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THE LIGHT OVERCOMES THE DARKNESS:
COSMIC CONFLICT IN THE
FOURTH GOSPEL

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THE LIGHT OVERCOMES THE DARKNESS:
COSMIC CONFLICT IN THE
FOURTH GOSPEL

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To God,

Who has been faithful to complete what He started.

And to Amanda, Keller, and Kyndall,

my joy and gifts from God,

who have borne many sacrifices on this journey,

enduring to the end,

and whom I love more than they can know.

May the Lord richly repay you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	viii
PREFACE	ix
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Thesis	4
Background	4
Johannine Studies	4
Warfare Literature	19
Dissertations	28
Conclusion	29
Methodology	30
Outline	32
2. A READING OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL IN LIGHT OF COSMIC CONFLICT	35
Prologue (1:1-18)	36
Early Testimonies of Jesus (1:19-51) and Cana to Cana (2:1-4:54)	38
The Festival Cycle (5:1-12:50)	41
The Farewell Discourse (13:1-17:26)	49
The Passion, Resurrection and Epilogue (18:1-21:25)	53
Conclusion	56
3. THE ANTAGONISTS OF COSMIC CONFLICT	58
Demons	58

Chapter	Page
John 7:20	59
John 8:48-52	60
John 10:20-21	62
Devil	62
A(?) Devil—6:70	64
The Devil—8:44; 13:2	66
Satan—13:27	71
The Ruler of this World—12:31; 14:30; 16:11	73
The Evil One—17:15	78
Thief—10:10	79
Placement of References	82
Judas Iscariot	83
Judas' Prominence in the FG	84
Judas as an Instrument of Satan	84
Additional Details Regarding Judas	87
The Jews	90
Identity in the FG	91
Conflict or Cosmic Conflict	96
Nature of the Conflict through the Narrative	99
The World	105
Identity in the FG	106
Nature of the Conflict	109
The Jews and the World	117
Pilate	120
Conclusion	123
4. THE PROTAGONISTS OF COSMIC CONFLICT	124

Chapter	Page
God the Father	124
God the Holy Spirit	125
John 14:16-17	125
John 15:26-16:16	125
John 20:19-23	128
Angels	130
The Disciples	131
As a Group	131
Individual Disciples	133
Conclusion	136
Jesus	136
In Relation to Demons	137
In Relation to the Devil	147
In Relation to Judas Iscariot	152
In Relation to the Jews	155
In Relation to the World	158
In Relation to Pilate	161
In Relation to God the Father	166
In Relation to the Holy Spirit	166
In Relation to Angels	167
In Relation to the Disciples	167
Conclusion	173
5. THE METAPHORS OF COSMIC CONFLICT	174
Light and Darkness	174
Background	176
Key Passages	181

Chapter	Page
Life and Death	200
Jesus and Life	201
Satan and Death	203
An Exception and Conclusion	206
Kingdom	206
Conclusion	211
6. THE WEAPONS OF COSMIC CONFLICT	213
Violence and the Death of Jesus	213
The Love of God	218
The Intercession of Jesus	223
John 17:1-26	224
John 14:16	228
Truth and Lies	229
Conclusion	233
7. CONCLUSION AND APPLICATION	235
A Johannine Theology of Cosmic Conflict	235
Overview	235
The Antagonists	235
The Protagonists	237
The Metaphors	239
The Weapons	240
Conclusion	241
Applications for the Church	242
Conclusion	247
BIBLIOGRAPHY	249

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- BDAG Bauer, Walter, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- BDB Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. 1906. Reprint, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951.
- BDF Blass, Friedrich Wilhelm, Albert Debrunner, and Robert Walter Funk. *Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
- DSS Dead Sea Scrolls
- FG Fourth Gospel
- HCSB Holman Christian Standard Bible
- JB Jerusalem Bible
- LXX The Septuagint
- UBS4 Aland, Barbara, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger, eds., *The Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. ed. (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1994).
- YLT Young's Literal Translation

PREFACE

This work is the culmination of a long journey, and I am indebted to many for their help along the way. In addition to my wonderful family, I must acknowledge several others.

Spiritually, God called me to Himself and to gospel ministry at Washington Park Baptist Church in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. Since that time, that church family has been so supportive, from enduring terrible sermons in my teenage years to spiritually and financially supporting us through the M.Div. and Ph.D. programs. I am especially grateful to my parents, Freddy and Pat Mackey, who taught me to love and trust Jesus from an early age and have always been supportive and encouraging. Ronnie and Ellen Ayers have been more than in-laws to me. I know God has protected us from much and given us more because of their prayers. Lastly, I am also grateful for fellow students and brothers in Christ who have encouraged me during this process. Thank you Eric, John, and Richard.

Academically, I would like to acknowledge Dr. B. Gray Allison, who encouraged me in my M.Div. at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary and modeled how to truly love and follow Jesus. There Dr. Kendell Easley was also used by God to instill in me a love for the Greek language, a love for which I will be eternally grateful. Finally, Dr. Bill Cook has been a source of constant encouragement during my Ph.D. program, taking me on as a student, allowing me to serve as his Garrett Fellow, providing support and direction for this dissertation, and caring about me as my pastor. A special word of thanks goes to my gifted wife, who spent countless hours to help proof countless pages through both a master's and a doctoral degree. I would be much less of a

person and writer were it not for her.

My prayer is that this work would be academically beneficial to a discussion regarding the reality of cosmic conflict and the manner in which the Fourth Evangelist addresses it. Furthermore, I pray that this discussion of the truths found in the Gospel of John regarding cosmic conflict will be of spiritual benefit to believers. May we face the enemy with not only caution, knowing his diabolical power and intentions toward us, but also with confidence, knowing Jesus' divine power and intentions toward us.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The conflict between God and Satan runs throughout the canon of Scripture. From the serpent in Genesis to the dragon of Revelation, the cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil is evident.¹ Johannine literature is no exception. Despite its lack of exorcisms, respected scholars in both the fields of Johannine studies and the biblical theology of Satan and demons contend that spiritual warfare² is a major theme in the Fourth Gospel (FG).³

Andreas Köstenberger rightly notes that the FG can be described “as a ‘cosmic drama,’ that is, as an account of Jesus’ enfleshment, salvific cross-death, and resurrection set in the context of a *cosmic spiritual conflict* that encompasses both heaven and earth.” He continues, “John’s *entire gospel* bears a marked imprint of his cosmology.”⁴

Barnabas Lindars, on the first page of his introduction to the FG states,

Man is involved in a power struggle between cosmic forces. On one side is the

¹Lyle Eslinger, “Judas Game: The Biology of Combat in the Gospel of John,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 77 (2000): 48, agrees: “Jesus’ duel with the Devil is the centerpiece of the combat myth in the Christian Bible.”

²For the purposes of this paper, spiritual warfare will be defined as the conflict between God and his agents and Satan and his agents. For similar definitions, see Charles Edward Lawless, Jr., “The Relationship between Evangelism and Spiritual Warfare in the North American Spiritual Warfare Movement, 1986-1997” (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997), 11-12, 292-93. Also, though slight differences in connotation may exist, in this paper spiritual warfare will be used synonymously with spiritual conflict and cosmic conflict.

³For the purposes of this paper, it will be assumed that John is the beloved disciple and the author of the FG. However, neither the authorship of the FG nor the identity of the beloved disciple significantly affects the theology of spiritual warfare in the FG. While redaction and source issues may at times be pertinent, who the author(s) actually is(are) will not.

⁴Andreas Köstenberger, *A Theology of John’s Gospel and Letters*, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 293. Emphasis added.

darkness (more often put in other terms: 'blindness,' 'evil,' 'this world,' 'the prince of this world'); this leads to destruction and death. On the other side is the light (associated with sight, the Spirit, 'the water of life,' 'the bread of life,' 'the light of the world,' fellowship with God); this leads to salvation and life in the New Age. Consequently, the decision between the light and the darkness affects a man's whole existence.⁵

He further posits, "the power struggle is fought out, not only at a cosmic level, but also in the historic events of the life of Jesus,"⁶ where the central battle occurs at the cross. For Lindars these themes are "all-pervading."⁷ Summarizing the plot of the FG, Alan Culpepper states, "In the face of *opposition of cosmic proportions*, [Jesus'] task is to reveal the Father by bearing witness to the truth (which ultimately is personal rather than propositional) and take away the sin of the world."⁸ D. A. Carson comments in the introduction to his commentary, "It is the Fourth Gospel [rather than the Synoptics] that provides 'a theology of the devil.'"⁹

Other Johannine scholars note the manner in which the author of the FG fronts the theme of conflict language in an effort to establish it as a dominant motif. C. H. Dodd, commenting on the Prologue and the translation of *καταλαμβάνω* in 1:5, employs conflict language in his paraphrase: "the light shone in the darkness . . . and *resisted the assaults of the darkness*."¹⁰ John Ashton also comments on the cosmic battle between

⁵Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, The New Century Bible Commentary (1972; repr., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1987), 24. See also Barnabas Lindars, *John*, New Testament Guides (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 13, where "the reader is alerted at the onset that the story of Jesus is the crucial manifestation of a cosmic struggle between light and darkness (1:5). Thus the story operates at two levels, and the facts which are described also have symbolic meaning in relation to the theology of John."

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., n†.

⁸R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 88. Emphasis added.

⁹D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 53.

¹⁰C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 203. Emphasis added.

light and darkness and Jesus' conflict with the world, asserting they are intentionally placed at the beginning of the FG in the Prologue. He suggests, "the amazing statement that the darkness failed to overcome the shining light (1:5) sets out the fundamental opposition to God's revelatory plan in the starkest possible terms."¹¹

Scholars who have focused their academic efforts in the area of spiritual warfare have also recognized spiritual conflict as a dominant theme in the FG. For example, Graham Twelftree boldly claims that "in the Fourth Gospel the whole of the ministry of Jesus takes on the character of a battle with Satan."¹² Similarly, Greg Boyd believes John 1:5 to be "a proleptic summary statement of Jesus' ministry" in which "John is setting up the theme of Jesus' ministry by stating that it most fundamentally constituted a conflict between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness."¹³ Stephen Noll argues the FG "sees Jesus' ministry and death as cosmic encounters between the authority of God and the power of evil."¹⁴

Clearly, many established scholars understand spiritual warfare to be a major theme in the FG. However, while most monographs on the FG do, to some degree, address the conflict between Jesus and Satan, none focus on the pervasiveness of its conflict motif. Several articles examine individual aspects of spiritual conflict in John's Gospel, but I am not aware of any work which methodically considers its full theology of spiritual warfare. This dissertation will seek to fill this gap in Johannine scholarship.

¹¹John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 389.

¹²Graham H. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 205.

¹³Greg Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 228. Furthermore, in an extensive footnote, Boyd argues *καταλαμβάνω* should be translated "overcome" rather than "comprehend" (376n39).

¹⁴Stephen Noll, *Angels of Light, Powers of Darkness: Thinking Biblically about Angels, Satan, and Principalities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 155.

Thesis

The thesis for this dissertation is that the FG does have a developed theology of cosmic conflict. Furthermore, warfare is evidenced in the FG by the author's portrayal of three primary aspects of the conflict: (1) the agents involved in the battle, both protagonists and antagonists; (2) metaphors the author employs that depict the conflict; and (3) the weapons, or the means by which the battle is fought.

Background

Though several articles address particular aspects of spiritual conflict in John's Gospel,¹⁵ no published monograph focuses on John's theology of spiritual warfare. Several prior works do contribute to the discussion, however. Some of these focus on the FG and address spiritual warfare at particular places, while others focus on spiritual warfare and have sections on the FG. As such, the following survey of previous research on this topic is divided into these two categories.

Johannine Studies

Andreas Köstenberger. Andreas Köstenberger, editor of the series *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, has authored its first volume, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*.¹⁶ In Part 1 of this volume, Köstenberger lays the historical

¹⁵See, e.g., Santiago Guijarro, "The Politics of Exorcism: Jesus' Reaction to Negative Labels in the Beelzebul Controversy," *Biblical Theology Bulletin: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 29 (October 1999): 118-29; Phillip Ross Bethancourt, "Christ the Warrior King: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Analysis of the Divine Warrior Theme in Christology" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), esp. 141-200; Elizabeth R. Achtemeier, "Jesus Christ, the Light of the World: The Biblical Understanding of Light and Darkness," *Interpretation* 17 (1963): 439-49; Adele Reinhartz, "'Jews' and Jews in the Fourth Gospel," in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel*, ed. R. Bieringer, D. Pollefeyt, and F. Vandecasteele-Vanneuville (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001): 213-30; Etienne Trocmé, "Light and Darkness in the Fourth Gospel," *Didaskalia* 6, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 3-13; Judith L. Kovacs, "'Now Shall the Ruler of this World be Driven Out': Jesus' Death as Cosmic Battle in John 12:20-36," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114, no. 2 (1995): 227-47; Eslinger, "Judas Game," 45-73; and J. C. Coetzee, "Christ and the Prince of this World in the Gospel and the Epistles of St. John," in *The Christ of John: Essays on the Christology of the Fourth Gospel, Proceedings of the Fourth Meeting of Die Nieuw-Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap Van Suid-Afrika [June 27-29, 1968]*, Neotestamentica 2, ed. A. B. du Toit (Potchefstroom, South Africa: Pro Rege Press, 1971): 104-21.

¹⁶Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel*.

framework for his book. In Part 2, he explores literary issues such as genre, literary devices, style, and vocabulary, concluding with a literary-theological reading of the Gospels and Epistles.

Part 3 contains material most applicable to this dissertation. Entitled “Major Themes in Johannine Theology,” this section begins with a discussion of John’s worldview, including his understanding of cosmology and his use of dualism which informs how he employs light and darkness to communicate spiritual conflict. In the second section of chapter 12, entitled “The Cosmic Conflict between God and His Messiah versus Satan and the World,” the author suggests that John has intentionally removed demons from his gospel “in order to focus his reader’s eye even more keenly on [the] titanic spiritual clash” between Jesus and Satan himself.¹⁷ Köstenberger briefly acknowledges the important role Satan plays in the gospel.

The conflict is further emphasized in Köstenberger’s next section that deals with major contrasts in John’s worldview: “Within the overall framework of his depiction of the cosmic battle that rages between God and his Messiah versus Satan and the world, John features a series of contrasts.”¹⁸ However, in his discussion of these contrasts—light/darkness, life/death, spirit/flesh, realms above/below, love/hate, and trust/unbelief—only light and darkness are explicitly characterized as indications of spiritual warfare.¹⁹ Köstenberger also sees the life, ministry, and death of Jesus in the FG as a cosmic drama.²⁰

R. Alan Culpepper. Culpepper’s narrative approach to the FG has influenced

¹⁷Ibid., 281-82.

¹⁸Ibid., 282.

¹⁹Ibid., 283, clearly states, “the juxtaposition of the polar opposites ‘light’ and ‘darkness’ conveys the notion of a cosmic spiritual conflict between God and Satan.”

²⁰Ibid., 293.

Johannine studies since its publication.²¹ In this seminal work, Culpepper examines literary elements and attempts to demonstrate how the Gospel is unified as a rhetorical whole, leading the reader to conclusions intended by the author. Culpepper argues the manner in which these elements—the narrator’s explicit and implicit commentary, time, plot development, and characters—are presented is meant as “a strategy for wooing readers to accept its interpretation of Jesus”²² and “contributes to the overall design and affective power of the gospel.”²³

A narrative reading of the FG also highlights aspects of spiritual conflict. For example, Culpepper notes the narrator of the FG gives the reader inside information into the thoughts and inner attitudes of Jesus, but rarely of other individuals. The exception to this is, of course, Judas. This literary device serves to highlight Judas’ role as betrayer. Similarly, interpretive asides are made by the narrator concerning “the Jews” and “the crowd” to emphasize the conflict that arises between them and Jesus.²⁴

Furthermore, Culpepper posits the author employs analepses (allusions to previous events) and prolepses (anticipations of coming events) to lead the reader. He notes the majority of prolepses in the farewell discourse “point toward ostracism, hostility, and exclusion from the synagogue.”²⁵ While Culpepper interprets these as a sign that such events were already a reality for John and his audience, they nonetheless communicate conflict in the text of the FG.

Where Culpepper discusses plot development, he notes the author of the FG begins by establishing opposing rules that will struggle throughout the entirety of the

²¹Culpepper, *Anatomy*.

²²*Ibid.*, 98.

²³*Ibid.*, 145.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 23-25.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 67.

narrative. These include light/darkness and belief/unbelief. While fronting them in the Gospel serves to alert the reader, their development throughout the narrative must be actualized. Culpepper demonstrates how these conflicts are developed in the plot of the FG by providing a chapter-by-chapter narrative commentary on the plot of the FG.²⁶

The chapter dealing with characters discusses most of the significant characters in the FG including some applicable to this dissertation—Judas, the Jews, and Pilate. Culpepper’s discussion of Judas helpfully points out the differences between the Synoptic Judas and the Johannine Judas. Each of these differences serves the purpose of the Johannine author and relates to the conflict between Jesus and Judas. Culpepper also notes that as the characters interact, “Jesus is at the center of all exchanges.” Though somewhat of an overstatement, he clarifies by adding, “where one minor character interacts with another . . . it generally serves as a witness to Jesus or as a foil for him.”²⁷ Furthermore, character interactions with Jesus usually emphasize the response of the character to Jesus, which in many cases is rejection and conflict. Surprisingly, Culpepper does not discuss the devil as a character at length.

Overall, Culpepper’s work does not contribute significantly to the question of John’s theology of spiritual warfare. However, his literary approach to the Gospel is helpful and this dissertation will employ it at times to elucidate aspects of the spiritual conflict in the narrative that are less obvious.

Elaine Pagels. Pagels, noted for her work on the influence of Gnosticism on NT authors, also focuses research on the conflict between good and evil.²⁸ She contends that the Satan of the OT was not “necessarily evil, [or] opposed to God,” but rather one of

²⁶Ibid., 89-98.

²⁷Ibid., 145.

²⁸Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random House, 1995).

God's "obedient servants."²⁹ From there, the character of Satan evolves and is infused with menacing qualities until he becomes the leader of the forces of evil in Jewish apocalyptic literature. Pagels posits this literature forms the background for the cosmic struggle seen in the NT.

However, Pagels views the conflict portrayed in the NT as not merely historical descriptions of actual spiritual conflict, but as a literary device used by the NT authors to picture the conflict between the church and its opponents, whoever they may have been. That is, the spiritual warfare of the FG is not indicative of John's honest interpretation of the events, but rather "the viewpoint of a radically sectarian group alienated from the Jewish community because they have been turned out of their home synagogue for claiming that Jesus is the Messiah."³⁰ According to Pagels, the redaction of the Johannine author(s), influenced by the situation of the Johannine community, is responsible for the conflict. The author continues this argument for the Synoptics, the remainder of the NT, the early church, and Christians for the last two thousand years.

Though Pagels holds this view, her comments on the presentation of spiritual conflict in the FG are still germane to this dissertation and are instructive at times. The second half of chapter 4, "Luke and John Claim Israel's Legacy," addresses John's Prologue and the struggle between light and darkness, Judas' betrayal, Jesus' conflict with "the Jews" and the world, and Jesus' episode with Pilate.³¹

Craig R. Koester. Symbolism is a key element in the FG and Koester's work explores the topic thoroughly.³² He makes a helpful distinction between core and

²⁹Ibid., 39.

³⁰Ibid., 61-62.

³¹Ibid., 99-111.

³²Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

supporting symbols. Light, for example, is a core symbol and occurs in significant contexts, adds more understanding to the message than supporting symbols, and is often expressed as a metaphor. Day, night, and blindness are classified as supporting symbols to light itself and are not explicitly metaphors. Rather, they are “imbedded in the fabric of the narrative.”³³ Furthermore, Koester argues the primary level of meaning in Johannine symbolism focuses on Christology and secondarily on discipleship. Thus images that reflect spiritual conflict primarily speak to the person and work of Christ and then secondarily to the application of the warfare (and victory) of the church.

In chapter 2, which discusses the characters in the FG and their symbolic value, Koester addresses Nicodemus and the man born blind and relates them to the light/darkness contrast. He also considers “the crowds” and “the Jews” and notes their hostility to Jesus. However, he does not tie these explicitly to spiritual warfare.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the symbols of light and darkness. There Koester states the meaning of light and darkness is not limited to one idea; rather, light is connected with God, life, and knowledge while darkness with their counterparts. This important insight helps the reader to interpret properly these symbols in context rather than forcing a meaning on them that is too narrow to fit that context. The author does see conflict language in 1:5 (“darkness did not *overcome* it”) yet accepts a comprehension interpretation in 1:10 (“received him not”). I will argue, like Koester, that light and darkness are a key motif in the FG and while that pair may be used to convey a lack of understanding or belief, it can, and often does, convey spiritual conflict also. Chapter 4 closes with a helpful distinction between the uses of light and darkness in the FG and in 1 John.

Chapter 8, entitled “The Crucifixion,” considers the symbolism associated with

³³Ibid., 5, 9.

Jesus' death in the FG. In a subsection entitled "The Ruler of This World is Cast Out,"³⁴ Koester touches on several aspects of spiritual conflict in the Gospel. He traces the influence of Satan on Judas through the FG—Judas as "a devil" in 6:70-71, the episode in the Upper Room, and the physical conflict in the Garden of Gethsemane with Judas and the soldiers. The author also acknowledges that the conflict with the devil, who is described as the "father of lies" and the "murderer from the beginning," involves truth versus lies and life versus death. For Koester, "the one 'exorcism' in John's Gospel is the crucifixion itself."³⁵ He continues, "the cross of Jesus was the weapon that God wielded in the battle with Satan, for through the cross the love of God engaged and defeated the forces of hatred arrayed against him."³⁶

A more recent work of Koester's is a general look at the theology of the FG.³⁷ Though more encompassing in scope, it makes the same propositions as his earlier work on issues germane to this dissertation. For example, he addresses the problem of evil in the FG and traces the actions of Satan (via Judas).³⁸ He also considers how the cross and resurrection are the means by which the battle with evil is won in the FG.³⁹

J. Ramsey Michaels. Michaels has written the most recent volume in the New International Commentary on the New Testament series. His work replaces Leon Morris'

³⁴Ibid., 206-9.

³⁵Ibid., 206.

³⁶Ibid., 209.

³⁷Craig R. Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008).

³⁸Ibid., 74-78.

³⁹Ibid., 117-20.

work on the FG written over forty years ago.⁴⁰ Though his relatively short introduction⁴¹ to the FG contains no direct reference to spiritual conflict, he does address it cursorily throughout his verse-by-verse commentary. Specifically, concerning light and darkness, Michaels translates 1:5 with conflict language, “overcome,” citing 6:17 as his rationale, but not positing 1:5 as an agenda-setting verse for the entire Gospel. Additionally, at other explicit points in the text, Michaels acknowledges spiritual conflict (e.g., 8:44; 12:31).⁴²

When noting that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night, Michaels makes an important distinction between why he came at night and why the author of the FG calls attention to it. Michaels acknowledges that night is virtually equal to darkness here and the reader is left to wonder how darkness is intended to be interpreted.⁴³ However, as is typical of the majority of NT commentators, he does not comment on either the pervasiveness of the conflict or the various mediums through which the conflict is presented.⁴⁴

⁴⁰J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010). See also J. Ramsey Michaels, *John*, New International Biblical Commentary, vol. 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), an earlier, less exhaustive commentary by Michaels which adds nothing significant to this discussion of spiritual warfare.

⁴¹His introduction is a mere forty-two pages of the book that includes more than a thousand pages.

⁴²Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 517-20, 695-96.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 78.

⁴⁴Rather than examine each major NT commentary on the FG in the “Background” section above and repeat a similar assessment for each one, suffice it to say the following commentaries acknowledge spiritual warfare in obvious places in the FG but do not develop it as a significant part of Johannine theology. Exceptions will continue to be addressed individually above. George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999). Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003). Keener also connects the light/darkness contrast in the Prologue with Jesus’ conflict with the “Jews” and the “world” (387). C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1978). D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991). However, Carson comments that John is the only Gospel to provide “a theology of the devil.” He notes the FG seeks to bring to light “the undergirding theology” of the events it describes (53-54). Andreas Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004). In

Barnabas Lindars. In his commentary, Lindars proposes the central message of the FG is to bring the reader to an understanding that Jesus is the Son of God.⁴⁵ As background to that purpose, Lindars understands that the author of the FG presents two alternatives to mankind—life and death. Moreover, these two options are the result of a cosmic struggle between light and darkness, each of which encompasses all the forces of good and evil, respectively. He continues, “the power struggle is fought out, not only at a cosmic level, but also in the historic events of the life of Jesus,”⁴⁶ where the central battle occurs at the cross. For Lindars these themes are “all-pervading.”⁴⁷

Rudolf Bultmann. The influence of Bultmann’s commentary on NT studies cannot be overstated.⁴⁸ It has been described as “a mighty tree” in that “it appeared not to permit anything strong and important to prosper in its shadow.”⁴⁹ Bultmann believed the FG to have been pieced together from various sources by a gnostic disciple of John the Baptist. Even though his source theory has since been widely rejected, his exegetical insights are still valuable. His German commentary was first published without an introduction, so his comments relevant to spiritual warfare will necessarily be taken from

this commentary, published prior to his *Theology of John’s Gospel*, the author does acknowledge light and darkness as a theological emphasis in his brief introduction but does not emphasize an overarching conflict between Jesus and Satan. Peter F. Ellis, *The Genius of John: A Composition-Critical Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1984). Ellis does note, however, the themes of light and darkness and that the theme of Jesus’ enemies “runs throughout the Gospel” (23). William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel according to John*, New Testament Commentary, 2 vols. in 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976). Gary M. Burge, *John*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000). Ben Witherington III, *John’s Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995). Ernst Haenchen, *John: A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, trans. Robert W. Funk, Hermeneia, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

⁴⁵Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 24.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid., 24n†.

⁴⁸Rudolph Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. by G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971).

⁴⁹Haenchen, *John*, 1:34.

his commentary on specific passages rather than introductory summary statements. However, his belief that gnostic principles undergird the FG prevents him from interpreting much of the Gospel in terms of spiritual warfare.

Bultmann argues the themes of conflict are presented at the first of the Gospel. Furthermore, he argues the conflict of 1:5 is developed in chapters 3-12 while that of 1:12-13 is developed in chapters 13-17.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, darkness is still in the background of chapters 13-17: “it is of symbolic significance that the scene takes place at night.”⁵¹

Concerning the Prologue, Bultmann argues its motifs such as light/darkness are introduced to the reader vaguely, allowing the rest of the Gospel to clarify their meaning. He further interprets the light (φῶς) to be equal to life (ζωή) and darkness to be “the constant revolt and hostility against God [having] found its expression in the mythological figure of the devil.”⁵² However, he translates καταλαμβάνω as “understand” in light of its parallel expressions later in the same passage. Even though he does not interpret it in terms of conflict, Bultmann does recognize the importance of the statement in verse 5 for interpreting the rest of the gospel: “The thematic character of verse 5 thus comes to full expression. The two sentences summarize the context of the Gospel under one aspect.”⁵³ He recognizes the conflict between Jesus and “the world” in the FG as well. For him the world “stands over against God and confronts him with hostility; the κόσμος then is σκοτία (v. 5).”⁵⁴

According to Bultmann, Nicodemus’ night visit to Jesus represents his

⁵⁰Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 48.

⁵¹Ibid., 458.

⁵²Ibid., 47.

⁵³Ibid., 48.

⁵⁴Ibid., 54.

misunderstanding and the author's attempt to create a mysterious tone. Similarly, on the night of Judas' betrayal when John emphasizes the nocturnal setting, Bultmann notes this "portrays once again in symbolic fashion the truth of 1:5: τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει."⁵⁵ However, in other places where many commentators see John's motif of spiritual warfare, Bultmann sees a gnostic myth as the source for the Johannine story, such as in Jesus' statement in 12:31 that "the prince of this world is cast out."⁵⁶

C. H. Dodd. C. H. Dodd's influential work, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, argues, "rabbinic Judaism, Philo, and the *Hermetica* remain our most direct sources for the background of thought" in the FG.⁵⁷ This assumption obviously affects much of Johannine interpretation, including Dodd's belief that Hellenistic mysticism influences the light/darkness contrast in the Prologue. Even so, Dodd describes light as truth or reality and darkness as "not-being, ignorance, and error," an interpretation consistent with a multi-meaning interpretation of John's use of the terms. Furthermore, concerning καταλαμβάνω in 1:5, Dodd employs conflict language in his paraphrase, "the light shone in the darkness . . . and resisted the assaults of the darkness," further establishing a reference to conflict at the beginning of John's Gospel.⁵⁸

John Ashton. Building on the works of Bultmann, Dodd, and Ernst Käsemann, Ashton explores the questions of John's background, community, and

⁵⁵Ibid., 483.

⁵⁶Unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotations come from the NASB. This version capitalizes personal pronouns for Jesus, and that practice is maintained in direct quotes in this dissertation.

⁵⁷Dodd, *Interpretation*, 133.

⁵⁸Ibid., 203. The second half of this work is a section-by-section theological reading of the FG, but the theology of spiritual warfare in the FG is not addressed. Even in explicit passages (e.g., 1:5, 6:70, 8:44, 12:31), Dodd makes either a passing comment or none at all regarding conflict. His comments on the Prologue appear to be the only direct intersection between Dodd's work and my dissertation.

primary theme.⁵⁹ In so doing, he addresses the issue of dualism in chapter 10 of his work, arguing, like Bultmann, the cosmic battle between light and darkness and Jesus' conflict with the world are fronted in the Prologue where "the fundamental opposition to God's revelatory plan" is set at the beginning of the FG.⁶⁰ Ashton's thorough discussion of dualism connects to spiritual conflict repeatedly and in a variety of ways.

Robert Kysar. Kysar's introduction to the FG⁶¹ aims to help the beginning student understand the uniqueness of the FG and its symbolism in the broad context of religious inquiry in general. Each of the four chapters focuses on a particular aspect of Johannine theology including Christology, soteriology, and eschatology. Chapter 2 deals with the Johannine dualism and most directly applies to the topic at hand.

Kysar argues a modified Judaic dualism stands behind the NT and the FG in which "an opposing supra-human force [thwarts] the divine will."⁶² When the Messiah arrives, however, all hostility will be defeated. For Kysar, this dualism is both vertical (cosmic between God and Satan) and horizontal (temporal, dividing time into two periods—before Christ and after). He goes on to describe the dualistic symbols of the FG and to discuss the author's use of the terms "world" and "the Jews." Kysar concludes the chapter with a less helpful discussion of Johannine determinism.

Dorothy Lee. Like Craig Koester, Lee's contribution to Johannine studies focuses on symbolism.⁶³ Though her work does not interpret John's imagery in the

⁵⁹John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 389.

⁶¹Robert Kysar, *John, the Maverick Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1976).

⁶²*Ibid.*, 48.

⁶³Dorothy Lee, *Flesh and Glory: Symbolism, Gender, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2002).

context of spiritual warfare, she does systematically examine symbols in the FG. In chapter 7, “Walking in Darkness: Symbols of Sin and Evil,” the primary symbols are discussed and she also notes, “the most important of these [are] introduced in the Prologue.” One is “darkness/light, which is a manifestation of death/life and is particularly prominent in the first half of the Gospel.”⁶⁴ Lee traces this theme throughout the narrative, seeing it in the Prologue, the Nicodemus pericope, particular references in the Feasts section (5:1-12:50), the healing of the blind man, and the raising of Lazarus. Additionally, she notes that even though there is less darkness symbolism in the second half of the book, “the symbolism is well enough established in the first half of the Gospel to carry through into the second. . . . By the end of the Gospel, darkness is established as a major symbol of unbelief, rejection, and death.”⁶⁵

Lee also discusses other representatives of evil such as Judas, “the Jews,” “the world,” and Pilate. However, she does not strongly connect any of these to a cosmic conflict that runs throughout the narrative. That is, she views them as evil but does not take the next step to explicitly connect them to a struggle between good and evil.

Francis J. Moloney. Moloney spent most of his academic career focusing on the FG. His most recent work is a series of essays on various aspects of that Gospel.⁶⁶ Related to the theme of spiritual warfare, his article, “Narrative Discourse at the Feast of Tabernacles: John 7:1-8:59,”⁶⁷ seeks to establish connections between Jesus’ conflict with the Jews and the major rituals of the Feast of Tabernacles. If one understands this conflict as *spiritual* conflict (especially in light of 8:44), then Moloney’s arguments show

⁶⁴Ibid., 166-96, esp. 167.

⁶⁵Ibid., 173-74.

⁶⁶Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John: Text and Context*, Biblical Interpretation Series, vol. 72 (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005).

⁶⁷Ibid., 193-213.

the Jews to be Jesus' spiritual opponents. John's themes of light/darkness, truth/error (lies), and life/death recur in chapters 7 and 8 as well. Moloney further notes the threat of violence opens and closes this section;⁶⁸ thus, "the conflictual nature" of the passage is evident.⁶⁹

Moloney also deals with other passages that clearly reflect spiritual conflict in his series of narrative commentaries on the FG. He notes the Prologue describes "an event in the past . . . where light and darkness clashed. [Yet] the light has not been overcome."⁷⁰ He further notes concerning 12:31,

The ruler of this world is now cast out: he is judged. The struggle between the light and the darkness is *now* (see vv. 23, 27, 31) and the darkness does not overcome the light (see 1:5). But this struggle is not a mythic gnostic battle, going on in the heavens. It takes place in the events of the story of Jesus, and supremely in the story of his being lifted up, and thus glorified.⁷¹

Similarly, darkness is viewed as evil when Judas leaves the upper room to betray Jesus "and it is night."⁷²

Raymond Brown. In Brown's last work, a posthumously-published revision of his prior *Introduction*, he addresses issues pertinent to the study of the FG.⁷³ One issue germane to this dissertation is the modified dualism contained in the FG and in the Qumran literature. Brown concludes the author of the FG is familiar with the "type of

⁶⁸Ibid., 210n47.

⁶⁹Ibid., 211.

⁷⁰Francis J. Moloney, *Belief in the Word: Reading John 1-4* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 34.

⁷¹Francis J. Moloney, *Signs and Shadows: Reading John 5-12* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 192. Emphasis original.

⁷²Francis J. Moloney, *Glory Not Dishonor: Reading John 13-21* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 23.

⁷³Raymond Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, ed. Francis J. Moloney (New York: Doubleday, 2010).

thought exhibited in the scrolls” though not dependent on Qumran literature.⁷⁴ He also discusses the use of “the Jews” in the FG and notes that “the level of hostility increases as one moves progressively through the Gospel episodes.”⁷⁵ However, he additionally points to positive uses of the term and attempts to balance the way the author uses it.

Brown’s two-volume commentary also offers insight on the theology of spiritual warfare in the FG.⁷⁶ Like most commentators, Brown does not emphasize an overarching theme of spiritual warfare but does recognize the motif at obvious places; however, he does develop this theme at those explicit passages more than most.

Commenting on 8:44ff, Brown connects Jesus’ struggle with the Jews to Satan:

Here . . . the fact that the devil is Jesus’ real antagonist comes to the fore. This motif will grow louder and louder as the hour of Jesus approaches, until the Passion is presented as the struggle to the death between Jesus and Satan (xii.31, xiv.30, xvi.1, xvii.15).⁷⁷

Furthermore, Brown sees here an implicit reference to the story of Cain via “murderer” and a further connection to light/darkness via “liar.” He understands Johannine dualism to maintain that lying is parallel to darkness—“it is part of the diabolic realm” in opposition to God’s truth represented by light.⁷⁸

Brown addresses spiritual conflict again in 12:31 where the prince of this world is now cast out. He points out the apparent contradiction in 1 John 5:19, “The whole world is in the power of the evil one,” but explains it as a victory over Satan in principle that must be worked out in believers’ lives. Jesus’ comments in 12:31 are quickly followed by another reference to light and darkness in 12:35-36. Brown notes

⁷⁴Ibid., 42.

⁷⁵Ibid., 157n18.

⁷⁶Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, Anchor Bible Commentary, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964).

⁷⁷Ibid., 1:364.

⁷⁸Ibid., 1:365.

this as the conclusion of Jesus' ministry to the Jews (as the second half of the FG focuses on Jesus' ministry to his disciples).⁷⁹

Warfare Literature

Cataloguing the works written on spiritual warfare is daunting, and the list of works continues to expand. This history of research will focus on works that pursue an *academic* investigation into the issues of spiritual warfare as they are seen in the NT.⁸⁰

⁷⁹Ibid., 1:479.

⁸⁰Helpful insights, however, may also be gained from popular works. What follows is an annotated list of popular works that merit consideration because of their importance or influence. Ed Murphy, *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996). Murphy's volume is one of the most comprehensive to date. He addresses theological considerations, examples of spiritual warfare in the OT and NT, and practical considerations in today's world. Charles Lawless, *Discipled Warriors: Growing Healthy Churches that are Equipped for Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2002) and *Putting on the Armor: Equipped and Deployed for Spiritual Warfare* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2006). In *Discipled Warriors*, Lawless attempts to show the relationship between church growth, spiritual warfare, and ministry in the local church. Emphasizing the biblical emphasis on defense rather than offense, he argues, "spiritual warfare is not about reacting to the Enemy—it is about putting on the armor of God in preparation for the battle" (18). *Putting on the Armor* is a seven-week group discipleship workbook that followed another workbook Lawless co-wrote with Kirk Franklin, *Spiritual Warfare: Biblical Truth for Victory* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2001). David Devenish, *Demolishing Strongholds: Effective Strategies for Spiritual Warfare* (Milton Keynes, England: Word Publishing, 2000), and Robert Dean, Jr. and Thomas Ice, *What the Bible Teaches about Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2000). Both of these works read like a series of topical sermons on spiritual warfare and offer helpful information and advice based on the Scriptures. John MacArthur, Jr., *How to Meet the Enemy: Arming Yourself for Spiritual Warfare* (Colorado Springs: ChariotVictor, 1992). This work is similar, focusing on the biblical teachings and how they relate to the origin of spiritual warfare, how warfare takes place today, and spiritual armor. MacArthur emphasizes the defensive posture Christians should take regarding warfare rather than strategic offensives. Chip Ingram, *The Invisible War: What Every Believer Needs to Know about Satan, Demons, and Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006). Ingram's work is written from an evangelical perspective and blends his experience with biblical teachings. Calvin Miller, *Disarming the Darkness: A Guide to Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1998). Miller writes a "simpler, if less scholarly" "introductory" work on spiritual warfare (14). David Powlison, *Power Encounters: Reclaiming Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995). Powlison argues against a ministry that focuses on demon expulsion as the answer to personal sins. His work surveys issues related to spiritual warfare. A. Scott Moreau et al., eds., *Deliver Us from Evil: An Uneasy Frontier in Christian Mission* (Monrovia, CA: MARC Books, 2002). Growing out of a meeting of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization in Nairobi in August 2000, this book assembles a series of papers that address theological concerns, case studies from the missionary field, and application to contemporary missionary issues. Jay E. Adams, *Winning the War Within: A Biblical Strategy for Spiritual Warfare* (Woodruff, SC: Timeless Texts, 1980). In typical Adams' style, this book is a great encouragement to believers. With very few footnotes, Adams uses Scripture to exhort the believer in practical ways. Timothy M. Warner, *Spiritual Warfare* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991). Warner offers a helpful overview of the biblical material but bases many of his conclusions on experience rather than the biblical text. Frank Hammond, *Demons and Deliverance in the Ministry of Jesus* (Kirkwood, MO: Impact Christian Books, 1991). Hammond briefly examines passages in the Synoptics that illustrate Jesus'

Graham Twelftree. Graham Twelftree has published several works which address the issue of spiritual warfare. His first, *Christ Triumphant: Exorcism Then and Now*, deals with exorcism in the NT, how it was understood in the early church, and what attitude the twentieth-century church should take toward exorcism.⁸¹ A very brief section of this book addresses Johannine theology as it relates to exorcism. This work, though published prior to his book, *Jesus the Exorcist*, is actually a sequel to it. In *Jesus the Exorcist*, a comprehensive revision of his dissertation under James D. G. Dunn, Twelftree examines in greater detail the biblical material pertaining to Jesus' exorcisms and attempts to relate his research to the current discussion of the historical Jesus.⁸²

Twelftree further expands the scope of his research with the publication of *Jesus the Miracle Worker*, considering all the miracles of Jesus, including his exorcisms, both historically and theologically.⁸³ Two chapters of this work are devoted to the miracles of Jesus in the FG. The author makes a legitimate attempt to explain in this book the absence of exorcisms in the FG, citing three probable influences: (1) John selects which signs to include and chooses only those that were spectacular; demon exorcism was not spectacular at the time; (2) John de-emphasizes the kingdom which necessarily leads to his de-emphasizing exorcisms; and (3) John chooses to link Satan's

encounter with demons and Satan but does not consider any passages from the FG. Peter Wagner, *Engaging the Enemy: How to Fight and Defeat Territorial Spirits* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1991). Wagner compiles essays from other sources in an effort to argue for the necessity of his strategic-level spiritual warfare. He maintains demons are assigned territories and effective spiritual warfare identifies, names, and rebukes territorial spirits. Experience rather than biblical teaching guides most of the content. Charles H. Kraft and Mark White, eds., *Behind Enemy Lines: An Advanced Guide to Spiritual Warfare* (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books, 1994). The editors have compiled chapters written by various authors dealing with both "ground-level" and "cosmic-level" spiritual warfare.

⁸¹Graham Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant: Exorcism Then and Now* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985).

⁸²Graham Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993).

⁸³Graham Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999).

defeat, not with exorcisms as the Synoptics had done, but solely with the death of Jesus.⁸⁴

His most recent work dealing with spiritual conflict is *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians*.⁸⁵ It expands the section of *Christ Triumphant* that deals with the early church and outlines how Q, the Synoptics, the FG, and second-century Christians and their critics understood exorcism. The brief section on Johannine theology in *Christ Triumphant* is expanded considerably in a chapter entitled, “Johannine Christianity.”⁸⁶

In this chapter, Twelftree continues his explanation for the absence of exorcisms in the FG. His three basic reasons remain, but each is more developed, supplementing his initial arguments with additional lines of evidence. For example, Twelftree notes the only place demons appear in the FG is where Jesus is falsely accused of being possessed by them. He examines further each of the accusations in context and demonstrates the accusations themselves open a window into John’s theology of demons and spiritual warfare.

The chapter concludes with a statement that “in the Fourth Gospel the whole of the ministry of Jesus takes on the character of a battle with Satan.”⁸⁷ While Twelftree’s research and conclusions are important for Johannine studies, this dissertation will be broader, examining the various ways the author of the FG presents the conflict between Jesus and Satan, including, but not limited to, Twelftree’s helpful insights.

Clinton Arnold. Clinton Arnold has written three significant works pertaining

⁸⁴Ibid., 223.

⁸⁵Graham H. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

⁸⁶Ibid., 183n1, acknowledges that this chapter, “Johannine Christianity,” “corrects and develops” the essay, “Exorcisms in the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics,” in *Jesus in the Johannine Tradition*, ed. Robert T. Fortna and Tom Thatcher, 135-43 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

⁸⁷Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 205.

to spiritual warfare. His first work, based on his dissertation, focuses on the concept of power in Ephesians and seeks to explain what Ephesians has to say about spiritual warfare.⁸⁸ His second work seeks to examine collectively what Paul's letters reveal about his understanding of demons, principalities, and powers in an effort to present a biblical theology on the topic.⁸⁹ His third work, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare*, is organized around answering questions related to the nature of spiritual warfare, demon possession, and territorial spirits.⁹⁰ Though his discussion of spiritual warfare includes references to Johannine literature, he omits any such reference in his table, "Imagery of Warfare and Struggle in the New Testament."⁹¹ Arnold's presentation of the weapons of spiritual warfare and the advice he gives for resisting evil are thoroughly rooted in Scripture and helpful for Christians. Though his work is biblical and more academic than most who have written on spiritual warfare, Arnold uses Johannine literature merely as support for his main ideas, which are centered in other biblical passages. That is, he neither roots his concepts in nor heavily supports them with Johannine theology.

Gregory Boyd. In *God at War*,⁹² Gregory Boyd examines the Old and New Testaments respectively to demonstrate that spiritual warfare is the overarching theme of the whole of Scripture. Rather than consider individual biblical authors and their theology of spiritual warfare, Boyd traces themes throughout the testaments. His

⁸⁸Clinton Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992).

⁸⁹Clinton Arnold, *Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul's Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992).

⁹⁰Clinton Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions about Spiritual Warfare* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997).

⁹¹Arnold, *Three Crucial Questions*, 22-23.

⁹²Boyd, *God at War*.

chapters on the OT are subtitled “The Hostile Environment of the Earth,” “Yahweh’s Conflict with Angelic Beings,” and “The Activity and Origin of Satan.” Similar subtitles communicate the warfare motif in the second half that addresses the NT: “The Kingdom of God as a Warfare Concept,” “The Warfare Theme of Jesus’ Exorcisms and Miracles,” and “The Warfare Significance of Christ’s Death and Resurrection.” He demonstrates how the abundance of evidence found throughout the biblical record supports the fact that conflict is essential to understanding biblical theology.

Boyd’s work is not without theological bias. He does present a wealth of research pertinent to an understanding of biblical spiritual warfare and significant data particularly applicable to Johannine theology. However, Boyd argues throughout the work for a free-will universe in which sickness, death, disease, and other maladies are the result of a powerful force of evil who exercises his will against the will of the God of the universe with some success. He rejects the notion that these evils could be considered, at times, part of God’s will. Though many evangelicals would disagree with his perspective, Boyd’s theological position on this issue does not overly color his research or presentation of his results.

Concerning Johannine theology, Boyd does not systematically examine what John says about spiritual warfare, but he scatters Johannine references throughout his work. For example, when discussing Jesus’ miracles as spiritual attacks on Satan, Boyd argues Jesus’ resuscitations, especially the raising of Lazarus (John 11), “must be viewed as acts of war against a cosmic foe who had been mastering mortality for far too long.”⁹³ The bulk of Boyd’s observations that relate to Johannine theology comes in chapter 8, “Kingdom Conflict in the Teaching of Jesus.” After discussing various themes from the Synoptic Gospels, the author turns his attention to distinctively Johannine themes. In a small, four-page section of this chapter, Boyd considers three aspects of Jesus’ teachings

⁹³Ibid., 213.

in the FG that convey the warfare motif: light and darkness, the “ruler” of this world, and “from God” versus “from the devil.” Concerning light and darkness, Boyd believes John 1:5 is “a proleptic summary statement of Jesus’ ministry” in which “John is setting up the theme of Jesus’ ministry by stating that it most fundamentally constituted a conflict between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness.”⁹⁴

Concerning the ruler of this world, Boyd argues that John describes a modified dualism between Jesus and Satan. He also states the cross is the “principle means by which the battle between these two is being fought and won.”⁹⁵ Lastly, Boyd understands a purposeful contrast in John’s language between that which is from above and that which is from below. The One who is from above has come to set free those who are below from “the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). Though mentioned briefly, Boyd does not develop this to any significant degree. He continues with a discussion of Jesus healing the man born blind in John 9. Though he rightfully argues that this miracle is a demonstration of the victory light has over darkness in the ministry of Jesus,⁹⁶ he spends most of his time attempting to recast the nature of the man’s blindness. Instead of his blindness demonstrating that even blindness can be the will of a sovereign God, Boyd attempts to demonstrate how the passage need not assume God’s sovereignty. Rather, Jesus’ actions demonstrate that healing is God’s will rather than blindness, and consequently, Christians need not passively accept negative circumstances but actively fight against them as spiritual warfare.

In Boyd’s second volume, entitled, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare of Theodicy*, he differentiates between what he calls

⁹⁴Ibid., 228. Furthermore, in an extensive footnote, Boyd argued *καταλαμβάνω* should be translated “overcome” rather than “comprehend” (376n39).

⁹⁵Ibid., 230. Though Boyd does not develop the centrality of the cross in spiritual warfare in the FG, he does point to other arguments in an endnote (378n48). He also addresses the cross and the *Christus Victor* motif in Paul’s epistles as “accomplishing a cosmic victory over God’s enemies” (239ff.).

⁹⁶Ibid., 380n62.

the “warfare worldview” and the “blueprint worldview.” The warfare worldview “does not assume that there is a specific divine reason for what Satan and other evil agents do.” Rather, God fights against Satan. On the other hand, the blueprint worldview assumes God is able to use even the evil of Satan to accomplish his purposes. As the title suggests, this work is an attempt at an explanation of theodicy and contributes very little to the investigation into John’s understanding of spiritual warfare.⁹⁷

Walter Wink. A three-volume work by Walter Wink considers the topic of power in the New Testament. The brief first volume⁹⁸ began as a response to Wesley Carr’s *Angels and Principalities*⁹⁹ which focuses on Pauline theology and is not pertinent to this dissertation. Wink’s *Naming the Powers* focuses on the terms used by the NT and other relevant first-century literature to refer to power. After a brief discussion of each term and particular NT passages, the author concludes with a demythologized interpretation, positing that a power is “the innermost essence of the material or ‘earthly’ reality.”¹⁰⁰ That is, “the spiritual Powers [should not be viewed] as separate heavenly or ethereal entities but as the inner aspect of material or tangible manifestations of power.”¹⁰¹ However, Wink does not seem to suggest the *nonexistence* of spirits or demons, just their powerlessness apart from physical expressions of their power, a clarification made in his second volume, *Unmasking the Powers*.¹⁰²

⁹⁷Greg Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare of Theodicy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 13.

⁹⁸Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 5.

⁹⁹Wesley Carr, *Angels and Principalities: The Background, Meaning, and Development of the Pauline Phrase hai archai kai hai exousiai* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

¹⁰⁰Wink, *Naming the Powers*, 105.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 104.

¹⁰²Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces That Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 4, states, “Power must become incarnate, institutionalized or

In the second volume, the author examines the biblical evidence of powers. They are categorized seven ways: Satan, demons, angels of the churches, angels of the nations, the gods, the elements of the universe, and the angels of nature. Wink's descriptions continue to focus on the manifestation of powers. For example, concerning Satan, he writes Satan should not be considered as a sign or idea, "but as a profound experience of numinous, uncanny power in the psychic and historic lives of real people. Satan is the real interiority of a society that idolatrously pursues its own enhancement as the highest good." He continues, "the issue is not whether there is a metaphysical entity called Satan, but how we are to make sense of our actual experiences of evil."¹⁰³

*Engaging the Powers*¹⁰⁴ concludes Wink's trilogy. In it, he labels what the author of the FG describes as "the world" as a "domination system" whose spirit is Satan, controlling the institutional life of this world. Pertaining to Johannine theology, chapter 7, "Breaking the Spiral of Violence: The Power of the Cross," does not focus on how the death of Jesus was the means by which the powers of evil are overthrown and forcefully thrown out. Rather, for Wink, Jesus' nonviolent response to the violence inflicted on him seems to accomplish more than his death itself. Despite this, Wink offers helpful insights into the role of the church in resisting evil powers and their manifestations.

Sydney Page. In *Powers of Evil*,¹⁰⁵ Page offers a comprehensive look at Satan and demons in the Bible, attempting to describe a biblical demonology by addressing every explicit reference in Scripture to either. His conclusions are based on an assumption of the authority of Scripture, subjugating experience to the teachings of the

systemic in order to be effective. It has a dual aspect, possessing both an outer, visible form . . . and an inner, invisible spirit."

¹⁰³Ibid., 25.

¹⁰⁴Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989).

¹⁰⁵Sydney Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995).

Bible.

Of the six chapters of the book, two examine the OT, two examine the Gospels and Acts, and two examine the Epistles. For this dissertation, chapters 3 and 4 are most pertinent: “Satan and Jesus in Conflict” and “Jesus’ Mastery over Demons.” In chapter 3, an excellent discussion details all references to Satan in the Gospels, highlighting the preponderance of references to Satan in the Synoptics and the relative scarcity in the FG. However, the five-page section on the FG does briefly address almost every major passage considered in this dissertation, those that deal with Satan, Judas, the Jews, the death of Jesus, and light versus darkness. Since demons are absent from the FG, the FG is almost totally absent from Page’s fourth chapter. Though Page identifies major themes of spiritual warfare in the FG, this dissertation will seek to identify others and develop all of them more fully so as to better define John’s theology of spiritual warfare.

Stephen Noll. In another work focusing on a biblical theology of angels and demons, Noll explores the role of these spirit beings in both the OT and NT.¹⁰⁶ The author points to John 12:27-32 as an obvious example of “spiritual warfare in Jesus’ passion.”¹⁰⁷ In a section entitled “Jesus and the Demonic Powers: Sweeping the Room,” Noll summarizes Jesus’ demonic encounters in each of the Gospels and the Johannine Epistles. He contends the FG, like the Synoptics but in a unique way, “sees Jesus’ ministry and death as cosmic encounters between the authority of God and the power of evil.”¹⁰⁸ Noll differentiates between power and authority, arguing that Satan is called a prince (ἄρχων) but never king (βασιλεύς), and emphasizes the role of “the world” in the FG. Furthermore, he understands John 1:9-13 to contain a programmatic statement that

¹⁰⁶Noll, *Angels of Light*.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 78.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 155.

pits the world against Jesus. While I believe the Prologue does set the tone for the spiritual conflict in the rest of the FG, spiritual conflict is broader than “the world” (cf., 1:5 with light and darkness). However, Noll’s work is helpful and acknowledges the presence of spiritual conflict in Johannine literature.

Dissertations

Though no major published work has been devoted to a Johannine theology of spiritual conflict, two unpublished dissertations have addressed the issue of conflict in the FG.

Kikuo Matsunaga. In “Powers in Conflict: A New Clue to the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel,”¹⁰⁹ Matsunaga posits that the author of the FG portrays almost every character as having sided with either Jesus or with the *κόσμος*. In Part 1, he discusses the two camps and the earthly members of each; in Part 2 he focuses on the heavenly members. He notes rightly the heavenly members are the spiritual powers behind the two camps. Although several insightful points are made, Matsunaga slants his application. He argues the conflict between the two camps comes at the hand of the Evangelist as a result of “the Church-Synagogue struggle, rather than the life of Jesus himself.”¹¹⁰ Thus the conflict motif in the FG does not tell us as much about Johannine theology as about the milieu of the later Evangelist.

John Stevens. In his dissertation, John Stevens examines various conflicts in the FG, including conflicts between individuals and groups and even conflicts with nature and death.¹¹¹ Though much of his work focuses on conflict as it relates to Jesus, he does

¹⁰⁹Kikuo Matsunaga, “Powers in Conflict: A New Clue to the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel” (Ph.D. thesis, McGill University, 1969).

¹¹⁰Ibid., viii.

¹¹¹John Leslie Stevens, “Conflict in the Fourth Gospel: Its Relationship to an Understanding of Messiah” (Ph.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991).

not deal with spiritual conflict nor does he understand this conflict as relating to a warfare motif. Rather, he views the conflict of the FG as a means by which others endeavor to sway Jesus for their own purposes. For Stevens, conflict is viewed, not as a cosmic struggle, but as the result of two different opinions regarding what Messiah is to be. Consequently, Jesus' death in the FG is the culmination of "these two opposing understandings of messianic theology."¹¹² While in a certain light this statement may be true, surely it does not contain the whole truth. Stevens does not acknowledge the devil's role in the conflict at all; thus, for him, the conflict is not spiritual conflict.

These dissertations are the most significant attempts to systematically deal with spiritual conflict in the FG. This dissertation will go beyond what either of these has done and will proceed in a nuanced direction compared to them. It focuses on the FG to consider examples of spiritual warfare in an effort to fully describe a theology of the FG on this topic.

Conclusion

Through this history of research, I have surveyed relevant scholars in both the fields of Johannine studies and spiritual warfare. I have also demonstrated the scarcity of work done where these two fields overlap. First, while Johannine commentators and theologians address spiritual conflict at obvious junctures in John's Gospel, few give it due prominence in their work. Next, while scholars in the field of spiritual warfare also recognize aspects of John's theology of spiritual conflict, other than a significant chapter in Twelftree's *In the Name of Jesus*, no length or depth of research has been dedicated to what John has to say about the topic. In the absence of a comprehensive investigation on John's understanding of cosmic conflict as seen in his Gospel, this work seeks to fill that gap.

¹¹²Ibid., abstract.

Methodology

Concerning method, this dissertation will begin with the text of the FG as we have it, specifically that text given in UBS4.¹¹³ The possibility of earlier versions of John's writings or stages of composition, while applicable at certain points, will not greatly influence the thesis of this dissertation which focuses on the canonical version of the FG.¹¹⁴

My investigation will begin with the text of the FG (both Greek and English). However, since I seek a comprehensive understanding of John's theology in this area, a wide variety of resources will be called upon to elucidate each passage. Insights will be gleaned from important commentaries, introductions, theologies, dictionaries, monographs, dissertations, and articles. This dissertation necessitates an investigation into many diverse topics so many diverse resources will be used.

Through historical-grammatical exegesis, I will seek to determine what the FG says about spiritual conflict. I will investigate those passages which portray individuals, groups, or spirits in conflict with God, Jesus, or his followers. Using careful exegesis, significant passages will be examined. I will not give a running commentary of each passage but will limit my comments to those that directly or indirectly inform this topic.

Concerning organization, two options present themselves for this particular study of the FG: a sequential approach (one passage at a time) and a topical approach

¹¹³Barbara Aland et al., eds., *The Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. ed. (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1994).

¹¹⁴Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel*, 316, agrees with this methodology: "Too often the underlying paradigm in exploring Johannine themes, including Christology, whether explicitly or implicitly, has been some variation of a history-of-religions model, a form of the historical-critical method, or a strictly literary, narrative paradigm. What is needed, however, is a literary-theological paradigm that does not cut off historical questions but takes its point of departure from the final text in its entirety and seeks to understand its theology globally and holistically." Additionally, I concur with Moloney, *Text and Context*, 194n7, "The Gospel is a recognizable unified narrative (an 'it') and not a collection of any number of disparate traditions used by an editor who has lost control of his sources (as rearrangement theories seem to suggest)."

For surveys of theories of composition, see, e.g., Robert Kysar, *The Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1975), 9-81; Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 76-90; Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 46-54.

(one topic at a time). Sequentially, one could identify a significant passage which speaks to the author's understanding of cosmic conflict and thoroughly deal with all aspects of cosmic conflict in that passage (agents, weapons, etc.). When all topics in that passage have been discussed, the next sequential significant passage would be considered, proceeding through the book one passage at a time. This sequential approach would emphasize the pervasiveness and variety of John's theology of cosmic conflict and one could more readily see how conflict plays into his plot development. However, drawing conclusions and summaries on each topic would be difficult.

In utilizing a topical approach, however, one deals with a particular singular aspect of cosmic conflict, examining each passage where that aspect occurs. Once all the passages that pertain to that aspect have been examined, a different topic is picked up, traced through the FG, and discussed in detail. Unfortunately, both options include a degree of overlap and repetition. The question for me was which one would provide the reader with the most continuity of thought and it seemed the topical approach was best. However, in order to provide the reader with a sense of the pervasiveness achieved in a chronological approach, chapter 2 will survey the conflict, walking through the Gospel. Chapters 3 through 6 will then explore the individuals and themes that relate to conflict topically and in much more detail. While some repetition will be necessary, effort has been made to reduce it as much as possible.

Attention will also be given to the original or "implied" reader¹¹⁵ of the Gospel, beginning with two assumptions—the reader would have read the FG sequentially¹¹⁶ and the reader would have read the Gospel repeatedly.¹¹⁷ These two

¹¹⁵Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 205-27.

¹¹⁶For arguments in favor of a sequential reading of the text see Lars Kierspel, *The Jews and the World in the Fourth Gospel: Parallelism, Function and Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 123; Adele Reinhartz, *The Word in the World: The Cosmological Tale in the Fourth Gospel*, The Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series, vol. 45 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 12.

¹¹⁷C. K. Barrett, *New Testament Essays* (London: SPCK, 1972), 29, notes the Gospel author

assumptions impact how individual passages are interpreted.¹¹⁸

Having considered all relevant passages, a summary will be given to combine the information acquired from the exegesis into a coherent arrangement of John's theology of spiritual warfare. Logical implications of this theology will then be presented.

Outline

The current chapter has introduced the concept of cosmic conflict in the FG and identified a wide variety of scholars who note its significance. It has offered a thesis for this dissertation which contends that the FG does have a well-rounded theology of cosmic conflict which impacts John's understanding of the individuals and groups in the FG, the themes and metaphors he uses, and even the actions and attitudes by which that conflict is carried out. Then, a survey of the background research already done in this area, by both Johannine scholars and those whose expertise lie in the field of spiritual warfare, situated this work in the broader field of academics and indicated a need for such a work. A summary of the method used in this dissertation followed, emphasizing a historical-grammatical exegesis of various passages. Finally, this chapter is closing with a chapter-by-chapter summary of the work.

Chapter 2 surveys the entire Gospel, highlighting significant references to cosmic conflict. This vertical reading of the FG will serve to provide a broad overview of all that will be examined in the following chapters.

The remainder of the body of the dissertation examines in depth those passages

assumed multiple readings. Also, even though the Gospel is to be read sequentially, starting with the Prologue, in subsequent readings the Prologue can be read in light of the rest of the Gospel. Thus repeated readings add understanding to repeated themes.

¹¹⁸E.g., John F. O'Grady, "The Prologue and Chapter 17 of the Gospel of John," in *Life in Abundance: Studies of John's Gospel in Tribute to Raymond E. Brown*, ed. Tom Thatcher (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007): 225, argues the book is like a whirlwind, returning to "certain fundamental themes again and again." He adds, "as the Gospel unfolds, the author brings the reader or listener continually back to these themes and each time brings a deeper understanding of their meaning."

which particularly communicate John's understanding of spiritual warfare. Chapter 3 focuses on the antagonists of the Gospel. This chapter examines references to Satan, demons, Judas, the Jews, the world, and Pilate to see how John portrays those who are in conflict with Jesus and his followers.

Chapter 4 focuses on the protagonists—God the Father, the Holy Spirit, angels, and the disciples. Jesus is considered last, being examined in light of his interaction with the other characters. This chapter, in examining the interaction between those on the side of good and the antagonists, yields important insights concerning how John understands and portrays spiritual warfare.

Chapter 5 examines particular themes and metaphors that relate to the conflict motif and how they convey John's understanding of the matter. It addresses the dualism of light and darkness, which is characteristic of John's writings. Its background, prominence, and the way John uses it is considered, beginning with John 1:5. Other themes considered include life/death and kingdom.

In chapter 6, the means by which the spiritual war is fought are examined. Particular attention is given to the role Christ's death plays in John's understanding of the conflict and what role the followers of Christ play in the battle.

Having completed a detailed examination of what the Johannine literature has to say about spiritual warfare in the five previous chapters, Chapter 7 summarizes the findings, presenting a comprehensive description of John's perception of this topic. Then suggestions are made as to how these findings apply to Christians today, both personally and corporately. The application includes a brief comparison of John's theology of spiritual warfare to popular works on the subject and current church practices.

The overall contention of this dissertation is that the FG has a full-orbed theology of cosmic conflict, conveyed using the relationships between individuals and groups as well as through images and metaphors, and this theology has significant

implications for the church today. Now having introduced the thesis, surveyed prior research, and described the method this dissertation uses, the next chapter will overview cosmic conflict through the entirety of the FG.

CHAPTER 2

A READING OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL IN LIGHT OF COSMIC CONFLICT

There are two ways to see the Grand Canyon. The first is from the outside, standing at the overlooks on the South Rim or enjoying its magnitude from a plane. The second is from inside it, riding a mule down the North Kaibab Trail or hiking on foot into its interior. Both methods have their advantages. The first allows one to grasp the expanse and grandeur of this wonder. The second gives the explorer up-close, first-hand knowledge of the details of the canyon. Similarly, both the expanse and the small details of the FG's portrayal of cosmic conflict deserve examination. Therefore, this chapter will serve as an overlook for the FG as a whole and chapters 3 through 6 will be individual trails into the FG's text.

