



# DISCIPLESHIP IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL



Having completed the necessary background investigation,<sup>1</sup> the question arises as to an appropriate starting point for investigating the concept of *discipleship in the FG*. The divergent formulations given by scholars of what discipleship in the FG comprises (see ch 1), complicate the formulation of the concept. The fact that the FG does not present us with a rounded off teaching or a clear definition<sup>2</sup> of discipleship also magnifies this problem. In the end this forces me to formulate a working-hypothesis,<sup>3</sup> namely that *discipleship in the FG comprises the continuation of the mission of Jesus*.<sup>4</sup> Such a hypothesis helps to determine the starting point of the investigation.

One possibility is to start with 'the reason for writing the FG' (20:31). Another possibility is to start with the prologue where the central features of Johannine thought are introduced. Even the LD offers a possible starting point.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately all three proposals seem to be inadequate. Owing to the fact that the essence of discipleship in the FG is then seen as 'the continuation of the mission of Jesus', this study has to start with an investigation of Jesus' mission. This will be followed by an investigation of the disciples. With regard to the mission of the disciples, there are only two explicit references in the FG in which Jesus himself sends out his disciples 'just as (καθώς) he was sent out by his Father'. Chapter 17 (17:18) contains a theological discussion on the mission of the disciples while ch 20 (20:21) discusses the historical commission of the disciples.<sup>6</sup> These two texts prove mission to be the main focus of Jesus for his disciples. In the LD Jesus' preparation of his disciples for a new way of life (discipleship) is the counterpart of his departure. In fact, this new way of life comprises the continuation of Jesus' mission.

Before commencing with the investigation of the mission of Jesus, it is necessary to look briefly at the different approaches of scholars regarding the socio-historical background, the purpose of the FG and the macro-structure of the FG. This will present the necessary perspectives that will contribute to determining the contexts for the different texts to be investigated.

---

<sup>1</sup> The historical research (ch 1) and the discussion of the appearances and description of the disciples in the FG (ch 3).

<sup>2</sup> The four explicit references to discipleship (8:31; 12:26; 13:35 and 15:8) in the FG relate to different aspects of discipleship, as distinguished from the point of convergence of discipleship.

<sup>3</sup> This working-hypothesis was formulated after having worked through the FG several times.

<sup>4</sup> Since discipleship is interpreted as being the continuation of the mission of Jesus, we shall first have to examine the concept 'the Father-Son relationship: Jesus' mission'. This will be followed by an investigation of the relationship between Jesus and the disciples during which parallels will be drawn in order to perceive discipleship.

<sup>5</sup> The LD is regarded by scholars as a teaching on discipleship (Segovia 1986; Tolmie 1992). Käsemann (1968) bases his study of Johannine Christology on a consideration of ch 17 which he writes, 'is a summary of the Johannine discourses and in this respect is a counterpart to the prologue'. But Käsemann is more concerned with an analysis of the themes depicted from ch 17 in relation to the historical situation (cf also Loader 1984:189).

<sup>6</sup> In chapter 17 we find Jesus' last conversation with, and report (prayer) to his Father while vv 20:19-29 contains Jesus' last conversation with his disciples, if we regard ch 21 as a postscript by the FE (Bultmann 1941:542; Brown 1972:1077ff, etc).

## **1. Approaches to the socio-historical background and purpose of the Fourth Gospel**

### **1.1 The socio-historical background**

It is essential to distinguish between the actual historical situation *in* the FG, where Jesus had spoken, and the socio-historical context *of* the FG, where the text has been put together in order to communicate a specific message (cf Meeks 1972:141ff; Brown 1979:17).

With regard to the socio-historical context of the FG, some questions immediately arise, i.e.: Why did the FE write this Gospel and to whom did he write? To be more specific, why did the FE characterize discipleship in the FG the way he did? In real terms these questions query the relation between the text, the readers and the historical context in which the text originated. Does this imply that there is a causal connection between what happened in history to the community to whom the FG was written and what was formulated in the text?

Especially since the seventies much research has been conducted in an attempt to answer these questions and to reconstruct a hypothetical Johannine community such as the one alleged to have called forth this book (see Footnote 7 of this chapter). It was above all the work of social scientists such as Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman (1967) that facilitated the application of the sociology of knowledge to the NT.<sup>7</sup>

The social histories of, Culpepper (1975), Cullmann (1976), Brown (1977), and Martyn (1979) started to reveal the social circumstances of a reconstructed community, but still there are many questions to be answered. Relating to these questions Domeris (1988:50) pointed out three areas, namely the social, economic and geographical settings.<sup>8</sup>

Bultmann (1926:35ff), one of the greatest theologians of this century, initially suggested that the Gospels are sources for the situations from which they arose and only secondary sources for the historical situations they describe. His opinion paved the way for the belief that the teaching of the FG, in a certain sense, mirrors the situation of the FE and of the Johannine community.<sup>9</sup> Some years later D Aune (1972:76) made an important statement,

---

<sup>7</sup> Other social scientists who made useful contributions to the understanding of the NT from a social perspective are L Festinger, H W Rieken and S Schachter (1956), K Burrige (1969), R Scroggs (1980), E W Mills (1983), P J Richter (1984), J Elliot (1984), G L Renner (1984), B J Malina (1986), J C de Klerk en C W Schnell (1987), Neyrey (1988), D Rensberger (1988), Elucidation of the FG, in relation to the community, which gave birth to the document was one of the most evident 'vectors of research' in the 1970s. Scholars who made useful contributions in this field are: E Käsemann (1966), W A Meeks (1972), A Culpepper (1975), Temple (1975), Müller (1975), Pancaro (1975), O Cullmann (1976), R Kysar (1977), A J Mattill (1977), L Martyn (1979), R E Brown (1979), A Y Collins (1979), J Painter (1980), B Domeris (1988), D M Smith (1974, 1988), Hengel (1989).

<sup>8</sup> Domeris (1988:51ff) studied the social structure, the leadership operative in the Johannine community and the audience envisaged by the FE.

<sup>9</sup> Smith (1988:435) takes the same idea slightly further. He writes that 'All the Gospels are products of Christian communities and mirror their understanding of who Jesus was. They are all selective in their presentations; and theological interest, as well as church usage, governed their selectivity. John is no different from the others...'

presupposing that religion is a projection of the consciousness of a community.<sup>10</sup> He was of the opinion that what the community experienced in their worship of Jesus, in the sense of his spiritual presence, was *read back* into the teaching of the historical Jesus by the FE.<sup>11</sup>

It is above all Brown's contribution that needs to be mentioned here. Brown (1979) discusses various contemporary solutions to the problem of the origin and relation of the Johannine literature. The main substance of this work is a presentation of his own hypothesis of four stages<sup>12</sup> in the life of a 'Johannine community'. In his thesis, characterized by keen insight, he includes several charts which summarize his conclusions. It may be felt that his elaborate reconstruction of the Johannine community is as complex as his elaborate four-stage process<sup>13</sup> of composition of the FG and that a simpler scheme would be more likely.<sup>14</sup>

Scholars use different methods for discerning the social setting of the FG. Meeks (1972:145) started with the history of the community in order to understand their theology in the light of this history.<sup>15</sup> Aune moved from the theological experience of the Johannine community to their Christology. Domeris (1988:51), influenced by the dialectical model of Meeks, chooses the model employed by N Gottwald (1979:622-691).<sup>16</sup> Gottwald convinces Domeris with his 'feed- back loop' and the idea that, instead of a static model in which ideology is determined by the relations of production, it must be understood as a dynamic model. Domeris' thesis therefore is '...that the Christology of the Fourth Gospel reflects the culmination of a historical process in which that Christology was developed in a dialectical relationship with its social praxis'.

A new trend which became evident in the 1980's departed from the endeavours to reconstruct the socio-historical setting of the FG. Painter (1980:22) is of opinion that although the history of the Johannine community which shaped the Johannine tradition is

---

<sup>10</sup> He maintains that 'The Christology of the Fourth Gospel is the primary means of expressing the religious needs, values and ideals of the Johannine community. That is to say that the Christology of the Johannine community is primarily determined by the soteriological interests of the ecclesiology of that community.'

<sup>11</sup> Other scholars such as Martyn (1979), Meeks (1972:141-173), and Brown (1979:17) have also attempted to discern the social setting of the Gospel from the text. They suggested that the FG can be read on two levels: the ministry of Jesus and the situation of an early Christian community.

<sup>12</sup> The first stage concerns the period before the composition of the FG, while the second refers to contact between the group and Gentile Christians. The third stage concerns the tension in the community on Christology, which led to a split in understanding, while the final stage came after the composition of the epistles.

<sup>13</sup> Many other scholars followed Brown in this sense: see p 2, footnote 8 of 'Introduction'.

<sup>14</sup> Even the evidence Brown offers for a low Christology in the community, succeeded by a high Christology, is not really compelling (cf I H Marshall 1980:112ff).

<sup>15</sup> Meeks refined this model by arguing that 'More precisely, there must have been a continuing dialectic between the groups' historical experience and to motivate and form the reaction of group members to the experience.' In the rest of his article he uses the 'ascent and descent' motif as hermeneutical key in order to discern the function it serves, firstly, within the FG's literary structure, and secondly by analogy within the structure of the Johannine community and its relationships to its environment.

<sup>16</sup> Domeris shows how Gottwald was influenced by E Durkheim and K Marx (1974) and therefore opts for a dialectical model in which life and consciousness interact.



more clearly evident in the FG than in the histories that shaped the communities, there are no straightforward indications upon which a history of Johannine Christianity can be based.

Inevitably a circularity is set up: the community is reconstructed by drawing inferences from the FG. Once this background had gained sufficiently wide acceptance, the next generation of scholars tended to build on it, or to modify it slightly by showing how the FG achieves its purpose by addressing that situation so tellingly. What we find here is a hypothetical circle-reasoning from the text to the history and back to the text with the 'reconstructed' history as the basis for explaining the text from which it was deduced (Van der Watt 1991:94). The circularity is not necessarily vicious, but the final picture is much less effectively substantiated and highly hypothetical (Carson, Moo & Morris 1992:169).<sup>17</sup>

Although there is consensus amongst many scholars regarding a relationship between the historical circumstances of the community, its social praxis and the text of the FG *'there are no straightforward data upon which a history of Johannine Christianity can be based'* (Painter 1980:22; cf also Becker 1981:173; Van der Watt 1991:94).<sup>18</sup> Room should be given for oral tradition, probably strongly influenced by the theological and linguistic individuality of a good leader and teacher (Hengel 1989:33; Van der Watt 1991:93). This should definitely have influenced and shaped his theology (Brown 1972; Renner 1984). This implies that the 'motives' and 'events' used to compose the FG should be sought over a period of about sixty years and existed in a condensed text, the FG (Van der Watt 1991:93). This obscures the specific time and circumstances of the FG and complicates the usability of information (Van der Watt 1991:94).<sup>19</sup>

In conclusion it seems to be clear that any endeavour to reconstruct a socio-historical background from which perspective the FG should be interpreted, would be hypothetical, owing to the fact that no explicit straightforward information is available and accessible, and a period of about 60 years for the writing of the FG also has to be accounted for. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to *construct* certain socio-historical circumstances,

---

<sup>17</sup> Martyn (1979) in his reconstruction of the Johannine community sees the community as being busy with aggressive evangelization amongst the Jews. Meeks (1986:163f) argues that the Johannine community was sectarian. Their Christological claims resulted in their alienation and their alienation in turn is 'explained' by a further development of the Christological motifs. According to Meeks (1986:164) these developed Christological motifs in turn drove the group into further isolation. Therefore the FG is a handbook for new converts, something to strengthen the community in this conflict. To see the FG as an isolated and sectarian community is to miss the commission in ch 17 (cf also 20:21). Carson, Moo & Morris (1992:169) correctly suggest that the FE was in touch with the wider church which influenced his Christology (cf Phil 2:5-11; Col 1:15-20).

<sup>18</sup> In the reconstruction of a Johannine community scholars differ from and criticize each other. Ashton (1991:163) criticizes Boismard for too many weak links in his long and elaborate chain of the community's development. Kysar (1977:356ff) criticizes Cullmann's view of the FG against the background of a form of Judaism as being burdened with an almost dogmatic hypothesis. Brown (1979), after spelling out his hypothesis about the Johannine community, indicated that he would be grateful if only one third of this hypothesis was accepted. This indicates that scholars who worked on the socio-historical background of the FG were also uncertain.

<sup>19</sup> The application of the historic critical, social scientific methodologies and models to the study of the NT made a significant contribution to our understanding of the biblical text. For an overview of different perspectives and theories to state the historical origin of the FG see Kysar (1977:355-366), Ashton (1991:160ff), but especially Van der Watt (1991:93-130). Van der Watt discusses this from different approaches: (i) from a form and redaction perspective; (ii) from a sociological paradigm.

applicable to that particular text, from that text, instead of *reconstructing* it as Brown, Culpepper, Cullmann and others did. Thus this is not a question of *reconstruction* but of *construction*.<sup>20</sup>

## 1.2 The purpose of the Fourth Gospel

The most appropriate place to start looking for the purpose<sup>21</sup> of the FG is the proposal of the FE itself namely “Πολλὰ μὲν οὖν καὶ ἄλλα σημεῖα ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐνώπιον τῶν μαθητῶν [αὐτοῦ], ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τούτῳ ταῦτα δὲ γέγραπται ἵνα πιστεύ[ε]τε ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ἵνα πιστεύοντες ζωὴν ἔχητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ” (20:30,31). In the words rendered ‘that you may believe’ there is a textual variant: either ἵνα πιστεύητε (present subjunctive) or ἵνα πιστεύσητε (aorist subjunctive). Some scholars argued that the present subjunctive supports an edificatory purpose: that you may continue to believe. The latter aorist subjunctive, then, supports an evangelistic purpose:<sup>22</sup> that you may come to believe. Both tenses are used in the FG, for initial faith and continuing in faith. It is highly speculative to emphasize the one or the other by way of prejudice. The meaning and purpose of the FG (20:31) cannot be obtained from only these two verses (20:30,31) and variants of v 31 in isolation,<sup>23</sup> but must be obtained from the whole FG in relation to v 20:31.<sup>24</sup>

The purpose of the FG may reside in its attempt to appeal not exclusively to the Jews (which live in Palestine or in diaspora)<sup>25</sup>, Jewish proselytes, Gentiles, or even Christians of a peculiar kind (a Johannine community), but to the whole body of Christian communities (Kysar 1975:163; Hengel 1989:106; Van der Watt 1991:101).<sup>26</sup> *The FG, thus, addresses the needs of Christians at a universal level. Because of the ‘universal nature’*

---

<sup>20</sup> In his article ‘The relevance of Jesus research for the “new” South Africa’, W S Vorster (1994:629) wrote: ‘If we wish to say anything about the past, whatever it might be, we are by definition obliged to make historical constructions. Historical constructions are constructions and not reconstructions—that is why they are not always the same, and why they always have to be put to the test.’

<sup>21</sup> For other proposals and arguments on the purpose of the FG, see Kümmel (1978:228); Guthrie (1981:271ff); Du Rand (1990:42ff); Carson, Moo & Morris (1992:168).

<sup>22</sup> Carson, Moo & Morris (1992:170f) view the FG as evangelistic (cf also Morris 1975:855ff; Dodd 1980:9), but in particular to evangelize Diaspora Jews and Jewish proselytes. This view is gaining influence. Cf Robinson (1960:107ff); Braine (1988:101ff); Brooke (1988:102ff); Carson (1991:94). In some other recent studies the FG is interpreted as mission literature (Ruiz 1987; Okure 1988; see also Schnackenburg 1975:58-72). From these studies a new trend becomes clear, namely, movement away from a hypothetic constructed Johannine community.

<sup>23</sup> It is dangerous to build a whole hypothesis around such exegesis.

<sup>24</sup> In his commentary on 20:31, Bultmann (1941:698) correctly denies that the tense has any real significance in this case. According to him, in the sense of the FE, it is a matter of indifference whether or not his potential readers are already ‘Christians’: Bultmann takes it theologically further when he states that for him the faith of the ‘Christians’ is certainly not a permanent conviction, but something which must be renewed continually, therefore requiring to constantly hear the Word anew. Bultmann’s point of view is certainly correct, but does not mean that the FG is without meaning for unbelievers.

<sup>25</sup> Robinson (1960:117ff) and Van Unnik (1959:410) are convinced that the main purpose of the FG was to convert Diaspora Jews. Carson (1987:642,645) revived the conclusions of Van Unnik and Robinson.

<sup>26</sup> In the FG we find both Jewish and anti-Jewish elements, as well as gnostic themes. Therefore any attempt to explain the whole FG on the basis of only one of these contrasts will be unjustified (Kysar 1975:161). Although the Jewish element predominates (Barrett 1978:27ff), the Hellenistic aspect is not absent (Hengel 1989:104).

of the FG's content, the FG is raised beyond its historical situation (Van der Watt 1991:101).

On the one hand the purpose of the FG is to lead more people to God (an evangelistic purpose, chs 1-12--cf also 15:27; 17:18; 20:21) and on the other hand it is to deepen the faith of those who were already Christians (an edificatory purpose, chs 13-17) in order to appreciate the unique relationship of Jesus (and their's) with the Father (cf Brown 1972:1060).<sup>27</sup> The perplexing question of the construct intellectual milieu of the FE is probably one of the clues as to why the FE does not present his message exclusively in the thought modes and expressions of a single heritage. He uses concepts and terms from various milieus to demonstrate the encompassing appeal of the Christian kerygma.<sup>28</sup> It is from this perspective that the FG has to be interpreted.

In *conclusion* we can say that scholars agree that the teaching found in the FG, in a certain sense, mirrors the situation of the FE and the Johannine community. Thus the teaching of the historical Jesus projects the community's experience in their worship of Jesus. This implies that the FG can be read on two levels: the ministry of Jesus and the situation of the early Johannine community.

Unfortunately a paradox does occur. Although there is consensus amongst many scholars that there is a relationship between the historical circumstances of the community, its social praxis and the text of the FG, '*there are no straightforward data upon which a history of Johannine Christianity can be based.*' Therefore any attempt at reconstructing the circumstances of the Johannine community, thus becoming involved in a complex hypothetical discussion regarding the socio-historical circumstances of this community, would lead us astray. In the research sufficient relevant information will emerge from the text to facilitate the construction of the information that is required to contribute to a better understanding of the text.

Finally, it will be accepted that the FG was written not only to a specific group, the Johannine community, but to the church in general for edification and evangelization purposes.

## **2. The Macro-structure of the Fourth Gospel**

The basic structure of the FG seems to be fairly simple until one starts to analyse it (Barrett 1978:11; Carson 1991:103). The experience is that a 'complexity wrapped in simplicity' (Carson 1991:103) is the reason why vast quantities of research on the structure of the FG have been published in recent years.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> This implies that the purpose of the FG has both qualitative and quantitative aspects: the qualitative aspect relates to the consecration of a disciple's life, and the quantitative aspect to the increase in members of God's family.

<sup>28</sup> The socio-historical background is reflected most simply in the structure and vocabulary of the FG, in the meaning of processes and characters. It is also embodied in the grammatical transitivity structures, i.e. in the process of *mission*.

<sup>29</sup> Van der Watt (1987), Wyller (1988), Mlakuzhyil (1989 -- The Christocentric literary structure of the Fourth Gospel), Giblin (1990 -- The tripartite narrative structure of John's Gospel). Mlakuzhyil clearly indicates how the perspective of approach can influence the construct of the structure of the FG.

