

## Articles

# Word and Deed in John: An Exploration of Evangelism and Ethics in the Fourth Gospel

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### *Abstract*

In this exegetical article, Ireland seeks to demonstrate that although deeds are not the obvious focus of the Gospel of John, Jesus' social concern is a part of His ushering in the messianic age. Rather than reading the fourth Gospel from a concordance perspective, it should be read from a "story authority" hermeneutic. Thus, seeing the transformation Christ makes in a life and in society, as deeds (social concern) that permeate through the book of John. Faith, which is so central to the book, is not simply a mental ascent, but results in works or doing the truth. Understanding this hermeneutic, word and deed are evident in John through new life in Christ.

### *Introduction*

In the last one hundred years, the debate over the proper relationship between word and deed, or between proclamation of the Gospel and engagement in social concern, has been featured prominently in Western Christianity.<sup>1</sup> In this discussion, the central issue has been that of priority concerning the Church's proclamational-evangelistic mandate, and the church's role in social concern. To date, there has been a wide range of opinions and little consensus on the precise relationship between word and deed—or, evangelism and social concern.<sup>2</sup> Advocates for a balanced approach regarding social concern often make use of Luke-Acts to emphasize Jesus' concern for the poor and marginalized.<sup>3</sup> But if social concern is an integral part of the gospel as some have claimed,<sup>4</sup> then Robert Karris raises an important question: "Why doesn't John have

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much, if anything, to say about the theme of rich and poor, which Luke develops in almost every chapter of his Gospel?”<sup>5</sup> In this essay, we shall explore precisely this question. My contention here is that John’s Gospel does indeed say much about social concern, but in a way consistent with John’s own unique theological agenda, focused as it is on Jesus’ ushering in the messianic age. While I have elsewhere argued for the prioritization of evangelism,<sup>6</sup> I want here to argue for the (simultaneous) integration of word and deed in the fourth Gospel. The equation, Word + writings/word(s)/Scripture + belief = life, is used to demonstrate this development.

*Word(s) in John: Revelation of a New Creation*

*The Word Incarnate*

John’s Gospel begins with, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God” (John 1:1). Here and in the remaining verses of the prologue (1:1-18), John emphasizes the incarnation of the Word, harkening back to Gen. 1:1 and the original creation. As God Incarnate, Jesus especially comes to reveal God (v. 18) but also to usher in a new creation.<sup>7</sup> This is in part the point of the reference to Genesis 1. Just as the original creation came about through the efficacious Word of God, so too does the Incarnate Word give birth to a new creation. To highlight this connection, John utilizes the familiar creation motifs of “light” and “life.”

In addition, the use of “Word” in reference to Jesus carries other connotations as well. Relevant to this study, it refers to “divine self-expression or speech.”<sup>8</sup> As such, this Christological designation underscores Jesus’ equality with the Father, eternal existence and nature, and revelatory coming.<sup>9</sup> And though much has been written on the meaning of *logos* in John’s prologue, it will suffice here to note that at the very least John’s use of this term makes an explicit connection between Jesus the Incarnate Word, and between Israel’s Scriptures and God’s own verbal self-communication. So, while it is true that there is something of contextualization taking place, there is also a more fundamental issue at stake. As Francis J. Moloney observes:

The choice of the Greek expression *ho logos*, whatever its background, allows the author to hint to the reader that from the intimacy between the Word and God which has been described, “the Word” will be spoken (*legein* or *lalein*). A word is essentially about

communication. The modality of that communication has not been indicated, but if there is the Word, then it exists to say something.<sup>10</sup>

Beyond the prologue, the concept of “word” features prominently in John’s Gospel. John uses two Greek terms in his Gospel for “word”—*logos* and *rhema*, without any apparent difference in meaning. Together these two terms appear 44 times in John’s Gospel.<sup>11</sup> In addition, there are numerous references to the fulfillment of Scripture or to the fulfillment of Jesus’ own words (cf. 2:17; 18:9, 32; 19:24, 28, 36-37). As just mentioned, *Logos* in the prologue (1:1-1:14) refers exclusively to Christ. But the prologue also introduces the reader to John the Baptist, who appears proclaiming Jesus as Light of the World (1:7-8) and as the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the World (1:29). Thus, the Good News as understood by John bursts forth in verbal proclamation from the very outset of his Gospel.

