

NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION

EXEGETICAL PAPER

ON

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

CHAPTER 6 VERSES 35 THRU 47

BY

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TEXT: John 6:35-47

35Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. 36But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe36But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. 37All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. 38For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

40For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

41So the Jews grumbled about him, because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 42They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" 43Jesus answered them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. 44No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. 45It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God. 'Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me— 46not that anyone has seen the Father except he who is from God; he has seen the Father. 47Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

It is the task of this work to examine the above-mentioned text in order to further appreciate its meaning and its implications as God's revealed word. In fulfilling this task it will be the burden of this work to endeavor in a comprehensive analysis of this portion of God's inspired word ([2 Tim 3:16](#)). The analysis' that will be employed, in this task of elucidation, will include a literary analysis of the text, a historical analysis of the text and a theological analysis of the text. It is a goal of this work to provide a proper balance of these three categories in assessing the text, which will hopefully facilitate the acquisition of a more robust understanding of God's inerrant word of truth.

In the Scriptures, the complete rule of faith is found within the books of the Old and New Testaments. This rule provides the measure, by which all beliefs are to be derived and affirmed. Thus, it is prudent for the Christian to examine the Scriptures to discern their meaning and implications which are authoritative for belief and practice. An appropriate assessment of the context of the written word will foster a more accurate and precise understanding of the specific

text in review. The intent of this work will be to set the context of the pericope noted above literarily, historically, and theologically.

The ultimate goal of this work will be to bring glory to God and bring others into a greater understanding of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Fortunately, the scope of this text lends itself particularly to the fulfillment of this goal in emphasizing Jesus' earthly mission. The text revolves around a discussion about this earthly mission, which is characterized by the redemption of sinners from death to life. This redemption is set within a covenantal context that includes the cooperation of all three members of the Trinity to accomplish. It is this covenant that will establish the basis for the mission, which predominates' the content of the discourse between Jesus and the Jews. Although, there are some who reject the notion that there is a *pactum salutis* (Covenant of Redemption) in Scripture, a proper understanding of this text is deficient apart from the acknowledgement of this intratrinitarian covenantal agreement¹. Thus, it is the burden of this work to demonstrate that in this text the convergence of all three members of the Trinity, and their respective roles in the Covenant of Redemption (CoR), are revealed.

LITERARY ANALYSIS

The Gospel of John, commonly known as the fourth Gospel, was written by the apostle John the son of Zebedee. In [John 20:30-32](#), the apostle states to the reader his purpose for authoring this Gospel message, which is that "you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." Thus, the apostle's goal for this book was evangelistic in nature, which is why the author has been traditionally characterized as an Evangelist. This characterization is also appropriately made of the synoptic writers who, although not as explicit as John, shared the same goal in their own authorship. It is indicative by any careful reading of John that its style, order and content are not the same as the other synoptic writers. This distinction causes the fourth Gospel to be unique and complementary in its place in the canon of Scripture.

There are some who argue that the fourth Gospel is written in a chiastic structure from beginning to end.² The theory suggests that there are six major parts to the overall structure of John that

¹ Robertson, O. Palmer. 1980. "The Christ of the Covenants" (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R) p 54

² Ellis, Peter. 2003. Inclusion, Chiasm and the Division of the Fourth Gospel. *St. Vladimir Theological Quarterly* 47.1: p 281

possess several sequences and sub-sequences within those parts. The following is a summary of a suggested layout:

- Prologue: 1:1-18
- (a) Part I: 1:19-4:3 Witness and Discipleship
- (b) Part II: 4:4-6:15 Response: Positive and Negative
- (c) Part III: 6:16-21 The New Exodus
- (a) Part IV: 6:22-12:11 Response: Positive and Negative
- (b) Part V: 12:12-21:25 Witness and Discipleship

Although, the detail of the particular sequences and sub-sequences and the precise verse endings may be debated, the above mentioned structure does appear to represent a viable case for the chiastic structure for the fourth Gospel.

This would suggest that the text that will be examined within this work is situated in Part IV of the grand structure of the fourth Gospel. The span of this part includes a period of several months of Jesus' ministry ranging from Passover ([John 6:4](#)), the Feast of Tabernacles ([John 7:2](#)), and the Feast of Dedication ([John 10:22](#)). All three of these pilgrim feasts obligated a male Israelite to travel to Jerusalem ([Deut 16:1-17](#)) in adherence to the Mosaic Law. In obedience to these requirements, Jesus, whose mission was to fulfill the Law would have observed these stipulations of the covenant. Thus, most of the content within this section of John is characterized by long discourses between Jesus and the Jews debating aspects of the Law. However, the most rigorous exchanges especially revolved around who Jesus claimed to be.

In descending the scale of structure Part IV arguably begins at [John 6:22](#) whose sequence would carry on through the rest of the sixth chapter to [verse 71](#). There seems to be at least one, possibly two subsequences that occur from [verses 22-34](#) that concern an exchange between Jesus and the Jews after the feeding of the five thousand. The response to the third question from the crowd begins with Jesus response to it that takes us through the structure we are proposing to examine ([verses 35-47](#)). A chiastic structure can be found in this subsequence, which can be proposed as support for the delineation of this pericope. This structure is seen as follows:

- (aa) [verses 35-37](#): Only those given by the Father believe unto eternal life
- (bb) [verses 38-39](#): The Father sent the Son, those He redeems will be raised the last day
- (cc) [verse 40](#): The Father has sent the Son to redeem a people
- (bb) [verses 41-44](#): The Father sent the Son, those He redeems will be raised the last day

(aa) [verses 45-47](#): Only those given by the Father believe unto eternal life

In the structure of this particular subsequence the literary focal point of this passage appears to be characterized by the Father sending the Son to redeem a people³. The entire subsequence seems to bear an emphasis that redemption is particular in its scope. Moreover, this particular redemption has been planned among an intimate union including the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is indicative that the text explicitly manifests this union between the Father and the Son. It will be argued later that the Holy Spirit is implicitly manifested as part of this union.

