

“WHOM ARE YOU SEEKING?” IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

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Abstract. Of the four Gospels, the fourth Gospel uses the word “ζητέω” most often. The question “Whom are you seeking?” which is typical of the Evangelist, is addressed to various interlocutors: once to the two disciples of John the Baptist (Τί ζητεῖτε 1:38) and Mary Magdalene (τίνα ζητεῖς 20:15), and twice to the people who were going to arrest Jesus (Τίνα ζητεῖτε 18:4,7). The purpose of this research is to study a hypothesis: The seeking of Jesus by the two disciples in the call narrative (1:35-42) and Mary in the resurrection narrative (20:1-18) frame the failure of the Jews in the arrestation narrative (18:1-11).

Keywords: Seeking; the call narrative; resurrection; arrestation; the two disciples; Mary Magdalene; Judas; failure; the Jews.

Introduction

Of the four Gospels, the fourth Gospel uses the word “ζητέω” most often. The question “Whom are you seeking?” (Τί ζητεῖτε 1:38, Τίνα ζητεῖτε 18:4,7, τίνα ζητεῖς 20:15) is typical of the Evangelist.¹ Luke has a similar but different question because Jesus refers to himself as the object of the question (Τί ὄτι ἐζητεῖτέ με, Luke 2:49). This question is repeated four times by Jesus throughout the fourth Gospel. This question is addressed to various interlocutors: once to the two disciples of John the Baptist (Andrew and the unknown disciple) and Mary Magdalene, and twice to the people who were going to arrest Jesus (the captors). The Evangelist uses the question “whom do you seek?” to mark the beginning of a new chapter in Jesus’ life: his public appearance, passion, and resurrection. The fact that this question becomes the first sentence of Jesus in the fourth Gospel (1:38), his passion (18:4,7), and after his resurrection (20:15), one can surmise that the Evangelist has a particular motive behind this question.

This paper will focus on the main conversations between Jesus and his interlocutors in the three narratives. Some questions that will be examined in this

¹ In this paper, John the Baptist will be called “the Baptist;” John the Evangelist, “the Evangelist;” the other disciple “the beloved disciple;” The Baptist’s disciples, “the two disciples/ the potential disciples;” Mary Magdalene, “Mary;” Those who come with Judas to arrest Jesus, “the captors;” And the Gospel of John, “the Fourth Gospel.”

paper are: what does Jesus' question mean? What is the motive of seeking Jesus? The purpose of this research is to study a hypothesis: The seeking of Jesus by the two disciples in the call narrative (1:35-42) and Mary in the resurrection narrative (20:1-18) frame the failure of the Jews in the arrestation narrative (18:1-11).² To achieve this purpose, I will divide the following discussion into three sections: Jesus' motive for asking the question, the motive of seeking Jesus, and the faith transformation of the disciples. In each section, besides some clues that help support my argumentations, I will also compare the three narratives in this order: the call narrative, the resurrection narrative, and the arrestation narrative.

Overview

The call narrative (1:25-42)

This passage begins with the Baptist's exclamation when he saw Jesus walking: "Behold the Lamb of God" (v. 36). Two disciples who previously were standing with the Baptist (v. 35) follow Jesus after hearing their teacher (v. 37).

Jesus (turned and saw them following) - (v. 38)

Jesus: "Whom are you seeking?" (v. 38)

The two disciples: "Rabbi, where are you staying?" (v. 38)

Jesus: "Come and you will see" (v. 39)

The two disciples (came and saw where he was staying) - (v. 39)

The two then live with Jesus (v. 39). The next day, after Andrew found Peter and said that they had found the Messiah, he brings Peter to Jesus (vv. 40-42). This narrative concludes with Jesus' words to Peter: "You are Simon, the son of John? You shall be called Cephas." (v. 42)

² The presence of a band of soldiers -την σπειραν- among the captors suggests that not only the Jews were responsible for Jesus' arrest, but "the world." In a broader context, this idea can be implemented. However, in the context of our discussion, this idea does not serve prominently, as Brown states. "the presence of the soldiers is not emphasized even as constituting the presence of Rome – it is only by deduction that we realize that Pilate and thus the Roman authority must have been consulted." Raymond Edward BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, 1st ed., ABRL, (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 816.

The arrestation narrative (18:1-11)

This passage begins with the report “after Jesus spoke these words, he and his disciples went to a park across from the brook Kidron” (v. 1). Judas, who previously knew the place (v. 2), comes to the place with a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and Pharisees carrying lanterns, torches, and weapons (v. 3).

Jesus (knowing all that would happen to him) - (v. 4)

Jesus: “Whom are you seeking?” (v. 4)

The persecutors: “Jesus of Nazareth.” (v. 5)

Jesus: “I AM.” (v. 5)

The persecutors (drew back and fell to the ground) - (v. 6)

Jesus: “Whom are you seeking?” (v. 7)

The persecutors: “Jesus of Nazareth.” (v. 7)

Jesus: “I told you that I AM. So, if you seek me, let these men go.” (v. 8)

After the Evangelist quoted one of Jesus’ sayings, “of those whom you gave me I have lost not one” (v. 9), Simon Peter cut off Malchus’ right ear (v. 10). This passage concludes with Jesus’ words to Simon Peter: “Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the father has given me?” (v. 11)

The resurrection narrative (20:1-11)

This passage begins with a lengthy introduction concerning the discovery of the empty tomb. Briefly, it can be described as follows: Mary came to the tomb and saw the stone that had been taken away from the tomb (v. 1); Mary ran and said to Simon Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved: “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him” (v. 2); the two disciples fled to the tomb (v. 4). Another disciple, who arrived first but did not enter the tomb, saw the linen cloths (vv. 4-5) and believed (v. 8). while Simon Peter, who came later and went into the tomb, saw the linen cloths (v. 6) and the face cloths which had been neatly folded (v. 7). This introduction ends with the Evangelist’s statement that they did not understand scripture (v. 9) and report that they returned to their homes.

The central scene begins with Mary crying outside the grave (v. 11). Then there was a brief conversation between the angels and Mary and shift to Jesus and Mary.

