


Fall 12-2016

John's Usage of ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω: A Theological Distinction

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THE SAINT PAUL SEMINARY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY
UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

John's Usage of ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω: A Theological Distinction

A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty of the School of Divinity

Of the University of St. Thomas

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree

Master of Arts in Theology

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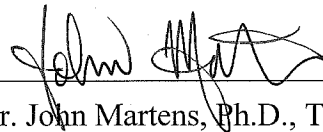
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St. Paul, MN

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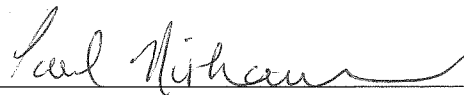
This thesis by David Haggard fulfills the thesis requirement for the Master of Arts degree in Theology approved by Dr. John Martens, Ph.D. as Thesis Adviser, and by Rev. Scott Carl, SSL and by Dr. Paul Niskanen, Ph.D. as Readers.



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From the outset of John's Gospel, the Evangelist insists on the divinity of Christ. The "Word made flesh" is a theological theme that is referred to throughout the entirety of his work. In order to emphasize this reality, John dedicates more of his Gospel to dialogue and reflection between Jesus and his followers. Even the word choice and irony presented in the Fourth Gospel bolster the theme that God became man. In one of the most important discourses in John's Gospel, the Farewell Discourse, John presents not only a statement about the purpose of Jesus' ministry but also explains the future of Jesus' followers. Jesus states in Jn. 16:23: "In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name." Taken by themselves in English, these sentences seem to contradict each other. On the one hand, Jesus claims that the disciples will ask nothing of him; on the other, he directs his disciples to ask God for things in his name. If one were to look beyond the English translation and examine the Greek, however, one would notice that there are two different Greek verbs for the word "ask": ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω. John's use of these two verbs in such close proximity in the Gospel gives rise to the question: does he intend distinct meanings for each of these words? Within the Fourth Gospel, John intentionally uses each Greek word for "ask," and while "ask" may provide an appropriate English translation for both Greek verbs, the distinction John makes between ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω is of a theological, not merely a philological, nature. When John employs these two words, he unveils a theological subtlety concerning God and prayers to him. While both ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω can have the definition of "beg," "ask," or "request," John's usage of each of these words is quite different. For John, the usage of ἐρωτάω implies a practical request or question to a peer. John's use of αἰτέω, on the other hand, provides a soteriological tone to the question or the request being made that is best understood in the creature-Creator or redeemed-Redeemer relationship.

A history of interpretation on ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω

While some scholars argue that ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω are synonyms, there have been several attempts to distinguish between the words in Jn. 16:23. First, it is interesting to note that John's preference for ἐρωτάω when composing, using it almost twice as much as Luke, and far more than Matthew; however, all of the Gospels use αἰτέω about as much as each other.¹ Ἐρωτάω is used 62 times in the New Testament and is found 34 times outside the Fourth Gospel.² Αἰτέω is found 70 times in the New Testament and 59 times outside the Fourth Gospel. Covering all of these usages together, the Liddell and Scott Greek Dictionary presents ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω as synonyms in the New Testament.³ This foundational work, however, does not explore the history of scholarship on Jn. 16:23 which contains many attempts at distinguishing the two words.

Historically, there have been many different attempts to identify separate definitions of ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω in Jn. 16:23. In the work, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, written in 1880, Richard Trench utilizes Jerome's Vulgate to distinguish between the two words. Ἐρωτάω, on the one hand, is translated as *rogo* or *interrogo* to indicate a question, and αἰτέω is translated as *peto* to indicate a petition from an inferior person to a superior one.⁴ While Jerome consistently translates ἐρωτάω as *rogo* or *interrogo*, he varies in his translations of αἰτέω. Throughout the majority of the Gospel of John, he translates αἰτέω as *peto*, but in Jn. 4:9 and Jn. 11:22 he chooses *posco* instead.⁵ Trench posits that a distinction in definition holds not just in the Gospel

¹ Usage of αἰτέω in Gospels: Matthew 14, Mark 9, Luke 11, John 11.

² Heinrich Greevin, “ἐρωτάω, ἐπερωτάω, ἐπερώτημα” in Gerhard Kittel, and G.W. Bromiley. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Vol. 2. Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans. 1964. 685.

³ Henry G. Liddell, and Robert Scott. *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889. 317.

⁴ R. C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*. London: Macmillan and Co. 1880. 145.

⁵ *Biblia Sacra Juxta Vulgatam Clementinam*. Ed. electronica. Bellingham, WA: Verbum Bible Software, 2005. Jn. 4:9, “Dicit ergo ei mulier illa Samaritana: Quomodo tu, Judæus cum sis, bibere a me poscis, quæ sum mulier Samaritana? non enim coutuntur Judæi Samaritanis.” Jn. 11:22: “sed et nunc scio quia quæcumque poposceris a Deo, dabit tibi Deus.”

of John, but throughout all of the New Testament.⁶ In Acts 3:3, however, a man lame from birth petitions (ἐρωτάω) for money from Peter and John.⁷ Likewise, Paul implores (ἐρωτάω) the community.⁸ Furthermore, in 1 Pet. 3:15, αἰτέω is used in conjunction with defense (ἀπολογία), which gives αἰτέω a tone of interrogation rather than supplication.⁹ Furthermore, Trench admits that 1 Jn. 5:16¹⁰ remains puzzling because it uses both words in connection to prayer to God.¹¹ Because Trench does not isolate John's usage of these two words from the rest of the New Testament, he overlooks the key theological distinction John invests in the two words.

Deviating from Trench, Moloney takes ἐρωτάω to mean supplication, arguing that in Jn. 16:23 ἐρωτάω has a soteriological tone, thereby presenting the opposite interpretation that is presented in this paper.¹² According to this line of thought, ἐρωτάω indicates a question asked from the human to the divine. While many of the interlocutors in John's Gospel do use ἐρωτάω to address Jesus, they are unilaterally met with a rebuke (as this paper will demonstrate). Moloney mistakes Johannine irony for literal intention.

Investigating the words in general, Heinrich Greevin distinguishes between the two, stating about ἐρωτάω, "In distinction from αἰτέω ... which often suggests a claim or passion ...

⁶ Trench, *Synonyms*, 146. Trench concludes, "Thus it is very noteworthy, and witnesses for the singular accuracy in the employment of words, and in the record of that employment, which prevails throughout the N. T., that our Lord never uses αἰτεῖν or αἰτεῖσθαι of Himself, in respect of that which He seeks on behalf of his disciples from God; for his is not the *petition* of the creature to the Creator, but the *request* of the Son to the Father."

⁷ Acts 3:3, "ὃς ἰδὼν Πέτρον καὶ Ἰωάννην μέλλοντας εἰσεῖναι εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν ἠρώτα ἐλεημοσύνην λαβεῖν"

⁸ 1 Thes. 4:1, "Λοιπὸν οὖν, ἀδελφοί, ἐρωτῶμεν ὑμᾶς καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ, ἵνα καθὼς παρελάβετε παρ' ἡμῶν τὸ πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν καὶ ἀρέσκειν θεῷ, καθὼς καὶ περιπατεῖτε, ἵνα περισσεύητε μᾶλλον." 1 Thes. 5:12, "Ἐρωτῶμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, εἰδέναι τοὺς κοιπῶντας ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ προϊσταμένους ὑμῶν ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ νοθετοῦντας ὑμᾶς,

⁹ 1 Pet. 3:15, "κύριον δὲ τὸν Χριστὸν ἀγίασατε ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν, ἔτοιμοι αἰεὶ πρὸς ἀπολογία παντὶ τῷ αἰτοῦντι ὑμᾶς λόγον περὶ τῆς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐλπίδος."

¹⁰ 1 Jn. 5:16, "ἐάν τις ἴδῃ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἁμαρτάνοντα ἁμαρτίαν μὴ πρὸς θάνατον, αἰτήσῃ, καὶ δώσει αὐτῷ ζωὴν, τοῖς ἁμαρτάνουσιν μὴ πρὸς θάνατον· οὐ περὶ ἐκείνης λέγω ἵνα ἐρωτήσῃ."

¹¹ Trench, *Synonyms*, 146. Trench comments on 1 Jn. 5:16, "The verse is difficult, but whichever of the various ways of overcoming its difficulty may find favour, it will be found to constitute no true exception to the rule, and perhaps, in the substitution of ἐρωτήσῃ for the αἰτήσῃ of the earlier clause of the verse, will rather confirm it."

¹² Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John: Sacra Pagina Series*. Vol. 4. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2005. 422

ἑρωτάω denotes a genuine request which is humble or courteous.”¹³ Greevin then argues that the word ἑρωτάω can also mean “to request” or “to demand,” and that these definitions are essentially equated with one another within the Gospel of John.¹⁴ Ultimately, Greevin does not make any clear distinction between ἑρωτάω and αἰτέω because he does not isolate John’s Gospel from the rest of the New Testament.

Brown’s commentary on John shows advancement in distinguishing between ἑρωτάω and αἰτέω, but stops short of making any distinctive separation between the two words in the Gospel as a whole. Brown translates the Jn. 16:23 passage as, “And on that day you will have no more questions to put to me. Truly I assure you, if you ask anything of the Father, He will give it to you in my name.”¹⁵ One should notice that in Brown’s translation he has inserted the words “no more questions to put to me” to distinguish the Greek word ἑρωτάω. This phrase emphasizes the pragmatic nature of ἑρωτάω in the Gospel of John. Nevertheless, Brown believes that the English translation of ἑρωτάω is interchangeable with αἰτέω in most cases because ἑρωτάω can be translated as prayer in Jn. 16:26 and Jn. 17:9.¹⁶ Brown argues that John distinguishes between these verbs in Jn. 16:23 but not in his Gospel as a whole. Regardless of how he views Jn. 16:23, he claims that Jn. 16:26¹⁷ shows no such distinction.¹⁸ Brown’s lack of distinction between these verbs in 16:26 prevents him from discovering the theological underpinnings of these words in the entirety of the Gospel of John.

¹³ Greevin, “ἑρωτάω, ἑπερωτάω, ἑπερώτημα” in Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*. Vol. 2, 687.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, 686.

¹⁵ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XIII-XXI)*. Anchor Bible Commentary Vol. 2. New Haven, Conn. London: Yale University Press, 2008. 719.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 635.

¹⁷ Michael W. Holmes, *The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition*. Lexham Press; Society of Biblical Literature, Verbum Bible Software. 2011–2013. Jn. 16: 26, “ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου αἰτήσεσθε, καὶ οὐ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐγὼ ἐρωτήσω τὸν πατέρα περὶ ὑμῶν.”

¹⁸ Brown, *The gospel according to John (XIII-XXI)*, Vol. 2. 722.

Evaluating each of these works side by side shows that if these scholars make a distinction in Jn. 16:23 between ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω, it either does not apply to the entirety of John’s Gospel, or it is wrongly imposed on other works in the New Testament. The scholars noted above acknowledge that the meanings of ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω cannot be simply conflated and that in the context of the Fourth Gospel these words are distinguished from one another. Some have even lamented the lack of decisive scholarship for Jn. 16:23. Trench writes, “Yet sometimes they [translators] have a little marred the perspicuity of their translation by not varying *their* word, where the original has shown them the way. For example, the obliteration at John 16:23 of the distinction between αἰτεῖν and ἐρωτᾶν might easily suggest a wrong interpretation of the verse.”¹⁹ While Trench is right that conflating the meanings of ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω will obscure the meaning of Jn. 16:23, these words do share a variety of definitions and so might be translated as the same English word in some contexts. The unique contribution that this paper will give to the exegetical work on Jn. 16:23 will be to demonstrate a distinction between the theological tone of ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω that is sustained throughout the Gospel of John—a distinction that takes the reader into some of the richest developments of the Fourth Gospel.

Contextual Analysis

John dedicates much of the text of his Gospel to dialogue between Jesus and others. Richard Bauckham, in his work *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John*, re-examines the genre of the Fourth Gospel and argues that John should be classified as a historiography. John’s selectivity, he argues, is crucial in understanding the genre

¹⁹ Trench, *Synonyms*. 144.

of his work. In Jn. 20:30-1, the reader is informed that Jesus performed other signs that are not contained in the Gospel.²⁰ John had to sift through his memory and possibly other early Christian writings to select the most important actions of Jesus to write about. Bauckham states that John's selectivity is what makes his Gospel look so different than the Synoptics:

While Mark has eighteen miracle stories, Matthew twenty and Luke eighteen, John has only eight (including chapter 21), not at all because he thinks miracle stories unimportant, but because he selects the most impressive (e.g., the blind man had been blind since *birth* [9:1], Lazarus had been dead *four days* [11:17]) and those most significant in terms of their spiritual meanings as signs.²¹

John's Gospel offers half as many miracles as Mark's but has a longer overall narrative. John dedicates more of his Gospel to dialogue and reflection on the miracles. Taking this reality into account, the Fourth Gospel could be considered the Gospel of divine discourse. It is the discussion between Jesus, the Word of God, and the others within the narrative that illuminates the difference between ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω. The Farewell Discourse, the last discourse before the Crucifixion and Resurrection, contains Jn. 16:23—a crucial passage highlighting John's differentiation between the two words.

