

SENT LIKE JESUS: JOHANNINE MISSIOLOGY (JOHN 20:21-22)

Craig S. Keener

Although scholars sometimes treat John as the most “universal” of the Gospels (cf. Jn 19:20), it is (along with Matthew) the most distinctively Jewish and the most explicitly rooted in Judean topography and culture.¹ But while it specifically views “the world” through the lens of Judean authorities, John’s world is theologically a wider one.

We could thus treat Johannine missiology through the lens of some other texts, for example, John 3:16, but we will subsume that text under our larger discussion outlined in Jn 20:21-22. As with the other lectures/articles in this series, I am using one passage to provide the structure for addressing the themes of the entire book or body of

¹As has been long and widely noted, e.g., Wayne A. Meeks, “‘Am I a Jew?’—Johannine Christianity and Judaism,” 1:163-186 in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty* (4 vols.; ed. Jacob Neusner; SJLA 12; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 1:163; D. Moody Smith, “What Have I Learned about the Gospel of John?” 217-35 in *“What Is John?” Readers and Reading of the Fourth Gospel* (ed. Fernando F. Segovia; SBL Symposium Series 3; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 218-22; James H. Charlesworth, “The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gospel According to John,” 65-97 in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith*; ed. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996); J. Louis Martyn, “Source Criticism and Religionsgeschichte in the Fourth Gospel (1970),” 99-121 in *The Interpretation of John* (ed. John Ashton; Issues in Religion and Theology 9; Philadelphia: Fortress; London: S.P.C.K., 1986); John A. T. Robinson, *Can We Trust the New Testament?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 82; W. D. Davies, “Reflections on Aspects of the Jewish Background of the Gospel of John,” 43-64 in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith*; David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1988), 23-24.

literature in which it appears.² When John's first audience reached John 20, they would be hearing it in light of all the rest of his Gospel that had gone before.

When the risen Jesus appears to the disciples, he commissions them to carry on his work. "As the Father has sent me," he declares, "in the same way I have sent you." Then he empowers them to do it: "Receive the Holy Spirit" (20:21-22). Thus, this passage involves three primary elements of relevance to our discussion of Johannine missiology: the model of Jesus; the empowerment of the Spirit; and the mission of Jesus' followers. The Spirit and Jesus' followers together carry on aspects of Jesus' mission. What then was Jesus' mission?

1. "As the Father has Sent Me" (20:21)

Jesus kept telling his disciples that he was going to "go" to the Father, and then return to them, so they could enter the Father's presence. Although his long-term ascension (20:17) may still remain future in our passage (20:21-22),³ Jesus has already gone to the Father by dying, preparing a place for them in the Father's presence (14:2-6, 23). Now Jesus has returned to them, and in 20:21, he commissions them to carry on his mission. He sends them *kathōs*, "in the same way" that the Father sent him.⁴ If we wish to understand what the text means by his followers being "sent," we must first examine the explicit model for their sending in the ministry of Jesus.

a. Sending in John's Gospel

The motif of agency, or being *sent*, is frequent in John's Gospel.⁵ A text very much like this one appears in 13:20: "Whoever receives

²I treat this approach of reading each part in light of the whole on a very basic level in Craig Keener, *Biblical Interpretation* (Springfield, MO: Africa Theological Training Service, 2005), 45-66.

³See discussion (and a survey of alternatives) in Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1192-95 (also discussing the function of narrative predictions in ancient literature).

⁴Roughly 17.3% of this adverb's NT appearances are in John's Gospel, whereas this Gospel constitutes only 11% of the NT text, so John uses the adverb roughly 36.4% more than average. The Johannine epistles account for 7% of NT uses, though they constitute only about 1.7% of the NT text; thus they use it over 400% more than average (though these letters' sample size is too small to draw firm stylistic conclusions).

⁵See discussion in Keener, *John*, 310-17, here especially 315-17.

whomever I send receives me; whoever receives me receives him who sent me.”⁶ Jesus’ followers carry out his mission as he carries out the Father’s. The concept may be implicit even in John’s terms for sending, insofar as they reflect a special Jewish tradition about what it means to send someone. John’s two Greek terms for “send” are, contrary to some scholarly traditions, interchangeable; John employs both for the Father sending the Son and for the Son sending the disciples. In antiquity, those sent with a commission were authorized representatives of those who sent them; how one treated those sent (e.g., heralds or ambassadors) reflected one’s attitude toward the sender.⁷ Later rabbis even came up with specific rules regarding commissioned agents, including the formulation, “A person’s agent is as the person himself.”⁸ The agent carried the full authority of the sender, to the extent that the agent accurately represented the sender’s commission.⁹ Jewish people recognized Moses¹⁰ and the prophets¹¹ as God’s agents, sent with his message.

Verbs for “sending” appear some 60 times in John’s Gospel, applicable to John the Baptist (Jn 1:6, 33; 3:28), to agents of the

⁶This same language appears in different words in Matt 10:40 (probably “Q” material; see Lk 10:16); cf. Mk 9:37.

⁷See Diodorus Siculus 4.10.3-4; Josephus *Ant.* 8.220-21; more fully, Keener, *John*, 313-14.

⁸See *m. Ber.* 5:5; *t. Taan.* 3:2; *b. Naz.* 12b. For the Jewish custom as relevant to the NT, see especially Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, *Apostolate and Ministry* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1969); on Johannine and rabbinic “sending,” H. S. Friend, “Like Father, Like Son. A Discussion of the Concept of Agency in Halakah and John,” *Ashland Theological Journal* 21 (1990): 18-28. Despite detractors, most scholars today accept the connection (noted also by W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* [ICC; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988-1997], 2:153); some church fathers also recognized the connection (see J. B. Lightfoot, *St Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* [3d ed.; London: Macmillan & Company, 1869], 93-94; Gregory Dix, *The Apostolic Ministry* [ed. Kenneth E. Kirk; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1947], 228). It might be better to view rabbinic and Johannine agency as particular cases of a larger ancient Mediterranean conception.

⁹On agents being backed by the sender’s authority, see e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus 6.88.2; Diodorus Siculus 40.1.1; Josephus *Life* 65, 72-73, 196-98; 2 Macc 1:20.

¹⁰E.g., Ex 3:10, 13-15; 4:28; 7:16; Deut 34:11; *Sipra Behuq.* pq. 13.277.1.13-14; *’Ab. R. Nat.* 1 A, most MSS.

¹¹E.g., 2 Sam 12:1; 2 Kgs 17:13; 2 Chron 24:19; 25:15; 36:15; Jer 7:25; 24:4; 26:5; 28:9; 35:15; 44:4; Bar 1:21; *Mek. Pisha* 1.87; *’Ab. R. Nat.* 37, §95 B.

authorities (1:19, 22, 24; 5:33; 7:32), to the disciples (4:38; 13:20; 17:18), and to the advocate, the Spirit (14:26; 15:26; 16:7), but most often to Jesus as the agent of the Father (3:17, 34; 4:34; 5:23-24, 30, 36-38; 6:29, 38-39, 44, 57; 7:16, 28-29, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29, 42; 9:4; 10:36; 11:42; 12:44-45, 49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25). In these passages, Jesus consistently defers all honor for his mission to his sender (cf. 7:18). Jesus recognizes that an agent, like a servant, is never greater than the sender (Jn 13:16).¹² Full submission to the Father's purpose and deferring all honor to him are two ways that Jesus models what it means to be divinely commissioned.

b. Jesus as God's Revealer

Jesus came to reveal the Father's heart. As he says in 12:45, "Whoever beholds me beholds the one who sent me." John has been preaching this message since the opening of his Gospel, which climaxes in the announcement that Jesus has revealed God to us (1:18). John's prologue is framed with the twin claims that Jesus is deity and that he is in absolute intimacy with the Father (1:1-2, 18).¹³ We are not deity, but Jesus' invitation to "abide" in him is an invitation to intimacy with him as the basis for our mission (15:4-5).

