

# JOHN

ANDREAS J. KÖSTENBERGER



Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

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For Timothy John,  
my sweet son,  
with my prayers  
and affection  
John 5:19–20



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## Series Preface

The chief concern of the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (BECNT) is to provide, within the framework of informed evangelical thought, commentaries that blend scholarly depth with readability, exegetical detail with sensitivity to the whole, and attention to critical problems with theological awareness. We hope thereby to attract the interest of a fairly wide audience, from the scholar who is looking for a thoughtful and independent examination of the text to the motivated lay Christian who craves a solid but accessible exposition.

Nevertheless, a major purpose is to address the needs of pastors and others involved in the preaching and exposition of the Scriptures as the uniquely inspired Word of God. This consideration affects directly the parameters of the series. For example, serious biblical expositors cannot afford to depend on a superficial treatment that avoids the difficult questions, but neither are they interested in encyclopedic commentaries that seek to cover every conceivable issue that may arise. Our aim, therefore, is to focus on those problems that have a direct bearing on the meaning of the text (although selected technical details are treated in the additional notes).

Similarly, a special effort is made to avoid treating exegetical questions for their own sake, that is, in relative isolation from the thrust of the argument as a whole. This effort may involve (at the discretion of the individual contributors) abandoning the verse-by-verse approach in favor of an exposition that focuses on the paragraph as the main unit of thought. In all cases, however, the commentaries will stress the development of the argument and explicitly relate each passage to what precedes and follows it so as to identify its function in context as clearly as possible.

We believe, moreover, that a responsible exegetical commentary must take fully into account the latest scholarly research regardless of its source. The attempt to do this in the context of a conservative theological tradition presents certain challenges, and in the past the results have not always been commendable. In some cases, evangelicals appear to make use of critical scholarship not for the purpose of genuine interaction but only to dismiss it. In other cases, the interaction glides over into assimilation, theological distinctives are ignored or suppressed, and

the end product cannot be differentiated from works that arise from a fundamentally different starting point.

The contributors to this series attempt to avoid these pitfalls. On the one hand, they do not consider traditional opinions to be sacrosanct, and they are certainly committed to do justice to the biblical text whether or not it supports such opinions. On the other hand, they will not quickly abandon a long-standing view, if there is persuasive evidence in its favor, for the sake of fashionable theories. What is more important, the contributors share a belief in the trustworthiness and essential unity of Scripture. They also consider that the historic formulations of Christian doctrine, such as the ecumenical creeds and many of the documents originating in the sixteenth-century Reformation, arose from a legitimate reading of Scripture, thus providing a proper framework for its further interpretation. No doubt, the use of such a starting point sometimes results in the imposition of a foreign construct on the text, but we deny that it must necessarily do so or that the writers who claim to approach the text without prejudices are invulnerable to the same danger.

Accordingly, we do not consider theological assumptions—from which, in any case, no commentator is free—to be obstacles to biblical interpretation. On the contrary, an exegete who hopes to understand the apostle Paul in a theological vacuum might just as easily try to interpret Aristotle without regard for the philosophical framework of his whole work or without having recourse to those subsequent philosophical categories that make possible a meaningful contextualization of his thought. It must be emphasized, however, that the contributors to the present series come from a variety of theological traditions and that they do not all have identical views with regard to the proper implementation of these general principles. In the end, all that really matters is whether the series succeeds in representing the original text accurately, clearly, and meaningfully to the contemporary reader.

Shading has been used to assist the reader in locating the introductory comments for each section. Textual variants in the Greek text are signaled in the author's translation by means of half-brackets around the relevant word or phrase (e.g., "Gerasenes"), thereby alerting the reader to turn to the additional notes at the end of each exegetical unit for a discussion of the textual problem. The documentation uses the author-date method, in which the basic reference consists of author's surname + year + page number(s) (e.g., Fitzmyer 1981: 297). The only exceptions to this system are well-known reference works (e.g., BDAG, LSJ, *TDNT*). Full publication data and a complete set of indexes can be found at the end of the volume.

Robert Yarbrough  
Robert H. Stein

## Author's Preface

This commentary represents the culmination of an intensive ten-year study of John’s Gospel, issuing in a monograph on mission in John (Köstenberger 1998b), a basic historical, literary, and theological survey (1999a), and a historical-background commentary (2002c), in addition to several scholarly articles on selected themes (esp. 1995b; 1998a; 2001b: 49–63; 2002b; 2003; 2004). The present work represents an effort to provide a comprehensive (though not exhaustive),<sup>1</sup> balanced treatment of John’s Gospel, both exegetically and theologically, based on the following convictions: (1) John’s Gospel is historically reliable—it stands up well to historical research (Blomberg 2002; Köstenberger 2002c; Riesner 2002) and resists simplistic dichotomizations between history and theology; (2) the Gospel is a product of careful literary composition—though the book is not to be reduced to story, John employs devices of selection, characterization, and plot development (Culpepper 1983; but see the critiques by Carson 1991: 39–40, 63–68; Tovey 1997: 47–52), study of which has the potential of enhancing apprehension of John’s theological message; and (3) John’s ultimate concern is tied to theology—the presentation of Jesus as Messiah and Son of God is in order to lead others to place their faith in Jesus the way he himself had done when Jesus called him to discipleship.

In keeping with these basic convictions, the present commentary is, first, based on historical research pertaining both to the most likely life-setting of the Fourth Gospel and to various details provided by the Johannine narrative. It is hoped that the overall cumulative effect of incorporating this detailed historical research into a full-fledged commentary will be to further rehabilitate belief in the historical reliability of John’s Gospel. A second distinctive of this work is the consistent drawing on the insights of literary studies on individual Johannine narratives. While in the past, the pendulum has at times swung too far in the historical direction—especially during the heyday of the historical-critical method—and at other times (more recently) toward an exclusive concern with literary aspects of the Gospel, the present

1. In light of the intended audience of this work, interaction is for the most part limited to commentaries, monographs, and periodical literature available in the English language. However, where judged essential, material in other languages is referenced as well.

commentary adopts a both-and approach, seeking to avoid both an unduly critical stance toward the Gospel's historical trustworthiness and a reductionism that moves almost entirely on a literary plane and neglects the historical dimension. As an inspired NT document and as the Word of God, John's Gospel demonstrably displays accurate historical detail as well as aesthetically pleasing literary sophistication, which jointly enhance the work's theological presentation and impact.

Hence, third, both historical and literary work are regarded as auxiliary to the theological appreciation of John's Gospel. Here (in the theological area) I have benefited most from the commentaries of my mentor, Don Carson, and the Dutch scholar Herman Ridderbos. While Carson's commentary excels both in its careful weighing of interpretive options and its theological grasp, Ridderbos is a master of theological synthesis, and I have found his treatment of "big-picture" issues particularly illuminating. Leon Morris's commentary, too, is a very fine piece of work and consistently reflects mature judgment that has often pointed the way in my own research. Other major conversation partners in the present commentary are Rudolf Schnackenburg and Raymond Brown (occasional disagreements with them notwithstanding). Frequent reference is also made to the commentaries by Barrett, Beasley-Murray, Keener, and Moloney, not to mention Bultmann, who can be brilliant at one time and rather off course (in my view) at another. I have learned from Martin Hengel and his historical insights (though daring to differ at certain junctures), and I have benefited from the literary work of the likes of Mark Stibbe and R. Alan Culpepper (despite lodging criticisms at individual points of interpretation). Above all, I hope to have learned from Jesus as he speaks to us through the pages of the Gospel of John.

All these debts I gladly acknowledge, and the author and Scripture indexes at the back of this volume indicate further debts, here unacknowledged. The writing of this commentary was for the most part accomplished in a sixteen-month period, from September 2002 through December 2003. It would not have been possible without the wonderful, amazing support of my dear wife Margaret, who had recently given birth to our fourth child, Timothy John. In fact, Timothy's middle name has something to do with the present volume, which his father was in the process of birthing at the time he was born. Timothy, too, is the one to whom this commentary is lovingly dedicated. My other children, Lauren, Tahlia, and David, likewise were fully supportive and often prayed that God would help Daddy finish his commentary. Your prayers have been answered! I am also grateful for several who provided research assistance at various junctures in this project: Michael White, Alan Bandy, Mark Owens, David Croteau, Scott Kellum, and Corin Mihaila. Finally, I would be amiss if I did not acknowledge

the contribution made to this work by my institution, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and its now former president, Dr. Paige Patterson, Dean Russ Bush, and the board of trustees. Thank you for allowing me enough space and time to pursue not only my teaching but also my writing ministry.

*Soli Deo gloria.*

# Abbreviations

## Bibliographic and General

<i>ABD</i>	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , edited by D. N. Freedman et al., 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992)
<i>ASV</i>	American Standard Version
<i>BAGD</i>	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , by W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979)
<i>BDAG</i>	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , by W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, 3d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)
<i>BDF</i>	<i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , by F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and R. W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961)
<i>BEB</i>	<i>Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible</i> , edited by W. A. Elwell, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988)
<i>BGU</i>	Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen (Staatlichen) Museen zu Berlin: Griechische Urkunden, 15 vols. (Berlin, 1895–1983)
<i>Cant.</i>	Canticles (= Song of Songs)
<i>CEV</i>	Contemporary English Version
<i>DJG</i>	<i>Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels</i> , edited by J. B. Green, S. McKnight, and I. H. Marshall (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1992)
<i>DSS</i>	Dead Sea Scrolls
<i>EDNT</i>	<i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , edited by H. Balz and G. Schneider, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990–93)
<i>ESV</i>	English Standard Version
<i>HCSB</i>	Holman Christian Standard Bible
<i>ISBE</i>	<i>The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i> , edited by G. W. Bromiley et al., 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979–88)
<i>ISV</i>	International Standard Version
<i>JB</i>	Jerusalem Bible
<i>KJV</i>	King James Version
<i>LSJ</i>	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> , by H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. S. Jones, 9th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968)
<i>LXX</i>	Septuagint
<i>MM</i>	<i>The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-literary Sources</i> , by J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan (1930; reprinted Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976)
<i>MS(S)</i>	manuscript(s)
<i>MT</i>	Masoretic Text
<i>NA<sup>27</sup></i>	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , edited by [E. and E. Nestle], B. Aland, K. Aland, J. Karavidopoulos, C. M. Martini, and B. M. Metzger, 27th rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993)

NAB	New American Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEAEHL	<i>The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land</i> , edited by E. Stern, 4 vols. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society & Carta/New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993)
NET	New English Translation
NewDocs	<i>New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity</i> , edited by G. H. R. Horsley and S. Llewelyn (North Ride, N.S.W.: Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, Macquarie University, 1981–)
NIDNTT	<i>The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> , edited by L. Coenen, E. Beyreuther, and H. Bietenhard; English translation edited by C. Brown, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975–86)
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
par(s).	parallel(s)
P.Eger.	Egerton Papyrus
P.Oxy.	Oxyrhynchus Papyrus
Qoh.	Qoheleth (= Ecclesiastes)
RSV	Revised Standard Version
Str-B	<i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testamente aus Talmud und Midrasch</i> , by H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, 6 vols. (Munich: Beck, 1922–61)
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich; translated and edited by G. W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)
TNIV	Today's New International Version
UBS <sup>4</sup>	<i>The Greek New Testament</i> , edited by B. Aland, K. Aland, J. Karavidopoulos, C. M. Martini, and B. M. Metzger, 4th rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 1993)
v.l.	<i>varia lectio</i> (variant reading)
ZPEB	<i>Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible</i> , edited by M. C. Tenney, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975)

## Hebrew Bible

Gen.	Genesis	2 Chron.	2 Chronicles	Dan.	Daniel
Exod.	Exodus	Ezra	Ezra	Hos.	Hosea
Lev.	Leviticus	Neh.	Nehemiah	Joel	Joel
Num.	Numbers	Esth.	Esther	Amos	Amos
Deut.	Deuteronomy	Job	Job	Obad.	Obadiah
Josh.	Joshua	Ps.	Psalms	Jon.	Jonah
Judg.	Judges	Prov.	Proverbs	Mic.	Micah
Ruth	Ruth	Eccles.	Ecclesiastes	Nah.	Nahum
1 Sam.	1 Samuel	Song	Song of Songs	Hab.	Habakkuk
2 Sam.	2 Samuel	Isa.	Isaiah	Zeph.	Zephaniah
1 Kings	1 Kings	Jer.	Jeremiah	Hag.	Haggai
2 Kings	2 Kings	Lam.	Lamentations	Zech.	Zechariah
1 Chron.	1 Chronicles	Ezek.	Ezekiel	Mal.	Malachi

## Greek Testament

Matt.	Matthew	Eph.	Ephesians	Heb.	Hebrews
Mark	Mark	Phil.	Philippians	James	James
Luke	Luke	Col.	Colossians	1 Pet.	1 Peter
John	John	1 Thess.	1 Thessalonians	2 Pet.	2 Peter
Acts	Acts	2 Thess.	2 Thessalonians	1 John	1 John
Rom.	Romans	1 Tim.	1 Timothy	2 John	2 John
1 Cor.	1 Corinthians	2 Tim.	2 Timothy	3 John	3 John
2 Cor.	2 Corinthians	Titus	Titus	Jude	Jude
Gal.	Galatians	Philem.	Philemon	Rev.	Revelation

## Other Jewish and Christian Writings

Acts Pet.	Acts of Peter	<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	Eusebius, <i>Historia ecclesiastica</i> ( <i>Ecclesiastical History</i> )
Apoc. Abr.	Apocalypse of Abraham	Jdt.	Judith
Apoc. Mos.	Apocalypse of Moses	Jos. As.	Joseph and Aseneth
<i>Apol.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Apologeticus</i> ( <i>Apology</i> )	Jub.	Jubilee
<i>1 Apol.</i>	Justin Martyr, <i>Apologia i</i> ( <i>First Apology</i> )	Let. Arist.	Letter of Aristea
As. Mos.	Assumption of Moses	Let. Jer.	Letter of Jeremiah
Bar.	Baruch	1–4 Macc.	1–4 Maccabees
2 Bar.	2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch	Mart. Isa.	Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah
3 Bar.	3 (Greek Apocalypse of) Baruch	Mart. Pol.	Martyrdom of Polycarp
4 Bar.	4 Baruch	Odes Sol.	Odes of Solomon
Barn.	Barnabas	Ps. Sol.	Psalms of Solomon
Bel	Bel and the Dragon	Sib. Or.	Sibylline Oracles
<i>Bib. Ant.</i>	Pseudo-Philo, <i>Biblical Antiquities</i>	Sir.	Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)
1–2 Clem.	1–2 Clement	T. Abr.	Testament of Abraham
<i>Dial.</i>	Justin Martyr, <i>Dialogus cum Tryphone</i> ( <i>Dialogue with Trypho</i> )	T. Ash.	Testament of Asher
Did.	Didache	T. Ben.	Testament of Benjamin
1 Enoch	1 (Ethiopic) Enoch	T. Dan	Testament of Dan
2 Enoch	2 (Slavonic) Enoch	T. Gad	Testament of Gad
<i>Epid.</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Epideixis tou apostolikou kerygmatos</i> ( <i>Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching</i> )	T. Isaac	Testament of Isaac
1 Esdr.	1 Esdras	T. Iss.	Testament of Issachar
2 Esdr.	2 Esdras (= 4 Ezra)	T. Jacob	Testament of Jacob
Gos. Thom.	Gospel of Thomas	T. Job	Testament of Job
Gos. Truth	Gospel of Truth	T. Jos.	Testament of Joseph
<i>Haer.</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Adversus haereses</i> ( <i>Against Heresies</i> )	T. Jud.	Testament of Judah
		T. Levi	Testament of Levi
		T. Naph.	Testament of Naphtali
		T. Reub.	Testament of Reuben
		T. Sim.	Testament of Simeon
		T. Zeb.	Testament of Zebulun
		Tob.	Tobit
		<i>Vir. ill.</i>	Jerome, <i>De viris illustribus</i> ( <i>On Illustrious Men</i> )
		Wis.	Wisdom of Solomon

## Josephus and Philo

Abr.	<i>On Abraham</i>	Husb.	<i>On Husbandry</i>
Ag. Ap.	<i>Against Apion</i>	J.W.	<i>The Jewish War</i>
Alleg. Interp.	<i>Allegorical Interpretation</i>	Life	<i>The Life of Josephus</i>
Ant.	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i>	Migr. Abr.	<i>On the Migration of Abraham</i>
Chang. Nam.	<i>On the Change of Names</i>	Mos.	<i>On the Life of Moses</i>
Cher.	<i>On the Cherubim</i>	Post. Cain	<i>On the Posterity and Exile of Cain</i>
Conf. Tong.	<i>On the Confusion of Tongues</i>	Quest. Gen.	<i>Questions and Answers on Genesis</i>
Creat.	<i>On the Creation</i>	Sacr.	<i>On the Sacrifices of Abel and Cain</i>
Decal.	<i>On the Decalogue</i>	Spec. Laws	<i>On the Special Laws</i>
Dreams	<i>On Dreams</i>	Unchang.	<i>On the Unchangeableness of God</i>
Drunk.	<i>On Drunkenness</i>	Worse Att. Bet.	<i>The Worse Attacks the Better</i>
Flight	<i>On Flight and Finding</i>		
Gaius	<i>On the Embassy to Gaius</i>		
Heir	<i>Who Is the Heir of Divine Things?</i>		

## Rabbinic Tractates

The abbreviations below are used for the names of tractates in the Babylonian Talmud (indicated by a prefixed *b.*); Palestinian, or Jerusalem, Talmud (*y.*); Mishnah (*m.*); and Tosefta (*t.*).

'Abod. Zar.	'Abodah Zarah	Hul.	Hullin	Roš Haš.	Roš Hašanah
'Abot	'Abot	Kelim	Kelim	Šabb.	Šabbat
B. Bat.	Baba Batra	Ketub.	Ketubbot	Sanh.	Sanhedrin
B. Meši'a	Baba Meši'a	Mak.	Makkot	Šeb.	Šebi'it
B. Qam.	Baba Qamma	Meg.	Megillah	Šeqal.	Šeqalim
Bek.	Bekorot	Menah.	Menahot	Soṭah	Soṭah
Ber.	Berakot	Mid.	Middot	Sukkah	Sukkah
Besah	Besah	Mo'ed Qat.	Mo'ed Qatan	Ta'an.	Ta'anit
Bik.	Bikkurim	Ned.	Nedarim	Tamid	Tamid
'Ed.	'Eduyyot	Nid.	Niddah	Ter.	Terumot
'Erub.	'Erubin	'Ohal.	'Ohalot	Yebam.	Yebamot
Git.	Git'in	Pe'ah	Pe'ah	Yoma	Yoma
Hag.	Hagigah	Pesah.	Pesahim	Zebah.	Zebahim
Hor.	Horayot	Qidd.	Qiddusin		

## Targumim

Tg. Neof. Targum Neofiti  
 Tg. Ps.-J. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

## Other Rabbinic Works

Mek.	Mekilta	Midr. Rab.	Midrash Rabbah	Rab.	Rabbah
Midr.	Midrash	Pesiq. Rab.	Pesiqta Rabbati		

**Qumran / Dead Sea Scrolls**

1QH	Thanksgiving Hymns/Psalms ( <i>Hôdâyôt</i> )
1QM	War Scroll ( <i>Milhāmâ</i> )
1QpHab	Commentary ( <i>Pesher</i> ) on Habakkuk
1QS	Manual of Discipline ( <i>Serek Hayyahad</i> , Rule/Order of the Community)
1QSa	Rule of the Congregation (1Q28a, appendix A to 1QS)
3Q15	Copper Scroll
4Q159	Ordinances <sup>a</sup>
4Q246	Apocryphon of Daniel
4Q372	Apocryphon of Joseph <sup>b</sup>
4Q521	Messianic Apocalypse
4Q534	Elect of God (4QMess ar = 4QNoah <sup>a</sup> ar)
4QFlor	Florilegium (4Q174)
4QPBless	Commentary ( <i>Pesher</i> ) on Genesis <sup>a</sup> (4Q252)
4QpIsa <sup>a</sup>	Commentary ( <i>Pesher</i> ) on Isaiah <sup>a</sup> (4Q161)
4QpNahum	Commentary ( <i>Pesher</i> ) on Nahum (4Q169)
4QTest	Testimonia (4Q175)
11QMelch	Melchizedek (11Q13)
CD	Damascus Document

# Greek Transliteration

$\alpha$	a	$\zeta$	z	$\lambda$	l	$\pi$	p	$\phi$	ph
$\beta$	b	$\eta$	$\bar{e}$	$\mu$	m	$\rho$	r	$\chi$	ch
$\gamma$	g (n)	$\theta$	th	$\nu$	n	$\sigma \varsigma$	s	$\psi$	ps
$\delta$	d	$\iota$	i	$\xi$	x	$\tau$	t	$\omega$	$\bar{o}$
$\epsilon$	e	$\kappa$	k	$\circ$	o	$\upsilon$	y (u)	'	h

## Notes on the transliteration of Greek

1. Accents, lenis (smooth breathing), and *iota* subscript are not shown in transliteration.
2. The transliteration of asper (rough breathing) precedes a vowel or diphthong (e.g.,  $\acute{\alpha}$  = ha;  $\ddot{\alpha}$  = hai) and follows  $\rho$  (i.e.,  $\dot{\rho}$  = rh).
3. *Gamma* is transliterated *n* only when it precedes  $\gamma$ ,  $\kappa$ ,  $\xi$ , or  $\chi$ .
4. *Upsilon* is transliterated *u* only when it is part of a diphthong (i.e.,  $\alpha u$ ,  $\epsilon u$ ,  $\omega u$ ,  $\upsilon i$ ).

