

C HAPTER FIVE

“Jesus has made majestic claims. But who is he to make them?”

(Hendrikson 1959/1:205)

JESUS’ CONVERSATION WITH HIS DISCIPLES (JOHN 13-17); THE PASSION NARRATIVE (JOHN 18-20); THE EPILOGUE (JOHN 21)

5.1 AN OVERVIEW OF JESUS’ MINISTRY TO HIS DISCIPLES

The second major section of the Johannine narrative after the section on the public ministry of Jesus is set during a single evening over dinner, before He was taken captive and crucified. At this meal Jesus spelled out his vision for his followers: *“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”* - John 13:34-35 (Van der Watt 2007:17). John starts the narrative with Jesus washing the

feet of his disciples to demonstrate how He understands this principle. The ensuing discussion came to be known as the Farewell Discourse.

The discourse can be subdivided into three parts (Van der Watt 2007:17-18):

- **A first discourse in John 13-14**, ending with the words, “*Rise, let us go from here*” (John 14:31). These two chapters serve to assure the disciples that they are indeed on their way to the Father because Jesus is “*the way, the truth, and the life*” (John 14:6), as long as they stay in a close relationship with Him. They will not be left orphaned if Jesus goes away, because He will stay with them in different ways:
 - He will be with them through the Spirit of truth, their special Helper who will be sent to them (John 14:16-19, 26).
 - His words and works will be a constant reminder of His presence with them (John 14:10-12, 23-24), being as close as He possibly can to them, making this experience possibly through the practice of prayer and the promise of giving them everything they according to the mission they share with Him (John 14:13-14).

- Finally, He will make His presence felt, as Jesus and his Father will “make home with everyone who loves Him and keeps his commandments” (John 14:23; 14:15, 21).

- **A second discourse comprising John 15 and 16.** In John, 15-16 it is explained why the disciples must keep their relationship with Jesus intimate. The first image being used is that of a vine and its branches (John 15:1-17). Only such an intimate relationship with Jesus will produce fruit that pleases the Father (John 15:8). As it was in Jesus' case, not everyone will appreciate their fruit, and they will be hated just like Jesus. They might even be persecuted and killed, but they can be assured that they are not left alone. The Spirit, their special Helper – or Paraclete – will guide and lead them (John 16:5-15).

As a result, their sorrow will change into joy, as indeed the Father and Jesus are always with them. There appear to be some overlapping between John chapters 14 and 16.

- **Finally, the prayer of Jesus in John 17.** John 17 contains Jesus' prayer to his Father. It has the character of a report-back from the Son to the Father of the mission that was undertaken (Van der Watt 2007:18) and the thematic progress in the prayer is evident:

- John 17:1-5. Jesus remarks that He accomplished the work that the Father sent Him to do (to give eternal life to all those who belong to the Father). He is now ready to return and to be glorified.

- John 17:6-8. The result of the mission was that many received the message of Jesus and indeed believed, forming a community of believers.

- John 17:9-19. What must now happen to those believers? Jesus asked not that they be taken out of this world, but that the Father should protect them so they can continue with Jesus' mission.

- John 17:20-23. Jesus also prays for those people who come to faith through the word and message of his disciples. He asks for loving unity among them and unity with the Father and Son.

- John 17:24-25. Jesus explicitly asks that eventually all believers should be where He is, with the Father in glory.

The only passage in these Farewell Discourses to contain the μαρτυρία-lexeme is John 15:18-16:4. The absence of the lexeme in this section is striking, given the frequent use of the word group in the previous chapters of the Gospel.

5.2 ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΑ IN JESUS' MINISTRY TO HIS DISCIPLES

General agreement exists with the beginning of this section at John 15:18, but apparently there is differing opinions to its ending (Newman & Nida 1980:490). It is difficult to break-up chapters 15 and 16, as various themes and emphases interlock with each other (Smith 1986:52). Although John 15:26-27 introduces a new subdivision, the persecution theme of the previous verses link thematically with John 16:1-4a, making the introduction of a new pericope at verse 26 difficult. As a whole, this passage deals with the world's hatred for the disciples, the reason being the world's hatred towards Jesus.