In the Gospel's prologue, Jesus so accurately reflects the Father that he is the Father's *logos*, normally translated "word." John draws here on a range of rich Greek and Jewish conceptions,¹⁴ but most fundamentally the term for Jewish hearers would evoke God's revelation of himself in Scripture, especially in the law, as God's "Word."¹⁵ Yet Jesus is a fuller, deeper revelation than was available in

¹²On the Son's submission as the Father's agent, see e.g., Craig S. Keener, "Is Subordination Within the Trinity Really Heresy? A Study of John 5:18 in Context," *Trinity Journal* 20 NS (1, Spring 1999): 39-51, here 45-47.

¹³Marie-Emile Boismard, *St. John's Prologue* (trans. Carisbrooke Dominicans; London: Blackfriars Publications, 1957), 76-77.

¹⁴See the survey of Greek conceptions in Keener, *John*, 341-43; for Philo, *ibid.*, 343-47; and for more traditional Jewish conceptions, *ibid.*, 347-63.

¹⁵Keener, *John*, 359-63; Eldon Jay Epp, "Wisdom, Torah, Word: The Johannine Prologue and the Purpose of the Fourth Gospel," 128-46 in *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation: Studies in Honor of Merrill C. Tenney Presented by his Former Students* (ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975); in the Gospel more generally, see Dan Lidy, *Jesus as Torah in John 1-12* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2007).

the law. In the climactic section of his prologue, John compares Jesus with the Torah (hence Jesus' first witnesses with Moses):¹⁶

Ex 32—33	Jn 1:14-18
The giving of the law	The giving of the Word
God “dwelt” among his people in the wilderness	The Word “tabernacled” among us (1:14)
Moses beheld God’s glory	“We” beheld his glory (1:14)
The glory revealed God’s goodness (33:19), and was “abounding in covenant love and truth” (34:6)	His glory was “full of grace and truth” (1:14)
Though grace and truth were present, Moses could not withstand God’s full glory (33:20-23)	The law was given through Moses, (but the <i>fullness</i> of) grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (1:17)
No one can behold God (Ex 33:20)	No one has ever seen God—but (now) the only Son of God, in intimate communion with the Father, has unveiled his character fully (1:18)

The glory that Moses beheld only in part, the disciples discovered fully in Jesus, though in a hidden way. The glory at his first coming did not look outwardly like the glory on Mount Sinai, but in terms of revealing God’s character, God’s heart, it went beyond Sinai. What does this glory look like in John’s Gospel? If we trace the terminology of “glory” throughout his Gospel, we see that his glory and character were revealed in his various kind works (e.g., 2:11), but that the ultimate expression of his glory appears in 12:23-24: Jesus will be glorified by

¹⁶With many, e.g., Boismard, *Prologue*, 135-45, especially 136-39; Jacob J. Enz, “The Book of Exodus as a Literary Type for the Gospel of John,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 76 (1957): 208-15, here 212; Peder Borgen, *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 150-51; Anthony Hanson, “John I.14-18 and Exodus XXXIV,” *New Testament Studies* 23 (1, Oct. 1976): 90-101; Everett F. Harrison, “A Study of John 1:14,” 23-36 in *Unity and Diversity in NT Theology: Essays in Honor of G. E. Ladd* (ed. Robert A. Guelich; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 29; Henry Mowley, “John 1.14-18 in the Light of Exodus 33.7-34.35,” *Expository Times* 95 (5, February 1984): 135-37.

laying down his life.¹⁷ The ultimate expression of God's grace and truth, too glorious even for Moses to see, emerged where the world's hatred for God also came to its ultimate expression: as we pounded the nails in the hands of God's own Son, he was crying, "I love you! I love you! I love you!" In the incarnation, and ultimately in the cross, Jesus revealed God's heart to us.

c. Jesus as unique, Jesus as model

There are some ways, of course, in which the Father's sending of the Son is unique. Jesus is the *monogenēs* (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 Jn 4:9), the specially beloved and unique Son (the traditional English translation, "only-begotten," reads too much etymology into the term).¹⁸ We are not divine, so while the world should see God among us (13:34-35; 17:21, 23), we are not his revealer in the unique way that Jesus was. While we may lay down our lives for one another (1 Jn 3:16), we do not carry away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29). John declares that the Father sent the Son not to condemn the world, but to save it (Jn 3:17). Jesus' agents do not save the world, but instead, like John the Baptist in the Prologue (1:7), are sent to "bear witness" concerning the light (e.g., 15:27). Still, John shows that the role of such witnesses is indispensable. Others would believe through their message (17:20); the Spirit would (as we shall soon propose) prosecute the world through Jesus' agents' witness for him (16:7-11). Even the context of our primary text emphasizes that Jesus' agents are stewards of God's forgiveness (20:23), presumably by accurately representing Jesus (cf. 16:7-11).¹⁹

¹⁷With e.g., Gary M. Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 132-33; David Earl Holwerda, *The Holy Spirit and Eschatology in the Gospel of John: A Critique of Rudolf Bultmann's Present Eschatology* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1959), 5-8; F. F. Bruce, *The Message of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 105; W. Nicol, "The history of Johannine research during the past century," *Neotestamentica* 6 (1972): 8-18, here 16.

¹⁸See R. L. Roberts, "The Rendering 'Only Begotten' in John 3:16," *Restoration Quarterly* 16 (1973): 2-22, here 4; I. J. Du Plessis, "Christ as the 'Only Begotten,'" *Neotestamentica* 2 (1968): 22-31; G. Pendrick, "Monogenh/q," *New Testament Studies* 41 (4, 1995): 587-600; Harrison, "John 1:14," 32.

¹⁹Cf. e.g., James I. Cook, "John 20:19-23—An Exegesis," *Reformed Review* 21 (2, Dec. 1967): 2-10, here 7-8.

Nevertheless, provided that we allow for Jesus' unique role and status, John's Gospel presents Jesus as a model for mission, and demonstrates that those he sends come to participate in that mission. In 1:43, Jesus called Philip to follow him; in 1:45, Philip followed Jesus' example by testifying to Nathanael from his experience understood through Scripture. But it is an encounter with Jesus himself that converts: Philip invites Nathanael to "Come and see" (1:46), and Nathanael believes through meeting Jesus who knows his life (1:46-51). Likewise, in 4:26, Jesus reveals his identity to a Samaritan woman, and she invites her entire town to "Come, see" the one who knew her life (4:29). Afterward, though they initially accepted the woman's testimony (4:39),²⁰ more Samaritans believed more fully once they met Jesus for themselves (4:41-42). As in Nathanael's case, it is experiencing Jesus for themselves that converts them; the honor cannot go to the witnesses. We are Jesus' agents, but as Jesus honored the Father, we are to honor Jesus. It is as we introduce people to the living presence of Jesus that they become most fully confronted by his truth, whether that makes them more hostile or, as in these cases, more receptive.

d. "Sent" to "the World" (Jn 3:16-17)

Jesus does not specify in 20:21 to whom he is sent, but this object is clear from earlier passages in the Gospel. The Fourth Gospel repeatedly emphasizes that the Father sent Jesus *to the world* (3:17; 10:36; 17:18; cf. 8:26; 17:21, 23), a theme repeated in 1 John (1 Jn 4:9, 14). The stated purpose of this sending is that the world might be saved (Jn 3:17; 1 Jn 4:14; cf. Jn 6:33, 51; 1 Jn 4:9).²¹

John 3:16-17 states God's motive in sending Jesus to the world: God *loved* the world.²² In contrast to some attempts to distinguish the

²⁰Despite the typical prejudice against women's testimony in Mediterranean antiquity; see e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 4.219; *m. Yeb.* 15:1, 8-10; 16:7; *Ket.* 1:6-9; *t. Yeb.* 14:10; *Sipra VDDeho.* pq. 7.45.1.1; Hesiod *W.D.* 375; Livy 6.34.6-7; Babrius 16.10; Phaedrus 4.15; Avianus *Fables* 15-16; Justinian *Inst.* 2.10.6.