Mary (saw two angels in white) - (v. 12)

Two angels: “Woman, why are you weeping?” (v. 13)

Mary: “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” (v. 13)

Mary (turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus) - (v. 14)

Jesus: “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” (v. 15)

Mary (supposing him to be the gardener): “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” (v. 15)

Jesus: “Mary.” (v. 16)

Mary: “Rabboni.” (v. 16)

Jesus: “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my father and your father, to my God and your God.’” (v. 17)

This passage closes with Mary's proclamation to the disciples: “I have seen the Lord” (v. 18).

I. Jesus’ motive for asking the question

	The call narrative	The resurrection narrative	The arrestation narrative
Jesus’ motives	Jesus’ initiative to disclose himself to the potential disciples.	Jesus’ initiative to reveal himself to Mary.	Jesus’ control over his arrestation.
Clue I: Jesus’ gesture	Jesus turned and saw.	Mary turned and saw, then Jesus called her name.	Jesus knowing, came forward and said.
Clue II: The character’s position	Jesus and the two disciples were standing.	Jesus and Mary were standing.	Jesus was standing, but the captors drew back and fell to the ground.
Clue III: The two-times pattern	Twice the Baptist proclaims, “Behold the Lamb of God.”	Twice the question “why are you weeping?” are asked (by the two angels and Jesus).	Twice Jesus asks, “whom are you seeking?”

Jesus’ motive for asking the same question to the varied interlocutors was undoubtedly different. In the call narrative, he acted as the initiator when asked two potential disciples, “whom are you seeking?” This question became the starting point for the two potential disciples to become his disciples. Furthermore, in the resurrection narrative, he also acted as the initiator when he revealed himself to Mary. In the arrestation narrative, through his question to the captor, the Evangelist does not only depict Jesus as the initiator but, more profoundly, Jesus as the controller of his arrestation.

Three indicators explain this dynamic, which are Jesus’ gesture, the figures’ position, and the two-times pattern. Jesus showed different gestures when speaking with the interlocutors (the potential disciples, Mary, and the captors). In the call narrative, Jesus “turned and saw” a moment before asking the two potential

disciples. In the resurrection narrative, even though Mary is the one who “turned and saw,” it is Jesus who starts the conversation. Meanwhile, in the arrestation narrative, Jesus came forward to the captors because he already knows what will happen to him.

The position of Jesus and his interlocutors when having a conversation is also different. In all three narratives, Jesus was standing when he began to ask the question. The two disciples and Mary were standing as well. In contrast, the captors “drew back and fell to the ground,” responding to Jesus’ words, “I AM.” The captors’ position is in great contrast both with Jesus and his interlocutors (the potential disciples and Mary).

“The two-times pattern” describes statements that are repeated twice in each narrative. In the call narrative, the Baptist repeats the same exclamation when he sees Jesus “behold the lamb of God.” the question in the resurrection narrative, “woman, why are you weeping?” is also asked twice, by two angels and Jesus. This two-times pattern culminates in the arrestation narrative, where it is Jesus Himself who repeats “whom are you seeking?” twice. The answer “Jesus of Nazareth” is also given twice by the captors.

Comment on Jesus’ motive of asking the question

The theme of following Jesus is undeniable in both the call narrative (vv. 37, 38, 40, 43) and throughout the Fourth Gospel (8:22; 10:4,27; 12:26; 13:36; 21:19,22). In the context of the call narrative, Jesus’ question to the two potential disciples shows his initiative to offer answers to their hopes and questions.³ Ramsey Michaels proposes to understand Jesus’ initiative (1:51) as self-disclosure. This question marked Jesus’ disclosure to his potential disciples, starting with the Baptist’s former disciples, followed by the other disciples’ call (Peter, Philip, Nathanael). Jesus’ disclosure to his disciples will culminate in the event when Jesus transforms water into wine. The Evangelist’s testimony that Jesus “manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him” (2:11) is the zenith of the call narrative.⁴

If in the call narrative Jesus is the one who “was turning and seeing” - στραφεις και θεασαμενος-, in the resurrection narrative, Mary makes the similar gesture, “she turned and sees” -εστραφη και θεωρει-. This gesture is the culmination of her search for Jesus. Three times Mary saw the resurrection signs:

³ F. J. MOLONEY, *Belief in the Word: Reading John 1-4*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 67. Although the fourth Gospel’s call narrative is different in many ways from the Synoptics (In the Synoptic -Matt 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11-, Peter, Andrew, John and James were fishing in the shore of the sea of Galilea), the four gospels agree that Jesus is the initiator of the disciples’ commission.

⁴ J. Ramsey MICHAELS, *The Gospel of John*, NICNT, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 119.

an empty tomb, the two angels, and Jesus, whom she thought was a gardener. Mary “turned and saw” right before witnessing the third sign, not long before realizing that it was Jesus who called her. In contrast with the unnamed disciple who “saw and believed” (20:8), Mary “sees” but not believed (v. 14). In the resurrection narrative, the word “see” occurs several times in three variants: “she/he sees” -βλέπει- (vv. 1,5), “he/she sees/observes” -θεωρεῖ- (vv. 6,12,14), and “he saw/perceived” -εἶδεν- (v. 8). Same with Mary who “sees” -βλέπει- the stone had been taken from the tomb, the beloved disciple also “sees” -βλέπει- the wrapping (v. 5). Peter “sees/observes” -θεωρεῖ- the linen cloths (v. 6) and Mary does the same twice: she “sees/observes” -θεωρεῖ- the angel (v. 12) and Jesus as a gardener (v. 14). On the one hand, Mary acts Peter, whose θεωρεῖ without faith; on the other hand, the beloved disciple “perceived and came to faith” -εἶδεν και ἐπίστευσεν- (v. 8).⁵

Although the Evangelist described Mary’s gesture is similar with Jesus in the call narrative, the initiative remains from Jesus because Mary became aware of Jesus’ presence when he called her name.⁶ Jesus’ call by mentioning Mary’s name is like the breaking of a spell.⁷ Mary, who suddenly knew Jesus’ identity, proved Jesus’ previous promise true “his sheep hear his voice as he calls by name those who belong to him” (10:3) and “I know my own, and my own know me” (10:14). According to Michaels, this calling by the name indicates that Mary can also be listed as one of Jesus’ disciples.⁸ This event also shows that Jesus took the initiative to reveal himself to Mary, just like the call narrative.

