

**The Yale Divinity School Bible Study
New Canaan, Connecticut
Fall, 2007**

The Gospel of John

VIII. Death and Resurrection

Introduction:

Throughout this gospel Jesus has been pointing ahead to his crucifixion. Very often John refers to Jesus' death as his glorification (7:39; 12:16,23; 13:21, 17:1). Whereas in Matthew and Mark Jesus dies crying of abandonment and in Luke Jesus dies commending his spirit to God, in John's Gospel Jesus dies with a cry of triumph: "It is finished! It is accomplished! We win. From the beginning of the Gospel (maybe from the beginning, period) Jesus mission has been to come from the Father, declare the Father and return to the Father. When he is lifted up on the cross he begins the return home.

If Jesus mission is finished in chapter 19, we wonder why he returns in chapter 20. Of course this is in part because John knows and believes the traditions of Jesus' resurrection appearances. But it is also the case that the appearances to Mary Magdalene, to the gathered disciples and then to Thomas provide the opportunity for Jesus to show the significance of his triumph for the ongoing life of the church. In different ways Mary Magdalene and Thomas provide the transition from the early disciples who could see to a new generation who will know Jesus because they hear and because they believe.

To Thomas is given the punch line of the gospel—the climactic affirmation toward which our whole story has been moving: "My Lord and my God!" God's own Word, made flesh and now glorified again.

Questions for Reading:

Take a few minutes to compare the story of the crucifixion in John's Gospel with that in Mark's Gospel. What differences do you see, and what might explain these differences?

Throughout John's Gospel we have noted a number of scenes in which the evangelist helps show us what faith looks like and how the reader might grow in faith. What does faith look like in these resurrection stories...and are there clues for how the readers, too, might grow?

Questions for Reflection:

The Gospel has frequently pointed to the cross as the central event in the story of Jesus. How does the story of the crucifixion relate to the stories of the resurrection and the appearances of Jesus?

What is the role of the disciples of Jesus in the story? Of Mary Magdalene, of Peter, of the Beloved Disciple, of Thomas?

For further study:

Basic:

Raymond E. Brown, "The Resurrection in John 20—A Series of Diverse Reactions," *Worship* 64 (1990) 194–206.

Frances Taylor Gench, "Encounters with the Risen Lord" in *Encounters with Jesus* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007) 128-141

More challenging:

Harold W. Attridge, "Don't be Touching Me: Recent Feminist Scholarship on Mary Magdalene," in A.-J. Levine, ed., *A Feminist Companion to John* (2003) 2.140-166.