**, so he **arrived at the tomb first**. This verse has been a chief factor in depictions of John as a young man (especially combined with traditions that he wrote last of all the evangelists and lived into the reign of Domitian). But the verse does not actually say anything about John's age, nor is age always directly correlated with running speed.

**20:5** παρακύψας The verb παρακύπτω means "to bend over (in order to see something better)" and this is what would have been necessary to see into the low opening of the tomb carved into the hillside. In most instances the entrance to such tombs was less than 3 feet (90 cm) high, so that an adult had to bend over and practically crawl inside.

βλέπει κείμενα τὰ ὀθόνια When the Beloved Disciple bent over and looked into this narrow opening, he **saw the linen wrappings** (ὀθόνια, a general term which might describe several types of wrappings, see 19:40) **lying [there]**. Presumably by the time the Beloved Disciple reached the tomb there was enough light to penetrate the low opening and illuminate the interior of the tomb sufficiently for him to see the graveclothes. We are not told exactly where the linen wrappings were lying. Sometimes the phrase has been translated “lying on the ground,” but the implication is that the wrappings were lying where the body had been. The most probable configuration for a tomb of this sort would be to have a niche carved in the wall where the body would be laid lengthwise, or a low shelf like a bench running along one side of the tomb, across the back or around all three sides in a U-shape facing the entrance. Thus the graveclothes would have been lying on this shelf or in the niche where the body had been (see below, verse 7).

οὐ μέντοι εἰσῆλθεν The Beloved Disciple, although he reached the tomb ahead of Peter, bent over and looked in and saw the graveclothes lying inside, **did not enter the tomb** at first. The Evangelist gives no specific reason as to why the Beloved Disciple did not enter the tomb immediately.

**20:6-7** καὶ εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον When Peter reached the tomb, he (in typical fashion) did not hesitate to enter. When he did so, Peter too saw the linen wrappings that the Beloved Disciple had seen from outside the tomb, but he also saw the σουδάριον, the piece of cloth that had covered Jesus’ head, **not lying with the other wrappings, but rolled up in one place by itself**.

τὸ σουδάριον This is a Latin loanword (*sudarium*). It was a small towel used to wipe off perspiration (the way we would use a handkerchief today). This particular item was not mentioned in connection with Jesus’ burial in 19:40, probably because this was only a brief summary account. A σουδάριον was mentioned in connection with Lazarus’ burial (11:44) and was probably customary. R. Brown speculates that it was wrapped under the chin and tied on top of the head to prevent the mouth of the corpse from falling open.<sup>166</sup>

οὐ μετὰ τῶν ὀθονίων κείμενον ἀλλὰ χωρὶς ἐντετυλιγμένον εἰς ἓνα τόπον Much dispute and difficulty surrounds the translation of these words. Basically the issue concerns the positioning of the graveclothes as seen by Peter and the other disciple when they entered the tomb. Some have sought to prove that when the disciples saw the graveclothes they were arranged just as they were when around the body, so that when the resurrection took place the resurrected body of Jesus passed through them without rearranging or disturbing them. In this case the reference to the σουδάριον being rolled up does not refer to its being folded, but collapsed in the shape it had when wrapped around the head. Sometimes in defense of this view μετὰ (which normally means “with”) is said to mean “like” so that the comparison with the other graveclothes does not involve the location of the σουδάριον but rather its condition (rolled up rather than flattened).

In spite of the intriguing nature of such speculations, it seems more probable that the phrase describing the σουδάριον should be understood to mean **it was separated from the other graveclothes in a different place inside the tomb**. This seems consistent with the different conclusions reached by Peter and the Beloved Disciple (verses 8-10). All that the condition of the graveclothes indicated was that the body of Jesus had not been stolen by thieves. Anyone who had come to remove the body (whether the authorities or anyone else) would not have bothered to unwrap it before carrying it off. And even if one could imagine that they had (perhaps in search of valuables such as rings or jewelry still worn by the corpse) they would certainly not have bothered to take time to roll up the facecloth and leave the other wrappings in an orderly fashion!

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<sup>166</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 986.

**20:8** καὶ εἶδεν καὶ ἐπίστευσεν After Peter went ahead and entered the tomb, the Beloved Disciple, who had arrived there first, also entered. When he saw the graveclothes in the condition described in the previous verse, he **saw and believed**. What was it that the Beloved Disciple **believed** (since v. 7 describes what he saw)? Sometimes it is suggested that what he believed was Mary Magdalene's report that the body had been stolen. But this could hardly be the case; the way the entire scene is narrated such a trivial conclusion would amount to an anti-climax.

It is true that the use of the plural "they" (ἤδειςαν) in the following verse applied to both Peter and the Beloved Disciple, and this appears to be a difficulty if we understand that the Beloved Disciple believed at this point in Jesus' resurrection. But it is not an insuperable difficulty, since all it affirms is that **at this time neither Peter nor the Beloved Disciple had understood the scripture concerning the resurrection**.

Thus it appears the Evangelist intends us to understand that **when the Beloved Disciple entered the tomb after Peter and saw the state of the graveclothes, he believed in the resurrection**, i.e., that Jesus had risen from the dead.

#### *A Note on the Significance for the Evangelist of the Tidy Tomb:*

What was it about the scene which led the Beloved Disciple to believe in the resurrection? Was it simply the presence of the graveclothes combined with the absence of the body, or was it the shape and position of the graveclothes as well, which suggested to the Beloved Disciple that a resurrection had taken place? (See the discussion of the shape and position of the graveclothes in verse 7 above.) We have already concluded in verse 7 that the description of the location and position of the σουδάριον indicates that it was in a different place in the tomb, not just rolled up where Jesus' head would have been. It would seem that if the graveclothes were still arranged in the form of the body (perhaps even preserving that form, something like an empty shell, due to the spices and oils which impregnated them) then Peter could hardly have missed the significance himself. Yet no mention is made in the Fourth Gospel of Peter believing at this point, and Luke 24:12 states that Peter "went away to his own home wondering [θαυμάζων] at what had happened." In light of all this it seems most likely that it was **the presence of the graveclothes, not scattered at random about the tomb but arranged in an orderly manner**, which led the Beloved Disciple to realize that a resurrection had taken place.

There may well be an additional theological significance to the presence of the graveclothes in the empty tomb as far as the Evangelist is concerned. When Lazarus came forth from the tomb, he was still wrapped in his graveclothes (11:44). He would need them again, for he would die a second time. **When Jesus came forth from the tomb, he left his graveclothes behind, because he would never need them again**. Death no longer held any power over him.

**20:9** οὐδέπω γὰρ ἤδειςαν τῆν γραφὴν Again we have a parenthetical comment by the Evangelist, explaining that at this time **neither Peter nor the Beloved Disciple who accompanied him into the tomb understood the OT scriptures pertaining to Jesus' resurrection**. This agrees with Luke 24:25-27 that only after the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus to the disciples did they come to understand the full significance of Christological prophecies in the OT.

The Evangelist does not explicitly mention what OT scriptures are involved (neither does Paul in 1 Cor 15:4, for that matter). The resurrection of the Messiah in general terms may have been seen in Is. 53:10-12 and Ps 16:10. Specific references may have been understood in Jonah 1:17 and Hos 6:2 because of the mention of "the third day". Beyond this it is not possible to be more specific.

**20:10** ἀπῆλθον οὖν πάλιν After entering the tomb and seeing the graveclothes, both Peter and the Beloved Disciple **left and went back to their homes**. John makes no comment on their state of mind at this point, but Luke mentions in the parallel account (24:12) that Peter was "wondering [θαυμάζων] at what had happened". Whether he had any discussion with the Beloved Disciple, who is said to have "believed" in verse 8, is not recorded.

### 3 D Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene (20:11-18)

#### 1 E Mary looks into the tomb and sees two angels (20:11-13)

**20:11** Μαρία δὲ εἰσπήκει By this time, Mary had returned to the tomb herself (cf. the Note on 20:3). Now she was **weeping** (κλαίουσα) with the loud lamentations and expressions of grief typical of mourners in the Near East (cf. 11:31, where the same verb is used). Her grief was undoubtedly heightened further by her belief that Jesus' body had been stolen from the tomb.

