

The Gospel of John – Some Final Thoughts

New Testament Survey – Lesson 13 (Part 2)

As we continue our lesson on John's possible use of Ephesians, I am reminded of a lecture recently given by Dr. Alister McGrath. Professor McGrath was concerned that when we speak about God and Biblical matters, we do so in language that the audience best understands. For many Christians, the ideas behind being "justified" and "sanctified" make sense. For others, however, and especially for those without a lot of exposure to the vocabulary of faith, such terms are foreign. For many "justified" is simply a word processing action that keeps the margins in line.

Vocabulary changes over time and location. It was not too long ago when "gay" referred to an attitude rather than a sexual orientation. There are words we use in the southern United States that are not frequently used in other parts of the country. You rarely hear "y'all" in the north, but it is a southern staple.

In our study on John, I asked the question whether the ideas and vocabulary of the Gospel of John were consistent with the Gospel's composition from Ephesus. If church history is right as to the authorship of John's gospel and the recipients of the letter to the Ephesians, we should see evidence in the texts. By the time of John's Gospel, the Ephesian church would have lived with Paul's epistle to the Ephesians for around two decades. It must have informed their vocabulary and doctrine.

This question is important for several reasons. First, while not conclusively "proving" the ideas of the gospel's authorship set out among the early church fathers, the absence of such consistency would raise doubts about the historical accuracy. Second, the consistency bears out the virtue of Professor McGrath's admonition. Even at the hands of the Holy Spirit and the inspiration of Scripture, we see John's work at using the language of his audience to communicate God's truth. Thirdly, it gives insight into some of the meaning that we can attach to the Gospel of John, if we see the ideas and language in light of a certain geography and time. It might illuminate and underscore certain passages. Fourthly, in a related sense, it serves to heighten our study. When we focus on common themes and vocabularies, we begin to see connections that might otherwise be missed. Finally, this type of study addresses a certain set of cynical scholars who challenge the Christian faith as an invention of Paul. Some even call Christianity the "church of Paul." This is not a new problem. While in Ephesus, Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthian church citing a form of that issue that was germinating there. Paul pointed out the flaw in believers who considered themselves "of Paul" or "Apollos" or "Peter." Paul pointed out that it was Jesus who died for them, not

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Paul! (1 Cor. 1:12-13). This study indicates that Paul's teaching was not a concoction from Paul's mind. Rather, Paul gave the church clear instructions that naturally proceeded from the teachings and life of Christ. If anything, this Gospel might be seen as a way John sought to shore up the teaching of Paul to a church that would soon be indicted for "leaving its first love" (Rev. 2:4).

So we continue our study from last week, looking at more words and ideas found common between the two books of Scripture. We remind, but do not repeat, all the warnings and suppositions from last week's lesson. We then finish this lesson by considering some additional insight that a careful examination of the text might imply.

COMMONALITIES

1. *The "prince of this world" (Eph. 2:2; Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)*

The Greek word "*arch-on*" (ἄρχων) means "ruler." In English, we retain that root in words like "mon-arch" which means "one ruler." We find it used in two ways in Matthew 9 where Jesus heals the "ruler's" daughter. It is used twice for the "ruler" (Mt. 9:18, 23). It is also used where the Pharisees judge Jesus for the miracle. There in Mt. 9:34, they announce that Jesus casts out demons by the "prince" of demons. That word "prince" is *archon* (ἄρχων) or "ruler." This occurs again in Mt. 12:24 where "Beelzebub" is called the "prince [*archon* - ἄρχων] of demons." Mark tells the same story and uses the same phrase in Mark 3:22. Luke repeatedly spoke of various "rulers" among the people, and one time references the accusation that Jesus cast out demons by "Beelzebub, the prince [*archon* - ἄρχων] of demons" (Lk11:15).

Paul takes the understanding of Satan another step. Paul warned the Ephesians not to walk as they did before their salvation. He reminded them that they were "dead in their trespasses" when they followed the "course of this world" by following its prince,

the prince [*archon* - ἄρχων] of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience (Eph. 2:2).

Satan was not simply the prince of demons; he was the author of the course of this fallen world.

John does something profound with Paul's vocabulary. John uses Paul's Greek phrase to translate what Jesus said and did for us. If we go to John 12, we read of Jesus telling his followers that he was going to die like a seed, which is then buried but grows to bear great fruit. Jesus tells the people that the unfolding events would usher in the judgment of *the world*.

Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world [*archon* - ἄρχων] be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself (Jn. 12:31-32).

John leaves no room for doubt. Jesus did not simply reign over the prince of demons in his death and resurrection. Jesus declared victory over this entire fallen world. Death is the hallmark of the cancer that has spread through the sin in the world, and Jesus stands in resurrection power against the entire world system. Deeds of darkness, human tragedies and the misery that is found in the world today, all the things that issued forth from Adam and Eve's following the Deceiver in the Garden rather than the Father, are judged by the actions of Christ.

This is unique to Paul and John. No other gospel writer cites Satan as the "ruler of the world."

2. "Wrath" as a present concept (Eph. 2:3-4; Jn. 3:36)

The Greek word for "wrath" is *orge* (ὀργή). It is,

thought of not so much as an emotion ... as the outcome of an indignant frame of mind (*judgment*).¹

Matthew and Luke both use the word to reference the wrath of God. But when they do it, they always do it in the future tense. We read of the "wrath to come" (Mt. 3:7; Lk. 3:7; 21:23). Paul always makes the point that the wrath to come is already manifested and present. It may not be evident to all people until the future (which is the sense of Matthew and Luke's quotes of Jesus speaking of the "wrath to come"), but it is a ready proclamation upon the world of sin *already*. So in Romans, for example, Paul wrote of the wrath already being revealed, even as it will be revealed in the future:

For the wrath [*orge* (ὀργή)] of God *is* revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth... But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath [*orge* (ὀργή)] for yourself on the day of wrath [*orge* (ὀργή)] when God's righteous judgment *will be* revealed. (Rom. 1:18; 2:5).

Paul made this point with the Ephesians. In two places he referenced the wrath of God as something very present (Eph. 2:3; 5:6). It affects the nature of the unsaved, and it is something very real that is visited by God on the

¹ "ὀργή," Bauer, Danker, Aland, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, (U. of Chi. 2001), 3d ed.

disbelieving/disobedient. Consider the first time where Paul explained that we believers used to walk among the “sons of disobedience” where,

we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath [*orge* (ὀργή)], like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (Eph. 2:3-5).

Paul taught, and the Ephesians understood, that we are heirs to God’s wrath that is already on this world. It is not simply something that is coming; it is rightly and justly borne by the world today. It just no longer applies to those who are under the grace of Christ!

This was not something simply “of Paul.” This was also the teaching of Christ. John explained it succinctly in his commentary on Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus. After the dialogue we know well in John 3 about the need to be “born again” or “from above,” John adds his explanation. He ends it with Jn. 3:36,

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God *remains* on him.

In this, Paul and John were hand and glove. Salvation from the coming wrath is a salvation we already possess.

3. *The theme and usage of the word “peace” (Eph. 2:14-15, 17; 6:15; Jn. 14:27; 16:33; 20:19, 21, 26)*

Perhaps more than any other Pauline expression found in John’s Gospel, we find the concept of “peace” (Greek *eirene* – εἰρήνη). Any reader of Paul knows how important the word was to him. It makes sense that it would be, because Paul lived a life knowing he was personally responsible for bringing great persecution on the church, even playing a role in the martyrdom of Stephen. Finding peace from the horrors of such a “previous” life must have been an incredible balm to Paul’s heart. So we read of Paul speaking of the “peace” [*eirene* – εἰρήνη] we have “with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). The kingdom of God is one of “of righteousness and peace [*eirene* – εἰρήνη] and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17). Believers have a “peace [*eirene* – εἰρήνη] of God, which surpasses all understanding” (Phil. 4:7).

Paul explained this carefully to the Ephesians.

For he himself is our peace [*eirene* – εἰρήνη], who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by

abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace [*eirene* – εἰρήνη] (Eph. 2:14-15).

Paul explained that Jesus came and preached this peace:

And he came and preached peace [*eirene* – εἰρήνη] to you who were far off and peace [*eirene* – εἰρήνη] to those who were near (Eph. 2:17).

It was both a “unity of the Spirit” expressed in the bond of the peace [*eirene* – εἰρήνη]” (Eph. 4:3), and source of readiness, as the “gospel of peace [*eirene* – εἰρήνη]” was likened to shoes, the base on which we stand and move (Eph. 6:23).