Different structures have been proposed. According to Barrett (1978:11) the FG can be divided into four clear parts, with an appendix:

- (a) 1:1-18, Prologue;
- (b) 1:19-12:50, Narratives, conversations and discourses;
- (c) 13:1-17:27, Jesus alone with his disciples;
- (d) 18:1-20:31, the Passion and Resurrection;
- (e) 21:1-25, an appendix.

According to Dodd (1980:289) the division in the FG occurs at the end of ch 12. His motivation is that this 'division corresponds to that which is made in all the Gospels before the beginning of the Passion narrative.' According to him it is more formal in the FG. At this point the FG is virtually divided into two books, with ch 1 forming the Proem. He then examines the FG under the following three titles:

- |                                   |                   |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| A The Proem                       | Ch 1              |
| B The Book of Signs <sup>30</sup> | Chs 2-12          |
| C The Book of the Passion         | Chs 13-20 (or 21) |

While it is correct to note the break between chs 12 and 13, not all researchers agree that the whole of chapter one should be regarded as an introduction. Various scholars have pointed out that the prologue is composed in metric form, and therefore differs from the rest of the FG. According to Barrett (1978:150) it is moulded in rhythmical prose; Schnackenburg (1968:224) describes it as a hymn with poetical and rhythmical sentences, and Morris (1975:72) refers to it as elevated prose. To combine the 'last discourses', the passion narrative, and the resurrection under one heading is not wrong, but then the heading must accommodate all. The heading chosen by Dodd is unfortunately undesirable (cf Barrett 1978:12).

Wyller (1988) and Mlakuzhyil (1987) offer rather unorthodox proposals. Wyller maintains that 10:22-29 is the 'structural summit' of the work, the 'change of fate' of the hero, around which the rest of the material is organized. It is difficult to believe on thematic and substantial grounds that these verses have the structural importance assigned to them by Wyller. He also stretches the credibility of his argument by expressing the belief that Plato's Simile of the Cave is the most plausible model for the structure of a Gospel (cf Carson 1991:103).

One of the most recent major discussions on the structure of the FG came from Mlakuzhyil, who focuses on major chiasms, 'bridge-pericopes' and 'bridge-sections'. He recommends that 2:1-12:50 be called the 'Book of Jesus' signs', and 11:1-20:29 the 'Book of Jesus' Hour'. The two overlapping chs, 11 and 12, constitute a 'bridge-section'. This proposal is unacceptable. Carson (1991:104) points out that many scholars maintained 'that individual sections of various length are neatly brought to a close (e.g. 1:18; 4:42; 4:53-54; 10:40; 12:44-50; 20:30-31; 21:25).'

Ostenstad (1991) investigates the structure of the FG from the perspective of literary structural criticism. With critical references to the works of Mlakuzhyil and Wyller, he finds a concentric structure in the FG with seven main sections symmetrically aligned around chs

---

<sup>30</sup> According to Dodd these chapters 'correspond to the account of the Ministry in the other gospels'. Dodd gathered the title of this section from the epilogue's opening words: τοσαῦτα δὲ αὐτοῦ σημεῖα πεποιηκότος ... (12:37-50).



8:12-12:50. He does not regard 20:30-31 together with ch 21 as an 'appendix'. According to him the structure of the FG is firmly rooted in the concentric composition of the FG.

Giblin (1990:449ff) offers a tripartite structure of the body of the FG (1:19-4:54; 5-10; 11:1-20:29). He based this structure on references to time, space and intrigues in the text. The result was that it brought to the fore the universal mission of Jesus, the hostility to Jesus in the great controversies and Jesus' love for his friends, and revealed several motifs in the inner part. For Giblin a bipartite division, with the break between chs 12 and 13, is equally valid in that it shows a movement from the signs performed by Jesus to the promised sign of the crucified and exalted Lord (2:18-22).

Carson (1991:104) tries to 'weigh the development of the Gospel as a *narrative* against the more formal considerations of structure.' He tries to follow the movement of thought as intended by the FE.<sup>31</sup> According to Carson his chosen outline 'is not so much the basis of the exposition that follows, as its result.' He started to work on a theological rather than a geographical basis to determine his outline.

Carson (1991:104) is partially correct when he states that 'one of the reasons why critics find so many exclusive structures in John is that his repeated handling of only a few themes make it possible to "find" all kinds of parallels and chiasms.' Probably the most important reason is that these different proposals concern scholars' preconceived notions which influenced their starting points in constituting a structure. The perspective from which one examines the structure will determine both the structure and the titles allocated.<sup>32</sup>

On the face of it, the FG clearly offers a prologue (1:1-18) and an epilogue (21:1-25), between which is the body part which can be divided into two central sections, 1:19-12:50 and 13:1-20:31. Brown, influenced by Dodd (Brown 1975:CXLII), gives a more substantial explanation than Dodd did for the break in the body part of the FG occurring at the end of ch 12. John 12:37-43 comprises a brief description and analysis of the public ministry of Jesus and its effect on the people; the last words of Jesus are directed to the people in general. In 13:1-3, the beginning of the second section, a different situation occurs. Jesus' words in chs 13-17 are directed to 'his own' (13:1), the inner group of his disciples, whom Jesus loves and who came to believe in him.

Under the influence of these two scholars (Dodd and Brown) these two sections are frequently referred to by scholars as the 'Book of signs' and the 'Book of Glory' (Brown 1975:CXXXVIIIff), or the 'Book of Signs' and the 'Book of the Passion' (Dodd 1980:289). Brown's explanation of the reason why he allocated these titles to these two sections is generally accepted. He designated the first section the 'Book of Signs' because these chapters are largely concerned with the miracles of Jesus, referred to as 'signs' by the FG (2:11,18,23; 3:2; 4:48,54; 6:2,14,26,30; 7:31; 9:16; 7:31; 9:16; 10:41; 11:47; 12:18,37;

---

<sup>31</sup> He stresses that the outline followed by him is no more authoritative than the conventional chapter and verse divisions. He also indicated that this conventional way formed no part of the original writing.

<sup>32</sup> Carson (1991): from a 'narrative' point of view; Giblin (1990): also from a 'narrative structural' point of view (but differing from Carson and Ostenstad); Dodd (1980): from a 'structure layers' point of view; Wyller (1988): from a 'thematic grounds' point of view; Mlakuzhyil (1987): from a 'major chiasms' point of view; Giblin (1990): from a 'time, space, and intrigues' point of view; Ostenstad (1991): from a 'literary structural' point of view. Cf also Segovia (1991): although he examines the plot of the FG from a literary-rhetorical point of view, he argues for the dominant role of the journey motif in the plot.

19:20; 20:30). These signs are interpreted by way of long discourses. The second section has the theme of Jesus' return to his Father (13:1; 14:2,28; 15:26; 16:7,28; 17:5; 20:17), 'so that the resurrected Jesus appears to his disciples as Lord and God (20:25,28).' For this reason he has chosen the title 'Book of Glory'.<sup>33</sup>

In conclusion, there are many proposed structures for the FG. At the end a choice of structure depends on 'from what perspective one looks at the FG, and what topic one wants to extract' from the FG. My choice for an outline, corresponds mainly with that of the well-known Johannine scholar R E Brown (1975:CXLI), but as seen from the perspective of discipleship in the FG.

It is obvious that discipleship concerns a relationship between a master and his followers. Who the Master is, what he teaches his followers and how they respond to him, are only a few important considerations. The chosen and proposed outline given below corresponds with these considerations. The divisions into 'parts' serves merely to facilitate the references.

### **I. Prologue (1:1-18)**

### **II. The revelation of Jesus to the world: Public ministry (1:19-12:50)**

1. Part One: The opening days of the revelation of Jesus (1:19-51)
2. Part two: From Cana to Cana -- various responses to Jesus' ministry in the different parts of Palestine (Chs 2-4)
3. Part Three: Increasing hostility:
  - 3.1 Jesus and the principal feasts<sup>34</sup> (Chs 5-10)
  - 3.2 Jesus moves towards the hour of death and glory (Chs 11-12)
4. Conclusion: An evaluation and summation of Jesus' ministry (12:37-50)

### **III. The revelation of Jesus to his disciples: Private ministry (13:1-17:26)**

1. Part Four: The last supper
  - 1.1 The meal (13:1-30)
  - 1.2 The last discourse<sup>35</sup> (13:31-17:26)

---

<sup>33</sup> Carson's (1991:103) objections to Brown's choice of outline is not really well-founded. Actually Carson tries to win ground for his own choice of outline.

<sup>34</sup> In many present-day editions of the Bible (The Open Bible [with the New American Standard version], Good News for Modern Man, New International Version, to name only a few) we find the pericope of the adulterous woman in John 7:52-8:12, mostly in a footnote reference. Textual criticism proves that this pericope of the adulterous woman did not form part of the original Gospel of the FG. Evidence of this is overwhelming (Metzger 171:220).

<sup>35</sup> The question whether the order of chs 5-7, 13-17 is correct, or whether chs 15-17 is an interpolation, is prompted by the observation that it seems as if 14:25-31 is probably the conclusion of the LD. Verses 14:30ff strongly suggest that Jesus had finished speaking to the disciples in the upper room where they had their last meal together. If the continuation of the discourse seems to be the case in the following three chs (15-17) considerable difficulties are raised. Various solutions have been raised to solve this problem. To avoid becoming involved in a long discussion to debate whether chs 15-17 were or were not part of the original discourse, I will only conclude that in my research I will make use of the text (chs 13-17) as I have it in front of me. For a thorough discussion of this problem, consult Segovia (1991:20ff; cf also Bultmann 1941:457; Barrett 1978:454).

#### IV. The glorification of Jesus (18:1-20:31)

1. Part Five: The arrest and interrogation of Jesus (18:1-27)
  2. Part Six: The trial of Jesus before Pilate (18:28-19:16a)
  3. Part Seven: The execution of Jesus on the Cross and the Burial (19:16b-42)
  4. Part Eight: The Risen Jesus
    - 4.1 At the Tomb (20:1-18)
    - 4.2 Where the disciples gathered (20:19-29)
- Conclusion: A statement of the purpose of the Evangelist (20:30-31)

#### V. Epilogue (21:1-25)<sup>36</sup>

The fact that a structural framework has been determined contributes to the determination of the various contexts of the texts that will be investigated.

### 3. A discussion of the appearances and description of the disciples in the Fourth Gospel

#### 3.1 A survey to the semantic field of μαθηταὶ

In the FG the most frequent term used by the FE to denote the followers of Jesus is the term μαθηταὶ. Of all the related terms referred to in the following two paragraphs on this page, μαθηταὶ appears most often in the FG. Μαθηταὶ is the plural of the singular noun μαθητής. Μαθητής on the other hand is the noun and is derived from the verb μανθάνω with the lexical meaning of 'learn' (Rengstorf 1942:393; Müller 1975:480).

According to the (semantic) *Greek-English Lexicon* by Louw & Nida, μαθητής is semantically grouped under the domain of 'Guide, Discipline, and Follow.' It is part of the subdomain 'Follow, Be a Disciple' (Louw & Nida 1988:465). According to them, words in this field of 'Be a Disciple' and relevant to the FG are ἀκολουθέω, ὀπισω, μαθηταὶ (μαθητής), τέκνον, συμμαθητής (Louw & Nida 1988:470f)<sup>37</sup>.

In this Lexicon Μαθητής (and μανθάνω) are also grouped under the domain of 'Learn.' Other related words in this field under the subdomain 'Learn' are γινώσκω, ὀράω, (ἐπιγινώσκω), ὀδηγέω, and τὰ πολλὰ σε γράμματα. Relevant words under other subdomains are: under 'Try to Learn' ἐραθνάω; 'Be Willing to Learn' πωρώ, πηρώ τὴν

---

<sup>36</sup> Many contemporary interpreters are of opinion that John 21 was not part of the FG as it was originally written. They assume that ch 21 was a later addition, or as Bultmann (1941:542) calls it, 'a postscript', and that it was added by someone other than the FE. According to Carson there have also been some strenuous defences of the more traditional view that although 20:30-31 constitutes the conclusion of the body of the FG, ch 21 was composed with the rest of the Gospel and was designed to be a kind of epilogue balancing the Prologue. In this research I shall work on the hypothesis that ch 21 was also written by the FE. For more detailed explanations regarding this problem cf Bultmann (1941:700ff; Brown 1975:1077; Barrett 1978:576f; Carson 1991:665).

<sup>37</sup> ἀκολουθέω: 1:37,38,40,43; 6:2; 8:12; 10:4,5,27; 11:31; 12:25,26,32,44; 13:36,37; 18:15; 20:6,22; 21:19f. ὀπισω: 6:66; 12:19. τέκνον: 1:12,13; 13:33. συμμαθητής: 11:16. μαθηταὶ: see footnote 4 of this chapter.

καρδίαν.<sup>38</sup> The semantic meanings of these words are close to each other in respect of overlapping components, and also those which distinguish them (cf Louw 1991:118). It seems as if there are two basic and technical meanings for μαθητής deduced from its semantic classification, namely: to *follow* and to *learn*.<sup>39</sup>

From this survey it is clear that from a lexical perspective there are a number of terms which fall within the semantic field of μαθητής. It is true that the semantic meaning of a word, in a certain sense, is determined by its lexical meaning, but is more specifically determined by its denotative and associative meaning in a paradigmatic and syntagmatic sense.

In order to come to a better understanding of the usage of this term in the FG a thorough paradigmatic survey of μαθηταὶ is necessary, as well as a survey of the appearances and description of the disciples in the FG. Only after such a survey can a profile of μαθητής be put together.

### 3.2 A paradigmatic survey of the usage of μαθηταὶ

The noun μαθητής occurs 264 times in the New Testament, exclusively in the Gospels and Acts. It occurs seventy-eight times<sup>40</sup> in the FG: the nominative form 47 times, the accusative 4 times, the genitive 18 times, and the dative 9 times. This is a greater frequency than in all the other Gospels (Matthew: seventy-three times; Mark: forty-six times; Luke: thirty-seven times).

The **singular form** (μαθητής) appears 16 times in the FG. It is interesting that fourteen of these appearances occur in the last four chapters and denote ὁ ἄλλος μαθητής (ὁν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς). The other two cases appear in 9:28 and 19:38. In 9:28 the Pharisees argue against the question of the healed blind man who asks them if they also want to become disciples of Jesus. In reply, the Pharisees accused him of being a disciple of Jesus. In 19:38 the term refers to Joseph of Arimathea who too was a disciple of Jesus.

The **plural form** appears 62 times in the FG and only 5 times in the entire Gospel the noun μαθηταὶ does not refer to 'the disciples' of Jesus. In 1:35 and 3:25 μαθητής denotes the disciples of John the Baptist. In 1:37 we perceive the transition where two disciples of the Baptist start to follow Jesus. Then in 9:28 it indicates the disciples of Moses and the rejection of the Pharisees as disciples of Jesus. In 8:31 μαθηταὶ is used in a general sense referring to a statement of Jesus that anyone may become a disciple of Jesus if he obeys this words.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Words not yet mentioned but semantically in the same field in the FG are δωδεκα, μετα αὐτον, and οὐς δέδωκάς μοι.

<sup>39</sup> In the first part of the FG (1-12) the disciples were, in a technical sense, characterised as followers, and in the second part (13-17) as learners if we consider the number of journeys (movement) and discourse as criteria. The opposite is definitely not excluded – they were also learners in the first part but in a minor sense and anticipated followers of Christ in the second part.

<sup>40</sup> μαθηταὶ occurs 62 times in the FG: 1:35,37; 2:2,11,12, 17,22; 3:22,25; 4:1,2,8,27,31,33; 6:3,8,12,16,22,24,60,61,66; 7:3; 8:31; 9:2,27,28; 11:7,8,12,16,54; 12:4,16; 13:5,22,23,35; 15:8; 16:17,29; 18:1,2,17,19,25,26; 20:10,18-20,25,26,30; 21:1,2,4,8,12,14. μαθητής occurs 16 times in the FG: 9:28; 18:15,16; 19:26,27, 38; 20:2-4,8; 21:7,20,23,24.

<sup>41</sup> Two other texts which also explicitly refer to discipleship are 13:35 and 15:8.



The high frequency of the term μαθητής and the four texts<sup>42</sup> which refer explicitly to discipleship (8:31; 12:26; 13:35; 15:8) indicate the vital importance of the circle of the disciples and discipleship in the FG. This will become clear in this study.

### 3.3 The appearances and description of the disciples in the Fourth Gospel<sup>43</sup>

There are various models for the characterization of characters.<sup>44</sup> In this analysis no specific model for the characterization of the disciples will be used. In this survey I shall look for tendencies which may relate to discipleship or may cast light on aspects of discipleship in the FG, for instance: (i) how the disciples are depicted by the FE, (ii) how the disciples react towards Jesus, (iii) the formation and composition of the group, (iv) how and in which circumstances they appear in the FG, (v) if there is any deeper meaning attached to the disciples as individuals and as group. In this survey I shall follow the outline of the FG as it is constructed in section 3.2 (The macro-structure of the Fourth Gospel).

#### I. The revelation of Jesus to the world: Public ministry (1:19-12:50)

##### Part One: The opening days of the revelation of Jesus (1:19-51)

Part One (1:19-51) concerns only the origins and growth of the first disciples of Jesus. In 1:19-34, the Baptist, baptizing in the vicinity of Bethany in the Transjordan (1:28), witnesses to the coming of one greater than he (1:19-28) and then proceeds to identify Jesus as such a one (1:29-34).<sup>45</sup> Verses 35f show the Baptist with two of his disciples.<sup>46</sup> He sees Jesus walking along, and calls his disciples' attention to Jesus.<sup>47</sup> The Baptist's acclamation contains the saying: ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ. According to Bultmann (1941:69) this is sufficient indication for the disciples to understand that they have to leave their master (v

---

<sup>42</sup> According to Louw (1991:118) 'Words do not "have" meanings, meanings are rather expressed by words.'

<sup>43</sup> The objective of this chapter, is not to go into detail by characterising the disciples in the FG. On this point Schnackenburg (1975:231-7), Culpepper (1983:115-125), Segovia (1985:76-102), and Tolmie (1992:207-228) make useful contributions. Segovia, Culpepper and Tolmie worked on this aspect from a narratological perspective and Schnackenburg from a theological perspective. The difference between them is that Segovia (1985:79) discusses the overall development of the disciples to develop the concept of discipleship. Culpepper (1983:115) on the other hand looks at the role of the disciples in the FG and Tolmie (1992:207ff -- he concentrated only on the LD) worked on the deep structure and the interaction of the implied author and implied reader.

<sup>44</sup> In the characterization of μαθηταὶ in the FG, I do not want to become involved in difficult and complex theories of 'characterization' (see Forster 1944:93-106; De Klerk & Schnell 1987:64; Tolmie 1992).

<sup>45</sup> In 1:19-28 the Baptist operates as a revealer and in 1:29-34 as the one who points to Jesus as the one to be followed "ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἀμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου" (1:29; cf 1:36). Thus the revelatory-salvific character of Jesus' mission, besides the Prologue, is already inaugurated by the Baptist.

<sup>46</sup> According to Brown (1971:74; cf also Barrett 1978:180; Carson 1991:154) all the Gospels agree that John the Baptist had disciples. This is not recorded but merely assumed. Presumably they were a group set apart by his baptism, with their own rules of fasting (Mark 2:18; Luke 7:29-33) and even their own prayers (Luke 5:33; 11:1; cf also John 3:25).

<sup>47</sup> This is related without any attention to historical detail. Neither the place nor the situation is described, nor does the FE raise the question whether the disciples had heard the μαρτυρία of the Baptist on the previous day.

37) and follow Jesus.<sup>48</sup> ἀκολουθεω in 1:37 introduces at this point what could be expected from the disciples in the first 12 chs. In these chapters one of the disciples' characteristics will be the 'following' of Jesus. Thus through the Baptist Jesus wins his first disciples (Schnackenburg 1965:306f).

