

“Afterwards, Jesus found him in the Temple” Looking for Implicit Motifs in John 5:14a

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Abstract. — *As a rule, exegetes consider John 5:14a merely as the geographical and chronological setting for Jesus’ admonition to the previously lame man in 5:14b. However, by combining the methodological approaches of narrative criticism and history of tradition, some implicit narrative and theological motifs are revealed. These relate to the emotional state and way of thinking of the healed man as a narrative character, as well as to the theological meaning of his encounter with Jesus in the Temple-area. Mutatis mutandis, by noticing these implicit motifs, the implied readers can potentially understand this encounter as being in line with the Old Testament Temple-epiphanies.*

Many exegetes comment extensively on Jesus’ admonition to the healed man in John 5:14b: “See, you have been made well. Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you.” Indeed, this statement bears a prominent theological significance, as it seems to implicitly connect health problems with sin, even underlining the human beings’ personal responsibility for committing sins and for bearing the consequences of their sinful actions.¹

On the contrary, it would seem that almost none of these exegetes pay much attention to the first part of the verse (5:14a): “Afterwards, Jesus found him in the Temple.” Usually, the interpretation of 5:14a is

1. Cf. for instance Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, Anchor Bible 29 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 1:208; Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, New Century Bible (London: Oliphants, 1972), 217; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1991), 246; John Christopher Thomas, “‘Stop Sinning lest Something Worse Come upon You’: The Man at the Pool in John 5,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 59 (1995): 16-17; Ben Witherington III, *John’s Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 138; Ulrich Wilckens, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, Neues Testament Deutsch 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 114; cf. however also Jesus’ differentiated response to this notion in John 9:2-3; see the combined comments on both 5:14b and 9:2-3 in Carson, *John*, 281.

limited to commenting on the expressions *μετὰ ταῦτα* as the temporal frame, and *ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ* as the spatial frame for Jesus' theologically significant statement of 5:14b. According to this point of view, the importance of 5:14a is limited to the role of an insignificant *per se* narrative background information about Jesus' significant and enigmatic statement in 5:14b.²

However, in a profoundly theological text such as the Gospel of John, the question arises whether even such minor narrative details as the ones provided in 5:14a contain important theological messages as well. Attempting to do justice to the significance of 5:14a, we will deal with its above-mentioned individual elements in the light of (a) its immediate narrative context, namely the story of the healing of the lame man, (b) the gospel narrative as a whole, and (c) relevant Old Testament motifs. In doing that, we will address the following questions: (a) What is the situation of the now healed man at this point of the narrative? (b) What is the meaning of Jesus' initiative to meet him again? (c) What is the equivalence between the relationship of God to the Temple according to the Old Testament witness and the relationship of Jesus to the Temple in John's Gospel? (d) Finally, based on the above, what is the true character of Jesus' meeting with the healed man?

Our method of approaching John 5:14a will mainly be the narrative-critical one. We will make particular use of the notions of implied author and implied readers, as well as of elements from the characterization of the lame man.³ Typically, the implied author and the implied readers are considered as reconstructions of the exegete based on the text's data.⁴ Therefore, there is dissonance among Johannine scholars concerning the identity of the Fourth Gospel's implied author, and more so of its implied readers. However, this diversity can also be an advantage.

2. Cf. for instance Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium*, Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 4 (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 2:124; Ernst Haenchen, *Das Johannesevangelium: Ein Kommentar* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980), 271; Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina 4 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 169, 173; J. Ramsey Michaels, "The Invalid at the Pool: The Man Who Merely Got Well," in *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Approaches to Seventy Figures in John*, ed. Steven A. Hunt, D. Francois Tolmie, and Ruben Zimmermann, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 314 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 341-342.

3. On narrative criticism and its application on New Testament texts see James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005).

4. Cf. the critical review of the category of the implied reader in biblical exegesis by Jörg Frey, "Der implizite Leser und die biblischen Texte," *Theologische Beiträge* 23 (1992): 274-277.

The individual exegete can namely choose his or her own implied author and readership, provided of course that this choice emerges from within the text.

