

God's Incarnate Son as the Embodiment of Last Day Resurrection: Eternal Life as Justification in John's Gospel

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INTRODUCTION

Long ago Rudolf Bultmann argued that Jesus' activity as "Revealer of God" is the eschatological event, "*the judgment of the world.*"¹ Thus, Jesus' advent and departure constitute the last day so that resurrection and judgment are "now present in the word of revelation" he brings.² Thus, "the 'coming' eschatological hour, which men had hoped for at the end of time, is declared to be already present, for it is the hour in which the Word of the Revealer is heard. It is the hour of the resurrection of the dead."³ Consequently, the

last day has already arrived so that it “is not a dramatic cosmic event which is yet to come and which we must still await. Rather the mission of the Son, complete as it is in his descent and exaltation, is the judgement.”⁴ For Ernst Käsemann, Bultmann’s student, emphasis upon the presence of last day resurrection prompts him to suggest at one point that John’s Gospel reflects the error of Hymenaeus and Philetus who taught that the resurrection has already occurred (2 Tim 2:17-18).⁵

A generation before Bultmann, evangelical theologian Herman Bavinck more evenhandedly observed, “For Christ is the Son of Man who already precipitated a crisis by his appearance, continues it in history, and completes it at the end of time. Their relation to him decides the eternal weal or woe of human beings.”⁶ While Bavinck affirms that with his first advent the Son of God already commences the last day, unlike Bultmann’s interpretation of John, he does not jettison belief that Christ shall come a second time to execute final judgment in accord with the verdicts already announced in the good news of his incarnation. While John’s Gospel stresses inauguration of last day resurrection and judgment with the incarnation of God’s Son, he insists that resurrection and judgment will yet take place on the last day.

Consequently, though evangelical New Testament exegetes acknowledge that within John’s Gospel advance announcement of the last day figures prominently, they subscribe to Bavinck’s reading of the Gospel over against Bultmann’s contrived reading.⁷ Not even C. H. Dodd, a renowned advocate of “realized eschatology,” accepts Bultmann’s claim that an “ecclesiastical redactor” attempted to domesticate its “dangerous statements” by inserting John 5:28-29.⁸ So, Andreas Köstenberger rightly observes, “in an important sense, God’s judgment was already brought about by the light’s coming into the world in the incarnation of the Son (1:14). This coming of the light into the world, in turn, confronts people everywhere with the decision of whether to embrace the light or to go into hiding and persist in darkness.”⁹ He explains further that all who reject God’s Son incur divine judgment, but all who believe in him “escape judgment already in the here and now (5:24), though the final judgment awaits the end of time (5:28-29).”¹⁰

Since Bultmann, Käsemann, and Dodd, interpreters have “variously agreed with, disagreed with or modified” their views.¹¹ Evenhanded acceptance of the tension John’s Gospel poses by portrayal of the last day’s advance arrival with the advent of the Son of God remains a challenge. For the temptation

is either to suppress or to overstate the ramifications of the last day's arrival. With the incarnation of God's Son two concomitant and inseparable but distinguishable acts of God that belong to the last day even now penetrate the present.¹² Because Jesus is the Son of God, the Father gives "all judgment" to him and authorizes him to have "life in himself" (5:22, 26-27). Thus, his mission sweeps forward the verdicts of divine judgment from the last day. So, the incarnate Word now issues the advance announcement of God's last day verdict of judgment—everyone who believes "is not condemned," but whoever does not believe "is condemned already" (3:16-19; 5:21-29).¹³

Several crucial expressions—to live, life, eternal life, to be raised from the dead, to be given life, resurrection, judgment, condemnation—collocate in the Book of Signs (John 1-12). They feature the advent of God's Son as activating the divine verdict of the last day ahead of its time in continuity with resurrection of life or resurrection of condemnation (5:29). John's Gospel presents eternal life as a foretoken of the life of the coming age entered through resurrection. As such, receipt of eternal life is parallel to and concomitant with justification before God, which, though not expressed with *δικαίω* and *δικαίωσις*, is announced emphatically by means of *lito-*tes—"are not condemned"/"do not come into condemnation"—meaning, "are most assuredly justified."¹⁴ Thus, Jesus' advent *already* portends and bequeaths the initial phases of the *not yet* final verdicts of the impending last day. Though "eternal life" is not inherently a judicial category, within John's Gospel *receipt of or entrance into* life of the coming age is tantamount to receiving justification. Particularly, as Jesus enfolds "does not come into condemnation" with "has eternal life" and "has passed from death to life," he renders the three expressions equivalent in effect. So, now to receive the life Jesus gives from himself as God's incarnate Son is akin to receiving in advance the last day's divine verdict of justification. This is so because to give eternal life now is Christ's performative-declarative speech-act by which he grants the foretoken "resurrection of life" (*ἀνάστασις ζωῆς*, 5:29), the verdict of final judgment that stands opposite "resurrection of condemnation" (*ἀνάστασις κρίσεως*, 5:29), which already in foretoken form remains upon all who disobey God's Son (3:36). Advance receipt of eternal life as the divine verdict of the last day signals continuous possession of eternal life now and in the age to come, for to have this life now provides recipients assurance of resurrection of life on the last day.¹⁵

THE INTERSECTION OF SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL DUALITIES

A distinguishing trait of the Fourth Gospel is its spatial duality (earth/heaven, world/not of this world, earthly things/heavenly things) that intersects a temporal one (an hour is coming and now is).¹⁶ While the Synoptic Gospels depict the age to come as remote yet coming, John's Gospel weaves together threads of spatial and temporal dualities which form an intricate pattern that features the immanence of last day resurrection and judgment signified by Jesus' miracles and accompanying discourses in preparation for his imminent "hour" of being glorified on earth paradoxically through death. Accented is the inauguration of the coming age's advent with the incarnation of God's Son who comes from heaven (3:13), who makes known the Father (1:18), and who embodies the powers of the coming age both to raise the dead (11:25) and to commence judgment (9:39; cf. 5:21-27). Essential to this temporal theme is the variegated thread that features the hour the Son of Man is to be glorified as the Passover Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.¹⁷ This temporal theme first appears in Jesus' reply to his mother's request at a wedding, "my hour has not yet come" (2:4). It reappears with recurrence to emphasize already commenced effects of the hour's imminence when Jesus says "the hour is coming and now is" (e.g., 4:23; 5:25; 16:32). The initial form of the temporal theme, first spoken by Jesus, reemerges when the narrator twice explains Jesus' eluding hostile capture by saying "his hour had not yet come" (7:30; 8:20) and later when he announces that Jesus "knew that his

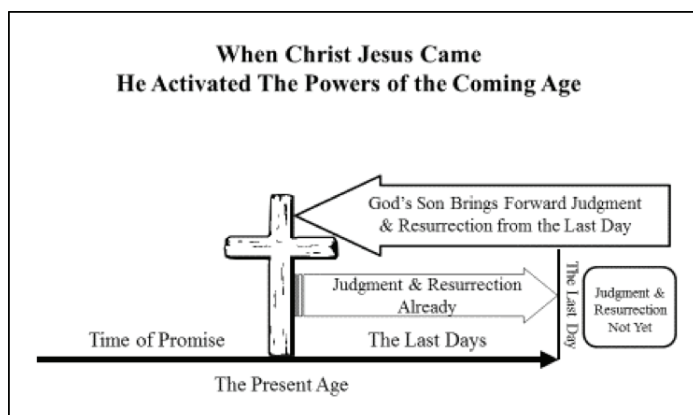


Figure 1

hour had come" (13:1) followed by Jesus' public declaration, "the hour has come that the Son of Man is to be glorified" (12:23, 27), and then private prayer, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your son" (17:1).