This chapter will demonstrate the pervasiveness of cosmic conflict in John's Gospel, using a sequential reading¹ of the entire book, section by section,² tracing the cosmic conflict in the plot of the FG. It will be shown that those introductory statements made at the beginning of this work concerning the pervasiveness of cosmic conflict and its importance to the message of the FG³ are, in fact, accurate.

This conflict will involve agents including Jesus, his disciples, the Holy Spirit, Satan, Judas, the Jews, and the world. Various metaphors, such as light and darkness,

¹This chapter will present a vertical reading of the text, surveying the narrative and highlighting cosmic conflict.

²For arguments in favor of a sequential reading of the text, see Lars Kierspel, *The Jews and the World in the Fourth Gospel: Parallelism, Function and Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 123, and Adele Reinhartz, *The Word in the World: The Cosmological Tale in the Fourth Gospel*, The Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series, vol. 45 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 12.

³See pp. 1-3.

will also illustrate the cosmic battle. No efforts to dig into specific texts will be made here. Rather, summary statements and broad insights will be suggested. The following chapters will contain detailed exegesis that confirms these insights, along with a discussion of other minor agents and images in the conflict and a look at the weapons used in the battle.

Prologue (1:1-18)

The Prologue of John's Gospel serves, not merely as an introduction to the Gospel, but as a key for interpreting the events of the narrative.⁴ As an introduction, it does announce to the reader several of its main themes. However, more than an introduction, it defines the role these characters and images will play in the Gospel as a whole. Therefore, the presence of cosmic conflict in the *Prologue* of the FG is particularly significant.

Mark begins his Gospel with the ministry of Jesus as introduced by John the Baptist; Matthew and Luke begin with the birth narratives of Jesus; the FG, however, begins "in the beginning." The *λόγος* is described as existing uncreated with God in the beginning and as the agent of all creation. Already Jesus is contextually placed in a

⁴See also Reinhartz, *Word in the World*, 16, "The prologue is not simply a hymn or a 'cultic-liturgical poem' . . . but is itself a brief narrative about the Word and its relationship to the world. . . . It also acts as the reader's guide to the cosmological tale as it comes to expression throughout the body of the gospel narrative." Kierspel, *The Jews and the World*, 114-23, argues the Prologue is no mere introduction to or summary of the Gospel, but a hermeneutical key to the Gospel as a whole, "a necessary preparation for the right understanding of the Gospel itself" (121). Edward W. Klink, III, "Light of the World: Cosmology and the Johannine Literature," in *Cosmology and New Testament Theology*, ed. Jonathan T. Pennington and Sean M. McDonough (London: T. & T. Clark, 2008): 84, describes the Prologue as an introduction but then adds, "It is the starting point from which the rest of the Gospel must be read." Bill Salier, "What's in a World? *Κόσμος* in the Prologue of John's Gospel," *The Reformed Theological Review* 56, no. 3 (1997): 107, acknowledges "the fundamental importance of the prologue to an understanding of both the structure and contents of what is to follow." Amos Yong, "'The Light Shines in the Darkness': Johannine Dualism and the Challenge for Christian Theology of Religions Today," *The Journal of Religion* 89, no. 1 (January 2009): 20-21, states the Prologue is "the core message of the Gospel as a whole and all of its other strands—the discourses, the miracles, the opposition to Jesus, his disciples, his death and resurrection—radiate from and find their explanation in this center." Dorothy Lee, "The Prologue and Jesus' Final Prayer," in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies*, ed. Tom Thatcher (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007): 229, speaks of "the importance of reading the Gospel, as we now have it, through the lens of the prologue."

cosmic setting. His entrance into his creation brings light, a theme the Fourth Evangelist introduces in the opening lines of his Gospel and reiterates regularly.⁵ This light is said to shine in the darkness, “and the darkness did not comprehend [κατέλαβεν, from καταλαμβάνω] it.” Καταλαμβάνω literally means to “seize,” often with “hostile intent,” and thus “overcome.”⁶ However, the word can also carry the sense of grasping with one’s mind and, thus, to “comprehend.” I argue John, while possibly including both nuances, definitely intends the conflict-laden connotation of “overcome.”⁷ Furthermore, the conflict between light and darkness is used throughout his Gospel as a metaphor for the cosmic battle between God and Satan, and diminutively between truth and error, belief and unbelief. Presenting the theme of light over darkness in the Prologue serves to prepare the reader for future encounters with the images in the Gospel.

John’s opening paragraphs contain other themes related to spiritual warfare as well. Both “the world” (ὁ κόσμος) and “the Jews” (here, “those who were His own,” οἱ ἴδιοι)⁸ are mentioned in 1:1-18 as recipients of the light. In 1:9-10 and 1:11-12, Jesus is pictured as coming to each and both reject him—the world does not know him and the Jews do not receive him. Already, John’s tells his readers that neither the world nor the Jews as a group accept him, and the stage is set for conflict between Jesus and them. Later references to these two groups continue to associate them with darkness, and, thus, cast them as antagonists in the cosmic battle between light and darkness.

⁵See 1:4, 5, 7, 8, 9; 3:19, 20, 21; 5:35; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9, 10; 12:35, 36, 46.

⁶Walter Bauer et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), s.v. “καταλαμβάνω.” BDAG adds, “most Greek commentators since Origen take κ[αταλαμβάνω] here as *overcome, suppress*. . . . But perhaps J[ohn] intended to include both meanings here.” Emphasis original.

⁷A full examination of this concept is found on pp. 181-87.

⁸Again, a thorough discussion of the role these groups play in the FG is found on pp. 91-120.

Early Testimonies of Jesus (1:19-1:51) and Cana to Cana (2:1-4:54)

Following the Prologue, John presents Jesus' ministry, beginning with the witness of John the Baptist (1:19-34), who has already been introduced (1:6-8). Before the author has the Baptist "speak," the Jews have sent a delegation to ascertain his identity and message. Though no open conflict is described, "the Jews" and "the Pharisees" are presented as questioning the Messiah's forerunner rather than embracing his message. Note the implicit contrast. On one hand, the representatives of the Jews in 1:19-34 question the message of Jesus' herald. On the other, Jesus' first followers in 1:35-51 describe him as "the Son of God" (1:34, 49), "the Lamb of God" (1:29, 36), "the Messiah" (1:41), and "the King of Israel" (1:49).

The narrative continues with the first sign—turning water into wine. In this pericope, Jesus states for the first time, "My hour has not yet come" (2:4), a phrase that will be developed later and explained to refer to Jesus' death. Significantly, this episode is followed by Jesus' first personal encounter with the Jews. In 2:13-22, Jesus enters the temple, finds the merchants and moneychangers, and violently drives them out.⁹ This leads the Jews to ask Jesus for a sign of his authority, to which he replies, "[You] Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (2:19). In their ignorance, the Jews fail to understand Jesus' meaning. Yet, the author interprets it for the reader—the temple was his body that these Jews would destroy.¹⁰ Thus in Jesus' first encounter with the Jews, he sharply rebukes some among them, they disapprovingly question him (as they had sent

⁹The majority of the other uses of this term, ἐκβάλλω, in the FG confirm the negative connotation. In 6:37, Jesus promises to "not cast out" all who come to him. In 9:34-35, the Jews put out a follower of Jesus from the synagogue. Most significant is 12:31, where Jesus states, "the ruler of this world will be cast out." The exception is 10:4, where it is used neutrally when the Good Shepherd puts out the sheep to pasture, going before them.

¹⁰Note Jesus uses a verb, Λύσατε from λύω, aorist active imperative, with a *second person plural* subject. Characteristic of Johannine irony, the Jews fulfill their own sign. They do "destroy" Jesus' body and he does raise it up again. For an extensive treatment of irony in the FG, see Paul Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1995).

others to do to John the Baptist), and Jesus references a destruction that would occur to his body at their hands. The reader now knows the conflict mentioned in the rejection of Jesus in 1:10-11 will ultimately result in his death. Additionally, this first passion prediction is placed at the beginning of the Gospel, accomplishing two things: (1) foreshadowing the coming conflict with the Jews that dominates chapters 5 through 12; and (2) “showing compellingly that Jesus is in utter control, and completely aware of his eventual destiny.”¹¹ The scene closes with many of the Jews trusting in Jesus’ name, and yet, this belief was disingenuous. As a result Jesus did not entrust himself to them. The following pericope presents Nicodemus as the example of these.¹² The repetition of ἄνθρωπος in 2:25 and 3:1 further supports this suggestion.¹³

Nicodemus is described as a ruler of the Jews who comes to Jesus by night. Scholars debate the issue, but evidence suggests this is more than a mere reference to time and setting. The subsequent comments Jesus makes to him regarding darkness (3:19-21), the reminder supplied by the author in describing Nicodemus later (19:39, “Nicodemus . . . who had first come to Him by night”), as well as similar comments made by the author later in the Gospel,¹⁴ all give indication the Fourth Evangelist is using the imagery of night to communicate spiritual darkness. In 3:19-21,¹⁵ Jesus continues the

¹¹Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John’s Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 196. Köstenberger and R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), are two notable scholars who have traced the plot of the FG, highlighting conflict. As such, their insights will be particularly helpful in the footnotes of this chapter. Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 20-30, also traces the narrative, highlighting references to the death of Jesus.

¹²Köstenberger, *Theology of John’s Gospel*, 198, argues Nicodemus “serves . . . as the paradigmatic human being. . . . Here is a Jew who represents the world, a characteristic that in Part 2 of John’s Gospel completely holds sway where the world and the unbelieving Jewish nation have become all but indistinguishable.”

¹³Gk., “καὶ ὅτι οὐ χρεῖαν εἶχεν ἵνα τις μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου· αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐγίνωσκεν τί ἦν ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ.” Ἦν δὲ ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων . . .” Emphasis added.

¹⁴See, e.g., John 9:4; 11:10; 13:30; 20:1, 19; 21:3.

¹⁵Scholars debate the precise point at which Jesus’ dialogue ends and the author’s comments

contrast begun in the Prologue between light and darkness. Light is embraced by those who practice the truth, while those who do evil hate the light and love the darkness.

The term “world” recurs in 3:16 as God loves the world and takes action to rescue those in and of it who believe. However, the light comes into the world, and men (as a whole in the world) loved the darkness rather than the light. In language very similar to the Prologue (1:9), the author demonstrates a dichotomous response to Jesus, setting the stage for a later development of two clear sides in a cosmic battle.

John 3:22-36 concludes the chapter with another witness of John the Baptist to Jesus’ messiahship in which he reminds his audience that Jesus “comes from above and is above all,” in contrast to others who are “of the earth” and speak of the earth. A similar statement will be made by Jesus later in which he states that he is “not of this world,” but the Jews are “of this world” (8:23), a fundamental difference that produces persecution against him.

Two scenes conclude the Cana to Cana section. In John 4:1-43, Jesus travels through Samaria and finds a Samaritan woman. In the previous chapter, the ruler of the Jews, the man named Nicodemus who represents both the Jews and the world, remains in the darkness of unbelief. In contrast, this Samaritan woman represents those who are in the world and are characterized by the “evil deeds” of the world (3:19), yet she responds to Jesus’ invitation for salvation and eternal life. In the end, she does believe, as do many in her town. Jesus’ actions and the woman’s response show that truly God loves the world and gives his Son for its salvation, demonstrating the darkness could not overcome the light.

The final pericope in this section describes Jesus’ second sign in which he healed the son of a royal official (4:46-54). Other than demonstrating the authority and power of the Gospel’s primary protagonist, this story contributes little to cosmic conflict.

begin. For a brief discussion of this issue, see Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 113-14.

In fact, though several instances have been cited above, the theme of conflict does not dominate this section as it does in the following sections.¹⁶

The Festival Cycle (5:1-12:50)

This section is referred to as the Festival Cycle because in it Jesus is compared to the Sabbath, the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Feast of Dedication. The conflict between Jesus and the Jews progressively intensifies in this section of the Gospel.¹⁷ Here the author introduces the reader to Judas and the devil. The antagonism of the world is mentioned, but it does not gain its strength until the Farewell Discourse section.

Jesus' third sign begins this section as he heals a man at the Pool of Bethesda who had been sick for thirty-eight years. However, the location of the healing is less important than the time of the healing—on the Sabbath. After they discover Jesus performed the miracle, the author notes, “and for this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing things on the Sabbath” (5:16).¹⁸ Jesus replies that just as God has been working, he will continue his Father's work. This intensifies the Jews' response to him, prompting them to be “seeking all the more to *kill Him*” (5:18, emphasis

¹⁶Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 91, argues the absence of conflict in this section can be explained by “the primacy effect.” That is, the author refrains from developing the antagonists as characters in the beginning of the story so as to “firmly establish the reader's first impression of Jesus' identity and mission.” Only then, having won over the audience, so to speak, to his point of view concerning the protagonists, does the author bring the antagonists onto the scene in conflict with the protagonists.

However, this section may also indirectly illustrate the truth, “in Him was life and the life was the light of men” (1:4), especially in light of the threefold reference to the son living (4:50, 51, 53).

¹⁷Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel*, 206, notes the representatives of Judaism show “increasing resistance” and become “increasingly harder in their opposition to Jesus.”

¹⁸“The role of the Jews in the gospel is not established until 5:16, 18. In these verses, they receive their ‘script’ for the rest of the story: they will seek to kill Jesus because he violates the sabbath and commits blasphemy. The force of this characterization is obvious: the narrator is telling the reader what to expect from the Jews.” Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 127.

added).¹⁹ The conflict between Jesus and the Jews throughout this entire section will focus on these two issues—Jesus breaking the Sabbath and his continued assertion that God is his Father and thus he is equal to God.

Chapter 5 concludes with a lengthy monologue directed toward the Jews in which Jesus expands his statement regarding his sonship. He argues that he does what the Father does (5:19), the Father shows all things to him (5:20), the Father has given all judgment to him (5:22), he possesses life as the Father does (5:21), he hears from the Father (5:30), and the Father has sent him (5:24, 30, 36, 37). In contrast, the Jews refuse to accept the one God has sent (5:43), they do not have God’s word abiding in them (5:38), they “have neither heard [the Father’s] voice at any time, nor seen his form” (5:37), they do not have God’s love in them (5:42), and they do not believe God’s prophet, Moses, who wrote of Jesus (5:45-46). Through this contrast, Jesus begins to define the difference between him and the Jews which illustrates he is of God and they are not. In this way, the author of the FG continues to highlight the two sides of an ever-increasing division between Jesus and the Jews.

The sign of the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus walking on the water, and the Bread of Life discourse comprise John 6. As before, the miraculous feeding and Jesus walking on the water serve John’s purpose of demonstrating Jesus to be the Christ (20:30-32) and indirectly serve John’s cosmological purpose of showing Jesus’ power over creation and this world. Otherwise, no direct examples of cosmic conflict are evident. However, later the multitude asks for additional signs such as more food. Jesus replies that he himself is the Bread of Life that came down from heaven (6:35). At this point, the Jews show up again in the narrative, grumbling about this statement (6:41) and

¹⁹J. Dennis, “Seeking Jesus: Observations on John’s Vocabulary of Death,” in *Repetitions and Variations in the Fourth Gospel: Style, Text, Interpretation*, ed. G. Van Belle, M. Labahn, and P. Maritz (Paris: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2009): 162n28, argues, “although 5:18 is the first explicit reference to the *Ioudaioi*’s desire to kill Jesus, the comparative *μᾶλλον* here implies that this is not the first time they have attempted to do so.”

arguing among themselves (6:52). As a result of Jesus' difficult sayings, several would-be followers desert him (6:66). Jesus announces to the crowd that he is aware "there are some of you who do not believe" (6:63). The author supplies a narrative comment to help the reader rightly interpret Jesus' meaning: "For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him" (6:64). While the identity of the betrayer remains a mystery, the fact of the betrayal is introduced here in the context of false followers who fall away.

The apostasy of these Jews²⁰ brings Jesus to ask the twelve if they will leave also. Peter responds that they cannot, for there is no one else who has words of eternal life. He continues, "and we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God" (6:69). The presence of non-believers among them resurfaces as Jesus responds, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" With that, Jesus identifies the betrayer as one of the twelve and connects the actions of the betrayer with the devil. Again, John adds more information for the reader, identifying Judas as the betrayer. The cosmic stage has been set. Jesus, the one with words of eternal life, will be opposed by the devil himself through Judas, one of Jesus' own disciples.

Immediately after linking Jesus' betrayal to Judas and the devil, the author reminds the reader that "the Jews were seeking to kill Him" (7:1).²¹ With this, the Fourth Evangelist is foreshadowing how all three parties—Judas, the Jews, and the devil—will be involved against Jesus in his crucifixion.

In an interaction with his brothers (whom the Evangelist has already noted

²⁰While those who complain and grumble are explicitly labeled Jews (6:41, 52), the descriptor, "His disciples," is given to those who apostatize (6:60, 66). However, just prior, the author notes, "These things He said in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum" (6:59), emphasizing the Jewish ethnicity of those who abandon Jesus.

²¹See also 7:11; 8:37; 11:56; 18:4, 7, 8.

were not believing in him, 7:5), Jesus notes the world does not hate them, but it does hate him because he testifies that its deeds are evil (7:7).²² Though not developed here, this comment concerning the animosity against Jesus from the world is a seed that will grow to be more fully developed in the second half of the Gospel.²³

Jesus confronts the Jews at the Feast of Booths asking, “Why do you seek to kill Me?” They deny the charges (cf. their lying nature in 8:44) and counter-accuse him of demon possession (7:19-20).²⁴ However, even the people of Jerusalem know their evil intentions (7:26), which are reiterated by the author in 7:30. Yet, they fail to seize him “because His hour had not yet come.” Two verses later (7:32) they try again, sending officers to arrest him, but who return empty-handed, being astounded by Jesus’ teachings (7:46). As chapter 7 closes, the conflict between Jesus and the Jews has escalated and formalized. Meetings have taken place and officers have been sent with the intent to arrest; yet, all have failed. Nonetheless, it seems Jesus’ death is now a question of when and not of whether. The author’s explanation for the failure at this point is simply that his hour had not yet come, emphasizing the sovereignty of Jesus over the entire situation.

In chapter 8, Jesus continues speaking to the Pharisees (8:13) and the Jews (8:22ff.). The themes of light/darkness and judgment resurface. Additionally, Jesus argues the Jews do not know him or his Father. Again, though they desire to, “no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come” (8:20). He continues noting their association with this world and his separation from it (8:23). His coming death is foreshadowed again with an almost passing reference to his being lifted up (8:28). Jesus again states that the Jews are attempting to kill him (8:37, 40).

²²Note the present tense of the verb, *μισεῖ*, indicating continuous action. Cf. 3:19, where the same is said of the men of the world.

²³“Hate” is used 13 times in the FG, the same number as in the Synoptics combined. In every use in the FG except one (12:25), Jesus’ opponents hate him or his disciples (3:20; 7:7; 15:18, 19, 23, 24, 25; 17:14).

²⁴The concept of demon possession is further discussed on pp. 58-62.

While references to conflict so far in this chapter have been disconnected and undeveloped, they now come to a crescendo. As the conversation turns to the parentage of the Jews, Jesus has already noted God is not their Father and now states they are doing the deeds of their real father. In 8:44, he explicitly states, “You are of your father the devil,” grounding his claim with two lines of evidence—both the Jews and the devil are murderers and liars. Following such a shocking assertion, they respond with two more accusations of demon possession. The scene closes with yet another failed murder attempt, this time by stoning (8:59).

Jesus’ statement in 8:44 leads the reader to reinterpret all conflict with the Jews up to this point and all to be encountered in the future in terms of the cosmic drama that is unfolding. That is, Jesus versus the Jews is not merely a clash of human ideologies or theological convictions. Rather, the conflict is part of a grand cosmic struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. Judas’ betrayal was shown in 6:70-71 to be of the devil. Now the opposition Jesus faces from the Jews is similarly couched in satanic language.

In chapter 9, Jesus heals a blind man. Just prior to healing him, Jesus says, “I am the light of the world” (9:5). In this way, his sign is an illustration of the “I am” statement. That is, by healing the blind, Jesus is showing himself to be the light of the world. In typical Johannine irony, the one who was blind now sees spiritually,²⁵ while those who are able to see physically are blinded spiritually (9:39-41). This chapter does not record an increase in the intensity of persecution against Jesus, but it does contain evidence of the expansion of that persecution to Jesus’ followers. The blind man’s parents are “afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed, that if anyone should

²⁵Note the progression of the man’s understanding of who Jesus is from only knowing Jesus’ name but not his location (9:11-12), to calling Jesus a “prophet” (9:17), to noting Jesus must be “from God” (9:33), to saying, “Lord, I believe” (9:38).

confess Him to be Christ,²⁶ he should be put out of the synagogue” (9:22). Later the man himself is put out of the synagogue by the Jews.

Persecution is also implicit in the next chapter. While Jesus is the Good Shepherd, there are thieves and robbers with murderous intentions toward the sheep. Regardless of the identity of these or of the identity of the thief in 10:10—Satan, Judas, the Jewish leaders, or someone else—there exist antagonists who fight against the sheep. Standing in their way is the Good Shepherd who has come to give life. That life that comes is as a result of his own death (10:11), a death which he chooses rather than one that is forced upon him (10:18). The picture presented in John 10 vividly illustrates the conflict between Jesus and those who will kill him but continues to highlight Jesus’ control over the battle. The chapter concludes with another mention of those who accuse him of being demon-possessed and additional references to the Jews’ failed attempt to stone him (10:31) and arrest him (10:39).

The resurrection of Lazarus dominates John 11. As Jesus’ seventh and final sign, it leads to his own death and resurrection. Following the raising of Lazarus, “many . . . of the Jews believed in Him” (11:45). As such, the sign itself proves to be the final straw that solidifies the Jewish leaders in their determination to put Jesus to death.²⁷ They convene a council to deliberate their strategy in getting rid of him (11:47-53). Caiaphas, in his rationalization of their actions against Jesus, states, “it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish” (11:50). John summarizes their resolve in 11:53, “so from that day on they planned together to kill Him.” As a result, Jesus withdrew from the Jews and remained with his

²⁶Cf. John’s purpose of the presentation of the signs and his Gospel as a whole in John 20:30-31, “that you may believe that Jesus is the *Christ*.” Emphasis added.

²⁷Note the contrast between those who believe in Jesus and take sides with him (11:45) and those who, in unbelief, go “away to the Pharisees” and inform them of Jesus’ actions (11:46), thus siding with those who are of the devil (8:44).

disciples. Consequently, John's record of their conflict with each other will decrease drastically until the passion.

Even though the Jews fade from the stage, Judas, "who was intending to betray [Jesus]" (12:4), quickly reemerges in John 12 as Mary anoints Jesus for his burial. In this pericope, Jesus' struggle with Judas is highlighted by the fact that their interchange dominates the passage. While the anointing is described in a single verse (12:3), Jesus' dialogue with Judas covers five verses. The persecution continues to extend further. In 12:9-11, the chief priests appear in the narrative, this time with a view to kill Lazarus also.

Following the triumphal entry (12:12-19), Jesus is approached by a group of Greeks who ask to see him. This desire by the nations to come to Jesus is interpreted by him as a signal that the eschatological clock has reached its climax.²⁸ "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (12:23). Jesus predicts his death with a metaphor of a grain of wheat. He also chooses to not be saved from this hour by the Father because for this purpose he has come. As a result, the Father answers audibly from heaven, and Jesus tells the crowd, "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself" (12:31-32).

Jesus' comments have much significance for the current discussion. First, while the world has already been shown to be against Jesus, here it is directly connected to its "ruler," the devil himself. Second, though Jesus performs no exorcisms in the FG, here the chief of all demons is said to be cast out. Jesus' exorcism of Satan provides context for the reader in understanding the absence of exorcisms in the FG. Third, the

²⁸So also, e.g., Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 4 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 352; Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to St. John*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 349; Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12-21*, The New American Commentary, vol. 25b (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 48.

means by which this exorcism will occur is the death of Jesus, a point made explicit by the editorial comment of the author, “He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die” (12:33). Thus, the hour that had been approaching and now has arrived is cast, not merely in terms of the death of one who was betrayed, but as an intentional means of ultimate victory in the cosmic conflict between Jesus and Satan.

The chapter continues with references to light and darkness. Jesus says, “For a little while longer the light is among you” (12:35), a reference to himself, similar to that made in 1:4, 9. Additionally, Jesus admonishes his disciples to “walk while you have the light, that the darkness may not overtake you” (12:35). “Overtake” translates the same Greek word, *καταλαμβάνω*, that was used in 1:5.²⁹ Having identified his death with the conflict with and victory over Satan, Jesus now relates his death to the struggle between light and darkness initially presented in the Prologue.

The concept of “world” returns at the end of the chapter, being characterized by darkness (“I have come as light into the world, that everyone who believes in me may not remain in darkness,” 12:46)³⁰ but still the recipient of Jesus’ saving actions (“I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world,” 12:47).

In summary, Jesus’ conflict, primarily with the Jews and secondarily with Judas, dominates 5:1-12:50. Furthermore, the Fourth Evangelist develops a pattern in this section of the FG—“a rising level of conflict and opposition within each episode and from one episode to the next.”³¹ Though Jesus’ conflict is with the Jews and Judas, it is also now clear to the reader that both are explicitly tied to Satan himself. Thus, Jesus’ struggle against each of these is cosmic in nature.

²⁹Its only other occurrences are in 8:3, 4 where it is used of a woman “caught” in adultery.

³⁰This passage is further connected to the Prologue. Cf. “I have come as light into the world, that everyone who believes in me may not remain in darkness” (12:46) with “coming into the world, enlightens every man” (1:9). Note three parallels: (1) coming and come; (2) not remaining in darkness and enlightens; and (3) everyone and everyman.

³¹Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 128.

The Farewell Discourse (13:1-17:26)

Chapter 13 begins what is commonly called the Farewell Discourse. Here Jesus shifts his focus from the Jews to his disciples. Therefore, the author's emphasis of the theme of conflict will shift, not in intensity, but in focus. That is, Jesus will spend more time preparing his disciples for conflict with the world, occurring after his death and resurrection, rather than personally being in conflict with the Jews or Judas. However, two additional references to the "ruler of this world" appear in these chapters.

This section begins with the author's reminder of Judas' intention to betray Jesus, highlighting the devil's role in that betrayal. Despite Jesus having loved his disciples "to the end" (13:1, itself a probable reference to Jesus' death),³² Judas was planning a betrayal, an idea placed in his heart by the devil (13:2). Following the foot washing episode, which was a picture of Jesus' cleansing death, Jesus says, "not all of you are clean" (13:11). The Fourth Evangelist interprets the comment, noting the reason for Jesus' statement as "he knew the one who was betraying Him."

The scene shifts to the meal in which Judas leaves to betray Jesus (13:21-30). Jesus quotes Psalm 41, "He who eats my bread has lifted up his heel against me" (13:20). Then, he explicitly states, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me" (13:21). After a period of bewilderment and questioning by the disciples, Jesus offers Judas a morsel of bread, indicating the one who was the betrayer. Judas receives the bread but not the gesture of friendship behind it, totally giving himself over to the scheme placed in his heart by Satan. At that moment, with finality the author states, "Satan then entered into him" (13:27). Jesus then instructs Judas to leave and do what he will do quickly, emphasizing Jesus' constant control over the situation. The author notes that when Judas left, "it was night" (13:30).³³ Now possessed by Satan himself, Judas exits

³²For further discussion, see pp. 69-71, esp. 70n50.

³³Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 192, argues after retrospection or a re-reading of the Gospel, the reader would connect Nicodemus (3:2), the Jews (9:4; 11:10), and Judas (13:30) via the image of "night" or

the stage of cosmic drama. He does not reappear in the FG until chapter 18, when he leads the guards to arrest Jesus in the garden.

In 13:1-30, several conflict themes are evident. First, violence against Jesus is predicted in the OT quote. Second, the betrayal of Judas comes to its climax as Judas is identified and leaves to do the deed. Third, Satan is again cast as the mastermind behind the betrayal, this time entering Judas. Fourth, Jesus' comment to Judas signifies the authority he has over the timing of the events. Last, the reference to "night" continues the theme of darkness associated with a world and individuals who reject Jesus.

Jesus' concentrated instruction to the disciples commences in John 14. Informing them of his soon departure, Jesus comforts them with the news of the coming of "another Helper," the Holy Spirit. However, the world cannot receive him because it does not know him (14:16, 17). The disciples are again contrasted with the world in 14:27. The peace that Jesus gives is markedly different from that given by the world. The chapter ends with the second reference to one who rules the world. He is said to be coming (14:30), a situation that prompts Jesus to leave (14:31). However, Jesus adds, "and he has nothing in Me," reiterating his sovereign control over the events leading to his death.

Jesus continues his teaching in chapter 15, revealing himself to be "the true vine." In this section, Jesus calls his disciples to "love one another, just as I have loved you" and references his death with evidence of the greatest love—laying down one's life for his friends (15:13). The command to love one another is restated (15:17) and followed by instruction concerning the hatred that will come from the world.

Here (15:18-23) and again in the next chapter (16:1-3, 32-33), Jesus prepares his followers for the persecution to come after his death. The world hates Jesus and, consequently, all those who align themselves with him. To follow Jesus and to be of the

darkness.

world are mutually exclusive. Those who are not of the world, not its own, are therefore hated by it. As a result of this hatred, they will be persecuted as Jesus was (15:20) and generally “have tribulation” (16:33). While Jesus’ conflict with the world will result in his death, for the disciples, this maltreatment will range from the milder excommunication from the synagogue to the most severe—murder (16:2). The immediate threat³⁴ of persecution will result in the scattering of the disciples (16:33). However, in spite of the hatred and persecution, Jesus asks his disciples to “take courage”; he has “overcome the world.”³⁵

Chapters 15 and 16 reference the coming Holy Spirit as well. In 15:26-27, the Spirit will bear witness of Jesus. Sandwiched between two references to persecution, the Spirit assists the disciples to give an unyielding gospel witness in the midst of their distress. Furthermore, he will help them not to stumble (16:1) and remind them of Jesus’ teachings (15:20; 16:4). The Spirit will also “convict the world of sin, and righteousness, and judgment” (16:8-11), a reference to his role in using the witness of the disciples to bring about the repentance of some in the world. Finally, he will guide believers into all truth (16:13).

This passage also contains the third and final reference to the “ruler of this world” (16:11) who “has been judged.” Consistent with the two previous references, here he is described as defeated and judged.

This section sheds light on the relationship between Jesus and the world (hatred, persecution, overcoming and conviction), between Jesus and the ruler of the

³⁴“Behold, an hour is coming, and *has already come*, for you to be scattered each to his own home, and to leave Me alone” (16:32). Emphasis added.

³⁵Overcoming language (Gk. *νικάω*) is prevalent in Johannine literature and carries conflict connotations. In 1 John, see 2:13, 14; 4:4; 5:4, 5. In Revelation, see 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 5:5; 6:2; 11:7; 12:11; 13:7; 15:2; 17:14; 21:7. Note also the only other use in the Gospels is Luke 11:21-22, “When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own homestead, his possessions are undisturbed; but when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers [from *νικάω*] him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied, and distributes his plunder.”

world (judgment), between Jesus' followers and the world (hatred, persecution, and bearing witness), between the Holy Spirit and Jesus' followers (bearing witness, supporting, guiding), and between the Holy Spirit and the world (conviction). The web of conflict is clearly multifaceted.

Chapter 17 contains Jesus' High Priestly Prayer in which he prays to the Father for himself (17:1-5), for his disciples (17:6-19), and for those who will believe through the disciples' witness (17:20-26). John 17:6-19 is particularly germane to the current discussion of cosmic conflict. Here Jesus continues to distinguish between his disciples and the world. His disciples were given to him "out of the world" (17:6). Yet, being still "in the world" (17:11) but "not of the world," they are hated by the world (17:14, 16). In spite of this, Jesus does not ask the Father to take them out of the world. In fact, Jesus sends them "into the world" (17:18) and asks the Father to protect them. Additionally, the disciples know the Father, but "the world has not known [him]" (17:25). Interestingly, the very characteristics that distinguish the disciples from the world are the commonalities they share with Jesus—they are not of the world (17:14), they are sent into it (17:18), and they know the Father (17:25). The disciples are clearly aligned with Jesus against the world.

Jesus also refers to the devil in the prayer, asking the Father to keep his disciples from "the evil one," a personal reference to Satan (17:15). Earlier Jesus states that he "was keeping them" (τηρέω in both verses, 17:12, 15) and that he "guarded them" so that none perished except "the son of perdition" (17:12), a likely reference to Judas. As such, Jesus indicates he has been actively protecting his disciples from Satan while on the earth and asks the Father to continue that protection after his departure.

While the Farewell Discourse does not contain as many overt conflict episodes as chapters 5 through 12, the concept of a cosmic battle is extended to Jesus' disciples through his preparatory teachings on the coming persecution, the references to "the ruler

of this world” and “the evil one,” and through Jesus’ prayer on behalf of his disciples. The narrative now shifts to the passion of Jesus.

The Passion, Resurrection and Epilogue (18:1-21:25)

Having finished his prayer, Jesus leads his disciples to the garden. The last time Judas was mentioned in the narrative, he had just been possessed by Satan and told by Jesus to act quickly. Now he leads “the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees” (18:3) to Jesus. This is the outworking of Satan indwelling Judas.

Even though Judas’ intentions are clear, for emphasis the author still refers to him as the one “who was betraying Him” (18:2). Judas’ awareness of the location is mentioned, indicating that Jesus was not attempting to conceal himself from his adversaries. Furthermore, the author portrays Jesus as knowing his enemies were coming and as going out to meet them. As in 13:1-2, 11, Jesus’ knowledge of the actions against him is emphasized.

Jesus identifies himself so as not to unduly endanger his disciples. John draws attention to this action by noting it fulfilled Jesus’ earlier prayer, “Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one” (18:9, cf. 17:12). The manner in which he identifies himself is also significant. In response to the guards’ inquiry, Jesus states, “I am *he*” (18:5). Congruent with John’s propensity for double meaning, Jesus identifies himself and also claims the divine name in reference to himself. The guards’ reaction (“They drew back and fell to the ground,” 18:6) supports this interpretation, highlighting the *cosmic* nature of the conflict. Peter’s response is to attack the high priest’s slave, cutting off his ear, but Jesus quickly halts his attack and references the cup he must drink from the Father.

What has been foreshadowed and then fully predicted earlier in the Gospel now begins to come to fruition—the betrayal and death of Jesus. All the primary

antagonists come together against Jesus: Judas, the devil (who had entered Judas and put in his heart to betray), the Jews³⁶ having sent their officers, and the world represented by the Roman cohort. Jesus' actions in the face of the conflict are personal surrender and the protection of his disciples. Though Peter provided an opportunity for violent resistance, Jesus refused and corrected Peter's error. This cosmic battle would not be won by aggression but by yielding.

The trial scenes that follow with Annas, Caiaphas (who is mentioned but not discussed by the author), and Pilate are obviously characterized by conflict. Jesus is bound, arrested, interrogated, slapped, and mocked. Accusations are being made against him, and he is asked to defend himself. The cosmic trial motif in the FG comes to a head with Jesus' interaction with Pilate.³⁷

In response to Pilate's question, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus talks of his kingdom being "not of this world" (18:36). The only other use of "kingdom" in the FG is 3:3, 5 where "*kingdom of God*" is used. This inclusio of John 3:3, 5 with 18:36 serves to equate Jesus' kingdom with the kingdom of God.³⁸ This again elevates the conflict from the clash of two earthly kingdoms to an epic battle between worlds. Jesus added that if his kingdom were of this world, his servants would be fighting, but they are not (cf. Peter's attack in 18:10-11). The distinction between Jesus' kingdom and Pilate's kingdom is made, but Pilate does not understand. Jesus speaks of testifying to truth and Pilate quips, "What is truth?" With that, Pilate leaves Jesus again. The theme of truth is prevalent in the FG and is consistently held by those who side with Jesus and is absent from those who do not. By extension, Pilate has chosen through his indecision to side

³⁶Though referred to as "the chief priests and the Pharisees" in 18:3, the same group is called "the Jews" in 18:12.

³⁷Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel*, 438ff.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 448.

against Jesus.³⁹ His loyalty is confirmed, and the conflict turns physically violent when Jesus is scourged (19:1), mocked with a crown of thorns and a purple robe (19:2), and repeatedly struck in the face (19:3), ending with his crucifixion.

Throughout the scene, the Jews consistently choose to side with whomever necessary to prevent Jesus' release and secure his crucifixion. They choose to release Barabbas with all of his evil deeds and name Caesar, the earthly "ruler of this world," as their king. Even after he was on the cross, they complained about the placard over his head naming him as "The King of the Jews" (19:19). Clearly, John continues to highlight the chasm between the two sides in the cosmic conflict and leaves no ambiguity as to who is on which side.

Note here also that in the middle of the scene in which Jesus seems the victim, powerlessly abused and shuffled from place to place, the author intentionally reminds the reader of Jesus' sovereignty over even these events by stating how they fulfill Scripture (18:32; 19:24, 36-37).⁴⁰

As chapter 19 ends, Joseph of Arimathea removes Jesus' body from the cross. Even after Jesus' death, the reader is reminded of the persecution from the Jews as Joseph is described as "a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews" (19:38).

John describes the resurrection appearances of Jesus in chapter 20. Continuing with the Johannine theme of darkness and its use to convey spiritual blindness, the author notes that as "Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb . . . it was still dark" (20:1).⁴¹

³⁹Pilate "has sought to avoid making a decision and has finally had to deny what he senses is truth and condemn one he knows to be innocent. . . . Pilate exercises worldly power and in the end stands with the world by his failure to stand with Jesus against it." Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 143.

⁴⁰Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel*, 256, notices "a steady stream of scriptural fulfillment in the second half of John's Gospel, and particularly in the crucifixion narrative." See also Andreas J. Köstenberger, "John" in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, edited by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007): 503-6, where he notes, "The effect is to explain to the reader how the Messiah could have been crucified."

⁴¹Contrast this with Mark's "when the sun had risen" (Mark 16:2), Matthew's "as it began to dawn" (Matt 28:1), and Luke's "at early dawn" (Luke 24:1).

Otherwise, no cosmic conflict is evident.

The Holy Spirit is given in 20:22-23 and will empower the disciples as they fulfill Jesus' commission.⁴² This accords with his role of empowerment in the face of persecution earlier in the Gospel (15:18-16:16). Chapter 21 is the Epilogue to the Gospel and also contains very little content related to cosmic conflict. However, the text does end with one final comment regarding cosmic conflict. In Jesus' last discussion with Peter (21:15-23), Jesus implies Peter will die a martyr in a fashion similar to Jesus' death (21:18-19). With that, Jesus reminds his disciples and John's readers that the conflict continues even though the war has been won.

Other than the mention of the Holy Spirit in 20:22-23 and Peter's martyrdom in 21:18-19, there is no mention of cosmic conflict at all after the crucifixion of Jesus.⁴³ What has been a consistent, recurring theme throughout the Gospel is almost totally absent now. This silence is significant. For the author of the FG, the death of Jesus is the "hour," "the cup," and the casting out of "the ruler of this world." At the cross, Jesus won. The conflict will continue as his disciples live out their faith in the world over which Satan still has limited influence, but the cosmic conflict is decided at the cross.

Conclusion

This survey of the narrative of the FG demonstrates that cosmic conflict permeates the Gospel. The author highlights it in the Prologue to establish a hermeneutic by which the reader is to interpret the rest of the Gospel. Conflict is implicit in chapters 2 through 4. With chapter 5, however, Jesus' conflict with the Jews begins and escalates

⁴²For a recent examination of this passage, see Russell Dale Quinn, "Expectation and Fulfillment of the Gift of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010).

⁴³Boyd, *God at War*, 211, 213, does argue, however, Jesus' power to produce fish from a sea ruled by Satan and which refuses "to give up its produce," is an example of a nature miracle that was a "definite act of war that accomplished and demonstrated his victory over Satan." While Boyd's point may be valid, one must look outside the FG for supporting evidence. The FG itself does not seem to portray the fish miracle in John 21 as cosmic conflict.

all the way through chapter 12. Furthermore, the author makes a point to characterize the struggle as satanic in nature. Chapters 13-17 describe the conflict from the disciples' point of view. Jesus prepares them for persecution after his death and John further discloses Satan as the agent behind the conflict through Judas' betrayal and the title "ruler of this world." Finally, the conflict comes to a head in the death of Jesus in chapters 18 and 19.

In conclusion, this struggle is expressed in a variety of locations, through different characters (both individual and collective), and by use of imagery and themes. Furthermore, the conflict seems to be particularly highlighted at points of significance in the narrative and noticeably absent after Jesus' crucifixion. These indicate the pervasiveness of spiritual warfare in the FG.

Having viewed the grandeur of the FG from above, the next several chapters will examine each character, image and weapon in more detail, travelling down into the trails of the text to see up close what it tells us specifically of a Johannine theology of cosmic conflict.

CHAPTER 3

THE ANTAGONISTS OF COSMIC CONFLICT

Craig Koester writes, “John tells the story of Jesus. The gospel carries no separable theology of Jesus’ death; John’s understanding of it must be discerned in and through his telling of the story.”¹ This is also true of his theology of cosmic conflict. The author of the FG reveals his understanding of the cosmic conflict through the retelling of events and his interpretation of these events. In the process, the main characters in those events—what they do, how they are described, how they interact with one another, etc.—are the primary vehicle the author uses to convey his story. This investigation of spiritual warfare will begin with the combatants, that is, the agents in this cosmic conflict. The first group of agents to be considered are those spiritual powers in opposition to Jesus, followed by a discussion in the next chapter of Jesus and his supporters.²

Demons

One might assume demons would figure prominently in a Johannine theology of cosmic warfare; however, they do not, and John records no exorcisms in this Gospel.³

¹Craig R. Koester, “The Death of Jesus and the Human Condition: Exploring the Theology of John’s Gospel,” in *Life in Abundance: Studies of John’s Gospel in Tribute to Raymond E. Brown*, ed. John R. Donahue (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005): 141.

²It will be shown that the author of the FG is theologically dualistic in his portrayal of Jesus’ opponents. “There is little gray or middle ground. One is either for God or for Satan, of light or of darkness, from above or from below.” Mark L. Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus: A Survey of Jesus and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 329.

³The absence of exorcisms in the FG is discussed in the next chapter. See pp. 137-47.

In contrast to the Synoptics, in which Jesus' exorcism ministry is conspicuous,⁴ demons are all but absent from the FG.

Although demons are physically absent from the events described in the FG,⁵ they are mentioned on three occasions. In all three occurrences, Jesus himself is accused of being possessed. Whereas the Synoptics present Jesus as the exorcist, the FG presents him as the one being accused of demon possession.⁶ Of these three passages, the first and last are brief, while the middle reference is longer and helps to interpret the other two.⁷

John 7:20

Having cleansed the temple in chapter 2, healed the impotent man on the Sabbath in chapter 5, claimed God as his Father in chapters 5 and 6, and called himself the "bread of life" (6:48), Jesus' actions had brought about opposition from the Jews, escalating to the point where the Jews were seeking to kill him (7:1). In 7:19-20, Jesus speaks the truth, that some are seeking to kill him. The crowd takes this "paranoia" or "madness" as an indication that he is demon-possessed.⁸ Though brief and absent of

⁴The four most prominent are found in Mark 1:21-28; 5:1-20; 7:24-30; 9:14-29. Others are found in Matt 9:32-34; 12:22; Luke 11:14. Passing references are also made in Mark 1:32-34, 39; 3:7-12.

⁵Eric Plumer, "The Absence of Exorcisms in the Fourth Gospel," *Biblica* 78 (1997): 363; Gerd Theissen, *Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1983), 226; and Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random House, 1995), 100-101, argue the place of demons in the FG has been replaced by humans. That is, instead of demons being the enemies of God through the systems of the world, mankind now is shown to be hostile to God and to be part of the world.

⁶One significant exception is Mark 3:21-27 where Jesus is accused of being possessed by Beelzebul.

⁷These passages will be revisited below in chap. 6, "The Weapons of Cosmic Conflict." John's portrayal of these accusations will be shown to demonstrate that truth and lies are significant weapons used in the conflict in the FG.

⁸An argument will be made that the author of the FG portrays "the Jews" as agents in the cosmic conflict. However, the author of the FG notes "the crowd" accuses Jesus here. Many scholars argue the author is making a distinction here between the genuine ignorance of "the crowd" and the evil intentions of "the Jews." See, e.g., Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 277; Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 4 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 243-45; William Hendricksen, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids:

obvious conflict overtones, Graham Twelftree rightly notes the charge itself is of little consequence here, but significance resides in the way the reader understands the charge. Because of editorial comments previously made by the author (5:16-18, 7:1), the reader knows the Jews are seeking to kill Jesus, and therefore Jesus is not merely paranoid. Consequently, Jesus is validated as the one who knows and tells the truth, while his enemies are ignorant of or suppressive of the truth (5:33-38). This incident also gives the reader “an interpretive perspective” by which to view future accusations by the Jews of demon possession.⁹

John 8:48-52

Unlike 7:20, this passage in context is rife with spiritual conflict images.¹⁰ In the preceding verses, the Jews have been cast in a very negative light. They do not understand Jesus’ teachings (8:22, 25, 27, 33, 39), they “will die in their sins” (8:24), they are slaves of sin (8:34-36), Jesus’ word is rejected by them (8:37, 43), they are seeking to kill Jesus (8:40, 44), God is not their Father (8:42), they are liars (8:44), and they are like their father, the devil (8:44). Following this litany of disparaging descriptions, the author of the FG quotes the Jews as saying, “Did we not say rightly that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?” (8:48). Jesus does not present a lengthy argument to defend himself,¹¹ nor does he directly answer the charge of being a Samaritan, a charge unique to the FG.

Baker Book House, 1976), 2:12; Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 361; R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 131; and Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, trans. Cecily Hastings et al. (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1979), 2:133. If these are correct, then the Jews are even further highlighted as agents against Jesus.

⁹Graham Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcisms among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 199-200.

¹⁰We will also return to this passage below where the argument will be made from 8:44 that the author of the FG presents “the Jews” as major characters in his drama of cosmic conflict.

¹¹Contrast this with Jesus’ passionate defense against the charge of demon possession in Mark 3:19-30 and Matt 12:22-37.

Scholars disagree concerning the nature of this charge. Perhaps Jesus' denial that they are descendants of Abraham led them to accuse his heritage as well. This charge could also be slander regarding Jesus' birth circumstances, a direct result of his being received in Samaria,¹² or equivalent to the charge of demon possession.¹³ It likely relates in some way to the charge of heresy and false prophecy, possibly stemming from false prophets of Samaria such as Simon Magus.¹⁴ In either case, the double accusation serves to intensify further the depiction of the opposition of the Jews against Jesus and his teachings.

Twelftree picks up on the narrative preparation done by the author and comments, "For with the Jews being cast as having a liar as their father (8:44), readers have already been informed that the Jews could be anything but right."¹⁵ That is, rather than Jesus being the one in theological error, the Jews are the ones who do not know the truth. The author's portrayal of the Jews in this fashion, prior to their accusing Jesus a second time of being demon-possessed (8:48), assists the reader in understanding the character of the Jews and their role in cosmic conflict. The author displays their antagonism as the substance of spiritual conflict.¹⁶

¹²Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, 2003), 1:764.

¹³Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 286; and Walter Bauer, ed., *Das Johannesevangelium* (Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1925), 130-31, suggest that Samaritan prophets were demon-possessed and thus to be a Samaritan and to be demon-possessed were essentially the same charge.

¹⁴See, e.g., Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, The New Century Bible Commentary (1972; repr., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1987), 331; and Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 225. Contra Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 414. Matthew Black, *The Scrolls and Christian Origins: Studies in the Jewish Background of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), 70, argues "Samaritan" had become synonymous with "heretic" and was used as an insult. Similarly Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 200-201, esp. 201n65, cites John Bowman, "Samaritan Studies," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 40 (1957-58): 306-8, to argue that "the accusation of being a Samaritan, though not intended literally, was meant as a charge of acting the Samaritan, or being responsible for false prophecy (cf. 8:52)." Kikuo Matsunaga, "Powers in Conflict: A New Clue to the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel" (Ph.D. diss., McGill University, 1969), 187, also notes the author of the FG equates demon possession with false prophecy.

¹⁵Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 201. So also Matsunaga, "Powers in Conflict," 201.

¹⁶So also Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to St. John*, Black's New Testament

John 10:20-21

In these verses, the accusation that Jesus was demon-possessed was made indirectly among “the Jews” rather than to Jesus’ face. The charge that “he has a demon and is insane,” is similar to the charge in 7:20. Again, this passage does not directly inform an examination of cosmic conflict other than to demonstrate that it exists.¹⁷

Hoskyns compares the charges of demon possession in the FG and in the Synoptics and notes the author of the FG retained the accusations but none of the accompanying miracles that spurred them.¹⁸ Why then did the author choose to include this thrice-repeated accusation? The repetition of the accusations serves to continue to highlight the conflict between Jesus and the Jews.¹⁹ More specifically, however, an argument can be made that John is presenting these three charges of demon possession in such a way so as to illustrate that it is the Jews, rather than Jesus, who are influenced by the devil. That is, Jesus is not lying; he is speaking the truth. Jesus is not wrong about the attempts on his life; the Jews and the crowd are in error. The Jews are the ones who are deceived, who are speaking lies, and who are murderous—characteristics of their father, the devil. As such, in characteristic Johannine irony, “for the readers it is the Jews, not Jesus, who are to be seen as demon-possessed.”²⁰

The Devil

Having considered the role demons play (or more accurately, do not play) in

Commentaries (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 274: “From the evangelist’s point of view, these accusations are seen as confirming Jesus’ hearers’ alienation from God, and because they are lies (cf. v. 55), their relationship to the liar and father of lies.”

¹⁷Indirectly, however, this accusation is consistent with the previous argument. Each use of μ (translated here as “insane”) in the NT describes someone who is relating a message that is not believable. See Acts 12:15; 26:24, 25; 1 Cor 14:23 (Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 203). This charge of insanity may be related to the charge of speaking lies made earlier.

¹⁸Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), 381.

¹⁹Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 365, suggests a similar idea.

²⁰Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 203-4.

the cosmic conflict of the FG, let us shift our attention to the chief demon—Satan himself. While demons play a lesser role in the FG than in the Synoptics, the devil’s role is emphasized more.²¹ For example, throughout the NT, the devil’s primary role is “to rule over the kingdom of darkness which opposes the kingdom of God.”²² Of all the Gospels, the FG presents the devil in this light most clearly, primarily through his title, “ruler of this world.” Even though he has no speaking role in the FG as he does in the Synoptics,²³ Satan’s power and influence is felt in the FG more often and more powerfully than in the others.

The manner in which the author of the FG discusses the devil is consistent with both the Synoptics and contemporary Judaism.²⁴ What is unique, however, is what the Fourth Evangelist chooses to emphasize for his particular theological purposes. The most obvious emphasis is Satan’s role in the death of Jesus.²⁵ A thorough examination of each reference to the devil in the FG, categorized by the various names employed to designate

²¹Contra Lyle Eslinger, “Judas Game: The Biology of Combat in the Gospel of John,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 77 (2000): 67, who argues John demythologizes the Synoptics. “The devil, Satan, and the demons have prominent roles as rivals in every canonical Gospel but John. In their place, John offers puny, human villains: the Jews, Caiaphas, and Judas.” I will argue Eslinger minimizes the role of Satan in the FG. Rather than being absent, Satan is prominent behind the scenes.

²²G. J. Riley, “Devil,” in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel van der Toorn, Pieter W. van der Horst, and Bob Becking, 2nd ed. (New York: E. J. Brill, 1999): 470.

²³See Matt 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13. Cf. Luke 22:31. Craig R. Koester, “Why was the Messiah Crucified? A Study of God, Jesus, Satan, and Human Agency in Johannine Theology,” in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, edited by G. van Belle (Leuven: University Press, 2007): 170, succinctly notes, “The evil one remains in the shadows in John’s narrative.”

²⁴J. C. Coetzee, “Christ and the Prince of this World in the Gospel and the Epistles of St. John,” in *The Christ of John: Essays on the Christology of the Fourth Gospel, Proceedings of the Fourth Meeting of Die Nieuw-Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap Van Suid-Afrika [June 27-29, 1968]*, Neotestamentica 2, ed. A. B. Du Toit, (Potchefstroom: Pro Rege Press, 1971): 105-6. Graham H. Twelftree, “Spiritual Powers,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000): 796, notes that in general, the presentation of Satan is more developed in the NT than in the OT, but nonetheless consistent. For a survey of the demonology of late Judaism, see D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic: 200BC–100AD* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 235-62, esp. 254-57.

²⁵Sydney H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 128, notes, “John’s portrayal of Satan focuses *exclusively* on his involvement in the suffering and death of Jesus.” Emphasis added.

him, will demonstrate these emphases.

A(?) devil—6:70

The first reference to the devil in the FG comes in chapter 6. Following the feeding of the multitude and walking on the water, Jesus gives the Bread of Life Discourse. At this juncture, many of Jesus' disciples recoiled at the "hard teaching" (6:60) and "turned back and no longer followed him" (6:66). The exodus of a large portion of his followers prompts Jesus to ask "the twelve"²⁶ if they will leave as well. In response, Peter speaks as representative of the group with a strong confession of their faith in Him ("We believe and know"). Jesus, however, corrects his assumption; not all of the twelve agree with him. In fact, "one of you [plural] is a devil." The author adds an editorial note to inform the reader that Judas is this devil who will betray Jesus.²⁷

"Devil" here translates the Greek word *διάβολος*. Commonly used by Jewish writers during the intertestamental period and early Christian writers, the word refers to the chief of all demons, the leader of the forces of evil, "the great Adversary of God and righteousness, the Devil."²⁸ The same word is used in the LXX as a translation for *יָשׁוּב* (*ṯ n*). *יָשׁוּב* can be used to describe an adversary, either personal or national. However, when translated with *διάβολος* in the LXX, it refers to a "superhuman adversary," *Σατανᾶς*.²⁹

²⁶"The twelve," as a descriptor of Jesus' closest followers, is used in the FG only here (6:67, 70, 71) and in 20:24. It functions in 6:67 to differentiate these from the rest who abandon Jesus. In 20:24, Thomas is identified as one of the Twelve even though absent from the first appearance of Jesus. In 6:70, 71, however, the term, repeated for emphasis, seems to draw attention to Judas' inclusion in the group and thus the heightened seriousness of his treachery ("though one of the twelve"). See also the section, "Judas," below.

²⁷Judas' personal role as an agent of cosmic conflict will be discussed in depth below.

²⁸Riley, "Devil," 463.

²⁹Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (1906; repr., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), s.v. " *יָשׁוּב* ." Walter Bauer et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), s.v. " *διάβολος* ."

This reference to “a devil” might seem as though it should have been dealt with in the previous section on demons. However, while most English versions translate the anarthrous διάβολος with the customary “a devil,”³⁰ a strong case can be made that the definite article should be present in the translation. Wallace categorizes διάβολος as a monadic noun, “a one-of-a-kind noun [that] does not require the article to be definite.”³¹ Carson adds that it always refers to Satan in the NT when it is substantive.³² If so, then 6:70 is a direct reference to Satan himself. Although Judas is not yet possessed by Satan, he is called Satan here. Of course, Jesus is not making a one-to-one identification of Judas literally being the Devil incarnate. Rather, in a comparative sense similar to Mark 8:33 (Matt 16:23) where Peter is called “Satan,” Judas is linked to Satan because of his evil act of betrayal in the service of the Evil One. Nonetheless, this is the first reference in the FG to Satan and is therefore significant. Jesus initially and clearly categorizes Judas’ coming act of betrayal, not merely as the actions of a dissident disciple or even as one under demonic influence, but with Satan himself.³³ In subsequent references to the

³⁰See, e.g., KJV, NKJV, RSV, ASV, NIV, JB, NCV, God’s Word Translation, and NRSV. However, the NET Bible, HCSB, and the Lexham English Bible give “the devil.”

³¹διάβολος is technically an adjective but often functions substantively in the NT. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar, Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 249, explains the KJV uses “devil” to translate both δαιμόνιον and διάβολος and thus διάβολος was not translated as a monadic noun in the AV. Modern translations have followed in its footsteps, translating διάβολος here as “a devil” instead of “the devil.” Wallace advances his case by citing “Colwell’s Rule” (249n85), which states, “Definite predicate nouns which precede the verb usually lack the article.” Furthermore, “a predicate nominative which precedes the verb cannot be translated as an indefinite or a ‘qualitative’ noun solely because of the absence of the article; if the context suggests that the predicate is definite, it should be translated as a definite noun” (E. C. Colwell, “A Definite Rule for the Use of the Article in the Greek New Testament,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 52 [1933]: 20). So also Friedrich Wilhelm Blass, Albert Debrunner and Robert Walter Funk, *Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), sec. 264; and J. Ramsey Michaels, *Gospel of John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2010), 417.

³²D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1976), 304. He also cites Mark 8:33, where Peter is addressed as Satan as support for a personal reference to the devil here.

³³The personal reference to Satan here is also consistent with the previous argument that the author of the FG focuses on Satan himself rather than his demons when describing cosmic conflict.

betrayal, Jesus will continue to identify the person of Satan as the mastermind and Judas as the willing proxy.

The Devil—8:44; 13:2

There are two places in the FG where *διάβολος* is articular and unambiguously refers to Satan. The first occurs in 8:44, where Jesus is in discussion with the Jews, and the second is 13:2, where the devil had put into Judas' heart to betray Jesus.

John 8:44. Following his claim to be the “the light of the world” at the conclusion of the Feast of Tabernacles (8:12), a dialogue ensues in which Jesus continues his assertion that God is his Father. Because the Jews refuse to accept this, Jesus argues, “you also do the things which you heard from your father” (8:38). This veiled reference to the Jews' father is repeated in 8:41-42 until Jesus finally declares, “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father” (8:44).³⁴

Jesus then delineates two primary characteristics of Satan that the Jews were emulating as evidence for his assertion—murder and lying.³⁵ First, Jesus posits the devil is a murderer *ab origine*, referring either to his actions toward Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 or toward Cain in Genesis 4. One is tempted to take this as a reference to the first

³⁴Because of an ambiguity, two translations of this phrase are possible. “The devil” (*τοῦ διαβόλου*) is genitive and could be understood as either possessive (“You are of the father of the devil”) or as an appositive (“You are of the father, the devil”). Very few opt for the possessive option. See, however, Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 318, and BDF, sec. 268[2], who argue this as a grammatical option. BDF, however, acknowledges, “but it is certainly meant as ‘of your father (cf. 38) the devil.’” The possessive translation was later supported by Gnostics who believed an inferior god created this material world as evil and this one was the father of the devil (George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 26, 2nd ed. [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999], 135; Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 282). For a discussion of this gnostic doctrine, see Bauer, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 127-29. Most dismiss the possessive without argument. See, e.g., Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 518, who states, “The [possessive] makes no sense, and is quickly set aside (rightly) by most commentators, beginning with Origen”; and Hendriksen, *John*, 2:60, who states the possessive reading was “so completely foreign to the context that it deserves no further comment.”

³⁵The connection Jesus makes here between the Jews and the devil is crucial to understanding the role the Jews play in the cosmic drama of the FG. See more discussion in the section, “The Jews,” below.

(human) murder, that of Cain killing Abel, especially in light of 1 John 3:12. In Genesis 4:7, “sin is crouching at the door,” tempting Cain, and he is told, “you must master it.” He fails to do so and slays his brother. Although Cain’s murder of Abel in Genesis 4 is as a result of the temptation of the devil “crouching at the door,” Satan’s direct work in Genesis 3 is both prior to and more fundamental than his indirect work in Genesis 4. Furthermore, the two characteristics in 8:44 are closely related. Jesus expounds on the second, but not on the first, as if the two are connected. Therefore, it is best, as most commentators do, to see John 8:44 as referring to the devil’s temptation of Adam and Eve in the garden that resulted in his bringing the entire human race into a state of death.³⁶ This, of course, was the *beginning* of his murderous acts throughout history which continued as early as one chapter later with homicide, and ultimately in the murder of Jesus.

The second characteristic given by Jesus is that the devil is a liar. Though the prepositional phrase “from the beginning” (ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς) syntactically goes with only the first half of the sentence, the devil’s lying also began early. The first words attributed to the serpent in Genesis 3:2 are “Indeed, has God said . . . ?” Two verses later he

³⁶So also, Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 353; Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 280; Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11*, The New American Commentary, vol. 25A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 305-6; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1978), 349; Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:760; Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 411; and Hendriksen, *Gospel according to John*, 2:60. Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 520, further connects John 8 with Gen 3 by contrasting Jesus’ truth, “You will die in your sins,” (John 8:24) with Satan’s lie, “You surely shall not die!” (Gen 3:4). Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:761, states, “whether John’s audience would have thought of the devil’s first murder as his deception of Adam and Eve or the work of Cain is not clear, though the former is more likely; Cain’s activity, like that of Jesus’ opponents in 8:44, simply repeats the devil’s activity.” Contra Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, Anchor Bible Commentary (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 1:358, who believes it refers to Cain, citing an odd tradition (J. Ramón Díaz, “Palestinian Targum and New Testament,” *Novum Testamentum* 6 [1963]: 75-80) that Cain was the offspring of Eve and the Devil. The connection with 1 John 3:12 and the only other use of ἀνθρωποκτόνος, 1 John 3:15, gives some, yet still insufficient, evidence for this view.

Connecting John 8:44 with the Fall in Gen 3 rather than with the murder of Abel in Gen 4 also says more regarding John’s understanding of cosmic conflict. While both events describe conflict, are not the events of Gen 3 more cosmic in nature?

contradicts a statement made earlier by God.³⁷ This accusation is discussed more fully than the first, adding that Satan “does not stand in the truth,” “there is no truth in him,” “whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature,” and that he is “the father of lies” (8:44). Jesus could be no stronger in his characterization of Satan opposing the truth. Hendriksen commented,

When he lies, he is original. When he does not lie . . . he quotes or even plagiarizes; but even then he gives the borrowed words a false setting, in order to create an illusion. He ever strives to lie and deceive, and this he does in order to murder.³⁸

The passage, through contrast, also highlights the extreme polarity of the combatants in this cosmic conflict. While Satan is a murderer,³⁹ Jesus gives life (in this context, 8:51; also, e.g., 3:15, 16, 36; 5:21, 24; 8:12). Satan murdered “from the beginning”; however, Jesus was “in the beginning” and “in Him was life” (1:1, 4).⁴⁰ While Satan is a liar, Jesus gives the truth that makes men free (in this context, 8:45, and note the emphatic ἐγὼ; also, e.g., 8:14, 16, 32, 36, 55).

The context of 8:44 places Satan clearly in opposition to Jesus. Morally, he stands for the opposite of what Jesus embraces. However, what the author of the FG presents is more than a *contrast* of diametrically opposed moralities—he is describing a *conflict* of spiritual opposites. The author of the FG

³⁷F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel and Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1983), 1:201.

³⁸Hendriksen, *Gospel according to John*, 2:61.

³⁹Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 518n83, notes ἀνθρωποκτόνος is not the usual word for murderer (φονεύς). He prefers “man-killer” or “homicidal” to convey the connotation. Similarly, G. H. C. MacGregor, *The Gospel of John*, Moffett New Testament Commentary (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1928), 220, renders it “slayer of men.”

