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Baptism and the Lord's Supper in the Gospel of John

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Discussions among Lutherans about the sacraments within the Gospel of John are too often confined to the Nicodemus discourse in John 3 and the Bread of Life discourse in John 6. The former is given a place of honor as a proof text for Baptism, while the latter is confidently judged by some not to contain “even one syllable” that testifies to the Lord's Supper, to borrow the pronouncement of Martin Luther.¹ Evangelical commentaries are of little help in their interpretation of John's testimony to the sacraments because of the prevalent understanding that the Spirit works apart from the sacraments; as a result, testimony to the sacraments in John tends to be completely dismissed.² Historical critical commentaries are often of little more help because of the tendency either to disregard the theology of the sacraments in John or to regard it as originating much later in the history of the so-called “Johannine community” and certainly not with the historical Jesus. For example, the renowned source critic Rudolf Bultmann acknowledged three testimonies to Baptism and the Lord's Supper in the Gospel but attributed all three to a later ecclesiastic redactor and even pronounced the Gospel of John to be “anti-sacramental.”³ Roman Catholic commentaries generally give more attention to Baptism and the Lord's Supper because such interpreters are reading John within the context of a sacramental church.⁴ This is especially true of some of the

¹ For example, see Craig R. Koester, “John Six and the Lord's Supper,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 4 (1990): 419–437. He supports the prominence of Baptism in John, but not the Lord's Supper; see 431–433. For his helpful history of interpretation of John 6, see 420–426.

² For example, see Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987).

³ Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 138–140, 300, 324–328, 677–678. The sacramental verses that he attributed to a later redactor are John 3:5; 6:51c–58; and 19:34.

⁴ For example, see Raymond Brown's two-volume commentary, *The Gospel According to John I–XII*, Anchor Bible 29 (New York: Doubleday, 1966), and *The Gospel According to John XIII–XXI*, Anchor Bible 29A (New York: Doubleday, 1970).

early church fathers.⁵ If one is willing to look closely at some of the water that runs through this Gospel, more testimony to Baptism will be found beyond John 3. Furthermore, if one is willing to listen to Jesus and the evangelist in John 6 before using Luther's polemical pronouncement to stop up one's ears, one will hear testimony to the Lord's Supper there and elsewhere in this Gospel.⁶

The scope of this study is broad. It will demonstrate that there is significant testimony to Baptism and the Lord's Supper in John's Gospel because both sacraments are inherently joined to Jesus and the Spirit who testifies of Jesus. The language in this Gospel about abiding in Jesus and he in us, about drinking the living water he offers, or eating his flesh and blood, is inherently about participation in Jesus as he offers himself in the life of the church after the resurrection: through his proclaimed word and his sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

It may be helpful to begin by explaining the approach to the Gospel of John that will characterize this study. As with the other three Gospels, it is important to read the discourses in John not only with awareness to what Jesus was communicating to his original audience, but especially with sensitivity to what the evangelist John was communicating to the church for whom he is writing. Interpreters have noted that the evangelist gives the reader important hermeneutical guidance for understanding his Gospel, including its sacramental teaching, after the account of the cleansing of the temple in chapter two, where he states: "When, therefore, [Jesus] was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken" (John 2:22).⁷ Even as the original hearers of Jesus did not understand some of his teaching about his death and resurrection until

⁵ See evidence in Joel C. Elowsky, ed., *John 1-10*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament IVA (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), and Joel C. Elowsky, ed., *John 11-21*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament IVB (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007).

⁶ There are two major articles by fellow exegetes in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the past few decades that argue for a relationship between interpretation of John 6 and the Lord's Supper; see James W. Voelz, "The Discourse on the Bread of Life in John 6: Is It Eucharistic?" *Concordia Journal* 15 (1989): 29-37, and David P. Scaer, "Once More to John 6," *Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord: Essays in Honor of Glen Zweck on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. Bart Day (Houston: The Zweck Festschrift Committee, 2000), 217-233, reprinted in this issue.

⁷ To name two Lutheran interpreters who emphasize this hermeneutical point in their exegesis of John 6, see Voelz, "The Discourse on the Bread of Life in John 6," 35, and Scaer, "Once More to John 6," in *Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord*, 232; *CTQ* 78 (2014): 62.

after the resurrection (e.g., "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up" in John 2:19), so also they did not understand some of his teaching about the sacraments until after the resurrection and ascension when the sacraments began to play a very significant role in mediating the presence and forgiveness of Jesus.

If one understands Jesus' discourses in this Gospel as sermons that John delivered to the post-Easter church that was baptizing people and celebrating the Lord's Supper weekly, then it is easier to understand how these discourses communicate about the sacraments. Xavier Léon-Dufour offers this guidance to the interpreter: "It is quite obvious that John was familiar with the early Church's sacramental practice of baptism and the Lord's Supper; it is therefore possible that this or that episode or statement of Jesus was deliberately chosen in order to call these sacraments to mind."⁸ Oscar Cullmann, who wrote what remains the most significant book on the sacraments in the Gospel of John, goes further by stating that the historical events in John contain references to "*further facts of salvation with which these once-for-all key events are bound up*."⁹ These "further facts" concern how Jesus would continue to be present and offer himself—his life-giving death—through the Spirit in Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

What is present in John, therefore, are not texts that record the institution of Baptism or the Lord's Supper, but the words and works of Jesus that are to be understood in fuller ways after his resurrection when the church is gathered in worship. Raymond Brown makes this important observation:

What a comparison with the Synoptics does show is that, while John may treat Baptism and the Eucharist, this Gospel does not associate these sacraments with a single, all-important saying of Jesus uttered at the end of his life as part of his departing instructions to his disciples. The Johannine references to these two sacraments, both the more explicit references and those that are symbolic, are scattered in scenes throughout the ministry. This seems to fit in with the Gospel's intention to show how the institutions of the Christian life are rooted in what Jesus said and did in his life.¹⁰

So how does one discern these references to the sacraments in John, especially when one may previously have been taught to ignore this

⁸ Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread: The Witness of the New Testament*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 272.

⁹ Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, trans. A. Stewart Todd and James B. Torrance (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), 56; emphasis original.