⁵ For Brown, εἶδεν is used “where sight is accompanied by faith.” BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah*, 986. Cf. Reimund BIERINGER, “‘They have taken away my Lord’ Text-Immanent Repetitions and Variations in John 20:1-18,” in *Repetitions and Variations in the Fourth Gospel: Style, Text, Interpretation*, eds. Gilbert VAN BELLE, Michael LABAHN, and P. MARITZ, BETL 223, Leuven: Peeters (2009), 609-630, here 617-618.

⁶ What happened to Mary is the opposite of Lazarus’ rising narrative. Jesus called Lazarus, who was dead from outside the tomb. As a result, Lazarus rose from the dead and moved toward Jesus. Meanwhile, in the resurrection narrative, the resurrected Jesus called Mary from the grave. As a result, Mary rose from her death of faith and moved toward Jesus to touch him..Cf. MICHAELS, *The Gospel of John*, 999.

⁷ Paul DUKE, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel*, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 105. MICHAELS, *The Gospel of John*, 999.

⁸ Further, Michaels states “Jesus later told to his male disciples, ‘You call me teacher and Lord, and you say well, for I am’ (13:13), and there is every evidence that his female disciples spoke to him in the same way. At Bethany, Martha ‘summoned Mary her sister, and told her privately, The teacher is here, and is summoning you’ (11:28). Mary Magdalene, like Mary of Bethany, and like the sheep in 1-3, has also been ‘summoned’ (although the word is not used), and she responds accordingly.” MICHAELS, *The Gospel of John*, 1000. Corresponding with Michaels, Brook states “In this gospel (John), she is single-handedly responsible for sharing the resurrection news with the others, a role that later earns her the title, *apostola apostolorum* (“apostle of the apostles”).”

In the arrestation narrative, Jesus does not only take the initiative, but more than that, he takes control of the situation. Moloney states, “Jesus is not betrayed, led out, or questioned. He knows, comes forward, and initiated the encounter.”⁹ The Evangelist describes Jesus’s control through the positioning of the characters in the three narratives. When asking the question “whom are you seeking?” to the Baptist’s former disciples, Jesus stopped from walking, as the two disciples did. At that time, the two disciples were behind Jesus, as it is said Jesus turned and saw them following him. In the resurrection narrative, Jesus and Mary were also standing. Although it does not say whether Jesus was standing behind or in front of Mary, her gesture in v. 14 (she turned) gives the impression that Jesus was standing behind her.

The captors’ position in the arrestation narrative was in contrast to the two narratives. While Jesus was in the garden together with his disciples, he saw the captors coming (which means that no one “turned and saw”). Jesus was not standing passively, but he came forward to meet them (supposing that he was standing). Until this point, the position of both Jesus and the captors are equal (even Judas was also standing with them -v. 5-).¹⁰ However, it did not last long because after Jesus said “I AM” -Εγώ εἰμι-, they drew back and fell to the ground. While in the Synoptics, Jesus is the one who prostrates in the dust of Gethsemane, here, the captors fell on the ground while Jesus was standing.¹¹ Their position was significantly inversely proportional to Jesus’ and in contrast with the two potential disciples’ and Mary’s. While the two disciples and Mary moved toward Jesus, the captors drew back. Even their falling emphasizes this contrast more.

The reason for the captors’ fall has something to do with Jesus’ affirmation for their answers. By saying “I AM,” he declared himself to be “the incarnate Logos of God.”¹² Some scholars suggest that the captors’ reaction reinforces this meaning because theologically, their falling to the ground is an expression of their powerlessness before the power of God (cf. Psa. 27:2; 56:9; Dan 2:46; 8:18; Rev

Ann Graham BROCK, *Mary Magdalene, the First Apostle: The Struggle for Authority*, HTS 51 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Divinity School, 2003), 60.

⁹ F. J. MOLONEY, *The Gospel of John*, SP 4, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 485.

¹⁰ In the synoptic, Judas takes a direct action to arrest Jesus (Matt 26:47-50; Mark 14:43-46; cf. Luke 22:47-48). In contrast, in the Fourth Gospel, Judas only presents passively among the captors. Gail R. O’DAY, *The Gospel of John*, NIB 9, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 493-865, here 802.

¹¹ DUKE, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel*, 109.

¹² Charles H. TALBERT, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles*, Reading the New Testament Series, (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 233-4.

1:17).¹³ Differently than these scholars, Heil argues that their gesture of drawing back and falling is an expression of their unbelief.¹⁴

If one translates 18:3 literally, the number of Jesus' captors seems exaggerated and is historically improbable.¹⁵ However, one can surmise that the Evangelist has a motive behind why he included the information in this narrative. A great number of the captors who are falling before Jesus might create a very dramatic picture.¹⁶ Duke sees this depiction as an "ironic testimony to the enemy's fear of Jesus."¹⁷ Even later in this narrative, Jesus still gave orders to them to let his disciples go. These facts prove that their goal of arresting Jesus was unsuccessful because Jesus was the one doing their job. Duke states, "the scene is, therefore, a comic enactment of the impotence of 'the ruler of this world to take the life of Jesus (14:30; 10:18). When an army of the ruler's minions comes hoping to seize Jesus, he must do their work for them and conduct his own arrest."¹⁸ Several times the Jews tried to arrest Jesus before, but they were unsuccessful (7:30,44; 8:20,59; 10:39; 12:36; compare Luke 4:29-30). Even the chief priests and Pharisees sent the temple officers earlier in 7:32. They returned empty-handed, saying, "No one ever spoke like this man" (7:46). The captors' powerlessness confirms that Jesus took control of his arrestation.¹⁹

Apart from that, another form indicating that Jesus was in control of his arrestation is related to the betrayal of Judas, his former disciple. There are six times previously the Evangelist identified Judas as the one giving Jesus over (6:64,71; 12:4; 13:2,11,21). Now, it is the time for Judas to fulfil his intention to

¹³ O'DAY, *The Gospel of John*, 802; BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah*, 261, 818; F. J. MOLONEY, *Glory not Dishonor: Reading John 13-21*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 130; Rudolf K. BULTMANN, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 639-40.

