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# GANZ NOTES TO SHARE FOR TNS 17, 1 (9 SEPTEMBER 2025) – ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

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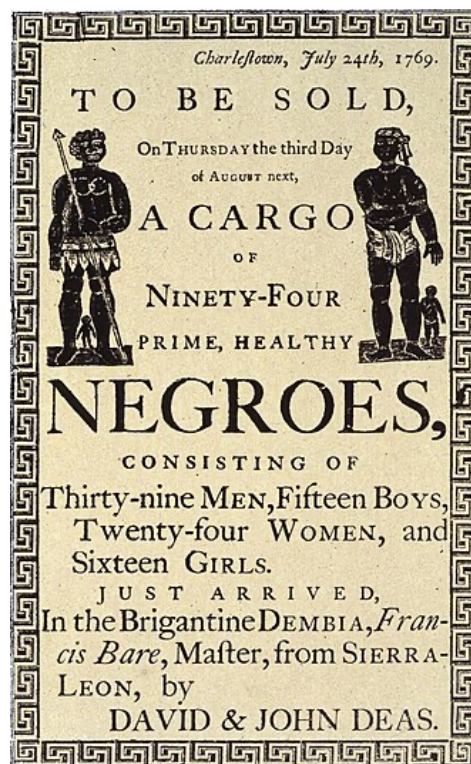
Compiled for sharing on 10 September 2025

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## FEAST OF ST. PETER CLAVER, SJ

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Ellsberg, Robert. *All Saints: Daily Reflections on Saints, Prophets, and Witnesses for Our Time*.



The transatlantic slave trade lasted for approximately 366 years, from the mid-16th century to the mid-19th century (roughly 1500s to the 1860s). During this time, European slavers transported an estimated 12.5 million Africans across the Atlantic to the Americas, with around 10.7 million surviving the journey to be sold as property.

Missioner to Slaves (1581–1654)  
“Deeds come first, then the words.”

**Peter Claver, SJ** was a Spanish Jesuit who was sent to Cartagena (now in Colombia) in 1610. Cartagena was then a great port of entry for African slaves. Ten thousand arrived every year to work in the mines (work considered too onerous for the native Indians). The conditions of their journey in this “middle passage” were unspeakably atrocious. The slaves were packed in dark holds like cordwood, chained together, lying in their own filth, fed no more than was sufficient to keep them alive. Perhaps a third of all those who embarked from Africa failed to survive the journey. To the wretched souls who remained Peter Claver devoted his life. With news of the arrival of each fresh slave ship, Claver would make his way to the dock and talk his way past the captain to gain access to the “cargo.” There he would move among the dazed and half-dead Africans, treating their wounds and distributing food and drink. With the help of interpreters and pictures, he would also try to communicate something of the principles of Christianity. How this was received is difficult to imagine, given that Christianity was ostensibly the religion of the slave masters. Nevertheless, Claver tried to instill in the slaves a sense of their human dignity and their preciousness in the eyes of God. This in itself represented a subtle subversion of the principles of the slave trade. Claver often confronted angry opposition from business and civil authorities who suspected that his ministry was undermining their lucrative commerce. Claver was tireless in his efforts. It is reported that during a career of forty years, he baptized over three hundred thousand slaves. He tried as best he could to follow them to the mines and the plantations, where he continued to intercede for them and to look after their material and spiritual welfare. At one point he called himself “the slave of the Negroes forever.”

## THE “MOMENTS” IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A “CREED”<sup>1</sup>

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I was significantly helped by Bernard L. Marthaler, *The Creed: The Apostolic Faith in Contemporary Theology* (2nd Revised edition) (11.12.1993).

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<sup>1</sup> These Notes on “moments” I developed for a Talk that I gave on 30 March 2014 at Columbia Presbyterian Church in Vancouver, WA.

**A Direct Experience of God – an Epiphany, or Revelation** – Before there is any move towards the “telling” of experiences, a person must have those experiences. “Before the Twelve thought of themselves as ‘apostles’ – people with a mission – they were witnesses.” (Marthaler: 2) **That is, one must experience the mysteries before one can talk about them, describe them, or to begin to understand what they mean.** The maxim of St. Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022 CE) concerning the necessity for every Christian to live *from the inside* every doctrinal argument and development in the history of the Church.

**The Creed as first Kerygma– the Creed as Telling a Story (narrative meaning):** “On the first Pentecost, Peter ‘with the Eleven’ was driven by an inner compulsion to proclaim what they had seen and heard and, yes, felt.” (Marthaler: 2). **The kerygma is essentially a story: Who was he? What happened? How did we come to know and understand Jesus?** The Gospels are in large part kerygma, though in the case of John’s Gospel, they also include a profound communication of the *meaning* of that story. Compare the concreteness expressed in 1 John 1:1-4.

**1 John 1:1-4 (NJB):**

<sup>1</sup> Something which has existed since the beginning,  
which we have heard,  
which we have seen with our own eyes,  
which we have watched  
and touched with our own hands,  
the Word of life —  
this is our theme.\*

<sup>2</sup> That life was made visible;  
we saw it and are giving our testimony [*kerygma*],  
declaring to you the eternal life,  
which was present to the Father  
and has been revealed to us.\*

<sup>3</sup> We are declaring to you  
what we have seen and heard,  
so that you too may share our life.  
Our life is shared with the Father  
and with his Son Jesus Christ.\*

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\* 2:13; 4:14; Jn 1:1-5; 19:35; Lk 24:39; Jn 20:20; Jn 1:1a; 3:11e

\* 5:20; Jn 1:14n; 15:27

\* Ac 4:20; 26:16; Ac 2:42seq.; 1 Co 1:9

<sup>4</sup> We are writing this to you so that our joy may be complete.\* <sup>2</sup>

**As the story was told and retold, certain essential elements consistently show themselves.** See an OT example at Deuteronomy 26:5-9. *When* things happened; how warm the day was; who was present at the time; *where* it happened can all be allowed to go vague, **but the meaning of the event must stay consistent in each telling of the story ... otherwise one is not telling the same story.** This is the abiding difficulty of *narrative* as principal carrier of meaning: the meaning is too influenced by the teller, too specific to the narrator.

