





**2018**



# READING JOHN

2018

# WHO WAS HE?



# WHO WAS HE?



# SEQUENCE

1. The setting in John's Gospel
2. The historical figure of John the Baptist
3. John the Baptist across the Gospels
4. The use of tradition: Luke 3 and John 1
  - (a) John 1:19-23: Day 1, scene 1
  - (b) John 1:24-28: Day 1, scene 2
  - (c) John 1:29-31: Day 2, scene 3
  - (d) John 1:32-34: Day 2, scene 4
5. The Quest for the Messiah
6. And so...

# THE SETTING

Now this was John's testimony (John 1:19) **Day 1**

On the next day John saw Jesus (John 1:29) **Day 2**

Again the next day John was standing there (John 1:35) **Day 3**

On the next day Jesus wanted to set out (John 1:43) **Day 4**

Now on the third day there was a wedding (John 2:1) **Day 7**

**Days 1 and 2** belong together (diptych)

**Days 3 and 4** belong together (diptych)

**Day 7** brings the sequence to a climax

This important sequence lays the foundation for the subsequent ministry of Jesus.

# THE HISTORICAL FIGURE



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- The differences between John the Baptist and Qumran are greater than the similarities.
- John anticipated “the coming one”, but it is difficult to be more precise than that - an angel? the messiah? a heavenly figure? God himself?
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- John anticipated “the coming one”, but it is difficult to be more precise than that - an angel? the messiah? a heavenly figure? God himself?
- John had a big influence in his day - as the need to execute him illustrates. Still, any idea of a revolt is due to Herod’s paranoia rather than to anything John the Baptist actually said.
- The relationship between Jesus and John is hotly disputed - e.g. did Jesus follow his “mentor’s” example and baptise?

# ACROSS THE GOSPELS



# ACROSS THE GOSPELS

Mk

Q

Mt

Lk

Jn

GN



# ACROSS THE GOSPELS

Mk

Q

Mt

Lk

Jn

GN

-

-

-

Birth

-

-

# ACROSS THE GOSPELS

Mk

Q

Mt

Lk

Jn

GN

-

-

-

Birth

-

-

Death

Prison

Death

Omits

**Omits**

-

# ACROSS THE GOSPELS

Mk                      Q                      Mt                      Lk                      Jn                      GN

-                      -                      -                      Birth                      -                      -

Death                      Prison                      Death                      Omits                      **Omits**                      -

"Elijah"                      Elijah?                      Elijah!                      "not Elijah" **not Elijah!**                      -

# ACROSS THE GOSPELS

Mk	Q	Mt	Lk	Jn	GN
-	-	-	Birth	-	-
Death	Prison	Death	Omits	Omits	-
"Elijah"	Elijah?	Elijah!	"not Elijah"	not Elijah!	-
Baptizes		Uneasy	Relegates	Omits	Refuses

# ACROSS THE GOSPELS

**Mk**

**Q**

**Mt**

**Lk**

**Jn**

**GN**

-

-

-

Birth

-

-

Death

Prison

Death

Omits

**Omits**

-

"Elijah"

Elijah?

Elijah!

"not Elijah" **not Elijah!**

-

Baptizes

Uneasy

Relegates

**Omits**

Refuses

-

Mid-time

End of OT

Mid-time

**Voice**

-

# ACROSS THE GOSPELS

Mk	Q	Mt	Lk	Jn	GN
-	-	-	Birth	-	-
Death	Prison	Death	Omits	Omits	-
"Elijah"	Elijah?	Elijah!	"not Elijah"	not Elijah!	-
Baptizes		Uneasy	Relegates	Omits	Refuses
-	Mid-time	End of OT	Mid-time	Voice	-
-	-	-	-	Best Man	-

# ACROSS THE GOSPELS

Mk	Q	Mt	Lk	Jn	GN
-	-	-	Birth	-	-
Death	Prison	Death	Omits	<b>Omits</b>	-
"Elijah"	Elijah?	Elijah!	"not Elijah"	<b>not Elijah!</b>	-
Baptizes		Uneasy	Relegates	<b>Omits</b>	Refuses
-	Mid-time	End of OT	Mid-time	<b>Voice</b>	-
-	-	-	-	<b>Best Man</b>	-
Disciples	-	Disciples	Disciples	<b>Disciples</b>	-