παρέκλυψεν Thus Mary **bent over and looked into the tomb** (the same verb is used to describe the action of the Beloved Disciple in 20:5, see the Note on this verse above).

**20:12** καὶ θεωρεῖ δύο ἀγγέλους ἐν λευκοῖς What Mary Magdalene saw when she looked into the tomb was not the graveclothes, but **two angels in white, seated one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying**.

**20:13** καὶ λέγουσιν αὐτῇ The angels themselves do not play a major role in the Johannine account of the resurrection of Jesus. They do not explain the significance of the empty tomb, but simply **ask Mary the reason why she was weeping**.

λέγει αὐτοῖς Mary replied in words similar to verse 2 with appropriate adjustments: this time it is **“my Lord”** rather than just **“the Lord,”** and the plural **“we do not know”** has now become singular **“I do not know”**. This is understandable if the other women who were with Mary earlier when the empty tomb was first discovered had now departed. Again, as in verse 2, Mary does not specify **whom** she thinks has taken the Lord's body.

#### 2 E Mary turns and sees Jesus but does not at first recognize him (20:14-17)

**20:14** ἐστράφη εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω καὶ θεωρεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐστῶτα At this point **Mary turned around and saw Jesus himself standing behind her**, although she did not recognize him. The text gives no indication why she turned, but she may have heard something, or the angels with whom she had just spoken may have done something which caused Mary to turn and look behind her.

Neither are we told **why Mary was unable to recognize Jesus**. There appears to have been something different about the resurrected Jesus which resulted in him not being immediately recognized even by those who had known him well. Something similar happens in John 21:4, as well as Luke 24:13-35, Luke 24:36-38, and Matt 28:17.

**20:15** λέγει αὐτῇ Ἰησοῦς Jesus asked Mary the same question the angels had just asked her: **“Woman, why are you weeping?”** but he added another, as if he knew she were looking for someone: **“Whom are you seeking?”**

ὁ κηπουρός Mary concluded that it was the **gardener** who was questioning her. Again we have no way of knowing (since the text gives no clue) what it was that led Mary to conclude that she was speaking with the gardener. Perhaps it was the only logical conclusion under the circumstances. We are not told what Jesus looked like or how he was dressed (some have seen this latter point as a difficulty since he left all the graveclothes in the tomb, but this is not necessarily a problem: the two angels who had appeared in the tomb

were both clothed in white, and it is reasonable to suppose that the resurrected Jesus' appearance was similar).

Mary now drew a second conclusion: if this person was the gardener, perhaps it was he who had carried Jesus' body away to some other spot. So she asked, "**Sir, if you have carried him off, tell me where you have placed him, and I will carry him away.**" It is often pointed out that Mary would have had difficulty in doing this alone, but certainly under the circumstances she did not stop to think of the difficulty of carrying out such an action singlehanded. She was speaking under intense emotional pressure.

**20:16** λέγει αὐτῇ Ἰησοῦς· Μαριάμ Jesus now spoke Mary's name, and so she turned to him and answered in Aramaic, Ῥαββουνί, which the Evangelist translates for the benefit of the readers as Διδάσκαλε ("Teacher"). Mary had apparently turned away again from Jesus, perhaps after he questioned her, since she had turned toward him previously in verse 14. Now, hearing her name, she turned back, and recognized Jesus. We may assume from Jesus' words to her in the following verse that her response was to attempt (at least) to embrace him.

**20:17** λέγει αὐτῇ Ἰησοῦς There are considerable difficulties raised by Jesus' statement to Mary in this verse. Μὴ μου ἄπτου is a prohibition stated with the present imperative. The aorist tense would normally be expected in a specific command; when the present tense is used for a specific command it would have the nuance "**Stop clinging to me**" with the implication that Mary already was.

οὕτω γὰρ ἀναβέβηκα πρὸς τὸν πατέρα The reason given by Jesus why Mary should stop holding on to him is **because he had not yet ascended to the Father**. Many fanciful explanations have been contrived as to why Jesus should say this, especially in light of the fact that he seemingly invites Thomas to touch his wounds in 20:27. The point seems to be that while Thomas was indeed invited to **touch** the wounds of the resurrected Jesus, Mary here is bent on **clinging** to him (a completely different verb is used in 20:27). Jesus has, however, by virtue of his resurrection, **entered into a new dimension of relationship** with **all** of his followers, and it is now inappropriate that Mary should hold fast to him.

Instead, Jesus has a mission for Mary to perform: she is **to go to the other disciples and inform them that she has seen the risen Lord, and he is ascending to the Father**.

τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου probably refers here not just to the half-brothers of Jesus mentioned in 2:12, 7:3, 7:5, and 7:10, but to all the disciples. If Mary was supposed to go to Jesus' literal brothers then we are not told in verse 18 that she did so.

#### ***A Note on 20:17 and the Ascension:***

In what sense, however, can Jesus here speak of the ascension in the present tense, since Luke records in Acts 1:3 that after forty days of post-resurrection appearances Jesus was taken up out of the sight of his followers by a cloud? P. Benoit made a useful distinction between the ascension understood as the glorification of Jesus in the presence of the Father, and the ascension understood as a levitation symbolizing the end of the appearances of the resurrected Jesus to the disciples.<sup>167</sup> As we have pointed out many times before, in the Fourth Gospel the death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation of Jesus to the Father's right hand are all portrayed as a unit, often under the term "**glorification**." This suggests that the Evangelist is thinking of Jesus' ascension here in 20:17 in the sense of **glorification** rather than **levitation**. It is a process **begun** on the cross and **culminating** in the presence of the Father. Such an emphasis neither precludes nor contradicts the ascension recorded by Luke in Acts 1.

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<sup>167</sup> P. Benoit, "L'Ascension," *Revue Biblique* 56 (1949): 161-203.



### 3 E Mary goes and informs the disciples (20:18)

**20:18** ἔρχεται Μαριὰμ ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ So in obedience to Jesus Mary Magdalene went and found the disciples (we are not told where they were at this time, but presumably they were in the same place mentioned in verse 19). Mary announced to them, “**I have seen the Lord,**” and told them what he said to her. The first part of her statement, introduced by ὅτι, is direct discourse (ἑώρακα τὸν κύριον), while the second clause switches to indirect discourse (καὶ ταῦτα εἶπεν αὐτῇ). This has the effect of heightening the emphasis on the first part of the statement.

We are not told in the Fourth Gospel how the disciples responded to this announcement. Mark 16:9-11 (in the disputed longer ending of Mark) records that when Mary announced to the disciples that she had seen the Lord, they refused to believe it. We may well imagine that such a report would be greeted by extreme scepticism if not outright disbelief.

### 2 C The appearances of Jesus to the disciples (20:19-29)

#### 1 D Jesus appears to his disciples, shows his wounds, and commissions them (20:19-23)

**20:19** Οὕσῃ οὖν ὀψίας τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ This time reference makes it clear that the first appearance of Jesus to the disciples took place **on the evening of the same day that he appeared to Mary Magdalene**, the first day of the week (Sunday) following the Sabbath and passover.

τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων The Evangelist specifically states that the doors were **shut** where the disciples were, because of fear of the Jewish authorities. In light of the reason given, we should probably understand this phrase to mean “**locked**”. This is a perfectly understandable reaction to the events of the past few days. **What is the significance of the inclusion of this statement by the Evangelist?** It is often taken to mean that Jesus, when he entered the room, passed **through** the closed doors. This may well be the case, but it may be assuming too much about our knowledge of the mode in which the resurrected body of Jesus exists. The text does not explicitly state **how** Jesus got through the closed doors. It is possible to assume that the doors opened of their own accord before him, or that he simply appeared in the middle of the room without passing through the doors at all. The point the Evangelist appears to be making here is simply that **the closed doors were no obstacle at all to the resurrected Jesus**. See also verse 26 for a second similar occurrence.

ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἔστη εἰς τὸ μέσον The phrases which actually describe Jesus’ arrival are ambiguous, as mentioned above. It cannot be determined with certainty whether he came **through** the doors, or the doors **opened** for him, or he simply **appeared** in the midst of the disciples.

καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· εἰρήνῃ ὑμῖν Jesus greeted his disciples with the statement “**Peace to you**”. In later rabbinic Hebrew this phrase became a standard greeting. It occurs in the OT a few times in such a sense (e.g., 1 Sam 25:6). Here, however, it can hardly be called routine; it bears more similarities to angelic appearances in the OT. When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon in Judges 6:22-23 he greeted him with “**Peace to you, do not be afraid, you shall not die!**” Daniel is similarly reassured in Dan 10:19. The phrase spoken here by the resurrected Jesus to the disciples must surely have been intended to reassure and calm them.

**20:20** ἔδειξεν τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τὴν πλευρὰν αὐτοῖς After this initial reassurance Jesus **showed the disciples his hands and his side**. Verse 25 makes it clear that this refers to the **nail marks** in his hands and the **wound from the spear** in his side. It is understandable why Jesus needed to do this; it was a positive

form of identification which would convince the disciples that it was indeed Jesus who had appeared to them.

When the disciples recognized Jesus they were suddenly overcome with **joy**. This is a fulfillment of Jesus' words to the disciples in the Last Discourse (16:20-22) that they would have sorrow while the world rejoiced, but that their sorrow would be turned to lasting **joy** when they saw him again.

From this point on the Evangelist himself begins to use the title κύριος to refer to the resurrected Jesus, as Mary herself did in 20:2, 13, and 18.

**20:21** εἰρήνη ὑμῖν Again Jesus repeated his reassurance to the disciples, "**Peace to you,**" but he now added a commission: "**just as the Father has sent me, I also send you.**" This is similar to 17:18, where Jesus prayed to the Father, "**just as you sent me into the world, I also send them [the disciples] into the world.**"

**Does this commission apply only to the Twelve (minus Judas, of course) or to all the disciples who were present?** It is not clear in the context that only the Twelve were present in the room when Jesus appeared to them. We certainly cannot rule out the possibility that others were present, and there is nothing in the context to suggest that we should limit the words of the commission only to the Twelve. In light of the fact that in the Last Discourse the Twelve appear to be models for the experience of all believers, as we have mentioned previously (see the Notes on 15:14 and 15:16), it appears more likely that **these words are for all of Jesus' followers**, just as the commission in Matt 28:19-20 is for all Christians.

**20:22** ἐνεφύσησεν καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον· What are we to make of Jesus' action here, and how does it relate to the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost described in Acts 2?

In terms of the imagery involved **this action on Jesus' part appears to symbolize the new creation which he himself has inaugurated**. The first part of the Prologue (1:1-5) introduced the idea that the preincarnate Word was involved in the original creative act. In the Notes introducing 1:19-51 we suggested the possibility that the opening narrative (1:19-51) of the Gospel itself, following the Prologue, was arranged so as to point to the beginning of a new creation, arranged according to a pattern of seven days. This pointed to the miracle at Cana as occurring on the seventh day and marking the inauguration of the new era. Now at the end of the Fourth Gospel the theme of the new creation emerges again. The use of the verb ἐνεφύσησεν to describe the action of Jesus here recalls Gen 2:7 in the LXX, where "the LORD God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and **breathed** into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." This time, however, **it is Jesus who is breathing the breath/Spirit of eternal life, life from above, into his disciples**. Furthermore there is the imagery of Ezek 37:1-14, the prophecy concerning the resurrection of the dry bones: there in verse 9 the Son of Man is told to prophesy to the "wind/breath/Spirit" to come and breathe on the corpses, so that they will live again. In verse 14 the LORD promises, "I will put my **Spirit** within you, and you will **come to life**, and I will place you in your own land..." In terms of ultimate fulfillment the passage in Ezek 37 looks at the regeneration of Israel immediately prior to the establishment of the millennial kingdom. We suggest, however, that the Evangelist saw in what Jesus did for the disciples at this point a partial and symbolic fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy, much as Peter made use of the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32 in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2:17-21.

**What then did Jesus do for the disciples in John 20:22?** It appears that in light of the symbolism of the new creation present here, as well as the regeneration symbolism from the Ezekiel 37 passage, that **Jesus at this point breathed into the disciples the breath of eternal life**. This was in the form of the Holy Spirit, who was to indwell them. It is instructive to look again at 7:38-38, which states, "the one who believes in me, as the scripture says, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. Now he said this concerning **the Spirit which those who believed in him were going to receive**. For the Spirit was not yet (operative in the

world), because Jesus was **not yet glorified**". But **now** in 20:22 Jesus was glorified, so the Spirit could be given.

**Had the disciples not believed in Jesus before?** It seems clear that they had, since their belief is repeatedly affirmed, beginning with 2:11. But it also seems clear that even on the eve of the crucifixion, they did not understand the necessity of the cross (16:31-33). And even after the crucifixion, the disciples had not realized that there was going to be a resurrection (20:9). Ultimate recognition of who Jesus was appears to have come to them only **after** the post-resurrection appearances (note the response of Thomas, who was not present at this incident, in verse 28).

Finally, **what is the relation of this incident in 20:22 to the account of the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2?** It appears best to view these as two separate events which have two somewhat different purposes. This was **the giving of life itself**, which flowed out from within (cf. 7:38-39). The giving of **power** would occur later, on the Day of Pentecost: power to witness and carry out the mission the disciples had been given. [It should be emphasized that in the historical unfolding of God's program for the Church, these events occurred in a chronological sequence which (after the Church has been established) is non-repeatable today.] On the analogy of the solution we proposed above for the ascension (see 20:17), we would suggest that here in the Fourth Gospel we are looking at **the giving of the Spirit that produces life**, while in Acts 2 what we have is **the giving of the Spirit that produces power**. These are not incompatible, but focus on different aspects of the Holy Spirit's role in relation to the Church.

**20:23** ἄν τινων ἀφήτε τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἀφέωνται αὐτοῖς... Jesus' statement to the disciples here, "**If you forgive the sins of any, they have been forgiven them; if you retain [the sins] of any, they have been retained,**" finds its closest parallel in Matt 16:19 and 18:18. It is best to understand this not as referring to apostolic power to forgive or retain the sins of individuals (as it is sometimes understood), but to the "power" of **proclaiming this forgiveness** which was entrusted to the disciples. This is consistent with the idea that the disciples are to carry on the ministry of Jesus after he has departed from the world and returned to the Father, a theme which occurred in the Last Discourse (cf. 15:27, 16:1-4, and 17:18).

## **2 D Jesus appears to the disciples, including Thomas, and Thomas declares Jesus to be Lord and God (20:24-29)**

**20:24** Θωμᾶς...ὁ λεγόμενος Δίδυμος, οὐκ ἦν μετ' αὐτῶν ὅτε ἦλθεν Ἰησοῦς We are now told that **Thomas, also called Didymus** (meaning "the Twin") **was not with the Twelve** when Jesus appeared to them for the first time, in 20:19-23. No explanation for his absence is given by the Evangelist.

**20:25** ἔάν μὴ ἴδω ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν αὐτοῦ τὸν τύπον πῶν ἥλων... The other disciples **reported to Thomas what had happened**, telling him that they had seen the resurrected Jesus. Thomas **does not believe on account of their testimony**, however. He flatly refused to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead unless he could see the nail marks in Jesus' hands and put his hand into the spear wound in Jesus' side. If Thomas was portrayed as something of a pessimist in his attitude in 11:16, he is certainly portrayed as a sceptic here. In 20:20 Jesus **had shown the other disciples his hands and his side**, and undoubtedly they had related this to Thomas in their unsuccessful attempt to convince him that they had indeed seen the risen Lord. But Thomas, probably picking up on their words, wanted more: he did not just want to see the wounds, but to touch them as well. Visual proof was not good enough for such an astounding claim; Thomas had to have tactile proof as well.

