

Jesus as Torah in John 2:1-22¹

By Dan Lioy²

Abstract³

An examination of John 2:1-22 affirms the Fourth Gospel's emphasis on Jesus being the divine, incarnate Torah. The miracle of changing water into wine at a humble peasant wedding in Cana of Galilee revealed that the Logos is the Creator of all things. In order to bring about overflowing joy associated with the fulfilment of the law's messianic promises, it was necessary for Jesus to atone for the sins of humanity, particularly through the shedding of His blood on the cross. Jesus' clearing the temple courts in Jerusalem validated His claim to be greater than this shrine and to have authority over all the religious institutions associated with it. By His bold act, the one who is the culmination of the Tanakh⁴ signaled that the judgment of God rested on the established civil and religious authorities. They were giving way to the new order of forgiveness from sin and fellowship with the Lord.

¹ The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

² Dan Lioy holds a ThM (Dallas Theological Seminary) and a PhD (North-West University). He has lectured at Trinity Theological Seminary, Marylhurst University, and Southwestern College. He has written several academic monographs, including ones on the Sermon on the Mount, the Gospel of John, and the Book of Revelation. He is presently a postgraduate supervisor with the South African Theological Seminary.

³ This essay is a preliminary version of material to appear in a forthcoming monograph being researched and written by the author. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of the faculty and staff of SATS. © 2007 All rights reserved.

⁴ *Tanakh* is an acronym that identifies the entire Hebrew Bible, which includes the Torah (or Law), *Nevi'im* (or Prophets), and *Ketuvim* (or Writings). Throughout this essay, the words "Torah" and "Tanakh" will be used interchangeably in reference to the Messiah. This approach is based on the fact that now and then in the Fourth Gospel the corpus of Hebrew sacred writings is referred to as the "Law" (cf. John 10:34; 12:34; 15:25).

1. Introduction

A major premise of this essay is that the Fourth Gospel presents Jesus as the divine, incarnate Torah. Expressed differently, He is portrayed as the realization of all the Mosaic law's redemptive-historical types, prophecies, and expectations (cf. the discussion in Casselli 1997; Lioy 2007). The Evangelist's goal was to convince people to trust in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, and consequently find eternal life in Him (John 20:30-31). The inclusion of seven signs (2:11), or attesting miracles, in the first 12 chapters of the Fourth Gospel help to accomplish that overarching purpose. The wondrous deeds persuasively demonstrate the messianic identity, power, and authority of the Lord Jesus.

2. Jesus as torah changing of water into wine (John 2:1-11)

John 2:1-11 records the first of 12 miracles performed by Jesus during His earthly ministry. Johns (1994:521) maintains that the "signs consistently play a positive role for faith throughout the Fourth Gospel". Against the backdrop of the "juridical motif" that "dominates the Fourth Gospel", the "miracles help make the case" for the messianic identity of the Son (527; cf. Cook 1979:55-56; Kim 2001:62-64, 81-82). Just as in the period of Moses, the great lawgiver and leader of Israel, God intervened in human history, so now with the coming of the Logos, God involved Himself in a new way to bring about eternal redemption for those who believed (cf. Deut 11:3; 29:2).

Lincoln (2005:61) explains that in the Septuagint, the Greek noun rendered "sign" was "particularly employed of divine actions through Moses at the time of the exodus". These miraculous deeds "attested to Moses as the divine agent, judged the Egyptians and their gods, and brought about the liberation of Israel" (cf. Exod 4:1-9, 28-31; 7:1-7; 10:1-2; 12:12-13). Similarly, in the writings of the Old Testament prophets, signs "attested to the prophets as God's agents, confirmed their message, and frequently also served as a vehicle for conveying that message" (cf. Isa 20:1-4; Ezek 4:1-4; 12:8-16). In a corresponding manner, "Jesus' signs ... attest to his divine agency". Furthermore, the miraculous deeds He performed emphasize the "unique

status of this agent as the giver of life in abundance". As the Messiah, He "exercises the divine prerogative" by "overturning dearth, disease and death".

Jesus' first recorded miracle took place at a wedding feast, which His disciples and mother also attended (John 2:1-2). The marriage celebration was a symbolic reminder that the age of the Messiah had dawned and inaugurated the blessings of the eschatological kingdom (Gen 49:11; Isa 25:6; Jer 31:5; Hos 2:22; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13; cf. Bock 2002:424; Ng 2001:68, 70; Sanders and Mastin 1988:109). The backdrop of this wedding feast was an array of purification rites described in the Tanakh, all of which found their ultimate fulfilment in the Son. The time reference in John 2:1 suggests the Messiah arrived the third day after He and His followers left the Jordan River area, where the Baptizer had been headquartered. The presence of Mary at the celebration indicates that the bride or groom (or both) was a close friend of the family, rather than just an acquaintance of Jesus and the disciples (Calvin 1999:82). It is unclear why no mention is made of Joseph. He may have been dead by this time.