Our chosen category of implied author and readers are well acquainted with Old Testament traditions, as the implied author makes use of a wide variety of Old Testament texts not only in a clear but also often in an allusive way. This fact presupposes good knowledge of the Old Testament texts on the part of his implied readers as well. In our opinion, such an understanding of implied author and readers opens up some interesting new exegetical possibilities. Although the historical author and readers may not have thought of all these possibilities in the first place, our implied author and readers certainly could have.⁵ In the case of John 5:14a, not all links and conclusions are evident in the text. However, narrative criticism and especially characterization can help us fill in the gaps and better understand characters that we know very little of, such as the lame man of chapter 5. Furthermore, narrative criticism raises questions that the diachronic approach would typically not be interested in, such as: why does this man go to the Temple? What does he have in mind? How does he feel? How does he develop as a character if at all?

In our approach, we will also attempt to combine narrative criticism with tradition-history. Thus, after exploring the intra-textual links in the narrative itself, we will turn our attention to the inter-textual links between the narrative and other narratives stemming from the main tradition-current of the Fourth Gospel, namely the Old Testament. Concretely, we assume that our implied readers are familiar with Temple traditions, epiphany traditions, and prophetic traditions. If nowadays we can make associations between such texts and John's Gospel, then our implied readers should have been able to make such associations too, perhaps even more so.

Of course, we have here to speak in terms of plausibility and not of certainty. While historic-critical scholars used to be very confident of their reconstructions, the method at hand cannot possibly raise such a

5. Although the implied readers are our own construction, putting them into historical perspective relates them with possible historical readers of the text. Since, however, we do not know much about the actual readership of the Fourth Gospel, such historical readers would also be the outcome of a reconstruction attempt. This is a point at which, on the one hand, the implied readers within the historical context of the Fourth Gospel and, on the other hand, the probable historical readers approach each other to a great extent; cf. for such an open reconstruction of the Fourth Gospel's historical readers Edward W. Klink III, *The Sheep of the Fold: The Audience and Origin of the Gospel of John*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 141 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 249-256.

claim. However, we would suggest that the present analysis is indeed plausible and that the proposed associations and way of reading the text could be shared by at least specific categories of implied readers.

I. The Healed Man's Inner State

In an attempt to comprehend the state of the healed man in 5:14 as a narrative character,⁶ it would seem that he is in an inner state of ambivalence. He has evidently just left the pool of Bethesda, near which he had probably spent a considerable amount of the 38 years of his illness (cf. 5:5). More importantly, after being bound to his bed for so long, the man is now able to stand up, lift his bed and walk (5:9), thus symbolically indicating that his bed does not anymore define his life. This radical change happened in an unexpected way when, after a short dialogue with a passing stranger (5:6-7), the latter commanded him to lift his bed and to walk away (5:8). Even if he had witnessed such a miracle happening to someone else rather than to himself, such a unique event would have certainly been one of the most defining experiences of his life. This is now much more the case, since he is the one to receive this unprecedented miraculous cure.⁷

Consequently, the change of state experienced by the formerly lame man is indeed dramatic. Based on the Jewish perception of disease, a patient so long and so heavily ill is practically a living dead person,⁸

6. See the relevant analysis in Michaels, "Invalid," 341-342.

7. The blind man's sentence in 9:32 also applies to the healing of the lame man in chapter 5; cf. on the close relationship of the two narratives J. W. Holleran, "Seeing the Light: A Narrative Reading of John 9," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 69 (1993): 354-382; R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1983), 139-140. On the heightened character of the Johannine miracles compared to the synoptic ones as a whole, see for instance Jürgen Becker, "Wunder und Christologie: Zum literarkritischen und christologischen Problem der Wunder im Johannesevangelium," *New Testament Studies* 16 (1970): 130-148, 137.

