

Crucifixion and Resurrection

The crucifixion is a stark and disturbing element in the story of Jesus. If Jesus was from God and was doing the work of God, then why was he put to death? If God had sent him and he spoke the truth about God, then why were his opponents able to execute him? The death of the Messiah is troubling enough, but the brutality of the process intensifies the issue. One of the disciples in Jesus' inner circle turned against him, making arrangements for his arrest. After being seized, Jesus was interrogated by the Jewish and Roman authorities (18:1-40). His captors subjected him to scourging and ridicule, clothing him with a purple robe and a crown of thorns to show contempt for his purported kingship (19:1-3). On the way to the place of execution Jesus carried his own cross, creating a degrading spectacle that warned the public about the consequences of defying the law (19:17). Crucifixion was supremely painful, as nails were driven through the wrists and ankles, so that when placed on the cross the body would weigh down on the wounds (19:18). Some forms of execution allowed the victim to retain a measure of dignity, but crucifixion did not. To crucify someone was to hang him on the "tree of shame."¹

The meaning of the crucifixion was sharply disputed. The Jewish leaders thought it right for Jesus to be put to death because he seemed to flout the law of Moses, and his actions created such a sensation among the people that they feared he would foment a disastrous revolt against the Roman order. Executing him was a way to end the threat he posed to social stability (10:33; 11:48-50; 19:7, 12). Pilate the Roman governor was told that Jesus had made himself into a king, and crucifying a pretender to the throne was politically

expedient, since it showed Pilate's loyalty to the emperor and let the public know that opposition to Roman rule would not be tolerated (19:12-22). For people on the street, the crucifixion discredited the idea that Jesus could be the Messiah. If the Messiah was to rule with strength and honor, the cross meant defeat and disgrace. If the Scriptures said the Messiah would bring in God's everlasting kingdom, the hope that Jesus might do so was shattered when he was "lifted up" to die by crucifixion (12:32-34). In a context of conflicting viewpoints, the writer of John's Gospel faced the challenge of showing that it was precisely by dying that Jesus would reveal the power of God, and that the cross was the proper place to proclaim the Messiah's reign.

The resurrection created its own set of issues. Rather than resolving the problem of Jesus' death by bringing the story to a happy ending, the message of the resurrection made things more difficult. After all, why would anyone believe it? There were other more plausible ways of coming to terms with a tragic death. Many people already believed that there would be a resurrection at the end of the age. Those who mourned the loss of family members or friends could take comfort in the hope that they would return to life on "the last day," when the present world of sorrow would end and the blessed age to come would dawn (11:24). Others thought of death as a transition point, when the person's body died, freeing the soul to ascend to life in heaven. According to John's Gospel, Jesus had spoken about leaving the world and returning to his Father (16:28). Therefore, one might assume that death brought an end to Jesus' bodily suffering and allowed his soul to depart to heavenly rest. It would be difficult to object to this point of view. Yet the Gospel moves against the stream by saying that Jesus rose, bodily, from the dead.

Allusions to the cross and resurrection span the whole of Jesus' public ministry, from the moment John the Baptist introduces him as the Lamb of God until Jesus approaches Jerusalem and tells the crowds welcoming him with palm branches that he will be lifted up in death (1:29; 12:32-33). Reading John's account of Jesus' death and resurrection in the context of the Gospel as a whole discloses multiple dimensions of meaning.²

The Significance of Jesus' Crucifixion

Many of the forces that brought about Jesus' crucifixion have already been considered theologically in previous chapters. On one level we have seen

that Jesus' death was the product of human sin and unbelief. His adversaries did not accept his claims and put their unbelief into action by having him put to death (pp. 70-72). On a second level Jesus' death was brought about by demonic evil. Satan carried out his hostile designs through human agents, using deception and hatred to kill the Son of God (pp. 76-78). On a third level the perspective changes dramatically as readers learn that Jesus' death carried out the will of God. In the face of human sin and demonic evil, God commands Jesus to lay down and take up his life in order to convey God's love to the world. It is not God's will that Jesus should die, as if the cross were an end in itself. Rather, God's will is that the world that is alienated from him should believe and have life. Love is communicated through crucifixion in order to evoke the faith that brings life (pp. 41-47). On a fourth level Jesus' death is the result of his obedience to God. Although his opponents charged that Jesus should be executed for rebellion against God, the Gospel discloses that he went to his death in obedience to God's command. He laid down his life as God directed him, in order that God's purposes might be fulfilled (10:17-18).³