The changing of water into wine occurred at Cana in Galilee. This village is only mentioned two other times in the Fourth Gospel (4:46 and 21:2). The latter reference identifies Cana as the home of Nathanael, who had just been chosen to follow Jesus (1:47). Since Cana was a small town, Nathanael would more than likely have also known the newly married couple. The exact location of this village remains unknown. Two possible sites are near Nazareth, where Jesus grew up with His family. One is a group of ruins called Khirbet Kana, about nine miles north of Nazareth. A second possibility is the present village of Kafr Kanna, about four miles northeast of Nazareth. Some of the Crusaders identified this location as Cana, and it fits well with the descriptions of medieval travellers, who describe a church in this location supposedly containing at least one of the original water jars from the wedding.

In Jesus' day, wedding festivals could last up to a week. On such occasions, banquets would be prepared to accommodate many guests. The attendees would spend the time celebrating the new life to be enjoyed by the married couple. It was common for entire villages to be invited to a wedding celebration. Also, to refuse such an invitation was considered an insult. The wedding meal itself consisted of bread dipped in wine. Typically, the guests

would call for innumerable toasts. After that, more visiting, eating, and drinking would occur (though this was rarely an occasion for drunkenness).

Wine diluted with water was the accepted beverage of the times, and people were accustomed to it. Because of a lack of water purification processes, this mixture was safer to drink than water alone. Careful planning was needed to accommodate all who came. This was imperative, for the strong unwritten rules of hospitality implied that it was humiliating to be caught in short supply of some necessary item (Morris 1995:156). Even the poorest Jewish parents would scrimp and save enough money to provide plenty of food and wine for their children's wedding; yet, for some unknown reason, the bridegroom failed to supply enough of the latter for the duration of the festivities (v. 3). Perhaps more guests came than he had anticipated, or perhaps they stayed longer than he had planned (Nicol 1972:53).

Few details are given of what happened next. Evidently, someone reported the predicament to Mary, who then went to Jesus. Perhaps He was seated at a table with His disciples and enjoying the festivities. One possibility is that Mary quietly sat down next to Jesus and discretely told Him the wine had run out (cf. Goldsmith 2003). Keener (2003:503), however, observes that "women were ordinarily separated from men at such feasts (insofar as possible)". The counter point is that the typical Galilean home of the parents of a groom "would not be large enough to segregate genders". If the festivities took place "in a courtyard surrounded by homes", then "the women and food preparation could have been concentrated in one home". Given the Fourth Gospel's lack of details about the wedding celebration, any reconstruction must rely on conjecture.

It is clear from Jesus' response that Mary's statement implied more than a simple observation of fact. Implicit in her words was a request for Jesus to do something about the situation so that the bridegroom could avoid being socially embarrassed. According to verse 11, Jesus had not yet performed any miracles. Thus at this point in the account we can only speculate as to what Mary had observed in Jesus that would give her the idea He could somehow resolve the problem.

It is unlikely that Mary expected Jesus to send the people home, for that was not His prerogative. Mary probably also did not want Him to send His disciples into town to buy more wine, for they surely lacked the funds to do so. It is possible Mary had seen Jesus on other occasions do kind and helpful things for hurting people. Perhaps in the privacy of neighbourhood life, Jesus was known as an extraordinary and caring person. Regardless of what Mary may have been thinking, Jesus gave her a startling and provocative answer. He did not say either yes or no; instead, He asked Mary why she had come to Him for help. Without waiting for her reply, Jesus’ words indicate that He was no longer under His mother’s authority. While Jesus continued to honour Mary, His actions were governed by the mission His Father in heaven had given Him (cf. 8:28-29). In brief, the goal of the divine, incarnate Torah was to die on the cross in order to atone for the sins of the world (cf. 1:29).

