

**Johannine use
of “κοσμος”**

A Monograph by

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Johannine use of - “κοσμος”

(Literal translations and commentary by J. A. Blaine, based upon the Greek text, upon the context in various English translations,-- and with some reference to Expositor's Bible Commentary notes.)

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John's Gospel

- 1:9-10** -- “He was the true light, enlightening every msn coming into the world. “
(*the inhabited earth / mankind*).
“He was In the world,
(*Jesus existed among, in the midst of, mankind.*)
- “the world was made through Him,
(*Through Jesus' agency, the celestial universe, the natural earth with all of its elements, systems, creatures, and human beings-- all came into being.*)
Cf. John. 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2; Rev. 10:6
- “the world did not know Him.”
(*The “world”, here, is the subject acting and initiating, and not an object, being acted upon. It appears to be a mass entity of the human populace together with some unseen power(s) which were hostile to Christ. This entity **did not** appreciate, nor accept Christ's identity and mission, and **chose not** to acknowledge and accept him.*)
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Overall, the term “kosmos/world” is understood to be-- a whole congregate entity, whether animate and/or inanimate.

In these opening verses of his gospel, John, appears to intentionally write of “world” **here** in order to present the three meanings of this word (*to be determined by its context*), which he will use in all of his writings----

1. The created natural earth and universe--
2. The human family of people, the sphere of human activity-
3. An organized entity, in opposition to God, hostile towards Christ, and evil in its intent--- (This entity can be understood to

be **the antithesis of the “kingdom of God/ of heaven”.**)

>>> Of all New Testament writers, John uses “kosmos” **more often** than any other, and John is the **only** New Testament writer who employs “kosmos” as the subject of a sentence. In doing this, he is assigning an intelligence to the “world” as an organized entity that is capable of initiating some negative, disbelieving, and evil act or activity.

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After several weeks into this study, I was encouraged to discover that my views on the multiple meanings of the word, “world” (*kosmos*) were in alignment with those of Dr. Tenney, an eminent biblical scholar, and a noted authority on John's Gospel: “The term “world” (*kosmos*) has several uses in the Johannine writings. It may refer to the universe as the object of creation (1:10), the materialistic order that allures men from God (1 John 2:15-16), or mankind in general as the object of God's love (3:16).it refers to the mass of unbelievers who are indifferent or hostile to God and his people.” Merrill C. Tenney, The Gospel of John, Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 9, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids MI, 1981, p. 154

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1:29 -- “On the morrow, he (*John*) saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, taking away (*is bearing -- present tense, continual action*) the sin of the world.’”

(The **world** appears to be an all-inclusive term to refer to **all human inhabitants**. Now, no one, in all of mankind, is to be excluded from the provisions of this sacrificial Lamb, who has come to be our sin bearer.)

3:16 -- “For God so (*an adverb modifying the verb, showing emphasis*) loved (*aurist, past action*) the world that he gave (*aurist, past action*) his only begotten son, so that every one believing (*present tense, ongoing action*) in him may not perish (*aurist middle, past, subjunctive*) but may possess (*present tense, subjunctive*) life eternal.”

(In this “golden text” of the entire New Testament, note the 3 persons involved: God -- his Son -- any believer. Also note

the positive verbs employed: loved -- gave -- believe -- possess. In a verse, this captures God's overall design for **every one of his human creatures**, of all time.)

3:17 -- "For God did not send (*commission, send forth*) His Son into the world in order to judge the world, but in order that the world through Him might be saved (*kept safe, restored, made well*)."

(Again, as in v. 16-- the world = the totality of **every human inhabitant**, in all of time)

4:42 -- "To the woman they said, 'no longer do we believe because of your talk, for we ourselves have heard and know that this man is truly the Savior of the world.'"

(At Sychar in Samaria, some of the townspeople became new believers in Jesus after hearing the "well-woman's" testimony. They then declare Jesus to be the Savior (*the Messiah?*) **for everyone**, and not just exclusively for the Judean Jews.)

6:14 -- "Therefore, the men, seeing the sign that he (*Jesus*) performed, said that, 'this man truly is the Prophet coming into the world'."

(This is similar to the declaration in 4:42, but is now declared following the feeding of the 5,000.)

6:33 -- "For the bread of God is the one coming down from heaven and *is giving (present active ptcp.)* life to the world."

(As manna came down from heaven following the Jewish exodus from Egypt, and became their bread staple, so likewise, does the Messiah come from heaven in order to impart a life-giving staple-- namely, an eternal quality of life, not only to **the Jewish people**, but **also to every person**.)

6:51 -- “I, myself, am the living bread, having come down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he shall live into eternity, and the bread which I shall give (*future tense*) is my flesh, (given) for the life of the world.”

(The crowds of people, hearing Jesus speak of “eating his flesh”, were puzzled-- as they voiced in the next verse (6:52). It appears that Jesus is here making a public, though veiled, reference to his coming crucifixion as God’s sacrificial Lamb offering. The eternal life-giving provisions of that offering are to be given, as was the miraculous, life-giving gift of manna in the desert, on behalf of, for **any and all persons and nations.**)

7:4 -- *Jesus’ unbelieving brothers said to him---* “For no one works in secret, and (*but*) seeks to be in openness. If you do these things, manifest (*make known*) yourself to the world.”