**The Creed as Profession of Faith – Conversation between Believer and Inquirer (Interrogation).** “The person being baptized, however, was asked standard questions to which he or she responded *I believe*.... the early ‘interrogatory’ form of the Creed is found in the writings of another Roman author, St. Hippolytus (fl. A.D. 200).” (Marthaler: 4) **From narrative to conversation: note this form of creedal profession is question-and-answer; it is dialogical, relational as that between teacher and student, parent and child.**

**The Creed as Symbol – Declaring a Content of Meaning; Proving that one Understands.** “The transition from the interrogatory form to the **declaratory form of the Creed** was gradual.... JND Kelly says that declaratory creeds are ‘a by-product of the Church’s fully developed catechetical system’.” (Marthaler: 5) **The declarative assumes that insight; i.e., an act of understanding, has occurred and, further, that a speaker grasps the definition which expresses exactly the understanding.** “Sometimes people are too close to a situation to understand it; distance often provides a better perspective.” (Marthaler: 14)

“The catechumens in turn were expected *to learn it by heart* so as to be able to ‘give it back’ (the *redditio symboli*); that is, **they were asked to recite it publicly to demonstrate that they were sufficiently grounded in the faith to be baptized.**” (Marthaler: 6)

Such a wonderful turn of phrase: **“to learn it by heart”** (a) a combining of intellect (learning) with affect (heart); (b) “heart” in the biblical sense was the place of practical reason, and the act of reasoning there was understood as not naturally occurring in humans, only God had this capacity *which he had to impart to humans* in order for them to know His will.

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\* Jn 15:11; 16:22-24; 2 Jn 12

<sup>2</sup> [\*The New Jerusalem Bible\*](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), 1 Jn 1:1-4.

The Creed was designated a “symbol,” the word from the Greek *symbolon* meaning “a pledge or token, a sign by which proves that he or she grasps or possesses the reality.” Think of the Wedding Vows: a very few words which are a “token” or “pledge” of the whole reality of faithful love. Think of the “dove” as the symbol for peace (cf. Genesis 8:11). Think also of algebraic symbols.

**The Creed as *Doxology* – the Need to Confess, to Boast.** “Christians confess before their Maker and their fellow human beings the wonders God has done for them.... **The creed functions in the liturgy as a hymn of praise.**” (Marthaler: 8)

Think of the example of your children and their favorite sports star/team: how excited they are to *narrate* the story of the star’s latest exploits, but a narration which is simultaneously *praise*; i.e., **it is told with the intention of inspiring in you, the parents, admiration and wonder and praise.**

**The Creed as Rule of Faith (*regula fidei*).** “The fourth century marks a further transition in the history and function of the Creed. The Creed that began as a corporate and personal expression of faith is **made to serve as a test of orthodoxy**, a *regula fidei* – “rule of faith.” (Marthaler: 9)

Recall here the Patristic idea of a creed as a “password” (*symbola distincta*) “that military commanders gave to their troops so that the soldiers could identify themselves to one another and be distinguished from the enemy (in Rufinus of Aquileia, d. 410).” Note the elements in this imagery: (a) the context is battle, conflict, enemies; (b) a way of distinguishing one’s own *in the midst of* an uncountable multitude; (c) there exists an organized relation between commander and soldiers.

After the period of great persecutions after the death of Diocletian (c. A.D. 302-312), the challenges to the “rule” of faith came from *within* the Church. **Thus creeds underwent a transformation of function: they became formulated over against erroneous views.** As C.H. Turner put it, “**The old creeds were creeds for catechumens, the new creed was a creed for bishops.**” (Marthaler: 10) “Nicaea set a precedent. Subsequent councils and synods sought to safeguard traditional doctrine and to repudiate erroneous teachings by formulating **creedal statements designed to resolve differences of opinion by finding a language a majority, if not all, bishops could agree on.**” (Marthaler: 11)

“The early Christians, however, saw it in a positive light. *They wanted guidelines* to ensure that the teaching being passed on to them was the authentic teaching of Christ.” (Marthaler: 9)

When “faith” has become in its primary moment a *personal* achievement of an *individual*, something *I have* – as it has become, perhaps since Kierkegaard – then

any sort of “rule of faith” is considered an interference with one's personal sovereignty. But when faith is in its primary moment a *treasure of the universal Church* throughout the world, whose breadth and richness is utterly beyond the personal achievement of one person, then a person seeks guidance, looks for some “rule of faith” as a means of *participating* in at least some portion of the whole.

**“The Apostles’ Creed as ‘articles of faith’ came to have a more pedagogical than a liturgical function. It served as a kind of syllabus for preachers and teachers,** a catalog of divine truths to be explained, interpreted, and applied from pulpit and podium.... In Latin *articulus* is the word for ‘joint’. The image evokes a comparison with the skeletal structure of the human body.” (Marthaler: 13)

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## WHAT IS A “GOSPEL”

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### CASTING A SPELL/BREAKING A SPELL

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The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**spell**”, which in its basic meaning means “a narration, speech”, but it this third meaning: **3.a. – 1579** – A set of words, a formula or verse, supposed to possess occult or magical powers; a charm or incantation; a means of accomplishing enchantment or exorcism.

I think here of a “good spell” (Old Eng. *godspel*, ‘good news’) and the remark of C.S. Lewis that “spells” are of two kinds: (1) those that put a person under an enchantment, and (2) those that break an enchantment, setting a person free.

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### NOT A BIOGRAPHY; AN ENCOUNTER

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**Kerygma is the communication of an *experience*,** an experience that the proclaimer wants his or her hearers to have – in this case, an experience of God that the proclaimer

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Eng. English

has had and deeply cherishes. Kerygma-narrative is not dispassionate; it wants hearers to experience God in the way that the proclaimer has experienced God in Christ.

