

# Jesus shed tears in frustration: The contribution of *dakryō* and *klaīō* to the interpretation of John 11:35<sup>1</sup>

Joan Salazar Infante

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium

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## Abstract

The shedding of tears of Jesus in Jn 11:35 has often been interpreted in four ways, namely: Jesus' grief over the death of a friend, Jesus' sadness over the reality of death in the world, Jesus' grief over his own impending death, or Jesus' anger because of the unbelief around him. None of these interpretations ventured into an in-depth analysis of the peculiar use of *dakryō* (a *hapax legomenon*) in Jn 11:35 within a narrative that uses *klaīō* three times (Jn 11:31, 332), even though both *dakryō* and *klaīō* belong to the same semantic domain. This article will explore the significance of John's use of *dakryō* for the interpretation of Jn 11:35. The article suggests that the lexical shift from *klaīō* to *dakryō* signals the reader to differentiate the weeping of Jesus in Jn 11:35 from the weeping of Mary and the loudaioi in Jn 11:33. Through a narrative-critical analysis of the contexts of the occurrences of *klaīō* in the Gospel of John and *dakryō* in the LXX, along with a narrative-critical analysis of the Lazarus story (Jn 11:1–53), the article proposes that Jesus' shedding of tears in Jn 11:35 is not to be interpreted in relation to mourning over death, but is rather due to the frustration of Jesus at the lack of faith around him, even by Martha and Mary, two people whom the Fourth Gospel specifically names as loved by him (Jn 11:5). Thus, the act of Jesus in Jn 11:35 may be interpreted as his shedding of tears out of frustration.

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## Corresponding author:

Joan Salazar Infante, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Sint-Michielsstraat 4, Leuven, 3000 Belgium.

Email: joan.infante@student.kuleuven.be

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## Introduction

In the entire NT<sup>2</sup>, *dakryō* is used only once, that is, in John 11:35<sup>3</sup> in the story of the raising of Lazarus. In the narrative, Jesus wept (*edakrysen ho Iēsous*<sup>4</sup>) when he was about to be shown the burial place of Lazarus. What catches our attention though is that in the same story *klaiō* is used three times, that is, in v. 31 and twice in v. 33 in reference to the weeping of Mary and the *Ioudaioi*. Why would John use *dakryō* in 11:35 and in this instance only, and not *klaiō*?<sup>5</sup> The eight occurrences of *klaiō* in John show that he is comfortable and competent regarding its use. Some scholars suggest that *klaiō* refers to weeping or wailing, or lamenting with an emphasis on the noise accompanying the action<sup>6</sup> while *dakryō* refers to the shedding of tears, and they use this distinction to explain the use of *dakryō* in 11:35.<sup>7</sup> If they are correct, does it follow that in Lk 19:41 (*kai hōs ēngisen idōn tēn polin eklausen ep autēn*) Jesus cried loudly over Jerusalem in contrast to his silent shedding of tears in 11:35? Is this distinction enough for an interpretation of 11:35?

2 Unless otherwise indicated, we are using Nestle-Aland<sup>28</sup> and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) for the New Testament (NT) texts.

3 All succeeding unindicated biblical texts are from the Gospel of John.

4 We note the presence of *kai* in some manuscripts (e.g. Sinaiticus, Bezae, Coridethianus, and the Family 13 codices) which is probably a later addition to correct the unusual asyndetic construction of the verse. The sentence pattern *kai* + verb + definite article + *Iēsous* occurs five times in John (1:36,37; 12:22; 18:15; and 19:9). The absence of *kai* in most manuscripts of 11:35, therefore, raises a question. The significance of the asyndetic construction of 11:35 will be discussed in the third part of the article.

5 In this study, we will use John to refer either to the Fourth Gospel or to the Fourth Evangelist.

6 In some texts *klaiō* is used in connection with verbs like *alalazō* (e.g. Mk 5:38), *anaboāō* (e.g. Gen 2:16; 27:38), *boaō* (e.g. Gen 29:11; Job 2:12), *krazō* (Rev 18:9), *ololyzō* (Jas 5:1), and even with the explicit use of *phōnē megalē* in Job 2:12. This seems to suggest that by itself *klaiō* does not carry the nuance of the loud wails associated with crying. The distinction between the presence or absence of sound in the use of *klaiō* and *dakryō*, respectively, needs further lexical analysis that is beyond the scope of this article.

7 See Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida (eds), *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), 304–305. See also Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 495; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles* (New York: SPCK, 1992), 175; and Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987), 399.

