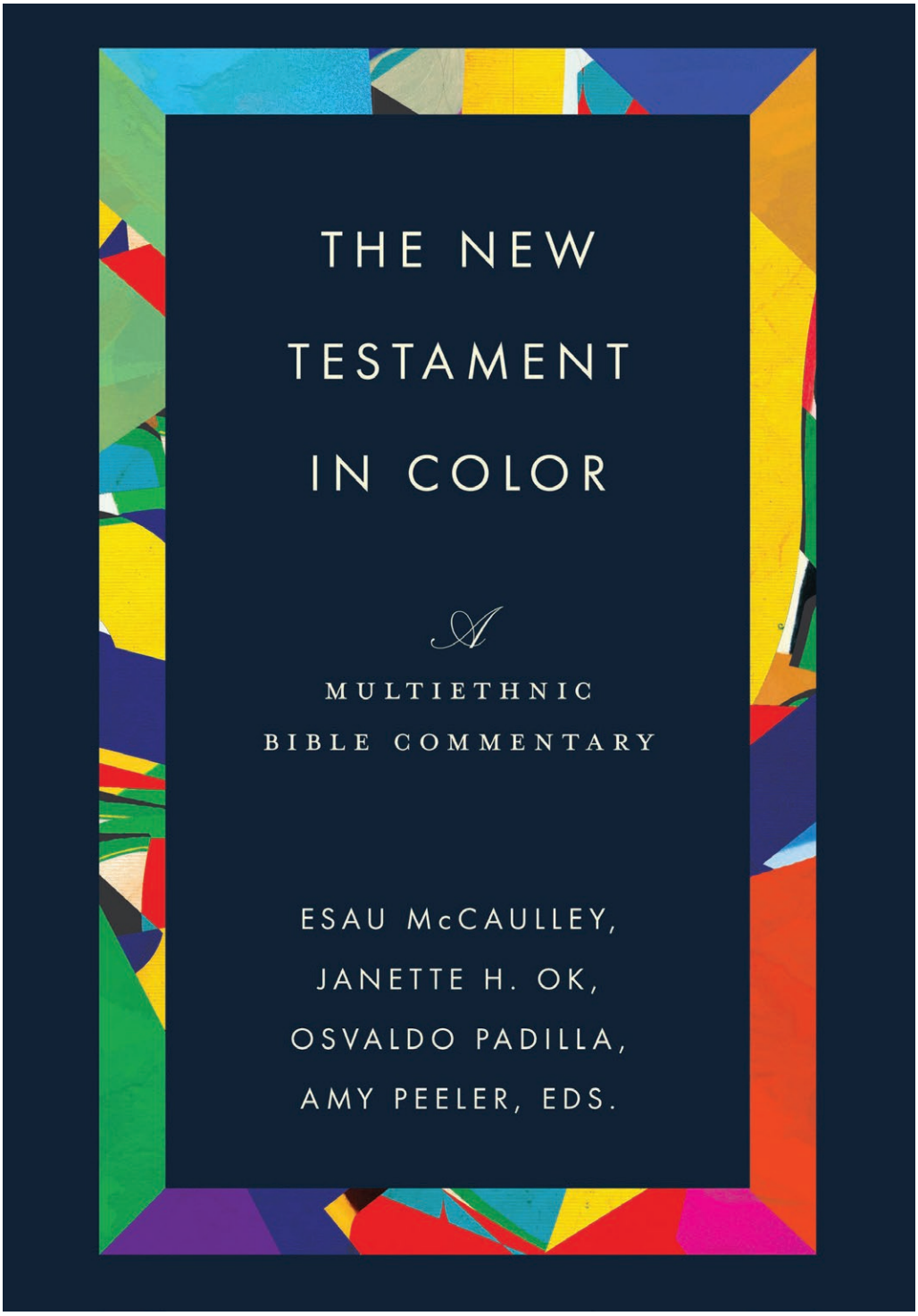

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CONTENTS

GOSPEL OF JOHN

Miguel G. Echevarría

INTRODUCTION

Authorship. The Gospel of John is technically anonymous. Like the Synoptic Gospels, the author makes no attempt to identify himself. Even the title "According to John" is not definitive evidence of the author's identity—for it was added when the Gospel began circulating together with the Synoptics. The Gospel's anonymity, however, is not sufficient reason to discard its authenticity. F. F. Bruce remarks: "It is noteworthy that, while the four canonical Gospels could afford to be published anonymously, the apocryphal Gospels which began to appear from the mid-second century onwards claimed (falsely) to be written by apostles or other persons closely associated with the Lord."[1]

Aside from any explicit identification of the author, the Gospel of John claims to have been written by the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (Jn 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:20). John 21:24 describes this disciple as "the one who has born witness about these things" and "wrote them down."[2] This verse, along with others such as John 1:14, testify that the beloved disciple was an eyewitness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Some argue that the beloved disciple is an idealized figure, who was historicized by a later redactor.[3] Others contend that he is Lazarus, because Jesus is said to have loved him (Jn 11:3, 36) and accounts of the beloved disciple only occur after Lazarus's resurrection in John 11.[4] Still others contend that the beloved disciple is Thomas, for he asks to see Jesus' side, information only the beloved disciple would have known, and evidence points to a school of Thomas that shows interest in the Gospel of John.[5] Though these arguments have their merits, the traditional view is still the most plausible: that the beloved disciple is John the Son of Zebedee. He was, after all, one of the twelve (Jn 13:23) and one of the sons of Zebedee (Jn 21:1-14), making him an eyewitness to the events surrounding the historical Jesus. That's why he records events not found in the Synoptics, such as Jesus turning water into wine (Jn 2:1-11) and Jesus' conversation with a Samaritan woman, events to which a direct witness would have been privy (Jn 4:1-45).

D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo provide insight into distinguishing the beloved disciple from Peter and the other disciples: "That

[1]F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John: Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 1.

[2]C. H. Dodd claims that Jn 21:24 only applies to verses Jn 21:20-23 (*Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1963; repr., 1989], 12). George R. Beasley-Murray, who is no friend of the traditional view of authorship, argues that this contention is unlikely, for the "immediate historical sequence of 'who has written these things' in v 24 by the 'many other things' which Jesus did and which could hardly be written (v 25) leads the reader to relate the statement to chaps. 1–20 as well as to chap. 21" (*John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36 [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999], lxxi). Translations in this chapter are the author's unless otherwise indicated.

[3]Rudolph Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, ed. G. R. Beasley-Murray (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 11-12.

[4]Gary M. Burge, *John*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 26.

[5]See James H. Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple: Whose Witness Validates the Gospel of John?* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 225-87.

he is one of the seven who go fishing in chapter 21 and, by implication, is not Peter, Thomas, or Nathanael, suggests he is one of the sons of Zebedee or one of the two unnamed disciples (21:2)."[6] And since James is the other "son of Zebedee" (Mt 10:2; Mk 1:19; Lk 5:10), who was martyred in Acts 12, John is the disciple and son of Zebedee who authored the Gospel of John.[7] Patristic evidence supports this conclusion. Irenaeus, for instance, attributes the Gospel to "John the disciple of the Lord, who leaned back on his breast, published the Gospel while he was a resident at Ephesus in Asia" (*Adv. Haer*. 3.1.2). Clement of Alexandria says that John wrote a "spiritual Gospel" (quoted by Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist*. 6.14.7). And the Muratorian Canon (ca. 180–200 CE) affirms that John the disciple wrote the Fourth Gospel.

While these arguments are well and good, that the church has decided to recognize John as the fourth canonical Gospel should be enough for Christians to accept its inspiration and authority. This is not a license to deny the traditional authorship of John's Gospel—it simply allows us to consider the canonical status of the Gospel as sufficient proof of its acceptance. For roughly twenty centuries, Christian communities from different tribes, tongues, and nations have read John's Gospel for encouragement and hope amid life's daily struggles—what many Latino/a people call *lo cotidiano*—knowing that Jesus has gone to "prepare a place" for them (Jn 14:3). The canonical status of John's Gospel was enough for them, as it should be for us.

Date. Since the nineteenth century, suggestions for dating the Gospel of John have ranged from 55 CE to the late second century. But with the discovery of Papyrus 52 (a short fragment containing John 18:31-32), which scholars usually ascribe to the early second century (ca. 117–138 CE), proposals for dating the Gospel from the mid to late second century have pretty well been ruled out. Thus, it is plausible to date John's Gospel anywhere from the late first century (80–100 CE) to the early second century (100–120 CE).[8]

John A. T. Robinson argues that John's Gospel was written before the first Jewish-Roman war (66–70 CE).[9] Few scholars are willing to date the Gospel that early. Unlike the Synoptics, John makes no reference to the temple. So, it's likely he wrote his Gospel after the temple's destruction in 70 CE, possibly ten to twenty years after this catastrophic event, which would have been long enough for his original audiences not to have required comment on what was once the central place of Jewish life.[10] We can argue, then, albeit tentatively, that John penned his Gospel somewhere between 80 and 90 CE.[11] Shortly thereafter, likely in the '90s, he published his three epistles.[12]

[6]D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 237.

[7]G. K. Beale and Benjamin Gladd, *The Story Retold: A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 126.

[8]Colin Kruse, *John: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 4 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 30; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (i–xii)*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 29 (New York: Doubleday, 1966), lxxx-lxxxvi.

[9]John A. T. Robinson contends that all the NT books were completed before 70 CE. For his discussion of John and his epistles, see *Redating the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2000), 254-311.

[10]See also Kruse, *John*, 31.

[11]For a more thorough discussion of the dating of John's Gospel, see D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 81-86.

[12]See Marianne Meye Thompson, *1–3 John*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 20-21.

Setting. The traditional opinion is that John wrote his Gospel while a resident in Ephesus. Early evidence for this is found in the writings of Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer*. 3.1.2) and Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.23.1–4). Ephesus is also the place where John wrote his epistles.

Some speculate that John's Gospel addresses the deficient beliefs of his followers in Asia Minor, such as matters related to the incarnation of Jesus, which he also addresses in his letters (Jn 1:1-18; 1 Jn 1:1-4; 4:2; 2 Jn 1:7).[13] While this is historically plausible, and may even be supported in the text (Jn 1:19-28, 35-42; 3:22-36; 10:40-42), we will not speculate about how John may (or may not) have been correcting deviant views among his earliest followers. We will focus on how John's Gospel reveals that Jesus is the Messiah.

Basic Outline. This commentary will follow a fourfold structure for the Gospel of John. The Prologue introduces the preexistence and incarnation of Jesus (Jn 1:1-18). The Book of Signs progressively reveals the identity of Jesus through seven messianic signs (Jn 1:19–12:50). The Book of Exaltation focuses on the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of the Messiah to the Father (Jn 13:1–20:31).[14] The seventh sign, the raising of Lazarus, bridges these two sections, anticipating Jesus' own resurrection (Jn 11:1-44; 12:1-11, 17-19).[15] The Epilogue concludes the Gospel, affirming John's eyewitness testimony to the events related to the historical Jesus (Jn 21:1-25). Below is an outline of the structure, which includes some further details.

I. Prologue (Jn 1:1-18)

II. The Book of Signs (Jn 1:19–12:50)

- The Appearance of Jesus and His Early Disciples: Transition to Signs 1–2 (Jn 1:19–1:50)
- The Cana Cycle: Signs 1–2 (Jn 2:1–4:50)
- The Jerusalem Cycle: Signs 3–7 (Jn 5:1–12:50)

III. The Book of Exaltation (Jn 13:1–20:31)

- The Farewell Discourse: Preparation for Exaltation (Jn 13:1–17:26)
- The Trials, Death, and Empty Tomb: The Exaltation of Jesus (Jn 18:1–20:31)

IV. Epilogue (Jn 21:1-25)

PROLOGUE (JOHN 1:1-18)

John begins his Gospel with the phrase "in the beginning." These familiar words evoke the creation account in Genesis 1, which begins the very same way (Jn 1:1; cf. Gen 1:1).[16] The interpretive context for John's prologue therefore includes the initial pages of Genesis. This expanded framework is essential for understanding important themes such as "Word," "light," and "life."[17]

[13]For instance, Thompson, *1–3 John*, 20.

[14]Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters: The Word, the Christ, the Son of God*, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 167. Often this section is labeled the Book of Glory. Already in the Book of Signs, Jesus' "glory" is spoken of in verses such as Jn 1:14; 2:11, 8:54, and 11:4. Moreover, the very "signs" in Jn 1:19–12:50 and Jesus' "exaltation" in Jn 13:1–20:31 are intended to reveal God's glory. All this leads us to conclude that the designation Book of Glory is not exact. I have chosen instead to designate Jn 13:1–20:31 as the Book of Exaltation, since this section emphasizes the "lifting up" of the Son of Man (e.g., Jn 17:1, 5, 24). See Köstenberger, *John's Gospel and Letters*, 167-68; George Mlakuzhyil, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, Analecta Biblica: Investigationes Scientificae in Res Biblicas 117 (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1987), 161-62.

[15]Köstenberger, *John's Gospel and Letters*, 168.

[16]John cites *en archē* verbatim from Gen 1:1 LXX.

[17]James F. McGrath argues that in the prologue John uses imagery and traditions that would have been familiar both to him and his opponents in order to defend his communities' beliefs about Jesus ("Prologue as Legitimation: Christological Controversy and the Interpretation of John 1:1-18," *Irish Biblical Studies* 19.3 [1997]: 98-120). While I will not investigate potential historical strife between hypothetical Johannine communities and their opponents, I do agree that John uses Jewish tradition, particularly the Genesis account, to set forth a high Christology.

John affirms that the Word (*logos*)[18] was with God in the beginning of creation (Jn 1:1-2).[19] According to Genesis 1, God "speaks" his good creation into existence (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26).[20] Thus, God made all things through his "Word," the very agent in creation, the one about whom John says: "All things came into existence through him, and not one thing was made without him" (Jn 1:3). If that were not enough, John also declares that the Word is one and the same with Israel's God (Jn 1:1). He is the one who created Eden for humanity to enjoy—until his people fell into sin, ruining paradise (Gen 3).

John makes a further declaration about the Word—he is one and the same with Jesus, who "took on flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14). John has affirmed, then, that the Word is the creator God, Yahweh, who has taken on full humanity in the person of Jesus. Jesus was not created. He is, in fact, the creator of all things, who has always existed separately and independently from the world.

As he called light into darkness at the beginning of creation (Gen 1:3-5), Jesus has returned to illumine a world that has receded into darkness (Jn 1:4-5). In so doing, he will redeem what he has created, bringing life out of death (Jn 1:4-5, 9).[21] We can say that he is bringing forth a new creation, where we will no longer experience the effects of the curse, like suffering and death (cf. Gen 3).[22] And as the darkness could not prevent the presence of the light in the original creation, it has no power to thwart Jesus from shining his light into a world in need of renewal (Jn 1:5). There is nothing, as John says elsewhere, that will stop Jesus from "making all things new" (Rev 21:5).[23]

To make sure that humanity was ready for his coming, God sent John the Baptist into the wilderness. There, he testified about the "light," so that people would know that Jesus was about to renew all things (Jn 1:6-8). Later in the Gospel, Jesus speaks of him as "the lamp that burned and shined" (Jn 5:35). Through his witness as the lamp, John let the work of Jesus be seen in his ministry, so that "all might believe through him" (Jn 1:7).