These lines from **1 John 1:3-4** express beautifully the goal of a Gospel in the hearer/reader:

<sup>3</sup> We are declaring to you  
what we have seen and heard,  
so that you too may share our life.  
Our life is shared with the Father  
and with his Son Jesus Christ.\*

<sup>4</sup> We are writing this to you so that our joy may be complete.\*<sup>3</sup>

**GOSPEL** (Gk εὐαγγέλιον; Old Eng. *godspel*, 'good news') **The central content of the Christian revelation, the glad tidings of redemption.** It is \*Paul's epistles that have given to this Gk noun such an important position in Christian vocabulary, but the way he uses it without explanation in writing to believers in \*Rome whom he did not know suggests that the Christian sense was already current. \*Mark follows Paul's usage but can also on occasion extend it to refer to the contents of Christ's own preaching (1:14f.). The cognate verb εὐαγγελίζομαι, to bring glad tidings, is found in religious contexts in the \*Septuagint. Is. 52:7 is quoted at Rom. 10:15, with reference to the Christian

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\* Ac 4:20; 26:16; Ac 2:42seq.; 1 Co 1:9

\* Jn 15:11; 16:22-24; 2 Jn 12

<sup>3</sup> [\*The New Jerusalem Bible\*](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), 1 Jn 1:3-4.

Gk Greek

Eng. English

\* indicates a relevant article in the *Dictionary* under that (or a closely similar) heading. It is recommended that the present edition of this Dictionary should be quoted as *ODCC* (4th edn).

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message, and Is. 61:1 at Mt. 11:5 (par. Lk. 7:22) on the lips of Christ, with reference to his own preaching. **The centrality of the noun in Paul and Mk probably derives from the Septuagintal verb which Paul and later \*Luke use frequently.** But the noun also has a pagan background and usage evidenced in an inscription from Priene (9 BCE), where Augustus' birthday is said to have been 'for the world the beginning of things which owing to him are *glad tidings*'.<sup>4</sup>

## STUDIES ON THE PASSION OF JOHN

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The Gospel of John 18-19

*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (1991) by Donald Senior, C.P.<sup>5</sup>

**Donald Senior (1991)** – Our rapid survey of John's Gospel is enough to illustrate that **the death of Jesus drives the story from start to finish.** Of all the Gospels, John gives the most prominence to the strife between Jesus and his opponents. **In the first chapter there are only distant echoes of eventual conflict, but as soon as Jesus begins his public ministry, that conflict breaks out into the open.** By the time Jesus' ministry is in full stride his exchanges with the Jewish leaders are angry and ominous. When the **Book of Glory** begins (13:1), the reader is not surprised that death stands on the horizon. But John's Gospel is not a series of mindless conflicts. In the Gospel's perspective, opposition is generated by the very nature of Jesus and his mission. Conflict breaks out where the meaning of the Gospel and the values of the world collide and the Passion is the final consequence of this collision.<sup>6</sup>

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par. parallel

\* indicates a relevant article in the *Dictionary* under that (or a closely similar) heading. It is recommended that the present edition of this Dictionary should be quoted as *ODCC* (4th edn).

<sup>4</sup> Richard Bernier, "[Gospel \(1\)](#)," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. Andrew Louth (Oxford, United Kingdom; New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 800.

<sup>5</sup> Donald Senior, [The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 3.

<sup>6</sup> Donald Senior, [The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 30.

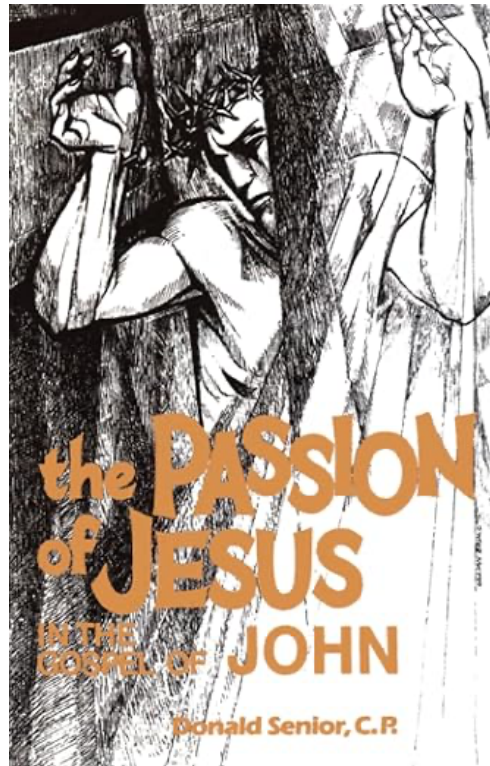
## The Passion - 18:1-19:42 -

Andrew T. Lincoln, [\*The Gospel according to Saint John\*](#), Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 2005).

The long farewell section has prepared readers, along with the disciples, to understand the events that now follow. The discourse and prayer in the extended lull in the action underscore that what is about to happen is the culminating hour to which Jesus' mission has all the time been moving and that, **despite all contrary appearances, the events of arrest, interrogation, trial and crucifixion are part of his hour of glory**. He remains in sovereign control throughout these events, aware that they are essential to his Father's purposes in achieving life for the world. The various episodes within the passion tradition can now be related and the distinctive shaping and detail of the Fourth Gospel's narration of these develop and reinforce the implied author's perspective that has already been established. In particular, the overall structuring of this section should be noted. **It progresses in five distinct episodes: (i) Jesus' arrest (18:1-11); (ii) his interrogation by Annas (18:12-27); (iii) his trial before Pilate (18:28-19:16a); (iv) his crucifixion and death (19:16b-37); and (v) his burial (19:38-42).** *The central and most extended scene is Jesus' Roman trial, and this corresponds to what has emerged as the central, overarching theme in this Gospel's narrative, that of judgement or cosmic trial.* As will become apparent, the literary artistry and the ironies of that central episode contribute effectively to the narrative's dominant perspective, which claims that in Jesus' mission, trial and death it is not he who is being tried and judged but rather that in him God is trying and judging the world.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, [\*The Gospel according to Saint John\*](#), Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 2005), 441.



Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991)

Chicago - (Nov. 10, 2022) – **Rev. Donald Senior, C.P.**, president emeritus and chancellor of Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, passed away Tuesday, Nov. 8, 2022. He was 82 years old.

Senior was born on Jan. 1, 1940, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He entered the Congregation of the Passion in 1960 and was ordained a Catholic priest in 1967.

He joined the faculty of Catholic Theological Union in 1972 and served as president from 1987 to 1994, and from 1997 to 2013 when he was named chancellor.

Senior was a world-renowned biblical scholar and a prolific writer, author of numerous books, reviews and articles. He was a Scripture columnist for the archdiocesan newspaper Chicago Catholic for the last six years.

Within the Passion narrative itself, John deftly uses symbol, irony, and dramatic staging to proclaim the full meaning of Jesus' death. But long before that climactic part of the Gospel is reached, the reader learns that Jesus is to die at the hands of his enemies and that his death will be a triumphant proclamation of God's love for the world. From the opening stanzas of the Prologue (1:1-18), through the bitter controversies of Jesus' public ministry, and on into the final meal of Jesus with his disciples, John's Gospel keeps the impending death of Jesus in full view of the reader. **This preparation in the Gospel, in effect, helps prepare the reader to probe beneath the surface of the Passion story and to detect there, like an ikon in words, its sense of triumph.**<sup>8</sup>

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## JOHN'S THEOLOGICAL VISION

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Commentators on John have long noted that this Gospel manages to state its entire message in practically every passage of the Gospel. Like waves washing across a beach, John's understanding of Jesus is asserted and reasserted as the Gospel unfolds. **While there is a "plot" to John's story and some movement of the drama from start to finish, the reader is confronted with the full picture right from the opening lines of the Gospel and it is restated in almost every subsequent scene.** Before considering the framework of John's narrative and its key themes, it is helpful to attempt to state succinctly John's overall perspective or "theology."<sup>19</sup>

He is the eternal Word springing forth from the very life of God before time began, arching into the created world and into the arena of time and space, there becoming "flesh" and revealing God's "glory" to the world. **To reveal God is the heart of Jesus' mission and, for John's Gospel, the key to understanding all that Jesus says and**

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<sup>8</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 15.

<sup>\*1</sup> A helpful summary can be found in D. Harrington, *John's Thought and Theology* (Good News Studies 33; Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1990); and the works of R. A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), esp., 86-98; J. Jervell, *Jesus in the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984); R. Kysar, *John, The Maverick Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1976); R. Scroggs, *Christology in Paul and John* (Proclamation Commentaries; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 55-102; D. Moody Smith, *John* (Proclamation Commentaries; Philadelphia: Fortress, 2nd rev. ed., 1986), 27-68.

<sup>9</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 15-16.

**does.**<sup>2</sup> Jesus takes “flesh” – that is, takes on a human nature and a human history – in order that God’s consuming love for the world would be visible and comprehensible to the human world. Revealing God, in Johannine terms, is not the mere dissemination of information about God. What Jesus reveals is that God will not condemn the world, but that God loves the world and intends to save it (3:16–17). Thus, the message Jesus embodies is active, dynamic, compelling.<sup>10</sup>

The “flesh” of Jesus does not mask his divine origin and substance but enables it to be revealed to the world.<sup>11</sup>

While revelation of God’s love is the driving force of Jesus’ mission, it is, in one sense, not its ultimate step. The Word comes into the world and through death and resurrection returns to God. **The return to God – not only of the Word but of all humanity – is the final purpose of Jesus’ mission in the world. *The communion of all being with God, with the same intensity and completeness that bonds God with Jesus, is the endpoint of the Johannine vision: “that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us ... that they may be one, as we are one.”*** (17:21–22). To achieve that God-given destiny, the Risen Christ sends the power of the Spirit into the world.<sup>12</sup>

**His opponents prefer “darkness” to “light”; they make a pact with “lies” and “untruth”; they fail to comprehend where he is from or, worse, reject his testimony that he comes from God and assert that he is in league with Satan (8:48, 52). Ultimately, they seek to kill him lest the magnetic force of his message draw the whole world after him (11:48).**<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See J. T. Forestell, *The Word of the Cross* (Analecta Biblica 57; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1974); A. Lacomara, “The Death of Jesus as Revelation in John’s Gospel,” in *The Language of the Cross* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977), 103–28.

<sup>10</sup> Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 16.

<sup>11</sup> Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 16.

<sup>12</sup> Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 17.

<sup>13</sup> Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 17.

The evangelist understands this opposition as the very nature of evil; the “world” loves its own and hates those whose spirit is not immersed in evil (14:18–19).<sup>3</sup> So the attacks of evil on Jesus are not unexpected but neither are they capable of thwarting the God-given mission of Jesus, the eternal Word of God. Paradoxically, the death which evil inflicts on Jesus in its effort to destroy his mission becomes the very means by which his mission is achieved. The word of the cross – self-transcending love for the other to the point of death – is the very Word by which God chooses to reveal the divine love for the world. And, therefore, Jesus is not a victim on whom death is inflicted; no, he lays down his life “on his own accord” because “I have received this command from my Father” (10:18).<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, this core message of Jesus as revealing God’s love for the world is sustained throughout the Gospel and stands behind John’s interpretation of the Passion of Jesus.<sup>15</sup>

Many of those who listen to Jesus *misunderstand* his words and become an opportunity for the Gospel to point to the deeper truth of Jesus and his message.<sup>16</sup>

The repetitive character of John’s Gospel does not mean that the unfolding of the “plot” or storyline of the Gospel is insignificant. **The Fourth Gospel is, after all, a narrative, not a theological discourse.**<sup>7</sup> And even though the overall message of John becomes apparent early in the text, there is a buildup of the story from its beginnings with the

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<sup>\*3</sup> John uses the term “cosmos” or “world” with a variety of meaning. At times, it has a neutral sense as when he refers to Jesus “coming into the world” or “leaving” the world – in these instances the “world” is simply the arena of human life (see, for example, 1:9; 16:21; 17:15). Or the world can be described as the object of God’s redeeming love as in the important text of 3:16–17 and as created in the pattern of God’s Word (1:10). But John also describes the “world” as the gathering point of values alien to the Gospel and therefore as rejecting Jesus and the disciples (1:10; 15:18–19; 17:14).