(With a possible mixture of motives, Jesus’ brothers advise him to leave the safety of Galilee, and to make himself, and his true identity, known to the broader world of the **general populace in Judea**, and perhaps also to the temple elite.)

7:7 -- *Jesus’ reply to his brothers was--* “The world does not (*cannot?*) hate you, but me, it hates, because I testify (*witness*) about it that its works are evil.”

(Here, John quotes Jesus using “the world” as the subject acting. This “world”, which opposes him and his mission, does not recognize Jesus’ identity, and expresses its opposition to him-- not just in disagreement, but in hatred. And by whose initiative does Jesus regard as “the world” hating him? In Jerusalem, **the temple’s established leaders** (priests, scribes, Sanhedrin, et al.), are in apparent league with the **unseen powers that have only evil intent.**)

8:12 -- “Therefore again, Jesus spoke to them, saying, I, myself, am the light of the world. The one following (*present tense ptcp./ continuing action*) me, will never (*ever*) walk (*aorist subjunctive*) in darkness, but shall have (*future tense*) the light of life.”

(John began his gospel (vv. 1:4-5, 8-9) by affirming that the eternal Word of God came to live among all men as the true light for dispelling the darkness of sin’s alienation. Here, before the scribes, Pharisees, and temple crowd, Jesus declares that he is the light for **all of humanity**, and that all who believe and follow him will have life-giving light.)

8:23 -- *To the Pharisees and other Jews, Jesus said,* “And he said to them, You are from the lower, I am from the higher. You are of this world; I am not of this world.”

(The Pharisees and Jesus are from a different world system, mindset, values, etc. Jesus recognizes that their “world” is **a rigid embrace of the traditional establishment** of the Torah’s commandments and customs which is tantamount to their survival, pride, and dignity as a nation-- and, to their belief that, among all peoples, they (the Jewish nation) are uniquely favored by God. Their rigid embrace of established traditions does not allow for any deviation from their conception of how the promised Messiah is to be revealed. Because Jesus does not conform to their established and rigid positions, he is definitely not a part of their “world”.)

8:26 -- “I have many things concerning you to say and to judge, but the one having sent (*aorist active ptcp.*) me is true, and what things I heard (*aorist tense*) from him, I speak unto the world.”

(What Jesus is proclaiming to the Pharisees is-- that what truths the Father, the embodiment of truth, has imparted to him, he is to proclaim it openly to **the entire “house of humanity”**, namely-- to **any and every person**, everywhere, whether Jew or Gentile.)

9:5 -- “As long as I may be (*subjunctive verb*) in the world, I am the light of the world.”

(In encountering a man who was visually blind, Jesus used a clay-spittle poultice when miraculously restoring his vision. In this miracle, Jesus affirmed and demonstrated that he could dispel both kinds of darkness-- visual and spiritual. He and his incorruptible light are to shine for **all of mankind** to be able to see and live. See also v. 8:12.)

9:39 -- “For judgment I (*Jesus*) came into (entered) this world so that the ones not seeing may (*present tense/ subjunctive*) see, and the ones seeing may become (*present tense/ subjunctive*) blind.”

(Speaking primarily to his Jewish hearers, Jesus declares that his purpose in coming to be among **all of the people** of the world is to be judgmental of the temple’s distortion of God’s plan to bring spiritual illumination and fulfillment through the promised Messiah.)

10:36 -- *Some Jews, who were intending to stone Jesus, were asked this question, “Of the one whom the Father set apart (sanctified) and sent into the world, you say, ‘You blaspheme.’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’ ?”*

(Jesus answered his Jewish critics by affirming his anointed identity and mission to minister to **all of humankind**.)

11:9 -- “Jesus answered, ‘Are there not twelve hours in a day? If someone walks in the day, he stumbles not because he sees the light of this world.’”

(A man simply needs natural daylight for walking, so as to not stumble. Jesus sees his need to continue his ministry to be the necessary light for belief in him and his mission.)

11:27 --- “She (*Martha*) said, ‘Yes Lord, I have believed (*Perfect tense, completed past action*) that you are the Christ, the Son of God, coming (*present tense, continual action*) into the world.”

(Martha affirms her belief that Jesus is the promised Messiah, who is now making His appearance openly to **the Jewish community, and to all others**, everywhere.)

12:19 -- “Therefore the Pharisees said to one another, ‘You perceive (*2nd P. plural*) that you benefit nothing, (*lo and*) behold, the world has departed (*3rd P, sing.-aorist tense, past action*) after him.”

(The Pharisees declare here that they recognize that the teaching and ministry of Jesus has influenced both-- their “world” of the temple establishment, but likely also, the “world” of the **common throngs of Jewish people**.)

