

C H A P T E R T H R E E

“Thus, John unfolds for us here on the lips of John the Baptist a whole christology.”

(Brown 1971:58)

JOHN THE BAPTIST (JOHN 1-4)

3.1 REVISITING THE STRUCTURE OF JOHN’S GOSPEL

The overall structure of John is fairly clear and generally recognisable (Painter 1997:574), since the particular situations in which the Johannine narrative unfold can be used as a criterion for the order and structure of the Gospel (Morris 1971:65-69; Van der Watt 2007:11-12). As shown in Chapter Two, events unfolding from John 1:19 up to John 12:50 can be grouped together as it represents John’s take on the public ministry of Jesus.

For the purposes of our investigation into the use of μαρτυρία, two chapters shall be devoted to Jesus’ public ministry, i.e. this chapter investigating John 1:19-4:54 and the next one looking into John 5:1-12:50.

The unity of John 1:19-4:54 is based on the common theme of the ministry of John the Baptist (Staley 1986:251). In all the pericopes that tell the story of John the Baptist the μαρτυρία-lexeme is used. This can be seen as a possible cohesive marker and as such allows the grouping together of these passages for the purposes of investigation. The thematic unity of John 1:19-4:54, as it will be expanded upon in due course, lies in the common theme of how the identity of Jesus as the Christ and how people recognise Jesus as the Christ. In this, the μαρτυρία word-group takes a very prominent position.

The specific pericopes containing the μαρτυρία-lexeme are:

- John 1:1-18.
- John 1:19-28.
- John 1:29-24.
- John 2:23-25.
- John 3:1-15.
- John 3:22-30.
- John 3:31-36.
- John 4:39-42 (detail consideration will be given to John 4:1-30 as this forms part of the context of the aforementioned pericope).
- John 4:43-54.

The Gospel's overall structuring follows a thematic-pictorial building-block pattern. It presents one theme after another and then returning later to an earlier previous thought to expand on it again. This makes it necessary to read the text synchronically, which means it will be read sequentially from verse to verse and chapter to chapter as the text now stands (Moloney 1993:2). Passages not included in the abovementioned list will only be glossed over.

3.2 INTRODUCING THE FIRST WITNESS

John 1:1-18 has been called a defining text about the incarnation of Christ (Hirsch 2006:131). It forms an integral part of the Baptist's story as it introduces his testimony in an unequivocally clear way. The Prologue, however, doesn't primarily deal with the Baptist. It should rather be seen as a confession of faith, a vision of the world from the perspective of faith arising from the manifestation of glory by the Word who became flesh (Painter 1997:579), provides the rational basis of the positions which are taken for granted in the rest of the Gospel (Lindars 1990:96) and tells of the marvellous coming of God into human history through Jesus Christ.

We find here a poem presenting two different orders of being (a philosophical concept) distinguished by the measure of reality they possess. The one is the order of pure reality, transcendent and eternal, which is the very thought of God, and the other is the empirical reality. The Prologue beautifully demonstrates the incursion

into the lower, empirical order by the higher, transcendent order – an increasing dominance of light over darkness, being over not-being and truth over error (Dodd 1953:295). The word befitting this manifestation, is σάρξ (John 1:14; 3:6).

But how does one go about with an anomalous passage such as this one? We should at least make an effort to pay the poetical genre in which it was written, some respect.

3.2.1 Retelling the Story

Thus, we should begin with the beginning. After all, that is where John started. Accepting that we are supposed to know something about the Old Testament, John recalls the creation story of Genesis 1. Through this back-story he reveals the real reason for God's creation: to speak it into existence; to make his words personal; to become a real part of it and by so doing to show his unrelenting love; and to show how true life can be found. Because the God of Genesis is also the God of John and He can be seen, touched, heard and spoken to. He who was, is and will be forever has also become ... human.

Alluding to the vast darkness covering creation, God spoke into it life and life became light, and light cast aside all vestiges of the darkness. Now all people can see how God looks, who He really is, and what it means to live in his loving presence.

Then there was this guy, an ordinary human being. He had a mission. He was to speak as well. But his words cannot create. It can only testify. His mission was to tell about the light, to share his knowledge of the Word, to reflect upon his personal involvement with God-who-became-human. He was to be so eloquently passionate about the Word who spoke creation into existence and then personally came to earth to shine a light in the spiritual darkness that remained, that everybody can see through his words how God on earth looks, and believe the testimony. His name was John, better known as the Baptist.

The thing with darkness, also, is that it creates doubt. It covers truth. It enslaves people through its ability to blind sight and heart. Darkness causes people to not believe. It causes them to reject the truth and choose the lie instead. It causes them to continue stumbling along through life, unable to see what riches life really holds. Darkness is very black closest to home. If you know the story of Genesis, as John expects you to, you also know how deceptively easy it is to fall for true-sounding lies. And if you believe any old thing you are removed from all light, living in the bondages of sin, eternally estranged from the Word who spoke you into existence.

Not anymore. If you accept the testimony of John you discover the light in the dark tunnel is actually at the door of the home of your real Father. If you take the light and live your life in its light, you receive a new surname, God's. If you make the connection between metaphor and reality, believing that this One is really who He claims to be, you are part of a heavenly family. And that's because God decided it will be so.

Therefore, what needs to be believed is that God, after speaking – the Word – became man, living on earth with us, exuding the real image and purposes of His spiritual self, giving Himself a true life identity.

Remember John’s testimony? He spoke about someone specific, somebody else we all saw. He practically yelled this guy’s true identity at us. He said: It’s Him! He is God! We discovered that He really is Him – He gave us grace like we could never have imagined. We lived under the law, expecting punishment. He gave life, forgiveness and the possibility to really see God.

His name is Jesus.

3.2.2 Investigating the Prologue

This - as set out above, then, is the strategy John had in mind when the author decided to include a poetic device before the prosaic part of the narrative (Moloney 1993:23-24). Now we are armed with enough information to adequately understand the story. We know what to expect: This pericope is all about “The Word” – or Jesus (Morris 1971:72). He is the hero of the tale (Stibbe 1994:6), although Jesus is only called “The Word” in two verses of the pericope (John 1:1, 14) and never again in this way in the rest of the Gospel (Phillips 2006:73).

It is only in here that John states absolutely and personally that the person Jesus is in fact the *λόγος*, the Word - spoken by God to reveal and create – incarnate (Dodd 1953:267-269; Klappert 1986:1114; Louw & Nida 1988:400). John verbally echoes the use of “to speak” in Genesis 1. The explicit linking of the metaphors of Light and Word provides the rationale of the Christology which is assumed in the rest of the Gospel, but not stated in the same philosophical terms as it is done in this pericope (Lindars 1990:74).

We must understand that the testimony of John the Baptist is helping us to grasp this fact. That is why, in John 1:15, testimony is presented through the historical present tense (*μαρτυρεῖ*), helping us to see it happened, John was there and now he will not keep quiet about it (Brown 1971:4). And the Baptist’s witness is continuing (Morris 1971:107).

The impression is strengthened by the use of the perfect tense in *κέκραγεν* (Brown 1971:15), having the value of a present tense, although appearing as something that is already happened and need to continue. Immediately this enforces the realisation that John wasn’t thinking along legal – or courtroom – lines when he uses *μαρτυρία*. He wants his readers to know the witnesses were people who were there, who saw it happen, who knew the persons involved, and who can attest to the truth of what he has written (Louw & Nida 1988:418).

As work of immense assurance and literary power (Lindars 1972:77), the Prologue thus describes the development of the plot of Jesus' public ministry (Culpepper 1998:116-117): While many did not accept Jesus who came to earth with the purpose to reveal God, there were those who believed in him and thus became God's children (Van der Watt 2007:12).

3.3 INVESTIGATING THE BAPTIST (John 1:19-51)

3.3.1 The Unity of the Narrative Sequences

John 1:19-51 relates a succession of events taking place over a period of four days (Moloney 1993:53-55): John 1:19-28 – Day One; John 1:29-34 – Day Two; John 1:35-42 – Day Three; John 1:43-51 – Day Four. The unity of this as single narrative is suggested by the repetition of τῆ ἐπαύριον in John 1:29, 35 and 43. During the course of these four days, both “story time” and “plotted time” is featured – story time as the four successive days of the events depicted, and plotted time can be found through the Gospel's use of τῆ ἡμέρα τῆ τρίτῃ in John 2:1. The use of this specific wording possibly alludes to Exodus 19:10-19 (especially 19:16) where the phrase is used to stage the dramatic setting of the gift of the law given through Moses in Exodus 20 (Moloney 1993:55). Thus the time frame provided is more symbolic than chronological (Brown 1971:45).