8. Cf. Haenchen, *Johannesevangelium*, 270; Udo Schnelle, *Antidoketische Christologie im Johannesevangelium: Eine Untersuchung zur Stellung des 4. Evangeliums in der johanneischen Schule*, *Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments* 144 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 113; George Raymond Beasley-Murray, *John*, *Word Biblical Commentary* 36 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1987), 74; Carson, *John*, 243; Christian Welck, *Erzählte Zeichen: Die Wundergeschichten des Johannesevangeliums literarisch untersucht: Mit einem Ausblick auf Joh 21*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 2.69 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 154; Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 297.

someone who has been abandoned by God and, thus, devoid of his grace and his divine life-giving acts, probably due to a heavy sin committed either by himself or even by his parents (cf. John 9:2-3).⁹ In the socio-historical context of our text, the idea that God has abandoned a human being leads unavoidably to social and religious marginalization and, therefore, even to the lack of social interaction with other people, as expressed by the lame man's statement ἄνθρωπον οὐκ ἔχω (5:7).¹⁰ Indeed, the implied readers should assume that whatever expectations for his healing the lame man might have had, they must have been minimized after so many years of waiting in vain for a cure.¹¹

The above observations demonstrate the dramatic change that occurs in the lame man's life. This change includes the realization on his part that he can now go wherever he desires without needing someone else to transport him; that he can gain his living by working, and thus stop begging; that he can be fully reintegrated into the Jewish social and religious community by exercising his religious duties; that his world is not anymore limited to the five galleries of the pool of Bethesda (cf. 5:2). The implied readers should, therefore, assume that the lame man experiences here quite a shock as a result of his miraculous cure.

Furthermore, the implied readers may assume that apart from this existential shock some critical questions should necessarily arise in the mind of the healed man that have no easy answers. The text does not express such questions clearly, but it implies them when followed closely.

9. Cf. Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, vol. 2, *Das Evangelium nach Markus, Lukas und Johannes und die Apostelgeschichte: erläutert aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich: Beck, 1924), 527-529. On the parallelism between the narratives of John 5:1-18 and 9 see among others Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 201956), 178-179; Wilhelm Wilkens, *Zeichen und Werke: Ein Beitrag zur Theologie des vierten Evangeliums in Erzählungs- und Redestoff*, Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments 55 (Zurich: Zwingli, 1969), 39.

10. The alienation of the lame man from his social environment and the religious contempt he apparently faces are evident in the parallel story of the healing of the man born blind. In that story, the blind man is not only faced with social dissociation by his neighbours (9:8-12) but even by his own parents who have practically no relationship with him before or after his healing (9:18-23). On the other hand, the Pharisees belittle him (9:28) and finally expel him from the synagogue as a sinner who pretends to be a teacher (9:34). Such a complete alienation matches the logic of 5:1-18, because had there been someone who really cared about the lame man, he would have tried to help him – with or without success – to enter the pool at the right time to be healed, cf. Charles Kingsley Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (London: SPCK, 21978), 254.

11. Cf. Haenchen, *Johannesevangelium*, 260; Welck, *Zeichen*, 148; Wilkens, *Evangelium*, 114.

Such an understanding should necessarily include a comparison with the parallel story of the healing of the man born blind in ch. 9. Considering all of the above, a fundamental question would be the one about the identity of the man who had cured him by only his word.¹² Just like any Jew in his shoes, the previously lame man would have to realize that his healer cannot but be a man of God, as only by God's power could he have performed such a healing (cf. 3:2; 9:31-33). Probably, the implied readers would expect the healed man to try to find his healer and properly thank him or perhaps even to connect with him and receive his blessing in view of the new phase of his life. This question, however, is followed by further quite overwhelming questions, which arise during his short dialogue with the Jews: How can a man sent by God possibly heal him and at the same time violate the Sabbath-rest by commanding him to transfer his bed?¹³ Where is this man now and why did he disappear right after the healing (5:13) before the lame man himself came to realize what exactly had happened and thank him accordingly? Is his healer indeed sinful, as claimed by the Jews (5:10,12,16; cf. 9:24), or righteous, as can be deduced by the unprecedented miracle he had performed (cf. 9:31-33)?

Subsequently, it is entirely possible that the implied author provides his implied readers with an indirect message as to the inner situation of the narrative character of the healed man. The implied readers are supposed to be familiar with the profound religious and social consequences of such a long disease. It should, therefore, be clear to them that after his cure the former paralytic should be understood as being in a situation of intense doubt and even self-questioning, which would mean that he is in urgent need for spiritual orientation and guidance, so as to be able to be reintegrated into the social and religious life of his people.