**20:26** Καὶ μεθ' ἡμέρας ὀκτῶ πάλιν **Eight days later** the disciples were again together behind closed doors. The setting is identical with the previous incident a week earlier (20:19), and the Evangelist makes a point of repeating the same statement about the doors being shut when Jesus came and stood in their midst and said, "**Peace to you.**" The only difference was that **this time Thomas was present with the other disciples**. His scepticism concerning the report of his fellow disciples was about to be put to the test.

**20:27** εἶτα λέγει τῷ Θωμᾶ Jesus (who is portrayed as knowing precisely what Thomas had said previously about what it would take to make him believe) now **turned to Thomas and offered him the opportunity to touch the nail marks in his hands and the spear wound in his side**. Jesus concluded his offer by exhorting Thomas to be “**not unbelieving but believing**.” There is a more than a little irony (almost sarcasm) here. Note that Jesus’ exhortation gives a clue to **the final element which was still lacking in the faith of all the disciples until after the resurrection**: it is the element Thomas lacked here, and which he affirms in the following verse.

**20:28** ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου Should Thomas’ exclamation be understood as two subjects with the rest of the sentence omitted (“My Lord and my God [*has truly risen from the dead*]”) as predicate nominatives (“*You are my Lord and my God*”) or as vocatives (“My Lord and my God”)? Probably the most likely is something between the second and third alternatives. It seems that the second is slightly more likely here, because the context appears confessional. Thomas’ statement, while it may have been an exclamation, **does in fact confess the faith which he had previously lacked**, and Jesus responds to Thomas’ statement in the following verse as if it were a confession.

#### *A Note on the significance of Thomas’ confession:*

With the proclamation by Thomas here, it is difficult to see how **any more profound analysis of Jesus’ person could be given**. It echoes 1:1 and 1:14 together: the Word was God, and the Word became flesh (Jesus of Nazareth). The Fourth Gospel opened with many other titles for Jesus: the Lamb of God (1:29, 36); the Son of God (1:34, 49); Rabbi (1:38); Messiah (1:41); the King of Israel (1:49); the Son of Man (1:51). Now the climax is reached with the proclamation by Thomas, “**My Lord and my God**,” and we have come full circle from 1:1, where the Evangelist had introduced the **reader** to who Jesus was, to 20:28, where **the last of the disciples** has come to the full realization of who Jesus was. What Jesus had predicted in 8:28 had come to pass: “**When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I AM...**”. By being lifted up in crucifixion (which led in turn to death, resurrection, and exaltation with the Father) Jesus has revealed his true identity as both **LORD** (κύριος, used by the LXX to translate יהוה) and **GOD** (θεός, used by the LXX to translate אלהים).

**20:29** ὅτι ἑώρακάς με πεπίστευκας It is significant that **Jesus does not reject or modify Thomas’ confession**. Instead he accepts it approvingly, and goes on to approve as blessed **those who believe without the benefit of seeing**. With this reference the focus shifts from Thomas and the other disciples, who had **both seen and believed**, to those yet future disciples who would **believe without the benefit of seeing**. R. Brown offers a vivid illustration of the point made here:

Throughout the Gospel and more particularly in the Last Discourse, in what the evangelist has been describing on the stage of early 1st-century Palestine, he has had in mind an audience seated in the darkened theater of the future, silently viewing what Jesus was saying and doing. True to the limitations and logic of the stage drama imposed by the Gospel form, the Johannine Jesus could address that audience only indirectly through the disciples who shared the stage and gave voice to sentiments and reactions that were shared by the audience as well. But now, as the curtain is about to fall on the stage drama, the lights in the theater are suddenly turned on. Jesus shifts his attention from the disciples on the stage to the audience that has become visible and makes clear to that his ultimate concern is for them—those who have come to believe in him through the word of his disciples....<sup>168</sup>

<sup>168</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1048-49.

Now that attention has been shifted to the **readers** of the Gospel, the Evangelist goes on to indicate in 20:30-31 his purpose for writing the Gospel; and this, too, ultimately has in view **those who have not seen, and yet are going to believe**.

### **5 B Conclusion to the Book of Glory: the purpose of the Signs (20:30-31)**

**20:30** Πολλὰ μὲν οὖν καὶ ἄλλα σημεῖα The Evangelist mentions **many other sign-miracles** performed by Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in the Gospel. What are these sign-miracles which the author of the Gospel has in mind? We can only speculate. The Evangelist says they were performed in the presence of the disciples, which emphasizes again their role as **witnesses** (cf. 15:27). The point here is that **the Evangelist has been selective in his use of material**. He has chosen to record those incidents from the life and ministry of Jesus which support his purpose in writing the Gospel. Much which might be of tremendous interest, but does not directly contribute to that purpose in writing, he has omitted. What the Evangelist's purpose in writing is, he has explained in the following verse.

**20:31** ταῦτα δὲ γέγραπται ἵνα πιστεύσητε... Now, at last, the Evangelist reveals to the readers the purpose of his book: **in order that they may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and in order that by believing they may have life in his name**.

The question which must still be addressed is whether the Evangelist is writing primarily for an audience of **unbelievers**, with purely evangelistic emphasis, or whether he envisions an audience of **believers**, whom he wants to strengthen in their faith. There are several observations that might be helpful here:

(1) in the immediate context (20:30), the other sign-miracles spoken of by the Evangelist were performed in the presence of **disciples**;

(2) in the case of the first of the sign-miracles, at Cana, the Evangelist makes a point of the effect the miracle had on the **disciples** (2:11);

(3) if the primary thrust of the Gospel is toward **unbelievers**, it is difficult to see why so much material in chapters 13-17 (the Last Meal and Last Discourse, concluding with Jesus' prayer for the disciples), which deals almost exclusively with the disciples, is included;

(4) the disciples themselves were repeatedly said to have **believed** in Jesus throughout the Gospel, beginning with 2:11, yet they **still** needed to believe after the resurrection (if Thomas' experience in 20:27-28 is any indication); and

(5) as we have mentioned before, the Gospel appears to be written with the assumption that **the readers are familiar with the basic story** (or perhaps with one or more of the synoptic gospel accounts, although this is not certain). Thus no account of the birth of Jesus is given at all, and although he is identified as being from Nazareth, the words of the Pharisees and chief priests to Nicodemus (7:52) are almost certainly to be taken as ironic, assuming the reader knows where Jesus was really from. Likewise, when Mary is identified in 11:2 as the one who anointed Jesus' feet with oil, it appears to be assumed that the readers are familiar with the story, since the incident involved is not mentioned in the Fourth Gospel until 12:3.

These observations must be set over against the clear statement of purpose in the present verse, 20:31, which seems to have **significant evangelistic emphasis**. In addition to this there is the repeated emphasis on **witness** throughout the Fourth Gospel (cf. the witness of John the Baptist in 1:7, 8, 15, 32, and 34, along with 5:33; the Samaritan woman in 4:39; Jesus' own witness, along with that of the Father who sent him, in 8:14, 18, and 18:37; the disciples themselves in 15:27; and finally the eyewitness testimony of the Evangelist himself in 19:35 and 21:24).