The particular text that is the concern of this work falls within the [sixth chapter](#) of the fourth Gospel. In this chapter the apostle is giving an account of the events surrounding the feeding of the five thousand. This event is recorded in all of the synoptic Gospels, however, John provides a much more thorough account of the discourse that day. The material unique to the fourth Gospel begins in [verse 14](#), where the people were astonished by what had just transpired in their midst, and they began to contemplate that Jesus was the Prophet promised by Moses ([Deut 18:15-19](#)). In [verse 15](#) it indicates that Jesus perceived their intentions, which was to “take Him by force and make Him king.” As a result, He withdrew from the crowd to escape from their impulse reaction of having their bellies filled through a remarkable miracle. In [verses 16-25](#) it recounts the return to Capernaum and how the disciples encounter Jesus walking on water in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. This further astonished the crowd who was aware that Jesus was not in the boat with the disciples, yet made it to the other side mysteriously.

These events lead to the discourse that includes the text that will be examined in this work. In [verses 26-34](#) Jesus exposes the true intentions of the people in response to the miracles. He points out that they wanted to make Him King not necessarily because of the miracle itself nor that Jesus was the Prophet promised by Moses, but because their stomachs were filled with food. This craving led to a request for manna from heaven to provide an endless supply of food for their taking. In [verse 35](#) Jesus then states that “I am bread of life” and whoever “believes” in Him will neither “hunger” nor “thirst”. This verse introduces the first of the “I am” statements that are repeated in subsequent sequences within Part IV of the fourth Gospel ([John 8:12](#); [8:58](#); [9:5](#); [10:7-14](#); and [11:25](#)). In the original language these statements are constructed with the

³ This structure differs from Ellis’ in the inclusion of verse 35, which to us seemed awkward to delineate the pericope at Jesus’ mid-sentence. Moreover, the glosses we have used to characterize the verses with differ from Ellis as well who does not emphasize the particular redemption overtones that we have.

emphatic ἐγώ εἰμι, which is identical to the form used in the Greek translation of the Divine name in [Ex 3:14](#). Although, not in and of itself a closed case for Jesus' divine self-identification, when considering the context of [8:58](#) it surely extinguishes the realm of doubt that would seek to deny the significance of the construction of these statements. This declaration is further supported in the text when Jesus appeals to His divine condescension in [verse 38](#), which presupposes a divine nature.

In briefly considering the literary context it is evident from the surrounding texts that the expectations that the people had for the Messiah are not being fulfilled in Jesus. The actions and responses of Jesus are indicative of the fact that He was plainly aware of this unfulfilled expectation. More will be elucidated about these peculiar circumstances in the subsequent historical analysis of the text. Nonetheless, it suffices to say that in this discourse it is apparent that Jesus is attempting to rectify this false expectation of the people in His response and be careful not to feed to it.

In [verse 36](#), continuing with the response to the third question of the discourse between Jesus and the Jews, it is evident that Jesus' statement refers back to the opening remarks of the discussion ([verse 26](#)). The crowd had "seen" the miracle, however, were overtaken from its significance by the satisfaction it brought to their stomachs. Being aloof to what had occurred at best or manipulative at worst they ignore the miracle from the previous day and request that Jesus perform another sign to validate His message. Jesus here points out the crassness of this request since they have already witnessed the validation of His message, yet chose not to believe it. Here the Word of God ([John 1:1](#)) who possesses the ability to pierce bone and marrow ([Heb 4:12](#)), in order to view the intentions of the heart, is making an adjudication about the spiritual status of His audience. Although, the Jews here were witnesses to an extraordinary miracle, they can only manage to focus on gratifying their insatiable appetite to fill their stomach, entirely ignorant to the spiritual meaning of what was occurring within their midst.

After making a judgment about the crowd's intentions in seeking Jesus, he exposes that they are coming in unbelief. In [verse 37](#) Jesus makes an interesting statement that defines an essential pre-requisite to those who "come" to Jesus. First, it should be pointed out that the way "come" is used in this verse possesses a connotation of "belief". As is evident from the discourse, the

crowd here in the text is “coming” to Jesus seeking to be fed with bread from heaven as their forefathers were (Ex 16:15; Num 11:7-9). Thus, to suggest that the word is being used to express the physical act of approaching a destination in this verse would be problematic. The other option to describe the sense that this word possesses would be to define it as an intimate spiritual act of drawing close to the person of Jesus. In other words, by believing or placing ones trust and faith in the person of Jesus as the context suggests the crowd was not doing.