# Hebrew Transliteration

א	'	א	t
ב	b	בָּ	ā qāmēš
ג	g	בָּ	a pataḥ
ד	d	בָּ	a furtive pataḥ
ה	h	בָּ	e səgôl
ו	w	בָּ	ē šērê
ז	z	בָּ	i short hîreq
ח	ḥ	בָּ	ī long hîreq written defectively
ט	ṭ	בָּ	o qāmēš ḥāṭûp
י	y	בָּ	ō ḥôlem written fully
ק	k	בָּ	ō ḥôlem written defectively
ל	l	בָּ	û šûreq
ם	m	בָּ	u short qibbûṣ
נ	n	בָּ	ū long qibbûṣ written defectively
ס	s	בָּ	â final qāmēš hē̄ (בָּ = āh)
כ	'	בָּ	ê səgôl yôd (בָּ = êy)
פ	p	בָּ	ê šērê yôd (בָּ = êy)
ש	s	בָּ	î hîreq yôd (בָּ = îy)
ך	q	בָּ	ă ḥāṭēp pataḥ
ר	r	בָּ	ě ḥāṭēp səgôl
שׁ	ś	בָּ	ō ḥāṭēp qāmēš
שׂ	š	בָּ	ě vocal šēwā'
		בָּ	- silent šēwā'

## Notes on the transliteration of Hebrew

1. Accents are not shown in transliteration.
2. Silent šēwā' is not indicated in transliteration.
3. The unaspirated forms of בְּ נְ כְּ דְּ גְּ are not specially indicated in transliteration.
4. *Dāgeš forte* is indicated by doubling the consonant. *Dāgeš present* for euphonious reasons is not indicated in transliteration.
5. *Maqqēp* is represented by a hyphen.

# Introduction to the Gospel of John

## Significance and Interpretation

John's Gospel, together with the Book of Romans, may well be considered the enduring "twin towers" of NT theology (Kostenberger 2000), soaring—to change metaphors—as an eagle over more pedestrian depictions of the life of Christ.<sup>1</sup> Very possibly written by John the apostle as the culmination of his long life and ministry (critical and postmodern objections to the Gospel's apostolic authorship notwithstanding),<sup>2</sup> the Gospel penetrates more deeply into the mystery of God's revelation in his Son than the other canonical Gospels and perhaps more deeply than any other biblical book. From the majestic prologue to the probing epilogue, the evangelist's words are as carefully chosen as they must be thoughtfully pondered by every reader of his magnificent work.

Over the course of history, the Fourth Gospel has exercised a remarkable influence commensurate with the profundity of its message. John's Christology, particularly affirmations of Jesus' deity and of his human and divine natures, decisively shaped the formulations adopted by the early church councils and creeds (J. N. Sanders 1943; Pollard 1970; Braun 1959; Grillmeier 1975: esp. 26–32). Many of the great minds of the Christian church, from the Fathers to modern times, have written

1. Taking their point of departure from the four beasts in Ezek. 1:10 and Rev. 4:6–8, the Fathers described John as an eagle. See, for example, Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum* 6 (cited in Volfing 2001: 45 n. 67): "John flies like an eagle above the clouds of human weakness and gazes most keenly and steadily with the eye of his heart at the light of unchangeable truth." On John as fisherman, son of thunder, beloved disciple, elder and seer, apostle in second-century interpretation, saint depicted as an eagle, and hero and icon, see Culpepper 1994.

2. See the recent paper by O'Day (2002), who says that the abandonment of the apostolic authorship of the Fourth Gospel has "created space" for new readings of the Gospel. Others, however, view the results of the rejection of the apostolic authorship of John's Gospel in less positive terms. In any case, the summary way in which Johannine authorship is regularly dismissed in contemporary scholarship is without justification, for this theory of authorship has never been definitively refuted (Kostenberger 2001b: 17–47). Though only a theory, it continues to be a possible and, I would argue, eminently plausible hypothesis based on both external and internal evidence (see, e.g., Carson 1991: 68–81; Carson, Moo, and Morris 1992: 138–57; and the discussion below).

commentaries or monographs on John's Gospel.<sup>3</sup> Despite the massive assault on John's trustworthiness in the wake of the Enlightenment, especially by liberal German scholars, John's Gospel stands today widely rehabilitated as a reliable witness to the life, words, and deeds of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup>

Almost from its inception, the interpretation of John's Gospel was hotly contested. In the days of the early church, it was the gnostics who laid claim to this Gospel, asserting that it supported their message of salvation through knowledge (revelation) apart from redemption and forgiveness of sin (J. N. Sanders 1943: 47–87; Pollard 1970: 25). John's first epistle may be the first to bear witness to the way in which the Gospel was misunderstood, if not intentionally misrepresented (e.g., 1 John 1:1–3; 4:2–3). Subsequent to the Reformation, English deists as well as liberal German scholars initially preferred John's Gospel because of its lack of emphasis on demon exorcisms. In the wake of the Enlightenment, however, from Edward Evanson in England to Karl Bretschneider and David Strauss in Germany, attacks were mounted alleging contradictions between John's "spiritual Gospel" (Clement of Alexandria's term) and the Synoptics (Köstenberger 2001b: 17–47), pitting "history" against "theology," as if a Gospel that stresses the importance of eyewitness testimony and the careful evaluation of evidence must necessarily bend historical fact for the sake of theological expediency.<sup>5</sup> In the twentieth century, the towering figure of Rudolf Bultmann enlisted John in his program of demythologization (Carson 1991: 31–33).

3. On the Latin background, see Volfing 2001: 11–59. See also the works referenced in J. N. Sanders 1943; Pollard 1970; Braun 1959; and Grillmeier 1975.

4. The Fourth Gospel's integrity is not compromised by the imitable Johannine style, enveloping narrative as well as discourse portions. For positive assessments of the historical reliability of John's Gospel, see Köstenberger 2002c; Blomberg 1993; 2001; 2002; contra M. Casey 1996. Nevertheless, there continues to be skepticism on the part of many; see the recent survey by Kysar (2002a), the largely positive assessment by Thompson (2002), and the very negative evaluation by Attridge (2002b).

5. The essays on history and theology in the Fourth Gospel and on the question of the Fourth Gospel's authorship by Morris (1969: 65–292) still repay careful study. For an interesting application of Clement's statement, see Thielman 1991: 183 in the context of his entire article. The reference to Clement's *Hypotyposeis* is found in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.14. See also Thompson (2002: 2), who rightly notes, "Whatever Clement meant in calling John 'a spiritual Gospel,' it is doubtful that he meant to contrast 'facts' in the modern sense and 'interpretation.' . . . [A] 'spiritual' Gospel gives the inner meaning of an event or reality and, hence, its truth must be spiritually discerned." Thompson rightly maintains that "the modern view" that calls into question the historicity of any item in John that "stands in the service of his theological or interpretive agenda" constitutes "a very strange way to imagine that theology works, and perhaps could only have been thought of by people actually not doing theology." Thompson (2002: 3) proceeds to call for greater sophistication in biblical scholars' philosophy of history. Carson (1991: 29) similarly disavows attributing to Clement a dichotomy between "spiritual" and "historical"; he suggests that "spiritual" may mean "allegorical" or "symbol-laden."

Also, in recent years efforts have been made to transfer John's Gospel from the mainstream of apostolic Christianity to the margins of end-of-first-century sectarianism. The "Johannine community," "school," or "circle," rather than John the apostle, it is argued, was responsible for compiling the Gospel in light of its struggles against a parent synagogue that expelled some of its members because of their faith in Jesus as Messiah (Martyn 1977; 1979; R. Brown 1978; 1979; cf. Cullmann 1976). This reconstruction, it should be noted, is significantly based on the charge that the references to synagogue expulsion in John (esp. 9:22) are anachronistic. Yet the historical value of such reconstructions has itself come under serious scrutiny and has been increasingly questioned (Hengel 1993; Bauckham [ed.] 1998).<sup>6</sup> In a stunning "confession," Robert Kysar (2002b), at a recent session of the Johannine literature section convened under the auspices of the Society of Biblical Literature, has chronicled the rise and fall of the Martyn/Brown-style "Johannine community" hypothesis and expressed personal regret for ever having endorsed it. While Kysar himself opts for a postmodern paradigm that acknowledges the validity of a variety of "readings" of the Fourth Gospel, his critique has opened the way for a thorough reassessment of a paradigm that until recently was almost beyond question.<sup>7</sup>

## Hermeneutical Presuppositions

No commentary is written without underlying hermeneutical presuppositions, whether conscious or unconscious, acknowledged or unacknowledged, explicit or implicit. Presuppositionless exegesis is impossible (Bultmann 1960), just as objective, neutral interpretation remains elusive. Every interpreter approaches the biblical text from a vantage point that reflects his or her ecclesiastical tradition, personal experience, and view of biblical authority, to name but a few of the most important factors in a person's preunderstanding (see, e.g., Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 1993: 81–116).

The present commentary is written in the conviction that although presuppositionless exegesis is an illusion, presuppositions do not necessarily preclude the kind of engagement with the biblical text by which the interpreter's understanding may be corrected by the scriptural message (Osborne 1991). What is more, an active, born-again faith in Jesus Christ as Lord is unashamedly acknowledged as the vantage point from which exegesis is undertaken (Schlatter, in Neuer 1996: 211–25). Rather than being a liability, this faith—together with the enabling work of

6. See, early on, Schlatter (1948: x), who comments that the term "Johannine school" appears to him to be "completely divorced from reality" (*völlig phantastisch*).

7. As late as 1990, D. M. Smith (1990: 293 n. 30) could write, "Martyn's thesis has become a paradigm. . . . It is a part of what students imbibe from standard works, such as commentaries and textbooks, as knowledge generally received and held to be valid."

the Holy Spirit in interpretation, if tempered with humility, exegetical work, and openness to the findings of others—can be a great strength (G. Maier 1994: 45–63). From the dialectic of the interpretive process, a reading of a given text (in the present instance, the Fourth Gospel) may be expected to emerge that can stake a legitimate claim at being more than merely one possible reading of this text (contra postmodern and reader-response approaches to John’s Gospel).

Specifically, authorial intention, as conveyed in the context of a particular literary genre and as enshrined in the text itself, is here considered to be the yardstick by which the validity of a given interpretation is to be measured.<sup>8</sup> That is, the reading that conforms most closely to the authorially intended message to the original readers, in light of the historical-cultural background and in keeping with linguistic and literary conventions of the day, has the greatest claim to being the most accurate interpretation of a given passage.<sup>9</sup>

Although 100 percent certainty may be hard to come by, at least in the more difficult instances, we may hope to try to reconstruct beyond reasonable doubt a setting—historical, literary, and theological—that comports well with the internal evidence of the document of John’s Gospel itself and coheres with what we know about early Christianity and its environment during the second half of the first century A.D. This remains not merely desirable, but a necessity, since the Gospel is part of the Christian canon, which ought to function authoritatively for the church in its preaching and teaching and application in life and practice (contra the “New Homiletic”).

As a Gospel, the text under study here can reasonably be assumed to be focused on the life and (vicarious) death of Jesus, not the history of an alleged sectarian “Johannine community” (though clearly the evangelist’s end-of-first-century vantage point can be expected to have informed his mode of presentation and selection). As to authorship,

8. The classic work is Hirsch 1967. Considerably more sophisticated is the recent work by Vanhoozer (1998), whose defense of authorially intended textual meaning is all the more to be taken seriously as Vanhoozer is keenly aware of, and sensitive to, the role of the reader in biblical interpretation, without, however, absolutizing it (cf. Vanhoozer 1995; see also the penetrating collection of essays in Vanhoozer 2002 and the following note).

9. An exceedingly clever defense of the author in general and of the author of John’s Gospel in particular is provided by Vanhoozer’s (1993 [= 2002: 257–74]) “hermeneutical exposition” of John 21:20–24. According to Vanhoozer, “The ethos of the Fourth Gospel largely depends on the identification of the author with the Beloved Disciple” (1993: 372). The “double Anselmian hermeneutics of ‘I-witness testimony’” advocated by Vanhoozer urges that the beloved disciple’s testimony be received on its own terms; unless it is believed, it is not understood. Over against the “death of the author” in much of recent scholarship and the prevailing “hermeneutic of suspicion,” Vanhoozer asserts “authorial rights” and advocates a “hermeneutic of belief” that seems all the more justified because the beloved disciple is consistently identified in the Fourth Gospel as an eyewitness. In this context it may be significant that as late as the very last verse of the Gospel, the authorial “I” is still heard (see commentary at 21:20–25).

all options, including apostolic authorship, must remain on the table, without undue dogmatism on all sides (Köstenberger 2001b: 17–47). The literary artistry of the Gospel, which recently has received increased attention, ought to be appreciated, albeit without a lopsided emphasis on literary matters at the expense of historical ones.<sup>10</sup>

The deluge of literary explorations on various pericopes of the Fourth Gospel has yielded considerable insight regarding various details in the text, but any such literary light must be incorporated into a full-orbed understanding of the Gospel that is properly grounded historically and adequately informed theologically. Otherwise, such “readings” remain atomistic and isolated from the larger context of which they were originally a part and of which they must remain a part in order to function effectively in the life of the church collectively and of believers individually.

Below, I will postulate a tentative historical setting for the Fourth Gospel. This may serve as an overall framework for individual interpretations. Literary and narrative interpretive insights are incorporated throughout the commentary. There is no bias against insights from that quarter. To the contrary, traditional approaches have much to learn from more recent ones. Nevertheless, a more radical reader-response stance is eschewed, not least because of its postmodern consequence of eroding the authority of the biblical text beyond the narrow scope of a given interpretive community, but more importantly because this stance is at odds with the way the text of John’s Gospel was likely to have been generated and to have functioned in the context of the interpersonal communication out of which it arose.

Underlying the present commentary is also an appreciation for previous efforts at interpreting the Fourth Gospel, be it in patristic or medieval times, during the Reformation period, or in the more recent history of interpretation. It is arrogant to assert the superiority of contemporary efforts at understanding a given biblical text merely because of our post-Enlightenment heritage (see Steinmetz 1980). At the same time, recent events such as the Holocaust and the development of gender-inclusive Bible translation have brought issues to the fore that have the potential for sharpening our understanding of certain passages in John’s Gospel (see Köstenberger 2003), not to mention the discovery of biblical MSS that add to the available text-critical data on the basis of which interpretive decisions are made.<sup>11</sup>

10. See Köstenberger 1999a: 30–31. There has been a virtual avalanche of literary explorations of Johannine themes or specific Johannine portions of text pouring from the presses in the last two decades. Among those are Culpepper 1983; Duke 1985; Staley 1988; M. Davies 1992; Stibbe 1992; 1994; Lee 1994; Tovey 1997; Beck 1997; Conway 1999; and Harstine 2002, to list but a few.

11. For examples where recent MS finds made a difference in the assessment of the most likely original reading, see commentary at 1:18 and 1:34.

Finally, this commentary is written on the assumption (reasonable, I believe, though it is not possible to defend this assumption here) of a high view of Scripture, foremost its inerrancy and inspiration. This pertains particularly to the understanding of geographical and historical details in the Gospel (on which, see Köstenberger 2002c; Blomberg 2002). The commentary is written from a stance that expects any such details ultimately to be capable of a resolution that does not implicate the Johannine text in actual error or contradiction. A case in point is the dating of the crucifixion in this Gospel in relation to the Synoptics (see Köstenberger 2002a: 147–48).

Such an assumption flies in the face of the unfettered critical scholarship unleashed in full force with Bretschneider (though found in latent form at least as early as the 1790s).<sup>12</sup> Doubtless the present commentary will, in many quarters, be assailed as an exercise in mere confessionalism and traditional exegesis. This, however, is at least partially inaccurate. For even within an inerrant framework there remain exegetical options to be adjudicated and historical and literary questions to be solved, even though certain outcomes are regarded as unlikely at the outset (unless data were to surface that required a radical revision of one's presuppositions).

On this basis it is now possible to sketch out briefly, and in the spirit of the type of "critical realism" advocated by N. T. Wright (1992: 61–64), a plausible historical, literary, and theological setting for my interpretation of John's Gospel.<sup>13</sup> This, in turn, will serve as the general framework for the commentary itself.

## Historical Setting

In reconstructing the historical setting of John's Gospel, one finds that a combination of internal and external evidence provides plausible grounds for concluding the following (Kostenberger 2000: 280). The author is (1) an apostle (1:14; cf. 2:11; 19:35); (2) one of the Twelve ("the disciple Jesus loved" [13:23]; cf. 19:26–27; 20:2–9; 21, esp. 21:24–25);<sup>14</sup>

12. Karl Gottlieb Bretschneider (1776–1848) pioneered an approach to John's Gospel that dated it to the late second century and rejected its veracity at most points (see Baird 1992: 312–14). In contrast, Bretschneider's contemporary Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) believed that "the Gospel of John bears such undeniable signs of authenticity, and so reveals on every page the eyewitness and personal participant, that one must be prejudiced and diverted from the natural course so as to doubt its authenticity" (cited in Baird 1992: 214).

13. See the magisterial "Part II: Tools for the Task" in Wright 1992: 29–144.

14. Note that the label "the disciple Jesus loved" occurs only in the second major portion of John's Gospel (first at 13:23). This is in keeping with the marked shift in perspective starting in 13:1, where the disciples' mission is viewed from the perspective of Jesus' exaltation (Kostenberger 1998b: 153). Hence, the casting of John in more elevated terms in chapters 13–21 is not unique in John's Gospel and may be seen as indicating that the

(3) John, the son of Zebedee. The disciple Jesus loved/John is consistently associated with Peter in the Fourth Gospel and elsewhere in the NT (13:23–24; 18:15–16; 20:2–9; 21; cf. Luke 22:8; Acts 1:13; 3–4; 8:14–25; Gal. 2:9).<sup>15</sup> Although the hypothesis of the apostolic authorship of the Fourth Gospel is regularly rejected in recent Johannine scholarship, the hypothesis has never been decisively refuted and continues to be at least as plausible as alternative explanations.<sup>16</sup> External evidence supports this identification (esp. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1.2),<sup>17</sup> indicating that John lived to a ripe old age and that he was the last of the evangelists to write his Gospel.<sup>18</sup> It appears that John wrote his Gospel in Ephesus

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apostle, as “the disciple Jesus loved,” has an important part to play in the postexaltation mission of Jesus carried out through his commissioned followers.

15. The epithet “the disciple Jesus loved” is plausibly understood as an instance of authorial modesty (see Vanhoozer 1993: 374, who cites Augustine and Westcott, contra Barrett 1978: 117). On authorial modesty, see also Köstenberger 2004.

16. See Blomberg 2001: 72, referring to Westcott. Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that apostolic authorship remains a hypothesis. In an essay surveying scholarship from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries on the issue, I have shown that the apostolic paradigm was challenged on largely philosophical rather than evidential grounds and that there is therefore compelling reason to doubt that the Fourth Gospel’s Johannine authorship has ever been refuted by actual argument (Kostenberger 2001b: 17–47). To assert the superiority of alternative hypotheses as virtually self-evident without adducing supporting evidence, as is commonly done today, hardly constitutes evenhanded scholarship. Cf. Keener 2003: 81–139, who at the outset of his thorough investigation of the authorship of John’s Gospel (which concludes, tentatively, in favor of apostolic authorship) states that the Fourth Gospel’s apostolic authorship has often been opposed out of dogmatism (p. 81) but that “traditional conservative scholars have made a better case for Johannine authorship of the Gospel . . . than other scholars have made against it” (p. 82).

17. One tricky piece of evidence concerns the second-century writer Papias (cited in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.4–5), a contemporary of Polycarp, who, in turn, was a disciple of the apostle John (on the date of Papias, see Yarbrough 1983; Munck 1959). Papias (at least to Eusebius) seems to refer to two separate Johns, the apostle and a “John the elder.” On this basis some have conjectured that the latter, rather than the former, wrote the Fourth Gospel. However, there is no need to drive a wedge between the two references to John in the passage in question. To the contrary, John may be designated “the elder” in the latter part of the quotation precisely because he is grouped with the elders mentioned earlier in the same passage. For a sound critique of the “John the elder” hypothesis, see Carson, Moo, and Morris 1992: 141–43. Keener (2003: 95–98) likewise challenges the reliability of Eusebius’s interpretation of Papias, owing to the former’s agenda of seeking to denigrate the Apocalypse. Keener (2003: 102–3) also includes an insightful discussion of the plausibility of John writing the Gospel at an advanced age. See also the works cited in Bauckham 1993: 27 n. 17 and the important essay by Hill (1998), who adduces from Eusebius’s (*Hist. eccl.* 3.24.5–13, esp. 11) reference to Papias (without naming him) that Papias held John the apostle to be the author of the Fourth Gospel (contra Bauckham 1993; Hengel 1989a; note my review of Hengel’s more extensive 1993 German monograph on the subject, Kostenberger 1996). For studies of the external evidence regarding the authorship of the Fourth Gospel, see Bauckham 1993: 24 n. 1.

18. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.22.5; 3.3.4 (quoted by Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.23.3–4), places John’s death during the reign of Trajan (A.D. 98–117); Jerome (*Vit. ill.* 9) says that John died in the sixty-eighth year after Jesus’ passion (i.e., A.D. 98 or 101). Regarding John being the

(so Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1.2; cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.1.1) and that he ultimately envisioned—like the other canonical Gospels—a universal readership (Bauckham [ed.] 1998). John’s original audience seems to have consisted primarily of Diaspora Jews and proselytes (Carson 1991: 91; see also Keener 2003: 175–80).

