

THE FUNCTION OF PASCHAL ALLUSIONS
IN JOHN'S CRUCIFIXION NARRATIVE: AN EXAMINATION
OF JOHN'S TYPOLOGICAL DEPICTION OF THE DEATH OF JESUS

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To Christ Jesus, my Passover

And to my wife Suzanne, and my daughters, Anna Grace, Madison, and Sydney
Your love and support make me who I am

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the various details within John's crucifixion narrative that are possibly functioning as paschal allusions. It will be purported that within the crucifixion narrative of John's Gospel, the author employs historical allusions to the Passover in order to communicate the typological significance of Christ's death. Such a study should provide a valuable contribution to the discussion of John's Gospel.

First, the proposed research will help to lay out the relationship between the allusions under consideration and the crucifixion narrative. Since these allusions compose a large portion of the narrative material, their role in the narrative should be examined. Second, the role of the relationship between the paschal lamb and Jesus in John's Gospel needs to be understood. Research into the paschal allusions in the crucifixion narrative will be fruitful for understanding how this relationship functions in John's Gospel.

Finally, John's theology of the death of Jesus is immensely important for the church today, for at the center of the Christian faith stands the cross. If John saturated his account of the crucifixion with allusions to the Passover, scholars cannot afford to overlook their significance for understanding the death of Jesus.

The following outline will be followed. An opening introduction will preview the thesis and provide the reader with a frame of reference for reading the thesis. Chapter 1 will give a description of the methods used in the thesis. It will offer a review of current

approaches, define the criteria for identifying a paschal allusion, and present an outline of the research to follow.

Chapter 2 will identify several paschal allusions in the crucifixion narrative. It will also examine the correspondence between the allusions and the text or event to which it alludes. Chapter 3 will present available evidence in support of the historicity of each of the main allusions identified in chapter two. Objections to the historicity of each allusion will be examined. The purpose of this chapter will be to demonstrate as far as is possible with the available data that John's account of these details is historically reliable.

Chapter 4 will examine how the allusions function in the text. Attention will be given to various relationships including the relationship between the various allusions themselves, the relationship between the allusions and the crucifixion narrative, the relationship between the allusions and the Gospel of John, and finally the relationship between the allusions and the Old Testament.

A final section of the paper will provide a synthesis of the previous chapters and will summarize the findings of the thesis.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

John's crucifixion narrative bears a strong relationship with the Old Testament as his two fulfillment quotations demonstrate (19:36–37). Yet, in addition to his explicit quotes, many words and details in the crucifixion narrative appear to correlate to the Passover event recorded in Exodus and its subsequent feast. The reader familiar with the events that took place in Egypt as God delivered His people out of bondage can scarcely hear the word hyssop and not be reminded of the blood that was smeared over the doors. Seeing the blood over the doors, the angel of death passed over the children of Israel who had faithfully sacrificed the lamb and followed God's instructions.

Even more striking than the mentioning of the word hyssop is the fact that Jesus' legs were not broken—the treatment of His body meeting the requirements of the paschal lamb, a connection made explicit by John's statement that this happened to fulfill the scriptures. Finally, for the Jew who had participated in the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, the rabbinical requirements for the sacrifice of the lamb would be recognizable in John's description of Jesus' death.

If limited to one connection, the detail might be considered coincidence. However, given the multiple connections between the details of John's crucifixion narrative and the Passover, it seems far more reasonable to conclude that these connections were intentionally selected and included in the narrative by the author to

connect the death of Jesus with the Passover. Such intentional connections are perhaps best described as allusions. Throughout this thesis, the function and meaning of these allusions will be explored.

The relationship between John's Gospel and the Old Testament has been the subject of much recent scholarship.¹ While much of the former Johannine scholarship focused upon Hellenistic influence on John's Gospel, the tremendous amount of Hebraic influence has more recently been recognized. Furthermore, the discipline of biblical theology and the study of the relationship between the two Testaments have enjoyed a renewed interest. Surely the study of how certain elements in the crucifixion narrative relate to one of the most significant events and feasts of the Old Testament will greatly add to this discussion.

Not only is this study important due to its potential impact upon inter-testamental studies, but also the magnitude of the crucifixion upon New Testament theology is immeasurable. If the Passover is the central redemptive event of the Old Testament, the cross is much more so for the New Testament. If John has utilized allusions to the Passover to communicate the significance and meaning of Jesus' death, scholars cannot afford to overlook this fact.

However, not all scholars agree that the details in John's crucifixion narrative are allusions to Passover or that they were intended by the author to connect Jesus' death

¹ D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson, ed., *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture* (New York: Cambridge, 1988), 245.

with the Old Testament. Thus, it will be necessary in this thesis to identify those elements of John's narrative that are most likely to be intentional allusions. Once these allusions have been established as likely intended paschal allusions, their relationship to history will need to be examined. If these allusions are meant to establish a typological relationship between Jesus and the Passover, then they would need to be historical, lest they form only a literary relationship.

Typology is the recognition of repetition within history. It sees relationships between present and past events. Thus, previous persons, events, and institutions pattern later realities.² Accordingly, in order for Jesus to be a type of the Passover or of the paschal lamb, both the details of His crucifixion and the details of Passover must be real events in history. It will then be necessary to present the available evidence in favor of the historicity of the paschal allusions. While historicity of the allusions cannot be established beyond all doubt, evidence can be mounted to establish the high probability of each of the events as having occurred as historical events.

The historicity of the event utilized to employ the allusion is crucial for establishing a typological correspondence. A literary allusion may be the intention of the author, but typology requires more than the intention of the author. Literature is written by its author, but history is written by a sovereign God. Biblical typology is a convergence of God's work in history to fulfill His promises and the biblical author's

² Micheal Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 350.

recognition and understanding of God's fulfillment of His promises. Thus, one may dismiss the historicity of the events recorded in John's crucifixion narrative and still argue that in John's mind Jesus was the paschal lamb, but in order to identify Jesus as the type of the paschal lamb one must accept the historicity of the events behind the narrative.

Finally, the relationship between the allusions and John's Gospel, as well as, the relationship between the allusions and the Old Testament will need to be examined. After having demonstrated the intentional use of the allusions to connect Jesus' death and the Passover and the likely historicity of each allusion, the function of the allusions will be considered.

An effort will be made to demonstrate that the historical paschal allusions were employed to communicate the typological significance of Jesus' death. The theology and characteristics of John's Gospel will be examined for support of such an understanding of John's crucifixion narrative. Finally, the implications for John's theology of Jesus' death will be explored. First, it will be necessary to establish a methodology to be followed throughout this thesis.

The various interpretations of the allusions in John's crucifixion narrative have often been the result of competing methodologies. The proverbial, "where you begin determines where you will end," holds true in Johannine studies. Consequently, it is essential to develop a methodology that can examine the text without forcing eisegesis. While no method of biblical interpretation has yet proven to be completely pure, the scholar still bears the burden of attempting to divorce himself from all presuppositions

and biases in order to uncover the intended meaning of the author. It is with these hermeneutical issues in mind that the following method of study is proposed. However, in order to have a background against which to compare the present approach, it will be necessary first to review some other approaches in current scholarship.

Two Previous Approaches to the Paschal Allusions

Two approaches that have been practiced in a manner inconsistent with the findings of the present study include: the literary-critical approach and the interpretation of history approach. Neither of these two approaches is inherently flawed. In fact both will be employed in this thesis. However, as the two examples given below will illustrate some practitioners of these methods have utilized them in such a manner as to dismiss the historicity of the text. In fact, many practitioners of these methods not only consider the historical accuracy of the text inconsequential, but also they consider the historical reliability of John's Gospel to be more than the modern critical mind can accept.³

The present thesis understands the allusions in the crucifixion narrative to communicate the typological significance of Jesus' death. Since typology is grounded in history and not in the text, any method which presupposes the text to be independent of historical fact precludes the possibility of typology.

³ For a defense of the historical reliability of John's Gospel see Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel* (Downer's Grove: Inter-Varsity, 2001).

Since the 1970's, New Testament studies in general have experienced a major paradigm shift.⁴ Once biblical interpretation in North America was dominated by the historical-critical method, however, as scholars abandoned this method, a vacuum was left in methodology. While the literary-critical method has not gained the acceptance that the historical-critical method held, it is has played a prominent role in the study of John's crucifixion narrative.

This general shift in interpretation has also affected the interpretation of the allusions in John's crucifixion narrative. Lyle Eslinger's article "Inner-Biblical Exegesis and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Question of Category" reveals much about the current mind set regarding the allusions. He writes: "For most critical readers, traditional ways of interpreting literary interconnections in the Bible have become problematic. We are not as open to assumptions like inspiration, divine authorship, or typological engineering of history."⁵ Instead of viewing the various allusions in the crucifixion narrative as historical events, Eslinger's literary approach views these details as figments of the author's imagination, intentionally created by the author in order to connect his writing with the Old Testament.

⁴ See the chapter entitled "Modern Approaches to the New Testament: Historical Criticism and Hermeneutics" in Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, ed. *Encountering the New Testament: A Historical and Theological Survey*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 153–168.

⁵ Lyle Eslinger, "Inner-Biblical Exegesis and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Question of Category," *VT* 42, no. 1 (1992): 47–58.

Eslinger writes:

“But the modern study of i.b.a. (inner biblical allusions) and Christian typological exegesis will surely part when they reach the historical component of the Christian reading. Christian typologies see the literary interconnections as proof of the marvelous providence behind history and its record in the Bible. God guides certain sequences of events to their conclusions primarily to demonstrate that same providence when their subsequent anti-types came to historical fruition. Historicity seems to be assumed throughout. In a modern study of i.b.a. such concerns are, like their historical-critical kindred, simply bracketed or even rejected as beyond verification. These are matters for faith and best left to the privacy of personal reading.”

The second approach views John’s description of events as interpreted history—meaning narrative that is controlled by theological interests not actual historical facts. Ernst Haenchen’s article, “History and Interpretation in the Johannine Passion Narrative,” is representative of this view.⁶ In this article, Haenchen attributes many of the details of the crucifixion to the theological intentions of the Evangelist. Thus, John’s Gospel is viewed as being written in a genre somewhere between fiction and historical narrative. Proponents of this view do not dismiss the entire narrative as the creation of the author; however they do not accept it as factual either. Such a view allows scholars to accept the theology of the Gospel without dealing with any critical questions such as apparent discrepancies between John’s Gospel and the Synoptics.

This approach raises a myriad of questions for theologians, not the least of which involves revelation. The interpretation of history approach is acceptable to those who

⁶ Ernst Haenchen, “History and Interpretation in the Johannine Passion Narrative,” *Int* 24, no. 2 (1970): 198–219.

study the history of the early church, for their focus is on what early Christians believed. Studying John's Gospel as interpreted history is sufficient to examine what John believed, but revelation occurs between both the event and the narrative. Thus, a narrative divorced from history is devoid of authority for believers and lacks any element of divine revelation. The approach developed below seeks to address the question of where revelation occurs: the event, text, or both.

Proposed Approach to the Text

The following sections will outline the basic premises followed in this thesis in approaching the text and the issue of revelation. Criteria for identifying a paschal allusion will also be given. Finally, the research to follow in this thesis will be outlined.

Relating Revelation, History, and Text

The approach to the paschal allusions followed in this thesis is based upon a certain understanding of revelation. Scholars have debated at length as to whether revelation occurs within an event, a text, or some combination of the two. Any view taken on this matter will guide further interpretation of the text. For this reason, the view of this author will be outlined here before continuing with the proposed research.

God acts in history. His actions reveal. Thus, revelation *occurs* in history, since it is God's actions that demonstrate His character and person. However, events do not *communicate* revelation, although they *contain* revelation. It is the written word that

communicates as it interprets events. Donald Hagner's explanation of the cross is illuminative.⁷ Hagner explains that New Testament theology views Jesus' death on the cross as an act of love (Rom. 9:8). But those who witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus did not stand at the foot of the cross and think about what a great demonstration of love was being poured out. They witnessed the horror of the crucifixion event. It was only through the written word which interpreted the event that the revelation of the event was communicated.

In accordance with this view of revelation, this thesis will approach John's Gospel as historical narrative. It is helpful to define these two words as they are used in this thesis. The adjective "historical" describes John's work as based upon real events. It actually took place as the narrative describes. It is this grounding of the writing in history that sets it apart from fictional narrative. Such a view distinguishes the present approach from the literary and the interpreted history approach. The word "narrative" conveys that John is telling a story. Stories can of course be either fictional or non-fictional, therefore it is necessary to use the adjective "historical" to differentiate John's story as a work of non-fiction.

While this description may seem elementary, it is essential to discuss approaches to John's writing at this level, because within these simple descriptions lie foundational concepts that separate the approach to John's paschal allusions in this thesis from the

⁷ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed., ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 25.

other two approaches described in the previous section. Since John's Gospel is narrative, it contains literary features which need to be recognized to understand John's intent. However, the literary approach falls short if it is divorced from the study of the actual content of the narrative, which in this case is actual historical events. The interpreted history approach assumes that the author has reshaped facts in order to fit his theological interests. This too falls short of the above description of revelation.

The paschal allusions in John's crucifixion narrative are best viewed then as both historical realities and literary devices. Within history these events took place. As an eyewitness, John saw these events and noticed their theological significance. He selected them to include in his narrative. Within the narrative, they function as a literary device to allude to the Passover.

Criteria for Identifying a Paschal Allusion

An allusion is a word or phrase intended to indirectly connect its context with a previous text or event. For example, John begins his gospel with the phrase: "In the beginning." Most likely, this phrase is intended to allude to the beginning of Genesis. By using this phrase, John makes a connection between the opening of his gospel and the opening of Genesis. It is an allusion and not a reference or quote, because it is indirect, perhaps even subtle.

Authorial intention distinguishes an allusion from a mere correspondence in the text. Since the reader's interpretation of the author's intentions are rarely certain, multiple criteria should be used to raise the level of probability of a particular word or phrase being correctly identified as an intended allusion. Criteria for identifying an allusion will

be given below and will be followed in this study. Words or phrases that meet at least one criterion will be considered a possible allusion, while those which meet two or more criteria will be considered more certain.

1. A similarity in wording, style, or structure with a text related to Passover.
2. A description of events that corresponds with events related to the Passover.
3. A use of a word connected to the Passover.
4. A context in which an intended allusion would enrich the meaning of the text, not add difficulty.⁸

Outline of Research

The following thesis will seek to follow all of the methodology presented above. First, the criteria given for identifying a paschal allusion will be applied to John's crucifixion narrative. Each identified allusion will be discussed in relation to its corresponding text/event (correspondent). Since some allusions allow for more than one possible correspondent, various proposals will be considered. The relationship between the allusion and its correspondent will also be considered. These issues will comprise chapter two entitled: "Paschal Allusions in the Narrative."

Next, the historicity of each allusion will be examined. A survey of evidence that supports the possibility of each event or detail used in the text as an allusion will be

⁸ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), 135. Osborne writes: "If the context is favorable the allusion will add richness to the meaning of the passage."

presented. Arguments against the historicity of the allusions will be also be considered and given a response. This section of the thesis will be entitled: “The Historicity of the Paschal Allusions.”

The final chapter of the thesis, “The Function of the Paschal Allusions,” will explore how the allusions affect the meaning of the text. Some allusions will be considered individually, however, the main focus of the chapter will be on how the allusions function as a whole.

Finally, a conclusion will be given. Here an attempt will be made to offer a synthesis of the previous sections and to summarize the major findings of the study. An effort will also be made to present some further issues raised by this study which should be addressed through further research.

CHAPTER 2

PASCHAL ALLUSIONS IN THE NARRATIVE

The Bible is replete with self references and subtle allusions.¹ John's Gospel in particular is saturated with a host of complex literary devices ranging from symbolism to inner-biblical allusion. It is John's employment of these devices that allowed him to write a Gospel with such depth of meaning. The theological ideas communicated through John's narrative would be difficult to fully communicate through mere propositional statements. However, while many scholars would agree that John utilizes Old Testament allusions, there is little consensus in identifying which passages contain the allusions and to which Old Testament passage or event they refer.

