

“Johannine Fulfillment Language”
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1. Introduction

The Gospel of John is replete with OT allusions and quotations. There are seven formal OT quotations in John 1:1-12:36; two have no introductory formula (cf. 1:23; 12:13), while five are introduced with a variation of “it has been written” (ἐστὶν γεγραμμένον; cf. 2:17; 6:31, 45; 10:34; 12:14). However, a marked shift occurs at John 12:38, from which point the phrase “in order that Scripture may be fulfilled” (ἵνα ἡ γραφή πληρωθῆ) introduces OT citations.¹ This distinctive introductory formula draws explicit attention to the deeper purpose at work in Jesus’ passion, i.e. the fulfillment of God’s will as set forth in Scripture. The primary purpose of this paper is to explain what the fourth evangelist means in saying that Jesus’ suffering and death take place “in order that the Scripture may be fulfilled.”

2. “Scripture” and the Word of Jesus

The word γραφή occurs 12x in John, nearly always in the singular, articular form and it always means “Scripture.”² The first use of γραφή is found in 2:22, where the narrator writes that the disciples “believed *the Scripture* (τῆ γραφῆ) and *the word* (τῷ λόγῳ) that Jesus had spoken.”³ The object of belief in this text is two-fold: the Scripture (specifically Ps 68:10 LXX, quoted in v. 17) and the word of Jesus (specifically vv. 19–21). This juxtaposition of Scripture and the word of Jesus prepares readers for John 18:9, 32, where it is Jesus’ own words that are “fulfilled.” The only occurrence of γραφή in the plural is at 5:39, where Jesus declares that the Scriptures (τὰς γραφάς) “bear witness about *me*.” This verse stresses that the OT serves as a

¹ John 12:38; 13:18; 15:25; 19:24, 36. 12:38 substitutes “the word of the prophet Isaiah” in place of “Scripture,” and 15:25 has “the world written in their Law.” The allusion to the OT in 19:28 is introduced by τελειόω rather than πληρόω. OT citations in 12:39 and 19:37 are introduced with πάλιν λέγει/ εἶπεν, but they immediately follow a citation introduced by a πληρόω formula and so should not be taken as exceptions.

² In 5:39, γραφή is plural and in 19:37 it is anarthrous but is modified by ἕτερα. By “Scripture,” I mean what is now referred to as the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible. In this paper, “Scripture” and “Old Testament” are used interchangeably.

³ English scriptural citations, unless otherwise noted, are taken from *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2001).

“comprehensive hermeneutical key” in bearing witness to Jesus as the Father’s own testimony to his Son (cf. vv. 37-38).⁴ 5:39 anticipates later references in the gospel to Jesus’ fulfillment of Scripture, especially in his suffering and death.

3. πληρώω in the Fourth Gospel

The verb πληρώω occurs 15x in John and is most often translated “fulfill” or “fill.”⁵ It is used for fullness of joy or sorrow (3:29; 15:11; 16:6, 24; 17:13),⁶ for a fragrance filling a house (12:3), and for the fulfillment of Jesus’ “time” (καίρος) (7:8). Twice, the evangelist states that Jesus’ words are “fulfilled” (18:9, 32). The remaining six occurrences of πληρώω in John refer to the fulfillment of Scripture in Jesus’ passion (12:38; 13:18; 15:25; 17:12; 19:24, 36). Three times, Jesus is the one who calls attention to the fulfillment of Scripture (13:18; 15:25; 17:12), and the other three times it is the narrator who does so (12:38-40; 19:24, 36-37). John also draws upon the same word group in his Prologue when he states that Jesus is “full (πλήρης) of grace and truth” (1:14) and “from his fullness (πληρώματος) we have all received, grace upon grace” (1:16).

The stress in John’s use of πληρώω is on bringing something to a state of fullness or completion. The repeated introductory formula ἵνα ... πληρωθῆ (“in order that it may be fulfilled”) stresses the divine purpose and intentionality undergirding and directing this fulfillment. When the subject is Scripture, πληρώω is fundamentally Christological⁷ and eschatological in sense, as Christ’s suffering and death disclose the ultimate fullness and completion of the will of God as revealed in Scripture.