¹⁰ Brown, *The Gospel According to John I–XII*, CXIV.

testimony? Francis Moloney outlines four criteria for discerning teaching about the sacraments in John, three of which will be summarized here. First, one should look for language in the text that reflects some form of the sacramental elements or rituals. Second, one should be aware of the use of a particular text in the sacramental practice, literature, and art of the early church. Third, one should look for evidence in the text that speaks of the ongoing presence of Jesus through the Spirit that can be located and seen.¹¹ With these criteria in mind, evidence testifying to Baptism will be examined first and then evidence testifying to the Lord's Supper. After these major discussions, this study will address briefly John's testimony concerning where Baptism and the Lord's Supper have their origin—namely, in the death of Jesus who gave over the life-giving Spirit to his church as water and blood flowed from his pierced side (John 19:30, 34).

I. Baptism

The Baptism of Jesus and Baptizing with the Spirit

Jesus is first seen in the Gospel of John not as a baby in a manger or a man in the Jordan River, but after his baptism when John the Baptist identifies him as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). With this announcement, the evangelist joins Jesus' baptism to the removal of the world's sin that is “finished” with the atoning sacrifice of this Lamb of God in the death of Jesus.¹² Long before water flows from the Lamb's side, his death for sin is foreshadowed as the source of life by means of the Baptist's announcement of the Lamb, repeated a second time for emphasis (John 1:29, 36). The account of Jesus' baptism is then relayed to the hearer through John the Baptist's testimony.

John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove and it abided on him [ἐμεινεν ἐπ' αὐτόν]. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and abiding [μένον], this one is he who

¹¹ Francis J. Moloney, “When Is John Talking about Sacraments?” *Australian Biblical Review* 30 (1982): 10–33. His other criterion is the polemical tone of the text (i.e., it is written not only as a record of an historical event in the life of Jesus, but to respond to a situation in the life of the Johannine church).

¹² See Charles A. Gieschen, “The Death of Jesus in the Gospel of John: Atonement for Sin?” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 72 (2008): 243–261, esp. 254–256; see also Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, 63–66. For a discussion of this Gospel's presentation of sin as a reality that enslaves the world, see Charles A. Gieschen, “Original Sin in the New Testament,” *Concordia Journal* 31 (2005): 359–375, esp. 363–364.

baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and borne witness that this one is the Son of God" (John 1:32–34).¹³

Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, this Gospel does not contain a narrative account of Jesus' baptism, where the heavens open over Jesus as he stands in the Jordan, the Spirit is seen descending as a dove, and the voice of the Father is heard. Each of the Synoptic accounts is unique, but none of them is explicit about who witnessed the baptism of Jesus. The Gospel of John, however, emphatically states that John had been told by special revelation about what he would see and that he did indeed witness the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus with his own eyes. John the Baptist does not mention the voice of the Father; he himself testifies that Jesus is the Son of God (John 1:34). There is much emphasis on the Spirit in John's account. Like the Synoptic accounts, this Gospel contrasts the Baptist baptizing with water and Jesus baptizing "with the Holy Spirit" who descended upon him (John 1:33). John only, however, states that the Spirit *abides* on Jesus (John 1:32).¹⁴ The Greek verb μένω ("I abide or remain") is important here and throughout John's Gospel.¹⁵ Here it indicates that Jesus is the location and source of the Spirit (cf. John 7:39; 15:26; 16:7; 19:30). Where he is present, so is the Spirit.

This account of Jesus' baptism prepares the way for the joining of water with the Spirit in the rest of the Gospel. This joining is seen already in the Nicodemus narrative (John 3:1–21) but also in the narrative that follows about the question put to John the Baptist by his own disciples (John 3:22–30). These disciples were concerned that everyone was going to Jesus and being baptized by his disciples (cf. John 4:1–3). It is noteworthy that John is the only Gospel that emphasizes that the disciples of Jesus engaged in baptizing long before the command to make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:19) and their baptizing of 3,000 souls on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). John the Baptist recognized the ebbing of his baptisms and the flourishing of those administered by Jesus' disciples. He calms the fears of his own disciples with the words: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Why? Baptisms that are associated with Jesus are not only water, but "water and the Spirit" (John 3:5; cf. 1:33). In what immediately follows, the evangelist draws this parallel between the baptism of Jesus and the baptisms being done by his disciples: "He [Jesus] gives the Spirit without measure" (John 3:34; cf. 1 John 4:13). Before one

¹³ This and all subsequent translations are the author's.

¹⁴ As noted in Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, 65.

¹⁵ For this prominent theme, see John 1:38–39; 4:40; 5:38; 6:27; 8:31, 35; 12:46; 14:10, 17, 25; and 15:4–7, 9–10, 16.

hears the Nicodemus narrative, one has already learned from this Gospel that Christian baptisms have their source in Jesus who gives the Spirit without measure, the Spirit who abides with the baptized, even as he abides with Jesus.

Baptism as the Begetting from Above

Those familiar with the Gospel of John know that the Nicodemus narrative (John 3:1–21) is among the most important scriptural testimonies to both the need for “spiritual begetting” due to man’s sinful condition of death (“that which is flesh is flesh”) and “water and Spirit” baptism as the means through which God accomplishes this “begetting from above.”¹⁶ The evangelist John communicates this while never using the words “baptize” or “baptism.” Because Anabaptist churches, which are so prevalent in the United States, abuse this text as supporting their mandate to be “born again” apart from and even before baptism with water, careful attention must be given to this testimony.

In contrast to the pleasantries of Nicodemus, Jesus is direct and blunt. The two present general conditional sentences early in the narrative parallel one another in structure and meaning:

ἐὰν μή τις γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν,
οὐ δύναται ἰδεῖν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ.

“Unless one is begotten from above,
one is not able to see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

ἐὰν μή τις γεννηθῇ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος,
οὐ δύναται εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ.

“Unless one is begotten of water and the Spirit,
one is not able to enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

There are two translation issues here. First, although γεννάω can be translated “born,” this Greek verb signifies the broader *parental* action of conceiving, carrying, birthing, and not the *infant’s* action of coming out of the womb in birth.¹⁷ This broader meaning of the verb, as well as its passive voice, is better expressed in English with the term “begotten.”¹⁸ As

¹⁶ The translation “begetting,” rather than “born,” is intentional and will be explained below.

¹⁷ *A Greek Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd edition, ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 193; hereafter cited as BDAG.

