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INTRODUCTION TO PART 2: ASPECTS OF HISTORICITY IN JOHN 5–12

Paul N. Anderson

John 5–12 covers the middle section of Jesus' ministry, including three trips to Jerusalem (John 5; 7; 12), intense debates between Jesus and the religious leaders in Jerusalem (John 5; 7–10), the feeding of the five thousand and related events (John 6—the sea crossing, debates as to the meaning of the feeding, and the confession of Peter), the healing of a lame man by the Pool of Bethesda (John 5), the healing of a blind man and his washing in the Pool of Siloam (John 9), the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11), the anointing of Jesus' feet by Mary of Bethany, Greeks coming from afar to meet Jesus, his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (John 12), and the emergence of plans to kill Jesus (John 5; 7; 8; 11; 12). In addition to these events, Jesus' teachings play an important role in this section of the Fourth Gospel. In debates with Jerusalem leaders, controversy over his being "one" with the Father who sent him take the center stage in John 5; 7–10; and 12. After the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus' bread-of-life discourse and related dialogues occupy over half of the seventy-one verses in John 6. In John 8:12, Jesus declares himself to be the light of the world, while the sin of the religious leaders in the next chapter is that they claim "We see" (John 9:41). In John 10:1–9, Jesus declares himself to be the gate of the sheepfold, while he soon thereafter declares himself to be the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep (10:10–18). Prior to the raising of Lazarus, Martha makes a pivotal christological confession, and Jesus declares, "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25–26). Jesus' agony is expressed before his final entry into Jerusalem (12:23–33), and Jesus' closing words at the end of John 12 provide a summary of his mission, closing what has been called the Johannine "book of signs" (12:44–50). As such, several historical questions press their way into the foreground when considering the middle section of the Gospel of John.

First, the presentation of Jesus as traveling to and from Jerusalem poses a striking contrast between John and the Synoptics. Jesus' visit to Jerusalem in John 5 is presented as at least a second visit following the first visit in John 2, and due to the hostility to his mission among the Jerusalem religious leaders (the *Ioudaioi*),

his further visits to the south are questioned severely by those around him (7:1–10; 11:1–16). Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a colt in John 12 is the fourth recorded visit to Jerusalem in the Johannine narrative, lending credibility to his statement that he had taught openly in synagogues and in the temple (18:20). Here one must choose between the Synoptic and the Johannine renditions of Jesus' ministry itinerary; one cannot have it both ways. Either Jesus visited Jerusalem several times during his ministry, or he visited only once—when he was arrested, tried, and crucified. Because Matthew and Luke follow Mark's itinerary, the question comes down to analyzing John and Mark together. On this point, many scholars believe that John's presentation is closer to a realistic rendering of what an observant Jew would have done before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. Not only once a year at Passover, but visiting the temple several times a year—especially during religious festivals—seems a likely thing for an emerging religious leader to have done in Jesus' day. It is also interesting to note that in all four Gospels, after Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey's colt with crowds chanting "Hosanna!" and paving the street with garments and foliage, the Romans did not arrest him as a threat. The answer to this question, as posed by Paula Fredriksen (1999; 2007), lies in likelihood of the Johannine presentation: Jesus had probably been there before, and thus the threat he posed was felt to be minimal. Here the Johannine rendering seems historically preferable to the single-Jerusalem-visit itinerary of the Synoptic Jesus.

A second problem, though, follows the solution to the first. If Jesus indeed traveled to Jerusalem more than once, how did he arrive back abruptly in Galilee at the beginning of John 6? Further, the Jewish leaders in John 7 appear to be still debating Jesus' healing on the Sabbath—performed in John 5—while John 7:1–10 clearly presents a debate about Jesus *returning* to Jerusalem. As the living-water motif of John 4 fits well with the living-bread themes of John 6, some scholars have sought to explain these aporias (perplexities in the text) by inferring a changing of the Johannine order: perhaps the original order was John 4; 6; 5; 7, which was rearranged by a later editor. Then again, the manna and sea-crossing themes, as well as the crowd's desire to coronate Jesus as the Mosaic prophet in John 6:14, follow directly on Jesus' assertion that "Moses wrote of me" (5:46). That being the case, it seems that John 6 follows John 5 with intentionality, even referring to a plurality of healings (6:2, implying those performed in John 4 and 5), suggesting a simpler set of composition possibilities. What if an earlier edition of the Johannine narrative was supplemented by the additions of several sections of material, including John 6? This matter cannot be solved here, but it does illustrate the fact that questions of historicity and chronology emerge from features *within* the Johannine text, not simply as a factor of comparing John and the Synoptics.