It is important to understand that the remark of Jesus about "the world" hating his disciples - in John 15:18 - imply people on earth who oppose God, because they are aligned with the power of evil (Barrett 1978:479; Newman & Nida 1980:491). The verb *μισέω* is repeated twice in this sentence and the second time it is used in the perfect tense (*μεμίσηκεν*) to indicate the enduring character of this action. The world's hatred actually has a long history and it is not about to end soon. John describes the contrast between Jesus' disciples and the world in absolute categories (Newman & Nida 1980:492).

The disciples do not belong to the world as they are chosen from it by Jesus, thereby providing the reason for its hatred: they are now part of the world to which Jesus belongs and this stands in direct opposition with the ideals of the world. Moreover,

they share in Jesus' mission, and as the previous discussion focused on their love for Jesus and each other, the antithesis of love – hate must also be explored (Lindars 1972:493).

In John 15:20 Jesus provides a shimmer of hope on this negative picture of the followers of the world. Where-as the depiction of the world's attitude towards Jesus and his disciples has been completely negative, Jesus seems here to be fine-tuning his view somewhat (Newman & Nida 1980:493). Some people from the world will obey the disciples' teaching just as they obeyed that of Jesus (lit. εἰ τὸν λόγον μου ἐτήρησαν, καὶ τὸν ὑμέτερον τηρήσουσιν).

It would seem that He wanted to show that all is not just lost, since the purpose of keeping his word is, after all, to show to the people of the world the light and how to start living in it. Through this, Jesus also showed his disciples that they can expect success in their mission and not rejection only (Lindars 1972:494).

John 15:21 provides the motive for this hatred and persecution: ἀλλὰ ταῦτα πάντα ποιήσουσιν εἰς ὑμᾶς διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου, ὅτι οὐκ οἶδασιν τὸν πέμψαντά με. There are two reasons for this persecution: First, the disciples are part of the world of Jesus (lit. for Jesus' name's sake), and secondly, the people of the world do not know the One who sent Jesus, in other words they do not know the Father (Newman & Nida 1980:494).

From John 21:22-25 the world's guilt is discussed as something that grows out of this persecution: The world hated Jesus - it will hate His followers as well. The world is persecuting Jesus - it will persecute His followers as well. The world didn't believe Jesus' word (or message, or teaching), it will similarly not accept the words of His disciples. Moreover, Jesus spoke to the people of the world and did works among them, therefore they now have knowledge of their sin and this takes away any opportunity for an excuse (Newman & Nida 1980:494-495). If Jesus did not come to earth to proclaim God's message, the world would not be guilty of sin.

As it is, the world has seen what Jesus did and it heard his teaching, making them guilty because by rejecting Him and his message they demonstrate their hatred of both Jesus and the Father who sent Him (Newman & Nida 1980:490-491, 495). This helps us understand the nature of Jesus' message: He came to proclaim the truth of people's bondage in sin and the resulting guilt they are suffering because of it. He also came to show them the way out of this bondage by doing the things that was unique to his Messianic character. Yet this way was rejecting, making the people of the world even guiltier.

John 15:26-27 reveals the source of strength for disciples during times of persecution: The Helper, Spirit of truth, who comes from the Father, will enable them to endure. The first reference to the Helper was in John 14:16 and further. There He was described as someone who will convict the world of sin, as He is a teacher, a witness to Jesus (Newman & Nida 1980:466-467). Note, however, that the words for witness do not occur anywhere in John 14 and this usage is inferred from the content

of the discussion. It is better to suffice with a general understanding of the function of the Holy Spirit by thinking along the lines of Him being a Helper to the disciples of Jesus, a meaning that is emphasised by John 16:26.

Newman and Nida (1980:497) referred to the complex locational relations in the clause, ὃν ἐγὼ πέμψω ὑμῖν παρὰ τοῦ πατρός, showing that the role of Jesus as the agent is primarily causative. It can thus be translated as “I will cause him to go from the Father and come to you.” This leads to understanding the testimony of the Helper as testimony about Jesus, specifically in the understanding that the Paraclete will unceasingly continue to testify about Him (Barrett 1978:482).

The text strongly implies that the Spirit is personal (Brown 1970:689). The causative clause of John 15:26 helps us to understand the intricate relation between the testimony of the Paraclete and the testimony of Jesus’ disciples. The Paraclete testifies about Jesus, since He comes from the Father and was with Jesus from the beginning – even before creation. He is sent to earth to bear witness about Jesus, thereby reinforcing the score of testimonies about his identity and mission. Furthermore, He is able to do it, because of the fact that He has intimate knowledge of, and functioned in, an intimate relation with Father and Son (Morris 1971:683).