12:25 -- “The one loving his self (*soul*) will lose it, but the one hating (*losing*) his self (*soul*) in this world will keep it into eternal life.”

(While a person is alive, and amongst **the human family**, he must regard eternal life of higher value than his own life’s goals and values.)

12:31 -- “Now judgment of this world is come; now the ruler (*prince*) of this world shall be cast (*3rd P. sing.- future passive*) out.”

(After the “palms and Hosanna” event in Jerusalem, Jesus begins the final week of his mission. He prays to the Father about facing the cross. He senses the reality of the plot and the **power of his evil adversary**, but knows that it will ultimately be defeated.)

Compare 14:30. [See also Luke 10:18]

12:46-47 -- “I have come (as) light into the world in order that all believing in me may not remain (*aorist tense/ subjunctive*) in darkness. And if anyone hears my words and keeps them not, I do not judge him. I came not that I might judge (*condemn*) the world, but that I might save (*aorist tense/ subjunctive --make well, keep safe*) the world.”

(In these closing words to the crowds before his final week, Jesus repeats his mission statement-- He has come as a darkness-dispelling light, and as a redeeming Savior for those of the **masses of humanity** who will hear and believe.)

13:1 -- “Now, prior to the feast of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that his hour had come that he should depart from this world unto the Father, (and) loving his own ones (*disciples*) in the world, he would love them to the end.”

(In this simple contrast between the locations of “out” and “in”, Jesus begins the final chapter of His earthly mission. John captures Jesus’ poignant awareness that He must soon separate, bodily, from His beloved disciples in order to fulfill His earthly mission. They will then remain among the “world” of **the living**.)

14:17 -- “*Even* the Spirit of truth which the world cannot (*has no power to*) receive, because it neither observes nor knows (*by*

personal acquaintance) it (*Him*) because it (*He*) abides with you, and shall be in you.”

(Here, the “world” is the subject of the infinitive verb, “receive”, preceded by a simple adverbial negative. This rejecting “world” is comprised of **common folk** who do not believe him to be God’s Son, and of the **religious authorities** who view Jesus as an upstart, threatening their established practices. Together with unseen evil forces, this coalition becomes the antithesis of the kingdom of God. Beginning in this chapter, Jesus begins to make numerous references to “the world“, in his teaching, and in his prayer.)

14:19 -- “Yet (in a) little (*while/bit*), the world sees (*they- 3rd P. pl./ continual action*) me no longer (*whose sight is withdrawn*) , but you (*disciples*) see (*you- 2nd P. pl.*) me (*visually & perceptibly*), (and) because I live, you also shall live (*future tense*).”

(In Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances, no one but his followers will visually see him. And, Jesus adds the hopeful assurance for all his believers “and because I live (*present tense*), you also shall live (*future tense*).”)

14:22 -- “Judas (not Iscariot) spoke to him (*Jesus*), What has happened that you are about to reveal yourself to us, and not to the world? ”

(This other Judas-- perhaps not as informed and involved as the other 11 disciples, and sensing the seriousness of Jesus’ remarks,--- asked Jesus why he is not being as open to the **entire populace** of Jews and Gentiles as he is with His own followers?)

14:27 -- “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let your heart not be troubled (*affected by great sorrow/ in the imperative voice*), neither

fearful (*also imperative voice*).”

(With a keen awareness of the effect which the coming trauma will have upon his disciples, Jesus repeats his comforting directive, given also in 14:1. **The human throngs**, not personally believing in his deity as Messiah, can never provide the loving and calming reassurance that the Savior offers.)

14:30 -- “No longer will I speak (*future tense*) many things with you for the ruler (*prince?*) of the world is coming (*present tense*), and he has no hold upon me.”

(Here Jesus begins the final chapter of His earthly, redemptive mission. He recognizes that there is a powerful person of authority in the “world”. He must now encounter this evil, formidable adversary-- now named as “the prince of the world”.

Jesus’ statement appears to be clearly related to the devil’s action at the conclusion of Jesus’ temptation in Lu 4:13, “*When the devil had ended all tempting, he departed until a new, opportune time.*” Now appears to be that “opportune time” for the devil to implement his strategy.

Also, we should note Paul’s recognition of, and warnings about, this evil, powerful person to whom Jesus is referring.-

--- Eph 2:2 “*Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit now at work in disobedient children.*”

Eph 6:12 “*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world (kosmokrator), against spiritual wickedness in high places.*”

Here, this “world” entity has **a powerful, intelligent person** (ruler, *archon*) directing **activity against Jesus**. Our Lord asserts that this “world’s prince” has no power over, or hold

upon him. Although the Temple's established elite (priests, scribes, Sanhedrin, and the ever critical Pharisees), were an opposing "world" to Jesus, as the Messiah, this "world" entity has now become more than just a Jewish opposition to His messiahship, but now includes satanic opposition to the Savior's atoning mission.

14:31 -- "But that the world might know that I love the Father and I do (*am doing*) as the Father has commanded (*charged- aorist tense, past*) me, thus I do. (*You, understood*) Awaken (*rise up- 2nd P.pl.- present passive imperative*), (*may*) we go (*1st P.pl.- present subjunctive*) hence."

