

**“HE SAW AND BELIEVED...”: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF
THE RESURRECTION NARRATIVE IN THE GOSPEL
ACCORDING TO JOHN 20:1-31.**

BY

NICHOLAS KWABLA LARSEY

(10444069)

**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,
LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT
FOR THE AWARD OF MPhil RELIGIONS DEGREE**

JULY 2015

DECLARATION

This is to certify that this thesis is the result of research undertaken by Nicholas Kwabla Larsey under the supervision of Rev. Prof. Daniel Jacobson Antwi and Rev. Dr. George Ossom-Batsa towards the award of M.Phil Religions at the Department for the study of Religions, University of Ghana.

.....
NICHOLAS KWABLA LARSEY
(Student)

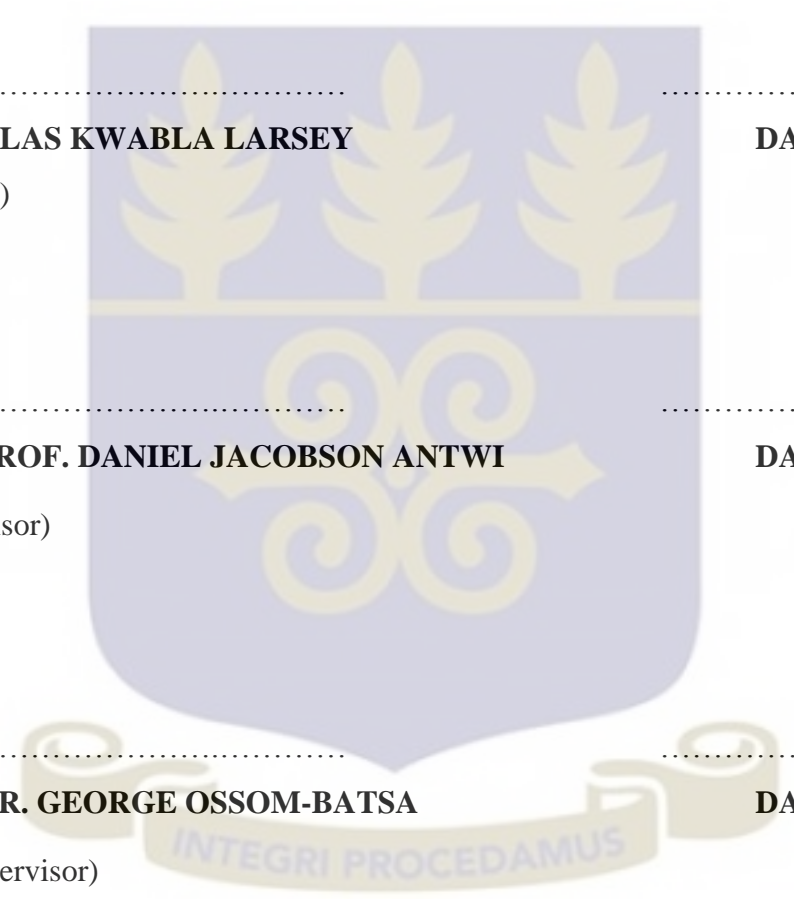
.....
DATE

.....
REV. PROF. DANIEL JACOBSON ANTWI
(Supervisor)

.....
DATE

.....
REV. DR. GEORGE OSSOM-BATSA
(Co-Supervisor)

.....
DATE



ABSTRACT

The resurrection of Jesus is very essential to the Christian faith because it constitutes the foundation of the gospel proclamation. Its significance is further testified by the fact that all the four evangelists devoted portions of their gospels to the passion and resurrection narrative. This research investigates John 20:1-31 to analyze the role of the resurrection account in the Fourth Gospel and its relevance for contemporary Ghanaian Christianity. The study attempts to look at what message John intends to communicate to his readers using the narrative critical method.

The narrative critical method attempts to understand the intention and accomplishment of an author by analyzing the compositional structural elements of the text. It is relevant for this study because it focuses on the effect of the text on the reader, therefore making possible the contextualization of the message in the contemporary Ghanaian Christianity in general and the Dangme's in particular. The study explores how the evangelist organized the narrative in order to guide his reader to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. It also examines how the experience of the disciples at the tomb formed the basis of their faith and informed their proclamation (20:31).