In what follows, we shift from the theological factors behind the crucifixion to ask about the *results* of the crucifixion. What did Jesus' death do for people? Everyone in the Gospel agrees that Jesus died. Friend and foe alike acknowledge the reality of his death. At the end of the day, the soldiers who carried out the crucifixion broke the legs of those who were crucified with Jesus, and when they came to Jesus they saw that he was "already dead" (19:33). The issue is not whether Jesus died but what his death means, and if readers are to understand it as something more than a senseless tragedy, the Gospel must reveal this. Here we will consider Jesus' death as an expression of love in human terms, as a sacrifice for sin, as a victory over evil, and as a revelation of divine glory.⁴

Love in Human Terms

Beginning at the simplest level, John's Gospel indicates that Jesus' death conveys love in human terms. During the last supper Jesus said, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (15:13). In a basic sense this saying is a commentary on the crucifixion, indicating that Jesus will go to his death willingly out of love for his friends. The idea is that if people show love by what they give for others, the most complete

form of love is revealed through the most complete form of giving, the giving up of one's own life for other people. Readers would not need to belong to the circle of Jesus' followers to understand this. Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, and Paul agreed that true love and friendship might mean that one person would willingly die for another.⁵ Drawing on this familiar idea, John's Gospel turns it into a lens that brings the meaning of the crucifixion into focus. Jesus defines love by his words so that readers will see that he conveys love by his death.

John's account of Jesus washing the disciples' feet reinforces the point. The passage begins by saying that Jesus, having "loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (13:1). By introducing the scene with an explicit statement about Jesus' love, the Gospel enables readers to see the footwashing as a tangible expression of that love — and most early readers would have needed help seeing the footwashing in this way. If Jesus' statement about laying down one's life for one's friends suggests the lofty tones of virtue and heroism, his act of washing feet smacks of scandal and self-abnegation. People normally washed their own feet or had them washed by a slave. Free people did not wash the feet of others. A host would offer guests a basin of water, but people then washed their own feet or else the washing was done by a slave.⁶ Therefore, when Jesus the master washes the feet of the disciples, he does the work of a slave; and Peter emphatically objects to his behavior, saying, "You will never wash my feet" (13:8). There were of course rare instances when a free person would assume the role of a slave and wash another person's feet as an expression of complete devotion, but these were extremes — which is why the action suits Jesus' purposes so well. He washes feet to show extreme love, to convey scandalous devotion, and to foreshadow his consummate act of self-giving on the cross.

The love expressed through the footwashing anticipates the love given through the crucifixion. The Gospel links the footwashing to the crucifixion by framing the episode with references to the impending betrayal (13:2, 18-30), and by saying that Jesus "laid down" his garments, echoing what was said earlier about laying down his life (10:17-18; 13:4). The introduction to the footwashing said that Jesus loved his own "to the end," which in Greek is *eis telos* (13:1), and this expression anticipates his final word from the cross: *tetelestai*, "it is accomplished," "the *telos* has been reached." Connecting the footwashing to the crucifixion enables readers to see that the love Jesus shows in a preliminary way by washing feet, he gives in a definitive way by laying down his life.

Presenting the crucifixion as love in human terms recognizes that if love is to be given to human beings, it must be given in forms that can be grasped by human beings. Jesus comes from heaven above, but cannot reveal the things of God in heavenly speech. Human beings belong to the earth, and in his teaching Jesus refers to the things of the earth — like bread, light, and water — to convey what comes from above. In the same way, Jesus washes feet like a slave and speaks of laying down one's life for a friend, drawing on patterns of earthly life to communicate with earthly people, that they might grasp the love he gives through his service in life and finally through his death.