In this manner, John's Gospel features the incarnation of the glorious and unique Son "who came from the Father" (1:14) as the one in whom resides the powers of the coming age so that with his advent he already sweeps forward resurrection and judgment from the last day into the present age (see Fig. 1). Thus, Jesus discloses most vividly the last day's spatial presence (immanence) and temporal presence (imminence) in his crucifixion and resurrection, but he also dramatizes the presence of resurrection and judgment through his signs and their accompanying discourses.

ACTED PARABLES AND PERFORMATIVE DISCOURSES

One aspect that distinguishes John's Gospel from the Synoptics is absence of a parable discourse. Yet, this hardly means that it is devoid of parables (e.g., John 2:19; 3:8; 9:4; 11:9, 10; 12:24). Given the range of meaning παραβολή bears throughout the LXX to translate *māšāl*, it is reasonable to identify Jesus' discourses in John's Gospel as entailing proverbial, paradoxical, and riddle-like sayings as parables, even if παραβολή occurs nowhere in the Gospel, though a synonym, ἡ παροιμία, does occur (10:6; 16:25, 29).¹⁸ For example, the evangelist essentially tells readers that Jesus' saying, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" (2:19-22), is a riddle, an enigma laden with significance designed to provoke response. Likewise, John portrays Jesus' miracles as *signs* (σημεῖα) that analogically signify realities of greater significance. Both Jesus' signs and the discourses that enshroud them are parabolic, for both portray heavenly things with earthly analogies (3:12-13).

Thus, each of Jesus' seven signs are acted parables that display his glory.¹⁹ Characterizing the series of signs is their escalating clarity of meaning, published knowledge, and provocative incitement of opposition that eventuates in Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. Of particular signification are Jesus' third, sixth, and seventh signs which entail performative acts and discourses that reveal his divine authority to enact the powers of the last day as he brings judgment and raising the dead forward in dramatic representative acts to foreshadow the greater acts forthcoming in his crucifixion and resurrection which bring near powers of the last day.

In John's Gospel Jesus' signs and accompanying discourses have performative functions that his parables have in the Synoptic Gospels. For as he speaks to the crowds with parables "in order that while seeing they might not see and while hearing they might not hear" (Mark 4:11-12; cf. Matt 13:12; Luke 8:10), so Jesus performs his signs "in order to fulfill the word of the prophet Isaiah... 'he has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts in order that they might not see with their eyes and understand with the heart and turn and I would heal them'" (John 12:37-40; Isa 6:10).

Jesus purposefully performs his third sign on a Sabbath day, healing the man who had become lame apparently on account of sin (5:14), to constrict responses to two, either belief in him as God's Son or unbelieving opposition. So, on the Sabbath Jesus commands the invalid of thirty-eight years, "Arise!" (ἐγείρε, 5:8), signifying by way of miracle his greater authority to raise the dead just as the Father does, which he asserts in the subsequent discourse (ἐγείρει, 5:21; cf. 12:1, 9, 17).²⁰ By raising the invalid to restore in the earthly realm what sin, decadence, and death had destroyed, Jesus signifies his authority both in the heavenly realm to raise the dead on the last day and even now to give life to people imprisoned by sin's dark tomb. By performing this healing on a Sabbath Jesus equates himself with the Father who "works until now" (5:17) to draw attention to the fact that he is restoring the Sabbath of creation (Gen 1:31) by rescuing the created order from the ravages of the curse as the Light from the eschatological Sabbath already pierces the darkness. As Creator, Jesus has authority to give life as the Father has (John 5:21; cf. 1:1-4).

Only the Creator and Lord of the Sabbath, who "works until now" (5:17), has authority to give life and to raise the dead. It is against this backdrop that Jesus utters his riddle in John 5:21-29. Thus, Jesus' saying, "the hour is coming and now is," expresses well the overlapping of the first creation and the new, for the new creation begins while the old continues until the old meets its end on the last day.²¹ (More on the discourse that accompanies Jesus' third sign will resume in the next section.)

As Jesus performs the third sign on the Sabbath to signify new creation's dawn and arrival of the last day's verdicts, he dramatizes the same with the sixth and seventh signs. Three elements within the initial paragraphs of the sixth and seventh signs situate them as dramatized parables.²² First, Jesus' preparatory dialogues with his disciples feature their impaired vision, seeing

sin as the universal cause of every particular malady as in the case of the man born blind (9:1-2), and their impaired hearing, failing to grasp Jesus' figurative portrayal of death as sleep from which he will awaken Lazarus (11:11-14). It is noteworthy that the narrative concerning the sixth sign concludes with another conversation about the blindness, sin, and guilt of Jesus' accusatory opponents (cf. 9:39-41). Second, both narratives signal that the signs are acted parables by Jesus' announcing to his disciples that he acts in both as occasions for displaying the glory of God's Son. The case of the man born blind presents itself with purpose, "in order that the works of God may be displayed in him" (ἵνα φανερωθῇ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ, 9:3), and Lazarus' illness will not terminate in death but is for God's glory, "in order that the Son of God may be glorified through it" (ἵνα δοξασθῇ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ δι' αὐτῆς, 11:4). A third element that confirms signs six and seven as performed parables is Jesus' accompanying spoken parables which figuratively feature him as the light that shines in the dark world, reprising the first announcement on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (8:12).²³ It is evident that the two sayings have riddle-like qualities. The second recalls the first and both recall the temporal theme—"my hour has not yet come"—and the accompanying temporal duality theme—"an hour is coming and now is." Thus, both accent the temporal nearness of the end of Jesus' mission, the urgency of completing his work, and the night of darkness that awaits him in Jerusalem but also awaits his disciples once he, their light leaves them. For he speaks parabolically:

"As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (9:4-5).
 "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light" (11:9-10).

Because Jesus intends by way of a sign to disclose his divine authority to raise the dead he delays his arrival in Bethany until after Lazarus' death and burial. Then he announces and dramatizes with acted parable a foretoken of the last day which foreshadows his own resurrection forthcoming within a few days.²⁴ Thus, he says, "Your brother will rise again" (11:23). Martha replies, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day" (11:24).