¹⁸ Related to this is John’s use of *μονογενής* as a term to describe the divine mystery

children are not responsible for their own conception, nurturing in the womb, and birth, so also the Christian is not responsible for the miracle of life given in Baptism; it is the result of a *divine* begetting from start to finish. Second, although *ἄνωθεν* can mean either "above" and "again," it is clear from the wider context, where John describes Jesus as the one who is "from above" (John 3:31), that this is the preferred translation here.¹⁹ The "begetting from above" that is necessary *to see* the kingdom of God is the "begetting of water and the Spirit" that is necessary *to enter* the kingdom of God. The language of "above" emphasizes that this begetting is from the divine realm, from God himself (i.e., from the Spirit who descended and remained upon Jesus); it is not from man, his efforts, or this earthly realm. Divine monergism could not be proclaimed more clearly.

This miraculous spiritual begetting from above in Baptism is probably the basis for John's references to Christians as "children," as John 1:13 affirms: "Whoever received him, he gave to them authority to become children of God, to the ones who believe in his name, who are begotten neither of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but begotten of God [ἀλλ' ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν]." This understanding of God as the Father who has spiritually begotten us is also found in John's first epistle: "Everyone begotten of God [πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ] does not make a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he is not able to keep on sinning because he has been begotten of God [ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται] (1 John 3:9). God as Father begetting children through Baptism is probably part of the background for the frequent use of the title "children" when John addresses his fellow Christians as their spiritual father (1 John 2:1, 12, 13, 18, 28; 3:1–2, 7, 9; cf. John 14:33).

The Nicodemus narrative, like the baptism of Jesus, links the begetting with water and the Spirit closely with the source of the life it offers, namely, the death of Jesus: "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up that whoever believes in him has eternal life" (John 3:14).²⁰ Nicodemus did not understand his own sinful condition ("earthly things"), so he did not understand how water and the Spirit would join him to the death of Jesus ("heavenly things").

of the relationship between the Father and the Son from eternity (John 1:14, 18; 3:16); contrary to BDAG, 658, this term is best rendered "only-begotten" rather than "unique, one of a kind."

¹⁹ Contrary to BDAG, 92, which renders *ἄνωθεν* in John 3:31 as "from above," but as "again, anew" in John 3:3.

²⁰ For "lifted up" as a reference to the death of Jesus, see Gieschen, "The Death of Jesus in the Gospel of John," 250–252.

With the resurrection, however, this teaching came into focus (cf. John 2:22).

Baptism as Marriage to the Bridegroom

One of the most prominent descriptions of the church as the bride of Christ is Paul's exposition in Ephesians about Christ who has cleansed his bride in Baptism:

Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order that he sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of water with the word [καθαρίσας τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος ἐν ῥήματι], in order that he present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she be holy and without blemish (Eph 5:25b-27).

The presentation of Baptism as marriage in John, however, is oftentimes overlooked, in spite of its prominence in John 2-4 where there is already much mention given to water and Baptism.²¹ It is John the Baptist who explicitly identifies Jesus as the bridegroom who has the bride coming to him for cleansing in Baptism: "The one who has the bride is the bridegroom" (John 3:29). Before and after this announcement, however, are two accounts that present Jesus as the bridegroom who brings purification to his bride.

The first of these accounts is the Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11). Jesus chooses to show himself as the bridegroom to his bride Israel in the context of a wedding celebration.²² With the abundant wine here, some might assume that if this text is sacramental, it must be eucharistic.²³ What is striking, however, is that the text explicitly mentions "six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding two to three measures" or a total of 120-150 gallons of water after they were filled (John 2:6). These repeated washings were very important for Jews, as emphasized again later in this Gospel through the discussion of the Baptist's disciples with a Jew "concerning purifying" (περὶ καθαρισμοῦ; John 3:25). Because Jesus, who takes away the sin of his bride, is present, there is no

²¹ Exceptions are Peter J. Scaer, "Jesus and the Woman at the Well: Where Mission Meets Worship," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 67 (2003): 3-18, and John Bligh, "Jesus in Samaria," *Heythrop Journal* 3 (1962): 329-346.

²² Contrary to Ridderbos, who surprisingly asserts "there is not a single hint in *this* wedding story that Jesus is acting as host or bridegroom," *The Gospel of John*, 109; emphasis original.

²³ Examples of modern interpreters who support a eucharistic interpretation include Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, 66-71, and Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 272-273.

longer need for the repeated ritual washings.²⁴ But if the water is used for wine at the wedding celebration, then where is baptism here? The implicit message is that purification from sin now comes to the bride through the bridegroom in the one-time washing with water and the Spirit, not through the repeated washings of Jewish purification rites. Cleansing or purification from sin through Jesus is also stressed in 1 John (1:7, 9 and 3:3). Such purification is found in Baptism, which is featured prominently in John 1–4.

The second of these marriage accounts is the narrative of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well (John 4:4–42). One can see Jesus as the bridegroom here because the setting at a well is the scene of some famous bride selections in the early history of Israel, especially Jacob's meeting of Rachel by a well (Gen 29:9–12; cf. the selection of Rebekah by a well in Gen 24:10–66). Here we see Jesus as the bridegroom who in love courts an adulterous and idolatrous woman.²⁵ The bridegroom picques the woman's interest with this contrary-to-fact conditional sentence: "If you knew the gift of God and who is the one saying to you 'Give me to drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water [ῥῶμα ζῶν]" (John 4:10).

Here Jesus uses the imagery of drinking living water as a metaphor for receiving the Spirit and believing in him. The early church did not have a problem applying the image of drinking water to baptism: the woman at the well is frequently used in artistic depictions of Baptism.²⁶ Peter Scaer offers this explanation:

Indeed, the imagery of drinking in the life-giving Spirit at baptism is natural, for it teaches an essential baptismal truth; namely, that not only do the waters of baptism wash away sins and offer second life, but through them, the Spirit enters the Christian and makes His home therein. By teaching about baptism in this way, John may be combating a tendency toward seeing baptism as simply an outward, symbolic ritual.²⁷

²⁴ The one-time washing of Baptism was understood to be the fulfillment of Ezekiel 36:25–27a ("I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you will be clean from all your uncleanness . . . And I will put my Spirit within you").

²⁵ See Scaer, "Jesus and the Woman at the Well," 3–18.