¹⁴ John Paul HEIL, *Blood and Water: The Death and Resurrection of Jesus in John 18-21*, CBQMS 27, (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1995), 22.

¹⁵ Many scholars argue that this is not historically probable. See BULTMANN, *The Gospel of John*, 637-8; Rudolf SCHNACKENBURG, *The Gospel According to St. John*, HThKNT, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 93; BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah*, 246-252, MOLONEY, *Glory not Dishonor*, 130.

¹⁶ Compare with transforming more than 100 gallons of water to be wine (ch. 2), feeding 5000 people (ch. 6), having a whole pint perfume pours on his feet (ch. 12), being embalmed with seventy-five pounds of spices (ch. 19), bringing 153 large fish (ch. 21). MICHAELS, *The Gospel of John*, 887.

¹⁷ DUKE, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel*, 109. Instead comic, I more chose term ironic to describe this situation.

¹⁸ DUKE, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel*, 109-110.

¹⁹ „Jesus ist der Herr der Situation.“ Anton DAUER, *Die Passionsgeschichte im Johannesevangelium; eine traditionsgeschichtliche und theologische Untersuchung zu Joh. 18, 1-19, 30*, SUNT 30, (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1972), 40; cf. DUKE, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel*, 80.

betray Jesus. According to Brown, “Jesus had given Judas permission to leave the last supper to betray him (13:27); now he will permit Judas and his forces to arrest him. For John, the passion is not an inevitable fate that overtakes Jesus; he is the master of his own fate.”²⁰

It is also necessary to take into account the two-times pattern in these three narratives. Twice the Baptist said, “Behold the Lamb of God” before the two disciples left him and follow Jesus. For Barrett, this repetition serves “in order to furnish a motif for the action of the two disciples.”²¹ At this point, the Baptist functions as a (human) messenger. In the resurrection narrative, the question “why are you weeping?” was asked the first time by the two angels (heaven messengers) and repeated by Jesus. This pattern will culminate in the arrestation narrative because Jesus himself raised the main question, “whom are you seeking?” twice.

II. The motive of seeking Jesus

	The call narrative	The resurrection narrative	The arrestation narrative
The motives	Positive: seeking a new teacher.	Positive: seeking Jesus' corpse	Negative: seeking a criminal
Clue I: response to Jesus' question	The two disciples: “Where are you staying?”	Mary: “... where you have laid him, and I will take him away?”	The captors: “Jesus of Nazareth.”
Clue II: physical contact	The two disciples stay with Jesus: No physical contact.	Mary has desire to touch Jesus.	The captors seized Jesus and bound him (v. 12)
Clue III: time setting	At four in the afternoon-The tenth hour.	Early in the morning while it was still dark.	At night and they brought lanterns, torches and weapons.

The motives for seeking Jesus by the characters in each narrative differ from one another. While the motive of the two potential disciples is to be Jesus' disciples, Mary's motive is to seek the missing body of Jesus. Although these are slightly different, both motives have positive nuances. In contrast, the motive of seeking Jesus in the third narrative is negative because the captors were seeking Jesus to arrest him.

Three indicators explain this dynamic: their responses to Jesus' question, the physical contact with Jesus, and the time settings. There are variant responses to Jesus' question, “whom are you seeking?” The two potential disciples' answer, “Rabbi, where are you staying?” has a similar nuance with Mary's “Sir, if you have

²⁰ Six times BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah*, 818.

²¹ C. K. BARRETT, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed., (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 180.

carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” Both were seeking the place of Jesus. In the arrestation narrative, the captors did not have the same interest with the two disciples and Mary in seeking Jesus. They looked for Jesus not to follow him, but to arrest him. Therefore, they address Jesus’ name and origin in order to respond to his question.

Physical contact is also expressed variously. The tendency of touching Jesus was not demonstrated by the two potential disciples, although the Evangelist reports that they were staying with him. Mary shows the tendency to touch Jesus when she recognized his presence. The climax of this tendency is when the captors arrest Jesus (20:19), there was unpleasant physical contact.

The time setting also plays a role in showing the motive of seeking Jesus. Of these three narratives, two events happened at a time of darkness: Mary went to the tomb in the early morning, and the captors went to the garden late at night. The thing that distinguishes the two narratives is a report that the captors came to the garden with lanterns and torches (and weapons) carried by the captors, but Mary did not carry anything.

Comment on the motive of seeking Jesus

In the call narrative, the motive for the Baptist’s disciples following Jesus is to become his disciples. The Baptist’s exclamation “behold the lamb of God” apparently served as a guide and command to his disciples to follow Jesus. Because of this exclamation, they left the Baptist, then followed Jesus. This exclamation becomes the sign by which the Baptist handed over his disciples to Jesus.²² The report of the Evangelist that Jesus was walking away from the Baptist (v. 36) supports the Baptist’s intention because when the two disciples followed Jesus, it also meant that they were walking away from the Baptist.²³ Besides that, their answers to Jesus’ questions expressed their desire to become Jesus’ disciples. However, there is a negative side to the two disciples’ answer. Their answer, “Rabbi” to reply to Jesus’ question, shows that both disciples failed to apprehend the Baptist’s message, who introduced Jesus as the lamb of God (v. 36).²⁴ For them, Jesus is only a teacher, and they want to attend his class.²⁵ Although they failed, their failure becomes a part of their process of becoming Jesus’ disciples.

²² TALBERT, *Reading John*, 82.

²³ MOLONEY, *Belief in the Word*, 67.

²⁴ Cf. Ruben ZIMMERMANN, “Jesus – the Lamb of God (John 1:29 and 1:36): Metaphorical Christology in the Fourth Gospel,” in *The Opening of John’s Narrative (John 1:19-2:22), Historical, Literary, and Theological Readings from the Colloquium Ioanneum 2015 in Ephesus*, eds. R. Alan CULPEPPER and Jörg FREY, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, (2017), 79-98, here 95-6.

²⁵ MOLONEY, *Belief in the Word*, 68; MOLONEY, *The Gospel of John*, 54.