But to make the point utterly clear that he is the embodiment of resurrection and eternal life, Jesus announces, “I am the resurrection and the life.”²⁵ To this he adds a paradoxical riddle—“the one who believes in me, even though he dies, he shall live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die, ever” (11:25-26). Again, Jesus uses a strong affirmative expressed by negation, “shall never die, ever” (οὐ μὴ ἀποθάνῃ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, 11:25), which by litotes means “shall assuredly live forever.”

By virtue of his signs accompanied with discourses Jesus’ mission as God’s incarnate Son is a divine performative drama designed to provoke conflict that climaxes with his death which paradoxically is his glory. For the conquest Jesus’ zealous opponents are confident they win by crucifying him is the glorious fulfillment of the mission he was sent to accomplish. “Jesus’ death is John’s *peripeteia*, the falsification of expectation; ‘the end comes as expected, but not in the manner expected.’ The crucifixion is part of Jesus’ glorification.”²⁶ Thus, after repeatedly revealing himself unambiguously as God’s Son, eliciting belief and confirming adversarial unbelief, Jesus withdraws from opponents who would seize him, dramatizing that divine judgment is already coming upon them in advance of the last day (cf. 6:15; 7:30, 44; 8:20). He even hides himself to conceal the light from them as a performative act to warn and to signify that they already stand condemned (8:59; 12:36).

So, after Jesus announces to his disciples, “The hour has come that the Son of Man is to be glorified” (12:23), and prays, “Father glorify your name” (12:28), the voice from heaven which responds—“I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again”—is fittingly unintelligible to Jesus’ opponents who hear it. Its unintelligibility signifies impending divine judgment (cf. Isa. 28:11), which Jesus announces: “This voice came not for me but for you. Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (12:30-32). Failure to decipher the sound from heaven does not restrain the crowd from passing judgment upon Jesus, for they know that “lifted up” figuratively portrays crucifixion as his destined death, which confirms for them that he is not Messiah (12:34). After warning, “Walk while you have the Light, lest darkness apprehends you” (12:35; cf. 1:5), Jesus aptly left them and as a dramatic act to signify their condemnation *he hid himself* from them (ἐκρύβη ἑπ’ αὐτῶν, 12:36; cf. 8:59). Thus, Jesus sums up the paradox of his mission:

I, the Light, have come into the world in order that the one who believes in me might not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him, for I did not come in order to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has one who judges him; the word which I have spoken, that will judge him in the Last Day (12:46-48).

Jesus' hiding and his performative saying that climaxes his signs as dramatized parables announces the foretoken of the divine verdict yet to be issued in the last day as already present. With the advent of the Light, God's Son, justification and condemnation already arrive in their initial phases, for eternal life and wrath have come with him.

RESURRECTION OF LIFE AND RESURRECTION OF CONDEMNATION

Now it is necessary to return to Jesus' discourse that ensues in the wake of his third sign. Because Jesus is the incarnate Son of God, the Father authorizes him to have "life in himself" in order to bestow life of the coming age to whomever he desires and to set in motion the coming judgment.

For just as the Father raises the dead and gives life, in the same manner also the Son gives life to whom he desires. For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, in order that all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father. The one who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

Truly, truly, I say to you that the one who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and does not come into condemnation, but has passed from death to life. Truly, truly, I say to you that an hour is coming and now is when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in himself in the same manner he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming in which all who are in tombs will hear his voice and they will come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation (John 5:21-29).²⁷

This passage poses three pairs of riddles. Most notable is Jesus' claim that the future is present: "The hour is coming and now is." Second is the arresting claim, "the dead will hear." Third is the more complex juxtaposition of two theological assertions that seem discordant: "the one who believes ... has eternal life (v. 24) correlated with "those who did good will come forth to the resurrection of life" (v. 29). These three pairs of riddles correlate rhetorically in the form of oxymoron or paradox.

Jesus means that, as God's Son who comes from above, he *already* brings forward and sets in motion things that properly belong to the last day, including judgment, salvation, eternal life, resurrection, justification, and condemnation. He brings first phases of these forward from the last day into the present (6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48). As John's narrative unfolds Jesus associates *possession of eternal life* with *justification*. He makes this association emphatic in three ways. First, he emphasizes his saying with a solemn introduction—"Truly, truly, I say to you" (ἀμὴν, ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, 5:24a). Second, he makes his saying emphatic by using litotes—"The one who hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and does not come into condemnation" (καὶ εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται, 5:24b)—which is an emphatic inverse way of saying "is assuredly justified already."²⁸ Third, Jesus emphasizes his performative saying by adding "but has passed from death into life" (ἀλλὰ μεταβέβηκεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν, 5:24c). By flanking "does not come into condemnation" on either side with "has eternal life" and "has passed from death to life," Jesus essentially indicates that to receive the life he now gives from himself is tantamount to receiving the divine verdict of the last day already, namely, justification, which he later designates "resurrection of life." The divine gift of eternal life is God's performative-declarative speech-act of justification.

The believer *already* experiences qualitative aspects of eternal life of the coming age, for even now the believer has crossed over from death to life. This strongly affirms that the powers of *the coming hour* are *already* active though not exhaustively nor in final form, for Jesus also speaks of resurrection and judgment *yet to come*, entailing everyone who does evil or good (5:29). All who *already* hear and believe are those who, in *the hour that is coming*, will hear from within their tombs signified by the raising of Lazarus (11:43-44), and will emerge unto the resurrection of life never to die again (5:28-29). Passage from death to life now is a harbinger of the resurrection of life in the

hour that is coming. Jesus' giving of life now is a foretaste, a promise of the consummate resurrection of life on the last day. Thus, the gift of eternal life serves as the sign and seal of justification, a foretoken of the divine verdict of acquittal on the last day.

Eternal life properly belongs to the coming age from which Christ, "the eternal life" who was with the Father (1 John 1:2), came *already* to raise spiritually dead people by the power of his Word through the gospel with assurance that he will come again to consummate resurrection by bringing forth the same individuals from their tombs unto the resurrection of life in the last day. Because God's Son has "life in himself" and "gives life to whom he will" (John 5:26, 22), he guarantees, "Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day" (6:54). Assurance that everyone to whom the Son now gives eternal life he will raise them up (ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ) on the last day belongs exclusively to all who continue to feed on Christ who is the only source of eternal life. Perseverance in Jesus Christ links the now and yet to come as inseparable phases of eternal life and resurrection so that in the last day only "those who have done good" will be raised unto eternal life (5:29).

