

GOSPEL OF JOHN 19 E (35-42)

35 And the *one* (John/He) who has seen *it* has borne witness, and his testimony is true; and that one knows that he speaks true things, that also you might believe.

“... ‘in fact the high degree of interpretation (of the Gospel of John compared to the Synoptics) is appropriate precisely because this is the only one of the Gospels that claims eyewitness authorship (Bauckham)’ or to be more precise, the authority of the only evangelist who witnessed the Passion. (Fr. Behr, pg. 53.)”

Saint Chrysostom: “That is, ‘I heard it not from others, but was myself present and saw it, and the testimony is true.’ He explains that an insult took place....Again he confirms the prophet’s words by his own witness. ‘These things I have told you, that you might learn that great is the relationship of the type with the reality.’ See with what diligence he takes to make that believed which seemed to be a matter of reproach, and bringing shame? For that the soldier should insult even the dead body was far worse than being crucified. ‘But still, even these things I have told, and told with much earnestness, that you might believe.’ Let none then be unbelieving, nor through shame injure our cause. For the things which appear to be most shameful, are the very noble records of our good things.”

³⁶For these things came to pass, in order that the Scripture should be fulfilled: “Not a bone of Him shall be broken.” ³⁷And again, another Scripture said: “They shall look at *Him* Whom they pierced. (Zach. 12:10)”

“The high point of the Gospel of John, if not its conclusion (it is finished 19:30), is the crucifixion of Jesus at the moment that the lambs are slain, or rather, when the Lamb is slain, interpreting this act by the scriptural injunction that not a bone of it/his shall be broken. (Fr. Behr, pg. 97)”

Israel was instructed not to break a bone of the slain paschal lamb

“In one house shall it be eaten, neither shall you carry forth of the flesh thereof out of the house, neither shall you break a bone thereof. (Exodus 12:46).”

Bishop Gerasimos: “The Passover lamb saved then the first born of Israel and freed the people from the Egyptians. Christ is the true Lamb who is sacrificed for the salvation of the world. That the bones of the Lord were not broken indicates that the Passover lamb of the Exodus was a type or foreshadowing Christ. That Christ died during the preparation day of Pascha, the time when the Passover lamb of the Jews was slaughtered, underscored His sacrifice. Christ was sacrificed as the Lamb of God, as the one who takes away the sin of the world”

In the Septuagint, we read: “And they shall look upon Me, because they have mocked Me; and they shall make lamentation for Him, as for a beloved friend, and they shall grieve intensely, as for a firstborn son [Zach. 12:10; cf. Jn. 19:37].”

Blessed Jerome: “The Evangelist John is quoting from the Hebrew, ‘They shall look on Him Whom they pierced [Zach. 12:10],’ for which we read in the Septuagint, ‘And they shall look upon Me because they have mocked (katwrrchvsanto, treat despitefully) Me,’ and in the Latin (Vulgate) version, ‘And they shall look upon Me for the things which they have mocked or insulted.’ Here the Evangelist, the Septuagint, and our own version all differ; yet the divergence of language is atoned by oneness of spirit.” [“Letter LVII, to Pammachus,” in Nicene, 2nd Ser., VI:115.]

³⁸And after these things, Joseph, the one from Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus—but had been concealed for fear of the Jews—asked that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave permission. Therefore he came and took away the body of Jesus. ³⁹And there also came Nicodemus, the *one* who came at the first to Jesus by night, bearing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds.

*Only the Gospel of John names Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus making John an eyewitness and privileged information with access as only a high-priestly family member might have or the high priest himself.

- John is known by the high-priest
- By his intervention Peter gains access to the court of the high-priest
- John knows the name of the high-priests' servant Malchus
- John knew what was going on in the meeting of the Sanhedrin

“Myrrh and stacte and cassia exhale from Thy garments [Ps. 44(45):7(8)].”

Myrrh is a symbol of burial. Aloes is a very refined form of myrrh. When the aromatic herb is squeezed, whatever part of it is liquid is separated as aloes, but the denser part which is left is called myrrh. Cassia is a very delicate and fragrant bark which is tightly stretched around a woody stalk.

Saint Basil: “You have myrrh because of burial; aloes because of the passage down to the lower world, since every drop is borne downward, and cassia, because of the dispensation of the flesh upon the wood of the Cross.”

⁴⁰Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the aromatic spices, as is the custom with the Jews to prepare for burial.

Chrysostom: “And they bought those spices whose special nature is to preserve the body for a long time and not allow it quickly to yield to corruption, which was an act of people imagining nothing great in respect to Him. Nonetheless, they exhibited very loving affection. But how is it that none of the twelve came, neither John nor Peter...no one can say that Joseph acted this way because he now had no fear of their power (Jews). Rather he came despite his fear...he buried Him, not as a criminal, but magnificently after the Jewish fashion, as some great and admirable person.”

Origen: “He (the Holy Spirit through the scriptures) did this so that everyone who wants to be buried with Jesus by baptism might know that nothing of the old state should be brought to the new tomb, nothing of uncleanness to the clean linen cloth.”

Initially adults were baptized naked, covered in the ‘oil of gladness’. In our time, adults are robed in white linen as they are baptized, like a burial garment. Once baptized we are given a mystical robe, unseen, the Light of Christ and the Holy Spirit now adorn Christians.

⁴¹Now there was a garden in the place where He was crucified, and in the garden a new sepulcher in which no one as yet was laid. ⁴²There then they laid Jesus, because of the preparation of the Jews, for the sepulcher was near.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem: “A garden was the place of burial, and a vine was what was planted there, as he said, ‘I am the vine.’ He was planted therefore in the earth in order that the curse that came because of Adam might be rooted out. The earth was condemned to thorns and thistles; the true Vine sprang up out of the earth, that the saying might be fulfilled, “Truth sprang up out of the earth, and righteousness looked down from heaven. (Psalm 85:11- Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven).”

4But thanks be to God Who always causes us to triumph in the Christ, and make manifest the fragrance of the knowledge of Him by us in every place. 15 For we are to God a sweet smelling fragrance of Christ in those being saved and in those perishing: 16 to some on the one hand an odor of death to death, and to others an odor of life to life. And who is sufficient for these things? [2 Cor. 2:14-16]

Saint Chrysostom: “The expression, ‘sweet smelling fragrance of Christ’, appears to me to admit of a double interpretation: for he means that in dying they offered themselves a sacrifice; or that they were a sweet smell of the

slaughter of Christ, as if one should say, "This incense is a sweet smell of this victim."...For some so receive this sweet smell so as to be saved, but others so as to perish. So that if anyone should be lost, the fault is from his own cause."