Four major interpretations have been proposed for 11:35 but not one of them ventured into an in-depth analysis of the significance of the verb difference.<sup>8</sup> The first interpretation attributes Jesus' shedding of tears to grief over the death of a beloved friend. For C. K. Barrett, the weeping of Jesus is his way of sharing in the sorrow of Mary and the *Ioudaioi*.<sup>9</sup> He argues that the misunderstanding of the *Ioudaioi*: 'See how he loved him!' (v. 36) explains the action of Jesus in 11:35, just as Caiaphas in 11:50 expresses the truth without knowing it (see also 3:2; 7:35; 8:22, 53; 10:33).<sup>10</sup> The second is an existentialist interpretation espoused by R. Schnackenburg who contends that Jesus' action was due to 'the sadness and darkness of the present world, the situation of trial and persecution. . . [and] the darkness of the inevitability of death', which the evangelist showed as something that can be conquered through faith in Jesus.<sup>11</sup> The third interpretation attributes Jesus' shedding of tears to his impending passion and death. According to W. Sproston North, while Jesus' love for Lazarus leads him to raise the latter back to life, this action will lead to his crucifixion and death, so that in 11:33–35 we have

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- 8 The positions are presented beginning from what we consider to be the least likely reading and moving toward the most likely interpretation. Some commentators only mention in passing the verb that is used in 11:35. For instance, Jean Zumstein, *L'Évangélie Selon Saint Jean (1–12)*, vol. 2 (CNT, Iva, Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2014), 376, noted that *dakryō* is a *hapax legomenon* but does not comment further on this verb. Udo Schnelle, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (2nd edition, THKNT 4; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2000), 191, briefly cites that *klaiō* is used for the ritualized mourning of the *Ioudaioi*, while *dakryō* is used for the outburst of Jesus. He seems to recognize the motivated use of both verbs in the pericope, but does not discuss their significance any further.
- 9 C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John, An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (2nd edition; London: SPCK, 1978), 400. See also Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 402.
- 10 Barrett, *John*, 400. Although Barrett noted the two verbs for crying that are used in ch. 11, he did not posit any explanation for the difference. See also Ernst Haenchen, *John 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of John, Chapters 7–21*, ed. Robert W. Funk and Ulrich Busse, trans. Robert Funk (Hermeneia; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984), 66 and Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John (i–xii)*, Vol. 1 (AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 426. Michael Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes. Kapitel 1–12* (RNT; Regensburg: Pustet, 2009), 739, suggests that the deep friendship shared by Jesus with the three siblings can be understood to later symbolize an ecclesial community, the *familia Dei*, so that there is actually a reason for Jesus to grieve and weep when a member of this future ecclesial community dies.
- 11 Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John, Vol. 2*, trans. Cecily Hastings et al., Vol. 2 (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament IV/2; New York: Crossroad, 1987), 336–337. See also George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, vol. 36, 2nd ed., WBC (Mexico: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 193–194, who shares Schnackenburg's opinion although he acknowledges that Jesus' grief over the human tragedy of death could be intertwined with his anger over the unbelief of those around him.

John's 'graphic portrayal of Jesus' agony in Gethsemane on the eve of his own death. . .'.<sup>12</sup> The fourth interpretation relates Jesus' tears to unbelief. F. Moloney has rightly perceived the 'deliberate' use of *dakryō* in v. 35 instead of the *klaiō* of vv. 31 and 33.<sup>13</sup> He opines that the tears of Jesus have nothing to do with mourning for the dead Lazarus at all. According to him, Jesus' anger and emotional disturbance in v. 33 and his tears in v. 35 are all because of Mary who initially demonstrated authentic faith in vv. 28–32, but whose mourning in v. 33 shows that she has joined the league of the *Ioudaioi* by focusing on the death of Lazarus, instead of Jesus' promise of resurrection and life.<sup>14</sup> Moloney sees in Mary a crucial figure that represents true faith. But even she failed.<sup>15</sup> Thus, Jesus shed tears 'because of the danger that his unconditional gift of himself in love as the Good Shepherd. . .who offers life here and hereafter to all who would believe in him (11:25–26), will never be understood or accepted'.<sup>16</sup> Around 50 years before Moloney's commentary, E. Hoskyns had already interpreted 11:35 in relation to unbelief. However, instead of particularly singling out Mary's mourning as the cause of Jesus' emotional turbulence and tears, Hoskyns situates Jesus' tears in relation to his anger at the people's unbelief of his power over death.<sup>17</sup> Hoskyns also sees a connection between Jesus' anger in v. 33 and his grief in v. 35 and posits that Jesus who is the resurrection and the life (11:25) burst into tears out of anger because of the unbelief of the *Ioudaioi* and the half-belief of Martha (see 11:39).<sup>18</sup>