Though J. V. Fesko properly affirms the unitary indivisibility of resurrection and judgment, even as in a single act, he fumbles the contrast between ἀνάστασις ζωῆς and ἀνάστασις κρίσεως in 5:29. While he correctly takes ἀνάστασις ζωῆς, "resurrection of life," as God's *verdict* not God's *act of judgment*, Fesko misreads ἀνάστασις κρίσεως as the divine *act of judgment* not God's *verdict* because he misconstrues κρίσις (5:24 & 29) as "judgment" rather than as "condemnation."²⁹ Consequently, on the basis of his miscue on John 5:29, Fesko embraces an over-realized view of judgment that resembles Bultmann's reading of John's Gospel more than Bavinck's and the traditional confessions with regard to final judgment.³⁰ Because Fesko claims that "knowledge of the final outcome of history" is already known because it is "rooted ... in inaugurated eschatology," he over-reaches to claim, "Given the inbreaking of the eschaton, the resurrection is not the penultimate step before the final judgment but instead is the final judgment in that it visibly reveals what has come with the first advent of Christ" for both the righteous and the wicked.³¹ Though Fesko asserts this inflated claim, he does not fully side with Bultmann. For, though he believes that Christ's advent eliminates last day judgment for believers, he does not accept the notion that the already swallows up the not

yet of the last day. Even so, he adds another misstep to his insistence that believers will not at all pass through the divine act of judgment on the last day; he claims they “are spared judgment according to works.”³²

However, the fact that Jesus features *resurrection of life* and *resurrection of condemnation* as two antithetical divine verdicts of last day judgment in John 5:28-29 without explicitly mentioning the act of final judgment hardly means that judgment which accompanies Christ’s first advent eliminates judgment on the last day for all who are in Christ Jesus, including their being recompensed “according to their works.” Otherwise, why would Jesus specifically assert that all who are in the graves will hear the Son’s voice and “will come out, *those who have done good things* unto the resurrection of life, and *those who have practiced evil things* unto the resurrection of condemnation”? Clearly, Jesus’ statement in 5:29 does not contradict what Scripture universally declares, that God will recompense each person κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ (cf. Ps 61:13; Prov 24:12; Rom 2:6; 2 Cor 11:15; 2 Tim 4:14; Rev 2:23; 20:12-13; cf. Matt 25:31-46).

Inseparable are Jesus’ authority to raise the dead and to judge them. This is evident in the way he introduces the two into his discourse: “For just as the Father raises the dead and makes them alive, so also the Son makes alive whom-ever he wishes. For the Father judges no one, but he entrusts all judgment to the Son” (5:21-22). Thus, Jesus reinforces the inseparability of resurrection and judgment when he repeats the essence of vv. 21-22 and inserts it between his sayings concerning resurrection *now* and *not yet*, in John 5:26-27. He says, “For just as the Father has life in himself, so also he has entrusted the Son to have life in himself, and he has entrusted to him to execute judgment because he is Son of Man.”³³ Nowhere in the context does Jesus join resurrection and judgment more indivisibly than in vv. 28-29: “Wonder not at this because the hour is coming in which all who are in their tombs will hear his voice and they will come out, *those who have done good things* unto the resurrection of life, but *those who have done evil things* unto the resurrection of condemnation.”³⁴ When Jesus speaks of the last day by setting “resurrection of life” over against “resurrection of condemnation,” in effect he merges resurrection and judgment, for both those who doers of good and evildoers.³⁵ Jesus presents last day resurrection as more than preparing its recipients for undergoing divine judgment.³⁶ He presents resurrection in that day as the respective verdicts of judgment—eternal life or condemnation—that already begins when the

dead hear the voice of the Son of God through the proclamation of the gospel. For those who hear the Son's word and believe the Father who sent him, to pass from death to life is God's foretold verdict of last day justification expressed by way of *litotes*, "does not come into condemnation" (5:24). This present verdict is inviolably of a piece with the final verdict in the last day, "resurrection of life." Likewise, for those who hear the Son's word but do not obey the Son, dwelling under condemnation—"the wrath of God remains on him"—is God's foretold verdict of last day condemnation expressed by way of *litotes*—"shall not see life" ("shall most certainly perish," 3:36). Again, this present verdict is inviolably of a piece with the final verdict in the last day "resurrection of condemnation."

JUSTIFICATION WITHOUT Δικαιῶ or Δικαίωσις

Juxtaposition of "resurrection of life" and "resurrection of condemnation" calls for some consideration of John's use of the δικ- word group which is sparse within the Gospel. Never do δικαίω or δικαίωσις occur while twice δικαιοσύνη does within a single context referring to the Paraclete who will "convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8-10). The adjective δίκαιος occurs three times in John's Gospel, twice to describe judgment (ἡ κρίσις ἡ ἐμὴ δίκαια ἐστίν, 5:30; τὴν δικαίαν κρίσιν κρίνετε, 7:24) and once in Jesus' prayer, "righteous Father" (πάτερ δίκαιε, 17:25). One other use of a δικ- stem word is in 7:18, ἀδικία.³⁷

Absence of δικαίω or δικαίωσις from John's Gospel accounts for relative silence concerning the concept of justification among Johannine scholars.³⁸ Brief passing comments are common as in C. K. Barrett's observations on John 3:18, "The present verse may be regarded as a statement of the negative aspect of the doctrine of justification by faith. The believer (though a sinner) does not come under condemnation."³⁹ Again, on εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται (5:24), he fleetingly observes, "The thought is closely akin to the Pauline doctrine of justification, according to which the believer does indeed come into judgment but leaves the court acquitted."⁴⁰ Similarly, on ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν οὐ κρίνεται (3:18), D. A. Carson comments, "Although John does not explicitly appeal to Paul's 'justification by faith' doctrine, the substance of the matter is found here."⁴¹ On εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται (5:24), he echoes Barrett: "The idea is virtually indistinguishable from the negative component of Paul's

doctrine of justification: the believer does not come to the final judgment, but leaves the court already acquitted.”⁴²

John’s passages call for greater attention. Additionally, where scholars do acknowledge that John’s wording is akin to Paul’s doctrine of justification, they regard it as a simple negative (“not condemned”) of Paul’s positive doctrine (“justified”).⁴³ It is surprising that they do not take note of the Fourth Gospel’s use of litotes in “the one who believes on him is not condemned” (ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν οὐ κρίνεται, 3:18) and “the one who hears ... and believes ... does not come into condemnation” (ὁ ἀκούων καὶ πιστεύων ... εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται, 5:24). This silence is remarkable given the frequency of litotes in John’s Gospel, which not a few scholars, including Carson, point out in other places within the Gospel.⁴⁴

If litotes occurs in 3:18 and in 5:24, then John’s Gospel contributes more concerning the “doctrine of justification” than ordinarily recognized. For what John affirms in these two passages is not simply that believers “are not condemned” or “do not come into condemnation.” Rather, by way of litotes these affirmations exploit the emphatic use of understatement to affirm the positive by negating its opposite. So Jesus is emphatically affirming that his coming brings forward the verdict of the last day so that already the verdict of justification is being announced through the gospel to everyone who believes in him.

