

Note: This Work has been made available by the authority of the copyright owner solely for the purpose of private study and research and may not be copied or reproduced except as permitted by the copyright laws of Canada without the written authority from the copyright owner.

Accepted Manuscript (AM) Citation: Reynolds, Benjamin E. "Apocalypticism and the Gospel of John's Written Revelation of Heavenly Things." *Early Christianity* 4, no. 1 (2013): 1-23.

This is a pre-copyrighted, author-produced, peer-reviewed version of the journal article accepted for publication in *Early Christianity* 4, no. 1 (2013)

Version of Record (VOR) Citation: Reynolds, Benjamin E. "Apocalypticism in the Gospel of John's Written Revelation of Heavenly Things." *Early Christianity* 4, no. 1 (2013): 64-95.

Apocalypticism in the Gospel of John's Written Revelation of Heavenly Things

The Gospel of John has long been considered to be non-apocalyptic, and its non-apocalyptic nature should be fairly obvious. John's Gospel contains no apocalyptic discourse with talk of wars, famines, and earthquakes (Mark 13; par.). Jesus does not speak of his *parousia*. There is no destruction of Jerusalem, no abomination that causes desolation. And although Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man, the Johannine Son of Man does not come on the clouds of heaven in glory, send out his angels to gather the elect, or be seated at the right hand of God (cf. Mk 13:26–27; 14:62; par.).¹ Judgment and eternal life take place during Jesus' earthly life (John 3:18; 5:24). Thus, there is no future expectation of judgment or salvation since they are already the present reality of Jesus' revelatory work. The Gospel of John also makes little mention of angels, lacks reference to God's heavenly throne (cf. Matt 19, 25:31; *I En.* 46, 62), and is deficient of other imagery typically found in Jewish apocalypses.

Yet, in the words of C.K. Barrett, "It might seem at a first glance that John bears no relation at all to the apocalyptic literature; this, however, is not so."² Numerous scholars have failed to see a relationship between apocalypticism and the Gospel of John because the term "apocalyptic" has often been understood as synonymous (or closely synonymous) with "eschatology." In his influential introduction to "Apocalyptic," Paul Vielhauer claimed the central feature of "Apocalyptic" is eschatology and specifically an "eschatological dualism" regarding this age and the age to come.³ Meanwhile, Ernst Käsemann admitted that he used the term "apocalyptic" within primitive Christianity "to denote the expectation of an imminent Parousia."⁴ This eschatological perspective on "apocalypticism" with its horizontal, temporal axis has generally been the perception of Johannine scholars throughout the twentieth-century, as has been noted by Robert Allan Hill.⁵ As such, the Gospel of John's more realized eschatology has meant that it has often been understood not to be "apocalyptic."⁶

¹ These Synoptic Son of Man sayings are often called the "apocalyptic" or coming Son of Man sayings. See Norman Perrin, "The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition," in *A Modern Pilgrimage in New Testament Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974) 57–83; Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Apocalyptic Son of Man Sayings," in *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester* (ed. B.A. Pearson; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) 220–28.

² C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978) 31.

³ Paul Vielhauer, "Introduction," in E. Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha* (Vol. 2; ed. W. Schneemelcher; trans. R. McL. Wilson; London: Lutterworth Press, 1965) 581–607; see also "Apocalyptic in Early Christianity: Introduction," E. Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha* (Vol. 2; ed. W. Schneemelcher; trans. R. McL. Wilson; London: Lutterworth Press, 1965) 608–42.

⁴ Ernst Käsemann, "On The Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic," *New Testament Questions of Today* (W.J. Montague, trans.; London: SCM Press, 1969) 108–37.

⁵ Robert Allan Hill, *An Examination and Critique of the Understanding of the Relationship Between Apocalypticism and Gnosticism in Johannine Studies* (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Mellen University Press, 1997), 5, 10, 15–60. Also, James D.G. Dunn, "Let John be John," in *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien. Vorträge vom Tübinger Symposium 1982* (ed. Peter Stuhlmacher; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1983) 309–339, at 323 n. 39; Christopher Rowland, *Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982; repr. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002) 25.

⁶ In a forthcoming essay, Jörg Frey, "God's Dwelling on Earth: 'Shekhina-Theology' in Revelation 21 and in the Gospel of John", in *John's Gospel and Intimations of Apocalyptic* (eds. Christopher Rowland and Catrin Williams; London: Continuum/T&T Clark, forthcoming), notes how Rudolph Bultmann's exegesis has been extremely

However, understanding “apocalyptic” as eschatology does not take into account the past forty or more years of scholarship on apocalyptic literature and apocalypticism.⁷ Scholars have noted that the term “apocalyptic” has often been confusedly used to refer to apocalypses (apocalyptic literature), apocalypticism (apocalyptic worldview), and apocalyptic eschatology.⁸ Only the latter is explicitly eschatological. Regarding apocalypses, the SBL genres group defined this genre of literature as the unveiling of heavenly mysteries by an angelic figure to a human being. This revelation takes place through a heavenly ascent or descent, vision or dream. Sometimes the content of the heavenly revelation includes eschatological information, but some of what is revealed includes astronomical information, angelic hierarchies, calendrical concerns, the places of the dead, or even ethical exhortation.⁹ Thus, rather than referring primarily to eschatology, Jewish apocalypses, and by extension apocalypticism, can be more accurately described as being concerned with the revelation of heavenly mysteries, some of which comprise future eschatological events,¹⁰ as we find them taking place within Jewish apocalypses.¹¹

Although the Gospel of John has more often been considered non-apocalyptic, there has been a small minority of scholars that has argued that the Gospel of John shares similarities with Jewish apocalypses or apocalypticism: Hugo Odeberg,¹² J. Louis Martyn,¹³ Jan-A. Bühner,¹⁴ John Ashton,¹⁵ Christopher Rowland,¹⁶ and Jey J. Kanagaraj.¹⁷ The most significant contribution

influential in this regard. For example, see Rudolph Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (trans. George R. Beasley-Murray; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971) 355.

⁷ See most helpfully and thoroughly, Lorenzo DiTommaso. “Apocalypses and Apocalypticism in Antiquity (Part 1),” *CBR* 5.2 (2007) 235–86; “Apocalypses and Apocalypticism in Antiquity (Part 2),” *CBR* 5.3 (2007) 367–432.

⁸ David E. Aune, “Understanding Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic,” in *Apocalypticism, Prophecy, and Magic in Early Christianity: Collected Essays* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008; orig. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006) 1–12 (2); John J. Collins, “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14 (1979) 1–20; *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 2.

⁹ 1 En. 22, 72–82; 94–105. Michael E. Stone, “Lists of Revealed Things in the Apocalyptic Literature,” *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God. Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright* (eds. Frank M. Cross, Werner E. Lemke, and Patrick D. Miller, Jr.; Garden City: Doubleday, 1976), 414–52.; *idem*, “Apocalyptic Literature,” *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, CRINT 2.2 (ed. Michael E. Stone; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 383–441, has highlighted the way in which apocalypses do not necessarily contain “apocalyptic” material and the ways “apocalyptic” material may be located outside of apocalypses.

¹⁰ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 9–11; Aune, “Understanding,” 2. However, DiTommaso, “Apocalypses and Apocalypticism,” 243, argues that “apocalypses are overwhelmingly concerned with eschatology.”

¹¹ John J. Collins, “Genre, Ideology and Social Movements in Jewish Apocalypticism,” in *Seers, Sibyls and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (Boston/Leiden: Brill, 2001) 25–38.

¹² Hugo Odeberg, *The Fourth Gospel: Interpreted in Its Relation to Contemporaneous Religious Currents in Palestine and the Hellenistic-Oriental World* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1929).

¹³ J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (3rd ed.; Louisville/London: Westminster John Knox, 2003).

¹⁴ Jan-A. Bühner, *Der Gesandte und sein Weg im 4. Evangelium: Die kultur- und religionsgeschichtlichen Grundlagen der johanneischen Sendungschristologie sowie ihre traditionsgeschichtliche Entwicklung* (WUNT II/2; Tübingen 1977).

¹⁵ John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁶ Rowland, *Open Heaven*; Christopher Rowland and C.R.A. Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament* (CRINT 12; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009).

¹⁷ Jey J. Kanagaraj, ‘Mysticism’ in the Gospel of John: An Inquiry into Its Background (JSNTSup 158; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998). See also more recently, J.H. Charlesworth, “Did the Fourth Evangelist Know the Enoch Tradition?” in *Testimony and Interpretation: Early Christology in Its Judeo-Hellenistic Milieu. Studies in Honour of Petr Pokorný* (eds. J. Mrazek and J. Roskovec; London: T&T Clark, 2004) 223–39; and Benjamin E. Reynolds, *The Apocalyptic Son of Man in the Gospel of John* (WUNT II/249; Tübingen 2008); Christopher Rowland

to the study of the Gospel of John's relationship with apocalypticism and the Jewish apocalypses has been John Ashton's *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*. Ashton focuses on the theme of revelation in the Gospel of John, and Ashton contends that "... the fourth evangelist conceives of his own work as an apocalypse—in reverse, upside down, inside out."¹⁸

It is worth noting that in studies on the Gospel of John and apocalypticism there is an "overlap" between apocalypticism and Merkabah mysticism, which may or may not be differentiated.¹⁹ At times, Jewish apocalypses are appealed to, but the claim is made by scholars that John's Gospel reflects a mystical outlook.²⁰ Merkabah mysticism focuses on the experience of seeing the heavenly throne (Merkabah) and the glory of God on the throne.²¹ Texts such as Ezekiel 1, Isaiah 6, and Daniel 7 with their throne room visions function prominently within Merkabah mysticism, in which visionary experience is sought by the mystic.²² Meditation or exegetical study of these throne room texts serve as the catalyst for the mystics own visionary experience. A mystical aspect to the Jewish apocalypses or the Gospel of John cannot be ruled out entirely, especially since these definitions are primarily modern scholarly constructions.

However, while mystical experience may exist in the Jewish apocalypses and may have been part of the apocalypticism behind the Jewish apocalypses, the focus of this article will be on noticeable similarities between the Jewish apocalypses and the Gospel of John. Thus, these similarities will be referred to as "apocalyptic" or having to do with Jewish "apocalypticism."²³ The first part of the article will focus on four themes found in Jewish apocalypses and the Gospel of John: the opening of heaven, the revelation of heavenly things, the Son of Man, and the importance of written revelation. Secondly, this will be followed by a discussion of the relationship between the Old Testament Scriptures and apocalyptic revelation and the implications this may have the Gospel of John's interpretation of the Mosaic Law. Together these themes may provide some insight for understanding the Revealer and revelation in the Fourth Gospel as "apocalyptic."

"Intimations of Apocalyptic"²⁴ in the Gospel of John

and Catrin Williams, eds., *John's Gospel and Intimations of Apocalyptic* (London: Continuum/T&T Clark, forthcoming). The latter publication contains essays from a stimulating colloquium hosted by Catrin Williams at Bangor University in Wales during the summer of 2010.

¹⁸ Ashton, *Understanding*, 329.

¹⁹ Dunn, "Let John be John," 323.

²⁰ Odeberg, *Fourth Gospel*, 5–6; Kanagaraj, 'Mysticism', *passim*; Jarl E. Fossum, *The Image of the Invisible God: Essays on the Influence of Jewish Mysticism on Early Christology* (NTOA 30; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), esp. 1; April D. DeConick, *Voices of the Mystics: Early Christian Discourse in the Gospels of John and Thomas and Other Ancient Christian Literature* (JSNTSup 157; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), esp. 68–85. See also Nils Alstrup Dahl, "The Johannine Church and History," in *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Otto A. Piper* (eds. William Klassen and Graydon F. Snyder; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962) 124–42.

²¹ Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (3rd ed.; New York: Schocken Books, 1974) 43–44.

²² Fossum, *Image of the Invisible God*, 1: "Mysticism is 'vertical' apocalypticism. It supplements eschatology 'linear' apocalypticism, by dealing with the mysteries of the heavenly world and the ways in which man can gain knowledge of those mysteries." See Dunn, "Let John be John," 323 n. 39.

²³ At the same time, I recognize that not all aspects of apocalypses can be described as "apocalyptic." See n. 9 above.

²⁴ This is the title of chapter 7 in John Ashton, *Understanding*, 307–29.

As John Ashton has rightly noted there are “intimations of apocalyptic” in the Gospel of John. For Ashton these intimations include four features, two that are temporal and two that are spatial: “two ages (mystery),” “two stages (dream or vision),” “insiders/outside (riddle),” and “above/below (correspondence).”²⁵ In addition to Ashton’s schematization, there are a number of themes that the Gospel of John shares with apocalyptic literature and Jewish apocalypses more particularly. In this section I will address four of these themes: the opening of heaven, the revelation of heavenly things, the Son of Man, and the importance of a written record of the heavenly revelation. The first three themes have obvious apocalyptic connotations and highlight the apocalyptic nature of John’s presentation of Jesus. The final theme, the written record of revelation, may not seem as obviously apocalyptic, but I will argue that it has implications for understanding the purpose of apocalypses and that it offers possible reasons why the evangelist might have adopted and adapted the genre of apocalypse.

The Opening of Heaven as Evidence of Apocalyptic Vision

In John 1:50–51, Jesus declares that his disciples will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man. Each of these concepts—heaven opened, ascent and descent, and Son of Man—have some connection to apocalypticism. The first and most dramatic of these concepts is often overlooked in scholarly literature,²⁶ where the focus tends to be on the Son of Man and the ascending and descending angels. Yet the opening of heaven sets the stage for the Gospel of John as apocalyptic revelation by introducing and making possible the heavenly revelation.

Throughout the Jewish apocalypses and elsewhere, the opening of heaven typically indicates the beginning of a revelatory vision and that what is seen is “otherworldly.”²⁷ An open heaven makes possible a human seer’s vision of heavenly mysteries whether the seer ascends to heaven or remains on earth. In the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, heaven opens after Abraham has ascended to heaven with the angel Yaeol (15–16). Once in heaven, Abraham recites a song to the Lord (17), sees the four winged creatures (18), and then God speaks to him (19). As Abraham obeys God’s command to look at the expanses under the firmament (19:1–3), heaven opens, allowing Abraham to see what God was revealing to him (19:4). The rest of the apocalypse recounts the heavenly vision given to Abraham made possible by the opening of heaven. In the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, the opening of heaven takes place in the midst of the revelatory material. After the second trumpet is blown, heaven opens and the seer is able to see the sea and the wicked sinking to Hades (10:2–11:6). The *Testament of Levi* depicts Levi entering heaven after heaven opens (2:6). Levi sees the three levels of heaven, and then the angel guiding him opens the gates of heaven for him and Levi sees the heavenly throne and God himself, the Holy Most High, seated on the throne (5:1). The *Testament of Abraham* records Isaac’s vision of heaven opening and a man surrounded in light coming down from heaven (A 7:3). The

²⁵ Ashton, *Understanding*, 310, 311–329.

²⁶ Cf. G.T. Manning, Jr., *Echoes of a Prophet: The Use of Ezekiel in the Gospel of John and the Literature of the Second Temple Period* (JSNTSup 270; London: T&T Clark, 2004) 150–60.

²⁷ Fritzleo Lentzen-Deis, “Das Motiv der ‘Himmelsöffnung’ in verschiedenen Gattungen der Umweltliteratur des Neuen Testaments,” *Biblica* 50 (1969) 301–27. Non-Jewish texts with the opening of heaven motif include the Apocryphon of John, the Apocalypse of Peter, Epistula Apostolorum, Pistis Sophia, etc. See Willem Cornelis van Unnik, “Die ‘Geöffneten Himmel’ in der Offenbarungs-Vision des Apokryphons des Johannes,” in *Apophreta: Festschrift für Ernst Haenchen zu seinem siebzigsten Geburtstag am 10. Dezember 1964* (eds. W. Eltester and F.H. Kettler; Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1964) 269–80.

interpretation of Isaac's vision by the angel Michael reveals what will happen to his father Abraham. In the book of Revelation, there are two instances of the opening of heaven. In 4:1, John the seer enters heaven through a door that opens in heaven, and in 19:11, heaven opens allowing him to see the vision of a rider on a white horse.²⁸

One of the more interesting passages about heaven opening in the Jewish apocalypses is that in *2 Bar.* 22:1. This passage is the first of three revelations given to Baruch (22:1–30:5; 36–40; 53–74), all of which are preceded by a prayer of Baruch (21; 35; 48). What is interesting about this instance is that Baruch says that he saw heaven open, but there is no account of him seeing a vision as in the examples above. Instead, Baruch hears a voice from on high. While the revelation follows the opening of heaven in *2 Bar.* 22:1, it is an auditory revelation and not a visible one. In each of the examples of the opening of heaven in the Jewish apocalypses, it is clear that this motif announces some sort of heavenly revelation, which may or may not include an actual vision. This unveiling of heaven is a distinctive feature of apocalypticism.²⁹

In a manner similar to the Jewish apocalypses, the opening of heaven in John 1:51 may suggest a beginning of heavenly revelation.³⁰ The use of the phrase and its placement prior to Jesus' first sign (2:1–11) implies that the phrase may function as an apocalyptic introduction, introducing what follows in the Gospel of John as the revelation of heavenly things.³¹ However, the obvious lack of apocalyptic imagery, such as glimpses into heaven, throne room visions, angelic dialogues, or dream interpretations, in what follows this promised vision of heaven opening in John 1:51 indicates to some scholars that John 1:51 is not apocalyptic.³² For example, Delbert Burkett argues that "heaven opened" in 1:51 is "quite germane to the context of Jacob's dream and need not carry any apocalyptic associations." He goes on to contend that "heaven opened... clarifies the place to and from which the angels ascend and descend and allows the connection of the Son of Man with Yahweh in heaven to be clearly seen."³³ Now, Burkett is correct if what he means is that the opening of heaven in John 1:51 is not Danielic, since Daniel 7 gives no explicit reference to the opening of heaven. But from the above examples, it should be clear that the theme of "heaven opened" appears to be at home in Jewish apocalypses. The opening of heaven in John 1:51 does more than designate one end of the angels' travels or merely clarify that God's location is in heaven. Rather, just as the heaven opened motif introduces and makes possible numerous heavenly experiences in Jewish apocalypses (and early Christian literature), the opening of heaven in John 1:51 introduces the heavenly vision that the disciples will see and makes that vision possible.

Content of the Apocalyptic Vision in John 1:51

²⁸ Additional New Testament examples of heaven opening include Jesus' baptism (Matt 3:16; Luke 3:21; cf. Mark 1:10), Stephen's vision (Acts 7:56), and Peter's vision (Acts 10:11).

²⁹ Michèle Morgen, "La Promesse de Jesus a Nathanael (Jn 1,51) eclairee par la haggadah de Jacob-Israel," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 67 (1993) 3–21; Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 78. The background of this theme of heaven opening is most likely Ezekiel's statement that he saw heaven open which introduces his vision of God (1:1). See Lentzen-Deis, "der 'Himmelsöffnung,'" 309. Cf. LXX Isa 63:19.

³⁰ Manning, *Echoes of a Prophet*, 150–51, argues that John 1:51 is dependent on Ezek 1:1.

³¹ Siegfried Schulz, *Untersuchungen zur Menschensohn-Christologie im Johannesevangelium: Zugleich ein Beitrag zur methodengeschichte der Auslegung des 4. Evangeliums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957), 99–103, 102–3; and Morgen, "Promesse de Jesus," 6–11, note the apocalyptic nature of the opening of heaven in John 1:51.

³² Cf. the examples above from *Apoc. Ab.* 19:3; *Apoc. Zeph.* 10:2–11:6; *T. Levi* 2:6; 5:1; *Rev* 4:1; 19:11; *2 Bar.* 22:1; and *T. Ab. A* 7:3.

³³ Delbert Burkett, *The Son of the Man in the Gospel of John* (JSNTSup 56; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991) 115.

While John 1:51 introduces an apocalyptic, visionary experience in a manner reminiscent of the Jewish apocalypses, the content of that apocalyptic vision is not comparable to what is seen by the Jewish apocalyptic seers. In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells Nathanael that he will see greater things, that he will see heaven opened, that he will see the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man (1:50–51). What are these greater things and do Nathanael and the other disciples have such visions? As Elizabeth Harris notes, the interpretation of the obscure “greater things” with the enigmatic vision of the Son of Man provides us with the clarification of “one conundrum by another, itself needing explanation.”³⁴

In the Jewish apocalypses, the opening of heaven is usually followed by an ascent of a seer to heaven, a vision of the levels of heaven, a vision of things or beings in heaven, the interpretation of a dream, or, as in the case of Baruch, spoken revelation heard by the human recipient of the revelation. In the case of the opening of heaven in John 1:51, what is seen is related to Jacob’s vision of a ladder placed on earth that reaches to heaven on which the angels of God ascend and descend. In fact, apart from the replacement of the “ladder” with “the Son of Man” in 1:51, the verse is a word for word citation of LXX Gen 28:12. But where is this promised revelation in John’s Gospel? The Son of Man never visibly connects heaven and earth. Angels do not appear until the resurrection and even then the angel does not ascend or descend (20:12–13).

Some suggestions for what the promised vision of 1:51 includes Jesus’ glory as seen by his disciples in the sign of water being turned to wine in Cana, Jesus’ signs more generally,³⁵ the cross,³⁶ or Jesus’ future glorification.³⁷ What seems more likely is that what the vision entails is seeing Jesus as the one who reveals the Father and who connects humanity to the Father just as Jacob’s ladder connects heaven and earth.³⁸ The opening of heaven makes possible the vision of God in the person of Jesus, the one who is the way to the Father and the only one in whom the Father may be seen and known (1:18; 6:46; 14:6–7). In response to his dream, Jacob awakes and says, “The Lord is in this place and I did not know it” (Gen 28:16). Speaking of Jacob’s response, Ashton states: “What Jacob concluded about a *place*, Bethel, is transferred by the evangelist to a *person* who, as Son of Man, is the locus of revelation.”³⁹ In this sense, the content of the vision is Jesus who is the Revealer of the Father. All of the Gospel of John, as it reveals Jesus in his words and actions as the Revealer of the Father and the one connecting the Father and humankind, is a revelation of the vision made possible by the opening of heaven.⁴⁰

³⁴ Elizabeth Harris, *Prologue and Gospel: The Theology of the Fourth Evangelist* (JSNTSup 107; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994) 118.

³⁵ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (AB 29, 29A; 2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1966–70) 1:83.

³⁶ Barnabas Lindars, *Jesus Son of Man: A Fresh Examination of the Son of Man Sayings in the Gospels* (London: SPCK, 1983; repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 149.

³⁷ R. Maddox, ‘The Function of the Son of Man in the Gospel of John’, in *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology* (ed. R. Banks; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 186–204.

³⁸ See Ashton, *Understanding*, 249–51.

³⁹ Ashton, *Understanding*, 251.

⁴⁰ Ulrich Wilckens, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (NTD 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998) 54: “Dieses erste Menschensohn-Wort ist die Überschrift über alles, was Jesu Jünger in Jesus sehen werden, die Überschrift also zum ganzen folgenden Bericht des Joh.” See also Stephen S. Smalley, “Johannes 1,51 und die Einleitung zum vierten Evangelium,” in Rudolph Pesch and Rudolph Schnackenburg (eds), *Jesus und der Menschensohn: Für Anton Vögtle* (Freiburg: Herder, 1975) 300–13, who contends that the Gospel of John is a midrash on 1:51.

Descent from Heaven and the Revelation of Heavenly Things

The heart of the apocalyptic genre is the revelation of heavenly mysteries. Whether through ascent to heaven, vision, dream, or directly from an angel who has descended, previously hidden things are revealed to a human recipient by an otherworldly figure. In the Jewish apocalypses, the heavenly things that are revealed include any number of things: astronomical calendars, the movement of the sun, moon, and stars, the judgment of the righteous and the wicked, the places of the dead, the levels of heaven, the hierarchies of angels, etc. Some apocalypses contain lists of “heavenly things” that are not necessarily “heavenly.”⁴¹ The mode in which these heavenly things are revealed, including their previous hiddenness, lends to their description as heavenly.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus is the one who reveals heavenly things. During his dialogue with Nicodemus, Jesus responds to Nicodemus’ incredulous question of disbelief by stating: “If I speak earthly things to you and you do not believe, how will you believe if I should speak heavenly things to you?” (3:12). Jesus has previously told Nicodemus about the earthly realities of birth and wind (3:3, 5, 6–8). Nicodemus understands being born *ἀνωθεν* as literally re-entering his mother’s womb and being born a second time (3:4). By comparison, in *4 Ezra* 4:5–10, the angel of the Lord gives a similar challenge to Ezra. The angel first asks Ezra to weigh fire, measure wind, or bring back yesterday. Following Ezra’s admission that he cannot, the angel says:

“If I had asked you, ‘How many dwellings are in the heart of the sea, or how many streams are at the source of the deep, or how many streams are above the firmament, or which are the exits of hell, or which are the entrances of Paradise?’ perhaps you would have said to me, ‘I never went down into the deep, or as yet into hell, neither did I ever ascend into heaven.’ But now I have asked you only about fire and wind and the day, things which you have passed and without which you cannot exist, and you have given me no answer about them!”⁴²

As with Ezra, how can Nicodemus understand the heavenly things to be revealed if he cannot even understand the earthly illustrations used by Jesus? The implication of Jesus’ question is that he can and will reveal heavenly things.

The content of what Jesus reveals in the Gospel of John is himself as the revealer of the Father, and thus also the Father and his relationship with the Father.⁴³ Jesus the Logos was with God (1:1–2), and is the only one who can make the Father known (1:18). Jesus descended from heaven (3:13; 6:32–35), is from God (9:33; 17:8), and can therefore reveal heavenly things (3:12–13). All that Jesus speaks is from the Father. In 8:26, Jesus says: “What I have heard from him, I speak these things to the world.” He continues in 8:28, “. . . just as the Father teaches me, I speak these things” (8:40; cf. 3:32). Again, at the end of Jesus’ public ministry, he says: “For I have not spoken from myself, but the Father himself, the one who sent me, has given me a command concerning what to say and what to speak. . . I speak just as the Father has spoken to me” (12:49–50). The content of what Jesus says comes from the Father even to the extent that

⁴¹ Stone, “Lists of Revealed Things.”

⁴² Unless otherwise noted, all citations from B.M. Metzger, “The Fourth Book of Ezra,” *OTP* vol. 1.

⁴³ The echo of the often repeated statement of Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (Kendrick Grobel, trans.; 2 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951, 1955) 66, is no coincidence: “Jesus as the Revealer of God reveals nothing but that he is the Revealer.” Note also, Severino Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel: The Torah and the Gospel, Moses and Jesus, Judaism and Christianity According to John* (NovTSup 42; Leiden: Brill, 1975) 203: “When Jesus speaks about himself, it is invariably with reference to the (his) Father (God).”

the Father has given Jesus the words (τὰ ῥήματα) that he speaks (17:8; cf. 7:16–17; 14:24) and that content is about the Father (7:17; 12:49; 14:10).⁴⁴ Further, Jesus' revelation includes not only what he speaks but also what he does. Jesus says, "The Son is unable to do anything by himself except what he sees the Father doing" (5:19). The work which makes up all of Jesus' life and ministry is the Father's work (4:34). Jesus does not do his own will but the will of the one who sent him (6:38). Just as he speaks nothing on his own, Jesus does nothing unless it comes from the Father (5:19, 30; 8:28; cf. 9:33).

In the Jewish apocalypses, the ability of a human seer to testify to heavenly things is dependent upon the seer's receiving of heavenly revelation from an otherworldly being. This is the case whether or not the human recipient ascends to heaven or remains on earth. Enoch, Abraham, and Levi all ascend to receive heavenly mysteries, but Daniel, Ezra, and Baruch remain on earth and speak with God or angels to receive revelation. By contrast, Jesus' ability to reveal the things of heaven while on earth is grounded in his origin from heaven and his relationship with God.⁴⁵ He can reveal heavenly things because as the Son of Man he has descended from heaven. He is the Word that was πρὸς τὸν θεόν (1:1); he was in the bosom of the Father (1:18). He is the one coming from above (ἄνωθεν; 3:31) and descending from heaven (6:33, 51; also 3:31). Jesus' statement in 3:13 highlights this heavenly origin as giving him the authority to proclaim heavenly things, while at the same time, it also negates claims of ascent by others: "No one has ascended to heaven, except the one who descended, the Son of Man." As such, the saying appears to be a polemical response to those who claimed to have ascended to heaven and returned to earth with heavenly secrets (cf. 6:46).⁴⁶

The grammar of 3:13 has garnered a significant amount of scholarly discussion because the verse appears to imply an ascent of the Son of Man prior to his descent. I have previously argued that the perfect ἀναβέβηκεν ("has ascended") functions as a gnomic perfect which indicates a general time aspect: "No one ascends to heaven, except the one who descended, the Son of Man."⁴⁷ John Ashton has recently noted that he is unconvinced by this view and has said that "armed, or blinkered, by our knowledge of the rest of the Gospel, we easily miss" that Jesus "has the authority to speak of heavenly things" because "he is speaking of what he knows and of what he has seen, having ascended to heaven and then come down (to convey his knowledge to others)."⁴⁸ While the gnomic perfect may not be entirely convincing, I remain unconvinced that Jesus ascended prior to his descent, whether that ascent was an ascent of God in the Old Testament,⁴⁹ a heavenly divine appointment to office,⁵⁰ an ascent-visionary calling during Jesus' earthly life,⁵¹ or Jesus' transfiguration.⁵² Maybe I am "blinkered" and read John 3:13 in light of

⁴⁴ Barrett, *Gospel*, 346: "Jesus does not speak of himself, but reveals what he has seen in the Father's presence."

⁴⁵ *Contra* John Ashton, "The Johannine Son of Man: A New Proposal," *NTS* 57.4 (2011) 508–29. See the discussion in the following paragraphs.

⁴⁶ The vast majority of scholars understand this verse as a polemic. See Odeberg, *Fourth Gospel*, 72.

⁴⁷ See Reynolds, *Apocalyptic Son of Man*, 108–16.

⁴⁸ Ashton, "Johannine Son of Man," 513–14.

⁴⁹ Delbert Burkett, *The Son of the Man in the Gospel of John* (JSNTSup 56; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 85–86.

⁵⁰ Peder Borgen, "Some Jewish Exegetical Traditions as Background for Son of Man Sayings in John's Gospel (Jn 3, 13–14 and context)," in *L'Évangile de Jean* (ed. M. de Jonge; Gembloux, Belgium: Duculot, 1977) 243–58.

⁵¹ Bühner, *Gesandte und sein Weg*, 374–99.

⁵² Ashton, "The Johannine Son of Man," 528.

the rest of the Gospel,⁵³ but I find that doing so makes more sense of the verse than arguing for an ascent of Jesus prior to his descent, an ascent which is not mentioned in the Gospel. Bultmann, cited by Ashton, states: “For Jesus did not first ascend into heaven to bring such knowledge back to earth again. Rather he first came down from heaven with the message entrusted to him by the Father and then he ascended into heaven. The evangelist cannot have thought of his ascent as a means for him to gain knowledge of the ἐπουράνια.”⁵⁴

To view the descent of the Son of Man as antecedent to his ascent need not be understood as a grammatical impossibility even if one is unconvinced by the gnomic perfect. Another grammatical feature to consider is the verbal aspect of the aorist participle: ὁ καταβάς. The ellipsis of John 3:13 indicates that the perfect verb ἀναβέβηκεν is understood to be repeated in the second half of the clause: “the one who descended from heaven [has ascended].” The verbal aspect of an aorist participle usually indicates action antecedent to the action of the indicative verb.⁵⁵ Since the tense of ὁ καταβάς is second aorist, the aorist aspect may indicate that the action of descent is prior to the action of the perfect verb ἀναβέβηκεν. This explanation seems to address the grammatical issues of John 3:13⁵⁶ and allows for sensitivity to the perspective of the Gospel. Thus, the Gospel of John as a whole indicates that Jesus is much different than all others who were claimed to have ascended to heaven. Jesus descended from heaven and is the only way to the Father.⁵⁷

If 3:13 is a polemic, the question of who the polemic is directed against remains. James Charlesworth, followed by J. Harold Ellens, claims that the charge of no ascent is directed against Enoch, particularly Enoch’s ascent in the Parables of Enoch.⁵⁸ The Enoch traditions grew up around the mysterious statement in Gen 5:24 that Enoch walked with God and was no more. In the traditions, Enoch the seventh from Adam ascended to heaven and was taken on heavenly journeys or shown the astrological phenomena. He returned to earth and reported this information to his children.⁵⁹ However, in the Parables of Enoch, it appears that in the final chapters (*I En.* 70–71) Enoch is taken up into heaven and is called the Son of Man. Earlier in the Parables of Enoch, Enoch has seen this Son of Man figure placed on the throne of the Lord of

⁵³ Along with Bultmann and “the vast majority of commentators,” as Ashton notes (“Johannine Son of Man,” 513–14).

⁵⁴ Ashton, “Johannine Son of Man,” 514; Bultmann, *Gospel*, 150–51.

⁵⁵ Constantine R. Campbell, *Verbal Aspect and Non-Indicative Verbs: Further Soundings in the Greek of the New Testament*, SBG 15 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008) 41–43. Cf. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 614–16, 620

⁵⁶ It has been noted, however, that aorist substantival participles may not always function in the category of attendant circumstance. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 615; Campbell, *Verbal Aspect*, 44. On the other hand, Campbell, *Verbal Aspect*, 44, argues that “the aorist substantival participle appears to retain its aspectual value.”

⁵⁷ Because of this, the Johannine Jesus may function more like an angelic mediator who conveys heavenly revelation than a human recipient who receives revelation. See Bühner, *Gesandte und sein Weg*, 404–6; Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 1998) 270–93; and Ashton, *Understanding*, 281–98.

⁵⁸ Charlesworth, “Fourth Evangelist,” 228–30; J. Harold Ellens, *Jesus as Son of Man in John* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010). The consensus among scholars of early Judaism is that the Parables of Enoch is a Jewish text from the first-century BCE or the early first-century CE. See, Gabrielle Boccaccini (ed.), *Enoch and the Messiah, Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); and Darrell L. Bock and James H. Charlesworth (eds), *Parables of Enoch, Early Judaism, Jesus, and Christian Origins* (Jewish and Christian Texts 11; London: T&T Clark, forthcoming).

⁵⁹ See James C. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition* (CBQMS 16; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984).

Spirits and carry out judgment against the kings of the earth. In *1 En.* 71:14 Enoch is declared to be “that Son of Man.” Charlesworth ventures “that John 3:13 seems directed against the Enoch groups and their claim that Enoch is the one who ascended into heaven to obtain the wisdom that they alone possess and the one who has been named ‘the Son of Man.’”⁶⁰

Since Enoch is called “that Son of Man,” it seems odd that a polemic directed specifically against Enoch’s ascent could simply use the phrase “the Son of Man” without specifying more clearly that Jesus is the Son of Man who has descended from heaven and not Enoch. The wording of 3:13 suggests that Enoch is not the sole target of such a polemic. There are other Old Testament figures who were claimed to have ascended to heaven. In the writings of Josephus and Philo, Moses’s ascent up Mount Sinai is depicted as actually ascending to heaven.⁶¹ Other ascent traditions in the Jewish apocalypses include Abraham (*Apoc. Ab.* 17; *T. Ab.* 10–15), Levi (*T. Lev.* 2–5), the seer of the Apocalypse of Zephaniah (*Apoc. Zeph.*), Baruch (*3 Baruch*), and John the seer of Revelation (4:1). In the Old Testament and Christian apocalypses, Elijah and Isaiah might also be included as possible targets of this polemic (2 Kgs 2; Isa 6).

While there are multiple examples of ascent traditions, it would seem that the more likely targets of any Johannine polemic might be those figures already named in the Gospel of John. In this regard, Moses is the best candidate because Jesus is continually depicted as being greater than Moses. Jesus has brought grace and truth in contrast to the law being given through Moses (1:17). Jesus is the one whom Moses wrote about (1:41; 5:46; cf. 6:14). Moses did not give the bread from heaven, while Jesus is the true bread from heaven (6:32). Jesus’ opponents claim to be disciples of Moses and not disciples of Jesus (9:28). Thus, when the Moses ascent traditions are considered, the assumption that the polemic of 3:13 may have been directed against Moses is far from unwarranted.⁶² Indeed, another polemical statement in the Gospel of John—“No one has ever seen God” (1:18; cf. 6:46)—may also be directed against Moses (cf. Exod 24).

However, Moses is not the only Old Testament figure named in the Gospel of John to whom these polemics against ascent to heaven and seeing God may have been directed. Jesus says that Abraham rejoiced to see Jesus’ day and that he was before Abraham (8:56, 58). The implied answer to the question posed by “the Jews” “You are not greater than our father Abraham, are you?” is “yes”, Jesus is greater than their father Abraham (8:53). Abraham, like Moses, has his own ascent traditions, and in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* 17, 19, Abraham does see God after ascending to heaven and God reveals heavenly things to Abraham (cf. Gen 18; *T. Ab.*). Jacob is implicitly referred to in John’s Gospel by the citation of his dream at Bethel (Gen 28:12; John 1:51) and in the reference to Nathanael as “truly an Israelite without deceit” (John 1:47; Gen 27:35; cf. 34:13). By giving the living water to the Samaritan woman, Jesus is greater than Jacob who provided the well (4:12).⁶³ Jacob may not have an ascent tradition, but Philo gives an etymology of the name “Israel” as “he who sees God.”⁶⁴ Jacob appears to have seen the Lord in his dream (Gen 28:12–14), and after wrestling with the angel of the Lord, Jacob says that he has seen God face to face (Gen 32:30). And last but not least, Isaiah has a climactic vision in

⁶⁰ Charlesworth, “Fourth Evangelist,” 232.

⁶¹ Philo, *Mos.* 1.158; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.88, 96. Cf. Ezek. Trag. 68–82.

⁶² Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (NovTSups 14; Leiden: Brill, 1967) 296–301. In a forthcoming book, John Ashton argues that the Gospel is in large part a response to Mosaic Judaism.

⁶³ Note the similar wording with the question in 8:53: μή σὺ μείζων εἶ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἰακώβ (4:12); μή σὺ μείζων εἶ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἀβραάμ (8:53).

⁶⁴ Philo, *Somm.* 1.129, 171.

which he sees the Lord seated on a throne in the temple, which may or may not have been the heavenly temple. His vision was at least considered an ascension by some (Isa 6; cf. the Ascension of Isaiah).

The sense of all of these figures and the polemical statements in John's Gospel about no one ascending and no one seeing God is that Jesus is greater than all of these figures. Those figures named in the Gospel of John carry greater weight as targets of the polemic, although Enoch and the others cannot be ruled out. None of them have ascended to heaven. None of them have seen God. Jesus, the Son of Man, however, has descended from heaven and can reveal the heavenly things from heaven because he is from above and speaks and does the things that he has heard his Father say and the things he has seen his Father do.

The apocalypticism of the Gospel of John cannot be missed in its emphasis on heavenly revelation given through a heavenly being who has descended from heaven. In contrast to the Jewish apocalypses, John's heavenly being is the one who was in the bosom of the Father and has come from the Father. To see Jesus is to see the Father, to hear Jesus is to hear God. The Gospel of John goes beyond the Jewish apocalypses with this connection. The specific content of the heavenly things in John's Gospel may be different, but its revelatory and heavenly nature reflects Jewish apocalypticism.

The Son of Man

Further evidence of the Gospel of John's apocalypticism may also be seen in the use of the term "the Son of Man."⁶⁵ The majority of uses of the phrases *ben 'adam* and *bar enash(a)* in the Old Testament are synonymous with the terms for "man" or "human being." The book of Daniel also uses the phrase in this generic sense (8:17), but in Daniel 7:13, Daniel sees "one like a son of man" coming with the clouds of heaven. The figure Daniel sees is a visionary figure and is described as looking like a human being. Yet, in three Jewish apocalypses, this human description of the visionary figure becomes the identification of an expected messianic figure, who is preexistent and acts as eschatological judge.⁶⁶

In the Parables of Enoch, the Danielic "one like a son of man" becomes "that Son of Man," a figure who is the Messiah ("Anointed One") and is seated on the throne of glory by the Lord of Spirits (38; 46; 62). "That Son of Man" carries out judgment against the kings of the earth (62–63), and "the whole judgment was given" to him (69:27).⁶⁷ The Enochic Son of Man was hidden from the foundation of the world, suggesting the figure's preexistence (48:6; 67:2). The origin of the figure in an apocalyptic vision and its re-interpretation in another apocalypse as eschatological judge highlights the way in which the originally generic term took on a specifically apocalyptic aspect.

⁶⁵ See Jörg Frey, "Die Apokalyptik als Herausforderung der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft. Zum Problem: Jesus und die Apokalyptik," in *Apokalyptik als Herausforderung neutestamentlicher Theologie* (eds. Michael Becker and Markus Öhler; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006) 23–94 (80–83).

⁶⁶ This discussion, and the following, is extremely brief and cursory considering the massive amounts of literature on the Son of Man. For a still brief, yet cogent description of the development of the idiom, see Sabino Chialà, "The Son of Man: The Evolution of an Expression," in *Enoch and the Messiah, Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables*, Gabriele Boccaccini, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) 153–78.

⁶⁷ All citations are from George W.E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch: A New Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004).

This trajectory continues in *4 Ezra*'s depiction of the Danielic figure in Ezra's vision of the man from the sea (*4 Ezra* 13).⁶⁸ Because of the interpretation of Ezra's eagle vision as Daniel's fourth kingdom (*4 Ezra* 11–12; Dan 7:7), it is clear the man that comes from the sea represents the "one like a son of man" that Daniel saw, even though the man from the sea is not called "the Son of Man" or "a son of man." The figure takes on a primarily messianic role and is often depicted as God's son or servant (13:37, 52; also 7:28–29; 12:31–32). The man from the sea acts in judgment as he reproves the nations for their wickedness (13:37). In 12:32–34, the Messiah's reproving of the nations takes place before his judgment seat, making his function as judge all the more explicit. Although the preexistence of the figure is not explicit, it is implied in the way that the Most High kept him for many ages (13:26; also 12:32).⁶⁹

The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch (*2 Baruch*) presents an interpretation of the Danielic son of man that is similar to that found in *4 Ezra*. The figure is referred to as the Messiah or Anointed One and not as "a son of man" or "the Son of Man" (29:3; 30:1; 39:7; 40:1–3; 70:9), and this figure is clearly a reinterpretation of the "one like a son of man" because he arrives after the fourth kingdom (39:5–7). Baruch's Anointed One acts a judge in the conviction of the last ruler and all those with him (40:1–3; 72:2). In addition, the figure appears to be preexistent since he appears to return to heaven in glory (30:1). The revelation of the Anointed One in 29:3 and 39:7 need not refer to preexistence, but it is suggestive, especially considering the statement in 30:1 and the descriptions of the Danielic figure in the Parables of Enoch and *4 Ezra*. All three of these Jewish apocalypses draw from Daniel 7 and present Daniel's "one like a son of man" as the expected Messiah,⁷⁰ the one who judges at the final judgment, and as one who appears to be preexistent.⁷¹

The New Testament book of Revelation may also be added to this list of apocalypses that reinterpret the Danielic son of man. In Rev 1:7 there is a partial quote from Dan 7:13 and the designation "one like a son of man" appears in 1:13 and 14:14. This son of man figure is also the Messiah, namely Jesus Christ (1:1, 2, 5). His preexistence is evident in the description of him as the first and the last (1:17) and as the beginning of God's creation (3:14). Further his actions of harvest (14:14–16) and the imagery of a double-edged sword in his mouth imply the son of man's role in judgment (1:16; 19:11; cf. Isa 11:4).

The features of the Son of Man figures noted in the three Jewish apocalypses and Revelation are also noticeable in the Johannine portrayal of Jesus as the Son of Man.⁷² First, in the Gospel of John, the Son of Man is the Messiah. The most explicit example of this comes in John 12. The crowd is presented as identifying the Messiah and the Son of Man as the same individual (12:34).⁷³ Earlier in the Gospel, Andrew tells his brother Peter that they have found

⁶⁸ The texts of *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* are relevant for this discussion not because they may have been known to the author of the Gospel of John, but because they represent two interpretations of the Danielic son of man by Jewish authors near the end of the first century and thus somewhat contemporary with the Gospel.

⁶⁹ See Michael E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990) 209, 368, on the preexistence and precreation of the Messiah.

⁷⁰ Or it may be more accurate to state that they describe the Messiah as Daniel's "one like a son of man."

⁷¹ More shared features have been previously described. See John J. Collins, "The Son of Man in First-Century Judaism," *NTS* 38 (1992) 448–66; Thomas B. Slater, "One Like a Son of Man in First-Century CE Judaism," *NTS* 41 (1995) 183–98; Reynolds, *Apocalyptic Son of Man*, 41–64.

⁷² To a greater or lesser extent each of these features may also be argued to be part of the portrayal of the Son of Man in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Reynolds, *Apocalyptic Son of Man*, 65–77.

⁷³ Chialà, "The Son of Man," 170; Bultmann, *Gospel*, 354–55; Ragnar Leivstad, "Exit the Apocalyptic Son of Man," *NTS* 18 (1972) 243–67.

the Messiah (1:41); Philip makes a similar statement to Nathanael saying that they have found the one of whom Moses and the prophets wrote (1:45). Nathanael's naming of Jesus as the King of Israel in the following verses also highlights the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah (1:49). Then at the end of the chapter, Jesus, the Messiah, refers to himself as the Son of Man (1:51), indicating that Jesus is Messiah and Son of Man.

Second, as in the Jewish apocalypses, judgment is an important function of the Son of Man in the Gospel of John. Judgment is closely associated with the Son of Man title throughout John's Gospel. Jesus has the authority to judge because he is the Son of Man (5:27). The similarity of this phrase with Dan 7:14 in the concepts of giving, Son of Man, and authority indicates an allusion in John 5:27 to Dan 7:14.⁷⁴ The striking similarity of the phrase "the whole judgment" in John 5:22, 27 and *1 En.* 69:27 was noted by R.H. Charles⁷⁵ and implies a similar dependence on Daniel or a possible interdependence between John and the Parables of Enoch. The Johannine Son of Man's role in judgment is also evident in 9:35–39. After revealing himself as the Son of Man, Jesus tells the man born blind that he has come into the world for judgment. The implication is that part of his role as Son of Man is to judge (also 8:26).

Third, while the preexistence and heavenly origin of the Son of Man tends to be an implication in the Parables of Enoch, *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*, and Revelation, the Johannine Son of Man is much more strongly portrayed as being preexistent. The Son of Man has descended from heaven (3:13) and will ascend to where he was before he descended (6:62). In addition, there are numerous references to Jesus as being sent by the Father (3:16; etc.), coming into the world (9:39), and being from above (3:31).

By depicting a Son of Man figure who is the Messiah, acts as Judge, and is preexistent, the Gospel of John reveals that it has one more connection with Jewish apocalypses. Granted, not all apocalypses reinterpret the Danielic son of man, but this figure is only clearly reinterpreted in Jewish apocalypses. As such, the apocalyptic nature of the Gospel of John becomes more and more difficult to ignore.

A Written Record of the Revelation

The final piece of apocalyptic evidence in the Gospel of John to be discussed is that of written revelation. Quite a few Jewish apocalypses place importance on the writing down of the mysteries revealed by the otherworldly mediators.⁷⁶ Throughout the Enochic literature, Enoch is portrayed as a scribe (*1 En.* 12.3–4; 15:1; 92:1; 4QEnGiants^a [4Q203] 8.4; 4QEnGiants^b [4Q530] ii.14–15; *Jub.* 4.17). In the Book of Watchers, the Watchers call him "Enoch, righteous scribe," and the Lord addresses him as "Enoch, righteous man and scribe of truth" (*1 En.* 12:4; 15:1). Christine Schams suggests that the designation "righteous scribe" indicates Enoch's ability not merely to read and write but that as a righteous man he has "teaching and knowledge of righteousness and God's righteous judgment."⁷⁷ With reference to *1 En.* 92:1 where the term

⁷⁴ G. Reim, *Studien zum alttestamentlichen Hintergrund des Johannesevangeliums* (SNTSMS 22; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974) 186; Schulz, *Untersuchungen*, 111.

⁷⁵ R.H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1912) 140–41; Charlesworth, "Fourth Evangelist," 233–34.

⁷⁶ This also extends into early Christian apocalypses. See William Adler, "Introduction," in *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity* (eds. James C. VanderKam and William Adler; CRINT 4; Assen/Minneapolis: Van Gorcum and Comp./Fortress, 1996) 1–31.

⁷⁷ Christine Schams, *Jewish Scribes in the Second Temple Period* (JSNTSup 291; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) 94.

“scribe” seems to be associated with wisdom, Schams states that it is unclear whether Enoch is referred to as a scribe because of his expertise in reading and writing, his wisdom, or both.⁷⁸ In the Book of Giants, Enoch is on two occasions called a scribe of distinction (ספר פרשא; 4QEnGiants^a [4Q203] 8.4), and in the second, this description is given because of Enoch’s ability to interpret dreams (4QEnGiants^b [4Q530] ii.14–15; cf. ii.21–22).

Enoch’s activity as scribe is directly connected to writing down the revelation that he has received (*1 En.* 68.1; 82:1; 83.10; 92:1; 108:1; *2 En.* 23.3–6; 40.1–12; *J* 68.2; *Jubilees* 4:17–22).⁷⁹ In the Book of the Luminaries, Enoch writes down everything that Uriel shows him (74:2), and the angels (presumably the seven named in *1 Enoch* 17) command Enoch to tell his son Methuselah these things and to write down all that has been shown to him, including the heavenly tablets which he read (81:6). And in 82:1, Enoch tells Methuselah that he has told him everything, that he has written down these things, and that he has given Methuselah the books about what has been revealed to him. The account of Enoch in *Jubilees* also reflects the tradition that Enoch wrote down the entirety of what he saw (4:17–19, 21–22). In *2 Enoch* 35:2, there is reference to the books in Enoch’s handwriting, and again in 36:1, Enoch’s family will read and study the books he has written that contain information about God.

However, it is not only in the Enoch tradition that the writing down of heavenly mysteries is significant. This is true of Daniel, Ezra, Baruch, John the seer, and Moses. In Daniel 8:26, the angelic figure tells Daniel that the vision he has seen is true but to seal it up, implying that Daniel had a written account of what he had seen. The written nature of the revelation is more explicit in 12:4 where Daniel is told to “keep the words secret and the book sealed” (NRSV; cf. 12:9). At the end of *4 Ezra*, Ezra shows concern for God’s law that has been burned, and he asks for the Holy Spirit to be sent so that he might write “everything that has happened in the world from the beginning, the things which were written in your Law...” (14:21–22).⁸⁰ After drinking a fiery liquid which allows for increased understanding and wisdom, Ezra dictates 94 books over the course of 40 days (14.39–40, 44–46), of which 24 of the books were to be made public and 70, which were written last, were only for wise (14:45–46). In *2 Baruch*, God tells Baruch: “...write in the memory of your heart all that you will learn” (50.1).⁸¹ The content of what Baruch is to write on his heart concerns what will happen to the dead at the end of time and comes in response to Baruch’s prayer (48–49). The apocalypse ends with Baruch writing a letter to the nine and a half tribes in Babylon (77.12; 78.1–87.1). The letter contains a focus on the law, its observance, and the judgment of sinners. This is not the same sort of heavenly revelation as in *1 Enoch*, but it bears close similarity with the content and focus of what Ezra writes in *4 Ezra*. In these two apocalypses, the law is a revelation from God.

Similarly, *Jubilees* frames Moses’ reception of the law on Mount Sinai as an apocalypse.⁸² However, what is revealed to Moses is not merely the law, but “what (was) in the beginning and what will occur (in the future), the account of the division of all the days of the

⁷⁸ Schams, *Jewish Scribes*, 95.

⁷⁹ George W.E. Nicklburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001) 65. Enoch’s writing also includes writing down the Watchers’ petition which he takes to God (13:4; 14:4).

⁸⁰ Stone, *4 Ezra*, 427: “The scriptures contained everything from creation to eschaton...”

⁸¹ Translation from Daniel M. Gurtner, *Second Baruch: A Critical Edition of the Syriac Text, with Greek and Latin Fragments, English Translation, Introduction, and Concordances*, JCTS 5 (New York/London: T&T Clark, 2009).

⁸² The genre of *Jubilees*, namely whether it should be described as an apocalypse, is debated. See Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 83.

Law and the testimony” (1:4, 26 cf. *4 Ezra* 14:21–22). Moses is commanded by the angel of the presence to write all that is revealed to him (1:5, 7, 26; 2:1). In the book of Revelation, John the seer is told to write what he sees and what is about to take place (Rev 1:11, 19). Since this echoes part of the opening of the apocalypse, it appears that what John is to write down includes all of his visions; however, there is at least one exception. In 10:4, he is told not to write what the seven thunders say (10:4; cf. Dan 12:4). John also receives three other commands to write specific statements, two of which are beatitudes (14:13; 19:9; 21:5).⁸³

The importance for a written record of the revelation is evident throughout the Jewish apocalypses.⁸⁴ The content of what is written down principally includes the heavenly mysteries revealed to human recipients; however, for *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* (and cf. *Jubilees*) the heavenly mysteries are more specifically the law, which is considered heavenly because it provides insight into God’s divine plan and the path of salvation.

Purpose of the written record

Even with their differences in the specific content of the heavenly mysteries, the Jewish apocalypses share a similar purpose in the writing down of the revelation. The written record serves as a testimony to the event of revelation. In other words, it provides an account of the mediation of heavenly secrets by an otherworldly figure, but the primary purpose for writing down the heavenly mysteries appears to be to teach and to testify to future generations about the content of the heavenly revelation (*1 En.* 81:5–6; 82:1; 92:1; 108:1; *2 En.* 35:2; 36:1; *4 Ezra* 14:21; *Jub.* 1:1; cf. *1 En.* 93:1–2), even if some apocalypses also required the sealing up or secrecy of the revelations (Dan 12:4; Rev 10:4; *4 Ezra* 14:45–46).⁸⁵ The written revelation concerning the knowledge and wisdom that was meditated by an otherworldly being to a seer made possible the ability to remember and retell the heavenly secrets so that the content might be followed and kept. In *2 Enoch*, the members of Enoch’s household will read the books (J 36:1; cf. 35:1–3). The book of Revelation gives a blessing to all those who read the words of the apocalypse (Rev 1:3). Toward the end of the Book of Luminaries, Enoch speaks to his son Methuselah:

Now my son Methuselah, I am telling you all these things and am writing (them) down. I have revealed all of them to you and have given you the books about all these things. My son, keep the book written by your father so that you may give (it) to the generation of the world. Wisdom I have given to you and to your children and to those who will be your children so that they may give this wisdom which is beyond their thought to their children for the generations (82:1–2).

This wisdom that is to be learned involves a call for righteous living: “Blessed are all the righteous who will walk in the way of righteousness and have no sin like the sinners...” (82:4).⁸⁶ The heavenly mysteries are written down and passed on so that the following generations will be faithful, so that there will be a faithful remnant (83:8). They are written so that the future

⁸³ G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 203, connects the command to write with similar commands given to Old Testament prophets.

⁸⁴ Cf. *T. Moses* 11:1.

⁸⁵ On the secrecy of apocalyptic revelation, see Adler, “Introduction,” 13–16.

⁸⁶ The sin of the sinners is not as one might expect the transgression of the law but rather improper astronomical measurements. James VanderKam in George W.E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 37–82* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011) 547, states: “Whatever the content [of the books given to Methuselah] may be, it is all termed ‘wisdom.’”

generations will understand God's judgments and decrees and "purge from [their] heart the idle error for which" they were punished (2 Baruch 87:5–6), and so that they will "find the path" and "live" (4 Ezra 14:22),⁸⁷ keep the law (1 En. 108:1), and obey and study the instructions (2 En. J 36:1). The readers of the apocalypses are to know that God has not abandoned them and that he is righteous (Jub. 1:6). They need to read, hear, and keep the things revealed to them (Rev 1:3, also chs. 2–3). In this sense, the heavenly revelation that is written down and passed on to future generations is life-giving because those who keep it are righteous and know the plan of God for the righteous and the wicked (1 En. 81:7–10; 82:4; Rev 1:19).⁸⁸

The Gospel of John as Written Revelation

The Gospel of John intimates a similar interest in the written record of the revelation. In its final form, the Gospel ends with a reference to the written record of the things concerning Jesus: "This is the disciple who testifies concerning these things and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true" (21:24). Another mention of writing is found in 20:30–31, which most scholars consider the original ending of the Gospel: "Therefore, there are also many other signs that Jesus did before his disciples which are not written in this book, but these have been written in order that you might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and in order that believing you might have life in his name" (20:30–31). Both passages highlight the written testimony of what has been seen and heard concerning the revelation of Jesus (1:14; 19:35; 20:8), which indicates a similarity with the written revelation in the Jewish apocalypses just mentioned.⁸⁹

Similar to the Jewish apocalypses, what is written in the Gospel of John serves as testimony or proof of the reality of the events recorded. In the Enoch tradition, Enoch is charged to teach and testify to his children regarding what he had seen, which was done through the written apocalypse (1 En. 81:6; 82:1). Likewise, in the Gospel of John there is a strong emphasis on testifying to the revelation, i.e., the person of Jesus. John the Baptist testifies about Jesus (1:19, 32; 5:33). Jesus says that he does not testify concerning himself (5:31), but his works, the Father, and the written Scripture (τὰς γραφάς), all testify to him (5:36–39). The beloved disciple testifies about what he saw at the foot of the cross (19:35), and the entire Gospel is presented as the testimony of this figure (21:24).

The testimony about Jesus is often referred to as being "true," including that of John the Baptist and the beloved disciple (ἀληθής, 5:32; 10:41; 21:24; ἀληθινός, 19:35). Jesus himself is called "truth" (ἀλήθεια, 14:6), God is "true" (ἀληθής, 3:33; ἀληθινός, 17:3), and God's word is "truth" (ἀλήθεια, 17:17). Ignace de la Potterie has argued that John's use of "truth" has its roots in apocalyptic literature.⁹⁰ For instance, the revelation recorded in a number of the Jewish apocalypses is described as being "true" or "truth." In fact, George Nickelsburg states: "The

⁸⁷ Stone, *4 Ezra*, 427: "The Torah enables humans to achieve eternal life."

⁸⁸ See Ignace de la Potterie, "The Truth in Saint John", in *The Interpretation of John* (ed. John Ashton; IRT 9; London/Philadelphia: SPCK/Fortress Press, 1986) 53–66 (esp. 54–55).

⁸⁹ Another similarity is the reference to the book form of the written revelation. Cf. Robert T. Fortna, *The Fourth Gospel and Its Predecessor: From Narrative Source to Present Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988) 201.

⁹⁰ Ignace de la Potterie, "L'arrière-fond du thème johannique de vérité," in *Studia Evangelica: Papers presented to the International Congress on "The Four Gospels in 1957" held at Christ Church, Oxford, 1957* (=TU 73; eds. Kurt Aland, et. al.; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1959) 277–94; *idem*, "Truth in Saint John," 54–55; Severino Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel: The Torah and the Gospel, Moses and Jesus, Judaism and Christianity According to John* (NovTSup 42; Leiden: Brill, 1975) 205.

seeking after or disclosure of “the truth” (τὴν ἀληθείαν) is typical in contexts of (esp. angelic) revelation.”⁹¹ *1 Enoch* 14:1 (cf. 13:10) refers to Enoch’s vision and God’s response to the Watchers as “the book of the words of truth,” and Enoch is called “scribe of truth” (15:1). Further on in the Book of Watchers, Uriel refers to Enoch’s question about the Watchers and their destruction as being eager for the “truth” (21:5; also 25:1). And in Dan 11:2, the angelic figure says: “Now I come to show you the truth. Three kings will stand in Persia...” The content of Daniel’s vision is called “truth.” The description of apocalyptic revelation as “truth” may suggest that the Gospel of John’s reference to Jesus’ revelation as “truth” and the testimony about Jesus as “true” highlights further similarities between Jewish apocalypses and John’s Gospel.

What is revealed in the Gospel of John calls for a response in a way not unlike what was noted in the Jewish apocalypses. In the case of John, it is not necessarily righteous living or specifically keeping the law that is the required response. The call is for belief in Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God whom the Father sent. The writing down of the revelation in the Gospel of John allows for this call for belief to be retold, for each generation to receive the same revelation and the same challenge. Although the purpose of retelling is not stated in John’s Gospel, Jesus’ statement to Thomas that those who do not see are blessed implies that retelling the words and acts of Jesus to those who have not seen him is expected (John 20:29; cf. 1:14).

There are obvious differences between the Gospel of John and the Jewish apocalypses, but the similar focus on writing down revelation, testifying to the revelation, including the truth of that testimony, and the importance of retelling the revelation for the purpose of a response draw attention to further intriguing parallels with the Jewish apocalypses.

Summary

The features of heaven opening, the revelation of heavenly things, the Son of Man, and the importance and purpose of written revelation are some of the more apparent themes that the Gospel of John shares with the Jewish apocalypses.⁹² These themes highlight the apocalyptic outlook of the Gospel from its beginning apocalyptic introduction to its revelatory content, and even its presentation as written revelation. Granted, these similar features are not necessarily “apocalyptic” on their own, but since they have a prominent place in the Jewish apocalypses, their existence in the Gospel of John suggests that an apocalyptic outlook permeates the Gospel and indicates that it indeed may be considered “apocalyptic.”

The Tension of Apocalyptic Revelation and the Mosaic Law and the Prophets

If the Gospel of John has an apocalyptic outlook⁹³ with its revelatory content and features similar to those found in Jewish apocalypses, what does this mean for understanding the Gospel? Does it or should it influence our interpretation of John? In the following section, I would like to explore one possible insight into which an apocalyptic understanding of the Gospel of John may offer some clarity (or at least draw attention to an area for further study), and that is the relationship

⁹¹ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 298.

⁹² Other themes not discussed for lack of space include: heavenly temple, vision of God, glory, double resurrection of the righteous and the wicked, and ruler of this world. On the latter, see the forthcoming essays by Loren Stuckenbruck and Jutta Leonhart-Balzer in Rowland and Williams, *John’s Gospel and Intimations of Apocalyptic*.

⁹³ Again, the meaning of “apocalyptic” being used emphasizes the revelatory aspect which may or may not include eschatology.

between the Scriptures⁹⁴ and apocalyptic revelation. The existence of heavenly revelation mediated by an otherworldly figure in the Jewish apocalypses creates a tension with the Torah and the prophets. God wrote the law on tablets of stone, but how should that be related to the heavenly tablets which Enoch read and passed on in written form to Methusaleh (*1 En.* 81:1–6; cf. *Jub.* 1:1)? Is the new apocalyptic revelation at odds with the previous revelation of the Torah to Moses? Is this apocalyptic revelation a rejection of the Torah, a replacement, a complement, an addition, or something else? Similar questions may be asked of the Gospel of John’s apocalyptic revelation in connection with the Old Testament Scriptures. First, we will examine the interpretation of the Scriptures in the Jewish apocalypses before proceeding to an investigation of John’s Gospel.⁹⁵

Jewish Apocalypses and the Scriptures

There are numerous examples of reinterpretation of Scripture in the Jewish apocalypses. The seventy years of exile prophesied by Jeremiah (25:11–12; 29:10) is repeated in Dan 9:2; but in Daniel, the angel Gabriel interprets Jeremiah’s seventy years as seventy “weeks,” or seventy sets of seven years (Dan 9:20–27).⁹⁶ The Parables of Enoch, *4 Ezra*, and *2 Baruch* all reinterpret the human-like figure from Daniel 7, and *4 Ezra* 12 and *2 Baruch* 36–40 provide other interpretations of Daniel’s four kingdoms. The Enoch traditions expand certain speculations on the meaning of Genesis 5:21–24.⁹⁷ The *Apocalypse of Abraham* retells part of the Abraham story but including a significant place for the angel Yaeol and an ascent of Abraham in the Genesis 12–17 narratives, and *Jubilees* is well-known as being rewritten Scripture.

Further, an extensive scholarly discussion has ensued over the position of the Mosaic Torah in the Enoch traditions. Moses, Sinai, the law, and the covenant are rarely mentioned throughout the Enoch materials.⁹⁸ This absence has suggested to some scholars that those behind the Enoch literature were antagonistic to Mosaic Judaism.⁹⁹ According to this view, the revelation presented in the Enoch literature is given as a polemic against the Mosaic Torah. Anatheia Portier-Young has offered a thoughtful, persuasive response to this view. She notes that the Enoch materials are not pro-Moses and the law, but the literature’s essential silence does not equal a negative view of the law and covenant.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ I am using the term “Scriptures” to include the Torah and the prophets as the Gospel of John appears to do (τὰς γραφάς, 5:39; cf. 1:45). See Hartwig Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium* (HNT 6; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005) 326. Cf. Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John: A Theological Commentary* (trans. John Vriend; Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1997) 205, who suggests that in 5:39 the Law of Moses is specifically intended.

⁹⁵ Unfortunately, both of these examinations must be necessarily brief.

⁹⁶ For a survey of this topic see Klaus Koch, “Die Bedeutung der Apokalyptik für die Interpretation der Schrift,” in *Die Reiche der Welt und der kommende Menschensohn: Studien zum Danielbuch. Gesammelte Aufsätze 2* (Martin Rösel, ed.; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlagsgesellschaft, 1995) 16–45 (22–31).

⁹⁷ See the summary in James L. Kugel, “The Beginnings of Biblical Interpretation,” in *A Companion to Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism* (ed. Matthias Henze; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012) 3–23.

⁹⁸ For an excellent survey of this topic, see Kelley Coblenz Bautch, *A Study of the Geography of 1 Enoch 17–19* (JSJSup 81; Leiden: Brill, 2003) 289–99.

⁹⁹ Gabrielle Boccaccini, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism: An Intellectual History, From Ezekiel to Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 89–103.

¹⁰⁰ Anatheia Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011) 294–307. Rowland and Morray-Jones, *Mystery of God*, 23: “The choice of Enoch rather than Moses as the apocalyptic seer need not be taken as a rejection of the Tora and the tradition of its interpretation.”

What is clear from all of these examples (and many more could be given) is that the Scriptures are at the core of apocalyptic revelation. The writers of the Jewish apocalypses are immersed in the Jewish Scriptures and closely interact with them,¹⁰¹ but what remains debated is whether these writers understand the revelation they present as superseding the Torah and the prophets, adding to it, reinterpreting it, or something else entirely. Klaus Koch, addressing Daniel's reinterpretation of Jeremiah, claims that the second revelation given by Daniel is on a higher tier than that prophesied by Jeremiah.¹⁰² In this view, the revelation of the apocalypses is of greater importance and in essence replaces the meaning of the old with that of the new revelation. By way of contrast, Markus Bockmuehl argues: "The main paradigm of apocalyptic revelation, therefore, seems to be that of inspired interpretation—i.e. an indirect, 'hermeneutical' revelation."¹⁰³ From this perspective, the Old Testament Scriptures are not replaced as much as they are reinterpreted. Their true meaning is made clearer through the revelation.¹⁰⁴

For example, in *4 Ezra*, Uriel informs Ezra that the fourth beast of Daniel's vision is an eagle: "He said to me, 'This is the interpretation of this vision which you have seen: The eagle which you saw coming up from the sea is the fourth kingdom which appeared in a vision to your brother Daniel. But it was not explained to him as I now explain or have explained it to you'" (4 Ezra 12:10–12). More details are made known in the angelic interpretation, providing greater understanding of what was previously revealed. The apocalyptic writers do not replace Scripture with new revelation; however, they attempt to explain the meaning of Scripture for their current context,¹⁰⁵ through divine and angelic mediation, as it relates to God's law, plan, and the end of time.¹⁰⁶ Christopher Rowland states: "The idea of revelation may bring with it connotations of novelty and a radical break with tradition; but there is very little evidence that the actual *content* of the revelations in the apocalypses themselves gives much warrant for supposing that such a thing did go on, even if the potential for it was in fact there."¹⁰⁷

The collection of literature at Qumran which includes apocalyptic literature and legal material indicates that at least those at Qumran did not find apocalyptic revelation at odds with Scripture.¹⁰⁸ What is obvious is that apocalyptic writers were immersed in the structures and language of Scripture. Their interaction with the Law was not a rewriting of the Law but a continuation and explanation of it. According to Markus Bockmuehl, the apocalyptic writers engage in an "inspired interpretation" or a "'hermeneutical' revelation" of the Scriptures, which

¹⁰¹ See Daniel Patte, *Early Jewish Hermeneutic in Palestine* (SBLDS 22; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975) 139–208.

¹⁰² Koch, "Bedeutung," 31; cf. Stone, "Apocalyptic Literature," 428–29.

¹⁰³ Markus N.A. Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (WUNT II/36; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1990) 31.

¹⁰⁴ The first of James Kugel's, "Biblical Interpretation," 14, four assumptions of biblical interpretation in early Judaism is: "The Bible is a fundamentally cryptic document" and therefore, "it was the interpreter's job to find the hidden meaning of the text and make it plain to others."

¹⁰⁵ Patte, *Early Jewish Hermeneutic*, 155–56, 196; Christopher Rowland, "Apocalyptic Literature," in *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture. Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars, SSF* (eds. D.A. Carson and H.G.M. Williamson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 170–86.

¹⁰⁶ Hindy Najman, *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism* (JSJSup 77; Leiden: Brill, 2003) 41–50, argues that "rewritten Bible," particularly *Jubilees* and 11QTemple, accompanies and does not replace Scriptural traditions. Also, Hindy Najman (with Ithamar Manoff and Eva Mroczek), "How to Make Sense of Pseudonymous Attribution: The Cases of *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*," in *A Companion to Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism* (ed. Matthias Henze; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012) 308–36.

¹⁰⁷ Rowland, "Apocalyptic Literature," 180, cf. 183.

¹⁰⁸ Rowland and Morray-Jones, *Mystery of God*, 23.

requires a dependence and knowledge of them.¹⁰⁹ Thus, rather than a rejection or replacement of the Torah and the prophets in Jewish apocalyptic literature, what we find is an interpreted revelation that is dependent on the Scriptures through a “deep interaction” with them.¹¹⁰

The Gospel of John and the Scriptures

The Gospel of John shares a similar sort of relationship with and interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures, particularly with the Mosaic Law. The revelation of heavenly things—which Jesus reveals concerning himself and his relationship with the Father and which are made possible through the opening of heaven and Jesus’ descent from the Father—appears to be in tension with the Torah on a number of occasions, as well as with other sections of the Old Testament Scriptures.

The first and most arresting of these comes in John 1:17: “The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” As has been noted above, there are other multiple contrasts between Jesus and Moses in John’s Gospel. Jesus is the true bread from heaven, whereas Moses did not give bread from heaven (6:32–35). When the man born blind asks them “the Jews” if they want to be Jesus’ disciples, they respond by saying, “You are that one’s disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken (λελάληκεν)¹¹¹ to Moses, but we do not know where that one is from” (9:27–28). These passages seem to reflect an antithetical relationship between the Torah and Moses on one hand and Jesus and what he reveals on the other.¹¹² However, in light of 5:39, 45–47, there is no contradiction between the Law and Jesus; there is a contrast between the interpretation of Moses and the Law by “the Jews” and that by Jesus (and the Evangelist).

What is actually taking place in the Gospel of John’s engagement with the Scriptures is similar to the “inspired interpretation” of the Jewish apocalypses. The argument of the Gospel of John is not that Jesus contradicts Moses and the Torah by offering a revelation that replaces them. The Scriptures, especially the Mosaic Torah, testify to Jesus (5:39). In addition, Moses, in whom “the Jews” hope, actually accuses them for not believing in Jesus because Moses wrote about Jesus (5:45–46).¹¹³ The understanding of “the Jews” is that there is a contradiction between the Law and Jesus’ revelation (9:28–29), but in actuality, true acceptance of the Law, of what Moses wrote, is acceptance of Jesus.¹¹⁴ Sean Winter argues that this is not a disconnection

¹⁰⁹ Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*, 31; Rowland, “Apocalyptic Literature,” 180; cf. Patte, *Early Jewish Hermeneutic*, 184, 201.

¹¹⁰ See also, Matthias Henze, “The Use of Scripture in the Book of Daniel,” in *A Companion to Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism* (ed. Matthias Henze; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012) 279–307 (esp. 301–3, and the citation from Jon D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life*).

¹¹¹ Pancaro, *Law in the Fourth Gospel*, 200–6, argues that λαλέω functions as a word of revelation in John.

¹¹² Further exploration of the claimed anti-Mosaic position in the Enoch material and the apparent anti-Mosaic bias of the Gospel of John might offer some intriguing insights into the relationship between the Gospel and the Enoch literature, especially if both have priestly connections. However, the Enochic literature tends to be silent on Moses and the Law whereas John reinterprets Moses and the law in line with Jesus.

¹¹³ Cf. Luke 24:27, 44.

¹¹⁴ See William R.G. Loader, “Jesus and the Law in John,” in *Theology and Christology in the Fourth Gospel: Essays by the Members of the SNTS Johannine Writings Seminar* (BETL 184; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005) 135–54; Sean F. Winter, “The Rhetorical Function of John’s Portrayal of the Jewish Law,” in *The Torah in the New Testament: Papers Delivered at the Manchester-Lausanne Seminar of June 2008* (eds. Michael Tait and Peter Oakes; JSNTSup 401; London: T&T Clark, 2009) 82–95.

between the Law and Jesus, but rather a dissociation or reinterpretation of the reality of the Mosaic Law.¹¹⁵ According to the Gospel of John, proper interpretation and study (ἐρυνάω) of the Scriptures (τὰς γραφάς; 5:39, 47) reveals the true identity of Jesus and where eternal life may be found.¹¹⁶ In the words of Severino Pancaro, "...the Law is a testimony to Christ and has value only as such... For Jn (and Christians) the Law is not opposed to Jesus; it has permanent value as a μαρτυρία to Jesus and finds its fulfillment in him."¹¹⁷ Even the symbols of the Law—life, light, way, etc.—have been transferred to Jesus.¹¹⁸

The Gospel has another indication of this "hermeneutical" or "inspired interpretation" of Scripture that centers on the revelation of Jesus. The most startling involves Isaiah's vision of the Lord in the temple, in which Isaiah saw the Lord's glory filling the temple (Isa 6:1–4). According to John, Isaiah did not actually see God; Isaiah saw Jesus' glory and spoke about *him* (12:41). The figure described as τὸν κύριον in LXX Isa 6:1 has been reinterpreted in the Gospel as Jesus. The similarity with Daniel's reinterpretation of Jeremiah's seventy years or *4 Ezra's* reinterpretation of Daniel's fourth beast should not be missed, especially when the revelatory nature of Isaiah's vision is considered.

The relationship of the Gospel of John to Moses and the Law suggests that the Gospel presents a similar understanding of revelation as "inspired interpretation" as found in the Jewish apocalypses.¹¹⁹ Not unlike the Jewish apocalypses, the Gospel's (re)interpretation of the Scriptures presents the "new" revelation not as a rejection of them but as the intended, "true" meaning of what Moses and the prophets wrote (1:45; 5:46). William Loader states: "[The writer of John's Gospel] is not someone who sees himself as having become apostate from his ancient faith, but rather as one who loves it and is convinced that the Gospel of Jesus is both consistent with God's actions in the past, including the giving of Torah, and the climax of God's initiatives, which now sets all that has preceded into perspective."¹²⁰ The revelation is thus not disconnected from or a replacement of the Scriptures. Rather the real meaning of what the Scriptures say is clarified by the recently mediated revelation. This "inspired interpretation" requires a close study and understanding of the Scriptures rather than a rejection of them.¹²¹ For John's Gospel, the new revelation which is mediated by Jesus is the apocalyptic, revelatory truth that fulfills and clarifies the Scriptures.

According to Bockmuehl, the "deep interaction with Scripture" which is required for this "inspired interpretation" in the Jewish apocalypses "opens the divine perspective on the world, and from this vantage point addresses pressing issues of cosmic and historical theodicy."¹²² I would argue that the Gospel of John appears to present a stronger claim to opening up a "divine perspective on the world." In the Gospel, as opposed to the Jewish apocalypses, the revelation of heavenly things is not merely mediated by an angel through an ascent or vision. The Johannine revelation is the revelation of Jesus the Son of God who reveals the Father and is himself God

¹¹⁵ Winter, "Rhetorical Function," 93, 94.

¹¹⁶ Loader, "Jesus and the Law," 143.

¹¹⁷ Pancaro, *Law in the Fourth Gospel*, 228.

¹¹⁸ Pancaro, *Law in the Fourth Gospel*, 452–87; Loader, "Jesus and the Law," 152; Winter, "Rhetorical Function," 91.

¹¹⁹ A more in depth comparison would need to address Old Testament citations and allusions in John's Gospel.

¹²⁰ Loader, "Jesus and the Law," 153.

¹²¹ See Bockmuehl, *Mystery and Revelation*, 41.

¹²² Bockmuehl, *Mystery and Revelation*, 41.

(1:1, 18; 10:30; 14:6–7).¹²³ The Johannine Jesus claims that he can make the Father known (1:18; 14:6–7). Only he has seen the Father (6:46). Only he is from above and has been with the Father (1:18; 3:31). Only he has descended from heaven (3:13). The exclusivist claim of the Johannine revelation is abundantly clear. Salvation and eternal life are only possible through Jesus' revelation. The Gospel of John discloses a heavenly mystery in a manner reminiscent of apocalyptic revelation. This mystery is Jesus himself, the fulfillment of what Moses and the prophets wrote.

Conclusion

Within scholarly circles the Gospel of John has a history of not being considered “apocalyptic.” This non-apocalyptic perspective on John exists largely because the word “apocalyptic” has tended to be understood in terms of eschatology, and unfortunately that understanding still persists among New Testament scholars. When the word “apocalyptic” is understood in relation to the literary genre of apocalypse, eschatology noticeably becomes part of a revelatory perspective that focuses on the hidden and secret things of heaven mediated by an angelic figure. As noted above, the Gospel of John shares a number of themes with the Jewish apocalypses, including the opening of heaven, the revelation of heavenly things, (the Son of Man), and the importance and purpose of a written record of the revelation. The existence of these themes suggests that the Gospel of John shares an apocalyptic outlook not dissimilar to the Jewish apocalypses.

One of the hermeneutical realities of understanding this “apocalyptic” nature of John's Gospel is the recognition that the revelation presented appears to function in tension with the Scriptures. Does Jesus' revelation negate the writings of Moses and the prophets? The Jewish apocalypses reflect a similar tension. Both John and the Jewish apocalypses show a respect for the Scriptures of Israel and on the whole seek to bring clarity to the meaning the Law through an “inspired revelation.” For John, the true meaning of the Scriptures is made known through the heavenly revelation of Jesus as he reveals himself and makes the Father known, heard, and seen.

The use of themes, modes of presentation, and similar forms of interpretation of Scripture as found in the Jewish apocalypses evidences an apocalypticism in the Gospel of John. However, the Gospel's heavenly revelation fulfills the Scriptures and appears to make an exclusivist claim against some forms of apocalyptic speculation. Jesus has heavenly origin, is from above, and was with the Father in the beginning. Because of his origin and descent from heaven only Jesus the Son of God, Messiah, and Son of Man can reveal the heavenly secrets. No one has ascended to heaven. No one has seen God. Not Moses, Elijah, Enoch, Levi, Abraham, Isaiah, or Jacob. Only Jesus has descended from heaven, where he was originally because he is “from above,” and only he has revealed what is in heaven. Unlike the Jewish apocalypses, which describe angelic orders, astronomical phenomena, the plan of the coming ages, mysterious sealed books, and the

¹²³ James Dunn, “Let John Be John,” 331–32, states: “The revelation which Jesus brings seems to be so limited, precisely because what he reveals is not information but, quite simply, God, that he is God in his self-revelation. *This* is what it means for the Fourth Evangelist to confess Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. It is this faith which he wants to win or sustain in his readers.”

judgment of the wicked and righteous, Jesus as the apocalyptic revealer reveals himself, and thus the Father and the way to the Father.¹²⁴

Benjamin Reynolds
Tyndale University College
Department of Biblical Studies and Theology
25 Ballyconnor Court
Toronto, ON M2M 4B3
Canada
breynolds@tyndale.ca

¹²⁴ I am grateful to John Ashton and Daniel Driver for their critical comments on an earlier draft of this essay and to Anna-Maria Agostan for her research assistance.