- 12 Wendy E. Sproston North, *The Lazarus Story Within the Johannine Tradition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 152–154. See also Stephen Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotions in the Fourth Gospel: Human or Divine?* (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 149. J. S. Randolph Harris, 'John 11:28–37', *Interpretation* 63 (October 2009), 403–404, who suggests that the words *erchou kai ide* (Jn 11:34) are a heavily loaded Johannine call to discipleship (see 1:39, 46; 4:29) that implies following Jesus even unto death. Harris posits that it was this phrase that led Jesus to shed tears for it made him aware 'of the cost of discipleship [that is, death], and the heartrending grief that death brings about, certainly for himself, but also for those he loves' (Harris, 'John 11:28–37', 404).
- 13 Francis J. Moloney, *Signs and Shadows: Reading John 5–12* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 168.
- 14 Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 166–167.
- 15 Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 166–167.
- 16 Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 167–169.
- 17 Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, ed. Francis Noel Davey (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), 403. Hoskyns does not comment on the significance of the verb difference.
- 18 Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, 404, argues that although *embrimaomai* in 11:33 may have some other meanings in other contexts, this word is used in biblical Greek to express anger or indignation such as in Dan 11:30; Lam 2:6; Mk 1:43; 14:5. See also Folker Siegert, *Das Evangelium des Johannes in seiner ursprünglichen Gestalt: Wiederherstellung und Kommentar. Schriften des Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 442. Meanwhile, Schnackenburg, *John*, 2:336 and Barrett, *John*, 398, 400, conclude that the anger of Jesus in 11:33 is due to the lack of belief of the *Ioudaioi* and do not connect it with Jesus' shedding of tears in 11:35.

The lack of consensus in interpreting 11:35 shows the difficulty of the text. Could an analysis of *klaïō* and *dakryō* contribute to the discussion? In other words, in a narrative that is considered by scholars to be the climax of all the signs in John, we are pressed to ask if the shift from *klaïō* to *dakryō* (two verbs belonging to the same semantic domain) in the same pericope serves a function for the interpretation of 11:35.

In this article we shall revisit 11:35 and find possible answers to the above question. We shall do this, first, through a narrative-critical analysis of the contexts of the eight occurrences of *klaïō* in John. Second, since *dakryō* is a *hapax legomenon* in the entire NT, we shall conduct a narrative-critical analysis of the contextual uses of *dakryō* in the LXX in order to have a broader understanding of this word.<sup>19</sup> Finally, in order to have a better grasp of the use and function of *dakryō* in 11:35, we shall analyse the verse within the immediate context of the Lazarus narrative.

### John's Use of *klaïō*

John uses *klaïō* eight times. Three are in ch.11 (vv. 31 and 33<sup>2</sup>) that we shall look into in the third part of the article. The other occurrences are found in 16:20; 20:11<sup>2</sup>, 13 and 15. The verb *klaïō* in 16:20 is used within the context of Jesus' prediction of his departure from the world and the pain that this will bring to the disciples. That this departure refers to his coming passion and death is clear from his assurance to his disciples of his return that alludes to his resurrection (see 16:15). Two verbs that belong to the semantic domain of *laugh*, *cry*, *groan* as identified by Louw and Nida are present in 16:20, namely, *klaïō* and *thrēneō*.<sup>20</sup> The latter is defined by Louw and Nida as weeping or crying especially in mourning for the dead. By using both *klaïō* and *thrēneō* in this verse, the text seems to strongly emphasize Jesus' death and the disciples' forthcoming grief and sadness when this happens.

19 We are using the *Vetus Testamentum Graecum auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis editum* (1931 –) for the LXX texts. For the English translation of the LXX, unless indicated otherwise, we are using Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright (eds), *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). The LXX uses *klaïō* 166 times. In contrast to only nine occurrences of *dakryō*, it seems that *klaïō* is more commonly used than *dakryō*. An initial survey of some of its uses indicates that the LXX uses *klaïō* in contexts such as mourning over death (Gen 27:35; 1 Macc 9:20; Sir 22:11), grief over an impending death (Gen 21:16; 4 Macc 15:19), loss of a father's blessing due to deceit (Gen 27:38), longing for/missing a beloved person whom one has not seen for years (Gen 43:30; 45:14; 46:29), compassion for the suffering of another (Job 2:12; 30:25), and captivity / destruction of a land and its people (Lam 1:1; Isa 15:2, 5). Our cursory survey has revealed that the LXX uses *klaïō* in different contexts, and more often in a context where the person experiences sadness and grief over the loss of someone or something that is invaluable. The contextual uses of *klaïō* in the LXX necessitate further exploration.

20 Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1:304–305. An analysis of the biblical uses of *thrēneō* will not be done in this article.

Four other uses of *klaiō* are present in the post-crucifixion scene in ch. 20. With the death of Jesus, Mary Magdalene who was still in a state of mourning went to the tomb while it was still dark (v. 1).<sup>21</sup> When she found that the stone covering the tomb was removed, she presumed and reported to Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved that some people had taken the Lord away (v. 2). Her report signifies an expectation to find a closed tomb with a dead body lying inside. Mary Magdalene stays outside the tomb weeping (v. 11). When she was asked by the two angels and by Jesus (whom she did not yet recognize), ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ (vv. 13, 15), her reply reflects her sorrow over the loss of the dead body of someone close to her: ‘They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him’ (v. 13; cf. v. 2).<sup>22</sup> Her concern over this dead body is further reflected in her next words: ‘Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away’ (20:15). While Mary Magdalene’s crying is clearly over the missing body of Jesus, this is only secondary to the fact that Jesus had died. Hence, her weeping is inseparable from the reality of Jesus’ death.

