

Section 1: Translation and Observations

John 6:36-45 is a passage of Scripture often debated among evangelicals, especially as it relates to the sovereignty of God in salvation. For this reason, I will examine this text in the original language and labor to provide a proper exegesis of the passage. To begin, an essentially-literal translation from the original language follows:

³⁶ “But I said to you that you also have seen and still see me but you do not believe. ³⁷ All who the Father gives to me will come to me and the one who comes to me I will never cast out, ³⁸ because I came down from heaven not in order that I may do my will but the will of Him who sent me. ³⁹ But this is the will of Him who sent me, that all He has given and still gives to me I may not lose from it, but I will raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who is beholding the Son and is believing in Him may have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” ⁴¹ Then, the Jews were murmuring about Him because He said, “I am the bread that came down out of heaven” ⁴² and they were saying, “Is this on not Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we have known and still know? How now is he saying that ‘I came down out of heaven’?” ⁴³ Jesus answered and said to them, “Murmur not with one another. ⁴⁴ No one is able to come unto me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁴⁵ It has been and still is written in the prophets, ‘and they shall be all taught of God’. Everyone who heard from the Father and learned comes unto me.”

Textual Variants

Apart from minor stylistic differences, such as: (1) dropping a movable ν (δίδωσίν vs. δίδωσί in v.37; δέδωκέν vs. δέδωκέ in v.39; ἔστιν vs. ἔστι in vv.39, 40, 45), (2) using ἐμὲ instead of με (vv.37, 45), (3) using a contraction in place of the longhand phrase, such as κἀγὼ instead of καὶ ἐγὼ (v.44), or (4) including the article (θεοῦ vs. τοῦ Θεοῦ in v.45), there are a total of eleven textual variants in the pericope at hand. Of the eleven, only one is listed in the ABS Greek New Testament apparatus. The variants are enumerated below:

1. The Nestle-Aland 27th Edition of the Greek New Testament (hereafter referred to as GNT) has [με] in v.36. Whereas the Textus Receptus (hereafter referred to as SCR) and the Robinson-Pierpoint Majority Text (hereafter referred to as BYZ) both have με.
2. GNT has ἀπὸ, while SCR and BYZ both have ἐκ with the Genitive τοῦ οὐρανοῦ in v.38.
3. GNT has πέμψαντός με, while SCR and BYZ both have πέμψαντός με πατρός in v.39.
4. GNT has [ἐν] τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ, where SCR has ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ and BYZ has τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ in v.39.
5. GNT begins v.40 with the words τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν, while SCR and BYZ begin with τοῦτο δὲ ἐστι
6. GNT has τοῦ πατρός μου in v.40 where SCR and BYZ have τοῦ πέμψαντός με
7. GNT has [ἐν] τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ in v.40 where SCR and BYZ have τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ.
8. GNT has πῶς νῦν λέγει, while SCR and BYZ have πῶς οὖν λέγει οὗτος in v.42.
9. GNT has ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς, while SCR and BYZ have ἀπεκρίθη οὖν ὁ Ἰησοῦς in v.43.
10. GNT and BYZ have ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ in v.44 where SCR has ἡ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ.

11. GNT has πᾶς ὁ ἀκούσας where BYZ has Πᾶς οὖν ὁ ἀκούων and SCR has πᾶς οὖν ὁ ἀκούσας in v.45.

Oddities and Vagueness

There are very few oddities and areas of vagueness in the pericope. In verse 37, we find Jesus using the phrase πᾶν ὃ δίδωσίν μοι...καὶ τὸν ἐρχόμενον πρὸς ἐμέ. The peculiarity lies in the fact that the terms πᾶν ὃ are neuter singular, while the term τὸν ἐρχόμενον is masculine singular. Similarly, in verse 39, Jesus uses the phrase πᾶν ὃ δέδωκέν μοι...αὐτοῦ...αὐτοῦ, which is again neuter singular. However, in verse 40, Jesus shifts back to the masculine singular form when He says πᾶς ὁ θεωρῶν...καὶ ἀναστήσω αὐτόν. He then continues to use the singular masculine form throughout the passage (e.g. in verse 44: ὁδεῖς δύναται ἐλθεῖν πρὸς με εἰὰν μὴ ὁ πατήρ ὁ πέμψας με ἐλκύσῃ αὐτόν, κἀγὼ ἀναστήσω αὐτόν, and in verse 45: πᾶς ὁ ἀκούσας...ἔρχεται).