⁴ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 263. Cf. esp. Martin Hengel, ‘The Old Testament in the Fourth Gospel,’ in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel*, ed. Craig A. Evans and William R. Stegner (JSNTSup 104; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 389.

⁵ The ESV renders πληρώω “fulfill” 9x (John 12:38; 13:18; 15:25; 17:12-13; 18:9, 32; 19:24, 36), “fill” or “be full” 4x (12:3; 15:11; 16:6, 24), “complete” 1x (3:29), and “fully come” 1x (7:8).

⁶ Cf. “πληρώω,” BDAG 828 §3.

⁷ For the Christological aspect of Scripture fulfillment, see esp. Andreas Obermann, *Die christologische Erfüllung der Schrift im Johannesevangelium: eine Untersuchung zur johanneischen Hermeneutik anhand der Schriftzitate*, WUNT 2/83 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996), 83, 88-89, 218-364.

4. τελειόω and τελέω in the Fourth Gospel

The verb τελειόω occurs 5x in the Gospel of John, and it typically stresses the completion of an activity.⁸ Three times, Jesus refers to “finishing” (NIV), “completing” (NRSV), or “accomplishing” (ESV), the work(s) of his Father (4:34; 5:36; 17:4). In 17:23, Jesus prays that his disciples “may *be brought to completion* as one.”⁹ Finally, τελειόω occurs in the narrator’s comment in 19:28 (“...in order that the Scripture would be accomplished [τελειωθῆ], Jesus said, ‘I thirst,’” own translation).

The related verb τελέω occurs twice in the Fourth Gospel, in the final scene of Jesus’ death in the exact same perfect passive form (τετέλεσται). Because Jesus knows that “all *was now finished*” (τετέλεσται), he said, “I thirst” (19:28), then upon receiving the sour wine he utters his final word from the cross “It is finished” (τετέλεσται). The cognate noun τέλος occurs in 13:1, “he loved them *to the end* (εἰς τέλος),” which stresses either the quality or the full duration of Jesus’ love.¹⁰ The τέλος word group places a particular stress on the movement toward a temporal end or the accomplishment of an intended goal.¹¹ That intended τέλος to which everything points in John is the crucifixion of the Son of God.

5. The Meaning of “Fulfillment” in the Fourth Gospel

The Fourth Gospel stresses that Jesus – especially in his death – must be understood vis-à-vis the OT witness. Interpreters have explained Johannine “fulfillment” in various ways, including appeal to prediction, peshar exegesis, and typology.¹²

⁸ Cf. “τελειόω,” BDAG 996 §1, glosses listed are *complete, bring to an end, finish, or accomplish*.

⁹ Translation of ὅσιν τετελειωμένοι εἰς ἓν by Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 2 vols., AB 29-29A (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966-1970), 2:771.

¹⁰ The former meaning is suggested by the NIV translation: “He now showed them *the full extent* of his love,” while the latter is suggested by the NET: “He now loved them *to the very end*.”

¹¹ Obermann concludes similarly, “Gegenüber πληρώω ist daher bei τελειόω das Moment des Zieles und endgültigen Höhepunktes betont.” Obermann, *Die christologische Erfüllung der Schrift im Johannesevangelium*, 88.

¹² This is by no means an exhaustive survey of the different views or the variations of the different positions, and due to space limitations, the hermeneutics of Judaism contemporary with the NT writing cannot be addressed here. For a detailed analysis of Jewish “appropriation techniques” and “hermeneutical axioms,” see Douglas J. Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives* (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1983), 25-78.

