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**Realized Eschatology in the Soteriology of John’s Gospel**

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**Introduction**

The study of Johannine soteriology, particularly with respect to its eschatological dimensions, has always been fraught with problems. Does John intend to present salvation in his Gospel as a completed

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event? <sup>2</sup> Are there aspects of salvation that still await future consummation? Are these two views mutually exclusive or have certain scholars of the Fourth Gospel presented a false dichotomy? And if not, what is the relationship between the two and how does an understanding of this relationship affect our day to day lives? Questions such as these pepper the landscape of studies in Johannine soteriology.

This issue of Johannine soteriology has been addressed in at least three ways: <sup>3</sup> 1) Those who view realized eschatology as characteristic of Johannine theology such that apocalyptic eschatology has no place. The latter is generally explained away in terms of redactional intrusions or otiose survivals. 2) Those who emphasize the futuristic dimension, subjecting any realized elements to futuristic or apocalyptic elements such that the realized dimension retains no independent significance (a minority view). 3) Those who accept both the realized and futuristic aspects as genuinely Johannine (a majority view). Both Rudolf Bultmann and C. H. Dodd have had a profound influence on how Johannine soteriology has been understood. For instance, Dodd writes that in Johannine thought “all that the church hoped for in the second coming of Christ is already given in its present experience of Christ through the Spirit.”<sup>4</sup> The position of this article is that John allows both realized and futuristic aspects but given his particular authorial intent, his primary emphasis is on the realized.

Aune contends that the critical issue in Johannine realized eschatology has to do not so much with the “what” but the “how,” particularly with regards to cultic worship in the life of the

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<sup>2</sup> This article presupposes that the author of the Fourth Gospel is John, beloved disciple and the son of Zebedee. See B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975[1881]), v–xxviii, for the development of this idea.

<sup>3</sup> For categories see David E. Aune, *The Cultic Setting of Realized Eschatology in Early Christianity*, Testamental Supplement 28 (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 49-54. Major names include Schweitzer, C. H. Dodd, Rudolf Bultmann; Glasson, Robinson to name a few.

<sup>4</sup> C.H. Dodd, *Apostolic Preaching* (NY: Harper & Row, 1964), 174. However, note the following comment by Keener, *John*, 1:320: “Although C.H. Dodd emphasized realized eschatology, scholars point out that in his final publication he did allow that early Christian eschatology included a futurist element—ambiguously as he may have kept that concession.”

community.<sup>5</sup> While this is certainly true, the “why” of Johannine realized eschatology is surely just as significant. A number of scholars have attempted to address this question and have come up with at least two major reasons: the first is polemical while the other stems from the community’s worship experience. As Keener rightly argues, Christian realized eschatology would surely have become a major focus in the church’s debate with the synagogue if leaders in the non-Christian Jewish community argued that Jesus (if truly the Messiah) should have inaugurated a new era. Refuting Aune who suggests that this emphasis was more likely due to the community’s worship experience of the risen Lord than from a polemical situation, he concludes that, “while the community’s spiritual experience is undoubtedly the source, the overwhelming emphasis may be due to the social context of the Gospel.”<sup>6</sup> Regardless, both factors play a vital role in the Johannine conceptualization of soteriology.

However, the following crucial factors are also reflected in the Gospel, as this article will demonstrate. These relate to John’s authorial intent to present salvation as:

1. Being paradoxical in nature, exhibiting a reconcilable tension between realized and futurist dimensions.
1. Having both horizontal and vertical dimensions, both displaying dualistic elements.
2. Reflecting the coming age already broken into the present expressed in his use of ὥρα in the phrase ἀλλὰ ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστίν (“but a time/hour is coming and now is”) found in 4:23 and 5:25.
3. Having elements similar to the Qumran conception of eschatological salvation which evidences a tension between the

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<sup>5</sup> Aune, *Cultic Setting*. In his monograph, Aune analyzes how eschatological salvation is conceptualized in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Fourth Gospel, the Letters of Ignatius, the Odes of Solomon and the surviving fragments of Marcion of Sinope. He investigates the function, the meaning and the mode of realization of this eschatology within the Johannine community. In his analysis, he points out that this eschatological salvation, while conceptualized in a great variety of ways, is a phenomenon capable of partial realization in present experience but also future realization.

<sup>6</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:320-21; Aune, *Cultic Setting*, 45-135.

present age and the one to come. Recent scholarship has shown that the Qumran literature has influenced the author of the Fourth Gospel at various points.<sup>7</sup>

Unlike Aune, who holds that the distinctive emphases of Johannine eschatology are to be attributed primarily to the Johannine community, this article holds that the author of the Fourth Gospel was primarily responsible for shaping the eschatology represented in his Gospel.<sup>8</sup> John does this so that readers might understand that this salvation that Christ brings is both a foretaste as well as an assurance that what has been promised will indeed come to fruition.

The term “realized” eschatology will need to be defined since, as Aune accurately points out, it carries with it numerous connotations that may result in an inadequate understanding of what this term truly entails. He writes,

At this point it is appropriate to inquire whether the term “realized” eschatology should be retained, and if so, with what significance. First of all, if the expression is taken to mean a complete realization of the eschatological blessings of salvation with no residue of futurity whatever, then it is hopelessly inappropriate. Secondly, to use the term in this rigid sense is historically impossible, since all Christian eschatologies (including those of the Gnostics) contain a dual emphasis on the present and future realization of the eschaton (although in widely varying proportions). . . . Because of the wide currency of the term “realized” eschatology, we prefer to retain the expression which shall be defined as those aspects of eschatological salvation which are somehow conceived of as partially realized in Christian experience within the frame work of present time, history and worldly conditions. The correlative of realized eschatology so defined would then be “final” or “futuristic” eschatology.<sup>9</sup>

For clarity, this article may well be re-titled *Johannine Soteriology: Already and Not Yet*; this accurately captures the dual elements of salvation obviously present in John’s Gospel and avoids projecting a false dichotomy that does not exist between realized and futuristic aspects of salvation. All scripture references (unless otherwise stated) are from the NASB.

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<sup>7</sup> See Elizabeth Mburu, *Qumran and the Origins of Johannine Language and Symbolism*, Jewish and Christian Texts 8 (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 44.

<sup>8</sup> Aune, *Cultic Setting*, 64, argues that “The distinctive eschatological emphases of the Fourth Gospel are the expression of the traditional beliefs of the Johannine community and not the individualistic *Tendenz* of a creative theologian.”

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

**A. The Paradoxical Nature of Soteriology: Tension Between the Realized and the Futurist Dimensions**

The first crucial factor stems from his understanding of salvation. Johannine soteriology must be understood as both already accomplished and not yet consummated. It has been noted that unlike the Pauline epistles, John does not seem to place much emphasis on repentance and seems to focus on “belief” rather than “faith.” This is primarily because the sin of the world, for John, is identified as lack of belief in Jesus and subsequent rejection of him and his claims (cf. especially 8:21-24; 15:21-24). However, while the differences noted in the writings of John and Paul regarding soteriology are true, they both reflect a consistency in thought with regard to the fact that salvation is always conditioned upon acceptance of the person and the teaching of Christ.

While disagreements arise on a number of issues regarding this Gospel’s view and presentation of salvation, textual evidence clearly shows that John expresses his theme of salvation in terms of analogies that place Jesus Christ as the source of salvation. Jesus refers to himself as the light of the world (8:12; 9:5; 12:46), in the prologue he is the true light(1:9), he is the way, the truth and the life (14:6), he is the bread of life (6:35, 48), he is the resurrection and the life (11:25), he is the one that provides living water (4:10), he is the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (10:11, 14), he is the true vine (15:1, 5) and so forth.