A second potential vagueness in the pericope is seen in verse 39. It is grammatically possible that the verb form ἀναστήσω can be either the future active indicative first person singular form OR the 1st aorist active subjunctive first person singular form of ἀνίστημι.

Interpretive Difficulties and Problems with Word Meaning

The majority of the interpretive difficulties and problems with word meaning in this passage are in relation to the sovereignty and freedom of God and the doctrines of grace, otherwise known as the doctrines of Calvinism. Some of the questions raised in regards to this text include:

- Jesus tells the Jews in v.36 that they have seen Him and still do not believe. What type of “seeing” is He referring to? Is it spiritual or physical? Was He referring to the illumination of the gospel and enablement to believe or simply to a merely outward witness of His person and work? If He is referring to illumination and enablement, then does this verse imply that the doctrine of irresistible grace is false?
- In verse 37, Jesus says “all that the Father gives me will come to me”. What does it mean for the Father to “give” someone to the Son? What is the basis of the Father’s choice of who to give the Son and who to withhold? Is this evidence for unconditional election or is there conditionality on the part of man?
- In verse 39, Jesus says that it is the will of the Father that He lose none of all that the Father has given to Him. Does this have any bearing on the doctrine commonly referred to as “the perseverance of the saints”? Does this statement by Jesus imply that all believers are secure in their salvation?
- Jesus said, “everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life” (v.40). Does this statement support the notion of “free will” and prove that salvation is based on the “free choice” of man? Does it contradict the previous statements that seem to refer to the sovereignty of God?
- In verse 44, Jesus says “no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.” What is the meaning of the word “draw”? Is it a forceful dragging or a gentle wooing? Who is drawn to the Son by the Father? Is every individual drawn or only the elect? Is this drawing resistible or irresistible?
- Lastly, Jesus said, “Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from Him comes to Me” (v.45). Does this give evidence that man is not truly dead in sin to the extent that he cannot respond to God? Must a man choose to listen the Father and learn from Him *before* coming to the Son for salvation? Does this verse overturn the doctrine of total depravity and give evidence for the “free choice of man”?

At the very minimum, one's understanding of the sovereignty of God, the freedom of God, and four of the five fundamental doctrines of Calvinism's TULIP¹ (i.e. all except limited atonement²) are directly informed by his understanding of this passage of Scripture. Since the words therein are from the mouth of Jesus, they are of the utmost interest, since Christ Himself is the ultimate authority and it is He Himself who taught the apostle Paul this "high doctrine" that he also espouses. Does John 6:36-45 give evidence that Jesus taught the complete sovereignty and freedom of God in salvation? My conclusions, based on exegesis of the original language texts, will follow the second part of this paper.

Section 2: Exegetical Conclusions

This portion of the exegesis paper will consist of a presentation of the conclusions drawn from researching John 6:36-45. A brief and succinct justification of exegetical conclusions follows.

Textual Variants

Each of the four stylistic differences noted in the first part of the paper between GNT, SCR, and BYZ are not significant in any sense. In the same way, of the eleven textual variants, none are significant grammatically, thematically or doctrinally. In v.36, the GNT has [μϵ], whereas SCR and the BYZ both have μϵ. Some of the manuscripts, such as Sinaiticus (Ⲙ) and Codex Alexandrinus (A), do not contain the term μϵ. Regardless of whether this word was originally in the text or missing, the thrust of Christ's statement is in no way affected. If the word μϵ is omitted, Christ is simply answering their question in verse 30, where they ask "what then do you do for a sign, that we may see (ἴδωμεν) and believe you?" by reiterating what He said in verse 26, "you saw (εἶδετε) signs". Similarly, the other ten textual variants have no affect on the meaning and significance of the text. The only other one worth mentioning is in verse 45. Here we find ὁ ἀκούσας (Aorist active nominative masculine singular participle) in GNT and SCR, where BYZ has ὁ ἀκούων (Present active nominative masculine singular participle). The GNT and SCR rendering is to be preferred, because the participle μαθών is connected to this one by the conjunction καὶ, and μαθών is an Aorist active nominative masculine singular participle. Grammatically, these two participles likely match, since they are referring to the same people in a parallel fashion. Again, the meaning is not affected either way.