It is, therefore, no surprise that the healed man eventually comes to the Temple, which was not situated far from the pool of Bethesda.¹⁴

12. It is certainly implied that the question of the Jews about the identity of the Sabbath breaker (5:13) is also a question that will even bother or is perhaps already bothering the lame man's narrative character who nevertheless focuses on his healing and not on the supposed breaking of the Sabbath (cf. 5:15).

13. This question is implied in the narrative's plot and is clearly expressed in the parallel narrative about the healing of the man born blind who makes the following statement during his interrogation by the Jewish authorities: *εἰ ἄμαρτωλός ἐστιν οὐκ οἶδα* (9:25).

14. Cf. Urban C. von Wahlde, "The Pool of Siloam: The Importance of the New Discoveries for Our Understanding of Ritual Immersion in Late Second Temple Judaism and the Gospel of John," in *John, Jesus, and History*, vol. 2, *Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. Paul N. Anderson, Felix Just, and Tom Thatcher, Early Christianity and Its Literature 2 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 155-173.

The implied readers could assume that the healed man does not just want to thank God for his unexpected cure,¹⁵ but also that he expects to find answers to the questions that bother him; mainly the identity of his benefactor, as well as the relationship between Torah-observance and his carrying around his bed on a Sabbath.¹⁶ It would seem that he has nowhere else to turn to for answers due, on the one hand, to his long-term social marginalization and, on the other hand, to the prejudice of the “Jews” who tend to focus on the violation of the Sabbath-rest while at the same time ignoring the reality of the miraculous cure.

Based on the above observations, both the healed man’s emotional situation and the reasons that lead him to the Temple, where Jesus finds him, should be clear to the gospel’s implied readers.

II. Jesus’ Initiative to Meet the Healed Man

It is of crucial importance that Jesus is the one who finds the cured man, although according to the previous analysis, it is the latter who should have tried to find Jesus. Jesus is thus presented as taking the initiative, just as it happens throughout the Johannine narrative.¹⁷

In the Fourth Gospel, no human being can impose upon Jesus or force him to do anything against his own will. When for instance at the wedding of Cana Jesus’ mother asks him indirectly to provide a solution to the problem of the lack of wine (2:3), Jesus answers: “What is between me and you, woman? My hour has not yet come” (2:4), thus signifying that he will act exclusively according to his own will and

15. According to Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 307 and Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:643, among others, the apparent reason for the lame man’s going to the Temple is to thank God for his healing.

16. At this point, the implied readers can well assume that the healed man is a devout Jew and, therefore, realizes the contradiction between his healing being from God and his carrying his bed on a Sabbath (cf. 9:16,24). See also Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel according to John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 238, who speaks of the lame man’s “receptivity toward God.”

17. Here, a further miraculous element may even be implied since Jesus is able to easily find the healed man among the thousands of the Temple’s visitors during the unnamed Jewish festival of 5:1, cf. Colin G. Kruse, *The Gospel according to John: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 149; cf. also Witherington, *John’s Wisdom*, 138; Udo Schnelle, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament 4 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2016), 142.

plan.¹⁸ Later on, when the Jews ask him to perform a sign in order to legitimize his cleansing of the Temple (2:18), Jesus does not succumb to their demand (2:19; cf. 6:30-33). When his brothers urge him to go to Jerusalem on the occasion of the Tabernacles festival in order to “manifest himself to the world” (7:4), Jesus does not follow their “advice,” but travels secretly to Jerusalem only later (7:10) because he wants to do so (7:14). Even when his friend Lazarus is about to die, Jesus remains where he is for another two days (11:6), thus deciding by himself the exact time to reach Bethany (11:7). As a rule, whenever Jesus intends to go somewhere, nothing can stand in his way. He can even walk on the stormy waves of the Sea of Galilee in order to meet his disciples who are in danger (6:19), knowing of course where to find them despite the darkness of night (6:17).

