

THE LAMB OF GOD: UNIQUE ASPECTS OF THE PASSION NARRATIVE IN JOHN



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Although different than the synoptic Gospels through much of its narrative, the Gospel of John, in chapters 12–20, joins the other Gospel accounts for the basic sequence of events of Jesus’s last week, from the Triumphal Entry through the Resurrection. In particular, the similarities among the four Passion narratives (see Matthew 26–27; Mark 14–15; Luke 22–23; John 13–19) have led scholars to postulate the existence of a primitive Passion narrative source, whether oral or written, that John and the other Gospel authors may have drawn from in crafting their accounts of the pivotal events from the Last Supper through Jesus’s death on the cross.¹ Nevertheless, despite the basic correspondence in events and sequence, the Johannine Passion narrative still exhibits some surprising differences, notably, the timing of the Last Supper and the Crucifixion, which John actually places before the Passover; the omission in the account of the Last Supper of the institution of what we would call “the sacrament”; the addition of the practice of the washing of feet and the long discourses at the Last

Supper; the omission of any report of Jesus's suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane; the portrayal of Jesus's carrying His own cross all the way to Golgotha without any reference to Simon of Cyrene; and the words "It is finished" before Jesus expires upon the cross.

Two features of John's Gospel seem particularly important for explaining the difference in how John chose to portray these events. The first is John's unusually high Christology. Christology focuses on the person and work of Jesus by explaining what it means for Jesus to be the Son of God and emphasizing what He did for the salvation of mankind. The different themes and perspectives of each Gospel author result in slightly different Christological emphases. For instance, while all four Gospels agree on the work of Jesus—namely that He died for the sins of the world and conquered death through the Resurrection—they focus on different aspects of His role as the Son of God. Mark, for instance, focuses on Jesus's authoritative ministry, beginning his account with God recognizing Jesus as His Son at Jesus's baptism and demonstrating through Jesus's miracles and teaching authority that He is God's Son. Matthew and Luke go back further, showing that Jesus is indeed the Son of God because of His divine conception and miraculous birth.² John, however, exhibits a preexistence Christology, teaching that Jesus was the Divine Son "in the beginning" (John 1:1) and revealing that His divinity continued, barely hidden, throughout His mortal ministry.³ This Christological stance led John to portray Jesus differently than the other Gospels, emphasizing His strength, downplaying His suffering, and focusing on how Jesus accomplished His atoning mission alone. The second feature of John's Gospel that substantively affected his Passion narrative is the thematic symbolism of Jesus as the Lamb of God.⁴ Jesus is explicitly identified as the Lamb

of God at the beginning of the Gospel, and this symbolism reemerges implicitly at the end of the Gospel, where the focus is on Jesus's sacrificial death, where Jesus, like a paschal lamb, sheds His blood so that death—spiritual as well as physical—may pass over His people.

The Divine Word Made Flesh

The high Christology of John's Gospel is established in the prologue of the work, the so-called Logos Hymn of John 1:1–18. Translated most simply as “word,” *logos* in Greek has a broad range of semantic meaning, representing not only spoken words but also the ideas behind the words and hence the means by which one person conveys his thoughts to another or puts his ideas into effect.⁵ In this broader sense, Jesus is the Word of God because He is the means by which God's ideas were effected, both in creation and in the ongoing governance of the universe. For John, however, Jesus was not only the Word with God, He was Himself God (see John 1:1). Thus with the first verse, the Gospel establishes the divinity of Jesus. According to John 1:14, this Divine Word, the source of life and light, “was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” The word translated “dwelt,” *eskēnōsen*, literally means “pitched his tent,” conjuring up the image of Jehovah dwelling in the midst of Old Testament Israel in the wilderness tabernacle.⁶

This single phrase, “and the Word was made flesh,” takes the place of the infancy narratives of Matthew 1–2 and Luke 1–2, but symbolic allusion to Jesus's divine conception and miraculous birth may in fact be found in John's account of the miracle at Cana, where Jesus turned water into wine (see John 2:1–11).⁷ Although often seen in Latter-day Saint interpretation as a sign of Jesus's mastery of the elements, and thus a sign that He was in fact their creator,⁸ the symbolic equation of water with eternal life—and hence divinity—

together with the association of wine with both blood and mortality presents another layer of possible meaning. In one of only two scenes in John's Gospel in which Jesus's mother is present, water becomes wine, perhaps indicating that the Divine Word became the man Jesus through the intermediate agent of Mary.⁹ Nevertheless, while veiled in flesh, the Johannine Jesus continues to be the powerful Divine Word who knows all things beforehand (see John 13:1; 18:4) and whose human side only rarely peeks through, such as when Jesus grew tired and thirsty as He traveled through Samaria (see John 4:6–7).¹⁰ This patent divinity, established in the prologue and asserted throughout the Gospel, affects how John portrays Jesus during the Passion.