# MARK

**Mark 1:1** The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

**2** As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

*"Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way,*

**3** *the voice of one shouting in the wilderness,*

*'Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make his paths straight.'"*

**Mark 1:4** In the wilderness John the baptiser began preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. **5** People from the whole Judean countryside and all of Jerusalem were going out to him, and he was baptising them in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins. **6** John wore a garment made of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. **7** He proclaimed, "One more powerful than I am is coming after me; I am not worthy to bend down and untie the strap of his sandals. **8** I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

# MATTHEW

**Matt 3:1** In those days John the Baptist came into the wilderness of Judea proclaiming, **2** "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." **3** For he is the one about whom Isaiah the prophet had spoken:

***"The voice of one shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make his paths straight.'"***

**Matt 3:4** Now John wore clothing made from camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his diet consisted of locusts and wild honey. **5** Then people from Jerusalem, as well as all Judea and all the region around the Jordan, were going out to him, **6** and he was baptising them in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins.

**Matt 3:7** But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You offspring of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? **8** Therefore produce fruit that proves your repentance, **9** and don't think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.'

For I tell you that God can raise up children for Abraham from these stones! **10** Even now the ax is laid at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

**Matt 3:11** "I baptise you with water, for repentance, but the one coming after me is more powerful than I am—I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. **12** His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clean out his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the storehouse, but the chaff he will burn up with inextinguishable fire."

**Matt 3:13** Then Jesus came from Galilee to John to be baptised by him in the Jordan River. **14** But John tried to prevent him, saying, "I need to be baptised by you, and yet you come to me?" **15** So Jesus replied to him, "Let it happen now, for it is right for us to fulfil all righteousness." Then John yielded to him.

# LUKE

- Luke has a very special concern with John the Baptist.
- Luke offers a very elaborate comparison of the two prophets
- Luke continues to refer to the Baptist in the Acts of the Apostles
- The Mandaeans – followers of the Baptist – still exist today

1. Annunciation of the birth of John the Baptist	2. Annunciation of the birth of Jesus the Messiah	Luke 1:1-25 Luke 1:26-38
3. The visitation ( <b>Magnificat</b> )		Luke 1:39-56
4. The birth of John the Baptist ( <b>Benedictus</b> )	5. The birth of Jesus the Messiah ( <b>Gloria</b> )	Luke 1:57-80 Luke 2:1-20
6. The presentation ( <b>Nunc dimittis</b> )		Luke 2:21-40
7. Jesus in the Temple		Luke 2:41-52

# LUKE

**Acts 1:5** For **John baptised** with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

**Acts 1:21** Thus one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time the Lord Jesus associated with us, **22** beginning **from his baptism by John** until the day he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness of his resurrection together with us.”

**Acts 10:36** You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, proclaiming the good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)— **37** you know what happened throughout Judea, beginning from Galilee after the **baptism that John** announced:

**Acts 11:16** And I remembered the word of the Lord, as he used to say, ‘**John baptised**

**with water**, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.’

**Acts 13:24** Before Jesus arrived, John had proclaimed a **baptism for repentance to all the people of Israel. 25** But while John was completing his mission, he said repeatedly, ‘What do you think I am? I am not he. But look, one is coming after me. I am not worthy to untie the sandals on his feet!’

**Acts 18:25** He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and with great enthusiasm he spoke and taught accurately the facts about Jesus, although he knew only **the baptism of John**.

**Acts 19:4** Paul said, “**John baptised with a baptism of repentance**, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.”

# LUKE

**Luke 3:1** In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, **2** during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. **3** He went into all the region around the Jordan River, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

**Luke 3:4** As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

***"The voice of one shouting in the wilderness:***

***'Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make his paths straight.***

**5** ***Every valley will be filled,  
and every mountain and hill will be brought low,  
and the crooked will be made straight,  
and the rough ways will be made smooth,***

**6** ***and all humanity will see the salvation of God."***

# LUKE

**Luke 3:15** While the people were filled with anticipation and they all wondered whether perhaps John could be the Christ, **16** John answered them all, "I baptise you with water, but one more powerful than I am is coming—I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. **17** His winnowing fork is in his hand to clean out his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his storehouse, but the chaff he will burn up with inextinguishable fire."

**Luke 3:18** And in this way, with many other exhortations, John proclaimed good news to the people. **19** But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the evil deeds that he had done, **20** Herod added this to them all: He locked up John in prison. **21** Now when all the people were baptised, Jesus also was baptised.