Koester (1989:329) discussed John 1:19-51 as a single unit, showing how the different pericopes fit together structurally. The first two parts of this passage is organised as two passages each of approximately equal length (John 1:19-23, 24-28 and John 1:29-34, 35-39). Both in John 1:19 and John 1:24 John tells of the delegation from Jerusalem and refers to the Christ, Elijah and the prophet (John 1:20-21 & John 1:25). In the narrative pairs comprising John 1:29-39, τῆ ἡμέρᾳ is repeated as well as John seeing Jesus coming or walking; the announcement, ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (John 1:29, 35-36) is made; and the word, μένειν, is repeated in John 1:32-33 and John 1:38-39.

The two narrative pairs are connected to each other through the presence of the Baptist, his reasons for baptising, the unknown character of the coming one (John 1:26, 31) and, more importantly, the Baptist's testimony.

3.3.2 Drama over Eschatology, while it's all about Jesus

The telling of the Baptist's story starts quite dramatic. As he is busy with his ministry of repentance, a delegation from Jerusalem appears to investigate his ministry. This delegation from Jerusalem consists of priests and Levites - members of the party of the Pharisees (John 1:24) – to question him on his actions (John 1:19) and report back, probably to the Jewish religious authorities in Jerusalem (John 1:22). At the time John was on the other side of the Jordan River – probably seen from the

perspective of coming from Jerusalem near Bethabara – where he was busy baptising people (John 1:28).

The question they asked him (“who are you?”), could relate to his perceived identity or to his authority or to the social grouping to which he belonged. John testified unequivocally that he is not the Christ (John 1:20), creating the impression he answered them from the viewpoint of his identity. They followed their question up with a clearer seeking of his identity, by wanting to know if he is the prophet Elijah or the Prophet (John 1:21), and John denied both. The delegation demanded that he explain himself (John 1:22), upon which he used the opportunity to explain his position in this unfolding scenario (John 1:27) and, more importantly, show the Jewish authorities that they do not know the real Messiah (John 1:26).

Yet, John does not want his readers to focus on any legal drama. The scene gets introduced with the suggestion that the Baptist’s testimony, to which he referred in the opening sequence (John 1:15), is linked to and now being continued: “καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ Ἰωάννου ...” (John 1:19a – Lindars 1971:102). To underscore the idea that this is an opportunity to explain his testimony, John emphatically used the same word, ὁμολόγησεν, tautologically (Brown 1971:45), placing it on either side of its semantic opposite, ἠρνήσατο, to underscore the contrast that is created here (John 1:20). This word means either “*to profess one’s allegiance*” or “*to acknowledge a fact publicly, to admit or to confess*” (Louw & Nida 1988/1:419-420). John wanted us to grasp the clarity with which the Baptist acknowledged his non-identity, his role in the

play, his authority to minister – thereby leaving his readers with a clear picture of the identity of the Christ (Morris 1971:130).

The first sequence of the Baptist's testimony presupposes the reader's knowledge of eschatological expectation in Jewish religion (Newman & Nida 1980:30). By baptising people, the Baptist was performing an eschatological action, while preaching a message of divine intervention filled with eschatological concepts popular among Jews (Brown 1971:46). John's eschatological teaching was based on concepts current within Judaism and he employed these thoughts to show how Christ fulfilled them (Brown 1986:928).

As this testimony is not about himself, but about The One of whom John the Baptist testified about in the first pericope, the Gospel aims to introduce the character of the One who will fulfil the Jewish leadership's eschatological expectation (Moloney 1993:61). The Baptist's answer, Ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ὁ Χριστός, should be understood as a reference to the expecting of a future Davidic king that would supposedly liberate Israel from foreign oppression (Newman and Nida 1980:30).

In John 1:21 the back-story of Jewish eschatological expectation becomes clearer (Newman & Nida 1980:31): The question whether John the Baptist could be the prophet Elijah is a reference to Jewish belief based on Malachi 4:5 that this prophet would return at the end of times to prepare the way for the Messiah (Lindars 1972:103). In any case, they had good reason to suspect John is claiming to be

Elijah. The synoptics' description (in Mark 1:6) of the Baptist's attire and diet correlate with Old Testament references in 2 Kings 1:8 and Zech 13:4 (Brown 1971:47). What they were trying to ascertain, therefore, was whether the Baptist fit in their concept of the intended Messianic precursor they wanted to associate with the Baptist (Moloney 1993:61).

As such, John refused to fit into any of their Messianic categories or that of his way-bearer, choosing instead to tell them that actually they do not know the Messiah (John 1:26). To achieve this, he claimed the role the Isaian voice presented through a quote from Isaiah 40:3, implying that his ministry was to present God to Israel. In the context of Isaiah 40, the Baptist's quote alludes to the role angels played in the good news of the arrival of the end of punishment for Israel's sins - They act like "a modern bulldozer" and level hills and valleys to make a "superhighway" for God's arrival (Brown 1971:50). God will be coming to show his might and therefore a road in the desert must be made for this appearance.

The delegation responded by questioning his baptism practice if he isn't the Christ, Elijah or the Prophet. With this, they probably shifted their questioning to the Baptist's authority (Brown 1971:51). In reply, the Baptist repeated and continued his earlier testimony (John 1:15). Instead of focusing on him, he turned the attention to Jesus, and He told them that among them are a person whom they do not know, he is to come after John but He existed before John.

Brown (1971:53) calls this a reference to an apocalyptic strain of messianic expectation where the Messiah's presence on earth would be hidden until he is shown unexpectedly to his people. The Baptist's authority (or power or status), therefore is of such a nature that he isn't worthy enough to perform a job associated with a slave for him (to untie his shoelaces for him – John 1:26-27). The Baptist's testimony is to reveal to his interlocutors the identity of this "hidden" Messiah. The Baptist's remark in John 1:26 isn't meant to be reproachful (Brown 1971:53) as he later told everybody that he also didn't know the identity of the Messiah, further underscoring the argument of a hidden Messiah.

3.3.3 Testimony, Hearing, Seeing and Believing – An Alternative Interpretation

Another possibility in the quest to understanding this remark exists. Koester (1989:327-348) examined the juxtapositioning of faith and signs in the Gospel in order "*to discern a coherent view of seeing, hearing, and faith in the relevant portions of the gospel ...*" (Koester 1989:328). Maccini (1996:107) concurs and says the issue is whether people respond with belief or unbelief to Jesus' revelation in signs and words. In the narrative sequence ranging from John 1:19-51 the depiction of the Baptist and his disciples is in striking contrast to the delegation from Jerusalem. Their questions centred on the abovementioned messianic expectations and how the Baptist fit into this scheme of thinking. He "negatively confessed" that he is not the Christ, prophet or Elijah. Then the delegation challenged him on his baptism practice – once again falling back onto their messianic theological paradigm.

Against this backdrop, then, enters the remark of John 1:26 - μέσος ὑμῶν ἔστηκεν ὃν ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἶδατε. Koester (1989:329) remarked that this reply suggests that the delegation's messianic paradigm didn't adequately prepare them to recognise Jesus as it raises the question of how someone recognises Jesus as the Coming One as well. John does, however provide information on how the Baptist and his followers came to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. In this we then find a convincing argument for an implied ecclesiology where μαρτυρία plays a central role (Koester 1989:329-330):

- The Baptist's answer to the Jewish delegation (John 1:31, 33) acknowledges that he also did not know who Jesus was, but he was able to do so after God spoke to Him.
- In John 1:35-39 the words spoken to the Baptist were confirmed when he saw the Spirit descend and remain on Jesus. In John 1:34 the μαρτυρία-lexeme appears again (here as μεμαρτύρηκα). In this instance the Baptist presented his testimony as a conclusion to what he saw and heard, thereby confirming the fact that John uses the lexeme to indicate the Baptist's attestation that he was personally involved, he saw, heard and can guarantee the truth of the event. Thus, the Baptist can conclude about Jesus, ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.

- In John 1:36 the Baptist repeated his remark about Jesus as Lamb of God, and this resulted in two of his disciples following Jesus (John 1:37) when they heard him say these words.
- In John 1:38 Jesus asked them what they wanted and, in stark contrast to the Jewish delegation's pressing questions concerning their messianic theology, they asked Jesus where He stayed, upon which He answered they must come and they will see (John 1:39).
- The text doesn't show anything extraordinary about this exchange, but in John 1:41 one of these men, Andrew, went to his brother telling him that he has found the Messiah.
- In a similarly ordinary way Philip is called (John 1:43) and he follows Jesus based on these words alone.