But John is not supposed to be the exclusive witness to the "light." All believers are to witness to Jesus' redemptive work, showing the world that the savior has come to roll back the darkness of sin and death. One of the ways we do this is by working toward removing racial inequalities in society, such as making sure people receive equal justice in civil and criminal matters, advocating for equal opportunities for

[18] Jewish tradition notes that the *logos* is God's preexistent partner in creation (e.g., Prov 8:22-30; Eccl 1:1-9). She seeks to dwell among humans, but they do not accept her, so she returns to the heavens (Prov 1:20-32; Job 28). While I do not deny a connection to such contexts, I believe the primary allusion in John 1:1 is to the creation account in Genesis. I will note the exegetical implications of this connection in the remainder of the section.

[19] Margaret Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 69 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 120.

[20] Andreas J. Köstenberger, "John," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 421.

[21] While there are similarities with gnostic documents, such as the Testimony of Truth and the Gospel of Truth, John's prologue has clear allusions to the creation account in Gen 1. Unlike gnostic literature, John values the physical creation. He values it so much that he argues that Israel's God took on flesh to redeem that which he created—which includes both his human and nonhuman creation. That worldview is far from gnosticism, which values secret knowledge, so that humans might be delivered from the evil, physical world, rather than the acknowledgment of what God created as good and worthy of redemption.

[22] Beale and Gladd, *The Story Retold*, 131.

[23] Jesus as "light" is common throughout the Gospel of John (Jn 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9; 12:35-36, 46). In Jewish literature, "light" is linked to "joy, life, understanding, and ultimately God" (e.g., Job 5:14; Ps 18:28; Wis 7:26; *2 Bar.* 17:4; Thompson, *John,* 29). Darkness, on the other hand, is linked to "terror, gloom, and death" (e.g., Job 15:22-23; Ps 88:12; 91:6; 107:10).

employment and promotion, and eliminating housing practices like redlining, which group black and brown people into their own separate ghettos. Jesus cares about the physical world, which includes the disparities that exist among real flesh and blood people. That's why he came "in the flesh" to give humanity fullness of life on earth. Since Jesus' incarnation marks the beginning of his renewing work, racial equality—which is nothing other than making sure that people flourish from the moment they are conceived in the womb to the time Jesus takes them home—is something for which believers should strive. In so doing, we bear witness to the human flourishing people will experience when Jesus restores all things. This is the kind of witness that brightens a dark world, beckoning others to follow the God who is shining his renewing light into the darkness.

Before John concludes his prologue, he remarks that Jesus is the "unique" (*monogenēs*) Son of God full of "grace and truth" (Jn 1:14, 17).[24] These concepts recall the Mosaic Law's affirmation of God's "steadfast love and faithfulness" to his covenant people (Ex 34:6).[25] God is so loyal to the covenant that he sent his Son into the world to redeem his people from sin and death. The notion of sonship recalls 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 2, which look forward to God's kingly Son, the Messiah, who will reign over the earth. The words God spoke to Moses are now fulfilled in Jesus—for God's "grace and truth" are now available to all who trust in Jesus, making us beneficiaries of the covenant promises of redemption (e.g., Gen 12, 15; Is 65–66).

The prologue ends with a final declaration of the importance of Jesus: Although "no one has seen God," the Son has made him known (Jn 1:18). At first glance, this affirmation seems inconsistent with the Old Testament, which is full of examples of people who have "seen God." Moses, for instance, is said to have spoken to God "face-to-face" (Ex 33:11; Deut 34:10). Israel's elders "saw the God of Israel" (Ex 24:9-11). And Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel saw God in visionary experiences (Is 6; Ezek 1; Dan 7). Marianne Meye Thompson, noting examples from passages such as Exodus 33:20-23 and Deuteronomy 4:12-15, reconciles John's affirmation with the testimony of the Old Testament: "There are numerous interpretive moves [in the Old Testament] that seek to explain apparently direct visions of God as mediated or indirect encounters with God."[26] Unlike Old Testament figures, Jesus has "an unmitigated and direct vision of God," because he has been with him since the beginning of creation (Jn 1:1-3; cf. Gen 1).

With the content of the prologue in mind, the remainder of John's Gospel shows that Jesus is the one whom the Father has sent as his Son and Messiah (Jn 1:19–12:50), who was "exalted" for our transgressions (Jn 13:1–20:29), so that we might experience life in a new creation (Jn 20:30-31).

THE BOOK OF SIGNS (JOHN 1:19–12:50)

After revealing that Jesus is the creator and redeemer of the earth, John ties his identity to the promised Messiah. John makes this connection through seven messianic signs, beginning with Jesus turning water into wine (Jn 2:1-11) and concluding with Jesus raising Lazarus from the tomb (Jn 11:1-44). The Book of Signs, then, is a fitting designation for the first major unit in the Gospel. At strategic

[24]"Only begotten" is a common translation for *monogenēs* in John 1:14 and 1:18. In view of the glory revealed solely in the Son, it is best to render the term as "unique" or "one and only."
[25]Köstenberger, *John*, 422.
[26]Thompson, *John*, 36. I have included the words in brackets to clarify that Thompson's observations are based on the OT.

points, John inserts other scenes into the narrative, such as conversations with Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-21) and a Samaritan woman (Jn 4:1-45). The unit is rich in Old Testament allusions, recalling how Jesus fulfills the eschatological hopes of people like Moses, Ezekiel, and Isaiah.

The appearance of Jesus and his early disciples: Transition to signs 1–2 (John 1:19-1:50). John the Baptist and "the Jews" enter the narrative prior to the seven messianic signs. John's Gospel frequently paints a negative picture of "the Jews" of Jesus' time. We should recognize that John the author does not lump all Jewish people under the same term. Second Temple Judaism was far too complex—too variegated—for that kind of generalization. Groups like the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Qumran community were all active in the first century. This makes it likely that John limits his use of "the Jews" to specific first century groups.

We should also note that intra-Jewish rhetoric is not uncommon in Second Temple literature. We see a parallel, for instance, in a thanksgiving hymn from Qumran, where the author speaks harshly of the community's enemies:

> And they, teachers of lies and seers of falsehood, have schemed against me a devilish scheme to exchange the Law engraved on my heart by thee for smooth things . . . . As for them, they dissemble, they plan devilish schemes. They seek thee with a double heart and are not confirmed in the truth. A root bearing poisoned and bitter fruit is in their designs (IQH 4:7).[27]

While the language is not as strong, John employs similar rhetoric against Jews who actively oppose Jesus (Jn 5:16-18; 7:1; 10:31, 39; 11:8), such as the Pharisees (Jn 7:32; 18:3) and chief priests (Jn 19:6, 15). Yet he does not depict all Jews, such as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, in the same light (Jn 3:11; 7:50; 19:38-42). He even describes Jews in a positive light, when he affirms that "salvation is from the Jews" (Jn 4:22) and affirms that Jesus himself is a Jew (Jn 4:9). We can therefore envision that John's pejorative use of "the Jews" is not a blanket term for all Jewish people, but a reference to members of the first-century religious establishment who oppose Jesus.

After clarifying these matters, we now turn our attention to the Jewish leaders' initial appearance in the Gospel, questioning John the Baptist about whether he is the Messiah (Jn 1:9). Although the people were genuinely anticipating an "anointed one" who would reign over the cosmos (2 Sam 7; Ps 2), the religious leaders are more interested in rooting out anyone who threatens their power, like any would-be Messiahs. That's why their question should not be taken at face value.

In response to their inquiry, John the Baptist confesses that he "is not the Messiah" (*christos*; Jn 1:20). So, the religious leaders move on to other anticipated figures, asking whether he is Elijah, the one to precede the arrival of the Messiah (Mal 4:5), or the Prophet, the one to lead Israel, just like Moses (Deut 18:15-19).[28] John denies each of these roles (Jn 1:21).

[27] Translation is from G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 3rd ed. (London: Penguin, 1987), 175. Gail R. O'Day cites this passage in her "The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreters Bible Commentary*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon, 2015), 8:545. See also her insightful discussion on the conflicts between various first century Jewish groups, including Jewish Christians, as the proper context for understanding John's negative portrayal of "the Jews" in pp. 540-53. For an overview of potential anti-Judaism scholarship on the Gospel of John, see Sonya Shetty Cronin, Raymond Brown, *"The Jews," and the Gospel of John: From Apologia to Apology*, Library of Biblical Studies 504 (London: T&T Clark, 2015).

[28] Burge points out that Deuteronomy 18:15-19 led to "enormous Jewish speculation concerning who this prophet would be and in some cases led to a conflation with the image of the Messiah. Other Jews distinguished the Messiah and the Prophet (see John 7:40; 1 Macc. 4:46; *T. Ben.* 9:2) and understood that he would simply be a forerunner. Qumran, for instance, looked for an eschatological 'prophet' who would accompany the Messiah (1 QS 9)" (*John*, 72).

Instead, he identifies himself as "the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said" (Jn 1:23). John recites an almost verbatim citation of the Septuagint (LXX) version of Isaiah 40:3.[29] In the larger context of Isaiah 40–66, this verse looks forward to a new act of salvation for God's people. As God delivered Israel from Egypt and led them to the land of Canaan, Isaiah looks forward to a new exodus from Babylon, culminating in a new heaven and earth (Isa 65–66).[30] By the first century, Babylon had come to personify any nation that oppressed God's people, including the Romans (Is 40:10-11; 51:9; 52; Rev 17–18). Isaiah's servant would bear the sins of the people, leading to a new act of salvation and restoration (Is 42:1-9; 49:1-9; 52:13–53:12). In view of this background, John's recitation of Isaiah 40:3 identifies his role as the herald of the Lord, the one who would accomplish the long-awaited new exodus.[31]

If he is not the Messiah, the Jewish leaders desire to know why John is baptizing (Jn 1:25). John specifies that his mission is to direct others to the coming Messiah (Jn 1:26-27). In view of exodus imagery, John's baptism evokes the memory of God leading Israel through the Red Sea, delivering them from slavery in Egypt and commencing their journey to the land of Canaan (Jn 1:24-28; cf. Ex 14–15), which then creates anticipation for one who would accomplish a much greater deliverance than what Israel experienced from Egypt (Jn 1:26-27).

The freedom the Israelites were expecting may be encapsulated in one powerful word, "liberation," which is a common hope for the people of God throughout history, who find solidarity with Israel's hope for deliverance. We see this, for instance, in Black and Latino/a theologies. After reflecting on the exodus from Egypt as a foreshadowing of the liberation of humanity in Jesus Christ, Gustavo Gutiérrez argues:

> The work of Christ is presented simultaneously as liberation from sin and all its consequences: despoliation, injustice, hatred. This liberation fulfills in an unexpected way the promises of the prophets and creates a new chosen people, which this time includes all humanity.[32]

The liberation of which Gutiérrez speaks, although grounded in the Scriptures, is often overlooked in favor of salvation as a departure into heaven. This is not what the Israelites expected—they anticipated a tangible deliverance from oppressive forces, which is a consequence of living under the power of sin. Nor is this what the world's marginalized populations anticipate when they read Israel's Scriptures, which includes people like them in the story of those who will be delivered from bondage to poverty, injustice, and racism. Gutiérrez's words are insightful for understanding how the promise of a new exodus is "good news" for all who trust that Jesus will deliver them from the power of sin and all its pervasive effects (Is 61; cf. Lk 4).

The echoes of a new exodus carry into the next scene, in which John sees Jesus and exclaims: "Look! The lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world [*kosmou*]" (Jn 1:29). The phrase "lamb of God" alludes to the Passover celebration in the exodus tradition, when the Israelites were to sacrifice a lamb and smear its blood on the lintels of their doors

[29]The only difference is that in Jn 1:23 the author exchanges *hetoimasate* for *euthynate* in Is 40:3.
[30]The expectation of a cosmic inheritance for God's people is also consistent with Second Temple literature. See, for instance, *4 Ezra* 6 and Sirach 44.
[31]See the helpful discussion in Beale and Ladd, *The Story Retold*, 134.
[32]Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 90.

(Ex 12). Those who followed these instructions were "passed over" by death and were later delivered from Egypt (Ex 12:23). There is a further allusion to Isaiah 53:7-12, which looks back on the original Passover, comparing the "servant" to a "lamb led to the slaughter."[33] When considering that Jesus takes away the sins of the "world," we can envision that he is the sacrifice of the new exodus, making it possible for all people to experience freedom from sin and all its repercussions (cf. 1 Jn 2:2).[34]

The presence of exodus imagery is heightened when John says that Jesus "baptizes with the Holy Spirit" (Jn 1:33). The cleansing of sin that Jesus, through the power of the Spirit, brings is connected to the promise of a new exodus. As God's Spirit delivered Israel through the Red Sea and gave them rest in Canaan (Ps 77; 104; Is 63:11-14; Neh 9), John's baptism symbolizes a new act of deliverance that Jesus would accomplish through his Spirit, leading his people to a new creation. His authority for the task is sourced in his identity as the promised Davidic king and servant, on whom the Lord has poured out his Spirit (Is 11:1-9; 42:1).[35]

John's vocation, then, is to announce that Jesus is the promised Messiah, who, through his suffering for sins, would deliver his people into a new creation. This new act of deliverance would be comparable to, albeit greater than, what God accomplished through Moses in Egypt. Though they hate anyone who contests their authority, the religious leaders will neither be able to hinder John from fulfilling his vocation nor stop Jesus from bringing redemption through his anguish.

Jesus' followers understood Passover imagery, calling Jesus the "lamb of God" (Jn 1:36), alluding to the sacrifice of a new exodus (Ex 14), and the Messiah and Son of God (Jn 1:41, 49), the promised Davidic king who would rule over the cosmos (2 Sam 7; Ps 2; 110). Phillip's statement to Nathanael ("We have found the one whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote. . . .") likely ties together "a host of expectations for a coming ruler that were rooted both in the Pentateuch and in the prophetic corpus of the Jewish Scriptures (e.g., Gen 49:9-12; Num 24:17-19; Mic 5:1; Isa 9; 11–12; Ezek 34)" (John 1:45).[36] Jesus' response to Phillip and Daniel ("you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man") only strengthens his identity (John 1:51).

Although we will later expound on the allusion to the Son of Man figure in the book of Daniel, for now we affirm that Jesus' reply to his followers symbolizes the power and glory that will be revealed in his salvific ministry, things that are sourced in God's revelation to Jacob (Gen 28) and Daniel (Dan 7).[37] This final statement sets the stage for Jesus' signs, which progressively reveal his messianic identity. Along with the progression of the signs, we will also witness the religious leaders' increasing resistance to his authority.

Signs 1 and 2: The Cana cycle (John 2:1–4:54). John 2:1–4:54 records Jesus' first ministry cycle in Cana of Galilee, within which

[33]Beal and Gladd, *The Story Retold*, 134.

[34]John employs the term *kosmos* in keeping with its common use: "the sum total of everything here and now, the world, the (orderly) universe" (BDAG, 561). A reading that limits the death of Jesus to a particular group must account for the normative use of the word.

[35]Edward W. Klink III, *John*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 136.

[36]Christopher M. Blumhofer, *The Gospel of John and the Future of Israel*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 177 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 74.