In light of all this evidence it seems best to say that the Evangelist wrote with a dual purpose:

(1) **to witness to unbelievers concerning Jesus, in order that they come to believe in him and have eternal life**; and

**(2) to strengthen the faith of believers, by deepening and expanding their understanding of who Jesus is.**

## The Epilogue (21:1-25)

### OUTLINE:

- 5 A The Epilogue: further post-resurrection appearances of Jesus (21:1-25)**
  - 1 B The risen Jesus appears to the disciples at the Sea of Galilee (Tiberias) (21:1-14)**
  - 2 B The risen Jesus speaks to Peter about his ministry and his future (21:15-23)**
    - 1 C Jesus restores Peter to fellowship and commissions him (21:15-17)**
    - 2 C Jesus tells Peter of his future (21:18-23)**
  - 3 B The Conclusion to the Gospel (21:24-25)**

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## DETAILED EXEGETICAL NOTES:

### 5 A The Epilogue: further post-resurrection appearances of Jesus (21:1-25)

#### *A Note on the role of chapter 21 within the structure of the Fourth Gospel:*

There seems to be a perfectly adequate conclusion to the Gospel in 20:30-31, coming immediately after the confession by Thomas in 20:28, which is the real climax to the narrative. 20:30 even seems to make essentially the same statement as 21:25. Yet on the other hand there is no obvious break in the narrative and no discernable difference in style, vocabulary, or grammar.

These observations have led to three different views on the relationship of chapter 21 to the remainder of the Fourth Gospel:

(1) It was written by the same author as chapters 1-20 (with the possible exception of 21:24, see discussion below on that verse) at the same time as chapters 1-20 were written;

(2) It was written by the same author as chapters 1-20 (again with the possible exception of 21:24) but at a later time (perhaps much later, near the end of the author's life); or

(3) It was written by someone other than the author of chapters 1-20 and added to chapters 1-20 at some later time.

If chapter 21 was indeed a later addition to the Fourth Gospel by a different author, it must have been added very early, because **no extant Greek manuscript** lacks the last chapter, and there is no serious evidence in the manuscript tradition for later addition.

As far as stylistic and linguistic evidence is concerned, nothing absolutely conclusive can be said. Some, like Plummer, find similarities which point to identity of authorship. Others, like Moffatt, find indications of divergence of style. Bultmann offers perhaps the strongest argument on the basis of style against identity of authorship between chapters 1-20 and 21. Significantly, however, Barrett is not convinced by these stylistic arguments, although he does not hold to identity of authorship on other grounds. In Barrett's own words, "These linguistic and stylistic considerations, when weighed against the undoubted resemblances between chs. 1-20 and ch. 21, are not in themselves sufficient to establish the belief that ch. 21 was written by a different author."<sup>169</sup>

Most scholars, including Barrett, make the decision for or against identity of authorship not on the basis of stylistic or linguistic evidence, but content and logical argument flow. S. Smalley demonstrates that chapter 21 is not as much of an addendum as some believe, and that it does in fact provide a necessary conclusion to the Fourth Gospel, which does not merely end with Thomas' confession, but has repeatedly emphasized that **the disciples will continue Jesus' witness to the world after he has departed (15:27) and will carry on his mission in the world.**<sup>170</sup>

Although it is impossible to be dogmatic about such a conclusion, it seems best to regard chapter 21 as **an integral part of the original composition of the Fourth Gospel** in the absence of compelling evidence to the contrary.

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<sup>169</sup> Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 577.

<sup>170</sup> Stephen S. Smalley, *New Testament Studies* 20 (1973/74): 275-88.



## 1 B The risen Jesus appears to the disciples at the Sea of Galilee (Tiberias) (21:1-14)

**21:1** Μετὰ ταῦτα The time reference here is indefinite, in comparison with the specific “after eight days” (μεθ’ ἡμέρας ὀκτώ) between the two post-resurrection appearances of Jesus in 20:26.

ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς Τιβεριάδος The **sea of Tiberias** was another name for the **sea of Galilee** (cf. the Notes on 6:1); this designation occurs only in the Fourth Gospel. We are not told how or why the disciples came to be back in Galilee after the events of the passover week in Jerusalem. In spite of the commissioning of the disciples by Jesus in 20:21-23, they do not appear to have had a clear purpose in mind at this time. This is something that would come after their empowerment by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost some weeks later.

**21:2** The disciples who were together in Galilee are specified: **Peter, Thomas** (whose mention forms a link with the climax of chapter 21, in verse 28), **Nathanael** (who is said to be from Cana), the **sons of Zebedee (James and John)**, and **two unnamed disciples**. The two who are not named may have been Andrew and Philip, who are mentioned together in 6:7-8 and 12:22.

**21:3** ὑπάγω ἀλιεύειν It is sometimes suggested on the basis of Peter’s comment that he was proposing to return to his former career of fishing. However, this is probably to see too much significance in the present infinitive; all that Peter was proposing was a fishing trip, perhaps out of **economic necessity**. Peter’s attitude may also have been partly the result of **despondency** over his threefold denial of Jesus during the

trials. In any case, the other disciples who were with him agreed, saying, “**we also will come with you.**”



The Sea of Galilee

καὶ ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ νυκτὶ ἐπίασαν οὐδέν Fishing on the Sea of Galilee was often done at night. This night, however, the disciples caught nothing at all. Perhaps we are to understand this as representing the unproductivity of mere human effort apart from Jesus. It is difficult to say with certainty, because when Jesus appears to them he does not explicitly censure

their efforts (v. 5).

**21:4** πρωίας δὲ ἤδη γενομένης... Just as **day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not recognize him**. Jesus’ appearance is somewhat mysterious; the Evangelist does not tell us how he came to be there. Just as in the two previous appearances recorded in chapter 20 (20:19-23 and 20:26-28) Jesus seems to have appeared unexpectedly, but the text here does not explicitly state this.

Some (including R. Brown) see the statement that **the disciples did not recognize Jesus** as difficult since they had already seen the risen Jesus twice in chapter 20.<sup>171</sup> This is understood to indicate that chapter 21 was appended by someone other than the Evangelist, who was not too careful about the internal consistency.

<sup>171</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1070.

But there are other good reasons for the disciples failing to recognize Jesus, one of them mentioned at the beginning of this same verse: **dawn was just breaking** as the disciples were returning in their boat from the unsuccessful night of fishing, and they were within hearing distance of the shore but in the dim light they would not have been able to recognize the face of an individual at this distance.

**21:5** παιδία, μή τι προσφάγιον ἔχετε Jesus spoke to the disciples from the shore, asking, “**Lads, you haven’t caught any fish to eat, have you?**” The question, phrased with μή in Greek, assumes a negative answer. This is the only time in the Fourth Gospel that παιδία is used as an address for the disciples. The word used in 13:33, τεκνία, is sometimes said to be a word indicating more tender affection than παιδία, but in 1 John 2:12 and 14 the two appear to be used interchangeably. Perhaps Jesus used this form of address because he did not yet wish to reveal his identity to the disciples.

προσφάγιον This is an unusual word. In Hellenistic Greek it described **a side dish to be eaten with bread**, and in some contexts was the equivalent of ὄψον, “**fish**.”<sup>172</sup> Used in addressing a group of returning fishermen, it is quite clear that the speaker had fish in mind. Here we have translated it “**fish to eat**” since some of the species of fish in the Sea of Galilee were not considered edible, and that is the point of Jesus’ question here.

**21:6** βάλετε εἰς τὰ δεξιὰ μέρη τοῦ πλοίου τὸ δίκτυον, καὶ εὐρήσετε After the disciples indicated that they had caught nothing, Jesus instructed them to **cast their net to the right side of the boat, and they would find (something)**. As is often the case the direct object (in this case of εὐρήσετε) is omitted in Greek, but is easily supplied from the context. Implicit in Jesus’ directions to the disciples is his **supernatural knowledge** (here, of the location of the fish) and the importance of **obedience** on the part of the disciples.

καὶ οὐκέτι αὐτὸ ἐλκύσαι ἴσχυον The Evangelist goes on to tell us that the result of the disciples casting their net where Jesus had directed is that **they were not able to haul it in because of the size of the catch of fish**. In verse 11 we are told the exact number of the fish in the net, one hundred fifty-three.

**21:7** ὁ κύριός ἐστιν As a result of the tremendous catch of fish, the Beloved Disciple realized that the stranger on the beach who had directed them where to cast the net was Jesus. He then said to Peter, “**It is the LORD**”. It appears that Peter was still not able to recognize Jesus visually, since his response came **when he heard that it was the LORD**. In all probability we are to understand that it was spiritual insight into the miracle itself which enabled the Beloved Disciple to recognize the stranger on the shore as Jesus, rather than eyesight superior to Peter’s.

