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GLORY NOT DISHONOR

Reading John 13-21

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Consummation

John 18:1—19:42

JESUS' SUFFERING has its place in the Johannine tradition,¹ but the Johannine story must do more than repeat the earlier story. The reader expects an interpretation of the passion of Jesus that will resolve questions posed by the preceding narrative. The reader is aware that Jesus of Nazareth died by crucifixion, but much of this story has looked toward the event as the high point of Jesus' human experience, his being "lifted up" (see 3:14; 8:28; 12:32-33). Associated with this lifting up is the notion of Jesus' "hour," which during the major part of the public ministry has pointed the reader to some future moment (see 2:4; 7:6; 30; 8:20). Jesus announces that the hour has "come" as the ministry draws to an end (see 12:23) and as the final encounter between Jesus and his disciples opens (13:1) and closes

¹ On this, see W. Thüsing, *Die Erhöhung und Verherrlichung Jesus im Johannesevangelium* (2d ed.; NTAbh 21, 2/1; Münster: Aschendorf, 1970) 78-82; C. R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995) 188-91. For M. W. G. Stibbe, *John as Storyteller: Narrative Criticism and the Fourth Gospel* (SNTSMS 73; Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992) 129-47, although the main literary feature of the Johannine passion account is irony, it is also marked by *pathos*, and has the tragic genre of the "killing of the king" as evidenced in the *Bacchae*. For E. Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of John in the Light of Chapter 17* (trans. G. Krodel; London: SCM, 1965) 6-8, tradition is the *only* reason for the telling of a Johannine passion story, but see M. M. Thompson, *The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988) 87-115.

(17:1).² There have also been more subtle suggestions in the narrative of a future time when the Son of Man would give a gift that will not perish (see 6:27), the disciples would come to understand the words of Jesus, the Spirit would be given, and Jesus would be glorified (see 2:22; 7:39; 12:16). Toward the end of Jesus' ministry a close link emerges between Jesus' death and the glorification of God and Jesus' being glorified (see 11:4; 12:23, 28). During the final meal, these suggestions are further confirmed (see 13:31-32; 17:1-5). The lifting up of Jesus on a cross will lead to a gathering of many who were formerly "dispersed" (see 10:16; 11:52; 12:11, 19, 32). During his final night with his disciples, he has instructed them on the need for a oneness of love (see 13:34-35; 15:12-17), the fruitfulness of being swept up into the love that exists between the Father and the Son (see 14:23; 15:9-11; 16:26-27). And he has prayed to the Father that this oneness might be such that others would come to believe that Jesus was the sent one of God (see 17:23-24, 26).

THE SHAPE OF THE NARRATIVE

The reader has regularly been introduced to new episodes in the story by descriptions of the place and the characters involved in each particular event (see 2:1-2, 13-14; 3:1-2a; 4:1-7a; 5:1-5; 6:1-4; 7:1-14; 9:1-5; 10:22-23; 11:1-4; 12:1-2). On the basis of this formal criterion, supported by changes of place, character, and action,³ the passion story can be divided into five distinct scenes:

² For a detailed study of the *Traditionsgeschichte* of the Johannine passion narrative, see A. Dauer, *Die Passionsgeschichte im Johannesevangelium: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche und theologische Untersuchung zu Joh 18,1—19,30* (SANT 30; Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1972) 21-227. For recent more theological studies of the text as it stands, see I. de la Potterie, *The Hour of Jesus: The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus according to John: Text and Spirit* (Slough: St. Paul Publications, 1989), D. Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (The Passion Series 4; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1991); Knöppler, *Die theologia crucis*, 242-68, and J. P. Heil, *Blood and Water: The Death and Resurrection of Jesus in John 18-21* (CBQMS 27; Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1995). For a number of contemporary readings of John 18-19 (practical criticism, genre criticism, sociological reading, narrative-historical reading), see Stibbe, *John as Storyteller*, 95-196. The most important study of the Johannine passion narrative is R. E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (2 vols.; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994).

³ See the same criteria, producing the same five scenes, in C. H. Giblin, "Confrontations in John 18,1-27," *Bib* 65 (1984) 211-12. I am unable to take into account the reading of John 18:28-19:42 by J. L. Staley, *Reading with a Passion: Rhetoric, Autobiography, and the American West in the Gospel of John* (New York: Continuum, 1995) 200-234.