Jesus was neither cruel nor harsh in His remarks to His mother. “Woman” (2:4)⁵ was a common term of address that implied no disrespect (Matt 15:28, Luke 13:12; John 4:21; 8:10; 19:26; 20:15; cf. Barrett 1978:191; Lightfoot 1983:100–101; Schnackenburg 1987:328.). In contemporary parlance, one might say, “Dear lady” (cf. Beasley-Murray 1999:34; Brown 1966:99; Bruce 1983:69). Such observations notwithstanding, the response “sets a peculiar distance between Jesus and his mother” (Bultmann 1976:116; cf. Keener 2003:504-506; Ridderbos 1997:105; Whitacre 1982:85). Jesus wanted Mary to think of Him not so much as the son whom she had parented, but rather as the Redeemer of Israel. Jesus used a social situation to point to a spiritual reality. In fact, the contrast between the wedding crisis and His mission could not have been more vivid. The Saviour’s query, “Why do you involve me?” (John 2:4), underscores Mary’s desire that Jesus do something to help a family avoid social embarrassment. Also, the follow-up statement, “My time has not yet come”, stressed that Jesus’ atoning sacrifice at Calvary, resurrection from the dead, and return to the Father in glory was a more eternally relevant issue (12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1; cf. Calvin 1999:85).

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from *Today’s New International Version* (hereafter abbreviated, TNIV).

From what transpired, it is clear that Jesus had not offended Mary. In fact, she seemed to instinctively know that her son would intervene in a constructive manner. At this point, Mary returned to the servants and possibly told the head steward to do whatever Jesus directed. Although Mary did not know what her son might have in mind, she nevertheless trusted Him to initiate what was prudent. Here we see that despite the awkwardness of the situation, the Lord Jesus conducted Himself impeccably in the social affairs of His community. Though His redemptive mission was lofty, He was not above mingling with people on all levels, so that they might be drawn to Him in saving faith as the fulfilment of the Tanakh (2:11). Jesus' response to Mary shows that the Saviour knew and controlled His eternal future (10:17-18). Mary, in turn, submitted to Jesus' decision about how to handle the situation.

The Messiah apparently wasted no time in taking action. After getting up from where He had been sitting, He went to the nearby spot where there were six empty stone jars. Perhaps after praying silently to His heavenly Father, Jesus told the servants to fill the jars with water (John 2:6-7). Mary's faith was honoured when Jesus did His first miracle at this humble peasant wedding. Jesus performed the miracle in such a way as to not draw attention to Himself or the shortage of wine at the feast (Köstenberger 2004:95).

The six stone vessels at the wedding feast normally kept the family's water supply fresh and cool. The jars of varying size each could hold about 20 to 30 gallons of water (all total, roughly between 120 and 180 gallons of liquid), which the Jews used to wash their hands and vessels according to the Mosaic law's requirements (Thomas 1991:162-165). Apparently, because of the number of wedding guests, the water in the six jars had been used up, so they needed to be refilled. The servants might have been puzzled by Jesus' unusual sounding command. Why take ordinary water to the master of ceremonies (vs. 8)? Despite whatever doubts the servants may have had, they did not complain; instead, they did exactly what Jesus said.

After the servants filled the jars to the top with water, they then dipped some out and took it to the person in charge of the festivities. When the person in charge (usually a servant or friend of the bridegroom) tasted the water now turned into wine, he was so pleasantly surprised that he commended the bridegroom for his good taste (v. 9). The master of ceremonies noted that it

was customary for the host (such as the bridegroom) to serve the best wine first and then later to bring out the less expensive wines; but the bridegroom was congratulated for the brilliant stroke of keeping the best wine until last (v. 10).

Jesus' first sign was experienced not so much as a miracle, but rather as a wonderful discovery. Only the Messiah and the servants initially knew what had happened. Jesus evidently took no unusual action, such as touching the stone jars or commanding the water to turn into wine. Most likely, Jesus' simple prayer brought about the attesting sign. Jesus did not call for a pause in the festivities, and He did not summon everyone's attention. He also did not tell those present to gather around and see how He had changed water into wine; rather, Jesus performed His miracle in a quiet and humble manner. John 1:3 reveals that the Logos is the Creator of all things. In fact, acts of creation and transformation are part of His nature (cf. 2 Cor 5:17). O'Day (1995, 9:538) states that the miracle Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee was "neither a rejection nor a replacement of the old, but the creation of something new in the midst of Judaism". Likewise, Silva (1988:28) affirms that the "new order instituted by Christ must be seen as a fulfilment, not a rejection, of the OT message".