The question “where are you staying?” more supports the two disciples’ intention to follow Jesus. Concerning this question, Moloney, states “it is often read in a symbolic way, but it is the logical question that follows on the recognition of a newly found teacher. Rabbis do not wander. They have living quarters where they sit and teach and gather students.”²⁶ It is not clear whether they previously lived with the Baptist or not. One thing for sure is they knew where the Baptist was, in the wilderness across the Jordan River. Based on this, one can also surmise that the two disciples at least wanted to know where Jesus was. The Evangelist confirms that their expectation is more than to know where Jesus usually is because they stayed with Jesus all that day. In this passage, the word “staying” -μένειν- occurs three times in verses 38-39. In general, μένειν can mean “to Lodge” (Mark 6:10; Luke 19:5). In this context, Brown proposes that the term has a theological tone.²⁷ Besides, by answering Jesus, “where do you live?” they are not shying away from Jesus’ question, but they tell him what they are looking for from him. Their question is not only based on curiosity, but rather as the potential disciples who are looking for a new teacher, because many times the Evangelist portrayed Jesus who “stayed” -μένειν- (2:12; 4:40; 10:40; 11:6,54), or “spent time” (διέτριβεν, 3:22), or “sat” -ἐκάθητο- (6:3), or “gathered together” -συνήχθη,- (18:2) with the disciples or potential disciples.²⁸

In response to the two disciples’ questions, Jesus said, “Come and you will see.” Philip will later raise this invitation in response to Nathanael’s question, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” In the context of the conversation between Jesus and the two disciples, this invitation is Jesus’ response to the curiosity of the new disciples, as Duke states, “In the fourth gospel one can rightly ‘search and see’ in the scriptures only when one will ‘come and see’ Jesus (cf. 1:39, 47).”²⁹ In these two texts, by answering “come and you will see,” the fourth Gospel does not try to hide the origin of Jesus. This invitation is implicit in all the ensuing silences of this beckoning gospel.³⁰ These facts reinforce their motive for seeking Jesus, namely, to become his disciples.

In the resurrection narrative, Mary’s initial motive of seeking Jesus is to seek his corpse. When Jesus asks Mary, “Whom are you seeking?” Mary replies, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away” (v. 15). Even though Mary’s reply implies that Mary’s motive was to seek God’s body, one should be open to the possibility that Mary does not look for the

²⁶ MOLONEY, *Belief in the Word*, 68.

²⁷ BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah*, 75.

²⁸ MICHAELS, *The Gospel of John*, 120-1.

²⁹ DUKE, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel*, 68.

³⁰ DUKE, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel*, 55.

corpse but the living person. According to Ramsey, regardless of whether she realizes it or not, “Mary is looking for a living person, not a dead body, as she has already intimated in speaking of ‘the Lord’ (v. 2) and ‘my lord’ (v. 13).”³¹ This is reinforced by Mary’s next answer (v. 15b), which always uses “him” instead of “it.”

Mary’s statement, “Where did you put God? I will take him away,” is the culmination of her two similar statements earlier. Three times Mary saw the signs of Jesus’ resurrection: the stone that had been taken, the appearance of the two angels, and Jesus’ revelation, whom she thought to be a gardener. Her announcement to Peter and the beloved disciple, and her answers to the angel and Jesus, hints that Mary is not taking into account the possibility that the Lord has risen. Moreover, her answer to Jesus, who she thought was a gardener, shows irony. Moloney states, “The readers sense the irony as the one whom she seeks asks her whom she is seeking, but her lack of faith is intensified as she mistakenly identifies Jesus as the gardener.”³²

In the call narrative, the two disciples respond to Jesus’ invitation to “come and you will see” by staying with Him. There is no physical contact reported by the Evangelist. On the other hand, in the resurrection narrative, the Evangelist gives the impression that there is a desire from Mary to touch Jesus. Jesus said, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the father” (v. 17). Jesus’ statement does not imply that Mary has embraced Jesus, but only that he has perceived her intention to do so.³³ According to Moloney, this commandment “Instruct her that she must desist from her attempt to reestablish the relationship she once had with him.”³⁴

The reason that Jesus gave was that he had not yet met the Father, “I am ascending to my Father...” (v. 17). There are several times the Evangelist mentions that Jesus would go to the Father (ὑπάγω at 7:33; 16:5,10; πορεύομαι at 14:12,28; 16:28). However, the word that is used here is ἀναβαίω (20:17).³⁵ This word supports the idea that Jesus has “not yet” -οὔπω- fulfilled his promise to the disciples (14:12,28; 16:10,28) because he has to return to his Father first.³⁶ From this understanding, one can see that Mary’s desire to touch Jesus was actually a

³¹ MICHAELS, *The Gospel of John*, 998.

³² MOLONEY, *Glory not Dishonor*, 165.

³³ O’DAY, *The Gospel of John*, 842.

³⁴ MOLONEY, *Glory not Dishonor*, 166.

³⁵ BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah*, 994.

³⁶ MOLONEY, *Glory not Dishonor*, 167.

form of respecting Jesus.³⁷ This prohibition is strictly preliminary to the main thing Jesus wants to say to Mary, namely the proclamation mission to the other disciples.

In the arrestation narrative, the captors' motive of seeking Jesus is to arrest and kill him. If in the two other narratives Jesus is approached by two potential disciples and a female disciple of Jesus (Mary), in the arrestation narrative, Jesus is approached by Judas, his former disciple. At this point, Judas is not only not interested in becoming a disciple of Jesus but in becoming the one who tries to arrest him. Judas was no longer with the group of at disciples but with the entourage of the Jew. Previously there were many verses that indicated that people were looking to kill Jesus, but they were unsuccessful.³⁸ The incident in the garden became the culmination of their efforts to find Jesus to kill him. The question “whom are you seeking?” in the events in the garden became the zenith of the Jews' efforts to seek Jesus to kill him. The contrast between Judas' role in the arrestation narrative with the disciples in the other narrative that is Judas becomes the counter figure of the two disciples and Mary. Judas fail to be Jesus' disciple.³⁹

In the call narrative, the time setting when Jesus meets the two disciples is at four in the afternoon, that is, the tenth hour. In the resurrection narrative, Mary went to the tomb alone early in the morning while it was still dark.⁴⁰ “Darkness” in this narrative can be interpreted in two ways: literally and symbolically. Literally, it was still early in the morning; and symbolically, Duke states “for the moment (while it was dark), Mary is in the night of unrelenting grief, and she knows it. The symbol fits the facts and her feelings, however briefly.⁴¹ This darkness is not only for Mary, but for Peter and the other disciple as well. Moloney states, “the *stand*

³⁷ Mary's motive is very different from Thomas, who is allowed to touch Jesus. Michaels states, “Mary and Thomas situations are not comparable, because of different motives: Mary as an act of devotion or worship, Thomas - for verification (v. 25).” MICHAELS, *The Gospel of John*, 1003.