It is important to establish where Jn. 16:23 fits within the Gospel as a whole, as well as the internal workings of the verse. The Gospel of John can be divided into two major sections: the first, often called the Book of Signs, focuses on Jesus' public ministry and extends from the prologue to chapter 12. The second book extends from chapter 13 to the Resurrection narrative and is commonly called the Book of Glory.²² The divide that happens at the beginning of chapter 13 reflects the shift from Jesus' miracles to the arrival of his hour and return to the

²⁰ Catholic Biblical Association (Great Britain). *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*. New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, 1994. Jn 20:30-31, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name."

²¹ Richard Bauckham, *The testimony of the beloved disciple: narrative, history, and theology in the Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2007. 104.

²² R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983. 94.

Father. The Book of Glory contains Jn. 16:23, and within the Book of Glory, it is located within what is called the Farewell Discourse, in which Jesus gives a final speech to his Disciples before the Crucifixion.

The verse Jn. 16:23 is divided into two clauses, each of which contains the verbs analyzed in this study. The first verb is ἐρωτήσετε, which is the future 2nd person plural of ἐρωτάω. The second verb is αἰτήσητε, which is the aorist subjunctive 2nd person plural of αἰτέω. As indicated above, each of these verbs have the general definition of “ask” but emphasize a distinct understanding of the divine nature of Christ. Jn. 16:23 begins with the temporal dative clause “on that day” (τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ) thus answering the question “when.”²³ Here Jesus is referring to the time in which the disciples’ sadness will change to joy and they will not ask Jesus anything because they will know his identity. Jesus’ glorification will be a definitive revelation for the disciples, and they will no longer be confused about Christ’s identity. This revelation will render any questions of ἐρωτάω to Christ inapplicable. The second part of Jn. 16:23 is introduced by the ἀμήν ἀμήν. There are some important features about the word ἀμήν in the Fourth Gospel and in the Scriptures in general: in the Old Testament ἀμήν is always used at the end of psalms, curses, blessings,²⁴ and doxologies.²⁵ Whenever Christ uses this word in the Gospels, it is always with one exception at the beginning of his statement.²⁶ Ratzinger notes about the word amen,

The *one* root word ‘*mn* (amen) embraces a variety of meanings...It includes the meanings of truth, firmness, firm ground, ground, and furthermore the meanings loyalty, to trust, entrust one-self, take one’s stand on something, believe in something; thus faith in God appears as a holding on to God through which man gains a firm foothold for his life.’²⁷

²³ Blass and DeBrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*. 107.

²⁴ Just, “Amen, Amen,” Deut 27:15-26; 1 Kings 1:36; 1 Chron 16:36; Neh 5:13; Ps 106:48; Jer 28:6, twice in conjunction Num 5:22; Neh 8:6; Ps 41:13; 72:19; 89:52.

²⁵ Ibid., Rom 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 15:33; 16:27; 1 Cor 14:16; 2 Cor 1:20; Gal 1:5; 6:18; Eph 3:21; Phil 4:20; 1 Thess 3:13; 1 Tim 1:17; 6:16; 2 Tim 4:18; Heb 13:21; 1 Peter 4:11; 5:11; 2 Peter 3:18; Jude 1:25; Rev 1:6, 7; 3:14; 5:14; 7:12 [twice]; 19:4; 22:20

²⁶ Ibid., Just notes this one occurrence in the “shorter ending” of Mark--usually added just after 16:8.

²⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, trans. J. R. Foster. *Introduction to Christianity (Revised Edition)*. 2004. San Francisco: Ignatius Press. 69.

It is no coincidence that the ἀμὴν ἀμὴν is used in conjunction with a form of αἰτέω. John is emphasizing his usage of αἰτέω as a word for reflection and understanding by introducing it with ἀμὴν ἀμὴν . The present verb λέγω is used in conjunction with the aorist subjunctive αἰτήσητε followed by the future “to give” (δώσει).

In Jn. 16:24a, the preposition “until” (ἕως) introduces the aorist second person form of αἰτέω (ἠτήσατε). The verb ἠτήσατε governs the accusative “nothing” (οὐδὲν) indicating that the disciples have yet to truly reflect upon the identity of Christ. Jn. 16:24b contains the present imperative of αἰτέω, which turns this asking into a command, and this command is followed by the future verb “to receive” (λήμψεσθε). If they ask, they will receive. This verse is brought to a close with the conjunction “so that” (ἵνα), which functions as a result clause here. “Complete, or fulfill” (πεπληρωμένη) is a perfect middle participle, indicating the result, namely, that the disciples’ joy may be full.

The rhetorical goal of the Farewell Discourse is to prepare the disciples for Jesus’ inevitable death and glorious Resurrection. In preparing the disciples for the Paschal Mystery, Jesus makes three essential points in the Farewell Discourse that are repeated and reiterated throughout the section: the Spirit guides the apostles in Jesus’ absence,²⁸ Jesus teaches his followers his identity and his ontological relationship to his Father, and Jesus promises that the disciples' fear will turn into joy.²⁹ The Easter event has not yet happened, the disciples still do not understand Jesus’ mission, and he is preparing them for the difficult times ahead. All the parts within the Farewell Discourse rely on each other. It not only discusses Christ’s relationship to his disciples but also the disciples’ relationship to each other and to the world.

²⁸ Jn.14:15-16, Jn. 16:6-7

²⁹ Jn. 14:27-28, Jn. 15:18, Jn. 16:22

Primary Definitions of ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω

In order to understand the difference between ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω in John's Gospel, one must first grasp the primary definitions of each word. The literal definitions of ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω actually overlap, both meaning to “ask” or “beg.” These overlapping definitions, however, do not mean that John employs these words in the same way in his writing. The purpose of this section is to highlight John's nuanced usage of the two verbs, not according to definition but according to theological tone.

In their exegesis of ἐρωτάω scholars tend to focus on the type of questions this asking verb implies. Liddell, defining ἐρωτάω in all of Greek literature (not just the New Testament), writes that ἐρωτάω means to question someone about something or pose a question to a person.³⁰ Readers of the Fourth Gospel encounter this application of ἐρωτάω in the first chapter. In Jn. 1:21, John the Baptist is asked about his identity from the Jews who have sought him out: “And they asked [ἐρωτάω] him, ‘What then? Are you Elijah?’ He said, ‘I am not.’ ‘Are you the prophet?’ And he answered, ‘No.’” Likewise, in Jn. 5:12 the Jews interrogate the man at the pool in Bethesda about the identity of the man who healed him.³¹ John also uses ἐρωτάω to introduce a general question, without regard to identity. The disciples ask Jesus if the blind man from birth had sinned or his parents in Jn. 9:2.³² Furthermore, the high priest questions Jesus about his teaching in Jn. 18:19, which is the most common usage of ἐρωτάω in the Gospel.³³ The disciples wonder about Jesus' departure; Jesus knows their concern and in Jn. 16:5 he frames a question from the disciples to himself which provides another example of ἐρωτάω. In this context, Jesus

³⁰ Liddell, *An intermediate Greek-English lexicon*, 696.

³¹ Jn. 5:12, “ἠρώτησαν αὐτόν· τίς ἐστὶν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ εἰπὼν σοι· ἄρον καὶ περιπάτει;”

³² Jn. 9:2, “καὶ ἠρώτησαν αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ λέγοντες· ῥαββί, τίς ἤμαρτεν, οὗτος ἢ οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ, ἵνα τυφλὸς γεννηθῆ;”

³³ Jn. 8:7, Jn. 9:15, Jn. 9:19, Jn. 9:21, Jn. 18:21.

reprimands his disciples about not asking him where he is going, “Now I go to the one having sent me, and no one of you *asks* [ἐρωτάω] me, ‘Where do you go?’” The usage of ἐρωτάω in Jn. 16:23a, “In that day you will ask [ἐρωτάω] nothing of me,” coincides with the definition of asking a question of clarification or obtaining information.

The other definition of ἐρωτάω “to request” or “demand” is also used by the Evangelist., The disciples beg (ἐρωτάω) Jesus to eat in Jn. 4:31.³⁴ Again this definition of ἐρωτάω as “request” can be shown in Jn. 4:40 when several Samaritans beg (ἐρωτάω) Jesus to stay with them.³⁵ The translation of ἐρωτάω is “beg” here because the disciples did not ask a question to Jesus, but rather entreated him to eat or to stay with him. These verses show ἐρωτάω can either mean to ask a question for information, or to request some action.

The word αἰτέω is found in 10 verses, in 8 forms, and used 11 times in John’s Gospel. This is considerably less than the 28 times that ἐρωτάω is used in John’s Gospel. Liddell defines αἰτέω as “ask” or “beg” for something or someone in the accusative case.³⁶ Stählin notes an interesting phenomenon in the New Testament whereby the writers when using αἰτέω tend to mean “to demand,” “In the NT concrete demands are often given a religious application. Thus payment is demanded in financial transactions...this is transferred into the sphere of ethical obligations.”³⁷ Stählin notes that the definition found in secular Greek “to request,” has been combined with “to demand” in the New Testament.³⁸ One should note that there is overlap between ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω, as both share the same semantic field including demand, request, or beg.

³⁴ Jn. 4:31, “Ἐν τῷ μεταξύ ἡρώτων αὐτὸν οἱ μαθηταὶ λέγοντες· ῥαββί, φάγε.”

³⁵ Jn. 4:40, “ὡς οὖν ἦλθον πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ Σαμαριῖται, ἡρώτων αὐτὸν μείναι παρ’ αὐτοῖς· καὶ ἔμεινεν ἐκεῖ δύο ἡμέρας.”

³⁶ Liddell, *An intermediate Greek-English lexicon*. 24.

³⁷ Gustav Stählin in “αἰτέω, αἴτημα, ἀπαιτέω, ἐξαιτέω, παραιτέομαι,” in Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*, V. 1, 191.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, V. 1, 191.

Simply distinguishing ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω by changing the English referent does little in the way of explaining how these two words reveal and support the theological framework of the Fourth Gospel. Likewise, reading ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω as synonyms obscures the theological distinction that John preserves between the words. If a reader of the Fourth Gospel systematically considers each usage of ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω as deliberate decisions made by the author, then the theological reality behind each word—and therefore each passage—emerges in greater clarity.

αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω and John's Use of Irony

Irony has a unique theological usage in the Fourth Gospel because it advances much of John's narrative. R. Alan Culpepper, in his work *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, covers many of the major literary concerns of John's Gospel—topics like plot, plot development, characterization, and imagery. A discussion about John's literary aims locate the investigation of ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω within current Johannine scholarship.

A major argument presented in Culpepper's work is that each Evangelist utilizes the same basic plot to recount the life of Jesus; however, in response to each particular culture's social and religious questions, they all emphasize different characteristics or themes.³⁹ The distinctive Johannine contribution to the traditional Gospel account is the revelation that Jesus is the Logos who creates the world, and without him nothing is created.⁴⁰ Culpepper notes that the theme and driving force behind the action and the dialogue in the Fourth Gospel is the ironic reality that the Logos sent from the Father to save the world is not accepted or even known by

³⁹ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 80-85. Culpepper quotes and then utilizes M. H. Abrams' definition plot in a dramatic or narrative work as "the structure of its actions, as these are ordered and rendered toward achieving particular emotional and artistic effects."

⁴⁰ Jn. 1:3, "all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made."

those to whom the Logos was sent.⁴¹ John's prologue, announcing Jesus as Logos, provides the reader with an ironic backdrop that will be referred to throughout the entirety of the Gospel, for the world rejected the very Logos sent to save it.⁴² Culpepper states, "The dialogue is often impelled by misunderstanding, inept questions, and double entendre."⁴³ In turn, rejection of the revelation that Jesus brings to the world is equated with sin.⁴⁴ The Fourth Gospel juxtaposes belief and unbelief. Concluding, Culpepper notes that John uses the word "believe" 98 of the 239 times that it is found in the New Testament. Jesus confronts a variety of people from multiple backgrounds (Samaritans, Jews, gentiles, high priests, Roman officials, and soldiers, etc.) in discussion throughout the plot. In this way, conversational narrative becomes the effective vehicle to convey how followers should respond to the Word made flesh. Belief is at the heart of this exchange, and it is the narrative that challenges the reader with the implications of the Logos becoming man.⁴⁵

Irony strikes the reader from the outset of John's Gospel: the Word became flesh, and the world did not receive him.⁴⁶ Kostenberger gives a brief explanation of Johannine irony, "While the irony was hidden from the original actor or speaker (in the story), it is quite apparent for the reader."⁴⁷ The type of irony that concerns this study is what Kostenberger terms a "clash of

⁴¹ Ibid., 89.

⁴² Ibid., 89.

⁴³ Ibid., 86-7.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 88. Culpepper notes a prime example of this connection in John 16:8-9 in which Jesus tells the disciples the Paraclete will convince the world, "concerning sin, because they do not believe in me."

⁴⁵ Ibid., 97.

⁴⁶ Andreas J. Kostenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters: The Word, the Christ, the Son of God*. Zondervan, 2009. 150. Kostenberger writes, "It has been said, with appropriate hyperbole, that 'in the Fourth Gospel theology is irony.' Indeed, irony is part of the warp and woof of the outlook underlying the *entire gospel*. The Word become flesh (1:14); the world failed to receive the one who made it (1:10-11); even God's chosen people rejected the Messiah God sent (1:11) ... Each of these integral parts of Johannine narrative are saturated with deep irony. As such, Johannine irony undercuts human pretense and misunderstanding and serves to expose the truth about Jesus the Messiah and Son of God, providing a compelling vehicle for leading the readers of John's gospel to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life."