John's Jesus even speaks differently than normal, mortal men and women, as evidenced by what has been termed the semipoetic "divine speech" of Jesus. While the historical Jesus may not have spoken Aramaic any differently than other effective teachers of His time, the teachings of Jesus in John—particularly in the great discourses such as His dialogue with Nicodemus (see John 3:1–21), His discourse on the water of life with the Samaritan woman at the well (see John 4:4–42), His discourse on the Divine Son (see John 5:17–47), and His discourse on the Bread of Life (see John 6:26–59)—are rendered in Greek in an elevated style that reflects some of the elements of Hebrew poetry such as parallelism. The elevated style causes readers to esteem Jesus's words even as the discourses themselves reveal how the divine Jesus was also the mortal Lamb who would be sacrificed so that they could have new life.¹¹

The Lamb of God

Twice John recounts that John the Baptist identified Jesus by saying, "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:29, 36).

Although Jesus is not explicitly identified as such again in the Gospel, the Baptist's testimony explicitly associated Jesus with the paschal lambs whose blood at the first Passover saved the children of Israel. While remaining the Divine Word that is the source of life, Jesus's incarnation, perhaps symbolized by the miracle at Cana, veiled Him in flesh that He could sacrifice for His people. As the blood of the paschal lamb was put on the doorposts and lintels of each Israelite home on the first Passover, so would Christ's blood be shed upon the cross. Christ on the cross is foreshadowed in the early chapters of the Gospel by repeated references to Jesus being lifted up. The first of these occurs during the dialogue with Nicodemus in chapter 3, when Jesus teaches Nicodemus that while Jesus is the one who brings eternal life through birth of the water and of the spirit, and though He came down from heaven, He must nonetheless be lifted up as the serpent in the wilderness (see John 3:14–15; see also 2 Nephi 25:20; Helaman 8:14–15).¹² Other references to Jesus being lifted up include one in John 8:28 during the Light of the World discourse and two in John 12:32–34 as Jesus reflects on the coming hour shortly after His Triumphal Entry to Jerusalem.

In addition to the blood of the paschal lamb being put on the doorway at the first Passover, an essential part of the Passover ceremony, at least until the destruction of the temple, was the consumption of the lamb's meat in the Passover meal. The synoptics do not associate Jesus's flesh with that of the paschal lamb until the institution of the sacrament at the Last Supper, where the broken bread represents the body of Christ. John instead introduces the image much earlier in the ministry during the pivotal Bread of Life discourse, when Jesus declares that He is the living bread from heaven and that anyone who eats His flesh will live forever (see John 6:51). Significantly, John notes that this discourse took place

near the time of Passover (see John 6:4), foreshadowing what would actually happen during the final Passover of Jesus's mortal ministry.¹³

The Timing of the Last Supper and the Crucifixion

The timing of Jesus's last Passover, however, presents one of the most significant differences between John's Passion narrative and that of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Whereas the synoptic Gospels clearly state that the Last Supper was a Passover meal (see Matthew 26:17–20; Mark 14:12–17; Luke 22:1, 7–14), John never explicitly identifies the Last Supper as a traditional seder or Passover meal. On the contrary, the narrative of John seems to suggest that the Passover actually began at sunset on the day that Jesus was crucified—in other words, according to traditional reckoning, on Friday evening rather than Thursday evening (see John 18:28; 19:31, in which the preparation day was likely the day when the Passover was prepared).¹⁴ This timing appears to have been significant for John because of its connection to the slaying of the paschal lambs before the Passover festival. According to Josephus, on the preparation day leading up to Passover, lambs were slaughtered in the temple beginning at the ninth hour and continuing until the eleventh hour,¹⁵ so the sacrifices would be completed before the festival began at sundown. While John does not give an actual time for Jesus's death on the cross, the synoptics indicate that He died at or near the ninth hour (see Matthew 27:46–50; Mark 15:34–37; Luke 23:44–46). In other words, Jesus, the Lamb of God, died as a sacrifice on the cross at the moment that the priests of the temple began slaughtering the paschal lambs.