³⁸ In the synoptic gospels, the description that people were seeking Jesus to arrest or destroy him is in the passages close to Jesus' passion narrative (Matt 21:46; Mark 11:18; Luke 19:47). But the fourth Gospel states that since chapter 5, the Jews (Ιουδαῖοι) had started looking for Jesus to kill him (5:18). This Jewish effort will be emphasized several times by the Evangelist on many occasions (7:1,11,20,25,30; 8:37,40; 10:39; 11:6). Cf. John DENNIS, “Seeking Jesus: Observation on John's Vocabulary of Death,” In *Repetitions and Variations in the Fourth Gospel: Style, Text, Interpretation*, eds. Gilbert VAN BELLE, Michael LABAHN, and P. MARITZ, BETL 223, Leuven: Peeters (2009), 157-170, here 161-166.

³⁹ MICHAELS, *The Gospel of John*, 885. Brown states, “Those disciples had followed him looking for life; Judas' party has come looking for Jesus' death.” BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah*, 818.

⁴⁰ Differing with the Synoptic, the Evangelist does not report the reason why Mary went to the tomb. However, the custom to mourn at the grave that is mentioned in 11:31 implies that Mary has the same intention when she came to visit Jesus' tomb. BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah*, 981.

⁴¹ DUKE, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel*, 107.

still in vv. 1-2 is one discussion and no faith, as the group of Mary, Simon Peter, and the other disciple stand still in the darkness.”⁴² The situation of darkness in the resurrection narrative is in stark contrast to the arrestation narrative. Despite leaving for the garden (grave) early in the morning, Mary is not depicted as carrying anything, while the captors came to the Garden of Olives with a lantern and torch.

The venue for the arrestation event is in the garden at night. It is not clear why Jesus chooses “the garden” as a place for spending nights (Mark 16:32 and Matt 26:36: Gethsemane, in Luke it is just “the place”).⁴³ According to Moloney, the Jews symbolize “the world” which came to seek out “the light of the world” by artificial light.⁴⁴ This is an irony because they cannot see the light of the world (cf. 3:19; 8:12; 9:5).⁴⁵

The symbol of the darkness of the night in the garden parallels the night when Judas left Jesus to deliver him up. The Evangelist’s emphasis in 13:30 that it was night was a theological symbol such as “Judas went over to the realm of darkness (1:5; 3:20; 12:35,46).”⁴⁶ Duke also agrees with Moloney with the statement “night stands in incongruous contrast with the sacred meal just shared, the morsel from the hand of Jesus, the positive expectation of the disciples, and the sobering fact that Judas’ journey into darkness is launched from the very presence of the light of the world... Judas is chosen by the light, lives with the light, yet in that brilliance can be possessed of Satan and ‘immediately’ be plunged into night.”⁴⁷ This situation, which is in complete contrast to the resurrection narrative, clearly shows “John’s constant play with light and darkness provides some instances of ironic imagery.”⁴⁸

⁴² MOLONEY, *Glory not Dishonor*, 159.

⁴³ Brown suggested it because it had something to do with the Passover celebration that would take place. Towards the Passover celebration, many pilgrims come from various places to the city of Jerusalem. Because Jerusalem was too small to accommodate all pilgrims, the district was expanded to a Bethphage on the hill of olives. BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah*, 806. The lantern and torches that they brought strengthen the description that it was dark.

⁴⁴ MOLONEY, *Glory not Dishonor*, 130.

⁴⁵ BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah*, 250.

⁴⁶ BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah*, 250; cf. DUKE, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel*, 79.

⁴⁷ DUKE, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel*, 108.

⁴⁸ DUKE, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel*, 7-8.

III. The faith transformation of the disciples

	The call narrative	The resurrection narrative	The arrestation narrative
Transformation	Positive	Positive	Negative
Clue I: Jesus' titles	From Rabbi to Messiah. Andrew said, “We have found Messiah” (1:41)	From Rabboni to The Lord. Mary said, “I have seen the Lord” (20:20)	Jesus of Nazareth (stagnant)
Clue II: discipleship	From the potential disciples to disciples	From the disciples to brothers	Disciple to enemy
Clue III: role play	From the witness, to messenger, to apostle	From the witness to messenger	From the witness to betrayer

This table shows the transformations shown by the characters in the three narrations after dialogue with Jesus. While the two disciples (especially Andrew) and Mary showed a positive transformation, Judas (and the captors) actually showed a transformation in the opposite direction. The three clues were a sign of their faith transformation.

Comment on the disciples' transformation

In the call narrative, there is a positive faith transformation. One of the clues of the transformation is the knowledge of the two disciples about Jesus. In the beginning, based on the Baptist's proclamation to Jesus, the two potential disciples know Jesus as the Lamb of God. On this basis, one can presume that the basic knowledge of the two potential disciples prior to talking to Jesus was Jesus as the lamb of God. When Jesus asks the question “whom are you seeking,” the two potential disciples greet him as a respected teacher, “Rabbi.” Ῥαββεί literally means “my great one/Lord/master.” The Evangelist's translation of the word as “teacher” is not a literal translation but is in accordance with the use of the word in the time of Jesus.⁴⁹ Although the two disciples seem to have failed to grasp the Baptist's message introducing Jesus as the Lamb of God, their knowledge of Jesus as a teacher cannot be interpreted as superficial because their answer reflects their longing to be disciples. Moreover, in the following passages, the Evangelist himself introduces Jesus as a teacher (1:49; 3:2) who learns from his father (8:28). Duke emphasizes the role of Jesus as a teacher by stating “He (Jesus) has been with God from the beginning. He is therefore more than learned, and even more than teacher. He is according to John the subject, the very substance and end of all true learning.”⁵⁰ Furthermore, by responding to Jesus' invitation to “come and see” by

⁴⁹ BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah*, 74.