Thus far, our survey of John’s uses of *klaiō* reveals its use within the context of mourning over death, be it a past or an impending event. The loss of the dead body led Mary Magdalene to cry just as Jesus foretold that his death would also lead his disciples to weep, mourn, and grieve (16:20). Do these uses suggest that John specifically uses *klaiō* in relation to mourning over death? As a point of comparison, we shall proceed below with a survey of the various contexts in which *dakryō* is used in the LXX.<sup>23</sup>

- 21 Sabine Van den Eynde, ‘Love, Strong as Death: An Inter- and Intratextual Perspective on John 20, 1–18’, in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. Gilbert Van Belle (BETL 200; Leuven, Paris, Dudley, MA: Leuven University Press and Peeters, 2007), 907, opines that Mary Magdalene’s motivation for going to the tomb early in the morning was to mourn for the dead Jesus, just as in 11:31, the *Ioudaioi* perceived Mary to go to Lazarus’ tomb to weep there.
- 22 She addressed Jesus as ‘to kyrio’ in 20:2. However, in 20:13, she calls him ‘to kyrio mou’. Mary’s closeness to Jesus is perhaps already implied in her presence in the crucifixion scene, together with the mother of Jesus, the beloved disciple, and the other Mary, the wife of Cleopas (19:25).
- 23 We are analysing the contextual uses of *dakryō* in the LXX for our comparative analysis because many scholars have demonstrated John’s use of the latter. For works that explore John’s use of the LXX, see Andreas Obermann, *Die christologische Erfüllung der Schrift im Johannesevangelium. Eine Untersuchung zur johanneischen Hermeneutik anhand der Schriftzitate* (WUNT II/83; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996). Maarten J. J. Menken, *Old Testament Quotations in the Fourth Gospel: Studies in Textual Form* (Biblical Exegesis Today 15; Kampen, The Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1996); ch. 3 of John A. Dennis, *Jesus’ Death and the Gathering of True Israel: The Johannine Appropriation of Restoration Theology in the Light of John 11.47–52* (WUNT II/217; Mohr Siebeck, 2006); and ch. 6 of Wm Randolph Bynum, *The Fourth Gospel and the Scriptures: Illuminating the Form and Meaning of Scriptural Citation in John 19:37* (NovTSup 144; Leiden: Brill, 2012).

## Dakryō in the LXX

The verb *dakryō* occurs nine times in the LXX.<sup>24</sup> Due to limitations of space, we shall only present relevant representative texts where *dakryō* is used. Chapter 3 of the Book of Job narrates Job's lamentation against God because of his misfortunes. In Job 3:24, Job is depicted as sighing and shedding tears while being gripped by fear. While the various disasters that have befallen Job are enough to cause someone to shed tears profusely, Job 3:24 suggests that Job's shedding of tears is connected with fear and anger. Job faced one misfortune after another, namely, loss of all his property (Job 1:13–17), death of his sons and daughters (Job 1:19) and a hideous physical infirmity (Job 2:7, 13), so that he would complain about having been shut in and disregarded by God (see Job 3:23 and 6:14). While this complaint may be loaded with fearful anxiety, it also suggests frustration and anger (see Job 3:26; 13:13; 15:13; 18:4): How could God abandon someone who has striven to be blameless (Job 1:1; 4:6; 10:2, 7)? According to J. Fokkelman, Job's language of cursing is a 'rhetorical way of performing abortion' and an indication that the poet behind the writing of Job successfully presented Job as one experiencing massive rage.<sup>25</sup> Thus, it is no wonder that while *phobos* is mentioned in Job 3:24–25, ch.3 ends with *orgē* (Job 3:26). Job shed tears amid a complex set of emotions, namely, anger, fear, desperation, and frustration (see Job 6:2; 7:11).

Another use of *dakryō* occurs in Ezek 27:35 within the context of lamentation over a place's and a people's prophesied destruction.<sup>26</sup> Ezekiel 27 begins with the Lord's summoning the prophet to take up a lament against Tyre (Ezek 27:1). After the injunction come detailed descriptions of the glory of Tyre as a trading center and its successful commercial dealings with other cities and nations. It is only in Ezek 27:25 that we hear of what is going to happen to Tyre – the reason for the prophet to raise a lament for her. Using the imagery of the ship, Tyre is said to have been weighed down into the heart of the sea because of the weight of her merchandise. The brief description of the catastrophic destruction of Tyre (Ezek 27:26–27) puts a dramatically abrupt end to the lengthy narrative of Tyre's successful dealings with other nations

24 See Job 3:24; Ezek 27:35; Mic 2:6; Sir 12:16; 31:13; 2 Macc 4:37; 3 Macc 4:4; 6:23; 4 Macc 15:20.

25 Jan P. Fokkelman, *The Book of Job in Form: A Literary Translation with Commentary* (SSN 58; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 205.