Elsewhere in this Gospel, *logos* refers to the words of Jesus and is at times equated with Scripture (2:22; 3:34). The word of Jesus frequently engenders belief, and in fact this is the central theme of the Gospel. “These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name (cf. 2:22; 4:41; 4:50). Thus, closely related to the new creation concept in John’s Gospel is the prominent theme of “life.” As Beasley-Murray says, “the Gospel is concerned to show how the life of the new creation has become possible for the world through the Son of God.”<sup>12</sup> In other words, John presents his audience with the equation: Word + writings/word(s)/Scripture + belief = life. The absence of belief owes to neglect of Jesus’ words (5:38; 5:47). Belief in Christ’s words, though, leads to life and is the mark of a true disciple. “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life” (5:24; also 4:50; 8:31; 17:8). Elsewhere He says, “the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life” (6:63).

In summary, the Incarnate Word, the words of Jesus, and the OT Scriptures, inextricably linked one to another form an absolutely necessary means of believing in Jesus in John’s Gospel. Just as the spoken word of God brought about the original creation, so to does the Incarnate Word bring about the renewed creation. This Word-centered belief leads inexorably to life, while rejection of the Word leads to death. Thus, there exists among these three forms of the word an inherent and reciprocal connection.

Based on the revelatory nature of the Word Incarnate, and the word or words of Scripture to which Jesus so frequently both refers and fulfills, one might easily get the impression from a cursory reading of John's Gospel that *deeds*—understood as social action—in fact have no place in the Christian life, and that Christianity is defined simply as believing in Jesus, based upon his own self-revelation and the revelation of Scripture. After all, when Jesus was asked directly, “What shall we *do*, so that we may *work* the works of God?” (6:28, NASB), He replied simply, “this is the work of God, that you *believe* in Him whom [H]e has sent.” Or, to put the matter more pointedly:

Johannine Christianity is interested only in whether he believes. “Are you saved, brother?” the Johannine Christian asks the man bleeding to death on the side of the road. “Are you concerned about your soul?” “Do you believe that Jesus is the one who came down from God?” “If you believe, you will have eternal life,” promises the Johannine Christian, while the dying man's blood stains the ground.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Deeds in John: A New Creation Ethic of Love*

As we have just seen, some have claimed that John's Gospel completely lacks any specific moral vision and is especially vague on the subject of Christian ethics. For example, Köstenberger provides a helpful summary of Wayne Meeks' take on this topic. Meeks claims that, first, the Johannine rule to “love one another” is both vague and limited to those within the Christian community. Second, Meeks states how Jesus is not presented as a model for human behavior but as rather the unique Son of God. Third, Meeks articulates how there is an undertone of subversion in John's Gospel, and this is ill-suited for an ethical foundation. Fourth, Meeks concludes it is not evidence precisely where the line exists between those inside and those outside the faith community, as the precise way in which one becomes an insider is shrouded in mystery. Finally, John's harsh language directed toward Jews fosters sectarianism.<sup>14</sup> For Meeks then, one must look elsewhere in the NT for an ethical imperative.

Köstenberger responds to Meeks, and argues to the contrary that John does indeed offer an ethic that can be described under the rubric, “the power of Love.”<sup>15</sup> First, “John's moral instruction is sufficiently specific and properly in keeping with the ethical core of the OT and of Jesus' teaching.”<sup>16</sup> Second, the foot-washing pericope in John 13 explicitly provides an instance in which Jesus models ethical behavior that is to be emulated (13:15, 17). Furthermore, the cross itself demonstrates God's own love “for the world,” not just for the community of his