Love is also conveyed in human terms so that it can be lived in human terms. Jesus' death is both the source and the norm for Christian discipleship, according to John. After showing love by washing his disciples' feet, Jesus directs them to wash one another's feet, saying, "as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (13:34). Again, when explaining that the highest form of love is to lay down one's life for others, he relates this to the new commandment, that the disciples are to love one another as Jesus loved them (15:12-13). Since Jesus' love is the source and norm for Christian discipleship, he gives his love in tangible worldly forms so that his disciples might give their love in tangible worldly forms. Jesus' love is conveyed in human terms so that it may be lived in human terms.⁷

Sacrifice for Sin

Readers discover a different theological perspective when they consider the death of Jesus through the words of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29). Here we move from the realm of love and service to the sphere of sin and sacrifice.⁸ Rather than relating the crucifixion to the circle of Jesus' friends, the passage relates it to the world and its sin. This perspective on the death of Christ presupposes a more radical sense of human alienation from God. Jesus is called the Lamb of God at the moment he first enters public view in chapter 1, and no one follows Jesus until John the Baptist says again, "Behold the Lamb of God," prompting two of John's own disciples to follow Jesus (1:29, 36). To discern the theological implications we must consider each part of John's statement in turn.

First is the expression "the Lamb of God." Introducing Jesus as the

Lamb at the beginning of the Gospel anticipates his death at Passover at the end of the Gospel. According to John's account, Jesus ate his last meal with the disciples on the night before Passover, rather than on Passover evening as in the other gospels (13:1). On the morning before Jesus' execution, the Jewish authorities avoided entering the praetorium in order to keep themselves pure for the Passover meal that evening (18:28). Jesus was taken out to be crucified on the day of preparation for the Passover at about noon, when the sacrifice of the Passover lambs began in the temple (19:14). The slaughter of the lambs was to be completed before sundown, and John relates that the soldiers saw that Jesus was dead before evening fell (19:31). The soldiers broke the legs of the two men who hung beside Jesus, but they did not break Jesus' legs since he was already dead. The Gospel relates this to the Scripture passage that says, "His bones shall not be broken" (19:36), citing the biblical stipulation that the bones of a Passover lamb were not to be broken.⁹

The link between the crucifixion and the Passover sacrifice seems clear, but its meaning is not simple. A Passover lamb was not generally regarded as a sacrifice for sin, but was more closely associated with deliverance from death. According to Exodus 12, the people of Israel observed the first Passover in Egypt by putting lamb's blood on their doorposts and lintels, not to atone for sin, but to prevent the destroyer from entering their homes and slaying their firstborn. The annual Passover sacrifice of the lambs commemorated this deliverance. To account for the connection between the Lamb of God and sin, some suggest that the Gospel combines Passover imagery with that of the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, who is compared to a lamb that is led to the slaughter and who is said to bear the sins of many.¹⁰ By drawing on these and other backgrounds the Gospel develops a new type of imagery, in which Jesus the Passover Lamb of God delivers people from death precisely by delivering them from sin.

This brings us to the second element in John the Baptist's testimony: "the sin of the world." Sin, in John's Gospel, is a problem in one's relationship with God, which by extension affects one's relationships with other people. Sin is the alienation from God that is expressed in a refusal to believe in Jesus, the one whom God has sent. The particular sins that people commit manifest this underlying antipathy toward God and Jesus, so that sin encompasses both unbelief and the actions that proceed from it (15:18-25). The sin of the world is fundamentally the world's alienation from God and the one whom God sent.

We have seen that human sin leads to the death of the Lamb, according

to John (see pp. 70-72). Those who do not believe that Jesus is from God regard him as a blasphemer and a threat to the social order. Conflict intensifies throughout Jesus' ministry. As unbelief takes its course, it leads to his arrest and condemnation by representatives of "the world," both Jews and Gentiles. This means that in a very basic sense, Jesus' death is the product of human sin. The Lamb suffers the consequences of sin because he is put to death by those who do not believe. Yet the paradox is that Jesus' death is not only the result of human sin — it is God's means of overcoming sin.