Within John's crucifixion narrative there is also disagreement. R. A. Edwards criticizes the entire concept of seeking to identify paschal allusions in John's narrative.² He apparently is of the idea that one has to reject the historicity of a detail in order to see within it some symbolic value or intended allusion. After listing many suggestions of paschal allusions given by other scholars he makes the assertion: "No thoughtful person has any right to attempt to read the story from a point of view so inherently improbable

¹ For an excellent treatment of the entire Bible see Carson, *It is Written*.

² R. A. Edwards, *The Gospel According to John: Its Criticism and Interpretation* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1954), 148–152.

until it has been demonstrated beyond question that no historical interpretation of the records is possible.”³ No doubt, Edwards has the noble intentions of defending the historical accuracy of John’s report. Yet, to deny the possibility of correspondence between certain historical events and previous historical events questions the sovereignty of God, which is a presupposition to typological interpretation.⁴ This thesis will argue that the paschal allusions are both historical details and subtle allusions to the Passover.

In stark contrast to the skepticism of Edwards regarding the paschal allusions, Borchert writes concerning John’s crucifixion narrative: “It seems to me, therefore, that what is taking place in this gospel presentation is a testimony to the ultimate or final Passover wherein God supplies the Lamb which takes away the sin of the world!”⁵ Such diversity of scholarly opinion should caution against too quickly identifying an intended allusion. Since there are so many literary connections between the New Testament and the Old Testament, readers become accustomed to making such connections. However, the key to properly interpreting inner-biblical allusions is to not make connections, but to identify connections that the author intended. The rich symbolism and language of the biblical text allows for many connections that the writer never saw or intended to

³ Edwards, *John*, 150.

⁴ Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), xv.

⁵ Gerald Borchert, “The Passover and the Narrative Cycles in John,” in *Perspectives on John: Method and Interpretation in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. Robert B. Sloan and Mikeal C. Parsons, NABPR Special Studies Series, no. 11. (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1993), 315.

communicate. In fact, one may become so adept at recognizing biblical allusions, that one sees them, even when they are not there.

Another problem with studying biblical allusions is identifying the event or text behind the allusion. Some allusions clearly refer to a specific event or text; others parallel multiple passages and events making it difficult to ascertain which reference the author intended. Such ambiguity can at times be frustrating to the reader; however, it is the ability of the writer to allude to multiple passages and events that allows him to enrich his work with a depth which could not be achieved through the use of mere propositional statements.

Consider Christian songs being written currently. The lamb is a popular motif. Suppose a song contains the line, “worship the lamb.” Could one reasonably ask which biblical text this song is alluding to? Unless some context in the rest of the song suggests otherwise, the most likely possibility is that the songwriter is drawing upon multiple passages and a rich imagery that is developed throughout the Bible. Likewise, inner-biblical allusions may draw upon more than one text or event. In this study, such allusions will be referred to as complex allusions. If the concept of complex allusions is recognized, then Old Testament passages unrelated to Passover which appear to be the correspondent of allusions in the crucifixion narrative will not be viewed as evidence against the allusion referring to Passover.

With these issues under consideration, the following sections of this chapter will seek to identify both allusions in John’s crucifixion narrative and their likely

correspondents. Evidence in favor of the allusion referring to Passover will be weighed and some of the most significant objections given by scholars will be considered.

The Day of Preparation of Passover

Three passages mark the day of Jesus' crucifixion as the day of preparation (19:14, 19:31, 19:42). Each of these passages are direct chronological references to the celebration of Passover during the year of Jesus' death, however, they may also indirectly relate the circumstances of Jesus' death to the Passover in Exodus 12. By setting the crucifixion within the context of Passover, John may be connecting Jesus' death with the sacrifice of the paschal lamb.⁶

Some may object that the chronological references are direct statements not subtle allusions. The actual word "Passover" is used in 19:14, instead of some more cryptic statement pointing toward Passover. Further, the phrase "day of preparation" clearly marks the chronology of Jesus' death as occurring during the festival of Passover; it is not some symbolic Passover that is occurring because of Jesus' death.

In response to these objections the following points should be considered. First, John may comprehend more than one idea within a single word or phrase. His use of

⁶ Barrett comments on the mention of the day of preparation in 19:14: "This is in fact probably John's motive for inserting the note of time..." C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 545.

double *entendre* has been well noted.⁷ It is inherent in the nature of symbolic language for a word in a narrative to refer to something literal while also pointing toward something else symbolically. Second, John's motive for including such chronological references should be considered. Why would John make three direct references to identify the day, if it did not serve some significant purpose for his Gospel? Surely John is not merely concerned with reporting raw historical details. If John is portraying Jesus as the paschal lamb, the emphasis of chronology would fit his purpose in connecting Jesus' death with the Passover.

This possibility becomes more likely when John's crucifixion narrative is compared with the Synoptics. Both John and the Synoptics place Jesus' death during the week of Passover; however, the Synoptics do not contain a single reference to the Passover in their crucifixion narratives, while John includes three. It seems most likely that the difference between the narratives is related to their individual theological emphasis. While the narratives are all in agreement that Jesus died during the Passover celebration, John chooses to highlight this fact in his narrative to further point to Jesus as the paschal lamb.

Moving past the objections considered above, the implications of John's chronology should be considered. Many scholars have suggested that the chronology of

⁷ See E. Richard, "Expressions of Double Meaning and Their Function in the Gospel of John," *NTS* 31 (1985): 96–112.

John places Jesus' death at the same time as the slaying of the lambs in the temple.⁸ Such a chronology is based upon one of two major interpretations of the phrase "day of preparation of Passover." The second possibility is that the phrase refers to the day before the Sabbath during the week of Passover. This issue will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Since the intended chronology of John's crucifixion narrative is highly contested among scholars, caution should be exercised in applying too much emphasis on the date of Jesus' death, which would have been Nisan 14th if the above cited interpretation is correct and Jesus died at the same time as the slaying of the lambs for the celebration of Passover. If John is narrating Jesus' death as occurring at the same time as the slaying of the paschal lambs in the temple, this would further enrich John's lamb imagery. However, it would only *add* to the portrait of Jesus as the paschal lamb.

John's typology is not dependent upon Jesus' death occurring at the same time as the paschal lambs. Typology does not consist of mere correspondence. In fact, types vary

⁸ G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36 (Waco: Word, 1987), 341; C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1958), 424; William E. Hull, "John," in *Luke-John*, vol. 9, The Broadman Bible Commentary, ed. Clifton J. Allen (Nashville: Broadman, 1970), 357; G. H. C. Macgregor, *The Gospel of John*, The Moffat New Testament Commentary (New York: Harper, 1928), 349; R. H. Strachan, *The Fourth Gospel: Its Significance and Environment*, 3d ed. (London: SCM Press, 1960), 317; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles* (New York: Crossroads, 1994), 241; Herman C. Waetjen, *The Gospel of the Beloved Disciple*, (New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 401.

greatly from their ante-types. Often, the type escalates some aspect of the ante-type.⁹ In other instances, the type is spiritual while the ante-type is literal. For example, the temple was a literal physical building, but Jesus' body becomes the new temple (Jn. 2:19–21); the correspondence is only in function. Thus, Jesus may be the type of the paschal lamb without every detail of His death corresponding to the sacrifice of the lamb. Therefore, whether the reader accepts or rejects the interpretation that John was dating Jesus' death on Nisan 14th, the point must still be considered that John was certainly dating Jesus' death during the celebration of Passover.

The context of the entire Gospel should also be considered at this point. Jacob Enz has argued that the evangelist uses the book of Exodus as a literary type.¹⁰ Others purport that Jesus is presented as the second Moses most clearly in John's Gospel. Much of the symbolism in John is based upon referents from the Exodus event. For example, the offer of living water to the woman at the well is reminiscent of Moses who repeatedly provided water for the Israelites in the desert (Ex 15:23–25; 17:6; Num 20:4–11).¹¹ Given the prominence of both the book of Exodus and the event itself in John's theology, it

⁹ Leonhard Goppelt, “τύπος,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972): 252.

¹⁰ Jacob J. Enz, “The Book of Exodus as a Literary Type for the Gospel of John,” *JBL* 76 (1957): 208–215; See also Otto A. Piper, “Unchanging Promises: Exodus in the New Testament,” *Int* 11 (1957): 3–22.

¹¹ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 169.

seems most likely that John's references to the day of preparation of Passover was intended to connect Jesus' death with the death of the Passover lamb.

The Mention of Hyssop

All four of the Gospels describe Jesus being given sour wine while on the cross, only John mentions that it was lifted up to Jesus on a stalk of hyssop (Matt. 27:48; Mk. 15:36; Lk. 23:36; Jn. 19:29). Both Matthew and Mark describe the wine as being put on a reed and lifted up. Luke simply states that Jesus was offered sour wine. The difference between John and the Synoptics is striking because hyssop was used to smear the blood of the paschal lamb over the lintel and two doorposts of the Israelite homes in the first Passover (Ex. 12:22). Like the emphasis of Jesus' death during Passover discussed above, John does not contradict the Synoptics, but includes additional information. The reed described by Matthew and Mark could well be a reed of hyssop. Since Luke makes no mention of what was used to offer the wine to Jesus, he in no way contradicts John. The significance comes then in John's selection of details to include.

Some scholars might argue that the inclusion of the identity of the plant may be a result of eyewitness testimony, especially since John is the only Gospel writer who claims to have been an eyewitness of the crucifixion (Jn. 19:35). However, John no doubt saw many other details during the crucifixion, which are not included in his Gospel. It is his selection of this detail that requires an examination into its significance for John's crucifixion narrative. The probability that John includes a description of a plant which was prominent in the Exodus account without intending to establish a connection between the death of Jesus and the Passover is not very high.

Furthermore, it is informative to compare the historical situation of both John's writing and the Exodus event. Exodus 12 is the first mention of hyssop in the canon. Here the author gives an account of the instructions of God to the Israelites for the observance of the Passover. No rationale is given in the text for the choice of hyssop to smear the blood. It is unlikely that the hyssop carries any theological symbolism at this point in the canon. Instead, the hyssop was most likely used, because of its suitability for the purpose. While the exact identity of the plant being referred to as hyssop is uncertain, the likely candidates share the characteristics of having a bushy top suitable for soaking up the blood and smearing it like a brush.¹²

John's situation is much different from the writer of Exodus. By the time John writes his Gospel in the first century, the word hyssop has been included in the Old Testament scriptures ten times. Further, it is included in the description of the Passover, which arguably has become the central feast of first century Judaism.¹³ The word hyssop has picked up so much theological baggage that the Psalmist can simply mention the word in reference to cleansing and expect his readers to understand the connection with the purification ceremonies of Leviticus (Ps. 51:7).

A second difference is the role of the hyssop in the two events. In Exodus it was part of the instructions given to the Israelites. It was in effect, central to knowing how

¹² For a discussion of the identity of the plant referred to as "hyssop" in the Bible see Chapter Three.

¹³ Roland De Vaux, *Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1964), 1.

God expected them to apply the blood to their doorframes. However, the fact that not one of the Synoptics mentions the hyssop demonstrates that if they were even aware of this detail—assuming their narrative is based upon the reports of others since, as far as we know, none of the synoptic writers were present at the crucifixion—they did not see it as essential to their own theological concerns about the crucifixion.

Given the differences between the contexts of Exodus and of the Gospel of John, it then becomes far more likely that John includes the detail of the hyssop because it has some theological significance for him. What then is the significance? John's mentioning of the word hyssop in narrating the action of the soldier would have caused readers familiar with celebration of Passover to be reminded of the event. Why the soldier used it for this purpose is unknown. It may have been conveniently growing next to the cross, or the hyssop may have been part of the regular elements used at the crucifixion along with the vinegar.¹⁴ The present concern is not why the soldier used the hyssop, but why John mentioned that it was hyssop that was used. The most likely answer seems to be that John intended to connect the crucifixion with an earlier use of the hyssop in the Old Testament. However, John may not have intended for his readers to connect the hyssop at the crucifixion with all of the previous uses of hyssop.

While the use of hyssop in the Old Testament was not confined to the celebration of Passover, it was confined to two purposes: the celebration of Passover and ceremonies of purification. The word hyssop occurs in five different places in the Old Testament (Ex.

¹⁴ So Trench, *John's Gospel*, 398.

12; Lev. 14; Num. 19; 1 Kings 4:33; and Ps. 51:7). Exodus 12 is the institution of the Passover. Leviticus 14 describes the purification of lepers and their homes. 1 Kings is a passing reference to hyssop as plant growing in the wall. Psalm 51:7 is a reference to being cleansed which most likely refers to the purification ceremonies found in either Leviticus or Numbers. Given the option of either Passover or purification serving as the correspondent for the hyssop mentioned in the crucifixion narrative, it seems that Passover better fits the context of the crucifixion.

Purification would add difficulty to the text. If applied to Jesus, the concept of purification would bring John's Gospel into sharp contradiction with other New Testament scriptures which are clear that Jesus was sinless and thus had no need of purification (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15). Yet, one could argue that the hyssop alludes to the purification from sin made possible through the death of Christ. The strongest point in favor of this argument is John 1:29 which links the lamb with purification of sin. However, since the image of 1:29 is the lamb, which is most likely the Passover lamb, then it would be more reasonable to conclude that hyssop is a complex allusion referring to both Passover and purification than it would be to conclude that the hyssop of the crucifixion has no connection to the hyssop of the Passover.

Having thus far discussed two possible allusions in the narrative, the cumulative effect of the two should be considered. While the reader may question the evidence in support of any one allusion being intended by John, the links between these details and the Passover become more difficult to dismiss as coincidence as they become more numerous. If the only connection between the crucifixion of Jesus and the Passover in

John's narrative was a mention of the word hyssop, this detail would most likely be rejected as an intentional allusion being made by the author. However, considered in relation to the triad of chronological references discussed above and the various other possible allusions discussed below, it seems reasonable to conclude that John intended for his readers to be reminded of the first Passover in Egypt and to read his narrative of Jesus' death with this context in mind.

The Escape of the Crurifragium

The escape of the practice of the crurifragium is the most explicit of the Paschal allusions, for John states that it fulfills scripture (Jn. 19:36). However, as will be discussed below there is some debate as to which scripture it fulfilled and whether or not that scripture relates to Passover. The practice of crurifragium will be discussed in much more detail in the next chapter. However, a brief description of the history of the practice will be helpful at this point in the discussion.

The most common cause of death for victims of crucifixion is suffocation.¹⁵ The weight of the body makes it difficult for victims to breath, causing them to push up with their legs in order to expand their lungs. Normally crucifixion victims took several hours, even a few days at times to die. When the Romans wanted to shorten a victim's time on the cross they would break their legs (a procedure known as the crurifragium) making the

¹⁵ For a thorough survey of the medical proposals for the cause of death during crucifixion see Matthew W. Maslen and Piers D. Mitchell, "Medical Theories on the Cause of Death in Crucifixion," *JRSocMed* 99 (2006): 185–89.

victim unable to lift his body to breathe. Often it was employed as a form of mercy, but in Jesus' case the Jews requested it because the next day was a Sabbath and they did not want bodies to hang on the cross during the Sabbath (Jn. 19:31).

Upon finding Jesus dead already, the soldiers refrain from breaking Jesus' legs and pierce His side with a spear instead. By doing so, none of His bones were broken. John sees this action as a fulfillment of the Old Testament and he quotes a scripture. However, the reference is ambiguous since no Old Testament scripture matches verbatim. Many scholars think that the quote is a convergence of three different passages: Ex. 12:46, Num. 9:12, and Ps. 34:20.¹⁶

Both Exodus and Numbers give the instruction not to break any of the bones of the Paschal lamb. Psalm 34 appears to be unrelated to Passover. It is a promise of God's protection over the righteous person.

Jn. 19:36b, “.....Not one of his bones will be broken.”
Ex. 12:46b, “...you shall.....not break any of its bones.”
Num. 9:12a, “They shall leave none of it until the morning, nor break any of its bones...”
Ps. 34:20, “He keeps all his bones;.....not one of them is broken.”

¹⁶ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 553; Talbert, *Reading John*, 245.

