

## “WHOM ARE YOU SEEKING?” IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

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

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

### Introduction

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

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

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