⁴⁰Coetzee, “Christ and the Prince,” 111, made much of this contrast: “This rule of [Satan] is not from eternity: he is a ‘murderer ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς!’ . . . The ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς which is used twice with regard to Satan, stands in striking contrast to the Ἐν ἀρχῇ which St. John uses with regard to Christ the Word in John 1:1! The more so since the Ἐν ἀρχῇ of John 1:1 undoubtedly refers back to Genesis 1:1, the beginning of creation.” Similarly, Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 230, comments that Satan “is said to have been a murderer ‘from the beginning’ (Jn 8:44), [but] he is not said to have been this murdering spirit ‘from eternity.’ In John, only God with the Word and Spirit is understood to be eternal.”

has managed . . . to expose the true spiritual underpinnings of the opposition to Jesus and his messianic mission. . . . Thus the deadly combat between Jesus and the Pharisees that ultimately brings Jesus to the cross is presented by John as, not an internecine Jewish struggle for supremacy (as Roman officials may have surmised), but a cosmic clash between good and evil, between God and Satan.⁴¹

Where Jesus seeks to bring life, Satan combats it, attempting to bring death. Where Jesus seeks to bring truth and freedom, Satan contests it, attempting to deceive and bring bondage. “The devil is the Anti-Christ,”⁴² both as Christ’s opposite and as his opposition. Raymond Brown rightly sees this passage as “the first time the fact that the devil is Jesus’ real antagonist comes to the fore.” Furthermore, “this motif will grow louder and louder as the ‘hour’ of Jesus approaches, until the passion is presented as a struggle to the death between Jesus and Satan.”⁴³

John 13:2. The second use of “the devil” in the FG is 13:2. Here, again, Satan is portrayed as the mastermind behind Judas’ betrayal of Jesus. Lincoln concurs: “Judas’ intention is seen as part of the cosmic conflict . . . that forms the backdrop for Jesus’ mission.”⁴⁴ The pericope in which this verse is found is the beginning of the Farewell Cycle of discourses (chaps. 13-17), ending with Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer.

The context of this reference to the devil is particularly significant. Culpepper notes this is “the most significant transition in the Gospel, introducing not only the scene of the footwashing but the entire second half of the Gospel.”⁴⁵ The author, again, has placed reminders of cosmic conflict at significant points in the narrative.⁴⁶

⁴¹Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John’s Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 222.

⁴²Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 343.

⁴³Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:364.

⁴⁴Lincoln, *Gospel according to St. John*, 366.

⁴⁵R. Alan Culpepper, “The Johannine *hypodeigma*: A Reading of John 13,” *Semeia* 53 (1991): 135.

⁴⁶Chapter 5, “Metaphors of Cosmic Conflict,” will argue that the author places a paradigmatic statement of conflict in the Prologue. As such, spiritual conflict is seen at both the beginning of the book

Not only is it a transitional pericope, but the pericope has allusions to Jesus' death as well. Here, the author sets the scene in terms of the Passover.⁴⁷ The second phrase of 13:1 connects the Passover with the long-expected "hour" seen throughout the Gospel.⁴⁸ John 13:1 concludes with the author's comment concerning Jesus' love for his disciples, how "He loved them to the end." Here εἰς τέλος is not merely chronological, denoting a love that continued up to a certain point—the end of Jesus' life—but rather, the end means "finally, to the uttermost, unto death."⁴⁹ Jesus' love is ultimately expressed in his death, in his giving his life for his sheep.

The actions of Satan in 13:2 are to be understood in light of the self-sacrificing love of Jesus described in 13:1. The use of εἰς τέλος as well as the symbolic foot washing that follows⁵⁰ connect the actions of Satan with the death of Jesus. By linking these two, the author further demonstrates his understanding of the cosmic conflict that is occurring.

and in the transition into the second half of the book.

⁴⁷The debate over to which meal this refers, while interesting, does not affect this point.

⁴⁸In 2:4, his hour "has not yet come." In 4:21, 23; 5:25, 28, "an hour is coming." In 7:30; 8:20, his hour "had not yet come." In 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1, his hour "has come." Interestingly, in 16:2, 4, 21, 25, 32, he returns to speaking of "an hour is coming" but refers to the persecution his disciples would experience.

⁴⁹Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 436. Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 373, notes, "To indicate both the time when this love will be shown and the quality of his loving, an expression with two meanings is used: 'to the end.'" The double meaning is also accepted by Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:550, who connects the phrase with Jesus' last words on the cross; Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 545n9, who translates it, "the full extent of his love"; Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 438, calling it "characteristic of John [to have] a double meaning in εἰς τέλος"; and Lincoln, *Gospel according to St. John*, 365.

⁵⁰Many scholars have noted the connection between the foot washing and the cross. See, e.g., Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 436; Ernst Haenchen, *John: A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Hermeneia, trans. Robert W. Funk (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 2:106; Lincoln, *Gospel according to St. John*, 364; J. B. Green, "Death of Jesus," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scott McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992): 162; Helge Kjaer Nielsen, "John's Understanding of the Death of Jesus," in *New Readings in John: Literary and Theological Perspectives, Essays from the Scandinavian Conference on the Fourth Gospel, Aarhus 1997*, ed. Johannes Nissen and Sigfred Pedersen (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999): 242. Barnabas Lindars, "The Passion in the Fourth Gospel," in *God's Christ and His People: Studies in Honour of Nils Alstrup Dahl*, ed. Jacob Jervell and Wayne A. Meeks (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977): 73; and Craig R. Koester, "Why was the Messiah Crucified? A Study of God, Jesus, Satan, and Human Agency in Johannine Theology," in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. G. van Belle (Leuven: University Press, 2007): 174.

Furthermore, John intends for the reader to see, not just the contrast between Jesus' actions and Satan's, but the irony that Jesus' actions will be accomplished through the actions of Satan. While Satan is portrayed as the architect behind Jesus' death, the reader of the Gospel also knows Jesus is the one ultimately in control of these events, a fact highlighted with the mention of his hour having come.⁵¹

The three references to "devil" in the FG are all situated in the context of earthly opposition to Jesus—whether from Judas or the Jews. Furthermore, the devil is explicitly shown to be the source of that opposition, so the conflict between Jesus and his opponents is truly cosmic in that it comes from the devil.

Satan—13:27

In addition to "the devil," this evil one is known by other names as well. The most common in the Gospels is "Satan," although only used once in the FG. "Satan" (σατανᾶς) and "the Devil" (διάβολος) are used interchangeably in all the Gospels with no distinct alteration in meaning.⁵²

Following a section transition (13:1-3), the episode of Jesus washing the disciples' feet (13:4-11), and his teaching concerning this act (13:12-20), Jesus and his disciples share in a meal. During this supper, Jesus comments, "Truly, truly, I say to you,

⁵¹Lincoln, *Gospel according to St. John*, 366, and, surprisingly, Boyd, *God at War*, 255-56, make similar statements.

John 13:2 contains an interesting textual variant. In various sources, "Judas" occurs either in the nominative (Ἰούδας) or the genitive (Ἰούδα). Also the name phrase occurs immediately after "heart" (καρδίαν) or later in the sentence. The easiest reading takes the genitive of Judas immediately following "heart." This gives a possessive sense: "The devil put into Judas' heart . . ." However, the harder reading is more likely and was chosen by the UBS committee (Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1975], 239), yielding a literal reading: "the devil already having put into the heart that Judas . . . should betray him." This reading, if it is original, highlights the satanic nature of the deed, allowing for Satan to put into his own heart the betrayal of Jesus. Regardless of which reading is preferred, the text is clear: Satan, using Judas, plots to kill Jesus. Note also the perfect participle, βεβληκότος, from βάλλω, "to cast or throw," perhaps emphasizing the force of the action. Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12-21*, *The New American Commentary*, vol. 25b (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 78, notes the NIV's "prompted" is weak.

⁵²Riley, "Devil," 470; Twelftree, "Spiritual Powers," 798.

that one of you will betray Me” (13:21). Jesus, shortly thereafter, offers Judas a dipped morsel. “And after the morsel, Satan then entered into him” (13:27).⁵³

In spite of no recorded exorcisms and no actual demon possessions in the FG, the author explicitly states that Satan *himself* entered Judas. This fact further illustrates the FG’s emphasis on the role of Satan instead of that of demons—a nuance which enhances rather than diminishes his theology of cosmic conflict.⁵⁴ Specifically, this passage, again, illustrates the degree to which Satan is involved in orchestrating and fulfilling the plot to kill Jesus. The author of the FG continues to describe spiritual warfare as being between Jesus and Judas on the ground, but ultimately between Jesus and Satan.⁵⁵ John 13:21-30 also demonstrates the author’s conviction that Jesus continued to maintain sovereign control at every point in the conflict. Even when Judas, now possessed by Satan, leaves, Jesus instructs him, “What you do, do quickly” (13:27). In this, Jesus is shown, again, to be aware of when his “hour” is and directing events to cause it to occur on the Father’s timetable.⁵⁶

⁵³The exact meaning of what occurs here is discussed in detail in chap. 4, pp. 152-55, when Jesus is discussed in relation to Judas.

⁵⁴So also Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 383, who states, “Judas is now part of a satanic program diametrically opposed to the program of God revealed in Jesus.” On the uniqueness of this possession compared to demon possession in the Synoptics, see Boyd, *God at War*, 227, especially 227n33.

⁵⁵Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 207, comments, “The interactions between Jesus and Judas at the supper constitute a preliminary skirmish in this cosmic battle, in which the power of God will rout the forces of Satan.” Also Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 482, who notes Satan’s possession of Judas has “the effect of taking the act out of the sphere of human, psychologically-motivated action. It is not a man who is acting here, but Satan himself, the antagonist of God and the Revealer.”

⁵⁶So also Lincoln, *Gospel according to St. John*, 379; Hendriksen, *Gospel according to John*, 2:248; and Page, *Powers of Evil*, 128. Koester, *Symbolism*, 207, notes it was only when Jesus gave Judas leave that he rose from the table and left.

It is not insignificant that in the FG Jesus takes the initiative and dips and offers the morsel to Judas, thus identifying him as the betrayer. In the Synoptics, in contrast, they dip in the bowl together (Mark 14:20, Matt 26:23). So also Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 752.

**The Ruler of this World—
12:31; 14:30; 16:11**

The next descriptor used by the Fourth Evangelist to describe Jesus' main antagonist is "ruler of this world." While the author uses this phrase to refer to Satan three times in the FG, it is absent in the OT, and similar phrases in rabbinic times refer to God, not Satan.⁵⁷ However, comparable phrases are not all together absent from Jewish writings.⁵⁸ Some have connected this title with "the Angel of Darkness" or "Belial" of the Qumran texts,⁵⁹ but significant differences exist. Thus, one cannot be certain of John's source for the phrase.

Outside these three references, the only other use in the FG is the plural form of the word referring to the Jewish religious leaders (3:1; 7:26, 48; 12:42).⁶⁰ "Ruler" translates the Greek phrase, ὁ ἄρχων. As a participle of ἄρχω ("to rule"), it generally connotes authority and charge over individuals or situations.⁶¹

The various ways the author of the FG uses "world" will be examined in detail

⁵⁷Note, e.g., the "prince of spirits" in *Jubilees* 10:8; 11:5ff.; and the "prince of evil" and the "ruler of this world" in the *Ascension of Isaiah* 2:4.

⁵⁸Borchert, *John 12-21*, 58, notes rabbis used עֶרְוֵל הָעוֹלָם ("Eternal Prince of the World") in referring to God.

⁵⁹Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 433; Borchert, *John 12-21*, 58; and Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:468, who references Raymond Brown, "The Qumran Scrolls and the Johannine Gospels and Epistles," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 17 (1955): 409-11, which was later revised and reprinted in Krister Stendahl and James H. Charlesworth, eds., *Scrolls and the New Testament* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 183-207.

⁶⁰Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:985, comments on the possible intentional link between the ruler of this world and the rulers of the Jews, "A connection is not necessary, but certainly possible." Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 355, also makes this connection.

⁶¹See also BDAG, s.v. "ἄρχω"; Coetzee, "Christ and the Prince," 106. Clinton E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul's Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 81, notes the secular use of the word normally described "the highest official in a city or a region in the Greco-Roman world." Page, *Powers of Evil*, 129n455, is correct to discount the origin of this title for Satan as stemming from his oversight over the earth prior to the fall.

Satan's authority is seen in other parts of the NT. In the Synoptics, when he offers Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, Jesus does not deny that as a possibility. Paul also describes him as "the god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4) and "the ruler of the power of the air" (Eph 2:2). Boyd, *God at War*, 181; Page, *Powers of Evil*, 184.

below. I will argue the primary use of *κόσμος* describes “the world” as fallen humanity in opposition to God. Therefore, for the author of the FG, “the prince of this world” denotes the leader, the “chief”⁶² of those who oppose God. Recker has suggested that this place of authority was not given to the devil. Rather, by means of their sin and siding with his agenda, humans have made Satan the “ruler of this world.”⁶³

Having arrived at a general understanding of the meaning of the title, let us consider it in each of the three contexts in which it is used.

John 12:31. Following the climactic announcement in 12:23, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified,” Jesus teaches about his coming death. He speaks of the falling and dying of a grain of wheat which then produces much fruit and of losing one’s life. His soul having become troubled, he prays to the Father, who replies audibly from heaven. Jesus responds, “Now judgment is come upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out.”

As previously noted, no demons are cast out in the FG. However, in this verse, in strong, almost redundant language,⁶⁴ we see Satan himself being “exorcised.”⁶⁵ In typical Johannine irony, the one who was attempting to remove Jesus from the world and to cast out his followers from the synagogue (cf. 9:34, where the same verb is used) is

⁶²Jacob A. Loewen, “The ‘World’ in John’s Gospel through West African Eyes,” *The Bible Translator*, 34, no. 4 (1983): 411, translates *ὁ ἀρχων* as “chief” in his West African context and 12:31, where the prince of this world is cast out, is rendered, “I have chased away their chief.”

⁶³Robert Richard Recker, “Satan: In Power or Dethroned?” *Calvin Theological Journal* 6 (1971): 141-42.

⁶⁴*ἐκβληθήσεται ἔξω*. So also Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 695.

⁶⁵Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 196, calls this “the grand cosmic exorcism” and the “climax” of the battle with Satan that pervaded the ministry of Jesus. Koester, *Symbolism*, 206, notes, “The one ‘exorcism’ in John’s Gospel is the crucifixion itself.” Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:880, concurs and makes a strong statement highlighting the cosmic conflict of the FG, “‘Casting out’ the ruler moves the Johannine Jesus far beyond the level of mere individual earthly exorcisms (as in the Synoptics) to the defeat of Satan in the heavenly realm (Rev. 12:9-10).”

himself “cast out.”⁶⁶ “Cast out” (ἐκβληθήσεται) is a future passive verb, allowing for a time in between this verse and the actual removal of Satan in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Yet, this removal does not likely mean an immediate geographical relocation from the physical world. In fact, Jesus later prays that the Father would keep his disciples (who are in the world) safe from the evil one (17:15) and John writes years later, “the whole world [still] lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). Rather, Satan will be removed from his position of authority,⁶⁷ but will still exercise some degree of power in this world.⁶⁸ But, even this “residual power . . . is further curtailed by the Holy Spirit, the Counselor” (16:11).⁶⁹

The nature of this removal is further revealed in verse 32. The “lifting up” of Jesus stands opposite the “casting out” of the ruler of this world. Clearly, the cross is in view and stands as the counterpart to the dethronement of Satan.⁷⁰

John 14:30. In the midst of Jesus’ Farewell Discourse, he promises to send

⁶⁶Lincoln, *Gospel according to St. John*, 352.

⁶⁷So also Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 433; and Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 427. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 213, connects this action with Satan falling from heaven in Luke 10:18 and sees a connection here with Satan’s ejection from heaven in Rev 12. So also Page, *Powers of Evil*, 130, 214-15; and Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:879, stating that Revelation was likely circulating at the same time in the same group as the FG.

⁶⁸So also C. K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1966), 52, “The devil is defeated, but he is not destroyed”; Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:706, “Thus while defeated, the Prince of this world keeps power over his own domain (see Eph 2:2, 6:12).” Brown supports this position by noting that in Revelation while Satan’s ejection from heaven and Jesus’ exaltation are described in Rev 5:7-12, the binding of Satan (10:2) and his ultimate casting into the lake of fire (20:10) are still future events (714).

⁶⁹Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 443. Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 696n47, points out that not until 16:11 is Satan finally judged (a perfect passive) and this is in the context of the future work of the Holy Spirit.

⁷⁰Beasley-Murray, *John*, 282, says, “The ejection of [Satan] from his vaunted place of rule took place as the Son of Man was installed by God as Lord of creation and Mediator of the saving sovereignty of God to the world.” Contra Hendriksen, *Gospel according to John*, 2:202, who goes so far as to say, “The drawing of all men to Christ is the casting out of the devil.” Emphasis added. He argues the coming of the Greeks (12:20-21) indicates that Satan is losing the nations over which he previously had control.

The cross as the primary weapon of cosmic conflict is discussed in chap. 6, pp. 213-18.

the Spirit and teaches his disciples the role of the Spirit. After commenting on his departure, Jesus says, “I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.”

In actuality, those “coming” are the mob who will meet him in the garden to arrest him. They are Judas, the Roman cohort, the officers from the chief priests, and the Pharisees (18:3). However, from Jesus’ cosmic perspective, the one coming is the mastermind behind the plot to kill him—the ruler of this world. The author of the FG continues to emphasize the actions of Satan in ordering the steps that lead to Jesus’ death instead of those of the human agents he uses.⁷¹

The phrase, “he has nothing in Me,” seems to be based on a Hebrew idiom which denotes the absence of a legal claim on someone.⁷² While it would *appear* that Satan does have something on Jesus, that he does have some power over him that he will use to put him to death, in reality, Jesus’ death is the voluntary result of his love for the Father (14:31).⁷³

John 16:11. Continuing his Farewell Discourse, Jesus predicts the persecution to come upon his disciples (16:1-4) and further comments on his departure and the presence and role of the Holy Spirit (16:5-16). Within these comments, Jesus notes when “the Helper” (16:7) comes, he will convict the world concerning judgment “because the ruler of this world has been judged” (16:11).

⁷¹So also Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 508; Page, *Powers of Evil*, 129; Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 585; and Lincoln, *Gospel according to St. John*, 398, who notes this “is a further reference to the cosmic backdrop of the events” of Jesus’ passion. Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 630, adds Jesus does not refer to his human persecutors, “but to the power that is behind them.” Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 469, reads this as additional support that “the passion itself may be regarded as a conflict between Jesus and Satan.”

⁷²Heb. אֵין בְּיָדוֹ. Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 485; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 263; Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:985.

⁷³Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 411.

The legal language used in the previous reference is employed again here. Much discussion exists about the role of the Holy Spirit and the meaning of “convict . . . concerning judgment.”⁷⁴ While such discussion is a worthwhile endeavor, the topic at hand focuses on the judgment on the world, which comes as a result of the judgment passed on its ruler. Since the ruler has been judged, those who follow the ruler fall under the same judgment.⁷⁵

Summary. The most obvious connection between these three passages is the victory that Jesus has over Satan—Satan “shall be cast out,” “has nothing in [Jesus],” and “has been judged.” The tenses of the verbs used also inform the reader as to the nature of the conflict between Jesus and the ruler of the world. In 12:31, the future tense (“will be cast out”) points toward and emphasizes the future cross event as the means by which the dethronement will take place. In 14:30, the present tense (“is coming”) references the actual events of the betrayal which are occurring as Jesus is speaking. This serves to highlight Satan’s personal role in Jesus’ betrayal. Lastly, in 16:11, the perfect tense (“has been judged,” *κέκριται*) communicates a past action with continuing results. Compare this with the same verb is used in 3:18. Both the ruler of this world (16:11) and “he who does not believe” (3:18) have been judged already. That is, both currently stand condemned, having been condemned in the past. Regarding Satan, this tense emphasizes his judged/condemned state and that the victory Christ will achieve over him was assured

⁷⁴For a brief discussion of the various ways “judgment” is used in the FG, see Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 503. For a discussion of the major positions regarding “convict,” see D. A. Carson, “The Function of the Paraclete in John 16:7-11,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98 (1979): 547-66.

⁷⁵“Having been counsel for the disciples’ defence in human lawsuits, the Paraclete now becomes the plaintiff in God’s judgment against the world.” Schnackenburg, *Gospel according to St. John*, 3:143. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 282, extrapolates warrant for this judgment on the world effectively: “Its submission to the ‘prince of this world’ led not only to its rejection of the Son of God, but to becoming the tool of its prince to his murder; its continued failure to acknowledge Jesus as the rightful Lord of the world, installed by God, implicates it in the judgment that took place in the cross and resurrection of Jesus.”

even before the cross event.⁷⁶

In each occurrence of “ruler” as a title for Satan, the author of the FG connects it with the death of Jesus, thereby emphasizing Jesus’ death as the means by which this ruler will be dethroned.⁷⁷ As such, this paper will return to these passages in chapter 6 when the death of Jesus is considered as the primary weapon of cosmic conflict in the FG.⁷⁸

The Evil One—17:15

The fifth and final phrase the author of the FG uses to describe the devil is found in the context of Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer. Jesus, having prayed for himself, continues by praying for his disciples. Noting that he is leaving the world but the disciples are remaining, Jesus asks the Father to “keep them in [His] name” (17:11). Jesus had already been keeping them in the name the Father had given him and had been successfully guarding them (17:12). Now Jesus continues his request in 17:15—“keep them from the evil one.”

This genitive phrase, ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ, could be either masculine or neuter. If masculine, the phrase takes on a personal connotation, “the Evil One,” obviously referring to Satan himself. However, if it is neuter, an impersonal connotation is best—“evil” in general. The masculine is accepted by the vast majority of scholars,⁷⁹ qualifying

⁷⁶Contra Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 835, who, though he notes the 3:18 reference and agrees the tense emphasizes the sure nature of Jesus’ victory, maintains the past time is used because Jesus is speaking from “the future perspective of the [Holy Spirit]” rather than the perspective of John’s audience as Page, *Powers of Evil*, 130, believes.

⁷⁷Twelftree, “Spiritual Powers,” 798; Graham Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 222; Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 59, also notes the parallel thought in Col 2:13-15, that the cross is the means by which God “disarmed the rulers and authorities.”

⁷⁸The role of the Spirit in 16:11 and the place of “the world” in each of the three references will also be considered in their respective sections below.

⁷⁹See, e.g., BDAG, s.v. “πονηρός”; Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 510; Bruce, *Gospel and Epistles of John*, 1:333; Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 761; Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 872;

this as a personal reference to the devil to be discussed here.

While this reference does not disclose large amounts of additional information regarding the author of the FG's understanding of Satan, one significant implication is obvious—Satan will continue to have influence in this world even after Jesus' death.⁸⁰ Furthermore, what is shown here is consistent with information previously discovered. That is, a cosmic conflict exists in which Jesus and Satan actively participate.

Thief—10:10

One other possible reference to Satan in the FG comes in John 10. In 10:1, Jesus describes one who does not enter by the door of the fold as “a thief and a robber.” After describing himself as the shepherd whose voice the sheep know, he acknowledges that any other is a “stranger” who the sheep will not follow. Jesus continues by describing “all who came before me” as “thieves and robbers” whom the sheep did not heed, but himself as the door through which any may enter and be saved. Verse 10 extends the contrast of 10:1-9, describing the thief who “comes only to steal, kill, and destroy” and describing Jesus as having come “that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” In the next verses, Jesus contrasts himself with a hired hand who flees when a wolf approaches. Jesus, instead, lays down his life for the sheep.

The question is, “To whom do these refer—the thief and robber, the stranger, thieves and robbers (plural) who came before Jesus, the hired hand, and the wolf?”

Borchert, *John 12-21*, 200; Lincoln, *Gospel according to St. John*, 437, who also uses conflict language, describing this phrase to be a reference “to the personification of cosmic evil” and mentions “two antithetical spheres of power operative in the world”; Page, *Powers of Evil*, 112-13, who assumes the personal meaning and cites it as support for a personal meaning in Matt 6:13; Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 471, who also sees a reference to Satan in “the son of perdition” (17:12) as additional support; Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 646, who adds “from the evil one” parallels “in Christ” (16:33, 1 John 5:20) to support the personal view; and Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:1059, who also cites *Jubilees* 50:5 which contains a substantive, personal use of “evil.” See Hendriksen, *Gospel according to John*, 2:360, for a brief list of secondary arguments for the masculine. While Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 527, holds the personal view, he notes the impersonal in *Didache* 10:5 as contra evidence. Many scholars also note the numerous uses of “evil” in 1 John (2:13, 14; 3:12; 5:18, 19) as additional support for a personal, substantive use here.

⁸⁰Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 196; Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 510. This will be further discussed in the sections on “Jesus” and “The Disciples” below.

Scholars suggest a variety of referents: false messiahs,⁸¹ the evil political and religious leaders of the intertestamental period,⁸² and antichrists in the Johannine community.⁸³ However, the majority of scholars look within the FG itself for a referent and identify the Jewish leaders—Pharisees, high priests, and/or Saducees.⁸⁴ Reinhartz provides a detailed survey of the issue and insightfully points out that Jewish leaders are a logical choice, especially in light of the relationship between chapters 9 and 10. In chapter 9, Jesus is contrasted with the Jews, so the contrast in the beginning of chapter 10 is a rational parallel. However, she goes on to point out difficulties with this connection. First, life and death typically refer to spiritual life and death, belief and disbelief in Jesus. While the Jews are shown to be in opposition to Jesus and his disciples, there is little emphasis in the FG on the eternal death that results from their actions. Second, the author portrays the Jews in the FG primarily as “failed sheep.” That is, they are Jesus’ own who refuse to believe rather than an organized body seeking to deceive. Third, passages such as 11:48-50 and 12:19 portray the Jews as wronged religious leaders who have had their “sheep” stolen by Jesus. In this case, Jesus more appropriately fits the role of thief.⁸⁵

In contrast to the Jewish leaders, Satan better fits the role of thief. The association between Satan and murder in 8:44 parallels that of the thief in John 10. The thief in John 10 begins his actions from outside the sheepfold and is distinguished from the sheep themselves. This may not be said of the Jewish leadership but is true of Satan.

⁸¹Julius Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Johannis* (Berlin: George Reimer, 1908), 47; J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), 2:346.

⁸²T. Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Johannes Ausgelegt* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1908), 444.

⁸³Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 368.

⁸⁴See, e.g., Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 86-98; Haenchen, *John*, 2:47; and Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:392.

⁸⁵Adele Reinhartz, *The Word in the World: The Cosmological Tale in the Fourth Gospel*, The Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series, no. 45 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 85-91.

Similarly, Satan has entered the sheepfold by “another way” and can rightly be said to have “come [into the world] before” Jesus in one sense.⁸⁶

An additional circumstantial argument may be made by looking at the other references to Satan. In each case, a direct or indirect reference to Jesus’ death can be found. In 6:70, Jesus compares Judas to the devil because he will betray him. The reader knows this betrayal will result in Jesus’ death. To be more direct, two verses later, John notes the Jews are seeking to kill Jesus (7:1). In 8:40, Jesus states the Jews are seeking to kill him. Then Jesus tells the Jews they are of their father the devil who was a murderer from the beginning (8:44), after which they do pick up stones to kill him (8:59). In 13:2, the devil is referenced as having put into Judas’ heart to betray Jesus. Again betrayal implies death, but additional references to death in this passage may include Jesus having “loved them to the end” and the symbolic nature of the washing of the disciples feet.

Later in the same chapter (13:27) Satan enters into Judas and Judas leaves to betray Jesus. In the next paragraph, Jesus states, “Now is the Son of Man glorified . . . I am with you a little while longer . . . where I go you cannot follow now” (10:31, 33, 36). As noted earlier, all the references to the “ruler of this world” show how Jesus’ death accomplishes his defeat. Similarly, in John 10, the text mentions the death of Jesus in the same context as “the thief.” While “the thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy” (10:10), Jesus comes to give life. In the next verse, this life is made possible because “the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep” (10:11). This sacrificial death is reiterated three more times in 10:15, 17, and 18. Again, while a circumstantial argument, it nonetheless is congruent with other references to see the thief as Satan himself.

Also, the author of the FG has portrayed all of Jesus’ opposition as originating from Satan himself. A nonspecific reference to one opponent (“the thief”), described in such clear contrasting terms with Jesus by Jesus himself, points to Satan as the referent.

⁸⁶Ibid., 92.

If so, then the juxtaposition of the primary protagonist and primary antagonist in this context highlights the high-stakes battle that is occurring which will result in the death of Jesus and the defeat of Satan. If not, then the case for a thoroughly developed theology of cosmic conflict in the FG is not weakened. Rather, if another referent is intended, the author has already shown that Satan is behind all other opponents, so the conflict is cosmic nonetheless.

Placement of References

Even though the FG does not refer to Satan more often than the Synoptics,⁸⁷ the references to Satan are spaced throughout the Gospel more so than in the Synoptics.⁸⁸ The effect is to remind the readers regularly of the opposition of Satan throughout the ministry of Jesus.

Additionally, the references to Satan occur at significant moments in the plot of the FG.⁸⁹ For example, in 6:70, speaking of Judas, Jesus says, “one of you is [the] devil.” This foreshadowing of a demonic betrayal immediately follows Peter’s confession, “We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God” and occurs earlier than in any of the other Gospels. Also, in 8:44, after demonstrating the Jews had rejected him, his teachings, and his Father, Jesus builds to a climactic revelation in which he reveals the true, spiritual paternity of his opponents, “the Jews.” He says, “You are of your father the devil!” The reference to Satan in 12:31, “*Now* judgment is upon the world, *now* the ruler of this world shall be cast out”

⁸⁷Satan is referred to by his various names 18 times in Matthew, 8 times in Mark, 14 times in Luke, and 8 times in John.

⁸⁸Coetzee, “Christ and the Prince,” 106. In Matthew, references to Satan occur in 4:5, 8, 10, 11; 9:34; 12:24, 26; 13:19, 38, 39; 16:23; 25:41. In Mark, they occur in 1:13; 3:22, 23, 26; 4:15; 8:33. In Luke, they occur in 4:2, 3, 6, 13; 8:12; 10:18; 11:15, 18; 13:16; 22:3. In John, Satan is referenced in 6:70; 8:44; 10:10; 12:31; 13:2, 27; 14:30; 16:11; 17:15.

⁸⁹I am indebted to Coetzee, “Christ and the Prince,” 106, for this idea, but he did not develop it as I have done here.

(emphasis added), follows Jesus' statement that his hour has finally come (12:23), a time marker the reader has been waiting for since 2:4. The events of the betrayal soon follow as the Gospel transitions from "the Book of Signs" to "the Book of Glory." In this important transitional paragraph, the devil has already put into Judas' heart to betray Jesus (13:2). At the final meal of fellowship Jesus shares with his disciples, Satan enters Judas. The final explicit reference to Satan comes in the midst of the High Priestly Prayer as Jesus asks the Father to protect his disciples from the evil one (17:15).

Consequently, the author chooses to use his limited references to Satan at key points in his narrative and in each case highlights Satan's work against God and his people. In so doing, the thesis of this paper that the FG does have a well-developed theology of spiritual warfare is advanced.

Judas Iscariot

Having considered the spiritual antagonists in the cosmic conflict of the FG, focus now turns to the people involved in the fight, and Judas⁹⁰ is the primary human agent in the cosmic conflict between Jesus and Satan.⁹¹ This, of course, is as a result of his betrayal of Jesus. The manner in which the author of the FG presents the character and actions of Judas consistently aligns him on the side of evil.

⁹⁰For a discussion of the various theories on his name and place of origin, see Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 345-46n167.

⁹¹Though I disagree with Pagels, *Origin of Satan*, 105, in that she classifies Satan as a "mythological figure," she is correct in noting "John, like the other gospels, associates the mythological figure of Satan with specific human opposition," of which she includes Judas and the Jews. Again, she erroneously discounts the reality of the devil, but identifies the major human forces in the cosmic conflict, including Judas: "John dismisses the device of the devil as an independent supernatural character (if, indeed, he knew of it, as I suspect he did). Instead, as John tells the story, Satan, like God himself, appears incarnate, first in Judas Iscariot, then in the Jewish authorities, as they mount opposition to Jesus, and finally in those John calls the 'Jews'" (111). Edward W. Klink, III, "Light of the World: Cosmology and the Johannine Literature," in *Cosmology and New Testament Theology*, ed. Jonathan T. Pennington and Sean M. McDonough (London: T. & T. Clark, 2008): 86, concurs, "rather than the opponents being [merely] human forces, John reveals that the battle involves cosmic forces—the devil/Satan (13:1-3, 27)" who battle behind the scenes while Judas and others are front stage.

Judas' Prominence in the FG

Every time the NT mentions Judas, he is associated with his betrayal of Jesus, and the FG is no exception.⁹² The majority of the time Judas is explicitly labeled as the betrayer. On the rare occasions when a label is absent, Judas is actively participating in the betrayal, and a label would be redundant. The FG, however, mentions him more often than in the Synoptics.⁹³ Furthermore, the FG introduces him earlier in the narrative than do the Synoptics.⁹⁴ For example, in the Synoptics, Judas is only mentioned in the lists of the disciples before we see him in the act of betrayal. In contrast, in the FG we see Judas on three separate occasions prior to his actual betrayal (6:70-71, 12:4-6, and mentioned in 13:1-11). As usual, in each case he is described as the future betrayer of Jesus. Furthermore, John's account of Judas' betrayal, while lacking in several details (see below), is still the most developed of all the Gospels.⁹⁵ Thus when compared with the Synoptics, the FG presents an increased presence of Jesus' betrayer (earlier and more often) and a lengthened discussion of that betrayal. Surely this escalation informs the author's emphasis on the cosmic conflict which found its spearhead in the betrayal.⁹⁶

Judas as an Instrument of Satan in the FG

Even though Judas and his betrayal of the Lord are very prominent in the FG,

⁹²The descriptors consistently used for Judas relating to his betrayal are an example of *antonomasia*, a form of periphrasis (Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:695).

⁹³He is mentioned 5 times in Matthew, 3 times in Mark, 4 times in Luke, and 8 times in John.

⁹⁴Borchert, *John 12-21*, 217.

⁹⁵So also D. J. Williams, "Judas Iscariot," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992): 407.

⁹⁶Judas' prominence has mistakenly led Lyle Eslinger, "Judas Game: The Biology of Combat in the Gospel of John," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 77 (2000): 69, to the conclusion that John has *replaced* Satan with Judas in the FG. He believes John has chosen "to incarnate the Devil, defanged and declawed. Hidden behind Judas and later inside him, the Devil is humanized—a perfect complement to the 'Word become flesh' (John 1:14)." While the comparison of Jesus' incarnation with Judas' possession is an interesting one, Eslinger has, nonetheless, overlooked the prominent role of Satan in the FG, especially as "ruler of this world."

the author, in very clear terms, emphasizes that Satan is the mastermind behind the betrayal—Judas is merely his tool.⁹⁷ The first connection between the two is found in 6:69-70. Jesus states, “one of you is [the] devil” and the author comments that Jesus is referring to Judas. This first reference to the devil in the Gospel compares Judas to the devil himself and seems to have replaced Jesus’ similar designation of Peter in the Synoptics (Matt 16:23, Mark 8:33).⁹⁸ While Peter is rebuked for attempting to forestall Jesus’ crucifixion, Judas is named the facilitator of it. Each is working against the purposes of God—Judas from the individual, human perspective and Peter from the sovereign, cosmic perspective. Barrett goes so far as to suggest the author of the FG is “intentionally correcting Mark” by showing that “the real devil is not Peter but Judas.”⁹⁹ While the intentionality on the part of the author of the FG is speculation, the absence of Peter’s rebuke and the presence of this similar charge against Judas is obvious and recognized by most scholars. For John’s readers, especially in light of the end result of both men’s actions, the implicit contrast between the two may serve to accentuate the severity of Judas’ actions. Regardless, the FG clearly connects Judas’ actions with Satan.

Satan’s influence and ultimate control over Judas is made explicit in 13:2, 27.

⁹⁷Even though Judas is portrayed as a tool of Satan, he is by no means exonerated from his crimes. On the contrary, his culpability is emphasized by every reference to him as the one who betrayed Jesus. See also Matt 26:24; Mark 14:21; Luke 22:22.

Also, other arguments have been made regarding Judas’ motives for betrayal including greed and unmet expectations in Jesus as the Messiah. One need not choose one of these over satanic influence. While one operates at the human level (greed or disillusionment), the other fully functions at the cosmic level (Satan’s directing of the betrayal).

⁹⁸So also Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 308; Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 276; Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:298; Haenchen, *John*, 1:308; and Beasley-Murray, *John*, 97. Also Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 304, who, when arguing for “the devil” rather than “a devil” in John 6:70, cites Mark 8:33 where Peter is addressed as Satan as support. The context is additionally supportive—Peter being characterized as “Satan” in the Synoptics follows Peter’s confession of Jesus’ messiahship; Judas being characterized as “devil” in the FG follows Peter’s confession as well.

⁹⁹Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 308. Interestingly, Judas is called “devil” because he is working with him to send Jesus to the cross, and Peter is called “Satan” because he is working to stop it. Herein lies a difficulty answered only by alternately considering both God’s sovereign purpose and human culpability.

The author introduces the scene in the Upper Room with the editorial comment, “during supper, *the devil* having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him,”¹⁰⁰ a comment without parallel in the Synoptics. He also adds, “After [receiving] the morsel, Satan then entered into him” (13:27),¹⁰¹ a statement paralleled only in Luke 22:3. For the author of the FG, Judas’ role in the betrayal of Jesus is unmistakably cosmic conflict.¹⁰²

One additional possible reference to Judas in the FG occurs in 17:12. In the context of Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer to the Father on behalf of his disciples, Jesus mentions “the son of perdition” (ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας). After being with the ones whom the Father had given him out of the world (17:6), Jesus kept and guarded them such that “not one of them perished” (17:12). The lone exception is “the son of perdition.” The phrase itself is likely a Semitism and refers to the “one who belongs to the realm of

¹⁰⁰John 13:2. Emphasis added. Textual variants, including word order and case endings, on the phrase, “Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon,” present some difficulty (Metzger, *Commentary*, 239-40). For a discussion of the arguments and implications, see, e.g., Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:550; Borchert, *John 12-21*, 78; Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 439; Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 449; and Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 732n13. In the end, as with most variants, very little theological significance is attached to one reading over the other.

¹⁰¹Boyd, *God at War*, 227, 374n33, rightly notes Satan’s possession of Judas is entirely different from others who were possessed by demons in the Synoptics. As to why, he suggests the following: “Unlike depictions of demonization in the Synoptics, this case of demonization is by Satan, not demons, and it is portrayed as a moral issue. That is, Judas, unlike other demonized people, is portrayed as being himself evil (John 17:12). Also unlike other cases of demonization, this case of Satanic possession leads to no abnormal animal-like behavior: it simply leads to evil action. The ‘prince of demons,’ it seems, is far more sophisticated than the demons he rules over, which perhaps also explains why Jesus engages in a prolonged intelligent conversation with Satan in the Gospels (Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13), while his conversations with demons are only to get information and to then command them to leave.” So also J. Ramsey Michaels, “Jesus and the Unclean Spirits,” in *Demon Possession: A Medical, Historical, Anthropological and Theological Symposium*, ed. J. W. Montgomery (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1976): 56; and Page, *Powers of Evil*, 127-28.

¹⁰²Contra Eslinger, “Judas Game,” 66. He argues humanity needs a story of one god versus another god. Thus, Satan is no real entity in the FG and in the evolutionary-required conflict between good and evil, “the demythologizing Gospel of John” presents “the heavenly battle [as] historicized in the form of Jesus versus Judas.” Eslinger is correct to note the central human character in the conflict is Judas, but the author of the FG does not “demythologize” the combat by taking it out of the cosmos. Rather he clearly notes how the earthly conflict is indicative of and integral to a cosmic conflict between God and Satan.

damnation and is destined to final destruction.”¹⁰³ The same phrase is used in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 as an appositive to “the man of lawlessness,” referring to the antichrist who will appear prior to the return of Christ. Judas is not explicitly named in 17:12 as the son of perdition, but the majority of scholars assume him to be the referent.¹⁰⁴ Thus, the author of the FG describes Judas using an eschatological term. Such strong language heightens the satanic influence exerted on Judas and his compliance with it.

Additional Details Regarding Judas

Other, less overt details in John’s portrayal of the actions of Judas seem to indicate further the satanic nature of the betrayal. First, the author emphasizes the heinousness of Judas’ actions.¹⁰⁵ In 6:70-71, for example, Jesus is said to have chosen the twelve. Note the emphatic use of the pronouns and their juxtaposition: Οὐκ ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς τοὺς δώδεκα ἐξελεξάμην. Additionally, the following καὶ is a contrastive conjunction¹⁰⁶— “and yet one of you is a devil.” The next verse repeats the idea of the twelve, describing

¹⁰³Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:760. So also BDAG, s.v. “ἀπώλεια.”

¹⁰⁴See, e.g., Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:1058-59; Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 869-70; and Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:760. Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 470, states, “There is almost universal identification between Judas and the son of perdition,” however, he personally believes “this expression must be given the meaning it has in the only other place it appears in the NT: Satan” (467). This is difficult to harmonize with the rest of John 17. Jesus is referring to those men (17:6) given to him by the Father, whom he kept and guarded and did not allow to perish. Surely Satan was not among this group. Moloney denies the lostness of Judas on account of Jesus’ benevolent actions toward him (13:1-7, 21-38). Yet, Judas rejects those actions, remains unclean, and goes out into darkness.

¹⁰⁵However, Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 513, rightly notes none of the Evangelists “indulges in invective” (346) or “launch out on a tirade against the traitor” (513). Their restraint is obvious, allowing the reader to understand for himself the seriousness of Judas’ actions. Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 429, reminds that the Evangelists’ habit of calling Judas the betrayer is not due to their knowledge at the time of his action but because of “the shocking force of their hindsight. It is as if they cannot recollect anything he said and did without also remembering that he was ultimately the one who betrayed the Lord of Glory for thirty pieces of silver.” If Carson is right, and surely he is, the repetitive nature of tagging Judas the betrayer is also indicative of the heinousness of his crime.

¹⁰⁶So also Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 307; and Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 417. Compare Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 671, and BDF, sec. 442[1]. See also English translations. The HCSB, NIV, NRSV, and NASB use “yet.” The NLT and NCV use the similar “but.”

Judas as “one of the twelve.”¹⁰⁷ As such, he is among those closest to Jesus, privy to more time and teachings than almost any other follower.¹⁰⁸ His knowledge of Jesus’ location in the garden in John 18 further indicates his close relationship with Jesus.¹⁰⁹

Ultimately Judas’ final choice to betray Jesus comes in 13:27, after Jesus has just washed his feet and offered him a morsel as a sign of friendship. Duke poignantly states, “Judas betrays Jesus on freshly washed feet and with the taste of sacrament still on his tongue.”¹¹⁰ The personal nature of Jesus’ actions¹¹¹ and the betrayal by one so close to him highlight the wickedness of such an act.

Additional details surrounding each appearance of Judas in the FG seem to further indicate his siding with the evil one. Notice the details of the context of the following passages. In 6:70-71, the announcement of Judas’ betrayal follows on the heels of Peter’s determination not to fall away and his grand confession of Jesus as “the Holy one of God” (6:68-69).¹¹² In 12:4-6, Judas is described as a greedy thief, while, in

¹⁰⁷Other than Thomas being “one of the twelve” (20:24), this is the only occurrence of this phrase in John, adding to its shocking force in the reader’s mind. Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 308; Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 417; and William M. Wright, IV, “Greco-Roman Character Typing and the Presentation of Judas in the Fourth Gospel,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 71, no. 3 (2009): 552-53, also see the emphasis on Judas as being part of the twelve.

Incidentally, in lists of the disciples, Judas is consistently listed last, in spite of serving as the treasurer of the group (John 12:6).

¹⁰⁸Hendriksen, *Gospel according to John*, 1:249, adds that “his devilish character” is further evidenced by the fact that while many desert Jesus, honestly disagreeing with him, Judas chooses to stay with Jesus, acting as if he were in total agreement with him. He, too, concurs that “one of the twelve” was “added to show the enormity of [Judas] sin.”

Wright, “Character Typing,” 553, notes, “From his first appearance in the Gospel, Judas is associated with unbelievers and is characterized quite negatively as the betrayer, an unfaithful disciple from Jesus’ inner circle and an associate of the devil.”

¹⁰⁹Wright, “Character Typing,” 558. Borchert, *John 12-21*, 217.

¹¹⁰Paul Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1995), 73.

¹¹¹This may also be emphasized in John 12:4, where Judas is described as “one of *His* disciples.” Emphasis added.

¹¹²Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:697, notes, “As Judas models apostasy throughout the Fourth Gospel (6:70-71; 12:4; 13:2, 26, 29; 18:3, 5), Peter sometimes models a level of discipleship in the context (although often deficient in understanding; 13:6-9, 24, 36-38; 18:10-18).”

the same room, Mary lavishes Jesus with perfume at great personal cost.¹¹³ In 13:1-11, Jesus is described as “having loved His own . . . to the end” (13:1) and humbly serving the disciples by washing their feet so they may be clean (13:3-10a). In 13:2, following the description of Jesus’ love, Judas is mentioned as the betrayer and as the one of the twelve whom the washing would not cleanse: “For this reason [Jesus] said, ‘Not all of you are clean.’”¹¹⁴ John’s depiction of Judas in the FG includes details that present him in contrast to genuine followers. As such, John consistently shows him to be on the side of the devil in the cosmic battle.

In addition to those details the author of the FG records, several details are absent, which further slants his presentation of Judas and emphasizes the cosmic nature of the conflict.

First, while all three Synoptics record Judas collaborating with the chief priests, arranging the details of a transaction in which he would hand Jesus over to them, including identifying him with a kiss,¹¹⁵ this information is entirely absent from the FG.

¹¹³Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 349; Hendriksen, *Gospel according to John*, 2:176; and Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:864, also note the poignant contrast.

Note, too, that in the Synoptic versions of this pericope, “*the disciples* were indignant” (Matt 26:8, emphasis added) and “*some* were indignantly remarking” (Mark 14:4, emphasis added) concerning the supposed waste. However, in the FG, Judas’ voice is the only voice heard. Borchert, *John 12-21*, 36, makes the point, “Judas was not an unfortunate, misguided person [as the disciples were in the Synoptic accounts]. He was inherently an evil thief who had no concern for the poor.” Tom Thatcher, “Jesus, Judas, and Peter: Character by Contrast in the Fourth Gospel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (1996): 448, notes, “Judas is the consummate hypocrite. By consistently telling the motives behind the apparently genuine actions of Judas, the narrator revealed a gross hypocrisy and indifference to Jesus and the needs of others.” Wright, “Character Typing,” 554, adds that the reference to him being a thief recalls the opponents of the Good Shepherd (10:10), further identifying him as an enemy of Jesus. Furthermore, Wright believes Jesus’ response to Judas in this pericope in the FG is “curt” and lacking the extended instruction given to the other disciples in Matt 26 and Mark 14. However, this may be due to other reasons and should be weighed as such.

¹¹⁴Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 550, notes οὐχὶ is strong and significant here. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 233, also notices the intentional contrast between Judas and Jesus at this point.

¹¹⁵Collaborating with the chief priests is seen in Matt 26:14-16; Mark 14:10-11; Luke 22:4-6. Identification with a kiss is seen in Matt 26:47-50; Mark 14:43-46; Luke 22:47-48. The absence of the kiss in the FG may also be due to John’s emphasis on Jesus’ initiative and control over the situation (Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 889) or to preserve Jesus’ dignity (D. Moody Smith, *John*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries [Nashville: Abingdon, 1999], 330).

The earthly details of the betrayal are minimized in the FG in an effort to raise the eyes of the reader to see the cosmic nature of the conflict. Similarly, though less significant, John does not record Judas' remorse and subsequent suicide found in Matthew 27:3-5 or the objection by Judas in the Upper Room, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" (Matt 26:25). Jesus' address of Judas in the garden as "friend" (Matt 26:50) is omitted, as well as the "woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed" (Matt 26:24, Mark 14:21, Luke 22:22). While these are admittedly arguments based on silence,¹¹⁶ and are therefore weaker, their cumulative effect is to minimize the human elements of the betrayal, giving way to the war being waged by cosmic forces behind the scenes.¹¹⁷

Lastly, having identified Jesus in the garden, "curiously . . . Judas fades from the scene."¹¹⁸ His role as betrayer having been completed, he is no longer needed by Satan. His absence from this point is consistent with John's emphasis on cosmic conflict. Judas is the primary human agent in the cosmic conflict because of his role in the betrayal of Jesus, but having completed that task, his contribution to the FG is done. The last appearance of Judas in the FG is described by an editorial comment in 18:5, "And Judas also who was betraying Him, was standing with them." In the middle of the arrest scene, John closes his narrative of Judas, presenting him "on one side of the confrontation and all the rest of the disciples on the other."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶These arguments are also based on the FG's dependence on the Synoptics, their sources, or oral tradition. While likely, this dependence has not been absolutely proven. Therefore, these arguments, though interesting and potentially beneficial, must be taken lightly.

¹¹⁷Though somewhat anecdotal but definitely conflict-oriented, Borchert, *John 12-21*, 217, describes the manner in which the author of the FG portrays the betrayal in the garden as "a clash between good and evil, where the traitor knows and violates the sacred place of retreat for his blameless victim. Judas' knowledge is clearly portrayed as the special knowledge of an insider who breaks a trust and shares that knowledge with the enemy."

¹¹⁸Williams, "Judas Iscariot," 408.

¹¹⁹Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 890.

The Jews

The designation, “the Jews,” is used a total of 15 times in the Synoptics, but 70 times in the FG. Clearly, for the author of the FG, this group is an important character in the plot of his work.¹²⁰

This section will: (1) identify this group who is in constant conflict with Jesus; (2) show that the author of the FG connects this group directly to Satan so that their conflict with Jesus is not merely differences of ideologies, but actual cosmic conflict; and (3) trace and describe the nature of that conflict through the narrative of the FG.

Identity in the FG

John’s use of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι has been a topic of much scholarly consideration.¹²¹ While some see John’s use to be uniform throughout the FG (though they disagree concerning to what it refers), others believe the author uses the term to refer to different groups at different times. The following is a brief summary of the most significant and plausible suggestions regarding the meaning of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in the FG.¹²²

Religious leaders. Several passages specifically support the idea that in the FG, “the Jews” refers to current religious leaders. For example, John 1:19 states, “the

¹²⁰For the seminal discussion of plot and the characterization of “the Jews” in the FG, see Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 84-98, 125-31.

¹²¹For a survey of the scholarship through 1982, see Urban C. von Wahlde, “The Johannine ‘Jews’: A Critical Survey,” *New Testament Studies* 28 (1982): 33-60, and since then, see Urban C. von Wahlde, “‘The Jews’ in the Gospel of John: Fifteen Years of Research (1983-1998),” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 76 (2000): 30-55. For more recent essays, see Judith M. Lieu, “Anti-Judaism in the Fourth Gospel: Explanation and Hermeneutics,” in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel*, ed. R. Bieringer, D. Pollefeyt, and F. Vandecasteele-Vanneuville (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001): 101-19. In that same work, see also Henk Jan de Jonge, “‘The Jews’ in the Gospel of John,” 121-40; Martinus C. de Boer, “The Depiction of ‘the Jews’ in John’s Gospel: Matters of Behavior and Identity,” 141-57; Raymond F. Collins, “Speaking of the Jews: ‘Jews’ in the Discourse Material of the Fourth Gospel,” 158-75; Adele Reinhartz, “‘Jews’ and Jews in the Fourth Gospel,” 213-30; and C. K. Barrett, “John and Judaism,” 231-46.

¹²²The following summary is based on the excellent introduction provided by Lars Kierspel, *The Jews and the World in the Fourth Gospel: Parallelism, Function, and Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 13-36.

Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, ‘Who are you?’” See also John 18:3, where “the officers from the chief priests and Pharisees” came to arrest Jesus, but later in verse 12 they are referred to as “the officers of the Jews.” Similarly, in 11:47-50, Caiaphas meets with “the chief priests and the Pharisees.” Recalling this meeting, the author of the FG later notes, “Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews . . .” (18:14). While outside of the FG this is not the typical use of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, evidence found in parallel passages in the Synoptics and in certain contexts in the FG, like these mentioned above, supports this interpretation.¹²³

Geographic Judeans. In Jesus’ day, Judea was a Roman province, ruled by Pilate, and encompassing the regions of Judea, Idumea, and Samaria. Anyone living in this political region was considered a Judean. In 3:22, the author uses a singular, adjectival form of the phrase to describe the land, εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν γῆν. Also, in 11:31, 36 when Jesus is with the family of Lazarus, those consoling Mary and Martha are described as “the Jews.” Since the event is taking place in the region of Judea, Judeans are there with their neighbors. Additionally, Kierspel notes Ἰουδαία always refers to a geographic region distinct from Samaria and Galilee, and its etymological association with Ἰουδαῖοι favors this meaning.¹²⁴

Followers of Judaism. On various occasions, the author of the FG uses the term to refer to anyone who adheres to the Jewish religion, whether from Judea or not, whether ethnically Jewish or Gentile. For example, note the religious contrast between Jews and Samaritans in Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman. In 4:20, she states, “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and you people [the Jews] say that in

¹²³Raymond Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, ed. Francis J. Moloney (New York: Doubleday, 2010), 163.

¹²⁴Kierspel, *Jews and the World*, 21.

Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” Two verses later Jesus asserts, “salvation is from the Jews.” Similarly, when Jesus confronts Pilate, Pilate responds, “I am not a Jew, am I?” (18:35), contrasting him as a Roman who does not believe in the Messiah with those Jews who do.¹²⁵

Jewish Christians. One specific reference, John 8:31, seems to refer to a group of ethnic/religious Jews who profess faith in Jesus as the Messiah: “Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed in Him . . .”

Symbolic term without an actual referent. The previous options have differed concerning to whom *οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι* refers. Some would argue the term does not have an actual referent but, rather, is used by the author(s) of the FG to refer to general “representatives of unbelief”¹²⁶ or serves a typological function in the plot of the FG.¹²⁷ Such a designation does not, then, emphasize the historicity of those to whom the term refers so much as the literary significance of the term in the FG.¹²⁸

Connotation of the uses. Having considered the possible meanings of this prevalent phrase, consider now the tone in which it is used. An important distinction is

¹²⁵Contra Brown, *Introduction*, 161-62, who sees these uses as ethnic.

¹²⁶Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 86.

¹²⁷John Ashton, “The Identity and Function of the *Ioudaioi* in the Fourth Gospel,” *Novum Testamentum* 27, no. 1 (1985): 57, who, however, does rightly suggest the distinction between “sense and reference.” Perhaps Fortna’s observation that this vague term removes the distinctions between various other religious groups found in the Synoptics (Herodians, Saducees, Zealots, etc.) supports this view (Robert T. Fortna, “Theological Use of Locale in the Fourth Gospel,” *Anglican Theological Review Supplementary Series* 3 [1974]: 90).

¹²⁸Reinhartz, “‘Jews’ and Jews,” 213, notes the tendency in recent scholarship to put “the Jews” in quotation marks. She attributes this to the move away from a literal understanding of its referent and toward them being identified as “a [literary] construct of the text itself; that they represent the state of unbelief and symbolize the unbelieving world as a whole; that they are not to be identified with the historical Jewish nation that was living in the Greco-Roman empire in the first century of the common era.” While the need to disassociate the term from an actual, historical, empirical group is unwarranted, the value of its symbolic and literary function is not totally lost on me. See the discussion of connotation below.

often made between the referent and the sense of the phrase.¹²⁹ The above discussion delineated the possible referents, i.e. the phrase's denotation. John's uses of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι can also be classified by whether he uses them in a positive, neutral, or negative light, i.e. the phrase's connotation.¹³⁰

For example, certain references such as “the Passover of the Jews was at hand” (2:13) and Pilate asking Jesus if he is “King of the Jews” (18:33) seem to have positive or neutral connotations, depending on one's perspective. However, other references have clear negative connotations. For example, “The Jews” send inquiries to John the Baptist (1:19), were persecuting Jesus (5:16), and “were seeking to kill Jesus” (5:18; 7:1).¹³¹

This dissertation examines John's understanding of cosmic conflict; thus, the negative uses of “the Jews” are most pertinent to the purpose of this work. Consider to whom “the Jews” refers in these negative uses.¹³² Two opinions have surfaced to explain their identity: (1) primarily Jewish authorities—Jewish leaders, Pharisees, scribes, members of the Sanhedrin, etc.; (2) primarily common, ethnic Jews who may include Jewish authorities. Again, scholars differ on the interpretation of this phrase in these instances, but evidence suggests the majority of uses refer to religious authorities.¹³³

¹²⁹See, e.g., Ashton, “Identity and Function,” 57.

¹³⁰For a chart categorizing each reference according to connotation, see Kierspel, *Jews and the World*, 74. Interestingly, the negative use of “the Jews,” while regular in the FG, is not found in the Synoptics; one possible exception is Matt 28:15. The negative use is so common that von Wahlde, “The Johannine ‘Jews,’” 35, labels it “the Johannine use.” In such instances, the term designates a certain group of people who “have a note of constant, intense hostility toward Jesus.”

¹³¹In a specific example, Duke, *Irony*, 120, argues that in the pericope of the healing of the blind man in chap. 9, the author deliberately avoids using Ἰουδαῖοι in 9:18 until those Pharisees who sided with Jesus in 9:16 fade from the scene.

¹³²Von Wahlde, “The Johannine ‘Jews,’” 40-41, notes a high degree of agreement among a wide variety of scholars as to which references are negative even though they disagree about to whom they refer.

¹³³*Ibid.*, 41, notes, among those scholars who advocate for the common, ethnic Jew position, the lack of agreement on which texts refer to the group as a whole and which few texts refer to the leaders. He continues, “although there are several persuasive arguments for seeing the Jews as ‘authorities,’ there seems to be almost no evidence for seeing them as common people. . . . [W]ith the exception of 6:41, 52 to

Conclusion. The examples cited above describing the referents of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι (other than the symbolic proposal) clearly indicate the author of the FG uses the designation in a variety of ways with a variety of connotations.¹³⁴ That is, the evidence supports the fact that the author of the FG uses the term οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι to refer to a variety of groups (Judean, Jewish leaders, etc.) in a variety of ways (positive, neutral, and negative).¹³⁵ Furthermore, the majority of the negative uses likely refer to Jewish authorities and their attempt to kill Jesus.¹³⁶

see the Johannine Jews as common people is to misread the evidence and to distort the intention of the author” (45-46). So also Lieu, “Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel,” 111, and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel: With Implications for the Fourth Gospel’s Purpose and Mission of the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 166, who describes them as “the Jewish nation represented by the religious and political leadership.” However, Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 126, rejects a polyvalent approach, stating that if it were valid, then “the reader of the gospel must always be asking whether the Jews in a given passage is the Jewish people in general, Judeans, or authorities hostile toward Jesus.” Rather, Culpepper determines the referent must always be the same since no attempt is made by the author to distinguish them (31). Kierspel, *Jews and the World*, 76, concurs. However, he later argues the author’s meaning cannot be derived apart from an understanding of the use of κόσμος. Furthermore, the way the author uses these terms in conjunction with each other emphasizes, not a narrowing of the term from “Jews” to “Jewish leaders,” but a broadening of the term from “the Jews” to all men (See Kierspel’s chaps. 3 and 4, and esp. 217).

Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 41, helpfully notes John has a tendency “to make the opposition of Jesus symbolic of evil itself” and thus this “tendency to abstraction . . . works to merge the opponents of Jesus into a single category: ‘the Jews.’”

¹³⁴Culpepper’s proposal of a uniform usage of the term (Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 31, 126) strains several texts to force that interpretation.

¹³⁵See Kierspel, *Jews and the World*, 74 and 74n63, for a helpful delineation of his interpretation of each use and his footnotes that compare his categorization to others.

¹³⁶Brown, *Introduction*, 164, further attempts to answer the question of why the author would choose this phrase to refer to authorities when he had others at his disposal, others that he used regularly such as “rulers” (οἱ ἄρχοντες in 3:1; 7:26, 48; 12:42). Brown suggests by the time the FG was written, the specificity existent in Jesus’ day between various types of authorities had faded. Furthermore, the author consistently uses the vague term, οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, whether he means rulers, common people, or a mob, to “deliberately join them together in their hostility to Jesus” (166). He also, adhering to the influence of the Johannine community on the composition of the Gospel, believes the vague term allowed the Johannine community to better identify the persecuting Jews in Jesus’ day with the persecuting Jews of their own day. “The ‘hostile’ Jews of the evangelist’s time are the heirs of the hostile Jewish authorities and crowds in Jesus’ time” (167). However, for Brown this community aspect does not negate “the literary presentation of the disputes with ‘the Jews’ and makes those disputes the occasion for expounding a Christology for believers” (171).

Conflict or Cosmic Conflict

The conflict between Jesus and the Jews throughout the FG is widely accepted. The following section will trace the conflict through the narrative in order to demonstrate its pervasiveness. However, is this conflict actually *cosmic* conflict? That is, is it merely a theological or ideological disagreement that has gone too far, a difference of opinion on the role of the Messiah that has gotten out of hand, or can we legitimately classify it as a spiritual, cosmic conflict connected to Satan himself? Two lines of evidence demonstrate its cosmic nature and connect the Jews to Satan in the FG.

John 8:44—Your father the devil. Perhaps the most shocking statement in the entire Gospel comes in 8:44 when Jesus identifies the spiritual paternity of the Jews, not as Abraham as they supposed, but as the devil himself. Contrast this with the presentation of the Jews in the Synoptics in which no connection is ever made between them and the devil.¹³⁷

In the previous verses, Jesus builds the suspense by concealing whom he means by their father but drawing parallels between them and the unknown ancestor—they do those things they heard from him (8:38),¹³⁸ and they do his deeds (8:41).¹³⁹ Their relationship with the demonic is further emphasized by the emphatic use of pronouns. Note the emphatic use of *ὁμεῖς* which begins the sentence in 8:44 as well as the use in 8:49. There Jesus replies to the Jews' accusation that he is functioning on the side of the devil by being possessed. Note the contrast implied with the emphatic pronouns: *Ἐγὼ δαιμόνιον οὐκ ἔχω, ἀλλὰ . . . καὶ ὁμεῖς ἀτιμάζετε με.*¹⁴⁰ The connection is further

¹³⁷Kikuo Matsunaga, "Powers in Conflict: A New Clue to the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel" (Ph.D. thesis, McGill University, 1970), 184.

¹³⁸Contrast this with the intimate relationship Jesus describes with his father: "I speak the things which I have seen with My Father." Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:754.

¹³⁹*ὁμεῖς ποιεῖτε τὰ ἔργα τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν.* Note the present tense and the emphatic pronouns.

¹⁴⁰Emphasis added.

illustrated by the etymology of the devil, *διάβολος*, to slander or falsely accuse, an action the Jews will commit as soon as Jesus finishes speaking in 8:48 when they accuse him again of being a Samaritan and having a demon.¹⁴¹

The explicit association Jesus makes between the Jews and their satanic spiritual heritage¹⁴² is enough to characterize all their conflict in the FG as cosmic conflict.¹⁴³

Situating this passage in the general landscape of spiritual warfare so far into the FG will also help to identify its importance and the cosmic nature of the conflict. In chapters 1 and 3, the conflict between God and Satan is expressed in general and symbolic terms (e.g., light versus darkness). The conflict is expressed in personal, yet still vague ways in John 5-8 (e.g., Jesus' conflict with the Jews over healing on the

¹⁴¹Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 518.