The above table demonstrates the slight differences between the verses. Ps. 34:20 matches the quote in several respects. First, both verses refer to an individual (his), whereas both Exodus and Numbers refer to a lamb (it). Second, both verses appear in the form of a promise. It is a small step from “not one of them *is* broken” to “not one of his bones *will be* broken” (Italics added). Exodus and Numbers on the other hand are commands, not promises. Thus, based upon the mere grammatical correspondence, the similarity between John 19:36 and Psalms 34:20 lends strong evidence toward it serving as the intended reference for John’s quote.

However, two factors should carefully be considered at this point in the discussion. First, as established earlier in this chapter, allusions may have more than one referent. Thus, John may be referring to more than one Old Testament passage. Some may object that this is not an allusion, but a direct quotation. Granted, John 19:36 is a quote. However, the fact that it does not match any Old Testament verse verbatim should cause us to carefully consider the conclusion of Köstenberger who writes: “two sets of scripture converge.”¹⁷ If this is the case, which seems most likely, then John’s reference to Psalms 34:20 in no way weakens the present thesis that John is also referring to the instructions for the paschal lamb.

The second factor that should be considered is the context of John’s crucifixion narrative. Already, two possible allusions to the Passover have been established as both possible and likely and others will be presented below. If John is using these various

¹⁷ Köstenberger, *John*, 553.

elements within his narrative to allude to Passover, then certainly there are enough of these allusions to constitute describing John's understood context for the crucifixion as paschal. Consequently, though Psalms 34:20 may more closely fit John's quote grammatically, Exodus 12:46 and Numbers 9:12 may more closely fit the context and theology of John's crucifixion narrative.

The volume of scholarly discussion concerning John's quotation of the Old Testament should not mislead the reader; the allusion in question in this thesis is not the quotation, but the mentioning of Jesus' escape of the crurifragium. The quotation however, provides valuable insight into what John's intentions were. Given his quotation of the Old Testament in this passage, which most likely includes a reference to the preparation of the paschal lamb (Ex. 12:46 and Num. 9:12), and his statement that Jesus' escape from the crurifragium fulfilled scripture (Jn. 19:36), it seems most reasonable to label his mentioning of Jesus' escape of the crurifragium as an intended allusion to Passover, in particular to the paschal lamb.

Jesus' Pierced Side

Some scholars suggest the piercing of Jesus' side as a possible allusion to the sacrifice of the paschal lamb.¹⁸ Had this event occurred in a different context, it would be difficult to support it as a paschal allusion. However, given the apparent level of

¹⁸ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 vols. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), II:1153; Köstenberger, *John*, 553.

saturation of allusions to Passover in John's crucifixion narrative, it should be considered. The placement of this detail in relation to the other paschal allusions is also a factor. Since John has already identified Jesus as the Lamb of God, set the crucifixion within the context of Passover, mentioned the hyssop, and described Jesus' escape of the crurifragium, the reader familiar with Passover could easily make the connection between the piercing of Jesus' side and some of the rabbinical requirements for the paschal lamb.

The history and development of the celebration of the Passover becomes helpful at this point. At its institution, the Passover was celebrated in the home with each family slaughtering and preparing its own lamb (Ex. 12). Later, the sacrifice of the paschal lamb was carried out in a central location. The instructions given in Deuteronomy demonstrate the centralization of the sacrifice: "You may not offer the Passover sacrifice within any of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, but at the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell in it, there you shall offer the Passover sacrifice..."¹⁹ By the time of Jesus, the temple had become the central place of worship,²⁰ consequently the paschal lambs were slaughtered in temple.²¹ In addition to the biblical instructions regarding the Passover, the Rabbis had developed several regulations concerning the sacrifice. Among the regulations recorded in the *Mishnah*, at least three are of relevance to the piercing of Jesus: *Pesahim* 5.9, *Pesahim* 7.1, and *Tamid* 4.2.

¹⁹ Deu. 16:5–6a.

²⁰ Jn. 6:20.

²¹ *m. Pesahim* 5.5–6.

Keener references *Pesahim* 5.9 and 7.1 and acknowledges that the piercing of Jesus may constitute an intended allusion to Passover, but he expresses some reserve: “An allusion to Passover is plausible and possible but fails to explain the entire point of 19:34.” Before the *Mishnah* references are examined, Keener’s concern should be addressed. It should first be noted, that no scholar, as far as this writer knows, claims that the intended meaning of the details of John’s crucifixion narrative identified as paschal allusions is limited to ideas related to Passover. It seems most likely that John included the piercing of Jesus’ side and the testimony of the flow of blood and water to present evidence of Jesus’ certain physical death.²² However, this intention does not restrict John from alluding to the paschal lamb. Just as an allusion may have more than one Old Testament referent, it may also serve more than one purpose in a text. Thus, John’s other motives should not be considered as evidence against his intended allusion to the Passover.

The first text cited by Keener is *Pesahim* 5.9.

“How did they hang up the carcasses and flay them? There were iron hooks fixed in the walls and pillars, and on these they used to hang and flay, there were thin smooth staves which a man could put on his own and his fellow’s shoulder and so hang and flay [his offering]...”²³

Although more detailed accounts of the hooks and the manner in which they were used are not available, the assumption from this text is that the hooks pierced the lamb

²² Köstenberger, *John*, 552; Gary M. Burge, *John*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 532.

²³ *m. Pesahim* 5.9.

and held its body—such was the case with the daily whole offering.²⁴ Since each Israelite, or at least the one representing his family group, slaughtered his own lamb,²⁵ most Jews would have been thoroughly familiar with the hooks and the piercing of the lambs in the temple. Arguably, the reference to the hanging of the lambs more closely parallels the hanging of Jesus on the cross than it does the piercing of His side. However, before drawing any conclusions concerning John's intentions, the other Mishnaic passages should be reviewed.

The second reference noted by Keener is from *Pesahim* 7.1: “How do they roast the Passover-offering? They bring a skewer of pomegranate-wood and thrust it through from its mouth to its buttocks, laying its legs and its entrails inside it.”²⁶ The image of thrusting a skewer completely through an animal could easily be described as piercing the animal. As with the previous reference, the administration of the practice by the offerer and not the priest would ensure that Jewish readers of John's Gospel, or at least those who had pilgrimaged to Jerusalem before the fall of the temple to celebration Passover, would have been well aware of this practice and many of them would have actually have performed this practice on occasion for their family group.

²⁴ *m. Tamid* 4.2.

²⁵ *m. Pesahim* 5.6.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.1.

The third Mishnaic text, *Tamid* 4.2, has been suggested by Köstenberger as possibly relating to John's allusion to Passover.²⁷

“He [that slaughtered it] did not break its hind-leg but pierced the knee-joint and so hung it up; he flayed it downwards as far as the breast; when he reached the breast he cut off the head and gave it to him whose lot it was to take it. He cut off the shanks and gave them to him whose lot it was to take them. He stripped off all the hide, slit the heart and let out its blood. He cut off the fore-legs and gave them to him whose lot it was to take them...”²⁸

The *Tamid* quoted here is a tractate dealing with the daily whole offering, not specifically the paschal lamb. However, in *Pesahim* 6.5, instructions are given to identify the name of the sacrifice before slaughtering the victim in order to make it valid. If the sacrificial victims were prepared in a completely different manner, there would be no need for such efforts at clarification. Given this warning, it seems reasonable to conclude that many of the practices that applied to the slaughter of the daily whole offering would also apply to the paschal lamb. It seems most likely then to conclude that the heart of the paschal lamb was also slit to drain the blood.

The physiological aspects of the piercing of Jesus will be examined in more detail in the next chapter; given that a detailed review of the medical evidence will be presented at that time, it should suffice at this point to state that the most likely explanation of the piercing of Jesus, resulting in the flow of blood and water, is that His heart was pierced.

²⁷ Köstenberger, *John*, 553, footnote 71.

²⁸ *m. Tamid* 4.2.

Such a description would parallel the slitting of the heart of the paschal lambs in the temple.

Having now surveyed three Mishnaic texts, a comparison of the three will be given to help identify if any may have been intended to serve as a referent for John's description of the piercing of Jesus. First, it seems fairly clear that the reference in the *Tamid* most closely relates to John's account. Although the hanging of the paschal lambs almost certainly involved piercing them with the hooks, the dominant image related to the hooks seems to be that of hanging not piercing. Again with the piercing of the paschal lambs with the pomegranate pole, the purpose was to hold the lamb in place, not release its blood. If John had described the soldier's spear as impaling Jesus and holding Him to the cross, then *Pesahim* 7.1 would perhaps be the most likely referent.

Second, if the purpose of the regulations is compared, the slitting of the heart seems to be more central to the sacrifice of the lamb. The regulations to hang the animal on the hook and to pierce it were both instructions regarding how to hold the animal while preparing it—peripheral issues for the theology of the sacrifice. However, the release of the blood was central to the sacrifice. Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that *Tamid* 4.2 is the most likely of the three Mishnaic passages as the referent to John's allusion.

Still, evidence capable of demonstrating beyond all doubt that John had any of these requirements in mind is not known to be extant. However, since John's other paschal allusions are considered to be surrounding the mentioning of the piercing of Jesus' side, the requirement preserved in the *Tamid* becomes an attractive referent. Yet,

the piercing of Jesus' side is not the only aspect of the soldier's action that corresponds to rabbinic regulations; the flow of blood and water that resulted from the soldier's action may have also been seen by John as a fulfillment of the requirements of paschal sacrifice.

The Flow of Blood and Water

The flow of blood and water from the side of Jesus has generated multiple interpretations. This study will consider whether John could have been alluding to the sacrifice of the paschal lamb. While the biblical text does not discuss the flowing of blood of the paschal lamb, rabbinic laws require that the blood of the sacrificial animal not be congealed, but flow freely. Since the present study is not limited to inner-biblical allusions, but it also considering allusions to the event of Passover, a connection between the free flow of Jesus' blood and the rabbinical requirement of free flowing blood in sacrificial animals should be considered.

J. Massingberd Ford first suggested that John's description of the blood and water may be an allusion to the paschal lamb, later followed by C. K. Barrett.²⁹ Ford saw a connection with three rabbinical texts: *Ohaloth*, *Hullin*, and *Pesahim*. *Ohaloth* 3.5 reads:

“What is ‘mixed blood’? The blood of a corpse of which an eighth [of a log] issued during life time and an eighth after death. This is the opinion of R. Akiba. R. Ismael says: [we must imagine] a quarter [of a log to have issued] during the lifetime and a quarter after death, [then it is] a quarter taken from both of these. R. Eleazar son of R. Juday says: Both of these

²⁹ J. Massingberd Ford, “Mingled Blood From the Side of Christ (John XIX. 34),” *NTS* 15 (1969): 337–38; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 557.

are *as water*. What then is ‘mixed blood’? It is that of a *crucified person* whose blood is streaming for the and under whom is found a quarter [of a log] of blood. It is unclean. Thank, however, of a corpse whose blood drips for the and under whom is found a quarter [of a log] of blood, is clear. *R. Judah says: not so, but that which streams forth is clean and that which drips forth is unclean.*”³⁰

Three points in this writing parallel John’s description of the blood and water.

First, the mixed blood is described as being as water. It does not identify the substance as being water, but states that it is like water. John reports seeing blood and water. While modern medical science teaches us that water, at least by the current scientific designation of H₂O, could not have flowed from Jesus’ side, clear serum resembling water could have. To insist that John was referring to H₂O is anachronistic. It is far more likely that John is describing a substance that had the appearance of water, just as the Mishnah text *Ohaloth*.

Second, *Ohaloth* discusses the blood of a crucified person. Thus, the discussion is completely pertinent to Jesus’ death. Third, the distinguishing factor in determining whether the blood is clean or unclean is the manner in which it exits the body. If it drips, then it is unclean; if it streams forth, then it is clean. John narrates: “but one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water” (Jn. 19:34). The word here translated “at once” is εὐθύς. Since it occurs here in the emphatic position, Ford suggests that it may be the equivalent of פִּנָּה “spurted forth.”³¹

³⁰ *m. Ohalot* 3.5; Italics added by Ford.

³¹ Ford, “Mingled Blood,” 338.

A second text, *Hullin*, concerns the slaughtering of animals. *Hullin* 2.6 reads:

“If a man slaughtered a beast that was at the point of death, R. Simeon b. Gamaliel says: [It is not valid] unless it can jerk a fore-leg and a hind-leg. R. Eliezar says: It suffices if [when it is slaughtered] the blood spurts forth. R. Simeon said [Even] if he had slaughtered it by night and came early in the morning and found the walls [of the neck] filled with blood, it is still valid, since its blood spurted forth.”³²

This passage demonstrates once again the importance of the manner in which the blood exits the body. It is consistent with the instructions of *Ohalot* and demonstrates that this was an important regulation regarding the cleanness of blood.

A final text comes from the tractate *Pesachim* which gives instructions for the preparation of the paschal lamb. Ford notes two passages which demonstrate the importance of the blood of the lamb being mingled and not congealed. *Pesachim* 5.5 reads: “Nor had the basins [for receiving the blood of the slaughtered Passover lamb] bases, lest the priests should set them down and the blood congeal.”³³ The second passage is from *Pesachim* 5.8: “they used to fill a cup with mingled blood [that was spilt] and toss it in one action against the Altar.”³⁴ John describes blood and water; thus, it was mingled. He further describes it as flowing; thus, it was not congealed.

If John was portraying Jesus as the paschal lamb, he may well have been describing the flow of blood and water in order to demonstrate that he was a legitimate

³² *Hullin* 2.6.

³³ *Pesachim* 5.5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.8

sacrifice, meeting the rabbinical requirements for a paschal lamb. Given the nature of typology it would not be necessary for Jesus to have met these requirements in order to be the type of the paschal lamb. However, the more points of contact that are identified between the type and the ante-type, the more recognizable and obvious the communication of the type. If John is choosing to include details from the crucifixion in which he sees the fulfillment of the paschal lamb, then the correspondence of his description of Jesus' blood and the rabbinical requirements for a sacrifice are unlikely to be mere coincidence.

Jesus as the Door

In the first Passover, the children of Israel were instructed to take the blood and smear it on the lintel and the two doorposts. John earlier presents Jesus as the door. Frank Waetjen and others have proposed that the blood flowing down the side of Jesus is an allusion to the blood on the door during the first Passover. No doubt the connection is brilliant. Whether it was in John's mind or not is a different question.

There are several difficulties with identifying the flowing blood as an allusion to the door. First, there is not complete correspondence between the two images. Jesus is identified as the door, and yet the blood was not smeared on the door but around the door on the lintel and doorposts.

Second, the metaphor of Jesus as the door is difficult to equate with the door of the Israelite homes. In John, Jesus is the door through which the sheep enter. In Exodus 12, the doorposts and lintel smeared with blood is the sign to God to Passover their homes. A final difficulty is that John does not mention Jesus as the door in the crucifixion

narrative. Thus, it is a lot to expect the reader to make the connection from an earlier reference in the text.

Conclusion

The above discussion shows many connections between the details of John's crucifixion narrative and Passover. The open question is whether or John intended for any of these connections to allude to the Passover, and thus, enrich the meaning of his text. How can authorial intention be proved beyond all doubt? If a method existed capable of demonstrating with complete certainty the intentions of the author, hermeneutics would be reduced to a mathematical science—apply the method, calculate the results. Such a method does not exist; and yet, interpretation is not random either. It is, in essence, a subjective determination based upon probability. The interpreter weighs all available evidence and determines the most likely intention of the author.

It has been the goal of this chapter to introduce the reader to the most significant evidence in favor of the various details of John's crucifixion narrative having been selected and utilized by the author to connect Jesus' death with Passover. As a single exhibit, perhaps none of the items under discussion here merit identifying Jesus as a type of Passover or of the paschal lamb. However, taken as a cumulative whole, the evidence given here provides a strong case in support of John's intended paschal typology.

Ultimately, the reader will judge whether the evidence presented here warrants the conclusion that John has selected various details to include in his narrative in order to communicate a paschal typological significance to the death of Christ. However, it will be far easier to conclude that the correspondence between the death of Christ and the

Passover in John's Gospel are intentional, than to explain the probability of all of these connections being coincidental.