In turn, Philip told Nathanael that he found the Messiah, and Nathanael reacted sceptical, based on the reputation of Jesus' home town, Nazareth (John 1:45). Nathanael believed in Jesus, however, after he spoke to Jesus (John 1:48-49). This led Jesus to make the following insightful remark:

ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, ὅτι εἶπόν σοι ὅτι εἶδόν σε ὑποκάτω
τῆς συκῆς πιστεύεις μείζω τούτων ὄψῃ. καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Ἄμην ἀμὴν
λέγω ὑμῖν, ὄψεσθε τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεωγῶτα καὶ τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοῦ θεοῦ
ἀναβαίνοντας καὶ καταβαίνοντας ἐπὶ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

(John 1:50-51)

In this last scene an interplay is found between Philip hearing Jesus making an out of the ordinary remark (πρὸ τοῦ σε Φίλιππον φωνῆσαι ὄντα ὑπὸ τὴν συκὴν εἶδόν σε – John 1:48) and him proclaiming Jesus to be the Son of God and the King of Israel (John 1:49), as well as in John 1:50-51 where Jesus remarked on Nathanael's faith based on what He said and the fact that he shall see greater things such as the heavens opened. As such, John successfully conveys the impression that through the testimony of John the Baptist, the true identity of Jesus was revealed (Lindars 1972:112). People believed the Baptist's testimony and got personally involved with Jesus. Through this relationship and the more intimate knowledge of Jesus, they made their own conclusions that He is indeed the Son of God.

For our investigation into an implied ecclesiology with μαρτυρία in a central position, the deliberate interplay in John 1:19-51 with the words, see, hear, speak, testify, and believe, is quite important. It also stands in contrast to the narrative sequence of John 2 that describes the miracle at Cana and the cleansing of the temple, where the chapter's concluding remarks – the off-the-cut observation by John about Jesus' attitude (John 2:23-25) – uses the μαρτυρία-lexeme to present a deliberate connection with the argument that believing in Jesus should rather be based on

seeing and hearing Him and the testimonies about Him. Nicol (1972:99) commented as follows about this interpretation possibility on John:

... One is first struck by the fact that he is apparently critical of this kind of faith [based on the miracles of Jesus]. (a) He partly rejects it or regards it as of little value, (b) makes it clear that much has to be added to it, (c) but nevertheless maintains that the miracles have some significance as witnesses to Christ for those who need it.

3.4 OF MIRACLES AND TESTIMONY (John 2)

In John 2, Jesus' action in public places is used as a vehicle to reveal his glory as new Bridegroom of the feast at the end of times (through the miracle at the wedding in Cana) and the raising of His body after three days (through the cleansing of the temple). In this way He is declared as the new temple who makes God present and who fulfils and supersedes the role of the temple in Jerusalem (Dunn 1997:354). Incidentally, it is only John that tells the Cana story – it is unique to this gospel (Brown 1971:101). There is a definite replacement motif evident in this story, as the miracle provides a sign of who Jesus is, namely the one sent by the Father who is now the only way to the Father. All previous religious institutions, customs and feasts lose meaning in his presence (Brown 1971:104).

This section of John's story is concluded by a narrator's statement from John that Jesus didn't trust those who came to believe in Him based on his miracles (John 2:24) as He knows humanity. Not even the ongoing testimony (μαρτυρήση) about human nature will change how He views humankind. The interesting wordplay with ἐπίστευεν should be noted: It is used both in John 2:23 (meaning believe) and John 2:24 (meaning trust), in an imperfect tense denoting Jesus' habitual attitude.

John wanted his readers to understand that nothing was wrong with Jesus' miracles but He knew what was wrong with humankind (Nicol 1972:132-133). Jesus was looking for genuine conversion and true faith and not just enthusiasm for the spectacular (Morris 1971:206-207).

This unusual knowledge of Jesus by John is put to good use in John 2:25 to show how Jesus' knowledge stems from the fact that He actually is God, as the Old Testament (see 1 Kings 8:39) showed that only God is able to know what is in the thoughts of humankind (Morris 1971:207). This is why the use of the μαρτυρία-lexeme here is intentional. It demonstrates Jesus' ability to know humanity's attitude without having to base his knowledge on witnesses.

3.5 IN CONVERSATION WITH NICODEMUS (JOHN 3)

3.5.1 A Nocturnal Confusion

The nightly conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus is introduced with the repetition of the previous pericope's last word, ἄνθρωπος, alluding to the fact that John's Gospel is actually continuing with the train of thought put forth regarding belief and wonders. As such, Nicodemus is depicted as part of a group of Jews who believes in Jesus partially and somewhat inadequately (Barrett 1978:208).

The clear identification of Nicodemus' status as a Pharisee and probably also a member of the ruling Jewish Council (John 3:1), underscores the idea that John intends to expand on the question of the Baptist's and later of Jesus' authority originally posted by the Jewish establishment, which the Baptist answered by testifying about Jesus' identity.

Nicodemus' opening remark thirdly stresses the continuation of the larger narrative line established up to this point as he confirms Jesus' Godly given status as teacher based on the σημεῖα he is doing (John 3:2).

Jesus' answer in John 3:3 is a typical stylistic figure in John (ἀμήν ἀμήν). Only in this Gospel the double amen is used, and it occurs 25 times. Its use is to emphasize what will follow and to confirm the truth of what is going to be said by Jesus (Newman & Nida 1980:51). It is therefore all the more surprising that the answer Jesus gave departs so radically from the statement posed to Him. Without addressing the matter of his authority – as implied by Nicodemus' remark – Jesus

launched into a discussion of the way a person will be able to see the kingdom of God.

For this He uses the metaphor of birth. John uses the phrase, βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, only in this pericope (here and in John 3:5). A more general use of βασιλεύς in the passion narrative explores the kingship of Jesus and the phrase here suggests Judaism's apocalyptic expectation of the miraculous vindication of Israel in the Kingdom of God and Jesus' criticism of their ignoring the necessity for inward conversion (Barrett 1978:207).

The kingdom is a common concept in John's Gospel and refers to God's rule in the lives of people rather than to a territory (Newman & Nida 1980:78). The intentional allusion to the Jewish belief in judgement, incidentally, also serves as a further stylistic contact between this pericope and John 1:19ff.

During the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, which has actually more the character of a monologue than a conversation (Lindars 1972:146), the following becomes apparent: A person has to be born a second time / from above to be able to receive / experience / enter / see the kingdom of God (John 3:3 – Barrett 1978:206; Newman & Nida 1980:78). Nicodemus misunderstood Jesus and reacted by questioning the possibility of being born again physically (John 3:4, 9 – Brown 1971:130; Van der Watt 1986/1:105).

According to Newman & Nida (1980:78) John characteristically uses words with a possible double meaning. This often serves as a means of transition in thought, based on the misunderstanding of the person with whom Jesus is speaking. Jesus here uses the misunderstanding as an opportunity to explain that what He means is referring to the necessity to be born from the Spirit along with a person's ordinary birth (John 3:5-7). The discourse stresses the point that the act of salvation depends on God's initiative and that the agent of salvation must originate with God through rebirth by the Spirit that only God can effect (Morris 1971:213; Van der Watt 1986/1:110; Lindars 1990:78).

John succeeds in this sequence to bring together two worlds – the Jewish expectation of the coming Kingdom and the Gospel's world that expresses salvation in terms of eternal life (Van der Watt 1986/1:107). The dynamic sense in which Jesus uses the concept of God's Kingdom shows he understands it as God's reign and not God's realm (Morris 1971:214). Jesus uses the example of the blowing wind as a parable to explain the inexplicable nature in the argument (John 3:7-8).

Here, we find yet another example of a double meaning as the word normally translated with wind also refers to spirit (Newman & Nida 1980:81). This metaphoric use tries to show the supernatural process of salvation that is invisible to the human eye and undeterminable (Van der Watt 1986/1:113).

3.5.2 The Use of *Μαρτυρία*

The stylistic change to the plural tense when using the μαρτυρία-lexeme (John 3:11) in contrast to the singular in the surrounding verses and the repetition of the theme of eternal life that also appears in John 3:36, connects this pericope to the story of the Baptist's testimony and the ongoing revealing of the identity of Jesus. The shift in verb tense here allows the reader to understand that Jesus refers to the collective testimony of Him as well as his disciples (Morris 1971:221).

According to Barrett (1978:211) this shift from singular to plural shows how Jesus associates with himself his disciples who have seen, believed and known. By deliberately using this lexeme, John's Gospel reminds us of the ongoing story of the testimony about Jesus that started with the Baptist, continued through his disciples and is now aimed at the collective of half-believing Jews of whom Jesus refuses to put any trust in their faith.

This is underscored by the fact that the final assertion mentioned in John 3:11 (τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἡμῶν οὐ λαμβάνετε) refers both to the ministry of Jesus and to the witness of the church (Barrett 1978:211-212). In this way, Jesus gradually changes from speaking about Himself to speaking about the testimony of the church (Nicol 1972:127), regardless if it is the author's theological school, the community for which he writes or any and every Christian to which the Gospel would reach out (Moloney 1993:115; Hägerland 2003:320-321).