For Paul, and for the Ephesians, there was a very present role that peace played in the life of a believer. It was in an internal peace, a peace with God, a peace shared among the saved, and a peace made possible by the gospel (by the death and resurrection of Christ). This makes more sense if we work through some aspects of the Hebrew word “peace.”

The Hebrew peace (*shalom* – שלום) is used hundreds of times in the Old Testament. We find it used in several ways, often simply as a greeting (the New Testament writers use “peace” in the same way). But if we focus on the aspect of personal or internal peace, we find some interesting Old Testament concepts. First, we should note that “peace” is to be a hallmark of the Messianic kingdom (Isa. 52:7)²:

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”

This is Paul’s sense of Eph. 2:17 where Jesus preached “peace” to those far off and near. It is also echoed strongly when Paul spoke of putting on one’s feet the “good news [“gospel”] of peace” (Eph. 6:23).

This peace is a state of well-being. It is where one is complete. It expresses,

the state of a being who lacks nothing and has no fear of being troubled in its quietude; it is euphoria with security. Nothing better can be desired for oneself and for others.³

² See also, Isa.9:6-7; Zech. 9:10, etc.

³ Spicq, Ceslas, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Hendrickson 1994), at 426.

We see this sense in Paul where one is reconciled to God by the end of the hostilities and wrath discussed earlier. This is Paul's thrust in Eph. 2:15-16 set out above.

In the synoptic gospels, there is virtually no use of the Greek word *eirene* – εἰρήνη in this sense. It is used as a greeting or blessing (Mt. 10:13; Mk 5:34; Lk 2:29; 7:50; 8:48; 10:5; etc.). It is combined with the verb “to make” when Jesus pronounces a blessing upon “peacemakers” (Mt. 5:9). But aside from Paul's companion Luke, we have absolutely no use of “peace” in the synoptics in the sense that Paul used the word. In fact, the one reference found in each synoptic Gospel, and the only reference beyond that listed above in Matthew or Mark is quite different! (It is used where Jesus encouraged people to “go in peace”)

The interesting thing when we examine the gospels, is that Matthew and Mark do not make any references to this internal peace or peace that we have with God. Matthew actually references Jesus' teaching about the conflict that accompanied Jesus' ministry.

Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword (Mt. 10:34).

John, on the other hand, lines up his vocabulary directly with Paul. John shows the same discord stirred up by the ministry of Jesus, but with other passages using Paul's vocabulary to show the final intent and effect of Jesus' ministry. Looking at these unique Johannine passages gives good credibility to the early church claim that John sought to supplement the synoptic gospels with important historical information and teaching. Consider the following two unique passages from John related to Jesus bringing “peace”:

- **John 14:27** “Peace [*eirene* – εἰρήνη] I leave with you; my peace [*eirene* – εἰρήνη] I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”
- **John 16:33** “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace [*eirene* – εἰρήνη]. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

Jesus met his messianic role as a bringer of peace. His message was one of peace. Not simply the world's peace from war or conflict, but an internal peace that reigns even in the midst of the tribulation and conflict of the world. This was what Paul taught, found in the life and ministry of Christ – a *shalom* peace of one “who lacks nothing and has no fear of being troubled.” This leads into a related commonality: suffering.

4. *The experience and endurance of suffering (Eph. 3:11-13; Jn. 16:33)*

Paul wrote as “a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles” (Eph. 3:1), one of many events of suffering in his light for the cause of Christ. This was not a cause for concern, however. Paul was glad to suffer for the cause of Christ. He explained to the Ephesians,

So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory (Eph. 3:13).

Paul’s word for suffering was *thlipsis* – θλίψις. It is frequently translated “tribulation.” Originally the word meant being pushed from each side, being pressed or squashed. It was also used as a word for the internal affliction one felt from the stresses and difficulties of life.⁴ We have a similar expression when we speak of the world closing in from all sides.

I suspect these words of Paul only grew in the hearts and minds of his Ephesian friends after he died a martyr’s death at the hands of Nero. Surely the teachings of Christ set out by John in his Gospel provided not only a salve to the Ephesians, but also a word of encouragement. These were words that gave a sense to Paul’s peace amidst suffering and tribulation. John set out from Jesus’ last set of instructions to his apostles the following assurance:

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation [*thlipsis*–θλίψις]. But take heart; I have overcome the world (Jn. 16:33).