Still, typology is not to be found in the mind of the author, but in history itself. For many, it is reasonable to conclude that John intended these details to point toward Jesus as the fulfillment of Passover, but implausible to suggest that his narrative is historically reliable. It will therefore be necessary to examine the evidence in favor of each of these details being real historical events that took place at Jesus' crucifixion.

CHAPTER 3

THE HISTORICITY OF THE PASCHAL ALLUSIONS

The historical reliability of John's Gospel as a whole has often been challenged by New Testament scholars. Characterizations such as the "spiritual" gospel have been used to focus reader's attention away from the historical report of John, seeing it as less reliable than the Synoptics. The paschal allusions in the crucifixion narrative are no exception to this skepticism. Such views of the character and nature of John's Gospel have led many scholars to view the paschal allusions as mere literary devices—details created by John to serve his theological purposes. While the paschal allusions may be literary devices utilized by John, this use does not preclude their historical reality.

As will be demonstrated below, ample evidence exists to establish all of the details alluding to the Passover as historically possible. As with most of history, our reconstruction of events is limited to the available literary and physical evidence. However, there is enough known evidence to establish what most likely took place at the crucifixion. In fact, if the amount and credibility of the available witnesses were compared with the evidence used to establish other events in history, John's account of the crucifixion might be shown to be far more supported than many other events presented as fact in various academic circles.

The allusions do not all face the same level of skepticism—some are more contested than others. The use of hyssop, for example, is widely questioned, while few

scholars doubt the practice of the *crurifragium*. Still, for the sake of completeness, a presentation of the main evidence available for each allusion will be given. Each allusion will be treated separately in canonical order. The allusion to be considered is John's reference to the day of preparation of Passover.

The Day of Preparation of Passover

Most of the criticism against the historicity of the day of preparation of Passover has been based upon two assumptions. First, it is assumed that the day in question was Nisan 14th, the day when the lambs were slaughtered in the temple to prepare for the Passover meal. Second, this report is seen as being in direct contradiction with the chronology of the Synoptics, which are to be viewed as more reliable. Thus, some assume that John is creating the date. It will be demonstrated first that Nisan 14th is one of two likely interpretations—both of which are possible given the historical data. While space will not allow for a full discussion of the relation between the Johannine and Synoptic chronology, it should here be noted that the intended Synoptic chronology is no more certain than the Johannine. Hence, whichever interpretation of John's use of the phrase "day of preparation" is chosen, the interpreter should not fear contradicting the Synoptics.

Since the purpose of this section is to establish the historicity of the paschal allusions, no effort will be made to determine which of the two following views is correct. Instead, it will be established that both interpretations are well supported by literary evidence. Further, since both interpretations place the death of Jesus within the week of Passover and connect His death with the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb, either

interpretation leads to the conclusion that the day of preparation of Passover is a historical allusion to the Passover.

The day of preparation for Passover is very problematic for interpreters. Part of the difficulty in understanding the phrase stems from its infrequent use in the New Testament. The word παρασκευῆ occurs only six times in the New Testament and is used only to identify the day of Jesus' crucifixion (Matt 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14, 31, 42). Three of these six occurrences are in John's crucifixion narrative. When παρασκευῆ occurs alone, in both the New Testament and Jewish literature, it refers to Friday, the day before the Sabbath.¹ John first uses the term in 19:14, “ἦν δὲ παρασκευῆ τοῦ πάσχα.”² Nowhere else in the New Testament is παρασκευῆ used with the genitive, τοῦ πάσχα—making the interpretation of this verse difficult. While most scholars would agree that the day of preparation (παρασκευῆ) is Friday³ (the day when preparations were made to observe the Sabbath), it is the addition of the genitival phrase,

¹ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2d, rev. and aug. by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 622; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 16.163–164; Mark 15:42; For a description of the day of preparation for the Sabbath see Eduard Lohse, “σάββατον,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. VII, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 15.

² None of the major texts cite any variant readings for this phrase.

³ Köstenberger, *John*, 537; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 708; Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. by John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 606; Cullen I. K. Story, “The Bearing of Old Testament Terminology on the Johannine Chronology of the Final Passover of Jesus,” *NovT* 31, no. 4 (1989): 318; Note also the *Didache* 8.2, “the preparation (the sixth) day.”

τοῦ πάσχα, that has generated countless proposals for John's intended chronology. Although many other options have been presented by scholars, two interpretations appear to be the most likely possibilities: the day before the Sabbath of Passover week and the day before the celebration of the Passover (Nisan 14th).

Each of the three Synoptics mentions the day of preparation (Matt 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54). Mark specifies that the day of preparation is the day before the Sabbath: "since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath" (Mark 15:42b). Luke also implies that the day of preparation occurs before the Sabbath: "It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning" (Luke 23:54).

In addition to the Synoptics, the *Didache* also attests to a preparation day and identifies it as the sixth day of the week: "but do ye keep your fast on the fourth and on the preparation (the sixth) day."⁴ Further evidence is found in Josephus' writing *Antiquities of the Jews*: "and that they be not obliged to go before any judge on the Sabbath day, nor on the day of the preparation to it, after the ninth hour."⁵ The *Babylonian Talmud* also makes clear reference to the day of Preparation: "that this day (the eve of the Sabbath) was a day of preparation, and that work had to be performed for the Sabbath."⁶

⁴ *Didache* 8:2

⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 16.6.

⁶ *b. Sabbath*, 16.

The wide range of early references discussed above leaves little doubt that the day of preparation was a term used to describe the day before the Sabbath. Further, Luke's statement regarding the Passover seems to indicate that by Jesus' day the phrase Passover had come to be used to refer to the entire celebration of both Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Luke writes: "Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover."⁷ Thus, the day of preparation of Passover may simply indicate the Friday of Passover week.

However, does the addition of the phrase "of Passover" refer to something other than the day of preparation for the Sabbath? Could it refer to the day before the Passover meal, Nisan 14th, when the lambs were slain in the temple to prepare for the celebration? Many scholars believe that it does refer to Nisan 14th, and that John mentions it to emphasize that Jesus was killed at the same time as the lambs in the temple.⁸ Such a view is widely supported by both Christian and Jewish literary sources.

There can be little doubt that the belief that Jesus died on Nisan 14th was widespread among early Christians. One of the earliest writings (*circa* late 2nd century) supporting Nisan 14th is from Clement of Alexandria who writes: "He who was the

⁷ Luke 22:1.

⁸ Barrett, *John*, 544; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 341; William E. Hull, "John," in *Luke-John*, vol. 9, *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, ed. Clifton J. Allen (Nashville: Broadman, 1970), 357; G. H. C. Macgregor, *The Gospel of John*, *The Moffatt New Testament Commentary Series*, ed. James Moffatt (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1929), 349; R. H. Strachan, *The Fourth Gospel: Its Significance and Environment*, 3d ed. (London: SCM Press, 1960), 317; Waetjen, *Beloved Disciple*, 401.

Passover...taught His disciples the mystery of the type on the thirteenth day...It was on this day, then, that...the preparation for the feast took place...And on the following day our Saviour suffered...”⁹ About 100 years after Clement, Peter the bishop of Alexandria writes: “He Himself, as the true Lamb, was sacrificed for us in the feast of the typical Passover, on the day of the preparation, the fourteenth of the first lunar month.”¹⁰ With both Clement and Peter writing as the major Christian leader in Alexandria during their own respective times, it seems reasonable to conclude that their writing characterizes the main view of the Christian church in Alexandria for at least a century.

The historian Eusebius (writing between 324 AD and 326 AD)¹¹ describes a major conflict that erupted during the second century between the churches of Asia and the rest of the world concerning Nisan 14th and the celebration of Christ’s Passover.¹² Philip Schaff comments: “The gist of the paschal controversy was, whether the Jewish paschal-day (be it a Friday or not), or the Christian Sunday, should control the idea and time of the entire festival.”¹³ The churches of Asia held that Nisan 14th, regardless of

⁹ This writing is no longer extant. Our only source is a quote in the Paschal Chronicle. The above translation is taken from Philip Schaff, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. II (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 581.

¹⁰ Schaff, *Ante-Nicene*, 282.

¹¹ For support of this date see Andrew Louth, “The Date of Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica*,” *JTS* 41 (1990): 111–123.

¹² Eusebius, *Church History*, Book V, Chapter XXIII.

¹³ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. II (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 212.

what day of the week it fell upon, should be celebrated as Christ's Passover, while the rest of the world argued that the resurrection should be always be celebrated on Sunday. Unfortunately, many of the known writings about this subject from the second century are no longer extant. However, enough writings are in existence to demonstrate that at the heart of the controversy was the belief that Jesus died on Nisan 14th.

We have two fragments of the writings of Claudius Apolinarius (second century) on this subject that have been preserved in the *Paschal Chronicle*.¹⁴ Together they make clear that the controversy was over whether Jesus died on Nisan 14th or celebrated the supper on Nisan 14th. They are as follows:

“There are some now who, from ignorance, love to raise strife about these things, being guilty in this of a pardonable offence; for ignorance does not so much deserve blame as need instruction. And they say that on *the fourteenth* [of Nisan] *the Lord ate the paschal lamb* (τὸ πρῶτον ἔφαγε) with his disciples, but that He himself suffered on the great day of unleavened bread [i.e. the fifteenth of Nisan]; and they interpret Matthew as favoring their view from which it appears that their view does not agree with the law, and that the Gospels seem, according to them, to be at variance.”

“The Fourteenth is the true Passover of the Lord, the great sacrifice, the Son of God in the place of the lamb ... who was lifted up upon the horns of the unicorn ... and who was buried on the day of the Passover, the stone having been placed upon his tomb.”

In addition to the witness of Apolinarius, we also have fragments from Hippolytus, bishop of Portus. In his book, *Against All Heresies*, he writes: “when Christ suffered He did not eat the Passover of the law. For He was the Passover that had been of

¹⁴ Both fragments are cited by Schaff, *History*, 214–215.

old proclaimed, and that was fulfilled on that determinate day.”¹⁵ In a treatise on the Holy Supper he wrote: “He who said of old, ‘I will not any more eat the Passover,’ probably partook of supper before the Passover. But the Passover He did not eat, but He suffered.”¹⁶ While Hippolytus does not mention any dates, he places the Lord’s Supper before the Passover—at the latest the beginning of Nisan 14th.

Further evidence is provided by the *Epistle of the Apostles*, an orthodox writing dated about 160 AD.¹⁷ This document reads: “But do ye commemorate my death. Now when the Passover (Easter, pascha) cometh...”¹⁸ It would appear from this writing that the basis for celebrating a Christian Passover on Nisan 14th is to commemorate the death of Jesus, which took place on this day.¹⁹

All of the writings discussed thus far have been Christian sources. However, we also possess two early Jewish writings supporting Nisan 14th as the day of Jesus’ death. First, the *Babylonian Talmud* reads: “On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged...he

¹⁵ This fragment was preserved by the author of the Paschal Chronicle. Hippolytus, *Against All Heresies*, in Unknown Translator, “Hippolytus Fragments: Part II.-Dogmatical and Historical,” Unknown Date, < www.piney.com/FathHippoDogmaticII.html > (Accessed on September 11, 2006).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ This date is given by C. Schmidt, “Die Passahfeier in der kleinasiatischen Kirche,” *TU XLIII* (1919): 577–725.

¹⁸ This English translation is from M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1950), 489.

¹⁹ See C. Schmidt, “Die Passahfeier,” 577–725. Schmidt proposed this thesis in a excursus appended to his translation of the text. For a discussion of Schmidt’s thesis see Cyril C. Richardson, “The Quartodecimans and the Synoptic Chronology,” *HTR* 33, no. 3 (1940): 177–190.

was hanged on the eve of the Passover!”²⁰ While some question whether this text definitely refers to Jesus, Morris Goldstein argues: “This appears to be definite testimony in the early rabbinic data.”²¹ Goldstein dates this statement before 220 AD.²²

The second Jewish reference, from the *Toledoth Yeshu*, unquestionably refers to Jesus. “That year the Passover came on a Sabbath day...Yeshu was put to death on the sixth hour on the eve of the Passover and of the Sabbath.”²³ According to Goldstein, the earliest specific mention of elements in the *Toledoth Yeshu* was in 826 AD.²⁴ However, William Horbury has demonstrated that Tertullian (late second century) cited material contained in the *Toledoth Yeshu* on two different occasions.²⁵ Therefore, the material in this writing, if not the writing itself, may be as early as mid-second century.

While none of these writings were written by eye-witnesses of Jesus and cannot establish the chronology of His death, they do prove that the belief that Jesus died on Nisan 14th was widespread among both early Christians and Jews who would have been familiar with the use of the phrase “day of preparation of Passover.” That they interpreted

²⁰ *b. Sanhedrin*, 43a.

²¹ Morris Goldstein, *Jesus in the Jewish Tradition* (New York: MacMillan, 1950) , 22; For an argument against Goldstein’s view see Gil Student, “The Jesus Narrative in the Talmud,” Unknown Date, < www.angelfire.com/mt/talmud/jesusnarr.html > (Accessed on September 11, 2006).

²² Goldstein, *Jesus*, 29.

²³ *Toledoth Yeshu*. English translation taken from Goldstein, *Jesus*, 152.

²⁴ Goldstein, *Jesus*, 147.

²⁵ William Horbury, “Tertullian on the Jews in the Light of De Spectaculis XXX. 5–6,” *JTS* 23 (1972): 455–459.

it to mean Nisan 14th demonstrates that they saw no contradiction between their interpretation and historical sources known in their day. Scholars, then, who interpret the day of preparation of the Passover to be Nisan 14th do so based upon strong literary evidence.

While it cannot be proven from outside sources whether John intended the Friday of the week of Passover or the day before Passover, it can be demonstrated that both are historically possible. Further, either interpretation would be consistent with the limited literary evidence available—leaving the interpreter no reason to dismiss the typological significance of the day of preparation based upon skepticism of its historical occurrence, regardless of which interpretation is preferred.

The Use of Hyssop

Many scholars have doubted the historical reliability of John's description of the use of hyssop at the crucifixion, based upon the premise that the plant is insufficient to lift a wet sponge.²⁶ Others have suggested that the text may be corrupt and that John may have been describing a spear instead of a plant.²⁷ Both of these ideas present several difficulties, which will be outlined in this section of the paper. Evidence demonstrating the possibility of hyssop being used just as narrated by John will also be presented.

²⁶ Gerald S. Sloyan, *John*, Interpretation Commentary Series, ed. James Luther Mays (Atlanta: John Knox, 1988), 211; Waetjen, *Beloved Disciple*, 401.

²⁷ E. W. G. Masterman, "Hyssop," in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949).

One of the major difficulties in this discussion is the identity of the plant referred to as hyssop in John 19:29. O. Celsius discussed eighteen proposals in his 18th century herbal and certainly many other identifications have been suggested since then.²⁸ Botanist Harold Moldenke writes: “The word “hyssop”—Hebrew “êzôb” or ezov” (Greek, ὕσσωπος)—is unquestionably the most puzzling and controversial of all the words in the Bible applying, or thought to apply, to plants and plant products.”²⁹ R. K. Harrison comments regarding the identity of the biblical hyssop: “it is very improbable that we shall ever know the true nature of this important biblical plant.”³⁰ Yet, despite this uncertainty in identifying the plant, many scholars seem certain that it was insufficient to lift a sponge of vinegar. Strachan writes: “Hyssop is not a plant which could provide a stalk long enough or stout enough for the purpose.”³¹

Among the different plants that have been suggested as the hyssop of the Bible, several would have been sufficient to lift a wet sponge. For instance, J. F. Royle argues

²⁸ O. Celsius, *Hierobotanicon*, 2 vols. (Unknown: Unknown, 1745–47). Cited by Alfred C. Andrews, “Hyssop in the Classical Era,” *CP* 56, no. 4 (1961): 230.

²⁹ Harold N. Moldenke and Alma L. Moldenke, *Plants of the Bible* (Waltham, Mass: Chronica Botanica, 1952), 160.