# JOHN THE BAPTIST

- John = prophet (1:16-17; 1:76; 3:1-6)
- Jesus = Messiah (1:32-33; 1:69; 2:4, 11; 3:23-38)
- Jesus = Son of God (1:35, 2:49; 3:22)
- **John: prophet, to prepare, go before**
- **Jesus: Saviour, House of David, mercy, Abraham, holiness, righteousness, salvation, forgiveness, light, dawn, peace**

# JOHN

**John 1:19** Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" **20** He confessed—he did not deny but confessed—"I am not the Christ!" **21** So they asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not!" "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No!" **22** Then they said to him, "Who are you? Tell us so that we can give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

**John 1:23** John said, "I am ***the voice of one shouting in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord,'*** as Isaiah the prophet said." **24** (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) **25** So they asked John, "Why then are you baptising if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

**John 1:26** John answered them, "I baptise with water. Among you stands one whom you do not recognise, **27** who is coming after me. I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandal!" **28** These things happened in Bethany across the Jordan River where John was baptising.

# GOSPEL OF THE NAZOREANS

- **Nazoreans 2** Behold, the mother of the Lord and his brethren said to him: John the Baptist baptises unto the remission of sins, let us go and be baptized by him. But he said to them: Wherein have I sinned that I should go and be baptised by him? Unless what I have said is ignorance (a sin of ignorance).
- The time and place of authorship of the Gospel fragment are disputed, but since Clement of Alexandria used the book in the last quarter of the second century it consequently **predates 200 AD**.
- Its place of origin might be **Alexandria** in Egypt since two of its principal witnesses, Clement and Origen, were Alexandrians.
- However, the original language of the *Gospel of the Nazarenes* was Hebrew, suggesting that it was written specifically for Hebrew-speaking Jewish Christians in **Palestine and Syria**.

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Mk

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Birth

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-

Death

Prison

Death

Omits

**Omits**

-

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Mid-time

End of OT

Mid-time

**Voice**

-

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- - - Birth - -

Death Prison Death Omits **Omits** -

“Elijah” Elijah? Elijah! “not Elijah” **not Elijah!** -

Baptizes Uneasy Relegates **Omits** Refuses

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- - - - **Best Man** -

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-

-

-

**Best Man**

-

Disciples

-

Disciples

Disciples

**Disciples**

-

# USE OF TRADITION

- The Fourth Gospel frequently has a relationship with the Synoptic traditions
- The reception of the tradition always reflects Johannine interests and theology
- Sometimes, the literary genre undergoes considerable alteration
- E.g.: the mission of the Baptist in Luke and John

# LUKE

**Luke 3:10** So the crowds were asking him, "What then should we do?" **11** John answered them, "The person who has two tunics must share with the person who has none, and the person who has food must do likewise." **12** Tax collectors also came to be baptised, and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" **13** He told them, "Collect no more than you are required to." **14** Then some soldiers also asked him, "And as for us—what should we do?" He told them, "Take money from no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your pay."

**Luke 3:15** While the people were filled with anticipation and they all wondered whether perhaps John could be the Christ, **16** John answered them all, "I baptise you with water, but one more powerful than I am is coming—I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

# JOHN

**John 1:29** On the next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! **30** This is the one about whom I said, 'After me comes a man who is greater than I am, because he existed before me.' **31** I did not recognise him, but I came baptising with water so that he could be revealed to Israel."

**John 1:32** Then John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending like a dove from heaven, and it remained on him. **33** And I did not recognise him, but the one who sent me to baptise with water said to me, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining—this is the one who baptises with the Holy Spirit.' **34** I have both seen and testified that this man is the Chosen One of God."

