

**The Advent of God's Son as Judgment in John's Gospel:  
Justification and Condemnation Already**

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## Introduction

Despite mistakenly construing John's Gospel against the backdrop of second-century Gnosticism, skewing his interpretation of the Gospel, Rudolf Bultmann correctly identifies divine judgment as an important aspect of Johannine theology.<sup>1</sup> He observes 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.*"<sup>2</sup> According to Bultmann, Jesus' coming cast the whole κόσμος into κρίσις.<sup>3</sup> Yet, this eschatological judgment "is no dramatic cosmic event, but takes place in the response of men to the word of Jesus."<sup>4</sup> He contends, "Thus the judgement is not a specially contrived sequel to the coming and the departure of the Son. It is not a dramatic

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<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. II, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Scribners, 1955), 33. He contends that "John's concepts, light and darkness, truth and falsehood, freedom and bondage, life and death, come from Gnostic dualism but they take on their specific Johannine meaning only in their relation to the idea of creation" (p. 17). Contra Bultmann's appeal to Gnostic backgrounds, concerning John's concept of "truth," see Geerhardus Vos, "'True' and 'Truth' in the Johannine Writings," *The Biblical Review*, 12 (1927): 507-520; reprinted in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 1980), 343-351.

<sup>2</sup> Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2.37 (emphasis original); cf. p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 33. He titles chapter 3 "The 'Krisis' of the World." This is reminiscent of an earlier and better formulation by Herman Bavinck: "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" (*The Last Things: Hope for This World and the Next*, trans. John Vriend, trans. John Bolt [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996], 138-139). Similarly, Bavinck states, "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" (p. 140).

<sup>4</sup> Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 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 even 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: Westminster, 1971], 155).

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.”<sup>5</sup>

Despite holding significant disagreements with Bultmann, New Testament exegetes do not miss the fact that divine judgment figures prominently in John’s Gospel. So, for example, Köstenberger 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.”<sup>6</sup> 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).”<sup>7</sup>

True as this is, arguments to counter or to qualify Bultmann’s insistence that John’s Gospel contends for a “realized eschatology” versus the traditional Jewish end-time eschatology tend to overlook important ramifications of the Last Day’s advance arrival with the advent of the Son of God. The exclusive claim of Peter’s proclamation that “there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12) finds expanded expression in the Fourth Gospel.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their works were evil.

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<sup>5</sup> Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 155.

<sup>6</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John’s Gospel and Letters*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 468-469.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 469.

The life of the Age to Come is resident in and mediated through God's Son, Jesus Christ. Hence, eternal life, which properly belongs to the coming age, is already present with the incarnation of the Word and is now being imparted to all who believe in God's Son. Noteworthy as is the advance installment of eternal life, signaling resurrection's encroachment into the present age, of equal significance is the announcement beforehand of God's Last Day verdict of judgment, all who believe "are not condemned," but whoever does not believe "is condemned already."<sup>8</sup>

With his advent, God's Son already brings forward two correlated acts of God—resurrection and judgment—that belong to the Last Day which consummates the present age and ushers in the Age to Come.<sup>9</sup> The mission of God's incarnate Son sweeps forward both the wrath of God's coming judgment now revealed in Christ's sacrificial death and the gift of God's resurrection life disclosed in Christ's glorious resurrection from the dead. Because Jesus is the incarnate Son of God, the Father authorized him to have "life in himself" to bestow this life of the coming age to whomever he desires in advance of the day of resurrection and to set in motion

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<sup>8</sup> A crucial interpretive decision must be made concerning uses of the verb κρίνω and the noun ἡ κρίσις throughout John 3:17-19 and concerning uses of κρίνω and ἡ κρίσις 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. Each use refers either to the *act of judgment* or to the *verdict of judgment*.

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 (μη ἀπόληται ἀλλ' 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 in καὶ ἐξουσίαν 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 κρίσεως 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."