³⁰ R. K. Harrison, “The Biblical Problem of Hyssop,” *EQ* 26 (1954): 224.

³¹ Strachan, *Fourth Gospel*, 320; So also J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, 2 vols., A. H. McNeile, ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1953), 640; Thaddeus M. Harris, *The Natural History of the Bible* (Boston: I. Thomas and E. T. Andrews, 1793; reprint Ontario: Provoker, 1968), 172 (page citations are to the reprint edition); William Temple, *Readings in St. John’s Gospel* (London: Macmillan, 1955), 368–9; Waetjen, *Beloved Disciple*, 401.

that the biblical hyssop is the common caper (*Capparis sicula*).³² The caper is a spiny shrub that grows four to five feet tall,³³ completely sufficient to lift a wet sponge.³⁴ In addition to the caper, the *Sorghum vulgare* has been suggested as the hyssop of John.³⁵ Moldenke describes this plant as being sufficient to raise the wet sponge: “the stem of this grass is truly reed-like and 5 or more feet tall.”³⁶ Another possibility, also sufficient to lift a wet sponge is the Syrian hyssop (*Origanum syriacum*).³⁷ Botanist Michael Zohary describes this plant as being stout, reaching about 28 inches high.

While these plants are only a few of the suggestions that could be considered, these plants alone are enough to adequately demonstrate that hyssop could have been used to lift the sponge of vinegar to Jesus’ lips. Some scholars may still argue that some or all of the suggested plants above are not likely candidates for the hyssop used in the Passover in Egypt. However, it should be considered that the biblical hyssop is not a

³² J. Forbes Royle, “On the Hyssop of Scripture,” *JRAS* 5 (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1844): 510–20.

³³ Moldenke, *Plants*, 160.

³⁴ W. E. Shewell-Cooper, “Hyssop,” in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 235.

³⁵ Winifred Walker, *All the Plants of the Bible* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1957), 101–102; John W. Klotz, “Plants,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 2, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 1713.

³⁶ Moldenke, *Plants*, 161.

³⁷ Michael Zohary, *Plants of the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 96–97.

single species of plant, but instead it most likely refers to several different plants.³⁸ If this is the case, then it is not necessary for the hyssop used at the crucifixion to have been available in Egypt or for it to have been suitable for the other uses described in the Old Testament.

A further consideration is the height of the cross. Popular iconography has often portrayed the cross as being very tall. However, many scholars argue that the cross was most likely not very high.³⁹ Therefore the hyssop would not need to be very long or sturdy for a soldier to use it to lift the vinegar sponge just above his own head.

Once the sufficiency of hyssop has been established, objections to the text must also be addressed. Many scholars have argued that the word hyssop (ὑσσώπῳ) is a corruption of the text, proposing the word translated “pike” or “javelin” (ὑσσῶν) as the original text.⁴⁰ Both Herman Waetjen and Edgar J. Goodspeed credit a sixteen century text critic named J. Camerarius with first proposing ὑσσῶν as the original.⁴¹ Godet assesses the proposal as being, “ingenious, but not sufficiently well founded.” The following discussion will seek to prove Godet’s assessment accurate.

³⁸ So Shewell-Cooper, *Plants*, 76; Moldenke, *Plants*, 161.

³⁹ Frédéric Louis Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, (New York, Funk & Wagnalls, 1893), 389; Kenneth Grayston, *The Gospel of John* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 162; William Hendricksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953), 435; Colin G. Kruse, *John*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 370.

⁴⁰ Bernard, *John*, 640; Strachan, *Fourth Gospel*, 320.

⁴¹ Edgar J. Goodspeed, *Problems of New Testament Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), 116; Waetjen, *Beloved Disciple*, 401.

First, the textual evidence should be examined. The word ὑσσῶν occurs in only two known texts, minuscules 476 and 1242, both of which are late texts.⁴² Further, no other variants are reported concerning the word ὑσσώπω by the UBS4 committee and the verse is given an “A” rating. In fact, UBS4 cites the following texts as containing the word ὑσσώπω: P^{66vid}, \aleph^2 , B, L, W, Ψ , 1, 33, 565, and others.⁴³ Those who favor ὑσσῶν often argue that it makes more sense for the soldiers to have used a javelin to lift the sponge than hyssop. However, in textual criticism one of the principles followed in establishing texts is to choose the more difficult reading. In this instance, hyssop should be preferred over hyssos.⁴⁴

Second, roman military history should be considered. G. D. Kilpatrick has pointed out that the pilum (Latin translation of ὑσσῶν) was a weapon reserved for legionary troops and was not available to other troops.⁴⁵ Jesus was crucified in the late 20’s or early 30’s. Yet, no legionary troops were stationed in Judea before A. D. 66.⁴⁶ Thus, the troops at Jesus’ crucifixion would have been auxiliary troops who were not armed with a pilum. Thus, a ὑσσῶν would not have been available to them.

⁴² Waetjen, *Beloved Disciple*, 401.

⁴³ *UBS4*, 398.

⁴⁴ Waetjen, *Beloved Disciple*, 401.

⁴⁵ G. D. Kilpatrick, “The Transmission of the New Testament and Its Reliability,” *JTVI* 89 (1957): 99.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 99.

Further support for the use of hyssop at the crucifixion comes from external writings. The historian Baronius writes: “The vinegar, sponge, hyssop, reed were all regular accompaniments of a crucifixion.”⁴⁷ In Pliny’s *Natural History*, published around 77 AD, he describes the use of vinegar with hyssop to staunch blood.⁴⁸ Although some scholars have questioned the likelihood of the soldiers having hyssop available at the crucifixion site, the previous two texts may indicate that hyssop was taken to the crucifixion to be given to the victims.

Given this evidence, the use of hyssop at Jesus’ crucifixion seems not only possible, but likely. The skeptic who seeks then to deny the historical accuracy of John’s report may find other details of the crucifixion to be easier to categorize as implausible than the use of hyssop.

The Practice of the Crurifragium

The practice of crurifragium is well attested by both archeology and early literature. Yet, despite the thousands of crucifixions carried out by the Romans, definitive skeletal remains of a crucified person were not discovered until 1968. Within three burial caves in Givat’ ha-Mivtar, near Jerusalem, fifteen ossuaries were found containing the

⁴⁷ Caesar Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 34.120. Quoted in G. H. Trench, *A Study of St. John’s Gospel* (London: John Murray, 1918), 398.

⁴⁸ Pliny, *Natural History*, 23.27.

remains of 35 individuals.⁴⁹ One of the individuals—identified as a male in his mid to late twenties—had been crucified. Both legs had been broken in a manner consistent with the practice of *crurifragium*.⁵⁰ The skeletal remains were examined by anatomist Nico Haas from the Hebrew University-Hadassah Medical School. He published the following analysis:

“The right tibia and the left calf bones (tibia and fibula) were all broken in their last third at the same level, but in a different manner: the right tibia had brutally been fractured, by comminution, into sharp, large slivers; the left tibia and fibula were broken by a simple, oblique, dentate-serrate line. Both types of fracture are characteristic in fresh bone (Pl. 23:B-C). The fracture of the right tibial bone (the fibula being unavailable for study) was produced by a single, strong blow. This direct, deliberate blow may be attributed to the final ‘coup de grace’. The same blow had had indirect repercussions on the left ankle bones. The percussion, passing the already crushed right calf bones, was a harsh and severing blow for the left ones, attached as they were to the sharp-edged wooden cross. The simple, oblique but serrate fracture resulted from this bilateral sharp pression.”⁵¹

While Haas’ analysis points toward clear archeological support for the practice of *crurifragium*, some scholars have challenged his interpretation of the broken leg bones. In 1985, Joseph Zias and Eliezer Sekeles published an article criticizing the findings of Haas and claiming that the broken bones were the result of post-mortem breaks not

⁴⁹ N. Haas, “Anthropological Observations on the Skeletal Remains from Givat’ ha-Mivtar,” *IEJ* 20, no. 1–2 (1970): 38.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

crurifragium.⁵² Although the publication of Zias and Sekeles article has caused some scholars to doubt Haas' conclusions,⁵³ it has not proved Haas to be inaccurate; it has only demonstrated that the broken bones can be interpreted in more than one way. If the crucified man did not experience the practice of crurifragium, this fact in no way undermines the historical reality of the practice, since crucifixion was carried out in a variety of ways.

Josephus described a mass crucifixion in which the Romans crucified their victims in various positions: "So the soldiers, out of the wrath and hatred they bore the Jews, nailed those they caught, one after one way, and another after another, to the crosses, by way of jest..."⁵⁴ Further literary evidence for the variety of crucifixion methods comes from Lucius Anneus Seneca who also described a mass crucifixion: "I see crosses there, not just of one kind but made in many different ways: some have their victims with their head down to the ground, some impale their private parts, others stretch out their arms."⁵⁵

These references clearly establish that crucifixion was carried out in a variety of ways. Thus, the skeletal remains of a crucified individual who had experienced the

⁵² Joseph Zias and Eliezer Sekeles, "The Crucified Man from Givat' ha-Mivtar: a Reappraisal," *IEJ* 35, no. 1 (1985): 22–27.

⁵³ Keener, *John*, 1151.

⁵⁴ Josephus, *The War of the Jews*, 5.11.1

⁵⁵ H. C. Michaelis, ed. *De Consolatione ad Marciam* (Harlem: Vincent Loosjes, 1840) cited by Maslen, "Cause of Death," 185.

practice of *crurifragium* would be enough evidence to establish that the practice took place at times, but skeletal remains of a single crucified individual who had not experienced *crurifragium* would by no means bring the historicity of the practice into question.

In addition to the archeological evidence, strong literary evidence exists attesting to the practice of *crurifragium*. Early literature demonstrates that *crurifragium* was a practice independent of crucifixion. It was often used to punish slaves. Seneca's work on anger includes a caution against a master being too hasty in applying the punishment: "A fine thing we shall have done, no doubt, if we send a wretched slave to prison! Why are we in such a hurry to flog him at once, to break his legs forthwith?"⁵⁶ Plautus' *Poenulus* contains the only known occurrence of the word *crurifragium* in extant Roman literature.⁵⁷ In his work, two slaves discuss the possibility of their master discovering their mischief: "Why, if master knows I've blabbed to any living soul, the next second he'd change me from Syncerastus to Splintershanks (*continuo is me ex Syncerasto Crurifragium fecerit*)."⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Seneca, *De Ira*, 3.32.1

⁵⁷ Erkki Koskenniemi, Kirsi Nisula, and Jorma Toppari, "Wine Mixed with Myrrh (Mark 15.23) and *Crurifragium* (John 19.31–32): Two Details of the Passion Narratives," *JSNT* 27, no. 4 (2005): 386.

⁵⁸ Plautus, *Poenulus*, 884–86. Quoted in Koskenniemi, "Wine Mixed with Myrrh," 387; see also Plautus, *Epist.* 2.128–31.

In addition to slaves, the Romans also used it to persecute Christians. Eusebius records the persecution in his *Church History*: “Therefore it was commanded that our eyes should be put out, and that we should be maimed in one of our limbs. For such things were humane in their sight, and the lightest of punishments for us.”⁵⁹ In the instance recorded by Eusebius, the victims of the *crurifragium* were allowed to live, in fact, part of their punishment was to live with the results of a maimed leg. In other cases, however, the intention of the *crurifragium* was to induce pain as a form of torture just before a victim’s execution. Ammianus Marcellinus describes such an occurrence: “And after many had been put to death, the two Apollinares, father and son, were exiled; but when they had come to a twenty-four miles from Antioch, their legs were broken, according to orders, and they were killed.”⁶⁰ Polybius describes men being tortured partly through *crurifragium* and then left to die: “After cutting off their hands they cut off the wretched men’s other extremities too, and after thus mutilating them and breaking their legs, threw them still alive into a trench.”⁶¹

These texts demonstrate that *crurifragium* was a common practice of the Romans, that it was a distinct practice from crucifixion, and that it was employed in a variety of ways to achieve various results. These facts are important to the case for the historicity of John’s narrative, since he records two of the three victims receiving the *crurifragium*, and

⁵⁹ Eusebius, *Church History*, 8.12.10.

⁶⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus, *The History*, 14.9.8.

⁶¹ Polybius, *The Histories*, 1.80.13.

the third, being Jesus, escaping the crurifragium. Also important to the present discussion are those texts which describe the crurifragium being used in conjunction with a crucifixion.

The account of Andreas' martyrdom illustrates that crurifragium was commonly used during a crucifixion as a means of mercy.

“And he gave orders for him to be beaten with seven scourges. After that he ordered he was to be crucified. And he instructed the executioners not to break his legs (τὰς ἀγκύλας καταλειφθῆναι), intending in that way to make his punishment more severe.”⁶²

The Gospel of Peter also demonstrates that the normal practice of the Romans was to show mercy to the crucified victims by hastening their death with crurifragium.

“[10] And they brought two wrongdoers and crucified the Lord in the middle of them. But he was silent as having no pain. [11] And when they had set the cross upright, they inscribed that THIS IS THE KING OF ISRAEL. [12] And having put his garments before him, they divided them up and threw as a gamble for them. [13] But a certain one of those wrongdoers reviled them, saying: 'We have been made suffer thus because of the wrong that we have done; but this one, having become Savior of men, what injustice had he done to you?' [14] And having become irritated at him, they ordered that there be no leg-breaking, so that he might die tormented.”⁶³

Lactantius explicitly states that it was the custom of the Romans to practice the crurifragium during a crucifixion: “Therefore, because He had laid down His life while

⁶² Martyrium Andreae, *Alterum I*, Quoted in John Dominic Crossan, *The Cross That Spoke: The Origins of the Passion Narrative* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 164.

⁶³ *The Gospel of Peter*, 10–14.

fastened to the cross, His executioners did not think it necessary to break His bones (as was their prevailing custom), but they only pierced His side.”⁶⁴

Some scholars, such as John Gill, have argued that it was not the custom of the Romans to hasten the death of crucified individuals through crurifragium, but to let them die slowly.⁶⁵ However, the three texts cited above clearly indicate the opposite, that crurifragium was the custom while prolonged agony was the exception. *The Martyrdom of Andreas* and *The Gospel of Peter* both include examples of individuals who were denied the usual practice of crurifragium in order to extend their torture. Other scholars point to Pliny’s *Natural History* for evidence against the common use of crurifragium. However, a careful look at the context of Pliny’s statement will show that his writing is actually consistent with the custom of crurifragium. He reports:

“For this evil, however, the king devised a singular remedy, and one that has never been resorted to either before that time or since: for he ordered the bodies of all who had been thus guilty of self-destruction, to be fastened to a cross, and left there as a spectacle to their fellow-citizens and a prey to birds and wild beasts.”

Many people have quoted the second part of his statement which describes the bodies being left upon the cross as a spectacle and a prey to birds and wild beasts.

However, Pliny prefaces his statement by saying that this had never been done before nor

⁶⁴ Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 4.26.

⁶⁵ John Gill, *An Exposition of the Gospel According to St. John*, The Newport Commentary Series (reprint, Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist, 2003), 594.

had it ever been done again up until his time, clearly indicating that leaving people for days on the cross was not the normal procedure.

If the above evidence is then compared with John's account of the crucifixion, it is found to support the historicity of John's description of Jesus' escape from the *crurifragium*. According to John, the Jews requested that Pilate have the crucifixion victims' legs broken, so that their bodies would not remain on the cross during the Sabbath. Such a request from the Jews would be consistent with Deu. 21:22–23: "And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day..." Pilate grants their request without any conditions or hesitations noted in John's account, quite a contrast to his earlier interactions with the Jews. Earlier, he refuses to even examine Jesus (18:31). Then he agrees to crucify Jesus only after tremendous pressure from the Jewish leaders (18:38–19:16). Finally, after placing an inscription on the cross, which intentional or unintentional, was an insult to the Jewish leaders, he refuses to change the inscription, despite their protests.