⁴⁷ Ibid., 152.

style”. A clash of style, he explains, is irony “issuing in discrepancy, including exaggeration or understatement.”⁴⁸ Jesus’ interlocutors do not realize his identity, leading them to address him mistakenly. Their mistake in turn provides an opportunity for Jesus to explain his mission. Jn. 4:7-10, Jn. 4:47 and Jn. 11:22 provide examples of how John’s intentional use of ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω deepen the sense of irony in the Gospel.

The first two occurrences of αἰτέω are in Jn. 4:7, 9-10 in which Jesus talks with the Samaritan woman:

There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ...So the Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you a Jew *ask* [αἰτέω] a drink from me being a Samaritan woman? The Jews do not have associations with Samaritans." Jesus replied and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, "Give me a drink," you would *ask* [αἰτέω] from this one and he would give to you living water."⁴⁹

While there are many important dynamics that heighten the sense of Johannine irony—the social unrest between the Samaritans and the Jews among them—we shall focus on αἰτέω alone. It is in this passage that John first distinguishes αἰτέω as a term preserved for creature to Creator address. Notice that Jesus does not actually use αἰτέω with respect to the Samaritan woman; rather it is she who (as we will discover) misuses the word to describe his interaction with her. In a way, her mistaken connection of αἰτέω to water is natural, because water is necessary for life. Jesus corrects this innocent mistake, turning her attention to the water of salvation. He uses the Samaritan woman’s phrasing as an opportunity to reveal something about himself. Jesus claims that she should demand (αἰτέω) “living water” from him. The Samaritan woman is surprised by

⁴⁸ Ibid., 152.

⁴⁹ Jn. 4:7, 9-10: “ἔρχεται γυνή ἐκ τῆς Σαμαρείας ἀντλήσαι ὕδωρ. λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· δός μοι πεῖν· ...λέγει οὖν αὐτῷ ἡ γυνὴ ἡ Σαμαρίτις· πῶς σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ὄν παρ’ ἐμοῦ; ὃ πεῖν αἰτεῖς γυναικὸς Σαμαρίτιδος οὔσης; οὐ γὰρ συγγρῶνται Ἰουδαῖοι Σαμαρίταις. ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ· εἰ ἤδεις τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τίς ἐστὶν ὁ λέγων σοι· δός μοι πεῖν, σὺ ἂν ἤτησας αὐτὸν καὶ ἔδωκεν ἄν σοι ὕδωρ ζῶν.”

Jesus' claim and asks if he is greater than the Patriarch Jacob.⁵⁰ Jesus' response—that whoever drinks from the water that he provides will have eternal life—shows that he *is* much greater than the Patriarch Jacob, for only God can give eternal life.⁵¹ John's connection of αἰτέω to water presents the idea that our desire for salvation should be as natural as our desire for life, and Jesus' clarification of αἰτέω connects the word to divinity. This scene introduces the theological usage of αἰτέω in John's writings.

Upon Jesus' return to Galilee, Jesus meets an official whose son needs to be healed. The reader is told that the official begged (ἐρωτάω) Jesus to heal his son in Jn. 4:47. Jesus replies to the official in Jn. 4:48 by stating, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe."⁵² On the surface Jesus' reply seems rather harsh. Especially considering the official responds in Jn. 4:49, "Sir, come down before my child dies," where he affirms his belief that Jesus is able to work the miracle. The general theological connotation of ἐρωτάω as a request put to a peer illuminates a very important element of this story which in turn clarifies Jesus' statement in Jn. 4:48. Essentially, in Jn. 4:48 Jesus is saying, "You will ask me to heal your child, but you will not ask me for salvation. I am a mere magician to you." The use of ἐρωτάω indicates that the official believes in Jesus as a miracle worker but not as God. Juxtaposing the story of the official to the Samaritan woman, the dividing line between ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω becomes clear. Jesus beckons us to αἰτέω him as Savior, and a relationship based on ἐρωτάω to him is merely superficial.

⁵⁰ Jn. 4:12, "Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?"

⁵¹ Jn. 4:13-14. Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

⁵² Jn. 4:48, "εἶπεν οὖν ὁ Ἰησοῦς πρὸς αὐτόν· ἐὰν μὴ σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα ἴδητε, οὐ μὴ πιστεύσητε."

The miracle story in Jn. 4 parallels the miracle story of Lk. 7, but some important differences come to the surface. Some might be hesitant to draw a connection between the miracle story in Lk. 7 and Jn. 4 because Jesus heals a centurion's slave in Luke 7, whereas Jesus heals an official's son in Jn. 4. Horn and Martens, however, indicate that the connection is quite natural, considering the setting and the characters of each miracle.⁵³ A comparison of these two stories can further demonstrate the differences between the two words for "ask". In Lk. 7:3 and Jn. 4:47, a verb from the root ἐρωτάω is used. In John, however, Jesus reprimands the official for asking him to heal his son, whereas in Lk. 7:9, Jesus tells the community, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." John's deliberate distinction between αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω explains Jesus' opposite reaction in his version. Here the Evangelist is beckoning his reader deeper into the mystery of the Eternal Word made flesh. Jesus is no ordinary miracle worker, but God himself. In Luke the distinction between αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω is not maintained, whereas John's use of ἐρωτάω accounts for the inherent irony and Jesus' rebuke in the miracle account. The miracle concludes in Jn. 4:53, "he himself believed, and all his household," indicating that the official made a transition in his faith. For John, the way in which a creature asks Jesus for something indicates whether or not they have faith in Christ.

The only time that αἰτέω is applied to the interaction between Jesus and his Father in the Gospel comes in the dialogue between Jesus and Martha in Jn. 11:22. In the beginning of chapter 11, Jesus' friend Lazarus dies. The narrator informs the reader in Jn. 11:17 that Lazarus' body was laid in a tomb and had been there for four days. Upon Jesus' arrival in Jn. 11:22, Martha, Lazarus' sister, goes to talk with Jesus and gives what seems to be a great statement of faith,

⁵³ Cornelia B. Horn, and John W. Martens. *Let the little children come to me*. Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Pr, 2009. 263-4.

“And even now I know that whatever you ask [αἰτέω] from God, God will give you.”⁵⁴ Here, Martha claims that Jesus can αἰτέω to God for whatever he wants.

Jesus’ conversation with Martha displays John’s usage of irony. First, notice that the word is being applied to Jesus’ relation to the Father by Martha. While Jn. 11:22 is a statement of faith in Jesus, it is imperfect. By saying that Jesus should αἰτέω to God, she misunderstands Jesus’ identity. Martha understands Jesus as creature, not Creator, and thus assumes he should αἰτέω to the Father. Martha’s statement thus provokes Jesus to declare a great Christological truth in Jn. 11:25, “I am the Resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.” To this, Martha responds in Jn. 11:27, her credo corrected, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world.” Like the official who would ἐρωτάω Jesus for a miracle, Martha had seen Jesus as holy man who could αἰτέω God. What they both misunderstood is that Jesus *is* God, the Son of the Father, standing in front of them. Jesus himself, therefore, needs to be addressed with αἰτέω. Jesus shows Martha that God is standing next to her by performing his particularly powerful miracle given Lazarus’s length of time in the tomb. Without Jesus’ clarifying “I am” statement, Martha and the reader could be left with the impression that her statement in Jn. 11:22 was correct. While followers of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel should αἰτέω Jesus, Jesus does not αἰτέω the Father.

Martha’s statement in Jn. 11:22 prevents Stählin from making any meaningful distinction between ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω. Stählin states, “Jesus uses αἰτέω only of the prayer of others, not of His own (cf. Jn. 16:26), which is always for Him an ἐρωτᾶν (Jn. 14:16 etc.) or δεῖσθαι (Lk. 22:32), though Martha thinks nothing of applying the term αἰτεῖν to Him too (Jn. 11:22).”⁵⁵ However, when the usage of αἰτέω is located within John’s irony, the word αἰτέω becomes the

⁵⁴ Jn. 11:22, “[ἀλλὰ] καὶ νῦν οἶδα ὅτι ὅσα ἂν αἰτήσῃ τὸν θεὸν δώσει σοι ὁ θεός.”

⁵⁵ Gustav Stählin, “αἰτέω, αἴτημα, ἀπαίτεω, ἐξαίτεω, παραιτέομαι,” in Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*, V. 1, 192.

cruX of Jesus' reaction to Martha. While Martha thinks nothing of applying αἰτέω to Jesus' relation to the Father, he quickly corrects her and explains his identity.

Without a theological distinction between αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω, Jesus' rebuke actually seems unwarranted in consideration of Martha's apparent faith. Furthermore, his rebuke might seem harsh, but without it, Martha would still be left without the knowledge of the intimate presence of God with her. Culpepper characterizes Jesus as cold and distant in the Fourth Gospel.⁵⁶ One should not be too hasty, however, to characterize Jesus in the Fourth Gospel as distant. If anything, Jesus' interlocutors do not realize how near God has come to them. Jesus' discourse in these miracle stories should be seen as a lesson in Christology brought about by the ironic statements of the Samaritan woman, the official, and Martha. Standing at the crux of John's usage of irony in these three stories is the distinction between αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω. If the distinction between the two words is not made, Jesus' remarks can seem rather obscure and cold—a grieving woman comes to Jesus for consolation, and Jesus seems less than sympathetic. The distinction between ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω allows the exegete to properly understand His comments in Jn. 4:10, Jn. 4:48 and Jn. 11:25. Jesus is not denying these suppliants the consolation they seek; he is giving them something far greater: knowledge of his divine identity. By using ἐρωτάω to show a sense of pragmatism and αἰτέω to show a sense of supplication before the divine, it allows John to show how the faithful should relate to Christ.

Overwhelmingly, Jerome's translation of ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω in the Vulgate supports a clear distinction between the two words. As noted above, every instance of ἐρωτάω is translated as *rogo* or *interrogo*; whereas αἰτέω is translated as *peto*. Jerome's only exceptions to this rule occur in Jn. 4:9 and Jn. 11: 22, where he chooses *posco* for αἰτέω instead. Why does Jerome use

⁵⁶ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 109.

posco over *peto* in these two instances? The difference between *posco* and *peto* is small but important. While *posco* has the rather strict definition of ask,⁵⁷ *peto* has the broader definition of to ask or to seek.⁵⁸ If Jesus were to *peto* the Samaritan women, or have *peto* applied to him by Martha, it might seem that Jesus is not omnipotent because he is needing something from God, which runs contrary to the prologue of John. In reality, these two instances represent Johannine irony in which John purposely shows his interlocutors *misusing* the words to make a point about the identity of Christ. Jerome, when translating αἰτέω in Jn. 4:9 and Jn. 11: 22, chooses the translation of αἰτέω as *posco* instead of *peto* to highlight John's Christology, rather than risk readers misunderstanding John's irony.

For the reader of the Fourth Gospel, belief and unbelief stand at the center of interpretation. The reader is presented with a puzzle in Jn. 2:23-24, "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs which he did; but Jesus did not trust himself to them." What was wrong with the faith that those at the Passover had in Jesus? This question presents itself throughout the entire Gospel. Culpepper argues:

The reader is also given a problem to work out: why did Jesus not accept the many who believed "in his name" (2:23-24)? The problem is posed not by Jesus but by the narrator. What is the difference between these believers and the disciples (cf. 2:11)? Is it that faith is acceptable only when it leads to an open commitment to follow Jesus?⁵⁹

The difference between ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω is one of the many clues to understanding this puzzle. Is Jesus the eternal Word upon which one's life should be built and centered, or is he a miracle worker who makes no ultimate claim on someone's life? Is it enough for one to follow him after

⁵⁷ J. M. Harden, *Dictionary of the Vulgate New Testament*. London; New York: Society of Promoting Christian Knowledge; The Macmillan Co., 1921. 90.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 89.

⁵⁹ Culpepper, *Anatomy*. 90.

a great miracle and messianic display like turning over the money changers' table at the Temple, or is there something more to the Nazarene than meets the eye? In a literary landscape where the identity of the Father and the Son are so central in understanding the irony presented within, the relationship of the Logos to the cosmos becomes the focus of the Evangelist. Through Jesus' interactions with the Samaritan woman, the official, and Martha a correct understanding of ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω are essential: Jesus does not αἰτέω the Father, and creatures should αἰτέω Jesus. Discourses on prayer and supplication become a testing ground for responses to Christ's identity. In other words, if Jesus is who John claims him to be (the Word made flesh) then an important question comes about how his followers should respond to him. The distinction between ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω follows the larger thematic schema of irony and contributes to the development of implications of the Word become flesh.

The Prayers of Jesus

While the story of Martha and Lazarus demonstrates how Jesus does not αἰτέω the Father, Jn. 14:16 unveils a new dynamic for ἐρωτάω, the relationship between Jesus and the Father. In this verse, Jesus reveals that he will ask (ἐρωτάω) the Father to send the Holy Spirit.⁶⁰ Again referring to his prayers to the Father, Jesus says to his apostles in Jn. 16:26, "In that day you will ask [αἰτέω] in my name; and I do not say to you that I shall pray (ἐρωτάω) the Father for you."⁶¹ Jesus uses ἐρωτάω four times during His prayer to the Father in Jn. 17: twice in Jn. 17:9,⁶² once in Jn. 17:15⁶³ and Jn.17:20.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Jn. 14:16, "καὶ ἐρωτήσω τὸν πατέρα καὶ ἄλλον παράκλητον δώσει ὑμῖν ἵνα ἢ μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα."