Similarly the disciples, are sent by Jesus to bear witness about Him as they, too were with Jesus from the beginning (that is, the beginning of his earthly ministry – Lindars 1971:497; Newman & Nida 1980:498; Ridderbos 1997:527). Underscoring

the point is the emphatic use of the pronoun, ὑμεῖς. Moreover, by repeating the words of John 13:16 in John 15:20, Jesus seems to have transferred His mission onto the disciples. Thus, their testimony must be understood as that they were there, they know Jesus personally and furthermore, they continue to do and say what He did and said. They must accept responsibility of this task as it cannot be evaded (Morris 1971:684).

Moreover, their testimony cannot be separated from the testimony of the Paraclete since the Paraclete is invisible to the world and can only be heard through the testimony of the disciples (Brown 1970:700). The relation of this witness is similar to the relation between the Father and the Son (Beutler 1972:366).

If we put these two verses in the context of the discussion of the μαρτυρία-lexeme in John 1:19 - 4:54, we find that the same overall theme is repeated here: To bear witness is to be able to attest to Jesus' identity and credentials based on the fact that you, as witness, know Him personally and are able to provide sufficient information about his heritage, character, actions and even integrity (Brown 1970:701). The Spirit can do it, since He was with Jesus and the Father from the beginning of time. And Jesus' disciples must do it, since they were with Jesus from the beginning of his earthly ministry.

The promise of the Counsellor enables the disciples not to have their faith shaken in the midst of hardship and persecution (Newman & Nida 1980:499). This more

specifically means He will protect them from losing their faith in times of persecution. John now returns to the earlier theme of persecution (in John 15:18-25) and in John 16:2 he describes some of the hardships Jesus' disciples will face. The idea that references to ἀποσυνάγωγος in John 9:22, 12:41 and here in 16:2 reflect conditions after 85 CE, as was occasionally argued (cf Smith 1986:53), is somewhat one-sided (Hengel 1989:114-117). The Christians' expulsion from the synagogues was a lengthy process that started even before Paul, with the martyrdom of Stephen. Moreover, the suffering of the communities of God in Judaea weren't isolated events, but widespread and repeated. Hengel (1989:117) concluded that the narrative in John 16:2 was meant to describe the general context of the whole post-Easter community, since the beginning of the church.

As it is, Jesus wants his disciples to appreciate the degree of animosity towards them, as He describes how the persecutors will think they are doing a service to God by expelling them from the synagogues (Newman & Nida 1980:500). John also reiterates the cause of the persecution as the world knowing neither the Father nor Jesus (John 16:3). The phrase used here, οὐκ ἔγνωσαν, actually denotes a constant truth as it is used in the aorist tense – meaning something like “they have never known the Father or me.”

Jesus is telling these things to them in advance, so that they will be able to withstand the pressure to leave the faith. John 16:4a uses the expression μνημονεύητε αὐτῶν ὅτι ἐγὼ εἶπον ὑμῖν, not to suggest that the disciples will forget what Jesus said, but to think about what he has said (Newman & Nida 1980:500). Jesus speaks, after all, of

things which the church will remember and understand only in the light of its subsequent, post-resurrection history (Smith 1986:54).

5.3 ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΑ IN THE PASSION NARRATIVE

5.3.1 Some Background Remarks on John 18-20

John's narrative of the crucifixion events largely follows the chronological sequence of the other Gospels, but contains several unique differences. Chronologically, Jesus was captured and questioned by the high priest as well as the political ruler of the area – Pontius Pilate. He was then sentenced to death by crucifixion, buried, but rose on the third day, and appeared to his disciples (Van der Watt 2007:18).

Van der Watt (2007:18-19) pointed to the following differences in the passion narrative between John and the Synoptic Gospels:

- John's version of the crucifixion is not a story of suffering. Jesus is portrayed as the one with the true power, even though He seemed powerless – having everything under control (John 18:35-38). In John 19:11, He said to Pilate that Pilate wouldn't have power unless it was given to him from above. That reflects the statement He made in John 10:17-18.