This brings us to the third element of John the Baptist's testimony, which is that the Lamb of God "takes away" sin. The Gospel regularly uses this verb (*airein* in Greek) to mean taking away or removing something.¹¹ If sin is the unbelief that separates people from God, then the Lamb of God removes sin by removing unbelief. In Johannine theology, sin is taken away when faith is evoked. Sin is the opposite of faith, and both are relational notions. If sin is a deadly alienation from God, then faith is a life-giving relationship with God. The death of Christ takes sin away when it creates faith in the face of unbelief.¹² For this to occur, the death of Christ must call forth human faith in God by conveying God's love to humankind.

The dynamics of divine sacrificial love are reflected in John 3, which anticipates that as Moses lifted up the serpent on the pole, so must the Son of Man be lifted up on the cross, so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life (3:14-15). The passage goes on to say that it was because God so loved the world that he gave his only Son — and in light of the previous verses God's giving of the Son includes giving him up to die (3:16). It was because God so loved the world that he gave his only Son up to death, so that whoever believes in him might not perish but have eternal life. If on one level the crucifixion conveys Jesus' love for those who followed him, on another level it conveys God's love for the world that hated him.

John's profound sense of the depth of the world's sin is what gives this text its edge. The "world" in John's Gospel is not characterized by radiant sunsets and gentle breezes, by the colors of spring flowers or the golden hues of fall — it requires no sacrifice to love a world like that. But in John's Gospel God loves the world that hates him; he gives his Son for the world that rejects him. He offers his love to a world estranged from him in order to overcome its hostility and bring the world back into relationship with its Maker. The proper theological term for this is "atonement," for if atonement means reconciling parties that have been separated, then the sacrificial love of God, conveyed through the death of Jesus, brings about atone-

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ment in a Johannine sense when it overcomes the hostility of unbelief by bringing about faith.

This understanding of atonement differs from the idea that Jesus' death is the sacrifice that pays the penalty for human sin.¹³ The notion that Jesus' self-sacrifice removes the penalty for sin revolves around the two poles of justice and mercy or law and grace. The idea is that when someone transgresses a law, justice requires that the person be punished. In cases of severe wrongdoing, justice might require that a person surrender his or her own life. As an act of mercy, however, a transgressor might be allowed to offer something in exchange for his or her life. By sacrificing something, the demands of the law are met, but in a way that allows the person to live. When this paradigm is transferred to the realm of theology, human beings are regarded as sinners who are justly condemned by God. Because God is just he expects the penalty for sin to be paid, but because God is merciful he allows the penalty for sin to be paid by his own Son Jesus, who dies in the place of sinners. The result is that Jesus' self-sacrifice honors the need for divine justice, while making room for divine mercy.

John's Gospel, however, operates with a different theological framework. The Gospel does not focus on the legal penalty for sin but on the matter of sin itself. It does not say that the Lamb takes away "guilt" but that he takes away sin — he removes unbelief. The Gospel does not relate Jesus' death to the need for divine justice but to the need for human faith. When the Gospel speaks of the wrath of God, it says that wrath threatens those who do not "believe" (3:36). When Jesus tells his opponents that they will die in their sins, he adds that they will die in their sins unless they "believe" (8:24). When the Advocate, the Spirit, comes to convict the world of sin after Jesus' return to the Father, readers are told that the sin is that the world does not "believe" (16:8-9). According to the Gospel of John, people fall under divine judgment because of unbelief, and they are delivered from divine judgment by being brought to faith (3:17). *When the love of God, conveyed through the death of Jesus, overcomes the sin of unbelief by evoking faith, it delivers people from the judgment of God by bringing them into true relationship with God.* This is atonement in the Johannine sense.

Proponents of a substitutionary interpretation of Jesus' sacrifice sometimes point out that the Gospel says that the good shepherd lays down his life "for" (*hyper*) the sheep (10:11, 15).¹⁴ Nevertheless, there is no suggestion that the good shepherd lays down his life to deliver the flock from divine judgment. The specific threat against the flock comes from thieves and

bandits, not from God's wrath. The point is that the shepherd conveys his devotion by laying down his life for the flock, in contrast to the hired hand who cares nothing for the sheep (10:13-14). Later, Caiaphas remarks that one man must die "for" the people (11:50). From Caiaphas's perspective, Jesus' death will save people from the consequences of a popular uprising. The evangelist then adds that Jesus' death will gather his followers into one (11:51-52). But again, there is no suggestion that dying "for" the people equals paying the legal penalty for sin. The Fourth Gospel has a different understanding of sacrifice.