The purpose statement in 20:30–31 is perhaps most plausibly read as indicating that John wrote with an (indirect) evangelistic purpose, expecting to reach his unbelieving audience via Christian readers (Bauckham [ed.] 1998: 10). The Gospel originated within the matrix of the early Christian Gentile mission, the emergence of early gnostic thought, and, last but not least, the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in A.D. 70 (Motyer 1997; Kerr 2002; P. Walker 1996: 195; Draper 1997: 264, 285), a traumatic event that left Judaism in a national and religious void and caused Jews to look for ways to continue their ritual and worship.<sup>19</sup> Seizing the opportunity for (Jewish) evangelism, John presents Jesus as the temple’s replacement (2:18–22; cf. 1:14; 4:21–24) and the fulfillment of the symbolism inherent in Jewish festivals (esp. chs. 5–12; see Hoskins 2002; Köstenberger forthcoming; Draper 1997: 264–65). If this reconstruction is correct, the Gospel most likely was written sometime after A.D. 70 but before A.D. 100.<sup>20</sup> If Thomas’s confession of Jesus as “my Lord and my God” is intended to evoke associations of emperor worship under Domitian (A.D. 81–96), a date after A.D. 81 would appear most likely.<sup>21</sup>

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last to write his Gospel, see Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1.1; Clement, cited by Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.7; and Eusebius himself, *Hist. eccl.* 3.24.7. See Carson 1991: 83.

19. See especially Alexander 1992 and Goodman 1992. For a fuller development and further bibliography, see Köstenberger forthcoming. For a critique of the Martyn/Brown-style “Johannine community” hypothesis, see Köstenberger 1998b: 200–210; Carson 1991: 35–36, 87–88, 369–72; and commentary at 9:22 below.

20. Very few would argue for a date prior to A.D. 70, as do J. A. T. Robinson 1976: 254–85 (but see the refutation in Kerr 2002: 19–25; see also Carson 1991: 82–86); Morris 1995: 25–30 (with reference to Cribbs 1970; Torrey 1936: x–xi); and Wallace 1990 (but see the present commentary at 5:2). However, the cumulative weight of the following internal evidence must be judged to favor a post-A.D. 70 date (cf. Croteau 2003): the references to the Sea of Tiberias in 6:1 and 21:1; Thomas’s confession of Jesus as “my Lord and my God” in 20:28 (contra emperor worship in time of Domitian?); the reference to Peter’s martyrdom (21:19); and the lack of reference to the Sadducees (Schlatter 1948: 44; though see the caution in Carson 1991: 84)—not to mention the comparative ease with which the Fourth Evangelist equates Jesus with God (e.g., 1:1, 14; 10:30; 20:28; see Carson 1991: 85, though note his caveats on p. 84) or external evidence such as Clement of Alexandria’s statement, cited in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.7, “Last of all, John, perceiving that the external facts had been made plain [in the Synoptics] . . . composed a spiritual gospel.” This is true especially since the major pieces of evidence cited in support of a pre-A.D. 70 date—the lack of reference to the destruction of the temple and the use of a present-tense verb in 5:2 to refer to the Sheep Gate pool—are not determinative and are capable of alternative explanations (see, e.g., Schlatter 1948: 23–24).

21. See Carson (1991: 85), who tentatively suggests a date of A.D. 80–85, in part because he finds it “hard to believe that, if the Fourth Gospel were written after AD 70, the date was *immediately* after AD 70. . . . The reverberations around the Empire, for both Jews

## Literary Features

John's overarching purpose is the demonstration that the Christ, the Son of God, is Jesus (20:30–31; see Carson 1987: 639–51) by weaving together several narrative strands. The prologue places the entire Gospel within the framework of the eternal, preexistent Word made flesh in Jesus (1:1–18). The first half of John's narrative sets forth evidence for Jesus' messiahship in the form of seven selected signs (1:19–12:50; cf. 20:30–31; see Köstenberger 1995b). John also includes Jesus' seven "I am" sayings (see "Theological Emphases" below) and calls numerous (seven?) witnesses in support of Jesus' claims, including Moses and the Scriptures, the Baptist, the Father, Jesus and his works, the Spirit, the disciples, and the evangelist himself (see commentary at 1:7). Representative questions concerning Jesus' messiahship serve to lead the Gospel's readers to the author's intended conclusion: the Christ is Jesus (e.g., 1:41; 4:25; 7:27, 31, 52; 10:24; 11:27; 12:34).

The second major section of John's Gospel shows how Jesus ensured the continuation of his mission by preparing his new messianic community for its mission. This portion opens with Jesus' farewell discourse (chs. 13–17): the new messianic community is cleansed (by the footwashing and Judas's departure; ch. 13), prepared (by instructions regarding the coming Paraclete and his ministry to the disciples; chs. 14–16), and prayed for (ch. 17). The disciples are made partners in the proclamation of salvation in Christ (15:15–16), their witness being aided by the Spirit (15:26–27), and taken into the life of the Godhead, which is characterized by perfect love and unity (17:20–26).

The Johannine passion narrative (chs. 18–19) presents Jesus' death both as an atonement for sin (cf. 1:29, 36; 6:48–58; 10:15, 17–18), though largely without the Synoptic emphasis on shame and humiliation, and as a stage in Jesus' return to the Father (e.g., 13:1; 16:28). The resurrection appearances and the disciples' commissioning by their risen Lord constitute the focal point of the penultimate chapter (ch. 20), where Jesus is cast as the paradigmatic Sent One (cf. 9:7), who now has become the sender of his new messianic community (20:21–23). The purpose statement of 20:30–31 reiterates the major motifs of the Gospel: the signs, believing, (eternal) life, and the identity of Jesus as Christ and Son of God. The epilogue portrays the relationship between Peter and the disciple Jesus loved in terms of differing yet equally legitimate roles of service within the believing community.

The structure of John's Gospel based on Jesus' seven signs may be delineated as follows:

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and Christians, were doubtless still too powerful. A little time needed to elapse . . . before a document like the Fourth Gospel could be free *not* to make an *explicit* allusion to the destruction of the temple."

**I. Prologue: The Word made flesh (1:1–18)**

**II. The Book of Signs: The signs of the Messiah (1:19–12:50)**

- A. The forerunner, Jesus' inaugural signs, and representative conversations (1:19–4:54)
  - 1. The testimony of John the Baptist and the beginning of Jesus' ministry (1:19–51)
  - 2. The first sign: Turning water into wine at the wedding at Cana (2:1–12)
  - 3. One of Jesus' Jerusalem signs: The clearing of the temple (2:13–22)
  - 4. Further ministry in Jerusalem and Samaria (2:23–4:42)
    - a. The “teacher of Israel,” Nicodemus (2:23–3:21)
    - b. Interlude: The testimony of John the Baptist (3:22–36)
    - c. The Samaritan woman (4:1–42)
  - 5. The second sign at Cana: The healing of the royal official's son (4:43–54)
- B. Additional signs amid mounting unbelief (5:1–10:42)
  - 1. At an unnamed feast in Jerusalem: The healing of the lame man (5:1–47)
  - 2. Galilean Passover: Feeding the multitude and the bread of life discourse (6:1–71)
  - 3. Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles (7:1–8:59)
    - a. First teaching cycle (7:1–52)
    - b. Second teaching cycle (8:12–59)
  - 4. The healing of the blind man and the good shepherd discourse (9:1–10:42)
    - a. Jesus heals a blind man (9:1–41)
    - b. Jesus the good shepherd (10:1–42)
- C. Final Passover: The climactic sign—the raising of Lazarus—and other events (11:1–12:19)
  - 1. The raising of Lazarus (11:1–57)
  - 2. The anointing at Bethany (12:1–11)
  - 3. The triumphal entry into Jerusalem (12:12–19)
- D. Conclusion (12:20–50)
  - 1. The dawning age of the Gentiles: Jesus predicts his death (12:20–36)
  - 2. The signs of the Messiah rejected by the old covenant community (12:37–50)

**III. The Book of Glory: Jesus' preparation of the new messianic community and his passion (13:1–20:31)**

- A. The cleansing and instruction of the new messianic community, including Jesus' final prayer (13:1–17:26)
  - 1. The cleansing of the community: The footwashing and Judas's departure (13:1–30)
    - a. The footwashing (13:1–17)

- b. The betrayal (13:18–30)
- 2. Jesus' final instructions: The farewell discourse (13:31–16:33)
  - a. Jesus' departure and sending of the Spirit (13:31–14:31)
  - b. Jesus the true vine (15:1–17)
  - c. The Spirit and the disciples' witness to the world (15:18–16:33)
- 3. Jesus' parting prayer (17:1–26)
- B. The passion narrative (18:1–19:42)
  - 1. The betrayal and arrest of Jesus (18:1–11)
  - 2. Jesus questioned by the high priest, denied by Peter (18:12–27)
  - 3. Jesus before Pilate (18:28–19:16a)
  - 4. Jesus' crucifixion and burial (19:16b–42)
- C. Jesus' resurrection and appearances and the commissioning of his disciples (20:1–29)
  - 1. The empty tomb (20:1–10)
  - 2. Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene (20:11–18)
  - 3. Jesus appears to his disciples (20:19–23)
  - 4. Jesus appears to Thomas (20:24–29)
- D. Conclusion: The signs of the Messiah witnessed by the new messianic community (20:30–31)

#### **IV. Epilogue: The complementary roles of Peter and the disciple Jesus loved (21:1–25)**

- A. Jesus appears to seven disciples (21:1–14)
- B. Jesus and Peter (21:15–19)
- C. Jesus and the disciple Jesus loved (21:20–25)

The literary structure of John's Gospel, in turn, can be shown to follow a chronological time line.<sup>22</sup>

#### **Chronology of Jesus' Ministry in John's Gospel**

Time	Location/Event	John
<i>Origin</i>		1:1–18
eternity past	the Word was with God	1:1–18
<i>Initial ministry, A.D. 29–30</i>		1:19–2:12
summer/fall 29	John the Baptist near the Jordan	1:19–34
subsequently	Jesus' calling of his first disciples	1:35–51

22. There are two main possibilities for the dating of Jesus' ministry, A.D. 26–30 or 29–33, with the latter set of dates to be preferred (see Hoehner 1977; Hoehner, *DJG* 118–22).

Time	Location/Event	John
winter 29/spring 30	the wedding at Cana of Galilee	2:1–12
<i>First Passover and first full year of ministry, A.D. 30–31</i>		2:13–4:54
April 7, 30	Jesus' first Passover (Jerusalem), temple clearing	2:13–3:21
spring/summer 30	John the Baptist near the Jordan	3:22–36
Dec./Jan./Feb. 30/31?	Jesus' ministry in Samaria	4:1–45
subsequently	the healing at Cana of Galilee	4:46–54
<i>Second year of ministry, A.D. 31–32</i>		5:1–47
March 27, 31	Passover not recorded in John	Matt. 12:1 pars.?
Oct. 21–28, 31?	the Sabbath controversy (Jerusalem)	5:1–47
<i>Second Passover recorded in John and third year of ministry, A.D. 32–33</i>		6:1–11:54
April 13 or 14, 32	Jesus' second Passover recorded in John (Galilee)	6:1–21
subsequently	Jesus' teaching in the synagogue of Capernaum	6:22–71
Sept. 10–17, 32	Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles (Jerusalem)	7:1–52; 8:12–59
Oct./Nov. 32?	healing of blind man, good shepherd discourse	9:1–10:21
Dec. 18–25, 32	Jesus at the Feast of Dedication (Jerusalem)	10:22–39
Jan./Feb. 33?	Jesus' withdrawal to the area near the Jordan	10:40–42
March 33?	the raising of Lazarus (Bethany near Jerusalem)	11:1–53
March 33?	Jesus' withdrawal to Ephraim	11:54
<i>Third Passover in John, passion week, resurrection appearances, A.D. 33</i>		11:55–21:25
Friday, March 27, 33	Jesus arrives at Bethany	11:55–12:1
Saturday, March 28, 33	dinner with Lazarus and his sisters	12:2–11
Sunday, March 29, 33	"triumphal entry" into Jerusalem	12:12–50
Monday–Wednesday, March 30–April 1, 33	cursing of fig tree, temple clearing, temple controversy, Olivet discourse	Synoptics
Thursday, April 2, 33	Jesus' third Passover recorded in John (Jerusalem), betrayal, arrest	13:1–18:11

Time	Location/Event	John
Friday, April 3, 33	Jewish and Roman trials, crucifixion, burial	18:12–19:42
Sunday, April 5, 33	the empty tomb, first resurrection appearance	20:1–25
Sunday, April 12, 33	second resurrection appearance recorded in John	20:26–31
before May 14, 33	third resurrection appearance recorded in John	21:1–25 <sup>23</sup>

## Theological Emphases

### *The Messianic Mission of Jesus*

In keeping with the Gospel genre, John's narrative focuses on Jesus and his messianic mission. At the very outset, John's account is based on OT theology. The Gospel's opening phrase, "In the beginning," recalls the first words of Genesis, which recount the creation of the world (1:1; cf. 1:3). According to John, the Word's coming into this world and being made flesh in Jesus constitutes an event of comparable magnitude (1:1, 14). Jesus is presented as the Word sent from heaven to accomplish a mission and, once the mission has been accomplished, to return to the place from which he came (cf. Isa. 55:11). John's use of the term λόγος (*logos*, word) with reference to Jesus also serves to contextualize the Christian message in the evangelist's culture.

Another OT concept taken up in John's prologue is that of light and darkness (1:4–5, 8–9; cf. 3:19–21; Gen. 1:3–4). In the Qumran literature, this contrast is set within the framework of an eschatological dualism. In John, however, Jesus is presented as the Word, active in creation, who has now brought final revelation from God. This revelation, in turn, is compared and contrasted with the revelation received by and mediated through Moses (1:17–18; cf. Exod. 33–34). Jesus brought "grace for grace" (1:16): though the law given through Moses also constituted a gracious gift from God, true grace—that is, final, eschatological grace—came only through Jesus (1:17). And no one, not even Moses, truly saw God (1:18; cf. Exod. 33:20, 23; 34:6–7); but now Jesus, with God at the beginning (1:1), and always, even during his earthly ministry, in closest relationship with the Father, has given a full account of him (1:18).

The Jewish milieu of John's Gospel and the firm grounding of its theology in OT antecedents are also borne out by the various component parts of the Gospel's christological teaching. John's favorite designation for Jesus is that of the Son sent by the Father (3:17, 34–36; 5:19–26; 6:40; 8:35–36; 14:13; 17:1). This metaphor is taken from Jewish life and the halakic concept of the *šālīlah*, according to which the sent one is like

23. For the dating of the four Passovers between A.D. 29 and 33 mentioned above, see Humphreys and Waddington 1992: 335.

the sender himself, faithfully pursuing his interests (cf. 13:16, 20). The image of the descending bread from heaven develops OT teaching on God's provision of manna in the wilderness (cf. Jesus as the antitype of the serpent in the wilderness [3:14]); the figure of the descending and ascending Son of Man (cf. the "lifted up" sayings in 3:14; 8:28; 12:34) probably derives from apocalyptic passages featuring one "like a son of man" (Dan. 7:13). Jesus is also shown to fulfill the symbolism of the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles (chs. 7–9) and the Passover (ch. 19), as well as that of Jewish institutions such as the Jerusalem temple (2:14–22; see "Historical Setting" above and discussion below).

Central to John's presentation of Jesus' work (esp. in chs. 1–12; see "Literary Features" above) is the concept of signs (Köstenberger 1995b). The trajectory of antecedent OT theology reaches back as far as the "signs and wonders" performed by Moses at the exodus; Jesus' signs point to a new exodus (cf. Luke 9:31). In John, however, the miraculous character of Jesus' works is blended with, and even superseded by, their prophetic symbolism (cf. Isa. 20:3). As with those of Moses and later prophets, the signs' function is primarily to authenticate the one who performs them as God's true representative. People are severely criticized for demanding spectacular evidence of Jesus' authority (4:48), yet signs are offered as an aid to faith (10:38). And though blessing is pronounced on those who "have not seen and yet have believed" (20:29), Jesus' signs clearly are designed to elicit faith among his audience, and when they fail to do so, people are held responsible.

Another crucial motif in John's theology is Jesus' fulfillment of the symbolism inherent in Jewish festivals and institutions. By pronouncing himself to be the "light of the world" (8:12; 9:5) and the source of "living water" (4:10–14; 7:37–38), Jesus claims to fulfill the torch-lighting and water-pouring ceremonies that formed part of the Feast of Tabernacles. By dying during Passover week, Jesus is revealed as the prototype of the Jewish Passover (19:14). By pointing to his own crucified and resurrected body as the true embodiment and functional substitute of the Jerusalem temple (2:14–22), Jesus indicates that Judaism is merely preparatory, anticipating the coming of God's Messiah. True worship must be rendered not in any particular physical location, but in spirit and truth (4:23–24).<sup>24</sup>

One final striking feature deserving comment is John's inclusion of seven "I am" sayings of Jesus. According to John, Jesus is (1) the bread of life, come down from heaven (6:35, 41); (2) the light of the world

24. On Jesus as the replacement and fulfillment of the temple in John's Gospel, see especially Coloe 2001; Johnson 2001; Hoskins 2002; and Kerr 2002. For a treatment that links this Johannine motif with the composition of the Fourth Gospel, see Motyer 1997 and Köstenberger forthcoming. On Jesus and Israel's traditions of judgment and restoration, see Bryan 2002.

(8:12 = 9:5); (3) both the gate for the sheep and (4) the good shepherd (10:7, 9, 11, 14); (5) the resurrection and the life (11:25); (6) the way, the truth, and the life (14:6); and (7) the true vine (15:1, 5). This terminology recalls God's self-identification to Moses at the outset of the exodus: "I am who I am" (Exod. 3:14). It is also reminiscent of Isaiah's consistent portrayal of the sovereign Lord God (e.g., Isa. 43:10–13, 25; 45:18; 48:12; 51:12; 52:6). In places, "I am" sayings and signs are linked (John 6:35; 11:25). Like the background to the Johannine signs, the background to Jesus' self-designation as the "I am" is therefore to be found in a trajectory ranging from Moses and the exodus to the OT prophets, particularly Isaiah (see John 12:38–41).

### *The Mission of the Messianic Community*

Like his portrait of Jesus, John's presentation of the new messianic community follows a salvation-historical pattern (Pryor 1992a). In keeping with OT typology, believers are described as a "flock" (ch. 10) and as "branches" of the vine (ch. 15). John, however, does not teach that the church replaces Israel. Rather, he identifies *Jesus* as Israel's replacement: *he* is God's "vine" taking the place of God's OT "vineyard," Israel (Isa. 5). John acknowledges that "salvation comes from the Jews" (4:22), yet he portrays Israel as part of the unbelieving world that rejects Jesus. Jesus' "own" (the "Jews") did not receive him (1:11). In their place, the Twelve, who are now "his own," become the recipients of his love (13:1; cf. ch. 17). The Jewish leaders, on the other hand, are said not even to belong to Jesus' flock (10:26). This does not mean that the Jews are now shut out from God's salvation-historical program, but they, like everyone else, must come to Jesus *in faith* rather than presuming upon their Jewishness.<sup>25</sup>

Another instance of John's drawing on OT antecedents is Jesus' parting preparation of his followers in terms reminiscent of Moses' Deuteronomic farewell discourse ("love," "obey," "keep commandments," etc. [chs. 13–17]; cf. 1:17; see Köstenberger 1999a: 144). However, at this salvation-historical juncture it is not Israel but believers in Jesus who represent the core group through which he will pursue his redemptive purposes. The community is formally constituted in the commissioning narrative, where Jesus' breathing upon his gathered disciples marks a "new creation," recalling the creation of the first human being, Adam (20:22; cf. Gen. 2:7). Jesus' dependent and obedient relationship to his sender, the Father, is made the paradigm for the disciples' relationship with their sender, Jesus (Kostenberger 1998b: 190–98).

25. Keener (2003: 227–28) suggests that John's use of "the Jews" is ironic in that the evangelist grants the authorities the title they covet while ironically undermining their claim (citing Rev. 2:9; 3:9). Keener recommends putting "the Jews" in quotation marks in modern translations to indicate the irony.

In John's treatment of individual disciples, particular attention is given to two of Jesus' followers: Peter and the disciple Jesus loved. These two characters are regularly featured together (Quast 1989; see "Historical Setting" above): in the upper room (13:23–24); in the courtyard of the high priest (18:15–16); at the empty tomb (20:2–9); and at the Sea of Tiberias subsequent to Jesus' resurrection (ch. 21). Though Peter is considered to be the leader of the Twelve (cf. 6:67–79), he is presented as second to the disciple Jesus loved in terms of access to revelation (13:23) and faith (20:8). In the end, the ministry of the disciple Jesus loved is shown to be equally legitimate to that of Peter. Both of their ministries, in turn, are portrayed in terms that recall the ministry of Jesus: in Peter's case, the analogy is found in the death by which he would glorify God (21:19; cf. 12:33); in the case of the disciple Jesus loved, the parallel consists in his position "at Jesus' side," which qualified him supremely to "give a full account" of his Lord's person and work (13:23; cf. 1:18). Thus, the role of witness to Jesus may take forms as different as martyrdom and writing a Gospel, but witness must be borne, according to each person's calling (15:26–27).

## Place in the Canon

Rather than constituting the product of a sectarian community at the end of the first century (as is held by certain proponents of the "Johannine community" hypothesis), John's Gospel is part of the fabric of canonical revelation, including the Synoptic Gospels, the other Johannine writings, the OT, and the rest of the NT.