Jesus' turning water into wine should be understood in terms of what the Old Testament said about the coming Redeemer. In the messianic age, the Lord would host a great feast complete with the best food and overflowing wine, symbolizing great joy (Isa 25:6; Joel 2:19, 24; 3:18; Amos 9:13-15; cf. Westcott 1981:39). In fact, one non-biblical description of the messianic age describes it as a time of great fertility, with grapes so large that just one would produce "about 120 gallons of wine" (Brown 1966:105; cf. 2 Baruch 29:5). Wine, however, could also symbolize suffering, since its colour suggested blood, and drinking its dregs was a sign of punishment (Pss 60:3; 75:8; Jer 25:15-16; cf. Glasson 1963:26, 88). Jesus symbolically linked wine with His blood at the Last Supper, which He celebrated when His hour had indeed come (John 2:4; 13:1; 18:11).

Smith (1962:334) maintains that the Johannine writer "saw Jesus' signs as antitypes of Moses' signs" recorded in the "Exodus materials". Similarly, Lierman (2006:214) observed that "just as Moses began his ministry with

signs to show that he was sent by God, so also Jesus in the Fourth Gospel performs signs to show he is sent by the Father". McGrath (2001) offers this clarification regarding the Moses typology in the Fourth Gospel: "John makes use of a motif and imagery that is not uniquely his, and yet which he uses in his own distinctive way" (58). Indeed, in the Fourth Gospel, "the belief that Jesus is the 'prophet (like Moses)' is perhaps made more explicit than elsewhere in the New Testament" (59).

We do not know how Jesus changed the water into wine at Cana in Galilee, only that He did it instantaneously and without fanfare; but we do know that Jesus used this miracle to validate His claim to be the perfection of the gift of the Torah (a truth that would later lead to His crucifixion). All the miracles of Jesus were signs that He performed to demonstrate His power so that people would trust in Him. Labahn (1999:186) states that the primary objective of the Fourth Gospel is to "awaken belief or perhaps to strengthen belief". In a similar vein, Witherington (1995:4) considers the Fourth Gospel to be a "dramatic biography written for Christians to use for evangelistic purposes". He also proposes a secondary purpose, namely, to "encourage those who already believe" (11). Likewise, Beasley-Murray (1999:lxxxix) affirms "there is ground ... for thinking that the Fourth Gospel was written with both evangelistic and didactic aims in view".

The Messiah's changing the water into wine unveiled His glory (that is, His divine nature, presence, and power; cf. Exod 24:15-18; 34:29-35; 40:34-38), and the disciples believed in Him as the Anointed One (John 2:11). His glory was seen in two aspects at Cana—His love for the neighbourhood people and His control over the elements of nature. Witherington (1995:79) thinks the consequence of Jesus' glory being revealed is that "God's life-giving and joyful presence can be found" in the Messiah. In addition, Keener (2003:275) remarks that "whereas Jesus' signs in the Synoptics especially authenticate his mission, the Fourth Gospel analyzes the signs in a christological context, using them and the frequently subsequent discourses to interpret Jesus' identity and to call for faith".

3. Jesus as torah clearing the temple courts (John 2:12–22)

After Jesus attended the wedding in Cana, He travelled some 20 miles northeast to Capernaum, where He stayed for a few days with His mothers, brothers (cf. Matt 1:24–25; 12:46; Mark 3:21; 6:3; Luke 8:19), and disciples (cf. John 1:35–51). Capernaum, the home of some of Jesus' followers, served as the Lord's headquarters during a large portion of His public ministry (cf. Matt 4:13; Mark 1:21; 2:1). It was a fishing village built on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum hosted a Roman garrison that maintained peace in the region. Major highways crisscrossed at Capernaum, making it militarily strategic. Because of its fishing and trading industries, the city was something of a melting pot of Greek, Roman, and Jewish cultures.

When it was nearly time for the celebration of the Jewish Passover in the winter of A.D. 27,⁶ Jesus travelled about 80 miles south from Capernaum to Jerusalem. Passover was one of several yearly sacred festivals the people of God observed. These special days had different purposes and varying kinds of observances, but they all were meant to deepen the people's devotion to the Lord and give them occasions for joy and celebration. Passover was the first festival on the calendar and possibly signified the most important holy feast to the Israelites. During this sacred event, they would commemorate the final plague in Egypt, when the angel of death passed over the Israelites while killing the firstborn of Egypt (cf. Exod 12:1-30). Passover was to begin on the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month (Lev 23:5). The Israelites would kill a lamb and on that evening eat a special meal. It was designed to remind them of the meal their ancestors ate on the first Passover night, before leaving Egypt (cf. Num 9:1-14; 28:16; Deut 16:1-7; Matt 26:17; Mark 14:12-26; John 2:13; 11:55; 1 Cor 5:7; Heb 11:28).