(In facing this adversary, Jesus had the confidence that he would encounter this "**prince**", **and the powers** making up this "world", knowing that, in his love for the Father, he had fulfilled his mission as commanded by the Father.)

15:18 -- "If the world hates you, you know that it hated (*perfect tense - past action*) me before you."

(Here, in Jesus' final conversation with His disciples before his trial, he is preparing them to expect more than just disagreement and ostracism by this **evil world entity**, but hatred. They can anticipate this hatred because they are aligned with Jesus in their belief that he is the Son of God. The "world" here can be understood to be the entire devil-inspired opposition which is venting its hatred-- formed long ago, even before creation.)

15:19 -- "If you were (*stative verb...a part of*) of the world, the world would have loved (*would have been loving -- imperfect tense-- a continuous action in the past*) its own, but you are not (*stative verb*) of the world, because I have chosen (*aorist tense--past action*) you (*from among many*) out of the world, on account of that, the world hates (*is hating*) you."

("world" / *kosmos*) is used **5 times** in this verse. While Jesus and his disciples are encountering the aggressive opposition

of the **established Jewish authorities**, he is fully aware that he is actually battling with the devil on behalf of his own chosen flock of disciples. And here, he is helping them to understand, and to expect, hateful opposition.)

16:8 -- “When he (*Counselor, Advocate*) comes, he will convict (*judiciously accuse of a charge known to be true*) the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”

(Here, Jesus’ mission is directed to more than just the Jewish people. **Every human**, past, present, future, is, and will be, found guilty of sin.)

16:11 -- “Of judgment because the prince (*ruler*) of this world is judged (*perfect tense-- a present state based upon past action.*) .“

(“this” world is specified, in contrast to 14:30. Jesus is aware of the **organized power** opposing Him, but knows this “prince’s” fate is assured.

Note also the devil’s opposition in Eph 6:12, (*kosmokrator*), “*the rulers of the darkness of this world.*” This Greek word is used only here in the New Testament. Jesus will put an end to Satan’s power to deceive and destroy.)

16:20 -- “Truly, truly, I (*Jesus*) say (*strongly declare*), that you will weep (*future tense*) and grieve (*future tense*) (*wail, loudly lament*), but the world will rejoice (*future tense*), but you will be (made) sorrowful (*future tense, passive*) (*caused grief*), but your grief will become (*future tense*) joy.”

(Jesus prepares His disciples for the certain emotional impact that His crucifixion will have upon them. He predicts that the “world” opposing him will actually be jubilant in his gruesome death. This “world” is a **coalition** of the mocking

crowds, the temple's established authorities, and the unseen powers of the devilish prince. The temple's elite will rejoice about preserving their traditional controls, and the evil prince will rejoice, believing that he has achieved an ultimate victory over the Father. However, Jesus assures his disciples that their despair and grief are to be transformed into joyful triumph.)

16:21 -- "A woman, when she gives birth, has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she delivers the child, she no longer remembers the travail because of the joy that a man has been born (*aorist tense, passive*) into the world."

(Comparing the situation to the crisis of childbirth, when a baby enters the **community of mankind**, Jesus assures his disciples that, following the painful travail in the coming crisis, they will ultimately have joy.)

16:28 -- "I came forth (*out from*) the Father, and have entered (*come into /perfect tense - present condition of a past action*) the world, and now I leave the world and depart to the Father."

(Here, Jesus clarifies the situation and affirms his identity as his Father's Son. His mission, by his incarnate birth, was to come and live **among the human family**. With his earthly mission nearing fulfillment, he is departing from the **arena of human activity** and is returning to the Father.)

16:33 -- "These things have I spoken (*perfect tense, past action*) in order that in me, you may have (*present tense, subjunctive*) peace. In the world you have (*oppressive*) affliction. But, be of good cheer (*present tense, imperative voice*); I have overcome (*perfect tense - past completed action*) the world."

(Such caring love has Jesus for his disciples! Here are his final words and thoughts to his followers before his final days. He knows that they will experience disheartening,

dangerous and devilish persecution from the “world” of **seen and unseen enemies**. In both 14:1 and 14:27, he admonishes them to “not be troubled in heart” because he has already conquered this oppressive “world”.)

17:5 -- “And now, you, Father, glorify me with that glory (*exalted state*) of yourself that I had before the world was.”

(Jesus is now praying for a restoration of the majesty that he shared with the Father prior to **all of creation**. It was that equality of majesty that he relinquished when he took on the human form of a servant, and suffered a degrading, painful death. Note: Php. 2:5-9)

17:6 -- “I have made known (*by my teaching / aorist tense, a completed action*) your name to the men you gave to me out of the world,...”

(In His prayer, Jesus reports that He has revealed the Father’s name (*His person & plan*), specifically, to the men (*disciples*) whom he (*the Father*) gave to him from among **the inhabitants of Israel**.)

