

# Introduction

To what extent Ezekiel rather than another OT source has channeled to John his characteristic concepts would be a profitable area for study.<sup>1</sup>

When studying the Gospel of John from a scholarly perspective, a number of questions concerning his authorial methodology and purpose inevitably arise. For example: Why is the Fourth Gospel so different vis-à-vis the Synoptic Gospels? Why did the author include certain events while excluding others? What agenda drove him to write with such a radically different outlook on Jesus' life? Is it even possible to discern that agenda? Did the fact that he had a particular audience in mind govern his unique presentation? What sources were utilized by the author? And is his use of sources—perhaps unique to him—an explanation for his distinctive presentation?

1. Bruce Vawter, "Ezekiel and John," *CBQ* 26, no. 4 (1964): 450–58 (450). Based upon my research, in the past fifty years only one monograph has been published that has attempted to do a thorough analysis on the Ezekiel//John connections and even then it has a tripartite focus: Ezekiel's influence on John *and* the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Second Temple Period. See Gary T. Manning, *Echoes of a Prophet: The Use of Ezekiel in the Gospel of John and in Literature of the Second Temple Period* (London: T & T Clark, 2004), esp. 100–49. Unfortunately, when dealing with the actual Ezekiel//John parallels, Manning spends most of his time addressing only the obvious connections (i.e., John 10//Ezekiel 34 and John 15// Ezekiel 15). Similarly, the work by Henk Jan de Jonge and Johannes Tromp (*The Book of Ezekiel and Its Influence* [Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2007]), fails to draw any significant connections either. Conversely, the unpublished dissertation of William Glenn Fowler ("The Influence of Ezekiel in the Fourth Gospel: Intertextuality and Interpretation" [PhD diss., Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, 1995]), does offer many more inter-textual insights, which I incorporate throughout this work.

These and a plethora of other questions have propelled the Johannine discussion for decades, if not centuries. Scholars have posited answers to these question, some of which are satisfying while others not so much so. Other scholars have also proposed theories that have held the day for a generation or two only to be replaced by a newer hypothesis when the older hypothesis has run its course.<sup>2</sup> In such tempestuous scholarly waters, it would indeed be presumptuous on my part to think that I could answer all the questions noted above in such a short monograph. Nonetheless, it may be possible to shed some light on the discussion, and perhaps even answer a couple of these nagging queries.

Furthermore, I do not claim to be a Johannine “scholar,” in the strictest sense of the term. To be sure, in many cases I would defer to those whose life’s work has been devoted to such a fundamental Christian text.<sup>3</sup> Yet, sometimes it takes an outside observer to see things that others, in the heat of the debate, fail to notice. It is from this vantage point that I seek to enter the scholarly fray, all the while maintaining a level of humility as I write in the shadow of some of the greatest Johannine scholars known to biblical studies. At the same time I must offer a word of apology for perhaps overlooking a

2. A good example of this is the theory that the book of John was a second-century Greek composition; a position that has changed radically in light of archaeological findings (i.e., the John Rylands Papyrus). In light of this discovery, John is now seen as a late first-century Jewish work. See James H. Charlesworth, “The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gospel according to John,” in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 65–97 esp. 65–68. See a similar assessment by David Wenham, “The Enigma of the Fourth Gospel: Another Look,” in *Understanding, Studying and Reading: New Testament Essays in Honour of John Ashton*, ed. Christopher Rowland and Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, JSNTSup 153 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 102–28 (103). Also, the once-popular “Johannine Community Hypothesis” has now been abandoned even by some of its most ardent supporters. On the latter point, see the discussion by Andreas J. Köstenberger, “The Destruction of the Second Temple and the Composition of the Fourth Gospel,” in *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John*, ed. John Lierman, WUNT 2.219 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 69–108 (72–76).
3. For a good representation of current Johannine scholars and their positions, see Tom Thatcher, ed., *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007).

particular scholar's article or monograph. When researching a topic such as this, one quickly realizes that the research is voluminous—for both Ezekielian and Johannine studies. Therefore, in the discussion that follows I have attempted to offer only a cross-section of scholarship from both camps.

With this caveat, I look for answers to some of the nagging questions noted above in a source every New Testament author would have been familiar with—the Hebrew Bible/LXX.<sup>4</sup> More specifically, I wish to draw upon my previous work on the book of Ezekiel,<sup>5</sup> a biblical book that I believe may hold answers to many of the questions listed above than many realize. When read in light of the Old Testament book of Ezekiel, the Gospel of John takes on new meaning, especially when we begin to discuss *John's use of Ezekiel*.

4. So too Peter M. Phillips, *The Prologue of the Fourth Gospel: A Sequential Reading*, LNTS 294 (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 147; Saeed Hamid-Khani, *Revelation and Concealment of Christ: A Theological Inquiry into the Elusive Language of the Fourth Gospel*, WUNT 120 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 132–39 esp. 133, 136; and D. E. H. Whitely, “Was John Written by a Sadducee?,” *ANRW* II.25.3 (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1985), 2481–2505 (2483).
5. Brian Neil Peterson, *Ezekiel in Context: Ezekiel's Message Understood in Its Historical Setting of Covenant Curses and Ancient Near Eastern Mythological Motifs*, PTMS 182 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012).