²⁶ See evidence in Robin Jensen, *Living Water: Images, Symbols, and Settings of Early Christian Baptism*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, vol. 105 (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

²⁷ Scaer, "Jesus and the Woman at the Well," 14.

What is this “living water” that Jesus offers?²⁸ There is a clear prophetic hope in Zechariah, grounded in the visionary prophecy expressed in Ezekiel 47:1–12, that one day “living water” would flow from the temple: “On that day living water [LXX: ὕδωρ ζῶν] shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter. And the LORD will become king over all the earth; on that day the LORD will be one and his name one” (Zech 14:8–9).²⁹ The purpose of this water is giving life through purification from sin: “On that day there shall be a fountain opened . . . to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness” (Zech 13:1).

The explicit identification of the “living water” with the Spirit, which sounds like the discussion of Baptism in the Nicodemus narrative, does not occur in the Samaritan woman narrative. It comes later in the Gospel of John in the context of the water libation ceremony at the conclusion of the feast of Tabernacles:

Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me, and the one who believes in me, let him drink.³⁰ As the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his belly will flow rivers of living water’” [ποταμοὶ ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας αὐτοῦ ῥέουσιν ὕδατος ζῶντος].³¹ This he said about the Spirit

²⁸ It is helpful to note that there is both Samaritan and Jewish evidence that identifies Torah as “living water” (e.g. *Memar Marqah* II.1, VI.3; Sirach 24:30–31; and 2 *Baruch* 23:30–31). Jesus’ teaching, therefore, identifying the “living water” as the Spirit whom he gives, appears to have a polemical edge against some Jewish and Samaritan interpretation.

²⁹ See Richard Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 279–280.

³⁰ This translation does not follow the typical punctuation of these sentences, which understands the first part of John 7:38 as introducing a new sentence, rather than functioning as part of the prior sentence in v. 37. By following the typical punctuation, which I deem erroneous, one is led to understand that the Old Testament quotation concerns the one who believes in Jesus rather than Jesus himself. Jesus is speaking here of himself as the source of the living water, which is the Spirit. This is confirmed in the passion narrative when water and blood flow from Jesus’ pierced side (John 19:34). For a discussion of this Christological interpretation, which has a strong history, see Brown, *The Gospel According to John I–XII*, 320–321.

³¹ Although it has proven difficult to identify the exact source of the citation in John 7:38, the language reflects the prophetic hope expressed in Ezekiel 47:1–11 and Zechariah 14:8 about life-giving water flowing from the temple as it once miraculously flowed from the rock during the exodus (Exod 17:6; Ps 75:15–16; cf. Jesus as the new temple in John 2:19). See the discussion in Brown, *The Gospel According to John I–XII*, 321–323. For a very intriguing proposal that the citation here is an adaptation of Isaiah 12:3 (“With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation”), see Joel Marcus, “Rivers of Living Water from Jesus’ Belly (John 7:38),” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117

whom the ones believing in him were to receive, for the Spirit was not yet [given], because Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:37–39).

Jesus had already identified his body as the temple (John 2:19). The “living water” is the Spirit whom Jesus gives over to the church at his death (John 19:30) when water and blood flow from him (John 19:34), through which the Spirit works to bring the life won in Jesus’ death to the world. The miraculous catch of 153 fish in John 21:11 confirms that the living water is flowing out from Jerusalem, bringing life as Ezekiel prophesied.³²

Anyone who argues that Jesus’ offer of living water to the Samaritan woman is about faith in Jesus but not Baptism is drawing a false dichotomy. This text is about receiving Jesus and his saving work through his gift of the Spirit. For the woman at the well, Jesus was standing before her eyes as the source of the Spirit. For John’s church, however, Jesus offered himself in the living water that is none other than the “water and Spirit” of Baptism. In both cases, no matter what the assorted religious or marital history has been, they receive the Spirit and become the purified bride of Christ who confesses: “This is indeed the Savior of the world” (John 4:42).

Baptism as the Giving of Spiritual Sight

Another of the signs of Jesus through which John teaches the church about Baptism is the healing of the blind man in John 9.³³ This account is about much more than physical sight, which Jesus alludes to immediately before the miracle by declaring “As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the World” (John 9:5). The Gospel of John then gives this account:

He spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed [ἐπέχρισεν] the man’s eyes with the mud and said to him, “Go wash [νίψαι] in the Pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). So he went and washed [ἐνίψατο] and came back seeing (John 9:6–7).

Notice that Jesus spits on the ground, makes mud and *anoints* the blind man’s eyes, and then instructs him to *wash* his eyes in the Pool of Siloam.

(1998): 328–330; see also David P. Scaer, *Baptism*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics, vol. 11 (St. Louis: The Luther Academy, 1999), 116–118. Marcus notes that the chanting of Isaiah 12:3 was featured in the water libation ceremony during the Feast of Tabernacles.

³² Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple*, 271–284.

³³ The seven “signs” are typically enumerated as follows: 1) changing water to wine at Cana (2:1–12), 2) healing of the official’s son (4:43–54), 3) healing at Bethesda (5:1–47), 4) feeding of the 5,000 (6:1–15), 5) walking on water (6:16–24), 6) healing of the blind man (9:1–41), and 7) the raising of Lazarus (11:1–54).

The language of anointing is used in connection with Baptism by John in his first epistle: "But you have the anointing [χρῖσμα] by the Holy One . . . the anointing [τὸ χρῖσμα] you received from him abides in you [μένει ἐν ὑμῖν], and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing [τὸ αὐτοῦ χρῖσμα] teaches you about everything . . . abide in him [μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ]" (1 John 2:20, 27).³⁴ More happens in the account of the blind man than the miracle of physical sight; this blind man is also begotten from above "to see the kingdom of God." He progressively gains spiritual sight as this narrative progresses, as seen when he confesses Jesus to be first "the man" (John 9:11), then "a prophet" (9:17), then "a man from God" (9:33), which leads to his expulsion from the synagogue (9:34). After Jesus finds him, the man born blind acknowledges Jesus to be "the Son of Man," confesses him as "Lord," and then worships him (9:38).