Through this interesting word play, the possibility is opened up to read the text from the perspective of John's instruction, or general teaching, addressed to the faith community (Lindars 1972:155). Thus the narrative is seen through the lens of teaching about believing because the person knows Jesus on a personal level – through the testimony of those who were with Him and can personally attest to the truth of His words. One should always keep the process envisaged with the telling of the calling of Jesus' disciples in the back of our minds, since this could help us to see how a person's testimony, based on what has been seen and heard, can be the catalyst for somebody else's personal discovery of who Jesus is.

3.5.3 How to Become Part of God's World

Jesus' reaction to the confusion of Nicodemus expands the argument presented in the previous passages by showing how people can become part of God's world. Jesus provides context on his words by stating that the nature of his remarks refers to earthly things, yet Nicodemus doesn't understand it. All the more will the incomprehension be if He speaks about heavenly things (John 3:12), or higher teaching (Morris 1971:222).

This is exactly why someone needed to come from heaven to earth to tell about these things. The only person who is able to talk about heavenly things is the one who came from heaven, the Son of Man (John 3:13). Jesus uses the expression,

Son of Man, frequently as self-designation, occurring in the Gospels over eighty times (Morris 1971:172). It is a literal translation from the Aramaic and means “man” or “the man.” Jesus uses it in a threefold way:

- It is a paraphrase of “I.”
- It refers to the heavenly Son of man, who will come in glory.
- It refers to the Son of man who suffers to bring humankind salvation.

The origin of the title, Son of man, should be sought in Dan 7:13, where a heavenly being was called “Son of man”. In John the term is always associated either with Christ’s heavenly glory or with the salvation He came to bring (Morris 1971:173). John understood Jesus’ usage of the title to express the fact that He is the one true mediator between heaven and earth, that He passes from one to the other and while living on earth He bestows on humankind the revealed knowledge and eternal life in which they, in turn, come to live in heaven (Barrett 1978:72-73). Through this all, the purpose of the title in this verse is to present Jesus’ credentials and heavenly origin (Brown 1971:133).

In the following argument the narrative alludes to the question of faith based on signs. Jesus uses the story of Moses putting the snake on a pole to cure people who

were bitten by poisonous snakes (Num 21:4-9) as a frame of reference. The chronology shifts to the future to emphasise the unique manner of exaltation: on the cross (Barrett 1978:213). It is uncertain whether John's Gospel only presupposes the knowledge of the crucifixion or if the somewhat shaded reference to this event is the narrative's way of expanding the overall argument of Jesus mission. As it is the case in John 2:12-22, we are led here to read the text from the perspective of Jesus' resurrection. The story wants us to grasp that the only sign worthy of causing belief is the one where Jesus is lifted up like the snake in the story of Moses – by looking at Him in this way, people will be saved (John 3:14-15).

Against this backdrop the use of μαρτυρία in John 3:11 shows us that Jesus' only testimony is about the things He knows and has seen, in heaven, having come from heaven Himself. As the verb is used in the plural and the allusion to His disciples is therefore implicated, it should also be understood as that they can only testify on what they know and has seen, namely their ongoing and developing relationship with the man Jesus, who came from heaven. This then is the only way to become part of God's world – believing the Son of man (his message and his death and resurrection) and receive spiritual birth through this faith (Morris 1971:224).

3.5.4 Loving a World that is Lost

The shift in focus in John 3:16-18 provides the motive for which Jesus came to earth. It is all about God's love for a world that is lost, thus the Son is sent on a mission as

consequence of this love (Barrett 1978:215). Referring to God's love for the world is a distinctly Christian idea as it is part of the Gospel to believe God's love is wide enough to embrace all humankind (Morris 1971:229). Jesus didn't come to earth to judge, but to save.

This thought is paradoxical, as John states in John 9:39 Jesus came to the world for judgement. The resolution of the paradox lies in the fact that salvation presupposes judgement for those who do not believe, as the other side of the same coin (Morris 1971:231).

Although God's judgement is presented as a reality (John 3:18), the primary purpose of Jesus' mission is to provide the light by which people can live and do the things that should be done when someone is living in obedience to God (John 3:21). In this, faith is very important – and John presents this truth in a sentence construct where it appears both positively and negatively (Morris 1971:232): A person who exercises faith is not condemned/judged but the person who persists in unbelief has been condemned already. The emphasis on faith is produced by repeating the verb three times in this one verse – twice as πιστεύων, and thirdly as ἐπίστευκεν (Morris 1971:233).

The condemnation to which John refers in John 3:19, refers to the process of judging and not the sentence of condemnation (Morris 1971:233). The contrast between light and darkness links back to John's opening statement (John 1:1-4) and the contrast

between either accepting the light or rejecting it is used to describe the nature of faith itself. The emphasis on light (by being repeated five times in John 3:19-21) presents the twofold meaning it is employed here: Metaphorically light stands for “good” as darkness stands for “evil,” and as in the rest of the Gospel light also refers to Christ Himself. Thus this part of the narrative refers to Christ’s coming to humanity (Morris 1971:234).

Suddenly the reader is left with a decision to make: You either accept or refuse the saving revelation of the Father who sent the Son (Moloney 1993:119). Faith, according to this discussion, is to accept that Jesus actually came from heaven on this mission, to know Him and through Him to know God, and to live in the light Jesus provides on earth (John 3:18-21). A person who does the truth is the one who responds to the gospel invitation, the person who has life in Christ - the one on whom God has laid His hand – and that is the person who will not avoid the light (Morris 1971:235).

If we attempt to summarise the discussion with Nicodemus we see the following (Koester 1989:335): Nicodemus believed in Jesus because of the signs He performed, but he became baffled when Jesus started to speak about being born anew. The signs didn’t prepare Nicodemus to believe Jesus’ words, as genuine seeing implied one should enter the kingdom of God and having eternal life. This can only happen through a spiritual rebirth and a faith that receives, or accepts, Jesus’ testimony. Thus Nicodemus’ initial positive response to Jesus’ signs did not lead naturally to genuine faith.

Moloney (1993:109) has sympathy with Nicodemus, however, as he interprets the initiating verses (John 3:1-2) that Nicodemus came to Jesus to seek a confirmation of his convictions. Jesus then attempted to draw him beyond his own expectations. John leaves us with the impression that Jesus succeeded in moving Nicodemus past his initial inability to believe Jesus on the basis of his words, as he mentioned Nicodemus again later in the Gospel, in John 7:50-52 – where He came to the defence of Jesus in front of the Pharisees, and in John 19:38-42 - as one of the two men who buried Jesus.

3.6 RETURNING TO THE TESTIMONY OF THE BAPTIST (JOHN 3:22-36)

3.6.1 Setting the Passage in Context

The narrative suddenly returns to the story of John the Baptist. John apparently protects the unity of the larger story corpus by linking this episode to the conversation with Nicodemus through the use of *μετὰ ταῦτα* (John 3:22). To Newman & Nida (1980:95) this pericope has only a loose connection with the preceding passages. They interpret the theme of this passage as how people flock to Jesus and become His disciples, although they admit it is not immediately apparent. For

them, this pericope establishes the theme by showing the superiority of Jesus over John the Baptist.

Yet they overlook the recurring use of phrases that also appear in the passage that previously told of John the Baptist, therefore they miss the continued focus on the Baptist's testimony and the unfolding of the implied integrity and character of Jesus throughout John 1:19-3:36. The repeated use of the following phrases in this section seems to re-iterate this:

- βαπτίζω
- ἐν ὕδατι
- μαρτυρία
- οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι
- σὺ τίς εἶ
- Ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ὁ Χριστός

One of the exegetical challenges of the pericope of John 3:31-36 is identifying the speaker (Brown 1971:159). An abrupt change is made from John the Baptist's testimony to general remarks about the position of the One who comes from above.

Three possibilities exist as to who is speaking, and each possibility changes the interpretation possibilities of the passage (Newman & Nida 1980:100-101):

- The verses could be attributed to the Baptist, as he was the last first-person speaker in the narrative.
- The verses could be attributed to Jesus himself, as the style of the passage closely resembles his language in other parts of the Gospel.
- It could also be attributed to the writers of John because a parallel exists between this passage and John 3:16-21 in the sense that here we find the writers' commentary on the relation between Jesus and the Baptist in the same way as how they commented in 16-21 on Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus.

It can be argued that this passage represents the synopsis of the narrative that started in John 1:5, where the Baptist was first introduced. The same themes that formed the content of this larger section of text are repeated in this paragraph to provide a bridge to the rest of John's narrative on the identity of Jesus, his relationship with the Father above and his relationship with the people below who either believe in Him or don't.