Reconciling John's timing with the synoptics' is difficult. On the one hand, they may be correct, and John has altered the timing for theological and literary reasons to illustrate

vividly that Jesus was the Lamb of God slain for the world. On the other, John may be correct, and the synoptic authors have altered the account's timing to emphasize that the Last Supper was a Passover meal. A possible support for this idea is the fact that no lamb is mentioned as part of the Last Supper meal in the synoptics, even though the eating of the lamb on that occasion would have been a powerful image. Since neither of these options is completely satisfactory for those who want to preserve the integrity of all four Gospel accounts, various suggestions have been made to explain how both could be correct. Propositions include the possibility that Sadducees and Pharisees might have celebrated the festival according to a slightly different calendar, or that Galileans and Judeans used a different calendar.¹⁶ Perhaps a more satisfactory explanation might be that Passover actually began the evening after Jesus was crucified, but Jesus, knowing that He would not be alive then to celebrate it with His disciples chose to celebrate it early (see Luke 22:15, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer").¹⁷

Omission of the Institution of the Sacrament

While this scenario might explain why John never referred to the Last Supper as a Passover meal, it does not satisfactorily explain one of the surprising omissions of the Gospel of John, namely the institution of the ordinance of the sacrament.¹⁸ Even if the Last Supper had, in fact, been an early celebration by a group of friends of a seder without a lamb (which could not be sacrificed early or outside of the temple), there is little doubt that at this last meal Jesus used bread and wine to help teach His disciples, then and now, the significance of His sacrificial act. Nevertheless, scholars have noted that sacramental imagery is not absent from the Gospel of John. Rather the images of wine and bread are woven throughout

the narrative, as in the miracle of Cana and the Bread of Life discourse.¹⁹ While it is true that John thus does not lack the imagery of the sacrament, this does not completely explain his failure to recount or explain it at the time of its institution. Perhaps for John, who focused so single-mindedly on the death of Jesus as a sacrifice, the symbolism of the sacrament, which is above all commemorative, was not as significant until Jesus was actually sacrificed.²⁰

The Washing of Feet and the Long Discourses at the Last Supper

While John's account of the Last Supper thus lacks a crucial feature, it nonetheless contains unique elements recorded nowhere else. John's account, without noting any other details of the meal itself, continues by stating: "Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). This verse establishes the emphasis of chapters 13–17, in which is found the loving service of Jesus, given with His coming sacrifice at Golgotha firmly in mind. The washing of the disciples' feet, while no doubt connected with other higher ordinances, is used here as a paramount example of service. When Jesus teaches, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14), the image of the greatest serving the least here is significant given the clearly stated divinity of the Johannine Jesus.²¹

The discourses of chapters 13–17 that Jesus delivers to His disciples, both at the Last Supper and along the way to the garden that would be the scene of His arrest, are unique to the Gospel of John. Here Jesus taught His followers, both then and now, fundamental principles of love and service, all

firmly focused on His own role as Savior and friend. Chapters 14 and 16 form a recognized doublet, in which Jesus teaches the necessity of His departing (see John 14:1–14; 16:4–7, 16–24), beginning with the well-known pronouncement, “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2–3). In both chapters, Jesus balances the disciples’ sorrow at His departure with promises of the coming of a “helper” or “advocate” (*paraklētos*, King James Version “Comforter”; see John 14:15–26; 16:8–15) as well as with an assurance of the continuing peace and love of the Father that will remain with them (see John 14:27–31). Chiastically placed between the chapters is Jesus’s allegory of the vine: even when He is no longer physically present with them, they can nonetheless still abide in Him, drawing sustenance and life from Him as branches do from the main stem of a vine (see John 15:1–17).