²¹Although Jesus came not with the purpose of condemning the world (3:17; 12:47), his coming does precipitate judgment (9:39; 16:8, 11).

²²On divine love originating the sending in John's theology, see M. Waldstein, "Die Sendung Jesu und der Jünger im Johannesevangelium," *Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift/Communio* 19 (3, 1990): 203-21. For God's love focused especially on the righteous or Israel, see e.g., CD 8.17; 'Ab. R. Nat. 36, §94B; *Sipra Deut.* 97.2; further discussion in Keener, *John*, 568-69.

meanings of the two Greek words John uses for “love,” John employs them interchangeably for literary variation, as was common in his day.²³ Both verbs apply to Jesus’ love for the Father, the Father’s love for Jesus, and virtually every other category of love in the Gospel. What tells us about the character of divine love is not whether John employs *phileō* or (as here) *agapaō*, but how he defines this love in the context. The Greek here does not say, “God loved the world *so much*,” but rather, “This is *how* God loved the world”:²⁴ he gave his Son. Good human fathers love their sons; we should understand that God the Father loves his Son infinitely, no less than himself, yet he and the Son together²⁵ sacrificed this Son so that the world might have life. This means that God loved the world, or those who would become his own out of the world, no less infinitely. As Jesus later says to the disciples, his followers’ unity would reveal divine love to the world, so they would recognize that God loved the disciples, *even as* he loved Jesus (17:23).

God’s love is no mere abstraction, no empty words. Rather, God demonstrated his love in an act. The act in which God “loved” the world was that he “gave” his Son; the aorist verb tense for both “loved” and “gave” points to this single act, which the context indicates is the

²³With most scholars today: e.g., John Painter, *John: Witness and Theologian* (foreword by C. K. Barrett; London: S. P. C. K., 1975), 62, 92; F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John: Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 404; Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (BNTC; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2005), 517-18; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 261; R. H. Lightfoot, *St. John’s Gospel: A Commentary* (ed. C. F. Evans; London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 343; Anthony C. Thiselton, “Semantics and New Testament Interpretation,” 75-104 in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods* (ed. I. Howard Marshall; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 93; R. Alan Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 248; Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John: A Theological Commentary* (trans. John Vriend; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 665-66. For the commonness of literary variation in antiquity, see e.g., Cicero *Orator* 46.156-57; *Fam.* 13.27.1; Aulus Gellius 1.4; R. Dean Anderson, Jr., *Glossary of Greek Rhetorical Terms Connected to Methods of Argumentation, Figures and Tropes from Anaximenes to Quintilian* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 53-54, 114.

²⁴With Robert H. Gundry and Russell W. Howell, “The Sense and Syntax of John 3:14-17 with Special Reference to the Use of ou[twq...w]/ste in John 3:16,” *Novum Testamentum* 41 (1, 1999): 24-39.

²⁵John emphasizes that the Son laid down his life voluntarily (Jn 6:51; 10:11, 15, 17-18; cf. 15:13), inviting his followers to do the same (1 Jn 3:16).

cross (3:14-15).²⁶ Just as Paul emphasized decades before John's Gospel, God demonstrated his love for us through the death of his Son while we were his enemies (Rom 5:8-10). The necessary condition God requires for eternal life is stated as "trust"; the verb tense and the rest of John's Gospel indicate that this requires persevering faith (Jn 8:31; 15:6), in contrast to the inadequate faith earlier in this context (2:23-25). The rest of John's Gospel also defines the object of faith: ultimately, it recognizes Jesus as our "Lord and God" (20:28). Here we have the motivation, method, and message for our mission: motivated by God's love (cf. 2 Cor 5:14), we lay down our lives to invite people to trust, or depend on, God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But we may especially note the object of his love here: "the world." In John's Gospel, the world often represents humanity hostile toward God (1:10; 3:19; 7:7; 8:23; 12:25, 31; 14:17, 19, 22, 30; 15:18-19; 16:11, 20, 33; 17:14, 25); yet it is from among those in that world that he saves those who trust in him (13:1; 17:6, 9, 11, 14-16, 25).²⁷ After this passage, the next mention of the world comes in 4:42, where Samaritans recognize Jesus as "Savior of the world."²⁸ Jesus crossed multiple barriers,²⁹ most obviously the ethnic and cultural barrier (4:9), to bring eternal life to the Samaritan woman at the well, who in turn brought her people to Jesus. While John's narrative world does not venture directly beyond the Samaritans, it does imply the world beyond them: Jesus has "other sheep who are not of this fold" (10:16; cf.

²⁶Cf. also e.g., Ernest Evans, "The Verb *al*gapan in the Fourth Gospel," 64-71 in *Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (ed. F. L. Cross; London: A. R. Mowbray & Company, 1957), 68; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (2 vols.; Anchor Bible 29 and 29A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1966-1970), 1:133.

²⁷Just as only a Samaritan (4:9) and a Gentile (18:35) acknowledge Jesus as a Jew, it is especially the most hostile representatives of "the world" who recognize that "the world" (much of humanity) goes after Jesus (11:48; 12:19). John thus mitigates his portrayal of the "world's" hostility on a personal level: the world may come to know about God, i.e., so some will be saved (14:31; 17:21, 23; 13:35); Jesus' death invites "all people" (12:32); the Judean crowds are divided in their responses to Jesus (7:43; 9:16; 10:19); Jesus invites the world (18:36-37).

²⁸On the implied ethnic universalism, see e.g., Francis J. Moloney, *Belief in the Word. Reading the Fourth Gospel: John 1-4* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 14.

²⁹See Keener, *John*, 585; idem, "Some New Testament Invitations to Ethnic Reconciliation," *Evangelical Quarterly* 75 (3, July 2003): 195-213, here 195-202.

7:35),³⁰ those who will believe in him through his disciples' message (17:20). John's mention of the "world," then, is as much a summons to reach all peoples as Matthew's or Luke's call to the "nations." Isaiah's light to the nations (Is 42:6; 49:6; cf. 60:2-3) is in John the "light of the world" (Jn 8:12; 9:5; 11:9; 12:46).