The implication of this statement made by Jesus is that the crowd who did not come to Jesus in faith is not given by the Father. In considering the positive implications of this statement it suggests that only those who meet the pre-requisite, those who have been given by the Father, will come to Jesus in faith. Moreover, it should be noted the statement also expresses certain inevitability about those who are given by the Father, which is that they will effectively “come” to Jesus. Jesus goes onto indicate that those who do meet this criterion of responding in faith, “He will certainly not cast out” (οὐ μὴ ἐκβάλω ἔξω). In considering the Greek construction of this statement a double negative participle with the future indicative verb is found. This type of construction, along with the aorist subjunctive, is the strongest way to negate something grammatically in the Greek language⁴. The ramifications, grammatically speaking, is a denial of any potential of the preceding terms from ever occurring. Thus, those who have been given by the Father to respond in faith to the Son are secure in that intimate union (John 10:29). The earnest desire of this commitment by the Son to those who had been given by the Father was fervently expressed in even His most dire hour (John 17:24). This emphatic negation of the possibility of those who will “come” from being lost is thus a repeated assertion by Jesus.

Thus, in proceeding to [verse 38](#) here Jesus illumines [verse 37](#) by stating that this was the purpose or will of the Father in sending Him. For it was the Father’s will in sending the Son that those whom He has given would come and partake of the “bread of life”, resulting in their redemption. Here Jesus alludes to His divine condescension (John 1:14) in clarifying that He has come down from the Father in heaven. This condescension is discussed in a previous discourse (John 3:13-16) of the fourth Gospel where Jesus clarifies that this journey is unique and exclusive to Him. This phrase would have carried a connotation to those familiar with the Mosaic Law (Deut 30:11-14) in declaring His intention to fulfill it. This is fitting since it leads into Jesus’

4 Wallace, Daniel. 1996. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan) p 468

confession that He has been sent by the Father to do His will, which is summed up in the precepts and commandments of the Law. Consequently, Jesus was so determined to achieve this end (*telos*) that He would call it His food (John 4:34) and seek nothing else (John 5:30) even until the last days of His life (Matt 26:39). The successful fulfillment of this commission would be the basis of ensuring that all who come to the Father would never be cast out (Rom 10:4-10).

This determination of Jesus to realize the will of the Father is further established in the continuation of the discourse with verse 39. Here He again re-emphasizes the purpose of His divine condescension, which is to ensure that all of those given to Him by the Father are preserved. In this discourse the point that none will be lost is analogous to the metaphorical illustration given in another area of the fourth Gospel (John 10:27-29). There, those that are given by the Father are equated with sheep, Jesus is equated with the Shepherd and the task of preservation is depicted as the impossibility of those sheep from being snatched out of His hand. Thus, both in this text and on another occasion Jesus is assuring the safety and preservation of those particular individuals given to Him by the Father. That preservation will be manifested through their being raised up on the last day. This was Jesus' pledge to all those who believe that the consequences of sin indicative of death (Rom 5:12), would not even be able to separate them (Rom 8:38-39) from His faithful preservation (John 11:24). Therefore, it is evident from the discourse thus far (especially in these last two verse) that Jesus is declaring to the crowd that He has been sent on a mission to fulfill the will of the Father in order to effectively save a particular people that are given to Him. Essentially then this divine condescension can be characterized as a rescue mission that will ensure the redemption of a people from death, as will be manifested in their being raised up on the last day.

As the discourse continues in verse 40 the content of Jesus statement here sums up the intent of the preceding verses recapitulating their meaning in a climactic fashion. This recapitulation supports the proposed literary structure of the text, which accentuates this verse as the central point in this pericope. It is here that the definition of "coming" to Jesus is explicitly manifested as belief or faith in Him. Moreover, it is here where the convergence of the will of the Father and the mission of the Son are succinctly defined as resulting in eternal life for those who believe. A belief that Jesus earlier states that the crowd did not possess. He goes onto to elaborate that the crowd did not possess this belief, because they had not been given by the

Father. Interestingly, in [verse 36](#) Jesus states the crowd had “seen” Him, yet they did not believe in Him or the message. However, here in [verse 40](#) this is now contrasted with “everyone who looks” to Him and “believes” will have eternal life. Thus, we see an explicit differentiation of those worthy to inherit the promises of eternal life being set forth by Jesus that is not favorable to the crowd.

The distinctions between these two groups of people, according to Jesus, do not revolve around anything in the persons themselves. Basically, the only differences between the two groups of people are whether they are given by the Father to the Son or not. Although, this is evidently the plain meaning of the text we have endeavored to explain, the accuracy of this explanation is further fortified by the reaction of the crowd in the subsequent [verses](#). Thus, it is important to emphasize that the crowd's reaction is indicative of their understanding Jesus accurately and concluding that they are not worthy of eternal life. They are not worthy of eternal life, because they have not been given by the Father. Hence, when they look to the Son they do not believe and will not be raised by Him on the last day. Obviously, this revelation would not be a pleasant one and the crowd reacts in a manner to discredit the words of Jesus by casting aspersions on the authority He possesses to pronounce such things.

The crowd's reaction to the words of Jesus begins in [verse 41](#) and the apostle characterizes their disposition as grumbling. This description of grumbling is curious and seems to be alluding to Israel's past episodes of grumbling, illustrative of the wilderness wanderings ([Ex 17:3](#); [Num 14:27](#); [Ps 78](#)). This is likely, since the word for grumbling *Εγόγγυζον* used here by the apostle is the same Greek word the Septuagint translators used for the term in the Old Testament (used in the verses just cited)⁵. Analogous to the numerous occurrences when the Israelites expressed disapprobation with the Lord and Moses, here Israel again is reacting negatively to the word of the Lord being proclaimed by the Prophet greater than Moses ([Heb 3:1-6](#)).