Indeed, the major purpose of the Gospel is to inspire belief in Christ (cf. 20:31). This is reflected in the plot development which is structured around both the recognition, and the lack thereof, of Jesus’ identity.<sup>10</sup> Having arrived at an understanding of who Jesus is, the characters in the story, and the readers, must make a choice either to believe in him or to reject him. This is especially prominent in the second section of the Gospel, which is dominated by Jesus’ signs. As the plot develops, John continually displays the conflict between belief and unbelief in the face of these signs. The signs that he performs become the evidence that prove his messiahship, authenticating his claims that he is indeed God’s true representative,

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<sup>10</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 85-88.

just as is portrayed in the Old Testament in Moses and later prophets.<sup>11</sup>

In this Gospel, the emphasis on realized eschatology is so strong that it almost, but not quite, seems to overshadow the fact that there are also futuristic aspects to John's presentation of salvation. For instance, note the following illustrative texts related to eternal life, a key aspect of the Johannine presentation of salvation. In these texts, eternal life in the Fourth Gospel is presented as a present reality and possession. John 3:15: ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων ἐν αὐτῷ ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον (that everyone who believes in him **may have** eternal life); John 3:36: ὁ πιστεύων εἰς τὸν υἱὸν ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον (He who believes in the son **has** eternal life); John 5:24: ὁ τὸν λόγον μου ἀκούων καὶ πιστεύων τῷ πέμψαντί με ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον (he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, **has** eternal life); John 6:47 πιστεύων ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον (he who believes **has** eternal life).<sup>12</sup> In arguing against van Hartingsveld's interpretation of eternal life in the Fourth Gospel "as an eschatological gift of salvation which is only 'promised' and appropriated in a preliminary way 'by faith,'" Aune accurately points out that the very grammatical usage of the key phrase ἔχειν ζωὴν αἰώνιον "to have/possess eternal life" reflects that "the possession of 'eternal life' from the Johannine perspective is decisively and emphatically a factor in the present experience of the believer."<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the syntagmatic relationships within these verses reveal that there is a direct correlation between believing and the immediate possession of eternal life. The semantic relationship may be understood as subordinate, logical, means-result.<sup>14</sup> One gains

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<sup>11</sup> See Mburu, *Qumran and the Origins of Johannine Language and Symbolism*, 44.

<sup>12</sup> See also 3:15, 36; 5:24, 40; 6:40, 47, 53, 68; 10:10; 1 John 3:13, 15; 5:12, 13, 16,

<sup>13</sup> Aune, *Cultic Setting*, 106.

<sup>14</sup> Linguists have noted the importance of understanding the function of a word within the larger linguistic unit, the sentence. The linear relationship of a word with surrounding terms in the speech-act is referred to as the syntagmatic relation. The vertical or associative relationship of a word with other words that could replace it, such as synonyms, is referred to as the paradigmatic relation. Paradigmatic relations are useful in helping one determine the parameters for the use of a word. This is particularly significant for technical and semi-technical terms. [Footnote continued on next page ... ]

access to eternal life by believing.<sup>15</sup> In this case, the grammatical usage, as well as the syntagmatic and semantic relationships indicate that eternal life is presented as a present possession.

From a literary perspective, John is able to communicate this aspect of realized eschatology through his use of external prolepses.<sup>16</sup> Culpepper observes that “Eschatological prolepses are relatively numerous early in the gospel; but, although there are some ambiguities and exegetical difficulties, one encounters only historical prolepses following John 14:3. This progression indicates the direction of John’s argument: *that which was traditionally expected at the end has already been experienced, at least in part.*”<sup>17</sup> The very literary structure of the Gospel therefore also underscores this crucial Johannine emphasis on realized eschatology.

Clearly, John has texts that emphasize realized eschatology to a greater extent than futuristic eschatology. However, this does not mean that he ignored the latter. Note the following comment by Keener: “Brown correctly points out that the Pharisees and Christians shared futurist eschatology; it was far more important for John to stress realized eschatology in a Gospel addressed to conflict with Jewish authorities who denied, not future hope, but the inauguration of that hope in Jesus.”<sup>18</sup> He knew what he had to highlight in order to convince his audience. So then, the expectation of a future hope

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These linear and vertical interrelationships, which form aspects of the linguistic context, must be taken into account in determining how any word is used.

<sup>15</sup> For categories on semantic relationships, see E. A. Nida, *Exploring Semantic Structures* (Munich: Fink, 1975), 50–65; *Style and Discourse: With Special Reference to the Text of the Greek New Testament* (ed. E. A. Nida et. al.; Cape Town: Bible Society, 1983, 1991), 102–103.

<sup>16</sup> See Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 64. He goes on to explain that external prolepses are of two basic types: “historical prolepses, those which refer to events which will occur among the disciples and later believers, and eschatological prolepses, those which refer to “the last day,” the end of time.” He concludes that “With John’s emphasis on “realized eschatology” it is not surprising that its historical prolepses outnumber its eschatological prolepses.”

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* (emphasis mine). He identifies the following as clearly eschatological: 5:28-29; 6:40; 12:48; 14:3.

<sup>18</sup> Keener, *John*, 1:323. In 1 John, conversely, the author addresses secessionists whose eschatology is wholly realized, and thus focuses more on future hope than the Gospel had.



cannot be negated. For instance, future bodily resurrection and eternal life in 5:21, 28-29; 6:39, 40, 44, 54 (see also 4:14, 36; 5:29; 6:27; 12:25; 1 Jn 2:18, 25), future judgment in 12:48, and perhaps even a reference to the Parousia in 14:3. Particularly in 5:28-29, the futuristic aspect of salvation is clearly emphasized. Note that the phrase ἔρχεται ὥρα (a time/hour is coming) clearly refers to a future occurrence, in this instance, of bodily resurrection. This has been questioned by a number of critics who suggest that these words are interpolations since they either do not seem to reflect authentic Johannine teaching on eschatology or that they consist of a combination of two unassimilated eschatologies, one spiritual and the other realistic.<sup>19</sup> However, as Ladd accurately summarizes with regard to this apparent conflict: "Life is to be experienced in two stages: life in the present in the spiritual realm and life in the future in the resurrection of the body."<sup>20</sup>

Dodd argues that the resurrection of Lazarus illustrates that eternal life in Christ is confined to the present and should therefore not be anticipated in the future.<sup>21</sup> However, the text of John 11:25-26 (Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?") clearly demonstrates at least two things: First, Jesus has life in himself which can only be appropriated by those who believe in him. Life in him cannot be understood merely in physical terms as is demonstrated numerous times in the Gospel. Present spiritual resurrection life is therefore a reality. Secondly, those who believe in him will live on after physical death. This is a clear reference to future resurrection life.

The emphasis with regard to salvation for John is therefore on the present reality, what many scholars have identified as realized eschatology or the already accomplished dimension of salvation. However, he does not neglect the futurist dimension. This seeming paradox arises for two reasons: 1) The event of the divine intervention of Jesus Christ in human history necessarily means that his salvific

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<sup>19</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 341.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Dodd, *Apostolic Preaching*, 170.



work must have an impact with regard to present existence. 2) John wrote from two standpoints—both before and after the resurrection.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, since John was significantly impacted by the Christ-event, his post-resurrection narration of the salvific work of Jesus Christ would naturally reflect this dual emphasis.

### **B. John’s Dualistic View of Soteriology**

Johannine soteriology has both a vertical and a horizontal dimension both of which clearly display dualistic elements. As R. E. Brown eloquently expresses, “the Johannine view of salvation is both vertical and horizontal. The vertical expresses the uniqueness of the divine intervention in Jesus; the horizontal aspect establishes a relationship between this intervention and salvation history.”<sup>23</sup> The vertical dimension has to do with John’s presentation of the world below contrasted with the world above. In the prologue itself, John begins by equating the world below with darkness and contrasting this against the light that Jesus Christ brings and is. The dualism is expressed in the statement, καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν (“and the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome /comprehend it” cf. 1:5). Here, John expresses the superiority of the light over the darkness. It can neither be overcome nor understood by the realm of darkness. However, as Ashton points out, the dualism expressed in this contrast is a modified dualism because while both light and darkness coexist in the world, the light must at the very least partially dispel the darkness.<sup>24</sup> The world below is also a realm of satanic power, sin and death which Jesus has invaded and overcome (cf. 5: 21, 24, 27; 8:34-47; 1 John 2:1; 3:4-10; 4:17). Through his life, ministry, death and resurrection, Jesus has delivered people from darkness, sin and death and given them the life of the Spirit.<sup>25</sup> This eschatological dualism of the two

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<sup>22</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 68.

<sup>23</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (2 vols.; AB 29–29A; NY: Doubleday, 1966–1970), 1:cxvi.

<sup>24</sup> John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (2d. ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 390.