John gives us a historical account of both physical and spiritual healing. He knew, however, that Christians who have been washed and anointed with the Holy Spirit in Baptism will see this anointing and washing miracle as also teaching them about the miracle of spiritual sight given in Baptism that leads them to confess and worship Christ, even if this confession results in religious persecution, such as excommunication from their (former) spiritual home.³⁵

Baptism as Receiving and Believing in the Divine Name

One of the most underappreciated testimonies to Baptism in John's Gospel and Epistles is the teaching about receiving and believing in the unique name that Jesus possesses, primarily because most modern interpreters do not listen to these texts like a first-century Jewish Christian would.³⁶ John teaches that the Father and the Son share the same name, which is none other than the unique divine name YHWH (John 5:43; 10:25;

³⁴ See Bruce G. Schuchard, *1–3 John*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012), 270. The "abiding" language in 1 John 2:27 echoes the baptism of Jesus account where the Spirit "abides upon" Jesus (John 1:32–33); for other examples in the Gospel of John, see note 13 above.

³⁵ J. Louis Martyn has promoted the argument that John 9 should be understood as primarily reflecting the history of the late first-century experience of the Johannine community being excommunicated from synagogue worship due to their confession of Christ; see *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, revised and enlarged (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979). Although John is without doubt using this account to address the challenges being experienced by later Christians, it is important to emphasize that it is a historical account of an event from the life of Jesus.

³⁶ See especially Charles A. Gieschen, "The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology," *Vigiliae Christianae* 57 (2003): 115–158, especially 135–141.

14:10–11; 12:28; 17:6, 11, 26; 3 John 7). One example of this is present already in the Prologue: “Whoever received him, he gave to them authority to become children of God, to the ones who *believe in his name*” (John 1:12). The emphasis that this Gospel places on believing in his name (John 1:12, 2:23, and 3:18), asking in his name (e.g., John 14:12–13), and suffering on account of his name (John 15:21), grows out of the understanding that the Divine Name of the Son has been revealed, given, and made known to Christians already in Baptism where it was the powerful word used with water (cf. John 17:6, 26).

John's first epistle also teaches about baptism by mentioning the name or word given in Baptism. 1 John 2:12 states, “I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven *through his name*” (i.e., sins forgiven through the name given in Baptism).³⁷ 1 John 2:14 states, “I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and *the Word of God* remains in you (The “Word of God” here is both the person Jesus and the name given in Baptism). Finally, 1 John 5:13 states, “I write these things to you who believe in *the name of the Son of God* that you know that you have eternal life” (i.e., that you believe Jesus is YHWH because you received that name shared by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in Baptism).

II. The Lord's Supper

The preceding discussion of Baptism in the Gospel of John leads one to conclude that the teaching of Baptism is often subtle, implicit, and scattered widely in the Gospel; it is not direct, explicit, and limited to one major proof text. If this is true with Baptism, one would expect that John would teach about the Lord's Supper in a similar way. And he does. John, who has a lengthy five-chapter farewell narrative, does not include an account of the institution of the Lord's Supper. One should not conclude, however, that this Gospel is void of eucharistic teaching. As will be demonstrated, teaching about the Lord's Supper in John is also often subtle, implicit, and scattered widely in the Gospel.

The Feeding of the 5,000

As in the Synoptic Gospels, this miracle became a very important prophetic action in the Gospel of John that foreshadowed the institution of the Lord's Supper as the means by which Christ would miraculously feed his church after the resurrection. When one looks at early Christian art, it is five loaves and two fish that become a major symbolic portrait for the

³⁷ See Schuchard, 1–3 *John*, 202 and 217, and Scaer, *Baptism*, 143–144.

Eucharist.³⁸ Unlike the Synoptic accounts, John also notes that the miracle took place when “Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand” (John 6:4), one year before the Lord’s Supper was instituted at Passover. John’s account reads as follows:

Jesus, therefore, took the loaves [ἔλαβεν οὖν τοὺς ἄρτους ὁ Ἰησοῦς] and, after he had given thanks [καὶ εὐχαριστήσας], he gave it to the ones who were seated [διέδωκεν τοῖς ἀνακειμένοις], so also the fish, as much as they wanted. And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, that nothing may be lost.” So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten (John 6:11–13).

As with the Synoptic accounts, there is language here that reflects the Verba of the Lord’s Supper, especially the verbs λαμβάνω and εὐχαρίστω, as well as the common element, the bread. Hearers of this account who celebrate the Lord’s Supper each Lord’s Day and know the Verba do not miss the relationship between this meal and theirs. Like the Synoptic accounts, the fragments are treated with respect and gathered into twelve baskets, enough to feed the new Israel. This aspect of the miracle was certainly interpreted as testifying to the Lord’s Supper in our earliest example of a eucharistic prayer, namely, the one found in the *Didache*:

We give you thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge which you have made known to us through Jesus, your servant; to you be the glory forever. Just as this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and then was gathered together and became one, so may your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom; for yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever (9:3–4).³⁹

A detail unique to John is that Jesus himself gives out both the bread and the fish; he is depicted as Israel’s Lord who as Shepherd lays down his sheep on green grass and feeds them, an image that is developed and expanded in his discourse on the Noble Shepherd in John 10.⁴⁰

³⁸ Maurice Hassett, “Early Symbols of the Eucharist,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 5 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05590a.htm> (accessed 8 April 2014).

³⁹ *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations of Their Writings*, 2nd edition, trans. J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, ed. and rev. Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 261.

⁴⁰ See Gieschen, “The Death of Jesus in the Gospel of John,” 256–258.

It is important to be very clear about what is being asserted here. John gives a historical account of the miraculous feeding of 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish; it was not the Eucharist that Jesus fed to this gathering of 5,000. John, however, like the other Gospel writers, uses this miracle to teach the church much about the Lord's Supper as the miraculous meal that our Shepherd continues to serve his sheep. Attributing authorship to a fisherman does not mean these texts are, therefore, without complexity in their intended sense. To see and believe this miracle of feeding is to be given assurance about the even greater miracle of feeding that takes place in the Lord's Supper.