3.6.2 A Conflict over Baptism

John here returns to the Baptist's unique ministry of baptism and uses it as a framework for conclusionary remarks on the testimony of the Baptist. The tense in which βαπτίζω is used in John 3:22, suggests repeated or habitual action (Newman & Nida 1980:96; Moloney 1993:122-123). It seems that the text implies the passing of an amount of time between John's initial testimony and the telling of this event. The clues provided are Μετὰ ταῦτα (John 3:22) as well as οὐπω γὰρ ἦν βεβλημένος εἰς τὴν φυλακὴν ὁ Ἰωάννης (John 3:24). The narrative includes specific information on the place of John's ministry (ἐν Αἰνῶν ἐγγὺς τοῦ Σαλείμ) and a chronological perspective placing it in a bigger contextual frame supported by the synoptic gospels, but only implied here (οὐπω γὰρ ἦν βεβλημένος εἰς τὴν φυλακὴν ὁ Ἰωάννης).

The matter of ritual cleansing through baptism is presented here as a point of dispute between the followers of the Baptist and the Jews (John 3:25). The use of ζήτησις suggests that the dispute was not a mere discussion but more like a full-blown argument between the Baptist's disciples and Jews (Newman & Nida 1980:96-97).

Jesus is drawn into this argument (John 3:26). Some of the Baptist's followers went to him and brought it to his attention that Jesus is also baptising people. The narrative intentionally uses the μαρτυρία word group to draw attention to the fact that the Baptist reported only positively about Jesus, and now Jesus is doing what the Baptist is doing. It would almost seem as if Jesus is depicted as competition to the Baptist. The use of the perfect tense, μεμαρτύρηκας, indicates the continuing effect of

the Baptist's witness to Jesus (Newman & Nida 1980:98). It is as if his followers reminded him of the fact that he never ceased to speak positively about Jesus, and look what happens now. From this, however, one gets the impression that John wanted to tell his readers that the Baptist's testimony was not a once-off event as it would have been the case in a court case, but something he did frequently and continuously. The Baptist didn't cease to testify about Jesus.

Even in this conflict-laden situation the Baptist didn't stop to attest to the integrity of Jesus: "God gave Him the authority," the Baptist said – as this is how John 3:27 can be translated since the phrase, *ἐὰν μὴ ἦ δεδομένον αὐτῷ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ*, is traditionally seen as "*merely a Semitic way of speaking of God*" (Newman & Nida 1980:98). "You have been there, you heard what I said. I said I am not the Messiah, but the one to go before the Messiah. Well it is He," the Baptist also said. Moloney (1993:125-126) asserts that this verse moves the narrative into the context of revelation, through the use of *ἀπεκρίθη ... καὶ εἶπεν*.

By referring to heaven, John refocuses the disciples' question from the greater authority on baptism to the source of all true gifts. As such, this is theological reflection and not merely a Semitism, providing the rest of John 3 as conclusion for the unity of the narrative between John 1:19 and 3:36 and creating an *inclusio* as greater probable basis for the inclusion of this pericope as part of the narrative of the Baptist's testimony.

The emphatic accent of ἀποὶ ὑμεῖς (John 3:28) should be read in conjunction with the use of μαρτυρεῖτε, as the use of μαρτυρεῖτε in this context may also be rendered as “you yourself heard me say” and perhaps more appropriately, “you can confirm with absolute certainty what I said as you were there” (cf. Newman & Nida 1980:99).

To further explain his role, the Baptist introduced another metaphor for comparison, and through this metaphor John’s Gospel also succeeds in providing some instruction about the character of testimony to the faith community for which he has written. The Baptist described how his function as preparer of the way is similar to that of the friend of the bridegroom at a wedding – he must listen to the groom’s arrival and joyously declare his presence to everyone (John 3:29). The narrative assumes here some knowledge of Jewish wedding practices of the time (Moloney 1993:126).

The exact meaning of the function of the friend listening at the door is not quite known, as the Greek phrase, ὁ ἑστηκὸς καὶ ἀκούων αὐτοῦ, is a translation of a Semitism (Newman & Nida 1980:99). It possibly relates to the Jewish wedding practice where the groom proceeds to the bride’s house on the wedding day, accompanied by his friends with tambourines and a band (De Vaux 1973:33). The function of the friend, then, would be to announce the arrival of the groom at the house of the bride, indicating the start of the ceremony and festivities. With this as back-story, the Baptist probably tries to convey that his testimony is focused on ushering in the Messiah in a joyous way. Simultaneously, it also serves the purpose

to help the faith community reading about his testimony that they should act accordingly.

To this metaphor the Baptist adds the remark that he must decrease while Jesus must increase (ἐκεῖνον δεῖ αὐξάνειν, ἐμὲ δὲ ἐλαττοῦσθαι - John 3:30). The literal translation can be explained by John 1:30's view on greatness as here it must be considered in terms of importance - that is, the Baptist should become less important while Jesus becomes more important (Newman & Nida 1980:100).

3.6.3 Concluding the Testimony of the Baptist

John rather abruptly departs from the testimony of the Baptist to provide his own commentary on the events that have transpired thus far (John 3:31-36). It continues the concluding thought of John 3:30 as well as referring back to the conversation with Nicodemus (Barrett 1978:224), in that one can only enter the world of God's kingdom through a birth from above. This is once again achieved by using ἄνωθεν, the word that created the initial misunderstanding with Nicodemus and forms the centrepiece of the perspective on God's reign (John 3:3, 31). The metaphor of heaven and earth as it was described in the first verses of the chapter is taken up again. The double meaning of ἄνωθεν seems to expand the reader's growing understanding of Jesus' identity and humankind's relationship with Him.

His testimony is on what he has seen and heard (John 3:32). This mirrors the remark Jesus made to Nicodemus in John 3:11-12 and here John uses this to expand the argument of John 3:16-20 that stated anyone who accepts - or receives or believes - this testimony will be saved. The use of *μαρτυρία* in these verses connects very directly with the idea that a witness was there and could see and hear what happened. This is probably why the tenses in *εώρακεν* and *ἤκουσεν* differ from each other, suggesting that the emphasis should be on seeing rather than hearing (Newman & Nida 1980:102). The passage focuses on the one sent from above who speaks, bears witness, gives authentic testimony, utters the words of God and it reflects a renewed interest in the word rather than the person of Jesus (Moloney 1993:128). This suggests a possible post-ascension focus on the ongoing testimony of the faith community who is continuing the ministry that Jesus started and is based on the example of John the Baptist's demonstration of authentic belief (Moloney 1993:129).

Through this, the acceptance of Jesus' testimony puts the seal on the belief of the one who accepts the testimony that God in fact exists. The use of the aorist participle shows John thinking of a decisive act whereby a person decides to accept Jesus and his witness instead of it being a continuous, day-by-day receiving of the witness of Jesus. Through this, the person sets his/her seal on the proposition that God is true (Morris 1971:245). Through this we can now see the interplay of metaphors – Jesus bringing light in the darkness, showing humankind how God looks, confirming his own Godly nature and showing how a person can have a new life by being born from above – through the testimony of the Baptist helps to identify what God really said (Newman & Nida 1980:103).

Thus, a seal is placed on the fact that God is true (ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἀληθής ἐστιν). Jesus, after all, was sent by God who gives the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). In this remark, John alludes to the testimony of the Baptist about Jesus' baptism, where God declared from heaven that the Messiah is the One on whom the Spirit rests (John 1:33).

Morris (1971:245-246) shows the implication of accepting this testimony in a very clear way:

When a man accepts Christ he is not merely entering into a relationship with a fellow-man ... He is accepting what God has said. He is recognizing the heavenly origin of Jesus. He is acknowledging the truth of God's revelation in Christ. He is proclaiming to all his deep conviction that God is true.

In John 3:34 the fact that Jesus was sent to do this, is pertinently stated. He comes from heaven and a person can only enter heaven by being born from above, or a second time, in a manner befitting the unique characteristic of heaven. It also alludes to the idea that His message is not accepted by all people, while those accepting it confirm the truthfulness of Jesus' testimony. It helps to understand that οὐ γὰρ ἐκ μέτρου δίδωσιν τὸ πνεῦμα implies God gave the Spirit completely (Newman & Nida 1980:104).

To this declaration John now presents the compelling argument that Jesus is loved by the Father, as John pictures a perfect unity in love between Father and Son (Morris 1971:247), to the extent that everything is given into Jesus' hands (John 3:35), therefore everyone believing in the Son receives eternal life (John 3:36). The verb, ἀγαπᾷ, is in the present tense and implies that the Father constantly and always loves His Son while the perfect tense of δέδωκεν indicates that what has been put in the Son's power remains within his power (Newman & Nida 1980:104-105). This can be put more forcefully: "*Jesus has complete authority to act in the Father's name*" (Barrett 1978:227).