<sup>14</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 17–18.

<sup>15</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 18.

<sup>16</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 19.

<sup>\*7</sup> See R. A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 78–98, and R. Kysar, *John’s Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984).

recruitment of Jesus' first disciples, through the mounting intensity of his public ministry and on to the climactic events of death and resurrection.<sup>17</sup>

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## PROLOGUE (JOHN 1:1-18)

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Even though these verses form a “prologue” to the Gospel proper they might be more accurately described as the intuitive “center” of the Gospel.<sup>9</sup> That is, the prologue states the core message of the Gospel as a whole and all of its other strands – the discourses, the miracles, the opposition to Jesus, his disciples, his death and resurrection – radiate from and find their explanation in this center.<sup>18</sup>

From the contents of the prologue the reader knows Jesus' ultimate identity and knows that his mission will engender new life. But the reader also anticipates that darkness will attempt to overcome the Light (1:5) and that Jesus will be rejected by “his own” (1:11). **Even in these opening strains of the Gospel, a note about the Passion of Jesus is sounded.**<sup>19</sup>

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## THE BOOK OF SIGNS (JOHN 1:19 TO 12:50)

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<sup>17</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 20.

<sup>18</sup> See P. J. Cahill, “The Johannine Logos as Center,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 38 (1976), 54–72.

<sup>19</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 20–21.

<sup>19</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 21.



The story begins in **Bethany beyond the Jordan** where John, the desert prophet, preaches and baptizes. Jesus approaches and is proclaimed by the prophet as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29, 36). Faintly, yet distinctly, the evangelist once again sounds a note about the death of Jesus – at the moment of Passover, Jesus’ life blood will be poured out for the sins of the world.<sup>10 20</sup>

At the first of three Passovers celebrated in this Gospel, Jesus goes to Jerusalem and there drives the merchants from the Temple.<sup>12</sup> The “Jews” challenge Jesus’ authority and his reply alludes to his death: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” When the leaders *misunderstand* his words – the first of many such instances in

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<sup>\*10</sup> On John’s use of Passover symbolism, see below, pp. 33–34.

<sup>20</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 21.

<sup>\*12</sup> One of the major differences between John and the Synoptic Gospels is the geographical deployments of their stories. **The Fourth Gospel has Jesus going back and forth to Jerusalem whereas in the Synoptics he makes one major journey to Jerusalem.** In all four Gospels, Galilee is viewed more benevolently than Jerusalem. On the role of geography in the Gospels, see S. Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus, and the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

the Gospel – the narrator reveals the symbolic dimension of Jesus’ words: “But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.” (2:22).<sup>21</sup>

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## MISUNDERSTANDING & HOSTILITY

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The gap between Jesus and the teachers of Israel is further illustrated in chapter three. Nicodemus, “a leader of the Jews,” comes to Jesus “by night” to learn the meaning of his teaching but his questions reveal the depth of his ignorance (3:1–15). In typical fashion, the dialogue with Nicodemus becomes simply an opportunity for the evangelist to construct a discourse by Jesus.<sup>22</sup>

But this apparent success of Jesus’ mission seems only a respite, for **the hostility against him which smoldered below the surface in the first four chapters bursts into flame in chapter five.** Jesus decides to return to Jerusalem to celebrate a “feast” (5:1). The cure of the paralysed man at the pool of Bethzatha on a sabbath day has a curious impact. The man who was cured reports Jesus to the authorities and they take offense that Jesus had “violated” the Sabbath rest. **For the first time in the Gospel, we learn the intensity of their opposition and the reason for it:** “For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.” (5:18).<sup>23</sup>

The white-hot intensity of chapter 8 seems to bank only slightly in the next scene. Jesus’ declaration that he is “the light of the world” (9:5) is illustrated in the miracle of restoring sight to the man born blind. **But the theme of opposition to Jesus still holds the Gospel’s attention.** Because of his belief in Jesus, the Pharisees throw the man who was healed out of the synagogue. The scene ends with Jesus accusing the leaders of being blind and liable to judgment (9:39–41).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 21–22.

<sup>22</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 22.

<sup>23</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 22.

<sup>24</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 24.

The climax of the Book of Signs comes in chapters 11 and 12. The raising of Lazarus is the final act of Jesus' public ministry. In liberating his friend Lazarus from death, Jesus enacts his identity as the "Resurrection and the Life" (11:25). But this great sign also triggers the final opposition to Jesus and puts in motion the plot that will lead to his death. **Frustrated and fearful because of the magnetic power of Jesus' ministry, the leaders gather in council to decide what to do.** Caiaphas the High Priest rises and gives his fateful statement: "You know nothing at all! You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed." (11:49-50).<sup>25</sup>

The Book of Signs ends as Greeks who had also come up for the feast seek out Jesus (12:20-22). Their presence seems to draw from Jesus a reflection on his impending death: **The grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die in order for it to bear much fruit (12:24). Jesus' spirit trembles before the approach of the fateful hour but a voice from heaven thunders God's endorsement of Jesus and his mission (12:28).** The voice, in turn, triggers Jesus' most eloquent statement on the meaning of his death: "Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (12:31-32).<sup>26</sup>

The evangelist signals a major turning point in the Gospel with the opening words of chapter 13: "Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. **Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.**" (13:1). The so-called "Book of Glory" covers events surrounding the Passion and resurrection of Jesus. In John this includes the long farewell discourse at the supper (chapters 13-17); **the Passion narrative itself (chaps. 18-19);** and the discovery of the empty tomb and the series of appearances to Mary and to the disciples (chapter 20).<sup>27</sup>

**But John's presentation is different. He seems to disperse his version of many of these preliminary events to other parts of his Gospel.**<sup>13</sup> The Gethsemani prayers finds an echo in chapter 12 when Jesus says that "my soul is troubled" and a voice from

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<sup>25</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 24-25.