Oddities and Vagueness

In verse 37, we find Jesus using the neuter singular πᾶν ὃ and the masculine singular τὸν ἐρχόμενον to refer to the same people. Similarly, in verse 39, Jesus uses the neuter singular πᾶν ὃ... αὐτοῦ... αὐτὸ, followed in verse 40 by the masculine singular πᾶς ὁ θεωρῶν...αὐτὸν. Why did He use the neuter and masculine singular forms to refer to the same people? Upon closer review of the text, it can be seen that Jesus is simply distinguishing based on perspective. Every time He refers to those given to Him (i.e. the elect) from the perspective of the Father (i.e. the divine perspective), He uses the neuter singular. Conversely, every time He refers to the elect from the perspective of the believer (i.e. human perspective), He uses the masculine singular, which is more personal. This pattern is found throughout John's gospel when Jesus is speaking

¹ Total Depravity; Unconditional Election; Limited Atonement; Irresistible Grace; Perseverance of the Saints

² Although it can be argued that limited atonement can be seen indirectly in this passage

specifically about those who have been given to Him by the Father. In John 10:29, Jesus said, “ὁ πατήρ μου ὃ (neuter singular) δέδωκέν μοι”. We also see this in 1 John 5:4 and twice in John 17. In v.2, Jesus said, “πάν ὃ (neuter singular) δέδωκας αὐτῷ”, and in v.24 He said, “ὃ (neuter singular) δέδωκάς μοι”. In v.9, however, He uses the masculine singular form, “ὧν δέδωκάς μοι”, because He is speaking on behalf of the elect (i.e. “I ask on their behalf”). Notice that Jesus always uses the perfect tense to describe the Father giving the elect to the Son. Verse 37 is the only exception. There, the present tense is used to emphasize the reason for the unbelief found in v.36.

A second area of vagueness is found in verse 39. It is grammatically possible that the verb form ἀναστήσω can be either the future active indicative first person singular *or* the 1st aorist active subjunctive first person singular form of ἀνίστημι. Although it is possible for it to be the subjunctive form here, since the phrase ἀναστήσω αὐτὸ [έν] τῇ ἑσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ is tied to another subjunctive phrase (μὴ ἀπολέσω ἐξ αὐτοῦ) by the connective ἀλλὰ, it is more likely that John intended it as future active based on his custom of use. The apostle used the entire phrase with the same form of the verb three other times in the immediate context (v.40, 44, 54), all of which are in the future active form. Similarly, the future middle is used in 11:24 in conjunction with the phrase τῇ ἑσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ. The phrase is again used in 12:48 with the verb κρινεῖ (future active). Additionally, of the seven uses of the verb ἀνίστημι in John’s gospel, none are subjunctive.

Interpretive Difficulties and Problems with Word Meaning

The majority of the interpretive difficulties and problems with word meaning in this passage are in relation to the sovereignty and freedom of God and the doctrines of grace. The first word that needs clarification is ἑώρακάτέ (v.36). The Jews have seen Jesus and still did not believe. What type of “seeing” was Jesus referring to? This is a common word, used 82 times by John in his gospel account alone. There are two common usages of this word (1) to see with the eyes, (2) to perceive. John regularly utilizes the word in both senses. In v.36, physical sight is to be preferred over perception, since Jesus’ whole point is to explain why they do *not* perceive and believe. The immediate context makes this abundantly clear. In v.14, the people physically saw (ιδόντες) a sign. In v.26, Jesus acknowledged that they physically saw (εἶδετε) signs but did not perceive their significance. In v.30, they themselves ask for yet another sign to see (ἴδωμεν) with their eyes so that they might perceive and believe. In v.36, as mentioned in the previous section, Jesus answers their query, saying that they have seen with their eyes. Verse 46, in conjunction with 14:9, makes it clear that they certainly have not perceived Him. So, this verse cannot in any way be referring to the illumination of the gospel and/or enablement to believe.