Finally, the issue of God's judgement returns, as in John 3:19-20. In that context, a person has to act in truth as a matter of obedience to God and come to the light. Here one must act in obedience to Jesus to be exempt from the wrath of God. This represents a shift from mere belief in Jesus to total obedience to Jesus. The possession of eternal life here is put forward as a present experience of the believer (Newman & Nida 1980:105), suggesting that total obedience to Christ brings the believer into the family of God (cf John 1:12) in the current reality of the earth already. John is obviously not thinking of a single action in the future, but a pattern of life in the present (Brown 1971:162).

3.7 IN CONVERSATION WITH A SAMARITAN WOMAN, A VILLAGE AND A ROYAL OFFICIAL (JOHN 4)

3.7.1 Jesus and the Woman from Sychar

With a masterful sense of drama and various techniques of stage setting, John has succeeded in forming this narrative into a superb theological scenario as one of the most vivid scenes in the Gospel (Brown 1971:176). The pericopes of John 4 relate thematically to the previous as well as following passages of John's narrative (Newman & Nida 1980:107): The mention of water in John 2:6-9 and 3:5 is expanded with the description of Jesus as the source of water in John 4. Lindars (1990:79) specifically argued that this passage presents Jesus, as mediator of the living water of divine Wisdom, as qualified to be the fulfilment of Samaritan hopes and, by implication, those of the whole world).

The mentioning of food in John 4:32-34 furthermore serves as the basis for further discussion in John 6. Especially the verses in John 4:1-4 serve as a transition from chapter 3, thereby linking the passages into one another as one thematic whole. Of particular importance to the larger conversation is the use of the μαρτυρία-lexeme in John 4:39. It therefore makes sense to provide an overview on the story of the Samaritan woman in search of contextual clues to the use of the word in this specific passage.

John 4:1 introduces the next episode of his narrative by starting with Jesus' discovery of the Pharisees knowing his disciples were baptising people. This

suggests that He was not directly involved in the previous discussion between the Jews and followers of the Baptist. It also creates the impression that the Pharisees did not approve of the practice of baptism, as John explicates that Jesus wasn't personally performing any baptisms (John 4:2). This pending conflict prompted Him to leave Judea to return to Galilee and the text thus places the story in the area of Samaria – the backdrop for John's next episode. Jesus and his entourage had to travel through this province to reach Galilee (John 4:3-4).

The use of $\xi\delta\epsilon\iota$ suggests a necessity because God's will or plan is involved, as in John 3:14, since it wasn't a geographical necessity for Jesus and his entourage to travel through Samaria (Brown 1971:169; Morris 1971:254; Barrett 1978:230; Stibbe 1994:19). It brought him to Sychar, a town with historic connections to Jewish history through the presence there of Joseph's well that was given to him by Jacob.

This narrative includes a substantial amount of contextual indicators, such as: Jesus was tired from the journey and he stopped at the well to rest (John 4:6); it was midday and not the usual time of day to fetch water as it would have been extremely hot at twelve noon (Moloney 1993:138). This pertinent time indicator suggests that the woman is attending to her daily chores outside the scope of accepted social norms. As language derives its meaning from the societal system and cultural context in which the communication originally takes place (Malina 1993:xi), this inference is based on the following cultural markers regarding ancient Judean culture:

- A woman's place was in the home and she was supposed to appear in public as little as possible, especially not at the busiest times of the day (Malina, Joubert & Van der Watt 1996:7).
- The practice to fetch water would not have happened at twelve noon, but early in the morning or late at night (Brown 1971:169; Stander & Louw 1990:45).
- The values of the first century were driven by honour and shame, with shame referring to specifically women's mindfulness of their public reputation (Malina, Joubert & Van der Watt 1996:8; Moxnes 2003:52). Given the provided context of John 4:18, it would be safe to assume that this woman was socially outcast from her group. Brown (1971:171) as well as Barrett (1978:235) showed how the Jewish people were allowed only three marriages and if the same standard applied to the Samaritans, which would be quite probable, her life had been markedly immoral.

The woman's religious position and the animosity between Samaritan and Jewish people are made equally clear - John 4:7-9, 20-22 (Barrett 1978:232). Placed together with the social conventions of the time, that dictated the appropriateness of conversations between men and women (Barrett 1978:228; Stibbe 1994:17), the final corner stone of the point that John is aiming to establish, is provided.

The ensuing discussion initially centred on the metaphor of water. In this, the conversation with Nicodemus - that a person must be born from water and spirit - is brought to mind (John 3:1-21). As with Nicodemus, an initial question is asked (John 4:9). As with Nicodemus, Jesus answers indirectly, opting to reply with a metaphorical remark with an unclear double meaning instead (John 4:10): Jesus speaks of the water of life and the woman thinks of flowing water. Whereas the word for well in John 4:6 was πηγή John uses φρέαρ in John 4:11. To Brown (1971:170) this indicates a shift from Jacob's well as source for living water (as πηγή is closer to fountain in meaning) to Jesus becoming the source of living water with Jacob's well a mere cistern (φρέαρ). This, as with Nicodemus, results in a misunderstanding on the part of the Samaritan woman (John 4:11-12), who is mystified because she got stuck with the literal meaning of Jesus' words (Stibbe 1994:18; Steyn 2008:147-148).

The misunderstanding is continued, as with Nicodemus, to serve as vehicle for Jesus' exposition on living water (John 4:13-15). And, as in the case of Nicodemus where ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω σοι was repeatedly used, John here employs the repetition of ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ (John 4:10, 13), as well as λέγει αὐτῇ (John 4:16, 21, 26), to indicate the importance of Jesus' statements.

The turning point in the dialogue between Jesus and the woman seems to be when Jesus laid out her marital pedigree in John 4:16-18 (Moloney 1993:148-149). It is one thing to speak about water that can take away thirst. It becomes something

completely different when a total stranger accurately tells you about your marital situation.

The discussion shifts from here-on to the person of Jesus and opens the door for John to make the theological point he intended. The theological point is this: The Samaritan woman is unaware of the gift that God is giving the world and she doesn't know Jesus' true identity, otherwise she would have asked for water that provides life (John 4:10). This water that provides life is never-ending and is in itself producing water similar to a spring that wells up with water, providing eternal life (John 4:14). This eternal life causes the believer to worship God because he/she knows who she/he is worshiping.

Jesus intentionally tries to draw the woman into a deeper level of understanding on his person and role, with remarks such as *πίστευέ μοι, γύναι*, in John 4:21a (Moloney 1993:150). The remark in John 4:22 about salvation coming from the Jews, must be placed against the back-drop of the early church's Jewish origin and the fact that the Messiah is most definitely a Jew (Morris 1971:270), as well as the fact that John wants to remind us that this is an encounter between Jesus and the non-Jewish world, one of the missional themes of Johannine ecclesiology (Moloney 1993:151).

A time will come when everybody will be worshipping through spirit and truth (John 4:23) and not at a specific place of worship, because God is Spirit and He must be worshiped in the world of the spiritual - John 4:24 (Lindars 1972:189). This is that

hour, and it means that “*the only acceptable act of worship* (δεῖ προσκυνεῖν) *can be the total orientation of one’s life and action toward the Father, sharing already in the gift of the Father* (ἐν πνεύματι), *a gift that is all it claims to be* (καὶ ἀληθεία)” (Moloney 1993:152-153).

The Messiah is somebody who will proclaim everything about God’s spiritual world and how to worship Him in Spirit and truth (John 4:25). He is the fulfilment of all the Old Testament can offer by way of worship, a fact that the woman recognised and acknowledged (Barrett 1978:228). In this we follow the Samaritan woman struggling to understand who is speaking to her, progressing in her understanding of who Jesus really is (Moloney 1993:155-156; Steyn 2008:148).

Koester (1989:335-336) pointed out the following about this story: The Samaritan woman encountered Jesus without any knowledge of his signs. The encounter was initiated by Jesus, contrary to her experience of Jewish men, but she persisted in the conversation and was struck by Jesus’ surprising knowledge of her personal history. Her message to the townspeople technically presupposes a negative answer, although the context indicates that she is verging on the brink of faith. This technically opposes Moloney’s thesis (1993:157-158) that the woman refused to believe completely as the discussion moved her away from the securities of her own knowledge and rejected Jesus’ word.

The impact of Jesus' self-revelation to the woman is of such a nature that John 4:28 tells us she left her water jar at the well and returned to the town immediately (Morris 1971:275). There she proclaimed to her fellow townspeople that she met a man who has explained her personal history, leaving her to wonder if He could be the Christ (John 4:29). John explicitly repeats the wording of John 4:25 here, reframed as a question (Moloney 1993:157). Her message had such an impact on the townsfolk that they went out of the town to the well to meet Jesus (John 4:30).