The Fourth Gospel records at least three separate Passover celebrations that occurred during the time of Jesus' earthly ministry: the first in 2:13, 23; the second in 6:4; and the third in 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; 18:28, 39; and 19:14. Some think that the Jewish festival mentioned in 5:1 was Passover, though Pentecost

⁶ The dates for the life of Christ used in this essay are based on the timeline appearing in the *Zondervan TNIV Study Bible* (2006:1656-1658).

and Tabernacles are two other strong possibilities. Depending on the separate number of Passover celebrations appearing in John's Gospel, Jesus' ministry could have lasted as long as three and a half years (Harris 2001). This statement is based on the premise that the Passovers appear in strict chronological order. Another option is that the material in the Fourth Gospel is arranged topically. In turn, this would leave open the possibility that the account of Jesus clearing the temple courts actually occurred later in His public ministry.

The Synoptic Gospels record a similar episode occurring in the week preceding Jesus' crucifixion, specifically after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (cf. Matt 21:12-17; Mark 11:12-18; Luke 19:45-46). Those favouring the view that the episodes in the Fourth Gospel are topically arranged consider the two temple clearing incidents as being one and the same (cf. Barrett 1978:195; Borchert 1996:160-162, 166; Keener 2003:518-519; Lincoln 2005:141-144; Schnackenburg 1987:344; Witherington 1995:85-86). In contrast, those who regard the material in John's Gospel as being sequenced chronologically argue for two separate episodes. This view is supported by the writer's emphasis throughout his narrative on mentioning specific times, places, facts, and details. Also, the content and wording of the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels about the temple clearing incident are markedly different (cf. Brown 1983:118-119; Carson 1991:177-178; Köstenberger 2004:111; Morris 1995:167-168; Tenney 1981:44). Regardless of which view is preferred, Jesus' statement in John 2:19 most likely forms the basis for the accusations voiced by false witnesses at the Redeemer's trial before the Sanhedrin (cf. Matt 26:61; Mark 14:58) and for the spectators' taunting remarks as His crucifixion (cf. Matt 27:40; Mark 15:29).

In the Fourth Gospel, there is theological significance to the clearing of the temple courts as one of Jesus' first public acts. From the start of the Saviour's earthly ministry, the judgment of God rested on the established civil and religious authorities. This was the reason why the old order, represented by the temple built by Herod the Great, would give way to the new order, represented by the temple of Jesus' body. With the advent of Jesus as the final expression of God's Tanakh, all the divine blessings anticipated under the old covenant were brought to fruition, including being cleansed from sin, experiencing the

delight of salvation, and enjoying unbroken fellowship with the Lord (cf. Isa 25:6-9; 56:7; Jer 31:31-34; Rev 21:22).

Kerr (2002:67) maintains that Jesus' bold action at the Jerusalem shrine heralded the "eschatological hour, the hour that comes to dominate the Gospel as Jesus moves towards the cross and the resurrection". Expressed differently, the cleansing of the temple in John 2:13-22 is an end-time event that "signals that the day of the LORD has come or is very near". It is in this "eschatological ethos" that "judgment will begin at the house of the LORD and a new Temple will be raised". According to Köstenberger (2004:102), the literature of the Old Testament and Second Temple Judaism "express the expectation of the establishment of a new temple for the messianic age" (cf. Ezek 40-44; 1 Enoch 90:28-36; Pss Sol 17:30).

Hanson (1991:43) thinks that the Evangelist's intent in John 2:17-22 was to "present Jesus as the true Temple, the house of God". Likewise, Coloe (2001:3) states that the "Temple, as the dwelling place of God, points to the identity and role of Jesus". Moreover, Hoskins (2002:abstract), based on his analysis of John 1:14, 1:51, 2:18-22, and 4:20-24, concluded that the Son, as the "true Temple" of God, "fulfills, surpasses, and replaces" the shrine in Jerusalem, along with the religious festivals associated with it, namely, the Passover, Feast of Tabernacles, and Feast of Dedication. It is through the death, resurrection, and exaltation of the Son that the Father replaces the old temple order with the new temple order. Jesus, as the antitype of the Jerusalem sanctuary, has become the "locus of God's presence, glory, revelation, and abundant provision".