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1930; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 261.

execution of the coming judgment upon both those who believe and those who do not (John 3:16-19; 5:21-29). Johannine scholars affirm these emphases. Yet, lacking within discussions of the Fourth Gospel's emphasis upon the present arrival of future resurrection and judgment in the person of Jesus Christ is development of John's doctrine of justification, expressed with neither the verb δικαίω nor the noun δικαίωσις but through less direct but no less emphatic expressions. In these expressions the affirmative is emphatically stated by negating its opposite so that "are not condemned" and "do not come into condemnation" bear the sense, "most assuredly justified."<sup>10</sup>

### **Justification in John's Gospel without Δικαίω or Δικαίωσις?**

The δικ- word group is sparse within the Fourth Gospel. Never does John use δικαίω or δικαίωσις. Twice δικαιοσύνη occurs, both within the same context. Referring to the Paraclete whom he would send after his departure, Jesus says, "And when he comes he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you will no longer see me; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged" (John 16:8-10).

Three times John's Gospel uses the adjective δίκαιος, twice to describe judgment (ἡ κρίσις). Jesus states, "I cannot do anything on my own; as I hear, I judge, and my judgment is *righteous* because I do not seek my own will but the will of the one who sent me" (John 5:30). Elsewhere Jesus cautions, "Do not judge according to outward appearance, but judge with *righteous* judgment" (7:24). The third use of δίκαιος occurs in Jesus' prayer: "O righteous

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<sup>10</sup> These expressions include but are not restricted to οὐ κρίνω and εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται in association with ἀπόλλυμι, μεταβαίνω ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν, and ἀνάστασις ζωῆς contrasted with ἀνάστασις κρίσεως (3:16-19; 5:21-29). Both passages use litotes which is a figure of speech that entails an emphatic use of understatement to affirm a positive truth by negating its opposite.

Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you sent me” (17:25).

The only other occurrence of a δικ- stem word in John’s Gospel is in 7:18 where some English versions translate the noun ἀδικία as “in him there is no *falsehood*” (ESV) or 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” (NASB<sup>95</sup>, NKJV).<sup>11</sup>

Does the fact that John never uses either δικαίω or δικαίωσις mean that he contributes nothing to the New Testament teaching concerning justification in Christ Jesus? Absence of these words may account partially for regnant silence among Johannine scholars on this subject. Perhaps silence for some even reflects passive indulgence in a word fallacy, assuming that the absence of δικαίω or δικαίωσις indicates that the concept of justification is not present within John’s Gospel.<sup>12</sup> Ephemeral comments by some scholars indicates their innocence concerning this word fallacy. For example, on John 3:18, C. K. Barrett fleetingly observes, “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. . . .”<sup>13</sup> Again, on εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται (5:24), Barrett offers in passing, “The thought is closely akin to the Pauline doctrine of justification, according to which the believer

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Vos, “‘True’ and ‘Truth’ in the Johannine Writings,” 744.

<sup>12</sup> 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).”

<sup>13</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (London: SPCK, 1958), 181.

does indeed come into judgment but leaves the court acquitted.”<sup>14</sup> Similarly, *ὁ ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν οὐ κρίνεται* (3:18), D. A. Carson takes note, “Although John does not explicitly appeal to Paul’s ‘justification by faith’ doctrine, the substance of the matter is found here.”<sup>15</sup> *Ὁ εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται* in John 5:24, similar to Barrett, in passing Carson also mentions, “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.”<sup>16</sup>

If some Johannine scholars have confused the absence of *δικαιῶ* and *δικαίωσις* in John’s Gospel with absence of the “doctrine of justification by faith” not all have done so. Nevertheless, fleeting comments such as cited above still leave a significant void in Johannine studies that begs to be filled. Additionally, where scholars do acknowledge that John’s wording is akin to Paul’s doctrine of justification, they regard it as the negative (“not condemned”) of Paul’s positive doctrine (“justified”).<sup>17</sup> To be sure, they take note that John’s expression is the

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<sup>14</sup> *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.

<sup>15</sup> D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 207.

<sup>16</sup> *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 the 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.

<sup>17</sup> 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.

negative of Paul’s affirmative formulation, “justified.” However, those who include these passing comments are silent concerning the 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 surprising given frequent use of litotes in John’s Gospel. This is all the more surprising because not a few scholars point out uses of litotes in the Fourth Gospel.<sup>18</sup>

Litotes is a figure of speech that entails an emphatic use of understatement to affirm a positive truth by negating its opposite.<sup>19</sup> 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.” If John employs litotes in 3:18 and in 5:24, then his Gospel contributes more concerning the New Testament “doctrine of justification by faith” than ordinarily recognized. For what John affirms in these two passages is not simply that believers “are not condemned” or

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<sup>18</sup> For example, D. A. 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 two examples Plumer offers in John 3:18-19 are identified as meiosis, simple understatement, he correctly points to 6:37, in agreement with Carson, as an example of litotes.