<sup>26</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 25.

<sup>27</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 25-26.

<sup>\*13</sup> R. Brown, "Incidents that are Units in the Synoptic Gospels but Dispersed in St. John," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 23 (1961) 143-60.

heaven acclaims Jesus (12:27–30). The anointing takes place when Jesus goes to the home of Lazarus in Bethany six days before the Passover (12:1–8).<sup>14</sup> There is no clear institution account in John but the words of Jesus in 6:51 seem to supply for it: “... the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” Prediction of Judas’ betrayal comes early, at the conclusion of chapter 6 (see 6:64, 70–71). **In John’s narrative the last supper dominates the five-chapter segment of the Gospel immediately prior to the arrest of Jesus. Little attention is given to the meal itself; after the symbolic act of the foot-washing, Jesus’ long farewell discourse is the sole focus of the scene.** It is a section of the Gospel without parallel in the Synoptics and contains some of the most characteristic language and themes of the Fourth Gospel.<sup>15 28</sup>

**NOTICE** – The “sandwich” structure of John 13, at the Last Supper; that is, notice how Jesus’ command that we love one another as He has loved us is placed in between Jesus’ announcement of TWO BETRAYALS: that of Judas and that of Peter.

### 1 John 1:

<sup>7</sup> But if we live in light,  
as he is in light,  
we have a share in one another’s life,  
and the blood of Jesus, his Son,  
cleanses us from all sin.\* <sup>29</sup>

Jesus’ long discourse now begins, occasionally punctuated by questions from the disciples. Characteristic themes of John’s Gospel weave through these chapters. A dominant mood is one of leave-taking: Jesus is about to return to God, **and he instructs**

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<sup>14</sup> In Mark 14:1 (see also Mt 26:6) the anointing takes place two days before Passover and is included in the series of events that lead to the arrest; see D. Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1984), 44–48.

<sup>15</sup> Luke, however, does depict Jesus giving something of a “farewell” discourse at the supper (Lk 22:14–38), much more than Mark or Matthew; see D. Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1989), 49–83. On the key function of chapter 17 within the Johannine discourse and the Gospel itself, see E. Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968).

<sup>28</sup> Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 26.

\* Mt 26:29par.; Rm 3:24–25, 24k; Rv 1:5

<sup>29</sup> *The New Jerusalem Bible* (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), 1 Jn 1:7.

his disciples on what they are to do in his absence. Jesus will not abandon them but will send the Paraclete, the Spirit who will recall to the disciples Jesus' teaching, help them understand it, and embolden them to face opposition as they carry out their mission in the world.<sup>16 30</sup>

NOTICE – the Holy Spirit

**John 14:**

<sup>15</sup> If you love me you will keep my commandments.\*

<sup>16</sup> I shall ask the Father,  
and he will give you another Paraclete  
to be with you for ever,

<sup>17</sup> the Spirit of truth  
whom the world can never accept  
since it neither sees nor knows him;  
but you know him,  
because he is with you, he is in you. <sup>\*31</sup>

**John 14:**

<sup>25</sup> I have said these things to you  
while still with you;

<sup>26</sup> but the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit,  
whom the Father will send in my name,  
will teach you everything  
and remind you of all I have said to you.\* <sup>32</sup>

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<sup>\*16</sup> On the Johannine theology of the Paraclete, see G. Burge, *The Anointed Community* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987).

<sup>30</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 27.

\* 15:10; Dt 6:4-9; 7:11; 11:1; Ws 6:18; 1 Jn 2:3; 5:3

\* 14:26r; 1:10g; 1 Co 2:12-14; 2 Jn 1-2

<sup>31</sup> [\*The New Jerusalem Bible\*](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Jn 14:15-17.

\* 16:13-15

<sup>32</sup> [\*The New Jerusalem Bible\*](#) (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 1990), Jn 14:25-26.

The disciples are to be obedient to Jesus' commands, to "abide" in him and his words (15:1-11), by imitating his own self-sacrificing love (14:21-24; 15:12-17). They are to love one another, as he has loved them. Jesus had loved them with the greatest love one can show a friend: to lay down one's life for the beloved (15:12-14). **They are sent into the world as Jesus himself was sent (17:18) and they are to "testify" to Jesus (15:27).** Therefore, they should expect from the "world" the same opposition and hatred that Jesus himself experienced (15:18-25; 16:1-4). But the Paraclete will be with them and sustain them (15:26; 16:13). Jesus will triumph over "the ruler of this world" (14:30; 16:33) and the Paraclete, too, will exercise judgment over the power of evil (16:8-11).<sup>33</sup>

Finally, Jesus asks that his disciples and all those who believe in God's Word through them will also return to God and "may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world." (17:24). **The last words of the prayer restate the entire mission of Jesus, a mission about to be accomplished in his death: "I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." (17:26).** This exquisite prayer returns to the cosmic themes of the Prologue, framing John's narrative of Jesus' public ministry, and setting the stage for the climactic events of death and resurrection. **The mission of the Word is about to be completed, and he will return to the presence of the living God from whence he came (17:5; 1:1-2).** The "Word" incarnate in Jesus (1:14) is now given to the disciples (17:14). And this same "Word" they will proclaim to the world (17:20).<sup>17 34</sup>

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## THE DEATH OF JESUS DRIVES THE WHOLE GOSPEL

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**Our rapid survey of John's Gospel is enough to illustrate that the death of Jesus drives the story from start to finish. *Of all the Gospels, John gives the most prominence to the strife between Jesus and his opponents.*** In the first chapter there are

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<sup>33</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 27.

<sup>\*17</sup> While a dominant metaphor of the prologue, the image of Jesus as the "Word" of God does not emerge in the Gospel until chapter 17, yet it remains a leitmotif of Johannine christology throughout the Gospel, especially in the Gospel's portrayal of Jesus as the revealer of God; see, below, Part III, pp. 144-47.