The temple area Jesus entered with His disciples was a complex of courts, porticoes, and buildings on a large raised platform. The area was filled with activity and noise as merchants and bankers did business with worshipers. Every day, and especially during the Passover celebration, pilgrims who had travelled from near and distant locations offered many types of sacrifices. Vendors near the temple sold ceremonially pure animals to the worshipers for this purpose. Money changers converted foreign coins into the proper currency so that visitors could buy the animals they needed and also pay the required half-shekel temple tax (cf. Exod 30:13-16). Tragically, the presence of all this

commercial activity prevented Gentile converts to Judaism from being able to worship and pray in the only approved spot of the temple area (John 2:14).

The Messiah, being filled with indignation at the enormity of the injustice, took bold and decisive action. To symbolize God's authority and judgment (Bruce 1983:75), Jesus made a whip out of cords of rope and began to flail it in the air, perhaps in a wide, circular motion. He chased people out of the temple area, and opened the pens housing their sheep and cattle to let these animals escape. He also turned over the tables of the moneychangers and scattered their coins on the ground (v. 15). Next, Jesus went to the merchants selling doves and ordered them to remove the birds from the area. Perhaps He opened some of the cages in which the doves were kept so they could more easily fly away. He ordered that the rest be removed and that the sanctuary of His Father no longer be turned into a house of merchants (v. 16). This is possibly an allusion to Zechariah 14:21, wherein the Hebrew term rendered "Canaanite" could also be translated "merchant" or "trader". The idea is that in the day the Lord established His messianic kingdom, He would remove all those involved in commercial activity from His temple.

From Jesus' earliest years, He was aware of His special relationship with His heavenly Father, including God's desire that the temple in Jerusalem be a sacred place for worship and prayer (cf. Luke 2:49). This attitude is reflected in Jesus' efforts at the start of His earthly ministry to clear the temple area of all profane activity. This set in motion a long chain of events that led to His atoning sacrifice on the cross. After the Messiah's resurrection from the dead, His disciples remembered the prophecy recorded in Psalm 69:9, which foretold that Jesus' fervent devotion for the Lord's house burned in Him like a fire.

As the second half of this verse prophesies, the Redeemer's love for the things of God would raise the ire of His enemies (cf. Rom 15:3). The antagonists did not realize that the insults they hurled at the Father, fell on the Son. Kerr (2002) argues that John 2:17 "brings the death of Jesus into view and that his death is the death of God's Paschal Lamb" (67). Accordingly, there is "no future for the old Temple and its sacrifices. God no more dwells within its walls, and its sacrifices have been replaced by Jesus, the Passover sacrifice. Jesus is now the house of the Father. God dwells in Jesus" (82).

As the divine, incarnate Torah, Jesus is the Lord and the Messenger of the covenant about whom Malachi 3:1-4 said would come to spiritually purify and morally refine God's people. This is in keeping with the Old Testament teaching that God maintained a burning zeal and passion for the covenant community and would deal with all rivals firmly. As John 2:17 indicates, anyone who was spiritually unfaithful to the Lord Jesus would experience His hand of discipline (cf. Prov 3:11-12; Heb 12:5-6). Similarly, James 4:5 states that God "jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us." The idea is that when God's people become unfaithful in their commitment, He zealously desires to have them return to Him in faithfulness and love. For that reason, when they opt for friendship with the world, it provokes God to anger. Indeed, He will not permit them to have divided loyalties between Himself and the world.

At some point, the temple authorities were alerted about the unfolding events and began to rush to the scene to investigate. When "the Jews" saw what Jesus had done, they demanded an explanation for His actions (John 2:18). In the New Testament, the Greek noun *Ioudaioi* (rendered "Jews") has a range of meanings, including the Jewish people as a whole, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and its environs, the religious leaders headquartered in Jerusalem, or simply those who were antagonistic toward Jesus (Carson 1991:141-142; Stern 1992:158-159; Whitacre 1982:20). Often in the Fourth Gospel, references to "the Jews" is not meant to be an "ethnic designation", but rather a "symbol of Jesus' opponents" (O'Day 1995, 9:617).

Keener (2003:222) states that the "primary issue is not ethnic (both persecutor and persecuted are Jewish) but power". Generally speaking, "the Jews" are "symbols of human rejection of God's revelation in Jesus". In a "negative sense", the antagonists in the Fourth Gospel become "representatives of the world" (Smith 1995:56). Kierspel (2006) carries the discussion further by maintaining that the Evangelist used *Ioudaioi* "in parallel position to *kósmos* throughout the Gospel" (214). Moreover, an examination of the way in which *kósmos* is used "reveals the author's intent to translate the particulars of Jesus' life *throughout* the text into universal notions that apply to Jews and Gentiles alike" (215; italics are his). For that reason, the audience is cosmopolitan

irrespective of the ethnic origin of its members (cf. John 3:16, 19; 4:42; 12:19-20).