2. "Receive the Holy Spirit" (20:22)

Not only are Jesus and his disciples "sent" in this Gospel, but so also is the Spirit "sent." The Spirit comes to represent and carry on Jesus' work: thus in 14:26, the Spirit is sent "in my name"; and in 15:26, the Spirit is sent to bear witness to Jesus. We are able to carry on Jesus' mission only because God himself lives and works in us. No sooner does Jesus give them the commission than he breathes on them and commands them to "Receive the Holy Spirit" (20:22). Just as in 15:26-27 and 16:7, the Spirit is closely connected with the disciples' witness.

a. The Breath of Life

What is the significance of Jesus breathing on them? Most scholars see an allusion to Gen 2:7: as God breathed into the first human the breath of life, so now Jesus imparts new life to his

³⁰Some take these other sheep in 10:16 as Diaspora Jews (John A. T. Robinson, "The Destination and Purpose of St. John's Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 6 [2, Jan. 1960]: 117-31, here 127-28; J. Louis Martyn, "Glimpses into the history of the Johannine Community," 149-76 in *L'Évangile de Jean: Sources, rédaction, théologie* [ed. M. De Jonge; Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 45; Gembloux: J. Duculot; Leuven: University Press, 1977], 174) or Samaritans (cf. John Bowman, "Samaritan Studies," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 40 [2, 1958]: 298-327; Edwin D. Freed, "Samaritan Influence in the Gospel of John," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 30 [4, Oct. 1968]: 580-87; Charles H. H. Scobie, "The Origins and Development of Samaritan Christianity," *New Testament Studies* 19 [4, July 1973]: 390-414, here 407), but most see them as Gentile believers (e.g., J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John* [2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928], 2:361; J. Ramsey Michaels, *John* [Good News Commentaries; San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1984], 169). Against some, normal usage suggests that "Greeks" (7:35; 12:20) are Gentiles (discussion in Keener, *John*, 721).

followers.³¹ Greek and Hebrew could employ terms for “breath” or “wind” for God’s Spirit. Jesus earlier depicted the eternal life initiated by the new birth not only in terms of water but also in terms of wind (3:8), perhaps evoking the resurrection life of God’s breath or Spirit in Ezek 37:9-14.³² (That is, as Jn 3:5-6 probably alludes to Ezek 36:25-27, so Jn 3:8 probably alludes to Ezek 37.) It is God’s breath that brings life to the new creation, as to the old.

As a matter of interest, we may pause to ask, as scholars often do, the relationship between this passage and Pentecost in Acts 2.³³ Some

³¹E.g., Ernst Haenchen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (2 vols.; trans. Robert W. Funk; ed. Robert W. Funk with Ulrich Busse; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 2:211; J. N. Sanders, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John* (ed. B. A. Mastin; HNTC; New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968), 433; Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts in the New Testament Church and Today* (rev. ed.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 90-92; Keener, *John*, 1204-5; James D. G. Dunn, “Spirit. NT,” 3:693-707 in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (ed. Colin Brown; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 703; Peter F. Ellis, *The Genius of John: A Composition-Critical Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1984), 293; M. Wojciechowski, “Le Don de L’Esprit Saint dans Jean 20.22 selon Tg. Gn. 2.7,” *New Testament Studies* 33 (2, 1987): 289-92 (though reading too much from the Targumim, which is then used to connect John 20 with Pentecost); Gail R. O’Day, “The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” 9:491-865 in *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (12 vols.; ed. Leander E. Keck; Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 846; Jan A. du Rand, “n Ellips skeppingsgebeure in die Evangelieverhaal volgens Johannes,” *Skrif en Kerk* 21 (2, 2000): 243-59. For imagery of a new creation, e.g., Cook, “Exegesis,” 8; John P. Meier, “John 20:19-23,” *Mid-Stream* 35 (4, 1996): 395-98.

³²Cf. e.g., Max-Alain Chevallier, *Ancien Testament, Hellénisme et Judaïsme, La tradition synoptique, L’oeuvre de Luc* (vol. 1 in *Souffle de Dieu: le Saint-Esprit dans le Nouveau Testament*; Le Point Théologique 26; Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1978), 23; D. W. B. Robinson, “Born of Water and Spirit: Does John 3:5 Refer to Baptism?” *The Reformed Theological Review* 25 (1, Jan. 1966): 15-23, here 17.

³³See discussion (from various perspectives) in e.g., Robert P. Menzies, “John’s Place in the Development of Early Christian Pneumatology,” 41-52 in *The Spirit and Spirituality: Essays in Honor of Russell P. Spittler* (ed. Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies; JPTSup 24; London, New York: T&T Clark International, 2004); Keener, *John*, 1196-1200; Turner, *Gifts*, 94-97; idem, “The Concept of Receiving the Spirit in John’s Gospel,” *VE* 10 (1976): 24-42; Max-Alain Chevallier, “‘Pentecôtes’ lucaniennes et ‘Pentecôtes’ johanniques,” *RSR* 69 (2, April 1981): 301-13; Donald A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991),

scholars see this passage as a lesser Pentecost; others as John's replacement for or equivalent to Luke's Pentecost. Perhaps on the historical level we may think of two levels of impartation, as some scholars argue. On the theological level, however, this is the passage that ties together Jesus' various promises surrounding the Spirit promises earlier in the Gospel: Jesus coming to them (14:18); resurrection life (14:19); joy (15:11; 20:20); peace (14:27; 20:21); the Spirit's new birth and indwelling (Jn 3:5; 14:17; 20:22), and being sent as witnesses (15:26-27; 20:21). John is not continuing his account his narrative as late as Pentecost; at least on the *narrative* level, this passage must carry the symbolic weight of John's entire theology of the Spirit. What then *is* John's theology of the Spirit?

b. The Spirit of Purification

First, the Spirit *purifies* God's people, and in a manner that mere ceremonial washings cannot. The image of Jesus breathing new life into his followers in Jn 20 indicates that this emphasis in John's theology of the Spirit continues here. Some ancient Jewish sources, especially among the Essenes, recognized in Ezek 36:25-26 that in the end-time the Spirit would purify God's people morally.³⁴ John

648-55; Joost van Rossum, "The 'Johannine Pentecost': John 20:22 in Modern Exegesis and in Orthodox Theology," *SVTQ* 35 (2-3, 1991): 149-67; Philippe H. Menoud, "La Pentecôte lucanienne et l'histoire," *RHPR* 42 (2-3, 1962): 141-47; Stanley M. Horton, *What the Bible Says About the Holy Spirit* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1976), 127-33; W. Bartlett, "The Coming of the Holy Ghost according to the Fourth Gospel," *ExpT* 37 (1925-26): 72-75, here 73; Francis Wright Beare, "The Risen Jesus Bestows the Spirit: A Study of John 20:19-23," *CJT* 4 (2, April 1958): 95-100, here 96; Burge, *Community*, 148.

³⁴See 1QS 3.7; 4.21; 1QH 8.30; 16; 4Q255 frg. 2.1; 4Q257 3.10; Craig S. Keener, "The Function of Johannine Pneumatology in the Context of Late First-Century Judaism" (Ph.D. dissertation, New Testament and Christian Origins, Duke University, 1991), 65-69; idem, *The Spirit in the Gospels and Acts: Divine Purity and Power* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 146-51, 162; F. F. Bruce, "Holy Spirit in the Qumran Texts," *ALUOS* 6 (1966): 49-55, here 52-54; J. Coppens, "Le Don de l'Esprit d'après les textes de Qumrân et le Quatrième Évangile," 209-23 in *L'Évangile de Jean: Études et Problèmes* (Recherches Bibliques 3; Louvain: Desclée de Brouwer, 1958), 211-12, 222; Émile Puech, "L'Esprit saint à Qumrân," *SBFLA* 49 (1999): 283-97; George Johnston, "'Spirit' and 'Holy Spirit' in the Qumran Literature," 27-42 in *New Testament Sidelights: Essays in honor of Alexander Converse Purdy* (ed.

develops this emphasis especially through an ongoing contrast with merely natural water, often water used for ritual purification.