⁶¹ Jn. 16:26, "ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου αἰτήσεσθε, καὶ οὐ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐγὼ ἐρωτήσω τὸν πατέρα περὶ ὑμῶν"

⁶² Jn. 17:9, "Ἐγὼ περὶ αὐτῶν ἐρωτῶ, οὐ περὶ τοῦ κόσμου ἐρωτῶ ἀλλὰ περὶ ὧν δέδωκάς μοι, ὅτι σοί εἰσιν."

⁶³ Jn. 17:5, "οὐκ ἐρωτῶ ἵνα ἄρῃς αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου, ἀλλ' ἵνα τηρήσῃς αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ."

⁶⁴ Jn. 17:20, "Οὐ περὶ τούτων δὲ ἐρωτῶ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ τῶν πιστευόντων διὰ τοῦ λόγου αὐτῶν εἰς ἐμέ."

Many scholars label Jn. 17 as Jesus' priestly prayer. Brown explains the name and the genre of this prayer: "The prayer of xvii has been traditionally designated as priestly prayer. Already in the early 5th century Cyril of Alexandria ... speaks of Jesus in xvii as a high priest making intercession on our behalf."⁶⁵ The verses comprise Jesus' prayer to his Father on his followers' behalf—they are the intentions of his sacrifice. Brown argues that ἐρωτάω should be translated as "pray" in chapter 17 because, "In vss. 9, 15, and 20 the verb *erotan* is used absolutely without a direct personal object; the Father is understood as the addressee of the request."⁶⁶ Brown's translation of ἐρωτάω as "prayer" in Jesus' last dialogue with the Father brings out the nature of Jesus' request. When it comes to the realm of prayer John has an overwhelming preference for αἰτέω, except when it comes to the prayers of Jesus to the Father. Because ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω can both be translated as prayer, Brown concludes that the Evangelist is not intending any theological distinction between the two words throughout the Gospel.⁶⁷ However, as the thesis of the present work argues the distinction that the Evangelist makes between the two verbs is not one of mere definitions, but is indeed theological in nature.

The use of ἐρωτάω in the prayers of Jesus to the Father presents the reverse of the Martha pericope, and the question again arises: if αἰτέω is the appropriate way for followers to address Jesus as God, then should not the interaction between Jesus and the Father be predicated on αἰτέω? In other words, if αἰτέω is the proper way for *us* to address divinity, then why does Jesus use ἐρωτάω to address the divine? At first glance, the use of ἐρωτάω on the lips of Jesus in the context of prayer seems to divert from the theological intent apparently applied throughout the rest of the Gospel, which pointedly reserves αἰτέω for divine address. John, however, is merely

⁶⁵ Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XIII-XXI)*, V. 2, 747.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 758.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 635.

being consistent—he utilizes ἐρωτάω to emphasize the intimate connection between Jesus and the Father in Jn. 17:22-23. It is the genius of the Evangelist that he attributes ἐρωτάω to speech with an equal, i.e. Jesus to the Father, and αἰτέω to the prayer of creatures to God.

The word ἐρωτάω is an appropriate verb for Jesus to relate to His Father in prayer because it implies a sense of equality between the Son and the Father. In the Fourth Gospel, ἐρωτάω suggests that the Father and Son are in communion together, working in accord for salvation. John uses ἐρωτάω to describe the prayers of Jesus and, as we have seen above, reserves αἰτέω for the prayers of those needing salvation to the one who can give salvation. Furthermore, the usage of ἐρωτάω coincides with Jesus' rebuke of Martha's application of αἰτέω to his prayers to the Father. If John would have used αἰτέω in the prayers of Jesus to the Father, then the distinction that he so meticulously made in other places would have been rendered irrelevant. After the priestly prayer of Jesus to the Father in Jn. 17, ἐρωτάω emerges with theological coherence throughout the Gospel, regardless of whether the word is translated as "pray" or "ask."

John's Eschatology: "That Day" and "The Last Day"

The first words of Jn. 16:23 are "On that day." Johannine scholarship is divided on what day the Evangelist is referring to in this passage. Within the Gospel's eschatological landscape, two major days are referred to: "on that day" (τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης) and "on the last day" (τῆς ἐσχάτης ἡμέρας). The words τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης occur three times in the Farewell Discourse.⁶⁸ The words τῆς ἐσχάτης ἡμέρας appear seven times within the Gospel.⁶⁹ Some argue that each referent points to

⁶⁸ Jn. 14:20, Jn. 16:23, Jn. 16:26.

⁶⁹ Jn. 6:39, Jn. 6:40, Jn. 6:44, Jn. 6:54. Martha speaks it to Jesus in Jn. 11:24 and Jn. 12:48.

the same day.⁷⁰ Culpepper asserts, however, that τῆ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ refers to the Resurrection and τῆ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ refers to Christ's return.⁷¹ The identification of each of these days is essential in the exegesis of Jn. 16:23.

Culpepper argues that John's eschatology presents a distinct character of holding at once the importance of τῆ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ, or the day of the Resurrection, in conjunction with τῆ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ, or the Resurrection of the dead. Culpepper notes, "John's thought is distinctive in importing to this overlap between the two ages more of the hope traditionally lodged in the age to come than was the case with other lines of early Christian theology."⁷² This connection makes John's eschatology pertinent to a study of Jn. 16:23. On the one hand, it is apparent from John's writing that Christ's passion had not brought about the typical understanding of the eschaton—

the general Resurrection of the dead, the last judgment, the punishment of the wicked and the blessing of the righteous that had been taught in other Jewish writings, like Dan. 12:1-2.⁷³ On the other hand, promises such as the end of hunger (Jn. 6:35), obtaining eternal life (Jn. 6:48), and sadness turning into joy (Jn. 16:20) are offered to Jesus' followers before the parousia.

Furthermore, the Easter event in 20:19 is positively identified as τῆ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ.⁷⁴ John's eschatology seems to be at once realized and imminent, requiring John to distinguish but also utilize the terminology of on "that day" and "the last day." By distinguishing between these two

⁷⁰ Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 422. Moloney writes, "When will this time be? Although this is almost universally understood as a reference to Jesus' seeing the disciples again after the Resurrection, such a reading hardly fits what Jesus says. The readers of the Gospel are living in-between-time, which is marked by hatred, rejection, and murder (cf. 15:18-16:3). This cannot be the time described by Jesus as full of a joy that not one can take from them (22c) so that there is no longer any need to ask anything of Jesus."

⁷¹ R. Alan Culpepper, "Realized Eschatology in the Experience of the Johannine Community," *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, eds. Craig R. Koester and Reimund Bieringer. Ottersweier: Tubingen, 2008. 259.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 259.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 259.

⁷⁴ Jn. 20:19: Οὐσης οὖν ὀψίας τῆ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ τῆ μιᾷ σαββάτων καὶ τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων ὅπου ἦσαν οἱ μαθηταὶ διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων, ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἔστη εἰς τὸ μέσον καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· εἰρήνη ὑμῖν.

days, John explains the eschatological ramifications of the Resurrection. The realized eschatology presented in the Gospel flows from John's Christology. Christ is the Logos made flesh, who breaks into the world and brings salvation to his followers now, which allows them to be raised up on the last day. In other words, the Resurrection, or "that day", marks the beginning of "the last days".

The Farewell Discourse prepares the reader for the Resurrection of Jesus. Christ's Resurrection ushers in the beginning of the end times, and the apostles' sadness actually turns into joy.⁷⁵ The last nine uses of αἰτέω are all in the Farewell Discourse and all come from the mouth of Jesus. Jesus states in Jn. 14:31, "And whoever should *ask* [αἰτέω] in my name, I will do this, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son."⁷⁶ Jesus states in Jn. 15:7, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask [αἰτέω] whatever you will, and it shall be done for you."⁷⁷ Again the vine discourse in Jn. 15:16, Jesus tells them: "You did not pick me out, but I picked you, and I have established you so that you may go and bear fruit and the fruit should remain in you, so that whoever should *ask* [αἰτέω] from the Father in my name he will give to you."⁷⁸ At the end of the Farewell Discourse Jesus declares: "Until now you have *asked* [αἰτέω] nothing in my name, *ask* [αἰτέω] and you will receive so that your joy may be fulfilled."⁷⁹ All of these verses display the soteriological force of αἰτέω. It is significant that Jesus never once tells his disciples to ἐρωτάω him; rather, they should αἰτέω him as God. "On that day"—the

⁷⁵ Jn. 16:23-24 RSV: "In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name. Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."

⁷⁶ Jn. 14:13, "καὶ ὃ τι ἂν αἰτήσητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου τοῦτο ποιήσω, ἵνα δοξασθῇ ὁ πατήρ ἐν τῷ υἱῷ."

⁷⁷ Jn. 15:7, "ἐὰν μείνητε ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ τὰ ῥήματά μου ἐν ὑμῖν μείνη, ὃ ἐὰν θέλητε αἰτήσασθε, καὶ γενήσεται ὑμῖν."

⁷⁸ Jn. 15:16, "οὐχ ὑμεῖς με ἐξελέξασθε, ἀλλ' ἐγὼ ἐξελεξάμην ὑμᾶς καὶ ἔθηκα ὑμᾶς ἵνα ὑμεῖς ὑπάγητε καὶ καρπὸν φέρητε καὶ ὁ καρπὸς ὑμῶν μένη, ἵνα ὃ τι ἂν αἰτήσητε τὸν πατέρα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου δῶ ὑμῖν."

⁷⁹ Jn. 16:24, "ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου αἰτήσασθε, καὶ οὐ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐγὼ ἐρωτήσω τὸν πατέρα περὶ ὑμῶν."

Resurrection—the source of our salvation is definitively revealed, for only God can raise himself from the dead; we will αἰτέω Jesus and receive it.

The Resurrection reveals the way of addressing Christ which many of his followers throughout the Fourth Gospel fail to see: αἰτέω. John’s usage of αἰτέω allows him at once to emphasize the identity of Christ as God and to establish his vision of realized eschatology. Within the Farewell Discourse, John’s intentional use of αἰτέω emphasizes the meaning of the Resurrection in John’s eschatology. The direct implication of John’s use of αἰτέω within his eschatology is that the believer obtains divine favors from God the Father through Jesus in this “in-between time” through the action of αἰτέω. Jesus’ exhortations to his followers to αἰτέω upon and after the Resurrection underscores the Christological and the eschatological framework of the Fourth Gospel, because the Resurrection confirms Jesus’ divinity and ushers in salvation. Questions of identity put to Christ predicated on ἐρωτάω become irrelevant after the Resurrection. God, in the Person of Jesus Christ, has manifested his divinity through defeating even death itself.

Apparent Contradiction of John 14:16, John 16:26, and John 17:9

Jesus tells His disciples he will ἐρωτάω the Father to send the Holy Spirit to them in Jn. 14:16.⁸⁰ Then, Jesus reassures his disciples that he will not ἐρωτάω the Father about them in Jn. 16:26: “On that day you will ask [αἰτέω] in my name; and I do not say to you that I shall pray [ἐρωτάω] the Father for you.” Jesus seems to contradict himself just a few verses later in 17:9, saying: “I am praying [ἐρωτάω] for them; I am not praying [ἐρωτάω] for the world but for those whom

⁸⁰ Jn. 14:16, “Ἐγὼ περὶ αὐτῶν ἐρωτῶ, οὐ περὶ τοῦ κόσμου ἐρωτῶ ἀλλὰ περὶ ὧν δέδωκάς μοι, ὅτι σοὶ εἰσιν, καὶ τὰ ἐμὰ πάντα σὰ ἐστὶν καὶ τὰ σὰ ἐμά, καὶ δεδόξασμαι ἐν αὐτοῖς.”

thou hast given me, for they are thine.”⁸¹ Once again, Jesus never uses αἰτέω in John’s Gospel in his own prayer to the Father. Interestingly enough, Jesus’ use of ἐρωτάω can be seen in Jn. 17 multiple times in his prayer to the Father. The apparent contradiction between the affirmation of Jesus using ἐρωτάω when relating to the Father in Jn. 14:16 and throughout Jn. 17, and denial of ἐρωτάω when relating to the Father in Jn. 16:26, hinders Brown from making any decisive distinction between ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω. With a clear understanding of John’s distinction between the two words, we are free to focus on John’s eschatology as a key to the cohesion between Jn. 14:16, Jn. 16:23, Jn. 16:26, and Jn. 17:9.

The Farewell Discourse culminates in Jesus’ priestly prayer which elaborates on both Jesus’ relationship to his followers and Jesus’ relationship to the Father. As noted above, “on that day” has been identified as the Resurrection. Jesus explains in Jn. 16:26 that the Resurrection will reveal his nature to his followers and change the nature of the disciples’ questions. Essentially, Jn. 16:26 becomes a qualification of Jn. 16:23.⁸² On the one hand, in Jn. 16:23 Jesus explains that the disciples will know his identity at the Resurrection and they will αἰτέω for salvation in his name.⁸³ The original point that the disciples will αἰτέω in Jesus’ name is restated in Jn. 16:26, but clarifies that Jesus will not have to ἐρωτάω, or pray, to the Father about their salvation.⁸⁴ Each verse affirms that “on that day,” or at the time of the Resurrection, the disciples will αἰτέω Jesus. Jesus explains that the disciples will no longer ἐρωτάω him in Jn. 16:23, and Jn. 16:26 explains Jesus does not have to ἐρωτάω the Father on their behalf. Jesus does ἐρωτάω on their behalf *before* “that day”, or before the Resurrection in Jn. 17:9. Because

⁸¹ Jn. 17:9, “Ἐγὼ περὶ αὐτῶν ἐρωτῶ, οὐ περὶ τοῦ κόσμου ἐρωτῶ ἀλλὰ περὶ ὧν δέδωκάς μοι, ὅτι σοί εἰσιν.”