Lincoln (2000:45) draws attention to the lawsuit motif found in the Fourth Gospel, noting that it is a reworking of the lawsuits recorded in Isaiah 40-55. Moreover, in the Fourth Gospel, Israel becomes the "representative of the world" (46), especially as the evidence is presented in the universal court of justice regarding Jesus and His messianic claims. The nations are "represented through the Samaritans", who affirm that Jesus is the Saviour of humankind (John 4:42), and the Greeks, who want to meet Jesus (12:20-22). Furthermore, Jesus' "climatic trial before Pilate ... sets the lawsuit squarely on the world stage and in the context of the nations" (256). Throughout the forensic process (as seen in the Fourth Gospel's cosmic-trial metaphor), Jesus functions as "God's authorized agent and chief witness" (46). The irony is that the person who is eventually tried and condemned by the religious and civil authorities of the day turns out to be their Creator and Judge (as well as that of all humankind).

In John 2:18, the Evangelist was referring to the Jewish authorities who had oversight of the Jerusalem shrine. They wanted proof of Jesus' legal right to disrupt the commercial activities occurring in the temple area. The Greek word rendered "sign" most likely refers to some sort of miracle that would certify Jesus' status as the Son of God (cf. 1 Cor 1:22). Ironically, Jesus' resurrection is the only authentication of His divine nature that He promised to give the religious leaders (cf. Rom 1:3). They failed to understand His claim that if they tore down the temple of His body, He would build it again within three days (Lightfoot 1983:113-114). The Jewish authorities thought the Messiah was referring to the temple of Herod the Great, which the king began to renovate and reconstruct around 19 or 20 B.C. The shrine was not completed until A.D. 64, during the reign of Herod Agrippa. A 46-year time line implies a date of around A.D. 27 for the Passover mentioned in John 2:13 (Haenchen 1984:184; Schnackenburg 1987:351).

On other occasions (recorded in the Synoptic Gospels), Pharisees and teachers of the law demanded to see Jesus perform a sign to authenticate His divine authority. In response, He declared that the only certifying mark they would receive was that of the Jonah. The prophet was facing certain death during the

three-day period in which he lay entombed in the belly of a huge sea creature (cf. Jonah 1:17). The Lord restored Jonah to life by setting him free from his predicament. This foreshadowed the Torah of God spending a similar amount of time buried in the depths of the earth. His own resurrection from the dead would be the supreme validation of His messianic power and authority and serve as a sign that He was superseding the "old temple order" (Keener 2003:517; cf. Matt 12:38-41; 16:1-4; Luke 11:16, 29-32). After Jesus' was raised from the dead, the Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to remember what the Redeemer had said, including the meaning and significance of His teachings (cf. John 14:26). What the embodiment of the Tanakh had prophesied, fulfilled what God had promised in the Old Testament (Calvin 1999:98). Jesus' disciples believed the Scriptures and the sayings Jesus had spoken about them.

4. Conclusion

The Fourth Gospel presents Jesus as the divine, incarnate Torah. The Evangelist recorded a number of witnesses from the first year of the Messiah's earthly ministry to substantiate this truth. The miracle of changing water into wine at a humble peasant wedding in Cana of Galilee revealed that the Logos is the Creator of all things. He also demonstrated that acts of creation and transformation are part of His nature; but in order to bring about overflowing joy associated with the fulfilment of the law's messianic promises, it was necessary for Jesus to atone for the sins of humanity, particularly through the shedding of His blood on the cross.

Jesus' clearing the temple courts in Jerusalem validated His claim to be greater than this shrine and to have authority over all the religious institutions associated with it. By His bold act, the one who is the culmination of the Tanakh signaled that the judgment of God rested on the established civil and religious authorities. They were giving way to the new order of forgiveness from sin and fellowship with the Lord. It was to be an era characterized by spiritual purity and unmitigated zeal for God.