The second area of consideration comes in v.37, where Jesus says, “all that the Father gives me will come to Me”. First, it is important to note that the singular nouns and verbs indicate that Jesus is speaking of elect individuals as opposed to an impersonal group (see above section on the use of the neuter singular). Secondly, we must understand the usage of the word δίδωσιν. John uses this verb when referring to the Father as the giver and the Son as the recipient of the elect in 10:29 (“My Father, who has given *them* to Me”). The antecedent to the implied *them* is “sheep” (v.27), who are described by Christ as those who: (1) hear His voice and follow Him (v.27), (2) are known by Jesus (v.27), (3) are given eternal life (v.28), (4) are given by the Father to the Son (v.29), (5) will not perish (v.28), and (6) will never be snatched from the Son’s or the

Father's hand (vv.28-29). Additionally, they are described in John 17 as those who: (1) are given eternal life (v.2), (2) belong to the Father (v.9), and (3) will be in heaven with Christ (v.24). Although the text in John 6:36-45 does not say *why* the Father chooses some to give to the Son, Arminians insist that He does so on the basis of foreseen faith exercised by free will. They believe that faith logically precedes and even determines election. This cannot be derived from the text for several reasons: (1) election (i.e. giving of the Father to the Son) precedes and guarantees faith in v.37 (i.e. δίδωσίν is present active and ἔξει is future active), (2) drawing/enabling precedes faith in vv.44, 65, (3) John 10:26, 29 indicate that the non-elect do not believe *because* they have not been given to the Son by the Father. So, although we cannot deduce from this text alone that election is unconditional, we can conclude that it precedes the act of believing as well as the ability to believe.

The third interpretive issue arises in regards to Jesus' statement in v.39 that it is the Father's will that He lose none the Father has given to Him. Many Arminians argue that although Christ would never will to cast anyone out (v.37), people can cast themselves out through unbelief. Many also maintain that Jesus is speaking solely in regards to the 12 apostles in a physical sense. Can this be true or does the text instead point to all believers in a spiritual sense? In this section of the passage, we have a small chiasm: (A) The Father gives to the Son and the Son does not cast out (v.37), (B) The Father's will (v.38), (B') the Father's will (v.39a), (A') None who are given are to be lost (v.39a). This literary structure indicates two things: (1) the Father's will is central to both Christ's work and man's salvation, and (2) the idea of the Son not casting out any of the elect is parallel to the idea that He lose none of the elect. This implies that the only way an elect person could possibly be lost is if Christ would cast him out, which He would not do. In v.37, Christ used the phrase οὐ μὴ ἐκβάλω ἕξω. By using οὐ μὴ with a subjunctive, which is one of the strongest grammatical forms of negation possible, Jesus was emphasizing the security of the believer. Furthermore, the very next phrase after the chiasm is ἀναστήσω αὐτὸ τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ, further accentuating the security of the elect. This phrase is used again in vv.40, 44, and 54. By connecting the four, we can readily conclude that those given to the Son by the Father and never lost (vv.37, 39) = those who receive eternal life through looking to and believing in the Son (v.40) = those who are drawn by and come to the Father (v.44) = those who have eternal life through partaking of Christ (v.54). This is true since all four of these groups are described as those whom Jesus will raise up on the last day. So, all who look to and believe in Christ unto eternal life, do so because they have first been given to the Son by the Father and drawn by the Father. By the will of God, they will never be cast out or lost, and every one of them will be raised up by Christ on the last day. These verses make it clear that Christ is not simply talking about His disciples in a physical sense but the all of the elect in a spiritual sense.

The fourth interpretive issue comes in v.44. Here, Jesus says "no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws (ἐλκύσῃ) him." Of the eight occurrences of ἔλκω in the New Testament, five occur in John's gospel. Each time the word is used, it refers to drawing or dragging. Each time, something is described as successfully drawn, the object of the drawing, is passive and has no ability to resist the drawing. Two of the occurrences in John refer to God the Father or Christ drawing men to the Lord Jesus for salvation (John 12:32). Many Arminians state that 6:44 is to be understood in light of 12:32 and that 12:32 indicates that Jesus draws every single person to Himself. First, an analysis of 12:32 will show that Christ is talking about drawing all people groups to Himself, not all individuals. Secondly, it is impossible for 6:44 to

be saying that God draws every single person. Christ's whole point in making the statement, which is the counterpart to v.37, is to explain to the Jews why they don't believe. This can be seen again in v.65, which is a restatement of v.44. In v.65, Jesus makes it clear that the drawing of the Father is an enabling to come to Christ in faith. Furthermore, v.44 makes a direct connection between those who are drawn and those who are raised up on the last day through the use of the pronoun αὐτόν (ἐλκύση αὐτόν, κἀγὼ ἀναστήσω αὐτόν). The αὐτόν who is drawn by the Father is the same αὐτόν that is raised on the last day by the Son. So, everyone drawn by the Father comes to the Son for salvation and will be raised on the last day. Notice that the Father's drawing precedes individual faith (ἔρχομαι is used throughout the passage to refer to faith). So, the simple construction of this verse strongly argues for total depravity (no one can come), unconditional election (unless the Father draws him), irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints (those drawn = those raised on the last day).