Jesus announces, “And this is the verdict: the Light came into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). So, in Christ, God already brings judgment to bear upon the world. The divine verdict of the last day is in, for the gospel is God’s announcement of his verdict ahead of the coming day of resurrection and judgment. As the cross of Christ Jesus portrays judgment’s condemnation on that impending last day, so his vacated tomb depicts the last day’s resurrection of life. Judgment, God’s wrath upon Christ on the cross condemned for others, and resurrection, God’s vindicating him by raising him from the tomb, constitute the in-breaking of God’s last day acts into the present age, both now bestowed to Christ’s believers in anticipation of the age to come.

Therefore, according to John’s Gospel, as Jesus proclaims the good news of the kingdom, he announces in advance the two verdicts of God’s final judgment—“resurrection of life” and “resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:29). So, “not condemned” and eternal life *already* belong to everyone

united with the Son of God through belief. All the blessings and powers of the *coming age* which we *already* foretaste are secured by Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. Everyone who believes in God's Son *stands justified already* in advance for already they have eternal life ahead of the last day. On the other hand, everyone who does not believe in God's Son *stands condemned already* (3:18, 36). "The one who disobeys the Son shall not see life" (ὁ ἀπειθῶν τῷ υἱῷ οὐκ ὄψεται ζῶην, 3:36), by way of litotes effectively means "shall most assuredly see death" or "shall certainly perish" in the coming age. Yet, God's last day verdict of wrath is not remote, for already it remains upon the disobedient (3:36). Advance announcement of these two verdicts—justified or condemned—is gracious because, while the criterion of God's judgment now is inviolable and will not change in the last day, God has not yet issued his final verdict concerning each individual.⁴⁵ Rather, announcement of the final verdict awaits the coming day while God mercifully proclaims the inauguration of eternal life made effective for everyone who believes in his Son. For through the proclamation of the gospel, God beckons all to obey his Son in order to receive eternal life, the receipt of which is justification, the inverse of condemnation (3:31-36). So, in the gospel God graciously foreshadows his last day verdict of judgment, either resurrection of life or resurrection of condemnation. In this way the coming of God's Son renders the final verdict inviolable.

CONCLUSION

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This one was in the beginning with God." John designs his whole Gospel to flow from these words because every act Jesus performs and every word he speaks are God's deeds and words. Thus, the Fourth Gospel aptly introduces God's Son as the Word, God's creative Word. For as in the beginning everything that was made came into existence through the Word, so also now, new creation already begins through the same Word who became flesh, as a human dwelling among humans, as the light of life shining in sin's darkness. For the Word's incarnation brings his heavenly glory down to earth and his powers of the last day forward. While the Word's glory and powers of the last day are displayed through each of his signs and their accompanying discourses, the convergence of his glory and last day powers are most fully

displayed in his crucifixion and resurrection to which Jesus' signs point. Here, divine judgment and resurrection are not only dramatically portrayed but also historically enacted. Heaven's just verdict issues forth in Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, for his incarnation already brings forward the two verdicts that will be issued on the last day, either resurrection of life or resurrection of condemnation.

Thus, the Word who was with God and came from heaven presents himself as "the Resurrection and the Life" and as one to whom the Father has given authority to judge in order that all might honor him by believing in him. Because he has authority to impart life to whomever he desires, to everyone who hears his word and believes the One who sent him, Jesus already enacts the powers of the coming last day both to impart life to the spiritually dead and already to commence judgment upon all who do not believe in him.

So, God's Son came not to condemn the world but to present himself as bread from heaven, the very source of eternal life. Yet, because the true Light now shines in the darkness exposing the works of darkness, judgment issues from his presence. His incarnation brings the last day verdict of justification to all who believe but brings the last day verdict of condemnation to remain upon everyone who disobeys by unbelief. So, just as Jesus Christ *already* gives eternal life to the dead who hear his voice ahead of the last day, so also, ahead of time Jesus announces the verdict of the last day, that those who do not believe in the Son *already* stand condemned while those who believe in him *already* stand not condemned, which is to say, they are already assuredly justified (3:18). And the gift of eternal life which is already theirs is the sign and seal of justification, God's assuring foretoken of his acquitting verdict, resurrection of life on the last day.

¹ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (vol. II; trans. Kendrick Grobel; New York: Scribners, 1955), 35. He states that resurrection and judgment take "place in the response of men to the word of Jesus" (2.38). He explains, "This means that the earlier naïve eschatology of Jewish Christianity and Gnosticism has been abandoned, certainly not in favour of a spiritualising of the eschatological process to become a process within man's soul, but in favour of a radical understanding of Jesus' appearance as the eschatological event. This event puts an end to the old course of the world. As from now on there are only believers and unbelievers, so that there are also now only saved and lost, those who have life and those who are in death. This is because the event is grounded in the love of God, that love which gives life to faith, but which must become judgement in the face of unbelief" (*The Gospel of John: A Commentary* [trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1971], 155).

- ² Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 258.
- ³ *Ibid.*, 259.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, 155.
- ⁵ Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17* (trans. Gerhard Krodel; London: SCM, 1968), 75.
- ⁶ Herman Bavincq, *The Last Things: Hope for This World and the Next* (trans. John Vriend; trans. John Bolt; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 138-139. Bavincq further explains, "The first time, to be sure, Jesus came on earth, not to judge the world, but to save it (John 3:17; 12:47). Still, immediately at his appearance he produced a judgment (*krisis*) whose purpose and result is that those who do not see can see and that those who see may become blind (3:18, 20; 9:39). As Son of Man Jesus continually exercises judgment when to those who believe already he grants eternal life here on earth and allows the wrath of God to continue to rest on those who do not believe (3:36; 5:32-38). Undoubtedly there is, therefore, an internal spiritual judgment at work, a crisis that is realized from generation to generation. It is an immanent judgment this side of the Beyond that takes place in the consciences of human beings. Here on earth faith and unbelief already bear their fruit and bring their reward. Just as faith is followed by justification and peace with God, so unbelief leads to a progressive darkening of the mind and hardening of the heart and a yielding to all kinds of unrighteousness" (pp. 138-139).
- ⁷ He argues, "In any case vv. 28f. have been added by the editor, in an attempt to reconcile the dangerous statements in vv. 24f. with traditional eschatology. Both the source and the Evangelist see the eschatological event in the present proclamation of the word of Jesus. Yet the popular eschatology, which is so radically swept aside by such a view, is reinstated in vv. 28f. The editor corrects the Evangelist by this simple addition, so that it is difficult to say how he thought the statements in vv. 24f. could be reconciled with it." (*The Gospel of John*, 261).
- ⁸ Concerning John 5:28-29, C. H. Dodd correctly defends its authenticity, for there is no hint that these verses were editorially added to the original text (Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* [Cambridge: University Press, 1953], 147-48).
- ⁹ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 468-469. Köstenberger acknowledges that Rudolf Bultmann rightly identifies that Jesus' activity as "Revealer of God," whose unitary advent (John 3:19; 9:39) and departure (12:31), is the eschatological event, "the judgment of the world."
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 469.
- ¹¹ Cf. W. Robert Cook, "Eschatology in John's Gospel," *Criswell Theological Review* 3 (1988): 83.
- ¹² Cf. Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1930; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 261.
- ¹³ As will be argued in this essay, a crucial interpretive decision must be made concerning uses of the verb κρίνω and the noun ἡ κρίσις throughout John 3:17-19 and within 5:19-29. For even though these terms may refer either to the act of judgment or to the verdict of judgment, their uses within these two contexts do not allow individual uses of the words simultaneously to bear equivocating senses as some inattentively read them. Each use refers either to the act of judgment or to the verdict of judgment but not to both at the same time. Within 3:17-19, given the contrasting destinies of those who believe in God's Son and those who do not believe, situated by the stark contrast expressed in 3:16 (μὴ ἀπόληται ἄλλ' ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον), it is apparent that both κρίνω and κρίσις, in 3:17-19, do not refer to the act of judgment but to the verdict of judgment. Hence, "For the Father did not send the Son into the world in order to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through him. The one who believes does not come into condemnation, but the one who does not believe is already condemned because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the verdict: that the Light has come into the world and the people loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil." Within 5:19-29, it seems apparent that the general statement of v. 22 uses both κρίνω and ἡ κρίσις with reference to the act of judgment, thus "to judge" and "the act of judgment," respectively. Hence, "The Father judges no one, but has handed over all judgment to the Son." Likewise, in 5:27, use of ἡ κρίσις and καὶ ἔξουσίαν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ κρίσιν ποιεῖν undoubtedly refers to "the act of judgment." Hence, "And he has given him [the Son] authority to carry out judgment because he is the Son of Man." Yet, because ἀνάστασις κρῖσεως stands antithetically to ἀνάστασις ζωῆς, in 5:29, here κρίσις must refer to the negative verdict of judgment, as in "the resurrection of condemnation" in contrast to "the resurrection of life."
- ¹⁴ Litotes is a form of understatement that is stronger than meiosis. It is a figure of speech that entails an emphatic use of understatement to affirm a positive truth by negating its opposite. For example, John the