Works Cited

- Barker KL et al. (eds) 2006. *Zondervan TNIV study Bible*. Zondervan.
- Barrett CK 1978. *The Gospel according to St. John* (2nd ed). Westminster.
- Beasley-Murray GR 1999. *John* (2nd ed). Thomas Nelson.
- Bock DL 2002. *Jesus according to Scripture: restoring the portrait from the Gospels*. Baker.
- Borchert GL 1996. *John 1-11*. Broadman & Holman.
- Brown RE 1966. *The gospel according to John (i-xii)*. Doubleday.
- Bruce FF 1983. *The gospel of John*. Eerdmans.
- Bultmann R 1976. *The gospel of John: a commentary*. Translated by GR Beasley-Murray et al. Westminster.
- Calvin J 1999. *Commentary on the holy gospel of Jesus Christ according to John* (vol 1). Translated by W Pringle. Baker.
- Carson DA 1991. *The gospel according to John*. Eerdmans.
- Casselli SJ 1997. Jesus as eschatological torah. *Trinity Journal*. 18(1):15-41.
- Coloe ML 2001. *God dwells with us: temple symbolism in the fourth gospel*. The Liturgical Press.
- Cook WR 1979. *The theology of John*. Moody.
- Glasson TF 1963. *Moses in the fourth gospel*. SCM Press.
- Goldsmith J 2003. *The visual Bible: gospel of John*. Visual Bible International.
- Haenchen E 1984. *John 1*. Translated by RW Funk. Fortress Press.
- Hanson AT 1991. *The prophetic gospel: a study of John and the Old Testament*. T&T Clark.
- Harris WH 2001. *The gospel of John: introduction and commentary*. Biblical Studies Press. Website: www.bible.org/series.php?series_id=72.
- Hoskins PM 2002. *Jesus as the replacement of the temple in the gospel of John*. Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.
- Johns LL 1994. The signs as witnesses in the fourth gospel: reexamining the evidence. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*. 56(3):519-535.
- Keener CS 2003. *The gospel of John: a commentary* (vol 1). Hendrickson.
- Kerr AR 2002. *The temple of Jesus' body: the temple theme in the Gospel of John*. Sheffield Academic.
- Kierspel L 2006. *The Jews and the world in the fourth gospel: parallelism, function, and context*. Mohr Siebeck.
- Kim SS 2001. *The relationship of the seven sign-miracles of Jesus in the fourth gospel to the Old Testament*. Dallas Theological Seminary.
- Köstenberger AJ 2004. *John*. Baker.
- Labahn M 1999. Between tradition and literary art: the miracle tradition in the fourth gospel. *Biblica* 80:178-203.
- Lierman J 2006. The Mosaic pattern of John's Christology. In J Lierman (ed), *Challenging perspectives on the gospel of John*, 210-234. Mohr Siebeck.
- Lightfoot RH 1983. *St. John's gospel: a commentary*. Edited by CF Evans. Oxford UP.
- Lincoln AT 2000. *Truth on trial: the lawsuit motif in the Fourth Gospel*. Hendrickson.
- _____. 2005. *The gospel according to Saint John*. Hendrickson.

- Lindars B 1986. *The gospel of John*. Eerdmans.
- Lioy D. The moral law in Christ-centered perspective: a canonical and integrative approach. *Conspectus* 3:54-89.
- McGrath JF 2001. *John's apologetic Christology: legitimation and development in Johannine Christology*. Cambridge University Press.
- Morris L 1995. *The gospel according to John* (rev ed). Eerdmans.
- Ng W 2001. *Water symbolism in John: an eschatological interpretation*. Peter Lang.
- Nicol W 1972. *The semeia in the fourth gospel: tradition and redaction*. EJ Brill.
- O'Day GR 1995. The gospel of John. In LE Keck et al. (ed), *The new interpreter's Bible*, 9:493-865. Abingdon.
- Ridderbos H 1997. *The Gospel according to John: a theological commentary*. Translated by J Vriend. Eerdmans.
- Sanders JN & Mastin BA 1988. *A commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*. Hendrickson.
- Schnackenburg R 1987. *The gospel according to St John* (vol 1 of 3). Translated by K Smyth. Crossroad.
- Silva M 1988. Approaching the fourth gospel. *Criswell Theological Review* 3(1):17-29.
- Smith DM 1995. *The theology of the gospel of John*. Cambridge University Press.
- Smith RH 1962. Exodus typology in the fourth gospel. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81:329-342.
- Stern DH 1992. *Jewish New Testament commentary*. Jewish New Testament Publications.
- Tenney MC 1981. The gospel of John. In FE Gaebelein (ed), *The expositor's Bible commentary* (vol 9), 3-203. Zondervan.
- Thomas JC 1991. The fourth gospel and rabbinic Judaism. *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde des Urchristentums*. 82(3-4):159-182.
- Westcott BF 1981. *The gospel according to St. John*. Eerdmans.
- Whitacre RA 1982. *Johannine polemic: the role of tradition and theology*. Scholars Press.
- Witherington B 1995. *John's wisdom: a commentary on the Fourth Gospel*. John Knox.