CHAPTER SIX

THE PASSION NARRATIVE OF JOHN 18–19

6.1. INTRODUCTION

6.1.1. Aim of the Chapter

The aim of the current and following chapters is to apply the proposed translation theory outlined in chapters 2–5 to two selected New Testament passages, the Passion narrative of John’s Gospel (John 18–19) and Paul’s exposition on the resurrection of the body in I Corinthians (1 Corinthians 15). The translation provided here was written according to the principles of systematic rendering of the Greek verbal aspect into Mandarin verbal aspect developed in this book. Over sixty Chinese (including twenty-two Mandarin) Bible versions are critically evaluated, along with several key Nestorian, Manichaean, and Catholic writings before the modern period. Although primary attention is given to the grammatical translation of Greek aspect into Mandarin aspect in the New Testament, other linguistic issues pertaining to Bible translation will also be addressed.

6.1.2. Discourse Structure of John 18–19

The Passion narrative of John (John 18–19) is divided into seven discourse units: the arrest of Jesus (18:1–14), Peter’s first denial (18:15–18), the trial before Annas (18:19–24), Peter’s denial of Jesus again (18:25–27), the trial before Pilate (18:28–19:16a), the crucifixion of Jesus (19:16b–37), and the burial of Jesus (19:38–42). Discourse boundaries are determined by shifts in tense-form and grammatical person.

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1 Six Japanese versions (Catholic and Protestant), RAGUET, the TRNT, CBT, JCV, JRV, and IWV, are consulted here specifically for non-verbal terms and expressions (e.g. ἀρχιερεύς, χάρις) because the Japanese writing system employs Chinese characters, and, more importantly, because the tradition of biblical translation in Japan has its roots in China. For introductory comments on the Japanese Bible and its relation to the history of Bible translation in China, see Ernest W. Clement “The Japanese Bible,” The Biblical World 40, no. 5 (1912): 296–306; C.K. Harrington, “The Bible in Japan,” The Biblical World 52, no. 1 (1918): 66–75; Sidney L. Gulick, “The Bible in Japan,” The Biblical World 35, no. 6 (1910): 380–86.

2 Porter, Idioms, 301–02.
For example, the shift in tense-form from the aorist (18:27) to the present (18:28) marks the beginning of a new pericope of the trial before Pilate (18:28–19:16a). The shift from the first person (17:4–26) to the third person (18:1) also signals the beginning of a new discourse unit, namely, the Passion narrative of Christ. Smaller discourse boundaries are marked by conjunctives, such as καί (18:38b–40), δέ (18:2–11), οὖν (18:12–14, 33–38a; 19:1–7, 8–16a, 23–24, 25–27, 31–37), or μετὰ τοῦτο (19:28–30).

The three verbal aspects in Greek (i.e. perfective, imperfective, stative) are characterized by their performance of specific functions in each of the discourse units. The perfective aspect is grammaticalized by the aorist tense-forms and is used 186 times (62% of total verbs) in the Passion narrative of John. The perfective aspect in Greek is generally used to provide background information to the narrative. In the first discourse unit (18:1–14), for example, the author of the narrative uses three aorist tense-forms (εἰπὼν, ἐξῆλθεν, εἰσῆλθεν) in v. 1 to depict the thematic backdrop to the narrative of Jesus’ arrest. Because it is less heavily marked, the aorist does not emphasize the action in narrative discourse unless certain distinctive syntactic or pragmatic features, such as repetition (of the exact verb form; see 19:6, 15), warrant the marking of prominence. In such cases, two-morpheme aspect compounds (e.g. -guò-le or RVC-le) may be used to reflect the discourse prominence expressed in the Greek. Apart from these exceptions, two-morpheme aspect compounds are not used in translating the aorist tense-form in Greek into Mandarin.

The imperfective and stative aspects, on the other hand, are utilized to convey prominence in Greek discourse because they are more heavily marked. The imperfective aspect in Greek is grammaticalized by the present and imperfect tense-forms, accounting for a total of 80

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4 There are a total of 300 verbs in the Passion narrative of John. The future form, although discussed in chapters 6–7, is not included in the statistics presented here. Also, verbs such as εἰμί (including its derivatives, e.g. ἔξεστιν) and φημί are aspectually vague (i.e. lacking a perfective/imperfective opposition) and therefore are not counted here. In addition, verbs enclosed with square brackets (e.g. John 19:24) are also not counted. For a discussion of aspectually vague verbs found in the Greek New Testament, see Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 441–47.

5 See Porter and O’Donnell, *Discourse Analysis*, ch. 4; Porter, *Idioms*, 302–04; Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 74–75. There are other syntactic and pragmatic means to convey prominence in discourse (e.g. clause structure, redundant pronouns), however, this book will focus on the discourse function of verbal aspect in Greek.