17:9 -- “I pray (*request while conscious of my equality with the Father*) for them (*disciples*); I do not pray (*similarly*) for the world, but (*in contrast*) for the ones (*disciples*) that you gave (*perfect tense - past completed action*) me...”

(Jesus’ concern, voiced in His petition to the Father, is focused upon His disciples’ preservation and safety, and not upon their religious and spiritual surroundings.)

17:11 -- “No longer am I (*will I remain?*) in the world, but they (*disciples*) are (*remain?*) in the world, and I come (*am coming*) to you, Holy Father, that you may keep (*guard, protect*) them in the name which you have given (*perfect tense*) me that they may be as one as we (*are*).”

(Jesus, in “the world”, seems to be referring to the current **religious and social milieu** of the establishment of the temple elite and the “hard liners” who reject and oppose His deity and messiahship.)

17:13--16 -- “ But now I come to you, and I speak these things in the world in order that they may have my joy (*complete in every way*) in themselves. and the world hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not request that you should take them out of the world, but that you will keep (*future tense - guard, protect*) them from the evil one. They are not of the world just as I am not of the world.”

- (Jesus is baring his soul to the Father, and voicing his loving concern for his disciples. He is keenly aware of the devilish origin of the **organized rejection** of his deity and of his mission among the Jewish people, and to **all of humanity** in general. He knows and senses the disparity between himself and the “gang of demonic sympathizers“.)

17:18 -- “As you sent (*aorist tense - past action*) me into the world, I also sent (*aorist*) them into the world.”

(Jesus reiterates and affirms his specific commission by the Father in being sent, incarnate, into **the human family**. In his earthly ministry, he invited, instructed, and inspired a small band of believers to continue his redemptive mission amongst all mankind.)

17:21 -- “In order that all them (*disciples*) may be as one as you Father are in me, and I in you, in order that they may be in us, and in order that the world might believe (*passive voice*) that you sent me. “

(Jesus’ prayer request is that he, his Father, and his disciples may be of one heart, so that-- **all men and women**, as well as the devil’s evil domain, may all believe that Jesus is truly the divine Messiah sent on a redemptive mission.)

17:23-24 -- “I in them and you in me, so that they may be perfected in one, in order that the world may know that you sent me, and that you have loved them just as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those ones you have given to me, may be with me where I, myself, am-- in order that they may behold my glory, which you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”

(Jesus is praying, both for his disciples’ unity, and that they may be a witness to the Savior’s identity and saving mission among the **masses of humanity**. He desires that they may be given some illuminating experience, similar to Jesus’ transfiguration, earlier, where his glory was revealed to Peter, James, and John.. By that revelation, they, too, may realistically know of Jesus’ deity.
Cf. Mt. 17:1-13; Mk. 9:2-13; Lu. 9:28-36

17:25 -- “Righteous Father, indeed, the world (“it”- 3rdP.-Sing. verb) does not (has not) know (2nd aorist tense, past action) you, but I know (same tense, action) you, and these ones (disciples) know that you have sent me.” (“know”-- a discriminating knowledge based upon personal experience)

(The strong focus of Jesus’ prayer is-- for his disciples-- for their keeping and protection from the evil “prince”, for their preservation and stability in their belief, for their sanctification through the truth, and for their unity together.)

18:20 -- “Jesus answered him, I have spoken (*perfect tense, past action*) openly (*clearly, frankly*) to the world.....in secret, I spoke nothing.”

(Here is a part of Jesus’ defense, when questioned by the high priest about his doctrinal teaching. He states that his teaching was open to **everyone** in his human audiences.)

18:36 -- “Jesus answered, my kingdom is not of this world, if my kingdom were of this world, then my servants (“troops”) would (*continually/ impf. tense*) contend (*struggle*) in order that I not be delivered over to the Jews, but now my kingdom is not from this place (*this “world”*).”

(Having been brought before Pilate, the Roman governor, Jesus explains his acclaimed kingship in terms that a non-Jew would understand. His kingdom is of a different nature --- totally unlike the **territorial domains** of Caesar and Herod. His kingdom does not have an earthly location. In not being handed over to the temple’s establishment and Sanhedrin, Jesus simply refers to them as “the Jews”.

18:37 -- “Therefore, Pilate said to him, ‘Are you not then a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king.’ ...to this (cause, purpose) I have been born (*perfect tense, passive*), and to this (cause, purpose) I have come (*perfect tense*) into the world in order that I may bear witness (*aurist tense, subjunctive*) of the truth. Everyone (that is) of the truth hears my voice.’ ”

(Continuing his defense before Pilate, Jesus declares that his mission is into **the milieu of Hebrew and Gentile peoples**, as well as to those Jewish traditional authorities, which are influenced by the devil.)

21:25 -- “And there are many other things which Jesus did (*aurist tense, past action*) , which if written (*subjunctive*) singly, I suppose the world, itself, would not be able to have space for (*future infinitive*) the books which are being written (*present tense ptcp.*).”