What could account for such a shift in the narrative? It seems unlikely that Pilate has experienced a change in heart toward the Jewish leaders. However, if the *crurifragium* is recognized as the normal custom, then Pilate would be far more likely to grant the requests of the Jewish leaders. It is even conceivable that Pilate intended already to have their legs broken and was simply waiting to let them hang on the cross for what he deemed an appropriate amount of time. Thus, the request may have been merely hastening what Pilate already intended.

John further describes the soldiers carrying out their orders. As they came to the first two victims (presumably the soldiers started on both sides working toward the middle since Jesus was crucified between the other two victims)⁶⁶ they broke their legs, but when they came to Jesus and found Him to be already dead, they refrained from breaking His legs. Lenski comments on this account: “remarkable as already this is, the next act is still more remarkable... Without orders from Pilate, on their own volition, the soldiers pierce the side of Jesus instead of breaking his legs.”⁶⁷

However, the actions of the soldiers are not remarkable at all. Instead, they are completely consistent with the extant texts regarding the use of *crurifragium* during crucifixion cited above. It has already been established that this practice was used for more than one purpose. It was used for torture at times, however in conjunction with a crucifixion it was not torture, but mercy. The purpose of breaking the legs of a crucified person was not to inflict more pain, but to hasten their death. Therefore, the soldiers would have no reason to break the legs of Jesus, once He was already dead.

Given the archeological and literary evidence supporting John’s account of Jesus’ escape of the *crurifragium*, it seems unreasonable to question his historical reliability on this point. John’s description of the soldiers piercing of Jesus’ side should be considered next.

⁶⁶ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 623.

⁶⁷ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel* (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1942), 1315.

The Pierced Side of Jesus

According to John, as the soldiers come to administer the crurifragium, they see that Jesus is already dead and they pierce His side with a spear. Some scholars have attributed this detail of John's narrative to theological symbolism not historical reality, seeing it as necessary to set up the flow of blood and water that has fueled endless interpretation. Although the extant literary evidence is far less abundant than the evidence for the practice of crurifragium, evidence from this period is consistent with John's account.

There should be little doubt about the possibility of Jesus being pierced by a spear. The spear, which was produced in many different forms, was an essential part of the weaponry of the Roman army.⁶⁸ Two primary sources from the 1st century describe the weaponry of specific troops. The first source is *Arrian's Array against the Alans*, which describes the battle plans of Arrianus against a threatened invasion by Alanic tribesmen. His description of the use of spears demonstrates their importance to the Roman soldier:

“And the front four ranks of the formation must be of spearmen, whose spearpoints end in thin iron shanks. And the foremost of them should hold them at the ready, in order that when the enemies near them, they can thrust the ironpoints of the spears at the breast of the horses in particular. Those standing in second, third, and fourth rank of the formation must hold their spears ready for thrusting if possible, wounding the horses and

⁶⁸ For examples of the various Roman spears and their history see Luke Dylan Ueda-Sarson, “Imperial Roman Lanciarii,” Date Unknown < <http://www.ne.jp/asahi/luke/ueda-sarson/Lanciarii.html> > (Accessed on January 9, 2007).

killing the horsemen and put the rider out of action with the spear stuck in their heavy body armour and the iron point bent because of the softness.”⁶⁹

The second source is Josephus’ *The Wars of the Jews*. He describes the spear as a part of the weaponry of a regular foot soldier. “Those foot-men also that are chosen out from the rest to be about the general himself have a lance and a buckler, but the rest of the foot soldiers have a spear and a long buckler...”⁷⁰ Both Arrianus and Josephus demonstrate the major role the spear played in the weaponry of the Roman soldier, leaving little room to doubt that a spear would have been readily available to the troops stationed at Jesus’ crucifixion.

As mentioned above, the Romans developed and utilized a variety of spears. John describes the soldier as using a “λόγχη.” This particular spear was widely used by different troops, unlike the pilum which was reserved for more elite troops.⁷¹ Thus, John’s account of the specific type of spear used by the soldier to pierce the side of Jesus is also consistent with the extant literary evidence concerning Roman weaponry.

As for the practice of piercing the crucified to ensure death, there is only one known extant text. Raymond Brown cites Quintilian’s *Decalationes maiores*: “As for those who die on the cross, the executioner does not forbid the burying of those who have

⁶⁹ Flavius Arrianus, *Arrian’s Array Against the Alans*.

⁷⁰ Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 3.5.5.

⁷¹ James Yates, “Hasta,” in William Smith, ed. *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* (London: John Murray, 1875): 587–589.

been pierced”⁷² While this text is the only known literary evidence citing the piercing of crucified individuals, a single text should be sufficient to demonstrate that John does not need to invent this practice for his theological purposes.

The nature and content of extant 1st century literature should also be considered. First, there are no known instructions of a Roman crucifixion extant.⁷³ All the literature available consists of eyewitness testimony of actual crucifixions. Second, because of the horror of crucifixion, ancient writers did not focus upon the details of what they witnessed. Instead, most accounts are fairly general in their description. When these two facts are considered, it becomes more understandable why more literary sources documenting the piercing of crucified individuals do not exist.

Even if piercing the crucified to make certain their death was not a normal practice, the act of the soldier as recorded by John is perfectly consistent with other sources concerning Roman guards. Luke describes the fear that overtook the Roman jailer when he thought that prisoners had escaped on his watch: “When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped” (Acts 16:27). His motivation for suicide was probably fear of being executed in a worse manner.

⁷² Quintilian, *Declamationes maiores* 6.9. Quoted in Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave*, vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1994) , 1177.

⁷³ So Maslen, “Cause of Death,” 185.

Consider also Matthew's account of the Jews bribing the guards from the empty tomb. When the guards reported to the chief priests what had happened, the chief priests gave them a sufficient sum of money and instructed them to spread a rumor that Jesus' disciples came during the night and stole His body. In addition to the money, they promised the guards that, "if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble" (Matt. 28:14). Given this atmosphere of fear, is it really that incredible that the guard posted at Jesus' crucifixion wanted to be certain that He was dead before he removed Him from the cross?

Thus, instead of viewing the piercing of Jesus as an extraordinary event, it should be understood as a likely and reasonable action of the guard stationed at Jesus' crucifixion. This soldier had both a spear, standard military issue, and a motivation, fear of his superiors, for such action. Finally, if Qunitillian's statement indicates the typical practice, the soldier may very well have been simply following procedure.

The Flow of Blood and Water

The rich imagery of John's description of blood and water flowing from Jesus' side has led many interpreters to view it as theological symbolism not historical reality. However, the two concepts are not mutually exclusive. If John does see theological significance in the event and intends to communicate this meaning to his readers, which is most likely the case, such an understanding does not require that the event be outside the realm of historical reality. Others have questioned whether John's report of the flow of blood and water is even physiologically possible. Arthur Gossip, for example, writes: "As to the blood and water, certain medical explanations that have been ventured do not

satisfy the mind and appear to be medically doubtful.”⁷⁴ Despite the skepticism of many biblical scholars, several physicians have produced medical studies demonstrating how the description of John could have physiologically happened. Interestingly, amid all of the studies produced by medical doctors discussing the flow of blood and water from the side of Jesus, not one, as far as this writer knows, questions the historicity of the event or describes it as physiologically unlikely or impossible. Instead, each study presents medical research demonstrating how the flow of blood and water could have occurred physiologically.

Even on this narrow subject, such a vast wealth of literature has been produced by medical doctors that the present study cannot be exhaustive in its survey. However, one plausible medical explanation for the events described by John should be sufficient to establish them as historically possible. The present study will present no less than three major explanations.⁷⁵ While many of the articles presenting these explanations seek to establish medically what actually happened physiologically, it is only the intent of this study to demonstrate that blood and water *could* have flowed from Jesus’ side, just as John described. Therefore, while multiple medical explanations of how this could have happened may frustrate the researcher who is trying to establish what happened physiologically, they add greater weight to the present study which is only concerned

⁷⁴ Arthur Gossip, “John,” in *The Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. VIII, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon, 1952), 786.

⁷⁵ For additional medical theories not discussed in this thesis see John Wilkinson, “The Incident of the Blood and Water in John 19.34,” *SJT* 28, no. 2 (1975): 149–172.

with establishing the likelihood that blood and water flowed from Jesus' side, just as reported by John.

The first major explanation to be considered suggests that the blood and water were contained in two separate anatomical spaces and were each released by the piercing of the spear. Pierre Barbet published a major work entitled, "A Doctor at Calvary," in which he presents medical research gathered from experiments on cadavers.⁷⁶ Based upon his research Barbet concludes, "The blow of the lance which was given to the right side reached the right auricle of the heart, perforating the pericardium."⁷⁷ Barbet reaches this conclusion based upon the theory that the agony of Jesus' death resulted in an accumulation of pleural fluid in the pericardium, the sac surrounding the heart.⁷⁸ Barbet explains that the pericardial fluid, or serum, would have the appearance of water. Since the body does not contain any water other than serous fluid, this must have been what John saw.⁷⁹ As for the blood, Barbet explains: "the part of the heart which extends to the right of the breast-bone *is the right auricle. And this auricle...is in a corpse always filled with liquid blood.*"⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Pierre Barbet, *A Doctor at Calvary: The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ as Described by a Surgeon* (Fort Collins, CO: Roman Catholic Books, 1953), 113–127.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 120. Italics author's.

Barbet tested his theory on several cadavers. He gives the following description of his tests:

“In my first autopsies I noticed that the pericardium always contained a quantity of serum (hydropericardium) sufficient for one to see it flowing on the incision of the parietal layer. In some cases it was most abundant. I, therefore, took my syringe once again, but I pushed the needle very slowly, drawing into the syringe the whole time. I was thus able to feel the resistance of the fibrous pericardium, and as soon as I had perforated it, I drew out a considerable quantity of serum. Then, as the needle proceeded on its way, I drew out some blood from the right auricle. I then took my knife, and, inserting it with the same precautions, I saw the serum flowing and then, as I pressed on, the blood.”⁸¹

Giovanni Judica-Cordiglia, an Italian doctor, conducted similar tests independently from Barbet.⁸² Judica’s research lead him also to conclude that the water seen by John was fluid built-up in the pericardium and that the blood was from the right auricle. However, Judica varied from Barbet in his estimation of what would have caused the level of fluid build-up in the pericardium required for John to have visibly noticed water coming from the wound. In his estimation there was a “serous traumatic pericarditis” which was caused from the blows and scourging Jesus received prior to His hanging on the cross.

The second major medical theory is proposed by A. F. Sava. In his article, “The Wound in the Side of Christ,” Sava argues that the water and the blood, “were present

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 122. Italics author’s.

⁸² Giovanni Judica-Cordiglia, *La Sindone* (Padua: Lice, 1961); An English translation of this work is not available. However, Barbet gives a good summary of Judica’s work. Barbet, *A Doctor at Calvary*, 122–23.

just inside the rib cage between the pleura lining the chest and that lining the lung.”⁸³

Sava cites his experience with severe chest injuries in which fluid gathered between the ribs and the lungs. He also performed experiments on blood from cadavers in which he collected the blood in glass cylinders and let them stand. The blood separated into clear serum on top with deep red in the bottom of the cylinders. Based upon this research, Sava concluded:

“the brutal scourging of Christ several hours before His death upon the cross, was sufficient to produce a bloody accumulation within the chest, so that the settling by this fluid into layers and its ultimate evacuation by opening the chest below the level of separation must inevitable result in the “immediate” flow of blood followed by the water.”⁸⁴

One of the most recent medical theories explaining the blood and water was proposed in an article in *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 1986. It is here argued by William Edwards and others that the prior medical research was misled by a literal reading of John’s account. Citing the Greek research of A. T. Robertson, Edwards argues that, “in the ancient Greek, the order of words generally denoted prominence and not necessarily a time sequence.”⁸⁵ Thus, John was most likely emphasizing the blood, instead of reporting its appearance to precede the flow of water. If Edwards is correct, his

⁸³ A. F. Sava, “The Wound in the Side of Christ,” *CBQ* 19 (1957): 345.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 345.

⁸⁵ William D. Edwards, Wesley J. Gabel, and Floyd E. Hosmer, “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ,” *JAMA* 255, no. 11 (1986): 1463.

understanding would answer much of the criticism that has been directed toward the research of Barbet and Sava in particular. Edwards explains what could have happened:

“Therefore, the water probably represented serous pleural and pericardial fluid, and would have preceded the flow of blood and been smaller in volume than the blood. Perhaps in the setting of hypovolemia and impending acute heart failure, pleural and pericardial effusions may have developed and would have added to the volume of apparent water. The blood, in contrast, may have originated from the right atrium or the right ventricle (Fig 7) or perhaps from a hemopericardium.”⁸⁶

While most readers of this study will not possess the medical training or experience to conclude on their own whether physiologically water and blood could have flowed from Jesus’ side as reported by John, they should be convinced by the independent, credible, medical experts whose research has been reviewed above that medical science offers more than one valid explanation for John’s report to be considered an accurate account. Origen remarked that the blood and water flowing from Jesus’ chest contradicted the medical knowledge of his day. However, the medical research that has been conducted and the advances in medical science that have been achieved since the time of Origen allow us to affirm John’s report with confidence.

Conclusion

The events that took place on the day of Jesus’ crucifixion cannot be established beyond all doubt. Yet, neither can the details of any other ancient historical event. Instead, the historian is left to reconstruct what took place based upon eyewitness

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1463.

testimony, secondary literary witnesses, archeology, and any other strands of available evidence. Accordingly, this chapter has presented the known extant witnesses to the allusions recorded in John's crucifixion narrative. If evaluated by accepted historical principles and standards, the evidence presented here should be found sufficient to demonstrate that John's account is likely to be an accurate account of what took place at the crucifixion.

Although the evidence presented here cannot establish for certain the accuracy of any of the details in John's narrative, it can establish each of them as possible and perhaps even likely. The scholar who questions the historical reliability of John's crucifixion narrative will need to give ample reasons for dismissing the evidence presented above. Further, given the ample available evidence that is consistent with John's narrative, can the historicity of the paschal allusions be reasonably questioned without additional evidence?

It seems more reasonable to conclude that John reported factual events that he witnessed at the crucifixion. Events which as he noticed correspond with the events and details of the Passover. If so, then the connections between John's crucifixion narrative and the Passover are not only intended, they are historical. Thus, the correspondence between the death of Jesus and the Passover is not to be found in the imagination of John, but in the history of God's redemption. If this is the case, then the allusions are intended historical allusions to Passover. The final chapter of this thesis will then examine how these allusions function in John's narrative and what they mean for his theology.

CHAPTER 4

THE FUNCTION OF THE PASCHAL ALLUSIONS

As with all of the details selected by John to construct his narrative, the paschal allusions were intended to accomplish some purpose with John's Gospel. The goal of this chapter is to examine how these allusions appear to function and what they contribute to John's theology. The individual allusions will first be considered individually. Second, the cumulative force of the allusions working together in the text will be examined. Third, the relationship between the paschal allusions and the Old Testament will be explored to determine in what way John may be enriching his message through the theology of the Old Testament.

The Function of the Individual Allusions

The first allusion identified in this study is John's use of the "day of preparation" to place Jesus' death within the context of Passover. The phrase appears three times in the narrative with some degree of variation: 19:14, "day of preparation of the Passover"; 19:31, "day of preparation"; 19:42, "the Jewish day of preparation." Most likely the variation is due to John's style of writing and not to any distinction between the references. Hence, 19:31 and 19:42 may be taken as a repetition of 19:14. Often, the purpose of repetition is emphasis. Scholars have noted that such repetition for emphasis is characteristic of John's writing style and have at times tracked this literary device to

identify John's major themes.¹ If then, John's chronological marks are repeated throughout the crucifixion narrative for the sake of emphasis, the meaning and significance of the emphasis must be sought. However, the placement of the chronological marks must first be considered.

The identification of the day of preparation appears to have been placed at important shifts in the narrative. The present focus is on John's crucifixion narrative. Although any subdivision of John's text is somewhat arbitrary, it seems reasonable to suggest that the passage under consideration here begins with the sentencing of Jesus (Jn. 19:14).² It is the sentencing of Jesus that initiates the sequence of events causing Jesus' death. Since the narrative concerns the crucifixion of Jesus, the most natural place to identify the climax of the narrative would be the actual death of Jesus (Jn. 19:30).³ The result, indirectly of the sentencing, and directly of the death of Jesus, is the burial of Jesus' body—which can be said to conclude at 19:42, since the next verse begins the resurrection narrative. Thus, at the beginning, climax, and conclusion of the narrative, the

¹ Keener, *John*, 48–49.