The Bread of Life Discourse: Partaking of the Passover Lamb of God

One of the challenges that comes with the lengthy Bread of Life discourse (John 6:25-65) is that interpreters, including Lutheran pastors, tend to see only two clear-cut conclusions: either the discourse is understood as speaking of a metaphorical eating/drinking of Jesus or a eucharistic eating/drinking of Jesus. It will be argued in what follows that a faithful interpretation of this discourse does not neatly land in one of these mutually exclusive categories.⁴¹ In spite of these disparate interpretations, the basic purpose of this discourse is neither difficult to discern nor unclear. This discourse is about receiving the flesh and blood of Jesus in faith in the ways that he offers himself. The strong incarnational emphasis of the Prologue, which announced that "the Word became flesh," continues here. Because the articles by Scaer and Voelz address many of the concerns raised by Lutheran interpreters, the focus here will be on a few additional interpretive observations.⁴²

As stated in the introduction above, interpreters of this discourse must be aware that they are interpreting not only what the original speaker (i.e., Jesus) was communicating to the original audience (i.e., Jews and disciples of Jesus), but primarily what the author (i.e., John) was communicating to his readers (i.e., post-Easter Christians). Even though the interpreter should focus especially on how John and the hearers of his Gospel would have understood this discourse, what can be said about the original communication? Jesus' words were spoken to encourage those listening to receive him as God in flesh and blood by faith. Even though he spoke these words long before he instituted the Lord's Supper, he certainly knew that

⁴¹ This is a very helpful aspect of the discussion in Voelz, "The Discourse on the Bread of Life in John 6."

⁴² Scaer, "Once More to John 6," and Voelz, "The Discourse on the Bread of Life in John 6."

he would institute the sacrament, just as he knew that he would die and rise again. Jesus, therefore, knew that these words would take on additional significance for Christians who ate his body and drank his blood after the institution of the Lord's Supper. The language of eating flesh and drinking blood that is so vivid in this discourse makes it very probable that Jesus was intentionally alluding to the Lord's Supper, knowing his teaching would take on fuller meaning after this supper was instituted and began to be celebrated regularly.

Even though it is helpful to understand what Jesus was communicating when he spoke these words, the primary purpose of the interpreter is to understand what the author John, under the guidance of the Spirit, was communicating to post-Easter Christians through his recording of this discourse in his Gospel. John wrote these words, which speak of receiving the flesh and blood Jesus by faith, a number of years after the Lord's Supper was instituted. John was well aware that a central means for this receiving of Jesus after his ascension is the Lord's Supper. Talk about partaking of the flesh and blood Jesus by faith does not preclude also sacramental eating since faith is vital for sacramental eating to be of benefit. Léon-Dufour stresses this point: "The relation between faith and sacramental participation is asserted *simultaneously* throughout the text."⁴³ That John intended readers of his Gospel to see a relationship between this discourse and their participation in the Lord's Supper is made even more apparent by observing that he does not teach about the Lord's Supper through an institution account in his passion narrative.

Having in mind the importance of interpreting what John wrote with sensitivity to how it would have been understood by the post-Easter Christians for whom he wrote, it is appropriate to examine briefly the specific elements of this discourse that lend themselves to a eucharistic interpretation. There is a distinct shift in the discourse at John 6:51 from Jesus identifying himself as the bread of life to identifying this bread to be specifically his flesh as the Passover Lamb who will be sacrificed: καὶ ὁ ἄρτος δὲ ὃν ἐγὼ δώσω ἡ σὰρξ μου ἐστὶν ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ζωῆς ("and the bread that I will give in behalf of the life of the world is my flesh"). Many Christians who commune regularly hear an echo here of some of the words of institution, such as in Luke 22:19: Τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ σῶμά μου τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διδόμενον ("This is my body given in behalf of you"). Note the correspondence between not only "flesh" with "body," but the verbs (δώσω and διδόμενον) and preposition (ὑπὲρ). Once again, what is especially important here is not how Jesus' original hearers understood these words,

⁴³ Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 261; emphasis original.

but how these words would have been understood by Christians for whom this Gospel was written.

In this context of Passover, Jesus goes on to speak about eating his flesh and also drinking his blood, vividly echoing eucharistic language and actions.⁴⁴

Amen, Amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh [φάγητε τὴν σάρκα] of the Son of man and drink his blood [πίητε αὐτοῦ τὸ αἷμα], you have no life in you; the one who is eating my flesh [ὁ τρώγων μου τὴν σάρκα] and drinking my blood [πίνων μου τὸ αἷμα] has eternal life. For my flesh [σὰρξ μου] is true food and my blood [τὸ αἷμά μου] is true drink. The one who is eating my flesh [ὁ τρώγων μου τὴν σάρκα] and drinking my blood [πίνων μου τὸ αἷμα] abides [μένει] in me and I in you (John 6:53–56).

As stated above, these words are about receiving the flesh and blood Jesus in faith through the means he himself offers. One of the primary means for receiving Jesus at the time John was writing and Christians were reading his Gospel was by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus in faith at the Lord's Supper. Another important link between this text and the Lord's Supper in the Gospel of John is the participle ὁ τρώγων ("the one who is eating"), used here and also in John's farewell narrative when talking about the last meal Jesus had with his disciples before his arrest and death (John 13:18; cf. Matt 24:38). Many have asserted that τρώγω has the specialized meaning of "bite or chew audibly,"⁴⁵ but recent research by David Hasselbrook indicates that τρώγω was preferred over ἐσθίω by some Greek writers when the present tense is used and signifies the same the general sense of ἐσθίω ("I eat").⁴⁶

The Bread of Life discourse, therefore, is about receiving the flesh and blood Jesus in faith.⁴⁷ It should not be understood as speaking *solely* about the Lord's Supper, but neither should it be interpreted as having *little or nothing* to say about this sacrament. The words of Jesus in John 6 are about

⁴⁴ The "eating" of Jesus is not totally surprising in the Gospel because it is Passover and he has been identified earlier as "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29, 36). The drinking of his blood, however, is shocking.

⁴⁵ E.g., BDAG, 1019.

⁴⁶ David S. Hasselbrook, *Studies in New Testament Lexicography*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, series 2, vol. 303 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 130–144. Hasselbrook offers evidence that ἔφαγον served as the aorist form of τρώγω for some first-century writers such as John.

⁴⁷ Because of this, John 6:53 cannot be understood as requiring participation in the Lord's Supper for salvation (e.g., infant communion in the Eastern Orthodox Church).

"eating and drinking" the flesh and blood Jesus in faith through the means by which he offers himself to us. In the context of John and his readers, therefore, these words certainly address the receiving of Jesus in the Lord's Supper. This discourse is, in fact, the primary source of teaching about the Lord's Supper in John.