The crucifixion of the Lamb "takes away sin" by taking away unbelief. To say this does not create an understanding of the atonement that is purely "subjective." The love that the Lamb conveys must come to people from outside themselves, from God. Change comes when the love communicated through the Lamb's self-sacrifice acts on people from without. Can this be reduced to what some call the "moral influence" approach to atonement, in which the Lamb's selfless example moves people to amend their lives? Hardly. According to the moral influence theory, "everyone becomes more righteous — by which we mean a greater lover of the Lord — after the Passion of Christ than before," since it inspires "greater love" and "deeper affection" in people.¹⁵ The underlying assumption is that to some degree people are already righteous and lovers of God, and that this tendency is encouraged by Christ's example. But this is not the outlook of the Fourth Gospel, which has a more radical notion of human estrangement from God. Given the Gospel's understanding of sin, something more than good influence is necessary for change to occur.

The death of Christ must *overcome* sin by evoking faith. When we looked at Jesus' death as love in human terms, we noted that he spoke of laying down his life for his friends (15:13). But when speaking of the Lamb, the Gospel envisions a world that is alienated from God by sin. Sacrificing one's life for a friend may express a relationship of love that already exists, but sacrificing one's life for a sinful world is done to create a relationship of love where one does not exist. Jesus' death may provide an example of love for people to follow, but a sinful world needs more than an example or it will not follow. The Lamb is sacrificed to create a relationship of faith in the face of the alienation created by sin. If a label is needed for this way of construing the death of Christ, it is *kerygmatic*. God addresses a hostile world with his radical Word of love in the crucified Lamb of God. When the crucified Word creates faith, it brings people to the relationship that

God intends. And when the crucified Word evokes such faith, God can say, "Now I am satisfied."¹⁶

Victory over Evil

Another theological perspective opens up when we hear Jesus say, "Now is the judgment of this world, now will the ruler of this world be cast out; and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself"; and the narrator explains that Jesus said this to show by what death he was to die (12:31-33). Rather than speaking of love and friendship or sin and sacrifice, this passage interprets the crucifixion in terms of conflict and victory in a world dominated by a hostile power.¹⁷ Here the basic problem is not so much human sin as it is the oppressive power of evil. People are not only sinful and in need of atonement, they are oppressed by evil and in need of liberation. Jesus' opponent, according to this passage, is the ruler of this world, whom the Gospel also calls Satan, the devil, and the evil one (13:2, 27; 17:15). John never fully describes Satan, but by telling of Jesus' clashes with opponents he reminds readers that evil works through human actions such as hatred and deceit (7:7; 8:44). Therefore, as the battle with evil reaches its climax in the passion, Jesus must meet hatred with divine love and deceit with divine truth.

Judas is the devil's ally in the passion story. Judas is initially linked to evil in John 6, but the plot thickens in John 13 where readers learn that the devil himself has determined that Judas will betray Jesus (13:2-3). Jesus' strategy in the conflict with evil is to show unwavering love (13:1). He assumes his battle dress by laying down his garments, girding himself with a towel, and taking up a basin to wash feet. The text makes clear that Jesus does not act out of weakness, but out of the strength of one who has come from God, who is going to God, and who has been given authority by God to manifest his power in an act of devoted love (13:1, 3). John says that God put all things in Jesus' hands, and Jesus now uses his hands to wash the disciples' feet, apparently including the feet of Judas. Therefore, if Judas remains unclean, as the text says he does, it is not because Jesus excludes him from his cleansing love, but because Judas is resistant to what Jesus offers (13:11).