The passage comprising John 4:31-38 will not be discussed in much detail here. As a possible bridge-passage – which leads the reader from one section of a narrative to the next (Moloney 1993:176) - it could better be read with the passage in John 6 (Moloney 1993:159). It also fits with the Johannine fashion of conducting a spirally formed, pictorial narrative. As such, these passages do not contain any reference to the *μαρτυρία* word group, therefore it is deemed as outside the scope of our investigation.

The following remarks, however, will suffice to place this interlude into context with the Samaritan story: Throughout the Samaritan story the disciples play a minor role. It is as if they fade into the background during the course of the narrative. They go into town to buy food; they return to find Jesus in an inappropriate discussion with the Samaritan woman, yet they keep quiet; when the woman leaves to call her townspeople they urge Jesus to eat something, seemingly concerned about his well-being.

Through this all it is clear that they misunderstand the intended level of Jesus' discourse (Segovia 1985:82-83): When they misunderstood Jesus' reply to their urging that He should eat, they miss the point that He is conveying, namely that His actual food is nothing less than the mission entrusted to Him by the Father (John 4:34). Their quiet discomfort about Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman (John 4:27) has to be clarified: it is actually part of Jesus' mission (John 4:37, 38b). They are also called to take an active part in this mission (John 4:38a) and must therefore be glad with Him (John 4:4:36) as this mission of theirs is very much at hand (John 4:35).

3.7.2 Jesus and the Townspeople of Sychar

The narrative unfolds in the following way (Moloney 1993: 168): In John 4:39 the people of Sychar came to faith, based on the testimony of the woman, specifically her words, ὅτι Εἶπέν μοι πάντα ἃ ἐποίησα. In this, she precedes the apostles as one of the witnesses to Jesus along with John the Baptist, performing what is viewed as the task of a disciple (Barrett 1978:243). In John 4:40 the Sycharites ask Jesus to stay with them, to which He complied. In John 4:41 it is reported that πολλῶ πλείους believed in Jesus because of his word (lit. διὰ τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ').

Finally, in John 4:42, the Sycharites spoke to the woman and told her they do not believe because of her words any longer, but because of what they heard, and they know Jesus is indeed the saviour of the world.

The greater significance of this narrative can be found in the remark, ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ἀληθῶς ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου. It indicates a definite global and wider-than-Jewish scope to John's intention of introducing Jesus as the Messiah (Barrett 1978:246; Moloney 1993:151).

3.7.3 Healing the Royal Official's Son

John now continues telling the story of Jesus' journey back to Galilee (John 4:43), picking it up from John 4:3. The narrative implicates a clear link to the first miracle in Cana (Moloney 1993:177-178) with both having the same general pattern and similarities in context (Brown 1971:194):

- ἦλθεν οὖν πάλιν εἰς τὴν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, ὅπου ἐποίησεν τὸ ὕδωρ οἶνον (John 4:46).
- Τοῦτο [δὲ] πάλιν δεύτερον σημεῖον ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς (John 4:54). This statement should be read in conjunction with John 2:11, ταύτην ἐποίησεν ἀρχὴν

τῶν σημείων ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν Κανά. Specifically the word order, *πάλιν δεύτερον*, should be seen as an implication that the two signs form a logical complement to each other.

The interconnectedness of the two signs is a hint that the miracles in Cana presents an example of the type of authentic faith which is described throughout John's Gospel and forms part of the instruction being given on the community's understanding as witnesses to the Christ. The word order in John 4:50b seems to confirm this, as *ἐπίστευσεν* opens the sentence (Moloney 1993:186) and the absolute use of the word means, "he became a Christian" (Barrett 1978:248). The specific information provided in John 4:52-53 regarding the time of the son's healing, also affirms that the outcome of authentic faith and the fact that, as the Samaritans' belief led them to knowledge of Jesus, the official's belief in the word of Jesus was based on the word only (Moloney 1993:187). It is intentional that John repeated ὁ υἱός σου ζῆ three times, in John 4:50, 51 and 52, as the basis of the miracle – the boy living – came through these spoken words alone.

This is further confirmed by the off-the-cut-remark on Jesus' thoughts (John 4:44), as it was in John 2:23-25: both passages have a similar function in the Gospel, that is, to introduce into the narrative the story of someone with inadequate understanding of Jesus' real power - Nicodemus on Jesus as giver of eternal life and the royal official on Jesus as giver of life (Brown 1971:188). In this verse *μαρτυρία* is used in a similar argument as John 2:25, and if linked together the seemingly incomprehensible character of the remark here gets new meaning and significance. Finally, the remark

made by Jesus in John 4:48, Ἐὰν μὴ σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα ἴδητε, οὐ μὴ πιστεύσητε, seems to confirm the idea that these miracles could be seen as some sort of instruction on the nature of authentic, or life-giving word-based (Koester 1989:336), faith - hence the negative comment on the side about the inadequacy of the Jewish people's ability to put their trust in, or honour, Jesus.

Some further considerations seem to underscore the point: The official came from Capernaum to Cana because he heard Jesus came to Galilee (John 4:47). This presupposes some belief in Jesus' prophetic abilities and reputation on his side. The use of κύριος in John 4:49 seems to suggest that the official saw Jesus as an ordinary person with special powers (Steyn 2008:149). Even after Jesus put him off with a sharp rebuke (Stibbe 1994:19), he persisted with his request, in a way similar to the persistence of his mother in John 2:5 (Moloney 1993:185). It should be noted that τέρατα is used in John's Gospel in John 4:48 only, and then in a negative sense, thus strengthening the idea that John thought judged an overemphasis on wonders as a blinding factor in revealing who Jesus is (Brown 1971:191).

The outcome of the narrative is depicted as the coming to faith of the official's whole household, who only heard the official's testimony of his encounter with Jesus (John 4:53). The apparent intentional use of ὁ βασιλικός (John 4:46) shouldn't be misread. The word can refer to any of the following: He could be a person from royal blood, or a servant to a royal household, or a soldier of the Herodian king or the Roman emperor, or a royal scribe (Brown 1971:190).

Taking into account that references to the world of Judaism gradually disappear (quite similar to the progression in the story of the Baptist's testimony moving from him to his disciples to Jesus) and move to references to the Samaritan world and finally the reference to a royal official in Capernaum, a Judean border town where a Roman garrison was located, we can assume that the weight of this circumstantial evidence seems to suggest he was a Roman soldier in the service the emperor (Moloney 1993:182-183).

Jesus' remark in John 4:48 could be seen as an indicator that the official was part of the wonder-seeking crowd in Jerusalem (therefore making him Jewish). The plural use of ἴδητε indicates an audience wider as only the official (Morris 1971:290). Thus John seems to continue describing the move away from Judaism to a global perspective on believing in Jesus, although this is disputed by Brown (1971:197). Lindars (1972:205) noted that the word, οἰκία (John 4:53), is a word from the vocabulary of Christian mission, further confirming the notion that John had some instruction regarding the faith community's missional identity at the back of his mind.

Moloney (1993:188) made the following conclusion in support of the interpretation that the narrative teaches its readers about authentic faith over and against religiosity founded on the signs Jesus had done, and he bases it on the word play with the title of the royal official: The man is called ὁ βασιλικός in John 4:46, 49. Then he is called ὁ ἄνθρωπος in John 4:50. Finally, he is called ὁ πατήρ in John 4:53. From

the description of a political and social function, the move is made to present him a human, a man, and finally, when his family believes, he is the parent.

This seems to suggest to Moloney that John depicts authentic faith in Jesus not only as a personal commitment to the word of Jesus; it also leads other people to faith. Thus was the scheme with the first miracle in Cana, as well as the Samaritan woman and in this context, where commitment to the word of Jesus leads to faith in others (Moloney 1993:189). Brown (1971:197) concurs with this, saying, “... *while Jesus encountered disbelief or inadequate faith in Jerusalem, when He comes to Samaria, the Samaritans believe on the strength of his word. In Galilee, in both the first and second Cana stories, an understanding of Jesus’ signs leads the disciples and the official’s household to faith.*”

Another matter needs some consideration. The story continues his journey away from Judea (John 4:43), placing his sojourn in Sychar as an interlude in this trip. John puts this remark in Jesus’ mouth, repeating the sentiment of John 2:25, which is placed after the cleansing of the temple. This passage thus seems to also insinuate that the Judeans’ rejection of Jesus is stemming from the commotion he caused in the temple (John 2:12-22) – implying that Jesus’ disregard for Jewish tradition and laws - and supersedes faith in Him, even if it is based on His signs.