All of these teachings focus squarely on Jesus. Even the five so-called Paraclete Sayings, which focus on the Holy Ghost as Comforter, or helper, identify His role not just as advocate but also as teacher, witness, prosecutor, and revealer (see John 14:15–18, 25–26; 15:26–27; 16:7–15). Jesus suggests that the Comforter is being sent to do these things for believers because Jesus Himself will soon be absent (see John 16:7).²² Indeed, the first of these sayings is actually about Jesus Himself and about the Holy Ghost only by comparison,²³ since another Comforter by definition suggests a first Comforter:

If ye love me, keep my commandments.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you *another Comforter*, that he may abide with you for ever;

Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him:

but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.
(John 14:15–18)

Remembering that the root meaning of *paraklētos* is “one who is called to someone’s aid,”²⁴ the suggestion is that the Holy Ghost is an advocate or helper in the absence of Jesus. That yet another helper will come to our side, not just to advocate our cause in heaven before God (see D&C 45:3–5) but actually to come to us, is a point made clear by John 14:23 and Doctrine and Covenants 130:3. Furthermore, “comfortless” in John 14:18 is a translation of the Greek *orphanous*, literally “orphans,”²⁵ suggesting that the Lamb of God will not leave believers fatherless—that is, devoid of comfort or the means of life—but that He, after His sacrificial death, will come and be a father to them through the gift of eternal life.

Eternal life—the kind of life that the Father and now Christ have—enjoyed in their presence is the subject of chapter 17, which is, in fact, a prayer rather than a discourse. Commonly known as the Intercessory Prayer, since in it Jesus prays that believers may be one with Him and the Father as He and the Father are one, it is also appropriately called “the Lord’s High-Priestly Prayer.”²⁶ As the high priest under the Mosaic order represented the people before God, interceding for them before sacrificing, so here Jesus intercedes for His people before His own sacrificial death. While the word *atonement* (Greek *katallagē*) does not appear in this chapter, His prayer for the eternal union of disciples with Him and the Father represents the very essence of being at one with God. As He rose from that prayer, He went forth to perform the very Atonement that would make that unity possible.²⁷

Omission of the Suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane

For this reason, the lack of any account of what happened in Gethsemane in John's Gospel is striking, especially to Latter-day Saints who have a deeper understanding of the significance of this first step in the atoning journey that ended on the cross (see Mosiah 3:7; D&C 19:16–19). The synoptics testify that in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed in great agony (see Matthew 26:37–39; Mark 14:33–36; Luke 22:41–42), but John simply states that Jesus crossed the brook Cedron and came to a garden, not even mentioning the names Gethsemane or Mount of Olives (see John 18:1). While the received text of Luke 22:43–44 provides important evidence including Jesus's sweat being "as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" and an angel appearing to strengthen Him,²⁸ for John the garden is simply the scene of Jesus's betrayal and arrest (see John 18:2–12).

What is most surprising is the fact that of the four Gospel authors, John was the only one who was one of the three near witnesses to Jesus's ordeal in the garden. Matthew would have been one of the eleven brought to the garden, but he would have been directed to sit apart as Jesus took Peter, James, and John not far from where He prayed (see Matthew 26:36–37; Mark 14:32–33). While the disciples were, according to the synoptic accounts, overwhelmed and slept during Jesus's experience, there is no doubt that John himself later learned of the details. It is not clear whether John passed over these details out of reverence or whether such plain and precious parts were later lost from his record. An additional possibility, however, is that because the theological focus of John's Gospel is on the death of the Lamb of God rather than on His suffering, he omitted the suffering in the garden for literary reasons. Perhaps the divine Johannine Jesus, who rarely even grew tired or thirsty, could not easily be depicted as suffering.

Jesus's Carrying His Own Cross to Golgotha

Some other unique features of John's Passion narrative, such as the addition of a private interview with and discourse to Pilate during the Roman trial,²⁹ are beyond the scope of this study of the Johannine Jesus. One detail before the actual Crucifixion, however, that illustrates how John chose to portray the consistent divinity of Jesus is the omission of any reference to Simon of Cyrene. The synoptic Gospels recorded that a passerby, one Simon of the North African city of Cyrene, was pressed into service, carrying the cross for Him to Golgotha (see Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:20–21; Luke 23:26). The Johannine Jesus, however, does not need any help, bearing His own cross the entire way (see John 19:17) and accomplishing His atoning sacrifice completely on His own.³⁰

Other Crucifixion Details in John

Mark records that Jesus was crucified at the third hour, about nine in the morning (see Mark 15:25). John, either recollecting differently or perhaps realizing that this did not provide enough time for all the activities involved in the trial and abuse of Jesus, states instead that Pilate did not even present Jesus to the hostile crowd and deliver Him over for crucifixion until the sixth hour, or about noon (see John 19:14).³¹ One other result of this altered timing, however, is that in John's account Jesus hangs—and suffers—for a shorter period of time.