[37]Klink, *John*, 154; J. Ramsey Michaels, *John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 135-39.

Jesus performs his first two miraculous signs: turning water into wine (Jn 2:1-12) and healing an official's son (Jn 4:46-54). He also has discussions about eternal life with Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-21) and living water with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:1-45). The sequence of events in Cana show that Jesus is the Messiah who is gathering a community of Jews and Gentiles—of whom many are social outsiders—into a new creation.

Sign 1: The wedding in Cana (John 2:1-12). The first messianic sign takes place "on the third day of the wedding in Cana of Galilee" (Jn 2:1). We should understand the reference to the "third day" from when John the Baptist witnessed about Jesus, which suggests that the wedding occurs on the seventh day of the week (Jn 1:19–2:1).[38] Raymond Brown contends that the Gospel frames the wedding on the seventh day so as to mark the beginning of a new creation in the same way in which Genesis 1–3 frames the original creation in seven days.[39] What is more, the reference to the "third day" also alludes to Jesus' coming resurrection on the "third day," when he would reveal himself as the first of many to rise from the grave, initiating a new creation (Gal 6:14-15; Col 1:18-20; Rev 1:13; 3:14).[40]

After noting the presence of Jesus' and his disciples, John sets the stage for the first sign, saying that the wine has run out (Jn 2:2-3). Wine was a staple at Jewish festivities. So, a lack of fermented goodness would have been perceived as a serious problem in a context where the host family was likely to lose honor.[41] The stakes are higher than individualist cultures may realize. Collectivist cultures, like those in the Middle East and Latin America, understand the shame associated with not meeting social expectations. So, when Mary wants Jesus to do something about the wine, what she really wants is for him to preserve the host family's honor before all the invited guests (Jn 2:3).

Jesus' response distances himself from the social responsibility of supplying wine for the wedding: "What does this have to do with me and you, woman? My hour has not yet come" (Jn 2:4; cf. 2 Sam 16:10).[42] As her son, Mary expects Jesus to oblige.[43] So, she instructs the servants: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5). Her words sound remarkably like Pharaoh's instructions to starving Egyptians in Genesis 41:55. When people cry out for bread, Pharaoh directs them to Joseph: "Do whatever he tells you." As Joseph provided food for Egypt, Jesus would supply wine for the wedding. Since Mary's command in the Greek New Testament is remarkably similar to Pharaoh's in the Septuagint, it is unmistakable that John intends to draw our minds to the Joseph account.[44] Although it is not yet time (the "hour") for him to receive his

[38]Jey J. Kanagaraj, *John*, A New Covenant Commentary (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2013), 20

[39]Brown, *John*, 105-6

[40]The fourth-century bishop Theodore of Heraclea notes that John's use of "the third day" is meant to allude to the fact that "he resurrected himself from the dead" (Joel C. Elowsky, ed., *John 1–10*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007], 89).

[41]See Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 70-71.

[42]The word-for-word translation of the sentence (*ti emoi kai soi gynai?*) is: "What to me and to you, woman?" The datives *emoi* and *soi* carry a sense of possession, conveying the responsibilities at the wedding that pertain to Jesus and Mary.

[43]Carson argues that, although Mary expected something from Jesus, it is unlikely that she anticipated a miracle at this point. It is more likely that Joseph has died, and Mary has become accustomed to relying on her firstborn son. It would have been natural, then, for Mary to turn to Jesus, as she would in other instances, for help in difficult circumstances (see *John*, 170-72).

[44]The respective verses read: *ho ti an legē hymin poiēsate* (Jn 2:5); *ho ean eipē hymin, poiēsate* (Gen 41:55 LXX). The minor differences are the use of *legē* in John 2:4 in place of *eipē* in Gen 41:55 LXX, although both are in the subjunctive mood, and the addition of *ti* in John 2:4. John could have purposely altered the passage or used another LXX version.

full glory, Jesus will perform his first miracle, providing a glimpse of the restoration he will accomplish.[45]

Jesus instructs the attendants to fill six large purification jars "to the brim" (Jn 2:5-7). He then tells them to "draw out" some of the contents and take a sample to the "head waiter" (Jn 2:7-8). The text does not tell us when the water becomes wine. All we know is that the head waiter tastes "water that had become wine" (Jn 2:9). It could have happened as soon as the water was poured in the jars, or while the attendants were carrying the contents to the head waiter. But too much discussion of such matters misses the point of the passage—that Jesus turns water into wine, giving us a glimpse of his identity.

Jesus' identity becomes clear when we read this sign in lieu of several Old Testament passages. Isaiah 25 associates wine with messianic expectations: that God would return to save his people from their oppressors, even death itself (Is 25:6). Jeremiah 31 connects wine with rejoicing and deliverance from exile (Jer 31:12). And Amos 9 links "sweet wine" with a time when Israel is restored to a prosperous land (Amos 9:13-14). What these passages have in common is the anticipation that the new age will bring deliverance from all oppression and into a permanent place of blessing, where God will "wipe away tears from all faces" (Is 25:8; cf. Rev 21:4). Thus, Jesus turning water into wine symbolizes that he is the anticipated Messiah who will lead his people out of exile in this sinful age and into a new creation. This new act of salvation, anticipated by prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Amos, will liberate God's people from oppression in the present world. The kingdom that Jesus brings will transform the present earth into a place of justice, peace, and equity, exactly as God's people have anticipated for centuries. Though this is only the first of seven signs, it is enough for the disciples to "believe in him" (Jn 2:11).

Cleansing the Temple (John 2:13-25). After spending some time in Capernaum, Jesus heads to Jerusalem for the Passover (Jn 2:13). Upon entering the temple, he discovers people more concerned about economic profit than worshiping God through prayer and sacrifice (Jn 2:14). So, he uses a whip to drive people out of the temple, pours out the coins of the moneychangers, and turns over their tables (Jn 2:15). What seems like a fit of rage is actually a display of zeal for God's house, the kind the disciples recall from Psalm 69:9: "Zeal for your house will consume me" (Jn 2:17).

The context of the Psalm is a righteous sufferer upon whom "the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen" (Ps 69:9). This figure is analogous to Isaiah's suffering servant who bears the iniquity of God's people (Is 53:6). When quoting Psalm 69:9, John recalls such Old Testament imagery, evoking the image of Jesus as the one who would suffer to restore his people to genuine worship of God. The locus of such worship would not be in a temple "made with human hands" (Mk 14:58). It would be Jesus' own body, the new temple, which he would resurrect three days after his death (Jn 2:18-22).

The original temple was intended to be a microcosm of the entire earth, where people would be at peace with God, just like Adam and Eve in Eden.[46] Thus, the resurrection of Jesus, the new temple, symbolizes the restoration of the

[45]The "hour" is common in John's Gospel, "referring to the time when Jesus will return to the Father through his death and resurrection" (e.g., Jn 4:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1; Kanagaraj, *John*, 21). In Jewish literature, "hour," as well as "time" and "day," is often used eschatologically, pointing to God's intervention in human history. See Dan 8, 10, 11, 12; *1 En.* 46–48; *3 En*. 30:2; *4 Ezra* 4:44-46.

[46]N. T. Wright, *History and Eschatology: Jesus and the Promise of Natural Theology*, The 2018 Gifford Lectures (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019) cites J. D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 162-70. See Ps 78:69; Is 66:1-2; Jub. 1:26, 29; 50:5.

cosmos, when he will cleanse the present creation of sin and death, making it a suitable place of worship. Once again, John gives us a picture of what Jesus the Messiah has come to accomplish. And it is more than just salvation of souls, as some would lead us to believe. It encompasses souls, bodies, and all that God has made, redeeming everything from darkness and making all things worthy of being the dwelling place of God and humanity.

Jesus did many signs of this sort in Jerusalem, the kind that point to his identity, even though they are not all mentioned in the Gospel (Jn 2:23). John says these led many to "believe in him" (Jn 2:23). It is debatable whether they really understood what they were witnessing, or whether they were just impressed with Jesus' miraculous deeds. It could be that they were spiritually blind, as John 2:25 seems to insinuate, setting the stage for the conversation with Nicodemus.[47]

Conversation with Nicodemus (John 3:1-22). Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus is the first of three encounters with people in need of the Messiah. Each meeting shows that God does not discriminate based on whether someone is a member of the ruling elite, like Nicodemus, a foreigner, like the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:1-45), or the child of political royalty, like the official's son (John 4:46-54). All must experience the transforming power of Jesus.

Nicodemus comes to Jesus "at night," revealing his darkened spiritual state (Jn 3:1-2). He is need of the light, whom John has already identified as Jesus (Jn 1:1-5).[48] As the cosmos is in need of renewal, so too is Nicodemus. There is no escaping that everyone and everything, including privileged members of the ruling class, desperately need Jesus.

Jesus wastes little time with Nicodemus: "Unless one is born again, they are not able to see the kingdom of God" (Jn 3:3). As a member of the Sanhedrin, we can imagine what Nicodemus was thinking: "Who is this person to tell me, a member of the ruling class, that I need to be born again?" By now, readers of John's Gospel should know that Jesus is lord of creation, and Nicodemus is a mere creature. The power dynamics are therefore the opposite of what Nicodemus may perceive.[49]

Quite frankly, we are all like Nicodemus, in need of being "born again," whether we realize it or not (Jn 3:3). Jesus unpacks this metaphor as "being born of water and the Spirit," without which one "cannot enter the kingdom of God" (Jn 3:5). These words allude to Ezekiel 36:25-27, which anticipates the time when God would cleanse his people's hearts with clean water and transform them by the power of the Spirit.[50] These verses are surrounded by the larger context of Ezekiel 36–37, which shows that the spiritual renewal of God's people coincides with their resurrection to a restored Eden, where they will dwell under the rule of a Davidic king (Ezek 37:24-25). Nicodemus, nevertheless, could not envision this eschatological hope, even though he should have, for he taught Israel from the very Scriptures to which Jesus alludes (Jn 3:9-10).

With another scriptural allusion, Jesus tells Nicodemus that Daniel's Son of Man has

[47]Klink, *John*, 184.

[48]Note the negative associations with darkness in John 9:4; 11:10; 13:30; 21:31.

[49]Power dynamics are an important element in John's Gospel, especially in regard to how Jesus relates to authorities. Jesus shows that the lowly in the present age will soon receive the power and influence that groups like the chief priests and Pharisees try to preserve for themselves. Alicia D. Myers and Lindsey S. Jodrey also note the presence of power dynamics in John's Gospel ("Come and Read: Hermeneutics and Interpretive Perspectives in the Gospel of John," in *Come and Read: Interpretive Approaches to the Gospel of John*, ed. Alicia Myers and Lindsey S. Jodrey [Lanham, MD: Fortress Academic, 2020], 1-25).

[50]For a discussion of the options for interpreting "born of water and spirit," see Carson, *John*, 191-94.

descended from heaven, revealing that Jesus is the mysterious figure who brings the heavenly kingdom to the earth, transforming life as we know it (Jn 3:13; cf. Dan 7). To dwell in this kingdom, Nicodemus must believe that Jesus would be "lifted up" as "Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness" (Jn 3:14). The "serpent in the wilderness" recalls the time when rebellious Israel was plagued with poisonous snakes, but God saved his people when he instructed Moses to place a bronze serpent on a pole, so that "if a serpent bit anyone, they would look on the bronze serpent and live" (Num 21:8-9). According to Jesus, this event foreshadows the time when he would be "lifted up." In John's thought, the "lifting up" of Jesus encompasses his death, resurrection, and exaltation.[51]

John now strengthens God's concern for the cosmos: "For [*gar*] God loved the world in this way [*houtōs*]: he gave his unique Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16).[52] Though translations such as the KJV, NIV, and ESV render the first clause in John 3:16 as "For God so loved the world," the adverb *houtōs* carries a forward-pointing sense rather than a superlative one, drawing the reader's attention to how God demonstrated his love for the cosmos—by giving his Son.[53] In view of the earlier allusion to Ezekiel 36–37, God intends to resurrect believers to a renewed earth, where Jesus will reign forever, just as Psalm 2 expects. After all, Jesus did not to come to destroy the cosmos, leaving us only with the hope of heaven—he came to save it (Jn 3:17-18).

To spend eternal life on the renewed earth, we must experience the renewing power of the Spirit, which comes through faith in the Messiah, just like Jesus told Nicodemus. This is the great equalizer of humanity. Regardless of ethnicity, class, nationality, or gender, all must trust in Jesus. If there was no exception for Nicodemus, then there is no exception for anyone—all need the total transformation that comes only through Jesus.[54] Whoever refuses to come to him shows that they prefer the darkness, rather than the transforming power of Jesus' light (Jn 3:19-21).

Conversation with a Samaritan Woman (John 4:1-40). On his way to Galilee, John says "it was necessary (*edei*)" for Jesus "to pass through Samaria" (Jn 4:3-4). John may be using *edei* to communicate that the route was shorter through Samaria.[55] In that sense, Jesus passed through Samaria out of convenience. More likely, though, the verb communicates the "eschatological necessity of God's plan, especially in regard to the saving work of Jesus (Jn 3:7, 14, 30; 9:4; 10:16; 12:34; 20:9)."[56] This sense fits with Jesus' mission to redeem the entire creation, including Samaritans. No one is outside of Jesus' redemptive plan.[57] That's why "it was necessary" for him to go through Samaria.

[51]Klink, *John*, 203.

[52]The postpositive conjunction *gar* is what conveys that the following context adds support to God's concern for the world. See the helpful discussion of this word in Steven E. Runge, *A Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Guide for Teaching and Exegesis*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2010), 52.

[53]Runge classifies *houtōs* as a "forward pointing adverb." For short, he calls it a "pro-adverb" (*Discourse Grammar*, 68-71).

[54]Allan Dwight Callahan recalls the moving story of Mary MacLeod Bethune upon hearing John 3:16 as a girl growing up in the Jim Crow South. When she heard her teacher read the verse, especially the word "whosoever," it meant to her that she had equal chance before God, leading to a life filled with confidence and determination ("The Gospel of John," in *True to Our Native Land*, ed. Brian K. Blount [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007], 190).

[55]Bultmann, *John*, 176. See the similar use of *edei* in Josephus' *Life* 269 and *Ant*. 20:118.

[56]Klink, *John*, 235.

[57]Blumhofer claims that the need to pass through Samaria, as with every other use of *edei* in John's Gospel, is one of "theological necessity" (*Future of Israel*, 90).

To appreciate the wideness of Jesus' redemptive mission, we should consider that the Samaritans and Jews despised each other. The Samaritans were the descendants of the northern Israelites and colonists whom the Assyrians brought from Babylon and Media.[58] The Samaritans combined the worship of the God of Israel with the gods of Babylon and established Samaria as their place of worship.[59] By the time Jesus "passes through Samaria," there was longstanding enmity between the Jews, who considered themselves natives of the land and true worshipers of Yahweh, and the Samaritans, who were viewed as foreigners who had corrupted the worship of Israel's God.

Despite the animosity, the prophets anticipated the restoration of Samaria. Ezekiel, in the very context of renewal to which John has already appealed, takes two sticks in his hands so as to show how God would unite the northern and southern tribes when he comes to cleanse their sins and restore them to the land of their ancestors, where they will dwell under the rule of one king and one God (Ezek 37:1-28).[60] Jeremiah looks forward to the ten tribes, whom he calls Ephraim, being restored to faithfulness under a new covenant (Jer 31:1-37). Regardless of first century Jewish perceptions, the Samaritans have always been within the scope of God's redemptive plan.