⁸² Below are the Greek Texts of 16:23 and 16:26. Seeing these verses side by side shows how John switches ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω.

⁸³ Jn. 16:23, “καὶ ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐμὲ οὐκ ἐρωτήσετε οὐδέν· ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἂν τι αἰτήσητε τὸν πατέρα δώσει ὑμῖν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου.”

⁸⁴ Jn. 16:26, “ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου αἰτήσεσθε, καὶ οὐ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐγὼ ἐρωτήσω τὸν πατέρα περὶ ὑμῶν”.⁸⁴

“that day” has not yet come to fruition, the disciples are still in need of Jesus’ prayers to the Father for them. The promise of the Holy Spirit in Jn. 14:16 is fulfilled during the Resurrection in Jn. 20:22, in which Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on the disciples—Jesus himself gives the Holy Spirit. Thus, Jesus prays (ἑρωτάω) to the Father for the disciples *before* the Resurrection—“that day”—but will not *after* it. When one reads Jn. 16:23 and Jn. 16:26 in conjunction with each other, three points are evident: on the day of the Resurrection the disciples will αἰτέω in the name of Jesus; the disciples will not ἑρωτάω Jesus; and Jesus will not have to ἑρωτάω to the Father for the disciples.

Praying in Jesus’ name

Jesus not only commands his disciples to αἰτέω him, but to do so in his name, or “in my name” (ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου) in Jn. 16:23 and Jn. 16:26. Jesus’ name in relation to the Father’s name is a major topic in John’s Gospel, appearing nine times.⁸⁵ Some might argue that John, by utilizing the phrase “in my name” seems to have subjugated Jesus to the Father, but this understanding underestimates the inherent soteriological invocation of God’s name.

Invoking the name of the Lord recalls God’s covenants with the patriarchs and David, and remembers God’s salvific work of the Exodus. By urging his followers to call on his name, Jesus is connecting himself to the Old Covenant understanding that God’s name communicates salvation to the Israelites. In his priestly prayer, Jesus explicitly states that part of his mission is to make known the Father’s name.⁸⁶ God’s revelation of himself as a personal God in the

⁸⁵ Jn. 5:43, Jn. 10:25, Jn. 14:13, Jn. 14:14, Jn. 14:26, Jn. 15:16, Jn. 16:23, Jn. 16:26.

⁸⁶ Jn. 17:6, Jn. 17:26.

Exodus story begins with the revelation of his name, “I am”, to Moses.⁸⁷ Ratzinger describes John’s connection between the name of Jesus and the divine name,

The significance of this process becomes fully visible when one also realizes that John takes up again, in a much more striking way than any New Testament author before him, the heart of the burning bush story: the idea of the name of God. The notion that God names himself, that it becomes possible to call on him by name, moves, together with “I am”, into the center of his testimony.⁸⁸

The “I am” statements of Jesus explicitly connect Jesus’ name to the burning bush scene in which the name of God is revealed to Moses. Likewise, if we are to extend the analogy a bit further, Jesus’ action of sacrifice connects himself to the sacrifice of Yom Kippur. During Yom Kippur the high priest would invoke this sacred name in the Temple once a year seeking communion with God for the entire people.⁸⁹ Even the garments that the priests would wear in Temple sacrifice would contain the name of the Lord.⁹⁰ The Word made flesh brings to fulfillment the divine intimacy initiated by God’s revelation of his name. In Jesus, we no longer have a priest wearing God’s name but God himself offering the priestly sacrifice. Jesus’ name bears with it, therefore, the same salvific gravity of the four letters.

The importance of the divine name in salvation history sets the scene for Jesus’ command to pray in his name. If Jesus were not God, it would not be effective to pray in his name. By indicating that the faithful should pray in the name of Jesus, John is showing the Son to be equal to the Father. Thomas, in his commentary on John, writes about Jn. 16:26, “*you will ask [αἰτέω] in my name*; for when you plainly know the Father you will know that I am equal to him and of

⁸⁷ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 136. Ratzinger writes, “The paradox of the biblical faith in God consists in the conjunction and unity of the two elements just described, in the fact, therefore, that Being is accepted as a person, and the person accepted as Being itself, that only what is hidden is accepted as the One who is near, only the inaccessible as the One who is accessible, the one as the One who exists for all men and for whom all exist.”

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁸⁹ Lev. 16.

⁹⁰ Ex. 28:36, “And you shall make a plate of pure gold, and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet, ‘Holy to the LORD.’”

the same essence, and that it is through me that you can approach or have access to him.”⁹¹ The phrase ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου, therefore, heightens the soteriological force of αἰτέω. The disciples will no longer doubt Jesus’ identity, but rather revere his divine name. Any time Jesus commands his disciples to pray to the Father in his name, he utilizes αἰτέω, but never ἐρωτάω.⁹² The Evangelist’s soteriological use of αἰτέω when discussing the theme of Jesus’ name coincides with the theological use of αἰτέω seen in distinguishing it from ἐρωτάω. Through the Resurrection, Jesus’ name will be glorified, and will open salvation to his followers.

The Passion narrative: Intentional Distinction

The difference between the Passion narratives in the Synoptics and John’s Gospel further demonstrates the distinction John maintains between αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω. In the Passion accounts of Matthew,⁹³ Mark,⁹⁴ and Luke,⁹⁵ Joseph of Arimathea uses the verb αἰτέω “to beg” for Jesus’ body from Pilate. Distinct from the other Evangelists, John has Joseph ἐρωτάω for Jesus’ body.⁹⁶ The Synoptics tend to conflate αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω and use them interchangeably with one another. John, on the other hand, has a clear understanding of αἰτέω as supplication to the divine by a creature. In order to fully appreciate the import of John differing from the Synoptics

⁹¹ Thomas, *Commentary On the Gospel of John*, trans. Fabian R. Larcher and James A. Weisheipl Thomas Aquinas in Translation Series. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2010, V. 3. 159. Thomas continues, “To have this hope of approaching or having access to the Father through Christ is what is meant by asking in the name of Christ: ‘Some trust in chariots, and some in horses. But we will call upon the name of our Lord our God’ (Ps 20:7).”

⁹² Jn. 15:16, Jn.16:23, Jn. 16:26.

⁹³ Mt. 27:58, “οὗτος προσελθὼν τῷ Πιλάτῳ ἠτήσατο τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ. τότε ὁ Πιλάτος ἐκέλευσεν ἀποδοθῆναι”

⁹⁴ Mk. 15:43, “ἐλθὼν Ἰωσήφ [ὁ] ἀπὸ Ἀριμαθαίας εὐσχήμων βουλευτῆς, ὃς καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν προσδεχόμενος τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, τολμήσας εἰσῆλθεν πρὸς τὸν Πιλάτον καὶ ἠτήσατο τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ.”

⁹⁵ Lk. 23:25, “οὗτος προσελθὼν τῷ Πιλάτῳ ἠτήσατο τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ”

⁹⁶ Jn. 19:36, “Μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα ἠρώτησεν τὸν Πιλάτον Ἰωσήφ [ὁ] ἀπὸ Ἀριμαθαίας, ὃν μαθητῆς τοῦ Ἰησοῦ κεκρυμμένος δὲ διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων, ἵνα ἄρῃ τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ· καὶ ἐπέτρεψεν ὁ Πιλάτος. ἦλθεν οὖν καὶ ἦρεν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ.”

in his Passion narrative, a brief mention of recent research needs to be made. It is important to establish the connection between the Passion narratives of the Synoptics and John's Gospel, for this connection in turn will allow us to understand the deliberate adjustment of language that John makes from the Synoptics in his Passion narrative.

Differences in chronology between the Passion narratives of the Synoptics and John's Gospel lead some scholars to conclude that John bases his Passion narrative on a different source than the Synoptics. Arguing against this line of thought, Gerd Theissen, in his work *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition*, argues that each of the Gospels are dependent upon the same pre-Markan or pre-canonical Passion narrative. The chronology of the Synoptics' Passion narrative does not seem to match that of John's narrative. One major discrepancy in chronology is that the Synoptics claim that Jesus died on the day of the Passover, whereas John indicates that Jesus died on the Day of Preparation, the day before the Passover. Theissen points out, however, that many of the verses within the Synoptics' Passion narrative do assume that Jesus dies on the Day of Preparation, instead of the day of Passover. In Mk. 14:1-2, for instance, the Sanhedrin decides to kill Jesus *before* the feast so that any uprising would be avoided *during* the feast, and this chronology would actually match the timeline of John's Gospel (Jn. 19:42).⁹⁷ In order to emphasize a connection with Jesus' sacrifice to the Passover sacrifice, the Synoptic writers place Jesus' death at the beginning of Passover, whereas John recounts a strict historical timeline of Jesus' Crucifixion. While the Synoptics utilize a theological timeline and John an historical one, both presuppose the same actual timeline.

The fourth Evangelist also differs from the Synoptic tradition by giving names in his Passion narrative where the Synoptics are silent. Richard Bauckham in his work, *The Testimony*

⁹⁷ Gerd Theissen, *Trans. Linda M. Maloney. The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition*. Fortress Press, Minneapolis. 1991. 167-8. Emphasis added.

of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John, refers to this lack of naming in the Synoptics as “protective anonymity.”⁹⁸ The Gospel of Mark does not name specific people in its Passion narrative; for example, the reader is given no indication as to which woman anointed Jesus (Mk. 14:3), or as to the identity of the man who fights the servant of the high priest, or even the name of the servant who was attacked (Mk. 14:47). Retaining the stylistic elements of historiography, John more often than not names specific people in the Passion narrative: Mary is the woman who anoints Jesus (Jn. 12:3); Peter is the disciple wielding the sword (Jn. 18:10); and Malchus is the servant of the high priest (Jn. 18:10).⁹⁹ Bauckham, agreeing with Theissen’s anonymity thesis, argues that the reason for Mark’s silence and John’s disclosure is that Mark has to protect those individuals during their lives, while John, writing after their death, could reveal their identities in his writing.¹⁰⁰ The differences in anonymity do not point to John utilizing a different source for his Passion narrative; rather, they correlate to the theory that John was the last Gospel composed.

Another simple but powerful argument that cannot be overlooked is the overall coherence of all the Passion narratives. Theissen notes that smaller pericopes within the larger Passion narrative presuppose each other; for example, the prediction of the disciples’ flight and Peter’s denial in Mk. 14:21-31 points to Jesus’ arrest in Mk. 14:43-54.¹⁰¹ This connection correlates with the prediction of Peter’s denial in Jn. 13:36-14:4 and eventual betrayal in Jn. 18:15-27. Each Passion narrative progresses in almost perfect unison with the others as the narrative unfolds, whereas other parts of the Gospel show significant differences. On the one hand, the inherent similarities indicate that each Evangelist was unwilling to make any major shifts from the

⁹⁸ Bauckham, *The testimony of the beloved disciple*, 185.

⁹⁹ Bauckham, *Testimony*, 101.

¹⁰⁰ Bauckham, *Testimony*, 185.

¹⁰¹ Theissen. *The Gospels in Context*, 167-8.

purported pre-canonical source; on the other hand, it arguably means that each small adjustment is done for some theological, historical, or practical reason especially if it corroborates related phenomena early in the Gospel. The changes that were made by each Evangelist are integral to their Gospel as a whole.¹⁰²

John's use of ἐρωτάω in Joseph of Arimathea's request for Jesus' body shows a deliberate shift from the Passion sources he utilized and provides positive evidence for intentional and distinct use of ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω. Though all of the Synoptics utilize αἰτέω for this part of the Passion narrative, for John, it is appropriate to have Joseph ἐρωτάω for Jesus' body because it is a request from one creature to another.¹⁰³ The Passion narrative is something received from the early community and was not changed without some specific reason. John intentionally adjusts the language from the Passion narrative that he received in order to maintain his distinction between ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω.

The Shepherd of Hermas and the Distinction between αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω

Although John differs from the Synoptics in maintaining a distinction between ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω, he is not the only writer of the time period to do so. The Shepherd of Hermas is an apocalyptic treatise written by a Christian after the apostolic period of the Church.¹⁰⁴ The work is narrated by a figured called Hermas, who experiences visions of a woman representing the Church and of an angelic figure (the Shepherd), who gives Hermas a series of mandates and parables. The Fourth Gospel and the Shepherd of Hermas share a general context and time of

¹⁰² Theissen. *The Gospels*, 167-8.

¹⁰³ The usage of ἐρωτάω in Jn. 19:36 is arguably intentional rather than happenstance.

¹⁰⁴ F. L. Cross and E. A Livingstone. *The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press. 2005. Verbum Bible Software. 1505.

composition.¹⁰⁵ While this work was not included in the Muratorian Canon,¹⁰⁶ the Shepherd of Hermas has always had an elevated standing within the Church. Irenaeus considered the work as Scripture; Origen thought that the work was divinely inspired; Tertullian utilized it while he was a Catholic and a Montanist; and Athanasius cites the work in his writing. In addition, Eusebius and St. Jerome argue that while the Shepherd of Hermas is not canonical, it should be read by the faithful.¹⁰⁷ While the Shepherd of Hermas does not comprise part of the Canon of Scripture proper, it had a significant influence on the Church Fathers and the early Christian faith. The eschatology and the exhortation on faith and doubt presented in the document can help develop our understanding of John's distinction between αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω.