# LUKE 3 AND JOHN 2

Luke 3:10-14

John 1:19-23

**Voice**

*What should  
we do?*

John 1:24-28

**Forerunner**

Luke 3:10-16

Luke 3:15-16

John 1:29-31

**Revealer**

*Who is John  
the Baptist?*

John 1:32-34

**Witness**

# LUKE AND JOHN

## Luke 3:10-16

**Scene one:** "salvation" vv.10-14

**Scene two:** "the Christ" vv.15-16

## John 1:19-28, 29-34

### DAY 1

#### **Scene one:**

"who are you?" vv.19-23

#### **Scene two:**

"why to you baptise?" vv. 24-28

### DAY 2

#### **Scene three:**

"the purpose of JB's baptism" vv. 29-31

#### **Scene four:**

"the identity of Jesus, baptiser in the Spirit" vv.32-34

# SCENE 1 QUEST FOR THE ONE FORETOLD

**John 1:19** Now this was John's **testimony** when the **Jewish leaders** (= Jews) sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" **20** He confessed—he did not deny but confessed—"I am **not** the **Christ!**" (egō ouk eimi) **21** So they asked him, "Then who are you? Are you **Elijah?**" He said, "I am **not!**" (ouk eimi) "Are you the **Prophet?**" He answered, "**No!**" (ou) **22** Then they said to him, "Who are you? Tell us so that we can give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

**John 1:23** John said, "I am **the voice of one shouting in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord,'** as **Isaiah the prophet** said."

## SCENE 2 QUEST FOR THE ONE FORETOLD

**John 1:24** (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) [This comment makes little sense.]

**25** So they asked John, "Why then are you baptising if you are not the **Christ**, nor **Elijah**, nor the **Prophet**?"

**26** John answered them, "I baptise with water. Among you stands one whom **you do not recognise, 27** who is coming **after me. I am not worthy** (ouk eimi [egō]) **to untie the strap of his sandal!**"

**28** These things happened in Bethany across the Jordan River where John was baptising.

## SCENE 3 QUEST FOR THE ONE FORETOLD

**John 1:29** On the next day John saw Jesus **coming** toward him and **said**, "Look, the **Lamb of God** who takes away the **sin** of the world! **30** This is the one about whom I said, '**After me comes a man who is greater than I am, because he existed before me.**' **31** I did not recognise him, but I came baptising with water **so that** he could be **revealed** to Israel."

## SCENE 4 QUEST FOR THE ONE FORETOLD

**John 1:32** Then John **testified** (= witnessed), "I saw the **Spirit descending** like a dove from heaven, and it **remained** on him. **33** And **I did not recognise him**, but the **one who sent me** to baptise with **water** said to me, 'The one on whom you see the **Spirit descending and remaining**—this is the one who **baptises with the Holy Spirit**.'

**34** I have both **seen** and **testified** that this man is the **Chosen One of God**." Or: that this man is **Son of God**.

# COMMENTARY

**John 1:19** Now this was John's **testimony** when the **Jewish leaders** (= Jews) sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" **20** He confessed—he did not deny but confessed—"I am **not** the **Christ!**" (**egō ouk eimi**) **21** So they asked him, "Then who are you? Are you **Elijah?**" He said, "I am **not!**" (**ouk eimi**) "Are you the **Prophet?**" He answered, "**No!**" (**ou**)

- John the Baptist is a witness
- NET: Jews = Jewish leaders
- Emphatic denial of status of any kind
- List: Messiah, Elijah, or the prophets ("Moses"?)
- "I am not" v. "I am" in the gospel

# COMMENTARY

**22** Then they said to him, "Who are you? Tell us so that we can give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

**John 1:23** John said, "I am ***the voice of one shouting in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord,'*** as **Isaiah the prophet** said."

- The citation from Isaiah first appears in Mark
- NB Context of Isaiah 40
- NB adjustment to "fit" John the Baptist in the desert
- The citation is now on the lips of John the Baptist himself

# COMMENTARY

**John 1:24** (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) [This comment makes little sense.]

**25** So they asked John, "Why then are you baptising if you are not the **Christ**, nor **Elijah**, nor the **Prophet**?"

- Pharisees: the remaining Jewish movement after the destruction of Jerusalem.
- Mentioned in this Gospel regularly: John 1:24; 4:1; 7:32, 45, 47-48; 8:3, 13; 9:13, 15-16, 40; 11:46-47, 57; 12:19, 42; 18:3
- Nicodemus is probably a pharisee
- The key question of John the Baptist is asked

# COMMENTARY

**26** John answered them, "I baptise with water. Among you stands one whom **you do not recognise**, **27** who is coming **after me. I am not worthy** (**ouk eimi [egō]**) **to untie the strap of his sandal!**"

**28** These things happened in Bethany across the Jordan River where John was baptising.

- Jesus is signalled by three comments: not recognised/known; after John; superior to John.
- Cf. He proclaimed, "One more powerful than I am is coming after me; I am not worthy to bend down and untie the strap of his sandals (Mark 1:7; also Luke 3:16)
- Bethany across the Jordan is a mystery
- Cf. the Madaba Map