The contrast appears regularly in John's Gospel (especially in what is often called its "signs" section). Jesus' baptism in the Spirit is greater than John's baptism in water (Jn 1:31, 33). Jesus sets aside the ritual purpose of six waterpots when he turns water in them into wine (2:6-10).³⁵ Whereas some Jewish people may have expected Gentile converts to become like "newborn babies" after they immersed in water,³⁶ Jesus summons Nicodemus to a true proselyte baptism in the water of the Spirit in Jn 3:5.³⁷ In Jn 4:14, Jesus offers "living"³⁸ water greater than the water of Jacob's well, a site holy to the Samaritans. In fact, John's "geographic" interest is not in holy sites like the Jerusalem temple or the Samaritans' Mount Gerizim, but the proper sphere of worship, namely in the Spirit of truth (4:20-24).³⁹ In 5:1-9, the water of a pool associated with healings leaves a man infirm, but Jesus heals him; in 9:1-7 another man is healed in connection with another sacred pool, but only because Jesus sends him there.⁴⁰ Jesus later takes the

Harvey K. McArthur; Hartford: Hartford Seminary Foundation Press, 1960), 40; Max-Alain Chevallier, "Le souffle de Dieu dans le Judaïsme, aux abords de l'ère chrétienne," *FoiVie* 80 (1, January 1981): 33-46, here 40.

³⁵See discussion in Keener, *John*, 509-13.

³⁶Later rabbis' association of conversion with becoming like a new child is often noted, e.g., H. W. Watkins, *The Gospel According to John* (ed. Charles John Ellicott; 2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957), 74; Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh. *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 82 (citing *b. Yeb.* 22a; 48b; 62a; 97b; *Bek.* 47a). This view is at least as early as the seventeenth century; see John Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica* (4 vols.; n.p.: Oxford, 1959; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 3:265.

³⁷See discussion more extensively in Keener, *John*, 537-55, esp. 546-50; cf. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John* (2 vols.; trans. William Pringle; Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847), 1:111.

³⁸A wordplay; "living" water was flowing water, the kind one would get from a spring (cf. e.g., LXX Gen 26:19; Lev 14:5-6, 50-52). But John also thinks of the "water of life" (Rev 7:17; 21:6; 22:1, 17); cf. Ps 36:9; Jer 2:13; 17:13; Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (Philadelphia: Westminster; London: SCM, 1953), 81; Birger Olsson, *Structure and Meaning in the Fourth Gospel: A Text Linguistic Analysis of John 2:1-11 and 4:1-42* (trans. Jean Gray; Lund, Sweden: CWK Gleerup, 1974), 213; Brown, *John*, 1:cxxxv.

³⁹See discussion more fully in Keener, *John*, 611-19.

⁴⁰Scholars often note the contrast between the two passages; see especially R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 139; cf. also Jeffrey L. Staley, "Stumbling in the

role of the suffering servant as he washes his disciples' feet, in a scene interspersed with announcements of the coming betrayal (Jn 13).⁴¹

The key text with reference to John's water motif (key because it offers an explicit explanation) is Jn 7:37-39, where Jesus promises rivers of living water. Jesus speaks on the last day of the festival of tabernacles (7:2, 37); at this festival priests poured water from the Pool of Siloam at the base of the altar, to symbolize an expectation stemming from the Scripture texts read on the last day of the festival. These texts, Ezek 47 and Zech 14, spoke of rivers of living water flowing from the temple and from Jerusalem in the eschatological time.⁴² On the day that these texts were read, Jesus announces to the people, "Whoever thirsts, let them come to me; let them drink, whoever believes in me. As the Scripture has said, 'From his belly will flow rivers of living water.'"⁴³ Jewish people thought of Jerusalem as the

Dark, *Reaching for the Light: Reading Character in John 5 and 9*, *Semeia* 53 (1991): 55-80; Dorothy A. Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel: The Interplay of Form and Meaning* (JSNTSup 95; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 105-6; Raymond F. Collins, *These Things Have Been Written: Studies on the Fourth Gospel* (Louvain Theological & Pastoral Monographs 2; Louvain: Peeters; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 23; Rainer Metzner, "Der Geheilte von Johannes 5—Repräsentant des Unglaubens," *ZNW* 90 (3-4, 1999): 177-93.

⁴¹For the footwashing, see especially John Christopher Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community* (JSNTSup 61; Sheffield: JSOT Press, Sheffield Academic Press, 1991).

⁴²See e.g., *t. Suk.* 3:3-10, 18. Among commentators, cf. e.g., C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 350; Archibald M. Hunter, *The Gospel According to John* (Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 84-85; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John* (3 vols.; trans. Kevin Smyth and J. Massingberd Ford; New York: Herder & Herder, 1968; New York: Seabury, 1980-1982), 2:155; see fuller discussion in Keener, *John*, 722-30 (esp. 725-27).

⁴³Scholars differ on the precise syntax here, some seeing water from the believer (Gordon D. Fee, "Once More—John 7:37-39," *Expository Times* 89 [4, Jan. 1978]: 116-18; Joseph Blenkinsopp, "John VII.37-9: Another Note on a Notorious Crux," *New Testament Studies* 6 (1, Oct. 1959): 95-98; Zane C. Hodges, "Rivers of Living Water: John 7:37-39: Part 7 of Problem Passages in the Gospel of John," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 136 (543, July 1979): 239-48; Bernard, *John*, 1:282; Juan B. Cortés, "Yet Another Look at Jn 7,37-38," *CBQ* 29 [1, Jan. 1967]: 75-86) and some from Jesus (Dodd, *Interpretation*, 349; Brown, *John*, 1:321-23; James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in relation*

navel of the earth;⁴⁴ but Jesus here depicts *himself* as the foundation of God's new temple, the source of living water.⁴⁵ John explains that once Jesus would be glorified, those who believe in Jesus would receive from him this living water, the Spirit (7:39).

Lest we forget his point, John also takes time to narrate an event at the crucifixion not included in the other extant Gospels. When a soldier pierced Jesus' side, not only blood but *water* came forth (19:34). Historically, the spear may have punctured the pericardial sac around the heart, releasing a watery substance along with the blood.⁴⁶ But why does John bother to record it and even underline it emphatically by noting that he was an eyewitness (19:35)?⁴⁷ I suspect

to Pentecostalism Today [Studies in Biblical Theology, 2d ser., 15; London: SCM, 1970], 179-80; J. Ramsey Michaels, "The Temple Discourse in John," 200-213 in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study* [ed. Richard N. Longenecker and Merrill C. Tenney; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974], 208-9; M. J. J. Menken, "The Origin of the Old Testament Quotation in John 7:38," *Novum Testamentum* 38 [2, 1996]: 160-75; D. Moody Smith, *John* [Abingdon New Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 1999], 174). For our purposes here, it may suffice to note that whether the rivers flow from the believer or Jesus, Jesus is the explicit *ultimate* source in 7:39.

⁴⁴See e.g., *Jub.* 8:12; *Sib. Or.* 5:249-50; *b. Yoma* 54b. Cf. also James M. Scott, "Luke's Geographical Horizon," 483-544 in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting* (ed. David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf; vol. 2 in *The Book of Acts in its First-Century Setting*, 6 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994), 526; Philip S. Alexander, "Notes on the 'Imago Mundi' of the Book of Jubilees," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 33 (1-2, Spring-Autumn 1982): 197-213; Mieczyslaw Celestyn Paczkowski, "Gerusalemme—'ombelico del mondo' nella tradizione cristiana antica." *SBFLA* 55 (2005): 165-202." Greeks applied the label to Delphi (e.g., Euripides *Med.* 667-68; *Orest.* 591; Pindar *Pyth.* 4.74; 8.59-60; 11.10).

⁴⁵Cf. e.g., Lloyd Gaston, *No Stone On Another: Studies in the Significance of the Fall of Jerusalem in the Synoptic Gospels* (NovTSup 23; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), 211; S. H. Hooke, "'The Spirit was not yet,'" *New Testament Studies* 9 (4, July 1963): 372-80, here 377-78; Mary L. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, A Michael Glazier Book, 2001), 132-33.