The Johannine Jesus finds whomever he wants and can only be found by whomever and whenever he wishes. When after the multiplication of the loaves the crowd attempts to grab him and proclaim him a king, he leaves without anyone being able to prevent him from doing so or to follow him (6:15). When the crowd attempts to capture and kill him charging him with blasphemy, no one can raise his hands against him (7:30,44; 8:20), while in other cases Jesus slips away unnoticed by the threatening crowd (8:59; 10:39). Even in the scene of his arrest, Jesus exits the garden by his own will to meet the armed guard that is coming to arrest him (18:4), and actively delivers himself to them (18:8,11).¹⁹

All the above examples are in line with Johannine Christology as a whole. Being the incarnate divine Logos (1:1,14) Jesus is always dominant, even when crucified, and nothing is hidden from him.²⁰ Bearing

18. Cf. Morris, *John*, 181; Otto Bächli, “Was habe ich mit Dir zu schaffen? Eine formelhafte Frage im A.T. und N.T.,” *Theologische Zeitschrift* 33 (1977): 78-80.

19. Cf. Christos Karakolis, “Across the Kidron Brook, Where There Was a Garden’: Two Old Testament Allusions and the Theme of the Heavenly King in the Johannine Passion Narrative,” in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. Gilbert Van Belle, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 200 (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 751-760.

20. Cf. Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium*, Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 4 (Freiburg: Herder, 1965), 1:334; Wilkens, *Zeichen*, 46-47; Becker, *Wunder*, 138; Gerd Theissen, *Urchristliche Wundergeschichten: Ein Beitrag zur formgeschichtlichen Erforschung der synoptischen Evangelien*, Studien zum Neuen Testament 8 (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1974), 225; Gilbert Van Belle, *The Signs Source in the Fourth Gospel: Historical Survey and Critical Evaluation of the Semeia Hypothesis*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 116 (Leuven: Peeters, 1994), 392.

this in mind, it becomes evident that Jesus' meeting with the healed man in 5:14a is not limited to just providing the narrative frame for his theologically significant statement of 5:14b. Even as a narrative frame, 5:14a can also have a theological significance in its own right: Jesus intends to meet the man he healed and talk to him. For this very reason and knowing exactly where to find him, he enters the Temple-area and indeed meets him. The initiative belongs exclusively to Jesus, who wants, knows and acts so as to find the healed man. This implied message should be clear enough to the implied readers.

III. The Temple as the Place of the Meeting

At this point, the question arises as to the meaning of the place, in which Jesus meets the healed man: Why does this meeting take place in the Temple area and not anywhere else? Addressing this question requires a brief reference to the theological significance of the Temple in the Old Testament, as well as in John's Gospel.

According to the witness of the Old Testament, since its construction, the Jerusalem Temple has been the central place of the manifestation of God's glory, also in the form of divine epiphanies. This perception is relevant to God's presence in and around the tabernacle, and especially the ark of the covenant.²¹ Since the construction of the Temple, God is presented as residing permanently in it having revealed his presence to Solomon during the inauguration ceremony of the Temple (1 Kings 8:3-11). The Temple is God's earthly residence while at the same time his throne remains in heaven. Thus, while remaining transcendent, God maintains a real presence in the Temple.²²

In one of Ezekiel's visions, God's glory leaves the Temple (10:18f; 11:22-23) when the Jews worship false gods (8:6-18). In another vision, Ezekiel sees God returning to the new Temple of Jerusalem and the cloud of his divine glory filling his "house" again (43:5). God promises thereupon that he will never again abandon the "place of the throne" and the "place of the track of his feet" (43:7). Both the building and the new

21. Cf. Ex 33:7-11; see on God's real presence in the tabernacle: Ex 25:22; 40:33-38; Lev 4:18; 9:32; 16:2; Num 7:89; 9:15-23; 10:11-12:5; 14:10; 16:19; 17:7; Deut 31:14-15; 2 Sam 6:2. Keener, *John*, 643, recognizes the theological significance of the Temple at this point, without however going into any further detail.