Here John explained that Jesus knew his followers would walk the path of Paul. They would have tribulation in this world, the world of the prince of demons. But Jesus overcame the world and its powers, even the ultimate power of death. There was a cause for peace (section 3 above) in the midst of tribulation and suffering *thlipsis* – θλίψις. Paul’s voice in his epistle was merely an affirming “Amen!” to the promise of Jesus.

5. *Access to the Father (Eph. 2:18; Jn. 14:6)*

There is a clear teaching of Paul to the Ephesians that the believers’ access to God the Father is through Jesus Christ. We read in Eph. 2:18,

For through him [Jesus] we both [Jew and Gentile] have access in one Spirit to the Father.

⁴ “θλίβω, θλίψις,” Kittel, Gerhard, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (Eerdmans 1965), vol. III, at 139.

This is not a foreign concept to the believer. It is a consistent one taught in the New Testament, but we note the direct idea expressed by Jesus in John 14:6,

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

In his Gospel, John closes the door on what Paul explained. As Paul noted, both Jew and Gentile have access to the Father in Christ. Then as John added, there is no other way for anyone to have access. Jesus is *the* way.

6. *The role of the Spirit in revelation (Eph. 3:4-6; Jn. 14:26; 15:26-27)*

Paul was unequivocal about the inspiration for this teaching and the source of his understanding: it was the Spirit of God. Moreover, Paul taught that the Spirit was the source of insight for *all the apostles*. Paul wrote in Eph. 3:4-5,

When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as *it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit*.

This is a marvelous affirmation of the Spirit at work in Paul's writings as well as the teaching of the other apostles. When John penned his gospel to the church at a later time, John was able to explain the genesis of this work of the Spirit from prophetic words of Jesus. Right before his betrayal, Jesus had a chance to explain to his clueless apostles that the coming events would leave them bewildered and scared, but with the coming Holy Spirit, they would get insight and understanding. More over, the Spirit would work *with* the apostles to teach and give insight to other believers.

John recorded Jesus saying,

The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you... But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning (Jn. 14:26; 15:26-27).

There is a marvelous matrix explained here. Jesus declared a promise that the Spirit would come and give insight to the apostles to aid them in reaching others with the testimony of Jesus. Paul was one such apostle, who ascribed his insight appropriately to the Holy Spirit. John was another who followed the same course, also recognizing the power of what Jesus said and the world experienced.

7. The implications of Eph. 3:9-10 on someone reading John 1

If our theory is right, it opens up some marvelous insights into the reactions of the Ephesians over the Gospel and teaching of the apostle John. Consider in this regard what Paul taught in Ephesians 3:9-10.

To me...this grace was given...to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

Paul explained that Creator God's plan was to make known to the world God's manifold wisdom. These are loaded Pauline terms. God's "wisdom" was not what the world thought wise. It would not satisfy the secular philosopher's mind. The wisdom of God was Christ crucified – an inconceivable act of absolute love and obedience. This mystery was held by God from his creation of the world.

If we keep this thought in mind when we read John's first chapter, several of John's verses suddenly take on an even greater significance. Consider these verses from John 1 in this light:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made... The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him (Jn 1:1-3, 9-10).

Look at the two in juxtaposition:

Paul: The work and purpose of Christ was a mystery hidden for the ages but being brought to light.

John: Jesus and his role in things was unknown by the world. In his coming, however, the world was beholding a true light.

No doubt, John was able to feed his flock richly by seizing the vocabulary and ideas of Paul about the role of Jesus in the eternal work of God.

8. Christ in you (Eph. 3:17; Jn. 14:20)

The idea of "Christ dwelling inside us" is nothing new to an evangelical believer. It is a very Biblical concept. If we trace the concept back to the Bible, we find it mainly in the writings of Paul and John. Paul is the only Biblical writer to refer to

the church as the “body” of Christ (Rom. 7:4; 12:5; 1 Cor. 10:16; 12:12, 27; Eph. 3:6; 4:12; 5:23; Col. 1:24; 3:15). Paul is also the only Biblical writer to refer to the Spirit of God “dwelling” (Greek *oikeo*-οικέω) in the believer (Rom. 8:9, 11; 1 Cor. 3:16). Paul also uses a closely related Greek word (*katoikeo*-κατοικέω) that we might translate as “settle down” in the sense of “living there.” Nowhere does Paul make this point any clearer than in his writings to the Ephesians. There, Paul taught that Christ “dwells,”

in your [plural as in the Southern “y’all’s”) hearts through faith (Eph. 3:17).

