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THE JOHANNINE *PAROIMIA*

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This investigation studied the use of the Greek term *paroimia* in the Gospel of John. In chapter 1 modern and ancient writers who wrote about the *paroimia* are reviewed as a background study. The discussions are mostly limited to the area of popular proverbs. The list of *paroimiai* in the period before the Fourth Gospel revealed that not only proverbial sayings but also idioms and maxims were included in the category of *paroimia*. The use of the term in the Septuagint translation and in Philo's writings shifted from the earlier use of the term because the former, in several places, translated the Hebrew words *māšāl* and *ḥīdāh* by *paroimia* and the latter replaced three words *ainigma*, *parabolē*, and *diēgēma* by *paroimia*. This use provided an intermediate step toward the drastic shift in the term's meaning in the Fourth Gospel.

In chapter 2 the use of the term in 16:4b-33 and the problem of *en paroimiais* are probed. By investigating the use of *tauta* it is shown that Jesus referred to the passage of vss. 5-24 by *tauta* in 16:25. The crucial sayings of vss. 25, 29 are conditioned by the questions of the disciples. The questions were caused by the difficult sayings of Jesus, which can be identified with *paroimiai*. The difficult sayings are found in vss. 5 (10b), 16. They are not parables, proverbs, illustrations, or figures of speech. They are riddles. Features of the Johannine riddles which occur in chap. 16 were observed: short; expanded by the use of a parable; cause questions; Jesus centered; Jesus' sayings; and use of ambiguous words.

In chapter 3 the *paroimia* of 10:1-5 was investigated to determine its literary form. Several possibilities were considered: parable, allegory, and riddle. "Riddle" is the most appropriate English equivalent for *paroimia*. Additional features of the Johannine riddles were observed: lengthy; cause of misunderstanding; and expansion by the use of proverbs.

In chapter 4 further Johannine riddles were located in light of the features observed in the previous chapters. These riddles culminate in the death of Jesus. Jesus is portrayed as a teacher of riddles in the Gospel.

The Johannine use of the term *paroimia* shows a dramatic shift from its use in the classical and Hellenistic literature before the Gospel.