All four Gospels note that prior to nailing Jesus to the cross, the soldiers who were crucifying Him divided His outer garments (*ta himatia*) into four parts and distributed them among themselves but that they cast dice for His inner tunic (*ton chitōna*, King James Version “coat”), thus fulfilling the prophecy of Psalm 22:18 (see Matthew 27:35–36; Mark 15:24;

Luke 23:34; John 19:23–24). Only John, however, notes that his coat “was without seam, woven from the top throughout” (John 19:23). Commentators have observed that this may suggest that it may have represented the priestly garment, reinforcing the image of Jesus not only as the paschal lamb being offered but as the high priest who made sacrifice for His people.³² One of the final activities at the cross reinforces this imagery. Shortly before He expired, Jesus announced that He was thirsty, leading a soldier to offer Him cheap wine (King James Version “vinegar”) on a sponge (see Matthew 27:48–49; Mark 15:36; John 19:28–30). While Matthew and Mark record that this sponge was placed on a reed (*kalamō*), John portrays it as being put on a hyssop branch (*hyssōpō*).³³ A short shrub, the hyssop’s branches would probably not have been long enough to reach the lips of a man suspended on a cross, even if the cross was relatively short, and its stalk would have been too flimsy to bear the sponge. Nevertheless, the hyssop was the plant mandated by the law of Moses not only for certain purification rituals but also for spreading the blood on the doorposts at the first Passover (see Exodus 12:22).³⁴

“It Is Finished” (John 19:30)

Only Matthew and Mark recount that Jesus cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” shortly before He expired (Matthew 27:46–47; Mark 15:34–35). They also record that He cried out before He died, while Luke says that instead He commended His spirit into the hands of His Father. John, on the other hand, has Jesus straightforwardly declare, “It is finished” (John 19:30). His mission then accomplished, Jesus on His own “gave up the ghost” (John 19:30).³⁵ While Jesus may, in fact, have done all of these—crying out in agony and making both the Lucan and Johannine utterances—the significance of John’s choice is that Jesus is portrayed in a

manner consistent with His image elsewhere in this Gospel: strong, in control, and divine.

Indeed, earlier in the Gospel Jesus had taught: “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:17–18).³⁶ This constitutes a unique insight on the part of John. In all other accounts of Jesus’s death and Resurrection—including those in the other Gospels, the speeches of Peter in Acts, and the writings of Paul—Jesus is slain by His enemies and raised by God. John understood, however, that Jesus was not just the Lamb of God, but He was also the incarnate Divine Word. No one could take His life from Him; rather He voluntarily lay it down, performing as priest the final paschal sacrifice. Likewise, He had within Himself power to come forth from the grave.

Bones, Blood, and Water

The final images of Jesus as the Lamb of God are found after He voluntarily surrendered His spirit. When the Jewish leadership asked the Roman authorities to break the legs of those being crucified so that their bodies would not desecrate the Sabbath—and, in John, the Passover itself—the soldiers first broke the legs of the two insurgents or revolutionaries (*lēstai*, King James Version “thieves”) who had been crucified with Him. When they came to Jesus, however, and found that He was already dead, they did not break Jesus’s legs “that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken” (John 19:31–33, 36). While this was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Psalm 34:21, not breaking any bones was a particular requirement of the paschal lamb, one that was as significant as the prerequisite that the paschal lamb, like Jesus, be without blemish (see Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12).³⁷