26 The Hebrew *r'am* is rendered *dakryō* in LXX Ezek 27:35. The NRSV reads: 'All the inhabitants of the coastlands are appalled at you; and their kings are horribly afraid, their faces are convulsed.' The verb 'convulsed' is the NRSV translation of *r'am* whose derivatives in Hebrew could mean 'thunder', 'rage', and 'complaint' so that when used in relation to a face, Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 22A; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 564, opines that the verbal idea being suggested here is 'a look conveying anger or complaint'. In the commentary, Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37*, 564, translates the phrase as 'their [the kings] faces lower'. He explains that the verb 'lower' implies 'look sullen', 'be dark' or 'gloomy', and 'threatening'.

(Ezek 27:4–25). The misfortune would be so terrible that the country would exist no more (Ezek 27:30). Within this context, we read of the reaction of the inhabitants of the coastlands and their kings: ‘All the inhabitants of the islands became sullen over you, and their kings became astounded with astonishment, and their face cried tears’ (Ezek 27:35). Within this background, the inhabitants and the kings’ reactions may be interpreted as sympathetic mourning over the massive destruction of Tyre and her people, an unexpected tragic end to a once mighty nation.<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, in the Books of Maccabees, we find the use of *dakryō* in the contexts of grief and anger at the unjust killing of a righteous person (2 Macc 4:37); sympathy, mourning and lamentation over the ruthless punishment and miserable expulsion of the Judeans (3 Macc 4:4); and anger, pity, and a change of heart (3 Macc 6:23).

Noteworthy too are the occurrences of *dakryō* in the Book of Sirach where the word is used to refer to the shedding of tears for ignoble purposes. Chapter 12 of Sirach provides a series of instructions on how one ought to deal with a pious person and a sinner. In Sir 12:16, the author warns never to trust an enemy who can deceive with sweet words from his lips and tears in his eyes. The shedding of tears is therefore seen as an act that is geared toward the achievement of an evil plan. Meanwhile, Sir 31:13 describes the eye to be a wicked and an evil thing which can shed tears from a whole face. These two occurrences of *dakryō* clearly indicate the shedding of tears in a deceitful self-serving sense that has neither to do with lamentation nor grief.

The different LXX texts we explored show that while *dakryō* clearly has the connotation of shedding tears, this action can be motivated by different reasons – be it noble or ignoble. It is used in Job 3:24 and Ezek 27:35 within the context of anger, frustration, fear, desperation, sadness, and sympathy, in 2 Macc 4:37 within the context of lamentation over death, and in Sir 12:16; 31:13 within the context of deceit. The analysis leads us to conclude that *dakryō* is used in different contexts and cannot be forthrightly assumed as the shedding of tears out of mourning over death. With its multivalent uses, an interpretation of the use of *dakryō* in 11:35 ought to take into consideration the context where this word occurs. We shall proceed in the next section with an exploration of 11:35 in its immediate and larger contexts.

## Back to John 11:35: Jesus and *dakryō* in context

The story of the raising of Lazarus brings to a heightened focus the Johannine motif of belief and unbelief in Jesus.<sup>28</sup> In the gospel, we hear the *Ioudaioi* asking Jesus for a sign to authenticate himself as the one sent by God (see 2:18; 6:30). These requests did not go unheeded for Jesus did perform many signs (see 2:11;

27 It may also be that the kings shed tears not only to lament the destruction of Tyre, their business partner, but also to lament over their own misfortune since the destruction of Tyre entails their own business losses (see Ezek 27:33).

28 See Schnackenburg, *John*, 2: 316; Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, 396.

4:54; 6:14; 11:47; 12:18). Despite the extraordinariness of these signs, they resulted in belief only in some (2:23) and unbelief in others (12:37). Within this context, how are we to interpret 11:35?

At the beginning of ch. 11, when news of Lazarus' illness reached Jesus, the latter stayed two days longer in the place (see v. 5) instead of rushing towards the sick friend.<sup>29</sup> The reason for this purposeful delay is clear: 'This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it' (v. 4) – a clear statement of the purpose of the sign that he will later on perform. Knowing that Lazarus is already dead (vv. 11–14; see v. 17), Jesus decides that it is time to go to Bethany 'to wake' him up (v. 11). Another reason for his purposive delay is given: 'For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe' (v. 15), thereby signifying the still inchoate faith of the disciples.

Meanwhile, Martha meets Jesus and says: 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died' (v. 21).<sup>30</sup> While her words clearly express her belief in Jesus' power to heal the sick and consequently prevent a person's death, it also hints at her lack of faith that Jesus can do something for someone who is already dead.<sup>31</sup> Her confession in vv. 22–24 points to the eschatological resurrection of Lazarus that Jesus can effect because of his relationship with God – not because of the presence of Jesus himself. Jesus corrects this lack of understanding by proclaiming to Martha his identity as the resurrection and the life, someone who can restore life to those who believe (v. 25). While Martha seems to show understanding (see v. 27), her reaction in v. 39 and Jesus' rebuke in v. 40 indicate that she has not fully grasped Jesus' identity and power over death.<sup>32</sup>

29 According to Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 157, Jesus' reaction to the news shows that he cannot be measured by human standards.