(1) Appeal to Prediction

Many interpreters have understood John's use of the phrase "that it might be fulfilled" to denote an appeal to the OT as *predictive prophecy*. Justin Martyr exemplifies this approach in his "Dialogue with Trypho," where he contends that Psalm 22 is exclusively predictive and must apply to Jesus alone in his suffering, death, and resurrection.¹³ The categorization of Johannine fulfillment language as primarily predictive prophecy rightly stresses the forward-looking nature of the OT revelation. However, the majority of OT texts said to be "fulfilled" in the Fourth Gospel are not, properly speaking, predictive prophecy at all in their original contexts (with Zechariah 12:10 in John 19:37 the only clear exception). For example, Psalm 69 [68 LXX] – the most frequently cited psalm in the Fourth Gospel – is a lament that includes a reference to the supplicant's own folly and wrongdoing (v. 5), thus making it an unlikely direct Messianic prophecy. Exodus 12:10, 46 LXX (cited in John 19:36) details directives concerning how the Passover lamb is to be handled, which are "fulfilled" by Israel in 12:50.

(2) Peshar Exegesis

A number of scholars¹⁴ have claimed that John's Gospel interprets the Old Testament in a manner akin to Qumran *peshar* exegesis.¹⁵ In *peshar* (Heb. פִּשְׁרָא, "meaning, explanation"), the interpreter's main task is "to extract the desired sense from the biblical citation by indicating the analogy and similarity between the text and the community's situation."¹⁶ According to Menken, the basic conviction that motivates John's approach to the "fulfillment" of the OT is "the conviction that Scripture has a hidden meaning that is revealed in the application of the text to

¹³ See Justin Martyr, "Dialogue with Trypho," chs. 97-106. John 13:18; 19:24, 28, 29, 36 are given as examples of predictive prophecy by Merrill C. Tenney, "The Old Testament and the Fourth Gospel," *BSac* 120 (1963): 300-8.

¹⁴ See M. J. J. Menken, *Old Testament Quotations in the Fourth Gospel: Studies in Textual Form* (Kampen, the Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1996), 207-8; Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 152-57; Donald H. Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 55.

¹⁵ According to Devorah Dimant ("Pesharim, Qumran," *ABD* 5:244-51), *peshar* can describe (1) a Qumran biblical commentary, (2) the formal term which introduces the exposition in the commentary, (3) the genre of the Qumran commentaries, and (4) the particular exegetical method employed at Qumran. The *exegetical method* of *peshar* (4) is the most important point of comparison with the Fourth Gospel's use of the OT.

¹⁶ "Pesharim, Qumran," *ABD* 5:251.

Jesus as God's eschatological envoy."¹⁷ He finds a near analogy to John's usage in the *peshet* exegesis of Qumran, as "the scriptural text concerns in a veiled way the events of the last days, which are occurring in the experiences of the interpreter and his community."¹⁸

The explanation of John's fulfillment language in light of the *peshet* exegesis of Qumran is helpful in so far as it sets John in the context of Jewish interpretation of Scripture and recognizes the eschatological dimension of his use of the OT. However, this approach does not give due weight to the differences between Qumran and John in structure, content, and exegetical method.¹⁹ The Fourth Gospel does not mirror the sort of extended running commentary on an OT passage that is found in the Scrolls, particularly the Habakkuk and Nahum *pesharim*. Further, while eschatological interpretation of the OT characterizes both the *pesharim* and the Fourth Gospel, the "radically Christo-centric hermeneutic sets the evangelist apart from the *pesharim*," and Jesus' teaching of the OT "points *beyond those Scriptures* to a new and fuller revelation of God in himself."²⁰

(3) Typology

G.K. Beale defines typology as "the study of correspondences between earlier and later events, persons, institutions, etc., within the historical framework of biblical revelation, and which from a retrospective viewpoint are perceived to have a prophetic function."²¹ The lament psalms quoted in John 2:17; 15:25; and 19:24 and the reference to Numbers 21:9 in John 3:14 are commonly understood as examples of Johannine typology.²² Goppelt contends that in John

¹⁷Menken, *OT Quotations in the Fourth Gospel*, 205-8.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 208.

¹⁹ For a detailed analysis of the similarities and differences between the use of Scripture in the Fourth Gospel and at Qumran that supports the above analysis, see Stephen E. Witmer, "Approaches to Scripture in the Fourth Gospel and the Qumran *Pesharim*," *NovT* 48, no. 4 (2006): 313-28.

²⁰ *Ibid.*: 327, emphasis original.

²¹ G. K. Beale, *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1994), 394. For a more thorough treatment of typology, see esp. Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982).

²² See e.g. D. A. Carson, "John and the Johannine Epistles," in *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture: Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars*, ed. Barnabas Lindars, D. A. Carson, and H. G. M. Williamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 249-51; Andreas J. Köstenberger, "John," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007),

“we find continuous indications of a comprehensive typological approach in terms of creation typology,” though he argues typology in John “is diminished in extent and in form” when compared to the Synoptics.²³

Hamid-Khani objects to calling Johannine fulfillment “typological” because, in his view, John does not stress the *correspondence* between Jesus and OT realities. Rather, in John Jesus is the present *realization* and embodiment of those past realities.²⁴ Thus, the fittingness of the label “typology” depends very much on the definition given to it, i.e. whether it is merely *analogical*²⁵ or whether it also includes an anticipatory or prophetic dimension (along the lines of Beale’s definition above). John’s approach to the OT is very often typological in this second sense (i.e. analogical and anticipatory).

(4) A Definition of “Fulfillment” in the Fourth Gospel

In my analysis, Johannine “fulfillment” functions as follows: Jesus “fulfills” the Scriptures by revealing their decisive, eschatological meaning in his suffering and death. The OT likewise offers the necessary categories to disclose the true significance of Jesus’ identity as the rejected, crucified Messiah. Johannine “fulfillment” is characterized by a dialectic, mutually interpretive relationship between the OT and Jesus. The unfolding plan of God throughout salvation history provides the essential continuity between Jesus the antitype and the various OT persons, institutions, and events that typify him. The *sui generis* revelation of the glory of God in Christ provides the eschatological reference point for all of God’s revelation in Scripture, as its goal (τέλος) and fullness (πλήρωμα).

416, 37, and passim. The presence of typology in John 3:14 and other texts is acknowledged even by Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *The Prophetic Gospel: A Study of John and the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 238.

²³ Goppelt, *Typos*, 181, 194.

²⁴ He writes, “In typology, the past is read into the present in such that ‘this’ (present) is similar to or resembles ‘that’ (past). ... [John’s] contention is far more radical, whereby in effect he claims in Jesus Christ ‘this’ (present) is the realisation or consummation of ‘that’ (past). The giving of manna, or sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb ... are shadows or ‘sketches’ of the reality of which Jesus is the genuine embodiment, realisation, or consummation.” Saeed Hamid-Khani, *Revelation and Concealment of Christ: A Theological Inquiry into the Elusive Language of the Fourth Gospel*, WUNT 2/120 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 293.

²⁵ Baker argues, “The essence of a type is that it is exemplary” and he sees the increase or progression from type to antitype as mainly a function of the movement from the OT to the NT. David L. Baker, “Typology and the Christian Use of the Old Testament,” in *The Right Doctrine From the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 326.

Thus John's conception of Jesus' "fulfillment" of OT Scripture entails two primary principles or themes: continuity and escalation. *Continuity* means that the events of Jesus' life are inexplicable apart from OT history. Key events such as creation, the giving of the Law at Sinai, the exodus from Egypt, and God's provision of food in the wilderness, and key Jewish institutions such as the temple and yearly feasts, provide the basic salvation-historical framework for Jesus' work in John.²⁶

Escalation means that Jesus is unquestionably *different* and *greater* than the former representatives of God such as Moses and Isaiah, for he not only speaks God's word (λόγος), he *is* the divine Word (λόγος) who "became flesh and dwelt among us" (1:14). As such, his revelatory work is more comprehensive than Moses' Law-giving (1:17-18), and his saving action is more definitive than God's Passover and the exodus from Egypt, since his Passover sacrifice actually accomplishes deliverance from sin (1:29; 8:36).

6. The "Fulfillment" of OT Scripture: Two Examples

In this final section, I will now briefly consider two significant texts that illustrate this dialectical understanding of Johannine "fulfillment." John 12:38-40 is considered first, for it is likely that from this point in the narrative all of John's OT citations and their common introductory formula (ἵνα ... πληρωθῆ) "are thematically related and have as their point of departure the pair of Isaiah quotations in 12:37-40."²⁷ Second, I consider John 15:25, for it is one of the three citations of Psalm 69 in the Fourth Gospel and occurs as a quotation from Jesus.