⁴⁶John Wilkinson, "The Incident of the Blood and Water in John 19.34," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28 (2, 1975): 149-72.

⁴⁷Although many scholars challenge this position, I have argued for the identity of the beloved disciple with the author, and that of both with the apostle John, in Keener, *John*, 81-139.

that it forms a climactic illustration of Jesus' point.⁴⁸ Lifted up and glorified, crowned king of the Jews, Jesus by his death provided living water for his people. The Book of Revelation expresses John's point well. Let the one who thirsts come and drink freely from the water of the river of life (Rev 22:17)! John's Gospel deals with the water of the Spirit of which traditional ritual purification is at best a symbol.

c. The Spirit of Prophetic Empowerment

Second, and of primary importance for our discussion of John's missiology, the Spirit involves prophetic power. Whereas some Jewish texts stressed the purifying aspect of the Spirit, most stressed the prophetic aspect of the Spirit.⁴⁹ Jesus' closing discourses to his disciples emphasize this aspect of the Spirit's work, including in his sayings about "sending" the Spirit. The Father sends the Spirit in Jesus' name to teach them and to recall Jesus' teachings to them (14:26); likewise, Jesus sends the Spirit to bear witness concerning him (15:26), as the disciples will do also (15:27).

Prophets both heard God and proclaimed what they heard, and we find both elements in this Gospel. Jesus talks about his disciples hearing his voice in 10:3-5, 16, 27. Indeed, his sheep there "know"

⁴⁸John selects for inclusion what he does to communicate a point (Jn 20:30-31). See e.g., Matthew Vellanickal, "Blood and Water," *Jeevadhara* 8 (45, 1978): 218-30; James McPolin, *John* (New Testament Message 6; Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1979), 249; Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1178-82; Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 181. Others find an allusion to water from the wilderness rock (e.g., T. Francis Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel* [Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1963], 52-53, citing church fathers).

⁴⁹See e.g., Robert P. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts* (London, New York: T & T Clark International, 2004), 49-101; idem, *The Development of Early Christian Pneumatology with special reference to Luke-Acts* (JSNTSup 54; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 53-112; idem, "Spirit and Power in Luke-Acts: A Response to Max Turner," *JSNT* 49 (1993): 11-20; Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 86-104; Youngmo Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom in the Writings of Luke and Paul: An Attempt to Reconcile these Concepts* (foreword by R. P. Menzies; Paternoster Biblical Monographs; Waynesboro, GA; Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2005), 10-51; Keener, "Pneumatology," 69-77; idem, *Spirit*, 10-13, 31-33.

him⁵⁰ *just as* the Father knows him and he knows the Father (10:14-15). This indicates the depth of relationship with Jesus that God has made available. The context is this: a blind man healed by Jesus becomes his follower and is expelled from the synagogue by Israel's guardians. Jesus compares these hostile guardians of Israel with strangers, thieves, and wolves, i.e., those who exploit the sheep (10:1, 5, 8, 10, 12); they resemble the false shepherds of Israel in Ezek 34:2-10. By contrast, Jesus is the good shepherd (Jn 10:11, 14), who would lay down his life for the sheep to protect them from the thieves. Jesus is using biblical imagery; the chief shepherd of Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures was God (e.g., Ezek 34:11-16), whose role Jesus appropriately fills here. Meanwhile, this formerly blind man, though excluded from Israel's religious community by its leaders, is embraced by Jesus as truly one of God's people, who were often compared with God's sheep in Scripture (e.g., Ps 100:3; Ezek 34:2). This man, who heeded Jesus, becomes an example of the sheep who heed his voice (as Israel, his sheep, failed to do in Ps 95:7-11).⁵¹ Jesus' disciples would provide another example of hearing his voice during his earthly ministry: he called them "friends," because whatever he heard from the Father he shared with them (Jn 15:15).⁵²

John is very clear that hearing Jesus' voice is an experience that should continue among the community of believers.⁵³ Just as Jesus did not speak from himself (12:49; 14:10), the Spirit would not speak from himself (16:13).⁵⁴ Just as Jesus indicated in 15:15 that he told his friends whatever he heard from the Father, he explains now that

⁵⁰OT language for Israel's covenant relationship with God (e.g., Ex 6:7; in the new covenant, Jer 24:7; 31:33-34).

⁵¹Most Johannine scholars today also view him as a model for John's primary audience; e.g., J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), 40; Severino Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 247-52; David Rensberger, *Johannine Faith and Liberating Community* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), 42.

⁵²Sharing rather than keeping secrets was one key element in ancient Mediterranean ideologies of friendship; see discussion in Keener, *John*, 1010; idem, "Friendship," 380-88 in *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley Porter; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 383.

⁵³On Johannine knowledge of God, see e.g., Keener, *John*, 234-47 (esp. 243-47); idem, "Studies in the Knowledge of God in the Fourth Gospel in Light of Its Historical Context" (M.Div. Thesis, The Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 1986).

⁵⁴I.e., not on his own authority, e.g., *T. Ab.* 15:8; 19:4A; Philostratus *Hrk.* 8.2.

whatever the Spirit hears from Jesus, he will speak to them (16:13). Just as Jesus came to glorify not himself but his Father, the Spirit comes to reveal and glorify Jesus (16:13-15).⁵⁵ This means that disciples today at least potentially are able to hear Jesus as clearly as did his first disciples, except now with the advantage of a retrospective understanding of Jesus' identity and mission.⁵⁶

Likewise, disciples who heard from Jesus would also reveal him to the world, in connection with the Spirit (15:26-27).⁵⁷ Whereas the Father sent Jesus "into the world" and Jesus sends the disciples "into the world" (17:18), John does not tell us that the Spirit is sent to the world. Rather, Jesus says, "If I go, I will send him to *you*" (16:7; cf. 15:26: "I will send him to *you*").⁵⁸ After Jesus promises to send the advocate to them, Jesus says that the Spirit will "convict" the world (16:8). In a context where the Spirit comes as witness (15:26) and perhaps "advocate" (one possible translation for *paraklētōs* in 14:16, 26; 15:26; and 16:7), we might render the Spirit's activity here as "prosecuting" the world.⁵⁹ The Spirit will charge the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. These were activities of Jesus earlier in the Gospel (3:20; 8:46), and the particulars offered in 16:8-10 also involve Jesus' person or acts. The point appears to be that Jesus, who confronted the world in this Gospel, will continue to confront the world; his presence remains. Now, however, Jesus' presence is revealed to the world especially through the Spirit's ministry in and through the disciples.

d. The Spirit and God's Presence

⁵⁵Cf. Heinrich Schlier, "Zum Begriff des Geistes nach dem Johannesevangelium," 264-271 in *Besinnung auf das Neue Testament* (Exegetische Aufsätze und Vorträge II; Freiburg: Herder, 1964), 269: the Spirit illumines the work of Jesus in his glory.

⁵⁶I discuss this more fully and in more explicitly practical terms in my *Gift & Giver: The Holy Spirit for Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 39-42.

⁵⁷Although the passage involves the first disciples who were with him "from the beginning" (cf. 2:11; 8:25; 16:4; Acts 1:21-22), but John expects his audience to understand their own experience analogously (1 Jn 2:24; 3:11; 2 Jn 6).

⁵⁸Cf. Henry Efferin, "The Paraclete in John 14-16," *Stulos Theological Journal* 1 (2, 1993): 149-56; earlier, Luther *Sermon on Jn 16*.

⁵⁹With e.g., C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (2d ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 90; O'Day, "John," 771; argued in Keener, *John*, 1030-35.