τὸν ἐπενδύτην διεζώσατο, ἦν γὰρ γυμνός, καὶ ἔβαλεν ἑαυτὸν εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν Peter’s behavior here has been puzzling to many interpreters. It is generally understood that γυμνός does not refer to complete nudity (as it could), since this would have been offensive to Jewish sensibilities. It is thus commonly understood that the meaning here is “**stripped for work**,” that is, with one’s outer clothing removed, and Peter was wearing either a loincloth or a loose-fitting tunic (undergarment). Believing himself inadequately clad to greet the Lord, Peter cast his outer garment (τὸν ἐπενδύτην) around himself and dived into the sea. C. K. Barrett offers the explanation that a greeting was a religious act and thus could not be performed unless one was clothed.<sup>173</sup> This still leaves one with the improbable picture of a person with much experience on and in the water **putting on his outer garment before diving in**. R. Brown’s

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<sup>172</sup> BAGD 719, s.v. προσφάγιον.

<sup>173</sup> Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 580-81.

suggestion seems much more probable here: the verb used, διεζώσατο, does not necessarily mean **putting clothing on**, but rather **tying the clothing around oneself** (the same verb is used in 13:4-5 of Jesus tying the towel around himself).<sup>174</sup> The statement that Peter was naked (ἦν γὰρ γυμνος) could just as well mean that he was naked **underneath** the outer garment (τὸν ἐπενδύτην), and thus could not take it off before jumping into the water. But he did pause to tuck it up and tie it with the girdle before jumping in, to allow himself more freedom of movement. Thus the clause that states Peter was naked is **explanatory** (note the use of γάρ), explaining **why** Peter girded up his outer garment (τὸν ἐπενδύτην) rather than taking it off: **he had nothing on underneath.**

**Why did Peter respond so quickly by jumping into the water, rather than waiting for the boat to get to shore?** Some have suggested that this was the **first** appearance of the risen Jesus to Peter. This would perhaps explain why Peter did not recognize Jesus until the Beloved Disciple identified him, and might also provide some insight into why Peter had returned to Galilee and begun fishing again. Furthermore it might explain the absence of any mention of Peter in the accounts of the two post-resurrection appearances to the disciples in Jerusalem (20:19-23 and 20:26-28).

In spite of this, however, Paul mentions that Jesus **appeared to Peter first** (which does not negate the presence of companions, so this may or may not have been a separate appearance) in 1 Cor 15:5, and Luke similarly indicates that Jesus **first appeared to Simon** (Luke 24:34). The location where this first appearance to Peter took place is difficult to determine; Luke's evidence would point to Jerusalem, but some have argued the appearance took place on the road from Jerusalem to Galilee.

In any case, a sufficient explanation for Peter's behavior here can be found in his emotional state resulting from his denials of Jesus. This despondency may have also been behind his proposal to resume fishing (cf. verse 3). **It is not necessary to understand this as the first time Jesus had appeared to Peter in order to explain Peter's behavior.**

**21:8** τῷ πλοιαρίῳ ἔλθον Unlike Peter, the other disciples came **with the boat**. It appears that the weight of the net loaded with fish was so great that they could not lift it into the boat (or perhaps they feared the net would tear if they lifted it out of the water), for they came **towing the net loaded with fish** (σύροντες τὸ δίκτυον τῶν ἰχθύων).

ὡς ἀπὸ πηχῶν διακοσίων When they made this miraculous catch of fish and Peter leapt into the water to swim to shore, they were not far from land. The Evangelist tells us they were **about two hundred cubits from the land**. A πηχὺς was about **18 inches** or **.462 meters**, so two hundred πηχῶν would be about **100 yards (92.4 meters)**.<sup>175</sup>

**21:9** βλέπουσιν ἀνθρακίαν κειμένην καὶ ὀψάριον ἐπικείμενον καὶ ἄρτον When they disembarked on the land **they saw a charcoal fire prepared, and [a] fish placed on it, and bread**. It is not entirely clear whether ὀψάριον is to be read as singular or plural, since it is anarthrous. Some have seen in the mention of only one fish and one loaf a symbol of **unity**; others have suggested a **miraculous feeding** in miniature, where Jesus multiplies the one fish and one loaf to feed the seven disciples. The latter explanation seems unlikely, however, since such a miracle, following on the previous one (the catch of fish) would probably not be mentioned so indirectly. In light of the fact that Jesus asks the disciples to bring some of the fish they have just caught in the following verse, it seems that only one may have been on the fire, and more were needed. But these fish the disciples had just caught were just as miraculously provided as the one already on the fire!

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<sup>174</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1072.

<sup>175</sup> BAGD 657, s.v. πηχὺς.

**21:10** ἐνέγκατε ἀπὸ τῶν ὀψαρίων ᾧν ἐπιάσατε νῦν Jesus said to the disciples, “**Bring some of the fish** (ἀπό is used as a partitive here) **which you have just caught.**” As mentioned above (in the preceding verse) it seems best to understand this request to mean that **some of the fish caught by the disciples were to be used in the meal.**

**21:11** ἀνέβη οὖν Σίμων Πέτρος It was Peter who took the initiative in **drawing the net to land** in response to Jesus’ request. We are not told where he **went up** to, but the verb ἀναβαίνω is used of boarding a ship, and that would be the logical explanation for its use here. Although we may recall that the net full of fish was not pulled into the boat, but towed behind it to land, it may well have been necessary for Peter to **go up into the boat to loosen the net** where it was fastened in order to bring the net to shore.

μεστὸν ἰχθύων μεγάλων ἑκατὸν πενήκοντα τριῶν The Evangelist makes two further points about the catch of fish: (1) there were **one hundred fifty-three large fish** in the net, and (2) even with so many, **the net was not torn.** Many symbolic interpretations have been proposed for both points (**unity**, especially, in the case of the second), but we are given no explicit clarification in the text itself.<sup>176</sup> It seems better not to speculate here, but to see these details as **indicative of an eyewitness account.** Both are the sort of thing that would remain in the mind of a person who had witnessed them firsthand. Perhaps we are simply to understand this as **the abundance which results from obedience to Jesus**, much as with the amount of wine generated in the water-jars in Cana at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry (2:6).

**21:12** δεῦτε ἄριστήσατε Jesus said to the disciples, “**Come, have breakfast.**” The verb ἀριστάω and the corresponding noun ἄριστον were normally used for the meal at the beginning of the day, as here. At this time there were usually two main meals per day for laborers; the other meal was the δεῖπνον (cf. 12:2).

#### *A Note on the Response of the Disciples to Jesus:*

**Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they knew that it was the LORD.** The response of the disciples in this situation is somewhat puzzling. On the surface it reads like a recognition scene, yet Jesus was already recognized by the Beloved Disciple in verse 7. This apparent awkwardness has led some, like R. Brown, to propose that two separate recognition scenes, one here and one in verse 7, have been blended together imperfectly, so that Jesus in effect is recognized **twice** in the same account.<sup>177</sup> This is not necessary, however, and it overlooks the explanation given in the present verse for the disciples’ hesitancy in questioning Jesus: “**because they knew that it was the LORD.**” In verse 7 the Beloved Disciple had recognized from the boat that the stranger on the shore was the risen Jesus, but this appears to be a spiritual insight following the miraculous catch of fish rather than a visual perception based on the appearance of Jesus. In verse 7 Peter plunged into the sea after he **heard** that it was Jesus, not because of what he could see. It appears that the disciples were not actually able to get a good look at Jesus until they got to shore. We might suppose that this would have been enough to clear up any doubts, although it should be remembered that there was something about the appearance of the risen Jesus which was different enough to make immediate recognition difficult. Mary Magdalene (20:15) did not immediately recognize him, and when he appeared to the disciples (20:19-23) he had to show them his hands and side before they are said to have recognized him.