⁵⁰ DUKE, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel*, 72.

staying with Jesus, the two potential disciples changed their status, becoming disciples of Jesus. At this stage, the two disciples began to be witnesses to the life of Jesus.

Their transformation did not stop there. The next day Andrew will be a messenger who bring news about Jesus to his brother Peter. He testified to Peter, “we have found the Messiah.”⁵¹ According to the Evangelist’s theology, when they stay with Jesus, they get a deep insight into who Jesus is.⁵² Ramsey also suggested a similar opinion. For him, Andrew’s proclamation “shows no awareness of this dimension of the Messiah’s work, yet later, when Simon Peter’s turn comes to speak for himself, he confesses Jesus as the Holy One of God.”⁵³ Andrew’s task ends with the statement that he brought Peter to Jesus (v. 42). At this stage, Brown inserts that Andrew has acted not only as a witness but also as an apostle who brings others to Jesus.⁵⁴

In the resurrection narrative, Mary shows a positive transformation of faith as well as the two disciples in the call narrative. Mary’s basic knowledge about Jesus at that time is that Jesus died on the cross as she, with the disciple who was loved by Jesus, Jesus’ mother, and other women, witnesses Jesus’ death. Therefore, for Mary, from the crucifixion until Jesus reveals himself to her, Jesus is dead. That is why the motive of seeking Jesus is finding Jesus’ corpse. Mary uses the term τὸν κῆρσιον to honor the body of the person she has been following (vv. 2,13,15). Mary, who is crying in front of the tomb, is asked by the two Angels and Jesus, but she failed to recognize them. The fact that she spoke to Jesus and about him, without realizing his identity, portrays Mary just as the blind man from birth whom Jesus healed who failed to recognize Jesus who healed him (v. 9:36,38).⁵⁵ Gail also adds that Mary is like the Samaritan woman at the well who “is ignorant of who is

⁵¹ Messiah is the transliteration of Aramaic.

⁵² BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah*, 79.

⁵³ MICHAELS, *The Gospel of John*, 123. Mark put Peter’s confession about Jesus’ messianic title in the middle of his Gospel (Mark 8:29). In contrast to Mark, the Evangelist introduces Jesus as the Messiah from the very beginning. According to Brown, the reason for this difference is that the Evangelist “has used the occasion of the call of the disciples to summarize discipleship in its whole development.” BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah*, 78. Apart from that, what is different from the character speaking (Andrew vs Peter) is, on the one hand, Jesus’ responses to Peter’s confession; on the other hand, Jesus does not react to Andrew’s proclamation.

⁵⁴ BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah*, 79; cf. Johannes BEUTLER, “Die Berufung Des Andreas Und Des Philippus Nach Dem Johannesevangelium (Joh 1.35–46),” *NTS* 65 (2019), 461–76, here 466–7. Andrew’s actions will be followed by the story of the other disciple’s summons and will climax at 2:11 when Jesus reveals his glory, and the disciples believe in him.

⁵⁵ MICHAELS, *The Gospel of John*, 999. Cf. MOLONEY, *Glory not Dishonor*, 164.

speaking to her,” so that she does not understand the implication of her own question (cf. 4:10).⁵⁶

The mention of τὸν κύριον in Mary’s words to Peter and the other disciples (v. 2), to the two angels (v.13), and to Jesus (v.15) will culminate when she recognizes Jesus after he calls her name. Mary answered: Rabboni "teacher" (v.17). Even though Ῥαββουεὶ is in Aramaic, its function is same with Ῥαββεί in 1:38. According to Moloney, by saying this, Mary made “a partial confession of faith.”⁵⁷ Her faith reached its fullness when she delivered the resurrection news to the disciples “I have seen the lord” τὸν κύριον.⁵⁸ Mary, who previously was unable to understand the words of the two angels -δύο ἀγγέλους- (vv. 12-13), now takes over the role of the two angels when announcing - ἀγγέλλουσα- God’s words to the disciples.⁵⁹ She has been moved from a partial confession of faith into perfect belief.⁶⁰ Mary’s task in bringing Jesus’ message to the disciples can be seen as an effort to gather the disciples back together after Jesus let them go when he was arrested.

The transformation of Mary’s faith can also be seen from the change in her status from being a female disciple to be a sister of Jesus. Although Jesus did not directly make this statement, one can surmise that the changing status of Mary to be Jesus’ sister can be inferred from Jesus’ command. Jesus gave orders to Mary “go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my father and your father, to my God and your God.’” According to Schneider, the plural of brother - ἀδελφούς- means siblings (of both sexes), whom Mary understands to mean the “disciples” (18).⁶¹ Regardless of whether Mary is included in the category of τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου or not, there is a transformation when Jesus gave his mother to a beloved disciple and vice versa. This incident signifies the change of the status of disciples: from disciples to brothers.⁶² Gail asserts, “[Jesus’] ascension is the

⁵⁶ O’DAY, *The Gospel of John*, 842.

⁵⁷ MOLONEY, *Glory not Dishonor*, 166.

⁵⁸ MOLONEY, *Glory not Dishonor*, 168. Further, Duke argues “There is a steady ascendancy of *kurios* in chapter 20 (vvs. 2, 13, 15, 18, 20, 25) until finally in verse 28, Thomas takes it to its zenith.” DUKE, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel*, 184.

⁵⁹ MOLONEY, *Glory not Dishonor*, 168.

⁶⁰ Cf. the faith transformation of the beloved disciple. “the model of Johannine discipleship has moved from no faith (vv. 1-2) through partial faith (vv. 4-5) into the fullness of resurrection faith by seeing that God had overcome Jesus’ death (vv. 7-8).” MOLONEY, *Glory not Dishonor*, 162.

⁶¹ S. M. SCHNEIDERS, “Women in the Fourth Gospel,” in *The Gospel of John as Literature: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Perspective*, Ed. Mark W.G. STIBBE, Brill: Leiden, (1993), 123-143, here 140.