22. Cf. 1 Kings 22:19; 2 Chr 18:18; 20:6; 36:23; 1 Esr 4:46,58; 2 Esr 1:2; Tob 1:18; 13:9,13; Ps 11:4; 103:19; 113:4; Prov 8:27; SapSol 9:10; Is 14:13; 63:15; 66:1; Dan 4:37.

worship of the newly constructed Temple shall be perfect (40:6–42:20), according to God’s promise of new hearts of flesh instead of stone (11:19–20; 36:25–26), as well as of an eternal covenant of salvation with Israel (16:60; 34:25; 37:26).²³

Finally, according to Solomon’s prayer during the inauguration ceremony (1 Kings 8:22–53a), the Temple is the primary place of addressing God, as well as of the revelation of God and his divine will. The Israelites will resort to the Temple not only to worship the Lord, but also to let him know about their problems and difficulties, as well as to ask him for his salvific intervention.²⁴ The righteous people hope that God will be more eager to listen to them in the Temple,²⁵ without of course being obliged to satisfy their requests. However, in case God wants to reveal himself and his will to the righteous, the Temple is the place par excellence to do so.²⁶

The Fourth Evangelist indeed considers the Temple as God’s house, according to Jesus’ statement in 2:16: “Do not transform the house of my Father into a house of trade.” Moreover, at this point, Jesus claims a special and unique relationship of sonship to God, which justifies his authority to carry out the cleansing of the Temple (cf. 2:18). In his subsequent dialogue with the Jews, Jesus refers to the temple of his body (2:18). Since his incarnation, he has been God’s new temple.²⁷ God’s earthly residence is no longer restricted to the Temple of Jerusalem. God dwells within Jesus Christ.

As is evident by the Johannine narrative of the cleansing of the Temple, Jewish worship is presented as requiring radical renewal. At the time of the composition of the Fourth Gospel, the Temple of Jerusalem no longer existed. The implied author refers to a new worship that is not associated with the Temple (4:20–24). God’s Temple is now Jesus Christ himself who is present amongst his “own” when they are united through love (17:20–24).²⁸ Moreover, the name of God, which according to Old

23. On the Temple theology of Ezekiel see Eric W. Baker, *The Eschatological Role of the Jerusalem Temple: An Examination of Jewish Writings Dating from 586 BCE to 70 CE* (Hamburg: Anchor Academic Publishing, 2015), 66–149. Generally, on the use of Ezekiel in John see Gary T. Manning Jr., *Echoes of a Prophet: The Use of Ezekiel in the Gospel of John and in Literature of the Second Temple Period*, Library of New Testament Studies 270 (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 100–197.

24. Cf. 1 Kings 8:37–39; cf. Ps 11:4; 13:2; 32:13; 52:3.

25. Cf. 1 Kings 8:29.

26. Cf. 1 Kings 8:36.

27. Udo Schnelle, “Die Tempelreinigung und die Christologie des Johannesevangeliums,” *New Testament Studies* 42 (1996): 368–369.

28. *Ibid.*, 370.

Testament theology can even replace God's real presence in the Temple,²⁹ is here replaced by the name of Jesus.³⁰

The implied author explains the new worship in Jesus' dialogue with the Samaritan woman. Jesus claims that the Jews worship what they know, while the Samaritans what they do not know (4:22). However, what do the Jews know about worship? A plausible answer would be the very presence and experience of the living God in the Temple of Jerusalem, a presence that in New Testament times may no longer be experienced as such, but is familiar to the Jews of that time through the witness of their sacred history and prophecy, as well as through the Temple-cult.³¹ The Samaritans, on the other hand, do worship the same God, but they do not know him, which could well mean that he has not revealed himself to them in their own holy temple. However, the hour of true worship, which is not anymore locally bound, has already arrived (4:23). God may have indeed been present in the Temple, but from now on "the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth" (4:24). This true worship of God is not confined to any earthly temple whatsoever because God being a spirit is present in every place he is worshipped. The implied readers could understand this as corresponding with the Old Testament's notion of a spiritual worship that is not necessarily connected with the Temple in Jerusalem.³²