Baptist's statement, "for he gives the Spirit without measure" (3:34), is an emphatic way of saying, "for he gives the Spirit lavishly." Here is a sampling of litotes within John's Gospel.

3:18 "Whoever believes in him is not condemned."

3:34 "for he gives the Spirit without measure."

3:36 "whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life."

4:14 "whoever drinks from the water which I will give to him shall never thirst, ever."

5:24 "He does not come into condemnation, but has passed from death to life."

6:35 "shall never hunger . . . shall never thirst."

6:37 "I will never cast out."

6:50 "shall not die"

8:37 "My word has no place in you."

8:40 "This Abraham did not do."

8:51 "If anyone keeps my word, he will never see death, ever!"

10:28 "they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."

11:26 "everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die, ever."

15:20 "a slave is not greater than his master."

19:12 "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."

- 15 As Marianne Meye Thompson points out, it is necessary to acknowledge that there "is a difference between 'resurrection' and 'life,' which one can see in John 5, where two statements are made about the life-giving work of the Son." After citing 5:25 & 28, she properly states, "According to these passages, the *dead* hear the voice of the Son of God and live; but those who are *in the graves* come out to resurrection. The statement in 5:25 describes a present reality—the hour is 'now here,' when those who hear the voice of the Son of God may participate in God's life, while the statement in 5:28 portrays a reality yet in the future, namely, the resurrection" ("The Raising of Lazarus in John 11," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* [eds. Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008], 239-240).

- 16 On the significance of the spatial distinction between the "above" and the "below" (3:31; 8:23; 19:11) or the "heavenly" and the "earthly" (3:12-13, 27, 31; 6:31-58) for understanding symbolism in John's Gospel, see Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), 1ff; R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983), 200-202. Cf. Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (9th printing 1975; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948), 355, and G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (revised ed. 1993; ed. Donald Hagner [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974], 259-272. See also Robert Kysar, *John: The Maverick Gospel* (revised edition 1993; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1976), 58-77.

- 17 This is not to suggest that John the Baptist had such an understanding when he announced, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). An echo of Ex 34:9 LXX (καὶ ἀφελεῖς τὸ τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν καὶ τὰς ἀνομίας ἡμῶν) seems plausible in the Baptist's declaration, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἀμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου, John 1:29). The cognates, αἴρω and ἀπαίρω, are evident. Cf. D. A. Carson, "Adumbrations of Atonement Theology in the Fourth Gospel," *JETS* 57 (2014): 518-519.

- 18 Cf. Friedrich Hauck, "παράβολή," *TDNT* 5.744-761.

- 19 Concerning Jesus' signs as acted parables see D. A. Carson's comments on the first and seventh signs (*John*, 172, 414). What I mean and what Carson means by "acted parable" is not what Herman Ridderbos rejects when he states, "Miracle is neither parabolic story nor symbolic action" (*Gospel of John*, 100). Ridderbos' immediately preceding sentence is instructive, for he states, "Any suggestion that in the Fourth Gospel one can separate 'flesh' and 'glory,' history and revelation, violates the most specific aspect of that Gospel's character." That Ridderbos does not object to acknowledging that Jesus' miracles were "acted parables" is apparent when he observes that "a distinctive of the Fourth Gospel is its repeated linking of miracles with lengthy conversations focused on the *meaning* of the miracles in the framework of Jesus' self-revelation as the Christ, the Son of God (so chs. 5, 6, 9, and 11). If one fails to see that connection and hence also the deeper spiritual significance of the miracles, the one has not 'see' the signs (6:26), and faith that rests solely on miracle 'as such' has fundamentally forfeited its claim to that name (cf. e.g., 2:23ff; 3:2 with 3:1f; 4:48)" (pp. 100-101). See also Craig L. Blomberg, "The Miracles as Parables," *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 6: *The Miracles of Jesus* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 327-359; idem, "New Testament Miracles and Higher Criticism: Climbing up the Slippery Slope," *JETS* 27 (1984): 425-438.

- 20 Granted, there is verbal asymmetry here, for John 5:21 does not say that Jesus raises the dead but gives life (John T. Carroll, "Present and Future in Fourth Gospel 'Eschatology,'" *BTB* 19 [1989]: 67). Indeed, Jesus

does not express the full symmetry within v. 21, for he intends to accent his bringing the resurrection forward from the last day. So, while the first clause of the comparative ("just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life") focuses upon the Jews' last day hope, the second clause ("so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes") prepares for Jesus' oxymoron of vv. 25-29. However, three elements in the text seem to legitimate taking the symmetry further than Carroll acknowledges. First, is the deliberate use of the same verb in both 5:8 & 21. Second, Jesus' words "gives life to whomever he wishes" underscores his sovereign authority to give life to the dead. Third, his sayings in vv. 24-29 make it clear that Jesus intends his hearers to understand his comparative to extend to both "raise the dead" and "give life." A fourth argument for my reading of the text may be added. The Fourth Gospel expressly connects Jesus' claim of 5:21 to the raising of Lazarus from the dead. John even uses the same verb (*ἐγείρει*) to describe Jesus' raising of Lazarus (cf. 12:1, 9, 17).