<sup>19</sup> Here is a sampling within John’s Gospel of examples of litotes, a form of understatement that is stronger than meiosis.

- 3:19 “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.”
- 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.”
- 8:51f “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.”
- 19:12 “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.”

“do not come into condemnation.” Rather, these affirmations, expressed by litotes, state the matter much more emphatically. In keeping with the function of litotes, the two passages must be understood respectively to affirm that all who believe in Christ Jesus “are certainly justified” and “most assuredly come into justification.”

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. Thus, the gospel is God’s announcement of his Last Day verdict ahead of the coming Day of Resurrection and Judgment. As the cross of Christ Jesus portrays judgment’s condemnation of the impending Last Day, so the vacated tomb depicts the Last Day’s resurrection unto the life. When crucified, Christ Jesus, the righteous one, *already* stood condemned for others, and he was raised from the dead, justified and appointed Son of God (cf. 1 Timothy 3:16; Romans 1:4). Judgment, God’s wrath upon Christ on the cross, and resurrection, God’s vindicating him by raising him from the tomb, constitute the invasion of God’s Last Day acts into the present age, both now bestowed to believers in anticipation of the Age to Come.

Therefore, according to John’s Gospel, Jesus Christ announces in advance the two verdicts of God’s final judgment, “resurrection of life” and “resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:29). So, justification and resurrection unto 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* taste are secured by Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. Everyone who believes in God’s Son *stands justified already* in advance of the Day of Judgment, for already they have eternal life ahead of the Day of Resurrection. 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 ζωὴν, 3:36), by way of litotes effectively means “shall certainly see death” or

“shall certainly perish” in the Age to Come. Yet, already God’s Day of Judgment verdict, wrath, remains upon the disobedient (3:36). Advance announcement of these two verdicts—justification and condemnation—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. Announcement of the final verdict awaits the Last Day while God mercifully proclaims the inauguration of eternal life made available to everyone who believes in his Son. For through the proclamation of the gospel, God beckons all to obey his Son to receive eternal life (John 3:31-35). So, in the gospel God graciously foreshadows his Last Day verdict of judgment, either resurrection unto life or resurrection unto condemnation. In this way the coming of God’s Son renders the final verdict inviolable.

### **The Power of Paradox<sup>20</sup>**

Among many features that distinguish the Fourth from the Synoptic Gospels is John’s emphasis upon a spatial dualism (earth/heaven, world/not of this world, earthly things/heavenly things) that dominates the teachings of both Jesus and the evangelist while retaining a temporal duality (now/an hour is coming) in comparison to the Synoptic Gospels’ contrast of this age with the Age to Come.<sup>21</sup> While the Synoptic Gospels depict the Age to Come as remote, yet to come, John’s temporal duality tends to accent Christ’s inauguration of the Age to Come. Jesus’ saying,

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<sup>20</sup> The expression is owing to the line, “For the power of paradox opens your eyes, And blinds those who say they can see” in the song, “God’s Own Fool,” (Michael Card, “The Life: The Complete Recorded Trilogy on the Life of Christ,” [Brentwood, TN.: The Sparrow Corporation, 1988]).

<sup>21</sup> 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: Fortress, 1995), 1ff; R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 200-202. Cf. Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, 9<sup>th</sup> printing 1975 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 355, and G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, revised ed. 1993, ed. Donald Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 259-272. See also Robert Kysar, *John The Maverick Gospel*, revised edition 1993, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1976), 58-77.