⁶² M. L. COLOE, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MI: Liturgical Press, 2001), 187-88; BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah*, 1021. Jesus also mentions the transformation of the disciple status in the Farewell Discourse (John 14-17) when he

confirmation that the believing community now knows God as Jesus knows God, that Jesus has opened up the possibility of a new and full relationship with God.”⁶³

In the arrestation narrative, the faith transformation experienced by Judas and the captors is inversely proportional to the faith experience of the two disciples and Mary. Judas, who was previously a disciple of Jesus, is now an enemy of Jesus.⁶⁴ As in the call narrative the Baptist’s disciples move to follow Jesus, in the arrestation narrative Judas leaves Jesus. After Andrew lived with Jesus, He brought Peter to Jesus. But in this passage, Judas brings companions, not with the same intentions, but so that Jesus may follow them.

Judas should have basic knowledge about who Jesus is. At least he should know that Jesus is a teacher whom he has followed. But in the arrestation narrative, Jesus is recognized by Judas and the captors only as a Nazarene. Nazareth, as quoted by the Evangelist, has a meaning in both geography and theology.⁶⁵ From the point of view of regulations in arrest, the practice of mentioning the name and origin of the person to be arrested is common.⁶⁶ “Jesus” is a common name, so the mention of the place-name explains more who is the Jesus they are looking for. Ramsey added, “The identification is evidently for the benefit of ‘the band of soldiers,’ Romans who may not have recognized him.”⁶⁷ But for Brown, the moniker, “the Nazarene” has a Christological value because “it will appear again on the cross triumphantly (19:19).”⁶⁸

These facts show how far the quality of knowing Jesus between the disciples (the two disciples and Mary) and the enemy (Judas Iscariot and the captors). Andrew and Mary, who initially addressed Jesus as teacher (Ῥαββεί and Ῥαββουνοι), later introduced Jesus as Messiah (Andrew to Peter: Εὐρήκαμεν τὸν Μεσσίαν 1:41) and Lord (Mary to the disciples: Εώρακα τὸν κύριον 20:18). Meanwhile, until the end of Jesus’ life, the Jews (represented by Jesus’ captors)

differentiated between servants and friends. Interestingly, the Evangelist emphasizes that the disciples’ transformation after Jesus’ resurrection is more than becoming the friends of Jesus but, more significant than that, become the brothers of Jesus.

⁶³ O’DAY, *The Gospel of John*, 845.

⁶⁴ For Brownson, “Judas’ betrayal of Jesus is the treachery of a disciple and insider who should know better, but who nonetheless refuses to accept the true identity of his master.” James V. BROWNSON, “Neutralizing the Intimate Enemy: The Portrayal of Judas in the Fourth Gospel,” *SBLSP* (1992), 49-61, here 51; Cf. HEIL, *Blood and Water*, 24.

⁶⁵ BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah*, 260.

⁶⁶ For Brown, “It is perfectly logical that a party sent to arrest a man would wish to identify him fully by name and locale.” BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah*, 810.

⁶⁷ MICHAELS, *The Gospel of John*, 889.

⁶⁸ BROWN, *The Death of the Messiah*, 260.

only knew Jesus as a Nazarene. With respect to Pilate’s overhead inscription of Jesus ΙΗΣΟΥΣ Ο ΝΑΖΩΠΑΙΟΣ Ο ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΤΩΝ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΩΝ (19:19), the Jews protest to Pilate that Jesus is not their king (19:21). However, they did not question Jesus’ identity as a Nazarene.⁶⁹

Conclusion

Based on the discussion and analysis on the main conversations between Jesus and his interlocutors in the three narratives, there are some conclusions:

Concerning the division of the sections:

1. The motives of seeking Jesus determine Jesus’ motive of asking the question, “whom are you seeking?” Before asking the question, Jesus already knew his interlocutors’ motive of seeking him. Their motives become apparent in their responses to Jesus’ question.
2. The motives of seeking Jesus will determine the transformation of Jesus’ interlocutors. The two disciples and Mary achieve a positive transformation because their motive of seeking Jesus is Positive. On the other hand, Judas (and the captors) experience a negative transformation because his motive of seeking Jesus is negative (to arrest him).

Concerning the comparison of the three narratives:

1. There is some irony which is shown by Judas and the captors when they try to arrest Jesus.⁷⁰ This irony becomes clearer when we compare them with the experience of the two disciples and Mary.
2. The irony which is happened in the arrestation narrative supports the hypothesis that the seeking of Jesus by the two disciples in the call narrative (1: 35-42) and Mary in the resurrection narrative (20: 1-18) frame the failure of the Jews in the arrestation narrative (18: 1-11).

⁶⁹ HEIL, *Blood and Water*, 85.

⁷⁰ Cf. MacRae, who states “Johannine irony is born out of a conflict in situation. The conflict is one that takes place on a variety of levels simultaneously: it is the conflict between Jesus and ‘the world’ or ‘the Jews.’” G.W. MACRAE, “Theology and Irony in the fourth Gospel,” in *The Gospel of John as Literature: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Perspective*, ed. Mark W.G. STIBBE, 103-113, Brill: Leiden (1993), 103-113, here 108.

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Concerning the question “Whom are you seeking”:

Jesus' question to his interlocutors in the three narratives is ironic because he knows that he is the one they are seeking, but instead, he keeps asking, "whom are you seeking." The responses from the two disciples and Mary, both in the form of their answers and their actions in proclaiming Jesus to the other disciples, show that they succeeded in perceiving Jesus' motive for asking the question. They got the clue that he gave them the opportunity to become his disciples, messengers, and apostles. On the other hand, by answering "Jesus of Nazareth," Judas and the captors fail to understand Jesus's motive. This failure prompted their answer "Jesus of Nazareth" to become ironic because even though they knew Jesus as a man of Nazareth, their position that fell before Jesus was as if they were dealing with God. One might suspect that perhaps the reason Jesus repeated the question “whom are you seeking” is because he knew their lack of understanding, and he provided them one more opportunity to give the correct answer. However, by giving the same answer, they confirmed their failure.

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