Lastly, Jesus said, "Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from Him comes to Me" (v.45). This verse in no way indicates that man is capable of coming to Christ without the enabling of the Father. In the previous verse, Christ made it abundantly clear that man cannot come to Him unless he is drawn by the Father. Here, Christ quotes Isaiah 54:13, which speaks of God's great mercy and perpetual covenant of peace given to the Lord's people. In v.17 of that passage, the preceding statements are summed up with the words "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord". This is exactly Jesus' point. Those who are the true servants of the Lord, who have received the promise of mercy and the covenant of peace, are the ones who come to Him. The Jews were the first to claim to be in covenant with God the Father, but Jesus made it clear how they could truly know if they were children of the covenant, given by the Father, drawn/enabled by the Father, hearers and learners of the Father, recipients of eternal life, and recipients of the promise to be raised on the last day. His point...these things are only true for those who come to Him in faith, which is what His audience had failed to do.

Section 3: Interaction with Scholars

The final section of the exegesis paper will consist of my interaction with four major commentators and three other authors. I will argue in support of the conclusions made in part two of the paper. The format and section titles will follow part two as well. The four major commentators I will interact with are (1) Andreas J. Köstenberger³, (2) B.F. Westcott⁴, (3) F.F. Bruce⁵, and (4) D.A. Carson⁶. Additionally, I will interact with writings from James White⁷, Norman Geisler⁸, and Steve Witzki⁹.

³ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004.

⁴ B.F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*, New Impression, London: John Murray, 1908.

⁵ F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1983.

⁶ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1991.

⁷ James White, *Drawn by the Father*, Lindenhurst, NY: Reformation Press, 2000.

⁸ Norman Geisler, *Chosen but Free*, Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2001

⁹ Steve Witzki, *Calvinism and John Six: An Exegetical Response, Part One*, The Arminian, Volume 23, Issue 1, Spring 2005; Steve Witzki, *Calvinism and John Six: An Exegetical Response, Part Two*, The Arminian, Volume 23, Issue 2, Fall 2005.

Textual Variants

As previously elaborated, I believe that the word $\mu\epsilon$ in v.36 is most likely original. Köstenberger notes that the majority of commentators also do. He then proceeds to list eight examples, including Carson. Westcott agrees that the thought is contained in vv.26, 30 and argues that “[Jesus] Himself was the sign”¹⁰. Bruce also references v.26. In verse 45, I have stated that $\acute{\alpha}\kappa\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha\varsigma$ is preferred over $\acute{\alpha}\kappa\omicron\upsilon\omega\nu$. Westcott agrees that the two participles are parallel: “the ‘hearing’ and ‘learning’ are presented as single events”¹¹. None of the other commentators mention this variant.

