

**The Original Icons of Faithful Discipleship
Within the Eschatological Family of Jesus:
John and Mary Standing By the Crucified (Jn 19:26-27)**

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Abstract

John 19:26-27 has been subjected to varied exegetical analysis for over nineteen centuries. The early Church Fathers generally interpreted Jesus' giving His mother (Mary) and His beloved disciple (John) to each other from the Cross at Calvary as a filial act of piety by a dying son. Some during that period and later came to believe that the evangelist was portraying something greater and symbolic by this exchange of the new mother and new son. This work provides a comprehensive historical overview and analysis of these commentaries and exegeses, as well as investigating the various hermeneutical principles that have been developed to understand the text aright. Initially taken on a literal level, the profound depths of this final act of the Messiah requires what this study calls a "chrono-theological" reading. John 19:26-27 is syntactically and thematically a deepening of Mk 3:34-35 where Jesus announces the creation of his new eschatological (spiritual) family. Belonging to this new Messianic family requires faithful discipleship, not common blood. A key to understanding John is the use of the "revelatory formula which is clearly seen in John's specific presentation of the two "moments" in Jesus' penultimate words ("Woman, behold, your son...Behold, your mother").

The first part of this study deals with Mary's identity as "mother" (μήτηρ), "woman-spouse/bride" (γύναι), and faithful disciple. Through this exegetical analysis it is shown how Mary represents *both* Eve and Zion at Calvary. From this bilateral symbolic identify flows Mary's new mission as the eschatological bride of Christ and the mother over all the children of God which in turn is embodied in the person of the beloved disciple.

In the second part, this work advances the traditional identification of the beloved disciple with St. John, the apostle and evangelist, and gives an in-depth exegetical analysis of "disciple" and "beloved." The focus then shifts to divine sonship and spiritual fraternity that the beloved "disciple-son" models within the fourth gospel.

The study concludes by a comprehensive analysis of Jn 19:27b showing that its fuller meaning is: *the faithful and beloved disciple-son welcomed Mary into all the aspects of his life, i.e., into the spiritual depths of his heart and into his material home*. This "chrono-theological" reading of Jn 19: 25-27 allows the double interpenetrating meanings which are grounded in each other to emerge. In receiving each other in their new relationality created by Christ in His Passion, Mary and John, standing by the Crucified One, form not only the eschatological family of Jesus, but personally and corporately represent "*origin-al*" icons of faithful discipleship in the fourth gospel.