### *Canonicity*

Like the Synoptic Gospels, John was accepted as Christian Scripture by the end of the second century A.D. What is more, the second-century author Tatian, in his Gospel harmony, the *Diatessaron* (Greek: "through four"), used John's Gospel as the chronological framework for the other three Gospels (Bruce 1983: 8; 1988: 127; Carson 1991: 28). The first Christian writer to attribute the Fourth Gospel to John and to quote explicitly from the Gospel was Theophilus of Antioch (ca. A.D. 180) in his three-volume work *To Autolycus* (2.22; Pollard 1970: 40).<sup>26</sup> Soon thereafter, Clement of Alexandria famously wrote, "Last of all, John, perceiving that the external facts had been made plain in the Gospel, being urged by his friends, and inspired by the Spirit, composed a spiritual gospel" (cited in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.7). Tertullian and Origen followed suit.

Except for the heretic Marcion and the fringe group the Alogoi, no one in the early church questioned the authenticity, authority, or can-

26. For a survey of second-century patristic references to John as the author of the Fourth Gospel, see Nixon 2003.

onicity of this Gospel. If John's Gospel took longer to gain universal recognition than the other Gospels, it likely was because it was almost instantaneously used by gnostic heretics to support their position.<sup>27</sup> In fact, John's first epistle may represent an attempt at responding to one such abuse. One of the earliest extant citations from the Gospel is by the gnostic Basilides (ca. A.D. 130); the earliest known commentary was penned by a gnostic, Heracleon, a student of Valentinus (ca. A.D. 180).<sup>28</sup> Irenaeus of Lyons, however, masterfully used the Fourth Gospel in refuting Gnosticism and thus dispelled any notion that the Gospel itself was tainted by gnostic thought (Pollard 1970: 42–48).

### *Relationship to the Synoptic Gospels*

The relationship between John's Gospel and the Synoptics is a vast and complex topic that can in no way be treated here in depth. The relationship has been described in terms of mutual independence or varying degrees of literary interdependence (see the survey in D. M. Smith 1992). Despite efforts to demonstrate literary dependence, it seems hard to establish on purely literary grounds that John must have known or used one or more of the Synoptic Gospels. Historically, however, it seems difficult to believe that the Fourth Evangelist had not at least heard of the existence of the Synoptics and read some portions of them. But whether or not the author of the Fourth Gospel knew these other Gospels, clearly he did not make extensive use of them in composing his own narrative. Apart from the feeding of the five thousand, the anointing, and the passion narrative, John does not share any larger blocks of material with the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>29</sup>

27. See the introduction above. There is no good reason to believe that John's Gospel itself is based on a gnostic *Vorlage*, as Bultmann (1971: 25–31, and passim) held, or that it reflects Docetism and was erroneously included in the canon (the view of Käsemann 1968: 76–77 [cited in Sloyan 1996: 127, 129–30]).

28. See also the gnostic Gospel of Truth and P.Eger. 2 (cited in Pollard 1970: 25). Concerning Basilides, see Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 7.22, 27; Heracleon's work is given extensive coverage in Origen's commentary on John's Gospel (see Bruce 1988: 128). Westcott (1896: i–ii, 184, 292) and Luthardt (1875: 96, 100–101), besides referring to Basilides, also discuss the possible acquaintance with John's Gospel reflected in Clement of Rome (2 Clem. 9:5 [ca. A.D. 150]: ἐγένετο σόρπε; cf. John 1:14), the Clementine Homilies (19.22; cf. John 9:1–3), and other patristic writings. Sloyan (1996: 130) cites an apparent reference to John 3:3, 5 in Justin Martyr, *I Apol.* 61.4–5 (Carson 1991: 25; though see J. N. Sanders 1943: 27–28; Pollard 1970: 39; Osborn 1973: 137–38; Skarsaune 1987: 105–6; and Pryor 1992b). Carson (1991: 26) also mentions Tatian, Claudius Apollinaris, and Athenagoras (of Athens). Bauckham (1993) adds Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus (late second century). J. N. Sanders (1943: 86), on the other hand, maintains that “the Apostolic Fathers cannot be said to produce any certain traces of its [the Fourth Gospel's] use”; Pollard (1970: 24; cf. Bultmann 1971: 12) likewise acknowledges “the fact that in no extant ‘orthodox’ writing from before A.D. 170 is there any explicit quotation from the Gospel.”

29. But note the “interlocking traditions” enumerated in Carson, Moo, and Morris 1992: 161–62. See also the internal evidence for John's awareness of Synoptic tradition, if not

Thus, unlike the Synoptics, John has no birth narrative, no Sermon on the Mount or Lord's Prayer, no accounts of Jesus' transfiguration or the Lord's Supper, no narrative parables, no demon exorcisms, and no eschatological discourse. Clearly, John has written his own book. This, however, does not make his a sectarian work apart from the mainstream of apostolic Christianity (Wenham 1997). Rather, John frequently transposes elements of the Gospel tradition into a different key (Köstenberger 2002a: 148–49). The Synoptic teaching on the kingdom of God corresponds to the Johannine theme of eternal life; narrative parables are replaced by extended discourses on the symbolism of Jesus' signs. Moreover, all four Gospels present Jesus as the Son of Man and as the Messiah fulfilling OT predictions and typology. Thus, the differences between the Synoptics and John should not be exaggerated.<sup>30</sup>

### *Relationship with the Other Johannine Writings*

John's first epistle is quite apparently directed to defuse an early gnostic threat to the message of John's Gospel by showing that Jesus indeed has come in the flesh. John's Gospel portrays Jesus along similar lines, albeit without specific references to proto-Gnosticism. I have set forth some of the more striking similarities between John's Gospel and 1 John elsewhere (Köstenberger 1999a: 203–5; 2000: 283–84; see also Keener 2003: 123–26). The Book of Revelation is addressed to seven churches in Asia Minor (Rev. 2–3) and is intended to strengthen believers in the face of suffering at the end of the first century. Again, the reader is directed to my earlier presentation of common features of John's Gospel and the Apocalypse.<sup>31</sup>

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one or more of the written Gospels, listed in Köstenberger 1999a: 36–37 (1:40: Andrew, "Simon Peter's brother"; 3:24: "This was before John [the Baptist] was put in prison"; 4:44: a prophet is without honor in his own country [cf. Mark 6:4 pars.]; 11:1–2: Bethany, "village of Mary and her sister Martha" [cf. Luke 10:38–42]; 6:67, 71: the Twelve; Judas, "one of the Twelve").

30. See the brief treatments in Köstenberger 1999a: 36–37, 198–200. Stuhlmacher (2002: 185–87) contends that John and the Synoptics do not merely represent different perspectives (what M. Hengel calls "aspective"), but that the Fourth Gospel "cultivates a[n] . . . idealized type of memory concerning Jesus." He urges, "The Johannine witness therefore needs to be consistently realigned with the Synoptics, the Pauline corpus and the OT, so that faith in Jesus Christ does not lose its historical roots" (p. 187). This, however, seems to be merely an oblique way of saying that John's Gospel is historically unreliable and that there are real contradictions between John and the Synoptics (cf. Stuhlmacher's more blunt statement in 1997: 287 [cited in Köstenberger 2002a: 144 n. 3]). I, of course, deny both accusations.

31. See Köstenberger 1999a: 205; 2000: 284; see also Keener 2003: 126–39, esp. 129. On the relationship between John's Gospel and the Pauline writings and the remainder of the NT, see Köstenberger 1999a: 205–7; 2000: 284–85.

- I. Prologue: The Word Made Flesh (1:1–18)
- II. The Book of Signs: The Signs of the Messiah (1:19–12:50)
- III. The Book of Glory: Jesus' Preparation of the New Messianic Community and His Passion (13:1–20:31)
- IV. Epilogue: The Complementary Roles of Peter and the Disciple Jesus Loved (21:1–25)

## I. Prologue: The Word Made Flesh (1:1–18)

The prologue is a kind of foyer to the Gospel (Carson 1991: 111).<sup>1</sup> In it John introduces the most important themes that he will develop in the rest of his work.<sup>2</sup> Unlike the Synoptics, John supplies neither a genealogy nor a birth narrative of Jesus. Rather, he reaches back all the way to eternity past, prior to creation (1:1; cf. Gen. 1:1). By linking Jesus' coming into the world to its creation, John signals that the incarnation of the Word (1:14) culminates a stream of salvation-historical events that command humanity's utmost attention. Thus the evangelist shows the progression from preexistence (1:1–2) to creation (1:3), the time subsequent to creation but prior to the incarnation (1:4–5), the Baptist (1:6–8), and the incarnation and its results and benefits (1:9–18) (van der Watt 1995: 321; Lindars 1972: 77).<sup>3</sup>

Though it is disputed whether the prologue is original with John or he adapted a preexisting hymn (inserting sections on the Baptist, 1:6–8, 15),<sup>4</sup> the prologue doubtless represents one of the most beautiful and

1. J. A. T. Robinson (1962–63) observes that “the themes of the gospel are played over beforehand, as in the overture to an opera” (cited in Viviano 1998: 183). Beasley-Murray (1992: 1867) calls it “an anticipatory description of the Mission of the Logos-Son to the World.” The bibliography on the Johannine prologue is vast: see van der Watt 1995: 311 n. 1; Kurz 1997: 179 n. 1. For a chart showing themes anticipated in the prologue, see p. 586 below.

2. This is why the prologue has also been called the “proleptic quintessence” (Harnack 1892: 191), a “microcosm” (Valentine 1996), and an “adumbration” (Booser 1998: 13) of the entire Gospel (cited in MacLeod 2003: 48 n. 1).

3. For a comprehensive chart delineating narrative time in John’s Gospel, see Culpepper 1983: 70. See also Burns 1971 and the chapter entitled “Structuring Time in the Fourth Gospel” in M. Davies 1992: 44–66.

4. Culpepper (1980–81: 1) quotes Barrett (1971: 27): “The Prologue is . . . one piece of solid theological writing. The evangelist wrote it all” (cf. Barrett 1975a: 20–35). Keener (2003: 333–34) maintains that the prologue is an original part of the Gospel, probably added by the author (the apostle John) after completing the first draft of the Gospel. According to Keener (2003: 333–34), ancient writers commonly introduced the main themes at the beginning of their work (see Keener 2003: 334 n. 10 for examples). Bultmann believed that the prologue originated as a pre-Christian gnostic hymn that stemmed from Baptist circles and was taken over and adapted by the Fourth Evangelist (Bultmann 1923: 4; summarized by Ashton 1986: 161). Valentine (1996), in contrast to many other Johannine scholars, argues that the prologue is an organic part of the book, a genuine preface intended to preview important theological themes, rather than a mere afterthought or postscript written after the body of the Gospel had been completed. E. Harris (1994: 26) contends that the prologue “was from the first the construction of the evangelist himself.” See the survey in MacLeod 2003: 49–52.

carefully crafted poetic portions in the entire NT (R. Brown 1966: 22; Beasley-Murray 1999: 3).<sup>5</sup> In its opening lines (1:1–5), John uses a form of “staircase parallelism,” introducing a concept at the end of one line and taking it up at the beginning of the next (Culpepper 1980–81: 9–10).<sup>6</sup> The pattern is broken in 1:6–9, which is written in more pedestrian prose, but is resumed in 1:10–11 and again in 1:17 (R. Edwards 1988: 8).<sup>7</sup> The literary artistry is most impressive in 1:1–2, which features both a staircase parallelism and a chiasm (Lund 1931: 42 [cited in Culpepper 1980–81: 9–10]; see also Staley 1986: 243; 1988: 50–51):<sup>8</sup>

A ἐν ἀρχῇ  
 B ἦν  
 C ὁ λόγος  
 D καὶ ὁ λόγος  
 E ἦν  
 F πρὸς τὸν θεόν  
 F' καὶ θεός  
 E' ἦν  
 D' ὁ λόγος  
 C' οὐτος  
 B' ἦν  
 A' ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν

The macrostructure of the opening section of John’s Gospel most likely follows a chiastic pattern as well (though specific proposals

5. Morris (1995: 64) calls it “elevated prose.” For a recent treatment of the Johannine prologue dealing with these and other questions, see MacLeod 2003: 48–64. For a discussion of the structure of the prologue, see Keener 2003: 334–37 (but Keener’s [2003: 337] own tentative proposal—a three-stanza structure omitting the Baptist verses [1:6–8, 15]—is hardly convincing).

6. See the brilliant analysis of 1:1–2 by Cohee (1995: 471–72), who demonstrates that the passage features both “staircase parallelism” and chiasm (both between lines 1 and 2 and between lines 2 and 3) whereby the verb ἦν is placed in the center of each clause. He also notes how this enables θεός in line 3 to be in the emphatic position. See also Keener 2003: 364–65.

7. Cohee (1995: 474–75) rightly notes, “Although verses 6 through 9 seem to exhibit some patterns of verbal repetition or rhythmical system, or may in fact be a prose commentary inserted between verses of hymnic poetry, they do not yield to analysis . . . as easily as verses 1 through 5. The same seems to be true of verses 12 through 18. Verses 10 and 11, however, . . . do exhibit such a structure.”

8. John’s prologue has stimulated several highly creative structural proposals. Often the only limit seems to be the imagination of the interpreter. A case in point is the understanding of the prologue as a series of three successive “waves,” each with three movements (La Potterie 1984; Moloney 1977: 35–39; 1993: 25–27; Viviano 1998). Coloe (1997: 44–46) sees 1:1–2 as introduction and 1:18 as conclusion, with 1:3–17 dividing into two sections of three strophes each (1:3–5, 6–8, 9–13 and 14, 15, 16–17), paralleling the six-day structure of Gen. 1:1–2:4. According to Coloe, the rest of the Gospel represents day seven.

differ: cf. Lund 1931: 44; Boismard 1957: 79–80; Lamarche 1964; Feuillet 1968: 160; Hooker 1969–70: 357; Borgen 1970; 1972; Culpepper 1980–81; Pryor 1990: 201–2; Booser 1998: 16; Kruse 2003: 59–60), with the Word’s incarnation and the privilege of becoming God’s children at the center, framed by references to the witness of John the Baptist:<sup>9</sup>

- A The Word’s activity in creation (1:1–5)
- B John’s witness concerning the light (1:6–8)
- C The incarnation of the Word and the privilege of becoming God’s children (1:9–14)
- B’ John’s witness concerning the Word’s preeminence (1:15)
- A’ The final revelation brought by Jesus Christ (1:16–18)

By way of more detailed analysis, the correspondence between 1:1–2 and 1:18 can be seen in that (1) these are the only points at which the Word is “with God”; the Word’s return to God’s presence “conveys a sense of order, balance, and completion” (Culpepper 1980–81: 10); (2) θεός (*theos*, God) occurs three times in 1:1–2 and twice in 1:18 but only three times in the remainder of the prologue (note that two of these instances are at the center, 1:12–13); and (3) both 1:1–2 and 1:18 feature balancing references to eternal time (ἀρχή, *archē*, beginning; πάντοτε, *pōtote*, ever).

Δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο (*di’ autou egeneto*, through him were made) in 1:3 (affirming the Word’s role in creation) is mirrored by διὰ Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο (*dia Iēsou Christou egeneto*, came through Jesus Christ) in 1:17 (affirming the role of Jesus in revelation). The parallel between 1:4–5 and 1:16 is conceptual (dealing with divine blessings) rather than verbal, with “light and life” corresponding to “fullness of grace.” The equivalence of 1:6–8 and 1:15 (references to John the Baptist) is self-evident. The incarnation is referred to in 1:9–11 and 1:14 (Culpepper 1980–81: 13–14).

In the center of the chiasm (the structure is clearer in Greek than in English translation), 1:11b and 1:13 correspond, as do 1:12a and 1:12c, which leaves 1:12b as the climax: “he gave the right to become children of God.”<sup>10</sup> The term “children of God” occurs again in 11:52, where these are said to include also believing Gentiles (cf. 10:16), and in 8:41 at the nexus of this theme in John’s Gospel (cf. 8:31–47), where true children of God are said to be those who not only have God’s word (8:31–38) but also respond to it in faith (8:39–47).<sup>11</sup> In keeping with

9. Boismard (1957: 79–80)—and many writers after him—notes that while 1:1–11 deals with the Word’s descent, 1:14–18 is characterized by a dynamic of ascent.

10. So Culpepper 1980–81: 15–17. This is supported by the observation of Pryor (1990: 202) that 1:14 is not to be considered as the prologue’s “great incarnational turning point,” but that “the ministry of the historical Jesus, which is unquestionably in focus in vv 12–13, ought to be projected back at least to v 9.” Staley (1988: 53–55) suggests that the center is found in 1:12–13.

11. See Culpepper (1980–81: 26–31), who notes that in relation to John’s first epistle, John 1:12 mirrors 1 John 3:1–2, while 1 John 3:10 (cf. 5:2) corresponds to John 8:31–47.

the above macrostructure, the prologue can be divided into strophes that mutually correspond by way of chiasm (see translation below): 1:1–2 with 1:18, 1:3 with 1:17, 1:4–5 with 1:16, 1:6–8 with 1:15, 1:9–10 with 1:14, and 1:11–13 at the center.<sup>12</sup>

The opening section of John's prologue (1:1–5) features the Word's participation in creation. Not only was the Word *with* God; it was itself God. The Word is presented as the giver of both light and life. By withholding the name of Jesus until 1:17, the evangelist creates suspense, allowing for certain christological anticipations to be seen in 1:1–5 without making them explicit until 1:9–14 and 1:16–18.<sup>13</sup> The present passage also sets the stage for the Word's rejection by the world at his "homecoming" (1:10) and the Word's incarnation as the one-of-a-kind Son from the Father (1:14, 18). John 1:5 sounds the note of the Word's victory over darkness, which foreshadows the Gospel's presentation of the ministry and passion of Jesus as a cosmic battle between God and Satan. Just as the entire prologue (1:1–18) is foundational for the remainder of the Gospel, 1:1–5 is foundational for the remainder of the prologue. Prior to the appearance of John the Baptist, who bore witness to Jesus, there already was the preexistent Word, who subsequently was made flesh in Jesus and revealed the Father to his followers (cf. 1:15).

In 1:6–8, the evangelist proceeds to anchor Jesus' ministry firmly in salvation history. Like the Synoptics, the present Gospel presents John the Baptist as "a man whose appearance and ministry belong integrally to the Christ-event" (Ridderbos 1997: 41). This reference to the Baptist, together with 1:15, anticipates the narrative commencing immediately after the prologue in 1:19. In light of the material's stylistic unity, it is not necessary to hold that the references to the Baptist were inserted into a non-Johannine, preexisting hymn.<sup>14</sup>

The climactic section of John's prologue (1:9–14) is framed by ref-

12. For a similar (but not identical) analysis, see Staley 1986: 245–46 (yet his suggested implications for the Gospel's narrative structure are rather idiosyncratic).

13. Stibbe (1993) sees elusiveness as Jesus' "major character trait in John's Gospel," contending that "Jesus is depicted throughout the story as the one who evades people both at the level of presence and at the level of language" (p. 25). Though this may be true at other places in the narrative, Stibbe's analysis of 1:18 hardly seems accurate: "What we have at the end of the Prologue is therefore the implication that the elusiveness of Jesus reflects the elusiveness of God" (p. 26). How does this square with the explicit statement in 1:18 that Jesus gives a full account of the Father? The Son must not be so elusive after all, since countless individuals down through the generations (including Jesus' own followers) have come to know the Father through the revelation of his Son (cf. 14:6).

14. Haenchen (1984: 1.117) holds that 1:6–8 represents a rather clumsy insertion into the original hymn. Bultmann (1971: 49) believes that the material is inserted to counter veneration of John the Baptist (cf. Schnackenburg 1990: 1.249–50). Ridderbos (1997: 42) ardently defends the prologue's unity. Moloney (1998: 37) notes that 1:6–8 is essential to the prologue in its current form.

erences to the coming of the true light into the world (1:9; a rather innocuous-sounding statement) and the Word becoming flesh (1:14; a truly startling claim). John 1:10–11 sounds a note of rejection by both the world (which was made through the Word [1:3]) and even his own people (i.e., Israel). John 1:12–13, with 1:12 as the major climax of the entire prologue (Culpepper 1980–81) and 1:13 as a clarifying addition, assigns to all those who believe “in his name” the right to become God’s children. Both 1:11 and 1:13 make clear that the Jewish people must not presume upon their ethnic privilege. By centering his Gospel in the (sole) requirement of faith in Jesus, the evangelist strikes a universal note that achieves a further climax in 3:16. This universal scope transcends national (Jewish) boundaries and is in further development of the opening references to creation.

Pursuing his chiastic arrangement of presentation, the evangelist then returns to the witness of John the Baptist (1:15; cf. 1:6–8). The previous reference spoke of the bare fact of John’s *identity*—now the evangelist elaborates regarding the *content* of John’s testimony. The chiasm is completed in the final unit of the prologue (1:16–18), with 1:16 corresponding to 1:4–5, 1:17 to 1:3, and 1:18 to 1:1–2. Just as God’s creation gifts through the Word were life and light (1:4–5), so God’s gift through his one-of-a-kind Son is fullness of grace, indeed, “grace for grace” (1:16). Moreover, just as the world came into being through the Word, so grace and truth came through the Word-made-flesh, Jesus Christ (1:17; cf. 1:3). Finally, the evangelist closes the prologue the way he began it: with a reference to the Word (i.e., Jesus) as God (1:18; cf. 1:1). Jesus’ ministry is thus cast as the creative Word’s eschatological enfleshment and definitive revelation of God.

- A. The Word’s activity in creation (1:1–5)
- B. John’s witness concerning the light (1:6–8)
- C. The incarnation of the Word and the privilege of becoming God’s children (1:9–14)
- D. John’s witness concerning the Word’s preeminence (1:15)
- E. The final revelation brought by Jesus Christ (1:16–18)

## Exegesis and Exposition<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup>In the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God,

15. In the following translation, units are broken up to reflect the chiastic structure as discussed above, whereby 1:1–2 corresponds to 1:18, 1:3 to 1:17, 1:4–5 to 1:16, 1:6–8 to 1:15, and 1:9–10 to 1:14, with 1:11–13 forming the center of the chiasm.

and the Word was God.