¹⁴²Contra Eslinger, "Judas Game," 59n37, who sees the reference to Satan as a "metaphoric hyperbole in Jesus' deprecatory characterization of 'the Jews,' not an attestation of the devilish character's ontological reality." Judith L. Kovacs, "'Now Shall the Ruler of this World Be Driven Out': Jesus' Death as Cosmic Battle in John 12:20-36," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114, no. 2 (1995): 234, rightly argues the opposite: "This text demonstrates that, for the Fourth Evangelist, 'the devil' is not a mere figure of speech, or a 'faded mythological conception.' Satan is an effective power who is active on the stage of human history."

¹⁴³So also Beasley-Murray, *John*, 135, "As the devil opposes the word and work of Christ, so the Jewish opponents of Jesus are his willing instruments, in particular they are ready to contrive his death." Dennis, "Seeking Jesus," 161, adds, "John 8:33-47 then makes clear that the opposition which the *Ioudaioi* level against Jesus reflects the cosmic conflict and opposition between God's Son and the devil: the devil seeks to destroy Jesus *through* the *Ioudaioi*." Emphasis added. Similarly, Mark W. G. Stibbe, *John, Readings: A New Biblical Commentary* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1993), 102, describes Satan as "the Sender," "the Originator . . . of the plot to kill Jesus."

De Boer's distinction between diabolical nature and the diabolical behavior of the Jews in this passage is not warranted. He wrongly contends, "John 8:44 claims that the devil is the father not of the Jews but of their behavior" (de Boer, "The Depiction of 'the Jews,'" 147). Throughout the passage, Jesus is drawing contrasting sets of parallels between himself and his father and the Jews and their father. Surely de Boer would not contend that Jesus argues God is not his father but rather the father of his actions. On the contrary, Jesus' point is that in both cases behavior gives evidence for organic paternity. His actions confirm his parentage and theirs do as well. D. Francois Tolmie, "The IOUDAIOS in the Fourth Gospel," in *Theology and Christology in the Fourth Gospel: Essays by the Members of the SNTS Johannine Writings Seminar*, ed. G. van Belle, J. G. van der Watt, and P. Paritz (Leuven: University Press, 2005): 395, agrees with de Boer, stating, "What is important is not who they are, but what they do in the narrative world." While true to a degree, the text still emphasizes what they do reveals who they are. So also Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 352, "Spiritual sonship in the only sense that matters is attested by likeness and conduct, whether the 'father' is Abraham or God" or the devil. Bruce, *Gospel and Epistles of John*, 1:201, describes it as "an ethical relationship," emphasizing a real relationship characterized by ethical behavior.

Sabbath). Then, for the first time, “the veil is lifted, and the nature of the conflict . . . is concretely revealed.”¹⁴⁴ That is, while the conflict was illustrated with symbolism and described as the author detailed personal interactions between Jesus and the Jews over the Sabbath and his identity, it is not until 8:44 that their true paternity, their inherent nature, is revealed—they are on the side of Satan.¹⁴⁵

The Jews’ role in the death of Jesus. The second line that connects the Jews with Satan is the manner in which the author of the FG characterizes those responsible for Jesus’ death. In several places, the devil is portrayed as the one behind the death of Jesus. He tempts Judas with the thought (13:2), he enters Judas just before Judas betrays Jesus (13:27), and he is the one who comes for Jesus on the night he is betrayed (14:31). Yet, the author of the FG presents *the Jews* as the responsible human party in Jesus’ crucifixion. Prior to the passion, they plan how they can put him to death (5:18; 11:53), attempt to arrest him for that purpose (7:30-32; 10:39), and even attempt a mob stoning (8:59). In addition, in the passion narrative they are shown to be plotting, arresting, trying, and repeatedly petitioning Pilate for the death sentence.

How does one reconcile the death of Jesus being the responsibility of both the devil and the Jews? The answer is the same as that of the responsibility of Judas. In the same way that Judas was both a willing participant and an instrument of Satan, the Jews here play a cosmic, satanic part in the death of Jesus. Jesus, himself, makes the connection as well. In 6:70, Judas is a/the devil; in 8:44, the Jews are the offspring of the

¹⁴⁴ Kovacs, “Now Shall the Ruler,” 233. She also notes the conflict was described generally in chaps. 1 and 3. I add it was described personally but vaguely in chaps. 5-8. Now specificity is given to the force behind the conflict. So also John Dennis, “‘The Lifting Up of the Son of Man’ and the Dethroning of the ‘Ruler of This World’: Jesus’ Death as the Defeat of the Devil in John 12:31-32,” in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. G. van Belle (Leuven: University Press, 2007): 682n22.

¹⁴⁵ So also de Boer, “The Depiction of ‘the Jews,’” 148. Although he sees too strong a Johannine community influence on the text and minimizes the nature of the Jews as characterized by Jesus, in commenting on 8:44, he does rightly set the conflict in the cosmic arena: “‘The Jews’ have astonishingly become players in a cosmic drama between God and the devil, and they have been enlisted on the wrong side!”

devil. Thus, in light of this direct connection, the conflict between Jesus and the Jews throughout the Gospel should be viewed from a cosmic warfare perspective.

Nature of the Conflict through the Narrative

This section began by determining the likely meaning of *οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι* in the FG and recognizing its often-used negative tone. Then I demonstrated the author of the FG does, in fact, employ the conflict between the Jews and Jesus as a demonstration of cosmic conflict. Now the actual conflict in the text will be surveyed to discover additional insights related to the author's presentation of cosmic conflict.¹⁴⁶

The author's arrangement and choice of which episodes to include is significant here. Clearly, John had a degree of freedom, perhaps more than the Synoptic evangelists in being the last Gospel written, to decide what events to include and what to leave out, which to emphasize and which to downplay. Thus, those he included were purposeful and strategic, a part of fulfilling his overall purpose.¹⁴⁷ This section will demonstrate the pervasiveness of Jesus' conflict with the Jews, a group John portrays "with a constant, unchanging hostility toward Jesus,"¹⁴⁸ as one aspect of the author's

¹⁴⁶ This section does not intend to trace all instances of cosmic conflict in the FG, but only those instances that specifically pertain to Jesus' conflict with "the Jews." For another helpful survey of the conflict, see Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 89-97, who addresses it as "plot development" and also mentions most of the references cited here. See also the broad overview in chap. 2 of this dissertation.

¹⁴⁷ Concerning narrative criticism, see Culpepper, *Anatomy*, especially 85, "The plot, therefore, interprets events by placing them in a sequence, a context, a narrative world, which defines their meaning. The events are then secondary to the story or message which gives them meaning." John's emphasis on Jesus' cosmic conflict with the Jews is further supported by Culpepper's assessment, "Plot development in John, then, is a matter of how Jesus' identity comes to be recognized and how it fails to be recognized" (88). That is, the entire plot of the FG moves along the tracks of Jesus' identity, which, along with his Sabbath healing, is the main source of conflict between him and the Jews.

¹⁴⁸ Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 126. However, it will be argued the hostility does change—it increases. So also Kierspel, *Jews and the World*, 90, who notes, "After the prologue (1:1-18), the Gospel enters the account of Jesus' public ministry in which the conflict with the Jews stands at the heart of the plot development (chaps. 1:19-12:50)." Contra Smith, *John*, 186-87, who argues that "no such hostility dominated the relationship between the historical Jesus and other Jews." Rather, what is presented is "the reflection of the mortal tension between the Johannine community and the Jews who had rejected their claims." Similarly, see Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 282.

understanding of the cosmic conflict between Jesus and Satan.

Beginning with the very first mention of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in the Gospel (1:19), the Jews are antagonistic toward John the Baptist, the herald and forerunner of Jesus.¹⁴⁹ A brief allusion to Jesus' "hour" (2:4) may prepare the reader for future conflicts with the Jews in which Jesus escapes because his hour had not yet come. Similarly, Jesus' comment about destroying the temple of his body (2:19-21) and his need to "be lifted up" (3:14), while not clarified, prepares the reader for future references.¹⁵⁰ The Jews question Jesus after he cleanses the temple, but their questioning is not aggression yet.¹⁵¹ In chapter 4, two possible allusions to looming threats are mentioned. In 4:1-3, Jesus leaves Judea because he "knew that the Pharisees had heard" he was baptizing more than John. In 4:44, the author comments that Jesus testified concerning himself "that a prophet has no honor in his own country."

Apart from these few, vague references, there is very little conflict with the Jews in the first four chapters. However, these chapters do contain several pericopes that focus on the centrality of Jesus to John's Gospel. The Prologue discusses the eternality and divinity of the logos. The testimony of John concerning Jesus identifies him as "the Lamb of God." The call of the disciples includes comments identifying Jesus as "the Messiah" (1:41), "the Son of God" (1:49), and "the King of Israel" (1:49). The wedding at Cana affords an opportunity for Jesus to perform his first sign and "manifest His glory" (2:11), and the temple cleansing at the end of chapter 2 denotes the authority Jesus

¹⁴⁹So also Brown, *Introduction*, 164n37; Jennifer A. Glancy, "Violence as Sign in the Fourth Gospel," *Biblical Interpretation* 17 (2009): 105; and Kierspel, *Jews and the World*, 122n44, who also notes that in light of the Prologue, this reference cannot have a neutral or positive connotation. Warren Carter, *John: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 30, believes "this scene creates the impression that the Jerusalem leaders exercise constant surveillance, that they spy on, and are antagonistic toward, figures whom they have not authorized."

¹⁵⁰Dennis, "Seeking Jesus," 160, argues this pericope contains violent language and "the ideal reader will expect the conflict between Jesus and the *Ioudaioi* and their pursuit of him to end in a violent way."

¹⁵¹Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 127.

assumes. Jesus' conversations with Nicodemus (chap. 3) and the Samaritan woman (chap. 4) continue to reveal Jesus' character to the reader, as does Jesus' second sign at the end of chapter 4. Culpepper rightly argues that the absence of conflict in John 1-4 serves the literary purpose of presenting Jesus prior to presenting his detractors:

These chapters have a powerful "primacy effect," that is, they firmly establish the reader's first impression of Jesus' identity and mission. The reader is led to accept the evangelist's view of Jesus before the antithetical point of view is given more than passing reference. It is hardly possible after these chapters for the reader to be persuaded by another view of Jesus.¹⁵²

However, things change dramatically in chapter 5. Maltreatment of Jesus by the Jews begins just after his healing of a man on the Sabbath.¹⁵³ John 5:16 states, "For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus." After Jesus states that he and his Father both are working, a statement that implies his equality with God, "the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him" (5:18). The persecution at this point does not seem to be physical but rather a continual plotting of how they might be rid of him.¹⁵⁴

The conflict in John 6 centers around the feeding of the five thousand and the Jews' unmet expectations concerning the Messiah. They are said to be "grumbling about Him" (6:41), and most of those Jews who are temporarily interested in his teaching and

¹⁵²Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 91. He continues, "only ten of the gospel's seventy references to the Jews occur in the first four chapters. Likewise there are only three references to the Pharisees and no mention of the crowd in these chapters." The author of the FG works on "establishing the narrator's perspective as the reader's first impression of who Jesus is" so he presents almost no opposition prior to John 5 (126). So also Kierspel, *Jews and the World*, 122, though less developed. Shailer Mathews, "The Struggle between the Natural and the Spiritual Orders as Described in the Gospel of John: III. The Early Triumph of the Spiritual Order," *The Biblical World* 42 (1913): 146, notes the absence of conflict in the early chapters as well. "The first four chapters of the Gospel of John describes the triumphal progress of the spiritual order as seen in Jesus' dealings with individuals. It is as if the author were writing an illustrative commentary upon the text: 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Children of God.'"

¹⁵³Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 203, rightly notices John's portrayal of the miracle records no impact on the crowd but emphasizes the Jews' negative response to it.

¹⁵⁴William Peyton Thurman, "The Conflict of Jesus with the Jews in the Fourth Gospel" (Th. D. Thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1947): 27. However, Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 127, is correct that the role the Jews will play in the FG is not obvious until now. The reader is informed concerning what to anticipate from the Jews from this point forward.

miracles leave and refuse to continue following him (6:66).

John 7:1 opens with Jesus leaving Galilee “because the Jews were seeking to kill him.”¹⁵⁵ Prior to Jesus’ appearance at the Feast of Tabernacles, there is “much grumbling” concerning him and opinions are divided concerning him (7:12), but the author notes, “yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews” (7:13). This first of several references to fear is an indication that their secret plots are becoming more public and their personal persecutions are becoming more open.¹⁵⁶ When Jesus does attend the Feast of Tabernacles and enters into discussion with the Jews, he confronts them about their attempts to kill him (7:19), and they respond by accusing him of being possessed by demons and denying their plot to kill him. After Jesus publicly “cried out in the temple” that God the Father has sent him, the Jews attempt to physically grab him but are denied because “his hour had not yet come” (7:28-30), another allusion to an impending denouement of conflict. Later in the same chapter, after Jesus promises “living water” on the final day of the Feast, officers are sent to arrest him. However, they fail to do so, being persuaded by his teaching not to take him in (7:45-46).

Again in 8:20, the narrator notes a desire on the part of the Jews to seize Jesus but an inability to do so “because His hour had not yet come.” Jesus speaks in 8:37, 40 of their continual seeking to kill him. Following the episode in 8:39-48, where “the verbal exchange between Jesus and the Jews reaches its most hostile and strident tones,”¹⁵⁷ the Jews, once again, accuse Jesus of being possessed. At the end of the chapter, Jesus affirms, “before Abraham was born, I am”; at this, the Jews dispense with

¹⁵⁵Thurman, “Conflict of Jesus,” 28, notes this secret form of plotting “is more insidious than it would have been had they openly attacked him.”

¹⁵⁶Further evidence is found in 7:25. The author’s comments here indicate a public knowledge among Jerusalemites of the attempt of Jewish authorities to kill Jesus. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 92, also recognizes “the opposition hardens and begins to mobilize itself.”

¹⁵⁷Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 93.

their plots and plans for a formal trial and, in mob-like fashion, attempt to stone Jesus.¹⁵⁸ This time he hides and leaves (8:58-59).

The conflict in chapter 9 continues as Jesus heals a blind man on the Sabbath. The Pharisees disparage him as not being from God because he healed on the Sabbath (9:16).¹⁵⁹ The story continues as the parents of the one healed are questioned, but they refuse to answer and defer questions to their adult son. The narrator notes the reason for their refusal: “they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Him to be Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue” (9:22). Later in the chapter the reader discovers the healed man has, in fact, been put out of the synagogue (9:35).¹⁶⁰ As such, the conflict is extending from Jesus to his followers as well.

While the hostility against Jesus lulls in chapter 9, it intensifies again in chapter 10. The culmination of the conflict is again foreshadowed in 10:18 when Jesus comments that no one will take his life from him, but he will freely lay it down. This also speaks to the limit of his enemies’ power. At this, the Jews are divided in their opinion—many accuse him again of being demon-possessed while others disagree. After claiming oneness with the Father, the Jews again attempt to stone him (10:31). Jesus’ response halts their action, but the scene ends with them again attempting to lay hands on

¹⁵⁸Attempts at stoning, while repeated in the FG, are absent from the Synoptics. Furthermore, Dennis, “Seeking Jesus,” 160, argues the violence against Jesus is highlighted when four different voices tell the reader of the Jews’ intent to stone Jesus—Jesus (10:32), the Jews (10:33), the disciples (11:8), and the narrator (8:59).

¹⁵⁹“The Jews” is used in 9:18, parallel to “the Pharisees” in 9:16, indicating the author seems, at times, to be using the terms interchangeably.

¹⁶⁰Many scholars have seen in this reference to excommunication from the synagogue an intrusion into the historical text by the author(s), reflecting an anti-Christian persecution by the Jews of John’s day against Jewish Christians. See, e.g., Brown, *Introduction*, 172-173, 213; Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:380; Peter F. Ellis, *The Genius of John: A Composition-Critical Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1984), 162; and Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 335n5. Contra Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 435; and Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 343.

him before he escapes (10:39).

The resurrection of Lazarus in chapter 11 seems to be the final straw that pushes the Jews to the point of no return. After hearing news of Lazarus' resurrection, a council is convened and the chief priests and Pharisees discuss what should be done. They decide, based on the advice of Caiaphas, to seek to put Jesus to death via a trial.¹⁶¹ "So from that day on they planned together to kill Him" (11:53). At the Passover, instructions are dispersed by the Jewish leaders to report any knowledge of Jesus' whereabouts so that they might arrest him (11:57).

Other than a few brief notes, the conflict between Jesus and the Jews is suspended for several chapters. The author prepares the reader for this in 11:54 by noting, "Jesus therefore no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews."¹⁶² The brief exceptions include a discussion by the chief priests of how they might also arrest and kill Lazarus (12:9), several references by Jesus to his coming death and departure, and predictions concerning the coming persecution to be experienced by his disciples (e.g., 15:20; 16:1-2, 33).

The culmination of the conflict between Jesus and the Jews begins in chapter 18 with the arrest in the garden. The "officers of the Jews" (18:12, who were previously referred to as the "officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees" in 18:3) arrest Jesus, tie him up, and lead him away. The trial of Jesus is instigated by the Jews, and Jesus is taken to Annas, Caiaphas, and then Pilate. Even before the Roman Pilate, the Jews are present outside, clamoring for crucifixion. Despite Pilate's repeated attempts to release Jesus, the author of the FG shows the Jews to be the (human) driving force behind Jesus' crucifixion. They ask for Barabbas (18:40).¹⁶³ They cry "Crucify, crucify!" (19:6).

¹⁶¹Thurman, "Conflict of Jesus," 33.

¹⁶²Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 128, suggests the author has firmly established the opposition to Jesus at this point and, presumably need not continue it further until its culmination in the passion narrative.

¹⁶³Craig R. Koester, "Why was the Messiah Crucified? A Study of God, Jesus, Satan, and

They manipulate Pilate with threats of him being “no friend of Caesar” if he releases Jesus (19:12). They balk at the inscription “The King of the Jews” over Jesus’ head on the cross (19:21), and they ask for Jesus’ legs to be broken (19:31). Even after Jesus’ death, Joseph of Arimethea is described as “a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one, for fear for the Jews” (19:38), and Jesus’ disciples seclude themselves behind locked doors “for fear of the Jews” (20:19).

In conclusion, as is evident from this survey, the role of the Jews in John’s portrayal of cosmic conflict is significant.¹⁶⁴ They are a primary agent in the spiritual warfare against Jesus and his disciples in the FG. The author portrays them as such by saturating his work with references to this conflict, by recording an increase of their hostility against Jesus as one moves through the chapters of the FG, ultimately leading to his crucifixion,¹⁶⁵ and by describing the extension of persecution from Jesus to his followers.

The World

This dissertation has argued that “the Jews” was a general term the author used to identify a group in opposition to Jesus, though some from that group were shown in a

Human Agency in Johannine Theology,” in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. G. van Belle (Leuven: University Press, 2007): 168, rightly notes the supposed contradiction in securing the release of an insurrectionist and then giving their allegiance to Rome. However, “their actions show a consistent alienation from God, since they repeatedly reject the king who has come from above in order to embrace the powers of the world below, whether in the form of Barabbas or Caesar.”

¹⁶⁴“The presentation of the conflicts was not by mere chance but that it was done by the determined design of John. John carefully selected his material as he set forth to show the offer Jesus made of himself to the Jews and their rejection” (Thurman, “Conflict of Jesus,” 34).

¹⁶⁵So also R. Alan Culpepper, “The Gospel and the Jews,” *Review and Expositor* 84, no. 2 (1987): 276-80; Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 128, who sees “a rising level of conflict and opposition within each episode and from one episode to the next”; and Leland Ryden, James C. Wilhoit, Tremper Longmann, III, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), s.v. “John, Gospel of,” who describe “a progressive intensification of conflict between Jesus and his antagonists.” See also Amos Yong, “‘The Light Shines in Darkness’: Johannine Dualism and the Challenge for Christian Theology of Religions Today,” *The Journal of Religion* 89, no. 1 (January 2009): 36n13, who comments, “There is no denying the increasingly pejorative connotations regarding οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι as the narrative progresses (into the Passion).”

positive light as believers of Jesus. In a similar way, the Fourth Evangelist wrote about “the world.” This section will examine how the author of the FG uses the term and its relevance to an understanding of a Johannine theology of spiritual warfare.

As a prominent term in the FG, *κόσμος* is used 78 times in the FG and only 15 times in the Synoptics combined. Additionally, *κόσμος* is used more than twice as much in the FG as in the remainder of the NT.¹⁶⁶ While “the Jews” take the stage as the primary opponents to Jesus and his disciples in the first half of the Gospel, they are less prominent in the second half. Similarly, “the world,” which is less prominent in the first half, rises in distinction in the second.¹⁶⁷ The connection between the Jews and the world will also be considered.

Identity in the FG

As with all words, *κόσμος* has a variety of meanings, even within the FG.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶N. H. Cassem, “A Grammatical and Contextual Inventory of the Use of *κόσμος* in the Johannine Corpus with Some Implications for a Johannine Cosmic Theology,” *New Testament Studies* 19 (1972): 81. First John is second in uses in the NT with 23.

¹⁶⁷Köstenberger, *Missions of Jesus*, 140. He also cites the absence of “the Jews” in the Farewell Discourse (John 13-17) as further evidence of this point and evidence against an “anti-Semitic” reading of the FG (174n123). So also Cassem, “Grammatical,” 87-89, who charts the use of *κόσμος* throughout the FG and labels each use as positive, negative, or neutral. He counts 33 uses in the first half (7 of which are negative) and 44 uses in the second half (29 of which are negative). So also J. W. Pryor, “Covenant and Community in John’s Gospel,” *The Reformed Theological Review* 47, no. 2 (1988): 47, who argues this is not the result of a hardening on the part of the world throughout the FG, but agrees with Cassem that the author focuses on God’s actions in the first half and the world’s response in the second half. Regardless of the cause, the effect is a clear presentation of conflict in both halves of the FG. Kierspel, *Jews and the World*, 77, 92, also notes the distribution of the terms but emphasizes that *κόσμος* is particularly present in the Prologue (1:1-18) and Farewell Discourse (13-17) and Ἰουδαῖοι is present in the sections that follow those—the Book of Signs (1:19-12:50) and the passion narrative (19-20).

¹⁶⁸BDAG, s.v. “*κόσμος*,” lists the following glosses and references from the FG for *κόσμος*: “the universe” (17:5, 24; 21:25), “world in general” (11:9), “world as the habitation of mankind” (16:21), “world in contrast to heaven” (1:9; 3:17a, 19; 6:14; 9:5a, 39; 10:36; 11:27; 12:26; 13:1; 16:28a, b; 18:37), “world as mankind” (1:29; 3:17b; 8:12; 9:5; 12:19; 17:6; 18:20), “world as mankind but especially believers” (3:16, 17c; 6:33, 51; 12:47), and “the world, and everything that belongs to it, appears as that which is hostile to God, i.e., lost in sin, wholly at odds w[ith] anything divine, ruined and depraved” (1:10; 7:7; 8:23; 12:25, 31a; 13:1; 14:27, 30; 15:18, 19a, b, c, d; 16:11, 33b; 17:9, 14a, b, c, 16a, b, 25; 18:36).

The two primary uses are the literal, geographic earth and the inhabitants thereof.¹⁶⁹ The first use to be discussed refers to the earth, the place where humans live. See, e.g., 1:10 where “[Jesus] was in the world” and 3:17 where the Father sent the son “into the world.” While these references may have specific connotations derived from the context, they clearly denote a geographic location.

The second use has *κόσμος* placed in sentences that require a personal subject or object.¹⁷⁰ For example, 3:16 states, “For God so loved the world,” and later refers to “whoever believes in him.” Similarly, the Jews complain in 12:19 that “the world has gone after Him.” Clearly, the inhabitants are in view here.

These two different uses are highlighted in several passages where the author of the FG uses *κόσμος* to refer to the place where humans live *and* to humanity in general, often juxtaposed in close proximity, even within the same verse. Consider, for example, John 1:10, “He was in the world [that is, on the earth], and the world [the earth and its inhabitants] was made through Him, and the world [presumably the people thereof] did not know Him.”¹⁷¹ So also, John 3:17, “For God did not send the Son into the world [down to the earth] to judge the world [its people] but that the world [its people] should be saved through Him.”

However, the personal uses of “the world” are not uniform. In some cases,

¹⁶⁹Cornelius Bennema, *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2009), 32, recognizes these uses and succinctly notes, “the world is both the *environment* in which the story of Jesus is played out and a *character* within the story.” Emphasis original. So also Reinhartz, *Word in the World*, 39n17. Strauss, *Four Portraits*, 330, adds the world is “used neutrally of the place where people dwell (1:10; 9:39; 13:1; 16:21, 28; 17:5, 24; 18:37).”

¹⁷⁰Margaret Pamment, “Eschatology and the Fourth Gospel,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 15 (1982): 82, in interaction with Bultmann and Schnackenburg regarding the vertical versus horizontal perspectives of the FG, rightly notes that although both the geographic and the social meanings of *κόσμος* exist in the FG, the author’s “interest immediately centres on human society.” However, she goes too far to claim that this is true “to the exclusion of all else (1:4ff).” Though an overstatement, she is generally correct when she notes, “For John, ‘the world’ is ‘the human world.’”

¹⁷¹See also 1:10, 3:17-19, 8:23-26, 9:5, 12:46-47, 15:19, 17:11-25. So also Klink, “Light of the World,” 75.

“the world” refers to the group responding favorably to Jesus or receiving the benefits of his saving actions.¹⁷² In an exaggeration, the Pharisees state, “the world has gone after [Jesus]” (12:19). Jesus “takes away the sin of the world” (1:29), and God loves the world and sent the son “that the world should be saved through Him” (3:16-17). Jesus is the “Savior of the world” (4:42) who came, not to judge, but to save the world (14:47). Jesus, as the bread of heaven, gives life to the world (6:33, 51). Jesus is “the light of the world” (8:12, 9:5, 11:9, 12:46; cf. 1:4, 9, 10). Jesus reveals his love for the Father to the world (14:31) and sends the Helper who will convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (16:8-11).¹⁷³ Jesus desires that the world believe (17:21) and even sends his disciples into the world just like he was sent into it, presumably to continue to offer it a witness to the truth (17:15, 18). In the majority of cases, however, the world is portrayed as not merely rejecting, but in opposition to¹⁷⁴ Jesus and his followers.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷²So also Bill Salier, “What’s in a World? *Κόσμος* in the Prologue of John’s Gospel,” *The Reformed Theological Review* 56, no. 3 (1997): 106, who identifies four uses: universe, earth, people in general, and people in rebellion. Coetzee, “Christ and the Prince,” 108, similarly notes three uses of *κόσμος*: (1) “creation,” (2) “mankind,” and (3) “mankind as enslaved in sin and living in enmity with God.” Here he differentiates the personal use into “mankind” and “mankind . . . in enmity with God.” He further connects the term with other Johannine concepts such as darkness, falsehood and the bondage of sin and death. Although the world is often characterized by these, this dissertation will examine those concepts separately later. See also BDAG, s.v. “*κόσμος*,” especially sec. 5 and 7.

However, even these “positive” references to “the world” in the FG betray its lack, sin, and need for God. Thus, Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 122, concludes none of the uses of *κόσμος* in the FG are “unambiguously positive.” See also D. A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 164; and Salier, “What’s in a World?” 107, who notes, it would be more accurate to refer, not to positive uses of *κόσμος*, but “to say that the *κόσμος* is the object of positive action from God and his Son,” which “implies a negative view of *κόσμος* in and of itself.”

¹⁷³However, this passage may also be taken as an act of judgment and sentencing on the world rather than a saving action. For further discussion, see pp. 125-28 of this dissertation.

¹⁷⁴Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:509, makes this point, adding that, particularly in the second half of the Gospel, “a strong note of hostility [consistently] accompanies the use of ‘the world.’” George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1974), 226, observes this use is not found in the Synoptics and rightly notes, “What makes *kosmos* evil is not something intrinsic to it, but the fact that it has turned away from its creator and has become enslaved to evil powers.”

¹⁷⁵Bennema, *Encountering Jesus*, 32, adroitly writes, “The world is both object—the target of God’s love and salvific mission—and subject—the personified world as humanity at large which opposes God/Jesus.” So also Kierspel, *Jews and the World*, 92, who notes that the world “stands mostly for non-

Nature of the Conflict

As established above, the FG uses *κόσμος* in both a physical and a social sense. In the physical sense, *κόσμος* (the earth itself) does not display opposition to Jesus in the FG.¹⁷⁶ Thus, those uses that refer to humanity in general are more applicable for this study. Rather than survey every use of *κόσμος* in the FG,¹⁷⁷ a few select passages that best demonstrate the conflict will be considered in depth.

The Prologue. The importance of the Prologue in the FG cannot be overstated. Many scholars have noted its significance in setting the tone for the reading of the rest of the Gospel.¹⁷⁸ Thus, “a fundamental perspective is established on the

believers who stand opposite to three different persons: Jesus, the Paraclete, and the disciples.” He also notes that with rare exception this term is used with a positive connotation in Greek writings prior to and concurrent with the NT (155-56). So a primarily negative use was unique to a first-century audience.

Cassem, “Grammatical,” 82, whose study also includes the Johannine epistles and Revelation, helpfully charts the uses of *κόσμος* by case. He concludes when the term is used as a subject of action (nominative or accusative-with-infinitive) the connotation is almost always negative. The world “did not know Jesus (i.10), the Father (xvii.15), or the disciples (1 John iii.1) and cannot receive the Spirit of Truth (xiv.17). It will see Jesus no longer (xiv.19). The only ‘acts’ of faith on the part of the world come with the salvific wish that it may know (xiv.31, xvii.23) or believe (xvii.21). In fact, the only time that the world actually does ‘listen’ is when it attends to false prophets (1 John iv.5).” The world is described as “hating the disciples (xv.18, 19, xvii.14, 1 John iii.13). It loves only its own (xv.19)” but cannot hate Jesus’ earthly brothers (7:7). However, he also notes when the term is used as the object of action, it is overcome (16:33; 1 John 5:4, 5), but also loved by God (3:16) to not be judged (3:17) but saved by Christ (12:47). He summarizes, “when the world acts on its own, its actions appear to be less than admirable. On the other hand, it appears to be the object of positive sorts of activity on God’s part, even though men do not seem to be encouraged to follow suit” (83).

¹⁷⁶One possible exception is the stormy sea in John 6:16-21, but the author of the FG does not take this opportunity to explicitly or implicitly link the episode to cosmic conflict. So also Salier, “What’s in a World?” 115, who adds, “There may be creation-wide implications arising from the mission of the son, but the *κόσμος* language in John’s Gospel does not seem to address them.”

¹⁷⁷Surveying every individual reference is avoided here for multiple reasons. First, the sheer number of references is prohibitive for a dissertation dealing with cosmic conflict in general and not “the world” in particular. Second, such surveys have already been done effectively. See, e.g., Kierspel, *Jews and the World*; Cassem, “Grammatical”; and Loewen, “Through West African Eyes.” Third, while a survey can yield a broad understanding of the author’s use and an idea of the pervasiveness of the theme, an in-depth examination of a few passages can also provide helpful insights not otherwise gained. These include connections to additional themes and implicit emphases not readily obvious from a cursory reading.

¹⁷⁸See, e.g., Reinhartz, *Word in the World*, 16, who writes, “The prologue is not simply a hymn or a ‘cultic-liturgical poem’ . . . but is itself a brief narrative about the Word and its relationship to the world. . . . It also acts as the reader’s guide to the cosmological tale as it comes to expression throughout the body of the gospel narrative”; Kierspel, *Jews and the World*, 114-23, who argues the Prologue is no mere introduction to or summary of the Gospel, but a hermeneutical key to the Gospel as a whole, “a necessary preparation for the right understanding of the Gospel itself” (121); Paul R. Raabe, “A Dynamic

κόσμος in relation to Jesus Christ. In the prologue, we find the basic contours for the construction of a systematic consideration of the κόσμος theology of John.”¹⁷⁹

At the beginning of the Gospel, the author introduces the reader to the concept of κόσμος. In 1:3, “all things came into being by Him,” and though κόσμος is not used, it is implicit, especially in light of 1:10—“the world was made through Him.” The first occurrence of κόσμος comes in 1:9, Jesus is the “true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.” As a participial phrase, ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον, best modifies τὸ φῶς rather than ἄνθρωπον.¹⁸⁰ This appears to be a neutral, geographic reference as Jesus comes into the realm of the earth, especially as 1:10 begins with, “He was in the world and the world was made through Him.” However, while it is a geographic reference, further investigation hints that the use is not neutral. John 1:9 connects the ideas of light and world. A similar connection is seen in 1:4 with light and men and in 1:5 with light and darkness. Additionally there seems to be parallelism. Notice in 1:4, “the life was the light of men,” and in 1:9, “the true light . . . enlightens every man.” Similarly, 1:5 says “the light shines in darkness,” and in 1:10, “He [the true light from verse 9] was in the world.” From verses 5 and 10, a connection between darkness and the world may be inferred. At the very least, the ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον implies the foreign nature of light

Tension: God and Word in John,” *Concordia Journal* 21 (April 1995): 142, who also calls it a key; Klink, “Light of the World,” 84, who describes the Prologue as an introduction, but then he adds, “It is the starting point from which the rest of the Gospel must be read”; and Salier, “What’s in a World?” 107, who acknowledges “the fundamental importance of the prologue to an understanding of both the structure and contents of what is to follow.”

¹⁷⁹Salier, “What’s in a World?” 107. He adds the references here “will shape the way κόσμος is read through the rest of the Gospel.”

¹⁸⁰Agreeing with and modifying τὸ φῶς, the participle would be neuter nominative; agreeing with and modifying ἄνθρωπον, it would be a masculine accusative. Both are grammatically possible. However, the most natural reading in the context is for “the light” to be “coming into the world” because in the next verse “He [not every man] was in the world.” Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 160-61, agrees and argues additionally that the periphrastic imperfect is typical of John (1:28; 2:6; 3:23; 10:40; 11:1; 13:23; 18:18, 25), and Jesus is described as coming into the world in other places (6:14; 9:39; 11:27; 16:28). However, he notes the natural birth of men, in general, is not a theme of the FG. For a survey of the exegetical question in this verse, see Ed L. Miller, “The True Light which Illumines Every Person,” in *Good News in History: Essays in Honor of Bo Reicke*, ed. Ed L. Miller (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993): 63-82.

to the world and a “sense of distance between the *λόγος* and the *κόσμος*.”¹⁸¹

Consequently, even though *κόσμος* has a seemingly neutral, geographic denotation, the connotation in this context is, at least vaguely, negative.

In 1:10, the initial *κόσμος* is the same as 1:9; “coming into the world . . . he was in the world.” This phrase emphasizes the close proximity of Jesus to the world. Those in it have physical access to him daily. The distance between God and man is bridged by the coming of the Son of Man.

The second use of *κόσμος* picks up the creation reference in 1:4, reiterating that “the world was made through him.” The connection between 1:4 and 1:10b makes it obvious *κόσμος* continues to refer to the place where men dwell that *λόγος* has made and now inhabits himself.

In contrast, the third reference to *κόσμος* in 1:10 does not refer to the created world as the two previous references, but to the *people* of the world instead.¹⁸² The prior references function to set the stage for the response of the third. That is, the author specifically emphasizes these two attending details to prepare the reader for the response. Since he, coming into the world, now inhabits the world, and since he is the world’s Creator, how, now, will this world of men respond to him? “The world did not know Him,”¹⁸³ and as such chose its side in the cosmic battle.

The world, as God’s creation, is dependent on God, but when the world is viewed

¹⁸¹Salier, “What’s in a World?” 111, who characterizes light as “alien” to the world. Less convincingly, he also notes this separation is reinforced by two different stative verbs—while the Word ἦν, the world ἐγένετο.

¹⁸²Though not generally disputed by scholars, Salier, “What’s in a World?” 111-12, points to evidences that support this interpretation. First, the Word is the light of *men* (1:4). That is, the Word came to minister to humanity in 1:4. Second, the concept of knowing (*γινώσκω*) is typically a uniquely human activity. Third, an interesting progression is evident through the Prologue: 1:3 refers to “all things” (including all the universe); 1:9 refers to “the world” (the earth as a subset of “all things”); 1:10 is in question; and 1:11 refers to “his own.” If οἱ ἴδιοι refers to his own people, then perhaps it is also a subset of the *κόσμος* in question. That would yield a meaning of “mankind” or “the world of men” for the term here.

¹⁸³Cf. Rom 1:18-21 for a similar idea.

solely in its own terms, without reference to God the Creator, it cuts itself off from the life God gives and stands in opposition to God. And it is ‘the world’ as human society that stands in opposition to God.¹⁸⁴

In 1:10, the author describes the world as refusing Jesus and opposing him. The following verse then compounds the indictment. Following a broad reference to Jesus’ rejection by humanity in general (1:10), the author narrows his view, stating, “He came to His own” (1:11). If οἱ ἴδιοι refers to his own *people*, then the Prologue also contains the first reference to Jesus’ rejection by the Jews. Concerning the κόσμος, the reader is alerted to the fact that there is a connection between the world and the Jews—they both reject Jesus—and the reader is prepared for additional connections as the Gospel progresses.

John 1:12-13 describes an alternative response. Some of those in the κόσμος and from οἱ ἴδιοι “receive Him” and “believe in His name,” gaining for themselves the title, “children of God.” Clearly, one of God’s purpose in sending Jesus is to save men, and the author of the FG highlights instances of individuals receiving and believing.¹⁸⁵ However, this does not negate the overall emphasis of the FG on the general rejection and unbelief of these two groups and their consequent opposition of Jesus.¹⁸⁶

In summary, in the Prologue κόσμος is presented as being in darkness, alienated from God, not knowing ὁ λόγος in spite of being created by him, and connected in some way to Jesus’ own that did not receive him. This caricature of κόσμος, a description congruent with later descriptions of those who oppose Jesus, serves to prepare the reader for the explicit conflict between Jesus and the world later to come in the Gospel. The author lays the groundwork in the very beginning of the FG for a fully

¹⁸⁴Pamment, “Eschatology,” 83.

¹⁸⁵See, e.g., John the Baptist and his disciples (1:35-37), the rest of Jesus’ disciples (1:40-51), Nicodemus (assumedly, 10:39), the Samaritan woman and her townspeople (4:39-42), the royal official and his family (4:53), the blind man (9:38), and many Jews upon hearing of Lazarus’ resurrection (11:45-46).

¹⁸⁶Kovacs, “Now Shall the Ruler,” 231, concurs, “The division of human beings into two camps, according to their different reactions to the incarnate Word—a prominent theme in the Fourth Gospel—is presented from the outset as *part of a larger cosmic struggle*.” Emphasis added.

developed war between *ὁ λόγος* and *ὁ κόσμος*.

The Farewell Discourse. Jesus' Farewell Discourse to his disciples (John 13-17) prepares them for their life and struggle after his death and resurrection. In this section of teaching, *κόσμος* is prominent—40 of the Gospel's 78 uses are found in these five chapters.

While cosmic conflict is prevalent in this section in general,¹⁸⁷ many of the uses of *κόσμος* are found in particular passages that are especially relevant to cosmic conflict. For example, two of the three uses of *κόσμος* in which the devil is named the “ruler of this world” are in this section. As the ruler of the world, the author implies that Satan exercises authority and influence over the world. Also, two other conflict-oriented passages describe the actions and attitudes of the *κόσμος* in this section. In John 15:16-20, Jesus has described his love as being the greatest kind, the kind that lays down one's life for his friends (15:13). He then commands his disciples to love one another (15:17). Juxtaposed to this self-sacrificing, brotherly love is the hatred of the world. Jesus comments, “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you” (15:18). He continues by giving the reason for this hatred. Since the disciples are not “of the world,” and thus not one of “its own,” but rather chosen by Jesus “out of the world,” the world hates them. Jesus then quotes a popular proverb, “A slave is not greater than his master.” He previously used this saying to remind them of the necessity to serve one another as he had done when he washed their feet (13:16). Now he applies it to the persecution they will experience as he has. “If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.” The author's understanding of cosmic conflict is displayed in this

¹⁸⁷Borchert's outline of the Farewell Discourse is helpful (Borchert, *John 12-21*, 73). He sees a chiasm (though he structures it as concentric circles of a target) with John 15:1-25 at center. If he is correct, this section begins with a reference to Satan placing in Judas' heart the betrayal (13:2), ends with Jesus praying that his disciples would be kept from the evil one (17:15), and has at its center a warning to his disciples of the coming persecution by the world because of its hatred of them (15:16-20).

passage in terms of the world, following its ruler, hating and actively persecuting Jesus and those whom he calls out of it to follow him.

Another significant passage pertaining to spiritual warfare using *κόσμος* is 16:32-33. In the context of discipleship, Jesus is preparing his disciples for what is about to occur. He warns, “you will be scattered” and “in the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” Sometimes in the FG, “in the world” can be used in a neutral, geographic sense (13:1, 17:11, 13), and if the statement were merely “in the world you have tribulation,” perhaps one could accept that meaning here, but the following phrase prevents that. “Take courage, I have overcome the world” implies *κόσμος* is the source of the tribulation, especially in light of the hatred and persecution of 15:16-20. The verb translated “overcome,” *νικάω*, is used only here in the FG, but its single other use in the Gospels is also very significant. In Luke 11:22, Jesus speaks about his casting out demons:

When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own homestead, his possessions are undisturbed; but when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers [Gk. *νικήσῃ* from *νικάω*] him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his plunder.

Jesus uses the same language to describe his overcoming the world as he does his overpowering of the devil when he casts out demons.¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, this same verb is used throughout Johannine literature in very similar ways to describe a conflict: Jesus and his followers versus Satan, his antichrists, and the world.¹⁸⁹

Even more striking is the placement of this verse just prior to the High Priestly Prayer of John 17 and the crucifixion which follows. On the surface, Jesus’ actions look

¹⁸⁸While this verb is a connection point between the overcoming of the world with the exorcism of demons, a similar connection is made in John 12:31b, “now the ruler of this world is cast out,” between the “exorcism” of the *devil* and his subsequent loss of rule over this world.

¹⁸⁹Other than two uses in Romans, this verb is found only in 1 John and Revelation. Its use in 1 John is particularly parallel to its use in the FG, connecting Satan, demons, and the world against disciples. It is used of overcoming “the evil one” (2:13, 14), the spirits of antichrist who are from the world (4:4), and the world (5:4, 5). Its use in Revelation also emphasizes the conflict between the saints/Lamb and the world/Satan (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 5:5; 6:2; 11:7; 12:11; 13:7; 15:2; 17:14; 21:7).

nothing like “overcoming” but more like being overcome. Yet through his death, Jesus has defeated the world.¹⁹⁰ Having secured the final victory, “he has made the world’s opposition pointless and beggarly.”¹⁹¹ This victory is to form the basis for his followers taking courage. Endurance in the face of tribulation can be maintained because of the knowledge of a victory won.¹⁹²

The High Priestly Prayer. Jesus’ prayer to the Father in John 17 contains more references to *κόσμος* than any other chapter in the FG and a variety of the different uses of *κόσμος* as well. In verses 5 and 24, the created order is in view when Jesus speaks of the glory and the love he had from the father before the world existed. Also, Jesus speaks of no longer being “in the world” (17:11), of his disciples still being “in the world” (17:11), and of not asking the father to take them “out of the world” (17:15). Jesus’ mission to the world is seen when he is speaking words “in the world” (17:13), when the Father sent him “into the world” (17:18), and when he sent the disciples into the world (17:18). However, the world is also characterized as alienated from God (“the world has not known [the Father]” 17:25), as not being included in Jesus’ petition (17:9), and as hating Jesus’ disciples (17:14). This hatred stems from the fact that Jesus and his disciples are not “of the world” (17:14, 16) and the disciples had come “out of the world” (17:6).¹⁹³ Satan’s direct influence over the world is implied in Jesus’ request in 17:15, that the Father not “take them out of the world, but . . . keep them from the evil one.”

¹⁹⁰“In the struggle between Jesus and the world, Jesus overcomes the world in his hour of passion, death, and resurrection (xvi:33) and casts down the Prince of this world (xii:31).” Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:509.

¹⁹¹Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 550.

¹⁹²So also Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:1049, who writes, “In the theology of the canonical Johannine corpus, believers overcome the evil one and the world by faithful obedience (1 John 2:13-14, 4:4), trusting in the accomplished victory of Christ (1 John 5:4-5). Such overcoming also demands persevering (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7).”

¹⁹³Note the play on words in vv. 14-15 with *ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου*. In v. 14, the idea of characterization is intended, while the same phrase in verse 15 relates more to geography.

Here Jesus indicates that Satan's influence over the world is the reason for the world's hatred of Jesus' disciples and the source of their danger in it.

These latter uses are consistent with other references to the world where *κόσμος* refers to humanity separated from God and in need of his mercy to reach out to them. However, while some have responded to Jesus in faith, most refuse, and those who refuse also oppose. I have argued above that 17:12 and 17:15 plainly address a battle between Jesus and Satan. In this context, one of spiritual conflict, the world is said to hate and be separate from Jesus and his disciples.

Conclusion. When examining “the world” in the FG as a whole, the negative uses of the term intensify in the second half of the Gospel.¹⁹⁴ This intensification is due to Jesus' preparation of his disciples during the Farewell Discourse for life “in the world” and persecution from “the world” after his departure. Nevertheless, the effect of the escalation serves to maintain a high level of awareness of cosmic conflict in the FG. As conflict with the Jews dies down, conflict with the world picks up; the author keeps some agent of opposition constantly before his readers.

In summary, the world generally rejects or opposes Jesus and his disciples (e.g., 1:10, 7:7, 15:18-19, 17:14, 17:25).¹⁹⁵ God, however, loves the world, and Jesus has come to act on behalf of the lost world, either in beneficent actions (e.g., 1:29, 3:16-17, 4:42, 12:46-47, 14:31, 17:21-23) or in judgment (e.g., 9:39, 12:31). The author of the FG consistently portrays the world as being alienated from God, under the authority of Satan, in need of Jesus' saving acts, and primarily opposed to the works and teachings of

¹⁹⁴Cassem, “Grammatical,” 89, fig. 1, is a helpful visual. He also employs principles of statistics to demonstrate the unlikelihood that such uses arose by chance. Therefore, “one can at least conclude with some security that the author is *deliberately* making use of the word in a different fashion in these different sections” (90). Emphasis added.

¹⁹⁵Note the exception in 12:19 where the Jews say “the world” has followed after Jesus.

Jesus, yet loved and sought by God through his Son.¹⁹⁶ In the cosmic battle, the world is aligned with Satan but is capable, through Christ's efforts on their behalf, of changing sides.¹⁹⁷

The Jews and the World

Having examined those passages which explicitly deal with the conflict between Jesus and the world, one additional issue requires attention—the relationship between “the Jews” and “the world” in the FG. The two terms are used similarly in many ways. For example, both are prevalent in the FG,¹⁹⁸ both are shown to be under the influence of the devil, and both often respond to Jesus with hostility and rejection.¹⁹⁹ Therefore, scholars rightly recognize somewhat of a connection between the two groups in the FG, but the extent and exact nature of that relationship is often ignored.²⁰⁰ When it is addressed, most scholars see John's use of “the Jews” to be generally similar to his use of “the world.” That is, as *κόσμος* stands for lost, fallen, rebellious humanity, the Jews

¹⁹⁶So also Köstenberger, *Missions of Jesus*, 187, who describes the world as “a dark place that is alienated from God but nevertheless remains an object of his love.”

¹⁹⁷Despite the fact that *κόσμος* can be used to describe both those who support and those who oppose Jesus, Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 55, rightly admonishes the reader to a unified interpretation of the term. “The *κόσμος* can be described both as the object of God's love (3.16) and receiver of the revelation (4.42; 6.33; 12.47), and also as the deceitful power which revolts against God (14.30; 16.11) and is rejected (12.31; 17.9). Both elements go to make up the concept of *κόσμος*, and it is wrong to try to distinguish two separate concepts of *κόσμος* in John.”

¹⁹⁸However, Ashton, “Identity and Function,” 66, interestingly notes how the Prologue narrows from the world (1:10) to the Jews (1:11), but the Gospel itself reverses the order, beginning with a focus on the Jews in the Book of Signs and broadening to a focus on the world in the Book of Glory.

¹⁹⁹See, e.g., even as early as the Prologue where “the world did not know Him” (1:10) and “His own did not receive Him” (1:11). “The rejection by Israel mirrors the rejection by the world—all these in rebellion against God.” Strauss, *Four Portraits*, 306. So also Bennema, *Encountering Jesus*, 31. However, his comment that ‘the Jews’ belong to this world (8:23) is not as helpful. In that passage, Jesus was there contrasting his *origin* from above with their origin “from below” or “of this world,” even though Jesus did highlight their unbelief in the following verses.

²⁰⁰Kierspel, *Jews and the World*, 111, esp. 111nn1-2, agrees and delineates the few exceptions.

serve as a “microcosm”²⁰¹ or a “representative”²⁰² of the world that they “exemplify” or “typify.”²⁰³ Lars Kierspel,²⁰⁴ however, argues the author of the FG uses the broader term, “the world,” as the more important of the two and the negative view of “the Jews” is conditioned by that of “the world.”²⁰⁵ He rejects equating the two terms, understanding “the Jews” to be a subset, an “embodiment” of the world, but argues the author of the FG accentuates “the world” as the primary culprit in the cosmic conflict and uses the actions of “the Jews” to illustrate the conflict.²⁰⁶ As such, the role and guilt of the Jews gives

²⁰¹Bennema, *Encountering Jesus*, 31; and Victor C. Pfitzner, “The Coronation of the King—The Passion in the Gospel of John,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 4 (1977): 10-11, who describes “the Jews” in the FG as “the personalized form of the kosmos.”

²⁰²Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 128; and James H. Charlesworth, “The Gospel of John: Exclusivism Caused by a Social Setting Different from that of Jesus (John 11:54 and 14:6),” in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel*, ed. R. Bieringer, D. Pollefeyt, and F. Vandecasteele-Vanneuville, 247-78 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001): 249. Brown’s position is similar: “The Jews belong to ‘the world,’ that is they are part of that division of men who are in dualistic opposition to Jesus and refuse to come to him as the light.” He rightfully adds, “John is not anti-Semitic; the evangelist is condemning not race or people but opposition to Jesus” (Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:lxix).

²⁰³Salier, “What’s in a World?” 113. Raabe, “Dynamic Tension,” 144, states that the Jews “epitomize” the world.

²⁰⁴Kierspel’s research and observations concerning who is speaking when these two terms are used in the FG is intriguing (Kierspel, *Jews and the World*, 93-94). He notes that 59 out of 71 times the narrator speaks of “Jews” while Jesus uses the term only 4 times. Similarly, 64 out of 78 times Jesus speaks of “the world” while the narrator uses the term only 7 times. As a corollary to this observation, he notes “the Jews” is primarily used in narrative while “the world” is primarily used in dialogue. He argues the reason for this is a strategy on the part of the author of the FG to “place loaded language at prominent places such as . . . the discourses of the story’s hero” so as to emphasize the culpability of “the world” over that of “the Jews” (138-39).

²⁰⁵Kierspel, *Jews and the World*, 153. He argues for this position based on two things: (1) The placement of the terms throughout the Gospel. He notes “world” is found in those hermeneutically important introductory sections (1:1-18 and chaps. 13-17) while “the Jews” are notably absent. (2) The belief that Jesus’ dialogue continues the paradigmatic function of the Prologue. Thus, since Jesus refers to “the world” and not “the Jews,” “the world” functions as the paradigm and “the Jews” merely follow. He concludes that in the individual pericopes “the readers’ attention is constantly pulled away from the Jewish antagonist and led to perceive ‘the Jews’ as only a [local] part of an opposition that is universal in scope.”

²⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 166. While the antagonism of “the world” universalizes culpability, Kierspel argues, “the Ἰουδαῖοι lose their exclusive role as antagonists” as κόσμος “transcends the racial boundaries of Jewish opposition” (167). His comments are true—by definition κόσμος is transcendental and κόσμος is clearly another antagonist, along with Ἰουδαῖοι in the FG. However, his conclusion that “the particular opposition (by the Jews) in a particular place (Judea) is explicitly, frequently and clearly converted into a theme of universal conflict between Jesus and the Roman empire (historical), if not between Jesus and humanity in general (existential)” (218) is an overstatement. While many of Kierspel’s arguments are valid, they do not

way to a universal conflict and culpability.

The FG links the two together. Note the only two uses of *διώκω* in the Gospel—in 5:18, “the Jews were persecuting Jesus,” and in John 15:19-20, “the world hates you. . . . If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.” The same verb is used to describe both the Jews and the world, but more importantly, Jesus refers to “they” in 15:20, referring to the Jews (5:18) but using “the world” as the referent in that context.²⁰⁷

The cooperation between Jewish and Roman authorities in Jesus’ crucifixion further links the Jews and the world together. Note their joint efforts to arrest Jesus (18:3) and the dialogue between Pilate and the Jewish leaders (chapters 18-19). This cooperation is further evident when one observes the parallelism used by the Fourth Evangelist in describing Pilate and Caiaphas. Köstenberger rightly notes several congruencies between the actions of the two men:

Both speak better than they know, Caiaphas unwittingly arguing for the necessity of Jesus’ provision of substitutionary atonement (11:49-50; 18:14), Pilate unwittingly acknowledging Jesus as the truth (18:37). Both also share in their complicity in Jesus’ death—Caiaphas as the one who handed Jesus over to Pilate (19:11), and Pilate in handing Jesus over to the Jews to have him crucified (19:16). In this momentous hour of salvation history, the evangelist therefore shows how these two characters are unequally yoked in the rejection of Jesus as the Messiah and ‘king of the Jews.’ Caiaphas’s action, representing the Jewish nation, and Pilate’s action, representing the non-Jewish world, include Jew as well as non-Jew in the sin of crucifying the Truth. Whether by actively pursuing Jesus’ death (the Jewish leaders) or by passively acquiescing to pressure (Pilate), the religious and political authorities in charge at the time of Jesus’ trial conspired together against the Lord’s

override the continual conflict presented by John between Jesus and the Jews. That conflict is not “converted” into universal guilt. That is, any emphasis used by the author to accentuate “the world” over “the Jews,” any attempt by the author to broaden the culpability beyond the Jews (while very possibly real), still does not negate the reality of a specific group in a specific place at a specific time, under the influence of satanic forces, arguing, opposing, persecuting, seeking, plotting, and ultimately killing Jesus. So also Niels Alstrup Dahl, “The Johannine Church and History,” in *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation*, ed. William Klassen and Graydon F. Snyder (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962): 129.

Kierspel’s observation that “modern Jews and Gentiles alike only understand this Gospel when they finish it with the confession ‘*mea culpa*’ on their lips” (218), a succinct comment on individual and universal culpability, is also insightful and accurate. However, this observation can be derived merely from the *use* and *nature* of *κόσμος* and need not necessarily be derived from its relationship to *Ἰουδαῖοι* in the FG.

²⁰⁷Dennis, “Seeking Jesus,” 169.

anointed, as Psalm 2 envisages.²⁰⁸

The nature of the relationship between “the Jews” and “the world” is significant for this investigation into John’s understanding of cosmic conflict. Whether one sees the relationship between these two terms in the FG as Kierspel does (where the role of “the Jews” as antagonists is minimized in light of the author’s use of “the world”) or as many other scholars do (both “the world” and “the Jews” are primary antagonistic agents in the FG, the Jews being a local example of the universal reality), a connection clearly exists. Furthermore, this connection is established by the author of the FG, who continues to present a well-developed understanding of the antagonists in the spiritual warfare against Jesus and his followers.

Pilate

Pilate is another figure, though minor,²⁰⁹ who is portrayed as in conflict with Jesus. John 18:28-19:22 describes the dialogue between Jesus and Pilate and between Pilate and the Jewish leaders. As a “ruler of this world” in the human, political sense, he is presented with Jesus and must decide what to do with him. The Jews call for Jesus’ death, yet Pilate repeatedly attempts to release him.

Though Pilate appears as an ambivalent political leader, not caring what ultimately happens except as it affects his own position, a closer examination of his actions (and inactions) reveals more about his character.²¹⁰ Pilate is confronted by Jesus

²⁰⁸Köstenberger, *Theology of John’s Gospel*, 452. Strauss, *Four Portraits*, 325, adds the Jews’ claiming of Caesar as their king confirms that they are “of the world.”

²⁰⁹Köstenberger, *Theology of John’s Gospel*, 453, agrees that Pilate is a minor figure, with the FG emphasizing the role of the Jewish leaders in the crucifixion of Jesus. So also Matsunaga, “Powers in Conflict,” 59. However, he is mentioned more in the FG than in any other Gospel (20 of the 55 times in the NT).

²¹⁰Some scholars believe Pilate to be ambivalent and neutral. Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 536, and C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 104-7, note a trend in the first century that shifts the primary blame from Pilate to the Jews. Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 653, however, argues Pilate is representative of “the state” and must decide for or against the truth. While likely a representative of John’s *κόσμος*, it is unlikely John intended Pilate to stand for the Roman political state. Christopher M. Tuckett, “Pilate in John 18-19: A Narrative-Critical Approach,” in

with the statement: “Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice” (18:37). Instead of hearing, understanding, and believing, Pilate demonstrates his failure to do so by replying with the rhetorical quip, “What is truth?” (18:38). Based on the previous comments regarding truth and the failure of the Jews to know it (8:40-46), the author demonstrates that Pilate is clearly siding with the Jews in his evaluation of Jesus,²¹¹ and thus on the wrong side of this cosmic conflict.

Pilate’s evaluation of Jesus as innocent (“I find no guilt in Him,” 18:38; 19:4, 6) is not evidence in his favor. Rather, Pilate’s actions of sending an innocent man to his death demonstrates either his weakness or his wickedness. In either case, he clearly does not “stand in the truth” (8:44).²¹²

Pilate’s guilt and position as Jesus’ enemy is supported further by the discussion he has with Jesus about “kingdom.”²¹³ Jesus comments that because his kingdom is not of this world, his disciples are not fighting to save his life. This calls to mind Peter’s actions with the sword and subsequent rebuke earlier in the chapter (18:10-11), perhaps carrying similar implications—Jesus will build his other-worldly kingdom

Narrativity in Biblical and Related Texts, ed. G. J. Brooke and J.-D. Kaestli (Leuven: University Press, 2000): 131, attributes this position held by Bultmann and others to their having “probably been influenced by their own situation of living in the era of the Nazi regime.” Still other scholars believe John is using Pilate to demonstrate that, while he wishes to be neutral, neutrality is impossible. These include Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:864; Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 143; Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 448; and M. W. G. Stibbe, *John as Storyteller: Narrative Criticism and the Fourth Gospel*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, vol. 73 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 109-10. Finally, other scholars believe the author’s portrayal of Pilate in the FG is clearly in opposition to Jesus. Tuckett, “Pilate in John,” esp. 132 argues this position adeptly and is joined by Duke, *Irony*, 126-37, and David Rensberger, *Overcoming the World: Politics and Community in the Gospel of John* (London: SPCK, 1988), 92-95.

²¹¹Robert Kysar, *John, the Maverick Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1976), 277, correctly sees “the governor’s posture throughout the trial is that of neutrality, but John will show that such neutrality is impossible—one is either of the light or of the darkness.”

²¹²So also Tuckett, “Pilate in John,” 136.

²¹³The concept of “kingdom” is discussed further in chap. 6, “The Metaphors of Cosmic Conflict.”

through his death, not through the swords of his disciples.²¹⁴

Even Pilate's question, "Where are you from?" (19:9) is telling. The Evangelist has already noted that the Jews do not understand where Jesus is from (7:25-44). Thus, Pilate unwittingly identifies himself with them and neither know Jesus at all.²¹⁵ Even though Pilate attempts to separate himself from the Jews by responding to Jesus sardonically, "I not a Jew, am I?" (18:35), he ultimately joins with the Jews in their plot to kill Jesus,²¹⁶ ordering his scourging (19:1) and delivering him to be crucified (19:16). In this way, Pilate is explicitly shown to be an accomplice of the devil in the spiritual conflict against Jesus.²¹⁷ Additionally, he stands as representative of the world and the Jews in their rejection of Jesus and the truth. John portrays "with devastating clarity the true nature of Pilate as one who is opposed to all that Jesus stands for and all that is of God," and "his narrative is showing all too clearly how Jesus and Pilate are

²¹⁴Kierspel, *Jews and the World*, 129-30, adds additional lines of evidence that demonstrate Pilate's character. These are more subtle and subjective but may still be valid. He cites the way in which Pilate limits Jesus' supposed authority to "King of the Jews" (19:19-22), rather than unmodified "King." Also, Pilate describes Jesus as a mere "man" (19:5), and he exaggerates his own authority over Jesus (19:10). Lastly, while Jesus says "he who delivered Me up to you has the greater sin," the author still implies Pilate's actions were sinful.

²¹⁵Tuckett, "Pilate in John," 137; Senior, *Passion of Jesus*, 91.

²¹⁶Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 593; and Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel*, 447, who notes, "Pilate . . . casts his lot with the Jewish leaders and the world because he cannot take his stand on the side of Jesus."

²¹⁷This point is further underscored by the use of *παράδιδωμι* to describe Judas' betrayal (6:64, 71; 12:4; 13:2, 11, 21; 18:2, 5, 36; 21:20), the Jews "delivering [Jesus] up" (18:30, 35; 19:11), and Pilate's "handing over" of Jesus to be crucified (19:16). However, the final use of the term in the FG comes as Jesus cries, "It is finished!" Then he "gave up [from *παράδιδωμι*] His spirit" (19:30). Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:1127, also traces this connection. Though this expression finds parallels in the Synoptics, the meaning of this verb here has definitely been colored by its previous uses in the FG (Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 965). Despite the actions of Judas, the Jews, and Pilate, Jesus remains the one who ultimately hands himself over in the end.

Kierspel, *Jews and the World*, 127, notes that the inclusion of Pilate and the soldiers in the conflict expands those responsible for Jesus' death beyond "the Jews." "The hostile 'world' consists of Jews and Gentiles." Compare the Synoptic accounts where this is made more explicit (Matt 20:19; Mark 10:33; Luke 18:32).

diametrically opposed to each other.”²¹⁸

Conclusion

Having made these observations, the investigation concerning the antagonistic agents in the cosmic conflict of the FG ends. A mere survey of the demonic and satanic references would have yielded some significant insights concerning the author’s understanding of the conflict. However, by examining the role of the human agents—Judas, the Jews, and the world and their interrelatedness with each other and with the devil—a more comprehensive view of the spiritual warfare in the FG is achieved. The author of the FG presents the devil as the mastermind behind Jesus’ crucifixion. He draws literary lines from the devil to Judas, the Jews, the world, and possibly to Pilate.²¹⁹ An array of opponents against Jesus and his disciples fills the pages of the FG, both demonic and human, as the author sets the stage and develops his plot of cosmic conflict.

²¹⁸Tuckett, “Pilate in John,” 132, 136.

²¹⁹So also Strauss, *Four Portraits*, 329-30, who labels the world, the Jews, and Satan as Jesus’ “opponents” and “antagonists” yet stops short of specifically portraying Satan as the force behind the others. Thus he fails to define their conflict as cosmic.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROTAGONISTS OF COSMIC CONFLICT

Having examined the role of Jesus' opponents in the FG, the investigation now turns to consider the agents on the other side of the battle line—the protagonists. Several characters appear in the narrative who side with Jesus, and their interactions with each other and with the antagonists further define John's understanding of cosmic conflict. This chapter discusses the allies individually, concluding with Jesus, the ultimate protagonist.