- Jesus' innocence and kingship are clearly declared in the Johannine account. Upon listening to Pilate, one hears two things, he does not find Jesus guilty of any crime and he constantly talked about Jesus' kingship. He even wrote it down as a title on the cross (John 19:19).
- John integrated the crucifixion narrative with his theology. It becomes apparent when one looks at the themes Jesus talked about during the events of the night:
 - Jesus drinks from the cup the Father has prepared for Him, He does what the Father asks (John 18:11).
 - He has no hidden agenda and speaks openly for everybody to hear (John 18:20-24).
 - He is a King, but his Kingship is not from this world and that is the truth (John 18:34-38).
 - The power does not lie with Pilate but comes from above (John 19:11).
 - Jesus cared for His mother and introduced her to the community of believers (John 19:26-27).
- John used irony as a style figure in his narrative. Jesus' opponents were ignorant of the real power game taking place. Although they thought they were in charge, the true power laid with Jesus. Ironically, they crucified Jesus

under false pretences and should be the ones crucified. Even more ironically, the cross became Jesus' throne, as was declared by the title on top of his cross – this is the King of the Jews (John 19:19). The cross thus acted not as an instrument of suffering and humiliation, but as the glorification of the Son of God (John 12:18; 17:1-5).

Although the Gospel of John is frequently thought of as the Gospel of the incarnation, the decisive factor for the argument that Jesus gives eternal life is the death of Jesus (Lindars 1990:81). It is in his death that Jesus really proved that he is the pre-existent Son of God (Lindars 1990:81-82): Jesus' death has a voluntary character. Though he was condemned to death, Jesus did it voluntarily, because he could retract his message. As he lay down his life out of his own will, he has the same power to take it up again. In John 10:17 Jesus states that the Father loves him because he accepts death as a freely willed choice to obey the charge given by the Father.

By giving his own life for his sheep, Jesus demonstrates the Father's will for the salvation of all people (John 10:29) as he is one with the Father (John 10:30); John also places great emphasis on the demonstrative aspect of the cross (John 8:28) and the argument starts as early as John 3:14 where the idea of the lifting up of the Son is first introduced. It refers to both the cross and Jesus' exaltation to heaven, therefore alluding to Isaiah 52:13 where the Suffering Servant is exalted after his humiliation even to death. The world can see the exaltation of Jesus through the crucifixion which is the demonstration of Jesus' moral union with the Father.

At the same time, Jesus' death is the supreme moral victory in the flesh. Jesus' personal preference and his fears are completely subordinated to the will of God (John 12:27-30). Through him, the devil's grip on humanity is broken and victory over the "prince of this world" is declared. This cosmic victory simultaneously ushers in the eschatological age; Finally, John portrays Jesus' death similar to the traditions of earliest Christianity as an atonement sacrifice. The testimony of John the Baptist (John 1:29, 35) refers to this. Jesus also says he gives his life for the life of the world (John 6:51), for the sheep (10:11, 15) and for his friends (John 15:13).

5.3.2 Finding the pivotal point of the Crucifixion

The pivotal point of the crucifixion can thus be found in Jesus' union with the Father. As such, it opens the way for believers to enter into a personal relationship with God through Jesus (Lindars 1990:82). The cross becomes the high point of the revelation of God's love and this love effects salvation. Salvation in the Johannine sense can be defined as being saved from sin, where sin is a refusal to accept Jesus as the Christ, Son of God – John 16:9 (Van der Watt 2007:52). Such a refusal results in evil behaviour and it can be seen visibly: hate, murder, lies, theft, seeking self-honour, etc. Therefore, it is not the deeds that count, but the lack of a relationship with God (Van der Watt 2007:53).

Furthermore, salvation is attained through faith – *“a self-sacrificing, intellectual and existential acceptance of the message and person of Jesus to the extent that it completely transforms a person’s thoughts and deeds in accordance with Jesus’ message and leads to an obedient life of doing what a child of God should do”* (Van der Watt 2007:55). When it occurs, a person is included in the family of God and is born “from above.” This makes it extremely important that a person will recognize Jesus for whom he is and, to this regard, the cross-events serve the purpose of defining when a person recognizes Jesus (Van der Watt 2007:56).