The Gospel indicates that Jesus possesses superior battlefield intelligence and knows that Judas will hand Jesus over to his enemies. Yet when

asked to identify the betrayer, Jesus dips bread into the supper dish and gives it to Judas — a gesture commonly understood to show favor. This gracious act on Jesus' part provokes intense demonic resistance in Judas, for when he receives the bread, Satan enters him (13:27). The action and response disclose the nature of the conflict, for what evil resists is the graciousness that Jesus extends. The Gospel says that Jesus chooses Judas, washes Judas, and gives Judas food (6:70-71; 13:1-11, 26), so that Satan's entry into Judas marks opposition to the graciousness Jesus shows. This opposition does not mean that evil is the superior force, however, for Judas does not depart from the table until Jesus allows him to do so, saying, "Do quickly what you are going to do" (13:27). Judas leaves the table only at Jesus' bidding, and in scenes to come Jesus will turn the destructive designs of evil toward the accomplishment of God's saving ends.

Jesus tells the disciples who remain with him, "I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us be on our way" (14:30-31). When Jesus finally leaves the supper and arrives in the garden, he is met by Judas and a group of Roman soldiers and Jewish police, who serve as agents of the ruler of this world. Jesus seizes the initiative by asking whom they are seeking. When they reply "Jesus of Nazareth," he says "I Am," using words that recall the name of God; and Judas and the soldiers draw back and fall to the ground. The episode bears out that the ruler of this world has no power over Jesus (18:5-6).

Many a scriptwriter would end the scene here, with Judas and the soldiers lying helplessly on the ground and Jesus standing coolly erect after his effortless victory, but John does not do so. At the end of the episode the soldiers arrest Jesus, bind him, and take him away. So why subdue the opposition only to be taken captive? Jesus subdues the opposition long enough to secure the release of his disciples: If "you are looking for me, let these men go" (18:8). John tells the story to show the extent to which Jesus cares for his own. Divine power is used for human deliverance. Jesus subdues the opposition so that others might be set free. But he himself is bound and taken away by his captors because the battle is not yet over: he must infiltrate more deeply into his opponents' territory where judgment will take place.

John's Gospel understands that people are judged by their positive or negative responses to Jesus. A saying earlier in the Gospel sets the tone: "Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not be-

lieve are condemned already" (3:18). Jesus engages in this conflict by rejecting the weaponry of the world and meeting his opponents armed only with truth (18:36-37). In some of the Gospel's most ironic scenes, Jesus' accusers make charges that bring Jesus closer to death while bringing the accusers themselves under judgment.

We have seen that the Jewish leaders charge that Jesus is guilty on two counts: rebellion against Rome and rebellion against God. Arguing that Jesus is a rebel against Rome, they insist that he is making himself into a king. Ironically, however, they are the ones who demand the release of Barabbas the insurrectionist and thereby show that they are guilty of opposing Roman rule (18:40; 19:12). They also insist that Jesus is a rebel against God, who tries to usurp God's prerogatives by making himself out to be the Son of God. The trial, however, enables readers to see that the reverse is true, for Jesus' accusers finally declare that their only king is Caesar — and Caesar was the man who was put in the place of God (19:7, 15).¹⁸ Pilate the Gentile fares no better. Pilate claims to have the power to do whatever he wants with Jesus, and he declares three times that Jesus is innocent, which is true. But if Pilate knows the truth, he proves incapable of doing the truth, for in the end he knowingly hands over an innocent man to be crucified (18:38; 19:4, 6, 10, 16). In one sense this episode is a defeat, for the claims made against Jesus lead to his death, but in another sense it is a victory for truth, since the world's pretensions to power and right are exposed to the readers. In passing judgment on Jesus the world reveals the truth about itself (see pp. 70-72).

"Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out" (12:31). John's Gospel describes no mythic fall of Satan, but it intimates that the ruler of this world is cast out as the crucified Jesus is lifted up as the world's true sovereign. Jesus is given his royal robe and crown of thorns during the scourging that prepares him for death; Pilate acclaims him a king before handing him over to his executioners; and Jesus is enthroned by means of crucifixion. The sign above the cross reads, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." It says this in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek for all the world to see. On the cross one sees the proper ruler of this world, the king whose love and truth cast out the power of hatred and deceit. His kingdom is not "from" the world since his power comes from above rather than below (18:36; cf. 6:15); yet Jesus does reign for the world and rightly bears the title "Savior of the world" (4:42).¹⁹

The theme of conflict and victory enables John's story of the crucifix-

ion to confront readers with two forms of dominion. One is that of the crucified Jesus, whose resolute love, witness to the truth, and obedience to God bring him to his throne on Golgotha. The other is that of the sinister ruler of this world, who entwines his allies in a web of hostility and deception as he seeks to bring about the death of the Son of God. From this perspective, readers find that there is no place for neutrality. In the cosmic battle between God and evil, the question is: Which claimant to the throne will obtain the readers' loyalty? The fourth evangelist is a participant in the conflict, exposing the pretensions of evil in order to capture the readers for the crucified and risen king.

Love remains central to John's understanding of the crucifixion, but when viewed in the context of conflicting powers, it assumes a new vitality. Love is a weapon in a conflict, and it serves along with truth to dethrone the forces that oppose it. Those who follow Jesus are called to love as he loved, and if Jesus wielded love in the face of evil, then his disciples' love may also take militant forms. The expression of love is complex rather than simple. Jesus loved by washing feet and contending with Satan. For those who follow, love means service to others and witness to truth; it entails giving of oneself and opposing evil. For the writer of the Fourth Gospel, authentic love encompasses all of this.

Revelation of Divine Glory

Shifting our perspective one last time, we can consider the crucifixion in terms of glory. Jesus' final prayer before his arrest sounds the theme: "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you. . . . I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed" (17:2, 4-5). The theme of glory takes us into yet another theological world, one that deals with the human need to know God.²⁰ The word "glory" (*doxa*) sometimes connotes honor (5:41), but in John's Gospel glory also has to do with the way God is revealed to human beings.

This perspective recognizes that people were created to know God, and the prayer in John 17 therefore states that eternal life means knowing the one true God and Jesus Christ, whom God has sent (17:3). To know God is to be in relationship with God, yet the Gospel also recognizes that people have no

immediate knowledge of God. "No one has ever seen God," the Gospel says (1:18). God's presence is hidden until God chooses to reveal it. The theme of glory has to do with the way revelation takes place. To discern what this might be we must consider Jesus' saying in light of the wider gospel story.

First, Jesus said that he glorified God on earth by accomplishing the work that God gave him to do. Jesus' earthly ministry was done to glorify God, and in a basic sense this means he honored God through his faithful obedience to God's commands. During his public ministry Jesus claimed to teach what God wanted him to teach, and to perform the healings and other works that God wanted him to perform. Such faithfulness honors God (8:49). In another sense, however, Jesus glorified God by revealing God's power. Biblical writers sometimes use the term *doxa* or "glory" for the way the power of God is brought within the realm of human experience. According to John's Gospel, Jesus made divine power visible by the miraculous signs he performed. At the beginning of his ministry Jesus manifested his glory by turning water into wine at Cana (2:11); and at the end of his ministry he revealed the glory of God by calling the dead man Lazarus back to life (11:40). John's account of Jesus' career encompasses these and other miraculous acts, which reveal divine glory by revealing divine power.

A second element in Jesus' prayer concerns the glory he will resume in heaven once his ministry on earth is over. This heavenly glory is something that the Son of God enjoyed before the world existed. To share in such glory is to share in divine honor, divine majesty, and divine power. It was out of love that the Father gave the Son such glory before the foundation of the world, so that sharing in God's glory means sharing in God's love. By means of his passion Jesus will return to the Father and enter a heavenly glory that his followers on earth cannot fully perceive, but can hope to see in the future. Therefore, Jesus concludes his prayer by asking that those whom God has given him may one day be with him in God's presence, to see the fullness of the glory that God gave to him in love (17:24).