He said it within the context of the church as the “body” of Christ. We are “members of the same body” (Eph. 3:6), the “body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). Paul is more descriptive in Eph. 5:23 where he details,

Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

As noted above, we do not find this exclusively in Paul. This was a concept that is also taught by John in his writings. Importantly, John does not merely teach it as a doctrine, the way Paul does, but John also traces it carefully back to the teachings of Jesus. Consider in this vein these passages of John⁵:

- **Jn. 6:56** “Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.”
- **John 14:18-21** “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.
- **John 15:4-5** “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

John speaks of Jesus simply as “in” us, but he is also fond of the word translated “abide” (*meno*-μένω). This word has the idea that Jesus “remains” in us. It is the same word John uses to describe the relationship Jesus had with the Father who “abides” in him. It fits well with the idea of Paul, not only as the teaching of Jesus upon which Paul could base his theology and understanding, but even more so as the holy description of the believer’s life – that we have Christ in us, in the sense

⁵ We are remiss if we fail to add that John repeatedly uses this same theme and vocabulary again in his epistle 1 John.

that the Father was in Christ. This is no momentary thing, nor is it something that comes and goes, like the tide. It is where Christ “remains” or “stays.” It is the permanent life of the believer, who is a new creation. It is the “seal” of the Spirit. It is the “assurance” of things to come. It is the first fruits of eternity and everlasting life, found in the soon-to-be-replaced body of all who seek and find the Lord!

John also saw fit, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to record some words of Christ that pointed beyond the affirmation of Christ dwelling in the first generation of his followers. John explained that the teaching of Paul to the larger church was the foresight of the Savior:

I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, *just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us*, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, *I in them and you in me*, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me (Jn. 17:20-23).

This is a marvelous example of the power of John to write to a community steeped in the theology of Paul. He gave the message of Christ that sounded loudly and consistently the preaching of Paul.

9. *The word “agape.”*

A beginning runner once lamented, “If the Eskimos have thirty words for snow, why don’t runners have thirty words for pain? When we read our New Testaments, we need to always remember that the Greeks had multiple words for “love.” The word we are keying on here is the noun *agape-ἀγάπη*.⁶

Paul is well known for writing about agape love. We read about it in most every verse of the famous 1 Cor. 13 chapter that begins,

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

Paul utilized agape as part of the Ephesians’ spiritual vocabulary both as something God has for us, as well as what we have for him and for each other:

⁶ We are distinguishing here between the noun *agape* and the verb “to love” (*agapao-ἀγαπάω*) built off the same noun. We find the verb used extensively by all the gospel writers. It is the usage of *agape* as a noun that concerns us in this section.

- **Eph. 1:4-5** “In love [*agape-ἀγάπη*] he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ”
- **Eph. 1:15** “because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love [*agape-ἀγάπη*] toward all the saints...”
- **Eph. 2:4** “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us...”
- **Eph. 3:17** “so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love...”
- **Eph. 3:19** “know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”
- **Eph. 4:1-2** “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love”
- **Eph. 4:15** “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”
- **Eph. 5:2** “And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”
- **Eph. 6:23** “Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul had the Ephesians who studied his letter *steeped* in love!

All the gospel writers wrote of *agape* love from the teaching of Christ, for of course it was a hallmark of what Christ did and taught. It is the seminal idea behind God caring for us. But all the other gospel writers wrote of *agape* in a verb form (*agapao-ἀγαπάω*), *i.e.*, “love your enemies” (Mt. 5:44). It is basically only in the Gospel of John that we see Paul’s repeated usage of the noun love (*agape*).⁷ In John’s Gospel, it is not a rare event, but happens over and over. Paul’s structure and noun-form of the *agape* principle is John’s standard usage:

⁷ Matthew uses the verb eight times, the noun once (Mt. 24:12). Mark uses the verb five times, but never the noun. Luke uses the verb 13 times and the noun once (Lk. 11:42).