(a) The fulfillment of Isaiah 6:10 & 53:1 in John 12:38-40

In the concluding verses of John 12, the evangelist offers a profound theological explanation for why, "Although he had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in him" (12:37). They did not believe, according to v. 38, "so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled (ἵνα ... πληρωθῆ): 'Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?'" The citation in John 12:38 is a

²⁶ As Hamid-Khani rightly states, "Salvation history provides the essential framework within which John is able to formulate his christological interpretation of the Scriptures." Hamid-Khani, *Revelation and Concealment of Christ*, 295.

²⁷ Craig A. Evans, "On the Quotation Formulas in the Fourth Gospel," *BZ* 26 (1981): 79-83, esp. 81.

verbatim rendering of Isaiah 53:1 LXX. In the context of Isaiah 53:1, the prophet's²⁸ question closely follows what he has said about "my servant" who will be "high and lifted up" yet be shockingly humiliated (52:13-15).

The conjunction ἵνα in John's introductory formula in 12:38 carries its customary telic force. This suggests that "the prophecy brought about the unbelief,"²⁹ for the inference drawn from the Isaiah 53:1 citation is: "For this reason (διὰ τοῦτο) they were unable to believe" (12:39, own translation). This conclusion about the people's *inability* to believe (οὐκ ἠδύναντο πιστεῦν) is buttressed by an independent citation of Isaiah 6:10.³⁰ John's adaptation of Isaiah 6:10 places primary stress on the people's *blindness* and inability to see Jesus' glory,³¹ though Isaiah and the evangelist have seen and testified to this glory (cf. John 1:14; 12:41; 19:35).

In the Isaianic context, it appears that "the people's rejection of God's servant depicted in Isa. 53 is predicated upon their hardening mentioned in Isa. 6:10."³² In both texts, the prophet introduces one who is "high and lifted up" – "The Lord" [יְיָ; ὁ κύριος] in 6:1, and "my servant" [יְדָבָר; ὁ παῖς μου] in 52:13 – then he follows with a statement of the people's obduracy (6:9-10; 53:1).³³ Additionally, the term "hearing" (ἀκοή) serves as a further link between the LXX of Isaiah 6:9 and 53:1.³⁴ How then are these two Isaiah texts "fulfilled" in John 12:37-40?

It is very likely that Isaiah 6:9-10 is itself an allusion to Deuteronomy 29:4, "But to this day the LORD has not given you a *heart* to understand or *eyes* to see or *ears* to hear." The

²⁸ The first person plural in this text ("our report") is likely a statement of the prophet identifying himself with his people and speaking for them. Cf. John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 381.

²⁹ Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 483. Cf. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 447-48.

³⁰ For discussion of the complicated question of which textual tradition John appeals to in citing Isa 6:10, see Menken, *OT Quotations in the Fourth Gospel*, 99-122; Craig A. Evans, *To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6.9-10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation*, JSOTSup 64 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 129-32.

³¹ The progression in Isaiah 6:10 MT and LXX is the heart, then ears, then eyes, but John puts the eyes first and drops the reference to ears. See Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 449. Cf. Jesus' words in John 9:39, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who *do not see may see*, and those who *see may become blind*."

³² Köstenberger, "John," 477.

³³ See Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 133.

³⁴ See Bruce G. Schuchard, *Scripture within Scripture: The Interrelationship of Form and Function in the Explicit Old Testament Citations in the Gospel of John*, SBLDS 133 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 101.

common language of sensory organs is unmistakable between the two passages.³⁵ In Isaiah's commissioning,³⁶ he is called to make the people's hearts fat, their ears heavy, and their eyes blind by his preaching, much the same effect that Moses' ministry had on the wilderness generation.