(John ends his Gospel with a magnificent hyperbole. The life, ministry, teaching, and final victory of Jesus Christ are so prodigious and glorious that the vast expanse of **all of creation** would not be sufficient space to contain all the written account and description of the Messiah.)

John’s Epistles

1J 2:2 -- “And he (*Jesus*) is the atoning sacrifice (*propitiation, placation, appeasement, obtainer of mercy, pacifier, gainer of good will by some offering*-- This Greek word is found only here, and in 4:10, in the N.T.) concerning (*for*) our sins, (and) not for ours alone (*only*), but also for (those of) the whole (entire) world.”

(John uses “world” here with the same import and meaning as he did in 3:16, “God so loved the world...”. It seems clear that John is not referring to the natural, material earth

“world”, --- nor is he referring to the hostile, evil “world” dominated by a devilish “prince”, mentioned in Jesus’ final days (14:30).

It is significant that John uses the adjective, “whole”, in referring to the object of Christ’s sacrificial death. Calvary’s gained provision was given on behalf of **every human inhabitant** of the earth--- for all, for any, and for all time. No person is excluded.)

1J 2:15-17 -- “(You, understood) Do not love (2ndP. pl., imperative voice, commanding - aorist tense) the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone is loving (3rd P. sing., subjunctive voice - present tense, continuing action) the world, the love of the Father is not in him, because everything which is in the world---- the depraved desire (*lust*) of the flesh, the depraved desire (*lust*) of the eyes, the boasting (*bragging, gloating*) of one’s life (*lifestyle*) --- is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world is departing (*passing, going away - continual action in the passive*), and its depraved desires, but the one doing the will of God abides (*remains*) forever.”

(In John’s emphatic and detailed statement here,
concerning “the world”.....

1. Note first his choice of the verb, “to love”, which is the verbal form of the noun, “love” (*agape*). While this word is often associated with God’s love for man, and vice versa, the word basically means: to admire or esteem. It also has the

2:15-17 (cont’d) meaning of: - to take pleasure in, - to prize above others, to be unwilling to do without.

2. Note next the number of the verb. It is in the second person, plural, which means that John is not directing this statement to one person, but to a group-- namely to the believers of his day, and to all who will read his writings.

3. Note also the voice of the verb. It is written in the imperative voice, meaning that the statement comes as: an instruction, a command, and/or a warning.

4. This directive begs this question: -- Why was this command to “love not the world” given? The context in vv. 2:1-27 warns of doctrinal defections and of some who had left the believers’ community, and were said to be “antichrists“.

5. What does John mean by that “world” which is not to

be loved? Although John knew that Jesus referred to the devil's leadership of the "world" that was hostile to his deity and mission, John makes no direct reference to the devil's involvement in the "world" in v. 2:15.

6. John explains what he means by "world" in v. 2:16. From the overall use of the term by both Jesus and John, it seems self-evident to understand that v. 16 refers only to what "the world" contains, which here is-- **depraved human behavior.**

Many Bible students see the possibility of comparing the three human behavior descriptions in the "world", in this verse, with the three episodes of Jesus' temptation by the devil, as recorded in Luke 4:1-13.

(Temptation #1) Lust for **Pleasure** -- Turn the stones into bread to eat. == "the lust of the flesh".

(Temptation #2) Lust for **Possessions** -- Worship me, and I will give you all the kingdoms (things) of the world that I will show you. == "the lust of the eyes".

(Temptation #3) Lust for **Position** -- From the pinnacle of Jerusalem's temple, jump, and angels will bear you up. == "the pride and boasting of one's life".

Perhaps, some may also generally compare the 3 contents of the "world" in v. 16 with those in Jesus' final directive to the rich, young ruler?----- "Sell all that you have, give it away to the poor, and come, take up the cross, and follow me."

[Mt. 19:16-22; Mk. 10:17-22; Lu. 18:18-23]

7. The allurements of this "world" are of fleeting value.

1J 3:1 -- "(You, understood) Behold, what kind of (*exclamatory rhetoric*) love has the Father given (*perfect tense, completed action*) to us, so that we may be called (*aorist tense, passive, subjunctive*) children of God, and we are. Because of this, the world does not know (*present tense*) us because it did not know (*aorist tense, past action*) him."

- (This word for "know" implies a knowledge based upon a personal acquaintance. This statement is a repetition of part of John 1:10. The "world" here is the subject, which takes `` the action of not recognizing the Savior's identity and mission. It is this **seen and unseen entity** which rejected and hated him, and is the same entity that rejects the

followers of Jesus, in their current status.)

1J 3:13 -- “Do not be astonished (*present tense*), brothers, if the world hates (*present tense*) you.”

(This **combined entity of human and superhuman powers** initiates its evil agenda of opposing Jesus as God’s Son, and of all of his constituency. So, brother believers, because of their identity as God’s children, should not be surprised to know that this same “world” entity also despises them.)

1J 3:17 -- “But, if one (*whoever*) has life (*life’s necessary goods*) of the world and beholds his brother having need, and he shuts his tender compassions from him, how does the love of God dwell in him?”