A third problem relates to John's distinctive selections of material. Why are there no exorcisms, teachings on the kingdom of God, or presentation of the transfiguration in this section? If John's tradition indeed represents an alternative perspective on the ministry of Jesus, how could it possibly have omitted core

elements of that ministry? Conversely, why are some of the prominent features of John 5–12 completely missing from the Synoptics? The two healings in Jerusalem, Jesus' claims about himself using distinctive "I am" references, and his raising of Lazarus from the dead would all feature prominently in any Jesus narrative connected with history—if indeed these things really happened in history and were known. Again, one way scholars have dealt with the diversity of selection between John and the Synoptics is to ascribe to the Fourth Evangelist's interests theological motives instead of historical ones. The assumption is that John crafts things in keeping with the narrator's theology, while the Synoptics proceed with historical interests, proper. The problem with this approach is that the Synoptics are equally as theological as John, and John has much more archaeological and topographical detail than all the Synoptics put together. Indeed, some theological crafting is likely in every Gospel, but other explanations include access to traditions with particular geographical provenances, access to different traditions and sources, and alternative presentations as an intentional factor of familiarity and complementarity. Indeed, the Johannine narrator acknowledges other renderings of Jesus' ministry (20:30–31), and the final editor declares intentional selectivity, perhaps as an answer to original questions about the narrative's distinctiveness (21:24–25). The Johannine-Synoptic selection differences, though, remain an interpretive and historical challenge.

A fourth problem relates to the similarities between John and the Synoptics. The feeding of the five thousand is included in all four canonical Gospels, and in Matthew, Mark, and John it is followed by a sea crossing. Does this imply Johannine familiarity with, or even dependence upon, Synoptic traditions? When comparing the feedings in Mark 6 and John 6, even some of the details are similar: the plentitude of grass (Mark 6:39; John 6:10) and the cost of feeding such a multitude (Mark 6:37; John 6:7). If these similarities imply traditional familiarity, might John's narrative be seen as a spiritualized incorporation of Mark? Yet despite several similarities between John 6 (the feeding of the five thousand, the sea crossing, a discussion of the feeding, and the confession of Peter), Mark 6 (the feeding of the five thousand and the sea crossing), and Mark 8 (the feeding of the four thousand, discussions of the feeding, and the confession of Peter), none of them is identical, making close derivation an unlikely inference. These seem to be three independent renderings of a similar set of events. Regarding possible traditional influence, however, why not assume that one or more Synoptic tradition made use of John's tradition, that influence went in more than one direction, or that intertraditional contact happened in several ways at several times? Reductionist theories may fail at precisely this point: they fail to account for the complexity of multiple possible inter-Gospel relationships. For now, however, the similarities as well as the differences between John and the Synoptics pose a historical problem.

A fifth problem involves the Johannine-Synoptic differences, especially at places where things are otherwise similar. Staying with John 6 for a moment,

John 6 includes the feeding of the five thousand, the sea crossing, a discussion of the feeding, and the confession of Peter; Mark 6 includes the feeding of the five thousand and the sea crossing; and Mark 8 includes the feeding of the four thousand, discussions of the feeding, and the confession of Peter. Did Jesus perform two feeding miracles, as listed in Mark and Matthew, or are these parallel traditions that Mark seeks to preserve? Clearly Matthew stays closer to Mark than Luke does, but why does Luke depart from Mark and include only one feeding (as in John), moving Peter's confession to follow the feeding of the five thousand (as it does in John)? Differences also extend to theological content and implications. In Mark 8:29 Peter confesses that Jesus is "the Christ"; in Matt 16:16 Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God"; and in Luke 9:20 Jesus is "the Christ of God." In John 6:69, however, Jesus is "the Holy One of God," a title found elsewhere in Hebrew and Christian Scriptures only on the lips of the demoniac in Mark 1:24 and Luke 4:34. If the Johannine Evangelist was familiar with Mark, why is Peter rendered as speaking like the Markan demoniac instead of the Markan Peter? Differences *and* similarities between John and the Synoptics present problems for narrow dependence-oriented theories, but they may also point the way forward in other ways.