- **John 5:42** “But I know that you do not have the love [*agape-ἀγάπη*] of God within you.
- **John 13:35** “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love [*agape-ἀγάπη*] for one another.”
- **John 15:9** “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love [*agape-ἀγάπη*]. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love [*agape-ἀγάπη*], just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love [*agape-ἀγάπη*].”
- **John 15:13** “Greater love [*agape-ἀγάπη*] has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”
- **John 17:26** “I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love [*agape-ἀγάπη*] with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

John 15:9 and 17:26 are perfect examples of the contrast between the noun and the verb. In both of those passages John uses the verb form (“the Father *has loved* me,” “so *have I loved* you,” “you *have loved* me”).

I find this intriguing that John and Paul are the principal users of the noun *agape*. Assuming that Paul did not write Hebrews, John and Paul are responsible for 108 of the 116 usages of it in the New Testament (78 for Paul, 30 for John).

10. *Comparing Eph. 3:14-21 to the Lord’s High Priestly Prayer found in Jn. 17*

I will leave out of this lesson analysis of the High Priestly Prayer in John 17 and its relation to Ephesians. Thomas Brodie does an excellent job of this analysis and the reader is encouraged to pursue that on her/his own.⁸ We will entice the reader with these conclusions of Brodie:

John’s climactic chapter [17] appears to depend even more on...the Epistle to the Ephesians...It seems reasonable to conclude that John had the epistle in hand and that he has used it in diverse ways as a major component of the chapter.⁹

⁸ Brodie, Thomas, *The Quest for the Origin of John’s Gospel – A Source Oriented Approach*, (Oxford 1993), at 128ff.

⁹ *Ibid.*, at 128, 134.

Where I depart from Brodie is that he tends to think John was adopting the epistle as the form for his own writing. I think it more reasonable to conclude that John was using the language and informing the theology of the Ephesians as he wrote his gospel. My main indicator for this conclusion is given below in the section on “distinctions.”

11. *The unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3-6; Jn. 17:21-23).*

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians contains one of the church’s most powerful pleas for unity within the body. Paul expressed his concern in the fourth chapter of Ephesians, adding to it a literary plea so articulate that it has the features of an “early Christian credo.”¹⁰ Paul urged the Ephesians,

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called... eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Eph. 4:1-6).

John’s Gospel adds a strong underscoring to Paul’s plea. John explained that this was not simply some Pauline concern. Rather it was at the heart of the Lord’s concerns as he faced his betrayal. In setting forward Jesus’ prayer, John recalled Jesus’ plea for unity of the church,

I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me Jn. 17:21-23).

There is a certain “hand in glove” between the prayer of Jesus and the plea of Paul. Jesus desired unity, even as he was one with the Father. Paul preached the same to the church. It would be nearly impossible for an Ephesian church who had Paul’s correspondence so dear to the heart, not to remember Paul’s plea as they understood the prayer of Jesus.

DISTINCTIONS

¹⁰ Bruce, F. F., *The New International Commentary on the New Testament – The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, (Eerdmans 1984), at 335.

First, I repeat my prompting at the start of Part 1 to this analysis: I have yet to find a scholar who has written up an analysis like mine. That immediately draws my own suspicions to my analysis. Yet the evidence of linguistic and thematic influence so permeates each chapter of Ephesians that I hold to my conclusions until someone persuades me otherwise. It is so pervasive, that it almost makes me think that the Gospel of John was written off of Ephesians, rather than the factual events of Jesus' life. I believe that some of Brodie's analysis referenced above might lead to such a conclusion. I do not embrace that conclusion, however, because of another subtlety that I call "distinctions."

There are a number of words and ideas that are core to Paul, both in his letter to the Ephesians as well as his other correspondence. These ideas are so powerful, that anyone wanting to write up a gospel to "match" Paul's teaching would hardly miss these. One major example is Paul's reference to the "power" (Greek *dunamis* – δύναμις). Paul spoke of God's power repeatedly in his writings, especially Ephesians:

- **Eph. 1:19** "...and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might."
- **Eph. 1:21** "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come."
- **Eph. 2:2** "in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience"
- **Eph. 3:7** "Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power."
- **Eph. 3:16** "...that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being."
- **Eph. 3:20** "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us."