God the Father

For the sake of thoroughness, a few comments are in order regarding the role of God the Father in this conflict. His presence in the FG and role in cosmic conflict is almost exclusively limited to the relationship between him and the Son. He is presented as giving authority to judge to the Son (5:22), loving the Son (3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 15:9; 17:24), sending the Son (3:17; 5:30, 36, 38; 6:29, 38, 39, 44, 57; 7:16, 28, 29; 8:16, 18, 26, 29, 42; 9:4; 11:42; 12:44-45, 49; 13:3; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:3, 18, 25; 20:21), drawing individuals to the Son (6:37, 44-45, 65; 14:6), and giving the Son instructions as to what to say and do (5:19, 36; 8:28, 38; 10:25, 32, 37; 12:50; 14:24; 15:15). Rejection of the Son is rejection of the Father. Jesus says, "He who hates me hates my Father also" (15:23), and "He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him" (5:23). Outside of these references, the Father is not presented as a primary agent in the conflict of the FG; instead, the Son, through the initiative of, by the authority of, and in obedience to the Father, wages the war. This further emphasizes the christocentric nature of the conflict in the FG.

God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit plays an important role in the FG. He is identified with Jesus when John the Baptist sees the Spirit descending and remaining on Jesus (1:32, 33). The Spirit is associated with believers in that the new birth is a Spirit-birth (3:5, 6, 8), they receive the Spirit (3:34; 7:39), their worship is “in [S]pirit” (4:23, 24), and the Spirit, in contrast to the flesh, gives life (6:63). The most significant aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit related to cosmic conflict involves his work on behalf of believers after Jesus’ death. Jesus teaches his disciples about this work in three key passages.

John 14:16-26

The Holy Spirit is called the disciples’ “Helper”¹ for the first time in 14:16. In the verses that follow, he is named “the Spirit of Truth” whom “the world cannot receive” because it does not “know him.” Jesus’ followers, however, “do know him” (14:17); this one will indwell them. The world, as fallen humanity who rejects and opposes Jesus and God, will now have no part in the third Person of the Trinity either. Though not yet stated, the author seems to imply by the distinction he makes that the Spirit given to the disciples will be a help to them in and against the world. The type of help is made explicit in 14:26, “He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I [Jesus] said to you.” This ministry of the Holy Spirit to the disciples will prove essential as they participate in the cosmic conflict.²

John 15:26-16:16

The Helper is mentioned again in 15:26-16:16 where he is identified with two roles—assisting the disciples and convicting the world. First, Jesus informs the disciples that the world hates them and will persecute them as it does him (15:18-22). He reminds

¹παράκλητος.

²The truth proclaimed by the disciples who are empowered by the Holy Spirit is discussed as a weapon of cosmic conflict in chap. 6, pp. 229-33.

them, however, that this hatred and persecution is in accordance with God's plan and fulfills Scripture (15:25). Jesus then states, "When the Helper comes . . . He will bear witness of Me, and you will bear witness also, because you have been with me from the beginning" (15:26-27). This statement suggests the disciples' witness is related to the Spirit's, and it seems best to interpret those witnesses as congruent. That is, the Holy Spirit will testify *through* the disciples.³

The passage continues into the next chapter where the goal in Jesus' instruction is given: "that you may be kept from stumbling" (16:1). The possibility of stumbling is a result of the coming persecution described in the next verse. "They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God" (16:2). This foreboding warning of coming persecution and the exhortation not to stumble in it, coupled with the warning of 15:18-20, forms an *inclusio* with the presence of the Helper in the lives of the disciples in the middle.⁴ Note also the use of "remember" twice in this passage (15:20, 16:4) as a means to cope with the persecution that comes. It is not incidental that one of the primary roles

³So also Rudolph Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 553-54; and J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2010), 825, who likewise notes, "These twin testimonies, in fact, are not two but one, for the Advocate will testify solely in and through the lives and lips of the disciples." Cf. Mark 13:11 and Luke 12:11. So also Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12-21*, The New American Commentary, vol. 25b (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 160, who notes, "The role of the Spirit here, then, is likened to that of a supporter for the disciples in witnessing to a hostile world." George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 277, is more clear: "this witness of the Paraclete is not a phenomenon apart from that of the disciples, but *inseparably associated with it*." Emphasis added. Edwin Clement Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), 482, adds, "[The Spirit's] witness is the witness of the Father to the Son through the disciples. . . . They are the instruments of the operation of the Spirit, and He works in them."

⁴Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 824, agrees, "In the face of the world's hatred, the disciples' only recourse is 'the Advocate.'" Also, Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 614, "The work of the Holy Spirit in the church is done in the context of persecution. . . . He comes to assist people caught up in the thick of battle and tried beyond their strength." Though Borchert, *John 12-21*, 159, sees a major section break at 15:26, he, nevertheless, sees the Spirit as "the divine resource . . . to assist them in coping with the hostility they are to experience."

given to the Spirit is to cause the disciples to remember Jesus' teachings (14:26).⁵ Thus, the first role of the Spirit in this passage is to assist the disciples as they witness of Jesus to the world and to enable them to endure persecution from the world as they witness, being reminded of Jesus' instruction.

The second role assigned to the Spirit in this passage is to "convict the world" (16:8). The legal language used earlier in the Gospel (e.g., 3:19; 9:39; 12:31) is employed again, but here the Spirit brings the case. Scholars differ concerning the intention of the Spirit's prosecution.⁶ Some argue the judgment has been given and the world is found guilty, sentenced, and condemned, such that the Spirit's aim is to demonstrate the world's guilt and the Father's justice in its sentencing (to either the world or the disciples).⁷ Others, however, argue the role of the Spirit is to convince the world of its guilt by exposing its sin with the ultimate aim being repentance and redemption.⁸ The matter is further complicated by the wide range of meanings associated with the verb ἐλέγχω,⁹ the difficulties associated with interpreting the three aspects of the Spirit's

⁵So also Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 4 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 431: "The disciples, directed, *reminded*, and strengthened by the Spirit, give witness to Jesus in the midst of a hostile world." Emphasis added.

⁶Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, The New Century Bible Commentary (1972; repr., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1987), 500, notes the "wide disagreement among scholars about its precise interpretation." Similarly, Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to St. John*, Black's New Testament Commentaries, vol. 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 419, states the issues in this passage "are set out cryptically and their interpretation is highly disputed."

⁷F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel and Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1983), 1:319, states, "judgment in the supreme court has been given for the Son of Man and against the world." Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, Anchor Bible Commentary (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 2:711-14, argues for this but notes the audience to be convinced of the world's guilt is the disciples.

⁸William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel according to John*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 2:324-26; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 536-37; Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 484; and Beasley-Murray, *John*, 280-82, seem to hold to this position. For Lincoln, *Gospel according to St. John*, 418-20, it does not matter: "whether those in the world are subjectively convinced of their guilt does not appear to be in view here. They may or may not be."

⁹Walter Bauer et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early*

conviction (περὶ ἁμαρτίας καὶ περὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ περὶ κρίσεως), and how those aspects relate to their ὅτι clause. If the passage emphasizes the Spirit's role in bringing the world to repentance, this would be congruent with the gracious action of God toward the κόσμος found in the first half of the Gospel. If the passage, however, emphasizes the world's guilt and refusal to repent, that would be congruent with the normal response of the world to Jesus and Jesus' comments concerning the world in the second half of the Gospel.¹⁰

Additional evidence is found in the close context and the Gospel as a whole. In this context, the coming of the Paraclete is to the advantage of the disciples, and they would seem to benefit more from the salvation of the world through their witness than from its judgment. In the other "Spirit" passages in the FG, the Helper helps by empowering the proclamation of the disciples, especially in 15:26-27 and 20:21-23. Evangelism is explicitly the goal in 20:21-23 and is not excluded from 15:26-27. Thus, the evidence points toward the following interpretation: When Jesus goes away, the disciples will be benefited (cf. "greater works than these," 14:12) with the coming of the Spirit who will, through their ministry, convince the world of its sin, Jesus' righteousness, and its status of judgment with the end that some of the world will repent and believe.¹¹

John 20:19-23

The final passage pertaining to the role of the Holy Spirit and cosmic conflict

Christian Literature, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), s.v. "ἐλέγχω," gives: (1) "bring to light, expose, set forth"; (2) "convict or convince someone of something, point something out to someone"; (3) "reprove, correct"; (4) "punish, discipline." For John 16:8, they suggest (2). However, "convict," "convince," and "point out" all carry great differences in connotation, so the problem remains.

¹⁰See N. H. Cassem, "A Grammatical and Contextual Inventory of the Use of κόσμος in the Johannine Corpus with Some Implications for a Johannine Cosmic Theology," *New Testament Studies* 19 (1972): 83, 89.

¹¹This interpretation is consistent with the portrayal of κόσμος in the rest of the FG. This interpretation also makes sense when one examines sin, righteousness, and judgment as the subject matter of sermons in Acts. Hendriksen, *Gospel according to John*, 2:326, points to Peter's sermon in Acts 2 as dealing "exactly with these three subjects." Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 484, agrees and points to Acts 24:25.

is Jesus' commissioning of the disciples and his bestowal of the Spirit to/on them in 20:19-23. Following Jesus' resurrection, the disciples gather together behind locked doors for fear of the Jews. Jesus comes in and says, "Peace be with you," shows his hands and side, repeats "Peace be with you," and then commissions them with the statement, "as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." Then, Jesus breathes on them, says, "Receive the Holy Spirit," and states that sins have been forgiven or retained based on the actions of the disciples.

No matter which interpretation one believes concerning what actually occurs in 20:22,¹² most scholars agree this act empowers the disciples for ministry.¹³ The commission of verse 21 is followed by the giving of the Spirit for power to fulfill that commission in verse 22, which is then followed by an explanation of the ministry in verse 23.¹⁴ The forgiving or retaining of sins is the content of that ministry. That is, through the proclamation of the gospel in the power of the Spirit, individuals receive or reject Jesus. Those who receive have their sins forgiven; those who reject retain their sins.¹⁵

¹²For a discussion of the various views, see Russell Dale Quinn, "Expectation and Fulfillment of the Gift of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010); Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 647-55. The issue centers on whether this event is an enacted parable, a partial bestowal of the Spirit, or the Johannine Pentecost. In any case, the implications for the role of the Holy Spirit in the cosmic warfare of the FG remain the same—Jesus gave (in whatever sense) the Holy Spirit to his disciples to equip and empower them for a ministry of proclamation.

¹³The following are representatives of each camp. Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 651, advocates the old theory of Theodore of Mopsuestia that Jesus' actions were a symbolic promise of the Spirit. So also Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 259. Bruce, *Gospel and Epistles of John*, 1:392, esp. 1:392n18, seems to hold to a real, though partial, outpouring of the Spirit. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 380-82, believes this is John's version of Pentecost. All three individually comment that the purpose of the giving of the Spirit is to empower the disciples for the ministry to which they have just been called.

¹⁴Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 644, concurs, "This saying also conveys the central content of the disciples' mission, referred to in verse 21, namely to proclaim with authority, as representatives of the exalted Lord, the remission of sins as the goal of his mission from the Father and therefore also the goal of their mission from him."

¹⁵Concerning ἀφέωνται and κεκράτηνται, the passive is an example of a divine passive. See, e.g., Bruce, *Gospel and Epistles of John*, 1:392; Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, Anchor Bible Commentary (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 2:1024; and Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 316,

The Spirit's role is empowering the witness of the disciples.

In conclusion, the Holy Spirit is presented as serving three primary functions in the FG in the conflict between the forces of God and the forces of evil, all related to assisting the disciples. First, he assists the disciples by strengthening them in persecution. Second, he assists them by: (1) empowering their witness and proclamation to the world; (2) convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment; and (3) granting to some in the world the forgiveness of sins. Third, he assists the disciples by reminding them of Jesus' teachings and guiding them in truth so as to equip them to endure and witness as they wage war against the enemies of God.

Angels

The FG mentions angels on only three occasions. In 1:51, Jesus predicts the disciples will see God's angels ascending and descending on him. In 12:29, God the Father audibly answers Jesus' prayer and those standing by suppose an angel has spoken to him. Finally, in 20:12, angels make their actual appearance in the FG, sitting in the tomb of the resurrected Jesus, conversing with Mary.¹⁶ Overall, angels play no significant role in the cosmic conflict of the FG.

Even though they do not add significantly to the question of John's understanding of cosmic conflict in the FG, angels' muted presence does seem to better serve John's theological purposes. In 1:51, they are useful in identifying Jesus as the reality to the OT type—Jacob's Ladder. In 5:4, their absence demonstrates Jesus' ability to heal without the need of water-stirring angels. In 12:29, they are mentioned in a diminutive sense. Those around did not understand that Jesus had audibly received direct

though he does not use that term. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar, Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 581, categorizes the perfect as a proleptic (futuristic) perfect.

¹⁶A fourth reference occurs in 5:4, where an angel is rumored to stir the waters of a pool to provide healing, but this text is absent from the best manuscripts.

communication from the Father. Angels were their feeble attempt to explain it, thus highlighting Jesus' communion with the Father. And, of course, in 20:12, they sit as visible testimony to the risen Jesus. In all four references, angels directly or indirectly serve to further identify Jesus as the Messiah. This is congruent with the way the author uses the accusation of demons to highlight Jesus' true nature and how the various signs reveal that nature.¹⁷

The Disciples

The divine and angelic protagonists in John's theology of cosmic conflict have been examined; attention now shifts to the humans who side with Jesus. Throughout the FG, these are called his disciples.

As a Group

Collectively, the disciples clearly side with Jesus, as is evidenced by their following him, believing him, baptizing in his name, learning from him, and being prayed for by him. However, other than a few individual instances, they do not engage as active participants in actual battle or conflict with the antagonists in the text of the FG.¹⁸ Their role in the conflict primarily takes place in the future, persevering in persecution and proclaiming Christ to the world.

In the Farewell Discourse, Jesus' instruction to the disciples makes them aware of persecution that will come upon them from the world. As they continue Jesus' mission after his death and resurrection, like him, they will also be hated and persecuted (15:16ff.). Jesus has spoken of his "hour" throughout the narrative of the FG, meaning

¹⁷So also Kikuo Matsunaga, "Powers in Conflict: A New Clue to the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel" (Ph.D. thesis, McGill University, 1969), 280.

¹⁸Contrast this with their participation in demon exorcisms in the Synoptics. The disciples are instructed and empowered to perform exorcisms (Matt 10:1; Mark 3:15; 6:7; Luke 9:1), actually perform exorcisms (Mark 6:13), and attempt but fail to perform exorcisms (Mark 9:18, 28-29).

the time of his crucifixion when the persecution and threats on his life will come to a head and he will lay down his life.¹⁹ Similarly, Jesus speaks of “an hour [that] is coming” in the future (16:2) when the disciples will also be persecuted and killed. They will be cast out of the synagogue (16:2, 4), scattered (16:32), have tribulation in the world (16:33), and some will be killed (16:2).²⁰ The world and the Jews are in conflict with the disciples in this cosmic battle as the dethroned ruler of the world uses his residual power to hinder their efforts.

The persecution the disciples will experience is the result of their active nonconformity to the world (15:19; 17:6, 14, 16) and their witness to the world about Jesus (15:25-27; 20:21-23). This witness to the world is their active participation in the cosmic war being waged after Jesus’ departure with the aid of the Helper. The author of the FG, in both his narrative comments and in Jesus’ speech, uses “sending” language to describe the disciples’ mission.²¹ That is, they do not merely sit and wait for the battle to come to them in the form of persecution; they are deployed into the hostile world to bear witness of Jesus.²² In the High Priestly Prayer, Jesus says that as the Father sent him, so he has sent the disciples (17:16). The same thing is said after Jesus’ resurrection when he gives them the Holy Spirit (20:21). The result of the sending in John 17 and John 20 is seen two verses later in each case where Jesus prays “for those also who believe in Me *through their word*” (17:18, emphasis added) and where Jesus speaks of those whose sins

¹⁹In 4:21, 23; 5:25, 28, “an hour is coming.” In 7:30; 8:20, the hour “has not yet come.” In 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1, the hour “has come.”

²⁰Cf. John 21:18-19 where Jesus predicts Peter’s martyrdom specifically.

²¹For the most part, the author of the FG uses ἀποστέλλω and πέμπω with no distinction in meaning. Note, however, his use of ἀποστέλλω exclusively in John 17.

²²So also, Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:509. After noting that Jesus has cast out the prince of this world and overcome the world, he adds, “the working out of this victory against the world must continue after Jesus’ departure. Jesus sends his followers out in the world (xvii 18), and their faith in him is to overcome the world (1 John v 4-5). Their purpose is to make the world believe in Jesus and come to know his mission from the Father (John xvii 21, 23).”

are forgiven and retained (20:23). As the disciples proclaim Jesus, those in the world are drawn to him (6:44), leaving their unbelief and rebellion to trust Jesus and follow him. The FG portrays the disciples as participating in the cosmic battle by taking the light of the truth of Jesus into the world (including to “the Jews,” cf. 8:23) and its darkness and bearing witness of Jesus (15:27).²³

Individual Disciples

While the part the disciples play in the cosmic drama is primarily a group role, occasionally individuals rise to the front of the narrative and take up the sword of conflict (figuratively and literally). Peter, Thomas, John the Baptist, and Nicodemus are examples.²⁴

Peter’s character is prominent in the Synoptics. Of all the disciples, he receives the most attention in the Gospels. In the FG, Peter speaks as representative of the twelve and says, “We have believed and come to know that You have the words of eternal life” (6:69). However, Jesus responds that not all believe. In fact, “one of you is a devil” (6:70). As such, Peter’s faith is contrasted with the betrayal of Judas. Similarly, when Jesus is washing the disciples’ feet, Peter requests that his whole body be washed! Jesus contrasts Peter with Judas again, saying, “He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and *you* are clean, but *not all* of you” (13:10, emphasis added). Peter’s participation in conflict escalates as the soldiers come to arrest Jesus (18:10-11). Once again, in contrast to Judas’ betrayal, Peter shows cautionless zeal, drawing his sword and cutting off the right ear of the high priest’s slave, Malchus. In this

²³Contrast this with the role of the disciples in the Synoptics. Jesus sent them out, but their duties also included healing diseases and casting out demons in addition to proclaiming the kingdom (Matt 10:1; Mark 3:15; Luke 9:1-2).

²⁴Other individuals in the FG clearly side with Jesus—Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Joseph of Arimathea, the other apostles, many Jesus healed, etc. However, these do not become specifically involved in the FG against the antagonists.

event, Peter attempts to join the cosmic conflict of Jesus versus Satan through physical violence, but Jesus responds by stopping Peter, stating that he will drink the cup the Father gives.²⁵

Peter appears in the text of the FG two other significant times. First, he falters in his witness for Jesus, denying the Lord three times (18:15-18, 25-27). Then after Jesus' resurrection, Jesus reinstates Peter with three confessions of Peter's love for Jesus (21:15-23). Neither one of these particularly relates to the discussion of cosmic conflict except to illustrate that even those who are in the camp of Jesus may, at times, not completely behave as such.²⁶

Thomas is also briefly mentioned in connection to conflict in the FG. As Jesus is preparing to return to Judea in light of Lazarus' death, the disciples object, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone You, and are You going there again?" (11:8). Thomas, though ignorant of the sovereign timing of Jesus' death, encourages the other disciples to follow Christ to the death in Judea: "Let us also go, that we may die with Him" (11:16). Whether his statement is one of courageous martyrdom or resignation, Thomas demonstrates his willingness to die for Christ in this battle against his opposition.²⁷

John the Baptist is another figure specifically involved in conflict with antagonistic forces. He is "sent from God" so as to "bear witness" of Jesus in order that

²⁵Cf. 18:36, where Jesus tells Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." Instead, Jesus will accept death and, as Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishing, 2003), 2:1112, notes, "Jesus' way called on even his servants to die (12:26; 13:16; 15:20)" as well.

²⁶However, in Peter's dialogue with Jesus, Jesus predicts Peter will die a martyr's death (21:18-19), a reference to the coming persecution Jesus taught about in the Farewell Discourse.

²⁷Thomas also has a brief period of unbelief (20:24-29). While sustained unbelief is characteristic of the world and not genuine disciples, Thomas' doubt is quickly remedied by an appearance of the risen Jesus, thus demonstrating his true allegiance.

“all might believe through him”²⁸ (1:6; cf. 1:33; 3:28). His mission is consistent with that of the other disciples; however, John fulfills his mission in the FG rather than after Jesus’ death. Consequently, he is persecuted during Jesus’ life and ministry. This includes being confronted by a subgroup of the Jews (1:19), later thrown into prison (3:24), and eventually killed (Matt 14:10; Mark 6:27). While his role as forerunner of Jesus is unique in the narrative of salvation history, his actions of proclamation and the resulting persecution are typical of all disciples.

John 9 tells the story of a man born blind whom Jesus heals on the Sabbath. This incident escalates the conflict between Jesus and the Jews in addition to bringing persecution to the one who was healed. After calling Jesus “a prophet” (9:17) and refusing to call him a sinner, the man testifies to the veracity of Jesus’ powers (9:24-25), and the Jews label him a disciple of Jesus (9:28, an accusation made a reality in 9:35-39). After he states his belief that Jesus is from God, he is excommunicated from the synagogue.²⁹

Nicodemus plays an extremely minor role in the cosmic conflict of the FG. When initially introduced, he is characterized by misunderstanding and leaves the scene not understanding or following Christ (3:1-21). The next time he appears, he receives a mild rebuke from the Pharisees, who are attempting to arrest Jesus, when he brings up the necessity of hearing a man before passing judgment (7:50-52). This incident is an example of a mild form of persecution, mentioned here simply for the sake of thoroughness.³⁰

²⁸Notice the repetition of the idea of witness: οὗτος ἦλθεν εἰς μαρτυρίαν ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός, ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι’ αὐτοῦ. Emphasis added.

²⁹Being put out of the synagogue is a form of persecution Jesus predicts will happen to his disciples after his death (16:2).

³⁰His identity as a disciple is not confirmed until John 19:39, where he assists Joseph of Arimathea in burying the body of Jesus.

Conclusion

In conclusion, an examination of the role of the disciples in the spiritual warfare of the FG has yielded several insights. First, the disciples are to expect persecution from the Jews and the world because of their other-worldliness and their mission. However, the influence of Satan lies behind the actions of the Jews and the world; thus, this persecution is truly cosmic in nature. Second, their active role in the conflict is limited to their being sent into the world with one primary job—the proclamation of the truth of Christ, being strengthened and empowered by the Holy Spirit.³¹ Third, they do not do direct battle with Satan or demons in the FG. This Gospel emphasizes Jesus' victory over Satan at the cross, rather than individual battles with demons. Lastly, Peter's action and Jesus' reaction demonstrate the cosmic battle, in one sense, is not earthly; it occurs on earth, but it is characterized and fought by other means.³²

Jesus

Jesus is the main character of the FG. The author's purpose in writing is to convince his readers to "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (20:30-31). Consequently, his character permeates the work, making a detailed analysis of Jesus' role

³¹Phillip Ross Bethancourt, "Christ the Warrior King: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Analysis of the Divine Warrior Theme in Christology" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), 179, rightly notes the role of the disciples and, by extension, the future church when he states, "Christ the warrior king continues to carry out his mission through the church against his arch-rival Satan."

³²So also Beasley-Murray, *John*, 331, who notes, "It is essential that Jesus' statement should not be misconstrued as meaning that his kingdom is not *active* in this world, or *has nothing to do with* this world. . . . When the Gospels depict Jesus powerfully active among people, delivering them from Satan's thrall and bringing to them the blessings of God's beneficent rule, they purpose to describe the kingdom of God in action in this world." Similarly, Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel*, 448, says, "Jesus' kingdom is not of this world—that is, it does not have its origin or derive its authorization from the world; rather, it transcends the political and material sphere of this world." However, in a footnote (448n57), he qualifies this statement, emphasizing the earthliness of the kingdom. "Jesus' kingdom *affects* this world, but it does not *belong* to it." Emphasis original.

Jesus' description about himself and his disciples (17:13-14) also applies to his kingdom: It is "in the world" but not "of the world."

in cosmic conflict in the FG a daunting task. However, much of what needs to be said concerning Jesus has already been addressed when the other agents were discussed.

Additionally, the cosmic conflict of the FG is very christocentric. Speaking particularly of Jesus' role in relation to Pilate, Haenchen notes Jesus "is the fixed point around which everything turns."³³ Most every paragraph in the FG has Jesus present and speaking. Even those dialogues in which Jesus is not present relate directly or indirectly to him.³⁴ The most important aspect of the other characters is how they relate to Jesus. For this reason, the investigation of Jesus has been postponed until now and will proceed by considering Jesus' interaction with these characters, one at a time, focusing on what can be learned about Jesus' role in the warfare.

In Relation to Demons

As discussed earlier, demons do not play an active part in the narrative of the FG. Their appearance is limited to the three times Jesus is accused of being demon-possessed. Consequently, Jesus does not cast out any demons in the FG. A thorough examination of cosmic conflict must address this absence of exorcisms.

The absence of exorcisms³⁵ in the FG is puzzling for several reasons. First, exorcisms are prominent in each of the three Synoptics.³⁶ Mark even begins the record of

³³Ernst Haenchen, *John: A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Hermeneia, trans. Robert W. Funk (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 2:188n3. R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 145, agrees, "Jesus is the center of all exchanges."

³⁴See, e.g., 3:22-36; 9:17-34; 11:47-57.

³⁵Contra Edwin K. Broadhead, "Echoes of an Exorcism in the Fourth Gospel?" *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 86 (1995): 111-19, who suggests the remnant of a previous exorcism story can be found in 6:66-71. He suggests the form of this pericope gives evidence that it is based on a Synoptic exorcism story and has been transformed through stage-by-stage development into its final form, communicating the faith and failure of Jesus' disciples. Broadhead's ideas, though interesting, are largely conjecture and require the reader to assume the progressive, stage-by-stage development of the FG.

³⁶So also Eric Plumer, "The Absence of Exorcisms in the Fourth Gospel," *Biblica* 78 (1997): 350.

the ministry of Jesus with an exorcism (Mark 1:23-28). In Matthew, Jesus casts out demons, bringing in the kingdom as the one who binds the strong man and then plunders his house (12:28-29). In Luke's first healing story, Jesus casts out several demons (Luke 4:31-41).³⁷ Furthermore, Jesus gives the disciples instructions to cast out demons in the Synoptics (Mark 3:14-15), but no such command exists in the FG.³⁸

Second, John's purpose, stated in 20:30-31, is to give evidence of Jesus being the Christ. In the Synoptics, this evidence is found in exorcisms. Thus it seems exorcisms in the FG would also have given evidence of Jesus' messiahship, thereby fulfilling John's stated purpose.³⁹

Third, some have suggested that exorcism figured prominently in the life and growth of the early church, describing it as "one very powerful method of their mission and propaganda"⁴⁰ and "well-established in Christianity and widely used."⁴¹ Though likely an overstatement, Ramsay MacMullen describes exorcism as "possibly the most highly-rated activity of the early Christian church."⁴² If exorcism played even a small

³⁷Graham Twelftree, "Demon, Devil, Satan," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992): 170, argues Luke's presentation of Jesus extends his authority over demons, compared to that of Mark, making Jesus' exorcisms in Luke more prominent.

³⁸Graham Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 28-29. He also contrasts the Synoptics' emphasis on Jesus as exorcist with the Pauline Epistles' silence on this matter.

³⁹Ibid., 184, agrees and adds in "Spiritual Powers," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000): 797-98, "the clearest statements about spiritual powers come from the Gospels, which portray the exorcisms of Jesus as the first stage of their defeat. . . . Jesus' exorcisms demonstrate his divine power and point to the continuing struggle between the holy God and that which contaminates his creation." So also Twelftree, "Demon, Devil, Satan," 163.

⁴⁰Adolf von Harnack, *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* (New York: Arno, 1972), 1:160.

⁴¹Christine Trevett, *Montanism: Gender, Authority and the New Prophecy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 157.

⁴²Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire (A.D. 100-400)* (London: Yale University Press, 1984), 27. See Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 25-29, who cites these sources but also helpfully balances them with contra sources that tend to minimize the role of exorcisms in the early church.

role in the first- and second-century church, it seems stories of Jesus' exorcisms would have been germane to John's audience and could have presented Jesus as the exorcist *par excellence*.

Assuming the Fourth Evangelist did have a developed theology of cosmic conflict, why did he not describe Jesus' exorcisms? As with the discussion concerning the absence of a Temptation narrative below, plausible reasons should be sought. The following discussion outlines the proposed solutions.⁴³

Inadequate solutions. Several inadequate reasons for the author's omission have been suggested. Perhaps the Evangelist simply is not aware of Jesus' exorcism ministry. Furthermore, perhaps this ignorance can be explained by the author's geographic location. If the author is the Beloved Disciple and if he is from Judea, then perhaps he is unaware of Jesus' exorcisms which take place in Galilee.⁴⁴ However, the Evangelist has knowledge of and recounts other miracles that take place in Galilee. In fact, of the seven signs in the FG, four take place in Galilee.⁴⁵ On the other hand, many have proposed the existence of a signs source from which the author draws much of his material.⁴⁶ If so, then perhaps the author's ignorance may be due to the absence of exorcisms in the signs source itself. Even granting this, one is still left with the possibility (rather probability) that the author still knows of exorcisms even though not contained in his source.⁴⁷ While it may explain the absence of exorcisms, the likelihood

⁴³Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 183-205, offers the most comprehensive discussion on this subject to date. I am indebted to him for much of the material that follows as evidenced in the footnotes.

⁴⁴A similar position is held by Sean P. Kealy, *That You May Believe: The Gospel according to John* (Slough: St. Paul Publications, 1978), 6-7.

⁴⁵John 2:1-11; 4:46-54; 6:5-14, 16-24.

⁴⁶For a defense of the "signs source" theory, see Robert Fortna, *The Fourth Gospel and its Predecessor: From Narrative Source to Present Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).

⁴⁷Note also the various passages in which the author of the FG mentions the multitude of Jesus' miracles that he chooses not to record (e.g., 7:31, 12:37, and 20:30). Furthermore, Plumer, "Absence

of John's ignorance seems slim.⁴⁸

If the author knows of exorcisms but does not include them, "it is only reasonable to conclude that the Fourth Evangelist has *deliberately* excluded references to exorcism from his Gospel."⁴⁹ Thus, Boyd is mistaken when he writes, "John's precise reasons for omitting Jesus' exorcisms are disputed, but for our purposes they are irrelevant."⁵⁰ If the Fourth Evangelist intentionally omits exorcisms, his reason for doing so is relevant. The following proposed solutions assume the author knows of Jesus' exorcisms but still inadequately explain why the Evangelist would have chosen to exclude exorcisms from his record of the life of Jesus.

Some scholars have alternately suggested that the author of the FG was a Sadducee, and, as such, did not believe in the existence of angels or demons.⁵¹ While this would help to explain an aversion the author has to exorcisms, it would not explain why the author writes about angels (1:51, 20:12) and records the accusation of Jesus being demon-possessed.⁵² Still others suggest that the author attempts to combat certain gnostic teachings that pertain to various levels of spiritual intermediaries.⁵³ Therefore,

of Exorcisms," 353, notes from a source, form, and redaction criticism perspective, "the Synoptic tradition is thoroughly permeated by references to Jesus' exorcisms." He argues various sources (Mark, Q, M, and L), forms (narratives, parables, and sayings), and even Evangelists' summary statements contain references to Jesus' exorcisms.

⁴⁸Plumer, "Absence of Exorcisms," 354, states the likelihood that the author of the FG is unaware of Jesus' exorcisms is "so remote as to be negligible." Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 185, concurs, "It is unreasonable to maintain that the Fourth Evangelist was unaware of the strong and widespread tradition that Jesus was a popular and powerful exorcist."

⁴⁹Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 185. Emphasis added.

⁵⁰Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 227. However, he is correct when he continues, "for this omission certainly does not lessen in the least John's understanding of Jesus' ministry as an act of war."

⁵¹See Acts 23:8. R. H. Strachan, *The Fourth Gospel: Its Significance and Environment*, 3rd ed. (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1941), 86. See also D. E. H. Whitely, "Was John Written by a Sadducee?" in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, vol. 2, ed., H. Temporini and W. Haase (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1985): 2481-2505.

⁵²See also Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 186.

⁵³G. H. C. MacGregor, *The Gospel of John* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1928), xxxii-

the Fourth Evangelist avoids exorcism altogether as part of his “anti-Gnostic polemic.” This position is similarly weak, based primarily on the assumption that passages that emphasize the goodness of creation or those that stress the reality of Jesus’ humanity must stem from an anti-Gnostic polemic.⁵⁴

Other possible solutions have been proposed that may contain more merit than those already mentioned but which are still too weak when standing alone to adequately explain the lack of exorcisms in the FG. These include an awareness of the Beelzebul controversy, an attempt to distance the Messiah from the genre of magicians that were prevalent in Jesus’ day, the lack of a theological emphasis on kingdom in the FG, and the supplemental nature of the FG.

Concerning Beelzebul, Jesus had previously been accused of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebul.⁵⁵ Some scholars maintain that John purposefully avoids presenting Jesus as an exorcist in order to avoid reminding his audience of this accusation which had caused “acute embarrassment to Jesus’ followers since the time of the public ministry.”⁵⁶ This position maintains the Fourth Evangelist has pastoral concerns, writing to bolster the faith of Christians and to help keep them from falling away. Since Jesus’ exorcisms were under the cloud of suspicion, and he was suspected of being “in league with Satan,” the author could not present Jesus as an exorcist. His reputation as such had already been marred beyond repair because of the Beelzebul controversy.⁵⁷ While it is possible John’s audience was in danger of apostasy caused by persecution, and John writes to strengthen their resolve, the argument that this

xxxiv.

⁵⁴Plumer, “Absence of Exorcisms,” 366.

⁵⁵Mark 3:22-27; Matt 12:22-30; Luke 11:14-23.

⁵⁶Plumer, “Absence of Exorcisms,” 360-61, believes this is a significant part of the explanation of the absence of exorcisms.

⁵⁷Ibid., 362.

controversy was an “embarrassing situation” for the early church is overstated. In fact, as demonstrated above, the Evangelist uses the accusation to turn the tables on Jesus’ accusers.

Another view suggests the author suppresses the exorcisms of Jesus in an effort to distinguish him from other healers and magicians of his day.⁵⁸ This suggestion has additional credence if it is assumed that the FG was written from Ephesus where its magic is well-documented.⁵⁹ However, Twelftree notes evidence to the contrary. Using spittle (9:1-7) and healing from a distance (4:46-54) were familiar methods of healers and magicians. Had the author truly intended to distance Jesus from them, he would have been better served to leave out these details.⁶⁰

Still other scholars have rightly recognized the small role the theme of “kingdom” plays in the FG compared to the Synoptics⁶¹ where exorcisms are a chief evidence that the kingdom is arriving.⁶² Consequently, since kingdom is deemphasized in the FG, so is exorcism.⁶³ However, even though “kingdom of God” is infrequent, the closely-related theme of the kingship of Jesus does occur with more regularity than in the Synoptics.⁶⁴ Additionally, the close link between kingdom and exorcisms in the

⁵⁸Ibid., 357-59, esp. 358, also believes this is part of the reason for the absence of exorcisms: “All [evidence] combined strongly to suggest that the Evangelist was deliberately attempting to obviate any possible misinterpretation of Jesus as a magician or wonderworker.” Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 361n44, also suggests this may be part of the reason for the absence of exorcisms in the FG.

⁵⁹Clinton E. Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1989), 14-20; Bruce M. Metzger, “St. Paul and the Magicians,” *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 38 (1944): 27-30. For original documents, see the critical edition, K. Preisendanz, ed., *Papyri graecae magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Teubner, 1941). See also Allan Chester Johnson, Henry Bartlett Van Hoesen, and Edmund Harris Kase, eds., *Papyri in the Princeton University Collections*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931).

⁶⁰Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 186-87.

⁶¹“Kingdom” is only used twice in the FG (3:3, 5) but is used 116 times in the Synoptics.

⁶²See Matt 12:28 and Luke 11:20.

⁶³Matsunaga, “Powers in Conflict,” 173, espouses this view.

⁶⁴Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 187, notes, “Jesus’ kingship . . . is mentioned fifteen times [in the

Synoptics does not necessitate the same link in the FG. That is, the Fourth Evangelist could have emphasized exorcism even in the absence of a kingdom focus. This particular theological reason for the absence of exorcisms is alone insufficient to explain fully the phenomenon.

Perhaps the most simplistic explanation involves the timing of the FG.⁶⁵ Since it is written last, the FG is by nature supplementary to the Synoptics.⁶⁶ Therefore, one can argue the author does not feel compelled to record those events in the life and ministry of Jesus that have been adequately covered previously. Rather, he is free to include specific events and interpret them for the reader to fit his purpose. While this simple solution, on the surface, seems appealing, further investigation reveals its faults. While the author of the FG does omit several key events including exorcisms, he does include material previously contained in the Synoptics.⁶⁷ Therefore, a purely supplementary hypothesis does not alone adequately explain the absence of exorcisms.

Other solutions. While some of the above suggestions may play a role in why the author of the FG avoids exorcisms, the solutions that seem to offer the best explanation relate to the Evangelist's larger theological purpose and take into account the

FG], nearly double that of any other Gospel." See 1:49; 6:15; 12:13; 18:13-19:46.

⁶⁵For a survey of the research pertaining to the relationship of the FG to the Synoptics, see D. Moody Smith, *John among the Gospels: The Relationship in Twentieth-Century Research* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

⁶⁶Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel*, 252. Those who hold to the supplementary nature of the FG include, e.g., Richard Bauckham, "John for Readers of Mark," in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audience*, ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998): 147-71; Martin Hengel, *The Johannine Question* (Philadelphia: TPI, 1989), 91, 193-94, esp. 194n8.

⁶⁷See, e.g., the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-13 and Mark 6:32-44) and Jesus walking on the water (John 6:15-21 and Mark 6:45-51). Other stories are similar in John and the Synoptics. See, e.g., the large catch of fish (John 21:1-14 and Luke 5:1-11) and the healing of the blind (John 9:1ff. and Mark 10:46-52).

It will be shown below, however, that the *manner* in which the signs are presented in the FG may give a significant clue as to why exorcisms are omitted.

miracles the author does, in fact, choose to record.⁶⁸

Twelftree outlines several compelling arguments for the uniqueness of the signs in the FG and helpful insights into the author's understanding of cosmic conflict. These form the basis for the strongest arguments to date for the absence of exorcisms in the FG.⁶⁹

While the spectacular nature of the miracles in the FG is obvious, Twelftree is the first to connect this characteristic with an explanation for the absence of exorcisms and to extend the idea to include the revelatory nature of the signs.⁷⁰ Consider each of the seven signs. First, he notes that 120 to 180 gallons of water are turned to wine and that the author of the FG states the sign reveals the glory of God (2:1-11). Second, the record of the healing of the official's son (4:46-54) emphasizes the severity of the boy's sickness. "At the point of death" and his having come back from "death" reveal that Jesus alone gives life. Next, the healing of the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda (5:1-18) is heightened by his thirty-eight-year condition being changed instantaneously. The dialogue that follows reveals Jesus to be the Son of God who heals on the Sabbath. Fourth, the details of the feeding of the five thousand, including the comment that "two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient" to feed them (6:7), emphasize the

⁶⁸For a discussion of the signs in the FG, including a survey of the scholarly works on this topic, see Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel*, 323-35, especially 323n31. These works include Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:525-32; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, trans. Cecily Hastings et al. (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1979), 1:515-28; Donald Guthrie, "The Importance of Signs in the Fourth Gospel," *Vox Evangelica* 5 (1967): 72-83; Leon Morris, *Jesus is the Christ: Studies in the Theology of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1989), 20-42; D. A. Carson, "The Purpose of Signs and Wonders in the New Testament," in *Power Religion*, ed. Michael S. Horton (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992): 89-118; W. D. Davies, "The Johannine 'Signs' of Jesus," in *A Companion to John: Readings in Johannine Theology*, ed. Michael J. Taylor (New York: Alba, 1977): 91-115.

⁶⁹Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 187-97. The following discussion is a summary of those arguments and insights.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 189-91. Morris, *Gospel according to Jesus*, 361n44, adds John's purpose in recording miracles is to present Jesus as Christ and that "John writes with single-minded concentration on [this] theme," not wavering from it, and that exorcisms do not fit that purpose. Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:715, echoes a theological motivation for the absence of exorcisms.

dramatic nature of the miracle. Twelftree connects this sign to the OT story of Elisha (2 Kings 4:42-44) to demonstrate the revelatory nature of Jesus as the prophet from God. In the fifth sign in the FG, Jesus walks on the sea and calms the raging storm. Furthermore, Jesus' use of Ἐγὼ εἶμι leads the reader to connect Jesus with Yahweh of Exodus 3. In the sixth sign, the blind man is healed (9:1-7) despite his having been blind from birth. Passages predicting such actions of the Messiah (Isa 29:18; 35:5; 42:7, 16, 18) add a divine element to this account. The culminating seventh sign in the FG is the raising of Lazarus (11:1-57). The references to the body having been in the tomb four days and the implication that decomposition had already begun stress the spectacular nature of this miracle. Jesus' comments also serve to underscore his divinity.⁷¹

Twelftree further concludes that the spectacular and revelatory nature of the signs in the FG is a primary reason why exorcisms are absent from it.⁷² Accounts of first-century exorcisms are both common and vague in significance and origin.⁷³ Concerning their commonness, Twelftree cites Greek magical papyri⁷⁴ containing spells and instructions for would-be exorcists and argues the actual identity and character of the individual was not germane to the success of the exorcism. Also, several individuals

⁷¹Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 194-95.

⁷²This reasoning is consistent with Köstenberger's observations on what constitutes a "sign" in the FG, especially the revelatory nature of the third observation: (1) signs are public works of Jesus; (2) signs are explicitly identified as such in John's gospel; and (3) signs, with their concomitant symbolism, point to God's glory displayed in Jesus, thus revealing Jesus as God's authentic representative. Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel*, 326-28.

⁷³Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 192-94.

⁷⁴Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 36, esp. 36nn5-6, cites Hans Dieter Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation Including the Demotic Spells, Vol 1: Texts*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Magic Spell and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1993); Roy Kotansky, ed., *Greek Magical Amulets; The Inscribed Gold, Silver, Copper, and Bronze "lamellae": Text and Commentary, Part 1, Published Texts of Known Provenance*, *Abhandlungen der Nordrhein-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Sonderreihe Papyrologica Coloniensis* 22.1 (Opladen: Westdeutscher, 1994); and Preisendanz, *Papyri graecae magicae*.

were known to be exorcists during the same time period as Jesus,⁷⁵ and even the exorcisms in the Synoptics “are reported as unspectacular events” with the exception of the Gerasene demoniac.⁷⁶ The ambiguity of exorcisms is seen in the Beelzebul controversy in which Jesus is accused of relying on the power of Satan for his ability to cast out demons (Mark 3:22-27; Matt 12:22-30; Luke 11:14-23). Exorcists’ success was often attributed to either their particular technique or to some power upon which they relied. By eschewing exorcisms completely and focusing on seven specific signs, the author of the FG is able to present Jesus as a unique “self-sufficient divine miracle-worker.”⁷⁷

Twelftree makes one final argument toward explaining the FG’s lack of exorcisms in terms of theological perspective. He argues that the author of the FG sees all of Jesus’ ministry as conflict with Satan while the Synoptics do not. Moreover, in the Synoptics, the conflict occurs through demon possessions and is resolved in two stages: first through Jesus’ exorcisms and then ultimately in the eschaton.⁷⁸ In the FG, however, the cross event is the resolution. Satan is defeated—“the grand exorcism”⁷⁹ occurs through the death of Jesus (12:31-32). Twelftree concludes simply, “exorcisms would not have been able to carry the notion of the magnitude of that battle.”⁸⁰ Similarly,

⁷⁵For a discussion of exorcists in first-century Palestine, see Graham Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 13-52; Esther Eschel, “Genres of Magical Texts in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Demons: The Demonology of Israelite-Jewish and Christian Literature in the Context of Their Environment*, ed. Armin Lange, Hermann Lichtenberger, and K. F. Diethard Römeld (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003): 395-415; and Graham Twelftree, “Jesus the Exorcist and Ancient Magic,” in *A Kind of Magic: Understanding Magic in the New Testament and its Religious Environment*, ed. Michael Labahn and Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2007): 57-86.

⁷⁶Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 192. So also, Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 361n4.

⁷⁷Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 194.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 194-97.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 196.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 197.

Plumer notes that the Synoptic accounts of exorcisms do not directly connect demons with Satan himself.⁸¹ Köstenberger concurs: “In order to focus his readers’ eye even more keenly on this [Jesus versus Satan] titanic spiritual clash, John has eliminated virtually all references to demons.”⁸² Therefore, for the Fourth Evangelist, exorcisms were insufficient means to communicate his message.⁸³

Twelftree summarizes:

From the perspective of the Fourth Gospel, an exorcism could not, without further and considerable explanation, be expected to reflect on the identity or origin of Jesus, nor on the divine dimension of a miracle. Nor could any number of exorcisms convey the grand cosmic scale and otherworldly setting of the battle the Fourth Evangelist wished to convey was taking place and was won in the cross event, yet adumbrated throughout the life and ministry of Jesus. For that, the Fourth Evangelist was able to take over from his (signs?) source stories, which were unambiguously divine both in origin and revelatory capacity. To allay any possible remaining misunderstandings, he called them “signs.”⁸⁴

His arguments are strong, incorporating several aspects of Johannine theology that previous scholars have already noted. By contrasting John’s purpose and style with the Synoptics, Twelftree is able to provide a viable, multi-pronged explanation for why the Fourth Evangelist chooses to leave exorcisms out of his Gospel.

In Relation to the Devil

While Jesus’ role in cosmic conflict against demons is absent in the FG, his role versus the devil is emphasized more than in the Synoptics.⁸⁵ However, like the

⁸¹Plumer, “Absence of Exorcisms,” 364.

⁸²Köstenberger, *Theology of John’s Gospel*, 281, who also comments that John, in omitting demons, “focuses all of his attention on Satan, the major supernatural antagonist in the Gospel” (559).

⁸³Plumer, “Absence of Exorcisms,” 364, also comments on John’s desire to communicate a particular aspect of cosmic conflict—the conflict between truth and lies. Since the exorcism stories of the Synoptics are unable to effectively communicate this conflict, they are omitted in the FG. The relationship between truth and lies in cosmic conflict is further explored in chap. 6, “Weapons of Cosmic Conflict.”

⁸⁴Twelftree, *Name of Jesus*, 198.

⁸⁵Twelftree, “Demon, Devil, Satan,” 169, who notes, “The Synoptic Evangelists share similar views on the devil and demons and Jesus’ dealings with them. The Fourth Gospel [however] has a unique contribution to make on this theme.”

Synoptics, John's presentation of Satan and Jesus' interaction with him is entirely limited to cosmic conflict. There is no reference to Satan that is not conflict-oriented.⁸⁶

While there is no direct exchange between Jesus and Satan in the FG⁸⁷ (because Satan does not actually appear in the FG), his role is nonetheless prominent and Jesus' actions toward him are highly significant.

Jesus' awareness of Satan's schemes is the first piece of information the reader receives related to Jesus and his relationship to Satan. In 6:70-71, Jesus knows of Judas' betrayal and calls him "[the] devil." In doing so, Jesus identifies Judas' coming actions as satanic. Similarly in the next verse, Jesus "was unwilling to walk in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill Him" (7:1). In light of the connection Jesus makes in 8:44 between the Jews and Satan, 7:1 is another instance of Jesus' foreknowledge of Satan's attempts on his life. In fact, it seems from 8:44 that Jesus is aware that the totality of his conflict with the Jews is orchestrated by Satan. His accurate characterization of Satan (and the Jews) as murderers and liars further establishes Jesus' foreknowledge in the mind of John's readers who know the story's outcome.

Similarly, in 13:1-3 between "Jesus knowing that His hour had come"⁸⁸ (13:1) and "knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands . . . and [that he] was going back to God" (13:3), the author states, "the devil [had] already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him" (13:2). While the author does not explicitly state that Jesus knows Satan's actions, the "knowing" in 13:1 and 13:3 imply it.

⁸⁶Ibid., 166, rightly remarks, "From the Gospel records it is clear that Jesus showed no interest in the demonic apart from his battle against the Devil and his minions."

⁸⁷One possible exception is John 13:27 where Satan enters into Judas and Jesus says to him, "What you do, do quickly." "Him" could grammatically refer either to Judas or to Satan. Contrast the absence of direct contact in the FG with the face-to-face confrontation of the Temptation in the Synoptics (Mark 1:12-13; Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). See below for a discussion of the absence of the Temptation narrative in the FG.

⁸⁸So also in his prayer in 17:1, 11, "Father, the hour has come. . . I am no more in the world," and 16:16, "A little while longer, and you will no longer behold Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me."

Additionally, his knowledge is made explicit in 13:11, “for He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, ‘Not all of you are clean.’” Jesus’ awareness of the timing of Satan’s actions is further alluded to in 12:35, “For a little while longer the light is among you,” and in 14:30, “I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming.”

Jesus not only knows the devil’s actions, but he actively works against him. In chapter 10, Jesus is the Good Shepherd who protects the sheep from the wolf and the thief⁸⁹ (10:10-12) and does not allow anyone to “snatch them out of [his] hand” (10:28). Also, Jesus is described as “keeping” his disciples and as having “guarded” them (17:12). From whom they are kept and guarded is not mentioned until 17:15 where Jesus asks the Father “to keep them from the evil one,” a reference to Satan.⁹⁰

Jesus’ work against Satan culminates in his “exorcism.” In 12:31, Jesus says, “Now judgment is come upon the world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out.” The repeated “now” (νῦν) is used for emphasis, to underscore the imminent cross event. It follows from 12:23 where Jesus’ much-anticipated “hour” has come.⁹¹ John 12:32 continues, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” Thus, Jesus’ death precipitates the two parallel phrases of 12:31—the judgment of the world and the expulsion of Satan. That is, the means by which the ruler of this world is cast out is the lifting up of Jesus.⁹²

Jesus adds another verb to describe his actions toward Satan in 16:11, “the

⁸⁹See pp. 79-82, where I argue “the thief” refers to Satan.

⁹⁰See pp. 78-79.

⁹¹Borchert, *John 12-21*, 59; Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 355; Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:879, agrees, “that judgment was coming ‘now’ revealed the eschatological significance of the cross in history.” C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. (London, SPCK, 1978), 426, notes the emphasis of the “now” and relates it to “the all-important crisis of the crucifixion.”

⁹²The cross as the primary weapon of spiritual warfare is discussed in chap. 6, pp. 213-18.

ruler of this world has been judged.” Judgment has been connected to the world already (3:18; 12:31; 16:8), but that connection is a direct result of the ruler of the world having been judged. The perfect tense of the verb (κέκριται) is used here and in 3:18, further connecting Satan and the world he rules with Jesus’ judgment.

In previous discussions of Jesus’ relationship to antagonists, his sovereignty over their actions has been highlighted. Though Satan is more powerful than other antagonists and is the architect behind this conflict against Jesus, he is no more outside of Jesus’ sovereignty than his minions. Since Satan is more elusive in the FG, never actually appearing, references to Jesus’ authority over him are necessarily more limited. However, Jesus’ comment in 13:27, “What you do, do quickly,” indicates Jesus’ authority over the time of his betrayal. As Satan has just entered Judas in the previous phrase of the same verse, one might understand Jesus’ comment to apply to Satan as well as to Judas. If so, this verse is another instance of Jesus’ direct sovereignty over Satan in their cosmic conflict. More explicitly, in John 14:30, when Jesus notes the ruler of this world is coming, Jesus tellingly adds, “and he has nothing in Me.”

Significant omission: The Temptation. In considering the cosmic conflict between Jesus and Satan, there is one other obvious omission in the FG. The Temptation of Jesus is recorded in all three Synoptic Gospels⁹³ but is conspicuously absent from the FG. A convincing argument for a Johannine emphasis on cosmic conflict must at least suggest plausible reasons for why the author would have omitted such a conflict-oriented episode in the life of Jesus.⁹⁴ However, very little scholarly attention has been devoted to

⁹³Mark 1:12-13; Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13.

⁹⁴While a comprehensive discussion of the differences between the Synoptics and the FG is beyond the limited scope of this dissertation, the significant omission of both the Temptation of Jesus and the exorcisms of Jesus are germane. For a discussion of the differences, see Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 58-85. For a survey of the academic works that examine the relationship of the FG to the Synoptics, see, e.g., Smith, *John among the Gospels*.

this omission.

The FG may contain the same elements of the Temptation narrative, but the author may have scattered them throughout the Gospel. The temptation for Jesus to be made king is reflected in 6:15 when, having multiplied the bread and fish, the crowd wants to take him by force and make him king. The temptation to turn the stones to bread may be referenced later in the same chapter when the crowd returns for more bread (6:26-34). Jesus' temptation to make a spectacle of himself by jumping off the pinnacle of the temple may have echoes in 7:1-4 when he is encouraged by his brothers to go to the Feast of Tabernacles and show himself to the world.⁹⁵ However, while this argument may have value relating to John's use of sources, it does not speak to a theology of cosmic conflict in the FG. Instead, one must explain the absence of the Temptation narrative in light of other themes and motifs.

Much like the above discussion of the absence of exorcisms in the FG, the most fruitful arguments are those which consider John's purpose and emphases. First, John's purpose is to present Jesus as the Messiah and convince his readers to believe in that truth (20:30-31). The writer may avoid staging the conflict in the early chapters of the Gospel so as to present Jesus for who he is before fully introducing his opponents.⁹⁶ Consequently, John leaves out the temptation since it would naturally be placed in these early chapters. Second, this dissertation argues for a distinct emphasis on cosmic conflict and that the conflict will come to its climax at the cross. Page rightly notes, "In John's view, the crucial battle between Jesus and the devil takes place, not in the desert or during Jesus' public ministry, but on the cross."⁹⁷ Thus, perhaps the author has no need to

⁹⁵See, e.g., Raymond Edward Brown, "Incidents that are Units in the Synoptic Gospels but are Dispersed in St. John," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 23 (1961): 152-55. So also Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random House, 1995), 101-3.

⁹⁶R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 91.

⁹⁷Sydney H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* (Grand Rapids:

present the initial skirmish in the wilderness when he is more focused on the decisive battle at the cross.

While these suggestions are, by no means, a comprehensive defense of the author's omission of Jesus' temptation, they do provide plausible reasons why John could have intentionally omitted this episode in order to further his purpose and primary theme.

In Relation to Judas Iscariot

Jesus' actions and attitudes toward Judas are centered around three consistent ideas: foreknowledge, forthright speech concerning his spiritual condition, and loving outreach.

The author of the FG presents Jesus as aware of Judas' future betrayal and makes the reader aware of this coming act of treachery as well. In fact, every reference to Judas either alludes to Jesus' foreknowledge of his betrayal or is a narrative comment in which Judas is described as the betrayer. In 6:64, Jesus states, "But there are some of you who do not believe," a statement the narrator clarifies, "For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him." A few verses later, Jesus calls one of the twelve, the "devil." Again the author interprets: "Now He meant Judas . . . for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him" (6:70-71; also 12:4). John 13:1-11 describes the foot washing scene. In 13:2, the author refers again to Judas as being led by the devil to betray Jesus. At the end of that pericope, Jesus states, "Not all of you are clean" because "He knew the one who was betraying Him" (13:11). At supper, he continues to demonstrate his awareness of the betrayer and makes his disciples aware as well with the statement, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me" (13:21, 26). Judas the betrayer is last seen in the garden in 18:1-11 where twice he is described as the one "who was betraying Him" (18:2, 5).

Knowing of Judas' intentions, Jesus seems to speak to Judas straightforwardly

Baker Books, 1995), 129.

and specifically. Without pointing out Judas to the disciples, Jesus speaks about the betrayer in his presence and what he says is significant. In 6:64, he points out Judas' unbelief and in 6:70 he states his actions are diabolical. However, 6:70 also reminds Judas that he is part of the twelve and that Jesus had chosen him.⁹⁸ Jesus rebukes Judas after his complaint regarding the apparent waste of resources by Mary in anointing Jesus (12:4-8). This rebuke could also serve as an attempt to convict Judas, especially in light of Jesus' reference to his own burial, a burial that will result from Judas' betrayal. After washing all the disciples' feet, Jesus teaches them about the need for regular cleansing (13:1-11). He adds, "Not all of you are clean," a statement made in Judas' hearing concerning Judas' spiritual standing. It is only after supper when Satan enters Judas that Jesus gives Judas leave and tells him, "What you do, do quickly" (13:27). This ends Jesus' dialogue with Judas, yet Jesus' prior statements concerning him are all direct, honest statements that can be interpreted as attempts to make Judas aware of his true spiritual condition.

Lastly, Jesus' actions toward are gracious and loving. In addition to Jesus' initial choice of Judas as one of the twelve, two other episodes lend themselves to this interpretation. First, though the text is not explicit, it seems as though Judas is present when Jesus washes the disciples' feet and presumably has his feet washed as well. This humble act of service on Jesus' part that also pictures his coming death may have served as an evangelistic outreach to Judas.⁹⁹

Second, many scholars have interpreted Jesus' actions at supper—giving Judas a place of honor and dipping the morsel and offering it to Judas—as the final offer of

⁹⁸I have argued above the mention of "the twelve" is primarily to demonstrate to the reader the heinousness of Judas' crime. However, such a reference could also serve to demonstrate *to Judas* the heinousness of his crime in light of Jesus' actions toward him.

⁹⁹So also Craig R. Koester, "The Death of Jesus and the Human Condition: Exploring the Theology of John's Gospel," in *Life in Abundance: Studies of John's Gospel in Tribute to Raymond E. Brown*, ed. John R. Donahue (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005): 149.

gracious friendship and love from Jesus.¹⁰⁰ The text seems to indicate the instrumental factor leading to Satan's possession of Judas is his receiving the morsel from Jesus. While various views attempt to explain what occurs here,¹⁰¹ most understand Jesus' actions to be either an act of judgment or final warning¹⁰² or that Jesus means this gesture as a final act of love and friendship.¹⁰³ The provision of food and drink is used by John to convey the idea of sustaining life. Earlier references to food and drink show Jesus to be the provider and sustainer of life (cf. 4:13-14; 6:32-40; 10:9). It seems best, therefore, to view Jesus' offer as positive.¹⁰⁴ But, could Jesus' actions go so far as to have included

¹⁰⁰D. J. Williams, "Judas Iscariot," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, edited by Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992): 407; Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:578; Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 383; Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 752; Borchert, *John 12-21*, 94-95; Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1982), 173; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 238; Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 474; Bruce, *Gospel and Epistles of John*, 1:290; Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 459; Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 557; Koester, "Death of Jesus," 149.

¹⁰¹For an excellent overview and discussion, see D. Francois Tolmie, "Jesus, Judas, and a Morsel," in *Miracles and Imagery in Luke and John: Festschrift Ulrich Busse*, ed. J. Verheyden, G. van Belle, and J. G. van der Watt (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2008): 105-24. Haenchen, *John*, 2:111, holds that the bread was "magical" or provided the vehicle through which Satan physically entered Judas, but this finds no parallel in the biblical worldview. Other suggestions are more viable. Some understand the passage to carry sacramental overtones. For example, Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 383-84, sees the Eucharist in this action, and William Wrede, *Vortrage und Studien* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1907), 136, sees baptism. However, little evidence exists in the text to cause the reader to see either the Eucharist or baptism in this passage. Concerning the Eucharist, a few words are present in this passage that could connect it to other sacramental passages. Francis J. Moloney, *Glory not Dishonor: Reading John 13-21* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 21-22, argues *τρώγων* is a rare word for eating and is used in John 6 which has eucharistic overtones. Furthermore, *λαμβάνει καὶ* is used in 13:26 and is found in all the "bread miracles." However, a strong case cannot be made based on three words and John omits the obvious institution of the Lord's Supper here. The evidence for seeing baptism in John 13 is even more scant. See Tolmie, "Jesus, Judas, and a Morsel," 122-23, for a concise refutation of the baptism view.

¹⁰²So Hendriksen, *Gospel according to John*, 2:247; Wrede, *Vortrage und Studien*, 482n6.

¹⁰³This seems to be the majority position. Advocates include Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:578; Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 383; Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:918; Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 207; Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 94-95, 752; Newbigin, *The Light has Come*, 173; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 238; Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 474, who describes it as "a final gesture of supreme love"; Lincoln, *Gospel according to St. John*, 379; Bruce, *Gospel and Epistles of John*, 1:290; and Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 557, who agrees in spite of the fact that "no evidence from antiquity appears to be cited" supporting this position (557n62).

¹⁰⁴Tolmie, "Jesus, Judas, and a Morsel," 119; Jan G. van der Watt, *Family of the King* (Boston: Brill, 2000), 216-35, 411.

a final opportunity for Judas to repent and choose the side of good? Opponents argue from “narrative logic” that Jesus is not attempting to stop Judas since God is working through Judas’ betrayal to bring about Jesus’ death and ultimate victory.¹⁰⁵ Others see no contradiction between God’s sovereign purpose and Judas’ choice and understand Jesus’ actions evangelistically.¹⁰⁶ In light of Jesus’ overall purpose toward individuals in the FG, his offer to Judas is, at the least, a final offer of friendship and love, but is most likely an evangelistic outreach to one who is about to go too far. Judas accepts the morsel, but the following verses show he refuses the intent behind it. Nevertheless, Jesus’ actions toward Judas in the FG are loving and evangelistic.¹⁰⁷

To summarize, while Judas is portrayed as diabolical in his intentions and treacherous in his actions against Jesus, Jesus’ actions toward him are honorable and possibly redemptive.

In Relation to the Jews

In the previous chapter, the majority of the uses of the term, οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, were shown to have a negative connotation and to refer to religious leaders in the majority of cases. Furthermore, beginning in John 5, the Jews are shown to be in conflict with Jesus continually with increasing intensity. However, this conflict is not mere ideological disagreement. Jesus’ comments in 8:44 directly connect the Jews’ actions with the devil himself. As such, all conflict between these two must be reclassified as cosmic conflict.

¹⁰⁵Tolmie, “Jesus, Judas, and a Morsel,” 120-21.

¹⁰⁶Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel according to John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 453; Andreas Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 416; Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 459, who describes Jesus’ offer as “a plea for loyalty”; Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 557, also seems to lean toward this redemption interpretation, noting it may be “a final appeal to Judas.” So also Beasley-Murray, *John*, 238. Williams, “Judas Iscariot,” 408, notes it was Jesus’ “last appeal to Judas to change his course.”

¹⁰⁷This is consistent with his attitude and actions toward the world—he came to save, loves, convicts of sin, etc. Though Jesus is combative in relation to the ruler of the world and adversative in his characterization of the world in general which opposes him, his actions toward individuals in and of the world are redemptive.

This section focuses on Jesus' role in the conflict as it relates to the Jews.

Jesus' willingness to dialogue with the Jews despite their evil intentions and accusations is significant and often overlooked.¹⁰⁸ Only when they begin to seize him or stone him does he end the dialogue and flee (e.g., 8:59; 10:31). Even then, John often adds a comment that Jesus' fleeing is because "his hour had not yet come" (e.g., 7:30; 8:20). This willingness informs the discussion of Jesus' intentions toward the Jews in the FG.

Investigation into what Jesus actually says to the Jews in these dialogues gives additional insights. Note the large sections of teaching material directed toward the Jews (e.g., 5:19-47; 6:41-58; 8:12-59; 9:41-10:18; 10:25-38) in which Jesus explains his identity and mission. In these passages, Jesus does not begin with judgmental characterizations, but rather he begins with positive instruction intended to reveal his identity and mission so that they may believe. As the Jews reject Jesus' propositions, a debate often ensues.