A pattern that emerges in each of these "hardening" texts is one of both continuity and escalation. Isaiah is called to preach to his generation, which is broadly characterized by sin, idolatry, and unbelief (cf. Isa 1), while Moses also spoke God's word amidst a "rebellious and stubborn" people (Deut 31:27). The LORD assures Isaiah that his preaching will effectively confirm the people in their hard-hearted unresponsiveness to God and his word, in much the same way that the LORD showed many signs to the Exodus-wilderness generations (Deut 29:2-3) and yet did not give them "a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear" (29:4). There are many verbal connections (noted above) between Isaiah's commission in 6:9-13 and the fourth "servant song" in 52:13-53:12, yet the latter text represents an escalation, as the prophet's sights are fixed on the servant figure who would be high and lifted up by God and also despised and rejected by human beings.

The application of Isaiah 6:10 and 53:1 to the unbelief of Jesus' own people even though they had seen "so many signs" is quite fitting. As Evans writes, "In John's quotation of Isa. 6.10, the imperative of the original Hebrew has been realized: God *has* blinded their eyes and has hardened their heart."³⁷ Jesus' rejection "fulfills" Isaiah 6:9-10 as the culmination of this scriptural pattern of God's judicial hardening of his people. One should not be surprised that the Messiah is rejected by his own people (cf. John 1:11), for throughout the OT narrative the majority of Israel rejected God's word mediated by Moses, Isaiah and others, while only a remnant believed. At the same time, Isaiah 6:10 and 53:1 (cf. Deut 29:4) illustrate for readers

³⁵ Cf. Gregory K. Beale, "Isaiah VI 9-13: A Retributive Taunt Against Idolatry," *VT* 41, no. 3 (1991): 257-78, esp. 75-76.

³⁶ Oswalt rightly distinguishes between the "call" of the prophet (6:1-8) and the "commission" of the prophet (6:9-13). See John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 170-91.

³⁷ Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 130, emphasis original. Schuchard contends that God is *not* the subject of τετύφλωκεν (blinded) and ἐπόρωσεν (hardened), but rather it is Jesus' "report" (ἀκοή) that blinds and hardens the people. Schuchard, *Scripture within Scripture*, 100-1. For a critique of both Schuchard's view and the view that Satan is the agent of blinding and hardening, see Menken, *OT Quotations in the Fourth Gospel*, 109-10.

that “even unbelief has some place in the purpose of God,”³⁸ while his judgment in confirming people in their unbelief is not the final word or ultimate purpose in his dealings with humanity. The purpose for which the Fourth Gospel was written was “that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (20:31 TNIV). However, by appealing to these two Isaianic texts at the close of Jesus’ public ministry, John explains that the “blind” unbelief of Jesus’ own people in the face of his many signs fulfills Scripture and thus carries out God’s purposes, albeit in a surprising way. “The Jews” resist God’s purposes by rejecting Jesus, and yet in this resistance they “unwittingly collaborate with God’s plan while at the same time remaining fully responsible for their actions.”³⁹

(b) The fulfillment of Psalm 69:5 in John 15:25

In John 15:18-25, Jesus prepares his disciples for the hatred and persecution that await them by making it clear that the world will hate them because it has first hated him. Jesus presses this point further as he points out that the world’s hatred of him is in fact hatred of his Father, the one who sent him. The world stands guilty because those in it have seen Jesus’ unique works and yet have hated both him and his Father. Jesus concludes by drawing attention to the deeper purpose underlying the world’s hatred: “in order that the word that is written in their law might be fulfilled (ἵνα πληρωθῆ), ‘They hated me without a cause’” (v. 25, own translation).

It is striking that Jesus refers to the fulfillment of the word from *their law* in v. 25. Clearly the referent of the pronoun “their” (αὐτῶν) is “the Jews,” given Jesus’ previous statements in John (cf. 7:19; 10:34), yet in 15:18-24 Jesus has continually referenced the hatred of “the world.”⁴⁰ The reference to the fulfillment of “the Jews’” law in “the world’s” hatred of Jesus suggests that “the Jews,” while the primary antagonists in Jesus’ death, are representative of the universal opposition of unbelieving humanity to Jesus.⁴¹

³⁸ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 536.