The scholarship on the author and setting of the Shepherd of Hermas has been remarkably consistent throughout its history. Hermas is not only identified as the narrator of the work within the text, but he is also the main character within in the plot. Origen, accepting the claim of the narrator, argues that Hermas is actually the author of the work. In his Letter to the Romans, Paul mentions a man named Hermas in his salutation.¹⁰⁸ Interestingly enough, Rome is the setting of the work, which corresponds with Origen's assertion that the Hermas of this work is the same Hermas mentioned in Paul's Letter to the Romans.¹⁰⁹ Osiek notes the vine imagery used in the work matches what one would find in central Italy, and mention of Clement and Pius further

¹⁰⁵ Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999. 20. Osiek writes, "The best assignment of date is an expanded duration of time beginning perhaps in the very last years of the first century, but stretching through most of the first half of the second century."

¹⁰⁶Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 6.

¹⁰⁷ William Hone, *The Apocryphal New Testament: Being All the Gospels, Epistles, and Other Pieces Now Extant* (Middlesex: Wildhern Press, 1820), 194.

¹⁰⁸ Rom. 16:14, "Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermas and the other brothers and sisters with them."

¹⁰⁹ Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 8.

suggest this location.¹¹⁰ Recently, there has been a general consensus that the work is the product of one author because of the “thematic unity” presented throughout the work.¹¹¹

Stylistically, the work is divided into 114 chapters and three major sections: Visions, Mandates, and Parables, or Similitudes.¹¹² Brannan argues that the work was probably composed in two major parts: Visions I-IV were composed around AD 90-100 and the rest AD 100-154.¹¹³ Osiek, on the other hand, acknowledges that Visions I-IV are a unit of text, and Vision V to the end of the work presents another unit written but are arguably written by a single author.¹¹⁴ She argues, however, that the work was probably broken into two sections because of the length of the text.¹¹⁵ Nonetheless the transition of Vision IV to Vision V presents a thematic shift; a major character of Visions I-IV is the woman who represents the Church, and the Shepherd is the major character from Vision V to the end of the work.

The purpose of Visions I-IV is to give the reader a conception of the Church. In the Visions a woman appears to Hermas several times but becomes more beautiful in each subsequent vision. The identification of the Church as feminine corresponds with Rev. 19:7 where the Church is understood as the Bride of Christ.¹¹⁶ The woman also appears as a tower which corresponds with Paul’s description of the Church as “the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” in Eph. 2:20. Osiek notes the high ecclesiology presented in Sim. IX.i.1, which identifies the Holy Spirit as speaking through

¹¹⁰ Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 18.

¹¹¹ Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 10.

¹¹² Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 10.

¹¹³ Rick Brannan, tran. *The Apostolic Fathers in English*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012. Introduction, About the Writings, Shepherd of Hermas, Second Paragraph.

¹¹⁴ Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 10.

¹¹⁵ Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 4.

¹¹⁶ Rev. 19: 7, “Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready.”

the Church.¹¹⁷ The woman, or Church, exhorts Hermas to humble himself before God, to evangelize, and to endure suffering with courage.

At the close of the Fourth Vision, Hermas returns home and is confronted by “The Shepherd, the angel of repentance,” who delivers to Hermas twelve Mandates.¹¹⁸ The Shepherd, whom the book is named after, is an angel who takes Hermas through a series of revelations and lessons.¹¹⁹ These visions and interactions between Hermas and the Shepherd comprise the majority of the prose. The Mandates cover various moral topics.¹²⁰ The Mandates then lead into the Parables. These Parables make up the last section of the treatise. With the work’s early dating, apocalyptic visions, Christian moral instruction, and early Church setting, the Shepherd of Hermas provides a fertile ground for a comparative study of αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω.

Although the Shepherd of Hermas shares many theological points of contact with the Gospel of John, it does not seem to be derived from a common source or to be dependent upon the Fourth Gospel for specific content. In the collection of journal articles entitled, *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, J. Drummond analyzes the Shepherd of Hermas’ use of the New Testament. He argues that the Shepherd of Hermas at no point provides its readers with a direct or indirect quotation borrowed from the New Testament.¹²¹ This does not mean, however, the book is entirely devoid of ideas or theology borrowed from or shared with the Fourth Gospel. The writer of the Shepherd of Hermas will often utilize different words than the New Testament, or he may use the same words as a certain passage but probably received the passage from

¹¹⁷ Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 33.

¹¹⁸ Vis. V, i, 7.

¹¹⁹ Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 16.

¹²⁰ Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 15, Osiek writes concerning the Mandates, “The moral teaching is thoroughly traditional and in the *Mandates*... the familiar refrain which ends many chapters, ‘Do this...(or avoid this...) and you will to God, and all those who do these things will live to God.’”

¹²¹ J. Drummond, *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*. Oxford Society of Historical Theology. Bellingham, WA: Verbum Bible Software, Inc. 2009. 105.

another source.¹²² Any similar distinction the two writers make between αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω, therefore, was presumably done independently.

Drummond notes connections between John and Hermas. The most important connection he makes is between Jn. 10:7-9, in which Jesus calls himself the door,¹²³ and Sim.

IX. xii. 1:

“First of all,” I said, “sir, explain this to me: Who is the rock and the door?” “This rock,” he said, “and the door are the Son of God.” “How,” I said, “sir, *as* the rock is old but the door new?” “Listen,” he said, “and understand, foolish one. ² The Son of God is older than all of his creation, so that he was counselor to the Father of his creation, for this *reason* the rock *is* also old.” “But the door, why *is it* new,” I said, “sir?”¹²⁴

The Shepherd of Hermas and the Fourth Gospel share a similar Christology. God is the rock, the foundation of all creation and being, existing before all ages, and Christ is the door ushering in the last days by his redemptive work. In his divine nature, Christ is preexistent to all his creation. This Christology echoes the scandalous “Before Abraham was, I am” in Jn. 8:58. Again, the writer of the *Shepherd of Hermas* in Sim. V. vi. 3, states that Son has received all power from his Father, which corresponds with Jn. 10:18, where Jesus explains that he has received all power from his Father.¹²⁵

The similar Christology in turn conveys warrants the same relationship between the Redeemer and follower that John stresses through his use of αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω. The emphasis on coming to God the Father through God the Son requires the follower to confess faith in Jesus’ divinity, or to αἰτέω Him. The writer of the Shepherd of Hermas distinguishes αἰτέω as the word

¹²² Drummond, *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, 105.

¹²³ Jn. 10:7-9. “Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.⁸ All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.⁹ I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”

¹²⁴ Brannan, Rick, tran. *The Apostolic Fathers in English*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012. Sim. IX. xii. 1

¹²⁵ Drummond, *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*. 123. Drummond backs away from an outright dependency between the two texts, “The identity of expression may be accidental, for it is sufficiently explained by the context.”

that a person should use to call upon God in times of trouble, or for more faith. The word ἐρωτάω is utilized for more practical reasons in the Shepherd of Hermas; one can ἐρωτάω God to understand visions and parables, but not for faith or salvation. While the usage of ἐρωτάω is more nuanced in the Shepherd of Hermas than it is in John, a distinction is made between the words that runs through the entirety of the work. It is necessary to investigate each word in its own context throughout the work in order to discover whether the Shepherd of Hermas applies a soteriological tone to αἰτέω but not ἐρωτάω.

The usage of ἐρωτάω in the Shepherd of Hermas

The word ἐρωτάω is found 19 times within the Shepherd of Hermas. Likewise, ἐπερωτάω, which shares the same root word as ἐρωτάω but adds the prefix ἐπι, or “upon”, is found 27 times within in the work.¹²⁶ Greevin argues that the prefix ἐπι can give the sense of a more pressing question.¹²⁷ The root ἐρωτάω is found on the lips of Hermas to introduce a direct question in Vis. III, i, 3, ““I *asked* her, saying, ‘Lady, to what part of the farm?’”¹²⁸ It is also used in subordinate clauses in Hermas’ speech, for example in Vis. II. ii. 1, “But after [fifteen] days of my fasting and asking [ἐρωτάω] many questions to the Lord...”. Likewise, ἐρωτάω and ἐπερωτάω are used by others in indirect discourse.¹²⁹ They are rarely used by others to introduce a direct question, but rather to recount what Hermas asks the woman or the Shepherd. This usage is probably due to the fact that Hermas’ partners in dialogue are the woman who represents the Church and the Shepherd, his angelic attendant, both of whom guide Hermas to truth and have the information that Hermas wants to acquire.

¹²⁶ Greevin in “ἐρωτάω, ἐπερωτάω, ἐπερώτημα” in Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*. V. 2, 688.

¹²⁷ Greevin in Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*, V.2. 688.

¹²⁸ Emphasis added.

¹²⁹ Herm. Vis. II, iv, 2. “The elderly lady came and asked me if I had already given the book to the elders”

The writer of the Shepherd of Hermas overwhelmingly favors some sort of use of ἐρωτάω when dealing with any sort of interrogation about a vision or interpretation of a parable. On the one hand, Hermas is directed by the woman to ask about a vision of a tower in Vis. III, iii, 3, “Therefore ask [ἐρωτάω] whatever you want about the tower and I will reveal it to you, that you may rejoice with the saints.” On the other hand, Hermas is reprimanded by the woman for asking about a vision in Vis. III, vi, 5, “And the white and round stones which do not fit into the building, who are they, Lady?” Answering me she said, “[How long] will you be stupid and foolish, and ask [ἐρωτάω] all things and understand nothing?” A prime example of ἐρωτάω in connection with a vision discourse occurs in the third vision. In this dialogue, Hermas asks the woman in Vis. III, x, 2: “But as she was leaving I asked [ἐρωτάω] her that she might reveal to me about the three forms in which she appeared to me. Answering me she said, ‘About these things, it is necessary for you to ask [ἐρωτάω] another, in order that it may be revealed to you.’” Hermas uses ἐρωτάω to inquire of the woman or to ask the Shepherd for understanding of what God has revealed to him.

If one focuses on the definition of ἐρωτάω in the Shepherd of Hermas, there is no direct or regular translation of the word. Whenever Hermas wants clarification about a mandate, he will ἐρωτάω the Shepherd.¹³⁰ Hermas’ questions for clarification are very similar to the disciples’ questions to Jesus about the nature of sin in Jn. 9:2.¹³¹ The word ἐρωτάω is even given the sense of supplication when Hermas throws himself at the woman’s feet in Vis. III, ii, 3,¹³² which harkens back the interaction between the Official and Jesus where the official begs (ἐρωτάω) Jesus to heal his son in Jn. 4:47. Furthermore, the Shepherd utilizes (ἐρωτάω) to ask the virgins

¹³⁰ Man. IV, i, 4. Man. IV, ii, 1. Man. IV, iii, 1. Man. IV, iv, 1.

¹³¹ Jn. 9:2, “And his disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’”

¹³² Vis. III, ii, 3, “Having said these things, she wished to go away. But throwing myself at her feet, I implored her by the Lord, that she show me what she had promised, a vision.”

a question in a vision at the end of the work.¹³³ The word ἐρωτάω can be used for questions of clarification and action when not followed by an object, which correlates exactly with what we find in John's Gospel.

In Mandate XI, the Shepherd warns Hermas against false prophets and soothsayers by claiming the consultation of these individual leads the faithful to question the providence of God.¹³⁴ This Mandate establishes the absolute limits of ἐρωτάω when dealing with the divine. Mandate XI uses ἐπερωτάω 7 times, primarily to describe a soothsayer's interaction with the divine. The dialogue starts in Man. XI, i, 2, with the Shepherd cautioning Hermas, "Therefore these double-minded ones, like to a soothsayer, they come and ask [ἐρωτάω] him what possibly will happen to them..." The warning from the Shepherd serves as a reminder that the action of ἐρωτάω can lead to a false faith; instead of supplication to God for salvation, it can lead to mere fortune telling. Later the Shepherd states in Man. XI, i, 3, "For he, being empty, also gives empty answers to empty people, for whatever he is asked [ἐρωτάω], according to the emptiness of man he answers." Fortunetelling and soothsaying, therefore, are essentially a waste of time. Even if one found out the day he was going to die what was going to happen to him, this information could not save his soul or lead to the blessedness that God has in mind. Ultimately, it is explained in Man. XI, i, 5 that the discerning spirit that is from God will not ask any questions about the future because faith in God will satisfy the believer, who does not fret over the future. The Spirit of God will lead into all truth, and when it comes to the believer it brings one into the fullness of life, a life in which questions about the future are a secondary concern. Given this

¹³³ Sim. X, v, 7. "And the shepherd asked the virgins if perhaps the master of the tower had come."

¹³⁴ Man. XI, i, 4-6. The Shepherd States, "For the one who asks a false prophet about any deed is an idolater and empty of the truth and foolish. For every spirit which is given from God does not ask questions but having the power of the deity speaks all things from itself, because it is from above, from the power of the divine spirit. But the spirit which is questioned and speaks according to the lusts of humanity is earthly and frivolous, having no power and does not speak at all unless it is asked."

context, ἐπερωτάω and ἐρωτάω emerge as the words for interrogating God or his messengers, often in a negative sense like a false prophet. The Shepherd introduces a more nuanced understanding of ἐρωτάω than utilized by John. In the Shepherd, ἐρωτάω can be used in addresses to God, but not in a way that leads to salvation.