<sup>25</sup> See discussion in Ladd, *Theology*, 265.

ages is also reflected in the following text: “He who hates his life in this world will keep it for life eternal” (12:25).<sup>26</sup>

The horizontal dimension of Johannine soteriology, with which this article is primarily concerned, is preeminently salvation-historical. There are two major factors in John’s understanding of the horizontal dimension of salvation. The first has to do with the centrality of Jesus in salvation history demonstrated in the invasion of Jesus into the world of humanity, an invasion that means that Jesus himself has stepped into human time and space. In the prologue John introduces us to the λόγος (“word”). As the subject of verse 14, “and the word became flesh and dwelt amongst us,” he reveals that the λόγος breaks into human history, altering it forever. Ridderbos points out, “The newness of this indwelling consists, of course, in the incarnation of the Word. It distinguishes itself from the divine indwelling operative up to that point by its totally different form of proximity—as that of one who permits himself to be seen and to be a member of society (cf. vss. 38, 39), to live among people as one of them.”<sup>27</sup> Christians were convinced that the eschaton had arrived in the person of Jesus and because of this the Christian community was reassured of the future completion of the eschatological salvation.<sup>28</sup>

In addition, the emphasis on the “hour” (of Jesus’ passion, death, resurrection, and ascension as the culminating hour in the long history of God’s dealings with humanity cf. 2:4; 8:20; 12:23 and so forth) as well as the repeated use of “now” (signifying the climax of Jesus’ mission, his victory over the devil and the world, his glorification and return to the Father cf. 4:23; 5:25; 12:31; 17:5; 16:5; 17:13) further defines Jesus’ centrality in salvation history.<sup>29</sup> As Stählin astutely points out “Already in this νῦν of the Fourth Gospel ... there is an awareness of being in transition, of being almost completely absorbed into the realization that in the Now of Christ the end, the consummation is present.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ladd, *Theology*, 268.

<sup>27</sup> Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (trans. John Vriend; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 51.

<sup>28</sup> Aune, *Cultic Setting*, 103.

<sup>29</sup> See Ladd, *Theology*, 268.

<sup>30</sup> G. Stählin, “νῦν,” *TDNT* 4:1106–1123.

The second major factor in John's understanding of this horizontal dimension of salvation has to do with the Holy Spirit. The coming of Jesus inaugurates a new form of worship, one that is mediated by the Holy Spirit himself (cf. John 4:23, 24). The Johannine Paraclete plays a crucial role, particularly in the third major section of the Gospel, the Book of Glory.<sup>31</sup> Referring to the close connection between the meaning and function of realized eschatology, Aune points out that "the present realization of eschatology is the primary way in which the Johannine community knew itself to be the corporate earthly representative of the exalted Jesus, constituted through the possession of his *alter ego*, the Spirit-Paraclete."<sup>32</sup> In his last discourse, Jesus prepares his disciples for his leaving, encouraging them with the fact that it would be brief, and that they would soon enter into a new relationship with him and with God the Father, through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Of grave importance is the crucial role the Holy Spirit would play in relation to the disciples and believers succeeding them after Jesus' departure. Speaking in the context of obedience to his commands, he promises another Paraclete from the Father in his place, a statement that suggests that Jesus is himself the first Paraclete (cf. 1 John 2:1) and that there is at least a preliminary indication of "a continuity between Jesus' pre- and postglorification ministry."<sup>33</sup> This continuation is successive rather than parallel. Indeed, the giving of the Paraclete is intimately tied to Christ's own death and exaltation (7:39; 14:15, 26; 15:26; 16:12). He is sent by both the Father and the Son (14:17, 26; 16:7) and comes to indwell believers uniting them to both the Father and the Son (14:15-20; 23) in a manner never experienced before.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> In terms of paradigmatic relations, John uses the two terms concentrated in the Farewell discourse ὁ παράκλητος ("the paraclete") and τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, ("the spirit of truth") to refer to the same thing, namely τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ("the Holy Spirit"). See Mburu, *Qumran*, 61–63.

<sup>32</sup> Aune, *Cultic Setting*, 134. While this article may not agree with Aune regarding the Johannine Community it nevertheless agrees with his conclusions regarding the Spirit-Paraclete.

<sup>33</sup> George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (2d ed.; WBC 36; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 256.

<sup>34</sup> However, while the reference in the epistle has a legal nuance, in this context where Jesus is in the midst of encouraging his disciples in view of his imminent departure, his role is clearly that of encourager or comforter.

The purpose clause of verse 16, “that he may be with you forever,” gives at least one reason behind the sending of the Paraclete – the permanent presence of the Spirit in the lives of believers.

In addition to the permanent indwelling he would also have the role of teaching the disciples and bringing to mind all that Jesus had taught them (cf. 14:26). At the present time, the disciple’s understanding was incomplete and what Jesus would teach them was limited by their ability to understand. This therefore necessitated that one come after him to provide a disclosure of his teaching. John also states: “and when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness and judgment,” a statement that clarifies the work of the Spirit in relation to the world (16:8). His role is therefore understood as that of continuing the work began by Jesus Christ in his earthly ministry as he guides us toward its consummation.<sup>35</sup> Keener points out the following crucial fact: “As in Paul, realized eschatology in the Fourth Gospel is inaugurated by Jesus’ presence and glorification, then realized and anticipated in believers’ experience through the Spirit (cf. Rom 8:11, 23; 1 Cor 6:14; 15:12-13; 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5).<sup>36</sup> Of note is the additional understanding that the Johannine Paraclete therefore serves as an assurance of present salvation and anticipates the eschatological future.

This horizontal aspect of salvation is a crucial element in understanding the relationship between what Jesus accomplished at his coming and what is yet to transpire in the future. It reflects two major factors: 1) The recognition of the centrality of Christ. 2) The crucial role of the Holy Spirit. These account for the tension between the already accomplished and the not yet consummated dimensions reflected in the horizontal aspect of salvation.

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<sup>35</sup> For a detailed discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit and its relation to the work began by Jesus Christ see Mburu, *Qumran*, 61–68.

<sup>36</sup> Keener, *John*, 1:323. He suggests that “It is even possible that John intentionally replaces most of the expectation of Jesus’ future coming in the Olivet discourse (prior tradition) with an emphasis on the Spirit’s coming to realize among the disciples the life of the new era.”

### C. The Johannine ὥρα: The Coming Age Already Broken into the Present

John clearly demonstrates his understanding of the coming age already broken into the present in his use of ὥρα. His emphasis on Jesus' hour has already been noted above. However, there is another use of ὥρα that is particularly significant by virtue of its linguistic combination. It is found in the phrase ἀλλὰ ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστίν (“but a time/hour is coming and now is”) in 4:23 and 5:25. This is a phrase that accurately captures the essence of the already-not yet motif in Johannine soteriology. In order to fully comprehend how ὥρα is used within this phrase, it is necessary to set it in its historical, literary, theological and semantic contexts. Particularly in cases where not just a word, but the concept it represents, is being determined (in this case the already-not yet concept), it is generally accepted that isolation of a word from its synonyms, antonyms and even figurative language connected with it leads to inadequate findings.<sup>37</sup>

What is this ὥρα to which Jesus refers, this ὥρα that “is coming and now is” in 4:23 and 5:25? The Jewish literature written around the time of the New Testament provides us with the most accurate data regarding usage of ὥρα in this instance, particularly where similar linguistic combinations exist.<sup>38</sup> In the New Testament, ὥρα generally refers to “the time set for something” (cf. Luke 14:17, Acts 3:1). In these instances, “hour” and “set time” were used synonymously. It also refers to “the divinely appointed time” with reference to the actualization of apocalyptic happenings (Rev 9:15; 14:7; 14:15). Particularly in Revelation 14:15, the linguistic combination is somewhat similar to 4:23 with the use of the verb ἔρχομαι (ὅτι ἦλθεν ἡ ὥρα θερίσαι). However in this case, w[ra is modified by the infinitive verb θερίσαι “to reap.” This combination

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<sup>37</sup> G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 42, notes that words and concepts only rarely coincide. Most words cover a variety of concepts, and all concepts are expressed by a complex assortment of synonyms and antonyms.

<sup>38</sup> The synchronic/descriptive approach focuses on the study of language within particular time frames, not on the developmental changes that take place over time. It is generally more reliable than a diachronic/historical one as it reflects the current usage of a word in certain linguistic combinations.

makes it clear that this reference is apocalyptic. Other references where the hour is defined by the content given to it include John 12:27 and Rev 3:10. Indeed in these contexts, “ὥρα can itself stand for this content.”<sup>39</sup>

Other uses for ὥρα specifically point to a set time for an action. For instance in John 7:30; 8:20; 13:1, a specific action of Jesus is in view. Here, the context makes it quite clear that “ὥρα” is given special significance only because it is linguistically linked to an action that Jesus himself performs. ὥρα also refers to the time appointed by God (John 12:23; 17:1; Mark 14:41; Luke 22:14). It can also refer generally to a fixed or measured time generally identified by the phrases ἐν τῇ ὥρᾳ ἐκείνῃ, ἀπὸ τῆς ὥρας ἐκείνης, αὐτῇ τῇ ὥρᾳ (cf. Matt 8:13; 9:22; 15:28; 17:18; Acts 16:18; 22:13; Mark 13:11; Matt 10:19; Luke 12:12) or even “at once” or “immediately” (cf. Rev 11:13; Luke 20:19; 24:33; 2:38; 7:21; Matt 26:55; Acts 16:33). Particularly with regard to the *parousia*, it is used to signify a section of the day or night (cf. Matt 25:13; Mark 13:32), daytime or nighttime (Matt 24:44; Luke 12:40). ὥρα also refers to a twelfth part of the day (cf. Matt 20:3, 5 f, 9; Mark 15:25, 33f; John 19:14; 1:39; 4:6, 52; Acts 2:15; 10:9; 23:23). In order to fully understand the phrase under study, ἀλλὰ ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστίν, one must grasp that the word ὥρα in its linguistic combination is very important.