followers—although the latter were especially loved by Jesus. Third, as to the notion of subversion, “love is the glue that holds the ethic of this gospel together”<sup>17</sup> and those things Meeks deems subversion are merely “literary devices” meant to highlight the many paradoxes surrounding Jesus’ life and ministry. Fourth, Meeks overplays his hand on the issue of human free will and predestination or election, as the two are commonly held together.<sup>18</sup> Finally, regarding John’s references to “the Jews” this should be taken, as Miroslav Volf has observed, as referencing primarily Jewish authorities and thus those opposed to Jesus and His mission.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the apparent hostility in this gospel is not toward a race of people, but toward those who exhibit a decisively negative attitude toward Jesus and His mission. Plus, John’s Gospel “shows that Jesus died for the very Jews who had him crucified” (Cf. 11:49-50). That said, “it is hard to imagine a more powerful demonstration of an ethic that preaches love for one’s enemies.”<sup>20</sup>

#### *How We Read the Fourth Gospel*

From these stances, Köstenberger goes on to advocate that John’s moral vision is to be equated with: “a call to evangelistic mission that is grounded in God’s love for the world and undergirded by communal love and unity.” As such, Köstenberger believes John’s moral vision to be “unique and distinctive,” but also complimentary to that found in the synoptics. While Köstenberger’s advocating for an ethical component to the Fourth Gospel is commendable, his equation of that mandate with the evangelistic task does not appear to do justice to the full scope of the text itself. And this, I believe, is in part due to some of his hermeneutical assumptions.

To illustrate this point, some scholars have seen in John a very clear moral mandate that extends beyond the evangelistic task. For example, by taking a “story authority” approach to John’s Gospel—that is by approaching John as an invitation to see oneself in the story, or by trying to understand how one lives out the story, Hans Boersma claims that the ethical demands of this Gospel become more readily apparent.<sup>21</sup> To support approaching the text in this manner, Boersma cites the work of N. T. Wright, whose similar approach “takes into account the gains of the postmodern critique of the Enlightenment naïve realist epistemology without falling into the trap of relativism.”<sup>22</sup> Robert Karris makes a similar argument when he says, “Close scrutiny of John’s *stories* will reward us with more contributions to our theme of Jesus and the marginalized than any number of concordance studies.”<sup>23</sup><sup>24</sup> Boersma, for his part, advocates approaching the

text in a holistic manner in order to discover holistic truth: “An approach that takes its starting point in a dualist separation between theory and practice—between theology and ethics—will indeed look in vain for explicit social or ethical applications of the doctrines set forth in the fourth Gospel.”<sup>25</sup>

As Craig Koester says, “the [g]ospel of John is written in a way that invites the reader into the story.”<sup>26</sup> In other words, Scripture cannot simply be looked at, as Wright says, “a running commentary” on what God has done, but rather “Scripture is there to be a means of God’s action in and through us—which will include, but go far beyond, the mere conveying of information.”<sup>27</sup> For Israel, revelation was dynamic owing to the firm belief in God’s activity in human history. Wright goes on to say that mining Scripture for mere data or propositions alone is an unfortunate consequence of the Enlightenment. Therefore:

A fully Christian view of the Bible includes the idea of God’s self-revelation but, by setting it in a larger context, transforms it. Precisely because the God who reveals himself is the world’s lover and judge, rather than its absentee landlord, that self-revelation is always to be understood within the category of God’s mission to the world, God’s saving sovereignty let loose through Jesus and the Spirit and aimed at the healing and renewal of all creation.<sup>28</sup>

Or, as Richard Hayes says,

The ethical significance of the New Testament narratives cannot be restricted to their didactic content. John, even more pointedly than the other [g]ospels, shows that a fuller reading of the story is necessary in order to grasp its implications for shaping the life of the Christian community.<sup>29</sup>

#### *New Creation and the Moral Implications of John*

Beginning then with this hermeneutical axiom of reading Scripture as an invitation to embody the story, Boersma calls for looking to John’s sign (Gr. *semeion*) theology. Whereas Kostenberger thinks that John’s love ethic lies especially in chapters 13-17, beginning with the foot-washing incident of chapter 13 and culminating in the Farewell Discourse of 15:9-17, Boersma says that one must “look behind” these passages, to the book of signs (chapters 2-12). Otherwise, the reader runs the risk of missing the larger context and the important theological foundation of these latter passages:

It is the book of signs that describes the arrival of the new age, as well as its rejection by the world.<sup>13</sup> A biblically centered worldview, therefore, is one that bases itself not on a love command erroneously abstracted from the biblical narrative. Instead, it is necessary

to do justice first to the narrative of the book of signs prior to an exploration of the book of glory. It is important, therefore, to carefully trace the story of the book of signs in order to arrive at a worldview consistent with the Gospel of John.<sup>30</sup>

Far from arguing that the “signs” of Jesus represent model behavior, Boersma instead shows that Jesus’ signs in the first half of the Gospel signify the dawning of a new, messianic age. First though, Boersma argues that John’s understanding of “signs” derives from the OT, in particular those of the Exodus. Furthermore, signs in the OT functioned in three ways, generally. They performed a redemptive role, a legitimizing role, and a parenetic or hortatory role. Just as the signs performed by Moses had a redemptive function in that they led to the freedom of the Israelites, as well as how they also functioned to authenticate Moses’ role and ultimately produce faith in God, Jesus’ signs likewise indicate a new exodus and affirm Jesus’ as God’s chosen deliverer, ultimately meant to produce faith in God as well.

In light of this OT understanding then, Jesus’s activities in the beginning of the Fourth Gospel become particularly important. The wedding in Cana (2:1-11) then represents the dawning of the new age, as Jesus “changes the water of the Torah into the wine of the messianic age.”<sup>31</sup> Likewise, the so-called temple cleansing (2:12-22) functions as a repudiation of the former sacrificial system, no longer needed because it has been fulfilled in Jesus. Both of these incidents though culminate in Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus, and the promise of new life. In this encounter, Jesus “points out to Nicodemus that the new age has dawned. In order to see or to enter the kingdom of God, one needs to be born from above; one needs to be born of ‘water and Spirit’ (3:5). Clearly the latter expression evokes prophetic images of the new age.”<sup>32</sup> The encounter ultimately issues in a call for faith. However, the faith called for “is not simply intellectual assent. It is trust that involves *works* that can stand the light (3:20); it is a trust that involves *doing* the truth (3:21).”<sup>33</sup> Faith understood in this way proves crucial to discerning a Johannine ethic. Faith is not belief divorced from action, but rather belief that produces action. The entire Nicodemus discourse ends not in a call to an intellectual or ephemeral recognition of right doctrine, but rather in the declaration that coming to the Light means practicing the truth (3:21). Though Jesus is certainly not teaching a works salvation here, He does seem to be saying that one who is in Christ “does deeds” that evidence that relationship. Given the preceding discussions of the new age, new temple and now new birth, this too then reflects the characteristic nature of the dawning messianic age. As Richard Burridge observes, “the

overriding theme [is] the love of God, coming to dwell among human beings in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and to teach his divine truth. The incarnation inaugurates the eschatological age and makes eternal life present in the here and now.”<sup>34</sup>

In addition to this point, there are other aspects of John’s Gospel that demonstrate the qualities of the dawning new age in which Jesus and his followers participates. Three prominent themes especially help the reader of John’s Gospel to formulate a relevant moral ethic, namely the Johannine understanding of the terms *World*, *Work*, and *Life*.