All this enables us to grasp the significance of Jesus' conversation with a Samaritan woman at a village called "Sychar, near the piece of land which Jacob gave to Joseph, his son," where Jacob's well was located (Jn 4:5-6). This is the place where patriarchs Isaac, Jacob, and Moses came for water and met their prospective brides (Gen 24:1-27; 29:1-12; Ex 2:15-21).[61] Though they were viewed as outsiders, this geographical note reminds us that the Samaritans are closer to God's redemptive work than readers may imagine. No place or people are beyond God's salvation. As he worked at Jacob's well before, he does so again, offering water that renews relationships and heals old wounds.

When Jesus strikes up a conversation with the Samaritan woman, she has no clue about the identity of Jesus (Jn 4:7-8). All she knows is that hostility exists between Jews and Samaritans (Jn 4:9). Jesus does something unexpected, offering her "living water" that will become "a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (Jn 4:10, 14). The offer of "living water" recalls the "life giving water" in prophetic imagery that represents the cleansing and restoration of God's people (e.g., Zech 13:1; 14:8; Ezek 36:25-27; 47:1-12).[62] When God's people are restored, Ephraim and Judah will draw water with joy from the "fountains of salvation" (Is 12:3).[63] Later in John, Jesus associates "living water" with the Spirit (Jn 7:37-39). When glancing again at Ezekiel 36–37, we see that the Spirit is the one who will bring promised reconciliation and restoration to a new creation. This interpretive context brings to light that the offer of "living water" to the Samaritan woman symbolizes eschatological salvation. What the prophets anticipated for centuries is being fulfilled in the "gift" that Jesus offers a foreigner and enemy of the Jewish people (Jn 4:10).

The problem is that the woman does not comprehend Jesus' offer (Jn 4:15). So, he presses the matter further, revealing his

[58]Brown, *John*, 1:170.
[59]Klink, *John*, 235; Blumhofer, *The Future of Israel*, 91.
[60]Blumhofer, The Future of Israel, 92.
[61]Isaac met Rebekah through a servant.
[62]Blumhofer, *Restoration of Israel*, 96.
[63]Blumhofer, *Restoration of Israel*, 96.

knowledge of her relationships with men (Jn 4:16-18). In response, the woman acknowledges that Jesus is a prophet (Jn 4:19). Yet he is more than a prophet. That's why he goes on to explain that soon people will not worship in mount Gerizim in Samaria or the Temple in Jerusalem (Jn 4:22). God's cosmic salvation, which is sourced in a Jewish Messiah, is not for any particular people, neither Jew nor Samaritan, regardless of claims to salvific privilege (Jn 4:21).[64] The new age brings salvation for all "true worshipers" who "worship the Father in Spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:23).

When mentioning the Spirit, Jesus alludes again to prophets such as Ezekiel, who anticipate the time when the Spirit would usher in a new age in which God's people would experience restoration (Ezek 36:25-27; see also Joel 3). Worship in this era would not be centered in a particular place, but in the God who redeems creation through the work of his Spirit. This is true worship (Jn 4:24).[65]

The woman picks up on the messianic allusions in Jesus' words: "I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called Christ" (Jn 4:25). As we have noted, messianic expectations are associated with David's anointed son, who will rule peacefully over his people when he returns to restore all things (2 Sam 7; Ps 2; Ezek 36–37). Jesus' allusion to the redemptive work associated with the new age seems to be gaining traction with the woman. Though she has not yet understood his identity, the Samaritan woman seems to acknowledge the work of restoration, accomplished through the empowerment of the Spirit, associated with the Messiah. What Jesus then says makes it plain, using the words "I am" (*egō eimi*) to reveal himself as the promised one (Jn 4:26).

Unlike most English versions, the words *egō eimi* do not warrant the translation "I am he." Rather, this is one of several such statements in John's Gospel which should be rendered as "I am," bringing to mind God's self-revelation to Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:14).[66] Jesus now speaks these same revelatory words to the Samaritan woman, revealing himself as the Messiah, God in the flesh, who has returned to redeem the cosmos, including those whom the Jews see as outsiders to the promises of redemption. The prophets, of course, such as Ezekiel and Jeremiah, knew better. They foresaw that, although salvation is "sourced in the Jews," it is not only for them—for it is through a Jew that the world would experience the blessing of salvation, including the Samaritans (Gen 12:3).

Subsequently, the Samaritan woman leaves the well and proclaims to fellow Samaritans: "Come! See a man who told me all I have done. Is this not the Messiah?" (Jn 4:29). Reflecting on this verse, Edward Klink argues: "The effect is not necessarily to challenge the possibility that he is the Messiah but to introduce a possibility not considered before. In a way, the Samaritan woman left the rhetorical challenge with Jesus and entered an entirely different rhetorical challenge, one involving the possibility of a Jewish Messiah for the Samaritans."[67] The woman, then, becomes a witness to the identity of Jesus. Through her testimony, many Samaritans believe that he is the "savior of the world" (Jn 4:39, 42; cf. Jn 1:29).

[64]In the clause *hē sōtēria ek tōn Ioudaiōn estin*, the prepositional phrase *ek tōn Ioudaiōn* carries a sense of source, suggesting that salvation originates in the promises to Jews like Abraham and David. This does not mean that it is exclusive to the Jews, for that would contradict John's view of cosmic redemption, which he reaffirms in John 4:42.

[65]In the prepositional phrase *en pneumati kai alētheia* in John 4:24, the conjunction *kai* conveys apposition, clarifying that worshiping "in the Spirit" is equivalent to worshiping "in the truth."

[66]See K.L. McKay, "'I am' in John's Gospel," *Expository Times* 107 (1996): 302-3.

[67]Klink, *John*, 247. See also Bultmann, *John*, 247.

The account of the Samaritan woman is a powerful testimony to Jesus' redemptive work—which is not exclusive to any particular people but available to all humanity, regardless of ethnicity or privilege. It also shows how God cares for foreigners and outsiders, those who are loathed or despised, perhaps because of their ethnicity or illegitimate residency. He loves such people so much that he offers them a place in his redemptive plan and uses them to witness to the grace that extends to all people. Jesus recognizes the full humanity of the "other," which makes the Samaritan woman worthy of proclaiming the arrival of the Messiah.[68]

If Jesus is our example, then we will also go to the outsider and offer them "living water." That means we will go to immigrants, regardless of whether they have proper documentation, to people living in illicit sexual relationships, to the communities to which our churches would not normally minister, and tell them about the Messiah who has come to deliver humanity from sin and death. After all, Jesus' work is not for any particular people, but for the entire world, including those with whom we have enmity or find unworthy of God's grace. As John has shown, those whom we shun have always been the focus of God's redemptive plan. In the new cosmos, we will enjoy sweet fellowship with those whom we once loathed. There, we will see redeemed Samaritans and Jews, former white supremacists and Hispanic immigrants, former pro-choice advocates and those who fought for the lives of the unborn, worshiping a brown skin Messiah. There is no limit to the extent of God's grace in Jesus Christ.

Sign 2: The healing of a royal official's son (John 4:43-54). The scene shifts back to Cana of Galilee, where Jesus performed his first sign. Jesus is welcomed to the area by people who had witnessed his miraculous deeds in Jerusalem (Jn 4:45-46). That does not mean they understand his identity. He is nothing more than a curiosity to them.

While visiting Cana, he is approached by a royal official whose son is at the point of death (Jn 4:46-47). The official asks if Jesus would come to Capernaum to heal his son (Jn 4:47, 49). Rather than leave the area, Jesus heals the boy from a distance, telling the official: "Your son lives" (Jn 5:50). The man "believes" Jesus and departs to his home (Jn 5:50). Upon his arrival, his servants inform him that his son has been healed, exactly as Jesus said (Jn 5:51-53). John confirms that this is Jesus' "second sign" (Jn 5:54).

It is important to note that the official believes before seeing evidence of his son's healing. This is far different from those who initially welcomed him into the region. Carson notes that their welcome "was fundamentally flawed, based as it was on too great a focus on miraculous signs (v. 45; cf. 2:23-25)."[69] Regardless of why they followed him, or when the official trusts in him, the restoration of the official's son is a picture of Jesus' mission—to bring life to a world in the throes of death. We would expect that someone well-versed in the Jewish scriptures, like Nicodemus, would have understood this. Instead, two unlikely people, a Samaritan woman and a Roman official, whom the Jews would have considered "outsiders to the covenants of promise," become beneficiaries of God's salvation.

The Jerusalem cycle: Signs 3–7 (John 5:1–12:50). John 5:1–12:50 records the remaining messianic signs. The seventh is the climactic

[68]Gerard S. Sloyan notes the pastoral implications of John 4: "An important avenue to reconciliation is acknowledging the full religious and human capacities of the 'other'" (*John*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching [Atlanta: John Knox, 1988], 59).

[69]Carson, *John*, 238.

sign, foreshadowing the death and resurrection of Jesus. The section also features the Feast of Tabernacles and Jesus' interaction with Jewish leaders, providing insight into how the religious establishment saw Jesus as a threat to their authority. John 11–12 initiate a transition from the Book of Signs to the Book of Exaltation, which describes Jesus as being "lifted up" for the entire world (Jn 13:1–20:31).

Sign 3: Healing of a lame man (John 5:1-47). Jesus returns to Jerusalem during the "feast of the Jews" (Jn 5:1). John does not mention the name of the feast, wanting his readers to focus on Jesus' third messianic sign. Jesus tells a paralytic man: "Get up, take your bed and walk" (Jn 5:8). The man immediately "became well and took his bed and walked" (Jn 5:9). The man's healing should be understood within the larger matrix of prophetic expectations, especially Isaiah 35, which foreshadows the healing of the lame alongside the restoration of creation. When we set Isaiah 35 as the backdrop for reading John 5, we see that Jesus healing a lame man, though only described in two verses, is meant to evoke the grand picture of God restoring the earth, delivering it from sin and all its effects.

The Jewish leaders of that day disagreed. All they could think about was Jesus healing "on the Sabbath day" (Jn 5:9). Undoubtedly there are biblical passages that forbid work on the Sabbath (Ex 20:8-11; 31:15-16; Lev 23:3; 25:2; Deut 5:12-15). Among these is also the prohibition to "bear a burden" and bring it into Jerusalem, which likely covers the man carrying his bed (Jer 17:21-22).[70] The focus on the biblical injunctions against work on the Sabbath means the leaders missed the point of what Jesus was trying to evoke, especially when considering what the Sabbath represents in Jewish apocalyptic literature. For example, *4 Ezra* 7–8 and the *Life of Adam and Eve* 51 note that the Sabbath is intended to symbolize the rest from the curse that will take place in the new creation. When first-century Jews kept the Sabbath, relieving themselves from the pain and sweat of their brow they experienced the other six days of the week, they were to anticipate the day when people will experience eternal rest in a new Eden (cf. Ezek 36–37; Rev 22). The Jewish leaders of that day miss the typological significance of the third messianic sign. As a result, they decide to kill the man who has come to renew the earth (Jn 5:15-16).

They become even more upset when Jesus claims that his authority to "work" on the Sabbath is sourced in his status as God (Jn 5:17-18). Jesus' "work" means that he was in the process of renewing his creation, of bringing rest to the earth. Yet the leadership continues to miss the point of Jesus' words.

Jesus continues to press the issue, arguing that "as the Father raises the dead and gives life, so also the Son gives life to whom he desires" (Jn 5:21). Deuteronomy 32:39 and 1 Samuel 2:6 testify to God's prerogative to "give life" to real flesh and blood people. He heals wounds and diseases, making people whole (2 Kings 5:7; cf. Is 53). The one who believes in Jesus also believes in the Father, becoming a recipient of "eternal life" and "crossing over from death to life" (Jn 5:24).[71] Jesus, then, has the power to transfer a person's existence to a new creation, where they will experience true life. We experience a foretaste of the future through the power of the Spirit, who has begun the process of healing wounds and making people whole (e.g., Jn 1:4; 3:15-16; 4:36; 6:47; cf. Ezek 36–37; Joel 2).

[70] Thompson, *John*, 122.

[71] John's use of "eternal life" does not refer to heaven or spiritual bliss devoid of matter. Rather, it is in keeping with the way Second Temple texts such as *1 En.* 40:9 and CD 3:20 employ "eternal life" to refer to a future existence in the renewed cosmos.

The religious leaders, of course, do not agree with Jesus saying that he, like the Father, gives life (Jn 5:18). Before rushing to condemnation, we should not put too much hermeneutical distance between ourselves and the Jewish leadership, as if we were immune to the same error. We can also struggle to imagine how Jesus is in the process of healing and restoring lives, of delivering people from sin and all its effects, like social injustice, hunger, and poverty. Perhaps it would be helpful to listen to theologians such as Samuel Escobar, who argues that Christian mission, which is based on the ministry of the historical Jesus, leads us "into direct contact with pain, injustice, the dead end of economic poverty, the abyss of corruption."[72] Such insights enable us to envision that John's Gospel is "good news" to people suffering under repressive circumstances, for he really is "making all things new" (Rev 21:5). The marginalized and oppressed can begin to experience equity and justice in the present, through the renewing work of the Spirit, by trusting that Jesus is the God who grants new life (Jn 5:21-24). This is better than the promise of heaven, which suggests that God loves people's souls but sees fit to leave them in their present squalor and oppression. That's not the message of John's Gospel. Nor is it the witness of so many global Christians.

Jesus promises that his people will experience the fulfillment of the promised new age: "An hour is coming and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live" (Jn 5:25). Though we "already" experience the new age of restoration through the presence of the Spirit ("an hour . . . is now here"), we have "not yet" heard the Son of God call the dead out of the grave ("an hour is coming"). Soon, however, Jesus will raise the dead and complete his plan of restoration: "for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear [the Son of Man's] voice and those who have done good will proceed into eternal life, but those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgement" (Jn 5:28-29). This statement alludes to the promise of resurrection and judgment in Daniel 12:2-3: "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to eternal life and some to shame and eternal contempt. And those who are wise will shine like the brightness of heaven, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever." Thus, in a single pericope Jesus identifies himself as the Son of God, alluding to Psalm 2, and the Son of Man, the figure in Daniel who will exercise dominion over the earth (Dan 7:14) and raise the dead (Dan 12:2-3). The ones who will be resurrected to life are those who believe Jesus is the Messiah. Those who oppose him will experience judgment.

The irony about the whole matter is that the first-century Jewish establishment was well-versed in the very words of Moses, which testify about Jesus (Jn 5:45-47). Though the entire Pentateuch looks forward to a new Moses, we can look to one specific text: "The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you; it is to him that you will listen. . . . And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I shall require it of him" (Deut 18:15, 19). Jesus is the prophet of whom Moses wrote. Since the religious leaders refuse to listen to him, as Moses required, they fail to understand his messianic identity. Consequently, they reject the one who has come to redeem them from the darkness of this sinful age, accomplishing an even greater redemption than Moses in the original exodus story.

[72]Samuel Escobar, *In Search of Christ in Latin America: From Colonial Image to Liberating Savior* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019), 332.