This phrase is first found in the story of the woman from Samaria, recorded in the second section of the Gospel of John, the Book of Signs. Within this narrative, this same word is used three times. The first reference is in 4:6 when it is referring to the actual hour of the day (the sixth hour or noon); the second reference is in 4:21 when Jesus informs the woman of the change in locus of worship; the third reference is linked to 4:21—it further expounds on the new manner of worship ushered in by Jesus. Various translations in both verses render ὥρα as “hour” (NAU, NKJV, NJB) or “time” (NIV, NLT, NET). Although a number of translations make ὥρα definite i.e. “the hour” or “the time” (NJB, NKJV, NLT), it is more accurate to render it “an hour” or “a time” (NAU, NET, NIV) with the understanding that it is the linguistic combination within the entire

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<sup>39</sup> Delling, “ὥρα,” TDNT 9:675–81.

phrase as well as the historical and literary contexts that give it its definiteness.

As the narrative progresses, Jesus declares to her that a time/hour is coming when worship would no longer be centered on Mt. Gerizim or the Temple in Jerusalem (verse 21). This is indeed a shocking statement on at least two levels. 1) The temple played a significant role in the lives of the Israelites: it enabled them to fulfil their obligations e.g. offering first-fruits, tithes, wave offerings and obligatory sacrifices; it served as the place of worship and prayer and was the place in which study of the Torah was conducted and questions on legal tradition could be posed; it provided a place for Temple worship alongside the priests, as well as ritual cleansing with cleansing water.<sup>40</sup> For Jesus to suggest that its centrality in worship would become obsolete is therefore outrageous. 2) Samaritans venerated Mt. Gerizim as a holy mountain. Indeed, although they recognized the five books of Moses, they were suspected of being an idolatrous cult because of this.<sup>41</sup> During Ezra's time, they were forbidden to help build the temple in Jerusalem, causing them to set up their own temple on Mt. Gerizim. They never forgave the Jews for the insult. Jesus' statement is therefore fraught with serious implications.

The phrase that reflects the essence of Johannine already-not yet eschatology is found in 4:23. Beginning with the adversative conjunction, ἀλλά, Jesus states ἀλλὰ ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστίν, (“But a time/hour is coming and now is”). What is the distinguishing characteristic of this ὥρα that has burst in upon human history, irrevocably altering the status quo? Jesus identifies it as a time ὅτε οἱ ἀληθινοὶ προσκυνηταὶ προσκυνήσουσιν τῷ πατρὶ ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ (v 23b, “when the true worshipers will worship the Father in S/spirit and truth”). The phrase ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ presents us with at least two syntactical difficulties that relate to the functions of ἐν and καί. A likely explanation (albeit with some nuancing) that explains the use of both is related to the use of καί. Rather than

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<sup>40</sup> See S. Safrai, “The Temple,” In *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions* (ed. S. Safrai et al; CRINT 2; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 876–77.

<sup>41</sup> Köstenberger, *John, Acts*, 45.



having a coordinating function, καὶ may be exegetical; hence, “in S/spirit, that is to say, in truth.”<sup>42</sup> This avoids collapsing the two categories into one, and also reflects the close relationship between the two nouns. Another issue relates to the ambiguity in the use of πνεῦμα, which makes it difficult to determine whether ‘Spirit’ or ‘spirit’ is in mind. Since both may appropriately fit the context, it is likely that this ambiguity was intentional.

The phrase therefore reflects a manner of worship that engages one’s spirit as opposed to merely being in the right place, going through the right motions and displaying the right attitude. Whitacre points out that on one level, this may point to genuineness in worship, without hypocrisy and with integrity.<sup>43</sup> However, given the nature of the conversation thus far, John probably also intends a deeper meaning, one that incorporates the new reality Jesus offers, founded on the character of God and the identity of Christ.<sup>44</sup> Henceforth the locus of worship would change in light of the fact that Christ points to himself as the source of eternal life. Moreover, since God is spirit, he cannot be confined to any one particular place—neither the Temple in Jerusalem, nor Mt. Gerizim.

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<sup>42</sup> C. John Collins, “John 4:23–24, ‘In Spirit and Truth’: An Idiomatic Proposal,” *Presbyterion* 21/2 (1995): 118–21, esp. 120, points out that comparable instances of this structure are to be found in the New Testament only in Eph 5:9 and 1 Tim 2:7, with the latter being the only truly analogous instance (although even here it is not entirely clear whether an exegetical use is in view). Looking outside the New Testament, and including at least one εἰς phrase, he suggests that it might “be possible to propose a wider definition, whereby ἐν A καὶ B could be interpreted as “in A, that is to say in B,” when A and B are not synonymous and when the context favors seeing B as a comment on the activity done in manner A, rather than an additional item in a list. This seems to be the case in 2 Pet 3:7, and in Judith 7:25; and possibly 2 Pet 3:1; 1 Maccabees 3:51; Ben Sira 45:4.” One criticism against these examples is that while most are valid, the first two use nouns that appear to be synonymous. However, this does not weaken the proposal as the other examples conform to the pattern.

<sup>43</sup> Rodney A. Whitacre, *John* (IVP 4; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 106–107.

<sup>44</sup> Contra Edwin D. Freed, “The Manner of Worship in John 4:23f.,” in *Search the Scriptures: New Testament Studies in Honor of Raymond T. Stamm* (ed. J. M. Myers et al.; Leiden: Brill, 1969), 46–47, the focus in this phrase is not merely ethical, relating merely to the right attitude and practice as in Qumran.

This has crucial implications for realized eschatology in Johannine soteriology. Henceforth, true worshippers (and indeed readers of this Gospel for generations to come) would have the opportunity to engage in true worship – worship centered not on a place, but on a person. It is no accident that John deliberately places the cleansing of the temple at the very beginning of the Gospel (2:12-22). Both the time of the cleansing (Passover) and the event itself are significant. John interprets this as representing the Messiah's lordship over the temple, which will be destroyed and replaced by all that is represented in Jesus' resurrection (2:19-20).<sup>45</sup> This phrase therefore emphatically affirms that temple worship, both in Jerusalem and Samaria, is to be displaced by worship inspired by the Spirit. True worshippers are therefore not those who worship on Mt. Gerizim, or in Jerusalem, or even those of a particular ethnicity, but those who worship God out of the fullness of the supernatural life they *now* experience, whose basis is God's revelation to man, Jesus Christ himself.<sup>46</sup> This statement is therefore an indication that this period of worship is *now* present in Christ, the true temple. Both the manner and the locus of worship are henceforth to reflect this, a clear indication that the coming age has now broken into the present.

How does John intend the reader to understand ὥρα in this context? A number of significant facts shed light on this question. In this story: 1) Jesus has just broken crucial ethnic, social and gender barriers by having a conversation with this woman. 2) The unfolding conversation clearly shows that Jesus is seeing and speaking beyond the mere physical. 3) He offers living water which refers to the revelation that Jesus brings. 4) In one breath, he makes a radical statement that alters forever where and how true worship was to be performed. Clearly, then, it cannot possibly be referring to actual time as in a twelfth part of the day. Viewed from the perspective of the readers, Aune writes, "As the hallmark of the followers of Jesus, the possession of the Spirit together with the resultant charismatic

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<sup>45</sup> Ladd, *Theology*, 267.

