

C HAPTER FOUR

“In ... one short sentence a vista appears of the metaphysical depths contained in the relationship between Jesus and his Father.”

(Schnackenburg 1971:308)

THE SECOND PART OF JESUS’ PUBLIC MINISTRY (JOHN 5-12)

4.1A POSSIBLE SCHEME FOR UNDERSTANDING JOHN 5-12

The second thematic block of the story of Jesus’ public ministry (John 5-12) tells in ever-growing detail how Jesus is giving eternal life and why. Simultaneously, this part of the story expands on Jesus’ identity by attempting to answer the question how one can be sure Jesus is the Christ.

These two motives show John’s pictorial story-telling ability. They are masterfully set against the backdrop of four different Jewish festivals (Newman & Nida 1980:336):

- **The Sabbath.** Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath (John 5), indicating his superiority over the Sabbath. In his teaching about the healing, Jesus identified himself and his activity with God and God's work.
- **Passover.** Jesus fed the multitude of people and revealed He was the life-giving bread that God had sent down from heaven.
- **The Feast of the Tabernacles or Shelters.** At this festival Jesus proclaimed Himself as the life-giving water and the light for the world, thereby fulfilling the meaning of the water and light ceremonies conducted during this feast.
- **The Festival of Dedication.** At this feast Jesus affirms that He is the One whom God has dedicated and sent into the world.

Thirdly, John here sets the stage for the Passion narrative by depicting the increasing animosity of the Jewish religious establishment of the time and their decision to get rid of Jesus:

- John frequently uses the word, *γόγγυζω*, to communicate the growing dissent among his audience (John 6:41, 43, 61; 7:32).
- His own followers started to reject his message (John 6:60, 66; 8:39).

- Jesus had to withdraw to Galilee as in Judea the Jews wanted to kill him (John 7:1, 25; 8:37, 40, 59).
- He was accused of having a demon (John 7:20; 8:48, 52; 10:20).
- Several attempts were made to arrest Jesus (John 7:30, 32, 44; 8:20; 10:39; 11:57) and at times they wanted to kill Him (John 8:59; 10:31; 11:53).
- This should be read against the fact that the people who were following Jesus wanted to make Him king by force (John 6:15).
- The subsequent fear that Jesus' actions would lead to a revolution causing the Romans to destroy the temple and the Jewish nation (John 11:48) also plays an important part in this part of the story.

4.2 SETTING THE SABBATH AS BACKDROP FOR AN ARGUMENT (JOHN 5-6)

4.2.1 What happened

John opens the scene with the story of Jesus' healing of a man who had been ill for thirty eight years. This miracle happened on the Sabbath. Although John 5:1 tells us Jesus went to Jerusalem to attend a religious feast, no further detail is provided. The matter at hand is Jesus' authority to override the law of the Sabbath (Lindars 1990:79). Thus the vehicle for John's teaching is the Sabbath, enabling Jesus to explain why and how He gives eternal life, a phrase that is used the most frequently in John 5-6 (Van der Watt 2007:14).

The pivotal argument is the fact that Jesus' healing on the Sabbath serves as a precursor to the eschatological acts which he is destined to perform. Through acts such as these, the future condition of eternal life is already accessible to believers.

The theme of life continues when John tells the stories of Jesus' miracles going about in Galilee. He specifies the miracles of the multiplying of the fish and bread, and Jesus' ability to walk on water. Woven through these stories is the discussion of Jesus as the bread of life. The central core of this message is that, through faith in Jesus, eternal life is mediated, therefore escaping eternal judgement (Van der Watt 2007:15). It also builds on a wisdom theme of the nourishment of the soul (Lindars 1990:79).

The narrative makes it obvious that Jesus' healing of the man was His initiative and not based on a request by the man himself (John 5:6-9a). Moreover, this healing took place on a Sabbath (John 5:9b). The man who was healed was confronted by the Jews because he was carrying his pallet on a Sabbath. He defended himself by referring to Jesus' command to get up and carry it. He didn't know who Jesus was, however (John 5:10-13).

When he met Jesus again, Jesus commanded him not to sin anymore (John 5:14) upon which he went back to the Jews to tell them it was Jesus who healed him (John 5:15).

This led to a confrontation between Jesus and the Jews as they wanted to punish Him for working on the Sabbath (John 5:16). Jesus defended Himself by stating He is working in the same way his Father is still working (John 5:17). This infuriated the Jews because Jesus called God his Father, thereby implying his equality with God (John 5:18). This scene provides the backdrop for the resulting theological discourse.

4.2.2 What John wants us to understand

Jesus' reply can be divided into two parts. In the first part of his response (John 5:19-30) He reasserts his position as God's Son with the ability to judge and provide life. In the second part (John 5:31-47), Jesus provides a list of witnesses to testify to the claims made in the first part of his response. To better understand the frequent use of μαρτυρία in this passage, it is necessary to explore Jesus' initial comments to the Jews.

The essence of Jesus' argument in John 5:19-30 is as follows (Newman & Nida 1980:153): The Son can do nothing of His own accord for His actions are wholly dependent on what He sees the Father doing. What He and the Father are essentially doing, is to provide life. But not only does He have the power to give life, the Son also receives the full right to judge. For all practical purposes the two issues are interwoven with each other. By referring back to the healing of the ill man, Jesus stated that the Father will show Him greater things than He already did. He then

expanded on this by saying the Father has the ability to raise the dead and give life. In a similar manner (οὕτως καὶ ὁ υἱὸς οὗς θέλει ζῶσθαι.) the Son is able to provide life upon His own choosing.

This ability stems from the fact that the Father gave to the Son the right to judge. With this, Jesus implies He is above the Jews' judging Him of "working" on the Sabbath as actually, He is the Judge whom they call upon as the foundation for their beliefs. This, furthermore, is the reason why the Son deserves honour. By refusing to honour the Son, a person is actually refusing to give honour to the Father.