The prayer traces a movement from glory on earth to glory in heaven, and given only the lines we have considered thus far it would be easy to bypass the cross without comment. Yet other passages connect glory to the crucifixion itself. When Jesus enters Jerusalem at the end of his ministry, he says, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified," and he compares himself to a seed that must fall into the earth and die (12:23-24). When Judas receives the piece of bread and departs to carry out the betrayal, Jesus says, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has

been glorified in him" (13:31). The saying does not limit glorification to what happens after the crucifixion, but links glorification to the process of betrayal that culminates in the crucifixion.²¹ And this brings us back to the prayer in John 17, where Jesus says that he has glorified God on earth by finishing the works that God gave him to do. The Greek word for "finish" is *teleioō*, a form of the word Jesus will utter at the time of his death when he says *tetelestai*, "it is finished." If Jesus glorifies God on earth by accomplishing God's works, then he glorifies God by the crucifixion that completes these works. The question is how he does this.

Given the way Jesus manifested divine glory by miraculous acts of power during his ministry, we might expect a battery of miracles to occur during his crucifixion. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, for example, the story of the crucifixion is vividly framed with displays of divine power. The eerie pall of darkness that the other gospels place over the crucifixion is a visible sign of supernatural force, and the dramatic tearing of the temple curtain reveals the hand of God. God's glory seems palpable in Matthew's account of the earth quaking and the saints rising on Good Friday (Matt. 27:45-54; Mark 15:33-38; Luke 23:44-45). The irony is that these traditional signs of divine power *are missing* from John's Gospel. John gives his readers no portents in heaven or on earth. If readers are to see glory in the crucifixion, they must see it in another way.

Put briefly, if the signs reveal God's glory by displaying divine power, the crucifixion reveals God's glory by conveying divine love.²² The crucifixion completes Jesus' work of glorifying God on earth, for by laying down his life he gives himself completely so that the world may know of Jesus' love for God and God's love for the world (John 3:16; 14:31). By his resurrection and ascension Jesus returns to the heavenly glory that God prepared for him in love, and Jesus prays that his followers will one day join him in the Father's presence to share in this glory and love (17:5, 24-26). To the eye of faith, however, the glory of the exalted Lord is already present in the crucified body of Jesus.²³ If glory defines what the crucifixion is, the crucifixion defines what glory is. The crucifixion manifests the scope of divine power by disclosing the depth of divine love.

A similar perspective is reflected in statements about Jesus being "lifted up" (*hypsōō*). The term can indicate either physical elevation or exaltation in the sense of honor, and when used for Jesus, both meanings are included. The contexts that speak of Jesus being "lifted up" make clear that it refers to his crucifixion, not to his ascension to heavenly glory. In so doing,

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these passages link the honor or glory of Jesus to the cross. We have seen that in 3:14-15 Jesus is said to be lifted up on the cross as Moses lifted up the serpent on the pole, and yet this underscores that the crucified Jesus also gives life (see pp. 44-46). Later, Jesus speaks about being "lifted up" by his adversaries, which occurs through his crucifixion (8:28). At the end of his public ministry he says, "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself," and the narrator explains that "he said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die" (12:32-33). Jesus' exaltation on the cross defines the character of his glory.

The centrality of love holds together the human and divine, the sacrificial and militant dimensions of Jesus' death. Love also creates the consummate paradox in John's understanding of the crucifixion: the death of Jesus can be a source of life. It is by dying that Jesus reveals the love of God, and when this love evokes faith, it brings people into the relationship with God that is true life (3:16).

The Significance of Jesus' Resurrection

John understands Jesus' death as the consummate expression of divine love, but recognizes that this is only apparent in retrospect, from the vantage point of the resurrection. In Johannine theology, the action of the risen Jesus is what brings people to the faith through which his life and death can be understood. The resurrection is essential for authentic faith because faith is a relationship with a living being. According to John, the crucifixion communicates the divine love that is the basis for a relationship with Jesus, and the resurrection means that this relationship is more than remembering one who has died. Faith is active trust in a Jesus who is unseen yet alive. Finally, the resurrection of Jesus defines hope for the future. The followers of Jesus face the prospect of a death that is as real as the death of Jesus himself. The message of resurrection is that the relationship with Jesus that begins now, in faith, has a future through the believer's own resurrection.²⁴

Resurrection and Faith

Jesus' followers understood that his death was real and complete. Those who placed him in the tomb may have honored him by putting a hundred