The Spirit empowers us to communicate Jesus to others because, through the Spirit, Jesus' presence remains in our midst. Jesus sends the advocate that "he may be with you forever" (14:16), and be "in you" (14:17); thus the Father and Son make their "dwelling place" within us (14:23). In fact, even Jesus' promise of many "dwelling places" in the Father's house apparently communicates the same point. Against the common assumption that the "Father's house" here must mean heaven,⁶⁰ its other uses in the gospel refer to a father's household (8:35) or to the temple (2:16-17). Thus, only context can specify what it means here.⁶¹ Most essentially, we may surmise that it will involve the place of the Father's presence.

What does Jesus mean by "dwelling places" ("rooms" in some translations) that he prepares in the Father's house in 14:2? This Greek term, *monē*, appears in only one other location in the entire New Testament.⁶² Not coincidentally, that location turns out to be later in this same context, deliberately clarifying its use here. In that passage (Jn 14:23), Jesus declares that he and the Father will come and make their "dwelling place" (*monē*) within believers.⁶³ The cognate verb is frequent in the context, referring to the Spirit or Jesus' message dwelling or remaining in believers, or believers dwelling or remaining in Christ (14:17; 15:4-10, 16).⁶⁴

⁶⁰Though argued only rarely by scholars, e.g., Holwerda, *Spirit*, 20, n. 52; also Calvin, *John*, 2:81.

⁶¹Many see an allusion to the temple; e.g., H. Leonard Pass, *The Glory of the Father: A Study in S. John XIII-XVII* (London: A. R. Mowbray & Company, 1935), 66-68; G. H. C. MacGregor, *The Gospel of John* (MNTC; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1928), 305.

⁶²It appears only once in the Apostolic Fathers (in Papias), twice in Josephus (*Ant.* 8.350; 13.41); and never, so far as I can tell, in the LXX (though 15 times in the Philonic corpus).

⁶³Many recognize a connection between the two uses in this context; see Robert Alan Berg, "Pneumatology and the history of the Johannine community: Insights from the farewell discourses and the First Epistle" (Ph.D. dissertation, Graduate School of Drew University, 1988; Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1989), 107-10.

⁶⁴This is a favorite verb for John, though not always carrying its full theological import; it appear 40 times in the Gospel, which is about 33.9% of NT uses, though John is just 11% of the NT text (i.e., over three times the NT average). The Johannine epistles employ the verb 27 times, or 22.9% of NT uses, or 13.7 times (1370% more) than average. Together the Gospel and epistles offer about 56.8% of NT examples of this verb.

What does Jesus mean in this context by, “I will come again to you” (14:3)? Later in this context, his coming (14:18) is associated with the giving of the Spirit (14:16-17) and new, resurrection life (14:19). It also involves Jesus and the Father “coming” to the believer and making their dwelling place there (14:23). In contrast to the second coming, his disciples would see him at the coming to which he refers here, but the world would not see him (14:19). Again in a context emphasizing the coming of the Spirit (16:13-15), Jesus says in 16:16 that he would return to reveal himself to them; the context clearly means after his death and resurrection (16:17-22). Jesus refers here not to his coming at the end of the age,⁶⁵ but his coming in Jn 20:19-23 to inaugurate eschatological life in the lives of his disciples.

Jesus repeatedly says, “I am going” (14:2-5, 28; 16:5, 7), referring in most of these texts to going to the Father by way of death (8:22; 13:33, 36; 16:28; cf. 16:20-22).⁶⁶ Jesus tells his disciples that they know *where* he is going and the *way* he will get there (14:4), but Thomas protests that they know neither one (14:5). The first disciples themselves did not understand 14:2-3 by itself any better than we understand these verses isolated from Jesus’ following explanation. But Jesus then explains: where he is going is the Father, and Jesus himself is the way to the Father (14:6). He is not telling the disciples that at his second coming they may go with him to places prepared for them. He is telling them that those who come to the Father through Jesus—i.e., those who believe and abide in Jesus—are in the Father’s presence.⁶⁷

⁶⁵Though not at 14:2-3, I do acknowledge future eschatology in John’s Gospel (see e.g., Jn 5:28-29; 6:39-40, 44, 54; 12:48; with many, e.g., Werner Georg Kümmel, *The Theology of the New Testament According to its Major Witnesses—Jesus, Paul, John* [trans. John E. Steely; Nashville: Abingdon, 1973], 294-95; Barrett, *John*, 68-69; Burge, *Community*, 115). Bultmann’s forced-choice logic that requires him to excise such passages as secondary ignores the coexistence of realized and future eschatology in the Qumran scrolls or, for that matter, Jesus’ teachings and Paul’s letters.

⁶⁶Some texts admittedly look beyond the death and resurrection to Jesus’ longer-range presence with the Father away from the disciples (14:12; 16:10); John’s love for riddles and wordplays leaves considerable ambiguity, probably deliberately.

⁶⁷On Jesus as the “way” to the Father’s presence here, see e.g., Robert H. Gundry, “‘In my Father’s House are many Monai’ (Joh 14:2),” *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 58 (1967): 68-72, here 70.

That is to say, Jesus' coming in 20:19-23 to give his disciples the Spirit inaugurates his presence in their lives in a new dimension. We can do God's work because God's Spirit lives in us.

3. "I Send You" (20:21)

Jesus sends the disciples into the world just as the Father sent him into the world (Jn 17:18). Some may object that such passages apply specifically only to the first disciples in John's narrative world. This objection, however, misunderstands the function of John's narrative.⁶⁸ Just as John the Baptist functions as a paradigmatic witness in the opening of John's Gospel,⁶⁹ so do Jesus' disciples function as paradigmatic for the community of believers. John is interested in those who believe through their proclamation (17:20). It is not only the first disciples who are fruit-bearing branches on Jesus the vine (15:1-8), who must abide and bear fruit (15:2-5, 8), persevere (15:6), and so forth. In his epistles John does not limit the Spirit to the Twelve (who receive the promises of the advocate in Jn 14—16); rather, he limits the Spirit to all true believers (1 Jn 2:20, 27; 3:24; 4:2, 13).⁷⁰ Not all believers in the community have the same role as the first disciples, but the community as a whole shares their same mission and purpose: to make Christ known.

a. Christological Confessions

A central part of this mission is proclaiming Jesus' identity. Among the models of preaching Jesus in the Gospel that we have noted are Philip and the Samaritan woman. Yet John himself offers us a model of how we should preach Jesus by how John himself, inspired by

⁶⁸For broader applicability of Johannine promises of the Spirit, cf. e.g., Beare, "Spirit"; D. Moody Smith, "John 16:1-15," *Interpretation* 33 (1, Jan. 1979): 58-62, here 60; George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 220, 268, 296; Boice, *Witness*, 143-44; Horton, *Spirit*, 120-21.

⁶⁹Cf. Hooker, "Baptist," 358; James Montgomery Boice, *Witness and Revelation in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970; Exeter: Paternoster Press, n.d.), 26; Walter Wink, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1968), 105; Collins, *Written*, 8-11; Harrison, "John 1:14," 25; Mathias Rissi, "Jn 1:1-18 (The Eternal Word)," *Interpretation* 31 (1977): 394-401, here 398; C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1965), 299.

⁷⁰Indeed, 1 Jn 2:27 may deliberately echo Jn 14:26 (with Dunn, *Baptism*, 197).

the Spirit, preaches Jesus in this Gospel. One may compare the various christological confessions he records in the Gospel:⁷¹ John the Baptist calls Jesus the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (1:29);⁷² Nathanael declares, “Rabbi, you are God’s Son! You are the king of Israel!” (1:49). The Samaritans acknowledge, “This one is truly the world’s savior!” (4:42). Peter confesses, “You are God’s holy one!” (6:69).⁷³ The climactic confession of faith, though, is Thomas’: “My Lord and my God!” (20:28). Jesus affirms as true this confession as faith, yet praises those who can have such faith without a resurrection appearance (20:29), whereupon John explains that this is why he wrote this Gospel: so those who have not seen may nevertheless believe Jesus’ identity (20:30-31).