The repetition of ἀμὴν, ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν (John 5:19, 24, 25) confirms that Jesus is elaborating on his argument. He now clearly states that people who hears His message and believes the Father will be exempted from judgement and move from death to life. The third repetition of ἀμὴν, ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν shows how Jesus ties the two arguments together: The time has arrived for the dead – or the spiritually dead (Tasker 1960:91) - to hear the voice of the Father, listen to it and live (Newman & Nida 1980:159). The Son received the ability to grant life from the Father as well as the authority to execute judgement, because He is the Son of Man. Jesus then alludes to the final judgement day when He will judge the dead – those who did the good (i.e. listened to His voice) will receive resurrection to life and those who didn't, to judgement.

4.2.3 Witnesses that confirm Jesus' relationship with the Father

In John 5:31-47 Jesus introduces a new direction in the argument when He says He cannot testify about Himself, since it will not be true. He can say only what God tells Him so that God will receive the glory (Lindars 1972:227; Newman & Nida 1980:162). Thus, He must present the witnesses to His mission and through this provide compelling evidence for the truth of the claims He just made. To understand this section we must keep in mind that the theological theme being developed is ultimately about one testimony: the testimony of God (Schnackenburg 1979:120).

In this narrative, the introduction of witnesses serves the purpose to verify and confirm Jesus' testimony. It should not be seen in the context of a legal proceeding where an accused is put on trial and has to produce witnesses to his defence (Brown 1971:223; Newman & Nida 1980:163).

The witnesses to the truth of His claims are listed as different aspects of the witness of "another" in John 5:32 – i.e. of the Father (Brown 1971:227):

- First of all, the abovementioned ἄλλος testifies on Jesus' behalf (John 5:32). This is a rather veiled reference to the Father and could rather be made explicit through translation (Brown 1971:224; Lindars 1972:228; Barrett 1978:264; Newman & Nida 1980:164). Morris (1971:323) makes an important contribution towards our growing understanding of μαρτυρία in the Gospel, especially regarding the witness borne by God:

Witness commits ... He no longer has the freedom to come down on either side of the issue at hand. He has burned bridges. He has destroyed his freedom. Now it is something like this that God has done in Christ. Jesus is the supreme revelation of God. If we want to know what God is like, we must look to Jesus. God has gone on record that this is what He is like. He has committed Himself in Jesus.

- The Baptist's testimony also attests to the truth of Jesus' claims (John 5:33-35). He serves as a lamp in the dark and his presence was initially welcomed by the Jews. Jesus doesn't need to base his claims on the testimony of a human, however (Newman & Nida 1980:164; Ridderbos 1987:237). He only refers to John as a tangible reference point for the Jews to believe more readily and to be saved, as salvation comes through believing in Jesus (Newman & Nida 1980:164-165).

Yet the Jews were willing to accept what the Baptist said for a little while (lit. ὑμεῖς δὲ ἠθελήσατε ἀγαλλιαθῆναι πρὸς ὄραν ἐν τῷ φωτὶ αὐτοῦ.) instead of basing their faith on the One whom the Baptist testified about (Barrett 1978:265). The fact that Jesus called upon the Baptist's testimony, was to enable his listeners to take his message to heart, accept it and make the leap of faith, or - as said in his own words – ἵνα ὑμεῖς σωθῆτε (Hendrikson 1959/1:207).

- The next witness Jesus calls to support his claims, is the works the Father enabled Him to do. It is difficult to present an action as a witness, however, since only a person can act as a witness (Newman & Nida 1980:166). Yet, through His deeds Jesus proves the Father sent Him. This is much more important than the testimony presented by the Baptist, as this provides Jesus with a delegated divine authority (Barrett 1978:266). The plural use of τὰ ἔργα calls attention to the various impressive things that God has enabled Jesus to do (Newman & Nida 1980:166).
- Again the Father is presented as a witness to Jesus. The verb, μεμαρτύρηκεν, is used in perfect tense, indicating the continuing or present effects of the action, therefore implying the Father's witness did not stop yet (Newman & Nida 1980:166). The Jews, as it is the case with everybody else, didn't hear his voice and are unable to see Him in person. Since this is the case, the message coming from the Father is presented by the one whom He sent (Jesus).

Jesus thus points out the sad reality that they are unwilling to internalise the teaching about the Father as they do not believe in Jesus (Newman & Nida 1980: 167). The point Jesus is making establishes that one should believe in Jesus first and then that person will receive the direct testimony from God (Barrett 1978:267).

- Finally, the Scriptures are presented as the last witness to testify about Jesus. Jesus is specifically referring to the Old Testament, being the Jewish Bible of

course. The argument presented by John is that the Jews believed that studying the Scripture will help them find eternal life, since they regarded biblical studies as an end in itself (Barrett 1978:267).

In this they miss the point of the Scriptures. The Scriptures actually testify about Jesus, the One who brings eternal life. Studying the Scriptures was supposed to lead the Jews to Jesus, but it didn't (Barrett 1978:268; Newman & Nida 1980:168).

Jesus does not claim honour from people, and He can see through the Jews' rejection, since they don't have God's love in themselves. This is an important point Jesus is making, as He goes on to show how the Jews are willing to accept a person who presents himself based on his own credentials, yet they reject Jesus who presents Himself based on the one and true God's credentials.

The reason for this is because they are focused on honouring each other and actively seek it for themselves as they belong to the same world as the unbelievers (Barrett 1978:269). They are not focused on God and His glory at all. This search for glory is a means of self-assurance and only when this self-assurance is shaken, a person will be willing to make an act of faith expressive of his dependence on God. The rebellion of Jesus' antagonists is therefore a rebellion common to the world (Brown 1971:229).

Jesus' final argument in this narrative returns to the Jews' obsession with Moses. Morris (1971:323) views Moses as one of the witnesses presented by Jesus to testify for Him. This is a reference to the first five books of the Old Testament, as it was believed that Moses wrote them. Jesus will not accuse the Jews on their refusal to believe, since Moses will do it. They failed to obey his commandments, having taken these commandments as an end itself (Barrett 1978:270). The books of Moses (those upon which the Jews base their faith) told about Jesus and if the Jews really believed what was written in it, they would have believed Jesus. The whole of Scripture actually reveals God and His redemptive purpose for humankind, and this is what is fulfilled in Jesus (Lindars 1972:233).

