

READING JOHN'S STORY OF JESUS

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The sessions will draw on my current study of the narrative of John's gospel. This approach looks at the story in its successive moments—what starts the narrative going, its mounting tension or rising action, its climactic turning point, and its resolution. The three sessions will be looking at the following moments in John's narrative.

Oct 3 Who are you? What are you doing? We need to make a report. Agents from Jerusalem interrogate John the Baptist to begin John's story of Jesus. In this surveillance society people are watched, they inform on each other, they are afraid to speak their minds. Except for Jesus. He speaks openly to general amazement. But the story gets going when he clears the Temple, his initial act in this gospel (not toward the end as in the other gospels). James C. Scott's theory of the hidden transcripts helps us to understand what is happening, as Jesus begins to attract attention, both favorable and antagonistic.

Oct 10 Lazarus and his sisters. After many comings and goings to and from Jerusalem, the central arena of action in this gospel, Jesus leaves for the place of John's baptizing. It is as if the story goes back to the beginning and threatens to stay there. The sisters of Lazarus prevail upon him to return to Jerusalem. Both Jesus and his disciples know that returning realistically is trading his life for that of Lazarus, for the opposition is intensifying. His return is the "Gethsemane" moment, and climax, in this gospel. The final decision to accept the consequences is as pivotal a decision as the first challenge in the temple. Together we learn that Jesus' resistance is nonviolent.

Oct 17 Pilate and the High Priests. Pilate dominates this gospel much more than the others. It places him in a three-way contest, along with the High Priests and Jesus. Each pair in turn face off—Jesus and the High Priests, Jesus and Pilate, Pilate and the High Priests. The last two end in a futile stalemate, while Jesus quietly moves toward his crucifixion, giving his life for his friends. The recent study of early civilization, *The Dawn of Everything*, by Graeber and Wengrow, help to sort this out. The Easter stories, however, provide an alternative ending, in which Jesus and his community prevails, and the opponents' plans fail.