There is also another factor to consider, however. When the Evangelist gives the reason for the disciples’ hesitancy, he does not say it was because they knew that it was Jesus, but **because they knew that it was**

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<sup>176</sup> For a summary of the symbolic interpretations proposed for the number of fish in the net, see Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1074-75, where a number are discussed at length.

<sup>177</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1077.

**the LORD.** Mary Magdalene had announced to the disciples that she had seen the LORD in 20:18, and when Jesus was recognized by the disciples in 20:20 they rejoiced when they saw the LORD. The climax is reached in the recognition scene with Thomas (20:28) where he exclaims, “**My LORD and my GOD**”. As pointed out there, κύριος was used by the LXX to translate יהוה, and thus Jesus’ prophecy in 8:28 (“When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that **I AM**”) is being fulfilled in these post-resurrection appearances. **The reticence of the disciples is understandable if they knew themselves to be in the presence of Deity.**

**21:13** καὶ λαμβάνει τὸν ἄρτον καὶ δίδωσιν αὐτοῖς Jesus came and **took the bread and gave [some] to them, and the fish likewise.** Is Jesus’ action here to be understood in light of similar actions in 6:11, where he also distributed **bread and fish**? Many have been led to see verse 13 here as a reference to the Eucharist, mainly in light of the suggested connection with 6:11. But such a conclusion is far from certain, and assumes that 6:11 itself alludes to the Eucharist.

**21:14** τοῦτο ἤδη τρίτον ἐφανερώθη Ἰησοῦς The Evangelist has added a note explaining that **this was the third time Jesus had manifested himself to the disciples after his resurrection.** The first time was described in 20:19-23 and the second in 20:26-29. We should probably understand this as a reference to **appearances to the disciples as a group**, since at least one additional appearance is mentioned in the Fourth Gospel itself (in 20:14-17, to Mary Magdalene), and Luke and Paul both mention a prior appearance to Peter (which may or may not constitute a separate appearance, see the discussion above in the Notes on 21:7).

## **2 B The risen Jesus speaks to Peter about his ministry and his future (21:15-23)**

### **1 C Jesus restores Peter to fellowship and commissions him (21:15-17)**

**21:15-17** Ὅτε οὖν ἤρισθησαν λέγει τῷ Σίμωνι Πέτρῳ After the conclusion of the meal, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “**Simon [son] of John, do you love me more than these?** (ἀγαπᾷς με πλεον τούτων)” Before considering the implications of the variation in vocabulary between ἀγαπάω and φιλέω, we must first attempt to answer the question, to whom (or what) does “**these**” (τούτων) refer? Three possibilities are suggested:

(1) τούτων should be understood as neuter, “**these things**,” referring to **the boats, nets, and fishing gear nearby.** In light of Peter’s statement in 21:3, “**I am going fishing**,” some have understood Peter to have renounced his commission in light of his denials of Jesus. Jesus, as he restores Peter and forgives him for his denials, is asking Peter if he really loves his previous vocation more than he loves Jesus. Three things may be said in evaluation of this view: (a) it is not at all necessary to understand Peter’s statement in 21:3 as a renouncement of his discipleship, as this view of the meaning of τούτων would imply; (b) it would probably be more likely that the verb would be repeated in such a construction (see 7:31 for an example where the verb is repeated); and (c) as R. Brown has observed, by Johannine standards the choice being offered to Peter between material things and the risen Jesus would seem rather ridiculous, especially after the disciples had realized whom it was they were dealing with (the **LORD**, see above on verse 12).<sup>178</sup>

(2) τούτων refers to **the other disciples**, meaning “**Do you love me more than you love these other disciples?**” The same objection mentioned as (c) under (1) would apply here: could the Evangelist, in light of the realization of **who Jesus is** which has come to the disciples after the resurrection, and which he has just mentioned in 21:12, seriously present Peter as being offered a choice between the other disciples and the risen Jesus?

This leaves option (3), that τούτων refers to **the other disciples**, meaning “**Do you love me more than these other disciples do?**” It seems likely that there is some irony here: Peter had boasted in 13:37, “**I will**

<sup>178</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1103.

**lay down my life for you,”** and the synoptics present Peter as boasting even more explicitly of his loyalty to Jesus (“Even if they all fall away, I will not,” Matt 26:33; Mark 14:29). Thus the semantic force of what Jesus asks Peter here amounts to something like **“Now, after you have denied me three times, as I told you you would, can you still affirm that you love me more than these other disciples do?”**

ἀγαπᾷς με πλέον τηούτων What are we to make of the variation in vocabulary in verses 15-17? The variation between ἀγαπάω and φιλέω in these verses is as follows:

21:15	ἀγαπᾷς με πλέον τηούτων	ναί, κύριε, σὺ οἶδας ὅτι φιλῶ σε
21:16	ἀγαπᾷς με	ναί, κύριε, σὺ οἶδας ὅτι φιλῶ σε
21:17	φιλεῖς με	κύριε, πάντα σὺ οἶδας, σὺ γινώσκεις ὅτι φιλῶ σε

In summary it should be noted that aside from **Origen**, who saw a distinction in the meaning of the two words, most of the Greek Fathers like **Chrysostom** and **Cyril of Alexandria**, saw no real difference of meaning. Neither did **Augustine** nor the translators of the Itala (Old Latin). This was also the view of the Reformation Greek scholars **Erasmus** and **Grotius**. The suggestion that we should see a distinction in meaning comes primarily from a number of British scholars of the nineteenth century, especially **Trench**, **Westcott**, and **Plummer**. It has been picked up by others such as **Spicq**, **Lenski**, and **Hendriksen**. But most modern scholars decline to see a real difference in the meaning of the two words in this context, among them **Bernard**, **Moffatt**, **Bonsirven**, **Bultmann**, **Barrett**, **Brown**, **Morris**, **Haenchen**, and **Beasley-Murray**.

There are three significant reasons for seeing no real difference in the meaning of ἀγαπάω and φιλέω in these verses:

- the Evangelist has a habit of introducing slight stylistic variations in repeated material without any significant difference in meaning (compare, for example, 3:3 with 3:5, and 7:34 with 13:33). An examination of the uses of ἀγαπάω and φιλέω in the Fourth Gospel seems to indicate a general interchangeability between the two. Both terms are used of God’s love for man (3:16, 16:27); of the Father’s love for the Son (3:35, 5:20); of Jesus’ love for men (11:5, 11:3); of the love of men for men (13:34, 15:19); and of the love of men for Jesus (8:42, 16:27).
- If (as seems probable) the original conversation took place in **Aramaic** (or possibly Hebrew), there would not have been any difference expressed because both Aramaic and Hebrew have only one basic word for love, ܠܘܘܐ. In the LXX both ἀγαπάω and φιλέω are used to translate ܠܘܘܐ, although ἀγαπάω is more frequent. It is significant that in the Syriac version of the NT only one verb is used to translate verses 15-17 (Syriac is very similar linguistically to Palestinian Aramaic).
- Peter’s answers to the questions asked with ἀγαπάω are ‘yes’ even though he answers using the verb φιλέω. If he is being asked to love Jesus on a higher or more spiritual level his answers give no indication of this, and we would be forced to say (in order to maintain a consistent distinction between the two verbs) that Jesus finally concedes defeat and accepts only the lower form of love which is all that Peter is capable of offering!

Thus it seems best to regard the interchange between ἀγαπάω and φιλέω in these verses as **a minor stylistic variation of the Evangelist**, consistent with his use of minor variations in repeated material elsewhere, and not indicative of any real difference in meaning.

βόσκει τὰ ἀρνία μου Again we are faced with a variation in vocabulary in verses 15-17:

21:15	βόσκει τὰ ἀρνία μου
21:16	ποίμαινε τὰ πρόβατά μου
21:17	βόσκει τὰ πρόβατά μου

There are some textual variants involved; it is understandable in such a case that scribal confusion would occur! The apparatus of the 27th edition of *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Nestle-Aland) should be consulted for the existing variant readings.