But the Jews chose to interpret Moses' books as a final system of religion. This makes it clear that they do not really believe what is written in the law. This becomes the ultimate reason for their rejection of Jesus' message.

At the core here is Jesus attacking the Jews misguided legalism based on their interpretations of the Old Testament law books. This causes them to focus on outwardly acts of piety and on keeping a social system in tact where one person tries to be more spiritually legalistic than the other in an effort to increase his social standing. The heart of the message contained in the Old Testament laws is missing in this, thereby causing the Jews to reject Jesus as Messiah.

4.2.4 Continuing the story

John 6 tells the story of two more miracles: the multiplication of the bread (John 6:1-15) and how Jesus walked on water (John 6:16-21). It also follows Jesus' discourse on the first of these miracles presenting Him as the bread of life (John 6:22-59).

In the final passage of John 6, the story is told of the rejection of Jesus' message - by his disciples (John 6:60-71). From this point onwards the growing confusion and hostility about Jesus is increasingly put forth in the story.

4.3 THE STORY OF THE FESTIVAL OF THE SHELTERS (JOHN 7-8)

4.3.1 Jesus is rejected by his own family

It is in the context of this rejection and the growing political atmosphere that the first situation sketched in John 7 tells of Jesus' own brothers rejecting him and how He reacted to this.

The passage sets the scene for the misunderstanding and hostility Jesus will face in Jerusalem (Newman & Nida 1980:219). The impression is created that Jesus was visiting with people in place after place in Galilee (*περιπάτει* - John 7:1), thus depicting him as actively busy with ministry and not merely walking about (Newman

& Nida 1980:220). This withdrawal of Jesus from the public eye had the implied benefit that it allowed Jesus to be with his disciples (Hendrikson 1959/2:3).

By referring to the Festival of Tabernacles (John 7:2), the impression of wider interpretation possibilities for μετὰ ταῦτα is strengthened, since this festival took place approximately six months after the Passover mentioned in John 6:4. The Festival of Tabernacles - or Shelters - was celebrated yearly as the most important and crowded religious festival on the Jewish religious calendar (De Vaux 1973:495-496).

Apart from being a chronological marker in the narrative, the mention of this festival in the passage also serves the purpose of underscoring the magnitude of the unbelief of Jesus' brothers – the sarcasm they demonstrated gets greater significance as the reference to the festival shows how they actually mocked Jesus over their insinuation that He is trying to attract attention with his ministry (is Jesus aspiring to high public office, perhaps?) – This with being a very large festival and all. Hendrikson (1959/2:4) suggested that the specific reference to this festival was also because certain remarks of Jesus, in John 7:37, 8:12 and 9:7, are connected to the ceremonies of the feast.

The reference to Jesus' disciples (John 7:3) should be read in a wider sense as that it refers only to his immediate circle of followers. As his brothers' remark should be read in conjunction with the previous passage's telling of some of his followers leaving him, Jesus' brothers could be implying that his appearance at this feast

should help him to win these deserters back (Newman & Nida 1980:221). The underlying theme of people basing their faith in Jesus, because of his miracles (John 2:23-25), seems to be in play here as the mention of his works could suggest an expectation on the part of his brothers of some mighty demonstration of his power (Hendrikson 1959/2:5; Tasker 1960:102). The use of *μετάβηθι* with the possible meaning of “transfer of activity” seems to support the idea (Schnackenburg 1979:139).

But His brothers were being mostly sarcastic. This notion is strengthened by the remark in John 7:4 when they told Jesus that He should go public with his ministry, as they suggested He had aspirations to be known as a public figure (*καὶ ζητεῖ αὐτὸς ἐν παρρησίᾳ εἶναι*). And as John states in John 7:5, they did not believe in Him.

In reply, Jesus spoke about the right timing (*καιρός* – occurring only in John 7:6, 8 – Barrett 1978:313), which has particular emphasis on a particular moment or period in time rather than using it as a chronological sequence (Hendrikson 1959/2:5; Newman & Nida 1980:223). This would suggest that Jesus’ decision on going to Jerusalem or not is predestined by divine decree (Tasker 1960:103). To the contrary, his brothers had the freedom to go there any time they wished as it would make no difference whether they go or not (Hendrikson 1959/2:6). Brown (1971:306) argued that in general *καιρός* has a deeper theological importance as decisive salvific moment than *χρόνος*.

The use of *καίρως* then suggests that Jesus' refusal to attend the feast should be read in association with the increasing hostilities reported against him as well as in conjunction with the previously stated message that Jesus only does what the Father is doing. It isn't on the agenda to use this particular feast as an event for public ministry, as Jesus' going into Jerusalem would probably result in Jesus' incarceration or even death. This, after all, is the time for the manifestation of the Son of Man at the moment of the Passion, and awaits the time appointed by the Father (Lindars 1972:284). Jesus must be circumspect to avoid running into troubles that could hinder his mission (Morris 1971:393).

The defining remark in this passage occurs in John 7:7 as Jesus explains how his brothers' presupposition (John 7:4) actually is false. Jesus is unable to "recommend" himself publicly, or to the world (*ὁ κόσμος*), since the people in the world have no basis for hating Jesus' brothers. They stand in opposition to God and his purpose (Newman & Nida 1980:223), represent the realm of evil, humankind's alienation from God's way of life, and the manifestation of the hostility towards God and Jesus (Hendrikson 1959/2:6). The continuous or progressive action implied by the tense of *μαρτυρῶ* as well as the emphatic inclusion of *ἐγώ*, suggest that Jesus was thinking about the overarching theme in the message of salvation, as explained in John 3:16-21 (Schnackenburg 1979:141; Ridderbos 1987:299). This message is the one that was rejected.