<sup>2</sup>He was with God in the beginning.

<sup>3</sup>Through him all things were made,  
and without him nothing was made  
that has been made.

<sup>4</sup>In him was life,  
and that life was the light of all people;  
<sup>5</sup>and the light shines in the darkness,  
but the darkness has not overcome it.

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, by the name of John.

<sup>7</sup>He came to give testimony concerning the light,  
so that through him all might believe.

<sup>8</sup>That man was not the light; rather, he came to testify concerning the  
light.

<sup>9</sup>The true light that enlightens every person was indeed coming into the  
world.

<sup>10</sup>He was in the world,  
and though the world was made through him,  
yet the world did not recognize him.

<sup>11</sup>He came to that which was his own,  
but his own did not receive him.

<sup>12</sup>Yet to all who did receive him,  
to those who believed in his name,  
to those he gave the right to become children of God—  
<sup>13</sup>children born not of natural descent,  
nor of human decision or a husband's will,  
but born of God.

<sup>14</sup>And the Word was made flesh and pitched his tent among us,  
and we have seen his glory,  
glory as that of the one-of-a-kind Son from the Father,  
full of grace and truth.

<sup>15</sup>John testifies concerning him  
and cries out, saying, "This is the one of whom I said,  
'The one who comes after me ranks ahead of me,  
because he was before me.'"

<sup>16</sup>From his fullness we have all received grace for grace.

<sup>17</sup>For the law was given through Moses—  
true, ultimate grace came through Jesus Christ.

<sup>18</sup>God no one has ever seen:  
‘the one-of-a-kind Son, God’ [in his own right],  
who lives in closest relationship with the Father—  
that one has given full account of him.

## A. The Word’s Activity in Creation (1:1–5)

The phrase “in the beginning” echoes the opening phrase of the Hebrew Bible (Gen. 1:1) and establishes a canonical link between the first words of the OT Scriptures and the present Gospel. “Beginning” points to a time prior to creation (R. Brown 1966: 4; Beasley-Murray 1999: 10; Schnackenburg 1990: 1.232).<sup>16</sup> Yet while John’s first readers would have expected the phrase “In the beginning *God*,” the evangelist instead speaks of “the Word” (Beasley-Murray 1999: 10). The focus of this verse is to show the Word’s preexistence (Ridderbos 1997: 25; Schnackenburg 1990: 1.232), preparing for the later reference to a new “beginning,” the incarnation of the Word (cf. 1:14) (Morris 1995: 64; Carson 1991: 114).

The designation “Word”—used in a christological sense only in the prologue (1:1, 14)—conveys the notion of divine self-expression or speech (cf. Ps. 19:1–4).<sup>17</sup> The Genesis creation account establishes the effectiveness of God’s word: he speaks, and things come to pass (Gen. 1:3, 9; cf. 1:11, 15, 24, 30). Psalmists and prophets alike portray God’s word in close-to-personal terms (Ps. 33:6; 107:20; 147:15, 18; Isa. 55:10–11). Yet only John claims that this Word has appeared as an actual person, Jesus Christ (cf. 1 John 1:1; Rev. 19:13). As a comprehensive christological designation, the expression “the Word” encompasses Jesus’ entire ministry, placing all of Jesus’ works and words within the framework of both his eternal being and existence<sup>18</sup> and God’s self-revelation in salvation history.<sup>19</sup>

16. Besides “beginning,” the Greek term ὁριζει can also mean “first cause.” It is possible that John here seeks to convey both meanings, “in the beginning of history” and “at the root of the universe” (Morris 1995: 65).

17. Calvin (1959: 7) remarks, ‘I think he calls the Son of God ‘the Word’ . . . simply because, first, He is the eternal wisdom and will of God, and secondly, because He is the express image of His purpose. For just as in men speech is called the expression of the thoughts, so it is not inappropriate to apply this to God and say that He expresses Himself to us by His Speech or Word.’

18. Michaels (1989: 21) observes, “Elsewhere in John’s Gospel, Jesus *speaks* the word, but in the prologue he *is* the Word, the personal embodiment of all that he proclaims.”

19. See the allusion to the tabernacle in 1:14 and the reference to God’s giving the law through Moses in 1:17 (see also 5:46). As Behr (2000: 94 [cf. M. Edwards 1995]) notes, for

The term “Word” appears to have been used by the evangelist at least partly in order to contextualize the gospel message among his Hellenistic audience. Keener (2003) provides thorough discussions of the gnostic Logos (pp. 339–41); the Logos of Hellenistic philosophy (pp. 341–43); Philo (pp. 343–47); wisdom, word, and Torah (pp. 350–60); and John’s Logos and Torah (pp. 360–63). Three primary backgrounds have been proposed: (1) Greek philosophy (Stoicism, Philo); (2) the personification of wisdom; and (3) the OT.<sup>20</sup>

In Stoic thought, *logos* was Reason, the impersonal principle governing the universe. A spark of universal Reason was thought to reside within people (at least the best and wisest of them), who must live in keeping with it to attain dignity and meaning. Yet while John may well have been aware of the Stoic concept of the *logos*, it is doubtful that it constituted his primary conceptual framework (see the three reasons given in Köstenberger 1999a: 52).

Another candidate is the personification of wisdom in wisdom literature (see, e.g., Talbert 1992: 68–71). In Prov. 8 (esp. vv. 22–31), wisdom is called “the first of his [God’s] works,” “appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began.” Wisdom was “the craftsman at his side” when he marked out the earth’s foundations, “rejoicing always in his presence.” A whole corpus of apocryphal wisdom literature built on these notions (Sir. 1:1–10; Wisdom of Solomon). At first sight, the parallels between the characterization of wisdom in Prov. 8 and John’s *logos* seem impressive. Wisdom, like John’s *logos*, claims preexistence and participation in God’s creative activity. Like the *logos*, wisdom is

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the second-century church fathers, including Justin Martyr, “The revelation of God in the incarnate Logos is the last, even if the most important, in a series of discrete revelations.” According to Irenaeus, “[t]he pre-existence of Christ, the Word of God, is inextricably connected with his seminal presence in Scripture, the word of God” (*inseminatus est ubique in Scripturis ejus Filius Dei*; Behr 2000: 98).

20. For a more thorough discussion, see E. Miller (1993: 448–49), who lists as many as nine different theories: (1) the OT *dbr*; (2) Wisdom (R. Harris 1917); (3) Greek philosophy (Stoicism); (4) Philo (Evans 1993: 100–145; Tobin 1990); (5) the Aramaic *mmr* (Hayward 1978); (6) rabbinic speculation on the Torah; (7) gnostic sources, such as the Hermetic literature, especially Poimandres (Pagels 1999); (8) the Hellenistic-gnostic redeemer myth, Mandaeans, and the Odes of Solomon (Bultmann 1923; 1973; 1971); and (9) the breaking of divine silence (Jeremias). Some, such as Epp (1975), combine two or more of the above (in Epp’s case, Wisdom and Torah). Miller himself (1993: 452), building on his earlier work (1989), advances the thesis that the uses of  $\lambda\circ\gamma\circ\varsigma$  in the Gospel proper, while not a christological title, are invested “with a certain christological transparency” (B. Reicke’s term). Thus, startlingly, Miller, who believes that the prologue was written not only after the Gospel proper, but even after John’s first epistle, finds the origin of the prologue’s  $\lambda\circ\gamma\circ\varsigma$  in the Fourth Gospel itself: “The one of whom it was said in John 7:46, ‘Never has a man spoken like this!’ eventually came to be called, appropriately, ‘the Word.’” I find this thesis entirely unconvincing (Miller [1999] attempts to make the same case for  $\alpha\rho\chi\acute{\eta}$ ). It is quite a tour de force to brush aside the massive OT substructure pervading the entire prologue. Not surprisingly, Miller’s thesis has found few followers.

depicted as a vehicle of God's self-revelation, in creation as well as the law. Yet despite these surface similarities, John's *logos* differs from personified wisdom in several significant respects, and the term *σοφία* (*sophia*, wisdom) is absent from this Gospel (Schlatter 1948: 43; see the three differences noted in Köstenberger 1999a: 53).

Finally, the third proposed background is the depiction of the Word of God in the OT. There are several reasons why this option has the most to commend it: (1) the evangelist's deliberate effort to echo the opening words of the Hebrew Scriptures by the phrase "in the beginning"; (2) the reappearance of several significant terms from Gen. 1 in John 1 ("light," "darkness," "life"); (3) the prologue's OT allusions, be it to Israel's wilderness wanderings (1:14: "pitched his tent") or to the giving of the law (1:17-18); and (4) the evangelist's adaptation of Isa. 55:9-11 for his basic christological framework (Kostenberger 1999a: 54).<sup>21</sup>

Since the Word existed in the beginning, one might think that either the Word *was* God or the Word was *with* God. John affirms both. First, he states that the Word was "with God." The preposition *πρός* (*pros*, with) indicates place or accompaniment, but also disposition and orientation (Ridderbos 1997: 25 n. 23).<sup>22</sup> What is expressed is "not simple co-existence, but rather the idea of active relationship or intercourse 'with'" (Pollard 1977: 364-65).<sup>23</sup> In terms of relationship, not only does *πρός* establish a relationship between God and the Word, but also it distinguishes the two from each other (R. Brown 1966: 5).

The word *ἦν* (*en*, was) in 1:1 conveys the notions of existence, relationship, and predication (R. Brown 1966: 4; contrast *ἐγένετο* [*egeneto*, came, became] in 1:3, 6, 14). At the risk of overtranslation, the force may be, "the Word continually was" (Morris 1995: 65; though, of course, *εἰμί* has no past tense indicative forms other than the imperfect).<sup>24</sup> In context, the Word's existence is placed "outside the limits of time and place, neither of which existed *en archē*" (Moloney 1998: 35).

The term *θεός* (*theos*, God; used again in 1:2, 6, 12, 13, 18) is familiar to John's readers as a reference to the God revealed in the OT. The

21. Viviano (1998: 182) comments, "This passage of Isaiah [Isa. 55:10-11] almost certainly had the decisive effect on John 1:1-18."

22. Moloney (1998: 35) says that *πρός* connotes motion, not just "with," and translates it "turned toward." Yet any force of motion inherent in *πρός* is overridden by the stative verb (Wallace 1996: 358-59; Schnackenburg [1990: 1.234] also rejects the idea). Lindars (1972: 84) proposes "in company with," while Westcott (1908: 1.6) writes, "The personal being of the Word was realised in active intercourse with and in perfect communion with God." Bultmann (1971: 32-33) suggests that *ἦν πρός* is a Semitism equivalent to *παρά* plus the dative.

23. Seeking to combine the notions of "with" indicating accompaniment and "toward" signifying relationship, R. Brown (1966: 4-6) translates, "The Word was in God's presence"; A. T. Robertson (1934: 623 [cited in MacLeod 2003: 57]) glosses, "face to face with God."

24. Lindars (1972: 82) labels *ἦν* "past continuous" and thus "virtually timeless."

word occurs in Gen. 1:1 to refer to the Creator. The same expression is used for “god” in the Greco-Roman world, whose pantheon was made up of dozens of deities. The Jews, by contrast, believed in only one God (Deut. 6:4). John’s favorite expression for God in his Gospel is “Father” of Jesus (cf. 1:14, 18).<sup>25</sup>

It is one thing for the Word to be *with* God (so were Isaiah’s personified Word and Wisdom); it is quite another for the Word to *be* God.<sup>26</sup> Having distinguished the Word—Jesus, not mentioned by name until 1:17—from God, John now shows what they have in common: they are God (M. Harris 1992: 67; Luther 1957: 15). Clearly, calling Jesus “God” stretched the boundaries of first-century Jewish monotheism (though see Bauckham 1998a; Hurtado 1998b). From the patristic era (Arius) to the present (Jehovah’s Witnesses), it has been argued that this verse merely identifies Jesus as *a* god rather than as God, because there is no definite article in front of θεός. Yet this is dubious for several reasons.<sup>27</sup>

First, John, as a monotheistic Jew, would hardly have referred to another person as “a god.” Second, if John had placed a definite article before θεός, this would have so equated God and the Word that the distinction established between the two persons in the previous clause (“the Word was *with* God”) would have been all but obliterated. Third, in Greek syntax it is common for a definite nominative predicate noun preceding a finite verb to be without the article (Colwell 1933: 12–31; McGaughy 1972; Wallace 1996: 256–70), so that it is illegitimate to infer indefiniteness from the lack of the article in the present passage.

In fact, if John had merely wanted to affirm that Jesus was divine, there was a perfectly proper Greek word for it: θεῖος (*theios*, divine) (R. Brown 1966: 5; Bultmann 1971: 33–34; Carson 1991: 117). Nevertheless, the force of the anarthrous θεός is probably not so much that of definiteness as that of quality: Jesus “shared the *essence* of the Father, though they differed in person” (Wallace 1996: 269). Everything that can

25. On “God” and “Father” in the Gospel of John, see especially the valuable and insightful monographs by Thompson (2000; 2001). On the characterization of God in the Fourth Gospel, see also Tolmie 1998; on God the Father, see Meyer 1996: 255–73 and Fisher 2003.

26. For a brief survey of the divinity and uniqueness of Jesus, particularly claims of Jesus’ preexistence, see Köstenberger 1998b: 46–47 (see relevant bibliography in nn. 7–8).

27. See Hartley 1999 for an interaction with the arguments by Jehovah’s Witnesses against Jesus’ deity from 1:1c. Hartley first surveys the history of the debate, starting with Colwell (1933: 12–21), followed by contributions by Harner (1973: 75–87), P. Dixon (1975), and Hartley himself (1996). Hartley concludes that “the Word was *theos* (1:1c) in every sense the Father was *ton theon* (1:1b), rather than *a god* in a particular sense the Father was not” (1999: 1, summarizing 1996). See also MacLeod 2003: 59–60; and Keener 2003: 372–74, who points to the anarthrous instances of θεός designating God the Father later in the prologue (1:6, 12, 13, 18) and the articular use of θεός with reference to Jesus in 20:28 (p. 373).

be said about God also can be said about the Word (Morris 1995: 68; Wallace 1996: 735). By contrast, wisdom is never referred to as θεός.

The purpose of the verse is more than mere emphasis through repetition (the view of Borchert 1996: 106).<sup>28</sup> Now that the reader understands the contents of 1:1, the evangelist, by reiterating the second clause of 1:1, provides closure as well as preparing the reader for 1:3 (Carson 1991: 118). The pronoun οὗτος (*houtos*, he) points backward to the Word and forward to a human being (Moloney 1998: 35).

"Having declared that the Word is God and proclaimed His divine essence, he goes on to prove His divinity from His works" (Calvin 1959: 9). The affirmation that all things were made through *wisdom* or even through God's *word* would have been thoroughly in keeping with Jewish belief. John's contention, however, is that everything—that is, the κόσμος (*kosmos*, world) of 1:10 (Bultmann 1971: 36)—came into being through "him," that is, Jesus, God-made-flesh (the word διά [*dia*, through] conveys secondary agency on the part of the Son here and in 1:10, 17; 3:17; 14:6; 1 John 4:9; Pollard 1977: 366; Wallace 1996: 434).<sup>29</sup>

The phrase ὃ γέγονεν (*ho gegonen*, that has been made) can be construed with what precedes or with what follows.<sup>30</sup> The former is to be preferred, for the following reasons.<sup>31</sup> First, "without him nothing has been made that has been made" brings closure to the thought expressed in 1:3 by way of emphatic restatement of the converse. The alternative, "That which has been made in him was life," is hardly intelligible.<sup>32</sup>

28. See, rightly, MacLeod 2003: 62 (who in n. 66 cites further proponents of the view that 1:2 merely repeats 1:1), though it is far from certain that 1:2 should be read in sapiential terms as MacLeod avers.

29. Though note that Jesus is not explicitly mentioned until 1:17. "All things" (*tὰ πάντα, ta panta*) may echo Gen. 1:31 (cf. Gen. 9:3; Ashton 1986: 184 n. 37). Though startling, the substance of the present assertion is in no way unique to John; it pervades much of the NT (cf. 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). For extrabiblical parallels, see Köstenberger 2002c: 6. For a survey of possible backgrounds for 1:3, see Keener 2003: 375–81.

30. Cohee (1995: 476–77) adds a third alternative: he believes that ὃ γέγονεν was introduced into the text as a gloss on the οὐδὲ ἔν of verse 3b.

31. So the majority of commentators, including Morris 1995: 66; Carson 1991: 137; Haenchen 1984: 1.113–14; Schnackenburg 1970: 1.239–40; Barrett 1978: 156–57; and Schlatter 1948: 5–6. Among the translations that construe ὃ γέγονεν with what precedes are the NASB, NIV, NKJV, ISV, NLT, HCSB, ESV, and TNIV.

32. Note the comment on this alternative by Metzger (1994: 168): "whatever that may be supposed to mean." In Metzger's dissenting opinion (the majority of the UBS translation committee favors taking the phrase with what follows) he states, "Despite valiant attempts of commentators to bring sense out of taking ὃ γέγονεν with what follows, the passage remains intolerably clumsy and opaque" (similarly, Schnackenburg, cited by Ashton 1986: 172). Among the major translations, only the NRSV prefers this alternative. Commentators who advocate this option are R. Brown (1966: 6–7), Bultmann (1971: 39–40, esp. n. 4), Beasley-Murray (1999: 1–2, esp. n. a), and Whitacre (1999: 52). See also E. Miller (1989), who integrates his belief that the phrase is to be taken with what follows into his larger thesis that 1:1a–b and 1:3–5 constitute a christological hymn in four strophes extolling the

Second, John frequently begins a sentence or clause with ἐν (en, in) plus a demonstrative pronoun (cf. 13:35; 15:8; 16:26). Third, Johannine theology elsewhere favors taking the phrase with what precedes (5:26, 39; 6:53; cf. 1 John 5:11).<sup>33</sup>

The thrust of this verse is to point to creation, not incarnation (Ridderbos 1997: 37; Carson 1991: 118). The evangelist emphatically asserts that “everything owes its existence to the Word” (Morris 1995: 71). Restating a clause by way of negating the contrary is a common Johannine device (e.g., 1:12–13, 20; 3:16–17, 36) (Morris 1995: 71). The perfect γέγονεν (*gegonen*, has been made) underscores the permanent effect of ἐγένετο (*egeneto*, were made) earlier in the verse, denoting “the continuing existence of created things” (Morris 1995: 71; cf. Ridderbos 1997: 37 n. 62).

**1:4–5**

In 1:4–5, the evangelist continues to elaborate on the Word’s involvement in creation, writing as one who looks at the present in light of its origin, with the imperfect verbs in 1:1–4 providing the general backdrop (Ridderbos 1997: 38, 40).<sup>34</sup> Both “life” and “light” are universal religious terms (D. H. Johnson, *DJG* 469–71; Schnackenburg 1990: 1.242–44), but John’s teaching is deeply rooted in OT teaching.<sup>35</sup> At creation, calling forth “light” was God’s first creative act (Gen. 1:3–5) (Morris 1995: 74–75). Later, God placed lights in the sky to separate between light and darkness (Gen. 1:14–18). Light, in turn, makes it possible for life to exist. Thus, on the fifth and sixth days of creation God made animate life to populate both the waters and dry land, culminating in his creation of humankind (Gen. 1:20–31; 2:7; 3:20). Now John asserts that life was “in him,” Jesus. He is the source of life, both physical and spiritual (“eternal”). He also is the source of supernatural light, since only those who possess spiritual, eternal life have the capacity to “walk in the light,” that is, to make moral decisions that are in accordance with God’s revealed will.<sup>36</sup>

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salvation-historical activity of the Word (he considers 1:1c and 1:2 to be interpolations). Brodie (1993: 138), because of the lack of punctuation, sees the text as inherently ambiguous and as being “part of a careful literary strategy” designed to focus on “the continuity between creation and the incarnation, between creation and redemption.”

33. Cohee (1995: 473) also draws attention to parallels in Greek literature, such as the passage quoted by the apostle Paul in Acts 17:28 from Aratus, *Phaenomena* 5, and perhaps Cleanthes, *Hymn to Zeus* 4: ‘Ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν . . .’ (“For in him we live . . .”).

34. Schlatter (1948: 6) notes the characteristic Johannine asyndeton in 1:4 and that it does not detract from the flow of thought. Keener (2003: 382) identifies the chain life-life-light-light-darkness-darkness in 1:4–5 as a literary device called sorites (also adducing Wis. 6:17–20).

35. For an extensive discussion of the place of symbolism in the Fourth Gospel, see Culpepper 1983: 180–98. See also C. Koester 2003.

36. Hence, the present reference is to light that only believers possess; contra Calvin (1959: 11), who speaks of the “light” of common grace given to humans, that is, ethical rationality, which animals lack: “I think that this is a reference to that part of life in which men surpass the other animate creatures. It is as if he were saying that the life given to men was not life in general but life united with the light of reason.”

“Light of [all] people” means “light *for* [all] people” (Bultmann 1971: 40), an objective genitive in Greek (Ridderbos 1997: 38 n. 64), pointing to the universal effects of the Word’s appearance.