*World*. For John, the “world” (Gr. *kosmos*) is neither the subject of wholesale denigration nor sufficiently good in its present state. In fact, John uses the term with a variety of meaning. Sometimes the word is used in a negative sense, and other times it refers to simply all people everywhere. Positively, Christ comes not to judge the world but to save it (3:16-17; 10:36; 12:47). But as Jesus’ mission progresses, the “world” becomes increasingly hostile to Jesus and His message (12:31; 14:17, 30).<sup>35</sup> Therefore, despite that John has no romantic notions about the realities of the world and its attitude toward Jesus, nonetheless the “world” yet stands primarily as “the object of the mission of God’s love.”<sup>36</sup>

*Work*. This dawning new age in John also has much to say about the Sabbath, the Torah, and thereby about works. Jesus himself was frequently criticized for the “works” He performed on the Sabbath (cf. 5:9-10, 16, 18; 9:1-41), and we shall have more to say about this later. But for now, it will suffice to note that in bringing about a new age, Jesus ushered in an eternal Sabbath—“the age in which the lame and blind find wholeness according to Scriptures.”<sup>37</sup> From this point, the Torah should be understood as pointing to Jesus as its ultimate fulfillment. While only Jesus as the Divine Son of God could usher in the new age and bring about a new understanding of the Sabbath, the all-encompassing nature of this age surely has implications for Jesus’ followers in relation to “work.” Namely, “Christians celebrate Sabbath as they do the works of Jesus who sends them into the world” (cf. 9:4 with 17:18).<sup>38</sup>

The point in all of this is that Jesus’ works become a vital and essential expression of the new messianic age. “Work” (Gr. *ergon*) featured prominently in Jesus’ own ministry. “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work” (John 4:4; cf. 5:17). Jesus also says that his followers will do even greater “works” (14:12). This simply means that Jesus’ disciples are to follow in these works that reflect the characteristics of the new age. While the “signs” in John’s [g]ospel are unique to Jesus, the “works” of Jesus become the prerogative

of his disciples. “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to the Father” (14:12).

*Life.* Doing “the works of God” is tantamount to belief in Jesus (6:28-29).

However, it is not only “belief” that is the objective of John’s Gospel, but more precisely “belief” leading to new “life.”<sup>39</sup> “Life,” though, must be understood in John’s Gospel in terms of a relationship with God.<sup>40</sup> John’s ethic is a relational ethic that centers on the person of Jesus.<sup>41</sup> Thus “belief” and “works” form an integral whole, whose object is “life.” As van der Watt has said:

Salvific faith in the [g]ospel of John is therefore a self-sacrificing, intellectual, and existential acceptance of the message and person of Jesus to the extent that it completely transforms a person’s thoughts and deeds in accordance with this message and leads to an obedient life of doing what a child of God should do.<sup>42</sup>

Those who fail to recognize Jesus and believe in Him, engage in “evil works” (7:7; 8:41). Therefore, “belief” in John cannot be simply the acquisition of right beliefs, but rather right belief requires the expression of and embodiment of Jesus’ own life and teachings, especially as they relate to the messianic age He inaugurates. And “life” in John’s Gospel has both physical as well as spiritual elements.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, the life Jesus promises concerns both the future and the present (5:25). As Boersma explains, “anybody who is of the opinion that to embody the story in ordinary life is not a Johannine concern will have to give a reckoning of the prominence of work terminology in this Gospel.”<sup>44</sup>

So, what does the embodiment of the messianic age look like, specifically? This is of course the crucial question, and one that some believe John leaves unanswered. Not so, however. Several incidents in John’s Gospel highlight Jesus’ concern for the marginalized of society, and thus stand out as “works” of a social nature. Richard Burrige, for example, shows that Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well in chapter four, the woman caught in adultery in chapter eight,<sup>45</sup> the paralyzed man by the pool in chapter five, and the blind man in chapter nine, all constitute examples of Jesus seeking out the marginalized of society and bringing them to the Light and to the Truth. Thus, though differing from the synoptic portrayal of Jesus as “friend of sinners,” John’s “biographical portrait of Jesus, and especially the way he seeks out and helps those in need on the margins, is very consistent with it, as the incarnate divine love reaches out to everyone.”<sup>46</sup>