<sup>34</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 28.

only distant echoes of eventual conflict, but as soon as Jesus begins his public ministry, that conflict breaks out into the open. By the time Jesus' ministry is in full stride his exchanges with the Jewish leaders are angry and ominous. When the Book of Glory begins (13:1), the reader is not surprised that death stands on the horizon. **But John's Gospel is not a series of mindless conflicts. In the Gospel's perspective, opposition is generated by the very nature of Jesus and his mission. Conflict breaks out where the meaning of the Gospel and the values of the world collide and the Passion is the final consequence of this collision.**<sup>35</sup>

That Jesus is "sent by God" is one of the Gospel's most insistent themes.<sup>18</sup> As we noted above, the purpose of that mission is to reveal God's redemptive love for the world.<sup>19</sup> For John the most eloquent statement of Jesus' revelation—his most effective sign—is his death out of love for others. There are a number of key texts in the Gospel that state this motif clearly. In the discourse with Nicodemus Jesus tells the Jewish teacher: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." (3:16–17).<sup>36</sup>

**This is the very reason the Son of man has descended from heaven (3:13), that he would be lifted up on the cross and reveal God's love for the world.** Other passages reinforce this fundamental Johannine theme which runs just below the surface on practically every page of the Gospel. In the Bread of Life discourse, for example, the Johannine version of the words of institution again proclaim that Jesus' death reveals God's redemptive love, this time using the image of heavenly bread and partaking of that bread: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh." (6:51).<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 30.

<sup>18</sup> On this motif, see J. Comblin, *Sent From the Father* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979); T. Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission* (WUNT 31; Tübingen: Siebeck/Mohr, 1988), 24–28.

<sup>19</sup> See above, pp. 16–17.

<sup>36</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 31.

<sup>37</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 31–32.

*Only in John's Gospel is Jesus' death interpreted as an act of friendship love:* "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." (15:12-13). The giving of one's life for another is the ultimate gift; no one can ask for more or expect any more convincing sign of transcendent love.<sup>38</sup>

**The third Passover coincides with Jesus' death and John repeatedly signals its approach (see 11:55; 12:1; 13:1). All of this culminates in the moment of Jesus' death which takes place as the Passover lambs are being slaughtered in the Temple.**<sup>22</sup> Jesus, the Lamb of God, brings to fulfillment the hopes of liberation expressed in the Passover ritual.<sup>23</sup> As we have stressed throughout our discussion, the powerful meaning John attaches to the death of Jesus helps explain the Gospel's focus on the cross. The story moves forward to the Passion because it is there that the culmination of Jesus' mission will take place. **And, at the same time, the centrality of Jesus' death, helps explain the weight John gives to the opposition to Jesus.** In failing to recognize Jesus, the opponents turn away from ultimate truth. And in mounting their deadly plot against Jesus they unwittingly become instruments of God's grace because, **paradoxically, in the very vengeance they wreak on Jesus the depth of God's love for the world will be demonstrated.**<sup>39</sup>

**John's conception of the Gospel drama has a certain "spatial" dimension to it.** Jesus, the Son of Man who "comes down" from heaven, is "sent" from God. He "enters into the world" and "abides" there. Conversely, with death, Jesus "leaves" the world, "returns" to his Father, and "ascends" to where he was before.<sup>25</sup> **As enfleshment is the Word's entry point into the world (see 1:14), so crucifixion becomes Jesus' paradoxical gateway to exaltation and glory at God's side.**<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 32.

<sup>22</sup> See below, the discussion of John 19:14.

<sup>23</sup> See below, Part III, pp. 157-59.

<sup>39</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 33-34.

<sup>25</sup> On this motif, see G. Nicholson, *Death as Departure*, and W. Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972), 44-72.

<sup>40</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 34.

A number of key passages and themes expressing this perspective weave their way through the early part of the Gospel and prepare the reader to understand the full meaning of the cross in John. **Primary among these are the “lifting up” sayings, one of the Gospel’s most haunting images.** Three times the Johannine Jesus refers to his death as a “lifting up,” using the Greek verb *hupsothēnai*. The verb connotes both the crucifixion whereby Jesus’ body is “lifted up” on the cross, and the exaltation of Jesus’ ascent to glory at the right hand of God.<sup>41</sup>

**In many ways, the “lifting up” sayings parallel the Synoptic “Passion predictions,” key sayings that punctuate the Gospel and through which Jesus foretells the suffering and eventual exaltation that the Son of Man must experience.<sup>30</sup> The Synoptic Passion predictions and the lifting up sayings in John give an orientation to the events of the Passion, providing for the reader in advance Jesus’ own interpretation of the meaning of his death. A key point to note in John’s Gospel is that the lifting up sayings portray the cross as both moment of death and moment of exaltation – a merger that is evident in the entire mood of the Johannine Passion narrative.<sup>42</sup>**

ON “THE HOUR” OF JESUS – The first instance is at the wedding feast of Cana; when the mother of Jesus requests that he do something about the wine running out, he replies: “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come” (2:4). Although the reference is opaque at this point, the reader will soon learn the connection between this scene and the words of Jesus at the cross (19:26–27), the “hour” of his death.<sup>31</sup> Other texts make the tie to the hour of death quite explicit. In chapter 7 his enemies want to arrest him but were unable to lay hands on him “because his hour had not yet come” (7:30). A similar note is found in chapter 8 where Jesus’ strong condemnation of the Pharisees in the Temple does not lead to his arrest because “his hour had not yet come” (8:20). And the Book of Glory begins with the solemn declaration: “Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father ...” (13:1).<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 34.

<sup>\*30</sup> See, for example, Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34; see D. Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark*, 28–30.

<sup>42</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 36.

<sup>\*31</sup> See pp. 108–14.

<sup>43</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 36–37.