According to Brown (1971:76) ch 1:35-51 is joined to the testimony of the Baptist in 1:19-34 by the repetition of a simple phrase of the Baptist's testimony about Jesus as the Lamb: Ἰδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (1:36). This reiterated testimony has in 1:36<sup>49</sup> a revelatory and demonstrative function and value in itself; its purpose is to initiate a chain reaction to attract the disciples of the Baptist to Jesus and make them the disciples of Jesus himself. The group of disciples quickly expanded and already in vv 35-50 the FG mentions five disciples:<sup>50</sup> Andrew, an unnamed disciple, Peter, Philip, and Nathaniel.

Two separate events in the process of becoming a disciple are described here. The first sequence (1:35-42) is introduced by the Baptist: on the basis of his open testimony concerning Jesus (1:35), two of his own disciples begin to follow Jesus. This indicates that the circle of the disciples of Jesus clearly begins from within the Baptist's own rank of disciples (Carson 1991:154). A third disciple is added when one of these two, Andrew, goes to 'tell' his brother, Simon Peter, and brings him to Jesus.<sup>51</sup>

The second event (1:43-51) is initiated by Jesus himself: a fourth disciple is called directly by him. He too proceeds to witness and brings an additional disciple to Jesus -- Nathaniel, the fifth<sup>52</sup>. Both these sequences of callings come to an end with a logion (1:50-51)<sup>53</sup> of

---

<sup>48</sup> Schnackenburg (1965:306), correctly, is of the opinion that these disciples represent the true Israel, who react positively to the call of God's messenger and follow the Messiah (cf 1:31,47,49). They actually founded the community which God himself gives to the Messiah (cf 3:27,29).

<sup>49</sup> In 1:29 the Baptist's proclamation of Jesus as the 'Lamb of God' has only a revelatory function, and has not, as Brown (1971:76) indicates, lost its revelatory function in 1:29 because revelation cannot be separated from assignment.

<sup>50</sup> Most studies of the first chapter of the FG take account of five disciples of Jesus, although only four are named -- Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip and Nathaniel. The fifth, the unnamed second disciple of John the Baptist, is assumed to be the Beloved Disciple. If the unnamed disciple was Philip, then there would be only four disciples of Jesus (cf Hulen 1984:153). Later on the FG mentions Judas Iscariot (6:64,70 etcetera); another Judas (14:22); Thomas (11:16; 14:5 etcetera); the Beloved Disciple (13:23; 18:15,16 etcetera) and also Joseph of Arimathea (19:38). Although the FG mentions the Twelve (6:67; 12:24), there is no Johannine list of the Twelve.

<sup>51</sup> Here right at the beginning of the FG, the disciples establish a pattern for the role of the disciples in bringing faith to others (Culpepper 1983:115).

<sup>52</sup> Both of these sequences gave rise to a series of Christological confessions on the part of these disciples. These confessions represent traditional Jewish Messianic expectations: the Messiah (1:41); the one written about in the Mosaic law and the prophets (1:45); the Son of God and the King of Israel (1:49) (cf Kümmel 1974:67). In the light of the revelatory character of these confessions, it does not only have to be seen theologically as the purpose of the FE to reveal the identity of Jesus but also may be seen to stress the revelatory-salvific character of discipleship. This corresponds with the objective of Jesus' mission.

<sup>53</sup> In this logion we find a promise which is comprised of two fundamental aspects: on the one hand, it points to the fact that the revelation of Jesus has begun, and that there are 'greater things' yet to come. On the other hand, in the light of this revelation, the preceding confessions must give way to and be understood in terms of a further acceptance of the claim of Jesus as the Father's unique representative (agent) (cf Segovia 1985:81; Carson 1991:162).

Jesus which is addressed to all the disciples (Carson 1991:163) in spite of the singular in the introduction (λέγει αὐτῷ) and thus forms the conclusion and climax of the whole section (cf Schnackenburg 1965:318; Segovia 1985:81; Carson 1991:164f)<sup>54</sup>. The words 'see', 'open', 'angels' and 'ascending' in v 51 stress the revelation of the 'Son of man'. Whereas part one has a strong revelatory-salvific function in relation to Jesus, the FE deliberately and theologically involves the disciples. They confess Jesus as the Messiah.<sup>55</sup> The FE wants to emphasize the 'witnessing function' of the disciples and the fact that they 'brought' others to Jesus who in turn became disciples of Jesus.

## Part Two: From Cana to Cana -- various responses to the ministry of Jesus in the different sections of Palestine (Chs 2-4)

In Part Two (chs 2-4) the public ministry of Jesus begins in ch 2:1 but the disciples<sup>56</sup> do not appear frequently in many different scenes. The repeated emphasis by the FE on the 'disciples' in chs 2-4 is intentional (Schnackenburg 65:271). In this part Jesus undertook two journeys<sup>57</sup>: from Cana, via Capernaum (2:12), to Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem, via Samaria (ch 4), back to Cana. On both journeys his disciples joined him. The interest of the FE is restricted to the 'theological' impact, which the sign in Cana had on the faith of the disciples (Schnackenburg 1965:329f; cf also Segovia 1985:8).<sup>58</sup>

### Chapter 2

The beginnings of the circle of Jesus' disciples are presented in the FG in Part One as a series of individual callings. This leads up to a climax of Jesus' first miraculous sign in the FG, which is performed in Cana of Galilee and witnessed by the entire group of Jesus' followers (2:1-11).<sup>59</sup> This sign<sup>60</sup> causes the revelation of the glory of Jesus and

---

<sup>54</sup> Schnackenburg (1965:318) links 1:51 with the preceding verses on a merely verbal (ὁψη ὁψεσθε) basis, and is of the opinion that the logion may have circulated originally without any setting (see also Barrett 1978:186).

<sup>55</sup> Their confession of Jesus' Messiahship relates to their confession in 16:30 that they believe that he came from God.

<sup>56</sup> In the section 1:35-51 five disciples started to follow Jesus: Andrew, Simon, Philip, Nathanael, and an unnamed disciple. No further calls are described. Whereas in 6:67 we hear of 'the Twelve', we can assume that this complete group is probably referred to in 2:1, for in the rest of the FG the FE gives the indication that he generally uses the term μαθητής to refer to the 'twelve' (cf also Barrett 1878:190).

<sup>57</sup> A journey is understood as a distance travelled in a number of days. In our context in the FG the distance has been taken as from one major region to another major region: from Galilee to Jerusalem, or from Jerusalem to Galilee.

<sup>58</sup> In Galilee (Cana) the revelation of the glory of Jesus bears fruit (2:11) but in Judea it leads to negative results (4:48).

<sup>59</sup> The crucial point in ch 2 is the faith of the disciples (Culpepper 1983:116). The FE separates the affirmation that the disciples saw the glory of Jesus and believed in him (2:11) from their coming to Jesus with confessions (and witness to others). Culpepper (1983:116) is correct that 'the evangelist leaves the implication that the two are in fact to be distinguished.' According to 2:11 the faith of the disciples is based on seeing (1:36,39,46,51). The question then arises what the difference might be between the disciples and the people of 2:23, for they also ἐπίστευσαν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, because θεωροῦντες αὐτοῦ τα σημεῖα ἃ ἐποίησεν (2:23-24; cf 1:12 and 2:11). Culpepper's solution, correctly, is that both groups begin with signs of faith, but the disciples exceed the 'people' in a willingness to 'follow' Jesus (1:37,38,40) and also to remember what Jesus said (2:22). 'Faith which does not lead to following is therefore inadequate. "Abiding" is the test of

consequently that his disciples<sup>61</sup> put their faith in him (2:11).<sup>62</sup> The FE relates the miracle to what precedes. By emphasizing the reaction of belief on the part of the disciples, the FE shows that he has not forgotten the theme of evolving discipleship that is elaborated in ch 1. The servants saw the sign, but not the glory of Jesus; the disciples perceive the glory of Jesus behind the sign, and put their faith in him (ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτόν) (Carson 1991:175; cf Barrett 1978:193). Belief is the result of 'the following of Jesus' that begins in 1:37; what they see here at Cana fulfils the promise of 1:50 (and 51).

The initial formation of Jesus' circle of disciples is followed by Jesus' first journey to Jerusalem. After a brief stay in Capernaum with Jesus, his disciples follow him to Jerusalem.<sup>63</sup> Segovia correctly believes (1985:96) that from this point the disciples should be seen as following Jesus wherever he goes although their presence is not always explicitly acknowledged.

Although there is none of the open opposition or rejection which characterizes the later journeys during the first journey, Jesus' reception is far from satisfactory and thus provides an immediate contrast to the earlier faithful response of the circle of disciples in 2:11. Where the disciples respond faithfully to Jesus' sign (2:11)<sup>64</sup> the Jews(2:18) demand a sign from him (2:13-22).<sup>65</sup>

In verse 2:23 we read that at the same Passover festival, "πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, θεωροῦντες αὐτοῦ τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ἐποίησεν". Sadly, their faith was spurious, and Jesus knew it. He therefore did not entrust himself to these spurious converts. By implication, Jesus wonderfully promises to entrust himself to those who truly trust him (cf 10:14, 15)(Carson 1991:184). The disciples, unlike the Jews, respond to Jesus immediately using a variety of Messianic titles and also accept him as the Father's unique representative.

---

discipleship (cf 8:31).'

<sup>60</sup> Brown (1971:103f) indicates that the FE specifically relates this miracle to the other miracles of Jesus and gives it a concrete place in his ministry. The FE tells us what the sign accomplished: through it Jesus reveals his glory and his disciples believe in him (2:11). The first sign had the same purpose that all the subsequent signs will have, namely, revelation about the person of Jesus; he is the one sent by the Father to bring salvation to the world. What shines through is *his glory*, and the only reaction that is emphasized is the belief of the disciples. According to 20:30 Jesus performed many miracles in front of his disciples.

<sup>61</sup> This group which was already formed by the time of Jesus' first visit to Cana (2:1-11) (Segovia 1985:78) is labelled "μαθηταί". From this point in the FG they are presented as following Jesus wherever he goes in his ministry. Their number and composition is not as clear in the FG as is the case in the Synoptics. The reader remains uninformed until ch 6 when an indication is given concerning the size of the group. Throughout the FG (from chs 1-21) the reader meets new individual disciples which are part of this group.

<sup>62</sup> Here the FE wants to indicate that their faith receives an 'essential impulse' from this sign. Afterwards their faith increases and grows richer in content throughout the FG. This seems to be clear from the Christological formula 'they believed in him' (πιστεύειν εἰς) occurs 26 times in the FG) (Schnackenburg 1965:340).

<sup>63</sup> The presence of the disciples is confirmed by the two asides by the FE in the second unit of Part Two (2:17,22) and the information provided in the transition statements of 3:22 and 4:2. Here the disciples are portrayed as accompanying Jesus from Jerusalem to the land of Judea.

<sup>64</sup> The FE is interested in the disciples as people who came to faith (2:11) (Schnackenburg 1965:331). This faithful response in 2:11 is supported by a like response in 1:35-51 to become disciples of Jesus.

<sup>65</sup> The disciples' response is also in contrast to the response of Nicodemus in his conversation with Jesus (3:1-10) (cf Schnackenburg 1965:363).



At the same time, there is the inability of the disciples to comprehend fully the nature of Jesus' action and saying in 2:22 so that only "ὅτε οὖν ἠγέρθη ἐκ νεκρῶν, ἐμνήσθησαν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι τοῦτο ἔλεγεν, καὶ ἐπίστευσαν τῇ γραφῇ καὶ τῷ λόγῳ ὃν εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς" (see also 12:16; 13:7). Thus the disciples' perception of Jesus as the Messiah, the one sent by the Father, remains nonetheless incomplete<sup>66</sup> prior to the 'hour' (Segovia 1985:82).<sup>67</sup>

### Chapter 3

In ch 3 the disciples are less prominent. The previous episode took place in Jerusalem. Now, 'After that,' certainly not long after the Passover week (Schnackenburg 1965:448), the second journey back to Galilee started. Jesus goes with his disciples (cf 2:12,17,22) to the Judean countryside (cf 11:54). According to 3:22 Jesus stay here with his disciples. During this period his disciples baptize<sup>68</sup> (cf 4:2). These verses prepare for ch 4 (Carson 1991:209).

### Chapter 4

The disciples are mentioned in the unit on Samaria and appear prominently in the first three verses. In the Samaritan story, the disciples play a minor but important role. Their journey into town to buy food<sup>69</sup> (v 8) allows the conversation at the well between Jesus and the Samaritan woman to proceed without any interruption (vv 7,9-26) and so paves the way directly for Jesus' subsequent exchange with them regarding the proper meaning and

---

<sup>66</sup> The level of the disciples' faith in Jesus, enables them to be his disciples. They saw him as 'the Lamb of God' (v 35), 'the Messiah' (v 41), 'the Son of God; the King of Israel' (v 49). In 2:11 we find an intensification of their faith. The essence of their faith has to be "ἐγνώκαμεν ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ" (6:69; cf also 16:27,30 and 20:28). Their misunderstanding lies in another area and is not based on disbelief. We must distinguish between 'disbelief' as the opposite of belief and a lack of a 'specific knowledge' which could cause misunderstanding. They are influenced by their frame of reference based on their specific tradition and culture (4:27). They as Jews expected a political Messiah, as is clearly known from the Synoptic Gospels and Acts (cf Acts 1:6). Because of this expectation they cannot understand that Jesus must 'go away'. Therefore most of their misunderstanding can be attached to 'the hour'.

<sup>67</sup> It seems as if a paradox occurs in ch 2. In 2:11 the FE stated that 'his disciples put their faith in him' and in 2:22 (cf also 12:16; 13:7) : "ὅτε οὖν ἠγέρθη ἐκ νεκρῶν, ἐμνήσθησαν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι τοῦτο ἔλεγεν, καὶ ἐπίστευσαν τῇ γραφῇ καὶ τῷ λόγῳ ὃν εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς". Schnackenburg (1965:338ff) makes a useful contribution to solving this problem. According to him the sign, which reveals the glory of Jesus, leads those (the disciples) whose faith is ready, to a deeper understanding of Jesus. The question may be whether these disciples of Jesus attain the full insight of faith in the miracle in Cana, since they are still beset by misunderstanding (see footnotes 70 and 71). This statement by the FE indicates that these disciples' faith had received an essential impulse from the sign at the wedding in Cana: 'their faith has grown stronger within them and richer in content.' From the Christological formula 'they believed in him' (πιστεύειν εἰς occurs 36 times in the FG) this growth in faith is clear (Schnackenburg 1965:450).

<sup>68</sup> The information of the disciples given in 4:1-3 is in contrast to the information given in 3:22-24. The indication from 3:22-24 is that Jesus is baptizing, but from 4:1-3 it is only the disciples who are baptizing in the Judean countryside. In the light of this contradiction, and the fact that their baptismal activity is not developed elsewhere in the FG, it seems as if some disciples of Jesus, coming from the school of the Baptist, continue to baptize in order to gain new followers for Jesus (cf 4:1) (Schnackenburg 1965:450). They probably baptized on behalf of Jesus (Hendriksen 1976:146; cf also Carson 1991:209).

<sup>69</sup> Culpepper (1983:116) points out that the disciples here fulfil the role of a rabbi's pupils. They address him as rabbi (1:38,49; 4:31; 9:2; 11:8), spend time together (3:22; 18:1), go to buy food for him (4:8,31), and also baptize (4:2).

nature of 'food' (vv 31-38). In his conversation with them, both a misunderstanding<sup>70</sup> and a broader lack of understanding<sup>71</sup> are quite evident on the part of the disciples. They clearly misunderstand the intended level of Jesus' discourse: they fail to see that Jesus' food is none other than the mission entrusted to him by the Father (v 34), and they fail to grasp altogether the fundamental meaning and significance of the witnessed encounter. It is then Jesus who must tell them<sup>72</sup> on account of their lack of understanding that they themselves are called to take an active part in this mission (v 38) and thus to rejoice with him (v 36). Although their mission is already very much at hand (v 35), they will only begin their missionary work after his departure, when they will be sent out by the risen Lord (17:18; 20:21) and will be guided and supported by the Paraclete (cf 15:26f; 16:7-11). Through his disciples Jesus will save people (Schnackenburg 1965:485f).

The FE presents a counterbalance for the lack of understanding on the part of the disciples regarding the mission of Jesus and that of the disciples. In the testimony of the Samaritan woman to that of many other Samaritans (4:39), the FE indicates that she has reaped what she has not worked for (4:38). The content of the woman's testimony (4:29) relates to that of the first disciples in 1:46 "Ἐρχοῦ καὶ ἴδε ..." Consequently many of these Samaritans believe in Jesus (4:39,42).

### **Part Three: Jesus and the principal Feasts of the Jews (chs 5-10)**

The circle of disciples is almost completely bypassed in Part Three (chs 5-10). It is only in ch 6 that the disciples as a group play a prominent role. They take part in the work of Jesus (6:1-14) and are instrumentally used by the FE to reveal the divinity of Jesus (the Son of Man (6:27,53,62); Holy One of God (6:69))<sup>73</sup>. Except for ch 6, for the rest of Part Three Jesus is in the vicinity of Jerusalem (cf 7:9 and 14). In this Part the principal Feasts clarify why the disciples are almost bypassed. He went to Jerusalem with his disciples in a series of journeys<sup>74</sup> to attend the Jewish Feasts. At each visit to Jerusalem (with two of the miracles he performed there) he was in a conflict situations against the opposition. The FE used these situations so that Jesus could teach the fundamental aspects of faith. This caused the group of disciples to maintain a low profile. Chapter 10 may be taken as an indirect reference to the group of disciples.

---

<sup>70</sup> Misunderstanding speaks of the tendency to read the surface meaning of a situation or statement (metaphors), and to miss the deeper level on which Jesus speaks (Siker-Gieseler 1980:209; Culpepper 1983:116,152). Misunderstandings in the case of the disciples are evident in 4:31-33; 11:11-15 and in the case of other people 2:19-21 (Jews); 3:3-9 (Nicodemus); 4:10-15 (Samaritan woman); 6:32-35 (crowd); 6:51-53 (Jews); 8:21-27 (Jews); 8:32-33 (Jews); 8:56-58 (Jews); 9:39-40 (Pharisees); 11:23-25 (Martha); 12:32-34 (crowd).

<sup>71</sup> Lack of understanding occurs where the listeners cannot grasp the literal meaning of Jesus' words (i.e. his departure). This is due to a lack of information or experience. Lack of understanding in the case of the disciples may be observed in 4:34; 6:6-7,19,60-61; 9:2; 11:14,16; 12:1-8,16 (12:20-26 by implication; cf 10:6), and in the case of the Jews 5:17-18; 6:40-43,51-52; 7:33-36; 7:21-22; 8:18-19,24-27; 10:30-33.

<sup>72</sup> A after each misunderstanding and lack of understanding, Jesus has the opportunity to elucidate this. In most cases it comprises revelation about himself.

<sup>73</sup> See Carson (1991:273) for the reasons why the FE includes this paragraph. The whole chapter climactically builds up to this confession. Schnackenburg (1965:13) is of the opinion that the FE probably regards this as a revelation to the disciples. Its purpose is to enable us to appreciate his divine status (ἐγὼ εἶμι).

<sup>74</sup> Scholars such as Bultmann, Schnackenburg, and Segovia infer that the sequence of chs 5 and 6 is in the reversed order. The acceptance of this statement will influence the total number of journeys that take place (cf Segovia 1985:82).