30 There are many textual problems in 11:21, such as the different word order of the phrase *ouk an apethanen ho adelphos mou* in some manuscripts and the use of *etethnēkei* in the majority text instead of *apethanen*. These textual problems will not be discussed here.

31 *Ei* expresses expectation (see F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature: A Translation and Revision of the Ninth-tenth German Edition Incorporating Supplementary Notes of A. Debrunner*, trans. Robert Funk (Cambridge and Chicago, IL: Cambridge University Press and the University of Chicago Press, 1961), 375. Martha's statement in 11:21, therefore, reflects her expectation that Jesus would come to Bethany after news had reached him that Lazarus was sick (cf. 11:3). The use of *ei* in a conditional clause along with *an* plus an indicative verb in the *apodosis* expresses a hypothetical reality (see Georg Benedikt Winer, *A Treatise on the Grammar of New Testament Greek: Regarded as the Basis of New Testament Exegesis* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1870), 380). Thus, had Jesus been present when Lazarus was ill, the latter would not have died (11:21). It is probable that Martha and Mary would have some knowledge of a previous event when Jesus healed a sick person and prevented that person's death (see 4:46–54) and Martha's words in 11:21 might have reflected this knowledge.

32 Moloney, *Signs and Shadows*, 162, cites the importance of the pronoun + perfect verb construction in 11:27a (*egō pepisteuka*) in interpreting Martha's confession as evidence

Her sister Mary echoes Martha's initial statement toward Jesus (v. 32). Mary falls at Jesus' feet. The verb that is used is *piptō*, signaling an action which might indicate a supplication or request for Jesus to do something (see Mt 18:26; Mk 5:22–23). However, Mary does not ask Jesus to do something for Lazarus. Like Martha's seeming private reproach, Mary's words in v. 32 also indicate a lack of faith in Jesus' power to raise the dead back to life.<sup>33</sup> Ironically, in this last of signs, it is Mary and Martha, two persons whom the gospel explicitly names as Jesus' beloved friends (v. 5) who fail to grasp the depth of Jesus' power (see 5:21) and show a lack of faith in his self-proclamation and promise (vv. 25–26; see also 5:24). The lack of faith of his beloved friends must have troubled Jesus (cf. 12:27; 13:21). Thus, when he saw Mary weeping with the *Ioudaioi*, he was greatly disturbed (v. 33). The verb *tarrasō* in v. 33 is translated as 'troubled' (NAS) or 'deeply moved' (NRSV). However, it literally means 'to cause movement as the result of shaking or stirring'.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, *tarrasō* in v. 33 is in the active voice, in contrast to its passive use in 12:27, 13:21, 14:1, and 14:27 where it is used with *pneuma* or *kardia*. John 11:33 may have the literal instead of the figurative meaning, which is usually presupposed. Thus, along with the reflexive pronoun *heauton* as object, it is possible to read v. 33 as 'Jesus moved (stirred) himself (into action)', which could perhaps point to his next move, that is, he is now going to perform that which he said will lead to his glorification (v. 11:4).<sup>35</sup> This is the reason why he asks: 'Where have you laid him?' (v. 34). However, when the *Ioudaioi* replied, 'Lord, come and see' (v. 34), somehow, we are brought back to the beginning of Jesus' ministry and the story seems to make an ironic turn. In ch.1, Jesus told two of John's disciples: 'Come and see' (1:39) and they followed Jesus. This occurred after John proclaimed Jesus to be the Lamb of God (1:37).<sup>36</sup> The use of the same verbs (*erchomai* and *horaō*) in both 1:39 and 11:34 seems to indicate a connection between the two invitations. It seems that the invitation by the *Ioudaioi* and Mary in 11:34 is an invitation toward a preoccupation with physical death even after Jesus proclaimed himself to be the

of a faith that still falls short since it is still rooted in the Jewish messianic expectations of 'the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is to come into the world' (11:27b), similar to that of Nicodemus in 3:1–11, the Samaritan woman in 4:25–26, and the crowds in 6:14. Our exploration of the narrative runs counter to the position of Mark W. G. Stibbe, *John* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 125, who deduced that Martha exhibits complete faith as expressed in the movement from a faith that is rooted in traditional Jewish theology in 11: 22, 24 to a true christological confession in 11:27.

33 Mary was so caught up in the reality of death that she failed to recognize him who is light and life (1:4), the one who can overcome the darkness of death (5:21,24; see also 8:12), standing right before her.

34 Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1: 212.

