

# JESUS LEADS A CIRCULAR DANCE WITH THE APOSTLES

(Acts of John : 94-96)



## Introduction

In some Gospels ( Matthew (26,30), Marc (14,26) ) we read that after the Last Supper preceding the arrest of Jesus , He and His Disciples sung . There exist apocryphal versions of the lyrics

However in the "Acts of John" there is a poetic description of a circular dance of Christ and the Apostles

The **Acts of John** is an apocryphal second century collection of Christian-based narratives and traditions, relating the travels and miraculous deeds of John the Apostle. There is an interlude in this text, in which several issues are discussed regarding the nature of Jesus and his suffering. Before going to his death, Jesus performs a circle dance with his disciples and sings an apparently Gnostic but also trinitarian hymn of spiritual protection:



## Excerpt from the Acts of John (94-96)

Now before he was taken by the lawless Jews, who also were governed by (had their law from) the lawless serpent, he gathered all of us together and said: Before I am delivered up unto them let us sing an hymn to the Father, and so go forth to that which lieth before us. He bade us therefore make as it were a ring, holding one another's hands, and himself standing in the midst he said: Answer Amen unto me. He began, then, to sing an hymn and to say:

Glory be to thee, Father.

And we, going about in a ring, answered him: Amen.

Glory be to thee, Word: Glory be to thee, Grace. Amen.

Glory be to thee, Spirit: Glory be to thee, Holy One:

Glory be to thy glory. Amen.

We praise thee, O Father; we give thanks to thee, O Light, wherein darkness dwelleth not. Amen.

95 Now whereas (or wherefore) we give thanks, I say:

I would be saved, and I would save. Amen.

I would be loosed, and I would loose. Amen.

I would be wounded, and I would wound. Amen.

I would be born, and I would bear. Amen.

I would eat, and I would be eaten. Amen.

I would hear, and I would be heard. Amen.

I would be thought, being wholly thought. Amen.

I would be washed, and I would wash. Amen.

Grace danceth. I would pipe; dance ye all. Amen.

I would mourn: lament ye all. Amen.

The number Eight (lit. one ogdoad) singeth praise with us. Amen.

The number Twelve danceth on high. Amen.

The Whole on high hath part in our dancing. Amen.

**Whoso danceth not, knoweth not what cometh to pass. Amen.**

I would flee, and I would stay. Amen.

I would adorn, and I would be adorned. Amen.

I would be united, and I would unite. Amen.

A house I have not, and I have houses. Amen.

A place I have not, and I have places. Amen.

A temple I have not, and I have temples. Amen.

A lamp am I to thee that beholdest me. Amen.

A mirror am I to thee that perceivest me. Amen.

A door am I to thee that knockest at me. Amen.

A way am I to thee a wayfarer. [amen].

96 Now answer thou (or as thou respondest) unto my dancing. Behold thyself in me who speak, and seeing what I do, keep silence about my mysteries.

**Thou that dancest, perceive what I do, for thine is this passion of the manhood, which I am about to suffer.**

For thou couldest not at all have understood what thou sufferest if I had not been sent unto thee, as the word of the Father. Thou that sawest what I suffer sawest me as suffering, and seeing it thou didst not abide but wert wholly moved, moved to make wise. Thou hast me as a bed, rest upon me.

Who I am, thou shalt know when I depart. What now I am seen to be, that I am not. Thou shalt see when thou comest.

If thou hadst known how to suffer, thou wouldest have been able not to suffer. Learn thou to suffer, and thou shalt be able not to suffer. What thou knowest not, I myself will teach thee.

Thy God am I, not the God of the traitor.

I would keep tune with holy souls. In me know thou the word of wisdom.

Again with me say thou: Glory be to thee, Father; glory to thee, Word; glory to thee, Holy Ghost. And if thou wouldst know concerning me, what I was, know that with a word did I deceive all things and I was no whit deceived.

**I have leaped:** but do thou understand the whole, and having understood it, say: Glory be to thee, Father. Amen.

## **An early Christian ritual?**

Melody Gabrielle Beard-Shouse (*Bibliography*) suggests that the circular dance in the Acts of John describes an ancient Christian Ritual in a period that gnostic and orthodox viewpoints coexisted. Furthermore, she points out that this ritual draws heavily on Greek philosophical understandings of circle dances representing order and disorder concluding that this ritual was ecstatic in character, and that it was individually transformative.

She also makes a comparative study with the dialogues between Master and Disciples as they are described in the recently found (fragmentary) apocryphal ***Gospel of the Saviour*** (which original is believed to be of the 2d Century) to confirm the idea of the existing circular dance ritual in the “early Christian plurality”