## Chapter 5

In ch 5 the circle of disciples is not mentioned at all during the third journey of Jesus when he went up to Jerusalem for the feast of the Sabbath.

## Chapter 6

The succeeding two appearances of the disciples reveal two misunderstandings (vv 1-15) and a lack of understanding (vv 16-24) on their part. In 6:1-15 Jesus deliberately 'tests' (πειράζων) the disciples on the subject of 'feeding' the approaching crowds; in response, two of them affirm the impossibility of such a feeding on the grounds of either the cost involved (= Philip) or the lack of available 'food' (= Andrew)<sup>75</sup>. The next scene in which we encounter them is in 6:16-21 on their way back to Galilee, when they see Jesus walking on the sea and approaching the boat. Their reaction here is one of fear (cf also 20:19).

Where the disciples initially remain completely in the background during Jesus' long and increasingly hostile conversation, their last appearance in this section provides a counterbalance to the three successive examples of misunderstandings/lack of understanding on their part. After the Galilean crowds<sup>76</sup> completely reject Jesus' claims<sup>77</sup> and abandon him (6:60-66),<sup>78</sup> the disciples openly declare their intention to remain with Jesus (vv 67-68). This appearance ends when they fully and explicitly accept the claims presented by Jesus (v 68) and subsequently reaffirm their previous belief in him (v 69)<sup>79</sup>. This chapter and the Galilean ministry of Jesus ended on an ironic event when many of his disciples turn back and no longer follow him (v 66) while a small group of 'Twelve' do believe (v 69). A few important statements are made in 6:60-71 with regard to the disciples: (i) they are chosen by Jesus (v 70), enabled by the Father (v 65) and given life by the Spirit (v 63). (ii) Because of what happened in (i) they could testify "ἡμεῖς πεπιστεύκαμεν καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ" (v 69); this also shows that a disciple of Jesus no longer belongs to this 'world' (cf 17:14).

This smaller group of disciples is also collectively mentioned in the FG as 'The Twelve'

---

<sup>75</sup> Segovia (1985:97) is correct that the disciples fail to see the present gathering in terms of mission. He believes that both the nature and purpose of the test of Jesus, as well as the given response of the disciples in 6:1-15, should be seen against the background of 4:31-38, and the close agreement between 4:35 and 6:5. According to him the disciples fail to see the intended 'feeding' in terms of Jesus' mission; they fail to realise, once again, that the fields are ripe for the harvest.

<sup>76</sup> The editorial reference in v 59 marks the end of the sermon in the synagogue at Capernaum. The rest of the chapter (6:60-71) no longer talks about 'the Jews' but about the 'disciples' of Jesus, who in the wider sense are subsequently distinguished from 'The Twelve' (6:60,61).

<sup>77</sup> The sign of the feeding of the multitude, as the climax of the Galilean ministry of Jesus, and the appearance of Jesus to his disciples on the lake 'is interpreted by a revelatory discourse which discloses its theological meaning.' This discourse forces the readers to make a decision about faith. It also exposes Jewish unbelief and the crisis in the group of the disciples. Finally it indicates the confession of faith by the Twelve, through Simon Peter (Schnackenburg 1971:14).

<sup>78</sup> Here μαθηταὶ refers to the crowds who have followed Jesus in Galilee because of the signs, but who cannot accept the higher claims presented in the conversation of 6:22-66 (vv 26,30-31,36,41-42,60-61,62,64,66).

<sup>79</sup> Here the disciples are for the first time explicitly designated as 'the Twelve'. Only in 20:24 is Thomas again referred to as 'one of the Twelve'. From 6:67-71 it seems clear that the Twelve are the inner group of disciples which is part of the μαθηταὶ, a larger group of disciples, who follow Jesus.

(δωδεκα),<sup>80</sup> but only 4 times (cf 6:67,70,71 and 20:24). In every case there is a suggestion of forsaking or unbelief in the context. In 6:66-71, Schnackenburg (1971:109ff) indicates, that the contrast between the Twelve who remain faithful to Jesus and the disciples who fall back into disappointment and disbelief is deliberate. But the Twelve (cf 6:67) are forced by Jesus to make a choice. Then Simon Peter comes forward as a spokesman and representative of the more intimate circle of disciples, the group of Twelve (cf 6:8; 13:6-10; 20:2), and gives the crucial answer, "ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ." With this answer the Twelve distance themselves from those who describe his teaching as 'hard' (6:60), and are determined to listen to his words and accept them. This confession is the expression of what the Twelve have found in Jesus over a period of time. If they, according to 6:67-69, are the true disciples it is because of their victory over the σκάνδαλον and because they decided for Jesus. So according to verse 6:70 they are the Twelve whom he has 'chosen' (Bultmann 1941:345).

### Chapters 7 to 9

In chapters 7-9 the disciples maintain a low profile and are almost completely bypassed.<sup>81</sup> This is due to Jesus' intense confrontation with 'the Jews' which dominates these chapters. The only reference to them in chs 7-10 is 9:2<sup>82</sup> as an introduction to the miraculous sign that begins and controls this cycles of events. Here in 9:2 they show that their understanding of sin and retribution is in line with the popular notion that affliction and misfortune and are God's judgment upon a sinner (cf Brown 1975:371; Barrett 1978:356). In this conversation their lack of understanding reveals the disciples' inability to see a specific event in terms of its reference to the 'hour'.<sup>83</sup> Their proposed association of physical blindness with sin (v 2), (in 8:21-30 they would presumably have heard the definition of sin as unbelief), shows that they fail to grasp the real meaning of sin.

---

<sup>80</sup> The way Jesus addresses his disciples reveals how the FE perceives the Jesus/disciples' relationship. Jesus calls 'the Twelve' (6:67-69) 'little children' (13:33), 'friends' (15:14,15), 'my brothers' (20:17), and 'children' (21:5). Sometimes Jesus addresses a disciple by name: Peter (1:42; 21:15), and Philip (14:9). According to Siker-Gieseler (1980:211) this suggests a family relationship between Jesus and his disciples. The fact that his disciples are called 'children' suggests that the disciples' relationship to Jesus is similar to the Son's relationship to the Father.

<sup>81</sup> According to 8:12,31; 9:27f the idea of discipleship enters these chapters in a concealed way (Schnackenburg 1975:234).

<sup>82</sup> Two other references to "μαθηταί" occur in 7:3 and 8:31,32. Concerning 7:3 scholars differ as to who these disciples are to whom the brothers of Jesus refer. According to the one group (Barrett 1978:311; Newman and Nida 1980:221), the term refers to a wider group of disciples of Jesus in Jerusalem and not explicitly to the 'Twelve'. 'Disciples' should be understood here in its widest possible meaning, perhaps referring to the many followers of Jesus who had recently turned back. For the other group (Schnackenburg 1971:194) μαθηταί refers to the Judean disciples of Jesus. A legitimate reason here could be that Jesus is mentioned without his disciples. Therefore they could have gone to Jerusalem without him. For a third motivation see the statement made by Segovia (1985:96). I believe that this is a case where no one can say with certainty to whom μαθηταί refers. Every proposal will be no more than speculative and hypothetical.

Concerning 8:31,32 most scholars agree that here Jesus is addressing Jews who have been in the faith for some time (perfect participle), the larger group of Jesus' followers. μαθηταί here relates to discipleship and refers to believers in general. Anyone who remains in Jesus' words will be his disciple. These two verses will be discussed in detail at a later stage.

<sup>83</sup> They fail to see this situation: (i) as an opportunity to reveal the glory of Christ (11:5-16); (ii) as an opportunity for the mission of Christ (to reveal the Father; to bring salvation to this man) and their own role in it (4:31-38; 6:1-15; 9:2-5; 11:5-16; 12:20-26). They also fail to understand the Theological meaning of these events (9:2-5).



According to Segovia (1985:84), 'the disciples have also failed to see the illness at hand in terms of the ongoing harvest.'

### Chapter 10 (by implication)

There is no direct reference to Jesus' disciples in ch 10:1-21,26-29. The "αὐτοῖς... ἐκεῖνοι" in v 6 refers to the Jews in ch 9, who there and elsewhere are the adversaries of Jesus. They are not his sheep and therefore do not hear and understand what he says (Barrett 1978:370; Carson 1991:383).

When Jesus addresses these Jews concerning discipleship, he refers to disciples metaphorically as 'sheep'.<sup>84</sup> In this chapter 'the following'<sup>85</sup> of the shepherd by his sheep (disciples) (vv 3,4) and other sheep (v 16) is stressed, because he leads them (vv 3,4).

The metaphor explains the relationship between Jesus and his disciples from two perspectives, from that of Jesus as well as that of the disciples. New content has been added to this relationship and stresses the essence of it. Jesus (the shepherd) is the one: (i) who knows his disciples for 'he calls his own disciples by name' (vv 3,14,27), (ii) he leads his disciples and 'goes ahead of them' (vv 3,4), (iii) he lays down his life for his disciples (vv 11,15), (iv) he gives them eternal life (v 28), and (v) the Father gives the disciples to him (v 29).

On the other hand (i) Jesus' disciples 'listen to his voice' (v 3,27)<sup>86</sup> because they know his voice (vv 4,14)<sup>87</sup>, (ii) they follow him and will never follow a stranger (vv 4,5,27), (iii) they will never perish (v 28), (iv) no one can snatch them out of Jesus' hand (v 28) or the Father's hand (v 29), (v) they were given by the Father to Jesus (v 29).<sup>88</sup>

Chapter 10 prepares the readers for chs 13-17 where this relationship between Jesus and his disciples will be elucidated by him in more detail and other terms. Some of these aspects also occur in chs 13-17.

### Part Four: Jesus moves toward the hour of death and glory (chs 11-12).

In Part Four (chs 11,12) we find much movement of Jesus and his disciples, although the distances travelled are not as great as was the case in the previous journeys. At the beginning of ch 11 we find Jesus and his disciples crossing the Jordan for safety at a place

---

<sup>84</sup> It is clear that the commentators failed in a certain sense to explain the term 'sheep'. According to Bultmann (1941:285) the 'flock' of which Jesus is the shepherd is not a historical entity, but a pre-temporal community, which means that it is also applicable to the historical church. Discipleship occurs implicitly in the discourses on the shepherd (cf Schnackenburg 1975:234).

<sup>85</sup> There is a definitive correlation between 1:35-50 and ch 10. In 1:35ff the first disciples start to follow Jesus and in ch 10 the sheep (disciples) follow the shepherd (Jesus). These two passages are linked together with the occurrence of ἀκολουθεῖ in both texts. In a few cases ἀκολουθεῖ is used in a discipleship context.

<sup>86</sup> The FE contrasts the disciples of Jesus with the Jews who do not want to listen to Jesus (v 26).

<sup>87</sup> At this point the FE parallels the disciples-Jesus' relationship with that of Jesus/Father relationship (cf Kümmel 1974:286f).

<sup>88</sup> The disciples of Jesus are also surveyed from a negative point of view: '...they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.'

where the Baptist had been baptized in the early days (10:40-42). Here they stay<sup>89</sup> for some days (11:6) until they leave for Judea where Lazarus is raised from the dead. After this miracle Jesus and his disciples withdraw to a region near the desert, to a village called Ephraim, where Jesus stays with his disciples. From there they go to Bethany (12:1) and the next day to Jerusalem where a crowd goes out to meet him as the 'King of Israel' (12:12-15).

In this Part the group of disciples appears more frequently; five times to be precise: 11:1-16,54; 12:1-8,16,20-26. The main issue here is the high incidence of the disciples' misunderstanding (11:11,12) and lack of understanding (11:14-16; 12:1-8,16,20-26).

## Chapter 11

Jesus receives a message that Lazarus is dying (11:1-16) while he and his disciples are still beyond the Jordan (11:5-16). After a two day delay (v 6), Jesus announces his plans to return to Judea.<sup>90</sup> A conversation immediately develops which yet again reveals the disciples' misunderstanding (11:11,12)<sup>91</sup> and lack of understanding (11:14,16) (Segovia 1985:84). Firstly they directly misunderstand the nature of Lazarus' situation (v 11,12)<sup>92</sup>; secondly they lack understanding that the death of Jesus, however awful it may seem, would also effect his glorification and the consummation of his ministry (v 14); and thirdly they misunderstand the real reason for the journey (v 16). It is quite clear that they have not yet grasped the real purpose for the journey<sup>93</sup> but believe instead that it will lead to their own deaths (v 16) (Segovia 1985:84).

The next reference of the disciples indicates that they are ready to go back to Judea with Jesus even if it means dying with him (11:7-16). In contrast to this approach we find that after going to Jerusalem 'to die', Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the region of Ephraim, near the desert, where they stayed for a while, together (v 54).

## Chapter 12

Chapters 1-12 and part four come to a close with Jesus' fourth and final journey to Jerusalem. The disciples are finally mentioned indirectly in 12:1-8 and directly in 12:16,20-

---

<sup>89</sup> It is assumed that his disciples were with him according to 11:7.

<sup>90</sup> The fact that Jesus responds is a testimony to his love for the Bethany family (cf vv 5,8). But first of all he sees this challenge as some kind of signal from his heavenly Father (11:4): "ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν, Αὕτη ἡ ἀσθένεια οὐκ ἔστιν πρὸς θάνατον ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα δοξασθῇ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ δι' αὐτῆς."

<sup>91</sup> This misunderstanding in v 12 leads to a revelatory explanation by Jesus about himself in v 13: he has spoken of his death.

<sup>92</sup> Upon the functionality of verse 11 scholars differ. Carson (1991:409) in a list of evidences tries to indicate that the failure of the disciples to discern the metaphorical significance of 'asleep', cannot be labelled as an artificial device. Schnackenburg (1971:409; cf also Barrett 1978:392), on the contrary, is of the opinion that this misunderstanding on the part of the disciples is a stylistic device of the FE. He intends not only to take the discussion further, but also to reveal the distance which separates men from the Revealer. Bultmann (1941:304) agrees with both the abovementioned viewpoints. According to him the double meaning of κοιμᾶσθαι is very old, and a primitive artificial device of the source lies behind this.

<sup>93</sup> His return, with all of the dangers involved, is presented once again in terms of the mission entrusted to him and to the disciples (v 4). Strengthening the faith of the disciples is a constant concern of Jesus, and all the more urgent as the passion approaches (Segovia 1985). The faith that Jesus wants to strengthen is faith in himself, the Messiah, the Son of God.

26. In all three references the theme of 'lack of understanding' on their part, appears, directly in 12:16 and indirectly in 12:1-8, 20-26. This chapter contains no miraculous sign or sustained discourse. The first two narrative sections (vv 1-11, 12-19) report events in which Jesus is honoured by people, even though many (including his disciples explicitly mentioned) do not grasp the significance of what is happening.

In 12:1-8 we read that Jesus is having a meal with other people (probably his disciples were some of those at the table) held in of his honour. At this event Mary anoints Jesus' feet with expensive perfume. It is then that Judas objects to Mary's deed.<sup>94</sup> The disciples could not grasp that Mary was anointing Jesus for his death (12:8). This indicates a 'lack of understanding' on the part of the disciples. At this stage of Jesus' ministry his disciples still do not understand that Jesus is going to die. This 'lack of understanding' is carried over to the next section (vv 12-19).

The FE sees in the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem a testimony of true kingship (18:37). In this sense Jesus is the expected Messiah, the Son of God (1:49). The disciples understand the meaning of this event as little as they understood the meaning of the temple (12:16 cf to 2:22). The FE says that they did not understand the connection with the Zechariah prophecy or the meaning of what the crowd did. They did not realize until Jesus had been glorified, that is, after his resurrection from the dead (2:22) and the sending of the Spirit (cf 7:39)<sup>95</sup>.

Section 12:20-36 starts with a reference to Greeks coming to Philip with a request to see Jesus. He went to tell Andrew and then both went to tell Jesus.<sup>96</sup> Jesus does not respond to the direct request of the Gentiles, but to the situation that their request represents<sup>97</sup> (Carson 1991:436; Schnackenburg 1971:479). Up to this point the 'hour' has always been future (7:30; 8:20), the hour, which in these cases is nothing other than the appointed time for Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension<sup>98</sup> and sending of the Paraclete (cf Brown 1972:541) – in short, his glorification. The requests of the Greeks changes the parameters: *The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified*. From now until the passion the 'hour' is an immediate prospect (12:27; 13:1; 17:1).

---

<sup>94</sup> Although Judas speaks in verses 4-5, the other disciples, according to Carson (1991: 428), have the same thought. According to Mark 14:4, 'some', and according to Matthew 26:8, 'the' disciples were displeased by the waste of the precious oil, while in the FG it is Judas 'the Iscariot' who makes the remark (Bernard 1963:419 and Schnackenburg 1971:461).

<sup>95</sup> Schnackenburg states (1971:473) 'Auferstehung, "Erhöhung", Geistsendung sind für ihn ein einziges Geschehen der "Verherrlichung" (vgl. 12,23.32). Das "Sich-Erinnern" der Jünger wird durch die "Erinnerung" des heiligen Geistes ermöglicht (vgl. 14,26; 16,14)'.

<sup>96</sup> The hesitation shown by Philip, in his action to go and tell Andrew that the Greeks want to see Jesus, seems to indicate failure to interpret this request in terms of the mission. It seems as if the disciples' reaction in this situation is very similar to their reaction in 6:5-9. This should also be seen against the background of 4:27,31-38. Again the disciples fail to interpret the coming of the Gentiles (Newman & Nida 1980:403; Carson 1991:435) to Jesus in terms of his (as well as their own) mission (Segovia 1985:98).

<sup>97</sup> Cf also 3:2 with 3:3ff. Jesus acts in a similar to when Nicodemus came to him (3:2f). When Nicodemus refers to the signs' performed by Jesus, he starts to confront Nicodemus with the concept of 'born again'.

<sup>98</sup> Although the ascension of Jesus (13:1,3,33,36; 14:1-4,28; 16:5,7,10,16,28; 17:1,5,11,13,24), as well as the sending of the Paraclete (14:15-17,25-26; 15:26-27; 16:7-11,12-15) is implied throughout the LD, the FG ends before the ascension event, as described in Acts 1, takes place.

Jesus sees this approach of the Greeks as a kind of signal that the climactic hour has dawned (v 23). In the following two verses (vv 24,25) Jesus explains that this 'hour' involves his own life and that the same possibilities apply to all disciples (v 26). Although 'serving' and 'following' Jesus may indeed entail the death<sup>99</sup> of the believer, he will be glorified by the Father and will be where Jesus is, with the Father (v 26).

For Schnackenburg (1971:482), the call 'follow me'<sup>100</sup> (12:26) is at the centre of the second saying of Jesus in this section: laying down of one's life in imitation of Jesus. Here, the invitation to discipleship means readiness to face death (cf 13:31-32). 'Hating one's own life' (v 25) means in practice laying down one's life for Jesus, for his name (cf 15:21).

The laying down of one's life, referred to in this text (12:26), is the counterbalance to the misunderstanding/lack of understanding which arises through a misinterpretation of the death of Lazarus, (11:12,13) the death of the disciples (11:16) and the death of Jesus (12:7). Therefore, to become a disciple of Jesus, one must be willing to lay down one's life for Jesus. To reach this counterbalance, the FE introduces the Greeks who want to see Jesus and to whose question Jesus responds by linking it to the theme of death.

### **The Revelation of Jesus to his disciples: Private ministry (13:1-20:31)<sup>101</sup>**

This second section of the FG consists of three parts: chs 13-17, 18-19, and 20<sup>102</sup>. The length of Jesus' discourses (chs 13-17) and dialogues (ch 20:19-31) in the circle of his disciples shows that these are of considerable importance (Schnackenburg 1975:1).

