

The Incarnation and The Passion in the Gospel of John **Fr John Behr, Lanier Library, December 7**

[1] Zech. 6:11–13

Take from them silver and gold, and make a crown and set it upon the head of Joshua [i.e. Jesus in LXX], the son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, “Behold the man whose name is Branch: for he shall grow up in his place and he shall build the Temple of the Lord. It is he who shall build the Temple of the Lord and shall bear royal honour, and shall sit and rule upon his throne. And there shall be a priest by his throne and peaceful understanding shall be between them both.”’ (Zech. 6:11–13, MT)

[2] Feasts in John

- 1: First, ‘the Passover of the Jews’ which is ‘at hand’ so that ‘Jesus went up to Jerusalem’ (2:13, 23).
- 2: Second, ‘a feast of the Jews’, when again ‘Jesus went up to Jerusalem’ (5:1); this is the only use of the term ‘feast’ without a definite article and no other indication as to which feast it was, though the healing of the man by the pool with five porticoes took place on the Sabbath (5:9).
- 3: Third, a second mention of ‘the Passover, the feast of the Jews’ being ‘at hand’ (6:4); this time Jesus does not go to Jerusalem but is beside the Sea of Galilee and crosses over to Capernaum in the evening (6:1, 16–17).
- 4: Fourth, ‘the feast of the Jews, the Tabernacles’ (7:2), when Jesus went up to Jerusalem ‘not publicly but in private’ (7:10); there follows references to ‘the middle of the feast’ (7:14) and ‘the last day of the feast, the great day’ (7:37).
- 5: Apart from the healing of the blind man on the Sabbath (9:14), there is no further indication of time till 10:22, ‘the feast of the Dedication in Jerusalem’, the fifth feast to be mentioned, during which ‘Jesus was walking in the Temple, in the portico of Solomon’ (10:23).
After this feast, Jesus returned to the place where he first began his ministry (10:40; cf. 1:28), never to return to the Temple again.
- 6: Then, finally, the sixth feast to be mentioned is the third and final Passover, which ‘was near’ (11:55), is ‘six days’ away (12:1),
is the point ‘before’ which Jesus eats with his disciples, speaks with them and prays to the Father, knowing that ‘his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father’ (13:1),
and then, at ‘the day of Preparation for the Passover, about the sixth hour’, he is crucified (19:14, cf. 19:31).
- 7: After these six temporal and festal indicators, there then comes, as seventh, the temporal markers of his appearance to Mary Magdalene ‘on the first day of the week’ (20:1), to the disciples, without Thomas, ‘on the evening of that day’ (20:19), and again ‘eight days later’ (20:26) to the disciples with Thomas.

[3] Ignatius of Antioch, *Romans*, 6:

‘Birth-pangs are upon me. Suffer me, my brethren; hinder me not from living, do not wish me to die ... Suffer me to receive the pure light; when I shall have arrived there, I will be a human being [ἄνθρωπος ἕσομαι], suffer me to follow the example of the passion of my God’.

[4] John 19:25–6

[25] So the soldiers did this. But standing by the cross of Jesus were **his** mother [ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ], and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. [26] When Jesus saw **the** mother [τὴν μητέρα], and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to **the** mother [τὴν μητέρα], “Woman [γύναι], behold, your son!”

[5] John 16:20–2:

[20] Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy. [21] When the woman [ἡ γυνή] is in travail she has sorrow [λύπη] because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child [ὅταν δὲ γεννήσῃ τὸ παιδίον], she no longer remembers the tribulation [θλίψεως], for joy that a human being is born into the world [ἐγεννήθη ἄνθρωπος εἰς τὸν κόσμον]. [22] So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

[6] Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies*, 1.9.2:

Manifest, then, is the false fabrication of their exegesis. For John, proclaiming one God, the Almighty, and one Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten, ‘by whom all things were made’ [1:3], declares that this is ‘the Word of God’ [1:1], this ‘the Only-begotten’ [1:18], this the Maker of all things, this ‘the true Light who enlightens every man’ [1:9], this ‘the Maker of the world’ [1:10], this the one who ‘came to his own’ [1:11], this the one who ‘became flesh and dwelt among us’ [1:14], they, speciously distorting the exegesis, hold that the Only-begotten, by emission, is another, whom they call the Beginning, and they hold that another became the Saviour, and another the Logos, the son of the Only-begotten, and another the Christ, emitted for the reestablishment of the Fullness. ... But that the apostle did not speak concerning their conjunctions, but concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, whom he knew to be the Word of God, he himself has made evident. For, summing up what he said above in the beginning about the Word [Ἀνακεφαλαιούμενος γὰρ περὶ τοῦ εἰρημένου αὐτῷ ἄνω ἐν ἀρχῇ λόγου], he adds [ἐπεξηγεῖται], ‘And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us’ [1:14].

[87] John 6:51-6

I am the living bread which descended [καταβάς] from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give [δώσω] for the life of the world is my flesh. ... 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; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me and I in him. (6:51-6)

[8] Cyril of Alexandria, *Com. Jo.* 4.2 (ed. Pusey, vol. 1, 532.18-21, 533.1-4).

‘Here too we should especially admire the holy Evangelist for crying out explicitly, “And the Word became flesh.” He did not hesitate to say, not that he became “in flesh” but that he became “flesh”, in order to show the unity. ... Therefore whoever eats of the holy flesh of Christ has eternal life because the flesh has in itself the Word, who is life by nature. For this reason he says, “I will raise them up on the last day”.’

The Prologue as a Paschal Hymn

[1] In first place was [and is the crucified Jesus,] the Word,
and the Word was [and is going] towards God,
and the Word was [and is] God.

[2] This one was [and is] in first place towards God;

[3] all things came to pass through him, and without him nothing came to pass.

What came to pass [4] in him was life, and the life was the light of human beings.

[4] The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

a [6] There was a human being sent from God, whose name was John. [7] He came for testimony [martyrdom], to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him.

[8] He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light.

b [9] That was the true light that enlightens every human being coming into the world.

c [10] He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, yet the world knew him not. [11] He came to his own, and his own received him not.

b' [12] But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; [13] who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. [14] And the Word became flesh and tabernacled in us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

a' [15] John bore witness to him, and cried, ‘This was he of whom I said, “He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me.”’ [16] And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace. [17] For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. [18] No one has ever seen God; the only-begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.’