- 21 Cf. Francis J. Moloney, *Signs and Shadows: Reading John 5-12* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 4-19.
- 22 Concerning the sixth sign, Andreas J. Köstenberger suggests that "John 9:39-41 serves as a kind of interpretive epilogue, transforming the preceding narrative into an acted parable with a message about sight and blindness in the spiritual realm" (*John* [BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004], 295).
- 23 As a riddle, the wording in John 11:10—τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου τούτου—entails double-entendre. At the earth-bound level, *this world's light* refers to the sun, but to all who have ears to hear, Jesus himself is this world's light (cf. 8:12; 9:5). Thus, these two riddles that feature the light/darkness theme with its thematic variation as day/night signal the Son of Man's approaching *hour*, which for him will be his glory as his mission reaches its completion but for his disciples will be a time of walking in darkness in the absence of his light. Cf. Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John*, 333-335 & 390-391; and Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 362-363 & 408-409.
- 24 As a riddle, the wording in John 11:10—τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου τούτου—entails double-entendre. At the earth-bound level, *this world's light* refers to the sun, but to all who have ears to hear, Jesus himself is this world's light (cf. 8:12; 9:5). Thus, these two riddles that feature the light/darkness theme with its thematic variation as day/night signal the Son of Man's approaching *hour*, which for him will be his glory as his mission reaches its completion but for his disciples will be a time of walking in darkness in the absence of his light. Cf. Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John*, 333-335 & 390-391; and Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 362-363 & 408-409.
- 25 Whether "resurrection and life" is a pleonasm, with *life* simply clarifying without adding meaning to what is meant by *resurrection*, or if the two are complementary, the latter seems more likely. "It is natural to view the first as the corollary of 'I am the Resurrection,' and the second as the corollary of 'I am the Life. Thus, (a) I am the resurrection—that is, the one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. (b) I am the Life—that is, everyone who lives and believes in me will never die'" (J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* [NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010], 632). Cf. Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 365; Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 413. Bultmann insists, "The two lines say the same thing, positively and negatively; by a paradoxical mode of sphere, for which human death and human life are only images and hints: the believer may suffer the earthly death, but he has 'lie' in a higher, in an ultimate sense. And for the man who tarries in the earthly life and is a believer, there is no death in an ultimate sense; death for him has become unreal" (*Gospel of John*, 403). Cf. Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John*, 396, n. 48.
- 26 R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (paperback ed. 1987; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983), 88.
- 27 The ESV translates κρίσις (John 5:22, 24, 27, and 29) consistently as "judgment," as though referring to the divine act of judgment, even though καὶ εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται (5:24) and οἱ δὲ τὰ φαῦλα πράξαντες εἰς ἀνάστασιν κρίσεως (5:28) clearly denote condemnation, the divine verdict of judgment issuing from the act of judgment. Some appeal to 5:24 and 5:29 to claim that believers will not pass through divine judgment at all in the last day.
- 28 Cf. John's "does not come into condemnation" in John 5:24 (cf. 5:29) with Paul's "no condemnation" (Rom 8:1). Both use litotes to affirm emphatically a positive truth by negating its opposite.
- 29 J. V. Fesko, *Justification: Understanding the Classic Reformed Doctrine* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 309-310, 312-316.
- 30 Ibid., 318. Just as with John's Gospel, Fesko misreads Herman Bavinck who states, "The resurrection and the last judgment are intimately associated as in a single act" (*The Last Things: Hope for this World and the Next* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996], 132). Bavinck does not support Fesko's claim, for he explains that while the NT represents judgment as appointed on a day or an hour, resurrection and judgment "are so comprehensive in scope that they are bound to take considerable time" (p. 132).
- 31 Ibid., 310-311. Fesko explains, "At the second advent of Christ, the righteous, those who have been justified by faith alone, are instantaneously clothed in immortality; they receive a *sōma pneumatikon*. The wicked are

also raised but are naked; they still have a *sōma psychikon*; their condemned status is immediately evident. God need not utter a word, as the justified and condemned statuses of the righteous and the wicked are revealed through the resurrection, just as for Jesus." Fesko's inconsistency is evident in that here he takes ἀνάστασις κρίσεως as the verdict, divine condemnation of the wicked, which his sustained discussion on pp. 312-318 contradicts.

- 32 Ibid., 310. "This separation between the wicked and righteous accords with what we have already seen from John's Gospel: 'Those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment' (5:29; Rev 11:18). Notice that Christ says that only the wicked are raised to judgment" (p. 316).
- 33 Here, "Son of Man" certainly echoes Dan 7:13-14, a context concerning dominion and judgment. The indefinite υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου likely functions not simply to indicate Jesus' humanity but reference to the title in Daniel 7. Cf. Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John*, 200-201. The creation-consummation motif of John 5:1-30, brought to into view by way of the Sabbath controversy, may suggest the Son of Man is Adam's eschatological counterpart. See Margaret Pamment, "Son of Man in the Fourth Gospel," *JTS NS* 36 (1985): 56-66. She argues that Jesus, as Son of Man, is Adam's counterpart—"what man could and should be." However, Pamment draws an unnecessary separation when she says, "It is therefore misleading to label 'Son of Man' a 'Christological term' since, unlike 'Son of God,' it does not seek to distinguish Jesus' unique nature or function, but defines the attributes of humanity which all men should exemplify" (p. 58). She has overdrawn the significance of the designation "Son of Man."
- 34 In the clause, μὴ θαυμάζετε τοῦτο, ὅτι ἐρχεται ὥρα, the use of ὅτι is somewhat ambiguous. It could bear the sense "that" as in, "Wonder not at this, that the hour is coming..." Or it could have the sense "because" as in "Wonder not at this (which I just said) because the hour is coming..." If it is the latter, as accepted here, then τοῦτο refers to Jesus' saying that the Son's voice will raise the dead to judgment. Cf. Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John* (NICNT; 3rd printing 1975; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 321; and Carson, *Gospel according to John*, 248.
- 35 If Jesus stresses that resurrection *already* is the token of resurrection *yet to come* in the last day when all the dead will hear his voice, then the relationship between "those who hear and believe" now in response to the Son's voice and "those who have done good" who come forth "unto the resurrection of life" calls for attention. The fact that Jesus identifies "those who hear and believe" as "those who have done good" poses theological difficulties for some. For example, Zane Hodges is concerned that some might read John 5:29 "as expressing a doctrine of salvation by works" ("Problem Passages in the Gospel of John, Part 6: Those Who Have Done Good—John 5:28-29," *BibSac* 136 [1979]: 158). Others attempt to resolve the apparent contradiction concerning reception of life by "those who hear and believe" and by "those who have done good" by arguing that "the lives they [believers] live form the test of the faith they profess" (Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 322). Similarly, John T. Carroll explains the not yet resurrection as validation of the resurrection life already received by those who believe: "Faith which does not lead to following is therefore inadequate. 'Abiding' is the test of discipleship (see 8:31)." For the disciples, therefore, present experience of eternal life calls for validation 'on the last day': faith in Jesus' word is the work not of a moment but of a lifetime" ("Present and Future in Fourth Gospel 'Eschatology,'" *BTB* 19 [1986]: 67). Likewise, Carson explains, "That believers who already experience eternal life must rise on the last day is not incoherent: their new resurrection-life existence will be the ratification and confirmation of the life and freedom from condemnation they already enjoy" (*The Gospel according to John*, 258). Cf. Köstenberger, *John*, 189-190. See also J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 322.