When John recorded the preservation of Jesus's bones, he also recorded what he felt was one of the most important signs of who Jesus was and what He did: "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and *forthwith came there out blood and water*. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe" (John 19:33–35; emphasis added). Treatments of this symbol have rightly noted that the blood represents the humanity—and the mortality—of Jesus, but they often differ on the significance of the water. Because the flowing of water from Jesus's side is reminiscent of the streams of water that Jesus proclaimed would flow from His belly (see John 7:37–39), some have seen it as representing the promised spirit that would flow from Jesus to His believers. While being hanged on a tree was a sign that one was accursed by God (see Deuteronomy 21:2–23), the flowing water, necessary for purification under the Mosaic system, was a sign that rather than being a curse Jesus was in fact a source of blessing, and this water resonates with the water used in both baptism and the washing of feet.³⁸

Perhaps more consistent with the symbolism elsewhere in John is the idea that water represents life, and not just mortal life but everlasting life (see John 4:14; 7:37–38). In this case, the flowing of blood and water from Jesus's side powerfully represents not only what Jesus *did*—the blood atoning for sins while the water purifies or cleanses the sinner—but perhaps even more significantly who He *was*. Due to His mortal inheritance from His mother, Mary, represented by the flowing blood, Jesus was able to lay down His life as a sacrifice for sin. Because of His divine, immortal inheritance from God, His Father, represented by the stream of water, He was able to take His life up again and become a source of eternal life.³⁹ Just as

Old Testament visions featured rivers of healing, life-giving water issuing from millennial Jerusalem and its temple, or the place of sacrifice (see Ezekiel 47:1–12; Zechariah 14:8), so now living waters flow from Jesus on the cross. In this view, the cross, a dead tree and sign of cursing, becomes a source of blessings as a new Tree of Life, as it was sometimes depicted in later Christian art—an image consonant with Book of Mormon visions of the love of God, best manifest in Christ and His sacrifice, portrayed as a fountain of living waters and a tree of life, the fruit of which was eternal life, the most precious of the gifts of God (see 1 Nephi 11:22–25; 15:36; D&C 14:7).

The sacrifice of the paschal lamb differed from many other sacrifices in that it was not explicitly an offering for sin—rather it was intended to ward off death, perhaps explaining in John the emphasis not just on forgiveness of sins but on new life.⁴⁰ But while those who placed the blood of the lambs on their doorposts on the first Passover were spared, they continued not with new life but with the same kind of life that they had before. Significantly the blood of the Lamb of God on the cross was accompanied by water, suggesting the new life that would come to the believers. As Jesus had taught, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). While Jesus certainly deepens and enriches mortality for those who follow Him, a deeper significance to this passage lies in seeing it as a reference to the eternal life—knowing and living eternally with God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (see John 17:3)—that comes from the Lamb of God.

“Even So Must the Son of Man Be Lifted Up” (John 3:14)

When Joseph of Arimathaea received permission to bury the body of Jesus, he was joined by Nicodemus, who brought a

kingly amount of spices to honor the man he now recognized as the Christ (see John 19:38–39). In introducing him again here, John reminds the readers that before Nicodemus had come to Jesus at night. Now, with the fulfillment on the cross of the prophecy that Jesus had made to Nicodemus that he would see the Son of Man lifted up (see John 3:14; 8:28), Nicodemus comes into the light as one who loved Jesus, eager to honor Him in death.⁴¹ In recognizing Jesus as both the Lamb of God and as the Divine Word, Nicodemus and believers in all ages come to know both who He truly was and what He did for us.

Shortly before the Passion, Jesus had testified that “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32). Then, after His Resurrection, He confirmed to the Nephites, “My Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father” (3 Nephi 27:14). Thus the cross and Jesus’s sacrificial death were the means by which the Divine Word, who had come down from heaven, returned there again (see John 4:13; 6:62). On that cruel instrument of death the blood of the Lamb of God flowed, but in being so lifted up, with streams of flowing water Jesus promised that we, too, would be lifted up to everlasting life.

Notes

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1. See Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 53–93.

2. For an overview, see Gaye Strathearn and Frank F. Judd Jr., “The Distinctive Testimonies of the Four Gospels,” *Religious Educator* 8.2 (2007): 59–85.

3. While many scholars see these different Christologies as the result of an evolution in early Christianity’s understanding of who Jesus is and what He did (for instance, see Raymond E. Brown, *Introduction to New Testament Christology* [New York: Paulist Press, 1994], 121–24, 136–41, 196–213), recognizing that Mark’s “low” Christology emphasizes God proclaiming Jesus as His Son at baptism does not necessarily mean that Mark did not know that Jesus was divinely conceived, nor does it necessarily demonstrate that he knew nothing of Jesus’s premortal role (see Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Eric D. Huntsman, and Thomas A. Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006], 10–11, 132–33).