² Many commentator's have identified 19:16b as the beginning of the crucifixion narrative. So Köstenberger, *John*, 521. The present study is not suggesting that this division of the text is incorrect. The point here is that the use of the phrase "day of preparation" appears to be intentionally positioned to occur at the beginning of the account of Jesus' death whether one designates it as part of the previous sentencing pericope or not is irrelevant.

³ So Schnackenburg who comments on 19:30: "Jesus' death as John describes it, is the climax of his *Christological understanding*..." Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, vol. 3, trans. Cecily Hastings and others (New York: Seabury, 1980), 285.

author explicitly sets the crucifixion of Jesus within the context of the annual celebration of Passover.

It seems then that John is emphasizing the context of Passover throughout the entire crucifixion narrative. If so, then John most likely intends for his readers to interpret the narrative within the context of Passover.⁴ While some may object that the setting is the feast and not the event, it must be remembered that the entire focus of the feast was to remember and commemorate the event. It is within this setting of Passover that the following allusions must also be considered and interpreted.

The second allusion to be considered is John's mention of hyssop (Jn. 19:29). In the Old Testament, the hyssop was used as a brush to smear and to sprinkle blood (Ex. 12; Lev. 14; and Num. 19); in the crucifixion narrative it has no contact with Jesus' blood, nor is it used to smear or sprinkle any other substance. Instead, it is used as an extension, allowing the soldier to reach the lips of Jesus. Thus, while there is no connection between the function or use of the hyssop in the Old Testament and in John's narrative, it is the mere mentioning of the word hyssop that connects this part of the narrative with the hyssop of the Old Testament, and most likely with the hyssop of the

⁴ Osborne notes in regard to setting: "The three Passovers in John (2:13; 6:4; 11:55) form a temporal framework for the entire ministry of Jesus." See also his discussion about the role of setting in interpretation. Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), 160–161.

Passover.⁵ So Ellis writes: “In choosing the word “hyssop,” John is almost certainly alluding to Jesus as the Lamb of the new Passover...”⁶

Paul Koptak, in his article on intertextuality, has labelled such uses of single words as “catchword links.”⁷ Gershon Hepner has labelled this same phenomenon as “verbal resonance.”⁸ Hepner argues that verbal resonance, or the use of a single word to connect two passages, was a common early rabbinical hermeneutic. He cites the second century Tanna Rabbi Ishmael who taught the principal of “lexical analogy.” Hepner explains: “According to the rabbinic paradigm, lexical analogies link two pericopes containing an identical word, shedding light on the meaning of the word and hence the pericopes in which it appears.”⁹ Hepner also suggests that verbal resonance was practiced by the sect at Qumran.¹⁰

It would seem then, that John is employing a well known device. Whether it is labelled a catchword link, verbal resonance, or a lexical analogy, it appears that the use of

⁵ So Peter F. Ellis, *The Genius of John: A Composition-Critical Commentary on the Fourth Gospel*, (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1984), 272; Macgregor, *John*, 348; Waetjen, *Beloved Disciple*, 401.

⁶ Ellis, *Genius of John*, 272.

⁷ Paul E. Koptak, “Intertextuality,” in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005): 332.

⁸ Gershon Hepner, “Verbal Resonance in the Bible and Intertextuality,” *JSOT* 96 (2001): 3–27.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰ Hepner cites Eliezer Slomovic, “Towards an Understanding of the Exegesis of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *RevQ* 7 (1969–71): 5–9.

the word “hyssop” was most likely meant to connect John’s crucifixion narrative with the Passover event. Yet, what is the nature of this connection and what does it mean for John’s theology? Hepner argues: “Verbal resonances extend the context of a verse beyond its immediate context, enabling the reader of biblical narratives to find a peshat [plain meaning] that can only be spotted by taking cognisance of other contexts...”¹¹ If Hepner is correct, then John most likely intended the mentioning of the hyssop to help identify Jesus as the new Passover or the new paschal lamb, or both.

The placement of the chronological marks has already been noted. The placement of the hyssop is also interesting, since outside of the framing chronological marks, it is the only allusion to occur before Jesus’ death in the narrative. The remainder of the allusions occur together in a cluster and all relate to the treatment of Jesus’ body after His death. The following table shows the location of the allusions within the narrative.

¹¹ Contents in brackets added for clarity. Hepner, “Verbal Resonance,” 4–5.

Table 1. The Allusions in Relation to the Narrative

19:14–16a	The Sentencing of Jesus to be Crucified		
		Day of Preparation of Passover	19:14
19:16b–18	The Administration of the Sentence		
19:19–22	The Inscription on the Cross		
19:23–24	The Dividing of Jesus Garments		
19:25–27	The Commitment of Jesus' Mother to John		
19:28 – 30	The Death of Jesus		
		Mention of Hyssop	19:29
19:31 – 37	The Treatment of Jesus' Body		
		Day of Preparation	19:31
		Escape of the Crurifragium	19:33
		Pierced Side	19:34
		Flow of Blood and Water	19:34
19:38 – 42	The Burial of Jesus' Body		
		Jewish Day of Preparation	19:42

If the mentioning of the hyssop is functioning as a verbal resonance or catchword, then its placement prior to the other three allusions would be fitting. Here it could signal the reader to the paschal context of the passage and make the identification of the other

allusions more explicit. So Waetjen writes: ‘it is used deliberately in order to alert the implied readers to a symbolic re-enactment of the ancient rite of Passover.’¹²

The other three allusions—the escape of the crurifragium, the pierced side, and the flow of blood and water—appear to be connected. First, they occur in the same place in the narrative. Second, they each concern the treatment of Jesus’ body. Third, they each fulfill instructions regarding the preparation of the paschal lamb; the escape of the crurifragium fulfills the biblical requirement, while the pierced side and flow of blood and water fulfill the rabbinical requirements.

Some might object to placing any emphasis upon the location of these allusions, arguing that they appear together in the text simply because one is the result of another. Jesus’ legs are not broken. Therefore, the soldier pierces His side to be certain of His death, which in turn produces the flow of blood and water. Thus, if John was giving an accurate historical report, he was bound to place these events together.

If the object of the present study was a video of the crucifixion, this point would be valid. However, the object under study is a narrative. And in the narrative, events occur where the author chooses to report them; John’s Gospel cannot be reduced to a theologically uninterested blow-by-blow report.¹³ He may accurately report the details, and yet, choose to rearrange them in the narrative. For example, John could have

¹² Waetjen, *Beloved Disciple*, 401.

¹³ Osborne writes: “Narrative time is distinct from chronology because it has to do with literary arrangement rather than with historical sequence.” *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 157.

separated the escape of the crurifragium and the piercing of Jesus with his comment on the fulfillment of scripture found in 19:36. Or, he could have narrated the piercing of Jesus' side and later in the narrative revealed that blood and water flowed as a result of the piercing. John may even change the order of the events. He could have narrated the piercing of Jesus' side and then later explained that Jesus was pierced as a result of the soldiers deciding not to break His legs. The possibilities for how the narrative could have been structured are numerous.

A second consideration in answering this objection is the writer's selection of detail. It should not be forgotten that John was under no obligation as a faithful witness of the crucifixion to report any of these details. He certainly omitted several other details in order to have room to include these (Jn. 20:30; 21:25).¹⁴ The placement of these allusions together in a cluster should then be considered as intentional and significant.

If then the escape of the crurifragium, the piercing of Jesus' side, and the flow of blood and water are taken as a unit, their most common feature appears to be that they each point to the fulfillment of some regulation of the preparation of the paschal lamb. Together, these allusions present a strong statement concerning the fitness of Jesus' death as a paschal sacrifice. Not only, did He meet the command given originally in the institution of the Passover feast (Ex. 12:46), He also meets the prevailing rabbinic practices for preparing the lamb.

¹⁴ Osborne comments: "For the evangelists the question was not what to include but what to omit." *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 158.

The Collective Function and Meaning of the Allusions

Given the previous discussion, it seems that collectively the paschal allusions connect Jesus with the Passover typologically. This relationship seems almost certain given the three allusions which signify the correspondence between the treatment of Jesus' body and the requirements for the preparation of the paschal lamb. Such a conclusion raises two main issues that will need to be examined. First, what exactly is the ante-type for Jesus? And second, what does this typology mean for John's theology.

The first question is difficult to answer. Certainly, there is strong evidence that Jesus is the paschal lamb, as the discussion below demonstrates. However, is the lamb the only ante-type? Undoubtedly, Jesus may serve as the type for more than one ante-type simultaneously. He is after all, *both* the lamb of God (Jn. 1:29; 1:36) *and* the new temple (Jn. 2:19–21).¹⁵ Could it be then, that Jesus is not only the new paschal lamb, but also the new Passover?

The difficulty in translating Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 5:7, illustrates the problem of identifying the ante-type. The same word "πάσχα" was used for both the Passover and the Passover lamb. Translators have struggled with how to translate it in 1Cor. 5:7. The TNIV, ESV, and the NSRV translate it as, "Passover lamb" or, "paschal lamb." The NASB, NKJV, and HCSB translate it as, "Passover." The same problem faced by the translators of this verse, confronts the interpreter of John's crucifixion

¹⁵ Andreas J. Köstenberger, "John," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander, et al (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000): 282.

narrative. In 1 Cor. 5:7, the reader must decide how to translate the word; in John 19 the reader must decide how to identify the type. The issue is the same: is Jesus the new Passover, the new paschal lamb, or both? The difference is subtle, but significant.

The crucifixion narrative alone may not contain enough evidence to conclude whether the ante-type is the paschal lamb or Passover itself. However, if the remainder of the Gospel is examined, evidence of John's intentions may be found. If the interpreter only applies anti-types and meanings that can be supported from other passages in the Gospel, then the worst error that can potentially be made is to support the proper Johannine theology from the wrong Johannine text. Yet, John's Gospel contains a consistency in thought and an overall coherence in presentation that should lower the possibility of reading something into the crucifixion narrative from earlier in the Gospel. If John identifies Jesus as the new Passover earlier in the Gospel, he most likely intends the same in the crucifixion narrative. The following discussion will survey how John has treated Passover and the paschal lamb throughout the entire Gospel. An effort will be made to demonstrate that both themes are recurring throughout the Gospel.

The Paschal Fulfillment Theme in John's Gospel

John's allusions to Passover in the crucifixion narrative are not the first occurrence of his theology of Jesus' fulfillment of Passover in the Gospel. The theme is introduced as early as 1:29, where John the Baptist pronounces Jesus to be the "the Lamb of God." Yet, the theme is not limited to the beginning and the end of the Gospel. Instead, it is distributed throughout the narrative—making it a reoccurring and prominent theme. While a detailed survey of all the occurrences of the theme is beyond the scope of

this study, the following discussion will seek to highlight characteristics of John's theology of fulfillment and demonstrate the relationship between the paschal allusions of the crucifixion narrative and the rest of the Gospel. An effort will be made to demonstrate that John's theology of Passover is one of typological fulfillment which is accomplished through the death of Christ.

In 1:29, John the Baptist is recorded to identify Jesus as, "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" This statement reveals several aspects of John's theology. First, notice that Jesus is not compared to the paschal lamb—He is the paschal lamb.¹⁶ Second, this statement functions as a title. It should also be noted that this title begins a series of titles in John's Gospel culminating with the title "Savior of the world" in 4:42. Third, the title identifies Jesus as "the" Lamb of God, designating Him as the paschal lamb par excellence.¹⁷

Finally, it should be considered that it is the sacrifice of a lamb for the Passover that makes it a paschal lamb. In other words, a lamb is simply a lamb until it is chosen to be sacrificed for the Passover. Thus, Jesus becomes the paschal lamb through His death. It would then seem that John the Baptist was not identifying who Jesus was as much as he was prophesying who He was to become through His death. Consequently, the allusions of the crucifixion narrative pointing to Jesus as the paschal lamb fulfill John's

¹⁶ This paper follows the interpretation that John the Baptist's statement is referring to the paschal lamb. For a survey of the other possible views see Christopher W. Skinner, "Another Look at 'The Lamb of God,'" *BSac* 161 (2004): 89-104.

¹⁷ Köstenberger, *John*, 66.

prophecy concerning the death of Jesus, that He would die as the Lamb of God. In this sense, the allusions of the crucifixion narrative are a culmination of John's paschal theology.

In addition to the paschal lamb theme, the celebration of the feast of Passover plays an important role in John's theology. While the synoptics record Jesus attending one Passover, John's Gospel records three (2:13; 6:4; 11:55). Although many have noted the role of Passover in the narrative structure of John's Gospel, the reason for his inclusion of three Passovers most likely extends beyond chronological and structural reasons and is instead grounded in his theological purposes.¹⁸ Thus, Leon Morris comments regarding John's inclusion of three Passovers: "John mentions the festival much more than do the Synoptists, and this may well be part of his plan to bring out the messianic significance of Jesus. What was foreshadowed in the great Passover deliverance of old was brought to its consummation in the sacrifice of Jesus."

Given the repetition of the Passover in the Gospel, it is also the context for much of Jesus' ministry. For example, near the Passover feast, Jesus is asked to provide bread, as Moses did in the wilderness. He responds by claiming that He is the bread of life (6:35). It seems that in the first part of the bread of life discourse (6:22–59), Jesus is claiming to fulfill the function of the manna in the wilderness that provided nourishment,

¹⁸ Keener argues: "Together with the final Passover (13:1; 18:28; 19:14), this Passover (2:13) frames Jesus' ministry in the Fourth Gospel. Interpreters have traditionally insisted that the repeated Passovers of the Fourth Gospel provide a chronological outline of Jesus' public ministry, but they miss the symbolic significance John finds in Passover." Keener, *John*, I:518. He also cites Gerald Borchert in support of his point. Borchert, "Passover," 316.

and thus, life for the Jews. However, later in the discourse, the fulfillment appears to expand.¹⁹ In verses 53–56, Jesus states,

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.”

In these four verses, Jesus couples His flesh with His blood four times.²⁰

Preceding these statements, He has identified the bread as His flesh that He will give for the life of the world (6:51), but to what does the blood refer? Bread does not have blood, nor is there any connection between the manna in the wilderness and blood. It seems most likely that by speaking of His blood; Jesus is making a reference to His death.²¹ In verse 51, He has stated that He would give His flesh for the life of the world. This statement clearly refers to His death.

While these words refer to Jesus’ death, several points indicate that they also refer to the Passover; both references taken together would point to Jesus’ death as the

¹⁹ George Beasley-Murray argues that the discourse contains development, “with the development perceptible in vv 35, 40, 50, 51, the image of eating the bread of life increasing in intensity.” Beasley-Murray, *John*, 95.

²⁰ Raymond Brown notes that flesh and blood is a Hebrew idiom for the whole person. However, Jesus’ Hebrew audience clearly did not take His words to be an idiom, for they responded: “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” (6:60). Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, The Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 282.

²¹ Leon Morris argues concerning verse 53: “The words, then, are a cryptic allusion to the atoning death that Jesus would die.” Morris, *John*, 335.

sacrifice of the true paschal lamb.²² The first point to consider is the context of the discourse: the Passover celebration. The most likely image to be evoked during Passover would be the paschal lamb.²³ Second, Keener writes concerning this passage: “rabbinic texts concerning the Passover speak of eating flesh (the lamb) and drinking the blood of grapes (cups at the Passover), here perhaps applicable to Jesus as the true vine (15:1).”²⁴

This passage demonstrates two characteristics of John’s paschal theology. First, the theme of the lamb and the theme of the event are interwoven in the text. Second, they each relate to Jesus in similar ways. The relationship between the lamb and the event will first be considered. Some may object that the connection between the lamb and the event is simply due to the lamb’s role in the feast. However, it should be noted that in the above passage the feast is not celebrated and the lamb is not mentioned directly. Instead, it is the context of the approaching feast that makes the allusion to the lamb likely. The connection is well demonstrated by 6:56 where Jesus states: “whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.” The flesh is most likely a reference to

²² Craig Blomberg’s outline of John’s Gospel labels 6:1–71 as “The True Passover: The Bread of Life.” He also writes concerning chapters 5–10: “Here John takes pains to stress Jesus as the fulfillment of the Jewish festivals—Passover, Tabernacles, and the “Dedication” (Hanukkah). Even the one main pair of events in this section not from Jesus’ ministry in Jerusalem is explicitly said to take place at Passover time—the feeding of the five thousand and the walking on the water. These events in turn lead to Jesus’ sermon about the Bread of Life, which ties in closely with the symbolism of bread at Passover.” Craig Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 160–61; Waetjen, *John*, 214.