Sign 4: Feeding the multitude (John 6:1-21). After his encounter with Jewish leaders, Jesus heads to "the other side of the Sea of Galilee" to perform his fourth messianic sign (Jn 6:1).[73] The sign takes place near the time of the Passover, which recalls Israel's deliverance from Egypt and God's provision in the wilderness (Jn 6:4). While looking back on these events, the Passover also anticipates a new deliverance and provision for God's people. This expectation forms the interpretive context of the fourth sign.

The fourth sign consists of Jesus turning five loaves and two fish into enough food to feed a large multitude (Jn 6:2-11). Jesus provides more than enough provision, instructing his disciples to collect the leftovers, which consist of "twelve baskets of fragments from the five barley loaves that remained" (Jn 6:13). When the crowd saw the sign, they remarked: "This is truly the prophet who has come into the world" (Jn 6:14). This response strongly suggests that the crowd believes Jesus to be the new Moses promised in Deuteronomy 18:15-18. Whether they understand the full implication of his identity is beside the point. The crowd utters enough truth for us to connect Jesus to the prophet who will accomplish salvation and supply eternal provision for his people (cf. Jn 6:22-59).

Later Midrashic texts, especially in the third and fourth centuries, associate the first deliver, Moses, with the second, the Messiah, "including the miraculous provision of bread from heaven at the time of the Messiah's self-revelation."[74] These thoughts were also swirling in the air of the first century. That's why, after seeing the sign, the crowd wants to make Jesus king (Jn 6:15). Knowing this, he withdraws from the crowd (Jn 6:15). While Jesus will certainly reign over the nations, as Psalm 2 says of God's Son, he would first be "lifted up" on the cross.

Commentators who chastise the crowd for their impulsiveness fail to consider that Jews had been oppressed for centuries, under countries like Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and Rome. They were longing to be delivered from their subjugation, longing for the Messiah. While they did not fully grasp how Jesus would establish his cosmic reign, they were right in seeing him as the king to deliver them from their enemies. Perhaps the world's oppressed have an easier time sympathizing with the crowd's desperation. Such people often live under the shadow of corrupt systems and governments, whose main concern is to maintain power and privilege, even if it means practicing exploitation and subjugation. So, they hope for a new leader to liberate them.

When reading about the eager crowd in John 6, we should realize that they, like so many oppressed peoples, wanted freedom from their oppressors—and they wanted it immediately! And who could blame them? They had been subjugated for centuries. At least they proclaimed the right leader as Messiah, regardless of whether they really understood what they were doing, or the full scope of Jesus' cosmic mission.

Sign 5: Walking on water (John 6:16-21). On the evening of the fourth sign, Jesus' disciples get into a boat and head to Capernaum (Jn 6:17). Along the way, they encounter a fierce storm (Jn 6:18). In the darkness of night, they see Jesus walking on the chaotic waters, evoking the image of Yahweh trampling on the waves of the sea in Job 9:8 (Jn 6:19). The scene

[73]The prepositional phrase *meta tauta* ("after these things") does not specify exactly when Jesus made his way to the Sea of Galilee. John uses these words to string together a narrative of selective stories that is sequential in nature, excluding accounts that are nonessential to John's theological argument. See Köstenberger, *John's Gospel and Letters*, 209.

[74]See the discussion in Blumhofer, *The Future of Israel*, 121.

is supposed to "open the eyes" of the disciples to Jesus' identity.[75] If that were not enough, Jesus tells the frightened disciples: "I am (*egō eimi*). Do not fear." The words *egō eimi* once more recall God's self-revelation to Moses at the burning bush, disclosing that Jesus is Yahweh in the flesh, who has come to establish his dominion over the creation. The account closes with the disciples gladly taking Jesus into the boat, shortly thereafter arriving at land (Jn 6:21).

When looking at the arrangement of John 6, we see that John sequentially arranges the fourth and fifth signs, Jesus feeding the multitude (Jn 6:1-15) and Jesus walking on the sea (Jn 6:16-21), so as to evoke the memory of Moses delivering his people from Egypt and through the chaotic waters of the Red Sea, identifying Jesus as the new Moses. As Yahweh, Jesus' act of deliverance will be far greater than anything Moses accomplished, leading his people out of the darkness of the present age and into a renewed earth.

Bread of life discourse (John 6:22-71). On the next day, the crowd that had eaten their "fill of the loaves" followed him to Capernaum (Jn 6:22-26). Recalling the example of Moses, the crowd challenges Jesus to perform a sign: "Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness, as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat'" (Jn 6:31). Jesus corrects them, saying it was the Father who provided bread, not Moses (Jn 6:32). This bread was not meant to sustain the wilderness generation forever. Eventually, they died (Jn 6:49).

What Jesus provides is greater than anything Moses gave their ancestors. In the discourse, Jesus claims to be "the bread of life" (Jn 6:35), who has "come from heaven, so that anyone may eat of it and not die" but live forever (Jn 6:50-51). Jesus identifies the bread as his "flesh," which he gives for the world (Jn 6:51). As God gave his people manna in the wilderness, Jesus offers himself to a world in need of redemption. What was given during the time of Moses pointed to Jesus. Those who trust in Jesus will partake of a new exodus from this sinful age and into a place far better than Moses could have imagined.

With all that Jesus has said and done, there are still people who do not trust in him (Jn 6:64). Jesus is not surprised by this. He knew exactly who would not believe—even who would betray him, Judas Iscariot (Jn 6:64). This raises some poignant questions for us, the kind that affect our eternal destiny. Will we choose to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, like Peter (Jn 6:68-69)? Or will we reject him, like Judas Iscariot (Jn 6:66, 70-71)? John's Gospel will continue to give us reasons to believe that Jesus is the true Messiah.

The feast of tabernacles (John 7:1-52). Jesus continues his ministry in Galilee, appearing at the Feast of Tabernacles. The feast recalled the time when God provided for his people in the wilderness, following their deliverance from Egypt (Lev 23:42-43).[76] The feast lasted seven days, culminating with a celebration on the eighth day.[77] Each day there was a ceremonial pouring of water, which came to symbolize Israel's eschatological hopes (Num 28:7).[78] Following the exile, Zechariah 14:16-19 calls on all the families of the earth to head to Jerusalem to worship the Lord by keeping the Feast of

[75]The phrases *peripatounta epi tēs thalassēs* (Jn 6:19) and *peripatōn hōs ep' edaphous epi thalassēs* (Job 9:8 LXX) are similar, strengthening the likelihood that John associates Jesus with Yahweh. The differences are the case of the participles *peripatounta* (Jn 6:19) and *peripatōn* (Job 9:8) and John' omission of *hōs ep' edaphous*.

[76]Kanagaraj, *John*, 78; Callahan, "John," 195.

[77]Klink, *John*, 353; Köstenberger, "John," 452.

[78]Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 257.

Tabernacles. Those who failed to do so would receive no rain (Zech 14:17-19). Thus, the nations were to worship Yahweh to receive "life giving waters."[79]

Since the Jewish leaders "were seeking to kill him," Jesus makes his way to the feast "in secret" (Jn 7:1, 10). On the day marked by joyous celebration ("the great day"), Jesus proclaims: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. The one who believes in me, as the Scripture says, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water'" (Jn 7:38). John later tells us that the "living water" symbolizes the Holy Spirit (Jn 7:39).

It is impossible to link Jesus' promise to one specific text. More likely, Jesus evokes a matrix of passages that anticipate eschatological restoration. This includes texts such as Zechariah 14:16-19 and others such as Isaiah 44:3, which associate Yahweh "pouring out water on a thirsty land" with "pouring out the Spirit" on his people (see also Ezek 47:1-12; Joel 2:28).[80] What Jesus utters is loaded with symbolism, revealing that he fulfills the eschatological expectations associated with the Feast of Tabernacles.

In view of Zechariah 14, Jesus is the Lord whom all people should worship and receive "life giving water." John uses "water" as a metaphor for the promised Spirit who would be "poured out" on people, just as prophets like Isaiah and Joel envisioned. All who come to Jesus will receive the life-giving power of the Spirit. Although God sustained the original wilderness generation for a time, as the Feast of Tabernacles was meant to evoke, the Spirit will sustain us long after he has led us out of the wilderness of this dark world.

Subsequently, Jesus' words spark a division over his identity, some claiming that he is the Prophet, others that he is the Messiah (Jn 7:40-41). The people are unaware that Jesus fulfills both offices. Allen Dwight Callahan observes that the controversy "is a conflict of opinions about Jesus's natural origin and whether it disqualifies him from being a prophet."[81] They suppress Jesus' claim to heavenly origin—a fact they undoubtedly know (Jn 7:28-29)—and focus on his home country, claiming that no prophet comes from Galilee (Jn 7:52). This is an inaccurate claim, for Jonah was from this area (2 Kings 14:25). Regardless of what Jesus says or does, the religious establishment is bent on discrediting him, even if it means denying the truth.

The woman caught in adultery (John 7:53–8:11). The account of a woman caught in adultery is one of the most vivid examples of God's grace in the entire biblical tradition. In this story, Jesus freely forgives a woman caught in the act of sexual immorality, despite the expectations of the scribes and the Pharisees. It's exactly what we would expect of one who has come to redeem everything and everyone in the cosmos. John's Gospel has consistently shown that no one is beyond salvation, especially outsiders like an adulterous woman.

While the account fits John's theological emphasis, we must reckon with its exclusion from some of the earliest and most reliable manuscripts, such as $\mathfrak{P}^{66.75}$ (ca. 200 CE) and important fourth-century codices Sinaiticus (א) and Vaticanus (B). As far as we know, fifth-century Codex Bezae (D) is the earliest significant witness for its inclusion in John's Gospel. Add to this that the style and vocabulary of John 7:53–8:11 does not match that of the rest of John's Gospel, and that it seems to interrupt the focus on the Feast of Tabernacles in

[79]Callahan, "John," 195.
[80]Kanagaraj, *John*, 84; Blumhofer, *Future of Israel*, 139.
[81]Callahan, "John," 195.

John 7–8, and the case against its inclusion seems very strong.[82]

Despite the shaky evidence for its inclusion, we have sufficient warrant for believing the historicity of the encounter. Papias mentions that the *Gospel to the Hebrews* contains an account of a woman who was accused of many sins before Jesus (*Hist. eccl.* 3.39). The account is found in Western and Byzantine manuscripts, such as codices Bezae (D), Laudianus (E), and Boreelianus (F), giving it an established ecclesial heritage. Jerome was also familiar with the tradition, including it in the Latin Vulgate. Even though it may not have been original to John's Gospel, Bruce Metzger rightly claims that "the account [of a woman caught in adultery] has all the earmarks of historical veracity."[83]

Many Christian traditions have valued Jesus' encounter with the adulterous women, including those who still read the King James Version. Thus, we cannot simply ignore the story, as if it has no value, or never happened.[84] For centuries, the account has shown believers how Jesus pardons a woman whom religious leaders deem unworthy of forgiveness, having committed the "unpardonable" sin of adultery.

The story should cause us to reflect on how we may be too eager to condemn people for committing any number of unforgivable sins. Those whom we judge look a lot like the people whom Jesus embraces. There is certainly a cost for embracing such "sinners." We may be labeled heretics, or any number of slanderous terms meant to identify us with those outside of orthodoxy, not unlike how the first-century religious establishment attempted to label Jesus. Yet, the eternal price for not doing so outweighs any sufferings associated with the present age.

In short, the story of a woman caught in adultery should remind us of how no one is outside the scope of God's salvation. After all, we are all like the adulterous woman, having gone after other lovers (e.g., Jer 22:20; 30:14). Yet Jesus is merciful to forgive us, as he forgave the adulterous woman (Jn 8:10-11). Seen in that light, the story is in keeping with John's emphasis on the universality of salvation, which extends to those deemed the worst of sinners, even if it was not original to the narrative.

Back to the feast of tabernacles (John 8:12-59). The scene shifts back to the Feast of Tabernacles. Once more, Jesus clashes with the religious leaders, having the audacity to claim: "I am [*egō eimi*] the light of the world [*kosmos*]. Whoever follows me does not walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (Jn 8:12). Jesus again uses the words *egō eimi* to reveal that he is Yahweh, the God who delivered his people from slavery in Egypt. His self-identification as the "light" recalls John's prologue, which reveals that Jesus is the very embodiment of the God who shined his creative light in the primordial darkness

[82]Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/German Bible Society Stuttgart, 1994), 188. See also Beasley-Murray, *John*, 143-44. Chris Keith notes that when the account does appear, it is found in ten different places in the manuscript traditions, such as after John 7:36, 44, 52, and 21:25 ("Recent and Previous Research on the Pericope Adultarae [John 7.53–8:11]," *Currents in Biblical Research* 6 [2008]: 377-404). Sloyan notes that the placement of the pericope in various places "testifies both to its existence as an independent narrative and to the sense of the copyists that it belonged with Jesus' teaching in the temple (cf. John 8:2) as part of his final eschatological warning" (*John*, 95).

[83]Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 188.

[84]Köstenberger, for instance, acknowledges that commentators agree the account "was inserted at a later time" and moves on to discuss John 8:12-59 ("John," 456). Bultmann also omits commenting on the story, saying that it did not belong to the original form of John's Gospel nor the ecclesiastical story (*John*, 312n2). While acknowledging the lack of early reliable evidence, both Klink (*John*, 386-96) and Michaels (*John*, 493-50) see the value of discussing the account of a woman caught in adultery.

(Jn 1:1-5; cf. Gen 1). Only when we take the echoes of Genesis, Exodus, and the prologue of John's Gospel into consideration can we fully grasp the cosmic implications of Jesus' declaration—he has come to deliver the world out of the darkness of sin and death, an act of salvation greater than the one in Egypt, and shine the light of a new creation.[85]

Despite Jesus' claim, the Pharisees remain in darkness.[86] No matter how often Jesus tells them that he has come to accomplish the will of the Father, they still attempt to discredit him, accusing him of being a Samaritan and having a demon (Jn 8:48). Despite how they are depicted in John's Gospel, we should be aware that the Pharisees held that Yahweh would liberate Israel and raise the dead. They even anticipated the coming of the Messiah.[87] Such beliefs are in line with historic Judeo-Christian expectations. Their dissent, of course, is significant: they do not believe that Jesus fulfills Jewish hopes.

When they accuse Jesus of being a Samaritan, the Pharisees attempt to align Jesus with those who combine the worship of Yahweh and idols (Ps 106:34-37), and the accusation of having a demon attempts to align him with those who follow Satan (*Jub.* 19:28-29).[88] But Jesus turns the tables on them, aligning them with the originator of all unfaithfulness: "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do what your father desires" (Jn 8:44). Abraham, then, is not their father, as they claim (Jn 8:53). If they were Abraham's offspring, they would have rejoiced to see Jesus' arrival (Jn 8:56). Instead, they pick up stones (Jn 8:58), confirming their true familial affiliation (Jn 8:44).

Sign 6: Healing a blind man (John 9:1-41). John shifts from the Feast of Tabernacles to Jesus' sixth messianic sign: healing "a man blind from birth" (Jn 9:1).[89] It is important to recognize that the Old Testament suggests that sickness may be the result of an individual's sin (cf. 2 Kings 14:6) or that of their parents (Ex 20:5; Deut 5:9). That's why the disciples ask: "Who sinned? This man? Or his parents?" (Jn 9:2). In this case, neither. It was God's will that the man be born blind, so that his powerful work might be displayed in him (Jn 9:3).