<sup>46</sup> However, taking into consideration the two-tiered nature of the Gospel, it is evident that this understanding of worship being mediated by the Holy Spirit would only be apparent in the context of the readers, and not the original context of the conversation as it unfolded.

manifestations forms the basis of the new eschatological worship described in 4:23f . . . Here the coming hour is identical with “that day” on which Christians will pray in the name of Jesus (16:26).”<sup>47</sup> From a literary perspective, John has consciously plotted this narrative to show that certain crucial elements necessary for a shift in salvation history are now in place. While Carson and Borchert contend that ὥρα in this context refers to Christ’s glorification,<sup>48</sup> it is more likely, that the combination of the concept of the hour and the fact that he points out that this hour is now, emphasizes that Jesus points to the present reality of the new age.<sup>49</sup>

Let’s turn our attention to the other significant text in John that epitomizes this already-not yet eschatology: John 5:25 ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστὶν ὅτε οἱ νεκροὶ ἀκούσουσιν τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ οἱ ἀκούσαντες ζήσουσιν (“Truly, truly, I say to you, a time/hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live”). In this context, hearing goes beyond merely perceiving and includes also belief. Morris describes it as ‘taking heed’ or ‘hearing with appreciation,’ not just the audible function.<sup>50</sup> As in 4:23, the construction ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστὶν is a key phrase that effectively represents Johannine already-not yet eschatology.

The reader notes that John records the catalyst that prompted this response from Jesus (cf. 5:1-14). The incident is the healing of an invalid at the pool of Bethesda which later results in expressed hostility from the Jews. Interestingly, the man is unable to see past the water as his healing agent,<sup>51</sup> just as the woman at the well was

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<sup>47</sup> Aune, *Cultic Setting*, 104, points out that the statement in 4:23 was apparently made by the Johannine community in conscious opposition to contemporary Jewish worship which is viewed as invalid since its *raison d’etre* is not the possession and manifestation of the Spirit. Note that based on this article’s assumptions of authorship, it is not necessary to view this statement as coming from anyone other than John himself.

<sup>48</sup> See D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (PiNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 223; Borchert, *John*, 1:207.

<sup>49</sup> See also Ridderbos, *John*, 1:163; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 63; Brown, *John*, 1: 172; Moloney, *John*, 128.

<sup>50</sup> Morris, *John*, 282.

<sup>51</sup> See Ridderbos, *John*, 185.

unable to see past the physical water to recognize that it could not quench her spiritually. What provokes the hostile Jewish response to this incident is the fact that Jesus heals this man on the Sabbath. The Sabbath was an extremely important day in Judaism and was to be observed as a holy day (Exod 20:8-10; cf. 31:12-18; 35:1-3; Deut 5:12-15). There were many rules and regulations governing what one could or could not do on this special day and anyone who desecrated this day would be cut off (cf. Exod 31:15). The Sabbath therefore generated many controversies. In this instance, carrying a bed was explicitly forbidden in the Mishnah (*M. Shab.* 10.1-5) and had legal consequences. However, it must be noted that the man carried his mat not to challenge the Pharisees (and their interpretation of the Sabbath) but as a sign of victory, a clear demonstration of his healing.<sup>52</sup>

Jesus' justification for breaking the Sabbath (which is based on the fact that his Father is still at work; cf. 5:17) merely serves to aggravate the Jews even more. This verse is foundational for understanding the entire section. Carson points out that the only way in which Jesus' defense can be considered to be at all valid is if "the same factors that apply to God" also apply to Jesus. Therefore, because Jesus' works fall under the Father's works, Jesus is exonerated.<sup>53</sup> However, even worse than working on the Sabbath, they felt that Jesus sought to make himself equal to God by claiming a Father-son relationship. Certain translations strive to capture the force of the result participle ποιῶν with the addition of 'thus' (NET), 'so' (NJB), 'thereby' (NLT). Making oneself equal to God was very offensive to Jews and those who had done that (Hiram, Nebuchadnezzar, Pharaoh, and Joash) were not looked upon highly.<sup>54</sup> Harvey rightly argues that Jesus is not claiming honor or privilege, but is rather explaining that his actions are consistent with God's intentions. As God's accredited agent, he could not be charged. He writes, "it was an established rule that an agent, when acting on the authority of his principle, must be treated as his principal would be if

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>53</sup> Carson, *John*, 248.

<sup>54</sup> Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 256.

he were present.”<sup>55</sup> Moreover, as Borchert points out, Jesus’ point was that if God continued to work and Jesus merely continued the works of God, why shouldn’t his actions have been acceptable?<sup>56</sup>

Jesus begins his response to the accusations of the Jews with his characteristic phrase ἀμήν ἀμήν, used to introduce pronouncements made by him and reflecting his authoritative tone to various individuals and groups (cf. 3:3; 5, 11; 5:19; 8:24, 51, 58; 12:24; 13:6; 14:12; 21:18). The basis for Jesus’ confidence in making this assertion is provided in the four γάρ clauses found between verses 19 and 26: 1) Jesus does not act on his own initiative but faithfully continues the work of God (verse 19); 2) Jesus is dependent on his Father because his love for Jesus as his Son means that he shows him all that he does (verse 20); 3) Jesus has the authority to do exactly as his Father does (verse 21); 4) Jesus has life in himself, a power granted to him by God himself. In actual fact, since he accurately represents the Father and does all he does in obedience to his Father’s wishes, his witness should be understood as the witness of the Father. Köstenberger explains that “Jesus’ role as the sent son highlights both Jesus’ equality with the Father in purpose (and even nature) and his subordination to the Father in carrying out his mission: ‘it is a legal presumption that an agent will carry out his mission’ (*b. `Erub. 31b-32a*; cf. *b. Ketub. 99b*).”<sup>57</sup>

The context clearly delineates what ὥρα refers to. This is clarified by the paradigmatic relationships expressed in the literary context. The hour /time to which the text under study points (verse 25) is one in which the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and live. What does οἱ νεκροὶ (“the dead”) refer to? Is it merely physically dead people or does it refer to spiritual death? Although Borchert argues for the former, it is more likely that the reference is spiritual death.<sup>58</sup> Aune contends that this verse refers to the resurrection of Lazarus. He refers back to 14:12 and the mention of

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<sup>55</sup> A. E. Harvey, *Jesus on Trial: A Study in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1977), 91.

<sup>56</sup> Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1–11* (2 vols.; Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996, 2002), 1:236.

<sup>57</sup> Köstenberger, *John*, 188.

<sup>58</sup> See Borchert, *John*, 1: 240; contra Barrett, *John*, 262; Brown, *John*, 215, 219, who say it is “primarily” to spiritual death.

“greater works” arguing that these can refer to miraculous resuscitations. However, given the context, this verse most likely has a broader reference and while the ministry of the Son does not neglect the physical, the emphasis is generally on the spiritual. For instance, Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must experience spiritual rebirth (3:3) and the solution to the thirst of the woman at the well is spiritual (4:13). The entire plot of this gospel revolves around belief and unbelief, categories that in themselves point to spiritual transformation. This meshes seamlessly with the thought of verses 28 and 29 which emphasize future resurrection life. Moreover, although the thought of verse 25 is reflected in verse 28 (for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice), the latter is purely in the future and the mention of tombs points to a physical death. In addition, the aorist participle ἀκούσαντες suggests that the text is referring to those who at the time of writing have been “vivified by the word of Christ.”<sup>59</sup> Hence, while both a present and future sense may be intended in verse 25, the context suggests that the present is in the foreground, Jesus’ ministry being characterized by the giving of life in the here and now.<sup>60</sup>

With regard to semantic relationships in both 4:23 and 5:25, the ὥρα to which these texts refer is syntagmatically linked to the two phrases “when the true worshipers will worship the Father in S/spirit and truth” and “when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live” in a subordinate, qualificational, character, setting, time relationship.<sup>61</sup> This relationship is clarified by the subordinate clauses introduced by the conjunction ὅτε. The adverbial use of this conjunction in both cases is temporal reflecting the fact that the action expressed in the subordinate clause is dependent upon the ὥρα referred to in the main clause. In terms of

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<sup>59</sup> Barrett, *John*, 262.

<sup>60</sup> Morris, *John*, 282.