The effect of the cross-events as pivotal point for salvation is demonstrated by the story of the unbelieving Thomas. Koester (1989:343) discusses the resurrection appearances as the culmination of the disciples’ coming to faith. By using repetition, the narrative creates three-part dramatic sequences which climax when a character recognizes that Jesus is alive. First, the beloved disciple saw and believed (John 20:8). “Believe” is used in an absolute sense, so it must be assumed that the disciple believed in Jesus’ resurrection, especially when read in conjunction with John 20:9 by way of contrast, Mary also saw, but she only believed when she heard Jesus’ voice.

This sets the stage for the third part of the story, when Jesus appeared to the group of disciples, initially with Thomas absent. As with the beloved disciple, who believed when seeing Jesus, and Mary, who believed after hearing Jesus, the disciples came to faith upon seeing him. However, Thomas made seeing and touching Jesus a

precondition for believing, as had the sceptics in Jerusalem – John 2:18 – and the crowd in Galilee – John 6:30 (Koester 1989:346).

The contrast is further accentuated when comparing Jesus' response to the disciples and to Thomas. To the disciples he said, εἰρήνην ὑμῖν (John 20:21) and to Thomas he said ὅτι ἐώρακας, με πέπιστευκας μακάριοι οἱ μὴ ἰδόντες καὶ πιστεύσαντες (John 20:29). This extends the possibility for subsequent generations of believers to know Jesus through the testimony of those who came to believe without actually seeing him. Thomas could touch Jesus as proof of his resurrection, while those after him will not be able to do so (Van der Watt 2001:445).

John's Gospel therefore uses the story of Thomas' unbelief as basis for the testimonial character of faith, making the reading of the Gospel an existential experience (Van der Watt 2001:446).

5.3.3 Jesus before the High Priest - John 18:19-24

The heated context of the night Jesus was arrested and tried forms the setting of this pericope. Jesus was brought before the high priest and he questioned him on his disciples and teaching. No mention is made of questions regarding Jesus' messiahship and the accusation of blasphemy, which was, according to the Synoptic Gospels, the pivotal points of the trial (Newman & Nida 1980:559). Jesus replied by referring Caiaphas to those who heard him speak for an answer. The gist of the

argument is that He spoke openly in all the public meeting places - in the temple and in synagogues – where people come together, implying that what Jesus said, is no secret.

Moreover, the high priest should question those who heard what He said and not Himself. This section, according to Newman and Nida (1980:560), must be understood against the backdrop of Jewish legal procedures of the time – it was improper for an accused to be asked to testify against himself (Morris 1971:755-756). Jesus was therefore demanding that the trial be conducted in legal fashion, with proper witnesses. However, the proceedings descended from the illegal to the abusive (Barrett 1978:523).

This resulted in one of the temple guards to hit Jesus as His answer was deemed an inappropriate way for addressing the high priest (Newman & Nida 1980:561). In this context the use of μαρτύρησον is almost irregular to the rest of John's Gospel, as Jesus uses it in the negative: *Εἰ κακῶς ἐλάλησα, μαρτύρησον περὶ τοῦ κακοῦ: εἰ δὲ καλῶς, τί με δέρείς* (John 18:23). The first part of Jesus' reply to this admonishment was to deny that He violated the law of Exodus 22:28, which prescribes the proper respect for God and His appointed leaders (Lindars 1971:550-551).

The request is thus to produce witnesses that can attest to the fact that He did anything wrong (Newman & Nida 1980:561).

In this context the μαρτυρία-lexeme seems to be used explicitly in strict legal sense, indicating that Jesus demanded proof of Him transgressing Judaic law (Morris 1971:757). Since John uses the technique of double meaning frequently throughout the narrative, the temptation exists to ask if Jesus wasn't also trying to show He never violated any laws during the course of his ministry.

If the different translation possibilities of μαρτυρία are taken into account, this incident suggests the following: Jesus is reaching the end of his ministry, with his final glorification (as He pronounced His coming death to be) imminent. He is asked about his followers and teaching and His reply is to evoke the testimony of those who heard Him speak. His remark, ἐρώτησον τοὺς ἀκηκοότας τί ἐλάλησα αὐτοῖς: ἴδε οὗτοι οἶδασιν ἃ εἶπον ἐγώ (John 18:21), alludes to one of the possible meanings of μαρτυρία (to be present and able to supply information of what was said or what happened).