“the hour is coming and now is” (e.g., 4:23; 5:25; 16:32), features his coming as the temporal encroachment of resurrection and judgment from the Last Day into the present age.<sup>22</sup>

The absence of any parable discourse in John also distinguishes it from the Synoptic Gospels. However, this does not mean that John’s Gospel is devoid of parabolic riddling as in Jesus’ short, pithy parables, such as, “No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment” (Mark 2:21). Parables of this kind are not absent (e.g., 3:8; 11:9, 10; 12:24).<sup>23</sup> But John features another form of parabolic speech in the Fourth Gospel. Given the range of meaning παραβολή bears throughout the LXX to translate the Hebrew לְשׁוֹן, it is reasonable to identify paradoxical and riddle-like sayings in John’s Gospel as belonging to παραβολή, even if the word παραβολή occurs nowhere in the Gospel, but a synonym, ἡ παροιμία, does occur (10:6; 16:25, 29).<sup>24</sup>

In John’s Gospel, Jesus’ performative riddle—“the hour is coming and now is”—is integral to the purpose of his incarnation. It effectively summarizes the paradox of Christ’s advent. This and other paradoxical sayings about his coming have the same purpose as his parabolic speech-acts have in the Synoptic Gospels which report that Jesus draws on Isaiah 6:10 and 42:19-20 to explain that he speaks to the crowds in parables “in order that while seeing they might not see and while hearing they might not hear” (cf. Mark 4:11-12). Jesus’ parables are performative acts of judgment in the vein of Isaiah’s commission, to make blind the blind, to make deaf the deaf, and to harden hard hearts.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> For variation on the theme, namely, “my hour has not yet come,” see 2:4; 4:21; 5:28; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:2, 4, 21, 25; 17:1.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, “The wind blows where it desires, and you hear its sound, but you do not know from where it comes or where it goes” (3:8); “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, for he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, for the light is not with him” (11:9, 10); “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat after falling into the earth dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (12:24).

<sup>24</sup> Friedrich Hauck, “παραβολή,” *TDNT* 5.744-761.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 377.

Likewise, in John's Gospel, alluding to the same passages in the ancient prophet in John 9:39-41 and in 12:40 by citing Isaiah 6:10, Jesus presents his advent as a divine performative act that brings judgment. He announces, "For judgment I came into this world in order that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind" (9:39).<sup>26</sup> This saying (9:39-41) "serves as a kind of interpretive epilogue" to confirm that Jesus' giving sight to the blind man is a dramatized parable that signifies in the natural realm that he has authority over sightedness and blindness in the spiritual domain.<sup>27</sup> Thus, by opening the eyes of the man born blind Jesus dramatizes the breaking in of Light from the Age to Come, "in order that those who do not see may see and those who see may become blind" (John 9:39). This saying relates paradoxically to "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world" (3:17) which, within its own context, forms a riddle by correlating with "whoever does not believe is condemned already" (3:18).

Jesus, God's Son who became flesh, is paradox incarnate whose revelatory words and deeds are performative acts that exude paradox, possessing power both to open and to close blind eyes. It is because his works and utterances simultaneously reveal and conceal his divine person that his actions and sayings bring judgment into the world ahead of time. For he who comes from above, not to condemn but to save the world (3:17-18), comes into the world to give Light to those who do not see and to blind the eyes of those who say they can see (9:41). These sayings,

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<sup>26</sup> Here is the only use of κρίμα (judgment) within the Fourth Gospel. True as it is that Jesus' sayings have riddle quality, for him to say "For judgment [εἰς κρίμα] I came into the world" (9:39) is different from saying "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn [ἵνα κρίνῃ τὸν κόσμον] the world" (3:17). Cf. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 377.

<sup>27</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 295. Cf. Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John*, 160; and Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 377-378.

from different portions of the Gospel, relate paradoxically to one another, but paradox is present even within the sayings themselves, paradox that reveals and conceals at the same time.<sup>28</sup>

Paradox punctuates Jesus' sayings throughout John's narrative, especially concerning his coming and judgment.<sup>29</sup> For example, the saying, "For God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world . . . whoever does not believe is condemned already" (3:17-18), entails oxymoron, a figure of speech.<sup>30</sup> Oxymoron also occurs when Jesus declares, "And if anyone hears my words and does not keep them, *I do not judge him*, for I did not come in order to judge the world. 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*" (12:47-48).

Jesus' sayings concerning judgment are speech-acts with divine impact, for given the mission of the incarnate Son of God, when he utters these sayings his words perform judgment now, in advance of the Day of Judgment. His words reveal, making alive, but they also conceal, indicting with wrath. The verdict of judgment is already in: "the Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the Light because their deeds were evil" (3:19). The point of Jesus' paradoxical sayings is that God's Son came not to execute condemnation, but that

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<sup>28</sup> Besides relating to John 3:17-18 paradoxically, the saying in 9:39 also includes oxymoron, "that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind." Likewise, oxymoron occurs in the saying, "If you were blind, you would not have sin [guilt], but now you say, "We see," your sin [guilt] persists" (9:41).