### **Part Five: The last supper (Chapters 13-17)**

Unlike the previous parts, this part is solely concerned with the circle of disciples<sup>103</sup> as they are informed by Jesus what discipleship is all about (Barrett 1978:436; see Tolmie 1992:207-228). The second part of the FG is more complex than the first part concerning the characterization of the disciples, due to the fact that no other characters appear and no movement takes place.<sup>104</sup> It is now only Jesus and his disciples in the upper room. The

---

<sup>99</sup> Although there are previous references to the dangers and difficulties connected with the mission of Jesus and his disciples (9:2-5; 11:8,16), this is the very first reference to a possibility of death in their mission.

<sup>100</sup> There is definitely a relation between the request of the Greeks who want to see Jesus (v 21) and the content of Jesus' response (regarding 'following' him) to those who want to serve him (v 26). This relation is also seen in 1:36,37 and people following Jesus after they saw the signs he performed (6:2 cf 6:26).

<sup>101</sup> Most scholars are unanimous that there is a major division between chs 12 and 13 and that there are notable differences between chs 1-12 and 13-21. The following two differences explain the frequency of the disciples' appearances in these two main parts. Firstly, during Jesus' public ministry, as described in chs 1-12, his words and deeds are addressed to a wide audience, provoking a crisis of faith – some believe and some refuse to believe. Chapters 13-17, however, is addressed to the restricted audience, his disciples, who believe that he came from God (16:30; 17:8,25). Secondly, the signs of chs 2-12 anticipate what Jesus would do for men once he was glorified, while chs 13-21 describe the 'hour' of glorification which constitutes a new dispensation.

<sup>102</sup> Reasons for this division see Schnackenburg (1971:1ff) and Brown (1975:CXXXVIIIff).

<sup>103</sup> Although much research has been done from various perspectives on various topics about this part of the FG (chs 13-17), I will highlight only a few relevant aspects about the disciples from these 5 chs. See Tolmie (1992) for a characterization of the disciples in chs 13-17, and Segovia (1991).

<sup>104</sup> It is important to distinguish between the characterization of the disciples and the characteristics of discipleship. The characterization of the disciples in the FG concerns their function and role. Discipleship in



only way to depict the disciples' character is to look at their response to Jesus' example and teaching on discipleship as well as some aspects of discipleship in Jesus' teaching which, in anticipation, characterize them. Two main units may be discerned, both of which take place in the same locus, during the meal in the city of Jerusalem: (i) the meal (13:1-30); and (ii) the Last Discourse (13:31-17:26).

### **The meal (13:1-30)**

In this section discipleship is characterized in terms of a *fundamental opposition between two counterparts, true discipleship as opposed to false discipleship* (cf Tolmie 1992:210). These counterparts highlight the Johannine dualism.<sup>105</sup> Whereas Jesus (who is to be followed) according to his ὑπόδειγμα represents true discipleship Judas Iscariot<sup>106</sup> represents false discipleship. The components of true discipleship in this section can be summarised in terms of: (i) being spiritually cleansed (vv 6-10) and (ii) humble service towards other people (vv 12-17).

(i) The first component of discipleship comes from the first interpretation of the footwashing (vv 6-10). According to v 8 it is impossible to 'have part with Jesus' if a person is not spiritually cleansed. In other words, unless a person is saved by accepting Jesus as his saviour he cannot become a child of God (1:12) and partake in discipleship. This is a prerequisite for discipleship. This fundamental fact is stressed by Jesus through the symbolic act of washing all of his disciples' feet.

(ii) The second component of true discipleship dominates the second interpretation of the footwashing (vv 12-17). Here Jesus provides an example for his disciples which they must imitate. The act of service by the rabbi to his disciples, the disciples must be willing to do for one another (Brown 1972:569). In Jesus' example the foundation is laid for discipleship which comprises a vertical relationship (to give one's life to Jesus--vv 6-10) and a horizontal relationship (to give one's life to people--vv 12-17).

False discipleship, on the other hand, is embodied in the character of Judas who is going to betray Jesus. His decision to betray Jesus is clearly linked directly to Satan (13:2,27). In the case of Judas 'rejected discipleship' would be a more suitable term to describe his actions, for he rejects Jesus. When Jesus washes the feet of his disciples, he includes the feet of Judas Iscariot, but he was not cleansed (cf 6:63-64).

The only other place in the FG where Jesus again tells his disciples (without Judas) that they are clean is 15:3: "ἤδη ὑμεῖς καθαροί ἐστε διὰ τὸν λόγον ὃν λελάληκα ὑμῖν". Thus real cleansing comes only through Jesus' revelatory word and through the atoning sacrifice to which the footwashing pointed (Carson 1991:466).

---

the FG concerns a new way of life which depicts a particular relationship with Christ. This new way of life is characterized in chs 13-17 and is described by Jesus as futuristic (chs 14-16 are full of conditional statements), which can only realized through the Holy Spirit. Although these characteristics of discipleship are anticipated, they are projected onto the disciples.

<sup>105</sup> The world 'above' and the world 'below'.

<sup>106</sup> This link between Jesus and Judas comes from vv 11 and 27. While Jesus is giving his life to save people (spiritual cleansing), Judas rejects it. Satan, who is Jesus' opponent, now enters into Judas' life.

Another comparison in this section is that the *Beloved Disciple (BD)*<sup>107</sup> represents true discipleship in contrast to *Peter*<sup>108</sup> who fails to be a true disciple in that moment. Where the BD<sup>109</sup> is the one 'close to' (ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ) Jesus, Peter is the one who 'denies' (οὐκ εἶμι)<sup>110</sup> Jesus.<sup>111</sup>

This section further continues to develop one of the important themes in the FG, namely, *the lack of understanding*<sup>112</sup> and *misunderstanding*<sup>113</sup> of the disciples.<sup>114</sup> Within the version of the footwashing the disciples (through Peter) completely fail to grasp the real meaning of Jesus' action.<sup>115</sup> Again this failure is attached to the climactic hour, which will be determined by Jesus' heavenly Father, but has not yet arrived (v 1). Peter objected to Jesus washing his feet.<sup>116</sup> As the disciples cannot yet comprehend how the one whom they venerate as the Messiah must go to the cross, so they cannot understand the richly symbolic acts that anticipate it.<sup>117</sup> Peter and the others will understand after these things

---

<sup>107</sup> A new character appears -- the BD. He is mentioned for the first time in 13:23-25. He appears close to Jesus in the LD. Here the FE defines his relationship with Jesus and Peter. He is characterized in contrast to the other Johannine characters -- he is the ideal disciple, the paradigm of discipleship. He has no lack of understanding (except 13:28; 20:9) and objections (Culpepper 1983:121) and follows Jesus to the end (19:26).

<sup>108</sup> In chs 18,20,21 Peter and the BD are in most cases mentioned together, Peter as the one who fails and the BD as the one who succeeds in following Jesus.

<sup>109</sup> The relationship between the BD and Jesus is described in the same way as the relationship which exists between the Son (Jesus) and the Father (1:18). As Jesus lies εἰς τὸν κόλπον of the Father, so the BD lies ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ of Jesus.

<sup>110</sup> Cf 13:38 with 18:17,25. Although these texts concerning Peter are not part of section 13:1-30, Peter definitely linked with the BD in 13:1-30.

<sup>111</sup> The BD is characterized by the pronoun 'beloved' (in Greek the verb ἠγάπα), where love refers to the nature of discipleship. Peter, on the other hand, rejects 'love' through his unwillingness to have his feet washed by Jesus.

<sup>112</sup> The following texts refer to the *lack of understandings* on the part of the disciples which occur in the LD 13:8-9,21-22,24-25,27-29,36-37; 14:5,21-22; 16:17-18.

<sup>113</sup> 14:7-8 is the only misunderstanding in the LD and concerns the sight (and knowledge) of the Father.

<sup>114</sup> In this section the frequency of 'lack of understanding' intensifies due to the increase of this tendency. The lack of understandings are solely concerned with the events of 'the hour'--which indicates the meaning and nature of Jesus' departure and return. During the public ministry of Jesus (chs 2-12) 'misunderstanding' and 'lack of understanding' is applied by the FE to reveal Jesus' identity and relate to the soteriology.

<sup>115</sup> Peter fails to understand the fundamental meaning of the washing (13:6b); this failure to understand is sharpened by his refusal to submit to the washing (13:8a); finally, faced with Jesus' severe threat in 13:8b, Peter proceeds to ask for a complete washing, and again fails to understand -- though from a different perspective -- the character of the footwashing (13:9).

<sup>116</sup> Siker-Gieseler (1980:209) draws attention to the disciples as objecting to Jesus on certain occasions. Each objection arises from an implicit misunderstanding (lack of understanding). In the first part of the FG (2-12) the objections come from the wider circle of disciples (6:60; 8:33; see also Judas Iscariot who is claimed to be a false disciple 12:4). In the LD objections came only from one of the inner circle of disciples, Peter (13:6,14; cf also 20:25 in the case of Thomas).

<sup>117</sup> The twofold meaning of this section which Peter could not understand is so significant: (i) Through the work of Jesus, God has cleansed a people for Himself. Sin, even the ultimate apostasy of Judas, still remains possible (cf 1 John 5:16). (ii) The disciples and servants of Jesus, who is their teacher and Lord, must follow

(μετα ταυτα). To some extent, the disciples' failure to understand, in this section, is similar to the previous examples in 2:13-22 and 12:12-19. From this section it is clear that the disciples do not understand what discipleship is,<sup>118</sup> therefore it was necessary for Jesus to provide them with a concrete example.<sup>119</sup>

In the following unit (vv 22-26; cf also vv 10-11,21), the disciples clearly again misunderstand the nature of Jesus' command to Judas (v 27), failing to connect it to the act of betrayal itself (vv 28-29).

The actions of two members of the inner circle of disciples (Peter and Judas), predicted by Jesus, contribute to the extremely negative characterization of the disciples. Peter denies and Judas betrays Jesus. These acts are counterbalanced by the FE introducing the BD into ch 13. He develops the stature of this BD in contrast to the failings of the disciples. Although the BD also fails to understand (13:24f), he later becomes the paradigm of a true follower of Christ.

### **The last discourse (13:31-17:26)**

In this section, the disciples are not characterized differently from the way in which they are characterized in chs 1-12. They still grow in faith and misunderstandings/lack of understandings still appear frequently. The only marked difference here is that they are characterized as being learners of Jesus,<sup>120</sup> while in chs 1-12 they are more emphatically depicted as followers of Jesus. This will become clear from the following paragraph. All the new teachings of Jesus in this section are directed to demonstrating how the disciples should live and what will happen to them in future.

Related to the disciples' lack of understandings are the questions they as the inner circle

---

his example. This example consists of showing the same humility, in fact, taking up the cross and following Jesus. If they do this, they will share his authority. Thus all the disciples of Jesus are his responsible envoys, and if they would share his dignity they are obliged to copy his humility and service. To receive a disciple sent by Christ, is to receive Christ; to receive Christ is to receive God (v 20) (cf Barrett 1978:437).

<sup>118</sup> To the disciples' lack of understanding, a new dimension is added, namely, to understand what discipleship comprises, for in the LD discipleship is combined with the departure of Jesus. If Jesus' departure implies discipleship, then it means that if the disciples do not understand what the glorification of Jesus means, they will neither comprehend what discipleship means.

<sup>119</sup> The actual counterbalancing of the disciples' failure to understand will come when the Paraclete comes. One of the principal tasks of the Spirit, after Jesus is glorified, is to remind the disciples of the teaching of Jesus and to help them grasp its significance and thus to teach them what it means. Indeed, the FE himself draws attention to things that were remembered and understood only after the resurrection (2:19-22; 12:16; cf 20:9). The ministry of the Spirit was not to bring a qualitatively new revelation, but to complete the revelation brought by Jesus himself (Carson 1991:505). According to Segovia (1985:87) the discourse, on the one hand, reaffirms the position that complete understanding is in fact impossible for the disciples prior to 'the hour'. Complete understanding is only possible after the resurrection because of the Paraclete that will teach them all things and remind them of everything Jesus has said to them (14:26). It is true of this section as a whole, that where Jesus is rejected in chs 2-12, the rejection is balanced by an exhibition of the blessedness of those who believe (Dodd 1980:403) even if their belief in these chs is partial and inadequate.

<sup>120</sup> The term "διδάσκαλος" appears twice and "ὑπόδειγμα" once in ch 13 to stress this point.

ask after Jesus has withdrawn with them (11:54).<sup>121</sup> All the questions<sup>122</sup> are addressed directly to Jesus. The disciples mostly ask for information (13:25,36; 14:22) and clarification (13:6,37; 16:17,18; see also 21:21). These questions are concerned with the departure of Jesus from the world. The disciples want to know *where* Jesus is going (13:36; 14:5) and *how* they can continue to be his disciples after his departure (13:35; 15:8).<sup>123</sup> They also want to know what Jesus means by 'a little while' when he says, "Μικρὸν καὶ οὐκέτι θεωρεῖτέ με, καὶ πάλιν μικρὸν καὶ ὄψεσθέ με."

It seems clear that all the questions are about the status of the personal relationship between the disciples and Jesus. How will this relationship endure if he goes away?<sup>124</sup> These questions clearly show the disciple's concern as to how they can continue to be disciples of Jesus when he is physically absent.

From these questions posed by the disciples and Jesus' response to them another dualism arises. Instead of *true discipleship* versus *false discipleship* the dualism (opposition) in this section comprises *discipleship* versus *being part of the world* (cf Tolmie 1992:). In the sense of the Johannine dualism, the conclusion drawn from this would be that discipleship would relate to the 'heavenly'. It would further mean that the 'heavenly' would exist in the 'earthly' through discipleship. As Jesus brought the qualities of the 'heavenly sphere' to 'earth' through his incarnation (1:1-18), discipleship will be a new way of life, relating to the qualities of the 'world above'.

The main theme of this section is the departure of Jesus (cf also Brown 1975:CXXXIX).<sup>125</sup> When Jesus wandered the earth he had disciples following him. His presence in the world is contrasted with his absence, but relates to discipleship. When he departs his disciples will continue his mission which again stands opposed to being 'part of the world'. Therefore the characterization of discipleship relates to the departure of Jesus. The characteristics can be grouped in the following categories:

- *The relationship of the disciples with Jesus*: this relationship is described from different perspectives. The disciples will receive peace from Jesus, be in Jesus, have joy, be chosen by Jesus, be appointed by Jesus, be called Jesus' friends, will remain in Jesus and in the love of Jesus, will keep the commands of Jesus, will have the prospect of future revelation and of seeing Jesus again (this will change their grief into joy -- 16:19-24), the Paraclete<sup>126</sup> will live in them.

- *The status of the disciples*: they will be faithful men (will have knowledge), will have

<sup>121</sup> Once they were represented by Peter (13:6; see also 6:69 and 21:21).

<sup>122</sup> Only in 16:17-18 the question is not directed to Jesus, but arises within the circle of the disciples.

<sup>123</sup> It becomes clearer that to remain a disciple of Jesus, a person has to *follow* the *teaching* and *example* of Jesus in his absence and be *involved* in his mission -- this is discipleship.

<sup>124</sup> The second division, which narrates what will happen from the Thursday evening of the Last Supper until the appearance of Jesus to his disciples after the resurrection, has all through it the main theme of *Jesus' return to his Father* (13:1; 14:2,28, 15:26; 16:7,28; 17:5,11; 20:7). This return then means the 'glorification of Jesus' (13:31; 14:17; 17:1,5,24). This comprises that the resurrected Jesus will appear to his disciples as Lord and God (20:25,28).

<sup>125</sup> In 13:1 it is written that "εἰδὼς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι ἦλθεν αὐτοῦ ἡ ὥρα ἵνα μεταβῆ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου πρὸς τὸν πατέρα," In 14:2 Jesus said πορεύομαι ἐτοιμάσαι τόπον ὑμῖν.

<sup>126</sup> The 5 texts concerning the Paraclete in the LD will be investigated later in this chapter.



eternal life, will have peace (16:33), joy, unity, glory, will belong to the Father and Jesus and will experience sanctification.

- *The works of the disciples:* they will perform greater deeds, bear fruit, witness,<sup>127</sup> be sent into the world.

- *The attitude of the disciples* will be that of obedience.

The consequences of being obedient to Jesus' appeal are: the disciples will bear more fruit (15:5); they will be where Jesus is (13:36; 14:3; 17:24); will be loved by the Father and Jesus who will show himself to them (14:21); they will do what Jesus has been doing, even greater things (14:12); Jesus will do whatever they ask in the name of Jesus (14:13,14; cf 15:7,16); they will be the friends of Jesus (15:14); Jesus will remain in them (15:4); they will come to fuller understanding (16:29-30); and finally all men will know that they will be his disciples (13:35; 15:8); God will be glorified.

Jesus is still physically present with his disciples during this discourse, but his time is running out. His anticipated absence is expressed in the words he directed to Peter “Ὅπου ὑπάγω οὐ δύνασάι μοι νῦν ἀκολουθῆσαι...” (13:36) and to the disciples as a group “πορεύομαι ἐτοιμάσαι τόπον ὑμῖν” (14:2), “Μικρὸν καὶ οὐκέτι θεωρεῖτέ...” (16:16) and his whole prayer in ch 17.<sup>128</sup> But he promises the disciples that he will remain with them through the Paraclete. His presence will not be physical any more but spiritual. After the glorification of Jesus the disciples will be transformed by the Holy Spirit to partake in future discipleship.

Contrary to discipleship is 'being part of the world'. Throughout this section it is implicitly clear and explicitly stated by Jesus that the disciples are still in the world (17:11) but not of the world any longer (17:14). Those who will be part of the world will be unable to receive the Paraclete, or to see Jesus. They will deny Jesus, will have 'worldly' peace, Jesus will not pray for them (17:9), they will be lost (17:12), and will hate the followers of Jesus (17:14,15).

Some of the actions undertaken by Jesus are directed to prevent his disciples from becoming part of the world': (i) He is going to prepare a place for those who belong to him (14:1-4) to be with him at a later stage (13:36; 14:3; 17:24), (ii) through his glorification Jesus will enable the disciples to partake in his life and (iii) through the sending of the Paraclete the disciples will be kept apart from the world. (iv) Finally, Jesus asks the Father to protect his disciples from becoming part of the world (17:11,15). The disciples' protection by God forms an important part in the performance of discipleship.

---

<sup>127</sup> In 4:34-38 Jesus reminds his disciples about their task of witnessing. This theme has been taken up in the LD again. The witness in ch 1 was voluntary, while here in the LD it is a command from Jesus himself to his disciples (15:27; 17:18; 20:21). The disciples are shown as testifying and pointing to Jesus. Already in ch 1 the first disciples' testimonies concerning Jesus led others to Jesus who also became his followers. They testify to the significance of the person of Jesus. They confess Jesus to be 'the Son of God,' 'the King of Israel' (1:49); 'the Holy One of God' (6:69); 'come from God' (16:30); 'My Lord and my God' (20:28); and the one who knows everything (16:30; 21:17). Only John the Baptist confesses Jesus as 'the Lamb of God' (1:29,36). In most cases the confessions are made in terms of titles. Little substantial content and meaning come from their lips, while the opposite happened in the 'I am' confessions of Jesus (6:35; 8:12,23-24,58; 10:7-14) (cf Siker-Gieseler 1980:209f).

<sup>128</sup> The departure of Jesus is central in the FG: 13:3,33,36; 14:1-4,18,19,28; 15:26-27; 16:5,7,10,16-19,28; 17:1,5,11,13.