Therefore, Jesus' reaction to the officer hitting Him while using μαρτυρία in a negative sense (“μαρτύρησον περὶ τοῦ κακοῦ”) creates an impression that He wants His inquisitors to look for testimony that will contradict His public ministry and teaching (Lindars 1971:551). Moreover, it suggests the possibility that Jesus is passing the baton to those who were present by involving them in the questions regarding His ministry and teaching. This is somewhat underscored by his challenge to the officer to bear witness to anything He could have answered wrong. It's almost as if John wants us to hear: “I spoke openly and in places where every Jewish person could hear me. Let those who were there come and testify on what I said to see if anything is wrong with that.”

This interpretation actually presupposes a total disregard of Jewish legal procedure as it is described by Newman and Nida. It could be put forth as plausibility however, since some of the background information provided by John contains certain discrepancies: John 18:13 states that Caiaphas was high priest that year and his father-in-law was Annas. Furthermore, John 18:13 states that Jesus was first taken to Annas. In John 18:24 it is said that Jesus was taken to Caiaphas, without saying anything more about what happened during that trial. Yet, in John 18:19 it is said that Jesus was questioned by the high priest, implying that Annas was high priest, as Jesus only gets sent to the high priest later in the evening.

And in John 18:28 it is clearly stated that Jesus was taken from Caiaphas' house to the palace of Pilate. Ridderbos (1997:582) suggests that we are not dealing here with a formal trial before the Sanhedrin, but with a hearing solely arranged on the personal authority of Annas. The context of this pericope as well as the way in which the facts are represented here, makes this clear.

Thus the context in which Jesus appears before Annas is either highly suspicious since he acts as high priest while he is clearly not, or Annas is a highly influential figure at the time and this inquiry wasn't a trial. It could also be that John had his facts wrong and told the story as he remembered it without trying to set this confusion straight for his readers. To return to the theory of the use of the μαρτυρία lexeme in the passage under consideration, the following: if the questioning by

Annas wasn't a legal procedure – since he was not really the high priest – the temple guard hit Jesus because He did not show proper respect, only. Jesus' reply to this, speaking directly to Annas and ignoring the guard – as Newman and Nida suggested - would not then make any sense to invoke correct legal procedure.

It is obvious that Jesus reacted to the questioning of Annas and not the hit through the face He received. Since we already came to the conclusion that John used the μαρτυρία word group in its widest possible sense, we can consider the possibility that John actually was using the event to continue with his subtle instruction on true discipleship and the living out of authentic faith through testimony.

Remember also that Jesus, in his conversation with Pontius Pilate, never directly answered the governor's questions (Newman & Nida 1980:570), but engaged in an actual theological conversation over his identity as the Christ with him, sidestepping the demands of ancient legal customs. It is therefore quite possible that we have in this specific narrative an intended word play aimed at the readers, that functions within the scope of the larger narrative.

5.3.4 Jesus before Pilate - John 18:28-38

After a short interlude telling about Peter's third denial of his affiliation with Jesus, John picks up the narrative of the case against Jesus when He is on His way to Pontius Pilate. The narrative of this trial appears in John 18:28 - 19:16a and it is

possible to divide this into seven shorter units, balancing the scenes between three scenes on either side of a central scene in which Pilate doesn't figure prominently, as this is the scene where the soldiers mock Jesus (Newman & Nida 1980:564). The first scene (John 18:28-32) and the seventh scene (John 19:12-16a) take place outside the palace.

In this first narrative (John 18:28-32) the Jews' agenda of killing Jesus is made evident as they demanded the death penalty for Jesus (John 18:31). John's inclusion of the information about the Jewish authorities' refusal to enter Pilate's palace because of religious purification reasons (Lindars 1971:555; Morris 1971:763), seems to underscore the fact that the conflict centres on Jesus' message and Jewish legalism.

Pilate's first question to Jesus implied that he was expecting a political trouble maker (Σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων - John 18:33). The notion that Jesus is busy handing over the baton of his ministry to his followers is subtly strengthened by His response, as He wanted to know from Pilate whether it is his own thinking or whether it is what was said about him (in other words, whether the testimony presented to Pilate implied that Jesus presented Himself as Jewish king). Newman and Nida (1980:569) observed that Jesus was called king of the Jews only in this text and it is an important designation in the deployment of the rest of the narrative.