<sup>61</sup> The categories employed in this article to describe the semantic relationships are from Nida, *Exploring Semantic Structures*, 50–65; *Style and Discourse: With Special Reference to the Text of the Greek New Testament* (ed. E. A. Nida et. al.; Cape Town: Bible Society, 1983, 1991), 102–103. See the appendix for a full listing of categories. See D. F. Tolmie, “A Discourse Analysis of John 17:1–26,” *Neot 27* (1993):403–11, for a study that follows a somewhat similar approach to the analysis of the semantic content of language segments.

syntax, the verb ἔρχεται should be understood as mostly futuristic or ingressive-futuristic. Wallace points out that “The addition of καὶ νῦν ἐστὶν defines the coming hour as having already *partially* arrived.”<sup>62</sup> The syntax of these verses clearly reflects an already-not yet nuance. In addition, the general literary context of these two verses reflects the concept of the already-not yet. ὥρα therefore constitutes an eschatological marker that pertains to the end times inaugurated or realized by Jesus’ coming.<sup>63</sup>

#### **D. Eschatological Salvation in the Qumran Community**

As in the Gospel of John, there is no rigid division between the present age and the age to come: the eschatological dualism of the two ages was held in perfect tension. The Qumranites believed, and this is expressed in their literature, that eschatological salvation was not only a future certainty, but a present reality that was experienced in the active life of the community. Aune notes that we can attribute a variety of realized eschatology to them because unlike a large segment of late Judaism, the Qumran community believed in the active presence of the Spirit within their community.<sup>64</sup>

In his work, Kuhn effectively shows that the activity of the Spirit was predominantly limited to the past and the future in rabbinic, apocryphal and pseudepigraphical Jewish literature. This is in contrast to the Qumran community whose consciousness of the Spirit of God in their community reflected the fact that eschatological salvation had already entered the present age in the history and experience of the community. Kuhn identifies texts such as 1QH 3:19-36, 1QH 11:3-14; 1QH 11:15 and following, and 1QH 15 which demonstrate a realized eschatology experienced by those qualified to be a part of the community. His thesis is that even while the Qumran community still

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<sup>62</sup> That is, an event begun in the present time but completed in the future. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 537.

<sup>63</sup> Köstenberger, *John*, 155.

<sup>64</sup> Aune, *Cultic Setting*, 103. Similarly with regards to the Gospel of John he points out “The necessity of reading the Fourth Gospel against the background of first century Judaism both in its orthodox and heterodox forms and presuppositions means that it is also necessary to view the belief of the Johannine community in their present possession of the Spirit as an indication of the radical distinction which existed between them and contemporary Judaism.”



held to the future expectation that characterized Jewish apocalyptic expectation, they nevertheless experienced eschatological salvation in the present. He identifies the following “eschatological acts” from 1QH 11.3-14 and 1QH 3.19-36 which characterize the present life and experience of the community: 1) Resurrection (11:12). 2) New creation (3:21; 11:13). 3) Communion with angels (3:21-23; 11:13f). 4) Deliverance from the final power of the realm of death (3:19). 5) Proleptic eschatological transference to heaven (3:20). Other aspects of this eschatological salvation include characteristics such as forgiveness of sins, joy, peace and the end of sorrow (cf. 1QH 3:21, 23; 11:10, 14, 15ff.; 15:15-17) with the final prayer in 1QH 11:33 clarifying that the blessings of eschatological salvation are to be understood in the context of the present experience of the author (“Thou hast done all these things!”).<sup>65</sup> The present experience of eschatological salvation is undeniable in the Qumran community.

A major aspect of this present experience of eschatological salvation is to be found in the identity of the community. Their understanding of their unique identity characterized the present life and experience of the community, bringing the future age into the present. 1QS 8.1-9.26 provides us with an understanding of the reason for the community’s existence (cf. 8.13-16; 9.19-20), and why its original members felt compelled to separate themselves from the rest of Israel and retire to the wilderness. Barrera notes that the rejection of the temple at Jerusalem, as well as worship celebrated there, was one of the most distinctive characteristics of the Qumran community. However, lest the nature of this antagonism be misunderstood, it must be emphasized that the Qumranites were not opposed to sacrifices and the cult. Rather, considering themselves to be the legitimate successors of the priesthood and the ‘true Israel,’ they disagreed with the priests of Jerusalem on the issue of the calendar of Feasts and accused them of betraying the laws of purity. This break with the

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<sup>65</sup> For a thorough exegetical discussion see Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, *Enderwartung und gegenwärtiges Heil: Untersuchungen zu den Gemeindeliedern von Qumran* (Studien zur Umwelt des Nuen Testaments, Bd. 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966). Where Kuhn is referenced, this study leans heavily on Aune’s analysis of Kuhn’s work. Aune, *Cultic Setting*, 31–44.

priesthood was the main reason for their withdrawal into the desert.<sup>66</sup> Other reasons include a particular way of understanding the prescriptions relating to the temple as well as the conviction of the imminence of the end of days. However, even though they had broken away from the establishment and had no means of offering sacrifices, they still regarded themselves as the ‘temple of God’ (Cf. 4Q174 [4QFlor] and the Temple Scroll). They therefore intended, “to start the history of Israel afresh, beginning with its roots in the desert and especially to prepare in the desert the path of the Lord by means of the study of the Law” (cf. 1QS 8.13-15; Temple Scroll 12). They believed that only they had the solution. As further evidence of their perceived exalted status, the authors emphasize the central role that the community played in atoning for the sins of the entire nation of Israel (8.3-10; 9.3-6; cf. 5.5-6). This atonement involved both living a righteous life as well as enduring suffering (8.3-4).<sup>67</sup>

In addition, those that formed part of this community believed themselves “to be living in the true city of God, the city of the Covenant built on the Law and the Prophets (cf. CD 7.13-18).”<sup>68</sup> These members are identified in 1QS 1.9 as בני אור (“sons of light”), the sect’s self-designation and a term almost always unique to Qumran theology. Leaney comments with regard to this term and its connection to the creation doctrine, “The sun was a light for the earth, Israel for mankind. It was therefore natural that those who believed themselves chosen to renew the Israel specially called by God should regard entrance upon membership of their sect as entrance into the covenant, should venerate the ‘greater light’ and should designate themselves ‘sons of light.’”<sup>69</sup> In addition, it is because they were

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<sup>66</sup> Julio Trebelle Barrera, “The Essenes of Qumran: Between Submission to the Law and Apocalyptic Flight,” in *The People of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Writings, Beliefs and Practices* (ed. Florentino García Martínez and Julio Trebelle Barrera; trans. Wilfred G.E. Watson; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 65.

<sup>67</sup> A. R. C. Leaney, *The Rule of Qumran and its Meaning* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 213–14.

<sup>68</sup> Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (rev. ed. London: Penguin Books, 2005), 71.

<sup>69</sup> Leaney, *Rule of Qumran*, 80.

“doers of the Torah” that they could apply this name to themselves.<sup>70</sup> ‘Sons of light’ were expected to demonstrate a pure way of life that had the atoning purpose of laying a foundation of truth for the house of truth in Israel (1QS 5.5, 6; cf. 8.5ff.).

The community was also to function as “a house of perfection and truth in Israel” (1QS 8.9-10). Given that this community believed that they were “recreating” Israel, these phrases identify it as “a cleansing community which purifies those who join it by absorbing them into its life . . . in Qumran men are regarded as effecting atonement when they observe those conditions of repentance and purification which bring them within the atonement which God alone, properly speaking, provides.”<sup>71</sup> Various contexts in the Rule and the scrolls in general attest to the community’s self-understanding as the ‘house of truth.’ Leaney, quoting Vermes writes, “The Temple of Jerusalem, fallen into the hands of wicked priests, was to be considered defiled (CD6.11-20; 1QpHab 12.7-9) until its purification at the return of the sons of Zadok in the last days. The War Scroll prophesies that this capital event will occur in the seventh year of the eschatological war against the sons of darkness (1QM 2.1-7). In the meanwhile, the council of the community is the one true sanctuary in which God is to be worshipped.”<sup>72</sup> In addition, by pointing out that the community is also a foundation of truth, the authors emphasize that it therefore constitutes the foundation from which the new Israel will arise, a foretaste of the coming blessings. Clearly, their understanding of their identity reflected their belief that the coming age had already broken into the present.

A key doctrine of the community, expressed in 1QS 3.13-4.26, reflects a dualism that expresses the nature of the relationship between the present era and the eschaton. The present era is characterized by a conflict between the two ways. This doctrine of two ways is not unique to the sect. It is also found in

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. 1QpHab 7.10–12. Otto Betz, *Offenbarung und Schriftforschung in der Qumransekte* (WUNT 6; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1960), 54.

<sup>71</sup> Leaney, *Rule of Qumran*, 168. Cf. men effecting atonement 3.6; 8.6; God effecting atonement 2.8; 11.14; CD 2.4f.; 3.18; 4.6f.; 14.19; 20.34.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 214, quoting Geza Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1961), 32 and following on 8.5ff.

pseudepigraphical and early Christian literature.<sup>73</sup> The depiction of this struggle is also reflected in Rabbinic literature which taught that every person had two tendencies in him, the good and the evil tendency, which both struggled for dominion in the person. Of note is the fact that in Qumran, the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Belial are juxtaposed with the latter ruling over the present era (cf. 1QS 2:19; 1QM 14:9). However, unlike more traditional eschatology, God's domination was not limited to the eschaton but found expression in the everyday experience of the community. Like all Jewish groups, God, the creator of all, was the starting point of the belief system of this sect (3.15b; cf. 1QHa 18.8-11; 9.7-20). The authors write: "He created man to rule the world and placed within him two spirits so that he would walk with them until the moment of his visitation: they are the spirits of truth and of deceit" (1 QS 3.18b-19). The surrounding context indicates that the relationship between the two spirits is one of opposition (4.23). They are further described in the metaphorical language of light and darkness equating 'truth' with 'light' and 'deceit' with 'darkness.' (3.25). These spirits derive from the *במעין אור* ("spring/fountain/source of light") and the *חושך וּמַמְקוֹר* ("spring/ fountain/source of darkness") respectively (3.20-21).