In John 7:8 Jesus then reaffirmed his understanding of timing and said that his decision to stay away from the feast was in accordance with the timing planned by

God (Newman & Nida 1980:224). Jesus did what He said he would be doing: He stayed behind in Galilee (John 7:9). The context of John 7:10 confirms the notion of Jesus acting in accordance to God's will, as this verse, being part of the next scene in the narrative, said how Jesus did go to the festival but secretly and on his own initiative (Newman & Nida 1980:225).

4.3.2 Continuing the Story

All through John 7 peoples' differing reactions to the message of Jesus are noted. The confusion that reigned among the people is also shown by describing what they believed and what they didn't believe (e.g. John 7:12; 7:20; 7:26; 7:32; 7:40-41; 7:52). Part of this confusion was that Jesus offered a new way into the family of God - through faith. It created questions about those who worship in the synagogues and were law-abiding followers of Moses (Van der Watt 2007:15).

Lindars (1990:79) grouped John 7:1-8:30 into a single discourse. It combines the theme of the necessity of Jesus' death with the question whether he has the proper credentials to be the Messiah. He started his explanation with a strong description of his identity, when He promptly stated that He is the light of the world and whoever follows Him will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life (John 8:12).

The presence of the Son of God brought confusion among the people who observed his ministry. It was especially evident in the things they believed and didn't believe.

Chapter seven of John's Gospel shows this confusion with perplexing clarity (Van der Watt 2007:15). People thought Jesus was a good man while others believed He was leading people astray (John 7:12). Some said Jesus is demon-possessed (John 7:20). People wondered whether He was the Christ (John 7:26). Some felt He should be arrested (John 7:32). Others came to believe He is really the prophet or Christ (John 7:40-41). Some argued no prophet would come from Galilee (John 7:52).

Jesus contributed to this confusion by offering faith as a new way into the family of God. This led to the questions about the fate of those people worshipping in the synagogues and who were law-abiding disciples of the laws of Moses with regards to their position as members of God's family. These questions on the real identity of the children of God in the light of the presence of Jesus are dealt with in the following chapters of the Gospel.

John 8 is introduced with a strong description of Jesus' identity as the light of the world. The discussion shifts from theoretical considerations of the qualifications for messiahship to what Jesus' special relationship to God really means (Lindars 1972:312-313).

John discusses the question of people's identity as children of God and shows how the answer to the question lays in their behaviour, as the way a person acts shows what he/she really is. A child does what his/her father does (John 8:38-39) and his/her deeds reveal true family allegiance. Jesus' opponents proved themselves as

liars and murderers since they tried to kill Jesus (eventually succeeding) through false witness. Thus they are not children of God but of his antagonist who was a murderer and liar from the beginning (John 8:44).

4.3.3 Determining the truthfulness of Jesus' testimony (John 8:12-20)

It would seem that *πάλιν οὖν αὐτοῖς ἐλάλησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων ...* (John 8:12) is a continuation of the discourse from John 7:52, yet it is resumed without any apparent explanation (Barrett 1978:335). Jesus returned to the earlier, frequently used metaphor of light – this is the metaphor with which John's Gospel was introduced in John 1:4-5 and remained of great interest and importance to John (Morris 1971:438; Lindars 1972:315).

The phrase, *τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου*, can be translated as “the One who gives light to the people of the world,” while the phrase, *ὁ ἀκολουθῶν ἐμοί*, can be understood as “whoever becomes my disciple” ((Newman & Nida 1980:264). Similarly, *τὸ φῶς τῆς ζωῆς* could be translated as “the light that shows people how they may live.” In John's Gospel light is not a mere component of the universe; it is active and saving. In itself, light has life and gives life (Barrett 1978:337). Light is personified and in this passage the person associated with light, is identified as Jesus.

The use of the present participle (ὁ ἀκολουθῶν ἐμοί) has an important contribution towards better understanding the point that Jesus is trying to make. This participle conveys the idea of a continuous following, implying that Jesus thinks of wholehearted discipleship and not casual adherence. It is the same word used in John 1:37 where the story of Jesus' first disciples is told (Morris 1971:438) and the second half of this verse forms a promise to faithful disciples (Lindars 1972:316). The idea receives some further impetus when taking into consideration that John also uses the future tense, ἔξει, when he tells us this following of Jesus will result in the receiving of the light of life.

Agreement exists that this passage forms part of the story of Jesus' attendance of the Festival of Tabernacles - mentioned in John 7:2 (Brown 1971:343; Morris 1971:436; Lindars 1972:315; Barrett 1978:335). The continuation here of that story is somewhat obscured by the parenthetical inclusion of the story of the adulterous woman (John 7:53 - 8:11), a passage which, incidentally, is not regarded as authentically part of John's Gospel (Hendrikson 1959/2:39).

The high point of the festival of the Tabernacle includes a ceremony with lights as symbolic depiction of a religious memory from Jewish history. To Christians it was important that Christ fulfilled all the spiritual truths to which these feasts pointed (Morris 1971:437). At the end of the Festival of Tabernacles the candelabra that was lit was put out, making Jesus' statement all the more profound in its apparent symbolism. This is further confirmed when taking into account that the lighting of the candles for this festival took place in the "Court of the Women" (Lindars 1972:315).

This is the place where Jesus was most probably teaching when He proclaimed that He is the light of the world.

Unexpectedly, the theme of light and darkness is temporarily dropped, resuming again in John 9:5. John chooses to focus instead on the response of the Jewish authorities about Jesus' statement. They objected by saying that a person's claims about himself/herself are irrelevant and untrustworthy, falling back onto Jewish legal code. Morris (1971:439) correctly argues that this is a way of ignoring the main question in favour of a technicality, as they do not wish to be convinced. Jesus offered a twofold refutation to this: Unlike other people, He knows his origin and destiny and is therefore capable to be a true and reliable witness about himself.

Furthermore, it only appears that He witnesses and judges alone; He is in fact inseparable from the Father, and their combined witness should be acknowledged as valid by anyone accepting Mosaic Law (Barrett 1978:333). This intimate union between Father and Son has the implication that the Father's witness and the Son's witness to himself are actually indistinguishable (Lindars 1972:316). With this, the origin and end of Jesus in God justify his activity in presenting testimony about the truth and in judging.