The usage of αἰτέω in the Shepherd of Hermas

Significantly, Hermas appears to invest αἰτέω with the same particular theological force as John in his Gospel. Αἰτέω appears 26 times in the Shepherd of Hermas, and in each of the three divisions. Αἰτέω is used in conjunction with ἐρωτάω in the third vision given to Hermas. In it, the woman rebukes Hermas by stating in Vis. III, iii, 2-3:

But you will not stop asking [αἰτέω] for revelations, for you are shameless. And I myself am the tower which you see being built, the church who appeared to you, both now and the previous time. Therefore ask [ἐρωτάω] whatever you want about the tower and I will reveal it to you, that you may rejoice with the saints.

This passage maintains that ἐρωτάω can be used when dealing with the interpretation of visions, mandates, and parables. Hermas is reprimanded and called “shameless” for asking [αἰτέω] about a vision, and again is urged by the woman to ask (ἐρωτάω) further about the vision. Here we have an explicit distinction between these words that is evident in the Greek but not in the English. In English, it seems rather contradictory; the woman is calling Hermas shameless for asking for revelations, but then telling him to ask for clarification about the vision. The distinction between ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω clears up this contradiction and reveals a subtle theological point the writer is making about the relationship between αἰτέω, salvation, and faith.

With an apparent distinction noted between αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω, αἰτέω must be investigated in its own context to be correctly understood. In Man. IX, the Shepherd gives Hermas a command against double-mindedness (διψυχέω). In this Mandate αἰτέω is used eleven

times, and the closely related substantive αἴτημα, or request, is used nine times. In the following passage from Man. IX, i, 1-8, a familiar soteriological tone emerges in the narrator's use of αἰτέω:

He said to me, "Remove double-mindedness [διψυχέω] from yourself and be not at all double-minded [διψυχέω] about asking [αἰτέω] anything from God, saying in yourself, namely, 'How am I able to ask [αἰτέω] from the Lord and receive, having sinned against him so much?'² Do not consider these things too carefully, but with your whole heart turn to the Lord and ask [αἰτέω] from him confidently and you will come to know his great tenderheartedness, that he may never forsake you but will fulfill the petition [αἴτημα] of your soul.³ For God is not like people who bear malice, but [he himself bears no malice] and has compassion upon his creation.⁴ You, therefore, purify your heart from all of the worthless things of this world, and the words which were previously spoken to you, and ask [αἰτέω] from the Lord and you will receive everything, and [all of your requests [αἴτημα] will be granted], if you ask [αἰτέω] confidently from the Lord.⁵ But if you doubt in your heart, you will never receive any of your requests [αἴτημα], for those who doubt in God, these are double-minded [διψυχέω] ones, and [they are never granted any] of their requests [αἴτημα].⁶ But those who are perfect in the faith, they ask [αἰτέω] for everything trusting upon the Lord, and they receive it because they ask [αἰτέω] confidently, being double-minded [διψυχέω] in nothing. For every double-minded [διψυχέω] man, if he does not repent, will be saved with difficulty.⁷ Therefore purify your heart from double-mindedness and put on faith, because it is powerful, and believe God, that all of your requests [αἴτημα] which you ask [αἰτέω] you will receive, and if when making a request [αἴτημα] of the Lord you receive it more slowly than you expect, do not be double-minded because you did not quickly receive the request [αἴτημα] of your soul, by all means for it is because of some temptation or some sin which you yourself are ignorant of that you receive your request [αἴτημα] more slowly than you expect.⁸ Therefore you do not stop making the request [αἴτημα] of your soul, and you will receive it, but if you become discouraged and double-minded [διψυχέω] when asking [αἰτέω], blame yourself and not the one who gives to you.

Man. IX serves not only as a reiteration of Jn. 16:23, but also as a key to understanding John's meaning in that verse. As in Jn. 16:23b, Man. IX, i, 4, states, "ask [αἰτέω] from the Lord and you will receive everything".¹³⁵ Both of these verses establish a connection between αἰτέω and the way in which the faithful should petition God. Furthermore, the text from Hermas urges the faithful to remain persistent in their requests, easing doubts and tensions when things do not happen as quickly as expected. This passage is not the only one in which αἰτέω is favored by the writer when describing a petition to the Lord; it is used throughout the work consistently. In

¹³⁵ The Greek text for 16:23b, "ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἂν τι αἰτήσητε τὸν πατέρα δώσει ὑμῖν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου." The Greek text of Man, IX, I, 4, "...καὶ αἰτοῦ παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου, καὶ ἀπολήψη πάντα καὶ ¹ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν αἰτημάτων σου ἀνυστέρητος ἔση ¹, ἐὰν ἀδιστάκτως αἰτήσης παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου." All Greek text from the Shepherd of Hermas taken from Rick Brannan, *Apostolic Fathers Greek-English Interlinear* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press Verbum Bible Software, 2011).

Man. XII, i, 1, Hermas shows that he understands that whoever asks (αἰτέω) from the Lord will receive it.¹³⁶ The Shepherd reiterates this understanding in Sim.V, iii, 9¹³⁷ and again in Sim. VI, iii.¹³⁸ The clear delineator between αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω is that αἰτέω is used for supplication to God for salvation, and ἐρωτάω is used for interrogation about visions, mandates, and parables.

Not only does Man. IX correlate with what we find in Jn. 16:23b, but it can also help us to deepen our understanding of the Evangelist's work. The Shepherd places αἰτέω in a broader theological landscape by introducing the use of αἴτημα and δίψυχος in relation to the verb. Within Man. IX, it is necessary to study the relationship between αἴτημα and αἰτέω. Gustav Stählin links αἴτημα to αἰτέω, because αἴτημα is the substantive of αἰτέω, and he gives the definition of the word as "request," "petition," or "desire".¹³⁹ In the New Testament, it means a petition.¹⁴⁰ The word occurs three times in the New Testament.¹⁴¹ Though most, if not all, of Johannine scholars have overlooked the theological connection between αἴτημα and αἰτέω, a simple connection exists. As the substantive of αἰτέω, the word αἴτημα is, for John, a supplication to God for salvation.

The next word in the Shepherd of Hermas that is used in relationship to αἰτέω is δίψυχος, which can be broken down into two words: "δί" meaning two and "ψυχος" meaning the natural

¹³⁶ Man. XII, v, 1. "I said, 'sir, is eager to keep the commandments of God, and there is no one who does not ask (αἰτέω) from the Lord that he be strengthened in his commandments and submit to them.'"

¹³⁷ Sim. V, iii, 9. "These things thus you will observe, you with your children and your whole family. And observing them, you will be blessed, and whoever upon hearing observes them, they will be blessed, and whatever they ask (αἰτέω) from the Lord, they will receive."

¹³⁸ Sim. VI, iii, 6, "And for the remaining time they serve the Lord with their pure heart, and they will prosper in [everything they do], receiving from the Lord all things, whatever they ask (αἰτέω) for."

¹³⁹ Gustav Stählin, "αἰτέω, αἴτημα, ἀπαιτέω, ἐξαιτέω, παραιτέομαι," Kittel, *Theological dictionary*. Vol. 1, 193. Stählin writes, "Verbal substant. of αἰτέω with -μα in the passive sense of 'what is demanded or requested.'"

¹⁴⁰ Ibid VI, 194. Stählin states, "In the NT it is used of the individual petitions which constitute a prayer (προσευχή)."

¹⁴¹ Pilate grants the *requests* of the Chief Priests in Lk. 23:24, "καὶ Πιλάτος ἐπέκρινεν γενέσθαι τὸ αἴτημα αὐτῶν." In Paul's letter to the Philippians he lets the community know that they should make their petitions known to God: Phil. 4:6 "μηδὲν μεριμνᾶτε, ἀλλ' ἐν παντὶ τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ τῇ δεήσει μετ' εὐχαριστίας τὰ αἰτήματα ὑμῶν γνωρίζεσθω πρὸς τὸν θεόν." In the first epistle of John αἴτημα is used with two usages of αἰτέω to describe how one should trust when petitioning to God: I Jn. 5:15, "καὶ ἐὰν οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἀκούει ἡμῶν ὁ ἐὰν αἰτώμεθα, οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἔχομεν τὰ αἰτήματα ἃ ἠτήκαμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ."

life of a person.¹⁴² Schweizer says that δίψυχος “denotes the divided man as opposed to the ‘simple’ man.”¹⁴³ The majority of scholars will actually translate this word as “double-minded,” as it connotes a man who doubts in the Lord or whose heart is not completely set on the Lord. For Hermas, the person who “asks” (ἐρωτάω) the Lord is double-minded, or asks and does not really believe that he will receive what he is asking for in prayer. The word is used twice in the Book of James, once to clearly state that the “double-minded” person will not receive anything in prayer,¹⁴⁴ and again to admonish people to leave behind their “double-mindedness.”¹⁴⁵ There is no etymological link between δίψυχος and αἰτέω, but there is a theological one. When Hermas writes about the problem of “double-mindedness,” authentic petition (αἰτέω) to the Lord is the antidote. Essentially, a believer’s faith should not be mixed with any other motives besides trust in God. The Shepherd’s theological point is that an authentic request to God cannot be double-minded.

In a comparison of all of the usages of αἰτέω in the Shepherd of Hermas to John’s use of the verb, some important similarities emerge. Αἰτέω is the word used for authentic faith in God. Once again, Mandate IX corresponds with Jesus’ words in Jn. 16:23b, where he reassures his followers that they will be able to ask “αἰτέω” for anything in his name. The urge to αἰτέω God in Mandate IX is essentially the same invitation that Jesus gives the Samaritan woman in Jn. 4:10. Furthermore, the rejection of Hermas’ αἰτέω for understanding of visions in Vis. III, iii, 2

¹⁴² Eduard Schweizer, “ψυχή, ψυχικός, ἀνάψυξις, ἀναψύχω, δίψυχος, ὀλιγόψυχος” in Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*. Vol. 9, p. 639. Schweizer, writes, “ψυχή is in the first instance the physical life. Thus there can be reference to the slaying, giving, hating, and persecuting of the ψυχή. ψυχή is limited and threatened by death. Yet the ψυχή cannot be separated from man or beast. This shows that what is at issue is not the phenomenon of life in general but the life which is always manifested in an individual man.”

¹⁴³ Schweizer in Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*, V. 9, 666.

¹⁴⁴ James 1:7-8, “For that person must not suppose that a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, will receive anything from the Lord.”

¹⁴⁵ James 4:8, “Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you men of double mind.”

places boundaries on authentic usages of αἰτέω—one can αἰτέω for salvation but not for visions or knowledge that ultimately detracts from God. The words δίψυχος and αἴτημα allow us to place αἰτέω in a wider theological context—a context which urges the believer to request anything from God and to remove double-mindedness from the heart to ask authentically from the Lord.

Test Cases from the Shepherd of Hermas

On the one hand, Mandate XI distinguishes ἐρωτάω as the word used to unlock the meaning of visions, mandates, and parables, which if misused leads to a false faith. On the other hand, Mandate IX shows that αἰτέω is a word that is favored to petition the Lord and to combat “double-mindedness.” Vision III presents a more intricate passage that juxtaposes all of these ideas. The distinctions are upheld in Vis. III, x, 6-9, in which Hermas “asks” (αἰτέω) the Shepherd about revelations:

Being very deeply grieved about these things, I wanted to understand this revelation, and I saw the elderly woman in a vision of the night saying to me, “Every request [ἐρωτάω] needs humility; so fast and you will receive what you ask [αἰτέω] from the Lord.”⁷ So I fasted one day and that same night a young man appeared to me and he said to me, “Why do you [continually] ask [αἰτέω] for revelations in prayer? Watch out, lest by making many requests [αἰτέω] you injure your flesh.”⁸ These revelations are sufficient for you. Are you able to see more powerful revelations than you have seen?⁹ Answering, I said to him, “Sir, this alone I ask [αἰτέω], about the three forms of the elderly lady, that there may be a complete revelation.” Answering, he said to me, “[How long] are you foolish? But your double-mindedness (δίψυχος) makes you foolish and you have not inclined your heart to the Lord.”

It might seem that in verse 6 of this text αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω are used interchangeably—the woman wants Hermas to ask (ἐρωτάω) with humility so that that he can receive from the Lord and trust that he will receive everything he asks (αἰτέω) from the Lord. Making the section even more difficult, Hermas is immediately rebuked by the Shepherd for longing to understand the revelations, essentially for doing exactly what the woman advised him to do. If one conflates the usage of αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω, the woman’s words seem to contradict the Shepherd’s words—“ask” (αἰτέω) and you will receive from the Lord, but stop “asking” (αἰτέω) for revelations in

prayer. Based on the clarifications made above, however, we can see that two matters are at stake in this passage: the understanding of visions and supplication to God.

Considering Vis. III, x, 6-7, the woman's words in verse 6 present nothing out of the ordinary; every request (ἐρωτάω) needs humility, and Hermas will receive whatever he asks (αἰτέω) from the Lord. Here in verse 6 the distinction needs to be kept in mind. In other words, when asking (ἐρωτάω) for clarification about a vision, it must be done humbly. Furthermore, one should trust that whatever he asks (αἰτέω) from God he will receive. The Shepherd's warning about injuring the flesh in the latter part of verse 7 allows us to further distinguish between αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω. The Shepherd does not give his warning because the advice of the woman is wrong or because he has some fundamental disagreement with fasting, but because Hermas commits a fundamental error in understanding God.¹⁴⁶ The word ἐρωτάω is used time and time again for Hermas to understand visions; however, to αἰτέω for a vision can produce adverse effects for the individual who desires holiness.