Before performing the sign, Jesus once again says: "I am [*egō eimi*] the light of the world [*kosmou*]" (Jn 9:5). This powerful statement reaffirms that Jesus is the creator God who has come to renew the cosmos, delivering all people and all things from slavery to sin (Gen 1; Jn 1; cf. Jn 8:12). As at other points in the Gospel, the statement prepares the reader for a glimpse of the cosmic restoration Jesus has come to accomplish.

We might expect that Jesus would heal the blind man immediately—but he doesn't. He does something laced with the kind symbolism we have come to expect of John's Gospel: He "spits on the ground and makes mud with the saliva" (Jn 9:6). He then takes the mud he just mixed[90] and "smeared" it on the man's eyes. Klink summarizes the symbolism well: "In

[85]See Beale and Gladd, *The Story Retold*, 142.

[86]Lynn Cohick ("Pharisees," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, 2nd ed. [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003], 675-76) observes that the Pharisees have the authority to convene a council with the chief priests to stop the spread of Jesus' influence, lest Rome take the temple and nation (Jn 11:48); they possibly hold power over synagogue membership (Jn 9:13-41); and they are likely among those who would have had authority over Jewish legal matters (Jn 1, 9).

[87]N. T. Wright provides a helpful discussion of the identity of the Pharisees (*Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vol. 1, *The New Testament and the People of God* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], 184-203).

[88]See Klink, *John*, 421.

[89]See John Painter, "John 9 and the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 28 (1986): 31-61.

[90]The pronoun *autou* modifies *pēlon*, suggesting that this is the mud Jesus had just made.

light of the already established creation motif in the Gospel, the reader is encouraged to understand 'his mud' to be a reference to creation of humanity from the earth" (Gen 2:7).[91] The late fifth and early sixth century African presbyter Ammonius of Alexandria remarks that Jesus "wanted to show with the mud that he himself is the one who made Adam from the earth."[92] As he made humankind from mud once before, Jesus uses mud to symbolize his messianic work of new creation. While the man's life is transformed by the healing, the allusion to a new creation strongly suggests that this sign is intended to reflect what Jesus will do for the entire earth.

Jesus then tells the man: "Go. Wash in the Pool of Siloam (which is translated sent). So, he went, washed, and returned seeing" (Jn 9:7). The command to wash in the pool is reminiscent of Elijah sending Naaman to wash in the Jordan, so that his flesh might be restored (2 Kings 5:10-13).[93] As Naaman headed to the Jordan to be cleansed (albeit after some coaxing), the blind man goes to the pool and his sight is restored.

This miracle is in keeping with Isaiah's anticipation that the Lord would return and "open the eyes of the blind" (Is 53:5). This would occur as an essential event in the restoration of people and the land on which they would dwell, when they would at last see "the glory of the Lord" (Is 35:2). This connection only serves to strengthen the messianic significance of the sixth sign, through which we perceive that Jesus is the Lord who will soon bring restoration and healing. Like other events in John's Gospel, this sign is a microcosm of the future.

When the religious leaders press the man (now made well) for his opinion of Jesus, he utters astounding truth: "From eternity it has not been heard that a man opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing" (Jn 9:32-33). The power to restore sight is so unprecedented that it must be sourced in God himself. There is simply no other explanation. The man later reveals his trust in Jesus—which is the only proper response to Jesus' restorative work (Jn 9:38).

Despite the miracle, the religious leaders remain blind to the fact that Jesus is "the light of the world" (Jn 9:18, 41). They cannot fathom that Jesus is doing what prophets like Isaiah predicted. Roughly twenty centuries later, not much has changed. We still struggle with envisioning the wholeness that Jesus brings to people. We have difficulty fathoming that Jesus has initiated the course of salvation that will continue until the entire creation is restored, which includes bringing justice and equity to the earth. We may attribute this incredulity to a soteriology focused on delivering souls from the present creation (as if it were evil) and into a bodiless existence in heaven. Justo González argues that this problem is rooted in Gnosticism:

> Long before the time of Constantine, some Christians developed a theology that made it possible for them to claim faith without taking the risk faith implied for any oppressed group. This theology was gnosticism. The gnostics were well aware of the evil and injustice that abound in the world. Their solution, however, was not to oppose that evil but rather to surrender this world to the powers of evil, and to turn to a wholly different realm for their hope for meaning and vindication. . . . The physical world was not part of the divine plan for creation but is rather the result of a mistake. In this world,

[91]Klink, *John*, 439.
[92]Elowsky, ed., *John 1–10*, 324.
[93]Köstenberger, "John," 460; Brown, *John*, 1:32.

> and the material bodies that are part of it, our souls are entrapped, although in truth they belong to the spiritual world. Salvation thus consists of being able to flee this material world.[94]

Quite simply, we should avoid a view of salvation that has more in common with Gnosticism than historic Christianity. The former cannot envision how the Messiah's healing of a man born blind gives us a glimpse of the restoration of the full humanity of people who have been denied justice and equity in the present age, preferring a gospel of heavenly escapism. We should hold, instead, that the messianic signs in John's Gospel reveal that Jesus has come to bring wholeness, and thereby dignity, to people who have longed for it, just like the man born blind.

The good shepherd discourse and the feast of dedication (John 10:1-42). The good shepherd discourse is situated within the framework of John 9:1, when Jesus encounters a man born blind, and John 10:21, when members of the crowd ask: "Are these the words of someone possessed by a demon? Would a demon be able to open the eyes of the blind man?"[95] These verses function as an *inclusio*, setting the context for Jesus' self-disclosure as the promised shepherd.

In the discourse, Jesus declares openly: "I am [*egō eimi*] the good shepherd" (Jn 10:11). The familiar words *egō eimi* recall that Jesus is Yahweh, the same God who revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush. His self-designation as the "good shepherd" evokes the framework of Ezekiel 34, where God promises to send a shepherd who would care for his people, unlike all the bad shepherds throughout Israel's history, including the ones in their current context. Ezekiel identifies the "one shepherd" as God's "servant David" (Ezek 34:22-23). This suggests that when Jesus identifies himself as the "good shepherd," he links himself "to Israel's hope and expectations for a Davidic messianic ruler," evoking stories of David (e.g., 2 Sam 7; 1 Chron 17).[96] Within such stories, God promises that a new David would shield his people from affliction (2 Sam 7:10; 1 Chron 17:9). Ezekiel describes this as a time when the shepherd would "tend his people with justice" (Ezek 34:16).[97] Jesus' declaration thus brings to mind the hope of God's salvation through his Davidic Messiah, who would exercise loving oversight of his people.

He loves his flock so much that he willingly "lays down his life for his sheep" (Jn 10:11, 18). These words recall the servant of Isaiah 53, who hands over his life for God's wayward people. Those who hear the voice of the promised shepherd will follow him to "pasture" (Jn 10:4, 7), which is reminiscent of Yahweh leading the Psalmist to the place where his soul is renewed (Ps 23). In keeping with the theme of cosmic redemption, Jesus says that this promise is not only for Israelites, but also for gentiles: "I have other sheep who are not of this fold; it is also necessary for me to lead them" (Jn 10:16).

On a canonical level, Jesus' declaration recalls the hope of a new exodus into a renewed creation, that is, a better pasture. While people like the Psalmist would have rejoiced to hear Jesus' words, at the Feast of Dedication the Jewish leaders desire to stone Jesus, accusing him of blasphemy (Jn 10:22-39). They reject

[94]Justo González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 141.
[95]There is no marker of transition that indicates otherwise, as in John 6:1 and John 7:37.
[96]Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 294.
[97]See Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 292.

that Jesus is the "one from above" who has come to shepherd his people into a place where they will experience the abundant life they never experienced in the present age.

When he identifies himself as the good shepherd, Jesus shatters the first-century religious establishment's self-perception. He displays that his leadership is "from above" while theirs is of this world. He shows that they are like all other leaders throughout Israel's history, like those against whom Ezekiel railed, who are more interested in preserving their authority than caring for people. What Jesus did, in effect, is threaten the status quo, which kept certain people in authority and everyone else in their place. But the religious establishment was engaged in a futile struggle. As John argues, the power that belongs to the devil, his followers, and all the darkness is in the process of being transferred to Jesus and his flock.

What we see in this account provides hope to marginalized believers, whose leaders may pose as good and kind, when they may just be interested in preserving their power.[98] Granted, many leaders usually don't envision themselves that way, believing that they are doing what is best for the sheep. Most people are not fooled. They know that their leaders are trying to preserve authority that will be handed over to Jesus anyway, when he exercises a rule characterized by justice and equity. Until that day, believers can trust that Jesus is the real shepherd, who truly has our best interests in mind, so much that he gave his life to lead us into a better pasture.

Sign 7: The raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-57). The raising of Lazarus is the seventh sign in the Gospel of John. This miraculous event anticipates Jesus' death and resurrection, which itself is a foretaste of the restoration of the cosmos (Jn 11:43-45; 20:30-31). But the religious establishment has "no eyes to see," as Isaiah would say, what Jesus evokes by raising Lazarus out of the tomb (Is 6:10; 32:3). They can only envision how this sign threatens their status. As a result, "the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and asked: 'What should we do? For this man is performing many signs. If we allow him to continue like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away our place and our nation'" (Jn 11:47-48). The chief priests and the Pharisees are committed to doing whatever it takes to preserve their place and privilege in Israel, even if it means putting an innocent man to death (Jn 11:53).

The anointing of Jesus (John 12:1-11). Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrives at Bethany, the site where he raised Lazarus from the dead (Jn 12:1).[99] While there, Jesus was treated to a dinner, where Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, were also present (Jn 12:2). The

[98]See the relevant discussion in Fernando F. Segovia, "The Gospel of John," in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*, ed. Ferando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 156-93. Self-interested leadership extends its tentacles beyond the United States, into places such as Latin America, where North Americans have often exerted power over Christian seminaries and denominations. In the 1960s and 1970s, for instance, the Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano fought to rid itself of American control. On behalf of the seminary, Orlando Costas argued, "Someone, certainly a missionary . . . has said that the [Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano] is a child that has grown and now doesn't want to recognize her mommy. I would say [that we are] like a 48-year-old man whose mother, for reasons of cultural conditioning, has not been prepared to recognize her son's maturity with the promptness that it should, but that is gradually becoming conscience of his duties and responsibilities" (David C. Kirkpatrick, *A Gospel for the Poor: Global Social Christianity and the Evangelical Left* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2019] 69, quoting Orlando Costas, "En el camino hacia un seminario autóctono notas de viaje: 1970," SBL Archives, San José, Costa Rica, 4.).

[99]For a solution to issues of chronology, see Carson, *John*, 427. Michaels refuses to see symbolism in the "six days" (*John*, 663). Klink, however, reminds us that "'six days' was significant at the beginning of the Gospel, the first six days of Jesus's ministry . . . . While this chronology might simply be a time designation in regard to the events surrounding Passover, it also gives emphasis to the last week of Jesus's ministry, just as it did for his first week" (*John*, 524).

presence of these figures shows continuity with the events of John 11.

While Martha serves dinner to Jesus and her brother Lazarus, Mary took a pound of expensive perfume and "anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair" (Jn 12:3; cf. Lk 7:36-38). It was common to anoint someone's feet to prepare them for burial.[100] It was uncommon to do so while a person was living. Thus, Mary does something unprecedented: She prepares Jesus for his coming death and burial.

John mentions that the odor of Mary's perfume fills the entire house (Jn 12:3), which contrasts the "stench of decay about which Martha warned Jesus at Lazarus's tomb" (Jn 12:3; cf. Jn 11:39).[101] The perfume's fragrance suggests that Jesus' coming death would not lead to the decay of his body, but to his resurrection.[102] Unfortunately, this symbolism was lost on Judas, who was more concerned about the money for which the perfume could have been sold (Jn 12:5). Though he pretended that his concern was for the poor, as treasurer he had grown accustomed to skimming from the money bag, which is what he would have done with the funds from the perfume (Jn 12:5-6).

Jesus would not allow Judas to distract from the significance of the event. So, he makes sure that his followers understand that Mary has prepared him for death (Jn 12:7). This does not mean that Jesus was unconcerned for the poor; it simply means that he wants his followers to focus on the significance of his anointing. When Jesus ascends to the Father, they will again devote their attention to the poor, in keeping with commands in passages such as Deuteronomy 15:11. For now, they are to focus on what will soon happen to their Messiah.

Later, a crowd comes to see Jesus and Lazarus in Bethany (Jn 12:9). The Jewish leaders were not pleased that Jesus, after having raised Lazarus, was attracting more followers (Jn 12:11). So, they decide to kill him. Through their evil and ruthlessness, we see the lengths to which some people will go to preserve their power. Unlike the religious establishment, believers are to take their cues from Jesus, who gave his life for his followers, rather than trying to preserve it (e.g., Jn 15:13).

The triumphal entry (John 12:12-19). Jesus now enters Jerusalem, fully aware of his destiny (Jn 12:12). The people "took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, exclaiming: 'Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel!'"[103] While there is no Old Testament precedent for this event, in the first century palm branches were a symbol of liberation for the Jews.[104] The Israelites waved them two centuries prior to Jesus' entry, when they welcomed Simon Maccabeus into Jerusalem as a political hero, having defeated the Syrians and repelling them from the temple (1 Macc 13:51).[105] Hopes for liberation were even minted on coins, bearing the image of a palm tree with the inscription: "for the redemption of Zion."[106] Thus, to wave palms in the air at Jesus' arrival would have symbolized that Israel's political liberation had arrived.

[100]Brown, *John*, 1:454.
[101]Thompson, *John*, 259.
[102]Thompson, *John*, 259.
[103]The *kai* is missing from some manuscripts (e.g., A Γ Δ) but found in reliable witnesses such as $^{2\text{-}*}\aleph^{b}$ and B. If the word is original, it functions appositionally, specifying that the "one who comes in the name of the Lord" is the "King of Israel." Thus, it is acceptable to represent *kai* in translation with a comma, as I have done above, conveying the sense of apposition in the sentence.
[104]Callahan, "John," 201. See, for instance, 2 Macc 10:7.
[105]Klink, *John*, 535. On the importance of the purity of the temple, see 1 Macc 2:50-65 and 2 Macc 6:24-28.
[106]William R. Farmer, "The Palm Branches in John 12, 13," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 3 (1952): 64.

Waiving palm branches has a further significance. A decade or so later John would write Revelation, where he depicts a heavenly scene: "A great multitude . . . from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out . . . 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" (Rev 7:9-10). This canonical connection enables us to envision that "waiving palm branches" at Jesus' arrival means that he is more than Israel's deliverer—he is the liberator of all people enslaved to the present age, including those who have been demonized for their concern for justice, the very thing that God promises for his people in their eschatological redemption (Is 65–66; Rev 22).

The crowd in Jerusalem cried out "Hosanna," which means, "Save us!" (cf. Ps 118:25-26). Regardless of how well they understood his identity, Jesus is their promised liberator. He is better than all the Maccabean figures. And he is undoubtedly better than any political savior. While we may be tempted to place our hope in temporal rulers, like presidents or elected officials, only Jesus can save us from sin and all its consequences. We must avoid thinking that our favorite politician will bring our respective nation into a permanent age of prosperity. Christians should not be swept away in such fervor. Our faith in politicians should be tempered by the fact that humanity's hope for freedom and deliverance is only in King Jesus. Anyone else is sure to disappoint.