After the incarnation of the Logos, God, the Father is represented in the Temple through Jesus and not anymore through the priesthood. Jesus is the one who cleanses the Temple from the traders (2:14-16). The Jews who are gathered in the Temple to commemorate the Feast of the Tabernacles, are not presented as seeking God, who should normally be in their focus, but none other than Jesus (7:11 cf. also 11:56). At this point, the implied readers could interpret the Jews as being unconsciously drawn towards the only one who can renew their worship (cf. 2:14-17; 4:20-24) and provide them with life (cf. for instance 3:36; 5:24). Just as God is free to be or not to be present in the Temple, so also Jesus comes to the Temple and leaves it whenever he wishes to do so.³³

29. Cf. Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A. Baker, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1967), 2:40-45.

30. Since people believe in Jesus, but also expressly in the name of Jesus, cf. John 20:31.

31. Cf. Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Lecture de l'évangile selon Jean (chapitres 1-4)* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1988), 369-371.

32. Cf. on the overall matter of the understanding of worship in the New Testament and in contemporary research Samuel E. Balentine, *The Torah's Vision of Worship, Overtures to Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999).

33. Cf. especially 5:14; 7:14,28-30; 8:19-20,59; 10:23-31; 18:20.

The Temple is also one of the main places, in which the Johannine Jesus reveals himself as the Son of God and as the only possible access of human beings to God, and thus to salvation. Hence, it is in the Temple area that Jesus proclaims: “You know me, and you know where I am from; and I have not come by myself, but he who sent me is real, whom you do not know” (7:28-29), and later: “If someone is thirsty, he or she shall come to me and drink. Those who believe in me, rivers of living water will flow from within them” (7:37-38). In the Temple area, Jesus even tells the Jews that they do not really know God, since they do not know him, the only one who can reveal God: “You do not know me, and you do not know my Father. Had you known me, you would have known my Father” (8:19). Jesus’ self-revelation in the Temple is culminated by his words: “Amen, amen I say to you, before Abraham was (or was born) I am” (8:58), by which he states his pre-existence and divinity (cf. 1:1), causing the religious indignation and hostility of his Jewish audience, who immediately attempt to stone him. He, however, hides and leaves the Temple (8:59), not unlike the divine glory that abandons the Temple in the aforementioned vision of Ezekiel (10:18-19; 11:22-23).

It would even seem that the implied author identifies Jesus as the incarnate Logos with the self-revealing God of the Old Testament epiphanies. This can be deduced by the implied author’s reference to the epiphany of Is 6:1-5, according to which the prophet “saw his glory and spoke about him” (John 12:41).³⁴ According to Isaiah’s text, both the epiphany and the subsequent prophetic call take place in the Temple. Isaiah is presented as seeing God sitting on his heavenly throne, while his divine glory fills the Temple (Is 6:1).³⁵ However, in the Fourth Gospel’s reception of this text, there is a significant change: Isaiah is no longer presented as beholding the glory of God, but instead the glory of Jesus (12:41).³⁶

According to the last verse of the gospel’s prologue, “no one has ever seen God. It is the only-begotten Son, who being in the bosom of

34. See the relevant analysis of Catrin H. Williams, “(Not) Seeing God in the Prologue and Body of John’s Gospel,” in *The Prologue of the Gospel of John: Its Literary, Theological, and Philosophical Contexts. Papers Read at the Colloquium Ioanneum 2013*, ed. Jan G. van der Watt, R. Alan Culpepper, and Udo Schnelle, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 359 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 91-97.

35. Cf. Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja*, Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament 10 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, ²1980), 1:244; Willem A. M. Beuken, *Jesaja 1-12*, Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament (Freiburg: Herder, 2003), 168-169.