To describe the distinction another way, it is natural for one to want to understand a divine vision, but to place all of one's faith in the vision and not God himself leads to a faith that is only as strong as the next vision. Furthermore, if one has to fast to understand these visions and if one places all of his faith in these visions, then he will constantly be fasting, and thereby injure his flesh.¹⁴⁷ According to the Shepherd, Hermas is not to place his faith in divine visions and fasting, but rather to allow his faith in God to become more precise by understanding the visions more clearly. Faith in God should allow more visions and more understanding of God,

¹⁴⁶ Sim. V, iii, 1-9 actually discusses what type of fasts are pleasing to the Lord.

¹⁴⁷ F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1033. Interestingly enough, this teaching on fasting foreshadows the problematic beliefs of the Manicheans, who practiced rigid fasting to release the soul from the body. Cross writes, "To achieve this release, severe asceticism, including vegetarianism, was practised. There existed in the sect a hierarchy of grades professing different standards of austerity; the 'Elect' were supported by the 'Hearers' in their determined missionary endeavours and in an otherworldly state of perfection."

instead of visions forming the sole basis for faith in him. Once understanding is established, one can then αἰτέω God for holiness and salvation. The Shepherd of Hermas thus presents an intentional division between αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω, which, though differing slightly from John's insistence on avoiding ἐρωτάω for any divine address, preserves the use of αἰτέω for a faith in God that seeks salvation.

Hermas encounters a large beast in Vis. IV, this vision contains another example that maintains the distinction between αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω. In verse 3, Hermas is walking by himself when he asks (ἐρωτάω) the Lord for a vision. Later, in verse 4, an angel charges Hermas with being δίψυχος, a charge that he does not understand.¹⁴⁸ The theme of asking (ἐρωτάω) for visions comes to a head in the seventh verse of Vis. IV. In Vis. IV, i, 7, Hermas pleads (ἐρωτάω) to the Lord to be spared from the beast; he remembers, “And I began to weep and to ask [ἐρωτάω] the Lord that he rescue me from it [the beast], and I remembered the word which I had heard, ‘Do not be of two minds, Hermas.’” In this sequence, the secondary translation of ἐρωτάω as “to beg” should be used since no information is being requested. Notice here that Hermas is not granted his request (ἐρωτάω) for rescue, but instead the Shepherd urges him not to be of two minds (δίψυχος). On the one hand, he is desiring visions; on the other, he is asking to be spared from them. Also, he is using ἐρωτάω to ask God to be spared from the beast. This dichotomy brings about the state of double-mindedness and shows the possible problematic nature of ἐρωτάω. Hermas needed to learn from this vision, not be saved from it.¹⁴⁹ Osiek notes that once Hermas gains courage, the beast really turns out to be a dog rather than a monster.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Vis. IV, I, iii: “‘And I was glorifying and giving thanks to him when the sound of a voice answered me, ‘Do not be of two minds, Hermas.’ I began to reason with myself and say, ‘How can I be of two minds having been so firmly established by the Lord and having seen *his* glorious deeds?’”

¹⁴⁹ Vis. IV, i, 3. The woman goes on to explain about the beast.

¹⁵⁰ Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 93.

The asking (ἐρωτάω) for visions could lead Hermas to the false assumption that he needs visions from God, or that God only works through visions. Although ἐρωτάω can have a legitimate use for requesting visions, relying solely on visions for faith leads to double-mindedness, because the vision takes focus away from God. The vision becomes a god and eliminates the need for faith.

Earlier in Vis. III, iii, 2, the woman states: “But you will not stop asking [αἰτέω] for revelations, for you are shameless.” Vis. III presents the inverse of the situation of Vis. IV. In Vis. IV, the woman directs Hermas not to “petition” (ἐρωτάω) to the Lord for visions because it leads to double-mindedness, and Vis. III indicates that Hermas cannot place his faith in visions by asking (αἰτέω) for them. Visions and interpretations are only useful insofar as they lead Hermas to deeper faith in God. The woman, or the Church, urges Hermas to look beyond the visions to God. The usage of αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω is not coincidental in Shepherd of Hermas; but rather, it is a theological distinction that is used to make Christological and eschatological statements within the work.

Sim. V, iv. Distinction Maintained

Similitude V contains both asking verbs in close proximity to one another. In Sim. V, ii, 7, the Shepherd kindly gives Hermas a parable about a field but seems to rebuke him as soon as Hermas asks for an explanation in Sim. V, iv, 2: “And the one who answered said to me, ‘You are very arrogant to ask [ἐρωτάω]. You ought not,’ he said, ‘to ask [ἐρωτάω] anything at all, for if it is necessary to explain to you, it will be explained.’ Osiek explains the Shepherd’s change in tone as a literary device to further the dialogue.¹⁵¹ Osiek, however, is overlooking the same

¹⁵¹ Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 177.

irony in wordplay that scholars considering αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω in John have missed. The Shepherd's anger is not arbitrary; rather, he is teaching Hermas how to interact with God.

In Sim. V. iv, 2, Hermas responds, “Sir, whatever you make known to me and do not explain I will have seen it in vain, and not understand what it is. Likewise also, if you speak parables to me and do not explain them to me, I will have heard something from you in vain.” On the surface, Hermas' concern seems reasonable—he does not want to waste an opportunity to understand these visions. It seems, however, that Hermas, like Martha in the Gospel of John, has not understood the Shepherd's use of ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω. He fails to realize that visions do not replace faith, and that one must αἰτέω to God with faith. The Shepherd reemphasizes the necessity of αἰτέω in Sim. V, iv. 3,

And he again answered me, saying, “Whoever,” he said, “is a servant of God and has his Lord in his heart asks [αἰτέω] for understanding from him and receives it, and he explains every parable, and the sayings of the Lord which were spoken through parables, they become known to him. But as many as are feeble and idle in intercession, those hesitate to ask [αἰτέω] from the Lord.”¹⁵²

The Shepherd urges Hermas to αἰτέω rather than ἐρωτάω when addressing God. Note that while using ἐρωτάω for understanding of visions is permitted, αἰτέω is preferred because it presumes faith in the heart. The Shepherd exhorts Hermas to ask (αἰτέω) the Lord to understand the parables rather than ἐρωτάω, because it refocuses Hermas from idle knowledge to faith in God. The usage of αἰτέω in Sim. V. iv, 4, correlates with the theological definition found in John. The Shepherd further states, “But the Lord is rich in compassion and to all who ask [αἰτέω] from him he gives unceasingly.” The Shepherd's response reiterates the meaning of αἰτέω: any who ask (αἰτέω) from the Lord will receive, and those who are weak and idle hesitate to αἰτέω because they lack faith in God.

¹⁵² Sim. V, iv, 2,4. This similitude proceeds as, “But the Lord is rich in compassion and to all who ask (αἰτέω) from him he gives unceasingly. But you, having been strengthened by the holy angel and having received such intercession from him and are not idle, why do you not ask (αἰτέω) for understanding from the Lord and receive it from him?”

With a clear distinction emerging from the Shepherd on the proper words to relate to God, Hermas' response in Sim. V. iv, 5 indicates that he is still uncertain as to how to address God. "I said to him, 'Sir, since I have you with me, I have necessity to ask [αἰτέω] you and to inquire [ἐρωτάω] of you.'" With a study of these two verbs throughout the text complete, we can finally revisit this verse and resolve the apparent contradiction. While Hermas' use of αἰτέω to the Shepherd shows that he is still unable to use them correctly. Hermas' ignorance disturbs the Shepherd and eventually provokes a rebuke.

Hermas continues in Sim. V, iv, 5, "I would have asked [ἐρωτάω] the Lord, that he might make it clear to me." The Shepherd immediately corrects Hermas in Sim. V. v. 1: "'I told you,' he said, 'even now, that you are crafty and arrogant, asking [ἐρωτάω] for the explanations of the parables.'" The Shepherd urges Hermas to αἰτέω the Lord in Sim. V. iv. 3-4. In English, the simple translation of ask for both αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω would seem to have the Shepherd contradicting himself. The theological distinction between the two words, however, allows the Shepherd to make his point very clear. One may αἰτέω to the Lord for salvation, in time of trouble, or for faith. For someone only to ἐρωτάω the Lord would be to reduce God to the fleeting content of a vision, much as using ἐρωτάω to Jesus reduces him to a miracle worker in John. The Shepherd explains to Hermas that no matter how hard he tries, he will never derive ultimate meaning from *asking* (ἐρωτάω) without true faith in God.

The distinction between αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω in both the Gospel of John and the Shepherd of Hermas expresses a shared Christology and eschatology. While the Shepherd of Hermas does not systematically reject all uses of ἐρωτάω to the divine as John does, he qualifies its usage. The use of ἐρωτάω to God for a vision can be legitimate, but care must be taken to avoid making the vision a god. Likewise, the Shepherd urges Hermas to αἰτέω God for salvation, and never to

ἐρωτάω him for it. The woman’s rebuke of Hermas for asking (αἰτέω) for revelations reminds the reader of Jesus’ rebuke of Martha for stating that Jesus will receive anything he asks (αἰτέω) from the Father in Jn. 11:20-27. The Shepherd of Hermas’ warning about ἐρωτάω in conjunction with double-mindedness reflects Jn. 4:47, in which the official asks (ἐρωτάω) Jesus to save his son. Jesus reprimands the official in Jn. 4:48, “Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.” Hermas does not make the same mistake as the official; when at the point of desperation confronting a wild beast, he refrains from asking (ἐρωτάω) God because he knows he would be double-minded if he did. God is not a vision to analyze nor a mere worker of miracles, but the source of all being, who beckons us to eternal life with him.

Essentially, the writer of the Shepherd of Hermas wants the reader to consider how we respond to God’s salvific work: do we truly believe in the salvific action of Christ, the God-man, or does our faith falter in a need for visions and seers? Ultimately, the Shepherd of Hermas answers these questions by distinguishing between αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω—an asking that indicates faith versus an asking that indicates a petition for creaturely knowledge.

A New Perspective on John 16:23

A proper understanding of αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω in the Gospel of John helps to reveal a coherent Christology and eschatology and eliminates apparent contradictions within the Gospel. Scholars have proposed every possible relationship between αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω, from absolutely distinct definitions in every single New Testament work to simple synonyms. While the definitions of both ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω have been shown to be similar enough to share some English translations, the distinction posed between the words in John’s Gospel is one not of definition, but of theological tone and appropriateness of use. As noted above, ἐρωτάω can have the

meaning of “ask” when it introduces a question (essentially seeking information), or the meaning of “beg,” or “request,” when it does not introduce a question. Likewise, αἰτέω can also mean “ask” with a recipient in the accusative case, and also “request” or “demand”. Theological insight into John’s differentiation between the verbs that goes beyond English translation is necessary to further appreciate the Fourth Gospel, and particularly Jn. 16:23.

The irony of the Fourth Gospel centers on the reality of the Word made flesh. Jesus’ interlocutors know that Jesus is unique; he performs miracles and has profound teachings. The Son of God, however, wants his followers to recognize that he is more than a miracle worker from whom to ἐρωτάω. He beckons them to αἰτέω him for salvation. Whenever someone does use ἐρωτάω with respect to Jesus in the Gospel of John, the Evangelist then supplies irony to indicate a misunderstanding on the behalf of those questioning Jesus. While Jesus uses ἐρωτάω in his own prayers to show the intimacy of the Father and the Son, Jesus commands his disciples to αἰτέω him. The distinction between αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω shows readers of the Fourth Gospel how to respond to the Word made flesh.

John’s eschatology explicates that τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ refers to the Resurrection of Christ. The Resurrection reveals the reality available to us, because we are now able to participate in “τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ” in the present moment. In Jn. 16:26, Jesus states that he will not ἐρωτάω the Father for the disciples *on that day*, but does just that in Jn. 17:9. These verses, however, need to be placed within the eschatological framework of the Gospel. If the Resurrection is understood to be τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ, then Jn. 16:23 can teach us how to relate to Jesus *after* the Resurrection. Jesus does ἐρωτάω the Father before the Resurrection but not after. “On that day,” Jesus’ followers will ask (ἐρωτάω) him nothing, because they will bear witness to his Cross and Resurrection. The Resurrection confirms his divinity. Jesus’ salvific actions make evident the

way individuals should interact with Him, and John indicates this change by drawing a theological distinction between ἐρωτάω and αἰτέω.

Independently of the Gospel of John, the writer of the Shepherd of Hermas develops a similar theological distinction between αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω. While in the Shepherd of Hermas ἐρωτάω might legitimately be used to request visions from God, it can lead to double-mindedness if the visions take the place of God. A pure-hearted request to God for salvation can only be made with αἰτέω. The writer of the Shepherd of Hermas indicates that all authentic requests to God can have no trace of “double-mindedness,” leaving behind the idea that God can be manipulated and controlled.

While scholars have missed this subtle but important distinction, it is crucial for interpreting the Gospel of John. Jesus never commands anyone to ἐρωτάω him within the Fourth Gospel. What seems like unwarranted harshness in his rebukes of Martha and the centurion are actually an invitation to recognize Jesus’ divinity. Individuals should ask (αἰτέω) Jesus, or the Father in Jesus’ name, because the word reflects the reality that Jesus is God. John’s consistent and precise use of these two words throughout the Gospel reveals not only John’s understanding of Christ, but the authentic approach to Jesus. Essentially, to use αἰτέω is to proclaim with John and believe that “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.”

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