Charlesworth identifies seven key features of the dualism expressed here: it is a modified dualism, because both spirits are subjugated to one God, and the existence of the spirit of perversity is limited; it is primarily explained in terms of the light vs. darkness paradigm; it is an ethical dualism; it is combined with an absolute determinism; it is a dualism that attributes responsibility for evil to God; it is an eschatological dualism with present and future rewards and punishments; and it is ultimately a cosmic dualism, although the struggle is centered in man.<sup>74</sup> In a later study, he isolated what he

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<sup>73</sup> Note the Two Ways tradition; cf. *Barn.* 18–20; *Did.* 1–6; *Herm.* 6; *Sir* 33; 42; *Jub.* 7–12; *1 En.* 2–5; 41–48; *T. 12 Patr.* (*T. Jud.* 20:1–4, *T. Ash.* 1:3 ff., 3–6; *T. Benj.* 4:1 ff.); Light and darkness representing powers or spheres to which men belong (*2 En.* 30.15; *T. Naph.* 2.10; *T. Levi* 19.1); being or causing ethical qualities (*T. Levi.* 17.6f.; *T. Benj.* 5.2; 6.4; *T. Gad* 5.7).

<sup>74</sup> He notes that while recognizing the cosmic dimension of this dualism, J. Jeremias isolates only three main characteristics: the dualism is monotheistic, ethical and eschatological. James H. Charlesworth, "A Critical Comparison of the [Footnote continued on next page ... ]

termed the *termini technici* associated with this dualism, that then form an identifiable paradigm.<sup>75</sup> What this paradigm does is explain the human condition and the fact that all people do evil because of the angel of darkness (1QS 3.22).

These two opposing figures, the spirits of truth and deceit, can be interpreted both macrocosmically, as angelic beings, as well as microcosmically (i.e. psychologically), constituting spiritual dispositions in each person. This tension has been explained thus: Some scholars see the two angels as personifications of the two spirits, hence they have only anthropological significance; others see the two spirits as people in microcosmic manifestations of a supernatural macrocosmic conflict.<sup>76</sup> The first view therefore emphasizes the conflict within mankind such that the two spirits represent opposing forces that struggle to find dominant expression in every human being. The second view emphasizes the conflict in the cosmos. The textual support points to both a macrocosmic as well as a microcosmic dualism (where the spiritual forces within each person correspond to the ‘spirit of truth’ and the ‘spirit of deceit’). While both the Damascus Document and the Rule have this macrocosmic dualism, only the dualism of the Rule involves good and evil.<sup>77</sup> This dualism is also represented in the War Scroll, but there, the representation of this dualism is not psychological or individual but points to the eschatological war between Michael and his angels (the sons of light) and Belial and his angels (the sons of darkness). And where they might share a cosmic dualism, different aspects are

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Dualism in 1QS 3:13–4:26 and the ‘Dualism’ Contained in the Gospel of John,” in *John and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Crossroads, 1991), 88–89.

<sup>75</sup> James Charlesworth, “A Study in Shared Symbolism and Language” in *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls: The Second Princeton Symposium on Judaism and Christian Origins* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; 3 vols.; Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 3:97–152 esp. 116.

<sup>76</sup> For an overview of these discussions, see John R. Levison, “The Two Spirits in Qumran Theology,” in *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls: The Second Princeton Symposium on Judaism and Christian Origins* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; 3 vols.; Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 2: 169–194.

<sup>77</sup> See David E. Aune, “Dualism in the Fourth Gospel and the Dead Sea Scrolls: A Reassessment of the Problem,” in *Neotestamentica et Philonica: Studies in Honor of Peder Borgen* (ed. David E. Aune et. al.; NovTSup 106; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 294.

emphasized in the two works.<sup>78</sup> The pertinent point is that in this present era a struggle between light and darkness is experienced at every level.

How was eschatological salvation experienced in the present age? This community was to be characterized by deliberate effort toward ethical perfection in all things, as well as an inner submission to, and an outward manifestation of, the requirements of the Law. Ethical perfection (cf. CD 7.5; 10.6) was synonymous with keeping every aspect of the Law.<sup>164</sup> This resulted in rewards in the present age. All those under the dominion of the שר אורים (“prince/leader/chief of lights”) were to live lives characterized by uprightness and integrity. This was only possible because God and the “angel of his truth” assisted the members of the community in the here and now in order that they might have victory over the רוח הערל (“spirit of deceit”; cf. 3.24-25). On the other hand corruption, sins, iniquities, guilt and offensive deeds were under the dominion of the מלאך חושך (“angel of darkness”), which is an alternate term for the ‘spirit of deceit’ (3.19b-20). Charlesworth rightly argues that there is no parallel in John’s Gospel to the latter. However, the clear reference to τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς πλάνης (“spirit of error/delusion/deception”) in the epistle (cf. 1 John 4:6) must be considered when discussing use in the Gospel and connections with the *Rule*.<sup>79</sup>

In this community, where the members devoted themselves in strict obedience to the Teacher’s interpretation of the Law, the ‘spirit of truth’ was seen as dominant. This conflict between the present era and the age to come would only be resolved by the visitation of God (cf. 1QS 3.18). The authors end by cataloguing the present and eschatological rewards for all those who walk according to the ‘spirit of truth’, for whom a crown of glory awaits (4.6b-8). This list, which is reminiscent of Old Testament ideals, enumerates positive defining

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<sup>78</sup> See Richard Bauckham, “The Qumran Community and the Gospel of John,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Fifty Years after their Discovery* (ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman et. al.; Proceedings of the Jerusalem Congress, July 20–25, 1997; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society in cooperation with The Shrine of the Book, Israel Museum, 2000), 108; Sarianna Metso, *The Textual Development of the Qumran Community Rule* (ed. Florentino García Martínez and A. S. Van Der Woude; STDJ 21; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 137.

<sup>79</sup> Charlesworth, “Dualism in 1QS,” 98–100,

characteristics that result from the direct influence of the ‘spirit of truth’, and includes amongst other things character traits such as meekness, patience, generous compassion, eternal goodness, trust in God and dependence on his mercy, love for members of the community, a concealment of the truths revealed to the community, and so forth. The rewards for those who walk in this way of truth include healing, plentiful peace in a long life, fruitful offspring with all everlasting blessings, eternal enjoyment with endless life and a crown of glory with majestic raiment in eternal light (cf. 1QS 4.6c-8). The blessings of eschatological salvation are clearly both earthly as well as eternal, reflecting the experience of salvation both in the present era and in the era to come.

The experience of the age to come in the present era can therefore be attributed to the following: 1) The community was conscious of the active presence of the Spirit of God. 2) This community had a unique identity which characterized the present life of the community, bringing the future age into the present. 2) In light of the existing microcosmic and macrocosmic dualism, rewards in the present age were experienced by allowing the ‘spirit of truth’ to function in the lives of the members as he should.