### *Conclusion*

My aim in this study has been to show that not only is it false to say that John lacks a moral vision, but also to argue that John presents only a thoroughly integrated pictures of word and deed as the proper framework for a Christian moral vision. John's treatment of Christ as the Incarnate Word, Who came to reveal God and speak words of life, that those who believe in Him would pass from death into life, lays the foundation for defining discipleship as *being in intimate relationship with Jesus and thereby participating in life that embodies the messianic age He inaugurates*. That relationship then results in a life that shows forth the same good works that characterized the life of Jesus, in both proclaiming the words of God and demonstrating that word in concrete performances of the new age. Sharing the gospel, therefore, is not about merely sharing information, but about sharing God's love for the world, by making known the truth found in Jesus and the life that comes from the embodiment of that truth.<sup>47</sup> In John's Gospel, then:

Actions cannot be separated from identity and the one flows naturally into the other, so much so that accepting Jesus in faith becomes the primary ethical action in John. Faith leads to a life encompassing change that determines all facets of a person's present and future life.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For an excellent and brief history and evaluation of this phenomenon, see David O. Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Evangelism Versus Social Concern* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1972).

<sup>2</sup> For example, Tokunboh Adeyemo identifies nine different models in "A Critical Evaluation of Contemporary Perspectives," in *In Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility*, ed. Bruce J. Nichols (Devon, UK: Patternoster Press, 1985), 41-61.

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the most thorough treatment of the social-ethical role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts is found in Matthias Wenk, *Community Forming Power: The Socio-Ethical Role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts* (London: T&T Clark International, 2000). The Lukan basis for Jesus' social ethic is usually founded on Luke 4:18-19, and thereby Jesus' citation of Isa. 61:1-2 and the reference there to Israel's Jubilee. See Sharon H. Ringe, *Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee: Images for Ethics and Christology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> For example, Ron Sider argues that while evangelism has a logical priority in that Christian social concern presupposes the existence of Christians, this point does not automatically lead to a practical priority. See Ron Sider, *Good News and Good Works*, Kindle ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011); *Making Christ Known: Historic Missions Documents from the Lausanne Movement, 1974-1989*, ed. John R. W. Stott (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Robert J. Karris, *Jesus and the Marginalized in John's Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 9.

<sup>6</sup> See Jerry M. Ireland, *The Missionary Spirit: Evangelism and Social Action in Pentecostal Missiology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 338.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. Also, as Köstenberger observes, though not particularly important to this study, the *Logos* concept contextualizes Jesus for a Hellenistic audience.

<sup>10</sup> Francis J. Moloney, *Belief in the Word: Reading John 1-4* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 30. Also Craig Koester: "A word is a form of address, a means of engagement. To say, 'In the beginning was the Word' is to say that in the beginning is God's act of communication. Without communication God remains unknown and unknowable. For the [g]ospel to say anything about God means that God must first disclose something of himself."

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Craig R. Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel*, Kindle ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 25-26.

<sup>11</sup> Though in two of these instances (4:39; 11:3), “word” refers to merely human words.

<sup>12</sup> G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Gospel of Life: Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 4.

<sup>13</sup> Jack T. Sanders, *Ethics in the New Testament: Change and Development* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 100. Cited in Hans Boersma, “A New Age Love Story: Worldview and Ethics in the Gospel of John,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 38, no. 1 (2003): 104.

<sup>14</sup> Köstenberger, 510-511.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 514.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 511.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 512.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* Here Köstenberger mentions as one example, Carson’s *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility*, and the argument for ‘compatibilism.’ See D. A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981).

<sup>19</sup> Köstenberger, 513, citing Miroslav Volf, “Johannine Dualism and Contemporary Pluralism,” *Modern Theology* 21, no. 2 (2005): 198-200.

<sup>20</sup> Köstenberger, 513. In his citing of Volf, Köstenberger summarizes five points that Volf makes in his rebuttal to Meeks. For the sake of brevity, I have only included here what I think are the most salient points of the argument as they relate to this present study.