35 We are grateful to Prof. Dr Reimund Bieringer for directing us to this insightful reading of the verse.

36 In the same chapter, Philip who proclaimed Jesus to be the one whom Moses and the prophets wrote about (1:45) repeated the same words of invitation to Nathanael, *erchou kai ide* (1:46).

resurrection and the life (11:25). Surrounded by unbelief, Jesus shed tears of frustration: *edakrysen ho Iēsous* (11:35).<sup>37</sup>

If we recall that John uses *klaiō* (vv. 31 and 33) just a few verses before 11:35, the use of *dakryō* becomes noteworthy. Scholars have long recognized John to be a master storyteller who writes with ‘profound intentionality’.<sup>38</sup> Had John intended the same semantic content for *dakryō* as *klaiō*, would he not have used *klaiō* in v. 35? If all of John’s uses of *klaiō* are directly related to death, it is possible to interpret the use of *dakryō* in v. 35 as an act that is not directly related to the grief that comes from mourning over the death of a friend.

Meanwhile, we note the asyndetic construction of v. 35.<sup>39</sup> According to G. B. Winer, ‘in all continuous writing the connexion of sentences is the rule, the absence of connexion (asyndeton) the exception’.<sup>40</sup> In a language that has many ways of connecting or coordinating sentences, this absence is, therefore, striking.<sup>41</sup> H. W. Smyth identifies two kinds of asyndeton: grammatical and rhetorical. Smyth explains that while grammatical asyndeton does not have much influence on the narrative, rhetorical asyndeton ‘generally expresses emotion of some sort, and is the mark of liveliness, rapidity, passion, or impressiveness of thought...’<sup>42</sup> Smyth further contends that the asyndeton appears when the unconnected sentence (1) provides a summary or the result of what precedes it; (2) gives a reason or explanation for the previous statement; (3) repeats earlier words or phrases that the author deems significant; (4) puts forward a thought that contrasts with the previous one; (5) ‘introduces a new

37 Cf. R. H. Lightfoot, *St. John’s Gospel: A Commentary*, ed. C. F. Evans (London, Oxford, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 223, who contends that while in 1:39, Jesus invites two of John’s disciples to follow him (*erchesthe kai opsesthe*), which resulted in their receiving the light, the words of the *Ioudaioi* in 11:34 (*kyrie, erchou kai ide*) was an invitation to leave the light and move towards darkness and death, an invitation that put a strain on him and resulted in an outburst of tears. However, Lightfoot does not connect Jesus’ weeping in v. 34 with his intense emotions in vv. 34 and 38.

38 Cf. Wilhelm H. Wuellner, ‘Putting Life Back into the Lazarus Story and Its Reading: The Narrative Rhetoric of John 11 as the Narration of Faith’, *Semeia* 53 (Jan 1991), 114.

39 Asyndeton between clauses and sentences is said to be a common didactic style of the gospels (see F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar*, 241). On the other hand, Steven Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Lexham Bible Reference Series; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 21–22, opines that asyndeton is also used either when the connection between the clauses is clear so that you do not need any connectives or when the author chooses ‘not to make a relation explicit’. The latter may be true in the case of 11:35.

40 Winer, *A Treatise*, 673.

41 Cf. Herbert Weir Smyth, *A Greek Grammar for Colleges* (New York, Boston, Cincinnati, Atlanta, and Chicago: American Book Company, 1920), 484.

42 Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, 484.

thought or indicates a change to a new expression'; and (6) 'is introduced by a word stressed by emotion'.<sup>43</sup> Our interpretation finds support from numbers four to six of Smyth's description.

Meanwhile V. Poythress contends that in semantic field analysis, meaning is seen to reside in the 'paradigmatic *contrast* of one element over against others. . .'<sup>44</sup> so that the asyndeton in v. 35 leads us to ask why John did not use a conjunction that could take its place like *kai* (which signals a 'close narrative continuation') or *oun* (which generally suggests a 'quasicausal relationship').<sup>45</sup> In other words, if John intended v. 35 to be interpreted as an effect of v. 34, he could have used *oun* to indicate a causal connection. Poythress's analysis of asyndeton in John reveals that in some cases '[the asyndeton] indicates that there is a major upset or disturbance of some kind in the causal connection of events along the main line of the narrative' as can be seen in 8:42, 52, 58; 11:25, 35.<sup>46</sup> The upset or disturbance is of two kinds: (1) 'interruptions to the main causal sequence' and (2) events in the sequence that are 'alien to what precedes'.<sup>47</sup> The difficulty of connecting the emotional outburst of Jesus with the *Ioudaioi*'s previous statement: 'Lord, come and see' (11:34) reflects the anomalous nature of 11:35 and alerts the reader to a possible intended disruption in the narrative.

So far, nothing in our analysis supports an interpretation of Jesus' tears in v. 35 in relation to the comment of the *Ioudaioi* in v. 36: 'See how he loved him!' It is certainly illogical that Jesus would weep for Lazarus whom he intended to raise. The comment of the *Ioudaioi* may be interpreted as a misunderstanding of Jesus' action in the same way that the disciples misunderstood Jesus' words in v. 12.<sup>48</sup> The evangelist uses the misunderstanding in v. 36 to develop the narrative pointing to the theme of unbelief while at the same time building up the suspense.<sup>49</sup> The comment of the *Ioudaioi* in v. 37 seems to act as a challenge

43 Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, 485. According to Blass and Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar*, 241, while the asyndeton may not be consciously employed by the author, it lends 'solemnity and weight to the words'.