With all this talk of power, and all the prayer for power, it is almost astonishing that John does not use the word one time in his gospel. It cannot be that Jesus never spoke of power, for Matthew uses the word (12 times), as does Mark (10 times) and Luke (15 times in his gospel; 10 more in Acts). Why this total lack of "power" in John? I really have no idea, but maybe I can make a suggestion or two as possibilities. First, this may be a manifestation of the apostle John a reformed man from the zealotry of his youth as reported in the other gospels. Matthew

and Mark both recorded John's embarrassing request, both directly and through his mother, to sit in the position of power at the right hand of Jesus (Mk 10:35ff; Mt. 20:20ff). This "son of THUNDER" (Mk. 3:17) was likely embarrassed as he aged, and was much happier being known not as the power seeker, but the apostle of love (agape), a much more suitable title.

Another item that might bear on the choice of words is the Hebrew thought behind John's gospel. John would be a native Hebrew/Aramaic thinker, and there are a lot more Semitic words for "power" and "authority" than there are Greek ones (or English for that matter). Whereas the Greek word *dunamis* and the English word "power" have a semantic range that includes usages which mean power and strength as well as authority, someone thinking in Hebrew/Aramaic, or whose first language is a Semitic one, is more likely to distinguish between strength and authority by using different terms. Hebrew has an amazing array of terms (at least 12) for the general ideas of power and authority, but has no one word that includes both in its semantic range. John's use of *exousia* might go back to the Hebrew *shilton* (שִׁלְטוֹן), so he uses the more specific Greek term, although *dunamis* could have been used too.

Regardless of the reasons why John *did not* use the word "power,"¹¹ it seems likely that had he been simply writing a gospel based upon Paul's letters, he would have done so. This is a strong indicator to me that John was about a *real* and *factual* gospel, but one that spoke in the language and the understanding of the Ephesian people. John was not relying on Paul's writings or deriving his gospel from them, but that he shows knowledge of them and seems to underscore them with his own factual knowledge of Jesus' teachings. He does this while making what it seems are conscious decisions to emphasize some of what Paul wrote about and to leave out other points Paul made.

CONCLUSION

This lesson and approach may be an aberration from the nutty mind of a lawyer, but it is one that makes sense to me. To me this speaks of Scripture in a most wonderful fashion. It confirms the promise of Jesus, that the Holy Spirit would come and empower the apostles not only to remember the things of Jesus, but also to teach the church and bear witness to him and his kingdom. It is a joint effort. The Holy Spirit leads, inspires, directs, teaches, and even supplies the needed

¹¹ In passages where one might expect John to use "power" (*dunamis* – δύναμις), he instead uses the word commonly translated "authority" (Greek *exousia* - ἐξουσία). See, e.g., Jn. 1:12; 5:27; 10:18; 17:2; 19:10.

words, yet at the same time, the gospels and epistles are written by real people, to real people, in real time, in ways that *make sense*! Should we ever suppose the Word of God could be any less spectacular? How magnificent is the Lord!

POINTS FOR HOME

1. *“For he himself is our peace... my peace I give to you”* (Eph. 2:14; Jn. 14:27).

Shalom peace...a true sense of well being...no fear of trouble...a life of confident security in THE Creator God. This must be one of the greatest gifts of God. My question for me is why do I not prayerfully dwell in this peace every moment of every day. I want to be better at this!

2. *“...I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering [thlipsis]... In the world you will have tribulation [thlipsis]. But take heart”* (Eph. 3:13; Jn. 16:33).

This is what makes “peace” so hard to inhabit. Suffering/tribulation comes around in this life all too regularly. Jesus gives the avenue to peace in his statement in John 16:33. “Take heart, for I have overcome the world!” That is a key to the peace. I am committed to taking regular time each day to contemplate and reflect on Jesus as the overcomer. I will note that in every conflict, every difficulty, and every stress in life. Jesus as the overcomer has taken away my burden. My goal is simply to acknowledge this truth in prayerful petition, and trust him to see me to the finish line. Any difficulties that come, are always opportunities to grow before him. Not always fun, but always a cause for thanks!

3. *“...Christ loved us and gave himself up for us... Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends”* (Eph. 5:2; Jn. 15:13).

John, the Son of Thunder, became the Apostle of Love. This love of Christ is the mortar that holds together all the bricks. It is Christ’s love behind him giving himself for us. It is Christ’s love that brings victory over tribulation. It is Christ’s love that gives us peace in our hearts. Christ’s love is overpowering. And Paul would remind us that nothing – NOTHING – can ever separate us from that love! (Rom. 8:35). Thank you, Lord!