<sup>21</sup> Boersma, “A New Age Love Story: Worldview and Ethics in the Gospel of John,” 105. The question this raises is, do the writer’s of Scripture ever present such an approach? The answer is “yes,” and this point is well made by Graham Twelftree in relation to the open-endedness of Luke-Acts. Twelftree, citing several ancient writers, including Herodotus and Lucretius, points out that open-ended narratives in the ancient world were often employed as in an invitation for the reader to see their own story as a continuation of the literary narrative, and that this is precisely the point of the open ending of Luke-Acts. See Graham H. Twelftree, *People of the Spirit: Exploring Luke's View of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic 2009), 43. See also Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* N12. N. T. Wright, “How Can the Bible Be Authoritative,” *Vox Evangelica* 21, (1991). Also, Köstenberger, though without making any reference to Boersma’s article, does seem to have something similar in mind when he argues against an “incarnational approach” to Jesus’ ethical teachings. Köstenberger, for example, proposes that one should primarily “discern doctrine on the basis of didactic passages ... rather than narrative passages,” Köstenberger, 518. But such an approach fosters a canon within the canon, elevating certain genres of the biblical text above others, and seems to directly contradict the “explicit” teaching of 1 Tim. 3:16, and the emphasis there on “all” Scripture. As William Klein et. al. observes, this realization is precisely what has led Gordon Fee and Douglas Steward to amend their warning against seeking normative demands from narrative portions of Scripture. They have altered that warning in later editions of their book, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, to include the phrase, “unless it can be demonstrated on other grounds that the author intended it to function in this way.” Klein, et. al. also points out by way of example, surely parables, which are always found in narrative passages, though not directly didactic, function primarily to either foster or forbid certain types of behavior; Cited in William W. Klein et al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Rev. & expanded. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 424. See also

Gordon D. Fee and Douglas K. Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993). In addition, I would add that Evangelicals derive doctrine from narrative portions of Scripture quite frequently but tend to employ this argument against conclusions that the group do not particularly like. For example, the Evangelical doctrine of Scripture in its most famous defenses has depended heavily on Jesus' teachings in narrative portions of Scripture (i.e. the Gospels), for example, consider Robert P. Lightner, *The Savior and the Scriptures: A Case for Scriptural Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1966). And Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1948). Finally, we might add that Jesus Himself used narrative portions of the OT for didactic purposes (see Mt. 12:1-8).

<sup>24</sup> Karris, 19. *Emphasis added.*

<sup>25</sup> Boersma, "A New Age Love Story: Worldview and Ethics in the Gospel of John," 105. Köstenberger, again without reference to Boersma's work, issues a fairly strong warning against attempts that derive moral imperatives from Jesus' "signs." But Köstenberger's aversion to this sort of incarnational understanding of a Johannine moral ethic does not apply here, since this is clearly not what Boersma has in mind. See *ibid.*, 106ff; Köstenberger, 516.

<sup>26</sup> Koester, *The Word of Life*, 2.

<sup>27</sup> N. T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today*, Kindle ed. (Harper Collins E-Books, n.d.), 28.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>29</sup> Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 140.

<sup>30</sup> Boersma, "A New Age Love Story: Worldview and Ethics in the Gospel of John," 106.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 110. *Emphasis added.*

<sup>34</sup> Richard A. Burrige, *Imitating Jesus: An Inclusive Approach to New Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2007), 335.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 332.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 334.

<sup>37</sup> Boersma, "A New Age Love Story: Worldview and Ethics in the Gospel of John," 112.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 112-113.

<sup>39</sup> Koester, 54.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>41</sup> J. G. van der Watt, "The Gospel of John's Perception of Ethical Behavior," *In die Skriflig* 45, no. 2 & 3 (2011): 443.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 436.

<sup>43</sup> See Koester, 31.

<sup>44</sup> Boersma, "A New Age Love Story: Worldview and Ethics in the Gospel of John," 115.

<sup>45</sup> Burrige is not arguing here for the authenticity of this pericope, only that it is consistent with other material in John. Burrige, 337.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 339.

<sup>47</sup> Sider, 123. This argument differs from my argument in *Missionary Spirit* in that there I am focusing on precisely the priority of evangelism as a cross-cultural enterprise. Here the argument refers more broadly to the life of the believer and the essence of discipleship.

<sup>48</sup> van der Watt, "The Gospel of John's Perception of Ethical Behavior," 444.