A sixth historical problem with the presentation of Jesus in John 5–12 is the plentitude of southern, Judean material. In fact, only a few scenes in John (1:43–51; 2:1–12; 4:1–54; 6:1–71; 7:1–10; 11:1–16; 21:1–25) are set in the north; the rest is in Transjordan, Judea, or Jerusalem. This fact has led some scholars to infer that the Fourth Evangelist must have been from the south, Judea, instead of from the north, Galilee. Whatever the case regarding the location of the narrator, the content of the tradition does indeed pose a striking contrast to the primarily northern ministry of the Synoptic Jesus. But this precisely is the historical question. Did Jesus' ministry include outreach to Judea as well as to Galilee and the Decapolis? If so, John's presentation appears to expand the reach of Jesus' ministry, if the Synoptics were known by the Evangelist or his audience. Even the north-south antipathy reflected in the Judeans' ambivalent response to the Galilean prophet (John 7) bears a good deal of religious and political realism when viewed from this perspective. In John, the northern prophet is portrayed as ministering in the south and raising consternation long before the foreboding events of the passion narrative.

A seventh historical problem with this section is an indirect result of the primary Johannine historical interest within the last four decades. The new light cast upon the Johannine situation as a function of J. Louis Martyn's treatment of John 9 involving two levels of reading, augmented by Raymond Brown's illumination of the Johannine situation on the basis of his reading of the Johannine Epistles and other texts, has led to the eclipsing of the originative level of history in favor of focusing on its finalized level of history. Indeed, some dialogical relationship with Jewish communities around the time of the narrative's finalization (say, in the 80s or 90s C.E.) can be inferred in a mirror-reading of the story. Not only is syna-

gogue expulsion a threat to the Johannine audience if they confess Jesus openly as the Messiah (John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2), but those struggles, says the narrator, went back to the days of Jesus and his immediate followers. While scholars have contested the particulars of synagogue expulsion and Jewish-Christian dialogue, originative history questions still remain. Was there a blind man whose healing became a threat to religious authorities during the time of Jesus? If so, how might the threatening of the Jerusalem authorities in John 9 be related to their being threatened by the healing of the lame man on the Sabbath (John 5) and the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11)? Whatever the case, the relation between the originative and delivered levels of history must be considered, not only the second level of history, but also on the first. Historical situation research, even if successful, cannot replace originative inquiry.

This issue points to an eighth question, involving the relation between history and theology in the Johannine narrative. Put bluntly, given that the Fourth Evangelist clearly believes Jesus to be the Messiah, are the presentations of Jesus as making high theological claims for himself (note the "I am" statements of John 6:20 and 8:58, Jesus' claim to be "working" with the Father in 5:17 resulting in accusations that he claimed to be "equal to God" in 5:18, and his own claims to be one with the Father in 10:30) and the wondrous miracles of Jesus distinctive to John (healing a man by the pool of Bethesda in 5:1-9, giving sight to a blind man in 9:1-7, and raising Lazarus from the tomb in 11:1-44) reports of what happened in history, or do they reflect embellished renderings of Jesus' words and deeds? While the Markan Jesus emphasizes messianic secrecy, the Johannine Jesus majors in messianic disclosure. The Synoptic Jesus speaks in parables and aphorisms, while the Johannine Jesus develops "I am" metaphors. While the Markan Jesus resuscitates the daughter of Jairus having said she is "sleeping" (Mark 5:39), the Johannine Jesus raises the brother of Mary and Martha from the tomb having clarified that "Lazarus is dead" (John 11:14). Of course, all nine of the Johannine "I am" metaphors are also found in the Synoptics in some form, as are *egō eimi* statements of Jesus and references to Exod 3:14 (Mark 12:26), and the Synoptic Jesus certainly performs miraculous signs in what is unlikely to have been an exhaustive record. While most scholars argue for some sort of independent tradition underlying the Johannine Gospel, the relation of the Evangelist's theological interests to the construction of his narrative remains an abiding question requiring the attention of Johannine and Jesus scholars alike.