But what about Luther's comments on John 6? Some take his statement that John 6 "does not refer to the sacrament in a single syllable" as representative of the Lutheran position on the relationship between John 6 and the Lord's Supper.⁴⁸ Luther made this statement in his argument against Rome's use of John 6 as speaking of the necessity of the Sacrament for salvation in distinction to Luther's emphasis on faith alone; rather than meet the argument, he removed John 6 from discussion.⁴⁹ He also avoided the use of John 6 in addressing Zwingli's eucharistic theology, especially prior to the Marburg Colloquy in 1528, since Zwingli argued that John 6 was eucharistic and used John 6:63 ("the flesh is of no avail") against the doctrine of the real presence and sacramental eating.⁵⁰ While it is important to agree with Luther that the primary focus for teaching about the Lord's Supper should be on the words of institution found in the Synoptic Gospels and 1 Corinthians, there are solid biblical reasons not to follow Luther in taking John 6 off the eucharistic table.⁵¹

Martin Chemnitz was more nuanced in understanding the relationship of John 6 to the Lord's Supper. He demonstrates that Lutherans can and should use John 6 in teaching about the Lord's Supper, as he does in the Formula of Concord:

So there is a twofold eating of the flesh of Christ [in the Lord's Supper]. First, there is a spiritual kind of eating, of which Christ treats above all in John 6 [35–58]. This occurs in no other way than with the

⁴⁸ "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church" (1520), AE 36:19. See also "Lectures on Hebrews," AE 29:10, and "Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, Chapters 6–8," AE 23:117–155.

⁴⁹ Scaer meets this objection; see "Once More to John 6," 218–220; CTQ 78 (2014): 48–50.

⁵⁰ Lowell C. Green, "Philosophical Presuppositions in the Lutheran-Reformed Debate on John 6," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 56 (1992): 17–37.

⁵¹ It should be noted that Luther did use John 6 in his sacramental piety, such as in his Easter hymn, *Christ Lag in Todesbanden*; see Kenneth F. Korby, "The Use of John 6 in Lutheran Sacramental Piety," *Shepherd of the Church: Essays in Honor of the Rev. Dr. Roger D. Pittelko*, ed. Frederic W. Baue et al. (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 2002), 129–144, esp. 139.

Spirit and faith in the proclamation of and meditation on the gospel as well as in the Lord's Supper.⁵²

There is other early evidence that Christians spoke of what is received in the Lord's Supper is the flesh and blood of Christ. The Epistles of John testify that there were some in the Johannine church who had left because they denied the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh.⁵³ John's Gospel appears to be testifying against a docetic Christology that downplays or denies the flesh and blood incarnation of the Son.⁵⁴ It is significant that Ignatius of Antioch, the church father who wrote several letters on the way to his martyrdom in Rome in the early second century, uses the flesh-blood language of John—not the body-blood language of the *verba*—in his descriptions of the Lord's Supper.⁵⁵ Where does Ignatius detect the manifestation of the docetic heresy in the church? He sees it at the Lord's table when individuals refuse to eat the flesh and blood of Jesus.

They abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer because they do not confess the Eucharist to be the-having-suffered-on-account-of-our-sins flesh which in goodness the Father raised up again. The ones who are denying, therefore, the good gift of God die while being contentious. It would be to their benefit to love, in order that they also rise up. It is fitting, therefore, that you should avoid such persons and not speak of them either in private or public (Symneans 6:2–7:2).⁵⁶

Could John have confronted a similar problem: Christians denying the Son of God in the flesh by abstaining from the Lord's Supper and then leaving? In light of 1 John, probably so.

The Vine and the Branches as an Exposition of the Last Supper

Although John does not record the institution of the Lord's Supper, there is no doubt that he is well-aware of the significance of this meal. He calls attention to the meal being set during the Feast of the Passover (13:1), twice refers to it as "supper" (13:2, 4), and twice mentions the morsel of bread given to Judas during the meal (13:26, 30).

⁵² FD SD VII 61; emphasis added. Translation from Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert (eds.), *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 604.

⁵³ See Schuchard, 1–3 *John*, 14–17.

⁵⁴ Udo Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).

⁵⁵ See especially these four texts from the Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch: Trallians 8:2; Romans 7:3; Philadelphians 4; and Symneans 6:2.

⁵⁶ This is my translation from the Greek text in Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 188.

Even though one does not find the eucharistic words in the farewell narrative, one does find a eucharistic homily of sorts. Cullman notes that the discourse on Christ as the Vine is a complement to the earlier discourse on Christ as the Bread. Léon-Dufour astutely observes that it is not far from “the fruit of the vine” in the Synoptic accounts (Matt 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18) to “the vine and the fruit” of John 15:1-11.⁵⁷ Note especially these words of Jesus:

Abide in me [μείνατε ἐν ἐμοί], and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine [ἐὰν μὴ μένῃ ἐν τῇ ἀμπέλῳ], neither can you, unless you abide in me [ἐὰν μὴ ἐν ἐμοὶ μένητε]. I am the vine, you are the branches. The one who abides in me [ὁ μένων ἐν ἐμοί], and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:4-5)

There are those who say that this discourse, like John 6, is only about abiding in Jesus through faith.⁵⁸ Yes, it is about abiding in Jesus through faith. But how does abiding in faith happen? Certainly it happens through hearing Jesus’ word, but also through eating and drinking his Supper. Faith in the person of Jesus and participation in his Supper are not two separate realities; participation in his Supper requires faith in Jesus and nurtures this living relationship. As Léon-Dufour states, “His [John’s] teaching on the sacrament is given not after but through his teaching on faith, while conversely faith in the person of Jesus is not simply the starting point of eucharistic practice but also inspires it at every moment.”⁵⁹

The verbal portrait of the plurality of branches continually “abiding” (μένω) in Jesus as the single life-giving vine also reflects both the communal character of the Lord’s Supper and its repeated celebrations. Cullmann articulates a helpful distinction between the sacraments within John: Baptism is the one-time divine begetting for an individual convert, whereas the Lord’s Supper is the repeatedly celebrated meal eaten by a community of believers.⁶⁰ Baptism is a means by which the Spirit is given and new life in Jesus is begun; the Lord’s Supper is a means by which the Spirit comes again and again to nurture the continual abiding in Jesus.