Jesus' public debates with the Jews are also one of his methods of teaching in the FG. Strauss comments, "this to-and-fro eventually concludes with a response concerning Jesus," a mixed response in which some are "moving toward faith in Jesus and [others are] moving away from it."¹⁰⁹ As such this conflict can be seen as part of Jesus' evangelistic teaching ministry, calling to believe even Jews who demonstrate fierce opposition to him.

¹⁰⁸See, e.g., 5:19-20, "The Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God. Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them, . . ." Note the repeated uses of ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς and similar phrases throughout the Gospel: to the Jews (2:19; 5:17, 19; 6:43; 7:16, 21; 8:14, 19, 34, 49, 54; 10:32, 34); to Nicodemus (3:3, 5, 10); to the Samaritan woman (4:10, 13); to those he healed (5:7; 10:25); to the multitude (6:26, 29); and to his disciples or individual disciples (1:48, 50; 6:70; 9:3; 11:9; 12:30; 13:7, 8, 36). While many of these uses result from the narrative nature of the Gospel, they still illustrate Jesus' willingness to dialogue, especially with his enemy in the conflict, the Jews. Commentators take this action of Jesus for granted and do not commend him for it in light of the Jews' attitude toward him.

¹⁰⁹Mark L. Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus: A Survey of Jesus and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 302.

Jesus comments that he has shown the Jews many good works from the Father (10:32); what purpose can there be in that other than evangelistic? He then encourages them to believe the works that he has done (10:37-38). Even his frank speech toward them can be considered honest warning in an effort to persuade them to believe. Evidence supports this theory. After Jesus states, “You do not believe because you are not My sheep” (10:26) and encourages them to believe, the Evangelist reports “many of the Jews . . . believed” after the raising of Lazarus (11:45) and again “on account of [Lazarus] many of the Jews were going away, and were believing in Jesus.”

However, for the most part, they do not believe him and reject his testimony. Thus, Jesus begins to speak very directly to the Jews in the midst of his teaching. He says they do not know him (8:19), they will die in their sins (8:21, 24), they cannot come where he is going (7:34; 8:21), they are from below (8:23), his word has no place in them (8:37), they do not believe him (8:45; 10:25, 26), they are of their father who is the devil (8:44), they are not of God (8:47), and they are not his sheep (10:26). Additionally, the author shows them rejecting Jesus as their king (19:15, 21).

While Jesus teaches and speaks frankly to the Jews, significantly, the FG does not present Jesus doing battle with the Jews in the same way he battles Satan. He does not protect his sheep from them, expel them, initially judge them, etc. Instead, when violence is threatened against him, he does not retaliate but simply escapes time and time again. It is not until the garden scene that we see Jesus’ supporters violently fighting. There Jesus actively rebukes Peter’s violence and willingly submits to those who arrest him because his time has come (18:11).

Synthesizing these aspects of Jesus’ actions toward the Jews, one can further understand Jesus’ role in cosmic conflict. His aim is not to defeat but to convert.¹¹⁰ He

¹¹⁰So also Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John: Text and Context* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005), 208, referring to Jesus’ dialogue with the Jews in John 8, notes, “Jesus did not abandon his attempts to draw his opponents into the light, even using warnings to do so.”

engages in dialogue with the Jews, often using his signs as a springboard for revelatory teaching. It is not until the chief priests, the Pharisees, and Caiaphas convene together and “from that day on they planned together to kill Him” (11:53) that “Jesus therefore no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews but went away from there . . . with His disciples” (12:54). Thus, his teachings to the Jews lie entirely in the first half of the Gospel. Seeing that many are rejecting him, he speaks straightforwardly regarding their spiritual condition. Therefore, Jesus’ motives toward the Jews in cosmic conflict are evangelistic.¹¹¹

As with Judas, it seems Jesus’ actions toward the Jews are loving and a genuine attempt to save them. While this is explicit in the Synoptics (Matt 23:36-39, e.g.), the continual conflict between Jesus and the Jews tends to overshadow Jesus’ primary motives toward them. Nonetheless, for the author who is presenting a unified theology of cosmic conflict, Jesus’ salvific actions and attitudes toward the Jews are the means by which he wages the war against his enemies. Those enemies who believe become his supporters and those who do not are judged and die in their sins.

In Relation to the World

As noted earlier, *κόσμος* is used in the FG in a variety of ways. However, in its primary use which most directly relates to cosmic conflict, it denotes fallen humanity in rebellion to God and under the rule of Satan.¹¹² Jesus’ actions and attitudes toward the world can be described as salvific, judgmental, and overcoming.

First, similar to his actions toward the Jews, the evangelistic mission of Jesus

¹¹¹So also Stephen Motyer, *Your Father the Devil? A New Approach to John and ‘the Jews’* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997), 212, who argues even the strong statement in 8:44 “serves not merely to *denounce* but more particularly to *warn*, to *persuade*” (emphasis original); Amos Yong, “‘The Light Shines in the Darkness’: Johannine Dualism and the Challenge for Christian Theology of Religions Today,” *The Journal of Religion* 89, no. 1 (January 2009): 48; and Whitacre, *John*, 319, who writes concerning Jesus’ final address to the Jews in 12:35-36, “Jesus’ very admonition and warning are also an invitation. He did not come to condemn but to save, so even his condemnations have the potential for leading to salvation.”

¹¹²See pp. 105-17.

toward the world is evident as early as the Prologue. Because of the nature of “the world,” Jesus does not carry on direct dialogue with it as he does with the Jews. Still, what is said about the world reveals Jesus’ redemptive intentions. John 1:9 presents Jesus as “coming into the world, enlightening every man.” Jesus’ entrance is reiterated in the next verse, “He was in the world.” Later in 1:29, the Baptist calls him, “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” Several other references speak of Jesus being purposely sent into the world in order that the world may be saved (3:16, 17; 6:14; 12:46-47; 18:37). Additionally, Jesus desires that the world will come to believe and know that God has sent him and to know that God loves the world (17:23, 24).

Not only has Jesus come into the world and desires its salvation, but he actively works to bring it about. He speaks openly to the world (18:20), gives his flesh for the life of the world (6:33, 51; cf. 3:16), and sends the Spirit to convict the world (16:8-11). He further makes preparations for a continuing ministry to the world through his disciples (17:15, 18) and specifically gives the Spirit to empower the testimony of his disciples to the world (20:19-23). As a result, many do come to believe that Jesus is the Christ and join him. They are said to come “out of the world” (15:19; 17:6). That is, their character no longer aligns with the world but with Christ. For example, the Samaritans “heard for [them]selves” and knew “that this One is indeed the Savior of the world” (4:42); the Pharisees even acknowledge “the world has gone after Him” (12:19);¹¹³ and Jesus himself is confident that many more out of the world will believe the testimony of his followers after he is gone (17:20).

However, the world as a whole in the FG rejects Jesus. In 3:19-20, “the world

¹¹³Additionally, after Jesus teaches and rebukes the multitude/crowd (6:26-27), many of the multitude believe (7:31). Admittedly, “belief” in the FG is often imperfect and insufficient, yet there seems to be positive response from the multitude. This is mentioned here because the multitude (*ὄχλος*) is not discussed independently above for two reasons: (1) they are not a major agent in the conflict; and (2) they function in the FG very similarly to the world in both Jesus’ actions toward them and their response to him. See 5:13; 6:2, 5, 22, 24; 7:12, 20, 31, 32, 43, 49; 12:9, 17, 29, 34.

... loved darkness” rather than the light who had come into it and “does not come to the light.” Despite various signs, those in the world do not believe Jesus (12:37), do not know Jesus (15:21), cannot receive the spirit of truth (14:17), and do not know the Father (17:25).

Moreover, this rejection is not merely passive non-acceptance of his message. Rather, the world actively contends with Jesus emotionally and physically. Emotionally, the world is said to hate Jesus (7:7; 15:18-19) and physically, it persecutes and seeks to kill him and his disciples (15:20).

Because the world rejects Jesus, he states it is judged, both as a previous position and current proclamation. Jesus says, “He who believes in Me is not judged, he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (3:18).¹¹⁴ However, this condemned state in which humanity finds itself will now receive the present declaration of judgment which results from the coming of the Son of God and is effected by his death. The FG continues, “And this is judgment, that light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil” (3:19). Similarly, Jesus states, “For judgment I came into this world” (9:39) and later notes, “Now judgment is upon this world, now the ruler of this world shall be cast out,” speaking of his coming death (12:31-33). Jesus’ current actions of judgment in the FG are based on the world’s already-established guilty verdict still in effect because of their lack of belief.

In the cosmic battle presented in the FG between Jesus and the world, the world offers serious blows. It persecutes, hates, and kills. However, in spite of these, Jesus states, “Take courage, I have overcome the world” (16:33).¹¹⁵ Jesus’ victory has

¹¹⁴Note the perfect passive tense of κέκριται.

¹¹⁵Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:1049, notes “take courage” (θαρσεῖτε) is used, among other things, as an exhortation prior to battle.

“Overcome” here is the only use of νικάω in the FG. See, however, its uses in 1 John (2:13, 14;

been secured. While it appears for a short time that he is defeated, his disciples will come to understand that through his apparent defeat, he actually gains total victory.¹¹⁶ In this context, Jesus uses his triumph as a means to encourage his disciples when they, too, seem defeated in the battle.¹¹⁷ In typical Johannine fashion, his overcoming the world will, ironically, give strength to his disciples to continue faithful gospel witness to the world even when being persecuted by it.¹¹⁸

In summary, Jesus' role in the cosmic conflict of the FG as it relates to the world is a rescue operation. His love and obedience to the Father drive his mission as he enters enemy territory to save those who have willfully subjected themselves to the ruler of this world. While his actions and attitudes persuade some, most reject him and actively work against his loving actions. In doing so, they prove themselves to be his enemy and are, therefore, judged and part of a system that has been overcome.

In Relation to Pilate

What the Fourth Evangelist records of Pilate, consistent with the other characters in the FG, emphasizes his relationship to Jesus. In fact, Pilate has no role in the FG other than his role in the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus' actions toward Pilate are recorded in John 18:33-38 and 19:8-12.

John 18:33-38. Pilate's role in cosmic conflict in the FG has already been

4:4; 5:4, 5) and Revelation (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 5:5; 6:2; 11:7; 12:11; 13:7; 15:2; 17:14; 21:7) where it often refers to overcoming the evil one and the world.

¹¹⁶Borchert, *John 12-21*, 184, agrees the perfect tense of the verb (*νενίκηκα*) communicates a "proleptic sense of victory even before the crucifixion."

¹¹⁷Ridderbos, *Gospel according to John*, 545, agrees, "With this final exhortation and assertion of his power Jesus concludes his farewell discourse, as a word that they should always and again call to mind (cf. 13:19; 14:26), not only in the 'hour' that is now coming and has come, but throughout their entire permanently embattled existence as the believing community in the world."

¹¹⁸Contra Norman R. Petersen, *The Gospel of John and the Sociology of Light: Language and Characterization in the Fourth Gospel* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1993), 86, who implies Jesus' disciples and subsequently John's audience came to hate the world because they had been hated by the world.

briefly discussed. From that discussion it was shown that even though Pilate does not actively seek Jesus' death, his character reveals that he sides with the Jews in his rejection of Jesus as truth and ultimately in their call for his crucifixion. John 18:33-38 will be examined again, this time with a focus on Jesus' actions toward Pilate.

Jesus is sent from Caiaphas to Pilate (18:28). Because the Jews refuse to enter the Praetorium, they remain outside, and Pilate goes back and forth between the prisoner inside and the Jews outside. After a brief conversation with the Jews concerning the charges, Pilate enters the Praetorium to question Jesus. He begins, "Are you the King of the Jews?" (18:33). Jesus' response turns the questioning back onto Pilate, but not in a sardonic mock. Rather, Jesus' question, "Are you saying this on your own initiative or did others tell you about Me?" (18:34), seeks to shine the light on Pilate's heart, to expose his darkness.¹¹⁹ Pilate responds by separating himself further from Jesus, defensively¹²⁰ denying kinship with Jesus or his nation. Jesus then answers his question by acknowledging that he is a king but qualifying the kind of kingship he possesses—it is not of this world. Jesus continues with a clear statement of his mission: "For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth" (18:37).¹²¹ Jesus, again, seems to turn the conversation to Pilate personally with the words, "Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice" (18:37), implying, "Are you one of them?"¹²² Pilate's response confirms Jesus' action. He recognizes Jesus' unspoken

¹¹⁹So also Borchert, *John 12-21*, 241, who argues Jesus was not seeking information but was challenging Pilate's motive for the question.

¹²⁰Μήτι ἐγὼ Ἰουδαῖός εἰμι; Note the emphatic ἐγὼ and the strong Μήτι.

¹²¹Lincoln, *Gospel according to St. John*, 463. He also notes Jesus' kingship "is subsumed under and reinterpreted by his witness to the truth." Other statements of his mission are 6:38; 9:39; 10:10; 12:46-47.

¹²²The evangelistic nature of Jesus' dialogue with Pilate is widely accepted. See, e.g., Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 655: "Pilate himself is put on the spot through this statement; he is asked whether he is willing to listen to the voice of the Revealer, and he must show whether he 'is of the truth'"; Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 925, who notes, "In effect he is asking Pilate, 'Do you belong to the truth? Are you hearing my voice?'" (emphasis original); Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 493, who considers "the decisive

personal inquiry, but similarly rejects this second attempt to confront him with the truth. Pilate quips, “What is truth?” and thus ends this episode of the interview.¹²³

From this episode, we see Jesus on mission to bear witness to the truth. There is no attempt to escape, to evade questioning, or to lash out at his captor. Rather, Jesus is portrayed as submissive to his coming death, possessing a kingship of a different nature than Pilate’s, and evangelistic in his attitude toward Pilate.¹²⁴

John 19:8-12. The second exchange between Jesus and Pilate occurs as Pilate continues to go back and forth between the Jews and Jesus, seemingly attempting to free Jesus. After the Jews tell Pilate that Jesus’ claim to be the Son of God requires a death sentence, he returns to Jesus and asks, “Where are You from?” (19:9). Jesus, however, remains silent, angering Pilate, who then responds, “You do not speak to me?” (19:10). The English translation appropriately places “to me” at the end of the sentence, giving the phrase the emphasis intended by its position in the front of the original Greek sentence.¹²⁵ The implication is that Pilate is appalled that Jesus refuses to speak to someone with his power, position, and authority, especially in light of Jesus’ precarious, and apparently helpless, situation. This is confirmed by Pilate’s next comments, “Do You not know that

issue” to be “how Pilate and ‘the Jews’ respond to Jesus’ royal status,” and speaks of Jesus’ “offer of truth” and his “revelation-invitation” to Pilate; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 332, who states Jesus’ comments “implicitly convey an invitation to join their number”; Cornelius Bennema, *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2009), 185, who says Jesus’ comments are “an implicit invitation to discover truth—saving truth about the divine reality present in Jesus’ teachings”; Borchert, *John 12-21*, 243, who agrees, noting Jesus was confronting Pilate and Pilate’s response was “an attempt to resist taking Jesus’ statement seriously in his own life”; and Köstenberger, *Theology of John’s Gospel*, 253, who goes a step further by arguing this passage presents, “as a paradigmatic instance,” Jesus being “sent into the world to speak the truth, which is God’s word. Jesus’ witness to the truth serves as a model for his followers to emulate (cf. 17:18; 20:21).”

¹²³Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 926, notes Jesus’ brief interaction with this Gentile has the same result as his extended and repeated interactions with “the Jews.” He points to John 1:10-11 where “the world did not know him” (1:10) and “his own did not receive Him” (1:11).

¹²⁴Cf. Luke 23:39-43 and Matt 27:54 for other indications of Jesus’ evangelistic efforts in his passion.

¹²⁵*Ἐμοὶ οὐ λαλεῖς*; Emphasis added.

I [emphatic] have authority to release You, and I [emphatic] have authority to crucify You?” (19:10). Pilate reminds Jesus of his command over the situation. However, in spite of his claim to have power to release him, Pilate has failed to do so numerous times already (18:31, 38-40; 19:6). Also, note the similarity between Pilate’s twice-stated “I have authority” here and Jesus’ statement in 10:17-18, “I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. *I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.*”¹²⁶

Jesus responds that Pilate has no authority over him except what he receives from above. While Pilate likely understands “from above” to be from his political superiors including Caesar, Jesus means “from heaven” as in 3:27 and 10:18b. As such, the source of Pilate’s authority is noted, him being “an unknowing instrument in God’s hands.”¹²⁷ Consequently, the one who handed Jesus over to him is more culpable. Jesus’ statement in 19:11b, “he who delivered Me up to you has the greater sin,” in typical Johannine irony, has Jesus, the one on trial before Pilate, delivering a verdict of “less guilty” on Pilate himself. This action indicates that Jesus is the judge over Pilate, not the other way around.

However, the referent to “the one who delivered Me up to you” is debated. Pilate would naturally think Jesus is referring to Caiaphas (18:28).¹²⁸ However, the Jews

¹²⁶Emphasis added. The Greek in all four instances is the same: ἐξουσίαν ἔχω, with the ἔχω being emphatic. Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 935; Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:892-93; and Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 524, also make this connection.

¹²⁷Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 936.

¹²⁸Beasley-Murray, *John*, 340; Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 601; Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 705; Borchert, *John 12-21*, 254; Köstenberger, *Theology of John’s Gospel*, 254; and Bruce, *Gospel and Epistles of John*, 1:362, cite Caiaphas as the one to whom the phrase refers.

arrange the betrayal¹²⁹ and Judas carries it out.¹³⁰ Yet, Satan is consistently portrayed as the mastermind behind the betrayal (6:70; 8:44; 13:2).¹³¹ Whether this statement refers directly to Satan or indirectly to him via the actions of Judas, Caiaphas, or the Jews, Jesus indicates the actions against him make his opponents in the cosmic conflict culpable.

This passage also highlights Pilate's powerlessness and Jesus' power and sovereignty in the cosmic battle taking place. Despite the appearance presented by his pomp and pride, Pilate has no authority over Jesus. His lack of genuine authority is seen: (1) in his inability to free Jesus; (2) in the contrast of his statement with John 10:17-18; and (3) in the source of his limited political power—God himself. By contrast, having been scourged and mocked, even in his humility and weakness, Jesus is shown to have all authority and to be sovereign over the battle. His statements in 10:17-18 and his role as judge in 19:11 indicate this.

In summary, the two exchanges between Jesus and Pilate both emphasize Jesus' sovereignty in contrast to Pilate's lack of actual power. Since Pilate sides with the world and the Jews, whom the author identifies as under the influence of Satan in their opposition to Jesus, he opposes Jesus in the cosmic conflict. Yet Jesus responds to his opposition with calm control and an attempt to apply the message of truth and the conviction of sin to Pilate personally. Jesus does not resist or attempt to escape the coming crucifixion ordered by Pilate, knowing it is the means by which the battle will be won.

¹²⁹Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 662; Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:1126-27; Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 569; Haenchen, *John*, 2:183; and Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 524, (though he attributes special culpability to Judas) understand "the Jews" collectively to be the singular referent. In light of the most recent uses of *παραδίδωμι* (18:30, 35, 36) and congruent with the author's portrayal of the Jews as a single character in this cosmic drama, I agree with these that "the Jews" have the greater sin. However, for the purpose of this paper, the identity of the referent is less important than the concept of betrayal itself.

¹³⁰Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 500; and Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 543, argue the singular participle, *ὁ παραδούς*, likely refers to an individual, Judas.

¹³¹Michaels, *Gospel of John*, 937, sees Satan as the referent.

In Relation to God the Father

Jesus relates to the Father in several ways in the FG that are pertinent to the discussion of cosmic conflict. First, Jesus is supported by the Father. Jesus is in the Father and the Father in him (14:10-11, 20); he is one with the Father (10:30); the Father is with Jesus (8:29; 16:32); Jesus prays to the Father (14:16; 17:1-26); and the Father loves Jesus (3:35; 5:20; 17:24). Second, Jesus submits to the Father. Jesus is shown doing the Father's work (5:9, 17); saying what the Father wants said (8:26, 28; 12:48-50; 14:10; 17:4-6); having received authority from the Father (3:35; 5:22, 27; 13:3; 16:15); and being sent from the Father.¹³² The relationship between the Father and the Son as described in the FG demonstrates that the Father takes the initiative in the cosmic conflict and directs the Son in the battle. However, as noted earlier, the Father does not directly engage in the spiritual warfare in the FG. That is, the Son receives his mission and authority from the Father, but then actively carries out that mission without the direct participation of the Father.

In Relation to the Holy Spirit

Jesus' role in cosmic warfare is further seen in his relationship to the Holy Spirit. As shown earlier, the functions of the Holy Spirit in spiritual warfare in the FG are: (1) to strengthen disciples in persecution; (2) to empower the witness and preaching of the disciples; and (3) to remind the disciples of Jesus' teachings, guiding them into truth.¹³³ In each case, the Spirit aids the believer as he engages in cosmic conflict, often encountering persecution. However, the reader is repeatedly reminded that it is Jesus who supplies the Spirit (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; 20:22). Thus while Jesus' mission is authenticated by the Spirit ("He will bear witness of Me," 15:26; "He shall glorify Me,"

¹³²A prominent theme in the gospel is the sending of Jesus into the world by the Father. See John 3:17; 5:30, 36, 38; 6:29, 38, 39, 44, 57; 7:16, 28, 29; 8:16, 18, 26, 29, 42; 9:4; 11:42; 12:44-45, 49; 13:3; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:3, 18, 25; 20:21.

¹³³See "Holy Spirit," pp. 125-30, above.

16:14), the primary emphasis in the FG is the way in which Jesus dispatches the Holy Spirit to believers, aiding them in their struggle. In this way, the author presents Jesus as the commanding general, sovereign over the conflict and helping his church as they continue the fight.

In Relation to Angels

The FG does not emphasize the role of angels in cosmic conflict and thus Jesus' actions toward those angels is negligible. Again, theology of cosmic conflict in the FG is christocentric and an emphasis on the angelic role in that conflict would take away from Jesus' personal defeat of Satan at the cross.¹³⁴

In Relation to the Disciples

Jesus' actions toward his supporters add further information to the discussion of John's understanding of cosmic conflict. In the Synoptics, Jesus charges and empowers his disciples to cast out demons, heal sickness, and proclaim repentance (Mark 6:7-13; Matt 10:1ff.; Luke 9:1-7). A broader group of seventy are also given power to cast out demons (Luke 10:1-20). However, no such commission is found in the FG. One is not surprised by this absence when one remembers that Jesus never casts out demons and rarely explicitly heals in the FG. Rather the FG emphasizes the manner in which Jesus draws, cleanses, prepares, protects, and sends his disciples.

Jesus draws and cleanses. Those who support Jesus in spiritual warfare and ultimately continue that battle are first sought (4:32), chosen out of the world (15:19), and drawn to him (6:44; 12:32). The author of the FG emphasizes the sovereignty of the Father in this process: "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me" (6:37) and "I manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they

¹³⁴Note, for example, the absence in the FG of a reference to Jesus' ability to request twelve legions of angels to deliver him from his betrayer and the arresting Jews (cf. Matt 26:53).

were, and Thou gavest them to Me” (17:6).¹³⁵ Those who are drawn and come are then cleansed. Jesus pictures this spiritual cleansing through the enacted parable of the washing of his disciples’ feet (13:1-11).

Jesus prepares. Jesus continues by preparing his disciples for the battle. This occurs in several ways. First, he makes them aware in various ways of his coming death which will seem like a cosmic defeat. He references the destruction of his body (2:19), being lifted up (3:14; 8:28; 12:32), laying down his life (10:11-18; 15:13-14), and going away (12:35-36; 13:33, 36; 14:19; 16:5, 16-22). He does so in order to help them believe (13:19) when it does occur. Jesus also teaches them to expect persecution from the world (15:18-21; 17:14)¹³⁶ and suggests the various forms in which it may come (16:2).¹³⁷ However, in the midst of this persecution Jesus promises help—the Helper, the Spirit of Truth—whom Jesus will send from the Father to strengthen, embolden, guide them in all truth (15:26-16:15), and remind them of all that Jesus has said (14:26).

While most of Jesus’ actions toward his disciples relate to the entire group, he does interact with specific individuals as well. In the epilogue, Jesus reinstates Peter (21:15-23) and in the process prepares him for his own martyrdom. Jesus tells Peter, “when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you,

¹³⁵Incidentally, the responsibility of the follower is also emphasized in the second half of each verse respectively: “and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out” and “and they have kept Thy word.”

¹³⁶While the death of Jesus is the turning point in the cosmic conflict, “Satan, refusing to concede defeat, will focus his attack on the human allies Jesus leaves behind (15:18-19; 16:33b)” via the world (Kovacs, “Now Shall the Ruler,” 234). For more on Jesus’ teaching as a weapon used to equip the disciples, see the section, “Truth and Lies,” in chap. 6, pp. 229-33.

¹³⁷Köstenberger, *Theology of John’s Gospel*, 246, notes Jesus has “the disciples prepared for what is about to follow as well as they could have been, given their persistent lack of understanding.” As such they are prepared for the imminent persecution to come. He also notes that Jesus ends his Farewell Discourse with a note of encouragement: “In the world you will have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (16:33). Thus, they have both help for the present and hope for the future.

and bring you where you do not wish to go” (21:18).¹³⁸ The Evangelist interprets this for the reader: “Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God” (21:19). Though this specific event is atypical in that Jesus does not usually reveal to his disciples the manner of their death, it does indicate that Jesus is involved in individually preparing disciples for persecution specifically and spiritual warfare in general.¹³⁹

Jesus protects. The author of the FG also portrays Jesus as protecting his disciples. They are physically protected in the storm (6:16-21) but, more importantly, spiritually protected from the evil one. This protection is necessary; even though the ruler of the world has been judged, “he is not deprived of the power to harm the disciples if they are left without divine aid.”¹⁴⁰ In his High Priestly Prayer (17:12, 15), Jesus remarks to the Father of his continual “keeping”¹⁴¹ of his disciples and how he “guarded”¹⁴² them such that not one perished except the “son of perdition,” according to

¹³⁸It is widely accepted that this verse suggests crucifixion. See Walter Bauer, ed., *Das Johannesevangelium*, (Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1925), 232. Ancient texts also understood it as such. See the use of ἐπτενεῖς τὰς χεῖράς σου in the following: *The Epistle of Barnabas* 12:2, 4; Justin Martyr, *1 Apology*, 35 and *Trypho*, 90ff.; Irenaeus, *Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching*, 79; and Cyprian, *Testimonies against the Jews II*, 20. For additional references and support, see Haenchen, *John*, 2:226-27, esp. 226nn21-27, and Köstenberger, *John*, 598, esp. 598nn12-14. Contra J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), 2:708; Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 713-14; and Schnackenburg, *Gospel according to St. John*, 3:366-70.

¹³⁹Ridderbos, *Gospel according to John*, 667, even suggests “Jesus has sought not so much Peter’s triple retraction of his denial; . . . it is rather what awaits Peter in the future that prompts Jesus to reinforce his ties with him as never before.” That is, Jesus initiates the conversation with Peter, not merely to restore him to ministry, but to prepare him for his martyrdom. Borchert, *John 12-21*, 338, adds the author’s editorial in verse 19 may also reveal the concern of John’s audience, namely “Peter’s death was a concern to the community.” He does see Jesus’ comments and John’s record of those comments as preparing *John’s audience* for future persecution.

¹⁴⁰Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 510.

¹⁴¹Note the imperfect tense of ἐτήρουν. Cf. also 6:39, “of all that He has given Me I lose nothing.”

¹⁴²Bruce, *Gospel and Epistles of John*, 1:332, adds he guards them “as a treasure entrusted to him by the Father.” Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 563n1; Bruce, *Gospel and Epistles of John*, 1:337n7; and Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 508, note there is likely no significance to the change in verbs. However, Lincoln, *Gospel according to St. John*, 437; Ridderbos, *Gospel according to John*, 553; and Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 525, see ἐφύλαξα (from φυλάσσω) related to the idea of a shepherd guarding

Scripture. But what did Jesus' keeping and guarding entail? That is, how did Jesus keep and guard his disciples? The qualifying phrase is "in Thy name which Thou hast given Me."¹⁴³ However, Carson convincingly argues from context that Jesus was keeping and guarding his disciples "in" the Father's name (locative) rather than "by" it (instrumental).¹⁴⁴ Therefore, what Jesus is communicating by this qualifying phrase is *to what* the disciples are being kept—kept "in firm fidelity to the revelation Jesus himself mediated to them"¹⁴⁵—rather than *the means by which* they are being kept which is not addressed here.

Nonetheless, the most obvious means by which the protection takes place is by prayer itself. Here Jesus asks the Father to keep and protect them and this request itself is the means by which they will be guarded. Thus, if Jesus' intercession in John 17 and his continued intercession in the future is an instrument that will bring about the safety of his disciples, it is reasonable to assume it was also one used regularly by Jesus during his earthly ministry.¹⁴⁶

The protection imagery continues in John 10 with the metaphor of the Good

his flock (cf. John 10:11ff.). The aorist may indicate that the action, while once continuous (imperfect), has now been completed (aorist), hence the prayer to the Father. So also Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 644n43; and Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 508.

¹⁴³Gk. ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου ᾧ δέδωκάς μοι. If the prepositional phrase is taken instrumentally, modifying τήρησον, then the sense is "protect them by the power of your name" (NIV). If taken as a locative use, modifying αὐτούς, then the sense is "keep them loyal to you" or "keep them in full adherence to your character." Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 562.

¹⁴⁴Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 562. Contra Borchert, *John 12-21*, 198n370, who argues for both: "Protection is not merely achieved through theological formulations. The power of God was evident in and by the agency of Jesus' mediatorial work."

¹⁴⁵Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 562. So also Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 500. Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 505, seems to take it instrumentally but argues the disciples are kept through the *revelation* of Jesus concerning the Father. Writing about the nature of Jesus' keeping and guarding, he notes, "What else was it but his revealing God's name to his own (v. 6), his imparting to them the words that the Father had given him (v. 8)?" So also Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 467, who states, "Jesus asks the Father . . . to care for the fragile disciples *by* gathering them into all that can be known of the reality of God." Emphasis added.

¹⁴⁶For more, see "Intercession of Jesus," pp. 223-29.

Shepherd. Jesus explicitly states, “I am the Good Shepherd.”¹⁴⁷ He goes before the sheep (10:4), lays down his life for them (10:11), protects them from the wolf (10:12), and ensures they “will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of [his] hand” (10:28). The inherent vulnerability of the flock further accentuates the defense provided by the Shepherd, a defense that results in “the unassailability of the flock of God because of his guardian power.”¹⁴⁸

Jesus’ arrest in the garden provides another example of his protection.¹⁴⁹ As the guards, led by Judas, approach Jesus and his disciples, Jesus moves toward his enemies, placing himself between them and the disciples. His question, “Whom do you seek?” (18:4), allows him to identify himself as the one they are seeking (“I am.”) so that no mistake can be made in the darkness, accidentally putting one of the disciples at risk. He repeats his question and his answer, adding “if therefore you seek Me, let these go their way” (18:7-8). The author explains for the reader Jesus’ intention—that he not lose one of those given to him by the Father (18:9). Even on the eve of his own crucifixion, Jesus continues to protect his disciples from the powers of darkness.

Jesus sends. Jesus’ preparation and protection of his disciples is part of his involvement in cosmic conflict. He is helping to defend them against the onslaught of the enemy. However, their participation is to be offensive as well. They are sent on the attack to pierce the darkness with the light of Christ.

The sending of Jesus into the world by the Father is a major theme of the FG, repeated numerous times throughout the Gospel.¹⁵⁰ However, in two key passages, once

¹⁴⁷Note the emphatic use of the pronoun (Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός, emphasis added), not to mention the debatable but likely allusion to the divine name.

¹⁴⁸J. Neville Birdsall, “John X.29,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 11 (1960): 344.

¹⁴⁹Koester, *Symbolism*, 208, connects the securing of the release of the disciples here with his continuing to keep them safe from the evil one in 17:12, 15.

¹⁵⁰Cf. 5:30, 36, 38; 6:38, 39, 44, 57; 7:16, 28, 29; 8:26, 29, 42; 9:4; 11:42; 12:44-45, 49; 13:3;

speaking to the Father in the disciples' hearing (17:18) and again directly to the disciples after his resurrection with an impartation of the Holy Spirit (20:21), Jesus sends the disciples in the same manner that he himself was sent by the Father. The multitude of references to Jesus being sent surely informs and intensifies the mission given by Jesus to the disciples. While they are not sent to do the exact thing as Jesus (cast out the ruler of the world, be lifted up for man's sin, etc.), they are sent in like manner to continue Jesus' mission through the proclamation of Jesus' message by the power of Jesus' Spirit.¹⁵¹

Jesus gives eternal life. Having told the disciples that he is leaving, Jesus promises to “come again, and receive” them to himself so they may be with him (14:3, cf. 14:8). Similarly, he prays that “they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am” (17:24). This involves a resurrection from the dead (5:28, 29; 6:39, 40, 44, 54; cf. 11:24) and the giving of eternal life (3:15-18, 36; 4:14; 5:24; 6:40, 47, 54, 58; 10:28; 11:25-26; 12:50; 17:2). These reassuring words serve to provide hope, the assurance of victory in the midst of the battle and of eternal life after the conflict.

In conclusion, Jesus' actions in cosmic conflict are seen in numerous ways in his interaction with his human allies, the disciples. He delivers them from the enemy camp (“the world”), enlists them on his side, prepares and equips them for the battle, and sends them into it, all the while promising to protect them while they are in enemy territory and into eternity.

14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:3, 18, 25; 20:21. Additionally, in 21:15-17, Jesus specifically sends Peter to feed and care for his (Jesus') sheep.

¹⁵¹C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 408; Hendriksen, *Gospel according to John*, 2:290; and Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:986, understand Jesus' comments in 14:31, “Arise, let us go from here,” to mean, “Let us go away [to meet this battle].” (A discussion of a possible “seam” in the text at this point is acknowledged but not germane to the current discussion.) Earlier in the FG, Jesus would go and hide to avoid further physical conflict (e.g., 5:13; 8:59; 10:39-40; 11:54). Now, however, his hour has come, and he will meet it. His willingness to face the conflict at the right time in the right way may also serve as an example to his disciples.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the role of the protagonists in the cosmic conflict of the FG. While the FG ultimately makes clear which individuals are the protagonists and which are the antagonists, to those in the middle of the conflict, it may not always be clear. For example, most would have assumed the Pharisees and Jewish leaders to be on the side of right, and the apostles assumed Judas to be a faithful follower. It is helpful to note that even though there is a clear demarcation between light and darkness in retrospect, there may exist uncertainty until then.¹⁵²

This chapter, together with chapter 3, provides a clearer picture of John's theology of spiritual warfare through the actions and attitudes of the agents of the conflict. However, John communicates this battle through other avenues as well. How the author employs metaphors to describe the cosmic battle will be discussed in the next chapter.

¹⁵²However, this need not be evidence for a blurring of the lines between the two camps as argued by Yong, "The Light Shines," 31-56. He attempts to argue for a "less exclusivistic theology of religions" (55) by looking at the light/darkness passages of the FG and attempts to relativize individuals' ethical standing. He points to these individual examples and argues that "most (apart from the Jewish opponents of Jesus) are in some sort of transition [between light and darkness] at dusk or dawn, rather than being stationary at either midnight or noonday." However, the reality of the journey of an individual from darkness to light does not negate the difference between darkness and light. Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 67, makes a similar argument though not as dogmatically. "While many of the characters in the Gospel play fixed roles of 'light' or 'darkness,' some such as Peter, illustrate movement from light to darkness." He also points to Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. I would argue these individuals reflect the struggle of discipleship rather than ambiguity as to their allegiance.

CHAPTER 5

THE METAPHORS OF COSMIC CONFLICT

To this point, spiritual warfare in the FG has been seen in the conflict between protagonists and antagonists. However, the author of the FG utilizes other tools to convey this conflict besides direct dialogue and the interaction between persons; he also employs metaphors and images infused with meaning. These include light, darkness, life, death, belief, and unbelief.¹ The discussion below will demonstrate John's uses of these concepts to depict a cosmic struggle between God and Satan.

Light and Darkness

Light and darkness are the most significant images in the FG. However, similar assertions may be made for other major religions and even various pieces of literature and art. In general, light and darkness are universal symbols and metaphors. Consider, for example, Allah as the source of light in Islam and the star and crescent moon—lights that shine in darkness—as its recognized symbols. The broad use of light and darkness in other religions, however, does not diminish their importance in the Christian Scriptures. In fact, these images are “archetypal symbols”² precisely because they do convey meaning in a wide variety of contexts.

¹Shailer Mathews, “The Struggle between the Natural and the Spiritual Orders as Described in the Gospel of John: II. The Great Opponents of the Gospel,” *The Biblical World* 42 (1913): 79, references light and darkness, life and death, and others as “the *dramatis personae*, one might almost say, of a transcendental conflict which was being waged at the same time that the historical struggle was being carried on.”

²Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 123, cites Philip Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), 111, who calls them “archetypal symbols” because of their significance which spans all cultures and all times.

From the beginning of the canon, the authors of Scripture have depicted the struggle between light and darkness.³ Initially, darkness covered the surface of the deep (Gen 1:2). Then in God's first act of creation, light was formed (Gen 1:3) through his first recorded words, "Let there be light." Immediately, "God separated the light from the darkness," and set light in authority over darkness: "And God made two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night"⁴ (Gen 1:16). The Hebrew for "govern," מְשֻׁלָּה, carries the idea of dominion.⁵ The dominance of light over darkness, which began in Genesis 1, is carried to fulfillment in the eschaton in Revelation 22: "And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever" (Rev 22:5).⁶

This conflict between light and darkness is used by the Fourth Evangelist as well, becoming, perhaps, "its most striking motif."⁷ With each successive recurrence in the narrative, its impact expands such that "the cumulative effect of the light and darkness motif [is] greater than any single occurrence of these images."⁸ Furthermore,

³For a discussion of the use of light throughout the Bible, see Elizabeth R. Achtemeier, "Jesus Christ, the Light of the World: The Biblical Understanding of Light and Darkness," *Interpretation* 17 (1963): 439-42.

⁴See also Gerald L. Borchert, "Light" in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2000): 644-46.

⁵Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (1906; repr., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), s.v. "מְשֻׁלָּה." For similar uses of the same word, see Jer 51:28; Ps 114:2; 136:8; 145:13. See the discussion on John's Prologue below. So also Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, Tremper Longman, III, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), s.v. "Darkness," who note, "God's first creative act is to produce light and separate it from darkness, with overtones of light's conquering darkness." Emphasis added.

⁶This point is even more poignant if one accepts Johannine authorship of both the FG and Revelation.

⁷Koester, *Symbolism*, 123.

⁸*Ibid.*, 124. Amos Yong, "'The Light Shines in the Darkness': Johannine Dualism and the Challenge for Christian Theology of Religions Today," *The Journal of Religion* 89, no. 1 (January 2009):

Jesus' whole ministry, even with the absence of exorcisms, can be characterized as a conflict between light and darkness.⁹ "The figures of light and darkness define the plot of the Gospel, for they represent the opposing powers of righteousness and evil, and the contrasting results of belief and unbelief."¹⁰

Background

Before examining some FG references to the light/darkness motif, let us consider possible backgrounds for this concept which may have informed how the author used it and how the reader understood it.

Gnosticism. Some scholars attribute John's use of light and darkness to Hellenistic dualism and advocate a Gnostic reading of the FG.¹¹ Bultmann argues for a Mandaean Gnostic source for the FG but his theory has never been widely accepted. While incipient Gnostic thought would have surely been present during the first century, its influence on John's theological understanding of cosmic conflict is unlikely.¹²

33, adds, "Any impartial reading of the FG will immediately notice the *centrality* of the light-darkness motif to its plot, characterization, and rhetoric." Emphasis added. He further states, "Arguably, one could make the argument that the gospel is an extended elaboration of the Johannine claim, 'If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in the darkness, we lie and do not do what is true (1 John 1:6)'" (34n9). While an overstatement, it still illustrates the importance of the light/darkness theme in the FG. William Sanford LaSor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 193, makes a similar postulation, arguing that all the other dualistic themes (heaven/earth, spirit/flesh, faith/unbelief, life/death) in the FG "essentially . . . become a dualism of two forces (light/darkness) which upon examination becomes the struggle of two spiritual beings (the incarnate Word and the Devil)."

⁹So also Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 76.

¹⁰Merrill C. Tenney, "The Imagery of John," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 121 (1964): 14.

¹¹See, e.g., Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. K. Gobel (New York: Charles Scribners, 1955), 1:6ff., esp. 17-21.

¹²Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Survey of the Proposed Evidences* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), esp. 29-34; Judith M. Lieu, "Gnosticism and the Gospel of John," *Expository Times* 90 (1979): 233-37; and Etienne Trocmé, "Light and Darkness in the Fourth Gospel," *Didaskalia* 6, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 5.

Dead Sea Scrolls. Since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) in 1947, scholars have sought to draw lines of congruence between them and various parts of the NT. The connection between the Qumran writings and the FG was made very early.¹³ The *Rule of the Community* (1QS; 4QS; 5QS)¹⁴ records the teachings by the Master and is given to those who enter the group. These teachings include a clear dualism between opposing forces as humans are divided into two groups, “the Sons of Righteousness” and “the Sons of Deceit” (1QS 3:20-21), following either the Angel of Light or the Angel of Darkness.¹⁵ The light/darkness imagery dominates this conflict.¹⁶ Similarly, *The War Scroll* (1QM; 1Q33; 4Q491-496) describes the battle between these two opposing forces in detail.

The question remains as to whether the uses of light and darkness in the DSS agree with those in the FG. While the dualism in the DSS is not congruent with that in the FG, strong similarities are evident. In both, a clear conflict exists between two forces and that conflict is pictured using the images of light and darkness (John 1:5; 12:35; 1QS 4:14; 1QM which begins, “The first attack of the Sons of Light shall be launched against

¹³See, e.g., one of the earliest connections made by Karl G. Kuhn, “Die in Palästina gefundenen hebräischen Texte und das neue Testament,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 47, no. 2 (1950): 192-211.

¹⁴J. H. Charlesworth et al., *The Dead Sea Scrolls—Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations*, 6 vols. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994). James H. Charlesworth, “A Study in Shared Symbolism and Language: The Qumran Community and the Johannine Community,” in *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls, vol. 3: The Scrolls and Christian Origins*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006): 112, aptly describes the Rule as “a pre-Christian, Jewish work that emphasizes cosmic dualism, expressed in terms of the light-versus-darkness paradigm, subsumed under the absolute sovereignty of ‘the God of Israel.’”

¹⁵Charlesworth et al., *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1:3, summarizes it in his introduction to the *Rule*, “The human is torn by a cosmic struggle between two extremely powerful angels, the Angel of Light and the Angel of Darkness. The human is either created in the ‘lot’ (*gwrl*) of light or the lot (*grwl*) of darkness, but each human has some portions of light and darkness. This thought is only implicit in the Rule of the Community but becomes explicit in the Qumran horoscopes (4Q186). Because a Son of Light has some portions of darkness he can be misled into evil by the Angel of Darkness (1QS 3:21-24).”

¹⁶See, e.g., James H. Charlesworth, “Critical Comparison of the Dualism in 1QS 3.13-4.26 and the ‘Dualism’ Contained in the Fourth Gospel,” *New Testament Studies* 15 (1969): 389-418.

the lot of the Sons of Darkness,” 1:1). In both, humans are portrayed as siding with either light or darkness and their assignment relates to their moral choices (John 12:35-36, 46-47; 1QS 3:21-22; 4:9-11). In both, light and darkness are associated with truth and deceit (John 8:12, 31, 32, 44-47; 1QS 3:19).¹⁷ Finally, both have a significant catalog of shared vocabulary.¹⁸

However, similarities in vocabulary do not assure one of congruence in meaning. In fact, John’s use of light is not abstract nor does it refer to a set of teachings or to a group of individuals. Rather, for the author of the FG, the “true light is identical with Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh,” and this is a foreign concept to the Qumran documents.¹⁹

There are other significant and irreconcilable differences as well. Note, for

¹⁷LaSor, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 199, adds that both the FG and the DSS similarly maintain a tension between the reality of free will and that of determinism.

¹⁸For further discussion on the similarities, see Raymond E. Brown, “The Qumran Scrolls and the Johannine Gospel and Epistles,” in *Scrolls and the New Testament*, ed. Krister Stendahl and James H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroad, 1992): 196-99; and LaSor, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 197-98. Some of the more important parallels noted by Craig A. Evans, *Word and Glory: On the Exegetical and Theological Background of John’s Prologue*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, vol. 89 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 147, include: ‘Spirit of truth’ (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 4:6; cf. 1QS 3:18-19; 4:21, 23); ‘Holy Spirit’ (John 14:26; 20:22; cf. 1QS 4:21); ‘sons of light’ (John 12:36; cf. 1QS 3:13, 24, 25); ‘eternal life’ (John 3:15, 16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24; cf. 1QS 4:7); ‘the light of life’ (John 8:12; cf. 1QS 3:7); ‘walk in darkness’ (John 8:12; 12:35; cf. 1QS 3:21; 4:11); ‘wrath of God’ (John 3:36; cf. 1 QS 4:12); ‘eyes of the blind’ (John 9:39-41; 10:21; cf. 1 QS 4:11); ‘full of grace’ (John 1:14; cf. 1 QS 4:4, 5); ‘the works of God’ (John 6:28; 9:3; cf. 1 QS 4:4); ‘men . . . for their works were evil’ (John 3:19; cf. 1 QS 4:10, 20); and darkness overcome by light (John 1:5; 1 John 5:8; cf. 1 QMyst 6).

Charlesworth, “Study in Shared Symbolism,” 110-12, argues the “unique form of dualism” and the technical terms found in the FG are not found elsewhere—not in “Greek, Roman, or Egyptian ideology.” They are only found in the Rule of the Community, columns 3-4 of the DSS. Therefore, he argues the Fourth Evangelist inherited these from the Qumran writings. He acknowledges John infuses them with the Christian kerygma but explains the source is Qumran: “The Christology . . . belongs to the Evangelist, but he did not create the symbolism and the terminology. The *spirit* is definitely Christian and Johannine, but the *mentality* was inherited.” Emphasis original. While Charlesworth is correct to acknowledge the uniqueness of John’s use and to point out the similarity in the vocabulary, he goes too far to require John to have inherited the symbols from Qumran. As previously noted, these symbols are universal. Contra Richard Bauckham, “The Qumran Community and the Gospel of John,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Fifty Years after their Discovery: Proceedings of the Jerusalem Congress, July 20-25, 1997*, ed. Lawrence W. Shiffman et al. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2000): 105-15.

¹⁹F. F. Bruce, *Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishers, 1956), 134.

example, that in the FG Jesus is the light of the world (8:12); in the DSS an angel fulfills this role (1QM 13:10-15, e.g.). The Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of Truth” in John 14:16-18; in the DSS the Angel of Truth leads the many spirits of truth (1QM 13:10).²⁰ The emphasis in the DSS, especially *The War Scroll*, is on a tangible battle whereas the conflict in the FG is primarily unseen.²¹ In the DSS, being a “son of light” is related to keeping God’s law; however, in the FG, being a child of God is dependent only on belief in Jesus as the Messiah.²² In the DSS, only in the eschaton will the conflict between the two spirits be resolved when light finally triumphs over darkness (1QS 4:18-19; 1QM 1:7, 10; 1QMyst 6). However, Johannine theology shows that darkness could not overcome the light (1:5) and is passing away (1 John 2:8). Furthermore, the cross is the final victory of light over darkness.²³

Considering these similarities and differences, clearly a relationship exists between the FG and the DSS, but no strict one-to-one relationship can be proven. David Aune suggests the possibility for an “indirect dependence” between John and the Qumran writings but attributes apparent similarities between the two writings most likely to the general atmosphere that both shared.²⁴

²⁰Jean Duhaime rightly notes these differences in his introduction to the War Scroll in Charlesworth, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2:90. So also LaSor, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 197.

²¹Yong, “The Light Shines,” 43, rightly notes the dualism in the DSS is “both cosmic and metaphysical” in contrast to the “soteriological and ethical” dualism in the FG. However, in this section Yong seems to minimize the cosmic nature of the Johannine contrast between light and darkness. His emphasis on the soteriological and ethical dimension is well taken; however, I would argue for cosmic conflict that lies behind both the need for and the ability to procure salvation and ethics.

²²LaSor, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 200.

²³Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 1:387, esp. 387no238; LaSor, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 198.

²⁴David Aune, “Dualism in the Fourth Gospel and the Dead Sea Scrolls: A Reassessment of the Problem,” in *Noetestamentica et Philonicai: Studies in Honor of Peder Borgen*, ed. David C. Aune, Torrey Seland, and Jarl Henning Ulrichsen (Boston: Brill, 2003): 281-303. Kikuo Matsunaga, “Powers in Conflict: A New Clue to the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel” (Ph.D. thesis, McGill University, 1969), 477, agrees and adds, “While the [FG] shares its background with sectarian Palestinian Judaism and borrows certain ideas and vocabulary from there, the Evangelist protects the Christian kerygma from being

Whether the author of the FG was dependent on, influenced by, or merely concurrent with the Qumran literature relates to the issue at hand only so far as it pertains to the question of cosmic conflict. That is, how does the relationship between the FG and the DSS affect one's understanding of John's theology of spiritual warfare? In the DSS, the images of light and darkness are clearly used to convey a strong spiritual and cosmic conflict that originates in the heavens and plays itself out on the earth. As such, to the degree that John was influenced by the Qumran writings, the conflict connotations of his use of light and darkness are thusly influenced. While it has been shown that John's use of the images of light and darkness are not congruent with that in the DSS, enough evidence exists to argue he was *somewhat influenced* by the imagery in the DSS, which obviously has cosmic conflict denotations. Therefore, the influence of the DSS on the FG (however large or small) supports the interpretation of John's use of light and darkness to portray a cosmic conflict.

Old Testament. Still other scholars maintain the symbolism of light and darkness in the FG is best explained by looking to the OT.²⁵ God's Word was a lamp and a light (Ps 119:105; Prov 6:23) and it gave light and understanding (Ps 119:130). God's presence was symbolized by a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire (Exod 13:21-22 where the pillar of fire is specifically said "to give them light"; so also Exod 33:9, 10; 40:38). His glory that filled the temple was associated with light. Isaiah 9:1-2, 6-7 speaks of the Messiah as the one whom "the people who walked in darkness have seen" as "a great light. . . . On them a light has shined." Additionally, this light will exhibit great power: "the government will be upon his shoulder," there will be no end to his government and peace, and his throne will be established forever.²⁶ Several passages illustrate the

distorted by its influence."

²⁵E.g., Koester, *Symbolism*, 100-15; Achtemeier, "Light of the World," 439-49.

²⁶J. Gerald Janzen, "'I am the Light of the World' (John 8:12): Connotation and Context,"

contrast between good and evil by using the metaphors of light and darkness (Isa 5:20; 59:9-10; Job 24:13-17; 30:26; cf. 2 Cor 6:14 and 1 John 1:5-7 in the NT as well).²⁷ The metaphorical use of light in the Synoptics which is likely dependent on the OT gives circumstantial evidence for John's dependence on the OT as well.²⁸

Perhaps it is best to understand the background of John's use of light and darkness as rooted in the OT and influenced by the writings from Qumran.

Key Passages

Having considered the possible sources by which the author of the FG was influenced in his use of this imagery, consider now the text of the FG itself. Several passages throughout the FG employ or imply the images of light and darkness to emphasize a theological truth.

Prologue. The argument has been made that John 1:1-18 is the hermeneutical key by which the reader is expected to interpret the rest of the FG. Thus the way he employs the light/darkness contrast here will inform how the reader is to understand its subsequent uses. In addition, the author highlights the contrast between light and darkness by placing it in an emphatic position—the opening verses of his Gospel. This serves as a literary cue to the reader to watch for this contrast throughout the book.²⁹

Several other factors influence one's understanding of John's use of light and

Encounter 67, no 2 (2006): 129-30, who argues for an OT background to John's imagery of light.

²⁷Achtemeier, "Light of the World," 441.

²⁸Keener, *Gospel of John*, 383, esp. 383n198; and John Painter, *John: Witness and Theologian* (London: SPCK, 1975), 33, point to Matt 4:16 (Isa 9:1); Matt 5:14 (Ps. 27:1; Isa 42:6; 49:6); Luke 2:32 (Isa 42:6; 49:6). Keener adds the references to other early Christian texts as well (Rom 2:19; 13:12; 2 Cor 6:14; Eph 1:18; 4:18; 5:8, 11; 6:12; Col 1:13). Sydney H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 131, adds that Luke also related light and darkness with God and Satan, generally in Luke 1:79 and 11:35 and explicitly in Acts 26:18. There Luke quotes Jesus who sends Saul so that the Gentiles "may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God."

²⁹Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random House, 1995), 100, notes, "Anticipating the message of the entire gospel, John declares that "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

darkness here. First, John 1:1-5 obviously parallels Genesis 1:1-5. Note Ἐν ἀρχῇ which begins both passages. Both describe creation and ὁ θεὸς and both contain the ideas of light and darkness. In Genesis 1:3, “God said . . .,” while in John 1:1 “the Word was with God.” This parallelism underscores the *cosmic* nature of the conflict between light and darkness.³⁰ The structure of the Prologue also supports a cosmic understanding. While it has a long history of scholarly investigation,³¹ the general division of the Prologue on which most agree is pertinent here. The first half of the Prologue deals with eternity past and creation, while the second half is more particular to Israelite history. As such, the occurrence of light and darkness in 1:4-5 emphasizes its cosmic aspect.³²

Next, the personification given to the two images in the Prologue is significant. In 1:4-9, both light and dark are portrayed as entities in and of themselves.³³ Carson rightly notes, “‘darkness’ in John is not only absence of light, but positive evil.”³⁴ Similarly, the entities of light and darkness are associated with people and groups. As Schnackenburg writes, “The Enemies of God do not merely walk in darkness . . . they are

³⁰Discussing darkness in general, under the subheading “The Cosmic Conflict,” Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longmann, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, s.v. “Darkness,” note “the primeval mind envisions life and even the cosmos as a conflict between light and darkness, viewed as combatants struggling for control of the world.” Richard W. Thomas, “The Meaning of the Terms ‘Life’ and ‘Death’ in the Fourth Gospel and in Paul,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 21 (1968): 201, succinctly writes, “The physical categories of Genesis 1 have become the spiritual dimension of John 1.”

³¹See, e.g., Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, Anchor Bible Commentary (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 1:22; J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), 1:cxliv-cxlv; George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 4; Rudolph Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. by G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 15; and M. E. Boismard, *St. John’s Prologue*, trans. Carisbrooke Dominicans (London: Blackfriars Publications, 1957), 73-81, for discussions of the various views.

³²Koester, *Symbolism*, 124, is one who makes this point. However, light is also found in vv. 7-9 which describe John the Baptist and the incarnation of Jesus, two historically-specific events. Thus, his argument is only slightly helpful.

³³So also Jan G. van der Watt, *Family of the King* (Boston: Brill, 2000), 236.

³⁴D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 119.

themselves ‘darkness.’”³⁵ As such, light and darkness characterize the participants and not merely the setting of the cosmic conflict.

The next issue to consider pertaining to the Prologue is how these two relate to one another, and the key element of this issue is the meaning of *κατέλαβεν* in 1:5. Three primary interpretations exist. First, *καταλαμβάνω* here means to grasp, seize, win, gain control over, or overcome.³⁶ If so, a clear reference to a spiritual conflict, pictured by darkness and light, is placed in the Prologue to the FG. Second, this literal meaning with physical implications, “to grasp,” is extended to the mental sphere, “to grasp intellectually,” that is, “to understand.”³⁷ In support of this, the darkness/light motif in John is often used to symbolize understanding or misunderstanding, belief or unbelief.³⁸

³⁵Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, trans. Cecily Hastings et al. (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1979), 1:246.

³⁶Achtemeier, “Light of the World,” 447; Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, The New Century Bible Commentary (1972; repr., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1987), 87; Thomas Tobin, “The Prologue of John and Hellenistic Jewish Speculation,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52 (1990): 262; and Mark L. Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus: A Survey of Jesus and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 306, who notes either meaning is possible but “overcome” “seems most likely, however, since the whole of John’s Gospel plays out the struggle between light and darkness.” John Painter, “The Death of Jesus in John: A Discussion of the Tradition, History, and Theology of John,” in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. G. van Belle (Leuven: University Press, 2007): 327, 351, notes the darkness is “aggressively opposed to” the light. Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 76, states, “We do not usually talk of darkness trying to ‘understand’ light. To take this meaning is really to think of darkness as equivalent to certain people, or perhaps the human race at large. But in this Gospel darkness is not so much people as the evil environment in which people find themselves. The theme of the perpetual conflict between darkness and light is found throughout the book. . . . ‘Overcome’ . . . is what is required here.” Boismard, *St. John’s Prologue*, 21, believes this to be the correct interpretation and adds, “Origen and the majority of the Greek Fathers” maintain this sense as well. Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 4 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 355, commenting on the ruler of this world being cast out in 12:31, notes, “The struggle between the light and the darkness is now . . . and the darkness does not overcome the light (cf. 1:5).” Emphasis original. Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. and trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1967), s.v. “καταλαμβάνω,” gives it the gloss, “to overpower.” They add, “The darkness of separation from God has not succeeded in overcoming the light, the new religious life, which is present in the Logos, in the divine Christ. It has not been able to vanquish the power of His light. [Rather] by the very existence of this light the whole sphere of night is overcome and deprived of its power.” Translations that lean toward this interpretation include: NRSV, ESV, HCSB, NET Bible, NCV, Message, and NLT.

³⁷Schnackenburg, *Gospel according to St. John*, 1:246-47. Translations that lean toward this interpretation include: NASB95, KJV, NKJV, NIV, and YLT.

³⁸Walter Bauer et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), s.v. “καταλαμβάνω”; and Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds.,

Third, the author of the FG intends both meanings to be read into its use here, characteristic of John's literary propensity for double meaning.³⁹

Those who hold to an intellectual understanding of *καταλαμβάνω* connect it with *γινώσκω* in verse 10, "He was in the world, and the world was made though Him, and the world did not know Him," and with *λαμβάνω* in verse 12, "As many as received Him . . ." Some also see a theological problem with reading spiritual warfare into the verb. They say it allows for the possibility of defeat that is not at all supported by the author of the FG. Therefore, for them, "understand" is preferred to "overcome."⁴⁰

The other occurrence of this Greek verb is in 12:35. Here the usage is informative and pushes the meaning toward a conflict motif: "Walk while you have the light, so that darkness will not overtake you." Here, the meaning is obviously not "understand" but "to grasp or seize."⁴¹ One additional text which may provide lexical aid

Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (New York: UBS, 1989), sections 32.18 and 37.19. Contra Jacob A. Dyer, "The Unappreciated Light," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 79 (1960): 170-71, who argues *οὐ κατέλαβεν* is parallel to *οὐκ ἔγνω* and *οὐ παρέλαβον*, "requiring similar meanings for all three terms." Furthermore, *ἔλαβον* is taken to be the "direct opposite of all three negative phrases." He concludes the best translation conveys the idea of acceptance based on the triple parallel and proposes, "The light still shines in the darkness, even though the darkness has never appreciated it."

³⁹E. Richard, "Expressions of Double Meaning and Their Function in the Gospel of John," *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985): 96-112, esp. 104; Koester, *Symbolism*, 125, 126, who translates it "overcome" but goes on to suggest the additional meaning "comprehend" and mentions 1:10 as support; BDAG, s.v. "*καταλαμβάνω*"; and Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, sections 32.18 and 37.19. Both BDAG and Louw and Nida reference the possibility that either "overcome" or "understand" may be the meaning and that John may have intended a double meaning. Other commentators who hold this position include Janzen, "I am the Light of the World," 134; van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 256, who notes, however, "The emphasis then seems to be the conflict between Jesus and his opponents and their inability to oppose Jesus in such a way that they can halt or destroy his divine revelation" (emphasis added); and Ben Witherington, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1994), 288, who opts for "comprehend" but notes "overcome" is also possible. Contra David W. Wead, "The Johannine Double Meaning," *Restoration Quarterly* 13 (1970): 106-20, who does not reference this verb as an example of double meaning. However, his article did not claim to be exhaustive.

⁴⁰Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:246-47.

⁴¹The verb also occurs in 8:3 in a passage absent from the best manuscripts. There a woman is caught in adultery. This use proves unprofitable in determining the meaning in 1:5, even if the passage were authentic. First, the darkness/light motif is absent, making this use less germane. Second, she may have been caught in either (or both) of two ways—caught as in "she came to be known as" an adulteress (intellectually, supporting "comprehend" in 1:5) and caught as in seized in the act of adultery (physically,

is John 16:33, wherein Jesus claims to have overcome the world. As argued above, the world is an agent of conflict in the FG. “Overcome” translates the verb *νικάω* instead of *καταλαμβάνω*, but its use here is at least circumstantial evidence that “overcome” is intended in 1:5.⁴²

The last piece of evidence to be considered is the general view of light and darkness throughout the rest of Scripture. God, who is associated with light, demonstrates his authority over the darkness in several ways. Achtemeier points out that God knows where the darkness is (Job 38:19) and what it contains (Dan 2:22). God observes the deeds of those who do the evil works of darkness (Isa 29:5-6; Ezek 8:12; Job 34:22). The darkness is not dark to God; it is bright like the day (Job 12:22; Ps 90:8; 139:11). The thick darkness is under God’s feet (Ps 18:9). Moreover, God uses the darkness for his purposes (Ps 18:11; Deut 4:11; 5:22-23), including judgment (Ezek 30:18-19; Isa 47:5; Jer 13:16).⁴³ These references further support a conflict interpretation of the verb.

Returning to the Prologue, note the tense of the verbs in 1:5. “And the light shines [present] in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome [aorist] it.” The present tense is a change from the past tenses the author uses in 1:1-4. This tense is the result of the nature of light—it continually shines.⁴⁴ The aorist tense of the verb is also significant. While it is possible this may be a gnomic aorist expressing a truism—

supporting “overcome” in 1:5).

⁴²Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 75n39, comments when “the light shines” in 1:5, the verb *φαίνει* “points to the essential action of light in itself,” contrasted with *φωτίζει* in 1:9, which refers to “the effect of light in illuminating people.” Thus, while the verb in 1:9 may better fit the nuance of “comprehend,” the verb in 1:5 better fits the nuance of “overcome.”

For additional circumstantial evidence, see T. Baarda, “John 1:5 in the Oration and Diatessaron of Tatian concerning the Reading of *katalambani*,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 47 (1993): 209-25. Here the author, among other things, cites three quotations from Clement of Alexandria that lean toward a “seize, apprehend” meaning for the verb.

⁴³Achtemeier, “Light of the World,” 444-46.

⁴⁴Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 75.

darkness does not overcome the light—much like a present tense can do, a single action is the usual way of understanding the aorist.⁴⁵ If a single action is intended in 1:5b, to what event is the author referring? While Creation and the Fall are options, for the author of the FG, the victory of light over darkness, of Jesus over Satan, is the cross event. Jesus' death is the most likely referent for the particular event.⁴⁶

In the description of the relationship between the darkness and the light, the author does not describe the effortless and immediate victory the light has over the darkness. Rather, he describes the inability of the darkness (in spite of implied efforts) to overcome the light. Such a description paves the way for the delineation of that resistance by the darkness and the subsequent conflict caused.⁴⁷ Also, since the author has stated the darkness can not overcome the light, the reader knows from the beginning the forces of good will prevail. This allows him to focus on *how* the light will overcome rather than whether or not it will.⁴⁸

To summarize, John 1:5 serves as a programmatic statement in that it describes the conflict which will permeate the rest of the FG and guides the reader in how the narrative is to be read. Boyd goes so far as to categorize 1:4-5 as a “proleptic summary statement of Jesus’ ministry” where “John is setting up a theme of Jesus’ ministry by stating that it most fundamentally constituted a conflict between the kingdom of light and

⁴⁵Ibid., 76, esp. 76n44.