The statement “the light shines” anticipates “the light that came when Christ entered the world and that now shines” (Ridderbos 1997: 39). In the present Gospel, “darkness” is “the world estranged from God” (Schnackenburg 1990: 1.245), spiritually ignorant and blind, fallen and sinful (Witherington 1995: 55), dominated by Satan. The evangelist announces at the outset that the darkness has not “overcome” (*κατέλαβεν*, *katelaben*) the light (better translation than “understood”; cf. NIV footnote; Köstenberger 1999a: 55). This reading is suggested by, among other things, 12:35 (cf. 16:33), the closest parallel in John’s Gospel (R. Brown 1966: 8).<sup>37</sup>

Once again, John contextualizes. While drawing on solidly OT concepts, he employs these universal terms to engage adherents of other religions and worldviews.<sup>38</sup> For some, light was wisdom (or wisdom was even superior to light; cf. Wis. 7:26–30). For others, light was given by the Mosaic law (2 Bar. 59:2) or Scripture (Ps. 19:8; 119:105, 130; Prov. 6:23). Still others looked for enlightenment in philosophy, morality, or a simple lifestyle. In this religiously pluralistic context, John proclaims Jesus as the supreme light, who is both eternal and universal and yet personal. Importantly, the coming of the light necessitated a choice to be made by those in the world who have seen it (Ridderbos 1997: 42).

37. “Overcome” or an equivalent is favored also by Morris 1995: 76; Moloney 1998: 36; Schnackenburg 1990: 1.245–46; Laney 1992: 39; Lindars 1972: 87; Schlatter 1948: 9 (“*καταλαμβάνω* never means ‘understand’ in John”); and Westcott 1908: 1.9–10. Carson (1991: 138) thinks that John might have both meanings (“overcome” and “comprehend”) in mind (so also Whitacre 1999: 53) and likes the ambiguity in BAGD’s translation, “master” (see BDAG 520). Keener (2003: 387) believes that John’s use of *κατέλαβεν* in 1:5 is an instance of *traductio*, a play on the multiple meanings of a word (here “comprehend” and “overcome”). Keener notes that the word occurs in Wis. 7:30 but admits that there the term clearly means “overcome” and no wordplay is present. Burge (2000: 56) agrees that both are at work, but he sees “overcome” as being dominant. Calvin (1959: 12) translates “comprehend.” The major translations divide more or less evenly between the two options, usually mentioning the one not chosen in a footnote: (1) NIV: “understood”; NASB, NKJV: “comprehend”; (2) NLT: “extinguish”; NET: “mastered”; ISV: “put out”; HCSB, ESV, NRSV: “overcome.” Notably, the TNIV changed the NIV’s “understood” to “overcome.”

38. Some believe that John is alluding here to the Greek dualism between light and darkness. Rather than affirming belief in a personal God who is sovereign, all-powerful, and good, the Greeks viewed reality in terms of polar opposites, such as light and darkness or good and evil. John, however, refutes this kind of thinking in his first epistle, where he states emphatically, “God is light; in him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). Another kind of light/darkness dualism is found in the DSS, particularly the War Scroll (1QM) depicting the battle between the “sons of light” and the “sons of darkness.” Yet, because of the sectarian nature of the Qumran community, light is never offered to those who live in darkness (cf. 1QS 3:21; 4:9–14) (Bauckham 1997). In John, on the other hand, Jesus urges his listeners, “Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light” (12:36; cf. 8:12; 9:5).

Demonstrably, however, beneath this contrast between light and darkness lies a significant cluster of OT passages. Most interesting are several instances in Isaiah that depict the coming Messiah as a light entering the darkness. In Isa. 9:2, one reads, “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.” In Isa. 60:1–5, a time is envisioned when the nations will walk in God’s light, and the glory of the Lord will shine brightly (cf. Isa. 42:6–7; 49:6; see also John 12:46; 1 John 1:5–7). In John, light and darkness are no equally matched duality, but in the battle between Jesus and Satan, Jesus, “the light,” is the overwhelming victor.

### B. John’s Witness concerning the Light (1:6–8)

1:6 All four Gospels identify the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus. Luke in particular provides a very thorough account of John’s origins, including the unusual circumstances surrounding his birth (chs. 1–2). In the context of John’s opening lines, the present description of John makes two things clear: (1) John was a man, not, as Jesus, God; and (2) John was sent by God to carry out a particular mission, in distinction from, but in relation to, Jesus. Ἐγένετο (*egeneto*, there was; contrast ἦν [*ēn*, was] in 1:1–4), together with ἄνθρωπος (*anthrōpos*, a man; contrast θεός [*theos*, God] in 1:1), sets the Baptist off from the Word or light: the Word existed from eternity. Yet although the Baptist was not the Word and certainly not God, he was indeed sent *from* God. The phrase “sent from God” is reminiscent of the OT description of a prophet whose role was to function as a spokesperson for God (e.g., 2 Chron. 24:19; 25:15; Jer. 7:25; 25:4; 28:9; 35:15; 44:4; Ezek. 2:3). The Jewish crowds thought of John as a prophet (Matt. 21:26 pars.), and that is how Jesus referred to him as well (Matt. 11:9 = Luke 7:26).

Luke records the unusual circumstances of how the Baptist got his name: initially he was to be named after his father, Zechariah, but his mother and his father concurred that his name should be John (Luke 1:59–63). The name “John,” a common one in the Hellenistic world of that day, also occurred frequently among the members of the Jewish priesthood, which included John’s father (Luke 1:5) (Carroll, *ABD* 3:886). “John” in the Fourth Gospel always refers to the Baptist.<sup>39</sup> The “other John” known from the Synoptics, that is, John the apostle, the son of Zebedee, is not referred to by name in this Gospel (though see 21:2). It is likely that he, as the author, conceals himself behind the phrase “the disciple Jesus loved” (first used in 13:23). Since the Fourth Evangelist is characteristically careful with names so as not to confuse his readers

39. Except, of course, for Simon’s father (1:42; 21:15–17). For a list of named individual characters in the Fourth Gospel, see Beck 1997: 30. For a discussion of all the significant named characters in John (plus the mother of Jesus and the “beloved disciple”), see M. Davies 1992: 316–49.

(see 6:71; 12:4; 14:22: two Judases; 11:2; 12:3; 19:25: several Marys, plus Jesus' mother), this is evidence for apostolic authorship (Morris 1995: 79 n. 52; Carson 1991: 120).

Whereas the Synoptists portray John's ministry as more multifaceted, John depicts him as the paradigmatic, though by no means only, witness to Jesus (Lincoln 2000: 58–73; the content of John's testimony is summarized in 1:15).<sup>40</sup> Like Luke (1:1–4), John stresses the accuracy of the facts set forth in his Gospel. In keeping with this concern, the Fourth Evangelist focuses on the Baptist's role as a witness to Jesus (cf. 1:7–8, 15, 19, 32–34; 3:26; 5:33–36). This makes the Baptist the first, though not the weightiest (5:36), among a whole series of witnesses to Jesus presented in this Gospel, which also include Jesus and his works (3:11, 32; 5:36; 8:14, 18; 10:25, 32, 37–38; 15:24; 18:37), Moses and the Scriptures (5:39, 46), the Father (5:32, 36–37; 8:18), the Spirit (chs. 14–16, esp. 15:26), the disciples (e.g., 15:27), and the Fourth Evangelist (19:35; 21:24).<sup>41</sup>

With regard to these witnesses, John's Gospel places particular emphasis on *eyewitnesses*, such as the Baptist (e.g., 1:32–34) and Jesus' first followers, including the evangelist (15:27; 19:35; 21:24). This role of eyewitness is both vital and humble. It is vital because eyewitnesses are required to establish the truthfulness of certain facts. Yet it is humble because the eyewitness is not the center of attention. Rather, eyewitnesses must testify truthfully to what they have seen and heard—no more and no less. The Baptist fulfilled this task with distinction. The last time he is mentioned in this Gospel, it is said of him that “all that John said about this man [Jesus] was true” (10:41).

“The light” has been cast as the life-giving, creative Word in 1:4, and as the illuminating, darkness-conquering force in 1:5. Now John (the Baptist) is said to give testimony to that light, with creation gradually receding into the background, and the focus increasingly shifting toward Jesus (cf. 1:9–14).

The desired, though not actual (Carson 1991: 121; Barrett 1978: 159), result of John's witness is that *all* might believe in Jesus (see commentary at 1:9) through him. Through the Word, “all things” were created; now it is God's purpose that “all people” might believe through John's

40. As Lincoln (2000: 21) notes, not only does the lawsuit motif (see Isa. 40–55, esp. 42:18–25; 43:22–28; 50:1–3) occur in each of the five main sections of John's narrative (prologue; 1:19–12:50; 13–17; 18–20; epilogue), but it does so in highly significant ways, forming the narrative framework of the Gospel (p. 141). According to Lincoln, just as there are seven signs and seven discourses in John's Gospel, there are seven witnesses: John the Baptist, Jesus himself, Jesus' works, God the Father, the Scriptures, the Samaritan woman, and the crowd. For a summary and appraisal of Lincoln's important monograph, see Köstenberger 2001a.

41. Keener (2003: 393) notes the literary purpose of opening and closing the Gospel with a witness (the Baptist and the evangelist respectively).

testimony (R. Brown 1966: 8–9). The word *πιστεύω* (*pisteuō*, believe) is found frequently in the Greek OT to describe the trust that God desires from his people.<sup>42</sup> In John’s Gospel, *πιστεύω*, first used here in 1:7, occurs close to one hundred times, almost three times as often as in the Synoptics combined. John virtually never uses the noun *πίστις* (*pistis*, faith) in his writings (the only exceptions are 1 John 5:4; Rev. 2:13, 19; 13:10; and 14:12). Though he is not averse to understanding belief as the affirmation of certain religious truths, he is much more concerned about active, relational trust in Jesus Christ.

- 1:8 The disclaimer “That man was not the light; rather, he came to testify concerning the light” (cf. 1:15; 3:30; 5:36; 10:41) is taken by some as evidence that there were in John’s day groups that elevated the Baptist above Jesus (R. Brown 1966: 28). There is some evidence for this in Ephesus in the 50s (Acts 18:25; 19:1–7). However, it is more likely that John’s primary burden is to contrast (note the strong adversative ὀλλά [alla, but]) the respective ministries of John and Jesus (see 1:19–51; 3:22–24; 4:1–2), whereby the Baptist is cast in a positive light as a witness to Jesus (Ridderbos 1997: 42). John is not the light, but he is a lamp (5:35) (R. Brown 1966: 9; Morris 1995: 81; Keener 2003: 393). The phrase “testify concerning the light” does not occur in other literature and appears to be a Johannine coinage.<sup>43</sup> The phrase “he came” is not explicit in the text—an ellipsis—but follows from 1:7 (Morris 1995: 81 n. 61).<sup>44</sup>

### C. The Incarnation of the Word and the Privilege of Becoming God’s Children (1:9–14)

- 1:9 In 1:9–14, the categories of 1:1–5 are brought back, but this time they are explored in light of their “kerygmatic implications” (Ridderbos 1997: 43). The syntax of the sentence in 1:9 is complex. That what was “coming into the world” is the true light, not humankind, is clear enough (e.g., Pryor 1990: 203–4; Barrett 1978: 160–61; contra Haenchen 1984: 1.117). Since in Greek the periphrasis is separated (“was . . . coming,” imperfect of *ἔνεστι* [*einai*, to be] plus the present participle), some translate the sentence as two somewhat independent clauses: “He was the true light . . . he was coming into the world” (see R. Brown 1966: 9–10).

“The true light is coming into the world” is a very subtle way of conveying the gospel to Hellenistic ears. It is hard to imagine a more discreet fashion of speaking of an event as momentous as the incarnation of

42. Abraham “believed the Lord” and thus became the father of all believers (Gen. 15:6; cf. Rom. 4:3, 20–24; Gal. 3:6; Heb. 11:8–12; James 2:23). Israel as a nation, however, is known in the OT primarily for unbelief (John 12:38; cf. Isa. 53:1).

43. On “the light” testifying, see 8:12–18.

44. Contra Wallace (1996: 477), who says that this may be an “imperatival *ἴνα*”—a conclusion called unlikely by Barrett (1978: 160).

the Word.<sup>45</sup> John uses the word κόσμος (*kosmos*, world) seventy-eight times in his Gospel (versus eight instances in Matthew and three each in Mark and Luke). The expression can mean “physical universe” (1:9, 10) or “a large number of people” (12:19). Most characteristically, however, the term refers to sinful humanity (e.g., 3:16). The phrase “come into the world,” with its corollary “return to the Father,” is used to depict Jesus as the one who enters the world from the outside and returns to his place of departure, that is, the presence of God the Father (cf. 13:1, 3; 14:12, 28; 16:28; 18:37). As in 3:19, the light was not received but rejected, resulting in judgment (cf. 9:39; 12:46–47) (Köstenberger 1998b: 121–23).

The coming of the Messiah frequently is depicted in the OT in terms of light.<sup>46</sup> By affirming that Jesus is the “true light”—just as he is the “true bread from heaven” (6:32) and the “true vine” (15:1)—John indicates that Jesus is the fulfillment of OT hopes and expectations. The term ἀληθινόν (*alēthinon*, true) here and elsewhere in John conveys the notion of genuineness in conjunction with typology: Moses gave the manna to OT Israel (though it was really God the Father who gave it; see 6:32); Jesus is the true bread from heaven—he gives life in an ultimate sense. Israel was God’s vineyard; Jesus is God’s vineyard—typified by fruitfulness—par excellence. Moreover, ἀληθινόν here also conveys a sense of ultimacy: in Jesus, God has revealed himself in an escalated, eschatological sense (Carson 1991: 122).

As the “true light,” Jesus is here presented as the source of (spiritual) light.<sup>47</sup> That light enlightens every person.<sup>48</sup> The evangelist has already stated that “that life was the light of men” (1:4), that “the light shines in the darkness” (1:5), and that the Baptist bore witness “so that through him all might believe” (1:7). The present verse does not suggest universalism—the ultimate salvation of every person—for John does not speak of *internal* illumination in the sense of general revelation (contra Morris

45. Among those who take 1:9 as a preliminary reference to the incarnation are Ridderbos 1997: 43; Carson 1991: 122; Borchert 1996: 112–13; Schnackenburg 1990: 1.255; Laney 1992: 41. Moloney (1998: 37) sees a hint to the incarnation already in 1:3c–4. There also may be an implied contrast with Hellenistic religions that offered false “light.”

46. On the general motif of “light,” see commentary at 1:4–5. On the coming of the Messiah in terms of light, see especially Horbury (1998: 92–93, 99–100), who also discusses rabbinic interpretations. Important OT references include Num. 24:17 (cf. 4QTest 9–13); Isa. 9:2 (cf. 42:6–7; see commentary at John 1:5); and Mal. 4:2 (cf. Luke 1:78–79; see Köstenberger 2002c: 8).

47. Later in John’s Gospel, Jesus calls himself “the light of the world” (8:12; 9:5). See also the depiction of Jesus in the Book of Revelation (1:14, 16; 2:18; 19:12; 21:23; 22:5, 16; cf. Matt. 17:2 pars.; Heb. 1:3; 2 Pet. 1:19). Köstenberger (2002c: 8) points out that the contrast conveyed by the expression “true light” is primarily between previous OT manifestations of God and God’s final, definitive revelation through Jesus Christ.

48. This is the only instance of the term φωτίζω (*phōtizō*, enlighten) in the Fourth Gospel.

1995: 84), but of *external* illumination in the sense of objective revelation requiring a response (R. Brown 1966: 9). As the remainder of the Gospel illustrates, not all did in fact *receive* the light, though it was *available* to all through Jesus' presence and teaching (Borchert 1996: 113). John here stresses the universal scope of Jesus' coming and the potential spiritual enlightenment available to all who would believe, an enlightenment that is available not merely to Jews but to all people, including non-Jews (cf. 1:12–13; 3:16; 10:16; 12:32; contrast 1:10; 3:19–21).

- 1:10–11** He—the Word who was the light<sup>49</sup>—“was” (*ἦν*, *ēn*) in the world: not just paying a fleeting visit, but, as John goes on to elaborate in 1:14, “dwelling among us.” Even though the world was created through the Word (an echo of 1:3), it did not recognize that Word, because it was estranged from him (Ridderbos 1997: 44). Yet the world should have recognized the one through whom it was made (Haenchen 1984: 1.117). The first half of John’s Gospel documents how not only the pagan world, but even Israel—“his own” (R. Brown 1966: 10)—failed to recognize Jesus as Messiah and Savior of the world, rejecting the light, including all demonstrations of Jesus’ deity and messiahship (his “signs”; cf. 12:37–43, citing Isa. 53:1) (Schlatter 1948: 17).<sup>50</sup>

Whether or not there is a progression in the evangelist’s use of the term *κόσμος*,<sup>51</sup> the evangelist highlights the irony, even tragedy, of the world rejecting the one through whom it was made.<sup>52</sup> The senses “created universe,” “universe inhabited by humankind,” and “fallen, sinful humanity in darkness” all resonate in the background (note the connection between “the world” and the “darkness” mentioned in 1:5; Bultmann

49. Rather puzzlingly, R. Brown (1966: 10) claims that “he was” refers to the Word, not the light. But this surely is a false dichotomy, for the Word (1:1–2) is later in the prologue consistently referred to as the light.

50. Schnackenburg (1990: 1.256) claims that the reference is not to Jesus’ earthly ministry but to Israel’s history prior to the incarnation. Similarly, R. Brown (1966: 30) cites the parallel of Wisdom in 1 Enoch 42:2: “Wisdom came to make her dwelling place among the children of men and found no dwelling place.” More likely, the reference is anticipatory of the Word’s incarnation in 1:14 (Culpepper 1980–81: 13–14; Carson 1991: 122; Ridderbos 1997: 43; Moloney 1998: 37). On a literal level, see the reference in Luke 2:7 that there was “no guest room available” (TNIV) for Jesus and his parents at his birth, which may have spiritual overtones as well.

51. Barrett (1978: 162) sees only one sense of *κόσμος* in this verse. Morris (1995: 85) contends that the first two instances refer to everyone, while the third reference is to those who came in contact with Jesus. Beasley-Murray (1999: 12) sees a progression from “the world inhabited by humankind” in 1:10a to “the world including human beings” in 1:10b to “humanity, fallen and in darkness” in 1:10c. Carson (1991: 123) demonstrates that the word *κόσμος* never has a positive usage (contra Burge 2000: 57) and only a few neutral ones.

52. Stibbe (1993: 27) observes, “The fact that the world does not acknowledge Jesus shows that John has no time for what literary theorists call ‘the pathetic fallacy’—the fallacious view that nature sympathizes with the poet and/or the hero. The world in John’s story is actively hostile to the protagonist.”

1971: 55). The thrice-repeated term κόσμος contributes to the solemnity and emphatic nature of the reference.<sup>53</sup>

“Did not recognize” translates the aorist of γινώσκω (*ginōskō*, know), referring to more than mere intellectual rejection and entailing a willful refusal to accept or believe (in) someone or something (Ridderbos 1997: 44; note the parallelism between πιστεύω [*pisteuō*, believe] and γινώσκω in 6:69). As R. Brown (1966: 10) points out, “The basic sin in John’s Gospel is the failure to know and believe in Jesus.” This refers first and foremost to a rejection of Jesus’ claim of equality with God and his revelation of the Father through words and signs.

In 1:11, what is said first in general terms—“his own [lit., ‘things’]” (Greek neuter) refers to the Word’s property (cf. the Greek of 16:32; 19:27; Acts 21:6; Kruse 2003: 66)—is then elaborated with specific reference to God’s chosen people Israel: “his own [people]” (Greek masculine), a wordplay in the original (Pryor 1990).<sup>54</sup> Not only was Jesus not received by a world made through him, but also he was rejected by a people specially chosen by God as his very own (see Exod. 19:5).<sup>55</sup> The picture is that of the Word not being a welcomed guest among his own people, the very ones who should have received him with open arms.<sup>56</sup>

To substantiate this claim, John 1–12 narrates Jesus’ performance of seven selected signs specifically for Israel, climaxing in a final statement regarding Israel’s rejection of Jesus’ signs in 12:37–43. In 13:1, then, the epithet “his own” is transferred from Israel to God’s new messianic community, consisting of the inner circle of followers of Jesus the Messiah (Pryor 1992a: 55; Köstenberger 1998b: 162, 165–66). The entire Gospel is

53. On solemnity, see Thielman 1991: 177–78.

54. This is the view of, among others, Carson 1991: 125; Dodd 1953: 402; R. Brown 1966: 10; Morris 1995: 85; Borchert 1996: 114; Burge 2000: 59. For a demonstration that 1:11, properly interpreted and understood (particularly the world as God’s property), refutes the notion, advanced by Bultmann, that John reflects gnostic thought, see Jervell 1956: 17–18. But see also the interaction with Jervell in Pryor 1990: 210–14.

55. Pryor (1990: 217) contends that “his own” here is “not a status term but a relational one,” referring to the Jews as Jesus’ “own kinsfolk,” “his own people according to the flesh,” “the people of his homeland,” but that “nothing in the verse is implied of Israel as God’s covenant people.” For Pryor, 1:11 is thus equivalent to 4:44. But surely this dichotomy is unnecessary: consider the parallelism between 1:11 and 13:1 and the salvation-historical references pervading the prologue (e.g., tabernacle in 1:14, giving of the law through Moses in 1:17). On a different note, “did not recognize” in 1:10 and “did not receive” in 1:11 are equivalent in meaning (Bultmann 1971: 56), a Semitism (cf. “did receive” in 1:12; see Bultmann 1971: 57 n. 2).