⁵⁷ Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 274.

⁵⁸ For example, Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John*, 240-242.

⁵⁹ Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 272.

⁶⁰ Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, 119.

The Meal with the Risen Christ on the Shore

Part of the unique post-resurrection witness of John is his record of the miraculous catch followed by a meal that occurred (John 21:1-14). Cullmann offers this advice about understanding such post-resurrection meals: "If, then, the first appearances of the risen Christ took place during meals, we must take into consideration, much more than is generally done, the fact that *the first eucharistic feasts of the community look back to the Easter meals*, in which the Messianic Meal promised by Jesus at the Last Supper was already partly anticipated."⁶¹ Note the characteristics this account shares with the Feeding of the 5,000:

When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish lying on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them; and although there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them [λαμβάνει τὸν ἄρτον καὶ δίδωσιν αὐτοῖς], and so with the fish (John 21:9-13).

As with the Feeding of the 5,000, Jesus takes (λαμβάνει) the bread and fish and gives (δίδωσιν) these to them, verbs that are found in all four institution accounts of the Lord's Supper. These were part of the miraculous catch of 153 fish, an abundance that shows the living waters flowing from Jesus' death are indeed fulfilling Ezekiel's prophecy about the river from Jerusalem producing many fish; here is a literal fulfillment that foreshadows what the Spirit will accomplish spiritually in Baptism (Ezek 47:10).⁶² As with the meal at Emmaus in Luke 24, the disciples recognize Jesus as Lord in this meal context. Is this the Eucharist? No, but as with the feeding of the 5,000, Christians are to see how this meal teaches them about the ongoing presence of the risen Lord, who now prepares and serves his church with the miraculous food of his flesh and blood.

III. Blood and Water at the Death of Jesus

There is no text in this Gospel more important for understanding John's testimony to Baptism and the Lord's Supper than his narration of the death of Jesus.

He bowed his head and gave over the Spirit [παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα] (John 19:30).

⁶¹ Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, 15; emphasis original.

⁶² Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple*, 271-284.

But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out [ἐξῆλθεν εὐθὺς αἷμα καὶ ὕδωρ]. He who saw it has borne witness and his witness is true, and that one knows that he tells the truth, in order that you believe (John 19:34–35).

With these words, John presents the sacraments as mysteriously “instituted” in the death of Jesus. John wants the hearer to see the significance of the blood and water coming from his side, so he waves the flag that this is his own eye-witness account and later quotes Zechariah (“They will look upon him whom they pierced”; John 19:37; cf. Zech 12:10). Here Jesus gives over the Spirit in the tangible forms of water and blood that flow from his side. The hearer of this account will remember that Jesus had promised this giving of the Spirit with the words “out of his belly will flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38–39). Jesus is here both the unblemished Lamb of God who is sacrificed and the temple where the sacrifice has taken place. Now the river that Ezekiel and Zechariah saw coming from the eschatological temple begins to flow from his side (Ezek 47:1–11; Zech 14:8). Jesus’ atoning death is the source of life—depicted as water and blood—that is delivered by the Spirit in the water of Baptism and blood of the Lord’s Supper.⁶³ What is taking place here is expressed profoundly by E. C. Hoskyns:

He [the Beloved Disciple] perceived that purification (water) and new life (blood) flow from the completed sacrifice of the Lamb of God, and he bears witness to the truth and efficacy of the Gospel, in order that those who read his gospel may believe that Jesus is the Saviour of the world, and that they are cleansed and enlivened by His Blood (1 John i. 7). And since, moreover, the benefits of the Sacrifice on Calvary are appropriated by the faithful Christian when he is reborn from above of water and the Spirit (iii. 3–5), and when he drinks of the blood of the Son of Man (vi. 53–6), the death of the Christ and the effusion of the Spirit (v. 30) and of the blood and the water, are declared to be the true institution of Christian Baptism and the Eucharist. The sacraments are not to the author of the gospels two independent rites, but means by which each faithful Christian is enabled to stand on Calvary with the Beloved Disciple and receive that purification and new life which is the life of the Spirit.⁶⁴

The water of Baptism and the blood of the Lord’s Supper not only impart the Spirit who unites us with Jesus, they impart the life won for the world through his atoning death. Why are there not narrations of Baptism

⁶³ Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, 115.

⁶⁴ Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, 2nd ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), 533.

and the Lord's Supper being instituted in this Gospel, especially from an eye-witness such as John? It may be that he does not want the sacraments to take on a life of their own, separate from Jesus and his death. Moloney notes that John 19:34-35 "presupposes the readers' knowledge and experience of the 'water' of Baptism (cf. 3:5) and the 'blood' of Eucharist (cf. 6:53, 54, 55-56), and links them with the cross."⁶⁵ The Spirit active in Baptism and the Lord's Supper could not have been depicted in any closer union with the incarnate Son and his death that is the source of life.

If one thinks this is over-reading John 19:34-35, listen to what John himself says about "blood and water" in his first epistle: "He is the one who came through water and blood, Jesus Christ, not in water only but in water and blood. And the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is truth. There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three are one" (1 John 5:6-8). Here John interprets his own passion narrative through a wonderful integration of Christology, Pneumatology, and Sacramentology. The Spirit testifies through the sacraments to the true identity of Jesus as God in flesh for the salvation of the world.⁶⁶

IV. Conclusion

Raymond Brown draws this insightful conclusion about John's testimony to Baptism and the Lord's Supper: "He could not interpolate sacramental theology into the Gospel story by anachronistic and extraneous additions, but he could show the sacramental undertones of the words and works of Jesus that were already part of the Gospel tradition."⁶⁷ This study has highlighted these "sacramental undertones of the words and works of Jesus" in this Gospel in order to demonstrate that there is significant testimony to Baptism and the Lord's Supper, far beyond John 3 and John 6, because both sacraments are inherently joined to Jesus and the Spirit who testifies of Jesus. What is present in John, therefore, are not texts that record the institution of Baptism or the Lord's Supper, but the words and works of Jesus that are to be understood in fuller ways after his resurrection when the church is gathered in worship, where Baptism and the Lord's Supper are central to how Jesus continues to abide in us and we in him, bringing us the life given in his death.

⁶⁵ Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 505-506.

⁶⁶ See especially Schuchard, *1-3 John*, 535-537.

⁶⁷ Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, CXIV.