⁴⁶Judith L. Kovacs, “‘Now Shall the Ruler of this World Be Driven Out’: Jesus’ Death as Cosmic Battle in John 12:20-36,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114, no. 2 (1995): 231; and Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 87. However, Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 77, suggests this may be another instance of a Johannine double meaning. Contra Keener, *Gospel of John*, 1:387, who agrees with the conflictual sense of the verb but argues the past tense of the verb “probably summarizes the whole of Jesus’ incarnate ministry” rather than the specific cross event. He is consistent to connect those in opposition to Jesus during “the whole” of his ministry—the Jews and the world they represent (1:11)—to darkness.

See pp. 213-18 for a discussion of the death of Jesus as a weapon of cosmic conflict.

⁴⁷Yong, “The Light Shines,” 41.

⁴⁸For a similar thought, see Beate Kowalski, “Anticipations of Jesus’ Death in John,” in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. G. van Belle (Leuven: University Press, 2007): 592.

the kingdom of darkness.”⁴⁹ Painter agrees:

The reader is made aware of the sinister and aggressive role of the darkness in the world created by the Word. From the beginning the light is in conflict with the darkness. The Gospel tells the story of this continuing struggle in the work of the incarnate Word.⁵⁰

However, the concepts of light and darkness are introduced in the Prologue but not fully explained. Consequently, that which is not clarified in 1:5—What is the “darkness”? How will it try to overcome the light? How will the light resist? etc.—is later to be revealed through the narrative. That is, when the reader is confronted with the themes of light and darkness, he is expected to relate them to the conflict initially described in the Prologue and understand each reference as a further explanation of that initial one.

In conclusion, based on its other uses in the FG, the likely background connection with Genesis 1, general, if not specific, connections with light/darkness in the DSS, and the context of John 1, I conclude *καταλαμβάνω* in 1:5 has forceful, conflict overtones. Therefore, it can be argued John begins his Gospel by setting a cosmic stage in which the *λόγος* is the light, the divine protagonist, who is in conflict with an unnamed antagonist, symbolized by darkness. With this setting described, the rest of his Gospel is to be understood in this context. Therefore, the struggle between the light and darkness, which began in eternity past, continues throughout the ministry of Jesus and continues in the lives of John’s audience.

John 3:19-21. The next occurrence of the darkness/light motif, John 3:19-21, parallels the language used in the Prologue. As the light “shines in darkness” (1:5) and is portrayed as “coming into the world” (1:9), in 3:19, “light is come into the

⁴⁹Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 228.

⁵⁰Painter, “Death of Jesus,” 350-51.

world.” All three refer to the incarnation, and the general response to Jesus’ “coming” in both passages is rejection—“His own did not receive Him” in 1:11 and “men loved darkness rather than the light” in 3:19. This connection implies the author intends his readers to interpret 3:19-21 in light of the conflict motif set up in 1:5.

The meanings of light and darkness are further developed in this passage.⁵¹ While still symbols, they are now connected with the deeds of men. Because of evil deeds, men refuse to come to the light; but those doing the truth (an overtranslation of *ὁ δὲ ποιῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν*) come to the light. By such they are being judged.⁵² Now, not only does the reader understand darkness and light to be two cosmic forces, but individuals necessarily side⁵³ with one of the two forces of the cosmic conflict as indicated by their actions.⁵⁴

John 8:12. The next significant passage dealing with light and darkness occurs in the Festival Cycle. One must not undervalue the significance of the Jewish context of this pronouncement. First, the setting is most likely the Jewish courtyard on the culminating day of the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. As the lamps are being lit to conclude the feast, Jesus declares, “I am the light of the world!” This context adds to the evidence for a Jewish understanding of the background to light/darkness in

⁵¹Ibid., 327, considers this “a programmatic statement of the conflict of the light and the darkness in the world.” So also Judith L. Kovacs, “Now Shall the Ruler,” 232.

⁵²Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 206, states, “[The] NIV’s ‘verdict’ is misleading; the word denotes the *process* of judging not the *sentence* of condemnation.” Emphasis original.

⁵³Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 251, 257, agrees, “Thus the image of light serves as figurative backdrop for understanding and evaluating both the reactions of those who reject Jesus, and those who accept him” (251). “Light and darkness serve as categories which distinguish two groups” (257). She further adds the deeds of men who love darkness are not “wrought in God” and this necessarily “implies direct opposition to God” (257).

⁵⁴Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 207, notes the FG’s divergence from the use of light and darkness in the Qumranic literature which emphasizes “a rigid and hopeless determinism.”

the FG.⁵⁵ Second, this passage follows 7:40-52 (understanding 7:53-8:11 to be a later addition) in which the chief priests and Pharisees have rebuked Nicodemus, stating that no prophet can come from Galilee. And yet, Jesus immediately makes this prophetic announcement.

For John's reader, Jesus' statement may bring to mind Isaiah 42:6 or 49:6 but would certainly take them back to the Prologue and 1:4. The initial statement in 1:4-5 is intended to shape how the audience understands subsequent references to light and darkness. As in 1:4 where the Word "was the light of men," similarly, but publically and from his own lips, Jesus announces himself as the light. Note Jesus' statement is not a declaration of war, announcing an impending conflict, but rather a statement of good news, redemptive, and inviting.⁵⁶ He refers to those who "follow Me" as no longer walking in darkness, but rather having "the light of life." Clearly there is a demarcation between those who follow him, having light and life, and those who walk in darkness. Walking in darkness compares to those who are still in their sins in 8:21, 24. This group is further identified in 8:44 as the offspring of the devil. In this sense, light and darkness characterize two responses to Jesus (as in 3:19-21) and thus on which side of the cosmic conflict individuals stand. Furthermore, 8:12 not only looks back at the Prologue and the Feast of Tabernacles in 7:37ff., it also looks forward, introducing much of the content of chapters 8-12.⁵⁷

John 9:4-5. Jesus' statement in the previous chapter, "I am the light of the world," is confirmed in chapter 9. Jesus and his disciples come upon a man who has

⁵⁵So also Yong, "The Light Shines," 35; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 127-28; Schnackenburg, *Gospel according to St. John*, 2:189-90; Keener, *Gospel of John*, 739; C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 349; and Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:343-44.

⁵⁶So also Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 362, "Jesus' stance towards the world remains salvific."

⁵⁷Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 237.

been blind from birth. After discussing the cause of the blindness, Jesus speaks of working during the day because night is coming and restates that he is the light of the world.⁵⁸ After healing the man, he follows Jesus and thus does not walk in (physical or spiritual) darkness but rather has the light (physical and spiritual) of life. The rest of the chapter narrates the interaction of the Jews with all those involved. In various ways throughout the narrative, the Fourth Evangelist further develops the light/darkness motif and escalates the conflict between Jesus and the Jews.⁵⁹

First, in 9:4 Jesus says, “We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming when no man can work.” The “works” refer to the previous verse in which Jesus attributes the purpose of this man’s blindness to an opportunity “that the works of God might be displayed in him.”⁶⁰ This emphasis on Jesus’ earthly ministry, as well as the phrase that follows, “while I am in the world,” informs how one is to understand “as long as it is day”—while Jesus ministers, before his coming death and departure. There is coming a time of night, Jesus says, “when no man can work.” This refers to the dark period of his passion and just afterward.⁶¹ Of course, Jesus’ work will continue through his disciples, especially after they are empowered by the Holy Spirit (cf. 20:19-23).

⁵⁸However, the restatement in 9:5 leaves out the Ἐγώ found in 8:12.

⁵⁹John’s purposeful and skillful presentation of this episode is recognized by Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:376, as well. He comments on the “consummate artistry” of the Johannine narrative, calling it “Johannine dramatic skill at its best.”

⁶⁰Paul Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1995), 118, argues the connection between this pericope and the theme of light and darkness may be further supported by the author’s use of φανερωθῆναι to describe how “the works of God might be *displayed*.” Emphasis original.

⁶¹So also Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 363; Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11*, The New American Commentary, vol. 25A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 314; Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to St. John*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 281; Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 343; and Wead, “Johannine Double Meaning,” 118. John 12:35-36 further confirms this below, as well as John’s comment in 13:30. See Dodd, *Interpretation*, 402, who made this connection, noting 13:30, “and it was night,” “recalls the whole symbolism of light and darkness in the Book of Signs (cf. ix.4).” Contra Peter F. Ellis, *Genius of John*, 161, who believes it is merely a proverbial saying emphasizing the importance of the work.

In 9:5, Jesus restates his earlier proclamation that he is the light of the world. By healing the blind man he further establishes that he came to enlighten every man (1:9).⁶² Duke goes so far as to suggest “the drama of chapter nine” brings to “vigorous life” the primary irony of the Gospel—that “the true light that enlightens every person was coming into the world” but was rejected by his own.⁶³

Similar to the way in which the author demonstrates it is the Jews who are actually influenced by the devil through the accusation of Jesus being demon-possessed, here those who physically see are shown to be spiritually blind, while the one who is physically blind is shown to be the one who really sees. Jesus makes this point explicit in 9:39, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see; and that those who see may become blind.”⁶⁴

In this pericope, the metaphor of light is explicit with Jesus again claiming to be the light of the world. Furthermore, the metaphor of light/darkness shifts to one of sight/blindness. Through this episode, the author presents Jesus as the one who is able to bring individuals out of darkness and into the light. That light overcomes the darkness is “the primary lesson that the evangelist meant to convey.”⁶⁵ The Jews are further cast in a negative light, being on the side of darkness/blindness yet again. Thus the light/darkness motif was effectively used by John to define the two sides of cosmic conflict.

⁶²Both Duke, *Irony*, 117; and D. Moody Smith, *John* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 40, connect John 1:9-13 with John 9. Smith adds 1:9-13 gains “concreteness and specificity” as a result of John 9. Duke, *Irony*, 118-19, further argues the man who was born blind is typical of every man. He is described as ἄνθρωπος rather than ἄνθρωπός τις, effectively generalizing the reference and “hinting that for John all mankind is born blind.” However, the article is used in 9:11, emphasizing the particularity of the one and only man, Jesus, who is the light of the world, who can bring light to the darkness.

⁶³Duke, *Irony*, 117.

⁶⁴Strauss, *Four Portraits*, 318, states it succinctly, “The miracle of sight symbolizes the progress of the narrative. As the man progressively gains greater spiritual *insight*, the religious leaders decline toward greater blindness.” Emphasis original. So also Duke, *Irony*, 118, who writes, “the man born blind is the one who sees with increasing clarity; the ones who claim sight plunge into progressively thickening night.”

⁶⁵Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:379.

John 11:9-10. After discussing with his disciples the sickness and subsequent death of Lazarus, Jesus suggests they return to Judea. The disciples protest, stating they have just come from there, and it would be dangerous to return since the Jews are seeking to kill Jesus. Jesus replies, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him” (11:9-10). Similar to 9:3-4, Jesus uses the imagery of light and darkness to speak of his death. His disciples do not understand his meaning, but the readers of John’s Gospel do, especially in light of 9:3-4.⁶⁶ Jesus uses the simple illustration of a pedestrian walking in the bright day and how that same walk is hindered at night without the sun. This picture is used to convey a deeper truth.⁶⁷ The twelve-hour day represents a time of safety for him and his disciples because his “hour” has not yet come. The night, when stumbling occurs, represents the time of his passion.⁶⁸

Notice the progression from 9:3-4 where the emphasis is urgency for ministry to 11:9-10 where the emphasis is protection and safety from a coming danger. As his hour approaches, the emphasis will continue to shift toward his coming death (cf. 12:27-36). Note, too, the subtle shift in the use of light from 11:9 to 11:10. In 11:9, the light is external: one “walks in the day” because “he sees the light.” However, in 11:10, the light is now internal.⁶⁹ The text does not say that a man stumbles because the light is not in it

⁶⁶Edwin Clement Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel* (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), 400. Similarly, Smith, *John*, 219, argues that Jesus is deliberately mysterious toward his disciples, but that “the informed reader knows that Jesus is the light of the world (8:12).”

⁶⁷Van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 248, notes these passages which contrast light and darkness employ real-life situations familiar to John’s audience.

⁶⁸M. W. G. Stibbe, “A Tomb with a View: John 11.1-44 in Narrative-Critical Perspective,” *New Testament Studies* 40 (1994): 51, helpfully paraphrases the interpretation most scholars accept concerning this text: “I can return to Judea because the hour for my death (the hour of darkness) is not quite upon us. I will therefore not be killed (‘stumble’) at Bethany because I am still ministering in a season of pre-ordained security (daylight).”

⁶⁹Andreas Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand

[the night],⁷⁰ rather it says one stumbles because the light is not *in him*.⁷¹ This internalization serves to further characterize two groups—those who possess the light and those who do not.

Here John uses light in two different senses. First, day/night represent a time of security/danger which is ultimately tied to cosmic conflict because Satan via Judas is bringing about the danger, but not until God the Father allows the “hour” to come. Until then, Jesus operates in sovereign safety. Second, light/darkness characterize individuals. There are those who “walk in darkness” and do not have the light in them, and there are those who spiritually “walk in the day,” having the light in them.⁷² Both uses indirectly or directly speak to John’s theology of cosmic conflict.

John 12:35-36, 46. Following the Triumphal Entry (12:12-19) and the request by the Greeks to see Jesus (12:20-26), Jesus announces that his hour has finally come (12:23). After describing his death as a grain of wheat that falls and dies, he speaks of casting out the ruler of this world by his being lifted up from the earth. In this context, Jesus speaks again of light and darkness.

After Jesus states, “The Son of Man must be lifted up” (12:33), the multitude

Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 330, comments on this transition from “the realm of nature . . . to symbolic language” and also notices a similar transition in the Qumran writings (1QH 17:26). Contra Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 390, who understands “in him” to be merely a reference to the Jewish understanding of “the light of the eye.” In this way, the light enters into him physically through the eye. Schnackenburg, *Gospel according to St. John*, 2:325; Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:423; and Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 390, also note the light of the body is the eye (cf. Matt 6:22). However, bearing in mind the previous passages, and especially 12:35, it seems best to understand v. 9 as I have above. So also Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:840, who states, “Jesus’ metaphor in 11:10 that the light is not ‘in him,’ refers to spiritual light, but may play on an image borrowed from some ancient views of science, that light resided in the eye.”

⁷⁰Contrary to a variant in manuscript D that does have *ἐν αὐτῆ* (fem. agreeing with *νύξ* of *ἐν τῆ νυκτί*).

⁷¹Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 400.

⁷²Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 392, agrees, “So in John the light by which men walk, in the absence of which they stumble, is Christ, who, simply by being the light of the world, distinguishes between the children of light and the children of darkness.”

asks who the Son of Man is. Rather than answer their question,⁷³ Jesus returns to the concepts of light and darkness and states, “For a little while longer the light is among you.” In doing so, he presses the urgency of following and believing in him, because if they do not, the darkness will “overtake”⁷⁴ them, a possible allusion to the setting sun.⁷⁵ The one in darkness “does not know where he goes.” In contrast, Jesus is sure of his mission, purpose, and destiny and his disciples know the way as well (14:3-6).⁷⁶ Jesus continues, exhorting his audience to “believe in the light, in order that you may become sons of light.”⁷⁷

I have argued the author introduces key concepts in the Prologue and expects the reader to interpret the rest of the Gospel based on their presentation in the Prologue; here again John returns to 1:1-18. Note the correspondence between “believe” and “become sons of light” and “become children of God” and “believe.”⁷⁸ Thus, Jesus’ last address to the Jews is an invitation for them to “come to the light” (3:21) and walk in it before darkness comes. In fact, in 12:46 Jesus states his purpose: “I have come as light into the world, that [ἵνα, purpose clause] everyone who believes in Me may not remain in

⁷³ Borchert, *John 12-21*, 61, argues that Jesus’ entire ministry has been the answer to that question, but they have refused to accept it. Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 479, comments that even though Jesus does not directly answer their question, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, which he believes provided the background to Jesus’ being lifted up, speaks of the Messiah as “a light to the nations” (Isa 49:5-6). This is particularly applicable in light of the coming of the Greeks earlier in the chapter (12:20-26).

⁷⁴ καταλάβη, from καταλαμβάνω, the same word used in 1:5 where the darkness did not overcome the light. While the darkness cannot overcome the light, it seems it can overtake individuals who do not “believe in the light” (12:36).

⁷⁵ Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 435, calls this “a word-picture of a traveler at sunset. He must make an effort to finish the journey before the darkness overtakes him, or he will lose his way.”

⁷⁶ Lincoln, *Gospel according to St. John*, 354.

⁷⁷ “Sons of light” is the familiar Hebraism denoting the qualities that define a person. Cf. John 17:12; Eph 2:1; 5:8. So also F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel and Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1983), 1:270; Schnackenburg, *Gospel according to St. John*, 396; Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 446; and Rodney A. Whitacre, *John*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 319, who, however, notes a double meaning here—both a Hebraism as well as a filial relationship with God that is offered in Jesus.”

⁷⁸ So also Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 435.

darkness.” The paragraph closes as “the light” “departed and hid Himself from them.”⁷⁹ Just as “the world did not know Him” (1:10) and “His own did not receive Him” (1:11), even so “though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him” (12:37).

This passage is consistent with the others in that light is portrayed as a person, Jesus himself, and darkness is the realm in which those walk who do not follow Christ, as well as an active force⁸⁰ that eventually overtakes those who do not believe in the light so as to become sons of light. Individuals are again divided into two groups, those who walk in the light and those who walk in the darkness. However, here their differentiation is not primarily a moral one, but rather one of faith—the sons of light are those who *believe* in the light.⁸¹

This pericope is Jesus’ final address to the Jews, closing the Book of Signs. Consider its primary emphases: (1) the casting out of the ruler of this world; (2) several references to the death of Jesus (his hour had come, grain of wheat, lifting up from the earth, and the light being with them only a little while longer); and (3) the primary metaphor John uses to communicate the conflict—light/darkness. Placing a significant reference to light and darkness here in the context of Satan’s exorcism and Jesus’ death speaks directly to the importance of this imagery for the author in communicating warfare.

John 13:30. The final significant passage dealing with light and darkness is one in which the words are not actually used. However, while the specific words “light”

⁷⁹Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:479.

⁸⁰So also Schnackenburg, *Gospel according to St. John*, 2:396: “The darkness is now talked about as a sinister force which attacks men, overpowers them and forces them into submission (cf. 1 John 2:11).”

⁸¹Cf. 1:10-12, where those who oppose him “did not know Him” and “did not receive Him,” but those in the light “received Him” and “believe in His name.” Cf. also 3:21, where the one who practices the truth “comes to the light.”

and “darkness” are not used in 13:30, still the imagery of darkness is conveyed through the word “night,” as it has been in the passages previously considered.

In John 13:30, when Judas leaves the disciples after the Last Supper, the author makes the narrative comment, “So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.” John’s point is not merely to report on the time schedule of the evening. He has already noted it is after the supertime meal (13:2, 4). Additionally, the “night” would actually have been rather bright because of the full paschal moon.⁸² Rather, John’s use of the symbol of darkness communicates Judas’ final surrender to the schemes of the devil. He is now inhabited by evil and doing the bidding of the evil one.⁸³ “Here literal and spiritual levels of the image combine to produce a wrenching picture of the evil soul abandoning itself to the ultimate deed of darkness.”⁸⁴

The import of this passage is further apparent when one considers the previous uses of “night.” In 9:4, “night is coming when no man can work.” In 11:10, “if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” Both of these passages speak of the hour in which the light leaves the world. When Judas left supper, that period of darkness began with the betrayal of Jesus, “and it was night.”

Interestingly, the next time Judas comes on the scene, he comes to the dark

⁸²D. J. Williams, “Judas Iscariot” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992): 408. So also Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 558.

⁸³Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1982), 173, connects this incident with 1:5, “So the final gesture of affection [by Jesus] precipitates the final surrender of Judas to the power of darkness. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has neither understood it nor mastered it.” Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 449, also connects it with 1:5 but further notes it is “the night that puts an end to Jesus’ work (9:4; 11:10; 12:35),” tying several darkness references together. Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 558, comments that this reference “point[s] us to the strife between light and darkness and indicat[es] that it was night, black night in the soul of Judas (11:10).” For further discussion, see the previous chapter, “Jesus in relation to Judas,” pp. 152-55.

⁸⁴Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longmann, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, s.v. “Night.” So also Strauss, *Four Portraits*, 322; Bultmann, *John*, 482-83; Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:32; and Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:920, who also points to Rev 21:25 and the absence of night in the eschaton and to 4Q299, frag. 5, lines 1-4. Keener also notes this interpretation is as early as Origen.

garden with “lanterns and torches and weapons” (18:3) to arrest Jesus. The one gone into the darkness now needs the world’s light to find the light of the world.⁸⁵

Nicodemus. The only literal uses of “night” (), a term that implies darkness, are in 3:2 and 19:39 where Nicodemus comes to Jesus and helps bury Jesus, in 13:30 when Judas leaves to betray Jesus, and in 21:3 when the disciples catch no fish after the resurrection. The use in 13:30 has already been sufficiently discussed.

The two references to Nicodemus have been debated by commentators who disagree concerning whether the use of “night” is laden with “darkness” overtones or if it is merely a time marker. While the use is subtle, when one considers the entire Gospel, its significance is clear.

At 3:1-2 John’s symbols of light and darkness are as yet not fully developed; and though their significance has been stated clearly in the prologue, the reader may not realize in a first reading that “night” in 3:2 has symbolic and ironic import. The cumulative weight of the Gospel, however, and particularly the repetition of this detail in 19:39, leaves little doubt about the symbolic/ironic intent of this verse.⁸⁶

If its use is metaphorical, then darkness here refers not so much to evil as in 13:30, but to a darkness of ignorance/lack of understanding (cf. 3:10) and/or possibly

⁸⁵Raymond Brown, “The Passion according to John: Chapters 18 and 19,” *Worship* 49 (1975): 127, recognizes the images used and notes the irony: “Judas has preferred darkness rather than light which has come into the world (3:19); when he left Jesus it was truly night (13:30), and now he needs artificial light.” Similarly Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:1078, notes the FG is the only Gospel to mention this detail and that “may suggest that he also derives symbolic, ironic import from it: the agents of darkness prove completely unaware that they are approaching the light of the world.” So also Ellis, *Genius of John*, 248, and William M. Wright, IV, “Greco-Roman Character Typing and the Presentation of Judas in the Fourth Gospel,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 71, no. 3 (2009): 558.

⁸⁶Duke, *Irony*, 185n40. So also R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 193), 192, who writes, “Retrospectively, or upon re-reading, ‘night’ functions as an index to the character of Nicodemus.” Similarly, Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 149, agrees, “It is a detail which only becomes meaningful when the whole piece has been read.” Contra Wead, “Johannine Double Meaning,” 120, who argues, “when we face the symbolic uses of the Gospel, we cannot deny their existence; but we must come to them with extreme caution lest we read into the text more than the author intended.” He advocates no metaphorical interpretation regarding Nicodemus and night.

However, Matsunaga, “Powers in Conflict,” 307n1, pushes the imagery too far when he suggests that since “Nicodemus is working before the ‘night’ comes” to get Jesus buried, the authors may intend to convey Nicodemus is no longer of the “night.”

fear.⁸⁷ Note the author's freedom to vary his use of metaphor. While this paper argues that the light/darkness motif in the FG is a metaphor primarily used to convey the cosmic conflict, one is not required to understand every use of the metaphor in this way. Knowing the author's proclivity toward double meaning, one should not be adverse to him using these images in additional ways, including to convey belief/unbelief, understanding/lack of understanding, or fear.⁸⁸ However, accepting that the image may be used in a variety of ways does not diminish the conflict overtones of certain obvious passages.

Other possible allusions. Other possible allusions are more minor and less certain than those mentioned above but warrant consideration. Consider, for example, John 5:35 where Jesus calls John the Baptist "the lamp that was burning and shining." In 6:17, the disciples find themselves in a boat on the sea, and "it had already become dark and Jesus had not come to them." In this darkness and absence of Jesus, a storm arises.⁸⁹ Some scholars also find a possible allusion to the light/darkness imagery in 18:18 where Peter is warming himself by the charcoal fire as he denies Jesus three times. Duke sees the light of the fire as a "tragic substitute for the light [Peter] is denying" and as an indication that Peter is "vulnerable to darkness."⁹⁰ The author of the FG connects this

⁸⁷Duke, *Irony*, 108, who also makes an insightful contrast between Nicodemus and Judas: "Unlike Nicodemus, who moves from night toward the light, Judas is chosen by the light, lives in the light, and yet even in that brilliance can be possessed of Satan and 'immediately' be plunged into night." Commentators who see the darkness as possibly fear include Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 1:130; and Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 149.

⁸⁸The following section, "Other possible allusions," will briefly discuss other passages that may fall into this category. So also van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 258: "The imagery is used as the context requires and does not dominate the message. Metaphorically all the references to light [or darkness] do not function in the same way. . . . The context specifies in each case how the imagery should be applied."

⁸⁹Achtemeier, "Light of the World," 443-44, interprets the darkness in this passage with symbolic meaning and sees allusions to Gen 1 as well. So also Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 209-10.

⁹⁰Duke, *Irony*, 108-109. So also Koester, *Symbolism*, 123, who sees the lanterns in the garden,

episode to Peter's reinstatement in chapter 21 by referring to a charcoal fire, this time with Jesus present (21:9).

In John 20:1, Mary comes to the tomb "while it was still dark." This reference does not seem to give any indication of an evil/oppositional connotation to the image, but many scholars understand it to carry symbolic import. It may denote fear or unbelief, similar to Nicodemus in 3:2,⁹¹ or perhaps the author is using it ironically—the light of the world is resurrected in its darkness.⁹²

A little later in the episode, Mary sees "two angels in white." While the white could represent several things, including majesty, purity, holiness, etc., it is consistent with the light/darkness motif regularly used by the author.⁹³

Conclusion. This section has argued the cosmic conflict between Jesus and Satan is illustrated by the author of the FG using the contrast between light and darkness. At the outset the author states the darkness did not overcome the light (1:5). The rest of the Gospel bears this out. The light wins. Jesus casts out Satan. Jesus overcomes the world. The persecutions and murderous plots of the Jews only serve to fulfill God's plans. In this way, the protagonists defeat the antagonists. However, I earlier argued that

the charcoal fire, and the darkness of resurrection morning as possible examples of the light/darkness motif.

⁹¹Lincoln, *Gospel according to St. John*, 489; Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 635; Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:981; Borchert, *John 12-21*, 291; Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 518; Whitacre, *John*, 471-72; and Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:1178, acknowledges this possibility. Contra Köstenberger, *John*, 561n3, who typically sees significance in John's symbolic language, but states, "Often, though not always, in John, darkness connotes evil or unbelief. . . . It is not clear that it does so here."

⁹²Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:1178, mentions this also. Contra van der Watt, *Family of the King*, 246n441; and Trocme, "Light and Darkness," 7.

⁹³Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:1189. Note another possible progression in the light/darkness imagery in this chapter. In 20:1, before any resurrection appearances, Mary comes to the tomb and the author explicitly says "it was still dark." After Jesus reveals himself to Mary and is about to appear to the disciples, John narrates, "when therefore it was evening on that day" (20:19). Darkness is implied but not stated. Thomas is absent from this encounter. One week later, again presumably at night (based on the parallel details of v. 19 and v. 26) and with Thomas present, Jesus appears again. In this case, darkness is neither stated nor implied. In these three episodes, as the understanding of the disciples grows and spreads, it seems the darkness diminishes.

Jesus' efforts toward Jews and the world in the FG are characteristically evangelistic. Also, the FG repeatedly presents individuals leaving the darkness of the antagonists and converting to the light of those who follow Christ. In this way, the victory of light over darkness, earlier described as casting out and judging, may also be seen in the transformation of an individual. One stops walking in darkness and starts walking in the light; he who is blind suddenly sees; and one who hates the light suddenly comes to it. That individual goes from darkness to light. From the cosmic perspective, Satan loses a slave and God gains a son; in each case, light overcomes the darkness.

Clearly, John employs these contrasting images of darkness and light to communicate a cosmic struggle in the FG.⁹⁴ Tenney summarizes it well:

The conflict of light and darkness constitutes the plot of John. The early chapters of the Gospel describe the shining of the light into the lives of different persons whose darkness is pierced by the revelation of God in Christ. Resistance to this revelation is the reaction of darkness that does not wish to be disturbed or convicted. The rising hostility [toward] Jesus, culminating in the crucifixion, seemed to mark the triumph of the darkness, for justice was frustrated, and evil prevailed over good. The death of Jesus apparently involved the denial of His claims and the defeat of righteousness. . . . The resurrection, however, brought the vindication of the claims of Christ, and once for all confuted His enemies. The life in Him, which overcame death, proved to be "the light of men."⁹⁵

Life and Death

Another metaphor that the author uses regularly is life and death. John uses ζῶν 36 times compared to 16 times in all the Synoptics⁹⁶ and the verb ζάω 17 times

⁹⁴John Dennis, "'The Lifting Up of the Son of Man' and the Dethroning of the 'Ruler of This World': Jesus' Death as the Defeat of the Devil in John 12:31-32," in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. G. van Belle (Leuven: University Press, 2007): 680, argues the same thing: "The identification of Logos as 'light shining in darkness' in 1:5 introduces the theme of cosmic conflict between the forces of light and darkness, between Logos and Satan."

Though outside the scope of this dissertation, further research could consider other Johannine literature. First John 1:5-6, 2:8-11; Rev 21:25; 22:5 also seem to indicate John employs the darkness/light imagery to point to a cosmic conflict.

⁹⁵Merrill C. Tenney, "The Imagery of John," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 121 (1964): 15-16.

⁹⁶The FG also uses the noun ψυχή (used 10 times which is comparable to its uses in the Synoptics) to describe life. Generally, ψυχή is used to describe physical life and ζῶν to describe spiritual life. Note the distinction in 12:25, "ὁ φιλῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἀπολλύει αὐτήν, καὶ ὁ μισῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ

compared to 15 in the Synoptics.⁹⁷ In the FG, the concepts of life and death are to refer to both physical and spiritual life or death.⁹⁸ In general, Jesus and his followers are associated with life, while Satan and Jesus' opponents are associated with death. Thus, John is able to use these concepts in the FG to further illustrate spiritual warfare.

Jesus and Life

Jesus is explicitly identified with "life" throughout the Gospel, beginning as early as 1:4, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." He offers "living water" to the Samaritan woman in 4:10. At the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus says to the mourning Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die" (11:25-26). On the night he is betrayed, Jesus instructs his disciples concerning his departure, telling them, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (14:6). In addition to these two direct "I Am" statements, Jesus' relationship with life is seen in other "I Am" passages. He states,

ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ τοῦτῳ εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον φυλάξει αὐτήν." For exceptions, see 4:50, 51, 53. So also Leon Morris, *Jesus is the Christ: Studies in the Theology of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1989), 191n3.

⁹⁷Archibald M. Hunter, *According to John: The New Look at the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), 107-8, calls the FG "the Gospel of Life" and believes "life" to be its central theme.

⁹⁸To determine how each word is used in each particular passage is not necessary for this discussion. This section seeks to demonstrate how "life" and "death," regardless of whether they refer to the physical or spiritual, are employed by the author to illustrate cosmic conflict. In several passages, the uses are greatly debated and entering that debate is not necessary for my argument. For an overview of the use of "life" in the FG in general and contrasted with its use in the Synoptics (especially the futuristic versus realized eschatology), see D. H. Johnson, "Light," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992): 469-71. Other important discussions include George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1974), 254-69; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 144-50; and Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 84-90.

Regardless of whether the use is physical or spiritual, Andrew T. Lincoln, "I am the Resurrection and the Life": The Resurrection Message of the Fourth Gospel," in *Life in the Face of Death: The Resurrection Message of the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1998): 128, points out Jesus is the source of both: "As the living Logos/Son, Jesus has the power in both the present and the future to pronounce a positive verdict of life. Presently, it is his word that enables those who are spiritually dead to pass from death and experience eternal life through believing (5:24-25). What is more, at the end of history it will be his voice that inaugurates the physical resurrection of the dead for a judgment of either life or condemnation (5:28-29)."

“I am the bread *of life*” (6:48, emphasis added) and “I am the *living* bread” (6:51, emphasis added). Having claimed to be “the light of the world,” he further states those who follow him will have “the light *of life*” (8:12, emphasis added). Finally, in 10:7, 9, Jesus claims, “I am the door of the sheep” and “I am the door.” While these descriptions do not relate to life, life is prominent in the next two verses (10:10-11).⁹⁹

Notice Jesus is not claiming to possess life, but that he is the essence of life. This, however, is not merely physical life shared by all men, but divine, eternal life characteristic of God Himself.¹⁰⁰ Jesus clarifies, “Just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have in Himself” (5:26). Additionally, in the majority of the uses of “life” in the FG, it is the benefit given to those who believe in, obey, and follow Jesus.¹⁰¹ He said, “whoever believes will in Him have eternal life” (3:15), and, “if anyone keeps My word he will never see death” (8:51).¹⁰² The uses of life are similar to the uses of light examined earlier in that they are characteristic of those who believe in, and thus side with, Jesus. Also as with light, Jesus offers life to the world and to the Jews, antagonists in the battle, illustrating his desire to save. The connection between light and life is made explicit in 1:4 and 8:12. Additionally, both light and life are

⁹⁹Ruben Zimmerman, “The Narrative Hermeneutics of John 11: Learning with Lazarus How to Understand Death, Life, and Resurrection,” in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, ed. Craig R. Koester and Reimund Bieringer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008): 89.

¹⁰⁰Morris, *Jesus is the Christ*, 195, agrees, “John is telling us that Jesus does not have the same relationship to life as we do. Our life is contingent, whereas his is necessary. Our life has a point of origin, while his does not.” So also Lincoln, “I am the Resurrection,” 125: “As God’s self-revelation, the Logos shares in the divine creative life.” Because of this nature, “The Logos is able to mediate life to those in the world who believe in him—that is, to put created life back into relationship with its source.”

¹⁰¹So also Richard W. Thomas, “The Meaning of the Terms ‘Life’ and ‘Death’ in the Fourth Gospel and in Paul,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 21 (1968): 201, who comments, “For John life is the primary soteriological notion.” As such, life is the distinguishing characteristic of those who are saved compared with those who are lost. This further strengthens its place as a marker in cosmic conflict.

¹⁰²For similar uses, see 3:16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:40; 6:27, 33, 35, 40, 47-48, 50-51, 54, 57-58, 63, 68; 7:38; 8:12; 10:10, 28; 11:25-26; 12:25, 50; 14:19; 17:2-3; 20:31.

repeated by the author at certain significant points in the narrative.¹⁰³ Previous sections of this dissertation have established “light” as a conflict-laden Johannine term. Now both light and life are behaving in a similar literary fashion, which provides us with another line of congruence that serves to circumstantially connect life with cosmic conflict.

Koester asserts:

The light of life stands over against the power of darkness which has failed to overcome the light (1:4-5). Although threatened by the night, it prevails. God’s Word engenders in people a life that can resist the powers of death, but this gift of life does not exempt those who receive it from conflict with the forces that oppose God. Rather, it enables them faithfully to withstand the onslaught of forces that would thwart the life-giving will of the Creator toward the creation.¹⁰⁴

Satan and Death

While life is characteristic of Jesus and is given to those who side with him, the concept of death (communicated through various words such as “death,” “die,” and “kill”) is characteristic of Satan and will be the end of those who reject Jesus and side with Satan. Despite relatively few references to Satan in the FG, he is specifically connected with death, being called “a murderer from the beginning” (8:44), “the thief” who “comes only to steal, and kill and destroy” (10:10),¹⁰⁵ and repeatedly portrayed as the instigator behind Jesus’ betrayal and crucifixion (6:70-71; 13:2, 27). Those who side with him (the Jews and the world) are similarly associated with death. In some passages, they are the ones seeking to kill Jesus. See, for example, 5:16, 18 where, for the first time, John tells his readers, “the Jews were persecuting Jesus” and “the Jews were

¹⁰³Jan G. van der Watt, “Repetition and Functionality in the Gospel of John: Some Initial Explorations,” in *Repetitions and Variations in the Fourth Gospel: Style, Text, Interpretation*, ed. G. Van Belle, M. Labahn, and P. Maritz (Paris: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2009): 90, recognizes the concept of light in the FG is used by the author in a “purposeful,” “consciously planned,” “logical pattern” of repetition. She believes “the concept of life is mentioned in central statements in key positions in the Gospel” and then delineates them (90n6). The same argument is made concerning light (see pp. 174-200).

¹⁰⁴Craig R. Koester, “Life in the Gospel of John,” *The Living Pulpit* 4, no. 3 (1995): 38.

¹⁰⁵See pp. 79-82 for the argument that this verse is a reference to Satan.

seeking all the more to kill Him.”¹⁰⁶ The attempt to kill extends to Jesus’ disciples as well. In 11:16, Thomas advocates going with Jesus back to Judea, believing it would likely end in their deaths at the hands of the Jews. Finally, Jesus warns his disciples that the Jews, “who make you outcasts from the synagogue,” will eventually kill them out of supposed service to God (16:2).

In other places, having rejected Jesus, those who side with Satan will not benefit from the life he gives. Jesus says to them, “you have no life in yourselves” (6:53), and without believing “you will die in your sins” (8:21, repeated in 8:24).¹⁰⁷

In addition to the general association of life and death with the two sides in the cosmic conflict, one other specific connection between these themes and the cosmic battle in the FG can be made. The FG argues that Jesus gives life and that Satan is a murderer from the beginning. Furthermore, since death intruded into God’s good creation when sin came, then death is seen as an enemy that attacks God’s original plan for his creation.¹⁰⁸ Each instance in which Jesus preserves or restores life may be viewed from a cosmic warfare perspective. Consider how Jesus is portrayed in John 11. First, three different individuals/groups state Jesus’ presence would have prevented Lazarus’ death.¹⁰⁹ In this way, the author posits Jesus and death are incompatible. However, as

¹⁰⁶See also 7:1, 19-20, 25; 8:37, 40; 11:50-53.

¹⁰⁷Also, the implication of death is contained in the idea of “perish” in 3:16; 10:28; 17:12 for those who do not believe.

¹⁰⁸So also Boyd, *God at War*, 213: “These things [sickness, death, etc.] were never intended to be part of God’s creation. They were, rather, the work of the devil, and it grieved and angered [Jesus] to see it,” commenting on John 11:35. This point is further strengthened when one recalls the connection between John’s Prologue and Gen 1.

Additional, though less convincing, evidence may be found in the vocabulary used in 11:33, 35 (ἐνεβριμήσατο and ἐδάκρυσεν). For a discussion, see Beasley-Murray, *John*, 192-93; Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker*, 216-17, 223; and Raymond Brown, *New Testament Essays* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1965), 182.

¹⁰⁹Martha says, “If You had been here, my brother would not have died” (11:21); Mary separately says the same thing (11:32); and the mourners wonder, “Could not this man . . . have kept this man also from dying?” (11:37).

“the resurrection and the life” (11:25) and the person who causes all those who believe in him to “never die” (11:26) and to “live even if he dies” (11:25), Jesus now demonstrates he is powerful even over death. He need not win the battle in the first round. Even though it may seem death has won, Jesus is life and can give life (5:21). Just as darkness could not overcome the light (1:5) and Jesus overcame the world (16:33), life will prevail over death. Boyd concurs that the resurrection of Lazarus and “all such resuscitations must be viewed as acts of war against a cosmic foe who has been mastering mortality for far too long.”¹¹⁰ Additionally, connecting Lazarus’ resuscitation as Jesus “cried out with a loud voice” (11:43) with Jesus’ comment in John 5:25, 28, “when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live,” Lazarus functions paradigmatically for every believer and the cosmic victory won at Lazarus’ tomb will be carried on in the eschaton.¹¹¹

Note also John’s repetition of the idea of life and death in the account of the healing of the official’s son in 4:46-54. The author tells the reader that the boy is “at the point of death” (47); the official requests Jesus’ intervention “before [his] child dies” (49); Jesus says, “your son lives” (50), a comment repeated in 4:53; and the servant is dispatched to tell the official that “his son was living” (51). While just a healing and not a resurrection, still this episode is characterized by John as a significant miracle because of the severity of the sickness. Jesus is portrayed as the one who causes the one in the grasp of death to live.¹¹² In light of the way the FG associates the two sides of the conflict with life and death, this healing should be interpreted as an example of Jesus’

¹¹⁰Boyd, *God at War*, 213. He further argues these acts of restoration are “yet another dimension of his war on Satan” and “definite acts of war that accomplished and demonstrated his victory over Satan.”

¹¹¹Jörg Frey, “Love-Relations in the Fourth Gospel: Establishing a Semantic Network,” in *Repetitions and Variations in the Fourth Gospel: Style, Text, Interpretation*, ed. G. Van Belle, M. Labahn, and P. Maritz (Paris: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2009): 190.

¹¹²Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker*, 200-201.

battle with, and victory over, original sin and death.

An Exception and Conclusion

Clearly, as demonstrated above, life is generally associated with Jesus and death with Satan in the FG. However, two significant exceptions exist. First, death is repeatedly associated with Jesus, but only in reference to his own death. The FG describes the death of Jesus as his willing choice over which he is in complete control.¹¹³ He is “the good shepherd [who] lays down His life for the sheep” (10:11, 15, 17) and the one who, with great love, “lays down His life for His friends” (15:13).¹¹⁴

Second, death is also associated with the disciples. Note Thomas’ willingness to die with Jesus (11:16) and Peter’s bold offer to die for him (13:37).¹¹⁵ Additionally, Jesus prophesies his disciples will be killed for their faith in Him, generally in 16:2 and Peter, specifically, in 21:18-19.

Ironically, these exceptions support, rather than undermine, the FG’s theology of cosmic conflict. In both situations, either the threat of death or impending actual death is the direct result of persecution by Jesus’ enemies toward him and his followers. Thus the prevalent themes of life and death are used by the author of the FG to further define the combatants in the struggle between good and evil in this cosmic conflict.

Kingdom

Kingdom is another minor image used by the author of the FG, though it is only explicit in two places: Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus (3:3, 5) and Jesus’ trial

¹¹³See especially the way Jesus references his own death (e.g., 13:33; 14:2; 16:5; 17:1-5), his actions during his arrest (18:1-11), and the manner in which he died (19:28-30).

¹¹⁴Other references to Jesus’ death include Caiaphas speaking of “one man” who should “die for the people” (11:50-53; 18:14), the grain of wheat that must fall to the earth and die (12:24), and being lifted up from the earth (3:14; 8:28; 12:32-34).

¹¹⁵Peter’s assertion was particularly brash in light of Jesus’ recent teachings that he would lay down his own life for the sheep (10:11, 15, 17).

before Pilate (18:36-37). Concerning Nicodemus, the “kingdom of God” into which Nicodemus needs to enter is not directly connected to cosmic conflict.¹¹⁶ The second reference, however, is germane and is connected to the broader idea of Jesus’ kingship.¹¹⁷

Nathanael is quickly impressed with Jesus’ prophetic knowledge and calls him “the Son of God, the King of Israel” (1:49), thus expressing messianic hope. However, Nathanael has much to learn about this “King of Israel” as is evidenced by Jesus’ next comments in 1:50-51. Nevertheless, while Nathanael does not fully understand Jesus’ kingship, this early reference prepares the reader for subsequent occurrences of the theme.

Next, early in his ministry, after Jesus feeds the five thousand by multiplying the boy’s lunch, the crowd rallies and attempts “to take Him by force, to make Him king” (6:15). Instead, Jesus leaves in order to prevent that action. This reference informs the previous one. Though Jesus is the King of Israel, neither Nathanael nor the crowd yet understands what this means. At this point in the narrative, the author gives no explanation for Jesus’ reasoning, but Jesus’ future statements (18:36-37) help the reader retroactively interpret what Jesus does in John 6.

The most significant section of the FG related to Jesus’ kingship is the passion narrative.¹¹⁸ At Jesus’ triumphal entry, the crowds wave palm branches and cry,

¹¹⁶Note “the kingdom of God” in 3:3, 5 is later called “My kingdom” in Jesus’ conversation with Pilate (18:36). Revelation takes this another step and proclaims, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever” (Rev 11:15). Köstenberger, *Theology of John’s Gospel*, 56. In this way, a vague connection may be made to cosmic conflict.

¹¹⁷Another possible allusion to kingdom may be evident in Jesus’ first miracle. See, e.g., Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 171-75; and Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker*, 193. The turning of the water reserved for ceremonial purification into the best of wines has often been seen as a symbol of Jesus’ coming kingdom/age. However, in John 2, Jesus’ kingdom is not particularly contrasted with that of the prince of this world, and initially it would be pressing too far to see spiritual warfare in the first miracle. However, further investigation may produce additional lines of evidence toward this end.

For a thorough discussion of Jesus’ kingship, see Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967).

¹¹⁸John uses βασιλεία significantly less than the Synoptics: Matthew 55 times, Mark 20 times,

“Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel!” (12:13). In this case, there is no rebuke or attempt to downplay the crowd’s assertion. Instead, the author confirms Jesus’ kingship by showing how these events fulfill Scripture,¹¹⁹ despite the fact his disciples do not understand until later. The difference between the reference to Jesus’ kingship in John 12 and those in John 1 and John 6 helps the reader interpret Jesus’ passion in light of his kingship and kingdom.

The next references to kingship come as Jesus is being interrogated by Pilate in John 18:33-19:16.¹²⁰ The previous references to king and kingdom have not been clearly tied to spiritual conflict. However, here we see Jesus’ kingship and kingdom are different from and opposed by the kingdoms of the world.

In the beginning of the narrative, the careful reader is made aware of two things: (1) a tension exists and will continue between Pilate and the Jews as it relates to Jesus (18:29-31); and (2) through this tension, Jesus will be put to death, fulfilling his previous predictions (18:32).

The narrative continues as Pilate, straightforwardly, and seemingly abruptly, asks Jesus, “Are you the King of the Jews?” (18:33). Jesus’ response comprises the final dialogue from Jesus in the FG before his crucifixion; as such, it bears significant weight. Jesus replies to Pilate in a royal fashion, probing him as to the nature of his question.¹²¹

Luke 46 times, and John 5 times. However, John uses βασιλεύς as much as the Synoptics: Matthew 22 times, Mark 12 times, Luke 11 times, John 16 times. Furthermore, βασιλεύς occurs twice as much in John’s passion narrative as in the passion narrative of any of the Synoptic Gospels. David Rensberger, “The Politics of John: The Trial of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103 (1984): 396.

Christopher M. Tuckett, “Pilate in John 18-19: A Narrative-Critical Approach,” in *Narrativity in Biblical and Related Texts*, ed. G. J. Brooke and J.-D. Kaestli (Leuven: University Press, 2000): 134n16, speaking to the question of John’s source for the passion material, adds, “Whatever we may decide about the question of dependency here, it is still the case that the issue of Jesus’ kingship is not just a small incidental motif within John’s story, representing only the vestige from a source. It is one of the main Christological foci of John’s whole presentation.”

¹¹⁹John cites Zech 9:9, “Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.”

¹²⁰For additional insights that pertain to Pilate himself, see pp. 120-23.

¹²¹Whitacre, *John*, 439: “Jesus neither affirms nor denies his identity as king, but he responds

When Pilate responds that he is not a Jew and asks Jesus, “What have you done?” (18:35), Jesus begins explaining his kingdom (18:36). First, Jesus’ kingdom is not of this world. That is, it is from above; it is from God.¹²² In contrast to Pilate’s kingdom which is of this world, Jesus’ kingdom has its source and substance in another world.¹²³ Yet, while it is not *of* this world (*ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου*) it is still *in* this world (*ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ*).¹²⁴ Second, were his kingdom limited to this world, his disciples would be fighting to prevent his crucifixion. Jesus’ rebuke of Peter’s violent actions in 18:10-11 proves that is not the case. Still, the allusion to fighting is present. While Jesus’ kingdom will not be advanced through physical violence, there seems to be an implied suggestion that it may be advanced through other means. Third, after accepting Pilate’s description of “king,” Jesus states he was born to fulfill the role of king in order to “bear witness to the truth” (18:37). He adds that all who are of the truth hear his voice. However, Pilate dismisses Jesus’ unspoken invitation for him to consider Jesus’ claims with a quip, “What is truth?” (18:38).

As the narrative continues, Jesus is addressed as “King” four more times before his crucifixion (18:39; 19:3, 14, 15). In 19:14, 15, Pilate announces to the Jews, “Behold your King!” (19:14) and asks, “Shall I crucify your King?” They respond, “We have no king but Caesar.” In doing so they proclaim their allegiance to the king of this world and reject Jesus’ kingdom and kingship.

After Pilate questions Jesus again and Jesus gives no answer, Pilate angrily

like a king.” Also, contrast the shorter, less developed parallel passages in the Synoptics (Matt 27:13-14, Mark 15:4-5, Luke 23:3).

¹²²Cf. John 3:3, 5.

¹²³Rensberger, “Politics of John,” 409, writes, “This conclusion plainly implies that if Jesus, his servants, and his kingship are not of this world, Pilate and the king he serves definitely are, and that the two must inevitably come into conflict.”

¹²⁴Jesus is said to be “in the world” in 1:10; 9:5. His disciples are said to be “in the world” in 13:1; 16:33; 17:11. So also Rensberger, “Politics of John,” 408; and Beasley-Murray, *John*, 331, who agrees, “Jesus’ statement should not be construed as meaning that his kingdom is not active in this world, or has nothing to do with this world.”

replies, “Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?” (19:10). The authority of the two is contrasted; Pilate claims authority over Jesus, yet, the reader knows this is ludicrous even before Jesus replies, “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above” (19:11). This portion of the pericope highlights the difference between Pilate, who thinks he has the authority and boasts of it, and Jesus, who actually has it but chooses not to use it.¹²⁵

In the end, Pilate writes on the inscription above the cross, “Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews” (19:19). Of course, the Jews balk at this as well, but Pilate retains the placard. As such, he joins the ranks of many in the FG who speak truth even when they are unaware of it. Through his crucifixion, Jesus fulfills both Caiaphas’ prophecy “that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish” (11:50) and Pilate’s announcement in three languages that he is “The King of the Jews.”¹²⁶ The tension between Pilate and the Jews that began the narrative in 18:29-31 continues, even up until Jesus is crucified in 19:23. Yet despite their differences, both have independently rejected Jesus and seen to it that he is crucified.

Jesus’ kingship is a major theme of the passion narrative, as evidenced by the manner in which John uses the interplay between the three characters—Pilate, the Jews, and Jesus—to demonstrate that although Jesus *is* the King of the Jews, both Pilate and the

¹²⁵“From above” translates the *ἀνωθεν*, which is also used in John 3:3, 7 in describing the kind of birth needed to enter the kingdom of God, thus connecting these two “kingdom” passages further. It is also used in 3:31, describing Jesus as the one who comes from above. This is significant because Jesus comes from the place from which Pilate receives his authority. So also Rensberger, “Politics of John,” 409. Perhaps the author of the FG purposefully makes this implicit comparison since none of the other evangelists include either reference. Ironically, *ἀνωθεν* in 3:11 answers the question from 3:9. So also Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 568. The final use of *ἀνωθεν* is a literal use in 19:23, describing the stitching of Jesus’ tunic.

¹²⁶Rensberger, “Politics of John,” 405; and Victor C. Pfitzner, “The Coronation of the King—The Passion in the Gospel of John,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 4 (1977): 20, who writes, “The *titulus* which usually bore the description of the criminal’s guilt now becomes a public announcement of the King’s authority!”

Jews reject him. The Jews' rejection is evident in their continuous aversion to Pilate's taunts of repeatedly calling Jesus their king, and in their final confession that Caesar is their king. Pilate's rejection is made evident through his dialogue with Jesus detailed above. Furthermore, while Pilate seeks to separate himself from the Jews, he, nevertheless, ends up on their side;¹²⁷ similarly, the Jews end up siding with Pilate in calling Caesar "king."¹²⁸ Such positioning further illustrates the fact that there are actually only two sides to the conflict—Jesus and his opponents. In this way, the theme of kingdom is used by the author of the FG to demonstrate further his cosmic conflict emphasis.¹²⁹

Conclusion

While there may be other metaphors used by the Fourth Evangelist which also convey the spiritual conflict between Satan and Jesus (e.g., the image of the Good Shepherd who protects his sheep from the wolves), this chapter has discussed the principal ones. The primary image is that of light and darkness, employed by the author regularly and powerfully to describe the battle between the two sides of the conflict and the two groups who engage in the battle. Life and death are also used to distinguish between those who side with Jesus and those who side with Satan. Finally, kingdom is a minor theme that tangentially relates to cosmic conflict.

Thus far, the agents involved in spiritual warfare—both protagonists and

¹²⁷Tuckett, "Pilate in John," 135.

¹²⁸Martin C. de Boer, "The Narrative Function of Pilate in John," in *Narrativity in Biblical and Related Texts*, ed. G. J. Brooke and J.-D. Kaestli (Leuven: University Press, 2000), 154n60. De Boer insightfully adds that the Jews' declaration that they have "no king but Caesar" is itself an *assumption* that Pilate/Caesar's kingdom is opposed to Jesus' kingdom (142n5).

¹²⁹Mathews, "Great Opponents," 77, turns to the Jewish messianic expectation to solidify further Jesus' kingship. "The Christ the Jews expected was to be no placid idealist speaking beautiful sentiments to classes gathered under the shade of the trees. He was to be a savior and a fighter, a founder of one kingdom and the destroyer of another; and if one will only read the [Fourth] Gospel from the point of view of the messianic passion of its author, he will not fail to discover the militant Jesus who is king far more than prophet."

antagonists—and the imagery the author uses to further develop the reader's understanding of the conflict have been investigated. Consider now the means by which the battle is fought.

CHAPTER 6

THE WEAPONS OF COSMIC CONFLICT

Having examined the agents involved in John's theology of cosmic conflict and further metaphors the author uses to describe that conflict, now our attention turns to the means by which the battle is fought. Judas approaches Jesus in the garden with "lanterns and torches and weapons" (18:3). Peter responds in kind, "having a sword, [he] drew it" (18:10). Yet Jesus tells Pilate his "kingdom is not of this world" (18:36), explaining why his servants are not physically fighting. While physical weapons are appropriate to fight physical battles, weapons of another kind are needed for spiritual battles (cf. Eph 6:10-20; 2 Cor 10:3-6). Though the author of the FG does not employ the language of "weapons" in describing the means by which the combatants engage each other, he does still speak to the issue.

Violence and the Death of Jesus

Persecution and violence are strategies employed by Jesus' enemies throughout the FG. This violence culminates in Jesus' arrest and murder by crucifixion. Persecution extends to Jesus' followers, and Jesus predicts this violence to increase after his death (15:20; 16:2). Previously, I argued the FG presents Satan as the source and originator of this violence from the Jews and the world.¹ In this way, persecution and violence are shown to be one of the weapons of Jesus' opponents in cosmic conflict, both during his life and after his death.

¹See pp. 91-120. Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, trans. O. Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1952), 145, notes, "The horrific death of Jesus is the strongest argument for the existence of Satan."

Jesus does not permit his followers, however, to exercise force in spiritual warfare with the Jews and the world. Jesus' rebuke of Peter in the garden (18:10-11) and his characterization of his kingdom as not advancing through "fighting" (18:36) give evidence of this. Thus, violence is not a weapon of the protagonists. Rather, in the midst of their suffering, Jesus promises the help of the Holy Spirit to enable them to endure so they can continue to bear witness of him (15:26-27; 16:13).

While the FG never portrays violence used *by* Jesus as a means to win the cosmic battle, in perhaps the most ironic twist in the Johannine plot, the violence done *against* Jesus turns out to be his most effective weapon in the overthrow of his opposition. The death of Jesus is the weapon used by the Jews, in collusion with the world, and under the direction of Satan behind the scenes; yet, the author of the FG presents Jesus' death as the primary means by which Satan is defeated.²

Before considering Jesus' death in the FG,³ it is important to remember that as the Gospel's central event, it is connected to several themes. A case can be made that the passion is an expression of Jesus' and the Father's love, a sacrifice for man's sin, the primary battle in the Gospel's cosmic conflict, and a display of glory.⁴ While each one is

²Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 33, notes, "The centrality of Jesus' death [in the FG] helps explain the weight John gives to the opposition of Jesus." However, I would argue the converse is also true—the weight John gives to the opposition of Jesus helps to explain the centrality of Jesus' death.

Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12-21*, *The New American Commentary*, vol. 25b (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 135, insightfully draws the comparison between John's portrayal of Satan's attempts to kill Jesus and Jesus' subsequent victory to the manner in which the Lion King, Aslan, was killed by the White Witch's servants. While "they may have understood part of the mystery that they could kill the king . . . they never understood the deeper mystery that this lion king would, in fact, conquer through his death."

³The general significance of Jesus' death in the FG has been disputed. Rudolph Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Scribner, 1955), 2:52-53, states, "Jesus' death has no preeminent importance for salvation" in the FG. Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1976), 7, 119, also minimizes the role of the passion in the FG, comparing it to the postscript of a letter that had to be included.

⁴Craig R. Koester, "The Death of Jesus and the Human Condition: Exploring the Theology of John's Gospel," in *Life in Abundance: Studies of John's Gospel in Tribute to Raymond E. Brown*, ed. John R. Donahue (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005): 143, lists these four uses of the passion in the FG

important, the connection between the cross and cosmic conflict is the relevant issue here.⁵

Concerning Jesus' death, note the author repeatedly shows the reader that Jesus is in control of his own death.⁶ Recurring references to Jesus' "hour" (2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 11:9; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:32, 17:1), in which Jesus does not perform miracles and is not captured or killed because "his hour" has not yet come, indicate Jesus' death will occur on his and the Father's timetable and not that of the Jews. Also, Jesus speaks of being "lifted up" (3:14; 8:28; 12:32) and of the divine necessity for his death to occur (cf. $\delta\epsilon\iota$ in 3:14),⁷ further indicating divine foreknowledge of and purpose in his death. Additionally, Jesus describes how he willingly lays down his life for his sheep and his friends (10:11, 15, 17; 15:13). In fact, he explicitly states, "No one has taken [my life] away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again" (10:18). Various other references to Jesus' death

and argues the author "construes the crucifixion in a number of different ways." Thus the reader should examine it from these various "frames of reference." Similarly, in answering the question, "Why was the Messiah crucified?" Craig R. Koester, "Why was the Messiah Crucified? A Study of God, Jesus, Satan, and Human Agency in Johannine Theology," in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. G. van Belle (Leuven: University Press, 2007): 165, rightly lists several reasons: the unbelief of his adversaries, Satan's schemes, as a fulfillment of God's plans, out of love for his disciples, and God's love for the world.

However, the fact that several causes, purposes, and results are connected to Jesus' death does not minimize any one in particular. Rather, the various themes highlight the importance of Jesus' death and thus magnify each individual one. Thus, an investigation into the connection between Jesus' death and cosmic conflict is warranted.

⁵However, the connection between the love of God and the cross, both weapons of cosmic conflict, will be made below.

⁶J. B. Green, "Death of Jesus," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 162, adds, "He has long known his betrayer (6:70) and actually sets in motion the act of betrayal (13:27)." Helge Kjaer Nielsen, "John's Understanding of the Death of Jesus," in *New Readings in John: Literary and Theological Perspectives, Essays from the Scandinavian Conference on the Fourth Gospel, Aarhus 1997*, ed. Johannes Nissen and Sigfred Pedersen (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999): 238, adds, "that he should die . . . according to the passion story in John, is the goal towards which Jesus is constantly moving."

⁷So also John Dennis, "'The Lifting Up of the Son of Man' and the Dethroning of the 'Ruler of This World': Jesus' Death as the Defeat of the Devil in John 12:31-32," in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. G. van Belle (Leuven: University Press, 2007): 682n23.

give the same impression.⁸ The narrative effect of these passages is to imply to the reader that Jesus will use his death for his own purposes.

The reader is also explicitly told that one of those purposes is the defeat of Satan. Consider the context of John 12:31-32. Concluding the first half of the Gospel and leading into the passion story, this section of the FG plays an important role.⁹ Jesus' hour has come (12:23, 27), and he, though troubled, willingly resolves to follow the Father's purpose. After a voice thunders from heaven, Jesus states, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself" (12:31-32). The $\nu\tilde{\nu}$ is significant, emphasizing the "eschatological moment in which soteriological benefits are secured for those who believe" and Satan is overthrown.¹⁰ The moment of Jesus' death is the moment in which Satan is defeated. Thus, verse 32 shows the time and the means by which verse 31 takes place. The ruler is cast out, both *when* Jesus is lifted up and *because* he is lifted up.¹¹ Bennema rightly

⁸E.g., "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (2:19); "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (9:5); "For a little while longer the light is among you" (12:35); "Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world" (13:1); "Where I go, you cannot follow Me" (13:36); "The ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me" (14:30); and "Shall I not drink [the cup] which the Father has given Me?" (18:11). Even in the moment of his death, John describes Jesus' control as "He gave up His spirit" (19:30). Note that in many of the previous references, Jesus is the active subject. He is in control of what happens rather than the passive victim to whom things happen. That pattern is also evident in his arrest scene in the garden (18:1-11).

⁹So also Judith L. Kovacs, "'Now Shall the Ruler of this World Be Driven Out': Jesus' Death as Cosmic Battle in John 12:20-36," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114, no. 2 (1995): 228.

¹⁰Dennis, "Lifting Up," 679, esp. 679n9. Also Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John, Anchor Bible Commentary* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 1:477, writes, "the victorious hour of Jesus [glorification via the cross] constitutes a victory over Satan."

¹¹George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 282, says, "The ejection of [Satan] from his vaunted place of rule took place as the Son of Man was installed by God as Lord of creation and Mediator of the saving sovereignty of God to the world." Contra William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel according to John*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 2:202, who goes so far as to say, "The drawing of all men to Christ *is* the casting out of the devil." Emphasis added. He argues the coming of the Greeks (12:20-21) indicates Satan is losing the nations over which he previously had control.

proposes,

The imminent cosmic defeat in 12:31 is immediately followed by the picture of cosmic restoration in 12:32, and, as 12:32 reveals, both aspects—the judgment of the devil and the liberation of humankind—refer to the future cross as the place where Jesus ultimately gives his life for the life of the world and deals with sin.¹²

Additionally, in both subsequent references to “the ruler of this world,” a connection is made to the death of Jesus.¹³ In the context of 14:30, Jesus is speaking of going away and going to the Father. He reminds the disciples that, despite what it will seem, “the ruler of the world . . . has nothing in Me.” Similarly in 16:11, Jesus had been speaking of going away (16:7) and the disciples not seeing Jesus in “a little while” (16:16). The first reference shows the reader how to interpret the subsequent two. Jesus’ death will accomplish the casting out of the ruler of this world (12:31), he is impotent to stop it (14:30), and his judgment in light of Jesus’ death is sure (16:11).

Several other scholars also recognize John’s emphasis on Jesus’ death as the means by which Satan is defeated.¹⁴ Notable among them is Page who contrasts John’s presentation with that of the Synoptics. “In John’s view, the crucial battle between Jesus and the devil takes place, not in the desert [for John omits the Temptation of Jesus] or

¹²Cornelius Bennema, “The Sword of the Messiah and the Concept of Liberation in the Fourth Gospel.” *Biblica* 86 (2005): 52-53. So also Beasley-Murray, *John*, 219, who notes the cross event accomplishes three things: “judgment of the world, the overthrow of Satan’s power, and the exaltation of Christ as Lord of the saving sovereignty of God.”