³⁹ Köstenberger, “John,” 481.

⁴⁰ “‘The world’ that has become ‘they’ must be ‘the Jews’ of the earlier narrative,” according to Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, SP 4 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 430.

⁴¹ Kierspel contends that “the Jews” function on a literary level as a synecdoche to “the world” in the Fourth Gospel. He writes, “Thus the reader is guided to perceive the Jewish antagonists in chapters 18-19 as examples which demonstrate *pars pro toto* how the hate of the world (15:18-20) is acted out by failing to comprehend the light of the world (1:5).” Lars Kierspel, *The Jews and the World in the Fourth Gospel: Parallelism, Function, and Context*, WUNT 220 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 131.

The source of the quotation of Scripture in John 15:25 is likely Psalm 68:5 LXX, “More in number than the hairs of my head are those *who hate me without cause* (οἱ μισοῦντές με δωρεάν).”⁴² Psalm 69 [68 LXX] is a lament psalm “of David” (דָּוִד; τῷ Δαυιδ),⁴³ which is alluded to by Jesus in John 19:28 [Psalm 68:22 LXX] and cited by the narrator in 2:17, as the disciples come to understand Jesus’ temple cleansing in light of Psalm 68:10 LXX.

Psalm 69 is originally a prayer for deliverance (v. 2) uttered by a righteous sufferer who bears reproach on account of his relationship with the God of Israel (v. 8). Jesus is certainly not the first “servant” (v. 18) to suffer baseless accusation and persecution, and the psalm’s association with David indicated in the heading recalls both the repeated hostility of Saul toward his anointed successor and also God’s protection of David. The typological correspondence between David and Jesus provides a likely hermeneutical basis for the application of Psalm 69 to Jesus’ imminent passion.⁴⁴ The baseless opposition faced by the LORD’s anointed David and by many other believers throughout history finds its consummate expression in the rejection of Jesus, the Son of God and true “king of Israel” (cf. John 1:49). Clearly there is both correspondence and intensification between the type (David) and antitype (Jesus). Yet in the text “They hated me without cause” there is not only the fulfillment of typology but also the “transformation of OT symbolism on a higher spiritual plane.”⁴⁵ The psalmist prayed for deliverance from those who hated him, while Jesus *accomplishes* deliverance from sin’s slavery and from God’s wrath for those who turn to him in faith (see 3:14-18, 36; 8:36).

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, Johannine fulfillment entails both continuity and escalation. The OT revelation provides the essential context for understanding the significance of Jesus’ identity and

⁴² The identical phrase οἱ μισοῦντές με δωρεάν occurs in Ps 34:19 LXX, and some commentators (e.g. Moloney) prefer this as the source. However, Ps 68:5 LXX is more likely the source given Hays’ criterion of “recurrence,” as Ps 68 [69 MT] is quoted in 2:17 and alluded to in 19:28. See the seven criteria for discerning what Hays calls “intertextual echoes” in Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 29-32. For textual matters on this quotation, see Menken, *OT Quotations in the Fourth Gospel*, 142-43.

⁴³ For the association of the Psalms with the tradition of David, see Margaret Daly-Denton, *David in the Fourth Gospel: The Johannine Reception of the Psalms* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 112.

⁴⁴ See Carson, “John and the Johannine Epistles,” 249.

⁴⁵ Köstenberger, “John,” 495.

work. At the same time, Jesus as the divine incarnate Word reveals the decisive, eschatological meaning of these earlier texts, with the surprising culmination of Scripture coming in his suffering and death. In John 12:38-40, Jesus' rejection represents the culmination of God's hardening of his people throughout history (cf. Deut 29:4; Isa 6:10; 53:1); yet Jesus' own people reject him because of their inability to see in Jesus' signs the eschatological revelation of the Son's glory (cf. John 1:14, 18; 12:41). In John 15:25, the hostility against Jesus links him with David and previous righteous sufferers, yet he is not delivered from his enemies (as the lamenters prayed to be) but is rather the one who brings about eschatological deliverance and gives life to all who believe.