<sup>29</sup> In addition to paradox that exists within and among statements, Jesus' paradoxical sayings of John 3:17-19 and 5:21-29 build upon κρίνω and ἡ κρίσις which are equivocal by nature, whose meaning depends upon contextual usage. In 3:19 ἡ κρίσις means "the verdict." In 5:22 κρίνω and ἡ κρίσις are neutral meaning "judge" and "judgment" respectively. In 5:27, likewise, ἡ κρίσις is neutral, "judgment" (cf. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 206-207). See also note 8 above.

<sup>30</sup> Not all rhetoricians agree on how to define *oxymoron* and *paradox*. Some regard oxymoron as essentially paradox compressed to two words used for effect, complexity, emphasis, or wit. Others define oxymoron as "a figure of speech that juxtaposes two opposite or apparently contradictory words to present an emphatic and dramatic paradox for a rhetorical purpose or effect" (Ross Murfin and Syryia M. Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* [Boston: Bedford Books, 1997], 263). For the sake of clarity and consistency, this essay uses *oxymoron* as a subspecies of *paradox*. So, *oxymoron* is reserved for paradoxical sayings that juxtaposed within the same context while *paradox* is reserved for the sayings within the Gospel that relate paradoxically with sayings elsewhere within the Gospel.

judgment might issue from his presence with either belief or unbelief.<sup>31</sup> Hence, Jesus says, “The one who believes in him is not condemned, but the one who does not believe is already condemned” (3:18), and again, “Truly, truly I say to you that the one who hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and does not come into condemnation, but has passed from death into life” (5:24). These emphatically announce the verdict of divine judgment in advance, including both justification and condemnation. 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” (12:48). Such performative sayings already announce ahead of time the divine verdict yet to be issued in the Last Day. With the advent of the Light, God’s Son, justification and condemnation already arrive.

### **Riddles, Resurrection, and Righteousness**

Because Jesus is the incarnate Son of God, the Father authorizes him to have “life in himself” in order to bestow this life of the coming age to whomever he desires and to set in motion the coming judgment.

For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment [condemnation], but has passed from death to life.

Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel according to St. John*, reprint, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 150.

himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment [condemnation] (John 5:21-29, ESV).<sup>32</sup>

This passage calls for further attention, for it 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.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> The ESV improperly translates κρίσις (John 5:22, 24, 27, and 29) consistently as "judgment," as though referring the divine *act of judgment*, despite the evident fact that 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. So J. V. Fesko contends, "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" (*Justification: Understanding the Classic Reformed Doctrine* [Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R, 2008], 316). As shown in note 8 above, to argue that believers circumvent divine judgment in the Last Day depends upon failure to make the necessary interpretive decision concerning use of κρίσις given the antithetical contrast between ἀνάστασις κρίσεως and ἀνάστασις ζωῆς in John 5:29. Clearly, ἀνάστασις κρίσεως refers to the divine verdict of judgment, "resurrection of condemnation," not to the divine act of judgment.

Indeed, in his saying of 5:29, Jesus does not explicitly mention the divine *act of judgment* but instead features the divine *verdict of judgment* that issues from the divine *act of judgment*: resurrection of life and resurrection of condemnation. Even though his intuition inclines him to recognize the unitary indivisibility of resurrection and judgment, Fesko extracts too much from the contrast between ἀνάστασις ζωῆς and ἀνάστασις κρίσεως in 5:29 because he wrongly infers that believers do not at all pass through the divine act of judgment in the Last Day (p. 310). Thus, he concludes that because Jesus features two contrasting final verdicts—resurrection of life and "resurrection of judgment" [his translation]—he contends that believers "are spared judgment according to works" (p. 316). However, Jesus' statement in 5:29 necessarily implies that both believers and unbelievers pass through the divine act of judgment wherein one's deeds are at issue. 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 declares, that God will recompense each human κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ (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). Despite his missteps on John 5:29, Fesko's intuitions are correct in that he views resurrection and judgment as unitary divine acts in the Last Day wherein resurrection already is the foretoken of judgment. This is reflected when he slightly overstates, "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" (pp. 310-311).