Discipleship can be formulated as 'not being part of the world' as Jesus was never part of the world. Therefore, because of their relationship with Jesus, they may experience the same sort of hatred,<sup>129</sup> persecution and killings (15:18-18:4). The hatred towards the disciples will culminate in attempts to kill them (16:2). Because of 'not being part of the world' and because of 'Jesus' absence' the disciples have the task of testifying about Jesus to those who are 'part of the world'.

In the previous division (chs 1-12) we saw that the Jews are depicted as the enemy, but in this division (chs 13-17) 'the κόσμος' is substituted for the Jews. The term κόσμος occurs more frequently in this Part. The contrast between the disciples and the world, a frequent theme in these chapters, is now strongly brought out (Barrett 1978:463). By the explicit contrast of the disciples and Jesus with the world (15:18-16:4) the FE intensifies the concept of discipleship as not being part of the world.

So the disciples remain in the world in a physical sense but must not become part of the world in a spiritual sense (cf 17:11-15). To accomplish this Jesus gives his disciples specific new promises and explicit instructions: *Specific promises*: he is going to prepare a place for them (14:3), he will come back (14:3) and take them to be with him so that they may also be where he is (14:3); they will perform Jesus' own works and even greater works (14:12); they will be granted any request made in Jesus' name (14:13-14; 16:23-4 cf 15:7); they will be given the Paraclete who will stay with them forever (14:16-17a,25-26; 15:26); they will be loved by Jesus (14:21) and the Father (14:21,23); they will receive Jesus' self revelation (14:21); they will become an abiding place for both Jesus and the Father (14:23); they will receive peace from Jesus (14:27; 16:33); if they remain in him and he in them, they will bear much fruit (15:5); their grief will turn to joy (16:20); cf ch 17 also. Quite a lot of these promises coalesce around the promise of the mission of the Paraclete. Therefore their belief and understanding of Jesus, his works and sayings are important for they have a task awaiting them: unfortunately their belief and understanding was incomplete prior to 'the hour'.

*Explicit instructions*: Jesus has set his disciples an example which they have to follow (13:15). He gives them a new commandment to love one another (13:34; 14:15; 15:12,17; cf 14:21,23) and to remain in his love (14:15,21,23; 15:10); he wants to bear fruit (15:8); he sends them into the world (17:18; cf also 20:21) with a specific instruction and a specific promise: If the disciples remain in him, he will remain in them (15:4); they will also bear much fruit (15:5).<sup>130</sup> Indirect and implied instructions are that they should be sanctified (17:17) and live in unity with God (17:21) and one another (17:23).

In the LD two important texts describe how a person can be identified as a disciple of

---

<sup>129</sup> The world's hatred is directed towards: the Father (16:23), Jesus (15:18,25) and the disciples (15:18,19) (Tolmie 1992:220).

<sup>130</sup> It is striking that Jesus makes several miscellaneous conditional statements to the disciples. Of the 38 occurrences the conditional statements in chs 2-12, 23 concern the redemption of the disciples (3:3,5,12,27; 4:48; 6:44,51,53,65; 7:37; 8:24,36,51,52; 10:9; 11:9,10,40,48; 12:24,24,32,47), 3 are not applicable (3:2,11; 7:5), 8 relate to Jesus (5:19,31,43; 6:62; 7:17; 8:16,54; 9:22) and only 4 concern discipleship (8:31; 9:31; 12:26,26). Of the 16 conditional statements in chs 13-21, 12 concern discipleship (13:17,35; 14:14,15,23; 15:4,4,6,7,7,10,14; 16:77), 1 relates to Jesus (14:13), 2 to the paraclete (16:7,7), 5 appear after ch 17, and only one has to do with salvation (13:8). Our conclusion is that in the first division (chs 2-12) of the FG the conditional statements concern salvation and in the second division (chs 13-21) they concern discipleship.

Jesus:<sup>131</sup> people will see it in the disciples' love for each other (13:35) and when they, the disciples, bear much fruit (15:8),<sup>132</sup> through remaining in Jesus (15:5). Both cases have a Christological basis. But the essence of discipleship is described by the FE using the comparative particle 'καθώς', to link the behaviour of the disciples to that of Jesus (17:18; cf also 20:21). The parallelizing of the relationship between the Father and Jesus on the one hand, with the relationship between Jesus and his disciples provides a deeper insight into the essence of discipleship. This will become clearer at a later stage in this chapter.<sup>133</sup>

### **Part Six: The Passion Narrative (Chapters 18-19)<sup>134</sup>**

The group of disciples appears only once in this part (18:1-12), while Simon Peter as an individual receives prominence in his three denials of Jesus (18:15-18, 25-27), the BD appears in 19:26,27 and Joseph of Arimathea, also called a disciple of Jesus, in 19:38.

### **Chapter 18**

This part starts with the disciples following Jesus to an olive grove beyond the Kidron Valley. The indication in v 2 "ὅτι πολλάκις συνήχθη Ἰησοῦς ἐκεῖ μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ"<sup>135</sup> confirms the close relationship which exists between them. But notwithstanding this, the negative portrayal of the disciples reaches a climax<sup>135</sup> when Judas betrays Jesus (18:2) and Peter denies<sup>136</sup> him three times. A paradox is experienced here one of his inner circle of disciples (Judas Iscariot) delivers him to the authorities to be crucified later.

On the other hand, Peter's armed resistance in striking the high priest's servant (18:10),<sup>137</sup> despite Jesus' repeated willingness to be arrested, again indicates the disciples' failure to understand (Carson 1991:579). This indicates that Peter (as well as the other disciples) still does not realize what Jesus' 'hour' involves and therefore tries to prevent it.<sup>138</sup>

---

<sup>131</sup> In the first Division of the FG (chs 1-12), there are two texts which explicitly refer to discipleship: 8:31 and 12:26. These four texts (8:31; 12:26; 13:35; 15:8) will be discussed in more detail at a later stage in this study.

<sup>132</sup> The consequence of not bearing fruit will be to be taken away (cut off) from the vine (15:2).

<sup>133</sup> Tolmie (1992:223) agrees, by implication, that most aspects concerning discipleship mentioned in the LD, appear in Jesus' prayer in ch 17, 'this section has the largest number of components associated with discipleship.' Jesus deals with this major concern in ch 17 where all the themes of the FG converge. Ch 17 will be discussed in detail at a later stage.

<sup>134</sup> In the Passion and Easter narrative the FE follows the tradition -- cf Mt 26:47-56; Mk 14:43-50; Lk 22:47-53 (Bultmann 1941:489f), but with a few exceptions.

<sup>135</sup> In this climax the predictions of Jesus are fulfilled.

<sup>136</sup> Peter's denial of the work to which Jesus, at this moment, has consecrated himself, is entirely in line with the Synoptic evidence as to the failure of the disciples to comprehend the Passion when it was announced to them (Mk 8:31-33; cf Jn 13:6-10) (Carson 1991:579).

<sup>137</sup> The FG alone has the name of the disciple (Simon Peter) and the slave (Malchus) involved. According to Sanders & Mastin (1975:386) this difference must be regarded as independent developments of the tradition.

<sup>138</sup> Segovia (1985:100) correctly points out that this is the third time that Peter's response steers to the rejection of Jesus' 'hour'. It happens in 13:8a for the first time where Peter refuses to submit to the washing; in 13:37 he does not want to allow Jesus to depart without him; and then here in 18:11a he does not want to allow Jesus to depart.

From ch 18:15ff we read that Peter and another disciple<sup>139</sup> were following Jesus. They were the only two mentioned as following him. The 'other disciple' passes the test of discipleship. Seen symbolically, he goes the furthest with Jesus, 'he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard'. Peter, symbolically seen, fails the test of discipleship, for he denies him. The sad lapse of Peter is not that he disowns his Lord, but that he does so as an intimate disciple of Jesus (Culpepper 1983:120).

## **Chapter 19**

On contrast to Peter it is the BD again who is introduced by the FE as the counterbalance to the disciples. Where Peter, in the previous chapter, tries to do good and rescue Jesus, but totally fails, it is in ch 19 that the BD alone, of all the disciples, who is mentioned as standing at the foot of the cross. He keeps on following Jesus up to the cross (v 26). It is to him that Jesus entrusts his mother (v 27). According to Culpepper (1983:121f) 'together, mother and son, they form the nucleus of the new family of faith. Although the other disciples let him down when he needs them, he calls them τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου (20:17) and designates that they are from now on members of his family; all believers are the children of God' (1:12).

## **Part Seven: The Risen Jesus (Chapter 20)**

The disciples, in contrast with the previous part, play a very prominent part (20:2-9, 17-18, 19-29).<sup>140</sup>

### **At the tomb (20:1-18)**

Only two disciples are mentioned in this section, each with a specific function. Apart from Simon Peter, 'the other disciple', the one Jesus loved<sup>141</sup> is also mentioned. Since he played a decisive role in the FG, he is introduced as the first to inspect the tomb. Schnackenburg (1975:365) is correct that the FE wants to have the BD present at the tomb's inspection in order 'to emphasize his exemplary faith' (v 8).

This 'other disciple' runs faster than Peter and arrives at the tomb first (v 4). At the end he is the one who "εἶδεν καὶ ἐπίστευσεν" (v 8). Verse 9 is merely an explanation which puts his faith in a still clearer light. Peter, on the other hand, is not presented here in a negative sense at all. From the situation sketched at the tomb, it is clear that Peter determines what the situation in the tomb is. For the question of resurrection this is extremely important -- what Peter saw is enough to legitimate the conclusion that Jesus has risen (vv 6,7).

The theme of 'a lack of understanding' appears again. Here their lack of understanding reaches a climax. The report by Mary about her discovery (v 2),<sup>142</sup> as well as that of the two disciples later on where they concretely saw the empty tomb, does not convince them that Jesus' predictions (2:20; cf 16:16) had been fulfilled (v 9). Thus, neither Peter nor the BD correlates the report of Mary Magdalene (v 2), or their own findings, with the previous

---

<sup>139</sup> The 'other disciple' with Simon Peter is not identified. Traditionally this person has been identified with the 'BD'.

<sup>140</sup> This verse indicates that neither Peter nor the BD (as well as the other disciples as seen from 2:22 and 12:16) even up to this point, understood 'from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.' (cf Segovia 1985:100; Carson 1991:639).

<sup>141</sup> This is the third passage in which he appears (cf 13:26; 19:26).

<sup>142</sup> Even with Mary, who functions as a prototype of discipleship, lack of understanding occurs.



announcements of Jesus about his death.<sup>143</sup>

In 20:17 Jesus, in his conversation with Mary, sends her with a message to the disciples to inform them that he is returning to his Father. In his message to them Jesus calls his disciples by a new name, namely, ἀδελφούς: a new relationship requires a new name, a name even more intimate than “φίλοι” (15:14).<sup>144</sup> Brothers belong to the same family. In a spiritual sense God is only the Father of those who have been chosen by Him and who have accepted Jesus (1:12) into their lives. In his pronouncement “Ἐναβαίνω πρὸς τὸν πατέρα μου καὶ πατέρα ὑμῶν καὶ θεὸν μου καὶ θεὸν ὑμῶν” (20:17), Jesus emphasizes the closeness of fellowship between himself, his Father, and his disciples. But in this utterance there is also a clear distinction. His sonship differs from theirs (Barrett 1978:566); hence he refers to *my* Father and *your* Father.<sup>145</sup> But through his glorification, the disciples of Jesus come to share in his sonship to the Father (Carson 1991:645).

### **Where the disciples are gathered (20:19-31)<sup>146</sup>**

This section is probably (in correlation with 17:17-19), the climax of the FG. The risen Jesus, appears to his disciples who are in fear (v 19,26), and blesses them (three times) (vv 19,21,26) with “Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν”. Afterwards his disciples, through Thomas, confess that Jesus is *Lord* and *God*. Finally the disciples are commissioned and inspired by Jesus for discipleship: to continue the mission of Jesus (20:21-23) – to reveal the Father and to bring salvation to the world. For this task they are totally dependent upon their Lord (Culpepper 1983:119).

This part of ch 20 confirms the status of the disciples as ‘children of God’ and their future roles. The disciples are finally commissioned and inspired for discipleship (20:21-23). The work of Jesus, to reveal the Father and to take away the sin of the world, will be continued by the disciples. To accomplish this formidable task they will be totally dependent upon the risen Lord<sup>147</sup> (Culpepper 1983:119). Jesus then gives them authority and sends the Holy Spirit to accomplish this task (v 23).

Jesus' appearances in ch 20 (and 21) fulfil the promises made in the FG and especially in the LD (16:16): Jesus' return to his disciples (vv 19,26; cf 21:4ff); he commissions the Holy Spirit (v 22)<sup>148</sup> and extends to his inner group of disciples his role and function ‘in’ and

---

<sup>143</sup> Jn 20:9 indicates that the disciples fail (as in 2:13-22; 12:12-19) to see the events at the tomb as the fulfilment of Jesus' predictions.

<sup>144</sup> In the FG the disciples were never called ‘children of God’, and none of them call God ‘my Father’. It is only in 1:12, in a general sense, that the FE refers to believers as τέκνα θεοῦ.

<sup>145</sup> See 1:14 for this distinction. Jesus is the Son of God by nature and the disciples by adoption (Hendriksen 1976:456).

<sup>146</sup> This section will be investigated at a later stage.

<sup>147</sup> This dependence is clear from the fact that the disciples could not even convince one of their own (Thomas), that they have seen the Lord (20:25).

<sup>148</sup> The fundamental reason for the disciples' incomprehension, has become clear to the reader. Without receiving the Spirit the disciples could not perceive. Therefore Jesus bestows the Spirit on them. The Spirit forms the bond between Jesus and the disciples (Schnackenburg 1975:386).

'towards' the world. In v 21 the mission of the disciples is constituted<sup>149</sup> and sin is now redefined in terms of this mission (Segovia 1985:89). For the first time the disciples understand the events of the 'hour' and glorification of Jesus, as well as their future role: the continuation of the mission of Jesus (Carson 1991:656).

Finally, their belief in Jesus is stressed (compare v 25 with v 27-29). The disciples now perceive Jesus' full status as the unique representative, the special agent of God.

### **Epilogue (21:1-25)**

The disciples appear right through this chapter. The events taking place here are somewhat strange. Only 7 of the 11 disciples are referred to. Where the other 4 are, is uncertain. The fishing expedition of the disciples plainly reveals their uncertainty, which contrasts sharply with their assurance that they have seen the Lord (20:25,29). Logically speaking, one would expect, after Jesus' appearances to them, that they will have gone out with excitement to witness to the whole world that Jesus has resurrected and that they have seen him. Unfortunately they do not.

Even in the last chapter the FE portrays the disciples negatively. They cannot catch any fish<sup>150</sup> until the risen Jesus arrives, or cannot even realise that it is Jesus standing on the shore. Jesus has to perform another miracle before they can recognise him. The counterbalance lies in the meal which reflects the intimate relationship between them, and also in the two imperatives "ἀκολουθεί" (v 19,22) and the BD already "ἀκολουθούντα" Jesus (v 20). It seems clear that the FG starts with the 'call to discipleship' (1:35-51) and ends with it, (21:15ff, especially vv 19 and 22 where "ἀκολουθεί" is used) in order to emphasize this concept. It is only through discipleship that the purpose of this gospel can be achieved.

The responses of Peter and the BD to Jesus in the scene at the lake confirm Peter's leadership and pastoral roles and the BD's special relationship to Jesus, his discernment, and his reliability as a witness.

From verses 24,25 it is clear that the BD is the link with Jesus. He is above all the one who has borne true witness, he reminds the others of all that Jesus said and did (20:30; 21:25), he is the epitome of the ideal disciple. 'In him belief, love, and faithful witness are joined. He abides in Jesus' love, and the Paraclete works through him' (Culpepper 1983:122f).

## **3.4 Conclusions**

### **3.4.1 A qualitative aspect**

The noun μαθηταὶ is used as a class noun to indicate a specific group of people. The frequent appearance of the genitive form of the definitive pronoun (αὐτοῦ)<sup>151</sup> used with

---

<sup>149</sup> See also Segovia 1985:102, footnote 71.

<sup>150</sup> It is possible that some of the disciples' thoughts were beginning to turn to their former occupation (from the Synoptics it is clear that some of them were fishermen) now that they have lost the presence of Jesus (cf Morris 1975:861).

<sup>151</sup> 2:2,11,12,17,22; 3:22; 4:2,8,27; 6:3,8,12,16,22,24; 9:2; 12:4,16; 13:5,23; 16:17,29; 18:1,2,19,25; 20:26,30; 21:2; cf 6:60,61,66; 7:3.

μαθηταί, the genitive of possession (μαθητῶν),<sup>152</sup> the personal pronoun in dative form (ἐμοί)<sup>153</sup> qualifies this group in a narrower sense<sup>154</sup>. These pronouns refer to Jesus. Hence they are the disciples of a specific person, Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God (cf 20:31).

In chs 2-12 it seems that the Jews are Jesus' opponents. Yet in the midst of this opposition, paradoxically, the inner circle of disciples continues to follow Jesus and to reaffirm their earlier belief (2:11) in him (6:67-71) over and against even the larger group of disciples who desisted from following Jesus (6:60-66). The way the disciples are portrayed in chs 13-17, identifies them as those who have already decided to keep on following Jesus. Whereas some of Jesus' followers choose to leave him, these twelve decide (with the exception of Judas Iscariot) to keep on following Jesus (cf Tolmie 1992:265).<sup>155</sup>

Thus because of their decision for Jesus they are separated from the other 'disciples' (6:60,61,66) by the title, 'Twelve', and their confession "ἡμεῖς πεπιστεύκαμεν καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ" (6:69). They are characterized by the FG as being an exclusive group, the disciples of *Jesus*, with whom Jesus, when the time of his death approaches, goes into seclusion (chs 13-17).

All the indications in the FG are that the disciples are almost always with Jesus<sup>156</sup> and accept Jesus' claims and remain bound to him (except Judas Iscariot) in a continuing bond (17:26).

The majority of μαθηταί-texts indicate a group of disciples in the narrower sense (2:2; 4:2; 6:3, etc), a group of twelve more closely related to Jesus. This statement is supported by a specific designation (ὃ δέδωκάς μοι) and another title (δωδεκα) that these 'Twelve' are an intimate group of disciples following Jesus. The article ὁ of the phrase ὁ δέδωκάς μοι refers primarily in some cases<sup>157</sup> to the 'Twelve'<sup>158</sup>.

This qualitative distinction presents a deliberate contrast between the disciples as believers and non-disciples (those who reject the claims of Jesus). As the FG develops, each part of it differentiates and separates further and further the circle of disciples from the unbelieving 'world'. In the first two Parts (1:35-51; 2-4) the disciples perceive Jesus

<sup>152</sup> 6:3,8; 11:54; 12:4; 13:5,23; 16:17; 18:2,17,18,25; 20:30; 21:12.

<sup>153</sup> 13:35; 15:8. In another conditional statement μοῦ is used (8:31) and in 7:3 σου.

<sup>154</sup> 29 times αὐτοῦ is used, 2 times ἐμοί, once σου and μου with the plural nominative pronoun μαθηταί. The genitive form of μαθηταί occurs 28 times out of the 77 texts where μαθηταί occurs. 13 times it is a genitive of possession. Thus a strong indication of possession figures here.

<sup>155</sup> It must also be bore in mind that they were chosen by the Father (6:39,65; 17:6,9,24) and called by Jesus (10:3).

<sup>156</sup> The following texts are direct indications of the disciples together with Jesus: 2:2,11,12; 4:2,8,27-38; 6:3-15,21,67-70; 9:2; (10:3,4 by implication); 11:7:16,54; 12:(1-8 by implication) 16,22; 13:1-17-26; 18:1-11. After his resurrection Jesus appears 3 times (20:19-23,26-29; 21:4-23) to his disciples.