The Jewish authorities again challenged Jesus' remark, now through attacking his authority. This becomes the subject matter of the rest of chapter 8 (Barrett 1978:338; Newman & Nida 1980:265), while using *μαρτυρία* in a strict legal sense. This explains

why they could say Jesus' remark is unconvincing. The demand of the Pharisees furthermore implies that they wanted Jesus to provide witnesses to prove his claim that He is God, knowing full-well it cannot be done. In any case, and with reference to the previous verse, light would no longer be God's Word if it demanded authorities recognised by people to confirm its authenticity (Barrett 1978:338).

Jesus' second reply indicates that He is denying their dismissal and affirming his own position (Newman & Nida 1980:265-266). Furthermore, He made a clear point of his intention to give his own testimony. If He did not make these statements the truth would never be communicated to people, who are dependent on the self-knowledge of the Saviour (Barrett 1978:338). More specifically, He may offer his own testimony since it is true and valid because it is confirmed by the Father who verifies it (Brown 1971:340). In John 8:14 Jesus remarked, ὅτι οἶδα πόθεν ἦλθον καὶ ποῦ ὑπάγω, hereby taking up the theme of his origin and destiny. The conversation that follows traces the Jewish authorities' complete ignorance of the origin, destiny and significance of Christ (Morris 1971:440; Ridderbos 1987:340).

The reason why the Jewish authorities do not know where Jesus came from or where He is going, stems from the fact that they make judgements on a purely human way (ὁμῆεις κατὰ τὴν σάρκα κρίνετε,) – by human standards, or by using human methods of judicial procedure, only (Brown 1971:340; Morris 1971:441; Lindars 1972:317; Barrett 1978:338; Newman & Nida 1980:266). To make judgements after the flesh is no judgement at all. If judgement is to be understood the way the Jewish authorities understands it, Jesus isn't making any judgement.

Moreover, Jesus didn't come to find people guilty of transgressions, but to save them from the slavery of their sins (cf. John 3:17; 12:47). Though Jesus' next remark (John 8:15) seems to affirm other comments He made about not being the judge (John 3:17), it also seems to contradict the fact that He indicated that indeed He is here for judgement (John 9:39). When Jesus does present judgement, it is in the name of and as the agent of God (Barrett 1978:338): "... *His judgment is performed on a different plane and is not subject to the same standards*" (Lindars 1972:317). Newman and Nida (1980:266-267) argued that the heart of the message in John's Gospel is to proclaim to the world that it is judged in the light of who Jesus really is.

No contradiction between Jesus' remarks, past and present, is intended, since Jesus is trying to show his perfect unity with the Father (John 8:16). Any judgement He makes, is not his own, in a purely human way; Jesus' judgements are made on the basis of his absolute relationship with the Father. Therefore, any judgements Jesus make, actually originates from God as He participates in the acts of judging. Jesus characteristically added a reference to his mission in what He says (καὶ ὁ πέμψας με). The Father sent him, but it was done in such a way that He is not left alone – the Father is still with Jesus. The emphasis is on the mission of Jesus and not the nature of the relationship between the Father and the son (Morris 1971:442).

Jesus next refers to Mosaic Law that dictates legal procedures when a person is on trial (John 8:17) and appeals to it. The laws He refers to, Deut 17:6 and 19:15,

require that two persons other than the one actually concerned provide testimony (Newman & Nida 1980:267). When their testimonies concur, they confirm the truth of the matter. The emphatic use of τῷ ὑμετέρῳ seems to depict Jesus as hostile or superior to Mosaic Law, but should be rendered to mean, “The Law that you yourselves accept” (Brown 1971:341). As a matter of fact, Jesus adopted Jewish legal theory in order to blow it to pieces (Schnackenburg 1979:194). Jesus reinterprets this Mosaic Law when He changes its wording from saying: the Law accepts the testimony of two witnesses, to saying: the Law accepts the testimony of two men (Morris 1971:442).

Jesus makes himself one of the two witnesses, in John 8:18, and uses the Father as the other witness. More specifically, He states that the Father sent him, indicating a close union between the two of them. In both instances the verb is used in the continuous tense, indicating that Jesus understood this action to be something that was started and hasn't stop yet (Morris 1971:443). Once again the Father is described in terms of his sending of the Son. The use of ἐγώ εἰμι alludes to revelation type of language with a chiastic linking to με πατήρ at the very end of the verse (Lindars 1972:318).

Jesus' remark leads – in John 8:19 - to another, typically Johannine misunderstanding allowing Jesus to provide further teaching on the matter (Newman & Nida 1980:268). The opportunity revolves around the origin and departure of Jesus, and of his parentage, especially since the Jewish authorities thought Jesus

was referring to his earthly father, therefore they want to speak to him to obtain his corroborating testimony.

Jesus' answer focused on a basic theme in the Gospel, namely that a person can only know the heavenly Father through the Son; if you do not know the Son you cannot possibly know the Father (Morris 1971:443). Knowing shouldn't be understood as being acquainted with, since Jesus meant here that they should really be in a more intimate relationship with Him (Newman & Nida 1980:268).

These themes are taken up in the remainder of the discourse (Barrett 1978:339). The fact that the Jewish opponents demanded that Jesus produce his Father, proves that they do not understand Jesus himself (Barrett 1978:340). If they had, they would have known from where He came and where He is going, and they would have known the Father also. Now, they have no knowledge of the Father at all (Morris 1971:443).

The pericope ends with providing some geographical information. There were thirteen different offering boxes in the temple. The room in which these boxes were placed could possibly not be accessible to the general public, and no public teaching could be done there (Barrett 1978:340), so it seems improbable that Jesus was teaching there. Perhaps it was meant to be understood as a room close to the court where the women was allowed in the temple, as women had access to these offering

boxes (cf. Mark 12:41-42). This language reflects the vague use of prepositions of place in koine-Greek (Brown 1971:342).