These and other questions are addressed by the essays in part 2 of the present collection, as they engage aspects of historicity in John 5-12. In the first paper, Brian D. Johnson elucidates the historical realism of the Jewish feasts presented in the middle part of Jesus' ministry. In particular, the Feasts of Tabernacles, Dedication, and Passover are analyzed from a socioreligious perspective and then connected with the narrative presentation of Jesus' multiple visits to Jerusalem and participation in these festivals as a means of furthering the narrator's purposes. Johnson also develops further his analysis of first-century Judaism

(Johnson 2006) by showing how a first-century Galilean leader might have been received in Jerusalem, including how Jewish images of value might have been appropriated by Jesus in articulating his mission. Whether or not Jesus' multiple trips to Jerusalem in John represent a strict chronology or a more general presentation of his fulfilling the theological themes of the particular feasts narrated, Johnson shows how they functioned in the narrator's presentation of likely historical events in compelling ways for later audiences.

Craig A. Evans addresses a handful of issues particular to John 6, contributing to a sense of coherence within the Johannine tradition. Having produced a number of studies on John and the Synoptics (1993; 1999; 2001) and extensive treatments of historical Jesus research (1995; 1996; 2008), Evans here focuses on the sacramental associations in John 6 (see Evans 2002). If more formalized presentations of a eucharistic meal setting are more likely to represent Christian theological developments, as rendered in the Synoptics, might the absence of an institution of the Last Supper as a meal of remembrance in John and the more informal feeding of the multitude argue for historical realism in John? Evans also unpacks the political and religious realism of the presentation of Jesus as fulfilling the typologies of Elijah and Moses in John 6. As the prophetic agent from God, Evans shows how the presentation of Jesus in John 6 fits entirely well within conventional prophet-associations, as described by Josephus, including Jesus' commissioning of the twelve as a sign of the restoration of dismembered Israel.

Given the strong likelihood that a devout Jewish leader from Galilee would have traveled to Jerusalem several times a year and that Jesus' ministry probably lasted more than one year, Sean Freyne takes the discussion further by showing how a Galilean leader would likely have been received in Jerusalem by the religious elite—both positively and negatively. Building on his earlier work (1988; 2001a), Freyne develops the contextual plausibility of a northern prophet's ironic rejection in Jerusalem. While finding his Davidic credentials lacking, the Judean leaders fail to note Jesus' fulfilling the biblical typology of the prophet like Moses (Deut 18:15–22) and accuse him of being insufficient in keeping the law of Moses. Having established his own picture of Jesus as a Galilean prophetic leader, however, Freyne (2001b; 2004) suggests several ways the Jesus presented in John indeed reflects the realism of first-century C.E. Palestine. Representing a Judea preceding the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., John's presentation of the Jesus of Galilee poses a remarkable contrast to the Jesus (ben Sirach) of Jerusalem. Rather than being presented as a cultured religious authority, the Johannine Jesus comes across as one of the people of the land (*'am ha'arets*)—an unlikely image to have been concocted for rhetorical purposes. In that sense, Freyne elucidates the religio-geographical realism of the Johannine presentation of the northern prophet spurned by the southern religious leaders.

Reporting on the latest archaeological discoveries in Jerusalem, Urban C. von Wahlde sheds light on the historical realities associated with the Pool of

Siloam in Jerusalem. Where the explanatory statement, “which means ‘sent’” (John 9:7), has been patently dismissed as having no historical relevance because of its clearly symbolic and theological character, the archaeological discoveries since 2004 and von Wahlde’s analysis of them pose a serious challenge to such moves. While the northern Pool of Siloam has been known for more than a century, the identification of the larger southern pool as a *miqveh*—a pool used for ritual purification—bears considerable implications for understanding the larger set of events reported in John 9. Rather than seeing the primary level of meaning as a reflection of the debates between later Johannine Christians and the local synagogue in Asia Minor or some other Diaspora setting, the originative history of the events takes on new significance. Jesus’ sending of the man to wash in the Pool of Siloam and to show himself to the priests would have restored him socially and religiously, and such a detail would not have made sense outside of Palestine or after the fall of Jerusalem. In addition to von Wahlde’s major contribution to Johannine archaeological and topographical studies (2006), this study makes major inroads not only into Johannine historicity but also into socioreligious understandings of Jesus’ historic ministry.