(Here, “the world” is used in the mundane, practical situation of everyday, earthly life. The **“worldly goods”** of food, clothing, shelter, etc. should be shared compassionately with fellow believers in the Christian community.)

1J 4:1 -- “Beloved ones, believe not all spirits, but scrutinize (*test, examine, prove, with the expectation of finding it either good or bad*) the spirits if they are of God because many pseudo-prophets have come forth (*3rdP,pl. - perfect tense, completed past action*) - (*publicly*) into the world.”

(By coming out openly to all persons in that region, and everywhere, these so-called prophets and false teachers are actively working to influence **everyone**, as well as the believers of the Christian community, in their area.)

1J 4: 3-5 -- “And every spirit which professes (*present tense*) not Jesus is not from God, and that one is of the antichrist, which you have heard (*2ndP, -pl. - perfect tense, past action*) that it (*the spirit of antichrist*) has come and is now already in the world. You are of God, “little” children, and you have conquered (*perfect tense, past action*) them because the one in you is greater than the one in the world. They are of the world, therefore they speak (*present tense*) of the world, and the world hears (*present tense*) them.”

(The “you” here are brother believers, and “especially beloved children” (*a special Greek word*), thus expressing a warm affection for one another. Because of their redemptive relationship with Christ, God’s Son, they share in his victory over all the opposition by **this opposing entity** of human and superhuman forces. Note the reference to “the one” in the world, which likely refers to the powerful, personal “prince” who opposes Christ, and to the “they” who are the persons who are in accord with the devil’s agenda. These false teachers are effective in affirming one another in their evil agenda.)

1J 4:9 -- “In this (*way*), the love of God was made known (*aorist passive*) in us because God has sent his only begotten Son into the world so that we might live (*aorist- subjunctive*) through him.”

(In this verse, we see the fulfillment of God’s loving promise of salvation given in John 3:16. Jesus, God’s Son, became human through the incarnation in order to enable **any**

person believing him to be God's Son to partake of life.)

1J 4:14 -- “And we (*ourselves*) have observed/beheld (*perfect tense, past completed action*) and bear witness (*present tense*) that the Father sent (*aorist tense, past action*) the Son (to be) savior of the world.”

(This is a beautiful, affirming repetition of the opening words of John 3:16--- ‘God so loved the world...’. The message is clear that Jesus truly is to be the savior **for every person.**)

1J 4:17 -- “In this has our love been rendered full and complete (*perfect tense, completed action*), in order that we may have undoubting confidence in the day of judgment, because as that one (*Jesus*) is, are we also, in this world.”

(Jesus, in his prayer to the Father, prior to his crucifixion, voiced his full confidence that his Father would vindicate him and preserve him through that horrific ordeal. Cf. John 17.5 ff. Even so, we, as loving believers, may have the same assurance of divine protection during our earthly pilgrimage **among the human family.**)

1J 5:4-5 -- “Because every single one who has been begotten (*perfect passive ptcp.- past completed action-- ‘has been born’*) of God overcomes/conquers (*3rdP- singular! -- present tense, active continuing action*) the world, and this is the victory that has overcome (*aorist tense, past action*) the world, even our faith. And who is the one overcoming (*present tense ptcp.*) the world, except the one believing (*present tense*) that Jesus in

the Son of God?”

(The “world”, here, is seen as something to be overcome, or conquered. It appears to be regarded as **the spiritual force resident**-- both in living naysayers, and in unseen demonic opponents. All of this force is to be struggled against, and “overcome.” The overcomers are those believing individuals who have been begotten of God (born again-- cf. Jn. 3:3 ff.), and are able to be victorious because of their faith, which is-- their belief in the deity of Jesus Christ and in his redemptive mission.)

1J 5:19 -- “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the evil (one).”

(The 3 closing verses of this epistle (18, 19, 20) all begin with the affirmation of “we know”. John, speaking for his fellow believers, writes of his/their certain belief that Jesus Christ is truly the sinless, incarnate Son of God,-- that they have come to know him,-- and that they have received his promised eternal life. They also recognize the opposition and hostility of the “world” as the antichrist’s **evil domain.**)

2 John 7 -- “For many misleading deceivers went forth into the world, the ones not confessing that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. That one (*Such a one*) is a deceiver and an antichrist.”

(In this short epistle, John is writing to another group of believers: to affirm them in their faith in Christ, to encourage them to be in loving unity, and to warn them of the deceiving and antichristian teachers who are active among **the human population.**)

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Comments and Conclusions

What was John's relationship with the Lord Jesus?

- >> In the beginning of Jesus' ministry, he called John, a Galilean fisherman, and brother of James, to become his disciple.
- >> Together with Peter and James, John became known as part of an "inner circle" of disciples. John was present during two momentous events: Jesus' mountaintop transfiguration, and his Gethsemane prayer.
- >> John wrote in his Gospel, in an apparent reference to himself, of "the disciple whom Jesus loved" in-- 13:23; 20:2; 21:7; 21:20. Cf. also Gal. 2:9 (the "pillars"). These references seem to assert that there was a special bond of friendship between them.
- >> This friendship bond was demonstrated when Jesus, in the very throes of his crucifixion, called upon John, who was standing nearby, to be the caretaker of his mother's welfare. (John 19:26-27)
- >> Could this special bonding between John and Jesus be a contributing reason for John's Gospel being distinctly different from the three synoptic gospels?