Unlike false saviors, Jesus had the right to ride into the capital city, symbolically announcing his enthronement. By riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, Jesus fulfills the messianic expectations of Zechariah 9:9: "Do not fear, daughter of Zion! Look! Your king is coming, sitting on the foal of a donkey!" (Jn 12:15). When his kingdom is established, Jesus will bring lasting peace to the cosmos.

After seven identity-revealing signs, and several scenes with people like Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, there is sufficient reason to believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah. We would think this would have been evident to those who witnessed Jesus' miraculous deeds and heard his powerful words. Yet John tells us that some persist in unbelief, while others believe in secret, afraid of being put out of the synagogue by the Pharisees (Jn 12:37-43). The Pharisees, and the rest of the Jewish establishment, cannot thwart God's plan to "lift up" Jesus for the world. Jesus will soon reverse the order of things, laying low the powerful and raising up the meek.

THE BOOK OF EXALTATION (JOHN 13:1–20:31)

John 13:1 opens the Book of Exaltation. This second major unit in John's Gospel leaves no doubt about Jesus' identity. When he is "lifted up," all will see that he is the promised Messiah and Son of God who has come to rid the world of darkness and initiate the process of restoring the earth. The farewell discourse explains this event to the disciples, along with the promise of the Spirit (Jn 13:1–17:26), and the passion and resurrection of Jesus give us a picture of what Jesus has in store for the world (Jn 18:1–20:31).

Farewell Discourse: Preparation for exaltation (John 13:1–17:26). The farewell discourse ensues with a farewell meal (Jn 13:1-38). The scene reveals that Jesus has full awareness of the absolute power the Father has bestowed on him. We see this when John records that Jesus knows that "the Father has given all things into his hands" (Jn 13:3).[107] We could only imagine what Israel's religious establishment would do with such power.

[107]See Segovia, "John," 183.

During the course of the meal, Jesus rises and washes his disciples' feet, displaying that the most powerful man in the universe has come to offer his life for the sins of his people (Jn 13:4-5; cf. Phil 2:6-7; Ezek 36:25-27). That Jesus would "serve" in this way identifies him with Isaiah's servant, who would suffer for the transgressions of Israel (Is 53:6). We must not miss the irony in John 13: The one with "all power" reveals that he will do what is fitting for people with "no power." And he will do so in the humblest way possible, giving his life on a cross, a means of execution so dehumanizing that it is reserved for the worst of criminals (Jn 10:15).

Jesus expects that his people will follow his example, exhorting them to "wash one another's feet" (Jn 13:14). Believers, then, are to serve in ways that people normally associate with those of low status. We are to humble ourselves, identifying with the lowly, as Jesus identified with the humble in his death. In so doing, we come closer to fulfilling our true vocation—to be like Jesus, who was treated like a criminal, having been stripped of his rights and dignity. In our day, it may mean finding solidarity with people on death row or immigrants in detention centers, those whom society has rendered powerless, rather than people in the Whitehouse or on Wallstreet.

The call to "wash one another's feet" is one and the same with the "new command" to "love one another" (Jn 13:34). While loving others is grounded in the Ten Commands or Ten Words given to Moses, the ability to obey God is associated with the new age. That's why Jesus calls it a "new command." Throughout their history, Israel struggled to keep the intent of the law, loving God and others, so they were sent into exile (Exod 20; Deut 28). The prophets anticipated the days when the Spirit would enable God's people to obey his commands (Ezek 36:25-27; Jer 31:31-34). When Jesus sends the promised Spirit, his people would be empowered to live as never before, loving God and neighbor from the heart (Acts 2, 8, 10).

Not all at the meal would receive the Spirit. During the course of the evening, Jesus identifies Judas as the one who would betray him (Jn 13:21-30). John records that he leaves "at night" to hand Jesus over to the religious leadership of the day—those who would do anything to protect their power (Jn 13:30). Their attempt, of course, is futile. It's only a matter of time before all authority is handed over to the true lord of the world. This is a good reminder that attempts to preserve power are useless—its all going to be given to Jesus anyway.

The remainder of the farewell discourse explains the nature of the place Jesus is preparing for his followers (Jn 14:1-31), his identity as the "true vine" (Jn 15:1-17), the promise of the Spirit (Jn 15:18–16:33), and a final prayer of protection (Jn 17:1-26). All this moves the narrative closer to the exaltation of Jesus, initiating the healing of the world.

Preparing a place (John 14:1-31). In the next section of the discourse, Jesus assures his followers that his departure is for their own good, so that he might prepare an eternal home for them: "In my Father's house [*oikia*] there are many rooms. But if it were not so, would I say to you that I am going to prepare a place [*topon*] for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that you will also be where I am" (Jn 14:2-3). Interpreters have proposed various meanings for the place Jesus will prepare for his people.

Some argue that the word *oikia* insinuates that Jesus gives his followers hope of a heavenly temple.[108] Others contend that Jesus promises

[108]Steven M. Bryan, "The Eschatological Temple in John 14," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 15 (2005): 187-98; Kanagaraj, *John*, 144-45.

his people a heavenly abode with God.[109] Each of these readings overlooks that in John's Gospel *oikia* is a special metaphor that refers to an actual place where a person dwells (e.g., Jn 11:31, 12:3).[110] And we have no reason to think *oikia* in John 14:2-3 is any different, especially since Jesus uses the word in connection to an actual "place" (*topos*).[111] Add to this the idea that Jesus' mission in the Gospel is to restore his creation and the sense of John 14:2-3 is clear: Jesus will leave to prepare a physical dwelling for his followers.[112] When he returns, Jesus will dwell with his people in the renewed cosmos he will have established for them (Rev 21:1, 3; cf. Is 65:17–66:24).

Knowing the ambiguity in his disciples' minds, Jesus clarifies the way to where he is going: "I am [*egō eimi*] the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Once more, Jesus identifies himself with the words *egō eimi*. As Israel's God and creator of the cosmos, it is fitting that only through him will his people find their "way" to the Father.[113] That means humanity must trust that Jesus is the very embodiment of "truth" and "life," leading to an existence in a far better world (Jn 14:8-10).[114]

When Jesus leaves to prepare an eternal dwelling place, he will not leave his people alone; he will send the Spirit in his place (Jn 14:16-17, 25-26). The Spirit will remain with us until Jesus returns to consummate the present age (Jn 14:16). Until then, we can trust that the Spirit's arrival fulfills the prophets' eschatological expectations, of when God would empower his people to follow him in obedience (Ezek 36:25-27; Jer 31:31-34).

It is no coincidence that the present section emphasizes the coming of the Spirit along with the call to "keep [Jesus'] commands" (Jn 14:15, 21, 23). The Spirit will remind Jesus' followers about all the Messiah has said and done, enabling his people to "keep the commands" with which the old covenant community had such difficulty (Jn 14:26). One of the most important expressions of the Spirit indwelling God's people is that he will enable us to love one another, as Jesus calls his disciples to do in John 13:34-35 and 15:10. This kind of obedience is evidence that we really do love Jesus and will dwell with him forever (Jn 14:15, 21).

Keeping Jesus' commands—embodied in the call to love our neighbor—varies from one context to another. Christian academics, for instance, can love their neighbor by intentionally bringing women and persons of color into course lectures, making sure that students read their names, see their faces, and hear their contributions. In so doing, we take marginalized voices and bring them to the center of conversation. Ministers can include quotes in their sermons from Latino authors like Robert Chao Romero and Black preachers like Tony Evans, showing congregants that their insights are just as valuable as those from the majority group. But loving others is not just reserved for academics and ministers. All Christians are called to love people at the margins and make them the center of our love and attention. If Jesus really has gone to prepare a better place for us, where all will receive equal love and attention, then Christians should start living now in light of the future, thereby giving unbelievers a glimpse of the acceptance all will

[109]Thompson, *John*, 307; Bultmann, *John*, 602.
[110]Klink, *John*, 614. See also BDAG, 695.
[111]See the similar use of *topos* as a "physical place" in 2 Sam 7:10 and Tob 3:6 LXX.
[112]See Klink, *John*, 615.
[113]Brown notes that most ancient and modern interpreters have read John 14:6 as the promise of eternal life in heaven or the ascent of the soul to a place removed from spatial realities (*John*, 2:621)
[114]See Thompson, *John*, 309.

experience in the world that Jesus is preparing for his followers.

The true vine (John 15:1-17). At the inception of this section, Jesus declares: "I am [*egō eimi*] the true vine" (Jn 15:1). We are already familiar with *egō eimi* statements identifying Jesus as the God of Israel. So, we will give more attention, as the thrust of the passage requires, to Jesus' self-identification as the "true vine." Jesus uses a metaphor that Isaiah applies to Israel, whom he accuses of producing bad fruit, i.e., living unfaithfully to God, as evidenced by their wicked deeds (Is 5:1-7).[115] Israel was therefore a vine fit to be burned, which is another way of saying they deserved the judgment of exile (Is 5:1-2; Ezek 15:2-6; 19:10-14).[116] In identifying himself as the "true vine," Jesus reveals that he is a new kind of Israelite—one who is faithful to the Father, even to the point of "laying down his life" for his brothers and sisters, taking the punishment they deserve (Jn 15:13). In so doing, he will reverse the destiny of his people, enabling them to produce "good fruit" (Jn 15:3-8, 16), which is equivalent to saying he will empower them to "keep the commands" (Jn 15:10-11). This is the kind of obedience Jeremiah expected when God delivered Israel from exile and brought them into a restored land (Jer 31:31-40). John expands the focus of new covenant obedience to include people throughout the entire world who trust in Messiah Jesus.

In "laying down his life," Jesus fulfills the command to "love one another" (Jn 15:13, 17). In so doing, we have the perfect example of obedience—loving people to the point of giving our lives to deliver them from the oppression of sin. We should not underestimate how costly it is to follow this example. If Jesus paid with his life, at the very least we should expect to be maligned by those who criticize our justice advocacy. Following Jesus, however, most certainly includes being aware of the injustices associated with the curse of sin and death and, by the power of the Spirit, doing something about it. Is this not what God did when he "heard the cries" of the Israelites and sent Moses to redeem them from bondage in Egypt (Ex 3:9-11)? Is this not what God did when he "heard the cries" of humanity and sent Jesus to redeem the world from slavery to sin (Gal 4:6-7)? Scripture resoundingly testifies that we serve a God who is aware of injustice—and does something about it, even giving his own life. We should assume that he expects nothing less from his followers.

Undoubtedly, then, we must count the cost of following Jesus. The parable of the rich young man is a good example. When told to give away his money to follow Jesus, the young man refused, for he was very wealthy (Mt 19:16-22). He was not willing to exchange his "capital" for the promise of eternal life. Like the rich young man, God calls us to risk what we have acquired, like relationships and distinguished positions, in order to follow Jesus in sharing and living a gospel that delivers people from sin and all of its tangible effects, like poverty and racism. And those who lose what they have acquired for living faithfully have the prospect of reigning with Jesus in the new world—which is far better than the wealth and prestige associated with this passing world (Mt 19:27-30).

The Spirit's coming (John 15:18–16:33). As the farewell discourse draws to a close, Jesus warns his followers that the world will hate them, just as it has hated him (Jn 15:18-25). Such enmity

[115]Beale and Gladd, *The Story Retold*, 146; Köstenberger, "John," 490-91; Klink, *John*, 650.

[116]Klink, *John*, 650. John F. O'Grady argues for the close relationship between the Good Shepherd discourse and the parable of the vine due to structural and theological similarities ("The Good Shepherd and the Vine and the Branches," *Biblical Theological Bulletin* 8 [1978]: 86-89).

will manifest itself in their persecution, which they will not face alone (Jn 15:20). Jesus will send his Spirit, who will embolden his people to bear witness to his restorative work (Jn 15:26-27). The Spirit will also convict the world of sin and the coming judgment (Jn 16:5-11), guide his followers into "all truth" (Jn 16:13), and declare "the things that are to come" (Jn 16:13). The latter is especially important in the face of persecution, for it reminds us of the future judgment of the world and the renewal of all things. When Jesus ascends to the Father, the Spirit will assure us that no matter how difficult the persecution, or how much the darkness seems to overshadow the light, Jesus will return to makes things right.

Despite living in a hostile world, Jesus' followers have good reason to be courageous. No matter what happens now, Jesus will return to make his creation whole, including those suffering under oppression, just like the Israelites living under Roman rule. As Jesus overcomes a dark world through his suffering and resurrection, we have the hope of overcoming our present difficulties through the power of the Spirit, who will raise us to enjoy a place transformed by Jesus the Messiah. There, we will experience the wholeness for which we have longed—the deliverance from oppression and the full restoration of our dignity—when we at last "overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). That day will be especially sweet for those who have suffered great affliction in the present age.

High priestly prayer (John 17:1-26). Jesus' intercessory prayer for his followers, commonly known as the high priestly prayer, concludes the farewell discourse. The prayer is composed of three petitions. In the first petition, Jesus prays for the glorification of the Father and Son (Jn 17:1-18; see Jn 17:1). Jesus' entire ministry has been directed toward his "exaltation"—through which the Godhead will receive glory by granting "eternal life" to all whom the Father has given to him (Jn 17:2). For the majority of the Gospel, John has asserted that Jesus has come to give his followers life in a new world. Now Jesus assures his followers that they can begin to enjoy this existence in the here and now, knowing that the Father is the "only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you [the Father] has sent" (Jn 17:3).

In the second petition, Jesus intercedes for his followers (Jn 17:9-20). As he sends his disciples into a dark world, Jesus prays for their unity and protection from the evil one (Jn 17:12, 18). Jesus knows that the world will hate them, as it has hated him, despite that he has come to shine his light into the darkness (Jn 1:6-18). For the sake of his followers, he will die, rise from the dead, and ascend to the Father (Jn 17:20).[117] After his ascension, he will send his Spirit to empower his people to extend his mission to the ends of the earth (Jn 15:26-27). The Spirit will see to it that the evil one does not thwart the message of new creation: that the effects of living in a dark world, where different forms of oppression are entrenched in our societies, will give way to an earth transformed by the light of Jesus the Messiah. There, Jesus will reign over his people with justice and equity, just like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and other prophets anticipated. That's the "good news" that Jesus' followers are to announce to the broken and hurting—not a platonic or gnostic vision of heaven that gives people no hope that their fortunes will ever be reversed on the earth.

In the third and final petition, Jesus prays for all who will believe in him through the witness of his disciples (Jn 17:20-26; see Jn 17:20). This is where the focus of the prayer extends beyond his first-century followers to all who will believe in the message that first

[117]Klink, *John*, 722.

originated with Jesus and his disciples. Jesus prays that we may be one and that one day we may be in his presence on a new earth, where all the pain of the present age will be no more (Jn 17:24). That's why Jesus was "sent into the world"—to redeem his entire creation, both human and nonhuman, in an act of cosmic restoration (Jn 17:24). As we take this message to the world, we should keep in mind that the "exaltation" of Jesus makes possible the restoration of a world enslaved to darkness, which carries out its oppression in a variety of individual and systemic ways. That the cross brings about a cosmic reversal of fortunes is good news for humanity, for they will soon be "lifted up" to enjoy their full humanization, like peace and joy—what the darkness has tried to keep people from enjoying since Adam and Eve were first exiled from the garden.