A second analysis of John 9 is contributed by Edward W. Klink III, but it focuses on the second level of Johannine historicity—that of its intended audience. Following recent critics of the Martyn/Brown hypothesis, namely, that a second level of reading John’s text should be seen against a Jewish-Christian set of tensions in the last decade or two of the first century C.E., Klink asks what sort of tensions would have been experienced by Jesus and his followers “even back then,” decades before the finalization of the Johannine narrative. Indeed, if Jesus were associated with high theological claims about himself, his movement would likely have been regarded as unorthodox. The point is that in-house tensions between local synagogue leadership and the Jewish followers of Jesus would have been experienced at earlier stages of the tradition’s development, perhaps even suggesting something of the original conflicts encountered by Jesus and his followers a half century or more before the Johannine Gospel was finalized. If Jesus was regarded by religious authorities as a *mesith*—someone who leads people astray—tensions with his followers are certainly understandable, whether or not there were ever widespread expulsions of followers of “the Nazarene” from local synagogues in Asia Minor or elsewhere. If tensions between the Jesus movement and orthodox Judaism were earlier as well as later within the developing Johannine tradition, might they have even rooted in the historic and provocative ministry of Jesus himself?

Addressing one of the most difficult issues in the Fourth Gospel, Richard Bauckham focuses on John 11 and 12, seeking to account for the Lazarus material in John, which is completely missing in the Synoptics. Picking up on the presentations of Mary and Martha in John and Luke and the anointing of Jesus presented in all four Gospels, albeit differently, Bauckham seeks to identify and analyze connections between the Johannine narrative and the Bethany family.

Given the occurrence of these names in Palestine in the first century (Bauckham 1998b), Bauckham asserts the reliability of at least the names representing real people during this time, bolstering the scene's credibility. He also resorts to "protective anonymity" as a means of accounting for other characters named in John that are unnamed in Mark. Within Bauckham's larger approach (2006; 2007; 1998a), if John's narrative was crafted as an augmentation and corrective to Mark, and if it also served a historiographic function, might John's narrative have been intended to pose an alternative history, explaining its echoes of—and contrasts to—the Markan narrative?

Ben Witherington III continues the investigation of the Johannine Lazarus tradition by connecting it with the question of John's authorship. Given the problems with the traditional view of authorship, Witherington picks up on the mention that Jesus "loved" Lazarus (John 11:3, 5), connecting him with the Beloved Disciple (21:24). While other theories of John's authorship abound, Witherington thereby seeks to account for the distinctively Judean material in the Fourth Gospel, the origin of this distinctive tradition, and the transcendent character of John's theological presentation of Jesus. In doing so, Witherington builds upon his earlier monograph on the wisdom tradition in John (1995b), suggesting how such a transformative experience as being brought back to life from the depths of the tomb might account for John's distinctive presentation of Jesus and his ministry. He also builds upon his earlier monograph on women around the ministry of Jesus (1984) in his treatment of Mary and Martha. Jesus' connection with the family of Bethany accounts not only for the inclusion of the Lazarus material in John, but it also explains, in Witherington's view, John's distinctive presentation of Jesus and his ministry.

A third analysis of the Lazarus material is offered by Derek M. H. Tovey, who poses a means of distinguishing history from fiction by asking whether there is a "referential" feature of the narrative. According to Tovey, if a narrative appears to be alluding to something particular in the consciousness of the author and the audience, that makes it a different sort of narrative than an abstract story plucked out of the blue. While confirming that such a feature does not determine anything about the historicity of a story as such, it at least shows evidence of history-reference markers in the text, calling for a preliminary consideration of the narrative as such. In doing so, Tovey builds upon his earlier monographs on narrative artistry and the presentation of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel (1997; 2007) and concludes that John's narrative here is closer in its form to theologized history than historicized theology. Whether or not this proves anything about the historicity of the contents is another matter; Tovey simply seeks to advance the discussion by identifying the telling character of the narrative's genre.

The essays in part 2 are responded to by Paul N. Anderson, who identifies strengths and weaknesses in each of the papers. In addition to commenting upon historical and literary bases for John's theology, Anderson draws into play his own attempts at assessing aspects of historicity in the Fourth Gospel with implications

for John's composition and Jesus research (2006a; 2006b; 2006c). In doing so, he picks up on some issues and extends the discussion to include degrees of plausibility in the arguments both engaged and advanced.