<sup>157</sup> The use of the expression, "ὁ δέδωκάς μοι" (and flexions) in other texts, indicates that Jesus is thinking of all those who have been given to him by the Father in the eternal decree of election. They have been chosen by the Father as a gift to the Son (hence, subsequently *drawn*; 3:27; 6:37-39,65; 13:3; 17:2,6-9,24; 18:9; cf 1:13; 3:21,35; 6:29,44; 12:37ff; 19:10-11).

<sup>158</sup> Jn 17:6-9,24; 18:9 (cf also 6:37,39; 17:2)

immediately in terms of the traditional Jewish Messianic expectations (1:41)<sup>159</sup> while no such understanding takes place among the Jews of Jerusalem (chs 1-3).<sup>160</sup>

This contrast intensifies in Parts three (chs 5-10) and four (chs 11-12) where the hostility towards Jesus, from the Jewish quarter, increases. While the disciples continue to follow Jesus and reaffirm their belief in him (6:69) the Jews reject Jesus, and finally come up with a plot to kill him. (11:45-53).

In Part five (chs 13-17) the contrast intensifies even more when Jesus is alone with his inner group of disciples. The opposition now becomes the 'Cosmos'<sup>161</sup> and the disciples are also mentioned as experiencing rejection and persecution (15:18-16:4; 17:14,15).

In Part six (chs 18-19) the theme of separation reaches a climax. The Jews crucify Jesus.<sup>162</sup> When Jesus appears to his disciples (20:19) their faith matures. While the Jews try to stop the ministry of Jesus, the disciples are going to continue the ministry of Jesus through discipleship.<sup>163</sup>

The exclusiveness of this group does not lie in the group itself, but in the person whom they are following, Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God (20:31). This exclusiveness applies to future disciples as well. Everyone who is attached to Jesus Christ, and is obedient to him, will be part of this exclusive group.<sup>164</sup> The qualitative aspect comes to the fore especially in 8:31; 12:26; 13:35 and 15:8 where it speaks of believers. It is particularly the explicitly indicated personal pronoun ἐμοί (μου in 8:31) in these texts that gives this exclusive group a qualitative character. Through obedience to the content of these four texts a disciple moves into the sphere (the mode) of discipleship.

### **3.4.2 A quantitative aspect**

The FG depicts at least three groups of disciples: disciples of John the Baptist (1:35,37; 3:25); disciples of Moses (9:28); and disciples of Jesus (2:2,11; etc). Regarding the disciples of Jesus, the FG clearly portrays two groups. The references to 'the twelve' are pertinent here to help provide an answer. There is clearly a wider circle which is mentioned

---

<sup>159</sup> Both the other titles ascribed to Jesus, namely, 'Son of God' and 'King of Israel' in 1:49, signify that Jesus is the Messiah (Barrett 1978:185f; Carson 1991:161).

<sup>160</sup> In contrast to the Jews, in ch 4 the Samaritan woman, many Samaritans and the royal official and his household come to faith in Jesus.

<sup>161</sup> As the ministry of Jesus advances, particularly in the second half of the FG the term 'the world' consistently identifies those who have turned against Jesus as being under the leadership of Satan. It seems as if a strong note of hostility accompanies the use of 'the world' (Brown 1975:508).

<sup>162</sup> While Judas betrays Jesus and Peter denies him three times, it is the BD who counterbalances this behaviour, by taking on the responsibility of Jesus in caring for Mary as her son (19:26-27) and believes when he sees the empty tomb (20:89).

<sup>163</sup> The contrast between the disciples and the Jews indicates the tension between the Johannine community(ies) and the Jewish 'world' and the circumstances they are engaged in to define and assert their position (cf Segovia 1985:91). The fact that the disciples accept Jesus in terms of the traditional Jewish Messianic expectations clearly indicates that the origin of the Johannine community(ies), as well as the dispute and tension, can only be sought in the synagogue itself.

<sup>164</sup> This exclusive group can be compared with the Pauline metaphor which refers to the church as 'the body of Christ'.



in only 5 cases.<sup>165</sup> The term has been used to indicate a large group of contemporary people following Jesus: because they are given by the Father to Jesus,<sup>166</sup> because of his words and deeds,<sup>167</sup> and because they believe in him.<sup>168</sup> After ch 6 there are others who express faith in Jesus: 'Jews who had believed' (8:31); the man born blind (9:38); 'other sheep that are not of this sheep pen (10:16); Martha (11:27) and Nicodemus.<sup>169</sup> They are not portrayed as 'disciples' who accompany Jesus as it was the case with the 'Twelve' in 11:7-12,54 and 18:1,2. In conclusion it seems that the FG presents a wider group of believers who do not accompany Jesus on a regular basis, as well as a smaller intimate group of believers, the twelve, who do accompany him.

In Jn 6:60 the number of the disciples of Jesus and the term "μαθητής", as used here, disclose a theological interest, deriving from the situation of the FE himself. This future extent of the concept<sup>170</sup>, of being a disciple, which appears abruptly here and differs from 6:3,8,12,16,22,24, derives from an already firmly established primitive Christian terminology in which all believers are disciples (cf 4:1 and Acts). Here the FE wants to speak to the latter disciples of Jesus (Schnackenburg 1975:234ff) in the Johannine community and in the times to come (cf also 17:20).

Discipleship, in connection with Jesus, is not contemporary, in other words is not limited to the time of Jesus, but also has a future application.<sup>171</sup> Everyone who would come to believe in Jesus and follow him through the leading of the Holy Spirit would become his disciple.

### **3.4.3 A negative and positive portrayal of the disciples**

The disciples are portrayed negatively throughout the FG, with only a few exceptions: 1:35-51,<sup>172</sup> 2:11; 6:69; 16:29,30; 17:6-8,25, Thomas's confession (20:28) and the role ascribed to the BD in the second part of the FG. All these exceptions refer to the gradual increase of understanding that took place throughout the FG concerning the identity of Jesus. Their negative portrayal relates mainly to their lack of comprehension of Jesus' moment of glorification.

---

<sup>165</sup> 4:1; 6:60,61,66; cf 6:2; 7:3; 10:16; 12:18,42.

<sup>166</sup> 3:27; 6:37-39,65; 13:3; cf also 1:13; 3:21,35; 6:29,44; 12:37ff; 19:10,11.

<sup>167</sup> 3:21; 4:48; 6:2,26,52,60,61,64,66; 7:3,4,10-13,31,40-44,49; 8:30,31; 11:45-48,55-57; 12:9-22,37-43; 13:35; 15:18.

<sup>168</sup> 4:48,53; 8:31; 12:42; cf 2:23; 4:39; 11:48.

<sup>169</sup> According to Siker-Gieseler (1980:215ff) the meaning of discipleship is portrayed in each of the characters in the different scenes and how the scenes have been shaped (cf also Pazdan 1987:145f; Doohan 1988:136f).

<sup>170</sup> The use of the future tense in 13:35 supports this statement; even the words "τοῦ Μωϋσέως ἑσμέν μαθηταί" indicate that the perception of future disciples is an accepted concept (cf also 1:12; 8:31; 12:26).

<sup>171</sup> Firstly it is directly clear from the following texts: 8:31; 12:26 13:35; 15:8; 17:20; and indirectly in 10:3-5; 8:12; 17:18; 20:10-23. Secondly it is clear in the theological intention in the use of μαθητής by the FE who wants his readers to identify themselves with the disciples (Schnackenburg 1975:236; Culpepper 1983:115).

<sup>172</sup> The reason why the FE incorporates the testimonies in 1:35-51 is to give these testimonies a theological perspective. It has a revelatory function in Part One—to indicate the identity of Jesus. The FE has used the call of the first disciples to summarize discipleship in its whole development (cf Brown 1971:78).

The failure of the disciples in the FG occurs primarily on the cognitive level and concerns misunderstandings and lack of understanding. This takes on various aspects: Firstly, it revolves around the departure of Jesus (the major theme in chs 13-17). Even at the arrival and identification of 'the hour', the disciples still fail to see and understand meaning of Jesus' glorification. From the FG as a whole, it is clear that complete understanding, especially about the glorification of Jesus, is in fact impossible for the disciples prior to 'the hour'. The promise of the sending of another Paraclete, explains why the belief of the disciples cannot but remain incomplete prior to the completion of 'the hour' (Segovia 1985:87). Secondly, there is a persistent lack of awareness concerning their own call to and role in the mission of Jesus' approaching 'hour'. Concerning their deeds, there are impulsive reactions (13:6,8; 18:10), betrayal, denial, fear for the Jews (20:19 cf 11:16), catching fish instead of witnessing (ch 21), whereas fishermen they could not even catch one fish on the lake (ch 21) before the risen Jesus intervenes.

On the other hand it is clear that from the beginning there is a gradual deepening of insight on the part of the disciples and a profound realization of who it is that they are following.<sup>173</sup> The FG itself insists on the gradual evolution of the disciples' faith (6:66-71; 14:9) (Brown 1971:77).<sup>174</sup> Belief in Jesus is presented as a requirement for following Jesus and undergoes a process of gradual understanding and perception (Segovia 1985:92). Their faith in Jesus progresses in 2:11 where Jesus has revealed his glory and the statement that the disciples believe in him. Here faith is the purpose of the signs (Barrett 1978:194). Their faith reaches a climax in 6:69 where Peter as spokesman, on behalf of 'the Twelve,' confesses "ἡμεῖς πεπιστεύκαμεν καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ". Their faith matured "ὅτε οὖν ἠγέρθη ἐκ νεκρῶν, ἐμνήσθησαν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι τοῦτο ἔλεγε, καὶ ἐπίστευσαν τῇ γραφῇ καὶ τῷ λόγῳ ὃν εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς." (2:22). After the resurrection of Jesus the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, (cf chs 14-16) is given, who recalls to their minds what Jesus had said and enables them to understand<sup>175</sup> it (14:26; 16:14).

We can conclude that in part one (1:35-51) the disciples come to believe in Jesus through testimonies (the Baptist, Andrew and Philip). In part two their faith deepens when they see the miracles Jesus performs (2:11). In 6:69 their faith stabilizes with the testimony of Peter that Jesus is 'the Holy One of God'. In 16:30 they confess their belief in Jesus and in 17:6-8 Jesus confirms their faith before the Father. Then in 20:28, after the resurrection of Jesus,

---

<sup>173</sup> We must take notice of the correlation which exist between faith and misunderstandings (and lack of understanding). These two aspects run parallel through the FG and reach a climax in 16:29,30 in a certain sense, although afterwards the disciples again fail (18:10; 20:9; 21:4) but also confess in 20:28 that Jesus is Lord and God.

<sup>174</sup> Kysar (1976:65ff) has written an outstanding chapter about 'faith' in the FG. To come to a better understanding of the disciples' faith in Jesus, it is important to understand the relation between faith and the signs performed by Jesus. I believe that in this chapter, Kysar provides a good model of exposition which will help to understand the development of the disciples' faith in Jesus. According to Kysar there are three stages of faith: (i) openness to faith or embryonic faith, signs faith, and mature faith. In Part One it is *embryonic faith*, obtained from the tradition, religion and culture, which enables them to follow Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. They obtain (ii) the *signs faith* in 2:11 after the miracle at Cana. From there on their faith increases. In the FG we only read of five miracles which take place (others have not even been mentioned according to 20:30) as well as some teaching occasions before the great confession of Peter in 6:69: 'We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God'. The status of (iii) *mature faith* is only reached after the Paschal events (2:22; 12:16; 13:7; 20:27-29).

<sup>175</sup> John 16:29,30 and 17:8,25 are references to the disciples' saving faith (17:3).

their faith culminates<sup>176</sup> in the testimony of Thomas “Ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου” (20:28).<sup>177</sup>

The lack of understanding/misunderstanding runs parallel to the disciples' growth in faith, and is the opposite counterpart of it, although both aspects are never mentioned together. The paradox is that the more their faith increases, the more their lack of understanding increases (especially in chs 13-17).<sup>178</sup> The FE wants to stress that although the disciples mature in their faith (that Jesus comes from God--16:30; 17:8), it remains incomplete. In order to perceive Jesus' identity, which makes discipleship possible, they also have to believe that Jesus departs to God. This would open their eyes to believe that Jesus is the Son of Man, a title which has only been used by Jesus himself.

A possible reason for the above tendency is to be sought in the historical situation of the Johannine community. The portrayal of the disciples in the FG reflects the life of the Johannine community. The disciples' faith indicates the community's acceptance of Jesus and their attachment to Jesus. The disciples' growth in faith calls for a more dedicated life to Christ on the part of the members in the community. The disciples' misunderstandings/lack of understandings concern the community's continuous contact with Judaism (Synagogue). Because the lack of understanding mainly concerns the glorification of Jesus, it indicates that the continuous contact of some of the members of the community with Judaism is due to the fact that they, so far, have not fully comprehended what the glorification (death, resurrection and sending of the Holy Spirit) of Jesus means.

---

<sup>176</sup> Thus full understanding of the role of Jesus came only after the resurrection (2:22; 12:16; 13:7).

<sup>177</sup> In 1:35-51 the first disciples express their belief in Jesus which is finally critiqued in 1:51 where Jesus states that they will see 'greater things'. Both the Cana signs lead to some degree of belief among the disciples of Jesus but the character of that belief remains doubtful according to Nicholson (1983:67). In 6:60-71 this group of disciples reappears with a larger group of Jesus' disciples. We find there that the larger group withdraws because of what Jesus has just said about the bread of life that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. From 6:61f it is certain that the descent and ascent of Jesus is incomprehensible to the disciples without the mediation of the Spirit. The declaration of their belief in Jesus as the 'Holy One of God' is left hanging in the air. It is not until chs 13-17 where the belief of the disciples is nurtured to the point where they confess that Jesus has come from God (16:30).

In the first half of the FG Jesus talks about where he had come from. From ch 13 onwards, he is preoccupied with his impending return above to the Father and the consequences of this for the disciples. When the disciples respond in 16:30 about their belief in Christ, it is only that they believe he came from God (17:8,25). This was only a partial confession about what faith in Christ comprises. At this moment they do not really understand what the impending death of Jesus is (in fact is his death his return to the Father). Although Jesus had spoken in the LD three times about his departure (13:19; 14:29; 16:4), it would only be known at a later date. The disciples have consistently been baffled by the reference to his departure. When Jesus, after his resurrection, appears to Mary, he corrects the incomplete belief of the disciples when he says to her “Ἀναβαίνω πρὸς τὸν πατέρα μου καὶ πατέρα ὑμῶν” (20:17). Nicholson (1983:73) is correct that Jesus is here, in effect, taking Mary and the ἀδελφούς to whom Mary must take this message, back to 16:33 where Jesus had previously stopped describing the whole scenario. Only when the disciples hear this message and with the outpouring of the Spirit (20:22) will they come to understand that Jesus had *come from* God but also must *return to* God. Only now is the scenario outlined in the LD completed.

<sup>178</sup> On the one hand the FE uses the misunderstandings/lack of understandings as a stylistic feature to develop various doctrines in the FG, and on the other hand to address a situation in the Johannine community.

### **3.4.4 Characterization in terms of relationships<sup>179</sup>**

The fact that the disciples are characterized<sup>180</sup> (individually<sup>181</sup> and corporately) in their different relationships<sup>182</sup> with Jesus, the Father, the Holy Spirit,<sup>183</sup> the world (Jews) and fellow disciples is striking. In the case of Jesus, they followed him wherever he goes. Their faith in him increases to such an extent that at the end they are able to believe that he was sent by God (16:30; 17:7-8,25). They were also used by the FE to reveal the identity (1:35-50; 2:11; 6:69; 20:28) and ministry (17:18; 20:21) of Jesus.

In the case of God they are saved and given to Jesus by Him (1:13; 10:29; 17:6 cf 6:44). Through the Holy Spirit they will experience his leadership. Their relationship to God, even to the Holy Spirit, is primarily described through their relationship with Jesus.

The disciples are also characterized in terms of their relationship to the Jews, whom they feared (20:19; cf also 6:6:19) and to the world which will hate and persecute them (15:18-16:4; 17:14), because of their relationship with Jesus.

They are weighed against the other disciples<sup>184</sup> of Jesus. Where the whole group of Jesus' disciples left him on account of his hard teaching, these 'Twelve' remain faithful to Jesus (6:60-71). It is clear that in nearly all cases the disciples are characterized, (both individually and corporately) in relation to Jesus and through Jesus to others.

### **3.4.5 General observations**

**(i) Following and learning:** Lexically μαθηταὶ means 'learner,' but from the semantic field

<sup>179</sup> See ch 6 for detailed references about the relationship of the disciples to God (Father, Son and Spirit) and people (fellow disciples and world).

<sup>180</sup> Judas' relationship to Jesus is negatively characterized in terms of his betrayal of Jesus, and related to the fact that the devil prompted him (13:2) and that Satan entered him (13:27). In 12:4ff he opposes the anointing of Jesus. Even Peter is negatively displayed in terms of his denial of Jesus (13:38; 18:15ff,25ff) and in terms of the fact that he is portrayed as having opposite characteristics to the BD (18:15ff; 20:2-9; 21:15ff).

<sup>181</sup> Cf the previous footnote. Andrew and Philip, and Peter and the BD are mentioned together a few times in the FG. In the case of Andrew and Philip, they in both cases (1:41,45; 12:22) perform the same deed, namely to witness and to bring people to Jesus (cf also 6:7,8). In the case of Peter and the BD, where they are mentioned together, it is always (except in 13:28 and 20:9) the BD who passes the test of discipleship, and Peter who cannot.

<sup>182</sup> Tolmie (1992:298f; cf also Segovia 1985) clearly indicates a few techniques used by the FE to characterise the disciples:

- as a *group* they are characterised directly by Jesus on some occasions and indirectly by their misunderstandings: 13:22,28,29; 16:12-18,29-30; 14:5-9,22 (cf also 13:8; 14:1; 15:5,14,16,21; 17:6,7,9).

- as *individual* disciples through:

their actions: + Peter (13:6-9, 36-38) -- impulsiveness;  
(13:24) -- leadership

+ Thomas, Philip, Judas (not Iscariot)

direct definition: the Beloved Disciple (ὄν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰσοῦς)

the narrator: Judas Iscariot (13:26-28).

Schnackenburg (1975:234f) sees the disciples as representatives of three different groups of people:

(i) people who believe in Jesus through his word and his signs,  
(ii) the later community in contrast to the unbelieving Jews,  
(iii) later believers which are challenged, tempted and have inadequate faith.

<sup>183</sup> In the LD their relationship with the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit is described in terms of the future.

<sup>184</sup> On this case 'disciples' refers to the larger circle who used to follow Jesus sporadically.



(3.1) and characterizing survey (3.3) it seems that μαθηταὶ could have a double meaning: the first would be 'learning' or 'being taught' while the second would be 'following,' 'being associated with,' or 'being an adherent of' (Louw & Nida 1988:470ff; Newman & Nida 1980:42; Bernard 1969:53).

Both meanings, 'learning' and 'following' figure in the FG. In chs 1-12 we have seen the disciples mainly following Jesus and in chs 13-17 that they learned from him in the technical sense of the word. Jesus did teach his disciples (chs 13-17), but they were more than just pupils. They were chosen to follow him in order to discover through the signs and discourses (2:11; 6:60-70) who Jesus is.<sup>185</sup> He also taught them in order to change their lives and to prepare and furnish them for the momentous task of being sent out to bring the Gospel of revelation and salvation to other people (17:18; 20:21; cf also Mk 3:14; Mt 28:19,20).<sup>186</sup>

**(ii) Theological meaning:** From this brief survey of the references to the presence of the disciples in the FG it is clear that throughout the FG it seems as though the disciples are drawn into the FG deliberately at strategic points<sup>187</sup> (cf also Schnackenburg 1975:234f; Culpepper 1983).<sup>188</sup> To mention only two examples: Jesus' ministry starts when his first disciples confer on him the Messianic title. It is striking that the FE retains the teaching and instruction for the inner group of disciples for their last meeting in the upper room on the occasion of the last supper.<sup>189</sup> From these references it is clear 'daß der Jüngerkreis im irdischen Wirken Jesu für Joh eine bestimmte, auch theologische Bedeutung hat' (Schnackenburg 1975:234).