### **E. Contribution of Qumran**

There is evidence that in his writing, John was influenced by Qumran language and symbolism at various points, particularly in his use of truth terminology.<sup>80</sup> With regard to the present experience of eschatological salvation, the involvement of the Spirit in worship is clearly emphasized in both the Gospel of John and the Qumran literature. While the linguistic combination ‘worship in spirit and truth’ (cf. John 4:24) does not occur in the Qumran literature, there is nevertheless a close relationship between John and Qumran with regard to the role of the Spirit in worship. Brown writes,

Schnackenburg, “Anbetung,” has shown how the close connection between spirit and truth in the Qumran writings offers some interesting parallels to John’s thought. At Qumran in an eschatological context God pours forth His spirit on the sectarians and thus purifies them for His service. This spirit is the spirit of truth in the sense that it instructs the sectarians in divine knowledge, that is, the observance of the Law insisted on at Qumran (1 QS iv 19-22). The purity thus

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<sup>80</sup> See Mburu, *Qumran*.



obtained turns the community into the temple of God, ‘a house of holiness for Israel, and assembly of the Holy of Holies for Aaron’ (viii 5-6, ix 3-5). We may well have here the background making intelligible Jesus’ remarks about worship in Spirit and truth replacing worship at the Temple.<sup>81</sup>

However, it must be noted that “in contrast with the belief in early Christianity, the Qumran community still looked forward to the miraculous giving of the Spirit in a more complete form at the visitation of Yahweh (1QS 4:20-22).<sup>82</sup>

A second similarity that has to do with the present experience of worship is found in the expectations regarding the temple. Like the prophets before them, the Qumranites were dissatisfied with temple practices and looked forward to a replacement temple, an expected eschatological temple that would satisfy their standards of purity. This expectation is also expressed in the Gospel. However, while the expectation in the *Rule* is of another physical temple, the Gospel points to Jesus himself as the spiritual replacement. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which the temple was regarded by the Qumranites as spiritual (present in the community itself) as well as physical (a future reality).<sup>83</sup> Both the Gospel and the *Rule* therefore recognize that the temple extends beyond physical realities with a significantly different manner of worship being expected in the present era. The crucial difference is that in the Gospel, this reality is found in the person of Christ and not the community of believers. In addition, while worship in the Qumran community involved ritual purity, this requirement is absent in John and so there are some obvious differences. Even given these, the use of the phrase ‘in spirit and truth’ more closely approximates the Qumran understanding of the presence and function of the Spirit in cultic worship. The present experience of eschatological salvation as well as the expectation of a future consummation is undeniable in both corpora.

Both in John and Qumran the contrast between light and darkness is presented within the context of a modified dualism with

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<sup>81</sup> Brown, *John*, 1:181.

<sup>82</sup> Aune, *Cultic Setting*, 35.

<sup>83</sup> This both/and position is ably defended by G. J. Brooke, *Exegesis at Qumran: 4QFlorilegium in the Jewish Context* (JSOTSup 29; Sheffield: JSOT, 1985).

certain technical terms that appear to be shared by both documents.<sup>84</sup> Both the dualism and the terminology are shared by John and Qumran, and both these documents make use of the symbolism of light and darkness to communicate this dualistic relationship. This is particularly evident in the vertical dimension of Johannine soteriology. Of additional significance is the absence of the expressions ‘sons of light’ and ‘sons of darkness’ in the Old Testament and in Rabbinic literature.<sup>85</sup> This at least raises the possibility that John may have acquired this terminology from the Qumran linguistic matrix. Metso raises the question of whether the dualistic ideas can be explained through the affinities with the Old Testament (e.g. Gen 1-3; Num 27:16; 1 Sam 10:10; 16:14-16; 1 Kgs 22:21-23; 2 Kgs 19:7), with other Qumranic writings (e.g. 1QM, some psalms of 1QH), or even as a reflection of the beliefs of some Jewish and pre-Christian circles (e.g. Jub. 7-12; Sir 33; 42; 1 En. 2-5; 41-48; T. 12 Patr., e.g. T. Jud. 20:1-4, T. Ash. 1:3 ff., 3-6; T. Benj. 4:1 ff.); or even some early Christian writings, and concludes that these do not reflect as great a parallel as does 1QS.<sup>86</sup> Hence while those who affirm an influence from the Hebrew Bible and general Jewish tradition are largely accurate, this does not in itself rule out the conclusion that John used the Qumran model to conceptualize this eschatological dualism of the two ages.

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<sup>84</sup> Charlesworth, “Shared Symbolism and Language,” 3:132–33, identifies the following shared vocabulary: in the light of life (1QS 3.7)/the light of life (8:12); and they shall walk in the ways of darkness (1QS 3.21; cf. 4.11)/and who shall walk in the darkness (12:35; cf. 8:12); the furious wrath of the God of vengeance (1QS 4.2–3)/the wrath of God (3:36); blindness of eyes (1QS 4.11)/the eyes of the blind (10:21); in the fullness of his grace (1QS 4.4; cf. 4.5)/full of grace (1:14); the works of God (1QS 4.4)/the works of God (6:28; 9:3). However, one should not assume that Charlesworth is saying that the Gospel of John is virtually a Qumran composition. He states clearly with regard to his conception of how these similarities came about that Johannine dualism was not unreflectively borrowed from the Qumranites, but incorporated into the Gospel of John via the “prismatic Christian kerygma.” See also Moody Smith on this similar dualistic theological vocabulary. D. Moody Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 16.

<sup>85</sup> Barrera, “The Essenes of Qumran,” 214.

<sup>86</sup> Metso, *Textual Development*, 138.

A significant difference, however, is that the Qumran community viewed darkness as disobedience to the Law, whereas John understood darkness in terms of the rejection of Jesus Christ, who is himself the light. Another important distinction is that whereas the Gospel calls people to believe in the light, the scrolls assume that the members of the community are already in the light.<sup>87</sup> In addition, it should be noted that whereas the *Rule* reflects a conflict between two spirits, John describes a conflict that is between the world and its ruler, children of light and children of darkness. These are not two spirits ruling over two distinct classes of people, but rather all are human beings in darkness, who are invited to come into the light, by the Light himself, Jesus Christ. Moreover, the psychological function of the two spirits warring in an individual is not represented in John. This is unlike the Synoptic Gospels which frequently speak of demon possession and exorcisms. The coming of the light also represents a realized eschatology that is not reflective of Qumran theology.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, even given these differences, the very conflict itself, the present and future rewards and punishment, the use of the light/darkness imagery and the expression ‘sons of light’ are illuminated by the Rule’s use within a similar dualistic paradigm.

This is not to say that John depended entirely on the Qumran conception of realized eschatology in his own understanding. However, in this instance, clear parallels exist with regard to 1) The role of the Spirit in cultic worship. 2) The expectation surrounding the temple. 3) The dualism expressed in both corpora.

### Conclusion

This tension between the already accomplished and the not yet consummated aspects of salvation must be accepted as a characteristic feature of the fourth Gospel. As Keener points out “Documents like the Fourth Gospel and the Qumran *Hymns* might stress realized eschatology without much emphasis on future eschatology, yet be employed without contradiction by the communities that also used Revelation and the *War Scroll*. If the communities envisioned no

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<sup>87</sup> Köstenberger, *John*, 387.

<sup>88</sup> Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*, 271.

contradiction, it is likewise possible that the authors themselves envisioned no contradiction.”<sup>89</sup>

Clearly, then, John never intended to present salvation in his Gospel as a completed event. Johannine soteriology clearly expresses both realized as well as futuristic elements. The presentation of this realized eschatology demonstrates that given John’s particular authorial intent, his concept of soteriology has been influenced by four crucial factors:

1. His understanding of salvation as being paradoxical in nature: exhibiting a reconcilable tension between realized and futurist dimensions. This seeming paradox arises for two reasons: 1) The event of the divine intervention of Jesus Christ in human history which necessarily means that his salvific work must have an impact with regard to present existence. 2) John wrote from two standpoints—both before and after the resurrection.
2. His understanding of salvation as having both horizontal and vertical dimensions, both displaying dualistic elements. The horizontal aspect of salvation is a crucial element in understanding the relationship between what Jesus accomplished at his coming and what is yet to transpire in the future. It reflects two major factors: 1) The recognition of the centrality of Christ and 2) The crucial role of the Holy Spirit. These account for the tension between the already accomplished and the not yet consummated dimensions.
3. His understanding of the coming age already broken into the present expressed in his use of ὥρα in the phrase ἀλλὰ ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστίν (“but a time/hour is coming and now is”) found in 4:23 and 5:25. In these two contexts, ὥρα constitutes an eschatological marker that pertains to the end times inaugurated or realized by Jesus’ coming.
4. The Qumran conception of eschatological salvation which evidences a tension between the present age and the one to come. The experience of the age to come in the present era can be attributed to the following: 1) The community was conscious of the active presence of the Spirit of God. 2) This community had a

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<sup>89</sup> Keener, *John*, 1:323-24.

unique identity which characterized the present life of the community, bringing the future age into the present. 3) In light of the existing microcosmic and macrocosmic dualism, rewards in the present age were experienced by allowing the ‘spirit of truth’ to function in the lives of the members as he should. In both John and Qumran, clear parallels exist with regard to the role of the Spirit in cultic worship, the expectation surrounding the temple and the dualism expressed in both corpora.

As noted in the introduction, John allows both realized and futuristic aspects but given his particular authorial intent, his primary emphasis is on the realized. John does this so that readers might understand that this salvation that Christ brings is both a foretaste as well as an assurance that what has been promised will indeed come to fruition.

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