Let us add to these confessions Jesus’ own declarations of his identity in this Gospel: “I am the bread of life” (6:35, 41, 48, 51), to sustain us; “I am the light of the world” (8:12; 95), to enlighten us; “I am the door” (10:7, 9), to welcome us; “I am the good shepherd” (10:11, 14), to protect and care for us; “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25), to raise us; “I am the way and the truth and the life” (14:6), to bring us to the Father; “I am the true vine” (15:1), to nourish us with continuous life; and greatest of all, simply “I am” (8:58)—as the God of the patriarchs and prophets.⁷⁴ Such declarations are a fitting

⁷¹These confessions need not all progress from lesser to greater (M. Baron, “La progression des confessions de foi dans les dialogues de saint Jean,” *Bible et Vie Chrétienne* 82 [1968]: 32-44), though 20:28 is certainly the climactic one.

⁷²The background probably involves the sacrificial lamb, with Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:299; G. Ashby, “The Lamb of God—II,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 25 (1978): 62-65; Bruce H. Grigsby, “The Cross as an Expiatory Sacrifice in the Fourth Gospel,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 15 (1982): 51-80; Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 97; Craig Keener, “Lamb,” 641-42 in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments* (ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 641. This might be combined with the servant in Is 53:7; so Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:300; Brown, *John*, 1:60-63; George L. Carey, “The Lamb of God and Atonement Theories,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 32 (1981): 97-122. Cf. also the sacrificial lamb of Ex 29:38-46, in Enz, “Exodus,” 214.

⁷³The probable reading here, with e.g., Bernard, *John*, 1:223; Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London, New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), 215. Against some scribes’ attempts to harmonize readings, John supplies a variety of christological confessions.

⁷⁴Some of these evoke divine or Wisdom images in Scripture or early Judaism, but “I am” is the most explicit (Ex 3:14; Is 41:4; 43:10; cf. Lightfoot, *Gospel*, 134-35; Hunter, *John*, 89; David Mark Bell, *‘I Am’ in John’s Gospel: Literary*

focus for a Gospel whose prologue is framed by confessions of Jesus' deity (Jn 1:1, 18).⁷⁵ Indeed, so is the body of John's Gospel, if we connect the prologue's claim (1:1, 18) with Thomas' confession in 20:28.⁷⁶ Biographies were supposed to focus on their protagonists;⁷⁷ John naturally focuses on Jesus in this Gospel, and preaches him while he does so. He preaches Jesus' identity to his audience so "that you may believe" (20:31), as the Spirit brings the hearers into real encounters with Jesus himself (16:7-15).

b. Jesus Revealed in the Community's Love

But we who are sent to preach Jesus present Jesus to the world not only through our words, but like Jesus himself, also through our "works." Believers will do the kinds of works Jesus did (14:10-12). Many of Jesus' works in this Gospel are his miraculous signs (5:20; 7:3, 21; 9:3-4; 10:25, 32, 37-38; 15:24), but his work also summarizes his entire mission (4:34; 17:4). Presumably, John, like Luke and other New Testament writers, does expect continuing miracles among Jesus' followers. But there is a kind of sign that John specifies, one that reveals God's character and light in a dark world. In 15:1-11, Jesus says that disciples, as branches bearing the fruit natural to the vine, should love one another. By loving one another, we show the world more of God's heart.

In 17:21, Jesus prayed that his followers would be one, "that the world may believe that you sent me." In 17:23, Jesus went on to pray that we would be perfected in unity, "that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them, even as you loved me." Part of our

Function, Background and Theological Implications [JSNTSup 124; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996], 258). Priests apparently used these very Isaiah texts during the festival at which Jesus declared, "I am" (Ethelbert Stauffer, *Jesus and His Story* [trans. Richard and Clara Winston; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960], 91).

⁷⁵With Boismard, *Prologue*, 76-77.

⁷⁶Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster; London: SCM, 1959), 308. I do argue for reading Jn 21 as part of the Gospel (Keener, *John*, 1219-22; cf. also Bruce, *John*, 398; Paul S. Minear, "The Original Functions of John 21," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 102 [1, 1983]: 85-98); my point here is only that it is not part of the main body of the Gospel.

⁷⁷On ancient biographies and the Gospels see especially Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (SNTSMS 70; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992).

greatest witness is the supernatural testimony of the reality of Jesus by the divine love that believers demonstrate to one another—at least, when we are truly depending on and imitating our Lord. Assuming the posture of a servant,⁷⁸ Jesus washes his disciples' feet in 13:4-10, in the context of the impending passion (13:1-3, 11).⁷⁹ Although disciples did almost anything for their teachers that servants would do, the one exception was apparently the demeaning work of dealing with the feet (washing them, carrying sandals, etc.)⁸⁰ Yet Jesus adopts this servile posture and summons his disciples to follow his example, doing the same for one another (13:12-15). In 13:34-35, he commands us, "Love one another, even as I have loved you. By *this* behavior everyone will know that you are *my* disciples." Jesus titles this injunction a "new" commandment not because it involves love (which was already commanded, Lev 19:18),⁸¹ but because of the new standard: "as I have loved you." That is, to love one another as he loved us is to love to the extent that we lay down our lives for one another (cf. 1 Jn 3:16). This is the greatest sign of Jesus' reality and character that he has given to us his people. The God of grace and truth, the God who revealed his glory in the cross, makes that message believable to the world when they see the church believing and living the heart of God.

Recall Jn 1:18: "No one has beheld God at any time, but the only God, who is in the Father's bosom, has made him known." Compare 1 John 4:12: "No one has beheld God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us." How will the world see God's heart now? Not only through our words preaching Christ, but also through our lives following his example.

⁷⁸Cf. Homer *Od.* 19.344-48, 353-60, 376, 388-93, 505; Apollodorus *Epitome* 1.2; Thomas, *Footwashing*, 40-41, 50-55.

⁷⁹Jesus' act here prefigures the passion (with R. Alan Culpepper, "The Johannine *Hypodeigma*: A Reading of John 13," *Semeia* 53 [1991]: 133-52).

⁸⁰*B. Ket.* 96a, cited by various commentators (cf. W. D. Davies, *The Sermon on the Mount* [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1966], 135; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971], 141).

⁸¹Early Judaism stressed the love commandment (e.g., *Jub.* 36:4, 8; *m. Ab.* 1:12; *Sipra Qed.* pq. 4.200.3.7; Thomas Söding, "Feindeshass und Bruderliebe. Beobachtungen zur essenischen Ethik," *Revue de Qumran* 16 [4, 1995]: 601-19; Reinhard Neudecker, "'And You Shall Love Your Neighbor as Yourself—I Am the Lord' [Lev 19,18] in Jewish Interpretation," *Biblica* 73 [4, 1992]: 496-517).

Conclusion

Jesus is the model for what it means to be sent in this Gospel: “As the Father sent me, even so I send you.” The object of this mission, as in the case of Jesus, must be the world: “For God in this way loved the world.” The Spirit who comes to testify about Jesus enables this mission by continuing to make Jesus the Word present in his followers’ word: “Receive the Holy Spirit.” Finally, Jesus’ followers must present the living Lord Jesus both by our words and by our works, by our witness and by our love.

Our mission is to present Christ in prophetic power, Jesus speaking in us; to bring people to experience our Lord Jesus for themselves; and to be a community of such divine love that outsiders can see and are drawn to God’s heart for the world.