SOON BUT ALSO NOW – The phrase, “the hour is coming, *and is now here* ...” collapses the expectation of the endtime into the present; what was anticipated for the end of the world is taking place *now* in the person and mission of Jesus, a typical Johannine perspective.<sup>33</sup> This same anticipation of the endtime may influence other instances where John uses the notion of “hour” (see, for example, 4:21, 23; 16:2, 4), including the references to Jesus’ death. As Jesus dies, so, too, does the old world and a new one is born.<sup>44</sup>

THE HOUR AND GLORY – **At that same moment Jesus’ spirit is filled with troubled prayer:** “Now my soul is troubled. And what shall I say? “Father save me from this *hour*? No, for this reason I have come to this *hour*. Father, *glorify* your name. Then a voice came from heaven, “I have *glorified* it, and I will glorify it again.” (12:27–28). “Hour” and “glory” are linked again at the beginning of Jesus’ great prayer in chapter 17, immediately before the beginning of the Passion narrative: “After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the *hour* has come; *glorify* your Son so that the Son may *glorify* you ...” (17:1).<sup>45</sup>

GLORY AND THE DIVINE PRESENCE – “Glory” is the manifestation of that divine presence which is worthy of praise and honor. God obviously is the bearer of “glory” (5:44; 11:4, 40; 12:43) **but in John’s Gospel Jesus himself is suffused with God’s “glory” and reveals it to the world. This image expresses a basic intuition of John’s Christology** and first appears in the Prologue: The Word who is made flesh takes up his dwelling in the community, “full of grace and truth,” and “we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son” (1:14).<sup>46</sup>

In binding the “hour” of the death of Jesus with the notion of “glory,” especially in the latter part of his Gospel, John prepares the reader for the paradox of the cross. It is a

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<sup>33</sup> On John’s so-called “realized” eschatology, see R. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I–XII*, pp. CXV–CXXI.

<sup>44</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 37.

<sup>45</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 38.

<sup>46</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 38.

moment that seems to rush forward with terrible power, but it will also be a moment of exaltation and triumph when the glory of God will stream through the crucified Jesus.<sup>47</sup>

THE HOSTILITY OF UNBELIEF – But in sharp contrast, many others refuse to believe in Jesus and, as we had noted above, their hostility to Jesus escalates as the Gospel story unfolds.<sup>34</sup> **John's Gospel, in fact, depicts opposition to Jesus much more vividly than the other Gospels do.**<sup>48</sup>

THE DEMONIC – Right from the start of John's Gospel, the enemies of Jesus are intensely hostile and want to destroy him. **The opponents are one-dimensional, practically becoming symbols of unbelief and even of evil itself. Standing behind the unyielding hostility of the leaders is, in John's perspective, the face of the demonic. John's Gospel, curiously, has no exorcisms,** a point of major contrast with the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>35</sup> But Jesus' combat with evil which the Synoptic Gospels express by means of the exorcism stories finds its echo in the Fourth Gospel in **the bitter conflicts between Jesus and his opponents.**<sup>49</sup>

JUDAS – The driving force of Satan behind the opposition to Jesus will find its culmination in Judas, one of the disciples. **The betrayer of Jesus seems to personify the demon: “ ‘Did I not choose you, the twelve? Yet one of you is a devil.’ He was speaking of Judas son of Simon Iscariot, for he, though one of the twelve, was going to betray him.” (6:70–71).** At the beginning of the Book of Glory, the demon makes its move: “The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him ...” (13:2). When Jesus, who knew what was taking place, shares with the betrayer a morsel at the meal, it becomes a signal that the demonic treachery could begin: “After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him,

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<sup>47</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 39.

<sup>\*34</sup> See above, pp. 22–25.

<sup>48</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 39.

<sup>\*35</sup> Exorcisms play a major role in the ministry of Jesus in all three Synoptics, but particularly in the Gospel of Mark.

<sup>49</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 40.

'Do quickly what you are going to do.' " (13:27). **As Judas leaves, he steps into the darkness – a vivid Johannine touch (13:30).**<sup>50</sup>

**EVIL ITSELF – What Jesus will therefore confront in the Passion is the power of evil itself. It wears many masks:** Jesus' opponents, Judas, and ultimately the power of Rome which condemns Jesus to death. There is no real middle ground. This epic struggle between God and evil, between life and death, between faith and unbelief, between light and darkness is the cosmic level on which much of Johannine theology runs.<sup>51</sup>

**NICODEMUS – There are a few characters in the Gospel that seem to stand suspended between those who believe and those who are hostile.** Nicodemus is a prime example.<sup>39</sup> He comes to Jesus "by night," a "man of the Pharisees," a "leader of the Jews" (3:1-2). He is anxious to learn from Jesus whom he respects as a "teacher who has come from God" (3:2) but he lacks "understanding" and apparently is not ready to receive the full meaning of Jesus' testimony (3:10-11). Nicodemus is one of the few minor characters to make repeated appearances in the Gospel.<sup>52</sup>

**THE ALL-OUT ASSAULT ON THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS –** The Gospel warns that the Passion – the moment when the full force of evil will be unleashed on Jesus – will also take its toll on the community. **The disciples, too, will undergo the withering assault of evil and have to endure the cold hatred of the world – not only as they stand by Jesus during his Passion but as they carry out his mission in the world.** If his words about the bread of life cause offense, much more offense can be taken by his death on the cross (6:62). In his final discourse, Jesus warns that the world will "hate" the disciples just as it hated him (15:18; 17:14) and just as the world persecuted Jesus, it will persecute them (15:20). The disciples would be "driven out of the synagogues" and "indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God" (16:2). They, like their Teacher, would have to "lose" their life to save it, and "hate" their life in this world in order to gain it forever. **Following Jesus**

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<sup>50</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 41.

<sup>51</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 41.

<sup>39</sup> See J. Bassler, "Nicodemus in the Fourth Gospel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108 (1989) 635-46, and the discussion below, pp. 130-33, 163.

<sup>52</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 42.

meant learning the lesson of the grain of wheat that had to fall to the earth and die, so that it could bear much fruit. (12:4-26).<sup>53</sup>

As the reader turns the pages of John's Gospel, the message is clear: only with Jesus' death will the story of the Word made flesh reach its terrible and triumphant conclusion.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 43.

<sup>54</sup> Donald Senior, [\*The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John\*](#), vol. 4 of *The Passion Series* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 44.