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JOHN 18:1-19:42

1. 18:1-11: Jesus and his enemies in a garden (see vv. 1-3 for the introduction)
2. 18:12-27: Jesus' appearance before "the Jews" (see vv. 12-16 for the introduction)⁴
3. 18:28-19:16a: Jesus before Pilate (see v. 28 for the introduction)
4. 19:16b-37: The crucifixion of Jesus (see vv. 16b-18 for the introduction)
5. 19:38-42: The burial of Jesus in a garden by his newfound friends (see vv. 38-39 for the introduction)⁵

This shape begins and ends with scenes in a garden and has the report of the trial before Pilate at the heart of the story.

READING THE NARRATIVE

1. Jesus in a Garden with His Enemies (18:1-11)

Commentators generally refer to John 18:1-11 as "the arrest" of Jesus,⁶ but this does not reflect what happens in Gethsemane. The events in the garden (vv. 1-11) are dominated by the initiative of Jesus.⁷ Jesus

Staley introduces his biographical experience of dogs and postmodern literary theory to undermine the traditional reading of Johannine language and metaphors. One corpse has been cut down and lies on the ground mouthing a traditional interpretation of the passage. Jesus hangs on the cross subverting that interpretation. See also J. L. Staley, "Reading Myself, Reading the Text: The Johannine Passion Narrative in Postmodern Perspective," in F. F. Segovia, ed., "What is John?" *Readers and Readings of the Fourth Gospel* (SS 3; Atlanta: Scholars, 1996) 59-104. My reading is largely represented in Staley's story by the man cut down.

⁴"The Jews" are here—as throughout the rest of the Gospel—one side of a christological debate.

⁵This division is largely followed by almost all commentators. Some (e.g., A. Dauer, *Die Passionsgeschichte im Johannesevangelium: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche und theologische Untersuchung zu Joh 18,1-19,30* [SANT 30; Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1972] and F. Genuyt, "La comparution de Jésus devant Pilate: Analyse sémiotique de Jean 18,28-19,16," *RSR* 73 [1985] 133-34) follow this overall structure, but read larger blocks of material as units. Heil, *Blood and Water*, 4-12, proposes three major sections (18:1-27; 18:28-19:11; 19:12-42), each one formed by six scenes that are determined—in each case—by four sandwich constructions. Major changes of place and characters are ignored (e.g., 18:12, 19:16b-17, 38).

⁶See, e.g., W. Bauer, *Das Johannesevangelium erklärt* (3d ed.; HKNT 6; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1933) 208; M. W. G. Stibbe, *John* (Readings: A New Biblical Commentary; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993) 180.

⁷This is recognized by commentators who include v. 12 with vv. 1-11 as "the arrest of Jesus." See, e.g., R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (2 vols.; AB 29, 29A; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966-1970) 2:805; B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (NCB, London:

and his disciples move to a known location, "where there was a garden [*hopou ēn kēpos*]," as opposing forces, Judas, a cohort of Roman soldiers (*tēn speirēn*), and some temple officers (*hupēretas*) gather and move against Jesus bearing lanterns, torches, and weapons (vv. 1-3). Such a combination is historically improbable, but the author indicates that Judas, the Romans, and "the Jews" combine against Jesus.⁸ The reader is aware that Jesus is the light of *the world* (see 8:12; 9:5) and that he has challenged his listeners at the close of the ministry to walk in the light while they have the light (see 12:35-36a). Armed for violence, Jesus' enemies, Romans and Jews representing "the world," come in search of the light of the world, carrying their own light, lanterns, and torches (v. 3).⁹

Knowing what will befall him (v. 4a), Jesus comes forward asking whom they are seeking, only to level them to the ground with his self-identification as *egō eimi* after their request for "Jesus of Nazareth."¹⁰ Again using the formula of self-revelation, *egō eimi*, Jesus informs his opponents that their designs upon Jesus of Nazareth can be pursued if they allow the disciples to go free (v. 8). The narrator nudges the reader to recall Jesus' words to the Father from the immediately previous context: "Of those whom thou gavest me, I lost not one" (v. 9; see 17:12; also 6:69; 10:28). Not even Judas, the betrayer, is excluded from those who must be allowed to go free. The fact that, even in this hostile context, no exception is made in Jesus' words in v. 9: "I lost not one," is indication that this Gospel makes no *final* judgment on the disciple Judas.¹¹ However bad his performance, he has now been

Oliphants, 1972) 537. Senior, *Passion*, 46, accurately calls 18:1-11: "Jesus confronts his enemies."