¹³It is surely significant that references are made to Jesus’ death in those passages that refer to demon possession as well. See 7:20 where the reference is in the accusation, 8:48-52 where the reference follows the accusation (8:59), and 10:20-21 where the reference precedes the accusation (10:18).

¹⁴See, e.g., Sydney H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 130, who adds, “From John’s perspective, the death of Jesus is his glorification and Satan’s defeat and condemnation”; Dennis, “Lifting Up,” 682: “This cosmic and earthly conflict or battle comes to a decisive resolution in John 12:31-32: the event (the cross) that Satan (and his earthly subjects) planned for Jesus’ destruction was, according to the divine plan, the event in which the devil himself was decisively judged and cast down”; and Kovacs, “Now Shall the Ruler,” 231, 233, who agrees, “The turning point in the cosmic conflict has arrived. . . . The crucifixion of Jesus, that critical moment toward which the author has been pointing ever since 3:14 (or even since 1:5), is about to occur. On the cosmic level, this moment brings the decisive victory over the evil ruler of this world.” However, Kovacs also rightly notes the FG does not explore “precisely how . . . the defeat of the archon [is] to be effected through the cross” (246).

during Jesus' public ministry [for he also omits all Jesus' exorcisms], but on the cross."¹⁵

Similarly, Senior remarks,

What Jesus will therefore confront in the Passion is the power of evil itself. It wears many masks: Jesus' opponents, Judas, and ultimately the power of Rome which condemns Jesus to death. There is no middle ground. This epic struggle between God and evil, between life and death, between faith and unbelief, between light and darkness is the cosmic level on which much of Johannine theology runs.¹⁶

The significance of Jesus' death in the cosmic conflict of the FG cannot be overstated. While discussions continue about the nature of the atonement of Jesus' death in the FG, the evidence regarding its connection to cosmic conflict is overwhelming. The death of Jesus is "the locus of a cosmic battle, in which Jesus achieves a decisive victory over Satan."¹⁷ As such, the cross stands as the climax of Jesus' battle with Satan, characteristic of his entire ministry.¹⁸

The Love of God

In addition to Jesus' death, another means by which Jesus and his camp wage war against the powers of darkness in the FG is love. While both creation and the incarnation are introduced in the Prologue, no motivation is stated for either. Consistent with the author's style of vaguely introducing a concept and later explaining in more detail, the motive is revealed in John 3:16. The FG clearly and concisely presents love¹⁹ as the root means and motivation for God's salvific action in John 3:16. Here the gospel is distilled into a few words, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten

¹⁵Page, *Powers of Evil*, 129.

¹⁶Senior, *Passion of Jesus*, 41.

¹⁷Kovacs, "Now Shall the Ruler," 246.

¹⁸So also Graham H. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 196.

¹⁹For an overview of love in general in the FG, see Jörg Frey, "Love-Relations in the Fourth Gospel: Establishing a Semantic Network," in *Repetitions and Variations in the Fourth Gospel: Style, Text, Interpretation*, ed. G. Van Belle, M. Labahn, and P. Maritz (Paris: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2009): 171-98.

Son.”²⁰ However, the simplicity of John 3:16 must not be allowed to overshadow the prevalence and multi-faceted theme of love in John’s theology. Note the variety of and number of references to subjects and objects of love in the FG.

The Father loves the Son (3:35; 5:20; 10:17; 17:24, 26). Jesus loves the Father (14:31; 15:10). Jesus loves his disciples, both as a group (13:1, 34; 15:9-17) and individually (11:3, 5, 36; 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20).²¹ The Father loves the disciples (14:21, 23; 16:27; 17:23). The disciples love Jesus (14:15, 21, 23, 28; 16:27) and are to love one another (13:34; 15:12, 17). Jesus instructs the disciples about love (13:35; 14:15, 21-28; 21:15-17).

God loves the world (3:16). On the other hand, no mention is made of the world loving God or Jesus. Rather, the men in the world “loved darkness rather than the light” (3:19), they love their own life (12:25), and they love the approval of others (12:43). The world does not love Jesus’ disciples because they are “not of the world” (15:19). The Jews did not have the love of God in them (5:42), neither do they love Jesus because God is not their Father (8:42).²²

²⁰“A broad consensus exists in Johannine research about the view that particularly John 3:16-18 comprises essential and fundamental intentions of the Fourth Gospel as a ‘miniature gospel.’” Enzo E. Popkes, “The Love of God for the World and the Handing over (*Dahingabe*) of His Son: Comments on the Tradition-Historical Background and the Theological Function of John 3:16a in the Overall Context of Johannine Theology,” in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. G. van Belle (Leuven: University Press, 2007): 609-10. Also Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, New Century Bible (London: Oliphants, 1972), 81.

²¹John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20 mention “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” The identity of this disciple is not germane to this argument, but rather what is significant is that he was a disciple whom Jesus loved individually. Frey, “Love-Relations,” 193, adds, “even though [this] expression only mentions Jesus’ love for a particular disciple, it strengthens the general idea that Jesus generally loves his disciples.” Leon Morris, “Love in the Fourth Gospel,” in *Saved by Hope: Essays in Honor of Richard C. Oudersluys*, ed. James I. Cook (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1978): 32, emphasizes the individuality of Jesus’ love by commenting on 11:5, where “Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.” He notes the separate listing of each of the three seems to indicate “a love for each individual person rather than a general benevolence toward the family” as a whole. Additionally, Frey, “Love-Relations,” 189n60, argues Jesus’ love for individuals is further highlighted in the FG, especially in John 11, where four different individuals/groups comment on Jesus’ love for Lazarus: the sisters (11:3), the narrator (11:5), Jesus himself (11:11), and the crowd (11:36).

²²For an expansion on each of these references, see Morris, “Love,” 27-43. For similar

Love could have been discussed in the previous chapter as a metaphor of cosmic conflict. Love is characteristic of those who side with Jesus; a lack of love or hate is characteristic of those who side with Satan.²³ However, there are several lines of evidence that argue love is used by the author as a tool in and a motivation for the cosmic conflict in the FG.²⁴

First, and most clearly, the FG presents love as the motivation which caused God to send Jesus into the world to die. Jesus' divine mission is a major theme, occurring numerous times throughout the FG,²⁵ and John 3:16 reveals the motive behind why God the Father sent Jesus the Son on this divine mission—God's love for the world compelled him.²⁶ The context of John 3:16 further highlights its importance. John 3:11-21 contains Jesus' first speech in the FG, the first reference to Scripture in the FG, and the first reference to "eternal life" in the FG. "This dense, kerygmatic context . . . strongly suggest[s] not to underestimate the relevance of the idea of God's love for the world within the theology of the Fourth Gospel."²⁷ This love for the world is obvious,

categorizations, see Frey, "Love-Relations," 177-78; and Kikuo Matsunaga, "Powers in Conflict: A New Clue to the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel" (Ph.D. thesis, McGill University, 1969), 391-93.

²³By the same token, the numerous references to the world hating Jesus and the disciples (7:7; 15:18, 19, 23, 24, 25; 17:11) give evidence that Satan does cosmic battle through hatred. So also Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 209.

²⁴Popkes, "Love of God," 617n27, argues that just as the Lazarus narrative is an explication of John 5:24-29, so the life and ministry of Jesus is the "narrative development" of the idea of God's loving the world by sending his son into it (1 John 4:9).

²⁵John 3:17; 5:30, 36, 38; 6:29, 38, 39, 44, 57; 7:16, 28, 29; 8:16, 18, 26, 29, 42; 9:4; 11:42; 12:44, 45, 49; 13:3; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:3, 18, 25; 20:21.

²⁶See also 1 John 3:1; 4:10-12, 16, 19. Morris, "Love," 30, adds that God's love is implied in other sending actions in the FG, including God's sending of John the Baptist and the incarnation of the Son, both of which are used to bring men to faith. Even though God's love for the world is only explicitly stated once in the FG, Francis J. Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John: An Exegetical, Theological, and Literary Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), x-xi, argues the actions of God communicate his love even where the vocabulary of love is not used.

²⁷Frey, "Love-Relations," 183-84. So also Popkes, "Love of God," 623.

from both the Father and the Son as one reads the FG in light of 3:16.²⁸

The expression of God's love for the world is the programmatic starting point of all 'love talk' within the Fourth Gospel. It provides the background for a Gospel narrative. . . . Therefore, the close link between the expression of God's love and the portrayal of Jesus' work and his death as revelation of his love should not be overlooked.²⁹

As an additional corollary, God's love is assumed in his sending the disciples into the world. Morris is right, "For the early church, the most important deed of love that could possibly be performed was evangelism."³⁰

Second, Jesus' love for his disciples is demonstrated in his voluntary death, mentioned in his teachings on the Good Shepherd and referenced before he washes the disciples' feet. Four times in eight verses, Jesus, as the Good Shepherd (10:11), says he "lays down His life for the sheep" (10:11, 15, 17, 18). The implied motive for this action is his concern for the sheep (10:13). This motive is made explicit in John 15:13, the other

²⁸So also Rudolph Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. by G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 488, commenting on Jesus' love of his own in 13:1, writes, "And although *they* are the object of his love, whereas in 3:16 it was the *κόσμος* that was the object of the Father's love, this distinction between the two involves no contradiction, but is quite appropriate. Of course the love of the Son, like that of the Father, is directed towards the whole world, to win everyone to itself; but this love becomes a reality only where men open themselves to it." However, there are surprisingly several dissenting voices. Note Käsemann, *Testament of Jesus*, 60, who minimizes God's love for the world by arguing 3:16 came from an earlier Christian formula and is merely employed by the author to stress "the miracle of the incarnation." Hugh Montefiore, "Thou Shalt Love Thy Neighbor as Thy Self," *Novum Testamentum* 5 (1962): 164, who, referring to John 17:9 states, "Jesus does not pray for the world . . . and it is to be presumed that he does not love the world, but only his disciples."

Perhaps the most radical voice of opposition comes from Clayton R. Bowen, "Love in the Fourth Gospel," *The Journal of Religion* 13 (1933): 39-49. He explicitly states, "The Johannine Logos-Christ . . . has love only for those within the circle of his friends" (42). He continues, "Nowhere is there a statement, nowhere a hint or suggestion, that he [Jesus] loved anyone save 'his own,' that he wanted [his disciples] to do so, or that his God did so" (44). Concerning the world, He explains God's love for the world in John 3:16 by arguing "the divine love was set upon those 'in the world' who were 'his own'—those who, when the Light shone, saw it" (46, emphasis added). Concerning Judas, he writes, "Jesus never loved Judas at all; he saw through him from the beginning and repeatedly excluded him in set terms from the circle of 'his own'" (44). Describing Jesus' attitude toward the Jews, he writes, "Nowhere [in the FG] is Jesus even fair to the Jews, still less affectionately desirous of winning them!" (47). See pp. 152-65 for evidence of Jesus' love for individuals who oppose him.

²⁹Frey, "Love-Relations," 186.

³⁰Morris, "Love," 38.

passage that references him laying down his life: “Greater *love* has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”³¹

In John 13, Jesus washes the disciples’ feet, again predicts his death, and is betrayed by Judas. In 13:1, just prior to these events, the narrator notes that Jesus, “knowing that his hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.” “To the end” translates εἰς τέλος and may be taken: (1) temporally, meaning he loved them up until the end of his life; (2) qualitatively, meaning he loved them completely; or (3) both.³²

The events of John 13, especially in light of the narrator’s comments in 13:1 and the devil’s actions in 13:2, all point to Jesus’ death. In this context, Jesus loves his own to the point that he dies for them. Furthermore, as a picture of that cleansing death, Jesus’ washing of the disciples’ feet is a physical expression of his love for them.³³

Koester also sees this as an act of love in the context of cosmic conflict. “Jesus’ strategy in the conflict with evil is to show unwavering love (13:1). He assumes his battle dress by laying down his garments, girding himself with a towel, and taking up a basin to wash feet.”³⁴

³¹Emphasis added. Of course, the idea that Jesus’ death is a display of God’s love is pre-Johannine (Rom 5:8, e.g.), but “its combination with the traditional sending formula is a particularly Johannine development.” Frey, “Love-Relations,” 185. Furthermore, John is unique among the Gospels in his portrayal of Jesus’ death as an act of love for friends.

³²Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 4 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 373, notes, “To indicate both the time when this love will be shown and the quality of his loving, an expression with two meanings is used: ‘to the end.’” The double meaning is also accepted by several others. See, e.g., Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:550, who connects the phrase with Jesus’ last words on the cross; Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 545n9, who translates it, “the full extent of his love”; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1978), 438, who calls it “characteristic of John [to have] a double meaning in εἰς τέλος”; and Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to St. John*, Black’s New Testament Commentaries (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 365.

³³Frey, “Love-Relations,” 181.

³⁴Koester, “Death of Jesus,” 149.

These passages related to Jesus' death on the cross are presented by the author as "an outpouring of his love for sinners and of his passion to redeem them."³⁵ Koester rightly connects the theme of the love of God with the death of Jesus to illustrate how both are weapons in the cosmic conflict. "The cross of Jesus was the weapon that God wielded in the battle with Satan, for *through the cross the love of God* engaged and defeated the forces of hatred against him."³⁶ Now the love of God and the love of Jesus can be understood in the context of cosmic conflict as well.

Lastly, the disciples' love for one another will demonstrate to all men the genuineness of their faith (13:35) and their unity will bear witness to Jesus' divine mission and the Father's love (17:23), thus being a witness to the world. In this way, God's love for the world provides for that world a witness, "so that the ignorance of the world [cf. 17:25] seems not to be definitive," but rather "the world shall come to believe in Jesus' mission."³⁷ The witness to the world is part of a strategy of cosmic conflict. Rather than condemn the world, Jesus' plan has always been to save it (cf. John 3:17)!

God's love for the world compelled him to send Jesus into it so that it might be saved. Jesus' love for his own led him to lay down his life for their salvation. The disciples' love for each other will be an effective witness of the truth of Jesus' mission and message to the lost world. Therefore, love is a powerful strategy to evangelize individuals in the world and thus continue the overthrow of Satan.

The Intercession of Jesus

Compared to the Synoptics, Jesus' prayer life in the FG is minimized. He is

³⁵Morris, "Love," 34. Morris also argues Jesus' life and ministry demonstrate this love, especially for those outside his followers, citing Jesus' actions toward the Samaritan woman (John 4) and toward Judas, especially the washing of his feet (John 13) (38-39).

³⁶Koester, *Symbolism*, 209. Emphasis added.

³⁷Frey, "Love-Relations," 197.

only shown praying on a few occasions.³⁸ For example, in John 6:11, Jesus gives thanks to the Father for the meal he is multiplying; in 11:41-42 he thanks the Father again for hearing him concerning the resuscitation of Lazarus that is about to take place; and in 12:28, after acknowledging that his soul is troubled because of the “hour” that has come, Jesus prays a brief prayer, “Father, glorify Thy name.” Though few in number, Jesus’ intercessions are presented by the author of the FG as devices through which he engaged in cosmic conflict.

While an argument can be made that 6:11, 11:41-42, and 12:27-28 indirectly relate to spiritual warfare,³⁹ two other references specifically relate to the weapons of cosmic conflict in the FG.

John 17:1-26

While instances of Jesus actually praying in the FG are few,⁴⁰ John 17 does record the longest of Jesus’ prayers found in Scripture. The context of this prayer particularly connects it to John’s theme of spiritual warfare. First, John situates it in an important place in the narrative, concluding Jesus’ Farewell Discourse. In chapters 13-16, Jesus focuses on his disciples and preparing them for his departure and the coming persecution from the Jews and the world. In fact, immediately preceding this chapter,

³⁸John 6:11; 11:41-42; 12:27-28; 17:1-26; cf. 14:16.

³⁹E.g., in the previous chapter where life and death are discussed, an argument is made that the resuscitation of Lazarus illustrates cosmic conflict. Thus, Jesus’ prayer in 11:41-42 ties his intercession to spiritual warfare. Similarly, the death of Jesus is the primary means by which God defeats Satan in the FG. Related to that aspect of cosmic conflict, Jesus prays in 12:27-28 about his coming death.

⁴⁰Andrew T. Lincoln, “God’s Name, Jesus’ Name, and Prayer in the Fourth Gospel,” in *Into God’s Presence: Prayer in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2001): 158-59, notes references in the FG that infer Jesus prayed regularly (9:31; 11:22, 42) and those that speak of Jesus only doing what he has heard from the Father (5:30; 8:26, 28; 12:49-50; 14:10; 15:15). He also lists two characteristics of the FG’s portrayal of Jesus’ prayer life that help to explain the scarcity of references to actual prayer: (1) “[The FG] assumes the intimate relationship narrated in the synoptic Gospels as being one of prayer,” and (2) “[The FG] heightens the synoptic portrayals by depicting Jesus as so much at one with the will of the Father that he really does not need to petition on his own account.”

Jesus says, “In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (16:33). Second, Jesus prays the prayer in the hearing of his disciples (minus Judas) on the night he is betrayed. Immediately following this prayer, Jesus is arrested and led away. Earlier Jesus speaks, using clear conflict imagery, of the time when “night is coming when no man can work” (9:4) because only “for a little while longer is the light among you” (12:35). That time has come, and just before it does, Jesus chooses to intercede for his followers.⁴¹

The chapter is often outlined in three simple sections: Jesus prays for himself (17:1-8), Jesus prays for his disciples (17:9-19), and Jesus prays for future disciples (17:20-26). The middle section speaks to the issue at hand.

In John 17:9-19, Jesus makes three specific requests to the Father on behalf of his disciples. First, Jesus prays that the Father would “keep them in Thy name” (17:11). This request to keep⁴² them stems from two facts: Jesus was departing from the world (“I am no more in the world,” v. 17a), and the disciples were to remain in the world (“they themselves are in the world,” v. 17b).⁴³ Jesus’ physical absence necessitated the Father’s intervening action. The keeping was done “in Thy name,” i.e., in accordance with God’s character.⁴⁴ Jesus explains in 17:12, “While I was with them, I was keeping them in Thy

⁴¹John F. O’Grady, “The Prologue and Chapter 17 of the Gospel of John,” in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies*, ed. Tom Thatcher (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007): 216, argues both the Prologue and John 17 “exemplif[y] many of the characteristics of the entire book.” Thus, if cosmic conflict is truly a Johannine motif, then it should be present in John 17, and it is.

⁴²Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:1058, notes “keep” (τηρέω) is primarily used in this Gospel of individuals keeping God’s commands. In John 17, however, it refers to God, perhaps employing a play on words—“God keeping those who keep his word (cf. Rev 3:10).” Lincoln, “God’s Name,” 166, points to “keeping” language in the OT (Jer 31:10; Gen 28:15; Ps 121:7-8; Isa 42:6; 49:8) as well as similar concepts in the Good Shepherd discourse (10:28, e.g.).

⁴³Note the use of the emphatic αὐτοί. So also Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 643n38.

⁴⁴D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), 562; Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 644; and Beasley-Murray, *John*, 299, take ἐν as locative. Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:759; and Borchert, *John 12-21*, 197, take it as both locative and instrumental.

name which Thou hast given Me; and I guarded them.”⁴⁵ The nature of Jesus’ protection is clarified in 17:12d, “and not one of them perished but the son of perdition.” Jesus’ safeguarding prevents any of his disciples from falling away as Judas did.⁴⁶ What Jesus has been doing during his ministry, he now asks the Father to complete—to ensure the continuance of the disciples’ faith and salvation. The danger lies in the fact that they are still “in the world.” Likely, *κόσμος* here carries the pejorative connotation of the mass of humanity in rebellion to God.⁴⁷ As such, the disciples need divine assistance to remain steadfast in their faith in the midst of unbelief. One result of the Father’s actions will be the disciples’ unity⁴⁸—both with one another and with the Godhead (“that they may be one, even as We are,” 11:11; “that they also may be in Us,” 11:21).⁴⁹

⁴⁵“I was keeping” translates *ἐτήρουν*, the imperfect of *τηρέω*, stressing past continuous action (cf. 6:37, 39; 10:28-29; 18:4-9); “I guarded” translates *ἐφύλαξα*, the aorist of *φυλάσσω* which may indicate completed action. So also Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 644n43. Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 553; and Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 525, see allusions to the Good Shepherd in *ἐφύλαξα*.

⁴⁶However, others see the emphasis more on sanctification. Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:759, notes, “Keeping them safe means keeping them from the contamination of the world.” Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 502, incorporates both ideas: “The prayer [is] that the community which stands in the world be protected from falling back into the world’s hands, that it be kept pure in its unworldly existence.”

Interestingly, the FG does not explicate the means by which Jesus kept or the Father will keep them. However, Lincoln, “God’s Name,” 170, notes John 17 recapitulates the mission of Jesus and the condition of the disciples after Jesus’ death as given in the teachings of Jesus so far in the Gospel and especially in the Farewell Discourse. C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 417, agrees, “The prayer gathers up much of what has been said, both in the Book of Signs and in the Farewell Discourses, and presupposes everywhere the total picture of Christ and His work with which the reader should by this time be amply acquainted.” If so, then Jesus’ prayer, heard by the disciples, is another avenue he uses to teach his disciples. Since Jesus’ teachings/truth will be discussed below as a weapon in cosmic battle, then Jesus’ prayer itself is at least one means by which his followers are protected. Ridderbos, *Gospel according to John*, 553, stresses the unity (“that they may be one,” 17:11) as the setting of protection more than the result of it: “In that fellowship they are safe from that which threatens them in the world.”

⁴⁷See pp. 105-8.

⁴⁸The present subjunctive seems to emphasize maintaining an already-established unity rather than creating a unity that does not yet exist. Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 644n42.

⁴⁹Lincoln, “God’s Name,” 169, argues the unity between God the Sender and Jesus the Sent is a fact being established in the cosmic trial of the FG. Thus, it is appropriate that the witnesses who testify to that fact should also be united.

For more on Jesus keeping and guarding, see “Jesus, In Relation to the Disciples,” pp. 167-72.

Second, Jesus asks the Father to “keep them from the evil one” (17:15). “The evil one” translates ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ, a substantival use of the adjective.⁵⁰ The referent is, of course, Satan. The author uses the same verb in the first and second request (τηρέω) but the parallel prepositional phrases differentiate the request (ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου versus ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ).⁵¹ Since his followers are not to be taken out of the world (17:15) and since the world hates them because they are not “of the world” (17:14), they need protection from the “ruler of the world” and its hating inhabitants.⁵²

Third, Jesus prays that the Father would “sanctify them in truth” (17:17).⁵³ Additionally, “for their sakes,” Jesus sanctifies himself to this end (17:18). John 10:36 describes Jesus as he “whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world.” In the same way, this purifying is necessary because they are being sent on mission into the world to be a witness to it (17:18) as Jesus was.⁵⁴

In the final section of Jesus’ prayer, he prays for those who will believe as a result of the witness of these disciples. The fact that Jesus mentions future converts

⁵⁰The majority of scholars understand it so. See, e.g., Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:1059; Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 646; Andreas Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 495; Ridderbos, *Gospel according to John*, 555; Lindars, *Gospel of John*, 527; Peter F. Ellis, *The Genius of John: A Composition-Critical Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1984), 243; Moloney, *Gospel of John*, 471; and Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:761. Contra Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 508, who equates “evil” with “the world.” However, Whitacre, *John*, 413, is surely correct, “Behind this world, which hates them, is the evil one, for ‘the whole world is under the control of the evil one’ (1 John 5:19).”

⁵¹Lincoln, “God’s Name,” 167, rightly notes these phrases describe “two antithetical spheres of power operative in the world.”

⁵²However, this may not necessarily imply physical protection. Even after Jesus finished his prayer, he himself is brutally killed. Furthermore, Jesus has already suggested the possibility of martyrdom for them in 16:2. So also Lincoln, “God’s Name,” 172. Morris, *Gospel according to John*, 646, notes they remain in the world so as to fulfill their mission. Therefore, “they should be kept from evil, for evil is fatal to the discharge of their task.”

⁵³More will be said in the next section, “Truth and Lies.”

⁵⁴“Hence, personal holiness is not to be an end in itself but a means to an end: reaching the lost world for Christ.” Köstenberger, *John*, 496. Also Ridderbos, *Gospel according to John*, 555; and Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 565-66.

would have been strengthening for his disciples, knowing the ministry Jesus is giving them will succeed. The content of that prayer, similar to the previous section, includes a request that they too be unified (17:21). Jesus adds that he desires his disciples be with him to see his glory (17:24). This eschatological facet further encourages his current and future disciples.

Jesus' prayer that the disciples be guarded, kept, and sanctified while they remain in the world that still continues to be ruled, to some degree, by the evil one is one aspect of his methods of cosmic conflict. Through his intercession, Jesus ensures that his followers are protected in the battle and set apart so that their witness is effective.

John 14:16

The intercessory ministry of Jesus relates to cosmic conflict in one additional way in the FG. In 14:16, Jesus tells his disciples, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever," a request which is answered in some fashion (depending on one's interpretation) in 20:22 (and at Pentecost, Acts 2:1-4). How this prayer is a means by which Jesus, through his disciples, carries out the ongoing spiritual battle against the forces of evil is evident when one considers the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer in the FG.⁵⁵ I previously argued the Holy Spirit works to encourage Jesus' disciples in the midst of persecution, to remind them of the truth, and to sustain them as they effectively bear witness to the truth in the midst of a hostile world. Through this witness, many from the world will believe and the spiritual battle will continue to be won as individuals know the truth and are set free.

Jesus' prayer for his disciples does not end with John 17. First John 2:1-2 reminds the reader that Jesus continues to pray for his disciples. Christians can be encouraged that "even after his departure Christ's advocacy in prayer supports the

⁵⁵See the discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit in chap. 4, pp. 124-30.

mission of his followers. Everything they have been told about their future role now has Jesus' prayer backing."⁵⁶

In summary, Jesus' prayers for his disciples serve to fortify them in the cosmic conflict in several ways. First, they are soteriologically kept by the Father. Second, they are protected from the evil one so as to be able to effectively carry out the mission they have received, a mission that is, by its nature, cosmic conflict. Third, they are sanctified in truth, further increasing their success in ministry. Fourth, through Jesus' request, they receive the Holy Spirit who functions in strengthening, encouraging, and revealing truth. Lastly, the knowledge of Jesus' continued intercession gives confidence for the future.

Truth and Lies

Truth is a significant theme in the FG. Its importance is evidenced by its usage—the “truth” word group is used 48 times in the FG compared with 10 in the Synoptics.⁵⁷ However, what the author means by “truth” in the FG is debated.

Various backgrounds have been proposed for the concept of truth in the FG.⁵⁸ Some see a Hellenistic background to the term which would lead one to interpret truth as a “self-revealing divine reality.”⁵⁹ In this understanding, the divine reality is transcendent over the human reality and is only attainable by revelation. Others find the roots of truth

⁵⁶Lincoln, “God’s Name,” 171. However, Lincoln points to the fact that Jesus is speaking as the exalted Christ in John 17 as evidence for his continued intercession. This may ask more of the text than it can bear, but the issue is resolved by considering 1 John 2:1-2.

⁵⁷ἀλήθ-. ἀλήθεια is used 25 times in John, compared with 1 in Matthew, 3 in Luke, and 3 in Mark. ἀληθινός is used 9 times in John, compared with 0 in Matthew, 0 in Mark, and 1 in Luke. ἀληθής is used 14 times in John, compared with 1 in Matthew, 1 in Mark, and 0 in Luke. Andreas J. Köstenberger, “‘What is Truth?’ Pilate’s Question in its Johannine and Larger Biblical Context,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48 (2005): 34, esp. 34n8.

⁵⁸For an excellent discussion, see Dodd, *Interpretation*, 170-78.

⁵⁹Rudolph Bultmann who wrote “ἀλήθεια,” in Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. and trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1967), s.v. “ἀλήθεια”; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 170-78.

in the Old Testament.⁶⁰ This Hebrew background connects the idea of “truth” with the Hebrew אֱמֻנָה, which is often translated “faithfulness,” and carries a moral aspect whereas the Greek interpretation would be strictly intellectual. Still others look to post-biblical Judaism and its apocalyptic literature⁶¹ where “truth” includes the moral sense common to Hebrew but expands the meaning beyond just “fidelity” to include “uprightness” as well.

By examining the uses of “truth” in the FG, one quickly notes truth involves action⁶² and does carry a moral sense, but it is more than mere “uprightness.” Additionally, the “truth” language is, in many cases, used synonymously with God’s “word.”⁶³ Truth refers to works of those who believe in Jesus (3:21; 4:23, 24), but it also describes the person and nature of God (3:33; 7:28; 8:26; 17:3, 17), the person and work of the Spirit (14:17; 15:26; 16:13), and the person, words, and work of Jesus (1:14, 17; 5:33; 6:32, 55; 8:16, 32, 40, 45, 46; 14:6; 15:1). It is a “*personal, relational* concept,”⁶⁴ large enough to express “the revelation of God in Jesus,”⁶⁵ “the knowledge of reality that comes through Jesus Christ.”⁶⁶ De la Potterie helpfully summarizes John’s usage:

⁶⁰Dennis R. Lindsay, “What is Truth? ἀλήθεια in the Gospel of John,” *Restoration Quarterly* 35 (1993): 129-45; George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1974), 226; Köstenberger, “What is Truth?” 43ff.; and Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 167, seem to lean toward this background as well.

⁶¹Ignace de la Potterie, “La verita in San Giovanni,” *Rivista Biblica* 11 (1963): 3-24, and the English translation found as “The Truth in Saint John,” in *The Interpretation of John*, ed. John Ashton (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986): 53-66; and Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:500.

⁶²Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 538, comments that in the FG truth is “truth in motion.” Howard Clark Kee, “Knowing the Truth: Epistemology and Community in the Fourth Gospel,” in *Neotestamentica et Philonica: Studies in Honor of Peder Borgen*, ed. David E. Aune, Torrey Seland, and Jarl Henning Ulrichsen (London: Brill, 2003): 258, 262, concurs, “Truth in this gospel, therefore, is not merely a body of conceptual insights, but involves following the divinely intended way of human life.”

⁶³See John 1:8, 10; 8:31ff., and especially 17:17. So also de la Potterie, “Truth in John,” 56.

⁶⁴Köstenberger, “What is Truth?” 35. Emphasis original.

⁶⁵Lincoln, “God’s Name,” 167; and Ladd, *Theology*, 266.

⁶⁶Dodd, *Interpretation*, 176.

For John . . . truth is found in the word of the Father turned to mankind, incarnate in Christ, illuminated through the action of the Spirit. What men are required to do with respect to the truth is not to win it by intellectual endeavor [as if it were derived from the Greeks' understanding], but to receive and enter into it in faith, to submit to it and live by it.⁶⁷

Having examined the general usage of truth in the FG, consider the various ways the FG connects truth with cosmic conflict. First, John repeatedly characterizes Jesus as truth and those who believe his word as associated with truth; furthermore, those who oppose Jesus do not have the truth. In John 14:6, Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" and asserts that he is more than just truthful. Rather, "he is the embodiment as well as the bearer of divine truth," he both conveys it and incarnates it.⁶⁸ Those who are of God hear "the words of God" (8:47) and do them, and Jesus' word abides in his true disciples (8:31).

On the other hand, those who oppose Jesus are resistant to truth (8:40, 45) and characterized by lies (8:44, 55). Satan is "the father of lies" (8:44) and his offspring follow in his footsteps. Jesus says, "my word has no place in [them]" (8:37) and they cannot hear it (8:43, 47). Similarly, the world cannot receive and does not know the Spirit of truth (14:16-17).

Second, in addition to associating Jesus and his followers with "truth" and their opponents with the opposite, the FG goes even further to portray truth as a *means* by which the spiritual battle is waged. For example, by knowing the truth, individuals are set free from the bondage of sin (8:32, 36). Later in the same passage, Jesus declares, "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word, he shall never see death" (8:51).⁶⁹ Individuals are converted and become followers of Jesus because of the truth of his word, as many Samaritans become followers of Jesus "because of His word" (4:41) and many

⁶⁷De la Potterie, "Truth in John," 64.

⁶⁸Kee, "Knowing the Truth," 256. Ladd, *Theology*, 266, notes Jesus "is the full revelation and embodiment of the redemptive purpose of God."

⁶⁹In the previous chapter, I argue death is an image of those forces opposed to God.

others will believe in Jesus through “the word” of his disciples (17:18).

Conversely, the author shows that lies and deception are a means by which the enemies of Jesus conduct their campaign. Throughout the FG, the Jews, who are clearly associated with Satan, use lies and deception in order to slander Jesus and bring about his crucifixion. Recall specifically their denial of seeking to kill Jesus in 7:20 and Jesus’ comment regarding their paternity in 8:44, connecting their lying with murder.⁷⁰

Truth as a weapon in cosmic conflict is further seen in the general teaching ministry of Jesus. That is, truth as it relates to Jesus’ word and his teachings is portrayed as a means by which his disciples are strengthened in their fight against the world, and thus, another example of truth as a weapon in cosmic conflict. This is especially evident in the Farewell Discourse where instruction is repeatedly given to the disciples in preparation for Jesus’ departure.⁷¹ Note also one of the primary roles of the Holy Spirit is to remind Jesus’ followers of his teachings (14:26; cf. 15:20; 16:4).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the intercession of Jesus is a weapon of spiritual warfare. Additionally, since Jesus’ prayers in the FG are often audible and primarily for the benefit of the hearers, he uses them to communicate truth, relating these prayers to the current discussion of truth as a weapon as well. In John 11:42, in his prayer to the Father, Jesus says, “because of the people standing around I said it, that they may believe.” Similarly, in his prayer in John 17, Jesus says, “But now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world that they may have My joy made full in themselves” (17:13). Furthermore, the truth he teaches is a precise tool Jesus uses to further equip his

⁷⁰Koester, *Symbolism*, 209, agrees that Satan’s lies are weapons in the cosmic conflict, “The ruler of the world also relied on deceit to exert control, since falsehood was part of his nature.”

⁷¹Kovacs, “Now Shall the Ruler,” 235, comments the Farewell Discourse prepares the *reader* as well. “References to cosmic conflict have an important role in the Farewell Discourse, whose purpose is to prepare the reader for the story of Jesus’ arrest, trial, and crucifixion, a story of ostensible defeat. The evangelist assures his audience that there is another, truer reading of this story and that the ultimate triumph of Christ and his followers is assured.”

disciples for battle, as is evident in 17:17. Jesus explicitly prays the Father will set apart his followers for service “in truth.” This truth is where and how they are set apart.⁷² Through the ministry of the Spirit of truth, the disciples bear witness to the truth (15:26-27). Just as Jesus’ testimony to the world is a means of cosmic conflict, so also the disciples will testify to the world, freeing some from the bondage of sin.

The connection between cosmic conflict and truth may also be seen in John 18:36-37. Jesus explains to Pilate that because his kingdom is not of this world, his disciples are not using violence to free their king and establish his kingdom. Rather, Jesus argues he came into the world to bear witness to the truth. The juxtaposition of a forceful advancement of an earthly kingdom with Jesus’ bearing witness to the truth as the king of an other-worldly kingdom is interesting. This contrast may be taken to imply the fighting Jesus does to establish his kingdom is, in fact, bearing witness to the truth. If so, truth is once again presented as a weapon in the cosmic conflict.⁷³

In conclusion, truth in the FG communicates the revelation of God through Jesus and the subsequent moral response to that revelation by those who follow him. Jesus reveals truth in order to save, sanctify, and strengthen his disciples, all part of his waging the battle of spiritual warfare. Satan, on the other hand, attempts to lie and conceal truth in order to put Jesus to death, his ultimate goal in the cosmic conflict of the FG. In this way, the important motif of truth, as with other themes in the FG, is employed by the Fourth Evangelist to communicate his theology of cosmic warfare.

Conclusion

While the FG does not use “weapon” terminology and this concept may be

⁷²Barrett, *Gospel according to St. John*, 510.

⁷³Truth as a weapon in cosmic conflict is also consistent with the Temptation narratives in Synoptics (Mark 1:12-13; Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13) where Jesus uses Scripture, i.e., God’s truth, to fight the devil. While the Temptation narrative is absent in the FG, its principal teachings are present—Satan cannot ultimately prevail over Jesus and Jesus overcomes him by means of God’s truth.

somewhat foreign to the setting of the FG, still there is merit in asking how the spiritual battle is waged in the FG. This chapter has discussed the means by which that occurs.

Jesus is the chief protagonist who, primarily through his death on the cross, which is motivated by love, strikes the death blow to Satan and all his adversaries. Jesus continues to wage the war through his communication of truth to and intercession on behalf of his followers. Interestingly, his followers are primarily passive in the battle. The significant weapons in the conflict, as seen in the FG, are wielded by the Triune God. Other than showing love for one another and receiving and walking in truth, the disciples seem to take their place behind Jesus, the Father, and the Spirit who battle on the front lines.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND APPLICATION

This dissertation has investigated multiple characters and themes, pursued numerous strands of evidence, and used a variety of methods and resources to investigate the theology of cosmic conflict in the FG. This chapter will seek to bring the previous findings together into a coherent summary of conclusions. Then, based on those conclusions, implications for the church today will be suggested.

Toward a Johannine Theology of Cosmic Conflict

This project began by proposing the FG has a well-developed theology of cosmic conflict. Using a two-pronged approach, the investigation proceeded to overview the entire Gospel, noting examples of cosmic conflict, and then examined the text of the FG, looking at particular aspects of the conflict topically. Below is a summary of the conclusions from each chapter.

Overview

The overview in chapter 2 demonstrated that spiritual conflict is pervasive, spanning the majority of the gospel and involving numerous individuals and groups, and communicated through interconnected metaphors and methods. Repetition of themes was evident and used by the author of the FG to reveal further to the reader his comprehensive understanding of spiritual conflict.

The Antagonists

The topical examination of the text began in chapter 3 with consideration of the antagonists in the conflict. While demons are absent from the FG, they are mentioned

when Jesus is accused of being demon-possessed. John makes his readers aware that these accusations are unfounded and casts the Jews who were making them in a negative light.

The role of Satan in the FG is emphasized more than in the Synoptics. He is shown to be the mastermind behind all the other antagonists. He puts into Judas' heart the notion to betray Jesus (cf. 6:70; 13:2) and enters Judas to do just that (13:27). He is the devil who is a murderer and liar from the beginning and is shown to be behind the efforts of the Jews to persecute and kill Jesus (8:44). He is the ruler of this world (12:31; 14:30; 16:11), the evil one (17:15), and the thief who "comes only to steal, kill, and destroy" (10:10). While references to him are spaced throughout the FG, they are also found in strategic moments in the plot. This serves to remind readers of his influence and to emphasize his presence at important moments.

Next, Judas Iscariot was discussed as the primary human agent in the conflict between Jesus and Satan. Satan's influence over him makes his actions against Jesus truly cosmic (6:70; 13:2, 27). The manner in which the author of the FG presents Judas confirms his place as an antagonist. He is always associated with the betrayal of Jesus, he is often contrasted with individuals who demonstrate love for and service to Jesus, and his position as one of the twelve and the treasurer of the group makes his actions particularly heinous.

Two groups are present in the FG as antagonists—the Jews and the world. "The Jews" is a descriptor used in the FG to generically categorize those in opposition to Jesus. While likely denoting a subset of the Jews, specifically Jewish leaders, the term often connotes a group in conflict with Jesus which is portrayed as in league with Satan and in opposition to God. The conflict between the Jews and Jesus, which is inferred as early as the Prologue, consistently escalates through the FG, culminating in the Jews' participation in the death of Jesus which has already been shown to be at the instigation

of Satan.

The world, while used in a variety of ways in the FG, is most often used to denote humanity in rebellion to God. The rejection of Jesus by the world is foreshadowed in the Prologue and made explicit in the Farewell Discourse wherein the world hates Jesus and will hate his disciples.

Pilate is the final antagonist considered. Though a minor figure, the author portrays him as opposed to Jesus and ultimately siding with the Jews, already shown to be the offspring of Satan. Jesus' discussion with Pilate concerning their kingdoms emphasizes the contrast between the kingdoms of the world and Jesus' kingdom of another world.

This chapter demonstrated the way in which significant characters in the Johannine plot are involved against Jesus in a cosmic battle led by Satan himself.

The Protagonists

The protagonists were then considered in chapter 4, beginning with God the Father whose primary role is defined by his sending the Son. The discussion turned to consider the Holy Spirit, who serves three primary functions in cosmic conflict: (1) He strengthens the disciples in the midst of their persecution by the world; (2) He enables them to witness effectively in the world; and (3) He reminds them of and guides them in truth that further equips them to endure persecution and witness.

The FG does briefly mention the presence of angels. However, their role in the author's cosmic conflict, similar to that of demons, is negligible.

While "the Jews" are a group in opposition to Jesus, the disciples serve as their counterpart who support Jesus. Their role in spiritual warfare includes active non-conformity to the world, enduring the consequent persecution, and faithfully bearing witness to the truth. The Farewell Discourse includes a large amount of teachings by Jesus intended to prepare them for the persecution they will face from the world when he

departs. The FG presents individuals as protagonists as well—Peter, Thomas, John the Baptist, the man born blind in John 9, and Nicodemus. Peter is often juxtaposed with Judas and shown acting with great zeal but contrary to Jesus’ intentions. Each of the others is presented as enduring persecution as a result of his relationship with Jesus.

In summary, the disciples are sent into enemy territory, equipped and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, to proclaim the truth about Jesus. As a result they will suffer persecution from the Jews and the world. Additionally, because Satan is behind the persecution, they are truly engaged in cosmic conflict.

Jesus, as the primary protagonist, was considered last. Because his unique role is so multi-faceted and because the FG is so christocentric, Jesus’ actions in cosmic conflict were considered in relation to all the other protagonists and antagonists. Beginning with an examination of the lack of exorcisms by Jesus in the FG, a thorough discussion provided an explanation for this absence. Since exorcisms are an important part of cosmic conflict, their absence in the FG requires an explanation. It was argued that, consistent with John’s use of signs, mere exorcisms could not adequately convey who Jesus is or what he has come to do. Rather, Jesus’ entire ministry is presented as a battle with Satan that ends with him casting out Satan himself (12:31). Furthermore, Jesus is presented as sovereign over Satan, knowing his schemes from the beginning (6:70-71; 13:1-2), actively directing Satan’s actions against him (13:27), and noting Satan has no power against him (14:30).

Jesus’ actions toward Judas, the Jews, the world, and even Pilate were characterized as straightforward but evangelistic. Keeping with his desire “that the world should be saved through Him” (3:17), Jesus uses several methods to win individuals to faith in him, including love, friendship, questioning, and warnings. While Jesus defeats and casts out Satan, overcomes the world, and judges the Jews as a group, he seeks to save individuals from out of the groups (i.e., the world and “the Jews”).

Jesus is sent from the Father on a salvific mission of love. He draws and cleanses individuals, prepares and protects them, and, then sends the Holy Spirit to the disciples. Finally, he sends them out as he himself was sent.

Cosmic conflict is seen in the FG as Jesus battles with Satan, the world, and the Jews. However, it is also seen as Jesus wins over his enemies and makes them “children of God” (1:12). Both the victorious conquering of unrepentant foes and the granting of life to those who once were enemies but now believe are shown as effective methods of spiritual battle.

The Metaphors

Chapter 5 expanded the discussion to investigate how the author of the FG employed metaphors to communicate his understanding of the cosmic battle. Light and darkness are two of John’s primary themes, recurring throughout the Gospel. However, the first occurrence is intended to define for the reader the subsequent ones. In 1:5, John writes, “And the light shines in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” “Comprehend” translates *κατέλαβεν* which can mean “grasp, seize, overcome” literally or to grasp or seize mentally, thus “comprehend.” It was argued while John may have intended both meanings, he did intend this word to convey the conflict-oriented idea of “overcome.” As such, John means for his readers to interpret references to light, darkness, day, and night in terms of cosmic conflict. From Nicodemus coming to Jesus at night, to Jesus being “the light of the world,” to Judas leaving to betray Jesus and “it was night,” the author continuously returns to this metaphor at important points in the narrative to show the battle between good and evil.

Another metaphor employed by the author is that of life and death. While Jesus and his followers are consistently characterized by life, Satan and his supporters are associated with death. The exceptions are when Jesus gives his life and dies on the cross and when Jesus’ followers are killed, being persecuted by the world. In all cases,

however, John's theology of cosmic conflict is advanced.

The final metaphor considered was that of kingdom. While Jesus downplays Nathanael's title, "King of Israel," in 1:49 and refuses the offer of kingship from his supporters in John 6, he does embrace the concept of kingdom and his kingship in his dialogue with Pilate where he clarifies the terms. John uses the interplay between Pilate, Jesus, and the Jews which focuses on the concept of kingdom to illustrate the two sides in the conflict—Jesus and his opponents. In the end, Pilate sides with the Jews and the Jews side with Pilate, both in opposition to Jesus. Thus, neither show themselves to be submissive to his kingship or a part of his kingdom. Rather, they are violently opposed to it.

The metaphors used by the author continue to fill in a fuller picture of his understanding of spiritual warfare. While the agents involved reveal a clear dichotomy between those who believe in Jesus and those who do not, the metaphors further illustrate and define the two sides of the conflict.

The Weapons

Finally, the means by which the battle is waged was considered in chapter 6. The world and the Jews, having the backing of Satan himself, engage in cosmic conflict by persecuting Jesus and his followers. This persecution takes the form of violence against them, leading even to their deaths. However, in an ironic turn, the death of Jesus becomes the primary means by which Satan and his camp are defeated. While the reader is aware of this throughout the FG, the agents involved are ignorant of what is being accomplished through Jesus' voluntary, sovereign, timely death.

Love is another weapon wielded by Jesus and his camp against the opposing forces. While characterizes Jesus' followers and hatred characterizes those who side with Satan, love participates in spiritual warfare in more specific ways as well. For the author of the FG, love is the root means and motivation for God's salvific actions toward the

world, the motivation for Jesus' voluntary death on behalf of sinners, and love among Jesus' followers is the evidence to a lost world of the genuineness of their faith. In these ways, love is integral to the strategy of cosmic conflict.

Jesus battles the enemy through prayer as well. He prays that his disciples be kept and guarded as he has kept and guarded them (17:12). He prays they be kept from the evil one (17:15) and that they be sanctified in truth (17:17). This spiritual protection and preparation serves to equip them for the ministry Jesus is leaving with them as he leaves the world but leaves them in it. Jesus asks the Father to send the Holy Spirit (14:6) who will encourage and equip them as noted earlier.

Truth and lies are additional weapons used by the combatants in the conflict of the FG. Satan and his offspring are characterized by lies and deceit (8:44ff.), while Jesus is "the truth" (14:6) who gives the Spirit of truth (14:17; 15:26; 16:13) to his followers who "practice the truth" (3:21). While the Jews use slander and lies to bring about Jesus' death, Jesus uses truth to convince others to believe in him. Additionally, Jesus teaches truth to his disciples in order to prepare them for their ministry when he is gone.

Conclusion

The Gospel of John presents a well-developed understanding of cosmic conflict. The agents involved in the conflict are numerous, including the major characters in the plot. They are also varied—some are spirit beings while others are humans, and some are aware of their roles while others are not. The conflict between them is not localized to a particular passage but ranges from the beginning to the end of the Gospel. The conflict is not a peripheral issue but is woven into the fabric of the plot of the FG. Finally, the conflict is pictured through significant metaphors and developed to such an extent that the means by which the battle is fought are also identifiable.

Applications for the Church

In addition to the contribution I desire for this work to make in the academic community pertaining to a fuller understanding of Johannine theology, I also wish for it to be beneficial to the church community at large. Therefore, now consider several applications to the church that come from aspects of John's theology of spiritual warfare.¹

First, in light of the way in which the FG defines spiritual warfare between two camps, the most important consideration for an individual today is obviously on which side his loyalties lie. John's presentation of Judas and others who apostatize (6:66) signals a warning to the church. While opposition in the FG comes from the Jews and from the world, Judas shows it can come from within a group of Jesus' own followers as well. This truth should lead believers to examine themselves and make ever sure they continue to follow Jesus and do not fall away.

Second, the FG stresses that Jesus was sent into the world by the Father. Furthermore, in like fashion, Jesus sends his disciples into it (4:38; 17:18; 20:21). Thus, Jesus' followers are to follow him by taking the truth of freedom from sin into a world enslaved by sin and Satan (8:31-36). That is, believers do not merely sit and wait for the battle to come to them in the form of persecution; they are deployed into the hostile but vanquished world to bear witness of Jesus.² The primary role of Jesus' disciples in the

¹The question of the applicability of the truths gleaned from the first-century followers of Jesus and John's audience to twenty-first-century believers is valid. However, Mark L. Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus: A Survey of Jesus and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 329, has argued Jesus' disciples, as narrative characters in the FG, represent all those who follow Jesus, regardless of whether they were contemporary, of the Johannine community, or of the twenty-first-century church. Furthermore, Jesus' prayer in John 17 connects the two groups and gives further assurance of their common ground. So also Paul R. Raabe, "A Dynamic Tension: God and World in John," *Concordia Journal* 21 (April 1995): 132; and Rudolph Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. by G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 504-5, who argues, "the contemporaries of Jesus had no advantage over their successors; and this is what the intercession [John 17] is about. It is a prayer that no essential distinction grow out of the difference in external historical situation of the successive generations; and this very petition shows that there is no such distinction." While obvious differences exist and direct one-to-one applications cannot always be made, general truths are clearly transferable from John's audience to today.

²So also, Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, Anchor Bible Commentary (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 1:509. After noting that Jesus has cast out the prince of this world and

FG in regard to cosmic conflict is the freeing of prisoners of war who are captured by the defeated enemy. The focus of the twenty-first century church should be to advance the front and push back the forces of evil through evangelism and missions.³

Third, those who follow Jesus in the FG are marked by a particular pattern of life. While they are in the world, they are not of the world (17:14-15). Rather than walking in darkness (8:12), they walk in the light (12:35-36), they have the light in them (8:12; 11:10), and they practice the truth and come to the light (3:21). They are to be sanctified in truth (17:17) and clean (15:3). Similarly, present-day believers are to live in the world, having been sent by Jesus into it, but our lifestyle is not to be of the world.⁴ We are to live set apart so that our gospel witness may be effective in order to fulfill the mission on which we have been sent. In this way, we are able to be competent combatants in the cosmic battle for the souls of those in the world.

Fourth, being in the world but not of the world will necessarily bring persecution from the world. Jesus told his followers to expect this hatred and persecution and equipped them to endure in the midst of it. The church today should expect no less. The world is just as rebellious and blinded as in Jesus' day, and if the church proclaims

overcome the world, he adds, "the working out of this victory against the world must continue after Jesus' departure. Jesus sends his followers out in the world (xvii 18), and their faith in him is to overcome the world (1 John v 4-5). Their purpose is to make the world believe in Jesus and come to know his mission from the Father (John xvii 21, 23)." So also Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 19: "The church as the body of Christ has been called to be a decisive means by which this final overthrow is to be carried out."

³Craig R. Koester, "The Death of Jesus and the Human Condition: Exploring the Theology of John's Gospel," in *Life in Abundance: Studies of John's Gospel in Tribute to Raymond E. Brown*, ed. John R. Donahue (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005): 151, notes in one sense, even the author of the FG is an active participant in the spiritual warfare through his writing. He "exposes the pretensions of evil in order to capture the readers for the crucified and risen king." In that sense, even this dissertation plays a role in cosmic conflict. Robert Kysar, "As You Sent Me': Identity and Mission in the Fourth Gospel," *Word & World* 31, no. 4 (2001): 373, adds, "If we take seriously the Johannine understanding of the mission of the church, we find ourselves engaging in culture without becoming identified with it."

⁴So also Elizabeth R. Achtemeier, "Jesus Christ, the Light of the World: The Biblical Understanding of Light and Darkness," *Interpretation* 17 (1963): 448, "The church is to witness to the light in word and in deed. It cannot do the works of evil and claim to be good; it cannot walk in darkness and claim to have light (1 John 1:5-7)." Kysar, "Identity and Mission," 373, adds, "We adopt a countercultural posture without separating ourselves from culture."

the same message, it should expect the same results. Persecution can be expected both individually and corporately. Note the persecution encountered by the man born blind in John 9 and Lazarus in John 11-12, in addition to the warnings given to the disciples as a group in 15:18-16:14 and 17:14. However, in the same way Jesus' followers were equipped to endure and continue a faithful witness—through the encouragement, strength, and reminding of the Holy Spirit—believers today have all that is necessary to likewise endure. Interestingly, the FG does not call for disciples to actively fight against this oppression. The author assumes persecution will come from the world but gives no instruction concerning avoiding it or persecuting the persecutors. While common-sense principles may be gleaned from other portions of Scripture that relate to how present-day disciples face persecution,⁵ the FG reminds us that there is a time and place to suffer for the sake of the gospel. Furthermore, the fact that suffering is not alleviated by victorious spiritual warfare but rather, enduring suffering *defines* victorious spiritual warfare, speaks against the teachings of prosperity gospel theology.

Fifth, in the FG, the conflicts that arise come primarily from a dispute about the nature and work of Jesus. For example, John the Baptist is questioned concerning his message about the Messiah (1:26-27). Jesus, also, is questioned regarding his authority to cleanse the temple (2:18), healing on the Sabbath, and calling God his Father (5:16-18). These illustrate the beginnings of the conflict between Jesus and the Jews. Jesus' conflict with the world is a result of his not being of it (17:16) and because his actions point out their sin (15:24). Jesus' conflict with Pilate concerns Jesus' identity and what kind of king he is (18:35-36; 19:10-11).⁶ In the same way, when believers make the

⁵See, e.g., Paul appealing to Caesar in Acts 25:11 or citing his Roman citizenship in Acts 22:28.

⁶Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 30, "John's Gospel is not a series of mindless conflicts. In the Gospel's perspective, opposition is generated by the very nature of Jesus and his mission. Conflict breaks out where the meaning of the Gospel and the values of the world collide and the Passion is the final consequence of this collision."

claims about Jesus that Jesus made about himself, conflict and persecution should be expected.

Lastly, the disciples' participation in the cosmic conflict in the FG is also instructive for present-day believers. They are characterized primarily as passive agents, deferring to Jesus' actions in cosmic conflict. In the FG, Jesus himself casts out (12:31) Satan⁷ and overcomes the world (16:33).⁸ This christocentric theology of cosmic conflict must characterize twenty-first century spiritual warfare as well. That is, emphasis must be placed on the victory already achieved through Jesus' death and resurrection. Then, in light of this victory, the church should be prepared to encounter Satan and his minions as a defeated foe who still, however, has ability, though limited, to inflict injury (cf. 17:15).⁹ Thus, Christians need to live with an understanding and respect for the power and evil of Satan, acknowledging both his existence and his defeated status. However, a misplaced curiosity about Satan and demons is to be avoided.¹⁰ Furthermore, since John's cosmic

Also J. Dennis, "Seeking Jesus: Observations on John's Vocabulary of Death," in *Repetitions and Variations in the Fourth Gospel: Style, Text, Interpretation*, ed. G. Van Belle, M. Labahn, and P. Maritz (Paris: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2009): 164, notes, "As is always the case in the Fourth Gospel, the questioning and conflict revolve around issues of Jesus' Messianic identity: is Jesus a good man or did he lead Israel astray (7:12); does his teaching and knowledge come from demons or God (7:14-20); is he the Messiah and if so surely our rulers . . . would know his origins (7:27)?"

⁷So also C. K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1966), 52, "The devil is defeated, but he is not destroyed"; Brown, *Gospel according to John*, 2:706, "Thus while defeated, the Prince of this world keeps power over his own domain (see Eph 2:2, 6:12)"; G. H. Twelftree, "Spiritual Powers," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000): 799, who notes that because hostile powers have been defeated at the cross, they are no longer "to be feared, even though they retain some power . . . until they are destroyed at the end (1 Cor 15:24-25)." He concludes his article noting the defeat of spiritual powers in opposition to God will take place in two stages, "The second stage can be expected in the eschaton; the first takes place in the ministry of Jesus, either focused in his exorcisms (Matt 12:28; par. Luke 11:20) or in the cross event (John 12:31), and is then played out in the ministry of his followers (Luke 10:17-18), and in the very existence of the church (Eph 3:10)."

⁸See also pp. 73-74.

⁹Judith L. Kovacs, "'Now Shall the Ruler of this World be Driven Out': Jesus' Death as Cosmic Battle in John 12:20-36," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114, no. 2 (1995): 234, rightly asserts, "Although Jesus' death and glorification are the turning point in the conflict (12:31), Satan, refusing to concede defeat, will focus his attack on the human allies Jesus leaves behind (cf. 15:18-19; 16:33b)."

¹⁰Twelftree, "Spiritual Powers," 797, adds, "The NT shows little interest in spiritual powers apart from their soteriological implications." The same is true for the FG and should be true for believers

conflict theology focuses on Christ, those methods which focus more on the activity of Satan than on the finished work of Jesus (cf. many popular works on spiritual warfare mentioned in chap. 1) get no support from the FG.¹¹

The disciples of the FG are also presented as protected by the prayers of Jesus as they participate in cosmic conflict (14:16; 17:9-26). Since Jesus prays for them in their hearing on the night before his crucifixion, they are well aware of his intercession and are able to be commissioned with confidence and sent out as lights in the darkness. Lincoln notes the importance of this fact:

To know that the risen and exalted Christ prays for those readers who believe is a major factor in shaping their identity and providing reassurance. The situations in which believers will find themselves have not only been foreseen and prayed for by Jesus, but they are also part of the outworking of God's purposes for the world. . . . Just as God has given Jesus what it took to accomplish his role, so now Jesus summons God to give what it will take for his followers to complete theirs.¹²

Present-day believers should be similarly encouraged and strengthened, knowing their

today.

¹¹The strategic-level spiritual warfare (SLSW) methods of C. Peter Wagner are a case in point. In accord with SLSW, the FG does present Satan as an actual being, capable of influencing individuals to accomplish his evil plans. Thus, his existence and power should be acknowledged, and is rightly acknowledged, by the proponents of dominion theology and the "spiritual warfare prayer movement" today. However, evangelism strategies that include identifying regional demons, praying against them, and binding them before evangelistic efforts are attempted find no parallel in the FG or the NT as a whole. For the Fourth Evangelist, the cross is the victory over Satan and his demons. While the Synoptics show Jesus casting out demons, and there is a limited place for such a ministry today, John's emphasis is on the victory achieved by Jesus' death and the freedom that comes from believing and resting in Jesus' work.

Many have adeptly made a biblical case against the practices of the spiritual warfare prayer movement. See, e.g., David Powlison, "Response to C. Peter Wagner and Rebecca Greenwood," in *Understanding Spiritual Warfare: Four Views*, ed. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012): 204-9; Fanning, "Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare"; Chuck Lowe, *Territorial Spirits and World Evangelisation: a Biblical, Historical, and Missiological Critique of Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare* (Borough Green, Kent, Great Britain: Mentor, 2001); and Charles E. Lawless, "Spiritual Warfare and Evangelism," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 28-44 This dissertation adds a small voice of support, noting no such practices are found or inferred in the FG.

Phillip Ross Bethancourt, "Christ the Warrior King: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Analysis of the Divine Warrior Theme in Christology" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), 182, concurs, "The warfare worldview of the Bible is far more concerned with what Christ has done than what the powers [of evil] are doing."

¹²Andrew T. Lincoln, "God's Name, Jesus' Name, and Prayer in the Fourth Gospel," in *Into God's Presence: Prayer in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2001): 171.

brother, the Lord Jesus, has asked their Father (20:17) to provide them with the resources necessary for them to succeed in the ministry he has given them.

Finally, with the death of Jesus, the disciples of the FG are also depicted as uniquely aided by the Holy Spirit and equipped through prayer.¹³ Because of Jesus' departure, the disciples have the opportunity to do "even greater works" (14:12) and have the presence of the Holy Spirit to "guide them into all truth" (16:13), "teach them all things" (14:26), and remind them of Jesus' teachings (14:26; cf. 2:22; 12:16). As Jesus did battle with Satan on earth through the disciples, the Holy Spirit will continue his fight.¹⁴ Furthermore, Jesus promises "more direct access to the Father once he goes to the Father (14:13-14; 15:7, 16; 16:26-27)" as well.¹⁵ Jesus gives much assurance to his disciples that their prayers will be answered. These tools are effective means by which Jesus' disciples, both then and now, conduct the campaigns of cosmic conflict in the world.

Conclusion

This chapter has summarized the various aspects of the theology of cosmic conflict found in the FG. Those aspects are numerous and diverse, giving evidence of a well-developed and fully-orbed theology. This chapter has also suggested ways in which John's theology of spiritual warfare may be applied to the lives of those who follow Jesus. That application can be summarized as follows:

The church, through its faith in the Light of the World, is to join forces with God in his cosmic struggle against the evil powers of darkness. As in the Old Testament, there is no doubt about the outcome of the battle. God is the Lord of light and of darkness. He will put down once and for all the forces of evil. . . . The Christian

¹³Lincoln, "God's Name," 173, 175-76, argues Jesus' instructions regarding prayer in the FG all come in the context of the disciples fulfilling their ministry. See 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23ff.

¹⁴Kovacs, "Now Shall the Ruler," 231, states that John 16:8-11 "promises that Jesus will send the Paraclete to continue to his conflict with the forces of evil."

¹⁵Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 2:1052.

church looks back to an empty tomb and sees in it the grave of all evil. So the church walks in the light until the end, until the time when there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, when the sun and moon shall be no more, when God will be all in all and light to every man, when the lamp of the Eternal City will be the Lamb, and 'the night shall be no more.'¹⁶

¹⁶Achtemeier, "Light of the World," 448-49.

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ABSTRACT

THE LIGHT OVERCOMES THE DARKNESS: COSMIC CONFLICT IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL

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The differences between the Gospel of John and the Synoptics have been widely discussed. One consideration is the way in which each presents the cosmic conflict between Jesus and Satan. While exorcisms and the Temptation of Jesus are prominent in the Synoptics, they are absent from the Fourth Gospel (FG), leading some to minimize John's theology of cosmic conflict. This dissertation argues the FG does, in its own way and for its own purposes, portray a cosmic battle between Jesus and Satan.

Chapter 1 presents the thesis of this dissertation: the FG has a well-rounded theology of cosmic conflict that influences the Fourth Evangelist's understanding of the individuals and groups in the FG, the themes and metaphors he uses, and even the actions and attitudes by which that conflict is carried out. The chapter continues by surveying the significant works of Johannine scholars and those who have written on the theology of spiritual warfare in general. The opening chapter concludes with a description of the methods employed in this investigation and a chapter-by-chapter summary of this dissertation.

Chapter 2 surveys the entire Gospel, highlighting significant references to cosmic conflict. This vertical reading serves to demonstrate the pervasiveness of spiritual warfare in the FG.

Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 carefully examine passages which particularly

communicate John's understanding of spiritual warfare. Chapter 3 focuses on the antagonists of the Gospel. References to Satan, demons, Judas, the Jews, the world, and Pilate are examined, and conclusions are drawn.

Chapter 4 studies the role the protagonists play in the conflict. Passages which reference God the Father, the Holy Spirit, angels, the disciples, and Jesus are discussed. The interaction between the protagonists and antagonists is given particular attention.

Recognizing the Fourth Evangelist communicates his understanding of cosmic conflict in ways other than the interaction between beings, chapter 5 explores images and metaphors that relate to the conflict motif. Light and darkness are the primary images, but life and death and kingdom are also considered.

Chapter 6 considers the means and methods by which the spiritual war is fought. Particular attention is given to the role Christ's death plays in winning the battle. Other "weapons" addressed include intercession, truth and lies, and love.

Conclusions are summarized in chapter 7 and resulting applications for the church are suggested.

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