Oddities and Vagueness

Regarding the use of the neuter singular $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu \delta$ in vv.37, 39, to refer to the elect, Köstenberger believes that it is “used in a qualitative, collective sense”¹². Westcott agrees, “believers are first regarded as forming a whole complete in its several parts”¹³. Bruce concurs that the neuter denotes “the sum-total of believers...the community as a whole”¹⁴. In Carson’s words, “a singular neuter is used to refer to the elect collectively”¹⁵. So, the four major commentators are all in agreement on this point, as are White and Witzki (and Geisler didn’t comment). In my essay, I argued that Jesus was simply distinguishing based on perspective. Every time He refers to those given to Him (i.e. the elect) from the perspective of the Father (i.e. the divine perspective), He uses the neuter singular. Conversely, every time He refers to the elect from the perspective of the believer (i.e. human perspective), He uses the masculine singular, which is more personal. This pattern is found throughout John’s gospel when Jesus is speaking specifically about those who have been given to Him by the Father (c.f. John 10:29, 17:2, 24; 1 John 5:4). So, I take a position contrary to all of these commentators and writers, and I stand by my position for three reasons: (1) My conclusions are based on the linguistic style of John throughout his writings, since he uses this convention at least three other times in his gospel and once in his first epistle. (2) The fact that he uses $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$ to refer to each elect individual opposed to the elect as a collective group can be seen clearly by context. For example John 17:2 pictures Christ giving eternal life to $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$, which is something given to individuals. 1 John 5:4 says that the $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$ who is born of God overcomes the world, also an individual reference. (3) Usually the neuter plural is used in conjunction with a singular verb to give the sense of a collective whole. On page 68 of his book on Greek Grammar, Bill Mounce writes, “It is an indication that the author is viewing the plural subject not as a collection of different things but as one group”¹⁶. Additionally, Wallace mentions nothing of a neuter singular used with a singular verb in his section on the collective singular.¹⁷ Given this fact, I contend that the apostle John would have likely used the neuter plural $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\alpha$ with the same verb if he was intending to speak of the elect as a collective group. From a theological standpoint, this conclusion has some significance. Some Arminian believers, such as Witzki, argue that this passage refers to the elect as a group, making election collective and impersonal, rather than individual and personal. The fact that John is

¹⁰ Westcott, 102

¹¹ Westcott, 105

¹² Köstenberger, 211

¹³ Westcott, 103

¹⁴ Bruce, 154

¹⁵ Carson, 290

¹⁶ William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003

¹⁷ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996, 400-401

indeed speaking of individual elect persons here quickly puts that idea to rest. This is a “death blow” to Witzki’s whole thesis, since it takes away any possibility of corporate, impersonal election from this passage. None of the commentators stated why they believe πάν refers to the elect corporately. They simply assume it to be true, but I cannot find reason to agree. As I have demonstrated above, John’s writing points to the contrary.

Secondly, in verse 39, I argue that the verb ἀναστήσω should be taken as a future active indicative first person singular. Köstenberger believes that it should be taken as aorist subjunctive, since it is connected to the subjunctive ἀπολέσω. Westcott points out that John’s usage here is unique in that “the effect is represented as dependent on the Father’s will; but when the words are repeated (vv. 40, 44, 54)...the effect is referred to the will of the Son.”¹⁸ Bruce does not comment and Carson links this verse with vv.40, 44, 54 in that they all refer to the final resurrection¹⁹. Although these men make good, strong points, I believe that the verb should be rendered as a future active for the following reasons: (1) John’s custom of use of the entire phrase (vv.40, 44, 54, 11:24, 12:48), (2) The fact that none of the other seven uses of the verb ἀνίστημι in John’s gospel are subjunctive, and (3) John regularly uses the verb ἀπόλλυμι in the subjunctive when speaking of man’s salvation (John 3:16, 10:28, 2 John 1:8). These facts are more compelling than the connected subjunctive verb.

Interpretive Difficulties and Problems with Word Meaning

The first word that needs clarification is ἑώρακατέ (v.36). The Jews have seen Jesus and still did not believe. My assessment that the reference here is to physical sight, not perception, is shared by all of the commentators.

The second area of consideration comes in v.37, where Jesus says, “all that the Father gives me will come to Me”. Regarding this, Köstenberger comments, “this present verse is significantly elaborated upon in 6:44...Despite the rejection mentioned in 6:36, Jesus is confident that certain ones will come to him”²⁰. Westcott, Bruce, Carson, and White all emphasize the fact that Jesus’ words demonstrate that God’s saving plan cannot be frustrated by disbelief. In the face of this unbelief (v.36), Carson says these words to show that “his confidence is in his Father to bring to pass the Father’s redemptive purposes”²¹. On the contrary, Witzki proposes a chiasm in vv.39-40 where the phrases “all that He has given me” and “everyone who looks to the Son and believes” are parallel. Then he proposes that the connective γάρ in v.40 indicates equality between the two phrases. From this he assumes that election is based on foreseen faith. I disagree completely. Parallel usage of descriptions does not imply equality, order or causality. This would be like saying that the phrase “love is patient, love is kind” implies that patience equals kindness or that one precedes the other. So, his whole position is based on a faulty assumption. John 6:44, 65, 10:26, 29 make it clear that election precedes faith.