ΔΙΝΩΝΕΝΘΑ  
ΝΥΝΟΔΑΤΙΣΑ  
ΦΑΙΣ

ΒΕΘΛΕΑΡΑ  
ΤΟΤΧΑΓΙΣΙΔΑΝΝΟΥ  
ΤΥΒΑ ΠΤΙΣΜΑ  
ΤΟΣ

ΓΑΛΓΑΛΑΤΟΚΑΙ  
ΔΩΔΕΚΑΛΙΘΟΝ

ΑΛΩΝΑΤΑΘΗΝΥΝ  
ΒΗΘΑΛΑ

ΤΕΡΙΧΩ

ΧΕΝΑΙΣΤΟΤΧΑΓΙΣ  
ΕΛΑΙΟΥ



ΑΙΝΩΝΕΝΘΑ  
ΝΥΝΟΔΑΤΤΑ  
ΦΑΙΝΕΤΑΙ

ΒΕΘΛΕΑΡΑ  
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ΤΟΣ

ΓΑΛΙΛΑΙΟΚΑΙ  
ΔΩΔΕΚΑΛΙΘΟΝ



ΤΕΡΙΧΩ



ΧΕΛΑΙΟΤΟΤΟΧΑΓΙΣΙΩ  
ΕΛΑΙΟΥ

# COMMENTARY

**John 1:29** On the next day John saw Jesus **coming** toward him and **said**, "Look, the **Lamb of God** who takes away the **sin** of the world! **30** This is the one about whom I said, '**After me comes a man who is greater than I am, because he existed before me.**' **31** I did not recognise **him**, but I came baptising with water **so that** he could be **revealed** to Israel."

- Enumeration of the days
- Standing v. movement / static v. Dynamic
- Lamb of God a second time
- Pre-existence affirmed
- Even John did not recognise/ know him
- John's only role is to reveal him

# COMMENTARY

**John 1:32** Then John **testified** (= witnessed), "I saw the **Spirit descending** like a dove from heaven, and it **remained** on him.  
**33** And **I did not recognise him**, but the **one who sent me** to baptise with **water** said to me, 'The one on whom you see the **Spirit descending and remaining**—this is the one who **baptises with the Holy Spirit**.'

**34** I have both **seen** and **testified** that this man is the **Chosen One of God**." Or: that this man is **Son of God**.

- John does not baptise Jesus
- He witnesses to the phenomenon of the Spirit
- The "one who sent me" is almost a name for God in the Fourth Gospel
- See and testified: the catechetical language of the Johannine community
- A variant reading is offered

# QUEST FOR THE MESSIAH

- **This is a quest story**
  - One of many quest stories in this Gospel
  - In one way, it is a mistaken quest
  - Yet, it serves to distinguish John from Jesus
- **It anticipates key interpretations of Jesus in this Gospel**
  - Passover Lamb
  - Word of God
  - Spirit-filled
  - Chosen One / Son of God

# AND SO...

## ✦ We learn a good deal about who John the Baptist is not

- **Not** the Christ, or Elijah, or the prophet
- **Not** worthy to untie the straps of his sandals
- Did **not** recognise the Christ

## ✦ We learn who John is

- The voice
- The forerunner
- The revealer
- The witness
- (Eventually, the “friend of the bridegroom”)

# AND SO...

✦ **We learn a good deal about who Jesus actually is**

- The Lord
- The Lamb of God
- He existed before John
- The one on whom the Holy Spirit descended and remained,
- The Chosen one of God (or the Son of God)

# AND SO...

- NB reading John in the light of biblical figures
- NB reading John in the light of Jewish expectations
- NB reading John in dialogue with the Synoptic Gospels
- The Gospels “receive” John the Baptist in a variety of ways
- There was a real John the Baptist, with continuing disciples
- The context of writing matters
- The presentation in John echoes the Prologue
- The presentation looks forward to themes later in the Gospel

# PRAYER

O God, most high and most near, you send glad tidings to the lowly, you hide not your face from the poor; those who dwell in darkness you call into the light.

Take away our blindness, remove the hardness of our hearts, and form us into a humble people, that, at the advent of your Son, we may recognise him in our midst and find joy in his saving presence.

This prayer we make through him whose coming is certain, whose day draws near, your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen.