

Lutheran Mission Matters

Winner of
Concordia Historical Institute's
2017 Award of Commendation



Johannine View of Persecution and Tribulation

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Editor's Note: *Lutheran Mission Matters* publishes twice a year on specific themes that have missional significance. Editors also allow other contributions on mission-related topics. Wang Lian's article actually is a Bible study on the Johannine view of persecution. This study is timely especially as today's Christians face opposition from the world as they live as Christ's witnesses in contexts that showcase competing ideologies and worldviews, often facing persecution and opposition. Wang Lian presents a case for Christians to hold their ground as the followers of Jesus did in the first century.

Abstract: In this article, I address persecution and tribulation from a Johannine perspective. The fourth Gospel emphasizes the importance of being prepared for suffering through its use of διώκω (*diokō*) and θλίψις (*thlipsis*). John gives more attention to Jesus' passion than the Synoptics. The mention of persecution and tribulation is an important one in the Johannine epistles, as well as in Revelation. This article mentions five areas of Johannine theology observed from John's writings: persecution based on hate, persecution associated with the world, persecution and the Holy Spirit, persecution foretold by Jesus, and Jesus Christ's example in persecution and suffering.

Christians around the world have been persecuted for their faith since the Early Church. Therefore, it is not surprising that persecution of Christian believers is occurring today. One such believer is Alimujiang Yimiti, a Uyghur pastor in northwest China, arrested in 2008 for "unlawfully providing state secrets to overseas organizations." His family and lawyer were not allowed to attend his trial and were not told of his sentence until four months after the trial. He is a converted Muslim, which may have been the reason that the government gave him a fifteen-year prison term after he was convicted.¹

Little has been written concerning the perspective of John on persecution and tribulation. However, John has a view of persecution and tribulation expressed in the fourth Gospel as well as his epistles and the Book of Revelation. This writer takes

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the traditional position that the “beloved disciple,” the brother of James and son of Zebedee, was the author of the fourth Gospel, the Johannine epistles, and the Book of Revelation.² John quotes Jesus Christ in John 15:20 as promising that His followers would be persecuted (διώκω, *diokō*) and that they would have tribulation (θλίψις, *thlipsis*) in John 16:33. John does not use the verb πάσχω (*paschō*) in his writings (used as the primary word for Jesus Christ’s sufferings in the Synoptic Gospels, as well as elsewhere throughout the New Testament for suffering), but that does not mean he does not have in mind the associated idea of endurance which πάσχω implies when he refers to suffering for the faith.

The subject of persecution is significant in the fourth Gospel, despite the verb διώκω only being used twice (5:16; 15:20).³ Whereas the fourth Gospel does not appear to have as striking an emphasis on Jesus’ teaching about persecution as do the Synoptic Gospels, this may be attributed to the relative lack of emphasis on eschatology in John’s Gospel (versus Matthew and Mark, for example, in the Olivet Discourse). Yet, the eschatology of the fourth Gospel reaches its climax in the Upper Room Discourse of John 13–16, and this is where Jesus’ teachings on persecution are also primarily found. Furthermore, the Synoptics (while each having a slightly different focus) emphasize the earthly nature of Jesus Christ (the suffering servant, lending a sense in which His followers would also suffer for His sake) versus the clear emphasis on the deity of Jesus Christ in the fourth Gospel, for example, the use of the key phrase “I am” equating to ἐγώ εἰμι (*ego eimi*), the Greek equivalent of יהוה [transliterated YHWH] of Exodus 3:14 (see also Jn 20:31). However, the *theologia crucis* is also an important theme for John.⁴

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Persecution of believers in Jesus Christ is also stressed in the Johannine epistles, notably in 1 John. The absence of the name of Jesus Christ in 3 John (mentioned obliquely only as “the name” in verse 7 and as “the truth” elsewhere in this epistle) could suggest that the author was aware of the persecution that could come to those who would receive and read this letter, as well as to those who might carry and deliver it. The Book of Revelation references more intense persecution and tribulation in the letters to the churches (chapters 2 and 3), and this tribulation reaches its climax in the Apocalypse. An interconnection exists between the intense hatred by the world, the persecution of believers, and the tribulation they will experience according to John’s writings. This article will explore some of the themes in the Johannine corpus related to persecution and tribulation in order to show that John had a theology of persecution and tribulation in his texts.

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Persecution Based on Hate

The Johannine Jesus emphasizes that persecution of His followers will be based on hate. The Greek verb *μισέω* (*miseō*) appears nine times in John's Gospel (five alone in John 15), five more times in 1 John, and three in Revelation. The frequent use of *μισέω* in the fourth Gospel to describe Jesus and His followers compares to seven uses of this verb in Luke and five in Matthew, with a relative view of a lack of preferential treatment and giving the idea of dishonor by comparison (or loving less, versus abhorring or despising) being seen in one use in Matthew and two in Luke, and a scattering of uses of this verb elsewhere in the New Testament (including only once in Mark, 13:13). John pictures the followers of Jesus as being hated based on their identification with Him. It is worth noting that both verbs in John 15:24 ("seen and hated") are in the perfective aspect, suggesting a permanent attitude.⁵ Jesus is hated with the same hatred the world has for His Father (Jn 15:23–24). Köstenberger argues that the theme of hate advances the theme of close identification between Jesus, the Father, and His followers.⁶

This hatred is the categorical opposite of the love that Christ shows and which His followers are to show for one another (Jn 13:34–35; cf. Jn 17:23–24), the theme that opens the Upper Room Discourse and characterizes what John had become, "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Clearly the hatred that these disciples would experience would be the opposite of the love that they had experienced with Jesus Christ. This love that had transformed them from requesting the form of retribution (fire from heaven) that John had felt was just (Lk 9:54) to seeking to be loving and merciful. Köstenberger also connects this hatred by the world with the disciples' election (Jn 15:19).⁷

Jesus uses this strong verb (*μισέω*) to express the idea that these disciples would not simply experience passive disinterest or disregard by the Jewish and Roman authorities, but active persecution. In Revelation, none of the uses of *μισέω* deals directly with the world's hatred of believers, although the persecution and killing of believers reaches a climax in this book. The persecution by the world of Christ's followers reaches its climax in Revelation 6:10 and 12:11 with a graphic picture of the martyrs falling before the throne of God and pleading for the judgment of God upon those who have killed the saints. This kind of hatred and the persecution based on it would be most intense among those who claimed to be the most devout, as well as those who have the most invested in the current world system.⁸

Surprisingly, in 1 John 3:13–15, John says that it is church insiders who will hate the disciples. By the time this epistle was written, those who had sought to persecute Christians were either men who had moved clandestinely into the assembly of believers or else were heretics who had left the church. Perhaps these were the false teachers to whom John refers in 2 John 7 and those who were making unjust

accusations from within the church in 3 John 10. However, John still makes it clear that the source of the persecution is the “world.”

Persecution Associated with the World

John repeatedly states that the persecution will come from the world (Jn 15:18–19, 17:14). Johannine cosmology is dualistic in nature, encompassing light and darkness (Jn 1:9–11).⁹ The world (κόσμος, *kosmos*) encompasses all the world forces that oppose Christ (both in terms of moral values and the antichrists who will arise), as well as the devil’s influence.¹⁰ Thus, the world hates Christ because He exposed its evil (Jn 7:7; 15:22).¹¹ The values that characterize the world are the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the boastful pride of life (1 Jn 2:15–16). John says this same world system loves its own and hates those who are not its own (Jn 15:18–19). This hatred is a Messianic fulfillment of Psalm 69:4 in John 15:25, being without a defensible cause. Jesus also makes it clear that the disciples will be hated by the world because they will not be of the world, even as Jesus was not of the world (Jn 17:14; see also Jn 15:20). This hatred from the world was present at the time of the writing of 1 John (1 Jn 3:13). However, Jesus does not pray for the disciples to be physically separated from the world, only from its values (Jn 17:15).¹²

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This same world system persecutes the believers in Revelation. The letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2–3 mention several occurrences of persecution. The churches of Smyrna, Pergamum, and Philadelphia are all described as encountering persecution. Persecution becomes full blown in the death of the saints described in Revelation 6:9–11, 7:14, and 12:11. Meanwhile, the forces of the world are described by John as amassing themselves to fight against Jesus Christ and His armies (Rev 19:11–19; 20:7–9). One purpose of Revelation is to prepare believers for this persecution (contra Oropeza, who believes that the purpose of the book is to combat assimilation and apostasy).¹³ One particular aspect of the world system worth noting is John’s mention of antichrists. These are part of the false religious systems incorporated into the world’s value system that seeks to replace true Christianity with a false religious system. Antichrists had already started to appear by the time of the writing of the Johannine epistles or were those who had apostatized from the true church (1 Jn 2:18–22; 2 Jn 7). They find their culmination in the arrival of the great antichrist in the beast of Revelation.

A key theme of the Book of Revelation is that of worship. The worship of the true God crescendos from chapter 1 through chapter 5, is contrasted with worship directed to the beast in chapters 6 through 18, and culminates in worship of the true

God in Revelation 19 through 22. In an attempt to hijack sincere worship of the true and living God, a false religious system of worship coalesces under the antichrist “beast” of Revelation 13, resulting in the persecution and martyrdom of true believers in Christ (Rev 13:7–8; 18:24). However, it is also clear from the Johannine eschatological perspective that multiple antichrists will surface. Thus, according to John, part of Satan’s strategy—using the world’s values that include acceptance of false religious systems—is to infiltrate the church with those who are not true teachers of Christianity and then initiate persecution from within.¹⁴ The persecution John envisions will begin in the synagogue among Jewish unbelievers and expand from there to non-Jewish unbelievers, resulting in the killing of true believers in Jesus Christ as a form of service to God (Jn 16:1–4). Thus, the persecution that John describes in Revelation is both present and ongoing, as well as in the future as part of the tribulation.¹⁵

The worldly power that arises as a result of this false form of worship contrasts with the true power that comes from the Holy Spirit, who is God’s provision for Jesus’ disciples who would soon undergo persecution.

Persecution and the Holy Spirit

Jesus stresses in the Upper Room Discourse that the disciples should not focus on the persecution to come because of the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit.¹⁶ The Johannine pneumatology of John 16 is the most advanced of the Gospels and is the main source of New Testament instruction regarding the third member of the Godhead alongside Romans 8.¹⁷ The juxtaposition of the promise of the Holy Spirit in John 15:26 to the description of the world’s hatred in John 15:22–25 makes it clear that the Holy Spirit is to have an important role in preparing the disciples for persecution and tribulation. Burge observes that this pneumatology is couched in the warnings about persecution and tribulation present in John 15:18 and following.¹⁸ Lindars also observes that the Holy Spirit’s assistance to the disciples is couched in the context of persecution in John 15.¹⁹

The function of the Paraclete (*παράκλητος*, *parakletos*), according to John 16, is to convict the world (vv. 8–11), guide the disciples into truth (verse 13), teach them what to say in the day of persecution (v. 13; cf. 15:26–27), and glorify Jesus Christ (v. 14).²⁰ The purpose of these activities is to give comfort to Jesus Christ’s disciples, who are also expected to experience grief (v. 22) and tribulation (v. 33). This takes place within the Johannine inaugurated eschatology concerning the *παρούσια* (*parousia*) in John 14:1–6 and 16:16–22, culminating in His visible return in Revelation 19:11ff.²¹ Michaels also notes that another function of the Paraclete is to give testimony of Jesus Christ by the means of the disciples to the hostile world.²² The conviction of sin that the Holy Spirit provides (Jn 16:8–11) is the same

conviction of sin that Jesus Christ provided, and for which the world hates Him (Jn 15:22).

The Holy Spirit enables believers in Jesus Christ to overcome (νικάω, *nikaō*) the world. Burge is correct in saying that persecution stimulated an interest in the Holy Spirit, who would sustain and strengthen them in the midst of the persecution.²³ This verb νικάω is prominently used in Johannine literature, accounting for twenty-four out of twenty-eight usages in the New Testament, the majority of which occur in 1 John and Revelation. The source of this overcoming is seen to be Jesus Christ's overcoming the world (Jn 16:33). In 1 John, John mentions both that these believers have overcome the evil one and the world and that this activity should be ongoing (2:13–14; 4:4; 5:4–5). In Revelation, there are multiple exhortations to the churches to overcome the tests they face (Ephesus, 2:7; Smyrna, 2:11; Pergamum, 2:17; Thyatira, 2:26; Sardis, 3:5; Philadelphia, 3:12; and Laodicea, 3:21). The saints are said to overcome through the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and their willingness to die for the sake of Jesus Christ (12:11). The indwelling Holy Spirit produces the perseverance of the saints (13:10, 14:12; see also Romans 5:3).²⁴ Köstenberger and Swain relate these passages to spiritual warfare in mission, overcoming darkness by the proclamation of the spiritual light found in Christ.²⁵

The tribulation foretold by Jesus in John 16:33 becomes the focus of the Holy Spirit's activity, the place where Johannine pneumatology of the Paraclete has its most prominent work. It is the situation in which the Holy Spirit enables true believers to overcome the world and the evil one in the ultimate, definitive victory of Jesus Christ's triumphal return. It is the promised work of the Paraclete that enables Christians to persevere in the tribulation that Jesus Christ Himself foretold, realizing that this perseverance does not depend on the strength of the believer but on God's work through the believer's suffering.²⁶ Estrada notes that the Holy Spirit is taking the place of Jesus in consoling the disciples and that the Spirit is to provide the disciples with a testimony about Jesus when they encounter difficulty.²⁷

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Persecution Foretold by Jesus

The other prominent aspect of John's theology of persecution is that it was foretold by Jesus Himself. Jesus warned His disciples in the Upper Room Discourse

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that they would suffer persecution for His sake (Jn 16:2, 33). What Jesus makes clear by these predictions, then, is that persecution is ordained by God Himself, a point He reiterates at His trial with Pilate (Jn 19:11). These prophecies play a prominent part in Johannine eschatology. Köstenberger states that one purpose of Jesus' parting instructions was to keep the disciples from being surprised by opposition, and this purpose is consistent with John's warning in 1 John 3:13.²⁸ Keener notes that the inaugurated eschatology in the fourth Gospel reflects the immediacy of tribulation in John's eschatology and is consistent with the same imminent return of Christ in Revelation.²⁹ While the initial persecution by the Jews focused on being thrown out of the synagogue, a much more violent form of persecution is envisioned by John, as portended for the disciples of Jesus in the Jews' treatment of Jesus (Jn 5:16–18).³⁰ Jesus' prayer in John 17 is for the protection of these believers in the face of the world's hatred (Jn 17:14–15).

Jesus also warns the churches in the letters in Revelation 2–3 to expect persecution, and He acknowledges that at the time of the writing of this book the persecution had already begun (1:9; 2:9–10). Nevertheless, chapters 4 through 18 describe a great tribulation that will come upon the whole earth and the resultant persecution that will be unleashed against true believers in Jesus Christ. Despite the many symbols and pictures in this drama, it is clear that those who are believers will be martyred for their faith (7:14; 12:11; 20:4).

Whereas John does not clearly state God's purposes for allowing persecution, it is likely part of the pruning process mentioned in John 15:2, since Christ's discussion of the vine and the branches segues to His teaching on persecution.³¹ One of the purposes of persecution, then, in Johannine thought is likely to prepare the saints to be more dependent on the vine (and so bear much fruit). Michaels says, "Jesus' disciples will suffer persecution simply because they belong to him and represent him."³² Thus, while persecution is ordained by God based on Christ's predictions of it, it is also ordained by God to make His children more dependent upon Him.

In John 17, Jesus prayed that His disciples would not be taken out of the world (and the persecution that they would face) (17:14–15), but that they would be unified as a result of the persecution they would face (17:11, 21). This also helps explain the descriptions and prayers of the martyrs in Revelation 6:10, 7:14–16, 15:3–4, and 19:1–2. It is reasonable to assume, then, that Jesus' teachings about prayer (Jn 16:23–24) are instructions to His disciples about their response in persecution.³³

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Again, John connects the disciples' response to persecution with anticipation of the *παρόυσια* of Jesus Christ. The anguish they will experience in suffering will be replaced by the joy of seeing Christ again at His return (Jn 16:21). The knowledge that God sees and will set things right at His judgment gives His disciples hope to persevere in tribulation (Rev 6:10).

The purpose of Jesus warning His disciples about the persecution, then, was that they would put their trust in Him and become dependent on Him, both before and during the coming tribulation, and also so that they would joyfully anticipate His return. Knowing that tribulation was part of God's plan for their lives would enable them to persevere in their faith. John proceeds to illustrate this principle in the death of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ's Example in Persecution and Suffering

Aside from Jesus Christ's statement that He was hated by the Jewish leaders (and so His followers also would be), the suffering of Christ is illustrated by John in the passion narrative of John 18–19. In His arrest, trials, and crucifixion, Jesus modeled for His disciples how He expected them to respond to persecution.³⁴ In doing so, He showed them they should be willing to remain silent in the face of false accusations and to focus on the truth.

Jesus, in His appearances before Pilate, refused to answer any of the false charges that had been trumped up against Him. Instead, He held His silence (19:9) and was willing to undergo scourging, as well as submit to a crown of thorns and beatings, despite Pilate's threefold affirmation that he found no guilt in Jesus (18:38; 19:4; 19:6). There is no mention in any of the Gospels that Jesus resisted these punishments or spoke out against those who inflicted them. The expectation was that His disciples should also willingly undergo suffering for the sake of the Gospel when confronted with false charges.

In addition, Jesus' only defense recorded by John was to affirm that His kingdom was not of this world, but that He came to bear witness to the truth. His willingness to confront Pilate on this subject brought the cynical response from Pilate, who represented the world's power system: "What is truth?" (Jn 18:38). Pilate did not wait for an answer, but Jesus had already confirmed that He was the way, the *truth*, and the life (Jn 14:6). John's perspective, then, of the world, is that it has no concern for truth, but only for the relative personal prosperity and comfort that the world affords. The confrontation between

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Jesus (whose kingdom far exceeded that of Rome) and Pilate (the most powerful

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man in Jerusalem at the time) showed that those with earthly power would be willing to compromise their morals for their own benefit and persecute those who stood for truth. John's theology of persecution focuses on how the world turns a blind eye to truth—even to the point of persecution—in order to obtain or retain its own system.³⁵ In the Johannine epistles, willingness to place God's truth above the world's teaching and to suffer for righteousness' sake are keys to overcoming the world (1 Jn 4:2–6; 5:4–6). John is also willing to confront those in the church who are accusing true believers unjustly (3 Jn 10), but this is based on a willingness to put truth first in spite of any consequences.

John portrays Pilate as notably presenting Jesus to those in the Praetorium with his well-known proclamation, "Behold the Man!" (19:5). In so doing, he unwittingly acknowledged who Jesus was, even while seeking to play upon the sympathy of the crowds. In the end, Pilate opts to have Jesus crucified, and Jesus willingly submits to crucifixion based on His recognition of different spheres of authority (19:10–11). Even in His resurrected state, Jesus retained the marks of His earthly suffering (Jn 20:27).

Yet, the Johannine theology of Jesus' suffering does not end at the cross: Jesus appears triumphantly to His disciples after His resurrection (John 21). He reappears to John in His resurrected glory (Rev 1:12–18). Thus, John recognizes that suffering and persecution for the believer will be transient and will cease entirely at the return of Jesus Christ when He establishes His earthly kingdom in the new Jerusalem (Rev 21:4–5). Jesus becomes the example, according to John, of someone who has gone through immense persecution and suffering and has come out gloriously victorious. This is something Christ's disciples can anticipate as well.

Lessons Learned and Application

The Johannine theology of persecution and tribulation, then, encompasses five major, interwoven themes. It emphasizes that the source of suffering for true believers is the hatred by the world's system. Such affliction is overcome by the power of the Holy Spirit, resulting in both pruning and perseverance. Affliction and suffering are ordained of God and therefore should be considered normal in the Christian life. Jesus Christ Himself showed us the example by enduring suffering and overcoming it through standing for truth and anticipating a future day when God will make all things right.

And how about us? We can anticipate persecution and tribulation as we reach out in ministry to the lost. The *missio Dei* requires our submission, and submission to God is frequently met with antagonism or hostility from unbelievers in the world. John's teachings concerning persecution serve as a corrective to the modern-day popularity of a "prosperity Gospel," which teaches that one should not have to go through suffering (contrary to the theology of the cross). Conforming to God's

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mission means we should be willing to emerge from our comfort zone in order to serve others. Are we willing to share Christ's love even with our persecutors, counting on the comfort and strength promised by the Holy Spirit? Let us follow Christ's example in responding to those who persecute us.

Christians should view persecution and tribulation as an opportunity to remain faithful in their witness to God. Such was the case with the twenty-one Coptic Christians who were martyred in Tripoli, Libya, in February 2015. They were given the chance to renounce their faith in Jesus Christ, but when each man refused to do so, they were beheaded.³⁶ Their martyrdom again shows the hatred of the world toward Christians and the power of the Holy Spirit to strengthen believers in the midst of persecution.

John's eschatological portrayal of Christ's triumphal return creates the motivation to endure persecution, a matter not otherwise developed in the Synoptic Gospels. His view of the kingdoms of heaven and earth (echoing Matthew) sets the stage for the earthly conflict between the world and Christ's disciples. Recognizing the normalcy of persecution and suffering, as well as the anticipated return of Christ, should give the true believer the perseverance empowered by the Holy Spirit to endure the persecution that comes his way. Echoing the exiled apostle John in Revelation 22:20, we can say, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"

Endnotes

¹ Bob Fu, "Alimujiang Yimiti," accessed August 3, 2017, <http://www.chinaaid.org/2015/04/alimujiang-yimiti.html>.

² Köstenberger points to the recent revival in belief in traditional authorship of John's Gospel and its historical reliability, as well as noting the support for this. Andreas Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 51–99.

³ Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren, *The Greek New Testament*, 4th ed. (Federal Republic of Germany: United Bible Societies, 1993). All word counts were performed using Logos Bible Software, version 7.8.

⁴ Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 525–538. Thompson points out that Christian tribulation cannot be understood without understanding John's emphasis on imitating the crucified King (Leonard Thompson, "A Sociological Analysis of Tribulation in the Apocalypse of John," *Semeia* 36 (1986): 147–174). Lindars also points out that the subject of persecution is woven into the rejection of Jesus throughout the fourth Gospel (Barnabas Lindars, "The Persecution of Christians in John 15:18–16:4a," *Suffering and Martyrdom in the New Testament* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 48–51).

⁵ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 681–682.

⁶ Andreas Köstenberger, *John: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 463–467.

⁷ Andreas Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 242. Köstenberger points out that the term μαθητής was to be understood not as simply applying to the Twelve but to their followers as well. He unites this with the Johannine mission theme to explain why Jesus loved His disciples, and they were to be united in love (522–523).

⁸ The interplay between the world and the disciples is part of Köstenberger's cosmic trial motif, in which the question of truth is put on trial before Caiaphas (Jew) and Pilate (Gentile), with both rejecting/dismissing Jesus' claims and representing the world's rejection of Jesus (Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 244, 436–456).

⁹ Köstenberger comments on the use of dualism in John's Gospel (including that of light and darkness) and notes that "John's is not an absolute dualism in which immovable boundaries are set between those who are in the light and those who live in darkness." (Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 280). See also Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 109–129, where Bauckham sees "the world" as part of John's cosmological dualism, a "dualism of opposition."

¹⁰ Robert W. Yarborough, *1–3 John: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 199–201.

¹¹ Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 1021.

¹² Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1060–1061.

¹³ B. J. Oropeza, *Churches Under Siege of Persecution and Assimilation: The General Epistles and Revelation* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2012), 175–233.

¹⁴ This view is consistent with Oropeza's contention that John viewed apostasy as the primary threat in his writing. However, apostasy alone does not explain John's purposes for writing, based on 1 John 2:15–16.

¹⁵ Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 129–130.

¹⁶ The Paraclete was sent to replace Jesus as the encourager of His disciples and to provide a strengthening presence in the absence of the physical presence of Jesus (Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 396–397).

¹⁷ This pneumatology also has a prominent role in 1 John as well. It is intertwined with John's Trinitarian mission theology, according to Köstenberger (Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 395–402, 539–546).

¹⁸ Gary M. Burge, "Persecution, Revelation, and Charismatic Crisis in the Johannine Community," *Evangelical Theological Society Papers, ETS-1023*, 1982.

¹⁹ Lindars, "The Persecution of Christians in John 15:18–16:4a," 62–66.

²⁰ Köstenberger also mentions that the Holy Spirit will call to the disciples' remembrance what Jesus taught (14:26) and will testify regarding Jesus (15:26) (Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 397).

²¹ This is part of Jesus' claim to pre-existence and His promise to return (Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 297–298).

²² J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John: New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 825.

²³ Burge, "Persecution, Revelation, and Charismatic Crisis in the Johannine Community."

²⁴ Hamilton proposes that an additional purpose of God's enabling the saints to overcome is to show His salvation through judgment to the glory of God, which Hamilton proposes is the unifying theme of the Bible. See James M. Hamilton, Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 56–59.

²⁵ Andreas Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 158–159.

²⁶ Again Köstenberger's description of the Holy Spirit as the Paraclete to replace Jesus is worth noting.

²⁷ Rodolfo G. Estrada III, "The Spirit as an Inner Witness in John 15.26," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 22 (2013): 77–94.

²⁸ Köstenberger, *John*, 468–469.

²⁹ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1016.

³⁰ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 1020.

³¹ Köstenberger points out the symbolism of Jesus as the true vine (the representative of Israel in such passages as Ps 80:8–16; Is 5:1–7; 27:2–6; Jer 2:21; Ez 15; 19:10–14; and Hos 10:1), and of His disciples as the branches (Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 502–504).

³² Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 821.

³³ This is true despite their (initial) misunderstanding of Jesus' teaching (Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 141–145).

³⁴ Larsson advances the argument that Jesus is glorified because of dying on the cross (versus being glorified in spite of the cross). See Tord Larsson, "Glory or Persecution: The God of the Gospel of John in the History of Interpretation," in Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser, eds., *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 82–88. This idea is advanced again by Bauckham in a pivotal statement: "What John has done is not to dissolve the passion in glory, but to redefine God's glory by seeing the suffering and the humiliation of the cross as the high point of its revelation" (Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory*, 199).

³⁵ The rejection of truth is an important aspect of Köstenberger's cosmic trial motif in John's Gospel and is also prominent in the Johannine epistles (Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 441–456).

³⁶ Stoyan Zaimov, "21 Coptic Christians Beheaded by ISIS Honored for Refusing to Deny Christ," accessed August 3, 2017, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/21-coptic-christians-beheaded-by-isis-honored-refusing-deny-christ-175128/>.