<sup>33</sup> Not all rhetoricians agree on how to define *oxymoron* and *paradox*. Some regard oxymoron as essentially paradox reduced to two words used for effect, complexity, emphasis, or wit. Others define oxymoron as "a figure of

Bultmann tries to eliminate paradoxical tension from this passage when he assigns verses 28-29 to a later editor who supposedly tried to bring the dangerous realized eschatology of verses 24 and 25 into agreement with traditional futurist eschatology.<sup>34</sup> Bultmann's idea is to eliminate the tension between the *already* resurrection of verses 24-25 and the *not yet* resurrection of verses 28-29 because he thinks the two are discordant.<sup>35</sup> Not even C. H. Dodd, the renowned advocate of "realized eschatology," accepts such a proposal. Dodd correctly defends the authenticity of John 5:28-29, for there is no hint that these verses were editorially added to the original text.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the text resists dismissal, but it also defies simplistic explanations. Today, few dispute that the interweaving of the future ("the hour is coming") with the present ("and now is") is integral to Johannine and to New Testament eschatology.<sup>37</sup>

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speech that juxtaposes two opposite or apparently contradictory words to present an emphatic and dramatic paradox for a rhetorical purpose or effect" (Ross Murfin and Syrya M. Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* [Boston: Bedford Books, 1997], 263). In this paper, distinction between oxymoron and paradox is as follows. The essay favors oxymoron for the three following elements of the text of the Fourth Gospel: (1) "the hour is coming and is now"; (2) "the dead will hear"; and (3) "believes . . . has eternal life" (v. 24) juxtaposed with "those who did good things will come forth to the resurrection of life" (v. 29). The essay tends to use *paradox* to describe the whole rhetorical figure that spans John 5:24-30 and includes the juxtaposition of the three elements of *oxymoron* noted above.

<sup>34</sup> Rudolf Bultmann 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 even 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). Contrast Robert Kysar's claim that texts that denote a future eschatology derive from pre-Johannine tradition, while the dominant present "eschatology" reflects the viewpoint of the author or redactor ("The Eschatology of the Fourth Gospel—A Correction of Bultmann's Redactional Hypothesis," *Perspective* 13 (1972): 23-33. Also cf. Nils Dahl's view that John 5:28-29 "illustrates how the Johannine testimony was modified when its setting shifted from a special form of Jewish sectarianism to mainstream Christianity" ("Do Not Wonder! John 5:28-29 and Johannine Eschatology Once More," in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John In Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, ed. Robert T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 322-36.

<sup>35</sup> Carson contends that the proposal cannot stand for "the interweaving of the two strands lies near the heart of all Christian eschatology, including" the Fourth Gospel (*The Gospel according to John*), 258.

<sup>36</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1953), 147-48.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. the influence of Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, esp. 293-295.

Christ's advent causes the coming age to overlap the present age, and Jesus expresses this with a riddle, "the hour is coming and now is when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live" (5:25). What Jesus means in John 5:21-29 cannot be grasped apart from understanding his rhetorical figure of speech, *oxymoron*. The same saying occurs in John 4:23 when Jesus tells the woman at the well, "Believe me, *the hour is coming* when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But *the hour is coming, and is now here*, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth" (John 4:21ff). The coming of "true worshipers" who will worship "in spirit and truth" is about to commence but awaits the arrival of "the hour," which John's Gospel indicates is Jesus' death, resurrection, and exaltation.<sup>38</sup> Yet, even before the cross, the season of true worship has already begun in the person and ministry of Jesus because he is the true temple who fulfills the function of the shadow temple of the old covenant and replaces it (John 2:13-21).<sup>39</sup>

So, what is Jesus saying with his riddle in John 5:21-29? He simultaneously veils and unveils his creative authority in his signs. Only the Creator and Lord of the Sabbath, who "works until now" (5:17), has authority to give life and to raise the dead. So, on the Sabbath Jesus commands the invalid of thirty-eight years, "Arise!" (ἔγειρε, 5:8), signaling his authority to raise

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<sup>38</sup> Apart from passages such as John 1:39; 4:6, 52, 53; 5:35, etc., in John's Gospel "my hour" (2:4), "his hour" (7:30; 8:20; 13:1; 17:1), and "the hour" (4:21, 23; 5:28; 12:23, 27; 16:2, 25, 32) all refer to Christ's death upon the cross and his exaltation that is integral to it or effects associated with it (16:23).