⁸ See the full discussion of both the historical and theological possibilities of the grouping in Brown, *Death*, 1:248-52.

⁹ See R. A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983) 192; C. H. Giblin, "Confrontations in John 18,1-27," *Bib* 65 (1984) 216-17; Koester, *Symbolism*, 186; Heil, *Blood and Water*, 19-20.

¹⁰ On the use of *egō eimi* in 18:4-8a, see Brown, *Death*, 1:259-62. Not all would accept that *egō eimi* is anything more than self-identification for the people who have come to arrest him. But the context demands more. See J. Bligh, *The Sign of the Cross: The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus According St John* (Slough, England: St Paul Publications, 1975) 18-19. D. M. Ball, 'I Am' in *John's Gospel: Literary, Function, and Theological Implications* (JSNTSS, 124; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) 137-45, 201, claims that in themselves the words say little, but the reader has by now (and especially after 13:19) come to recognize that Jesus is applying Isaian ideas of Yahweh as God and Savior to himself.

¹¹ This a further indication that the reference to the Son of Perdition in 17:12 is not Judas, but Satan (see 2 Thess 2:3, 8-9).

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given into the care of the Father, whose remarkable love has been revealed by Jesus (see 17:11-12). Judas is "with them" (v. 5: *met' autōn*), but he plays no active role in the arrest (cf. Mark 14:42-45). Jesus prayed for his disciples (see 17:9-19) and for those who have heard the word through their ministry (vv. 20-26), that they might be swept up into the oneness of love that existed from all time between the Father and the Son "so that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them even as you have loved me" (v. 23). As Jesus initiates the process that will lead to his being lifted up (see 3:14; 8:28; 12:32), he demands that his disciples go their way so that they may perform their missionary task (see 13:20, 34-35; 15:5-8, 16, 26-27; 17:18-19, 20-23). Peter fails to understand the significance of the events about to take place, using a sword in a violent attempt to change the course of events (18:10). But he is rebuked, as the passion story must now begin.¹² The reader is aware that Peter is thwarting God's design as Judas is thwarting that design. The prophecies of 13:1-17, 21-38 are being fulfilled. But Jesus willingly drinks the cup the Father gives him (v. 11; see 12:27). The Johannine passion story begins because Jesus allows it to begin. He is the master of the situation. However, from the first scene, 18:1-11, the disciples are singled out for special attention. Unlike the parallel scene in the Synoptic tradition, where Jesus' loneliness is stressed (see Mark 15:32-42; Matt 26:26-46; Luke 22:40-46), Jesus is in the garden with his disciples (John 18:1). They are mentioned three times in two verses (vv. 1-2), while Judas, another disciple of Jesus, is described as standing with Jesus' enemies (v. 5: *eistēkei de kai Ioudas ho paradidous auton met' autōn*). In the face of hostility and violence, Jesus demands that the disciples be free. The passion of Jesus may not only be about what happens to Jesus but may also determine the future of the community. Jesus' never-failing love for his disciples, including Judas and Peter, makes God known (see 13:18-20).

2. Jesus' Appearance Before "the Jews" (18:12-27)

Verses 12-14 introduce Jesus and Peter in a way unparalleled in the Synoptic tradition.¹³ Jesus is seized (v. 12) and led to the house of

¹² On Peter's failure, see Stibbe, *John*, 181; Senior, *Passion*, 54-55. J. P. Heil, "Jesus as the Unique High Priest in the Gospel of John," *CBQ* 57 (1995) 736-37, understands Peter's gesture as a misguided attempt to stop Jesus' high priestly sacrifice.

¹³ For Synoptic contacts, see Dauer, *Passionsgeschichte*, 62-63, 91-99; K. Quast, *Peter and the Beloved Disciple: Figures for a Community in Crisis* (JSNTSS 32; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989) 71-76; Brown, *Death*, 1:78-79 (Mark), 87-88 (Luke), 418-19 (synoptic chart).