36. Cf. Morris, *John*, 605; Siegfried Schulz, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, Neues Testament Deutsch 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 170; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 217; Carson, *John*, 449-450. Of course the glory of Jesus is not different from the glory of God, cf. 1:14; 11:4,40; 17:5,22,24.

the Father explained God" (1:18).³⁷ Consequently, when God reveals his glory in Old Testament times, he always does so through his Son. The Old Testament witnesses of God's glory actually behold the glory of the pre-incarnate (ἄσαρκος) Logos and only through him do they access God the Father.³⁸ More concretely, the divine person who, among other things, appears on Mount Sinai, speaks with Moses, is present in and around the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant, and later permanently resides in the Temple of Solomon, is actually the pre-incarnate Logos. Therefore, the Temple of Jerusalem is also the residence of the Logos and God's only-begotten Son because it is the house of God his Father (cf. 2:16). It is then apparent that whenever the incarnate Logos, namely Jesus, comes to the Temple, he comes to the place par excellence of the manifestation of his glory, which takes place both in the Old and in the New Testament era.

Based on the above, it should be clear that in the Fourth Gospel, Temple-theology and Christology are inextricably connected.³⁹ In all events taking place in the Temple, Jesus is the protagonist. He is the one who renews and reinterprets the Temple's worship. Furthermore, in the Temple, Jesus reveals his true nature, origin, and mission, he becomes the centre and focus of Jewish festivals, and comes and goes whenever he wishes, while his presence or his absence creates a much more significant impact than the Temple-cult itself.

Conclusion

Following the above analysis, we would hardly characterize the mentioning of the Temple in 5:14a coincidental or only playing the role of a narrative frame just to the aim of introducing the implied readers to Jesus' significant word of 5:14b. The healed man can be considered as going to the Temple because he has questions of crucial theological and existential importance. The Temple is the place par excellence, in which any pious Jew should hope to be heard by God. Indeed, not only is the healed man heard by God, but he actually meets God, not in the form

37. See the relevant analysis in Otfried Hofius, "Der in des Vaters Schoß ist' Joh 1,18," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 80 (1989): 163-164.

38. See our analysis in Christos Karakolis, "The Logos-Concept and Dramatic Irony in the Johannine Prologue and Narrative," in *The Prologue of the Gospel of John*, 144-147.

39. Cf. among others Mary L. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), especially 219-222.

of an Old Testament epiphany, but in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Logos who shares the glory of his heavenly Father.

From this point of view, 5:14a does not just describe a simple meeting, but a revelation of the incarnate Logos, and through him of God himself to the healed man.⁴⁰ However, this revelation does not consist of any miraculous event or striking sighting. The impressive miracle that radically changed the life of the lame man has already been performed demonstrating Jesus' divine authority and life-giving power. Thus, when Jesus finds the healed man in the Temple-area, he no longer needs to reveal his divine power, but only his identity. We cannot infer this directly from the text. However, some important characteristics of an Old Testament epiphany are implicitly present: the initiative that belongs to God (in our case to Jesus), the Temple as the place par excellence of God's (in our case of Jesus') presence, and the manifestation of his glory, the epiphany itself (in our case Christophany) as God's (in our case Jesus') response to the doubts and prayers of his chosen people (in our case the healed man).⁴¹

Summarizing the above, the following conclusions can be formulated: (a) The healed man may be understood as going to the Temple, not only to thank God for his healing but also or even mainly to find the right answers to his existential questions. (b) Jesus takes the initiative to find the healed man, thus indicating that he fully determines the course of events. (c) Just like God in the Old Testament, so also the Johannine Jesus reveals his divinity, reinterprets and renews the worship of the Temple, becomes the Temple's central figure during Jewish festivals and finally comes and goes unhindered according to his own will. (d) The analogy of God's and Jesus' relationship with the Temple can be explained based on the Johannine theological principle, according to which the Logos, whether pre-incarnate or incarnate, is the only one to reveal God the Father to humanity while, at the same time, sharing God's properties. (e) Due to the above, the implied readers of the gospel could or even should understand Jesus' encounter with the previously lame man as a divine revelation along the lines of the Old Testament Temple-theophanies.

40. Since only by knowing the Son human beings can know the Father, cf. 1:18; 8:19; 14:6,9; 15:24.

41. On a symbolic level the healed man can indeed be understood as a representative of the entire Israel, since he has been ill for 38 years, a number obviously hinting at the 38 years of Israel's wandering in the desert (Deut 2:14), cf. Christian Dietzfelbinger, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, Zürcher Bibelkommentare (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2001), 1:192; Hartwig Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 299.

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