The trials, death, and empty tomb: The exaltation of Jesus (John 18:1–20:31). After his High Priestly Prayer, Jesus departs "with his disciples across the Kidron brook" and enters a "garden" (Jn 18:1). The garden scene is a major transition point in the Gospel, setting in motion a series of events leading to the exaltation of Jesus. As we've noted, this event marks the turning point for the cosmos, when the darkness begins to fade, and the light of a new creation breaks forth. But the darkness will not depart quietly. It would do its worst to preserve its power over the world, even if it means arresting and crucifying the lord of the universe.

John uses the garden scene to recall Genesis 1–3, so that we might envision that Jesus is on a mission to create a new paradise for humanity.[118] That Jesus was crucified and resurrected in a garden solidifies his mission, of which he is the first fruits (Jn 19:41; 20:15).[119] Unbeknownst to Judas and the officers of the chief priests and Pharisees, the events following Jesus' arrest serve to fulfill the purpose for which he came to the earth.

Trials of Jesus (John 18:12–19:16). After his arrest, the Jewish leadership puts Jesus through a series of trials (Jn 18:12). They have no intention of giving him a fair hearing. The establishment sees Jesus as a threat to their authority, so they will do whatever it takes, even if it means releasing an insurrectionist, to convict him of a crime worthy of death (Jn 18:40). Perhaps they were ignoring texts prohibiting legal injustice, like Leviticus 19:15. What we can say for certain is that the religious establishment is blind to what is increasingly clear to readers of John's Gospel: that Jesus is the real king, whose reign is about to change the political and social order of the cosmos.

The Jewish leadership first brings Jesus before Annas, Israel's former high priest. Predictably, he finds him guilty and sends him to Caiaphas, the current high priest (Jn 18:19-24). John does not tell us what happened during Jesus' trial before Caiaphas. From Matthew's account, we assume he was found guilty of blasphemy, making him worthy of death (Mt 26:57-75). In John's Gospel, however, Caiaphas only serves to send Jesus on to Pilate (Jn 18:28). Since the Jews were under Roman rule, only Pilate had the authority to put Jesus to death (Jn 18:30-31). Even though they were under Roman authority, the Jewish establishment turns to their oppressors to crucify an innocent man who threatens their authority.

Before we rush to judgment, we should reflect on how we are also prone to collude with power for personal gain, even if it means

[118]My reading is influenced by Klink, *John*, 733. Establishing the theological significance of the garden is uncommon in Johannine scholarship. See, for instance, Brown (*John*, 2:806), who argues against the presence of the motif, and Kanagaraj (*John*, 172) and Thompson (*John*, 362-63), who do not mention the theological implications of the garden.

[119]Klink, *John*, 733.

compromising our ethical standards. We should avoid this approach, even if we are oppressed or marginalized. Israel' prophets call God's people to repentance, trusting that only Yahweh will fulfill the kingdom promises (Deut 28–30; Is 1; Jer 35; Amos 9). He is the only one who will give us true authority under his reign and autonomy from our enemies (2 Sam 7; 1 Chron 17). In our desire to be free—which is good and right—we should always keep our trust firmly in Jesus, the promised Messiah who has come to liberate us from sin and all its repercussions, including repressive authorities.

When we are aware of our own sinful inclinations, we understand why the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day, as sinful as their actions were, colluded with Rome to kill their promised king. We must learn from their mistakes, reminding ourselves that power is reserved for Jesus, from which we will benefit when he establishes his reign on the earth (Rev 20–22). Our hope for any lasting deliverance and authority must be in him.

When Jesus stands before Pilate, the Roman governor asks: "Are you the king of the Jews?" (Jn 18:33). Jesus knows that this question comes from the Jewish leaders' accusations, who don't fully understand his identity (Jn 18:34). His answer is appropriate: "My kingdom is not of this world" (Jn 18:36). This was a different response than what Pilate was accustomed. He was used to rulers who laid claim to particular lands or territories—not an otherworldly kingdom, one that would soon overtake the entire earth. Jesus is a far bigger threat than Pilate or the first-century Jewish authorities imagine. Jesus has not just come for Judea or Rome; he has come for the entire cosmos. Although the king of the universe is before him, Pilate does not recognize him. Nor does he understand the suffering Jesus must endure to establish his reign. What Pilate does recognize is that Jesus has committed no crime, so he will try to release him (Jn 18:39). The crowd, however, is insistent on crucifying the king, choosing to have Barabbas released in his stead (Jn 18:40).

Knowing that his release could spark an insurrection, threatening his own authority, Pilate complies with the Jews (Jn 19:6-8, 12-16). As readers of John's Gospel, we know what Pilate and the Jewish leaders do not understand: Power is slipping out of their hands. The more they try to preserve it, the more they are losing it. It's only a matter of time before all authority is handed over to Jesus. Since the path to his reign is through a bloody cross, Pilate plays his part in this cosmic drama.

At first, he tries to appease the Jews by flogging Jesus (Jn 19:1). The soldiers adorn him with a crown of thorns and a purple robe (Jn 19:2). Then their mocking ensues: "Hail, King of the Jews!" (Jn 19:3). Their taunting only confirms what is partially true—in reality, he is the king of the cosmos, including Rome, just as the Psalmist affirms (Ps 2:8). As their sovereign, he has the power to crush all rebellion (Ps 2:9-12). If the soldiers had any sense, they would stop mocking the king whose anger will soon be kindled against all insurrectionists (Ps 2:12).

Despite Pilate's attempts at releasing Jesus, the Jewish leaders cry: "Crucify! Crucify! . . . We have a law, and according to that law he deserves death, for he has made himself out to be the Son of God!" (Jn 19:6-7). They attempt to force Pilate's hand by appealing to their religious and political law. To add to the pressure, they threaten his loyalty to Caesar (Jn 19:12). Sensing his own authority is being threatened, he compromises the standards of justice he is supposed to uphold, handing Jesus over to be crucified (Jn 19:16). Before he does, we should

note the cries of the chief priests: "We have no king but Caesar!" (Jn 19:15). By giving their allegiance to Caesar, Jewish leaders reveal their affiliation with those who oppose God.[120] This is something we have sensed throughout the narrative, only now proclaimed from their own mouths. As God's Son, Jesus will soon execute judgment on all who refuse to honor him as king (Ps 2:9-12). Since the Jewish leaders would rather align themselves with Caesar, their fate will be tied to those who refuse the authority of Jesus, like Pilate.

At the risk of casting all the blame on the Jewish establishment, we should recognize that both the Jewish leaders and Pilate had a role in crucifying Jesus. While our focus has been on the former's actions, we must stress that Pilate was no less culpable. He knew Jesus was innocent. He could have resisted the pressure from the Jewish leadership. Instead, he approved of the execution of God's son. Seeing the culpability of both parties promotes a reading of John's Gospel that does not place all of the blame for Jesus' death on the Jews. Such readings have been used to promote antisemitism, something which John, who himself was a Jew, would never have condoned.[121]

Death and empty tomb (John 19:16-42). The soldiers lead Jesus out to a place called Golgotha, where he is crucified between two other men (Jn 19:17-18). Since the entire Gospel has been looking forward to this moment, we should expect him nowhere else than at the center of the crucifixion scene. The stage is set for the death and resurrection of the king.

Pilate contributes to this expectation, inscribing the words: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" (Jn 19:20). Though he writes this to insult the Jewish leaders, his words serve as a notice to all who read John's Gospel: The king is about to offer his life.[122] When he does, the darkness will flee, and the light of a new creation will shine forth. The signs in John's Gospel are a foretaste of what he is about to accomplish.

Before the scene's climax, the soldiers cast lots to determine who would keep Jesus' tunic (Jn 19:2-24). John tells us that their actions fulfill Psalm 22:18 (21:19 LXX): "They divided my clothing among them, and for my tunic they cast lots."[123] By quoting the Psalm, John identifies Jesus with David, who suffers innocently at the hands of his adversaries.[124] In the throes of his own injustice, Jesus shows that he is the greater David-like ruler whose reign will not be thwarted, despite the efforts of the people. Though David reigned over the land of Israel, Jesus' suffering establishes his rule over the earth.

After enduring the agony of the cross, Jesus says, "It is finished!" These are the Gospel's climactic words, with which Jesus acknowledges that he has completed the work assigned to him by the Father. Through his suffering and death, Jesus initiates the liberation of the world from the powers of sin and death (Jn 1:1-18, 29; 3:16-17; 4:34; 5:36; 10:10; 17:4). Soon the creation will be renewed, and the darkness will have no foothold on the earth. We can imagine how Jesus' final words reverberated throughout

[120]Klink, *John*, 785.

[121]For a reading that is conscience of an antisemitic understanding of "the Jews" in John's Gospel, see Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 302-18.

[122]Origen argues, "Whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed king, and every letter bears witness of his reign, whether of Greeks, or Romans, or Hebrews. And for a crown above his head was written, 'This is Jesus the King of the Jews'" (Joel C. Elowsky, ed., *John 11–21*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture [Downers Grove: InterVarsity], 311).

[123]John cites the exact words of Ps 21:19 LXX: *diemerisanto ta himatia mou heautois kai epi ton himatismon mou ebalon klēron* The English translation reflects the chapter and verse order of the BHS.

[124]See Beal and Gladd, *The Story Retold*, 149-50; Blumhofer, *The Future of Israel*, 199.

the cosmos, announcing the arrival of freedom and restoration. Soon God's Spirit will overwhelm the darkness, empowering his people to practice a heartfelt love for God and neighbor, exactly as the Old Testament prophets anticipated. Among other things, this means that racism will be replaced by acceptance, xenophobia will be substituted by hospitality, and abuse will be supplanted by genuine care. No one will be called a stranger or outsider in the restored cosmos because all will be at home with their God. Jesus' final words certainly speak more than we can imagine—but no less than what we have mentioned.

John mentions that not one of Jesus' bones were broken, fulfilling Passover imagery from Exodus 12:46 (Jn 19:33, 36) and revealing he is truly the "lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (Jn 1:29; cf. Is 53:7-12). As mentioned earlier, Passover imagery also alludes to Isaiah 53:7-12, which compares the servant to a lamb led to the slaughter. All this enables us to envision how Jesus is the lamb of God who offers his life to liberate his entire creation from the darkness that has ensnared it since Adam and Eve were exiled from the Garden of Eden. Rightly does Jesus accomplish a new exodus, delivering the world from an oppression greater than anything Israel experienced under Pharaoh.

Arising out of the tomb, which just so happens to be in a garden, Jesus is the first fruits of a world that will blossom into the renewed Eden. The remainder of John's Gospel records how Jesus shows his disciples that he has been raised from the dead, proving he is the victorious king who restores all things.

Appearances of the resurrected Jesus (John 20:1-29). When Mary Magdalene reports that Jesus' body is no longer in the tomb, Peter and the beloved disciple run to the tomb to see for themselves (Jn 20:1-4). When they arrive, all they find are linen cloths (Jn 20:5-7). Though they saw the empty tomb, John records that they were slow to "understand the Scripture, that Jesus must rise from the dead" (Jn 20:9). Despite the obtuseness of the disciples, the empty tomb reveals that Jesus really is the first installment of the resurrection that Daniel anticipates (Dan 12:1-2); he is the first Israelite to whom the Spirit has given new life (Ezek 36–37); he is the suffering servant who has risen to experience eternal life with his offspring (Is 53:10). In him, the promises of resurrection find their fulfillment, displaying to the cosmos a foretaste of the renewal of all things.

Following this scene, Jesus appears, in resurrected form, to Mary Magdalene and the disciples (Jn 20:11-23). Jesus "breathes" on his disciples and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Jn 20:22). This scene recalls Genesis 2:7, when God fills Adam with the "breath of life," and Ezekiel 37:9, when God "breaths" on Israel's dry bones. In keeping with this pattern, Jesus' "breath" on his disciples signifies that he is giving them new life, as he did to Adam in the original garden and he will do for his people in a new garden.[125] In addition, God empowers his followers to be ministers of his renewing work in the world (Jn 20:23). All who believe their message will also receive the life-giving breath of God, ensuring that they will be resurrected into a renewed garden.

The purpose of the book (John 20:30-31). John records many signs which the historical Jesus performed. There are more, of course (Jn 20:30). But what he has recorded is enough to fulfill his purpose: "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (Jn 20:31). By now we should understand that "life" is more than a spiritual reality. Through

[125]See the discussion in Michaels, *John*, 1010-12.

the series of signs, chief among them being the bodily resurrection of Jesus, John reveals that "life" refers to making people whole, delivering them from slavery to the darkness of sin and death in the present age and into one far better.

EPILOGUE (JOHN 21:1-25)

The epilogue of John's Gospel records Jesus' third post-resurrection appearance, which portrays him enjoying a meal of freshly caught fish and bread with his disciples (Jn 21:1-14). According to Jerome, Jesus ate with his disciples so that "he might confirm the doubting apostles who did not dare approach him because they thought they saw not a body but a spirit."[126] This scene reveals once more that Jesus has risen bodily from the grave. A spiritualized resurrection was never the position of John or his earliest readers.

After the meal, Jesus confirms Peter's commitment to shepherd the early followers of Jesus, knowing that he too will suffer and die (Jn 21:15-19). Peter will follow in the footsteps of the great shepherd, Jesus, even to death. It's a good reminder for those of us who desire to follow Jesus. As was the case with our Lord, suffering will soon give way to our glorious resurrection from the grave, when we will enjoy life in a better world.

John's Gospel ends with the assurance that everything the beloved disciple has recorded is true (Jn 21:24). Jesus really is the long-awaited Messiah, the one people like Moses, Isaiah, and Ezekiel wrote about. Through his miraculous signs, culminating in his exaltation on the cross, Jesus shows that he is in the process of recreating the earth, making it into a new Eden. Soon the creation will undergo a cosmic resurrection, undoing the darkness that has overwhelmed it for far too long (cf. Rom 8). On the renewed earth, all power and authority will be handed over to King Jesus. Soon he will reign with the kind of equity and justice the world has yet to see. Those who suffered under abusive authority will flourish under the rule of God's Son and David's royal descendant.

Since all John says is true, we can look forward to the day when all the effects of sin are reversed and Jesus is reigning over a resurrected people, on a renewed earth. But we should not wait until then. The Spirit Jesus promises in the farewell discourse has now come, initiating the process of healing and redemption, of making people and the entire creation whole (Acts 2). That means that the Spirit works through believers to gradually remove the effects of the curse on earth, such as individual and systemic racism, global poverty, government oppression, and exploitation of migrant workers, which will have no place on the earth God is preparing for his people. When we consider the whole of John's Gospel, we see that humanity is called to believe in the Messiah who was crucified and resurrected to renew his creation, delivering it from the power of darkness. In so doing, we have the privilege of participating in the work of restoration that the Spirit has begun on the earth, anticipating the day when Jesus returns and gives eternal wholeness and rest to his creation.

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[126]Elowsky, ed., *John 11–21*, 381.

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