This theme is picked up again in the narratives following John 4, when John explicitly comments on the rejection of Jesus by his own people as part of the story of the

dispute over baptism - taking into account that the Samaritan narrative is presented as something that happened in the process of Jesus' going away because of the conflict that erupted.

Finally, when returning to the proposition that the Johannine narrative also contains instruction for the faith community to which it is addressed, the issue of John's possible teaching on a missional ecclesiology should be investigated again. John seems to be answering the question of their identities that was put to the Baptist by the Jewish establishment in John 1:19-25, and to Jesus by Nicodemus in John 3:2. He does this by introducing different members of the social group throughout the section that ends at John 4:54:

- οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἐξ Ἱεροσολύμων ἱερεῖς καὶ Λευίτας (John 1:19).
- ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων (John 1:24).
- οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι (John 2:18).
- ἦν δὲ ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων (John 3:1).
- μετὰ Ἰουδαίου (John 3:25).
- οἱ φαρισαῖοι (John 4:1).

- ὁ βασιλικός (John 4:46, 49).

The purpose of this repetitive use seems to be to reiterate that Jewish religion created an expectation that the Messiah needed to prove his identity by signs and wonders. It also seems to underscore the move from a deeds-based faith to a word-based faith. And it sets up the discussion of belief based on knowing Jesus in an intimately personal way as opposed to a religious system that only adheres to spiritual practices.

By finally bringing the repetitive and often unusual use of the μαρτυρία-lexeme into the discussion, ***it would seem that John wanted his community members to see a pattern of testimony developing, enabling them to become proficient witnesses to the reality of Jesus living inside them,*** and that is based on receiving the faith through the testimony of people who knew Jesus personally (as they don't).

This last remark is affirmed by the way Jesus conducted the miracle spoken that this pericope spoke about. The royal official communicated an expectation that Jesus should be physically present to perform some sort of miraculous deed on his sick son (John 4:49). Instead, Jesus sent him home with the assurance that his son is healed (John 4:50). It is therefore quite intentional that John said the man believed Jesus' words and went home.

The story then explains how he discovers the exact time at which the fever left his son as being the same as when Jesus spoke the words (John 4:52). This apparent realisation that Jesus' words are enough to do a miracle moved him, along with his household, to believe in Jesus (John 4:53).

By including the phrase *καὶ ἡ οἰκία αὐτοῦ ὅλη*, John shows how this royal official's testimony regarding what Jesus said caused his family to share in his new-found belief in Jesus' identity as the One sent by God. In this case, it would seem that John intentionally omitted the use of the *μαρτυρία*-lexeme, to accentuate the actual miracle: people start to believe in Jesus based on His words only and on the testimony of those who personally know him and can attest to this knowledge.

3.8 CONCLUSION

What do we see on the Gospel of John's use of *μαρτυρία* up to this point?

In the Prologue to the Gospel, Jesus is introduced to the readers of John as the Word that became flesh and brought light into the darkness. He came to earth as human being and showed those who believe in Him how God looks like. And He helps those who believe to discover their place in the family of the Heavenly Father. Integral to this is the testimony of an ordinary human being, John, whom we later get to know better as the Baptist. He tells us about the incarnate Word, so that we can

come to faith. He helps us to discover who the Word is in his existence as ordinary human being, thereby discovering his name is Jesus.

The Baptist perceived his main purpose as way-bearer for the Christ. Through his ministry, he helps people understand the emptiness of their lives and their need for true faith and salvation. He also serves as testimony, still, of who the Christ really is. This testimony grew on him in a gradual way, from a vague understanding of the coming Messiah, and how he is supposed to proclaim the manifest arrival of the Saviour; to grasping that The One is actually in his midst already; and finally to discovering that Jesus truly is the Son of God.

Through the telling of the story of the Baptist's discovery of the Christ, John, the Gospel writer, uses the opportunity to ever so subtly instruct his congregation members on the true nature of faith. Faith is not following religious rituals. Faith also is not to believe in someone because of his ability to perform signs and wonders. Faith is to accept the word about the Christ, the proclamation given by the witnesses to Him. It is to grasp the knowledge that the idea of a coming Messiah actually has become a Person, somebody with a very clear and definite identity – namely Jesus of Nazareth. When one understands that faith is to put all your trust on this person, what happens when you observe his wonders is that it only strengthens your (newly found) faith and turn you into a witness yourself.

To be absolutely clear, John wants his community of fellow believers to have no doubt about whom the Christ really is. He therefore introduces several situations and witnesses to enlighten them on the nuances of believing in Jesus as the Christ. He tells us about some of Jesus' own disciples who started to follow Him on the basis of the Baptist's testimony. They spent time with Him, getting to know Him better, and immediately started to share their Messianic discovery with their family and friends.

John also tells us about a wedding where Jesus' mother order him about, ignoring his rebuke and standing astonished about the miracle He performed on water jars. As she and his band of followers already had some sort of a grasp on whom Jesus really was, this sign only caused them to put their ultimate trust in Him.

John shared with us how Jesus overturned the religious practices of his countryfolk by chasing everybody out of the temple. He then calmly re-interpreted the temple and his demonstration in the temple to explain that He must ultimately die to prove He is the Messiah, by ultimately conquering death.

John introduced a Jewish scholar and community leader, Nicodemus, into the story. This gentleman observed Jesus' actions and miracles and started thinking. He then went to meet Jesus, and discovered he doesn't understand things after all. True faith is to start living the reality that God has created. This is only possible when one transforms in identity through a spiritual birth that will enable earthlings to share in the world of God. This is only possible through faith. Faith isn't ritual or law, however,

but lovingly accepting that Jesus is indeed the Messiah, by completely trusting Him as the One who will carry you over the bridge to God's world, shines a light in this world and helps you live the life of a child of God even though you are still merely a human being. And for this, you cannot base your faith on signs or miracles, but by knowing The One personally.

John needed to share some more information about the Baptist and his testimony. He needed to tell us how Jesus' ministry started to look frighteningly like his own and it almost seems as if the two prophet-like figures are starting to compete with one another. But in true Johannine fashion, the Evangelist wanted the listeners in his community and his readers to know something more about how testimony works: Through your intimate and growing knowledge of the Saviour, whom you now know personally, other people are also starting to see Him, getting to know Him. In the process you are fading into the background until all that is left is Jesus and the people who heard about Him from you, putting their trust in Him alone. This is actually how God planned it. Your role as witness is to announce Jesus like a bridegroom is announced to the bride by his best friend. The bride isn't interested in you - she wants to marry the groom, after all. She listens to you until you tell her he is there, and then she rushes out to meet the love of her life, glad about his arrival.

John also wanted to show something about God's love for non-Jewish people. So he told the story of the Samaritan woman. He told us about her dubious personal history, her status as social outcast, her longing to belong. He shared how Jesus reached out to her, offering her real water of living faith, built on worshiping God in

total adoration because you know all about a life of true worship, especially since the Messiah is making this possible. And He showed her who the Messiah is. John shared how this woman risked her already no-grace status among her townsfolk to share with them this discovery.

The details of John's story are amazingly basic. He leaves a lot of things unsaid. We must see between the lines how Jesus knew about her husbands, how their very short discussion could have such an impact on her, how his disciples was left in the dark about his inappropriate social behaviour, and most importantly, how her fellow Sycharites came to believe her testimony ("There's this man, who told me about my past. Can he be the Messiah?") so quickly. But that's how it happened. Perhaps John wanted us, as outsiders, to see how easy it is to be a witness – you meet Jesus, He changes your life and then you tell everyone about the encounter in such a spontaneous way that they are drawn to investigate for themselves. As with the Baptist becoming less, the woman's fellow townspeople told her they now believe because they met Jesus and not because she gave her testimony.

Then John showed us one more miracle. This time it is a Roman soldier of some sorts who received the gift of faith. He heard about Jesus. He also heard Jesus is in the vicinity – in the neighbouring town to be exact. His boy is dying. He is desperate. So he undertook the journey personally to ask Jesus to come to his house. Jesus was rather rude to this desperate man. He told Him off about people wanting signs before they can believe. All he wanted was a chance for his boy. And he believed enough of the stories about Jesus to trust his wonder-working ability. So he just kept

on asking, please. Jesus sent him home with a promise that his request was granted. In my opinion it must have been a huge let-down, an anticlimax. Yet this soldier took Him on his word and went home. The rest, so the saying goes, is history – he had a healthy son and a family who crossed the bridge of faith towards Jesus.

So this is what John wanted to teach us: Faith is trusting in God completely. It is not waiting for miracles. It is built on knowing God personally. It is authentic when your testimony reflects your knowledge about Jesus and His integrity as The One being sent from heaven to such an extent that people around you literally see Him through the eyes of your words.