As for the meaning, it is sometimes pointed out that βόσκω describes a more restricted activity, that of feeding animals, than ποιμαίνω, which refers to guiding and protecting the flock as well as feeding it. This may be true, but taken comprehensively both terms form a general description of pastoral care. Again we are probably dealing with stylistic variation here on the part of the Evangelist. The Latin Vulgate translated both verbs with the same verb, *pascere*. And as for the different words for sheep, it should be noted that there are no less than **three** different words for **fish** in verses 5-13.

As for the significance of the entire scene in the narrative, it seems clear that it is intended to indicate **Peter's complete restoration to a position of apostolic leadership after his threefold denial**. Three times Peter had denied Jesus; three times Peter now affirms his love for his Lord, and three times Jesus commissions Peter to care for the flock of God. There could be no question on Peter's part or on the part of the other disciples that he had been completely restored.

## 2 C Jesus tells Peter of his future (21:18-23)

**21:18** ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω σοι After restoring Peter to his former position of apostolic leadership, Jesus went on to tell him prophetically something of the fate that awaited him in his old age. Jesus told Peter that **when he was young, he tied his own girdle, and went wherever he wished, but when he is old, others will bind him and carry him where does not wish to go**. There are four elements that are being compared: (1) young—old; (2) tying his own girdle—being bound by others; (3) going—being taken; and (4) wherever one wishes—where one does not wish to go. For the stretching out of the hands in old age there is no corresponding element in the initial stage.

**21:19** τοῦτο δὲ εἶπεν σημαίνων... The Evangelist inserts a parenthetical explanation. Jesus' words to Peter **signified the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God**. This explanation makes it clear that the comparisons of the preceding verse ultimately related to Peter's death, a meaning which is not immediately obvious without the following explanatory note.

The phrase σημαίνων ποίω θανάτῳ δοξάσει τὸν θεόν almost certainly indicates martyrdom (cf. 1 Peter 4:16), and it may not predict anything more than that. But the parallelism of this phrase to similar phrases in John 12:33 and 18:32 which describe Jesus' own death by crucifixion have led many to suggest that the picture Jesus is portraying for Peter looks not just at martyrdom but at death by crucifixion. This seems to be confirmed by the phrase ἐκτενεῖς τὰς χεῖράς σου in the preceding verse. There is some evidence that the early church understood this and similar phrases (one of them in Isa 65:2) to refer to crucifixion.<sup>179</sup> Some have objected that if this phrase does indeed refer to crucifixion, the order within verse 18 is wrong, because the stretching out of the hands in crucifixion precedes the binding and leading where one does not wish to go. R. Brown sees this as a deliberate reversal of the normal order (*hysteron proteron*) intended to emphasize the stretching out of the hands.<sup>180</sup> Another possible explanation for the unusual order is the Roman practice in crucifixions of tying the condemned prisoner's arms to the crossbeam (*patibulum*) and forcing him to carry it to the place of execution.<sup>181</sup>

After these words to Peter concerning his martyrdom, Jesus said to him in summary, **"Follow me."** Peter was to follow Jesus first in **discipleship** and later in **death**, as Jesus had just foretold.

<sup>179</sup> For a detailed discussion of the evidence see Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 876, n. 52.

<sup>180</sup> Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1108.

<sup>181</sup> W. Bauer as cited by O. Cullmann in *Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 88.

**21:20** Ἐπιστραφεὶς Apparently Jesus had been doing what he had frequently done during his earthly ministry with the disciples: he was walking along as he spoke with them. After Jesus had finished speaking with him, **Peter turned and saw the Beloved Disciple following too**. The Evangelist adds an explanatory note that this was the disciple who had leaned back on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper and questioned him about the one who was to betray him (13:25).

**21:21** κύριε, οὗτος δὲ τί Peter thus asked Jesus concerning the future of this other disciple. It is natural to suppose that after Jesus had spoken of Peter's future, Peter's curiosity would be aroused concerning his fellow disciples. So Peter asked Jesus, "**Lord, but what [about] this one?**" The actual question is elliptical; various verbs may be supplied: "what about this one?," "what is to become of this one?," "what will this man do?," etc.

**21:22** τί πρὸς σέ σύ μοι ἀκολουθεῖ Jesus replied to Peter, "**If I wish him to remain [μένειν] until I come, what is that to you? You follow me.**" In the context it seems clear that μένω means "to remain alive" (cf. the use in 1 Cor 15:6). It seems less likely that we should attach to it the special Johannine theological sense involving the permanent relationship between Jesus and the believer and/or the Father. Jesus does not answer Peter's question. The point Jesus makes to Peter is that **it is none of Peter's business what will happen to Peter's fellow disciples**. Peter is rather to concern himself with following Jesus.

**21:23** ἐξηλθεν οὖν οὗτος ὁ λόγος εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς... The Evangelist adds another parenthetical note to explain Jesus' saying concerning the Beloved Disciple. **This saying of Jesus circulated among the brethren that the Beloved Disciple would not die (but would remain until the Lord's return)**. The Evangelist makes it clear, however, that **this is not what Jesus had said**. Jesus had not said the Beloved Disciple would not die. Jesus had asked a hypothetical question: what did it matter to Peter if Jesus wished this other disciple to remain until his return? The adversative used by the Evangelist (ἀλλά) indicates the strength of this distinction.

### 3 B The Conclusion to the Gospel (21:24-25)

**21:24** Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ μαθητὴς ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ τούτων καὶ ὁ γράψας ταῦτα The Fourth Gospel concludes with **an authentication of the testimony** of the one who both witnessed the events described and wrote them down. Many have understood this to be a conclusion written by someone other than the Evangelist. It is argued that the plural οἶδαμεν indicates more than one person is involved in this statement of authentication, and thus it has been added by others after the completion of the Gospel. This may be so, but **several points favoring authorship of these final verses by the Evangelist himself need to be considered:**

(1) If this statement of attestation were added by a later writer we would expect it to stand at the very end of the Fourth Gospel, but in fact it is followed by verse 25, which resorts to the first person singular (οἶμαι) again;

(2) Manuscript evidence for treating both verses 24 and 25 as a later addition to the Gospel is so slim as to be virtually nonexistent (verse 25 was omitted by the original copyist of , but the **same** copyist then added it as a correction; there is no manuscript evidence of any kind for the omission of verse 24);

(3) Jesus in 3:11 uses a **plural** verb where it is clear in context that only he is speaking;

(4) 1 John 1:1 uses plural verbs in the same way, in a context where authentication of **testimony** is concerned; and

(5) The author of 3 John, who elsewhere uses the first person singular, uses a plural verb and pronoun to refer to himself in verse 12 in a context where authentication of **testimony** is concerned: καὶ ἡμεῖς δὲ



μαρτυροῦμεν, καὶ οἶδας ὅτι ἡ μαρτυρία ἡμῶν ἀληθὴς ἐστίν. **In light of all this it seems probable that the Evangelist himself is the author of 21:24.**

**21:25** “Ἔστιν δὲ καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ ἃ ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς The Evangelist concludes with a note concerning his **selectivity of material**. He makes it plain that he has not attempted to write an exhaustive account of the words and works of Jesus, for if one attempted to do so, “**the world itself could not contain the books which would be written.**” This is clearly **hyperbole**, and as such bears some similarity to the conclusion of the Book of Ecclesiastes (12:9-12). As it turns out, the statement seems more true of the Fourth Gospel itself, which is the subject of an ever-lengthening bibliography!

The statement in verse 25 serves as a final reminder that **our knowledge of Jesus**, no matter how well-attested it may be, **is still partial**. We do not know everything that Jesus did during his three and one-half years of earthly ministry. This supports the major theme of the Fourth Gospel: Jesus is repeatedly identified as **God**, and although we may know him **truly**, on the basis of his self-disclosure, we can never know him **exhaustively**. There is far more to know about Jesus than could ever be written down, or even known. On this appropriate note the Gospel of John ends.