The third interpretive issue arises in regards to Jesus’ statement in v.39 that it is the Father’s will that He lose none the Father has given to Him. Köstenberger, Bruce, and Carson agree that the security of the believer depends of the faithfulness of the Son. James White adds, “if the true

¹⁸ Westcott, 103

¹⁹ Carson, 292

²⁰ Köstenberger, 211

²¹ Carson, 290

believer can fail to receive salvation then...the Son has failed to do the very thing that the Father sent Him from heaven to accomplish”²². Witzki, on the other hand, attempts to connect the word ἤξει in v.37 with ἀναστήσω in vv. 39, 40, 44, and 54 to conclude that Jesus is simply stating that He will ensure that all people who believe (by their own free will) to the end will have the guarantee of being raised up on the last day. However, he altogether ignores Christ’s declaration “I shall lose nothing”. This is an absurd interpretation. It is obvious that everyone who believes to the end will be resurrected. That has nothing to do with the context of John 6...Jesus was not explaining to them how their belief will ensure their resurrection. They didn’t believe! He was doing just the opposite, explaining why they didn’t believe. As stated in part 2 of my paper, when we take vv. 39, 40, 44, and 54 together, we can clearly see that the emphasis is on the faithfulness of Christ doing the will of His Father by causing the elect to persevere.

The fourth interpretive issue comes is v.44. Here, Jesus says “no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws (ἐλκύση) him.” Köstenberger comments that “salvation depends not on human believing, but on the ‘drawing’ action of the Father”²³. Using John 12:32 as a reference, Westcott asserts that the drawing is “a love which calls out, and does not destroy, man’s freedom and issues in self-sacrifice”²⁴. Geisler agrees with the meaning being to “draw out of love”²⁵ instead of dragging. Bruce also mentions John 12:32 saying that Christ “draws all without distinction to himself”²⁶, as does Carson. Bruce argues that the statement in this verse is the negative corollary to v.37. Carson adds, “The combination of v. 37a and v.44 prove this ‘drawing’ activity of the Father cannot be reduced to what theologians sometimes call ‘prevenient grace’ dispensed to every individual, for this ‘drawing’ is selective, or else the negative note in v.44 is meaningless”²⁷. Witzki argues that the verse never says that *all* who are drawn will be saved. Geisler goes further by saying that “their being drawn by God was conditioned on their faith...those who believe are enabled by God to come to Him”²⁸. Interestingly, Geisler provides no attempts at exegesis of the passage. Each time the word, ἔλκω is used, the object of the drawing, is passive and has no ability to resist the drawing. The ideas that 6:44 is to be understood in light of 12:32 and that Jesus draws every single person to Himself are both incorrect. In 12:32, Christ is talking about drawing all people groups to Himself, not all individuals. Secondly, it makes no sense to say that God draws every single person in the context of 6:44, since Christ’s whole point in making the statement, which is the counterpart to v.37, is to explain to the Jews why they don’t believe (c.f. v.65). Furthermore, v.44 makes a direct connection between those who are drawn and those who are raised up on the last day through the use of the pronoun αὐτόν (ἐλκύση αὐτόν, καὶ γὰρ ἀναστήσω αὐτόν), indicating that the Father’s drawing precedes individual faith. So, Witzki’s claim that some will be drawn and not saved is unfounded, and Geisler’s claim that God’s drawing is conditioned on faith is completely backwards from what the passage actually says.

²² White, 43-44

²³ Köstenberger, 213

²⁴ Westcott, 104

²⁵ Geisler, 95

²⁶ Bruce, 156

²⁷ Carson, 293

²⁸ Geisler, 95

Lastly, Jesus said, “Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from Him comes to Me” (v.45). Regarding this verse, Köstenberger wrote, “everyone truly receptive to divine revelation will come to Christ”²⁹. Both Köstenberger, Bruce, and Carson compare this quote from Isaiah 54:13 to the new covenant promise found in Jeremiah 31:31-34. I agree with their assessments with one additional comment. To understand how this verse relates to v.44, we must understand that, in context, Isaiah 54 speaks of God’s great mercy and perpetual covenant of peace given to the His own people. In v.17 of Isaiah 54, the preceding statements are summed up with the words “This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord”. So Jesus was essentially saying that those who are elect (i.e. who have received the promise of mercy and the covenant of peace) are the ones who come to Him. Despite the Jews’ claims, their failure to come to Christ proved they were not children of the covenant.

²⁹ Köstenberger, 213