What/Who is the "world" of which John writes?

- >> "World" is a singular neuter noun. It is an "it". It is neither masculine nor feminine, yet, it is used as a representative term, to be understood inclusively, and refers to all living persons, male and female, in all earthly locations.
(In a few instances, "world" refers to just the natural, created earth.)
- >> Sometimes, depending on the context, "world" refers only to certain Jewish persons (priests, Pharisees, et al.), or just to persons living in a certain location.
- >> John's Gospel is an authentic, divinely-inspired record of Jesus' words and ministry, and is preserved for every individual, male and female, in all locations, in all times, to read or hear.

In the years following Jesus' resurrection and ascension, many believers embraced Christ as their Savior. In his Epistles, John

was divinely-inspired to record instructions, encouragements, and warnings to be given to those early believers who were living out their faith in an antagonistic environment.

Because it is not possible to convey all of these recorded writings to every specific individual, “world” is used to embrace every person, everywhere, as the intended audience of John’s writings. So now, persons reading his writings, centuries after they were written, may consider themselves to be a part of the “world” to whom (or, of whom) John is writing.

How does John employ “kosmos / world” in his writing?

- >> Most often, the word is used as an object of a preposition-- mostly with “in” or “into”. John heralds the coming of Jesus, records his spoken words, and the events of his life. Here, entering into the “world”, is the promised Messiah, a new inhabitant in the human community. He is a new arrival, with a new message to be made known “in”, “unto”, and “within” the “world” of all men and women, Jew and Gentile. Also, Jesus knew that his disciples would be active “in” the arena of human activity.
- >> Next frequently used is the preposition, “of”. This word, or usage, has the sense of: “belonging to”. The noun, “world”, being in the genitive case, expresses possession, and “of” is understood. *(No word for “of” is used or needed in the original text.)* . Hence, all the world, by a personal belief and faith, possesses Christ’s “light”. *(Christ is the true light that belongs to all who trust and believe in him.--- **is equal to:** “I am the light of the world.”)*
- >> It is used as a direct object of a verb. So, in 3:16, the “world” is loved by God, and in 1 John 5:4-5, the “world” is to be overcome by those believing in Jesus.
- >> There are interesting multiple usages of “world” in John 17:13-16, and in 1 John 2:15-17.
- >> Of all the 56 verses in John’s Gospel, where “kosmos/world” is used,

half of them are found in chapters 14 to 17. These chapters contain Jesus' farewell messages to his disciples and his priestly prayer to his Father.

Jesus is keenly aware of his coming change of residence "out of the world", as well as the challenging spiritual environment which his disciples will encounter "in the world".

How does John's use of "kosmos" differ from all other N.T. writers?

>> Most significantly, John is the only New Testament author employing "world" as the subject of sentences. In this usage, the "world" is assumed to be an entity possessing a personal intelligence which is capable of decisions and actions.

In almost every instance, in his Gospel, where "world" is the subject of a sentence, this "world" entity expresses hostility to Jesus and his followers. "It" takes specific, opposing actions toward, and within the human community.

And so, we read--- that this evil "world" entity:

- did not "know", or recognize Jesus as the Son of God.
- can, and does "hate",
- cannot "receive the Spirit of truth",
- cannot give peace, as the world "gives",
- "will rejoice" in Jesus' crucifixion,
- "does not know" the Father,
- "lies in wickedness".

>> Because Jesus spoke of an unseen ruler (or, prince) of "this" world, in 12:31 and 14:30, it is understood that this "ruler" is the devil. "It" is Jesus' superhuman adversary, and must be seen and known by Jesus' followers as an enemy to be encountered and resisted.

In my view, --- this evil, ruling entity pursues an agenda of thwarting God's redemptive mission, and dissuading all humans from a belief in Jesus Christ. The "world's" degrading influence can be observed in the many aspects of human culture, such as: the media, visual and performing arts, literature, fashion, legislation, education, etc. "It" distorts, corrupts, and undermines biblical norms for human behavior, and the spiritual belief of any grouping of people-- national or tribal.

Thus, in his Epistles, John warns believers to be wary of false

- teachers who are recognized as “antichristian“.
- >> It is understandable, then, why John warns those early believers to “*love not the world*” (1 John 2:15-17), and also why James, Jesus’ brother, warns in James 4:4, “*You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is enmity towards God? Whoever chooses to be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*”

Take notice of this special triad of verses.

- >> In John’s Gospel, we read of God’s glorious offer and promise of eternal life. In the Epistles, early believers experienced the personal fulfillment of that promise of eternal life.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.” (1 John. 4:9)

“And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.” (1 John 4:14)

Δοξα εν υψιστοις θεω
Gloria in excelsis Deo