56. According to Culpepper (1983: 169), the “foundational irony of the gospel is that the Jews rejected the Messiah they eagerly expected.” A similar conclusion is reached by Duke (1985: 117), who suggests that 1:9–12 represents a summary of the dominant irony in the Fourth Gospel and notes how this primary irony (Jesus’ rejection by the Jews) is played out in the narrative in John 9.

taken up with the narration of the ever-escalating confrontation between “the Jews” and Jesus, culminating in Jesus’ crucifixion.<sup>57</sup>

- 1:12 John 1:12–13 is very possibly the climactic statement of the entire prologue, and by way of *inclusio* epitomizes the very purpose for which the Gospel was written: for people to “believe” and have life “in his name” (cf. 20:31) (Witherington 1995: 56).<sup>58</sup> The present statement sharply contrasts those who received him and believed with those who did not, marking out believers as those who “went against the current, who broke with the general pattern by which the world thinks, lives, and acts” (Ridderbos 1997: 45). John 1:12–13 also protects 1:5, 10, and 11 from being misunderstood.

The term ἔλαβον (*elabon*, did receive), a cognate of παρέλαβον (*paralabon*, received) in 1:11, is parallel to πιστεύω (*pisteuō*, believe; cf. 5:43–44) (Moloney 1998: 38; Schnackenburg 1990: 1.261). To “receive him” means to entrust oneself to Jesus, to acknowledge his claims, and to confess him (Carson 1991: 125–26). The grammatical construction uses a pendent nominative, with the following clause referring back to it with a personal pronoun (Wallace 1996: 52; Barrett 1978: 163). John 1:12–13 strikes the balance between human responsibility (“to receive,” “to believe”) and divine sovereignty (“born of God”).

The expression “believe in the name” of Jesus is found only in the Johannine writings (cf. 2:23; 3:18; 1 John 3:23; 5:13) (Hawthorne, *ISBE* 3:480–83). In 1:7, “believing” has already been identified as the purpose of John’s testimony to Jesus as “the light.” Now, believing—the present participle may denote continual belief (Wallace 1996: 621)—is said to be “in his [Jesus’] name” (equated with “receiving” him). On one level, believing in “the name” of Jesus is nothing other than believing in Jesus (3:18) (R. Brown 1966: 11). Yet the phrase “believe in the name of Jesus” may place particular emphasis on the fact that in order to believe in Jesus, one must believe that he bears the divine name. For John, then, believing in Jesus entails accepting him “to the full extent of his self-revelation” (Schnackenburg 1990: 1.263). In the

57. Culpepper (1983: 125–32) has a helpful discussion of the evangelist’s characterization of “the Jews.” For a critique of Culpepper’s methodology of characterization and an alternate proposal, see Stibbe 1992: 24–25.

58. For a helpful chart summarizing people’s belief or lack thereof in the remainder of the Gospel, see Croteau 2002: 120 (on believing in John’s Gospel, see also Gaffney 1965; Melick 1976; and H. Koester 1989). In the first half of the narrative, negative responses predominate; the few instances of believing in the second half are all positive. This seems to support the notion, defended in the present commentary, that Jesus’ mission in John 1–12 is predominantly (though not exclusively) one of failure owing to people’s lack of believing response, while John 13–21 is taken up with Jesus’ focus on the nucleus of the new messianic community. Hence 1:12, as the pivot of the prologue, serves to encapsulate the entire scope of John’s presentation of people’s responses to the Messiah in terms of reception or rejection with the result of eternal life or judgment.

early church, the name of Jesus could simply be called “the Name” (Acts 5:40–41; 3 John 7).

Being a child of God is neither a quality possessed by all nor an exclusive prerogative for Israelites; it is an entitlement for those who believe in the Word (Ridderbos 1997: 46). The word translated “right” ( $\varepsilon\xi\omega\sigma\iota\alpha$ , *exousia*; cf. 5:27; 10:18; 17:2; 19:10) in the NIV/TNIV refers to the authorization or legitimate claim of becoming God’s children,<sup>59</sup> a privilege (Ridderbos 1997: 46 n. 88) that now has been made available to all who believe in Jesus as Messiah. This assumes that, in one sense, sinful people are not God’s children, even though they are created by God, unless and until they believe in Jesus Christ (cf. 1 John 3:1–2). John is careful to distinguish believers, who *become* children ( $\tau\acute{e}k\nu\alpha$ , *tekna*) of God, from Jesus, who *is* the unique Son ( $\nu\acute{i}\o\zeta$ , *huios*) of God (Pollard 1977: esp. 364; Ridderbos 1997: 45; Oepke, *TDNT* 5:654; R. Brown 1966: 11; Beasley-Murray 1999: 13). In the OT, the Hebrews are called God’s children (Deut. 14:1), even God’s son and firstborn (Exod. 4:22). Yet OT saints did not call God “Father” or “Abba.” The privilege of *being* God’s children is extolled in 1 John 3:1–2; in John 1:12, the focus is on “becoming” God’s children, indicating a change of status (Morris 1995: 87). The Word’s ability to give this right is proof of his exclusive and unique relationship with God (Ridderbos 1997: 45).

The opposite of being born of God spiritually is natural procreation, mentioned by the evangelist in three different expressions (Ridderbos 1997: 47; Lindars 1972: 92). Spiritual birth is not the result of human initiative (Moloney 1998: 38) but of a supernatural origin (Schnackenburg 1990: 1.263).<sup>60</sup>

“Natural descent” renders what is literally “bloods,” that is, a blood relationship, on the basis of the belief that natural procreation entails the intermingling of bloods (cf. Ezek. 16:4–6; Wis. 7:1–2). Descent from the patriarchs was vital in the Jews’ understanding of their divine sonship (see esp. John 8:31–41). John’s point is that being a child of God is not a

1:13

59. Calvin (1959: 17) understands  $\varepsilon\xi\omega\sigma\iota\alpha$  in 1:12 as “honor”; Schlatter (1948: 19) glosses the word as “authorization” (Ermächtigung).

60. Some identify “children of God,” not “those who believe,” as the antecedent of the relative clause beginning 1:13 in order not to make faith follow regeneration (Bultmann 1971: 59 nn. 4–5). However, this is both syntactically awkward and implausible, as well as theologically unnecessary. In the Greek syntax, “those who believe” immediately precedes the relative clause and is thus most naturally taken as the antecedent, and the relationship between faith and rebirth is not easily reduced to a set sequential formula. The statement in 1 John 5:1, “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God,” allows one to deduce from a person’s belief that person’s regenerate state; regeneration (being “born of God”) and saving faith thus go together and cannot be separated. Spiritual rebirth takes place at God’s initiative; people are called to faith based on God’s revelation in Christ. John nowhere elaborates on the precise temporal relationship of these two aspects. Here and elsewhere in his Gospel (6:44–45; 10:26; 12:37–40), he affirms both divine sovereignty and human responsibility, and interpreters should do no less (see Carson 1981).

result of blood relations, as if a Jew, for instance, could simply presume upon descent from Abraham or Moses (Morris 1995: 90). Rather, spiritual birth must be sought and received from God on the basis of faith (in Jesus as Messiah).<sup>61</sup>

The phrase “of human decision” renders the literal “will of flesh,” whereby “flesh” does not denote what is sinful (as it does so often in Paul’s writings), but merely relates to what is natural as opposed to what is supernatural. The reference to “a husband’s will” implies the OT concept of male headship, in the present context perhaps with reference to the initiative usually taken by the husband in sexual intercourse resulting in procreation. Alternatively, the reference could more generally be to parental determination or will (Borchert 1996: 118). The expression “born of God” is reminiscent of OT passages in which God is said to have given birth to his people Israel (Deut. 32:18) (see further the commentary at John 3:3–5).

1:14

By way of *inclusio*, John now returns to the preexistent Word (cf. 1:1–2; see R. Brown 1966: 30; see also the oblique reference to the incarnation in 1:9).<sup>62</sup> The major burden of 1:14–18 is to identify the Word explicitly with Jesus.<sup>63</sup> Rather than using the words ἄνθρωπος (*anthrōpos*, man) or σῶμα (*sōma*, body), John here employs the almost crude term σάρξ (*sark*, flesh; cf. Rom. 8:3). Σάρξ here denotes “all of the human person in creaturely existence as distinct from God” (Ridderbos 1997: 49; cf. Borchert 1996: 119 n. 72; Barrett 1978: 164). The powerful Word of God has been born into frail humanity (Mowvley 1984: 136). ‘Εγένετο (*egeneto*, was made or born [more customarily, though somewhat misleadingly, rendered “became”]) does not mean “changed into” in the sense that Jesus, by becoming human, ceased to be God.<sup>64</sup> Nor does it mean “appeared” human (*pace* the docetists; see Morris 1995: 90–91) or even “took on” humanity (as is suggested by Witherington [1995: 55]). The main point is that God now has chosen to be with his people in a more personal way than ever before (Carson 1991: 127).

61. Cf. Borchert (1996: 118), who says that spiritual birth is not the result of bloodline relations. Witherington (1995: 56) paraphrases this as “ethnic origins,” Carson (1991: 126) as “natural descent.”

62. The second-century church father Irenaeus considered 1:14 to be a “summary” of 1:1–13 (cited in Behr 2000: 102).

63. Grappe (2000: 153–69) discusses 1:14–18 in light of Second Temple literature. He identifies the *shekinah* motif as the focal point of the passage, taking its point of departure from the revelation granted to Moses at Mount Sinai. For John, Jesus is the place where God’s presence, glory, grace, and truth are revealed. “By virtue of his unique nature, he is the one who transcends the most prestigious figures and institutions of the past” (p. 153).

64. This point is made forcefully by O’Neill (1991: 127): “The Word did not turn into flesh, did not change its nature and become flesh, did not masquerade as flesh, and did not come on the scene as flesh. . . . ‘The Word was born flesh’ or ‘the Word was made flesh.’”

The affirmation that “the Word was made flesh” takes the opening statement in 1:1 one step further: that same Word now has been born as a human being. Though John does not elaborate on the precise way in which Jesus was made flesh, his contention that deity assumed human nature in Jesus would have been anathema for Greeks who held to a spirit/matter dualism and could hardly have imagined immaterial Reason becoming a physical being. The idea of gods appearing in human form was not uncommon to the ancients. But John makes clear that the Word did not merely become manifest as an apparition—as was alleged by the docetists (from δοκέω, *dokeō*, seem)—but literally was made flesh (Talbert 1992: 74; cf. Pagels 1999; Grappe 2000).<sup>65</sup>

John’s message is that the incarnation represents an event of equal importance with creation. Since the world—including God’s chosen people (1:10–11)—is dark, fallen, and sinful, humanity’s need is for spiritual rebirth (1:13; cf. 3:3, 5), available only through the preexistent, enfleshed Word (cf. 1:29, 36). This ran counter to gnostic thought, which denied not only Jesus’ incarnation (on the grounds that it was inconceivable for God, who is spirit, to take on matter, which was considered evil), but also human sinfulness (cf. 1 John 1:8, 10) and hence the need for atonement (cf. 1 John 2:2; 4:10). The pronouncement that in Jesus, the Word, who was God, had been made flesh was therefore fundamentally at odds with the claims of *gnosis*, which did not acknowledge Jesus as “come in the flesh” (1 John 4:1–3; 2 John 7).

The Greek verb σκηνώω (*skēnoō*), commonly translated “dwelt,” more literally means “to pitch one’s tent.” This rare term, used elsewhere in the NT only in the Book of Revelation (7:15; 12:12; 13:6; 21:3), suggests that in Jesus, God has come to take up residence among his people once again, in a way even more intimate than when he dwelt in the midst of wilderness Israel in the tabernacle (Exod. 40:34–35).<sup>66</sup> Moses met God and heard his word in the “tent of meeting” (Exod. 33:9); now, people may meet God and hear him in the flesh of Jesus (Mowvley 1984: 136). Jesus’ “pitching his tent among us” is here related to the incarnation, that is, his being made human flesh; according to John, Jesus took the place of the temple (Schlatter 1948: 23; cf. Hoskins 2002: 170–74; Kerr 2002: 122–23). The aorist tense of σκηνώω could be viewed as ingressive (“began to dwell”) or complexive (“dwelt” in its totality); perhaps both are in view: the Word took up residence, and then stayed (Ridderbos 1997: 51; Morris 1995: 91).<sup>67</sup>

65. On the background of “the Word” in John and on points of contact with John’s contemporary culture, see commentary on 1:1.

66. While some see the tabernacle parallel (see Exod. 35–40), others look to the tent of meeting in Exod. 33 (Morris 1995: 92) or the exodus in general (Beasley-Murray 1999: 14).

67. Or, as Eugene Peterson’s modern paraphrase (*The Message*) expresses it, “the Word moved into the neighborhood.”

In Jesus, his followers saw the glory of God. “Us” and “we” probably refer not to all human beings or the church, but to those who lived with Jesus, particularly John and his fellow apostles, who “saw” (*θεάομαι, theaomai*)—a stronger word than mere “seeing,” indicating “observing” or “perceiving” (Ridderbos 1997: 52; Schlatter 1948: 24)—him in faith (cf. 1:12) (Morris 1995: 93 n. 98; cf. Ridderbos 1997: 51; Carson 1991: 128).<sup>68</sup> Like Moses of old (2 Cor. 3:6–18; cf. Exod. 34:29–35; see Mowbley 1984: 136), the apostles were firsthand eyewitnesses of God’s glory, which was in these last days displayed in Jesus, God’s one-of-a-kind Son (Matt. 17:1–2 pars.; 2 Pet. 1:16; 1 John 1:1; cf. Heb. 1:3; 2:3–4).<sup>69</sup>

First mentioned here, *δόξα (doxa, glory)* is another important term introduced in the opening section of John’s Gospel. In the OT, God’s glory was said to dwell first in the tabernacle, and later in the temple.<sup>70</sup> The Second Temple period was marked by the relative paucity of God’s revelation in light of Israel’s apostasy. As John makes clear, now, in Jesus, God’s glory has taken up residence in the midst of his people once again. To bring glory to God is said to be Jesus’ overriding purpose in John’s Gospel (9:3; 11:4, 40). As he brings glory to God, glory also comes to Jesus. This only continues what was already true of Jesus prior to his coming, for glory characterized both Jesus’ eternal relationship with God (17:5) and his preincarnate state (12:41). While on earth, Jesus’ glory is manifested to his first followers particularly through his “signs” (cf. 2:11; see Carson 1991: 128). As the obedient, dependent Son, Jesus brings glory to God the Father throughout his entire ministry, but he does so supremely by submitting to the cross, which for John is the place of God’s—and Jesus’—ultimate glorification (cf. 12:23–33; 13:31–32; 14:13; 17:1, 4–5).

The believer cannot see the glory of the Father in the Son, but rather a glory “as of”; but what can possibly be seen, is seen (Moloney 1998: 39).<sup>71</sup> Jesus is God’s “one-of-a-kind Son” (*μονογενής, monogenēs*).<sup>72</sup> The term is used in the OT and the Apocrypha to mean “only child” (Judg.

68. R. Brown (1966: 13) contends that “us” refers to humanity, and “we” to the apostolic witness (contra Barrett 1978: 166); Haenchen (1984: 1.119) takes “we” as a reference to the Christian community. Bultmann (1971: 69) unduly dichotomizes and dehistoricizes when he takes “seeing” as the unhistorical sight of faith.

69. Pryor (1990: 202 n. 6), in interaction with Schnackenburg, sees in 1:14–18 a polemic using the language of Exod. 33–34: whereas God’s tent was pitched outside the camp of Israel and Moses was denied the vision of God’s glory, Jesus’ followers had the grace of the incarnate Word dwelling among them and have seen his glory.

70. For further discussion and relevant passages, see Köstenberger 1997: 230.

71. Ridderbos (1997: 53) renders ὡς as “in keeping with his nature as” (cf. Schnackenburg 1990: 1.270), R. Brown (1966: 13) as “in the quality of.”

72. Winter (1953: 336) comments, “It is not *einzig*, but *einzigartig*” (cited in de Kruifj 1970: 112); cf. Schlatter (1948: 25): “not ‘*einzig geboren*,’ but ‘*einzig der Art nach*.’” Commentators differ on the exact meaning of *μονογενής*. R. Brown (1966: 13–14) prefers “unique,” pointing to the Latin *unicus*, and says that there is no reference to the Son’s procession (similarly, Wallace 1996: 360, 363, charging S. Porter [1992: 142] with committing the

11:34; Tob. 3:15; 8:17). Being an only child, and thus irreplaceable, makes a child of special value to its parents (cf. Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38; see Pendrick 1995: 593–94).<sup>73</sup> Hence, the LXX often uses ἀγαπητός (*agapētos*, beloved) instead of μονογενῆς (Gen. 22:2, 12, 16; Amos 8:10; Jer. 6:26; Zech. 12:10; cf. Prov. 4:3; in Judg. [A] 11:34, both words are used).<sup>74</sup> The seminal event in OT history in this regard is Abraham's offering of Isaac, who in Gen. 22:2, 12, 16 is called Abraham's “one-of-a-kind son” (Hebrew, *yahid*; note the probable allusion to this text in John 3:16), even though the patriarch earlier had fathered Ishmael (cf. Heb. 11:17; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.13.1 §222: μονογενῆς; see Fitzmyer, *EDNT* 2:440; Winter 1953: 337–40; Moody 1953: 213–19, esp. 217). *Μονογενῆς* therefore means not “only begotten,” but “one-of-a-kind” son (in Isaac's case, son of promise; according to Heb. 11:17–19, Isaac is a prefiguration of Christ).<sup>75</sup>

In both OT and Second Temple literature, the Son of David and Israel are called God's “firstborn” or even “only” son (cf. Ps. 89:27; 2 Esdr. [4 Ezra] 6:58; Ps. Sol. 18:4; Jub. 18:2, 11, 15). In a decisive step further, John applies the designation μονογενῆς to God's “one-of-a-kind” Son par

“root fallacy”; Borchert 1996: 120). Morris (1995: 93) likewise favors “only” or “unique,” disavowing any etymological relationship between μονογενῆς and γεννάω. Beasley-Murray (1999: 14 [cf. Haenchen 1984: 1.120]) concurs that the expression means “unique” and sees it as parallel to ὀγαπητός, “beloved” (cf. Carson 1991: 128). Ridderbos (1997: 53 [cf. Schnackenburg 1990: 1.270–71]) leans toward “only begotten” rather than simply “only,” especially in light of the ensuing preposition “from.” This is the view also of Dahms (1983), who points out that μονογενῆς often occurs in contexts where γεννάω is used as well (cf., e.g., 1:13; but see the refutation by Pendrick [1995]; see also Moody 1953). Laney (1992: 44) prefers “unique” or “one-of-a-kind,” while Lindars (1972: 96) notes that “the phrase of the Father . . . is decisive.” Keener (2003: 412–14) demonstrates that “only begotten” as a rendering of μονογενῆς fails the etymological test. He therefore glosses the meaning as “one of a kind,” noting that Christians, like Israel, are called God's children (1:12–13), but Jesus is the special, one-of-a-kind Son (citing M. Harris 1992: 84–87). For a summary of the relevant passages and debate, see Cox 2001.

73. De Kruijf (1970: 114) notes that even though Luke 8:42 and 9:38 have parallels in the other Synoptics, only Luke uses the term μονογενῆς or even gives the information that the girl and the boy have no siblings. The presumable reason for this is Luke's desire to highlight the special value that the salvation of these children has for their parents.

74. But note that Aquila uses μονογενῆς to translate *yahid* in Gen. 22:2, as does Symmachus in Gen. 22:12 (see Pendrick 1995: 593 n. 29).

75. For a very thorough and definitive demonstration that the notion of Jesus as the “only begotten” of the Father is foreign to Johannine thought and was read into the Gospel only later during the patristic period, see Pendrick 1995. Among other pieces of evidence, Pendrick cites ancient references where μονογενῆς is applied to an only child who was not the only begotten, “for the father might have begotten other children who died young and so the preservation of his name rests on the only surviving son” (p. 590). In light of the high infant mortality rate in the ancient world, Pendrick notes that “there must have been many only children who were not the only ones begotten by their parents” (p. 590 n. 23). See also Moody 1953: 213–19 and W. O. Walker 1994: 41 n. 37 (though when Walker contends that “the Greek of 1.14 does not include νιός with μονογενῆς,” he overlooks that “son” surely is implied in the term μονογενῆς, both semantically and by virtue of the juxtaposition with “from the Father”).

excellence, Jesus (John 1:18; 3:16, 18; cf. 1 John 4:9). This is similar to the designation of Jesus as God's "beloved son," which surfaces in the Synoptics in the voice from heaven at Jesus' baptism and transfiguration and in the parable of the wicked tenants (see esp. Mark 1:11; 9:7; 12:6; cf. Luke 20:13) (Pendrick 1995: 595 n. 42). In keeping with the Isaac narrative and the parable of the wicked tenants, the term μονογενής in the present passage thus contains a significant soteriological dimension, culminating in John's assertion in 3:16, "God so loved the world that he sent his one-of-a-kind Son." This designation also provides the basis for Jesus' claim that no one can come to the Father except through him (14:6). It is also likely that "one of a kind" in John's context refers to Jesus' uniqueness in that "he is *both* the *human* Son of Joseph *and* the *divine* Son of God" (W. O. Walker 1994: 41 n. 37).

Jesus is the "one-of-a-kind Son" *from* (παρά, *para*), or alongside of, the Father, in the sense that he was "with" the Father (1:1), that he has come "from" the Father (16:27; 17:8), and that he will send the Paraclete "from" the Father (15:26). The Son also sees and hears (8:38, 40; 15:15) and receives from (10:18) the Father. Jesus *is* from the Father; the Baptist is *sent* from the Father (1:6) (Pollard 1977: 365).