<sup>39</sup> The contrast is not between false and true worship but between "earthly copy" worship and "heavenly original" worship as in "earthly copy" light (the sun) and "heavenly original" light (the Word, John 1:9) or in "earthly copy" bread (manna) and "heavenly original" bread (eternal life; 6:32) or as in "earthly copy" vine and "heavenly original" vine (15:1). Likewise, worship "in spirit and in truth" does not contrast with "false worship," for under the old covenant both true and false worship took place. Rather worship "in spirit and in truth" contrasts with worship that centers upon a particular place, the Temple, which was a copy and shadow of the original (cf. Heb. 8:1-6; 9:1-10; 10:1-4). "True worshipers" seek God in his heavenly realm and adore him in his habitation rather than in earthly localities with structural limitations. Cf. Vos, "'True' and 'Truth' in the Johannine Writings," 344, and Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 355-357.

the dead just as the Father does (ἐγείρει, 5:21).<sup>40</sup> By raising the invalid in the earthly realm, restoring what sin, decadence, and death destroyed, Jesus signifies his authority in the heavenly realm in the Last Day to raise the dead who now repose within their tombs and already to raise those imprisoned in graves of sin. It is on the Sabbath that Jesus does this healing and equates himself with the Father who “works until now” (5:17) to draw attention to the fact that he is restoring creation 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 (5:21; cf. 1:1-4) just as the Father has. 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.<sup>41</sup>

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 these forward from the Last Day into the present (6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48). Jesus emphatically associates *possession of eternal life* (i.e., resurrection 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

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<sup>40</sup> 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 and 5:21. 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 (ἐγείρε) to describe Jesus’ raising of Lazarus (cf. 12:1, 9, 17).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Francis J. Moloney, *Signs and Shadows: Reading John 5-12* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 4-19.

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.”<sup>42</sup> 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 already the divine verdict of the Last Day, namely, justification.

The believer *already* experiences qualitative aspects of the resurrection life of the Last Day, for the believer has crossed over from death to life. This strongly affirms that the powers of *the coming hour* (age) are *already* active but not exhaustively, for Jesus also speaks of resurrection and judgment *yet to come*, entailing everyone who does evil and everyone who does good (5:29). All who *already* hear and believe are those who, in *the hour that is coming*, will hear from within their tombs like Lazarus (11:43-44), and will emerge unto the resurrection of life never to die again as Lazarus did (5:28-29). The resurrection life of the now spiritually dead is of a piece with the resurrection of the physically dead in the hour that is coming. Jesus’ giving of life now is a foretaste, a promise, of the consummate resurrection in 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 to raise spiritually dead people *already* by the power of his Word in 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

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. John’s “does not come into condemnation” in John 5:24 (cf. 5:29) with Paul’s “no condemnation” (Rom. 8:1). Both, as will be shown, use litotes to affirm emphatically a positive truth by negating its opposite.

guarantees, “Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the Last Day” (John 6:54). Assurance that everyone whom the Son raises from the dead will be raised unto eternal life in the Last Day belongs exclusively to all who continue by faith in Christ to feed on him who is the only source of eternal life. Perseverance in Jesus Christ links the two—now and yet to come—inseparable phases of resurrection and eternal life so that in the Last Day only “those who have done good” will be raised unto eternal life (John 5:29).

In the case of raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus demonstrates his power to call the dead from their tombs by way of a dramatized parable akin to his raising up the lame man (5:1-18) and his giving sight to the blind man (9:1-41). Interpretation precedes the dramatized parable in the raising of Lazarus. Jesus features the indivisible and unitary relationship between the *coming* future resurrection and the *already* present resurrection in his riddle: “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even though he dies, shall live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die” (11:25-26).<sup>43</sup> Likewise, Jesus underscores the indivisible correlation between the *coming* future judgment and the *already* present judgment when he says, “The one who believes in him is not condemned, but the one who does not believe already stands condemned because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. This is the judgment: Light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than the light, for their deeds were evil” (3:18-19).