²³ Keener, *John*, 688.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 688. Unfortunately, Keener does not cite any of these rabbinic texts.

the eating of the lamb, while the blood is most likely a reference to the wine at the feast. Jesus is not only the lamb, He is the fulfillment of the Passover as well.

In regards then to the similarity in relationship between the lamb and the feast, a comparison with the points raised regarding 1:29 will be illustrative. As with the lamb in 1:29, Jesus is the bread of life, He is not like the bread of life. Second, the bread of life functions as a messianic title as does the lamb of God. Third, the superiority of Jesus over the bread of the Exodus is emphasized. Just as He is the lamb par excellence, so also is He superior to the bread of the Exodus of which people ate and then died (6:49–51).²⁵

Finally, the fulfillment of the feast and the lamb both relate to the death of Jesus. As discussed above it is through His death that Jesus becomes the lamb of God. So also with the bread, He must die in order to become the bread of life. Jesus states: “And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” It is through His death that He will give His flesh. In this respect, the paschal allusions within the crucifixion narrative relate to both the lamb and the event of Passover in the same manner; they highlight the significance of Jesus’ death in accomplishing the function of both the lamb and the event. Consequently, the identity communicated through the messianic titles are accomplished through His crucifixion.

²⁵ Maarten J. J. Menken, “Observations on the significance of the Old Testament in the Fourth Gospel,” *NeoT* 33, no. 1 (1999): 137.

The Paschal Allusions and the Old Testament

Just as the paschal allusions of the crucifixion narrative point toward Jesus' death as the climax of John's paschal theology as he developed it throughout his Gospel, so they also point to Jesus' death as the climax of God's redemption in history.²⁶ What is presented through John's paschal references is a continuity between Jesus and the acts of God as recorded in the Old Testament. Such an understanding of the relationship between the paschal allusions of the crucifixion narrative and the Old Testament is well grounded in John's use of the Old Testament throughout his Gospel.

Jesus' fulfillment of the Old Testament is a common Johannine theme. One of the characteristics of Johannine fulfillment is the concept of replacement. Perhaps the most overt example of this type of fulfillment is Jesus' replacement of the temple (2:19–21). Thus, by fulfilling Passover Jesus replaces the paschal lamb of the feast. After His death there is no more need to observe the Passover, because Jesus is the believer's Passover.

D. A. Carson describes John's replacement theology as follows:

“Thus again and again the typologies the evangelist develops do not simply interpret the OT, or *simply* utilize the categories of the OT to explain Jesus and his gospel, but become as well the vehicles by which Jesus and his gospel effectively *replace* those institutions, events and themes that have anticipated him. (cf. Goppelt, ET 1982, pp. 185ff). If they anticipate him, they point to him, prophesy of him, and he fulfills them and thus replaces them. This does not mean, for the evangelist, that they are discarded so much as fulfilled: they find their true significance

²⁶ Richard Morgan, “Fulfillment in the Fourth Gospel: The Old Testament Foundations,” *Int* 11, no. 2 (1957): 160.

and real continuity in him who is the true vine, the true light, the true temple, the one of whom Moses wrote.”²⁷

In keeping with this approach to fulfillment displayed throughout the Gospel, it seems reasonable to conclude that John presents Jesus as the replacement of the paschal lamb and of the Passover. He is the new lamb whose death inaugurates a new Passover. Such a message would have resonated well with the Jewish readers who were disillusioned with the destruction of the temple. For them, and for all John’s readers, Jesus makes the celebration of the Passover and the sacrifice of the paschal lamb.

It would then appear that the function of the paschal allusions is to identify Jesus as the new Passover and as the new paschal lamb—as the completion of God’s redemptive work in history. As literary devices, they allude to the text of the Old Testament. As historical allusions, they illustrate God’s providence in fulfilling the antetypes previously established in history.

The Feast Fulfillment Motif in John’s Gospel

John’s use of the paschal allusions to point to Jesus as the new paschal lamb and the new Passover can be demonstrated to be consistent with his theology throughout the Gospel. The prominence of Jesus’ fulfillment of the feasts in John’s Gospel has long been noticed by scholars. In fact, the feasts, in particular, play such a major role in the Gospel, that some have argued that they are the sub-structure for part of the book, referring to a

²⁷ Carson, *It Is Written*, 255–56.

festival cycle.²⁸ Aileen Guilding went so far as to assert that the entire Gospel was written as a Christian commentary based upon the Old Testament lectionary readings in the Jewish Synagogue, which of course followed the cycle of the festivals.²⁹ These views demonstrate that the feasts are highly significant to the theology of the Gospel of John. The following survey demonstrates how the different feasts were depicted in order to communicate that Jesus as their fulfillment.

Jesus' Fulfillment of Tabernacles

Like Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles was an annual festival which commemorated the Exodus from Egypt (Lev. 23:42–43). The festival lasted for eight days, during which various special celebrations took place in the temple.³⁰ During two of these celebrations, Jesus made statements, which in their context, amounted to bold claims to fulfill the symbolism of the celebrations.³¹ Each of these two statements will be discussed separately.

²⁸ Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1–11*, The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture, vol. 25a, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 223–27.

²⁹ Aileen Guilding, *The Fourth Gospel and Jewish Worship* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1960).

³⁰ According to the mishnaic tractate *Sukkah*, the celebrations included the rites of the *Lulab*, the Willow-branch, the *Hallel*, the *Sukkah*, the Water-libation, and the Flute-playing. *Sukkah* 4.1.

³¹ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective*, Encountering Biblical Studies Series, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 108–110.

The Living Water Statement, 7:37–39

After informing the reader that it is the last day of the feast, John records Jesus as crying out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’” (7:37–38).

Alone, this statement is a beautiful invitation to come to Jesus and receive nourishment and refreshing. However, in the context of the feast it takes on a much deeper meaning than the mere image of refreshing water.

One of the celebrations that took place in the temple was the water-libations. Each day of the feast, for seven days, golden pitchers were taken to the pool of Siloam and filled with water. The golden pitchers would then be carried into the temple and offered by the priest.³² The original purpose of this libation was to petition the Lord for rain. However, by Jesus’ day it had taken on Messianic connotations.³³

The last chapter of Zechariah speaks of the coming day of the Lord—a day when, “all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths” (Zech. 14:16).³⁴ Earlier in this same chapter, Zechariah prophesies: “On that day living waters shall flow out from

³² *Sukkah* 4. I, 5ff; 9. 5ff.

³³ George W. MacRae, “The Meaning and Evolution of the Feast of Tabernacles,” *CBQ* 22, no. 3 (1960): 268–69.

³⁴ ESV. “Booths” is another translation for tabernacles.

Jerusalem” (Zech. 14:8).³⁵ The Jews present at the feast, who were familiar with its meaning, would have understood Jesus’ claim to be the source of living water as a claim to be the Messiah.³⁶ That an argument immediately took place in the crowd, as to whether Jesus was the Christ or not, demonstrates that indeed, they did understand His words as a Messianic claim (7:40–43).

The Light of the World Statement, 8:12

At the same Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus makes another statement claiming to fulfill a celebration of the feast: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (8:12). At the close of the festival, a candle lighting ceremony took place in the Court of the Women of the temple. The mishnaic tractate, *Sukkah*, comments: “there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect the light.”³⁷ In this context, Jesus’ statement could hardly be construed as anything other than a claim to fulfill the symbolism of the candle lighting ceremony.

³⁵ The passage to which Jesus is referring is uncertain. Whether He intended the Zechariah passage or not, it still demonstrates that the Messianic expectations of the Jews associated with the Feast of Tabernacles were established by the time of Zechariah. For a discussion of other Old Testament water passages to which Jesus may have been referring see: Borchert, *John*, 291.

³⁶ Herman Ridderbos writes: “Living, that is, running, water was the image of refreshment and revitalization, and this was symbolized by the pouring out of water during Tabernacles. Hence by inviting the thirsty to himself Jesus clearly indicated that what was sought and celebrated during the feast found its fulfillment in him.” Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. by John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 272.

³⁷ *m. Sukkah* 9.5.

Just as all of the Feast of Tabernacles commemorated some aspect of the Exodus and wilderness wandering, the candle lighting ceremony was intended to remind the worshippers of how God led the children of Israel through the wilderness at night by a pillar of fire.³⁸ Thus, Jesus' claim to *be* the light was a claim to deity.³⁹ Whether the, “ἐγώ εἰμι,” (I am) in Jesus' statement is alluding to the burning bush revelation or is simply stating verbal relationship between Jesus and the light is uncertain. Without the connection, the statement still amounts to Jesus claiming to be divine. As in the living water statement, the response of Jesus' listeners clearly demonstrates that His statement was understood in this way. Yet, the Pharisees avoid speaking of light or darkness and instead, engage Jesus on legal grounds, charging that His procedure is unsound.⁴⁰

Further, His claim to serve as the light extends beyond the exodus experience, for Jesus claims to be the light “of the world,” not just of the nation of Israel. For Jesus to make this claim at the Festival of Tabernacles was very appropriate given the Messianic prophecy in Zechariah of the nations coming to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast (Zech. 14:16).

³⁸ Borchert, *John*, 295.

³⁹ Borchert, *John*, 296.

⁴⁰ Köstenberger, *John*, 254; Morris, *John*, 390.

Jesus' Fulfillment of the Feast of Dedication

The Feast of Dedication commemorated the consecration of the new altar in 164 B.C. that replaced the pagan altar set up by Antiochus Epiphanes IV to sacrifice swine.⁴¹ Thus, the celebration of dedication was in essence a celebration of replacement. It is during this feast that Jesus claims directly to be one with the Father—a statement which is interpreted by the Jews as blasphemy (10:30–33). Then He claims to be the one, “whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world” (10:36).

The word translated consecrated, “ἡγίασεν,” was used in both the Old Testament and in Second Temple literature for those set apart for an office or mission.⁴² By using this word during the Feast of Dedication, Jesus is claiming to be the new temple. Earlier, He has made the same claim (2:19). Here in the context of the Feast, His claim is very natural if He is the Messiah. For the temple altar was replaced by Antiochus with a pagan altar, and then by Judas who sanctified the temple. Now Jesus is replacing the altar with the true temple.

The Concept of Fulfillment in John's Gospel

Jesus replaces the feasts. However, He does not literally replace them. Instead, Jesus serves the *purpose* and *function* of the feasts—thus making them obsolete or fulfilled. While each feast served to celebrate different events in the salvation-history of

⁴¹ Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*, 15.

the nation,⁴³ their common purpose was to gather the people together for worship. Thus, Zechariah prophesies: “Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths” (Zech 14:16). The feasts were to gather the Jews, but eschatologically all the nations would one day be gathered for worship.

Through the person and work of Jesus Christ, all people were given access to God and were drawn together to worship. Thus, Jesus can instruct His disciples in the Farewell Discourse: “In that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God” (16:26–27). Once Jesus has completed His work (“In that day”) those who believe in Jesus and love Him may ask the Father directly.

Jesus’ ministry is available to all who will believe (3:15–16). He is the Savior of the *world* (4:42). Thus, He is not only the shepherd of Israel, but He says: “I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd” (10:16). As the fulfillment of the eschatological hopes of Zechariah, Jesus claims: “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (12:32).

⁴² Köstenberger, *John*, 315–16.

⁴³ Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 577.

Given this context of John's theology and writing, it seems natural to understand John's depiction of the crucifixion as a fulfillment of Passover. It is consistent with the whole of John's Gospel to view the paschal allusions as pointing to Jesus as the new paschal lamb and the new Passover.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The connections between John's Gospel and the Old Testament are many. So many that it seems unreasonable to judge each correspondence to be mere coincidence or to be insignificant. Within the crucifixion narrative, the case for John's intentional allusion to the Old Testament is even stronger than within other sections of his Gospel. Further, if John is alluding to the Old Testament, and Passover in particular, then the sheer number of allusions alone should warrant serious study into how they function in John's narrative and what they mean for John's theology.

However, much of the attention that has been given to the paschal allusions has denied their historicity. Some see the allusions as mere literary devices created to enrich the literary depth of John's Gospel. Others purport that the allusions are mere fiction conveniently created to support the beliefs of the author. Proponents of these approaches often dismiss typology as a possibility for the allusions due to an anti-supernatural presupposition that denies the providence of God. This thesis has sought to challenge such views. The approach taken to the text of John's Gospel, throughout this work, views revelation as the combined product of history and scripture. Such a view accounts for the possibility of typological correspondence in history.

The first step taken in studying the allusions was to identify them. Such a task is not easy or simple. For even among scholars who recognize that John is alluding to the Passover in his crucifixion narrative, there is no consensus as to which details in the

narrative constitute intended allusions. Still, the process of identifying allusions is not completely arbitrary. In this thesis, connections such as words, phrases, and contexts have been discussed to allow the reader as much available information regarding the correspondence between John's narrative and the Passover as possible. After viewing the numerous connections, it should become apparent that there are too many corresponding details between John's narrative and Passover to be coincidental. The reader may not accept all the elements suggested in this thesis to have been intended by John, but it would be difficult to dismiss all of them as coincidence.

After identifying several possible allusions, the main criticism of interpreting the allusions as demonstrating typological correspondence, namely their historicity, was addressed. None of the allusions can be proven to have been actual historical events at the crucifixion. Yet, none of the allusions have been proven to be fiction either. Further, as chapter three has demonstrated, there are several strands of literary, archeological, medical and other evidence to support John's account as historically reliable. Given such evidence in favor of the historical accuracy of John's report of the crucifixion, it is incumbent upon the critic to explain how such solid evidence can be dismissed without serious consideration.

The final chapter seeks to bring the reader to the conclusion that, if indeed, John is alluding to the Passover, and the allusions are not his own creation, but his selection of details which he has observed to be theologically significant, then he must be proclaiming Jesus to be the new paschal lamb and the new Passover. What other conclusion could account for the facts presented here?

Jesus dies during the Passover. Three times John brings this fact to the reader's attention. Like road signs posted at major intersections pointing the driver which direction to go, John places these three chronological markers at every significant turn in the narrative—first at His sentencing, then at His death, and finally at His burial. In addition to the chronological markers, John places a catchword, “hyssop,” in the text. Matthew and Mark note that the soldiers used a reed, but John is intent upon identifying Jesus as the new Passover and the new paschal lamb, so he includes the identity of the plant. Hyssop is so infrequently used in the Bible, its mentioning would undoubtedly remind John's readers of the Passover in Egypt. The deliverance that took place as God passed over the homes of those who smeared the blood with the hyssop would no doubt provide a rich context for understanding what Jesus accomplished upon the cross.

John also records the details of Jesus' crucifixion, noting the correspondence between His death and the regulations for the paschal lamb. If these regulations are missed by the reader, the direct quote in which John makes an explicit statement that these things fulfilled scripture will surely clarify John's intentions. Such a direct statement regarding the fulfillment of the Old Testament is a bold statement for such a subtle writer as John. Yet the measure of directness is perhaps an indication of the magnitude of this truth for John's theology.

For John, Jesus is the replacement of the Passover and the paschal lamb. Not because the former has simply been supplanted by a greater means, but because Jesus is the fulfillment of these things. He is the end to which they pointed, for in the death of Christ a deliverance merely foreshadowed by the Exodus from Egypt is accomplished.

There is no more need to sacrifice lambs, for the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world has been slain. For those who believe in Him, He is our Passover.

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