Pilate's reaction (μήτι ἐγὼ Ἰουδαῖός εἰμι) implies the lack of any real knowledge of Jesus other than the information given to him by the Jewish authorities (Newman & Nida 1980:569). As said before, Jesus didn't answer Pilate's question directly. He chose the opportunity to describe the nature of his kingdom (ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμὴ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου), thereby affirming that the origin and nature of his royal authority is not of human origin, making the nature of his rule different from that exercised by the rulers of this world (Newman & Nida 1980:570). Pilate repeated his question, this time expecting a positive answer only (Lindars 1971:559).

Jesus answered indirectly yet again, implying His origin is other-worldly and his mission in this world is to bear witness to the truth. Truth is a central concept in John's Gospel and should be understood as meaning "what is true" or "what really is" (Newman & Nida 1980:571). In this context μαρτυρία is used. Jesus stated that He testifies about the truth, since He came from another world on this specific mission and only those who is of the truth, will hear his voice (Morris 1971:770-771). This is a participial construction and can also be translated as "whoever belongs to the truth hears my voice."

Pilate's very famous, postmodernistically relative reply, "What is truth?" left the matter in the air, open for interpretation, since the matter is not explored in John's Gospel any further. We can safely assume that Jesus didn't use μαρτυρία in a legal sense. As the context indicates He is referring to testifying about his supernatural origin, it is plausible to understand the remark as a pertinent reference to his identity as Son of God, and his mission to bring in everyone who accepts his message. In

the sub text of this conversation it seems that Jesus' deliberate interplay with phrases such as μαρτυρήσω τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, and ἀκούει μου τῆς φωνῆς, want to convey the idea that the witnesses to the truth should continue to bear testimony of Jesus' Kingship.

5.3.5 Witnessing Jesus' death - John 19:31-37

John ends his account of the crucifixion of Jesus with a very emphatic remark on what he saw (John 19:35). Not only does he repeat words from the μαρτυρία lexeme two times in a single sentence, he also repeats words from the ἀλήθεια word group twice in the same sentence. It is almost as if John has put a deliberate interjection into his account of Jesus' death.

The impression this creates is that he wanted to be absolutely clear that he witnessed the event, that he is convinced of the reality of it happening and that he does not want any uncertainty about it.

He wanted his readers to be absolutely sure that Jesus really was dead. This is underscored by the final remark of this sentence: ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς πιστεύ[σ]ητε. With this, he connects his testimony about Jesus' death to the purpose of his gospel (John 20:31). Newman and Nida (1980:595) noted that John wanted to convey a theological significance with this specific appeal to an eyewitness-report (see also Morris 1971:818-819).

5.4 ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΑ IN THE EPILOGUE

5.4.1 Some Background Remarks

The final chapter of the Gospel deals with two issues: the restoring of the relationship between Jesus and Peter, and the way John would die. The setting is at the sea of Tiberias and in meeting them there, Jesus first demonstrated how they could rely on his power and presence in their further endeavours. Then He restored the broken relationship with Peter who denied Him on the night of his crucifixion and commissions him to look after his flock. After this, Jesus commented on Peter's question about the future of the beloved disciple, thus ending the Gospel narrative.

Finally, John concludes his Gospel. The final pericope in the gospel relates the rumour about the disciple whom Jesus loved and creates the impression that he lived to a very old age, thus necessitating this inclusion in his account of Jesus' ministry. These final verses also create the impression that this disciple has come to the point in his own ministry that he was involved in the writing down of the story of Jesus and he now wants to affirm the fact that he actually was present at the events being described.

5.4.2 The sharing of the testimony as final thoughts – John 21:24-

25

The repetition of the μαρτυρία lexeme here, as in the case of Jesus' crucifixion, serves an emphatic role: to make it clear that what he said, is true and there should be no uncertainty about it (Morris 1971:880-881). In John 21:24 the initial reference to the testimony is made in the present tense and stands in contrast to the past tense of ὁ γράψας ταῦτα, indicating that the witness on whose testimony the Gospel depends (or the part of the Gospel referred to in περὶ τούτων), was still alive at the time this verse was written (Newman & Nida 1980:638).