In three of the four discipleship texts (8:31; (cf 12:26); 13:35; 15:8) the use of the term μαθηταὶ indicates that this concept has already been used, extended and applied to a new situation. The theological meaning comprises firstly: that the term 'disciples' of Jesus is used by the FE in a typological sense, that μαθηταὶ refers to future disciples as well and that what Jesus has taught his disciples, promised and commanded them, is also applicable to future disciples of Christ. Secondly, from the perspective of the reader, the reader wants to associate himself with the disciples' growing faith, their following of and learning from Jesus. Thus, in the FG μαθηταὶ is firstly used to indicate Jesus' close companions, secondly, Jesus' adherents, and finally all later believers (cf Schnackenburg

---

<sup>185</sup> Through their theological meaning of μαθηταὶ in the FG the reader also discovers, through identification with them, who Jesus is.

<sup>186</sup> A μαθητῆς 'is one who learns from, and associates himself with, a respected teacher' (Bernard 1969:53; cf also Morris 1975:155).

<sup>187</sup> In Jn 1:35-51, the example of the disciples illustrating how people become disciples of Jesus, is linked with the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. In 2:11 the disciples' faith in Jesus is portrayed as the pivot of the beginning of Jesus' ministry. In 4:27-38 Jesus addresses them with the essence of his mission, in 6:1-71 the disciples are involved in the miracle of Jesus and confess him as 'the Holy One of God' and remain with him when many other disciples left him. In 18:2ff, 15ff Judas betrays Jesus and Peter denies him. His disciples are with him when he is proclaimed as king (12:12-16), and in chs 13-17 they received special teaching from Jesus apart from others. At the crucifixion (19:26) the BD was present and after his resurrection Jesus appears three times to his disciples (20:19-29; 21:1ff).

<sup>188</sup> There are some sections (4:27-38; 9:2-5; 11:7-16) which can only be ascribed to the FE who inserts these texts at certain points in the FG.

<sup>189</sup> This is in contrast with the Synoptic Gospels.

1975:237).<sup>190</sup>

**(iii) The formation and composition of the disciple-group:** In the FG nothing is said about the formation<sup>191</sup> of the inner-circle (the Twelve) of Jesus' disciples.<sup>192</sup> The Twelve are mentioned abruptly in 6:67,70f as well as in 20:24, and in ch 21 more than half of this group is mentioned. There is no indication of any of the disciples' trades. The nearest approach to any equivalent deduction in the Synoptics, where their trades are more explicitly spelled out, is found in ch 21:1-14 (cf also 6:16). From this text it may be deduced that some of them were probably fishermen. Judas Iscariot is the only disciple known who is probably linked to the Zealot party, as may be discerned by his being called 'Iscariot'. The rest is unknown.

**(iv) A revelatory-salvific function:**<sup>193</sup> Right from the beginning, in their first appearance in the FG, it becomes clear that the disciples have a double function attached to their calling: the moment they meet Jesus, they start to witness about him or confess him (1:41,42,44,46); through them Jesus is revealed as Messiah (1:41,49). This will be their mission to be accomplished in the future, which will become clearer later in this study, although they do not perceive this (4:33-38; 6:5-9; 9:2; 11:12-15). In ch 17 Jesus mentions openly (on a theological level) what their future task comprises. In a theological discussion about their future (ch 13-17), he appoints them as his agents (17:18) and historically sends them out into the world (20:21) with a mission.<sup>194</sup> The disciples are also depicted as having the function of leading people to Christ (1:40-47; 4:29; 17:20-23; 20:31). In 17:20-23 Jesus prays for those who will believe in him through the message of the disciples. This is also the task of the Paraclete who works through them in the world to save people (3:3-8; cf 16:8ff). This double function of the disciples parallels that of Jesus.

**(v) Appearances in the FG:** The disciples are prominent in the Galilean ministry of Jesus, but not in his Judean ministry.<sup>195</sup> Their appearances in the FG are influenced by various factors: (i) by the number of signs and related discourses,<sup>196</sup> (ii) the theological meaning of the disciples,<sup>197</sup> (iii) the disciples' relationship with Jesus.

**(vi) Reflect on of a historical situation:** Scholars are unanimous that the FE's description

---

<sup>190</sup> When μαθηται is used in this study, it specifically refers to the inner group (the Twelve) of Jesus' followers.

<sup>191</sup> Only from 1:35-50 is there an indication how the first five disciples came to follow Jesus.

<sup>192</sup> In the Gospel of Mark, there is a line of development in the portrayal of the disciples which does not appear in the FG:- the first four disciples immediately follow the call of Jesus (1:16-20),  
- the composition and appointment of the twelve (3:13-19),  
- the disciples' successful proclamation of the Gospel (6:7-13,30) (Breytenbach 1993:28).

<sup>193</sup> 'Revelatory' refers to the revelation to be brought by the disciples through their witness in the world. 'Salvific' refers to the salvation of people as a result of the disciples' word of revelation.

<sup>194</sup> Throughout the FG Jesus sporadically refers to their future mission which will relate to his mission: 4:34-38; 13:16; 15:26f; 17:18; 20:21. In most of the characters in the FG who depict different models of discipleship (Doohan 1988:136f; Pazdan 1987:145f) the witnessing aspect is emphasized. Even through their behaviour Jesus' disciples will reveal him and witness about him (13:35).

<sup>195</sup> In the Judean ministry Jesus was involved in various conflicts with the Jews.

<sup>196</sup> Sometimes the disciples played a minor role in the signs performed by Jesus (6:5-9; 9:2).

<sup>197</sup> See also footnote 187.

of the historical Jesus is an indication of the Johannine community's perception of the risen Christ. This same statement applies to the disciples. The description and construct of the disciples is the characterization of the incomplete circumstances of the Johannine community (cf Schnackenburg 1971:3). In chs 1-12 the FE reveals Jesus to the readers<sup>198</sup> (the Johannine community) so that in chs 13-17 he can address the problems in this community. He wants to indicate to them how people, who believe in Jesus, should live.

**(vii) A thetical parallelism:** It is especially in the LD (chs 13-17) that Jesus parallels the relationship which exists between him and the Father in his relationship with his disciples. This is clear from the FE's use of the comparative particle "καθὼς". Elsewhere in the FG this parallelism is found in relation to life (6:57), knowledge (10:14f), love (15:9; 17:23), mission (17:18; 20:21) and unity (17:22).

**(viii) Continuation of the mission of Jesus:** There is no mention of the sending out of the disciples during Jesus' ministry on earth. Although there are suggestions, throughout the FG, regarding the mission of the disciples, it is only at the 'hour' (17:18) and in conjunction with the bestowal of the Holy Spirit that the disciples receive the formal mission charge from Jesus to continue his mission on earth (20:21).<sup>199</sup>

Discipleship in the FG is seen as the continuation of the mission of Jesus. In the FG no clear apostolate is worked out.<sup>200</sup> All that we have is a few texts from which conclusions may be drawn regarding the commission<sup>201</sup> of the disciples by Jesus. It is only in two cases in the FG that there are direct indications that the disciples were commissioned by Jesus (cf also 15:27): the whole ch 17 (v 18) comprises a theological discussion of the mission of Jesus and the disciples, while ch 20:21 indicates the historical situation where the disciples have been personally sent out by the risen Christ. Since discipleship in the FG is seen as the continuation of the mission of Jesus, ch 17 will be taken as our foundational point of departure for investigating Jesus' relationship with his disciples.<sup>202</sup> This continuation of Jesus' mission is based on the Father-Son relationship. Because this relationship is spelt out in terms of 'Agency' it implies that the character of Jesus' relationship with his disciples is to be that of 'Agency' as well.

---

<sup>198</sup> The FE did this through the signs Jesus performed, his speeches, the witness of the Baptist, the names allocated to Jesus and the 'I am'-sayings.

<sup>199</sup> The lack of awareness about their mission in the community, which the FE addresses in the FG, should be seen from the perspective of the Johannine community's confrontation with the synagogue. This confrontation consists of a strong rejection and hostile opposition on the part of the Jews encountered in the course of the Jewish mission. The FE was convinced that the Johannine community represents Jesus and has to continue, under the leadership and guidance of the Holy Spirit, the mission, the Father entrusted to Jesus, as they continue to present the claims of Jesus to 'the world'. The FE stresses Jesus' obedience to his Father to complete his work (17:4) to convict the community that its mission, like that of Jesus, must continue regardless of circumstances or consequences (15:17-16:4). They must actively and deliberately reach out to Samaritans (ch 4) and Gentiles (17:18; 20:21) and the Jews as well, because only through their mission can these people become part of God's household (children of God—1:12), and receive life (3:16,36), truth (8:32) and peace (16:33; 20:19,21,26).

<sup>200</sup> The difference between discipleship and the apostolate is that discipleship consists of a mission (17:18) whereas apostleship comprises an office.

<sup>201</sup> I will indicate the difference between *send* and *commission* in the discussion of the 'agency' concept.

<sup>202</sup> Regarding ch 17, Hendriksen (1976:348) says: 'The mission of Jesus Christ and of his followers on earth, unto the glory of God, is the theme throughout.'

### (xiii) Disciples and discipleship:

The character of discipleship in the FG is not embedded in the term μαθηταί. There is a clear distinction between the FE's use of "μαθηταί" and 'discipleship'. "μαθηταί" is particularly used as a technical term referring to an exclusive group of people following Jesus, due to their faith in him, while *discipleship* is the portrayal of the group (of believers) which characterizes their exclusiveness in their *relationship* with the glorified Christ.<sup>203</sup> The exclusiveness relates primarily to the person to whom they are attached and is observed in their new way of life which relates to the life of the person being followed.<sup>204</sup> The historical commission of the disciples by Jesus takes place after his resurrection (20:21).

The content of chs 13-17 differs from that of the rest of the FG. The rest of the FG is dominated by the identity of Jesus (where the disciples are followers of Jesus), while in chs 13-17 the characteristics of discipleship are spelt out over and against being part of the world.<sup>205</sup> This relates to the main theme in chs 13-17: the departure of Jesus (which is described within the dualism of 'Jesus' presence' and 'Jesus' absence').

### (ix) Counterbalances:

The counterbalances fulfil an important function in the FG. In each part, as pointed out, counterbalances occur, in relationship to the high occurrence of misunderstanding/ lack of understanding. The counterbalances are rectified actions for the disciples' misunderstanding/ lack of understanding (see Giesbrecht 1986:118). In most cases, the counterbalances do not come from the disciples themselves.<sup>206</sup> A counterbalance is introduced to emphasize the matter concerned and as a motivation for the Johannine community to perform the task involved where the counterbalances highlights the particular misunderstanding/lack of understanding.

### (x) The Beloved Disciple

The BD plays an important role in the FG (the phrase occurs 14 times in chs 13-21). As we have already stated the BD is used by the FE to depict the ideal disciple, the paradigm of discipleship. From all the texts in which the term BD occur,<sup>207</sup> 13:21-30 seems to be the most important witness how the role and function of the BD is to be understood.<sup>208</sup> He reclines in the bosom (ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ) of Jesus.<sup>209</sup> The term "κόλπος" also occurs in 1:18.

---

<sup>203</sup> See Giesbrecht (1986:110ff) for his identification of this new community.

<sup>204</sup> The characteristics of discipleship, spelt out in chs 13-17, are anticipated and formulated as conditional sentences.

<sup>205</sup> From the 78 occurrences of μαθηταί in the FG there are only 3 texts in which μαθηταί is used where there is explicit reference to discipleship: 8:31; 13:35; 15:8.

<sup>206</sup> An exception is the counterbalance in part three with the confession of Peter on behalf of the disciples (6:69). In the Passion narrative (chs 18-20) the FE uses the BD, the ideal disciple, as a counterbalance to the failure of the other disciples to follow Jesus.

<sup>207</sup> 13:21-30; 19:25-27; 19:34b-35; 20:2-10; 21:1-7; 21:18-25.

<sup>208</sup> The way the BD is indicated in the FG is an indication of the Johannine community's self-understanding. The reference, the BD, (τὸν μαθητὴν ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς) is mentioned in all the passages except 19:34b-35. Although it is possible that the FG is referring to the BD in 18:15-18, it will add little to the contribution of the other texts. Culpepper (1975:266) indicates that a redaction-critical study of the BD texts reveals that all of them were *added* to the traditional materials by the FE except the last one (21:18-25). This text was probably added by the final redactor.

<sup>209</sup> According to Gunther (1981:130) κόλπος (bosom) symbolizes the love and fellowship in a family.



Here Jesus is also described as being in the bosom (εἰς τὸν κόλπον) of the Father, and makes Him known (ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο). 'By analogy, the BD is credited with having the same relation to Jesus that Jesus had to the Father (cf 3:35; 15:9) and with performing the same function in the community, i.e., making him known' (Culpepper 1975:266; Tolmie 1992).

The BD is further characterized in the FG as the ideal disciple. Lindars (1972) discerns that the BD symbolizes 'the ideal disciple, who remains true where Peter fails'. Agourides (1968:5) notices that after Peter denies Jesus he vanishes from the scene. The BD, however, follows Jesus up to the end when he was crucified.<sup>210</sup> This ideal relationship is used by the FE as a model for that of the other disciples with the Father and Son (14:20; 15:4f,9; 17:21-23,26).<sup>211</sup> Gunther (1981:134) points out that the idealized BD is given the privileged role by the FE of being the primary ongoing witness. Moreover, in the FG the witness of the BD was to endure after his death (19:35--μεμαρτύρηκεν; 21:24--μαρτυρῶν [present participle] and γράψας [aorist]) (Bultmann 1941:555; Brown 1972:1123; Gunther 1981:134). Thus 'he, rather than Peter, was the disciple *par excellence*, who served as model of those who are loved by Jesus (cf 13:1), who understand his mind and bear witness to truth, and who consistently, loyally follow him. He represents an idealized *historical personality...*' (Gunther 1981:134).<sup>212</sup>

#### (xi) A paradigm of traits

<u>Mainly in chapters 1-12</u>	<u>Mainly in chapters 13-21</u>
<p>The disciples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Confess Jesus</li> <li>2. Follow Jesus (are also taught)</li> <li>3. Express concern about Jesus</li> <li>4. Perform duties for Jesus</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Jesus commissions disciples to witness</li> <li>2. Jesus teaches them (following implied)</li> <li>3. Disciples deny, betray, and leave Jesus alone</li> <li>4. The promise and outpouring of the Spirit</li> <li>5. The BD portrays as the ideal disciple</li> </ol>
<p><b><u>Traits found in both parts of the FG</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Misunderstanding and lack of understanding occur</li> <li>2. The disciples elected by Jesus and given to Jesus by the Father</li> <li>3. The disciples believe in Jesus (grow in faith and knowledge)</li> <li>4 Characterization of some disciples: Andrew, Peter, BD, Philip, Judas, Thomas</li> </ol>	

**From the survey so far conducted, we may conclude that the meaning of the concept of discipleship does not so much lie in the term μαθητής because: (i) The institution of discipleship goes back, not to the historical Jesus, but to the exalted and glorified Christ when he gives them his Spirit (20:21). (ii) The term μαθητής is used in the FG**

<sup>210</sup> The FE positions Peter contrary to the BD in order to state a point; true discipleship is to follow Jesus to the end (cf 13:37).

<sup>211</sup> 'As Christ is the one whom God loves par excellence (3:35; 5:20; 10:17; cf 17:23,24,26), ...the beloved disciple stands in the same relation to Christ as to God; as Christ is in a special sense the ἀγαπητός of God, so the beloved disciple is portrayed as the ἀγαπητός of Christ in a special way' (Kraggerud quoted by Gunther 1981:130).

<sup>212</sup> Culpepper (1974:267ff) rightly points out the similarities of function of the Paraclete and the BD, namely: teaching, reminding, and witnessing concerning the truth and being sent by Jesus.

basically as a technical term. The discipleship texts (8:31; 13:35 and 15:8; cf also 12:26) constitute a transition from being mere followers (in a literal sense) to becoming followers of Jesus in a sense of behaviour. This consists of a new way of life because of a new dispensation introduced by the incarnation of the Son, which only becomes effective in the post-Paschal dispensation.

In a qualitative sense the term discipleship depicts a specific group of people following a specific person: Jesus. The most important requirement to become a follower of Jesus is to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the one who *came from God* and has *returned to God*. Because the disciples have to continue the mission of Jesus they may expect harsh opposition from the world. All that has been said so far about discipleship is due to the fact that Jesus' relationship with his disciples is a duplication of and is based on the relationship between the Father and Son.

## **4. Discipleship: the continuation of the mission of Jesus**

### **4.1 The Great Commission**

At the beginning of this study it is stated that discipleship is seen as the continuation of the mission of Jesus. This further implies that the Jesus-disciples relationship (discipleship) is based on the Father-Son relationship. If discipleship is thus seated in the Father-Son relationship, the mission of Jesus must be observed carefully, and afterwards the commission of the disciples. Finally conclusions will be drawn concerning discipleship. This will constitute the setting from which discipleship must be interpreted.

In order to make the interpretation of Jesus' mission relevant to the interpretation of discipleship one has to consider the following aspects:

- (i) The principle aspects regarding Jesus' 'mission'.
- (ii) The qualities of this new way of life which Jesus made possible.
- (iii) Because Jesus is the one to be followed, his Person (who he is) and Work (what he did) are important.<sup>213</sup>
- (v) What causes people to be drawn to follow Jesus and to adopt a new way of life?

'Sending' plays a central role<sup>214</sup> (Waldstein 1990:310; Allen 1953:166) and is one of two

---

<sup>213</sup> Jesus' person and the work he came to do legitimize the continuation of his mission. Because the person and work of Jesus comprise the entire FG, only texts relevant to the mission of Jesus will be investigated.

<sup>214</sup> The Christology of the FG has been subjected largely to extensive systematic analysis (Loader 1984:188ff). Much attention has been given to individual motifs and their historic-traditional background. Traditionally it concentrated on the perception of the titles by which Jesus was most commonly addressed or designated, such as Messiah, Son of God, Son of Man, and Logos (Kümmel 1974, Thyen 1974, Ladd 1977, Cullmann 1977, Mealand 1978, Guthry 1981, Culpepper 1988, Kysar 1993, esp pp 27-57). Apart from the major commentaries of Bultmann (1941), Lenski (1961), Bernard (1963, 1969), Schnackenburg (1965, 1971, 1975), Brown (1972, 1975), Morris (1975), Barrett (1978), Lindars (1981), Carson (1991), etc there are also the works of Bultmann 1953, Blank 1964, Käsemann 1968, Müller 1975, Moloney 1978, Goppelt 1983, Du Rand 1989). Pryor (1991:341) states that '...no one would care to dispute that John makes use of a descent-ascent Christology.' But in the meantime a paradigmatic shift of the Christology of the FG has taken place viewing it from a new perspective: Christ the *Agent*, or *missionary* (Borgen 1968, Harvey 1987, Waldstein 1990, Mercer 1990, Van der Watt 1991, cf Kuhl 1967, Bühner 1977, Miranda 1977, Loader 1984). The word