44 Vern S. Poythress, 'The Use of the Intersentence Conjunctions De, Oun, Kai, and Asyndeton in the Gospel of John', *Novum Testamentum* 26(4) (Oct 1984), 313.

45 Poythress, 'Intersentence Conjunctions', 329, 331.

46 Poythress, 'Intersentence Conjunctions', 332–333. John 11:35 is one of the identified texts.

47 Poythress, 'Intersentence Conjunctions', 333.

48 Wendy E. Sproston North, *The Lazarus Story Within the Johannine Tradition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 42.

49 Could 11:36 be a form of Johannine irony? In her study on how the fourth evangelist's literary style can be a key to understanding John's dynamics of revelation, Gail O'Day, 'Narrative Mode and Theological Claim: A Study in the Fourth Gospel', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105(4) (1986), 664, keenly observes that John uses irony as 'the perfect vehicle for his theology of revelation'. O'Day defines irony as 'that specific rhetorical figure or more encompassing general literary mode in which two contradictory or conflicting meanings are held together in one image or expression [and] in

while also hinting at their perception of the limitations of Jesus' power.<sup>50</sup> This continued unbelief could explain Jesus' third emotional disturbance in v. 38. Jesus was surrounded by people who lacked faith in him so that in his prayer to the Father he would say: 'I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me' (v. 42). The repetition of *pisteuō* in vv. 11:15, 25, 26, 27, 40, 42 and the reaction of many *Ioudaioi* in v. 45 (*episteusan eis auton*) clearly show the narrative's emphasis on the theme of faith in Jesus.

### Conclusion

Moloney has rightly recognized the deliberate use of *dakryō* in John 11:35. In a gospel which uses *klaiō* eight times with a clear connotation of lamentation for the dead, the asyndetic singular use of *dakryō* in a pericope where *klaiō* figures three times invites the reader to differentiate the weeping of Mary and the *Ioudaioi* in v. 33 from that of Jesus in v. 35. The different meanings with which the LXX uses *dakryō* remind us that the meaning of *dakryō* in 11:35 may not *a priori* be limited to the lamentation for the dead. Which of its several meanings is to be assumed in 11:35 can, however, only be determined by its literary context. Thus, when read in light of the pericope's dominant motif of belief and unbelief, along with Jesus' emotions of anger and disturbance in 11:33 and 38, the lexical shift from *klaiō* to *dakryō* requires the reader to expect also a shift in meaning. As we have seen, the larger context of the Fourth Gospel does not cohere with interpretations that suggest that Jesus shed tears to mourn the death of a friend, nor of his distress over the reality of death, nor of sadness over the anticipation of his own death. Our analysis has demonstrated that Jesus shed tears out of frustration because of the

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order to read and interpret irony, the reader is not asked merely to substitute the "correct" intended meaning for the "incorrect" surface meaning of the ironic expression, but rather is asked to hold the two meanings in tension and, as a result of moving through that tension, to arrive at what the author intends to express' (O'Day, "Narrative Mode", 663). Thus, following the lead of O'Day, the comment of the *Ioudaioi* in 11:36 could be another form of Johannine irony where the evangelist offers the possibility for readers to interpret Jesus' tears in 11:35 as the human expression of his love for the dead Lazarus (similar to the interpretation of the *Ioudaioi*) while at the same time inviting them to arrive at a second level of meaning within the context of Jesus' continued invitation for complete faith in him.

- 50 John 11:37 somehow creates a link with 9:32–33. In the story of the man born blind, we have someone who is not personally known to Jesus and yet this person confesses Jesus' identity as someone who comes from God (9:32–33). While the man born blind believed in Jesus and worshipped him (9:38), those who are close to Jesus somehow fell short in their belief. By harking back to the story of the man born blind in 11:37, John further enhances the theme of belief and unbelief, that is, belief by someone who does not know Jesus (9:35–38) and the invitation for his beloved friends to come to full faith in him.

continued failure of those around him, especially by people he loved (both Martha and Mary), to fully apprehend his real identity and believe in him.

### **Author biography**

**Joan Salazar Infante** is a religious sister from the Philippines who belongs to the congregation of the Augustinian Sisters of our Lady of Consolation. She obtained her Initial Master's and Advanced Master's degrees in Theology and Religious Studies major in Biblical Studies in 2010 and 2011, respectively, from the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium. Her research interest is mainly on the Fourth Gospel. She is currently doing her PhD studies at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven and working on a research project entitled 'A Lexical Semantic Analysis of *kosmos* in the Gospel of John' under the supervision of Professor Dr Reimund Bieringer (promoter) and Professor Dr Pierre Van Hecke (co-promoter).