Though the idea that resurrection in the Last Day validates persevering belief is commensurate with Jesus' teaching, it seems less than fully adequate to explain the continuity between "those who hear and believe" and "those who have done good." This is so because Jesus' statements—"those who hear and believe" and "those who have done good things"—do not address *how* or *on what basis* they receive resurrection life. Rather, Jesus simply identifies *who* receives the life he gives. "Those who hear and believe" the voice of the Son of God who already come to life are identical with "those who have done good things" who will come forth unto the "resurrection of life."

Furthermore, John 5:29 does not associate belief and doing good by treating the second simply as validation of the former. John's Gospel identifies belief with obedience (cf. 3:26). In John's Gospel belief and doing good do not stand in synthetic coordination but rather they are in organic correlation. This is evident in 3:19-21, for to believe is to "do the truth" and "the one who does the truth comes to the Light, in order that it may be evident that his deeds have been done by God." Likewise, 6:27-29 indicates an organic correlation of belief and deeds: "Do not work for food that perishes but for food that endures unto eternal

life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on this one God the Father has placed his seal ... This is the work God requires, that you believe in that one whom he sent." Similarly, John 8:39 organically correlates belief and deeds: "If you are Abraham's seed, then do the works of Abraham" (cf. Urban C. Von Wahlde, "Faith and Works in Jn VI 28-29: Exegesis or Eisegesis?" *NovT* 22 [1980]: 304-315). These passages not only indicate that belief and works are in living correlation but also they stand together in vital relationship to God's work. For whatever deed the believer does that may be counted good is so only because it derives from God's work in the believer (3:21). So Jesus says, "As the branch is not able to bear fruit by itself if it does not remain in the vine, so neither can you if you do not remain in me" (15:4).

Therefore, the connection between the Son's voice in the already resurrection when he raises "those who hear and believe" and in the not yet resurrection when he raises "those who have done good" is one that is entirely oriented to the life-giving voice of the Son. It is the Son's creative voice that produces both the believing (represented under the imagery of hearing) and the doing of good that invariably characterizes all whom the Son will raise unto life in the last day.

³⁶ Cf. the discussion of resurrection and judgment within Paul's theology in Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, 261-263. Vos notes, "In the resurrection there is already wrapped up a judging-process, at least for believers: the raising act in their case, together with the attending change, plainly involves a pronouncement of vindication. The resurrection does more than prepare its object for undergoing the judgment; it sets in motion and to a certain extent anticipates the issue of the judgment for the Christian" (p. 261).

³⁷ Sometimes ἀδικία is translated as a noun—"in him there is no falsehood" (esv)—and sometimes as an adjective—"nothing false in him" (RSV, NRSV, NIV)—on the assumption that the adjective ἀληθής, in the clause οὗτος ἀληθής ἐστιν, bears the sense *veracity* contrasting with *falsehood*. More likely, however, ἀληθής is virtually synonymous with "good" (καλός) or "righteous" (δίκαιος), contrasted with the clause "there is no unrighteousness in him" (NASB⁹⁵, NKJV). Cf. Geerhardus Vos, "'True' and 'Truth' in the Johannine Writings," in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos* (ed. Richard B. Gaffin; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1980), 344.

³⁸ Not so with Frédéric Louis Godet who cites H. Jacottet: "Here is justification by faith, and condemnation by unbelief" (*Commentary on the Gospel of John*, vol. 1 [New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1886], 397). Godet adds, "Now the Lord declares that the believer, being already introduced into eternal life, will not be subjected to an investigation of this kind. He will appear before the tribunal, indeed, according to Rom. xiv.10; 2 Cor. v.10, but to be recognized as saved and to receive his place in the kingdom (Matt. xx.v)."

³⁹ C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (London: SPCK, 1958), 181.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 217. Barrett correctly observes that καὶ εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται (5:24) does not mean that the believer will not face the divine act of judgment in the Last Day but that the believer will not come into condemnation. See note 8 above.

⁴¹ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 207.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 256. Barrett expresses the matter more carefully than Carson does when he states, "the believer does indeed come into judgment but leaves the court acquitted" while Carson claims "the believer does not come to the final judgment, but leaves the court already acquitted." Some may take Carson's statement beyond his own intentions, for it seems to overstate his own case slightly, as though believers do not still face divine judgment in the Last Day. Despite his claim, Carson's intention seems evident, for his point is that John 5:24 makes it clear that the believer passes unscathed through divine judgment in the last day.

⁴³ In a trade book, Philip Eveson comments on John 3:18 and 5:24 observes, "This is the verdict, and the condemnation includes the wrath of God remaining upon that person (John 3:36). The same truth is reiterated in John 5 where we are told that the one who receives God's word through Jesus has eternal life 'and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life' (vv 22-24). This means that they are in a right legal position before God here and now through faith in Christ. The future judgment is not ignored as the following verses in John 5 indicate. It will ratify what is already a reality (vv 25-30)." "All this reminds us of Paul's statement that 'there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' (Romans 8:1). Justification is a verdict in the present that a person is not guilty and will not receive punishment. While Luke presents the positive side in Jesus' teaching on justification ('he went home justified'), John records discourses which focus on the negative side of the same truth ('not condemned' and 'will not be condemned')." See Eveson, *The Great Exchange: Justification by Faith Alone in the Light of Recent Thought*, (Bromley, Kent, England: Day One, 1996), 30.

⁴⁴ For example, Carson comments on "I will never cast out" (John 6:37), "Formally it is a 'litotes', a figure of speech in which something is affirmed by negating its contrary ... When Jesus says *whoever comes to me I will never drive away*, the affirmative that he is expressing in this fashion is often taken to mean 'whoever comes

to me I will certainly welcome'... But in fact, the affirmation expressed by this litotes is rather different: 'whoever comes to me I will certainly keep in preserve'" (*The Gospel according to John*, 290). Cf. Alfred Plumer, *The Gospel according to S. John* (Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools; Cambridge: University Press, 1882), 106. Though the example Plumer offers in John 3:19—"Men loved **the** darkness rather than **the** Light"—may be more properly identified as meiosis, he correctly points to 6:37 and 8:40 as examples of litotes. See also R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel 1-10 and 11-21* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1942), 291, 1056, 1268.

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