

Handout: The Gospel of John Chapter 5

The Historical Hour: The first importance of “the hour” is that it points in this Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels to the climax of Jesus’ earthly ministry, to the appointed time of His Passion and glorification. Before the appointed “hour”, set by the Father, the attempts of Jesus’ enemies to harm Him have all been in vain because “His hour has not yet come” [7:30; 8:20]. The countdown of that hour, the point at which the clock starts ticking, is at the start of Passion week when Jesus rides into Jerusalem on the day the Passover lambs are selected for the sacrifice [Palm Sunday]. In John’s Gospel “the hour” of Christ’s humiliation and death on the cross is *“the hour of his exaltation that becomes the source of everlasting life for the world.”* [Ignatius study Bible page 26].

The Liturgical Hour: Christ’s “hour” reaches beyond the historical events of His Passion and glorification and into the liturgical commemoration of these events as they are reenacted in the life of His Church. Biblical scholars point to several passages in sacred Scripture that illustrate the connection of His “hour” with Christian worship:

1. John 2:4, at the wedding at Cana Jesus responds with His mother’s request for additional wine for the wedding feast with the response *“My hour has not yet come”*, suggesting that when the hour does come He will provide that “best wine” of the wedding feast in abundance. Christian scholars down through the centuries have always seen this statement as a reference to the ordinary wine that becomes the perfect blood of Christ in holy Eucharist when *“he pours Himself into the Eucharistic cup under the visible sign of wine.”* [St. Ignatius Study Bible –the Gospel of John page 26].
2. John 4:21-23 in the encounter with the Samaritan woman Jesus insists that his coming “hour” is associated with worship that is superior to any previously know worship including the Jews’ worship under the Old Covenant in the Temple in Jerusalem and the Samaritan’s imperfect worship at Mt. Gerizim.
3. John 5:25-29 in our current passage where Jesus announces his “hour” as the time when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of Man and will be resurrected to judgment. In the reading of the Gospel and other Biblical passages in the Liturgy of the Word at Mass we continue to hear the “voice” of the Son of Man speak to us and to awaken our souls.
4. John 12:20-24 in which Christ’s final “hour” will bring in a harvest of souls from every nation on earth because Jesus, like a grain of wheat the dies and is buried in the earth only to rise again to new life, will give that gift of new life to Israel and every nation on earth. It is His Church who continues to sow the seed and reap the harvest of souls: 4:37-38 *“I sent you to reap a harvest you have not labored for...”* and Matthew 28:19-20 *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look, I am with you always; yes to the end of time.”*

The gift to the Father of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross cannot be divided from the sacramental gift of Christ to His Church in divine Liturgy. *“This was recognized in the early Church, where the “hour” of Jesus referred not only to his suffering and death, but as in the ancient liturgies of St. James and St. Mark, the expression “this hour” referred to the re-presentation of the Passion in the Eucharistic celebration.”* [Ignatius Study Bible page 26]. M. Hunt © 2001 www.AgapeBibleStudy.com