The impression is created that Jesus was interrogated by the Jewish authorities in some sort of a trial, as the place locator in John 8:20 places Jesus very close to the hall where the Sanhedrin met (Morris 1971:444). He wasn't arrested however, and John interprets this theologically: this failure isn't due to a lack in resolve or opportunity, but because the predestined time for Jesus' arrest hasn't arrived yet – therefore rendering his enemies powerless to do anything.

4.3.4 Continuing the Story

The resulting debate after this passage centres on the claim of being true children of God. For Jesus, the basic answer lies in one's behaviour, as who one is becomes apparent in what one does (Van der Watt 2007:15). Jesus refused to accept human witnesses as proof of his credentials by declaring that the legal requirement for two witnesses to support a case is met by the agreement between himself and the Father. This opened the way to understanding the importance of the crucifixion, as the cross demonstrates the unity between Jesus and the Father, John 8:29 (Lindars 1990:80).

In the discourse of John 8:31-59 Jesus argues that a child only does what his father is doing (John 8:38-39), therefore one's deeds reveals his/her family allegiance (Van

der Watt 2007:15). A child of God will act like a child of God. Because Jesus' opponents tried to kill Him – and eventually succeeded – they proved themselves as murderers and liars, and followers of God's opponent who was a murderer and liar from the start (John 8:44). The point of this contrast comes to the fore in John 8:51-52. Only Jesus, as God's Son, can give eternal life, because he has life in himself as he indeed is pre-existent (John 8:58). The Jews – who have the Law as well as being descendants of Abraham – do not have the capacity to give life which is claimed by Jesus and which will be demonstrated in his death and resurrection (Lindars 1990:80).

Again Jesus' argument is not left unchallenged (Van der Watt 2007:15-16). When He healed the blind man on a Sabbath, He is called a sinner because He broke Mosaic Law (John 9). This man came to Jesus' defence when he argued that nobody could do such miracles if God wasn't working through him. The Jewish leaders rejected this perfectly logical argument also and through this act illustrated their untruthfulness. They even expelled the healed man from the synagogue and John used it to describe their own spiritual blindness (John 9:40-41). The main point was adequately illustrated though (Van der Watt 2007:16): It is not legalistic synagogue worship, but faith in Jesus that guarantees membership of the family of God.

The narrative in John 9 serves as preparation to the climax in John 10, by contrasting the sight which Jesus gives with the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees (Lindars 1990:80). First Jesus explained why His opponents have no chance of becoming children of God on their own – it's because He is the only door of the

sheepfold of God (John 10:7, 9). If a person wants to be part of the fold of God, they should use this door (Van der Watt 2007:16). Then they will have a shepherd who will give his life for them (John 10:11, 15) as they now belong to Him (John 10:14).

4.4 JESUS IS REJECTED ... AGAIN - JOHN 10:22-30

4.4.1 Some background remarks

John 9 recounts another miracle performed by Jesus – the Sabbath-day healing of a blind man. The story is used as vehicle to convey the blind man’s testimony of his belief in Jesus, the ironical remark that the Jews do not know where Jesus comes from (as they did not want to acknowledge his ability to perform the miracle) and the blind man’s statement that Jesus must come from God (John 9:33). This all is recounted before Jesus offered the man the choice to believe in Him as Christ (John 9:35-41).

Martyn (1979:27) regarded John 9 as seminal to unlocking the Johannine community’s circumstances. He argued that the narrative provided insight into some definite situation in the life of the church, with John 9:22 as key to the understanding of the community dimension. The fact that the blind man’s parents refused to testify for fear of being expelled from the synagogue is anachronistic. Jesus’ lifetime knew nothing of expulsion from synagogues and this statement therefore reflects the context of the Johannine community late in the first century, where other historical

sources cited the Jewish practice of expelling Christians from their synagogues. Martyn concluded that John 9 depicts a two-level drama (Stibbe 1992:58), for the description of the healing miracle also depicts incidents within the Johannine community to which the Gospel was directed.

The first part of John 10 is devoted to the parable of the sheepfold, in which Jesus explains that His relationship with His flock is based on them knowing Him and their ability to hear His voice. He further used the metaphor of Him being the door through which the sheep must go to be safe from evil and harm. He is the door by laying down His life for his sheep because He and the Father know and love each other. Because of this intimate relationship between Jesus and the Father, He is able to take up His life again after it was laid down.

4.4.2 Still more rejection of Jesus

Two parallel accounts form the basic outline of the final part of this chapter. John 10:22-30 revolves around the question, are you the Messiah? The question is answered by Jesus referring to his followers as sheep, invoking the Old Testament image of King David as shepherd of the people thereby affirming the messianic overtones of the image of Jesus as the good shepherd. John 10:31-39 develops the analogue between shepherd and sheep further when Jesus speaks about the security of the sheep by affirming that no-one can snatch them away from Him.

John 10:22 creates the impression that Jesus actively attended the different religious festivals of the Jewish religion. Newman and Nida (1980:337) place this feast during approximately December which means that several months have passed since John's telling of Jesus' attendance of the Festival of the Shelters, which is placed from September to October of each year. This feast commemorated the sanctification of the temple in 165 BCE after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanus (Hendriksen 1959/2:120; Morris 1971:516; Lindars 1972:366; Ridderbos 1987:426).

It can be viewed as a festival dedicated to the renewal of worship in the temple (Schnackenburg 1971:304). The feast's dating in December and the central role light and candles played also suggests a pagan connection in connection with the celebrating of the winter solstice, but this isn't reflected by John's Gospel.

John describes a form of activity to introduce the actual issue he is depicting by telling us that Jesus was walking along the temple passageway, called Solomon's Porch, when he was accosted by some of the Jewish authorities (Newman & Nida 1980:338). In Acts, Solomon's Portico is described as the place where the early church met before their expulsion from the temple and synagogues (Lindars 1972:367).

As if Jesus hasn't previously answered their questions about his identity, the Jewish authorities now demanded that He clearly states if He was the Messiah. The only time when He did clarify his true identity to somebody was in John 4:26 when He told

the Samaritan Woman directly that He is the Messiah (Schnackenburg 1971:305; Barrett 1978:380; Newman & Nida 1980:339) and in somewhat veiled format to the man he healed from blindness, in John 9:35-37 (Morris 1971:519; Barrett 1978:380).