The extent of the disapproval is summarized in a series of rhetorical questions in [verse 42](#), whose answers were designed to discredit Jesus' claims. The argument, which is also used on another occasion ([John 7:27](#)), is to refute Jesus' claim of divine condescension manifested in His statement “I have come down from heaven”. This is also metaphorically illustrative of Jesus

⁵ Bauer, Walter. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*/ revised and edited by FW Danker (Chicago: The University Chicago Press) p 204

equating Himself with “the bread of life”, which was the response to their request for the heavenly manna. As noted above, both of these contentions would have been familiar to the crowd through the Torah. Their reasoning is to deny any possibility of Jesus’ descent from heaven, since they presumed He was conceived according to the natural order. Thus, being brought to the world through ordinary parents it would have been “impossible” to also claim to have been from heaven. From their perspective, without possessing the New Testament Scriptures; they seem to have an excellent point. Nonetheless, we must be reminded of the origin of the discussion, which resulted from the extraordinary miracle performed by Jesus. This demonstration of divine power provided the credentials necessary for the crowd to believe the words of Jesus as authentic. This supernatural act provided them with no excuse to disbelieve the message of Jesus even without the resource of the New Testament to clarify that the conception was not according to the natural order. Moreover, it is arguable that they did have Scriptural witness ([Is 7:14](#)) nullifying any appeal to the ignorance that “Emmanuel” or “God with us” (divine condescension) would be conceived in an extraordinary manner.

Jesus responds in [verse 43](#) and proceeds to explain why their grumbling was unmerited in [verse 44](#). The response is almost identical in meaning to the previous statements in [verses 37 and 39](#), however is stated in a different way. The crowd understood the meaning when their exclusion was conveyed implicitly responding with a negative reaction. This results in Jesus stating the same thing, however explaining their exclusion in a more explicit manner. In the response Jesus identifies another pre-requisite necessary for those who inherit eternal life. Not only does one have to be given by the Father to the Son, but the means by which this transaction is made effective for those who “come” to Jesus is by being “drawn” by the Father. The means by which the Father draws individuals to “come” to Jesus is through the Holy Spirit or Third Person of the Trinity we learn in a prior discourse of the fourth Gospel ([John 3:3-8](#)). It is indicative here in this statement and from referencing the prior discussion that the work of this Trinitarian member is indispensable for the salvation of the individual. This essential act, however, is inherently irresistible as is demanded by the word choice employed here by Jesus.

The translation of the word ελκύση as “draw” in English, as some have pointed out⁶, does not

⁶ Sproul, RC. 1997. *Grace Unknown: The Heart of Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books) p 94-95

convey the forceful connotation of the word. We find support for this in the New Testament where it is always rendered in English as drag or hauled (John 18:10; 21:6, 11; Acts 16:19; 21:30; Jam 2:6), except for one passage (John 12:32)⁷. In examining the semantic domains of this word we find it is categorized with other verbs like pull or lead by force⁸. It shares this domain with another word σὺρῶ, which is synonymous in meaning being rendered as drag or pull by physical force implying the need to overcome resistance (Rev 12:4)⁹. This word is used in the same passage with ἐλκῶ in John 21:8, thus used by the Evangelist as a synonym. Moreover, this characterization is further reinforced when the abundance of other more common words with a less forceful connotation could have easily been used in this statement. The words ἀγῶ (to lead or bring) found in Matt 21:7 and Luke 4:1 or ὀδηγῶ (to guide or direct) found in Matt 15:14 and Rev 7:17 could have been used to convey the sense of drawing in a softer way¹⁰. However, these less forceful meanings evidently were not what Jesus had in mind during this discourse. Although, the forcefulness of this language is not usually incorporated into the translation of this verse, the characterization of an overwhelming compulsion applied to an individual to “come” to Jesus receives strong support. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the exegete of this text to emphasize the irresistible nature that the connotation of this word has. A connotation that is essential in defining the role of the Holy Spirit in the redemption of individuals.

In proceeding to [verse 45](#) this identification of the Holy Spirit as the One whom the Father uses to irresistibly draw individuals to Jesus finds further support. As Jesus continues His response to the crowd, He is quoting the prophet Isaiah (Is 54:13) in this specific instance. In reviewing the original context of this citation this benefit of being “taught by God” was a result of the Lord’s unconditional promise of an eternal covenant of peace for Israel (Is 54:9-10). In subsequent revelations by the prophets this “covenant of peace” is further defined as the New Covenant (Jer 31:34). It is manifested that in the New Covenant, the heirs of this promise would be “taught by God” through the Holy Spirit. Moreover, the Holy Spirit would perform the task of changing the heart of the individual from stone to flesh to facilitate a positive response to God’s call of redemption (Ezk 36:25-27). Jesus’ understanding of the prophetic promises of a New Covenant,

⁷ Bauer, Walter. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature/ revised and edited by FW Danker* (Chicago: The University Chicago Press) p 318

⁸ Louw & Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York, NY; UBS) p 82

⁹ Louw & Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York, NY; UBS) p 205

¹⁰ Louw & Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York, NY; UBS) p 208

thus converge and find their fulfillment in His divine condescension to redeem those given to Him by the Father who will also be irresistibly drawn to “come” to Him in faith. The effective execution of this redemption, promised in this unconditional covenant, includes the collaboration of all three members of Trinity.

Again in [verse 46](#) Jesus refers to His divine condescension, which intrinsically infers to His exclusive ability to claim to have been within the presence of the Father. There are two significant conclusions that are inherent within this unique claim of possessing access to the presence of the Lord. First, Jesus is declaring that He is more than just a man for no man can survive this encounter and live ([Ex 33:20](#)). Thus, this further reinforces His previous statements (i.e. [verse 35](#)) that are being repeated here. Moreover, it also builds upon previous declarations made by the author as well ([John 1:18](#)). Second, Jesus being the Word incarnate is bringing a full disclosure of the Father’s will. Rather than having the Word mediated through the mouths of a prophet or the reading of the Scriptures, Jesus who is the Word, manifests it completely ([Deut 30:12](#)). This privilege of access into the heavenly Holy of Holies is possible for Jesus being without sin and entitled based upon His own righteousness to be within the presence of the Lord. It is this righteousness that will provide the basis for all those who believe to inherit eternal life, which is Jesus’ next statement in [verse 47](#). Jesus’ accomplishment of the will of Him who sent Him is so thorough and comprehensive that He can confidently guarantee that those who “come” (or believe in) to Him will never be cast out.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

As consideration to the historical context of this passage is made, it is appropriate to draw attention to the atmosphere of Palestine during the first century AD. From the time of the exile to the advent of Jesus several significant events occurred within this geographic region. During the Babylonian captivity of exilic Israel a new power emerged to dominance in the Near East. It was this Persian king who decreed the return of the exiles to Israel and commissioned them to rebuild the temple ([Ezra 1:1-2](#)). A second temple was rebuilt in compliance with this decree and Israel did return to Palestine to occupy the land. As the dominance of Persia diminished the region was conquered by Alexander the Great whose untimely death left the region on the border between two competing successors. Thus, the oversight of this land was in continual tension and was exchanged between the Ptolemaic and Seleucid Empires.

In the midst of these political tensions a significant religious event that involved the defilement of the second temple by a Seleucid Emperor culminated in a successful rebellion that resulted in Israelite independence¹¹. This sparked a period of almost a century of Israelite self-rule, known as the Maccabean period, believed by some to have been the beginning of a messianic kingdom¹². However, this independence did not remain permanent arriving at a cessation with the Roman general Pompey's conquest of Jerusalem¹³. Thus, it dispelled any credibility to the proposition that the messianic kingdom was realized during the Maccabean period. This realization was followed by a subsequent movement that would be characterized by an eager anticipation of Messianic advent to bring a termination to foreign rule over the land of Palestine.

The strategy employed by this movement to hasten the arrival of Messiah was a strict and zealous observance of the Mosaic Law in hopes to restore the theocratic dynasty¹⁴. This strategy was most clearly manifested in the Pharisee and Essene sects of that era. Although, Israel was in the land during this period they would have conceded that without the theocratic dynasty reinstated, they were still in exile¹⁵. Thus, a fervent attempt to encourage genuine and passionate observance of the stipulations of the Siniatic covenant (1 Kg 8:46-53; 2 Ch 7:13-14) would result in its being reestablished through a Messianic king. This desire of divine restoration of the Israelite theocracy is indicative of inquiries made by the disciples to Jesus as to when He would reinstitute this kingdom (Acts 1:6-8). Moreover, this expectation was assimilated into the crowds thinking evident in their own aspirations to coronate Jesus after the miracle of the bread (John 6:15). No doubt this ethos had significant influence over the thoughts and practices of the day, which merits the consideration of where this belief originated.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and all that are in them. He created man in His own likeness and image then placed in him in a beautiful garden to exercise dominion over creation (Gen 1:26) and produce a holy race (Gen 1:28). These blessings, however, were provisional requiring full obedience by man of the stipulations provided by his Creator Lord (Gen 2:15-17). It came about that man failed in that effort listening to the apocryphal word of Satan in lieu of his Creator Lord. Although stipulations of the covenant made between God and

11 Ferguson, Everett. 2003. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: WB Eerdmans, Third Edition) p 407

12 Ferguson, Everett. 2003. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: WB Eerdmans, Third Edition) p 452

13 Ferguson, Everett. 2003. *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: WB Eerdmans, Third Edition) p 411

14 Godfrey, Robert. 2006. September 13, 2006 Lecture. *Ancient Church* (Escondido, CA: WSC)

15 Horton, Michael S. 2006. *God of Promise Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker) p 47

man were to result in death as the immediate consequence for violation, a gracious promise was uttered that a Savior would come to reconcile this broken relationship ([Gen 3:15](#)). This mystery made in the form of a promise was the hope of mankind to redeem them from the curse of death instigated by their federal representative. Throughout history, this mystery became more defined as to where this promised Seed would emerge ([Gen 12:1-3](#); [Gen 49:10](#)).

God chose the nation of Israel to preserve this seed, which resulted in the ratification of another covenant made at Sinai ([Ex 24](#)). This covenant was also conditional, based on obedience to God's laws with the intent to maintain the distinctness of this privileged nation above all others ([Lev 20:26](#)) facilitating the preservation of the lineage for the Messianic Seed. Analogous to the covenant made at creation, Israel was granted tenure within an earthly paradise as long as they obeyed the stipulations of the covenant ([Ex 3:8](#); [Josh 24:13](#)). Despite continuous failures to live up to the standards of the covenant, God was merciful in preserving this nation. Moreover, the mystery revealed in the garden also continued to receive further definition ([2 Sam 7](#); [1 Sam 2:35](#)) providing a more robust profile of this Messianic Seed.

Israel continued in their rebellion forsaking the laws of the covenant that God had obligated them to keep ([Ezk 21-22](#)). This continual disregard could no longer be tolerated, which culminated in their eviction from the land in the same manner as their father Adam ([2 Kings 24:20](#)). Nonetheless, God promised a restoration of His covenant people to ensure that the original promise of a Messianic Seed could be kept. The hope of this promise was the only thing left for Israel to trust in. The fervency manifested by the zealous sects of the time manifested almost a sense of desperation knowing that the advent of Messiah was the last resort. Hence, knowing the desperation of their state encouraged their own resolve to control their own destiny through a scrupulous observance of God's Law ([Rom 10:2](#)). Unfortunately, this well intentioned philosophy resulted in at least two significant detrimental affects. First, diligent observance of the Law became the exclusive focus of religion to the extent that it had a blinding affect in interpreting the times that confronted them ([Matt 11:20-24](#); [Luke 11:29-32](#); [12:54-56](#)). Secondly, there was a harmful confusion of the two covenants characteristically distinguished by command (Law) and promise (Gospel). Both of these influences coupled with the true desire to be freed from foreign oppression restoring the excellence of the theocratic kingdom attributed to the false expectations the people had for Messiah.

This background assists in understanding the surrounding texts of the passage that is the concern of this work in important ways. It is certainly a peculiar response to those who would seek to make you their king to elude them by withdrawing ([John 6:15](#)). Nonetheless, this was Jesus response to the crowd's ambitions to coronate Him after the spectacular miracle of the feeding of five thousand. This evasion by Jesus, however, was necessary to avoid fueling Israel's false expectations that their obedience induced His coming. In fact Jesus goes above and beyond mere avoidance of the false hope all the way to obliterating their potential of being fulfilled in Him. He does this in the subsequent passages that are the cause for the dramatic shift in the crowd's perspective on Jesus transitioning from king or potential Messiah to a madman or lunatic with His unpalatable hard sayings. These sayings were extremely effective in decimating this false expectation and so insufferable that even Jesus' closest disciples had to grapple with their piercing ramifications ([John 6:60-71](#)).

It is also evident that this background facilitates a more effective understanding of the text that is the concern of this work. The mystery that was first revealed in the ancient garden is being made known in the passage more clearly than ever before. In addition to unveiling God's hidden mystery ([1 Cor 2:6-14](#); [Rom 16:25-26](#)), Jesus in the midst of this response is clarifying the confusion prevalent during His day relative to the two covenants. Rather than rely on their own obedience to hasten the advent of Messiah, Jesus clarifies that it was Messiah's mission to obey the Law on behalf of the people ([verse 38](#)) in compliance with the will of the Father ([verse 39](#)). Thus, the conditions would not be fulfilled by the people to induce the coming of Messiah, but the Messiah would come to fulfill the conditions so that the people could inherit the promises ([verse 40](#)). Far from having to meet any conditions to inherit the promises, Israel would simply have to receive the promises earned by Messiah after being compelled to "come" ([verse 37](#)) by the work of the Holy Spirit that proceeds from the Father ([verse 44](#)) to receive them.

THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

It has been the burden of this work to demonstrate that the *pactum salutis* or Covenant of Redemption is a biblical doctrine, which is manifested within this text of Scripture. This doctrine is the articulation of the role that each member of the Triune Lord performs in the process of redemption. The criticism of this doctrine has traditionally been that it has no biblical support. For the most part this doctrine employs a hermeneutical perspective, or system, that

seeks to unify several related passages describing the Trinitarian roles in different areas of Scripture. However, in considering this text, as noted above, it is apparent that these three distinct roles of the Triune Lord converge. Moreover, in order to understand the passage properly the *pactum salutis* must be affirmed as a biblical doctrine. Thus, in this section the system proper will be explained to further elucidate the meaning of the text with a more robust understanding of this vital doctrine known as the Covenant of Redemption.

As many theologians have pointed out, the Christian religion and the Scriptures are based on covenant¹⁶. This provides the framework or paradigm for how the Scripture's are to be understood properly¹⁷. Throughout the Scripture two over-arching covenants, known as the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace, are made between God and man. Although, this has been introduced in the previous historical analysis, further explanation will be made since a proper understanding of these covenants is imperative for the Covenant of Redemption.

The Covenant of Works, also known as the Covenant of Creation, was first made with Adam in the garden. It is a conditional covenant between God and man who merits blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. All humanity is under this covenant with God, which will be the basis for their judgment on the Day of the Lord. As discussed above, Adam failed to keep this covenant with God, incurred the curses associated with its violation, and the consequences of this fall have been transmitted to all of Adam's progeny in a depraved sin nature. This fallen nature has corrupted the original righteousness that humanity was first created with and precludes them from obeying God's Law. Thus, mankind is in a state of enmity against God ([Rom 3:10-23](#); [Eph 2:1-3](#)), unable to merit the blessings based on their own righteousness and will be brought to justice at the end of the age for their rebellion against God ([Rev 20:11-12](#)).

The Covenant of Grace encompasses the various individual covenants progressively revealed to God's people throughout redemptive history. There are different administrations of this covenant, however, they all are based on the principle of grace. The term grace is indicative of the fact that man has acquired "demerit" before God as a result of his sin and rebellion. This is

16 Morris, Leon. 1965. *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: WB Eerdmans) p 65

17 Horton, Michael S. 2006. *God of Promise Introducing Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker) p 10-22

an unconditional covenant that is based on a promise that God has given to man that a Redeemer would come to save him from his state of demerit. The nature of an unconditional covenant is that it is simply received and not earned, which is a necessity for man who is incapable of reconciling himself after the curse of the fall. However, God by His nature is just and cannot simply overlook the sin and rebellion that man has accumulated against Him. Thus, the Covenant of Redemption is required to allow the fulfillment of the promises in the Covenant of Grace to be realized while allowing God to remain consistent with His own just nature.

Therefore, the Covenant of Redemption provides the basis for God to maintain the unconditional promises made in the Covenant of Grace while preserving His own essential attribute of being just. It is apparent that these two biblical truths, God's unconditional promises and His justice, are in tension and require reconciliation. This reconciliation occurs in the Covenant of Redemption where the Son is assigned the burden of fulfilling the Covenant of Works. In accomplishing the demands of God's righteousness, or the Father's will, the conditions required of man in the first covenant are met by the God-man Jesus Christ. Moreover, the demands of God's justice that must be placated in the punishment of man's sin are further accomplished in the Son bearing the punishment on the cross. This was the purpose of the divine condescension, which was indicative of this agreement or covenant made amongst the members of the Trinity¹⁸. The Father chooses to redeem a people and gives them to the Son, the Son fulfills the conditions and the demands of justice on behalf of the people's redemption, and the Holy Spirit is sent to make effective the redemption earned by the Son in "drawing" all those who have been given ([Eph 1:3-14](#)). This is essentially a summary of Jesus' words recorded in this text, which has been the scope of the preceding work. Furthermore, it is evident that this summary is loaded with a whole host of other biblical doctrines, which will be unpacked in the subsequent remainder of this work.

As the Covenant of Redemption serves as the basis or foundation for the Covenant of Grace it helps to characterize the nature of it. As noted previously, it is an unconditional promise that is made to certain individuals who can rely on redemption outside of themselves to be provided from above. Certainly, this is *good news* for people who are unable to please God or save themselves as a result of their fallen nature. The very nature of an unconditional promise,

18 Kline, Meredith. 2006. *Kingdom Prologue Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock) p 145

however, is that there is nothing earned or required for the recipient to do in order to receive the benefits. Hence, the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ alone is a consequence of these covenants. This is manifested in the concept of vicarious substitution that is inherent with the role that Jesus accomplishes in the covenant. Jesus is sent from heaven to do the Father's will (verse 38), fulfilling all righteousness perfectly (2 Cor 5:21). He is also sent to assume the sanctions of the curse taking the punishment of it upon himself and propitiating¹⁹ the wrath associated with God's justice against disobedience (Rom 3:24-26; Gal 2:19-21). This work was performed for all those who had been given to the Son by the Father and applied in a transaction known as double imputation. Consequently, the sin of the individual transferred to Christ is paid for on the cross and the righteousness of Christ is transferred to the individual who can now stand before God as innocent²⁰. This condition is fulfilled by Christ alone and is received by a saving faith in the unconditional promise.

This saving faith is a gift to the individual (Eph 2:5-9) who is quickened or regenerated by the Holy Spirit (Tit 3:5-7; John 3:3-8), and is unable to accept this promise in his fallen state (1 Cor 2:8-16). This is also known as effectual calling, which affirms the inevitability that those who are given by the Father and redeemed by the Son will certainly be "drawn" by the Holy Spirit to accept the promise and the blessings of double imputation associated with it²¹. Thus, it can be characterized as a monergistic act that the Third Person of the Holy Trinity makes alive, an otherwise dead sinner allowing them to hear the gospel and believe. The use of the term monergism is to distinguish that it is an act solely performed by God and not a collaborative or cooperative effort between God and man known as synergism. Otherwise, Jesus would not have used such forceful language in the text above (i.e. ἐλκύση), which is indicative of the innate resistance that fallen man has towards the message of the gospel (1 Cor 1:18-24).

It is also evident that this text and the doctrines already discussed are integral to the theological acrostic known as TULIP²². All five of the doctrines summarized by this acrostic are reliant on this pericope and the *pactum salutis* for their validity. Due to man's total inability to save himself in his fallen state God must choose to redeem some on the basis of Christ's effective work on the cross. The effective work of double imputation is applied to the individual by the

19 Morris, Leon. 1965. *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: WB Eerdmans) p 65

20 Murray, John. 1955. *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, MI: WB Eerdmans) p 117 & 124

21 Murray, John. 1955. *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, MI: WB Eerdmans) p 92

22 TULIP stands for Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace, and Perseverance of the saints

monergistic act of the Holy Spirit. The work is classified as effective, because it will produce its intended purpose in losing none who are to be saved manifested in their being raised on the last day ([verses 39 and 40](#)).

Finally, another implication that this text has upon the theological doctrines of the Church has to do with the characteristics they should possess. As a result of this text and the doctrines already considered above, it is appropriate to note that they are reliant on Christ's divine descent not the individual's ascent to God. This can also be articulated as the necessity of possessing a theology of the cross in lieu of a theology of glory. Since the incident of Adam's fall, man-made religion has been characterized by the attempt to ascend into the heavens to gain access to God (i.e. Tower of Babel). Nonetheless, this quest for unmediated access into the presence of the thrice Holy Lord would only culminate in instantaneous death for sinful man. Thus, it has been the attribute of biblical religion to seek God through a mediator from heaven who would inevitably condescend to man accommodating his weakness²³.