While Jesus is God's "one-of-a-kind Son," God is Jesus' "Father." The word πατήρ (*patér*, Father) is more personal than the term θεός (*theos*, God; see commentary at 1:1). It is Jesus' preferred way of referring to God in John. Although Jesus taught his disciples, who upon believing in Jesus had become God's "children" (1:12), to call God "Father" as well (Matt. 6:9 par.), Jesus' divine sonship remains unique. Thus, shortly after his resurrection, Jesus instructs Mary to tell his disciples, "I am returning to *my* Father and *your* Father, to *my* God and *your* God" (20:17). The relationship that Christians are able to enjoy with God their "Father" is unique among the world's religions, many of which portray God as remote, stern, impersonal, or mystical. The special fatherhood of God for believers is already implied in 1:12–13 in the reference to the "children of God" who are "born of God."<sup>76</sup>

According to John, Jesus is "full of grace and truth."<sup>77</sup> The introduction of the terms χάρις (*charis*, grace) and ἀλήθεια (*alétheia*, truth) marks another first in this Gospel. Χάρις occurs in John only in 1:14–17 in the phrases "grace and truth" and "grace for grace." Other than in Paul (where the word means "God's unmerited favor"; e.g., Eph. 2:8–9), χάρις in John's Gospel, in conjunction with ἀλήθεια, alludes to the OT phrase

76. On God the Father in the Gospel of John, see especially the work of Thompson (2000; 2001). See my largely appreciative review of her contribution (Kostenberger 2002d), yet note the concerns I raise regarding the overall thesis of her work.

77. The antecedent of πλήρης (*plérēs*, full) is subject to debate. If declinable, it refers to ὁ λόγος (R. Brown 1966: 14; Morris 1995: 94). If indeclinable, it should be taken with δόξαν (Carson 1991: 129) or σύντον, as is perhaps most likely (so BDAG 827; Ridderbos 1997: 54 n. 117). In any case, fullness of grace and truth is predicated of Jesus.

"loving-kindness [Hebrew, *hesed*] and truth [Hebrew, *emet*]" (Exod. 34:6; cf. 33:18–19; see Mowley 1984: 137; Kuyper 1964: 3–13; cf. Ps. 25:10; 26:3; 40:10; Prov. 16:6; see also Ps. 83:12 LXX [= Ps. 84:11 Eng.]). In this expression, both "loving-kindness" and "truth" refer to God's covenant faithfulness to his people Israel.<sup>78</sup> According to John, this faithfulness found ultimate expression in God's sending of Jesus, his one-of-a-kind Son (Lane 1992: 44). John 1:14–18 displays numerous parallels to Exod. 33–34 (Kostenberger 2002c: 11; Swain 1998: 30; Mowley 1984).

## D. John's Witness concerning the Word's Preeminence (1:15)

The evangelist now returns to the witness of John the Baptist (cf. 1:8; 3:30; 5:36; 10:41). The Baptist serves as the prototypical OT prophetic witness to Jesus and his coming, which makes his testimony an integral part of the salvation history canvassed by the evangelist.<sup>79</sup> The dual phrase "testifies" and "cries out" (on which see further commentary at 7:28, 37, and at 12:44), a hendiadys (Ridderbos 1997: 55 n. 123) with μαρτυρεῖ (*martyrei*, he testifies) representing a "historic present" (R. Brown 1966: 15; Borchert 1996: 122) and κέκραγεν (*kekragen*, he cries out) a stative perfect, vividly envisions the Baptist's ministry as still continuing (Carson 1991: 130).

The Baptist was six months older than Jesus (Luke 1:24, 26) and began his ministry before Jesus did (Luke 3:1–20). The OT generally (though not without exception) supports the notion that rank and honor are tied to one's age (e.g., Gen. 49:3; Prov. 16:31). Thus, priority in time—such as being the firstborn—implied preeminence (cf. Deut. 21:17; Isa. 61:7).<sup>80</sup> Because of the Baptist's age and earlier ministry, both he and the evangelist are at pains to show that Jesus really was "before" John and therefore rightfully to be honored above him.

The Baptist, presumably unaware of Jesus' preexistence as the Word, may simply have intended to affirm that Jesus "surpassed him." If so, he spoke better than he knew (Kruse 2003: 72). For in the context of John's opening words (where Jesus is portrayed as having existed with God from eternity), the Baptist's confession also points to Jesus' eternal origin (1:14; cf. 8:58; 12:41) and thus preeminence. Interestingly, the Baptist's witness is anticipated here prior to its actual narration in 1:19–34 (Ridderbos 1997: 55). Studying the Baptist's quotation of himself (cf. 1:30) gives insight as to how ancients viewed quotations (paraphrasing the

78. On "truth," see the discerning study by Barr (1961: 161–205).

79. As in the case of 1:6–8, some see 1:15 as an addition to a preexisting hymn (R. Brown 1966: 15; contra Barrett 1978: 167); but again, this is unnecessary. Brodie (1993: 143) comments, "John appears to be . . . the embodiment of the OT. . . . John's crying, therefore, far from being an illogical interpolation, is altogether appropriate. It is as though, when the incarnation finally arrived, full of covenant love, the OT stood up and cheered."

80. See Harrison, BEB 1:791. For a different kind of argument from chronological priority, see 1 Tim. 2:13.

essential message but not necessarily repeating a statement verbatim; see Wallace 1996: 455).<sup>81</sup>

### E. The Final Revelation Brought by Jesus Christ (1:16–18)

**1:16** John 1:16 resumes the thought of 1:14.<sup>82</sup> The present statement, plus 1:17, coming as it does at one of the most climactic junctures of the prologue, is similar in function and import to Paul's letter to the Romans, where the apostle claims in 1:17 that in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed "from faith[fulness] to faith." The term ὅτι (*hoti*, because) at the beginning of the clause conveys the notion that all believers can support the verdict that Jesus was greater than John (Morris 1995: 97). According to the evangelist—no longer the Baptist speaking (Borchert 1996: 122–23)—in the incarnate Word was found "fullness" (*πλήρωμα*, *plērōma*) (resuming the thought of 1:14 temporarily suspended by 1:15).<sup>83</sup> This expression occupied an important place in gnostic thought, the first major Christian heresy, which began to germinate in the second half of the first century (see 1 Tim. 6:20–21). It is to this type of teaching that the apostle Paul responds when he affirms that God's fullness dwelt in Jesus (Col. 1:19; 2:9; cf. Eph. 1:10, 23; 3:19; 4:13). For the Fourth Evangelist too, fullness can be found in one thing only: the grace of God displayed in Jesus, whose purpose was to bring "life . . . abundantly" (10:10). When the evangelist attributes "fullness of grace" to Jesus, he evokes parallels with similar descriptions of God in the OT (see Ps. 5:7; 51:1; 69:16; 106:45; Lam. 3:22–23; see also 1QS 4:4).

"We all" includes the "us" and "we" mentioned in 1:14—that is, the apostolic circle—but may, more comprehensively, refer to the entire believing community. Κοί (*kai*; preceding "grace for grace" in the Greek) may be explicative ("that is"; Schnackenburg 1990: 1.275; Ridderbos 1997: 57 n. 131; contra Morris 1995: 98 n. 119) or resumptive ("even"; Beasley-Murray 1999: 15).

The major translations are inadequate in rendering the phrase χάριν ὀντὶ χάριτος (*charin anti charitos*) in 1:16 (NIV: "one blessing after another"; NASB: "grace upon grace").<sup>84</sup> M. Harris (*NIDNTT* 3:1179–80), while favoring the NIV rendering (the phrase "denotes a perpetual and rapid succession of blessings, as though there were no interval between the arrival of one blessing and the receipt of the next"),<sup>85</sup> points to a better way when he contends that "the idea of constant renewal may be less prominent than

81. Borchert (1996: 122) thinks that this verse constitutes evidence that the prologue was written after the Gospel proper.

82. For this reason R. Brown (1966: 15) and Ridderbos (1997: 56) believe that this verse was inserted later by the evangelist.

83. This is the only time that *πλήρωμα* is used in John's Gospel.

84. But note the TNIV: "grace in place of grace already given."

85. See also Bultmann 1971: 78; Lindars 1972: 97; Bruce 1983: 43; Beasley-Murray 1999: 15; Schnackenburg 1990: 1.275–76.

the notion of the replacement of ‘old’ grace by ‘new’ grace.”<sup>86</sup> Importantly, the meaning “in return for” appears in the only two other occurrences in ancient literature (R. Edwards 1988: 4),<sup>87</sup> while there is no parallel to “grace upon grace” in all of ancient Greek literature. In fact, where “grace upon grace” is the intended meaning, the preposition used is ἐπί (*epi*, upon).<sup>88</sup> By portraying Jesus’ coming in terms of the giving of “grace [*in exchange or return*] for [ἀντί, *anti*] grace,”<sup>89</sup> the evangelist affirms that the grace given through Moses was replaced by the grace bestowed through Christ (cf. Exod. 33:12, 13, 17) (Mowvley 1984: 137).<sup>90</sup>

True grace—that is, final, eschatological grace—came through Jesus Christ.<sup>91</sup> Rather than offend the Gospel’s Jewish audience, this verse is designed to draw it in: “If you want an even more gracious demonstration of God’s covenant love and faithfulness,” the evangelist tells his readers, “it is found in Jesus Christ.” Jesus’ ministry is superior to that of Moses, just as he is superior to Jacob (4:12) and Abraham (8:53). The absence of the word “but” between the two phrases suggests that John did not see a radical disjunction between God’s giving of the law through Moses at Sinai (Hofius 1983: 278 n. 56, 279 n. 58) and the incarnation of Christ (R. Edwards 1988: 8; Lindars 1972: 98; Jeremias, *TDNT* 4:873).<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, as in the following verse (1:18), the underlying dynamic is antithetical to some extent (Hofius 1989: 169 n. 44; contra Carson 1991:

86. See also Wallace 1996: 365–68, referring to Waltke 1958: 1.166–76; R. Brown 1966: 16; and especially the excellent, definitive discussion in Carson 1991: 131–34, referring also to R. Edwards 1988; La Potterie 1977: 1.145–50.

87. Euripides, *Helen* 1234: χάρις ἀντὶ χάριτος ἐλθέτω (“since favor is for favor due”) and Dionysius of Antioch, *Epistle* 40: χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος ἀπαιτήσαντες (“asking for one favor in exchange for another”).

88. Cf. Sir. 26:15: χάρις ἐπὶ χάριτι γυνὴ οἰσχυντηρά (“a modest wife adds charm to charm”). Keener (2003: 421) contends that the phrase in John 1:16 conveys the sense of a “compensatory exchange,” accumulation (“grace added to grace”) rather than substitution, “an inexhaustible supply of blessing.” Contra Keener, the use of ἐπί rather than ἀντί in Sir. 26:15 does put in question the relevance of Sir. 26:15 as a parallel for John 1:16.

89. So, earlier, Schlatter (1948: 32): “Gnade für Gnade” (grace for grace).

90. R. Edwards (1988: 7 nn. 17–21) cites the following leading fathers of the Greek church as holding that the phrase “grace for grace” referred to a replacement of the Mosaic law by the gospel: Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Origen, and Theophylact (also Jerome, the most learned of the Latin fathers). Somewhat curiously, Michaels (1989: 24) contends that “grace and truth” is “a circumlocution for the Holy Spirit” (with reference to passages in John and elsewhere that connect the Spirit with grace or truth; cf. John 4:23–24; 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 5:6).

91. For the translation “true grace” I am indebted to R. Edwards (1988: 11, following R. Brown 1966: 16, with further reference to Montgomery 1939; Kuyper 1964), who notes that the Hebrew *Vorlage hesed wa-emet* constitutes a hendiadys meaning “faithful (or enduring) love.” Edwards (*ibid.*) rightly cautions that John’s appropriation of these OT expressions must be allowed to have a “fresh nuance”: “The Old Testament symbols of God’s gracious acts have been appropriated and Christianized.”

92. Keener (2003: 422) states that the contrast in 1:17 is between something good and something better (citing *m. Abot* 2.7: “the more study of the Law the more life”). See also

132–34), though not in a strongly contrasting relationship such as might be indicated by the adversative conjunction ἀλλά (*alla*, but).

The connection with the preceding clause is one of cause (ὅτι, *hoti*, for; cf. Wallace 1996: 461): the law is seen as the gracious gift of God (Schlatter 1948: 32–33, 193 at 7:19; with ἐδόθη [*edothē*, it was given] as a “divine passive”; Hofius 1989: 170), albeit a gift that now has been superseded by God’s gracious giving of his Son (Moloney 1998: 40, 46; see John 3:16; Rom. 8:32; Gal. 4:4; see also Heb. 1:1–2; 2:2–3; 3:1–6). Notably, what is referred to here is the event of the giving of the law at Sinai, not later abuses—such as legalism—by the Jews (cf. Paul, e.g., Rom. 3:19–21; 9:30–32; 10:3–4). The Pharisees (who call themselves “disciples of Moses” [John 9:28]) sharply contrast following Moses and Jesus—but not so the evangelist. In fact, later on in the Gospel, Jesus claims that Moses wrote of him (5:46–47).<sup>93</sup> This also, at long last, is the first mention of Jesus in the Gospel, culminating a string of references to the Word—both preexistent and incarnate—and the light. What is more, Jesus here is referred to by his fuller designation, “Jesus Christ,” forming an *inclusio* with 17:3, the only other instance of this expression in John’s Gospel.

1:18

At the conclusion of his prologue to the Gospel, the evangelist states emphatically, “God [first in the Greek word order] no one has ever seen.” The present verse constitutes an *inclusio* with 1:1 (Keener 2003: 335 [with reference to Boismard 1957: 76–77], 338). There it was said that the Word was *with* God and the Word *was* God. Here in 1:18 it is similarly said that the “one-of-a-kind Son” was God and that he was with God in the closest way possible (Louw 1968: 38). This relationship, in turn, is presented as the all-important reason why Jesus, the enfleshed Word, was able to overcome the vast gulf that had existed between God and humankind up to that point—despite the law. For God no one had ever seen—not even Moses (1:17; cf. Num. 12:8) (Hofius 1989: 170). If there is a polemic here, it is not against the law itself (true also of Paul [e.g., Rom. 3:31]), but against the revelation contained in the law. As Jesus asserts later in the Gospel, anyone who has seen him has seen the Father (14:9; cf. 12:45), and no one can come to the Father except through him (14:6). Although the law is God’s gracious revelation, it is not adequate as a vehicle of the “true, ultimate grace” (1:17) that came only through Jesus Christ.

The lack of a coordinating conjunction (asyndeton) indicates the causal relationship between 1:18 and 1:17 (Hofius 1989: 163 n. 4). Importantly, this theme is reiterated in the body of the Gospel during the course of Jesus’ ministry in relation to the Jews (5:37; 6:46; cf. the close verbal parallel 1 John

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Luther’s (1957: 139–48) discussion of 1:17, summed up as follows: “It is as if he were to say: The Law, given through Moses, is indeed a Law of life, righteousness, and everything good. But far more was accomplished through Christ” (p. 144).

93. Other positive references to the law in John include 1:45; 7:19, 22–23, 51; 8:17; 10:34; 12:34 (cf. R. Edwards 1988: 8–9).

4:12). In the OT, God had stated clearly that no one could see his face and live (Exod. 33:20) (Mowley 1984: 137). Moses received a glimpse of God's "back" (Exod. 33:23), as did Hagar (metaphorically; Gen. 16:13). The saints of the OT usually were terrified of seeing God (Exod. 3:6b; Judg. 13:21–22; Job 13:11; Isa. 6:5). The reason for humankind's inability to see God is two-fold: first, God is spirit (John 4:24); second, humankind fell into sin and was expelled from God's presence (Gen. 3; Isa. 59:2). Jesus surmounted both obstacles: he, himself God, became a human being, so that others could see God in him (John 1:14; 14:9–10; cf. 20:28); and, being sinless, he died for people, so that their sinfulness no longer keeps them from entering into fellowship with God (John 1:29; cf. Rom. 5:1–2, 6–11).

By way of *inclusio*, the phrase "the one-of-a-kind Son, God [in his own right]" provides a commentary on what is meant in 1:1c, where it is said that "the Word was God."<sup>94</sup> The Word was God, and so Jesus is "unique and divine, though flesh" (Mowley 1984: 137). Rather than functioning attributively ("the one-of-a-kind God"), μονογενῆς probably is to be understood as a substantive in its own right as in 1:14 ("the one-of-a-kind Son"), with θεός in apposition ("God [in his own right]"; Hofius 1989: 164). The phrase "one-of-a-kind Son, God [in his own right]," which John here uses with reference to Jesus, is both striking and unusual (though note the equally clear ascriptions of deity to Jesus in 1:1 and 20:28). If this is what John actually wrote, it would identify Jesus even more closely as God than the phrase "one-of-a-kind Son." Judaism believed that there was only one God (Deut. 6:4). As John shows later in his Gospel, Jesus' claims of deity brought him into increasing conflict with the Jewish authorities. In the end, the primary charge leading to his crucifixion was blasphemy (19:7; cf. 10:33).<sup>95</sup>

The phrase "in closest relationship" (*εἰς τὸν κόλπον*, *eis ton kolpon*) refers to the unmatched intimacy of Jesus' relationship with the Father (Wallace 1996: 360), which enabled him to reveal the Father in an unprecedented way (cf. the contrast with Moses in 1:17; R. Brown 1966: 36). Literally, John here says that Jesus is "in the Father's lap," an idiom for greatest possible closeness (cf. Prov. 8:30) (Hofius 1989: 164–65, following Gese 1981). This is the way the term is used in the OT, where it portrays the devoted care of a parent or caregiver (Num. 11:12; Ruth 4:16; 2 Sam. 12:3; 1 Kings 3:20; 17:19; Lam. 2:12; cf. b. *Yebam.* 77a) (Hofius 1989: 166 nn. 19–21).<sup>96</sup> The most pertinent NT parallel is the reference to "Abraham's side" (TNIV) in Luke 16:22.

94. Regarding the important text-critical issue pertaining to 1:18, see additional note.

95. On the level of the original readers of John's Gospel, Keener (2003: 426) observes that "[t]o Jewish Christians needing to lay even their lives on the line because of their Christology, John reminds them that Christology is at the heart of their faith in Israel's God."

96. Greek parallels include Aristotle, *De mirabilibus auscultationibus* 846b.27; Demosthenes, *Orations* 47.58.

These parallels show how deeply intimate John considered Jesus' relationship with the Father to be. The evangelist later uses a closely similar expression (ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ; lit., “in Jesus’ bosom” [13:23]) with regard to himself, “the disciple Jesus loved,” indicating that his closeness to Jesus during his earthly ministry made him the perfect person to write this Gospel. Access to divine revelation was also prized in the pagan mystery religions and Jewish apocalypticism and mysticism. Yet here John claims that Jesus’ access to God far exceeds not only that claimed by other religions, but even that of Judaism. This is why Moses’ system was inferior: under it, no one could see God (Morris 1995: 100).

John here does not use the more common term for “to make known,” γνωρίζω (*gnōrizō* [15:15; 17:26]), but the rare expression ἐξηγέομαι (*exēgeomai*; found only here in this Gospel). In its Lukan occurrences (Luke 24:35; Acts 10:8; 15:12, 14; 21:19), the term regularly means “to give a full account” in the sense of “telling the whole story,” the probable meaning here also (Louw 1968; Morris 1995: 101; contra Beasley-Murray [1999: 16], who likes the thought of the Logos “exegeting” the Father).<sup>97</sup> As he concludes his introduction, John therefore makes the important point that the entire Gospel to follow should be read as an account of Jesus “telling the whole story” of God the Father.

## Additional Note

**1:18.** There is a question as to whether the original reading here is μονογενῆς υἱός (*monogenēs huios*, one-of-a-kind Son) or μονογενῆς θεός (*monogenēs theos*, one-of-a-kind [Son, himself] God). With the acquisition of  $\tilde{\gamma}$ <sup>66</sup> and  $\tilde{\beta}$ <sup>75</sup>, both of which read μονογενῆς θεός, the preponderance of the evidence now leans in the direction of the latter reading. M. Harris (1992: 78–80) expresses a “strong preference” for μονογενῆς θεός, for at least four reasons: (1) it has superior MS support; (2) it represents the more difficult reading; (3) it serves as a more proper climax to the entire prologue, attributing deity to the Son by way of *inclusio* with 1:1 and 1:14; (4) it seems to account best for the other variants. Most likely, then, μονογενῆς υἱός represents a scribal assimilation to 3:16 and 3:18.<sup>98</sup>

97. See also E. Harris (1994: 109, 115), who suggests the rendering “has communicated divine things,” viewing the verb as a technical term describing the actions of religious figures in disclosing divine truth.

98. This also is the judgment of the majority of the UBS translation committee: see Metzger 1994: 169–70 for discussion and a more extended rationale. The type of evidence summarized above convinced the NIV, NASB, ISV, and ESV, though not the NKJV and HCSB; the NRSV (“God the only Son”) and NLT (“his only Son, who is himself God”) adopt a compromise solution. The TNIV, too, seeks to steer a middle course, though still affirms θεός as the original reading: “the one and only [Son], who is himself God.” Among commentators, the reading μονογενῆς θεός is preferred by R. Brown 1966: 17; Lindars 1972: 98–99; Bruce 1983: 44–45; Carson 1991: 139; Morris 1995: 100–101; Borchert 1996: 124; Wallace 1996: 307; Beasley-Murray 1999: 2 n. e; Burge 2000: 61; Keener 2003: 425–26; see also E. Harris 1994: 102–5; contra Bultmann 1971: 81 n. 2; Schnackenburg 1990: 1.278–80 (tentatively); Ridderbos 1997: 59 n. 140; Moloney 1998: 46; and Schlatter 1948: 34–35. Note that Barrett (1978: 169) changed his position between the first edition (1955) and second edition of his commentary: “The added evidence of the two recently discovered papyri may seem to swing the verdict this way.” Note also Wallace 1996: 360: “the unique One, God.”