Thus it would seem that the Jewish authorities who demanded an answer from him didn't necessarily figure out his identity from his past deeds and teachings. Being traditionally Jewish, it is also very probable that they couldn't fathom the answer positively, as their idea of the Christ was that of a political king of Israel who is in rebellion to the Roman government (Hendriksen 1959/2:120).

Jesus' reaction was to focus on their (spiritual) unbelief, since the deeds He did in the Father's name testify about him. He not only told them about his exalted origin and nature, He also proved it with his words being accompanied by his works (Hendriksen 1959/2:121). This is therefore a reminder of the argument in John 5:36 on the witness of the works he had done - made more compelling by the miracle of giving sight to the blind man in John 9 (Lindars 1972:368). After all, a lack of faith equals a lack of spiritual understanding (Hendriksen 1959/2:121), and this open hostility – the failure to believe - is the sin of which they are guilty.

John must now put two things in perspective: He needs to show that Jesus is aware of the fact that the Jews definitely cannot believe, in view of the John 9-discussion on spiritual blindness, so there is no point in answering their question (Lindars 1972:368). He also has to provide an answer for the benefit of the reader and to give

the grounds for the final rejection. The previously discussed metaphor of the sheep has moved the discussion into a deeper level of understanding, so the answer can best be given on this basis. This answer is provided in John 10:30.

John 10:26 therefore serves as a link to return to the theme of the good shepherd. He returns to remarks He made in John 10:4, where He said the sheep follow Him because they know his voice, and John 10:14, where He said He knows his sheep (Newman & Nida 1980:340). In John 10:8 the sheep was described as the true believers, so much so that they do not heed thieves and robbers, but the shepherd's voice instead (John 10:16). One can therefore appreciate that because unbelief is understood as a refusal to hear and obey, it can be expressed here simply by saying, ὅτι οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐκ τῶν προβάτων τῶν ἐμῶν (Lindars 1972:368).

Furthermore, the reference to eternal life (John 10:28) refers back to verse 10 with the added fresh dimension of verses 14-18 on the sacrifice of the shepherd. Since Jesus lays down his life for his sheep, and takes it up again, He is able to give them eternal life.

Lindars calls this verse one of the great theological statements of the Gospel, as it surpasses the metaphorical dimension of the imagery. Returning immediately to the pictorial imagery of the Gospel, with the phrase, καὶ οὐχ ἄρπάσει τις αὐτὰ ἐκ τῆς χειρός μου, John refers back to John 10:12 showing how the safety of the sheep is ensured

as Jesus displays two characteristics of an ideal shepherd – his sacrifice for his sheep and having an intimate knowledge of them (Lindars 1972:369).

John 10:29 provides some difficulties in translation (Hendriksen 1959/2:124; Lindars 1972:369; Newman & Nida 1980:340), but in essence the text expands on the thoughts presented by the previous verses, that stated Jesus' followers (the sheep) knows his voice, that He gives them the sort of life that belongs to the world of the Father and that nobody can steal them away from Jesus. Thereby the safety of the sheep is traced back to the plan of the Father, as Jesus' knowledge of the sheep was traced back to his own relation with the Father in John 10:15 (Lindars 1972:368). The Father is the ultimate reality, so the security of the sheep is impregnable.

Finally, in John 10:30, Jesus makes the explicit statement of his unity with the Father. This oneness should be understood in ethical terms (Lindars 1972:370) as it grows from Jesus' obedience to the Father, by which He is able to do the same deeds as the Father (Newman & Nida 1980:341). Elsewhere in the Gospel the oneness between Father and Son is expressed as a unity of nature or being. Here the unity is emphasised by Christ reflecting the Father in all that He says and does as they are essentially one (Hendriksen 1959/2:126; Morris 1971:522).

Speaking to his Jewish opponents while standing in the portico of Solomon in the temple, Jesus points to himself and claims He is the visible presence of God among

them (therefore replacing the temple), bringing the argument over his messianic claims to a conclusion (Moloney 1996:147).

It can also be called mutual indwelling (Lindars 1972:371), implying the unity to be essential and permanent and not a passing and temporary concurrence of a common mind and purpose. Later, in John 17, this oneness between Father and Son is depicted as the prototype and model of oneness to which the community of believers also should aspire (Schnackenburg 1971:308).

4.5 ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΑ IN THE FINAL PASSAGES OF JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY

4.5.1 Some background remarks

John 11 recounts the final miracle included in John's Gospel. Here, He raises Lazarus from death. Put against the backdrop of the ongoing rejection of Jesus by the Jews, Jesus' remark of the purpose of the miracle that is about to happen, becomes all the more significant: Αὕτη ἡ ἀσθένεια οὐκ ἔστιν πρὸς θάνατον ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα δοξασθῇ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ δι' αὐτῆς (John 11:4). This should also be read in conjunction with Martha's confession, ἐγὼ πεπίστευκα ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενος (John 11:27). The commotion caused among the Jews by this miracle forced Jesus further into hiding (John 11:54), as the decision was formally made to capture and kill Him (John 11:49-53).

The final narrative depicting Jesus' public ministry recounts the journey from Ephraim – where Jesus stayed after the raising of Lazarus – to Jerusalem, where Jesus and his disciples were headed to participate in the Passover (John 12:1). Thus the stage is set for the private conversation between Jesus and his disciples (John 13-17) and his capture and execution and resurrection (John 18-20). The narrative of this journey includes Mary, sister of Lazarus, anointing Jesus' feet. This most probably enables John to more clearly introduce Judas Iscariot as antagonist of the story, as he was previously introduced into the story line (John 6:70-71). Here the description of Judas Iscariot includes the remark that he took money from the common money box since he was a thief (John 12:4-6).