4. See Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 216–24.

5. See Walter Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, “logos,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 598–601.

6. Bauer et al., “skēnos” and “skēnoō,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 929; see also Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, volumes 29–29A of the Anchor Bible Series (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 29–35; F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 37–42; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 82–93; Holzapfel, Huntsman, and Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament*, 133.

7. For theological aspects of the miracle, see Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 103–110; see also Bruce, *The Gospel of*

John, 68–72; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 153–64; Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 82–86.

8. See, for example, James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 136–38; and Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 1:453–54.

9. See Holzapfel, Huntsman, and Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament*, 133–34.

10. See Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 102; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 228.

11. See Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, ed. Francis J. Moloney (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 284–87.

12. See Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 132–33, 144–46; Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 87–90; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 184–86, 197–201.

13. See Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 263–67 for Passover background of the Bread of Life sermon, 269–303 for the sermon itself. See also Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 158–61; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 311–15, 327–37; Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 99–104; Eric D. Huntsman, “The Bread of Life Sermon,” in *From the Transfiguration to the Triumphal Entry*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006), 261.

14. See Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 555–58, 578–79; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 684–695; David Rolph Seely, “The Last Supper according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke,” in *From the Last Supper to the Resurrection: The Savior’s Final Hours*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book: 2003), 64–67; Holzapfel, Huntsman, and Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament*, 137–38.

15. Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 6.9.3, §422–27.

16. See Seely, “The Last Supper,” 67–74.

17. See Holzapfel, Huntsman, and Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament*, 138.

18. See Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 542–43; Holzapfel, Huntsman, and Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament*, 138.

19. See Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 272–74, 284–93; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 311–15; Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 301–9.

20. Huntsman, “The Bread of Life Sermon,” 277–82.

21. See Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 595–96; McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 1:708–11; see also Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 558–59, 563–72; Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 280–84; Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 130–34; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 543–54.

22. See Holzapfel, Huntsman, and Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament*, 138–40.

23. See McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 1:734–37.

24. Bauer and others, “paraklētōs,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 766.

25. Bauer and others, “orphanos,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 725.

26. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 609–10.

27. See Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 768–81; Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 335–37; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 648–53.

28. See Holzapfel, Huntsman, and Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament*, 123. For the textual issues involved, see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001), 151. Nevertheless, for reasons for retaining these verses as authentic (or at least ancient), see Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 179–90.

29. See Eric D. Huntsman, “Before the Romans,” in *From the Last Supper to the Resurrection*, 296–99; see also Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 843–72; Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 352–54, 361–62; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 678–84, 704–7.

30. See Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 897–99, 910–18; Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 913–17; Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 366–67; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 710–12.

31. See Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 958–60.

32. See Brown, *The Gospel of John*, 902–4, 920–22; Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 955–58; Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 369–70; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 715–16.

33. One late-eleventh-century manuscript reads “javelin” (*hyssō*) rather than “hyssop,” but the reading of hyssop is considered secure (see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 217–18).

34. See Brown, *The Gospel of John*, 907–10, 927–31; Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 1074–77; Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 372–74; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 718–21; Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 218.

35. See Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 930–31; Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 374; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 720–21.

36. See Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 418; McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 1:486–87; Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 399; Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 228–29; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 456–57.

37. See Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 219.

38. See Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 933–37, 944–56; Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 375–77; Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 721–28; Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 200–203.

39. To be sure, ancient physiology posited that in addition to blood, the body contained other important fluids or humors, including a clear liquid called *ichōr*. A divine form of this fluid, however, was also believed to be the special substance of the gods, which flowed in their veins *instead* of blood (see Homer, *Iliad*, 5.340;

Plutarch, *Moralia*, 180E, 341B; and the brief discussion of Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 203). Given that resurrected bodies are bodies of flesh and bone and not flesh and blood, if symbolically water equals spirit, the flowing water could, in fact, represent the quickening spirit that animates immortal beings (see Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, April 1917, 63).

40. See Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, 220–21.

41. See Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 1258–68; Holzapfel, Huntsman, and Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament*, 133.