As Luther would insightfully observe it is not the characteristic for true religion to climb the ladder into the heavens to "see God in the nude". No, it is the characteristic for true religion that man find God clothed in flesh through the Person and work of Christ, which is an act of His humiliation ([Phil 2:5-11](#)). This is indicative of the fact that biblically it is not our role to earn our redemption or reconciliation with God, but to simply receive the unconditional promises procured by Christ as a passive recipient. This is supported by the text when Jesus alludes to His divine condescension to fulfill the will of the Father for those given to Him ([verse 38](#)). It was this task that was determined from the foundation of the world ([1 Pet 1:18-20](#)) that Jesus, the Second Person of the Triune God, acquiesced in accordance with the covenantal agreement that had been ratified with the Father and the Spirit. In compliance with the terms of that agreement Jesus willingly humiliated Himself by assuming creaturely flesh ([John 1:14](#)), subjecting Himself to frailties of humanity ([Heb 4:15](#)), obediently fulfilling the Law ([Matt 5:17](#)), and becoming a curse on behalf of those He represented ([Gal 3:13-14](#)). Although our first representative failed to give us peace, rather bringing alienation, Christ Jesus became incarnate to actively and passively perform the task of peacemaking indispensable for our reconciliation with God ([Rom 5](#)). The crowd's response throughout the entire discourse manifests that they were seeking glory, not a

23 Horton, Michael S. 2002. *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of Christ-Centered Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker) p 122

cross. This expectation certainly was contributory to the notion of the cross being a considerable stumbling block for the Jews ([1 Cor 1:23](#); [1 Pet 2:8](#)).

Thus, it is evident the Covenant of Redemption is an integral part to a proper understanding not only of this pericope, but of several other important doctrines. As this covenant is considered the articulation of it, necessarily, leads to other theological conclusions as demonstrative of the content above. It provides the appropriate context for how these other important doctrines are to be understood. Consequently, when it is denied as a biblical doctrine it increases the risk that the proper context to the other doctrines, which are invariably still affirmed, will be lost. Moreover, its denial would also detrimentally affect the proper understanding of the pericope that is the concern of this work. The edifying richness of the framework that an affirmation of this covenant provides, if denied, would then be absent. As a result, it should also be noted that this *pactum* is completely reliant upon an essential doctrine itself. The concept of the Trinity, which has been referred to throughout this work, is a vital doctrine whose biblical validity must be affirmed for the *pactum* to be maintained. Thus, the one true being whom has revealed Himself to man through covenant as God consists of three persons known as Father, Son and Holy Spirit who although are distinct in person remain one in essence.

God the Father chose in eternity to elect a people based upon nothing within them or nothing that they could ever do. This election was based solely upon His mercy and grace without any conditions being fulfilled by the individuals. These are the people whom Jesus refers to in this pericope ([verse 37](#)) that were given to Him by the Father. God the Son, thus, was assigned the task of condescending into this world to perform the Father's will ([verse 38](#)). It was the Father's will for the Son to redeem this elect people through His substitutionary work carried out in His life and death. This substitutionary work would provide the basis for this elect people to look to the Son and be saved through faith in Him ([verse 40](#)). However, since the elect people were incapable in and of themselves to coming to Jesus and believing in this work, the Father and the Son send the Spirit to effectively draw them into faith ([verse 44](#)). God the Holy Spirit, thus, would perform the task of applying the redemption earned by the Son for the elect people and making it effective. His application of redemption could never be prevented from successfully gathering all those whom had been chosen by the Father and redeemed by the Son into the unconditional gracious promise they were predetermined to receive ([verse 39 and 45](#)). Hence,

those who are to be redeemed would be unable to resist this calling, just as a fish caught in a net, would be unable to resist being dragged out of the water into the boat (i.e. ἐλκύση). This eternal covenant, known as the *pactum salutis*, is an agreement between the Trinitarian members of the God-head who are all an integral part in actively ensuring the redemption of the elect ([1 Pet 1:1-2](#)).

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

It has been the goal of this work to examine this passage within the fourth Gospel to set it within its literary, historical and theological contexts to facilitate an understanding of its meaning and implications as God's authoritative word. It has also been the thesis of this work that a proper understanding of this text is deficient without affirming the *pactum salutis*, which converges in the response of Jesus to the crowd.

In reviewing the pericope's grammatical significance, linguistic significance and literary context within the canon of Scripture, it supports the affirmation of the *pactum salutis*. After considering the pericope's historical context it is apparent that confusion about the nature of God's covenant existed during that period. In the discourse, Jesus appears to be making an effort to correct this confusion by articulating the role that the covenant God plays in redemption. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that support is found for the affirmation of the *pactum salutis*. Then in analyzing the theological implications it was demonstrated how the *pactum salutis* becomes an integral part to providing an appropriate context for several other important doctrines.

As a result of this work, the opinion of this author has been fortified in concluding that the Covenant of Redemption is a biblical doctrine. It is also an essential part to a proper understanding of this pericope and other important biblical doctrines. The denial of this covenant's biblical support would be well served by endeavoring to exegete our Lord's words in this text as recorded by the beloved apostle. For if this task is performed, it is incumbent upon the exegete to concede, that this precreation, intratrinitarian, covenant pact, is essential not only for a proper understanding of the Scripture, but to ascertain the depths and richness of our very redemption.