In chapter 10 the question is asked whether the opponents to Jesus have a chance to become children of God on their own (Van der Watt 2007:16). Jesus takes the opportunity to explain that He is the door of the sheepfold of God and a person can only enter God's sheepfold if they use this door. Furthermore, by entering through this door, they have a shepherd that is willing to lay down his life for them as they belong to him. They will follow the Son of God, the giver of life, the light of the world, the Good Shepherd. No-one will be able to steal them out of the hands of the Father or the Son. Thus, the answer to the question (can one become a child of God without Jesus?) is no. Again the Jews rejected Jesus' message as they refused to believe in Jesus or his works (Van der Watt 2007:16).

crowd seem to have political overtones, as if they were welcoming Jesus as a national liberator (Brown 1971:461). The entering into the city on the back of a donkey is a prophetic action designed to counteract this nationalistic overtone (Brown 1971:463).

The crowd is called large, and this should be ascribed to the fact that people flocked to Jerusalem for the Passover as pilgrims (Newman & Nida 1980:396), adding weight to the fact that they responded to the testimony of those who witnessed the “stupendous miracle” (Morris 1971:588) of the raising of Lazarus (John 12:17).

Here the use of *ἐμαρτυρία* depicts the eyewitness accounts given of this event, attesting to its truthfulness and creating the setting against which Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem should be interpreted. The verb is used in the imperfect tense and indicates action in progress (Newman & Nida 1980:400), therefore implying that the witnesses to Lazarus’ raising couldn’t stop talking about it in their ongoing conversations about Jesus (Moloney 1996:186).

We can infer some additional understanding to the use of the *μαρτυρία*-lexeme in this specific context: One of the outcomes of being a witness to Christ, it would seem from this event, is that a person’s testimony is carried so convincingly because of its truth and the personal involvement with the situation being described, that the receivers of the testimony are propelled into investigative action of some sort.

This event serves as the final motivation for the Jewish authorities' decision to kill Jesus: ἴδε ὁ κόσμος ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ ἀπῆλθεν (John 12:19).

4.5.3 Continuing the Story

In the final passages of John 12 Jesus spoke to some Greek speaking Jews who wanted to meet Him (John 12:20-26). This event is used as vehicle for Jesus' proclamation of His imminent death and the theological reason for His death, namely that it is like a grain falling in the ground and bearing this fruit: anyone who willingly loses his earthly life will receive eternal life, in John 12:24-25 (Moloney 1996:187).

The following event that is recalled, is the voice from heaven (John 12:27-36) stating that Jesus will be glorified, allowing Jesus to tell His followers that He will be crucified (John 12:33). Jesus then departed from the temple and John commented on the Jews' unbelief as fulfilment of prophecies from Isaiah. This John also used as basis to show that even some Jewish authorities came to believe in Jesus but kept quiet out of fear of persecution from the Pharisees. John couldn't refrain from some value comments, however, as he interpreted their silence as loving the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:43).

The final pericope of John 12 can be viewed as a summary of all things Jesus taught during the course of His public ministry, as recounted by John's Gospel (John 12:44-50). To believe in Jesus is to actually believe in God and seeing Jesus enables a

person to see God. Jesus came as light of the world and not as judge because His primary mission is to save the world. Jesus' words will be the ultimate judge, as people who rejected his message will be judged as such. This is possible because Jesus didn't speak on his own accord, but received His authority from the Father. Moreover, He received a specific commandment from the Father and it is ζωὴ αἰώνιος (John 12:50).

4.6 CONCLUSION

Jesus has the ability and the authority to provide life. He received this from the Father, and in this He is totally dependent on the Father. Jesus also has the right to judge, and this He received from the Father as well. Since He came to earth to provide life in the fullest sense, Jesus wants people to believe in the Father. Believing in the Father enables them to move from death to life. To achieve this, Jesus presents witnesses to his mission, providing compelling evidence of the truth of his claims.

These witnesses are the Father, John the Baptist, the works Jesus are doing while on his mission, and the Scriptures of Jewish religion. Refusal to accept these stems from a person's unbelief in God. Therefore, if a person truly believes in God, he/she will accept and believe Jesus' testimony. Unfortunately, the Jewish adversaries to Jesus were so stuck in their legalistic clinging to the laws of Moses that they failed to recognise the testimony these Scriptures presented about Jesus.

The list of witnesses also helps contemporary readers of John's Gospel to grasp something of the basis of their own testimony. As they believe the message presented by Jesus, they know the Father and hear his voice. And like John the Baptist, they are also standing in line as witnesses to Jesus. And as the people of Jesus' day could see his works, the believers of today can also testify to these works as they can see evidence of Jesus' continuing mission on earth today. And just like the Jewish faithful they can search the Scriptures as they also have access to the full body of Biblical literature today.

At the core of Jesus' testimony is his mission to save those who live in the darkness of unbelief, causing them to be enslaved to sin. Jesus presents himself as the true Mediator of the Father's saving grace, even though this testimony is rejected by the religious people of his time. Jesus is able to be the Mediator because He and the Father are inseparably united and their testimonies are indistinguishable from each other.

In the shepherd narrative of John 10 Jesus presents His testimony through a pastoral metaphor. This is done to demonstrate the real outcome of believing his message. Those who accept his testimony and meet him as Saviour, discover the Father as true Shepherd of a flock that cannot be harmed. They are cared for, looked after and this enables them to flourish. It happens through the sacrifice Jesus is making by laying down his life for these sheep.

Finally, Jesus' works are quite spectacular. This is aptly demonstrated by him raising Lazarus from the grave. People couldn't stop talking about it. Those who were

present at the event testified to those who were not. And even if they did not believe in Jesus because of his message, they certainly were willing to crown him king because of his miraculous abilities.

This last reference to testimony in Jesus' public ministry – in John 12 –depicts a lasting impression of John's use of the lexeme. He transferred the legal meaning of testimony into the religious domain to give it new content: People who see Jesus in action, who listen to his message and who get to know him are in an excellent position to tell other people about what they saw and experienced. In fact, it is an integral part of John's implied ecclesiology that a living faith community will serve as witness to the God it personally knows, loves and trusts.