Inseparable are Jesus’ authority to raise and to judge the dead. This is evident in the way he introduces the two into his discourse: “For just as the Father raises the dead and makes

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<sup>43</sup> Once again, in John 11:26, when Jesus says, “shall never die,” he uses litotes, here signifying “shall most certainly live.” This essentially repeats Jesus’ earlier use of litotes in his saying, “Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death, ever” (8:51). Here, by litotes, Jesus means, “If anyone keeps my word, he will most assuredly see life forever!” Response by the Jews indicates that they failed to grasp Jesus’ figure of speech, for they say, “Now we know that you have a demon. Both Abraham and the prophets died, and you say, ‘If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death, ever’” (8:52). By reifying Jesus’ figure of speech, they fail to apprehend that Jesus is promising eternal life not avoidance of the grave.

them alive, so also the Son makes alive whomever 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.”<sup>44</sup> Nowhere in the context does Jesus join resurrection and judgment more inseparably 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.”<sup>45</sup> When Jesus speaks of the Last Day by setting “resurrection of life” over against “resurrection of condemnation,” in effect, he merges resurrection and judgment, both for those who do good and for those who do evil.<sup>46</sup> Jesus

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<sup>44</sup> Here, “Son of Man” certainly echoes Daniel 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. Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 200-201. The creation-consummation motif of John 5:1-30, brought to 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.”

<sup>45</sup> In the clause, μὴ θαυμάζετε τοῦτο, ὅτι ἔρχεται 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. Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, NICNT, 3<sup>rd</sup> printing 1975 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 321; and Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 248.

<sup>46</sup> 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” (Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 322). Similarly, John T. Carroll

presents Last Day resurrection as more than preparing its recipients for undergoing divine judgment.<sup>47</sup> 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, receipt of resurrection life already—“has passed from death to life”—is

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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. Andreas Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 189-190. See also J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, U.K.: 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 those who are concerned to rescue the passage from an apparent contradiction fail to recognize that 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.”

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]: 3-4-315). 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 hearing or belief and the doing of good that invariably characterizes all whom the Son will raise unto life in the Last Day.

<sup>47</sup> 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).

God's present verdict of 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 believe or obey the Son, dwelling under condemnation—"the wrath of God remains on him"—is God's present verdict of 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."

### **Conclusion**

Absence of *διακίω* and *δικαίωσις* from John's Gospel inclines Johannine scholars to say little, except in passing, concerning the Gospel's contributions to the New Testament teaching on the doctrine of justification. The fact that John frames his expressions concerning justification as negated understatements doubtless contributes to this. Nevertheless, two of John's narratives provide fertile discourse that bears much fruit concerning a rich understanding of his teaching with regard to justification.

John's contributions concerning justification come by way of recognizing Jesus' use of litotes in his sayings of John 3:18 and 5:24. When he announces "the one who believes in him is not condemned" (3:18) and "the one who hears . . . and believes . . . does not come into condemnation" (5:24), Jesus is actually saying quite emphatically, "the one who believes is assuredly justified." For by way of litotes, the emphatic use of understatement to affirm the positive truth by negating its opposite, Jesus is emphatically affirming that his coming brings forward the verdict of the Last Day so that already the verdict is being revealed in how people respond to him, either in belief or unbelief.

Jesus underscores the fact that his presence in this world establishes the presence of the future Last Day judgment when with performative words he announces “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” (5:25). Thus, the paradoxical saying indicates that the Son of Man who will call forth the dead on the Last Day is already giving resurrection life to all who believe in God’s Son. Yet, additionally, God’s wrath from the coming Day of Judgment already remains upon all who disobey the Son. Thus, the two antithetical verdicts of judgment in the Last Day—“resurrection of life” and “resurrection of condemnation”—already are being revealed wherever the voice of God’s Son is heard through the proclamation of the gospel in this present age.

Indeed, resurrection and judgment properly belong to the Last Day. God’s Son came not to condemn the world, yet because the Light has come into the world judgment issues from his presence. His presence brings the Last Day verdict of justification to all who believe but the Last Day verdict of condemnation comes to everyone who disobeys by unbelief. Thus, just as Jesus Christ *already* gives life to the dead who hear his voice ahead of the Day of Resurrection, so also, ahead of the Day of Judgment 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).