These verses tell us nothing of the authorship of John's Gospel however, only that it was partially based on the testimony of an unknown eyewitness. The use of οἴδαμεν suggests the presence of a group of people, including the writer of verse 24 (Smith 1986:74-75). This leads to the conclusion that John's Gospel was probably written in several stages as the result of a group effort with perhaps four to seven individuals working together – including a “beloved disciple” and “an evangelist,” one elder and a seer named John – who were eyewitnesses to some, or all, of the events recalled in the Gospel (Hill 2004:1), making this a theological document rather than a historical account of Jesus' life (Lindars 1971:640-641).

5.5 CONCLUSION

In the second part of John's Gospel, a surprisingly small amount of story space is awarded to the μαρτυρία-lexeme. It is surprising when put against the backdrop of the very frequent occurrences of this word in the first twelve chapters of the Gospel. Nevertheless, the few passages making use of this word group provide us with an increasingly clear picture of an implied Johannine ecclesiology.

One of the outcomes of Jesus' mission on earth is to expose the people who refuse to live in God's light for what they really are: haters of God. Not only do they refuse to acknowledge God, they also choose to live a life leading to increased animosity towards God's people. Thus the church must know: Be part of God's family and the world is going to hate you for that. This hatred is not just negative feelings or verbal accusations, but also active efforts to undermine and destroy the mission of the church. The people of the world do not like the message of the church at all. Luckily the children of God can find solace in the knowledge that it is not personal. They are hated because of God. They belong to God, and the hatred is aimed at God, thereby causing the church to suffer.

All is not lost, however, since people who belong to the world still hear the voice of the church proclaiming the light and God's presence and come to faith. After all, how will God be successful in his master plan of salvation if the message of love cannot be heard at all? This shimmering of hope in an otherwise bleak vision will also spill over to the lives of the members of the faith community. In tough times, they will find comfort in this reality and it will provide them with the power to go on in the mission Jesus entrusted to them.

Furthermore, they are not alone. Jesus sent the Helper to stand in our midst. The Paraclete, whose job it is to bear witness to Jesus, will provide us with adequate emotional resources to never lose this hope we have. And He will strengthen our own testimony, since we speak with one voice – the voice of Jesus echoing through the centuries, with the message of love and salvation and life coming from above.

The story has to be told to its end, as well. Therefore we find ourselves in the inner sanctum of ancient Jewish power. With pregnant horror we are forced to observe the travesty that calls itself Jesus' trial, hearing the accusations and seeing the conduct of people who truly believe they are acting in God's way. We observe how Jesus is interrogated and watch his replies, while being unable to step in and shout out his innocence. Had his own disciples, bar one, not also deserted Him in this hour? And that one is standing outside at the fire, lying to everybody about his association with Jesus, denying Him.

We hear how Jesus masterfully plays with words, even when He is fighting for his own life. We hear Him challenging the so-called high priest and his guard on the witnesses they cannot produce that He is guilty of blasphemy. We accompany Him to the residence of the Roman governor, where He clearly shares His kingship of heaven, his mission to earth and his testimony to the truth – that only He can bring life to this broken world. Then, with absolute shock and horror, we hear the uproar of

Jesus' fellow Jews that they want Him crucified and nothing less, even though the governor can find nothing to convict Him of.

We stand at the side of the cross, where his mother is weeping out her desperate sorrow. We see Him die, graciously quick, and we confirm the testimony of the beloved disciple that he is indeed dead. And three days later we share in the joy of Jesus' resurrection, the clear evidence of his empty grave and the instruction on authentic faith given to a highly doubting Thomas.

We finally stand at the beach, watching Jesus restore his friendship with Peter. And we sit with the author of this Gospel, sharing in the testimony that became the book of John.

In all this, we hear the recurring thought of a community that is called to share in the mission of Jesus. We are one. We are to love one another. We are to live lives of unparalleled quality, different to the standards of the world – more humble and self-sacrificing. And intentionally testimonial: As we have been there when Jesus started his ministry we still are there today, through the continuing testimony to his Divine identity, royal mission and true purpose – to shine his light in this dark world so that we can see how His Father really looks. None of this would have been possible if we weren't taught how to follow in his footsteps, believe in his words and share in his testimony. Especially do we share in his testimony, that declaration of his true



identity and character that ignites the spark of faith in the souls of people who are desperately looking for God.