The thesis establishes that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead was a turning point in the life of the disciples who hitherto were in doubt. The study revealed that Thomas' Christological profession of faith in the risen Jesus (My Lord and my God) brought the gospel to its climax, thereby increasing the faith of the believer. The research also brought to light the eschatological connotations of the resurrection. It revealed that the resurrection appearances ignite the faith of the believer not only in anticipating his own resurrection, but even more in having assurance in the infallible Word of God. Again the study found the import of Jesus' resurrection, not in the historical verification of it, but more importantly in the faith experience it brings to the believer. In contextualizing the resurrection within the Osudoku community, the researcher discovered that the resurrection concept does not have a direct bearing on the community. Nonetheless, the idea is implicitly demonstrated among the people. This is expressed through their proverbs, songs, parables and preparations made for the dead to cross over to the afterlife.

It is hoped that the research will contribute to the ongoing debate on the subject matter and offer some more insights. In addition, it will help deepen the Christian understanding of the resurrection of Jesus and also to enlighten believers on the biblical perspective of Jesus' resurrection and its relevance for contemporary understanding of Christian identity.

DEDICATION

To the believing community of Christians worldwide, whose faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ has been reinvigorated. Also, to Rev. Fr. Francis Asagba for his mentorship in the academic journey, Rev. Dr. George Ossom-Batsa for his encouragement and finally to my late father, Michael Kofi Larsey, Agnes Larsey my beloved mother and Nিকেিশা.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me...” It is the Grace of God that has brought me safe thus far and to God be all the Glory, honour and praise. To my Archbishop, Most Rev. Gabriel Charles Palmer-Buckle, for permitting me to pursue the course, am very grateful.

I wish to express with gratitude my indebtedness and heartfelt appreciation to my indefatigable supervisor, Rev. Dr. George Ossom-Batsa whose fatherly love and academic acumen has contributed immensely to the timely completion of my work.

The industrious Head of Department, the adorable lecturers and the competent administrative staff cannot be left out in my appreciation. They contributed in diverse ways in making my life in the department very happy and congenial hence, the successful completion of my research. It would be a sign of ingratitude if I fail to show appreciation to Mr. Godfred Nsiah who was always there for me and my colleague, Daniel Yeboah, for his support to enable me meet the record time of submission.

My special appreciation goes to all the good people of the St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church at Kotobabi for their unflinching prayer support and cooperation. I am also indebted to Rev. Fr. Francis Oteng-Bawuah for his support and encouragement, Rev. Frs. Neumann Tettehfiio and Peter Kabutey for their encouragement. To the hard working and tireless parish cook, Bernadette Muniratu Taasi for her support, am always grateful.

Finally, to Rev. Fr. Francis Asagba, for his tremendous support both in cash and in kind and to the following personalities who also contributed immensely to the successful completion of my work: Penelope Abotsi Mensah, David Larsey, Richard Larsey, Augustina Larsey, Andrew Larsey and many more who could not be acknowledged here, I am very grateful and may God richly bless you.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Content	Page
DECLARATION	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTORY ISSUES	1
1.1 Background to the Study.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	9
1.3 Research Questions	10
1.4 Literature Review.....	10
1.4.1 Resurrection and the Question of Faith	11
1.4.2 Motive of the Resurrection in John’s Gospel	12
1.4.3 Significance of the Resurrection to the Reader.....	15
1.5 Methodology	18
1.6 Organization of the Chapters	20
CHAPTER TWO: EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF JOHN 20:1-31	22
2.1 Introduction.....	22
2.2 Delimitation of the Text.....	22
2.3 Structure of John 20:1-31.....	23
2.4 Textual Analysis of John 20:1-31	25

2.4.1 Introduction to the Text (vv.1-2)	26
2.4.2 The Empty Tomb (vv. 3-10)	29
2.4.3 The Lord Appears to Mary Magdalene (vv. 11-18).....	35
2.4.4 The Lord Appears to the Disciples (vv. 19-23)	44
2.4.5 The Lord Appears to Thomas (vv. 24-29)	55
2.5.6 Conclusion and Purpose of the Gospel (vv. 30-31)	63
2.5 Conclusion	68
CHAPTER THREE: RISING FROM THE DEAD IN JOHN’S GOSPEL	71
3.1 Introduction.....	71
3.2 Related Concepts to death and Resurrection in John’s Gospel.....	71
3.3 Journey of the Reader	82
3.4 Conclusion	88
CHAPTER FOUR: A COMPARISON OF THE CONCEPT OF DEATH AND RESURRECTION IN JOHN AND AMONG THE DANGMES	90
4.1 Introduction.....	90
4.2 Origin and History of the GaDangmes	90
4.3 Death and Afterlife from Traditional Ghanaian World view.....	93
4.4 Death and Resurrection from an Osudoku Perspective	96
4.5 Related Concept of Death and Resurrection in John’s Gospel and in Osudoku	102
4.6 Relevance of the Resurrection to Contemporary Osudoku Christian	108
4.7 Conclusion	114

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	116
5.1 Summary	116
5.2 Conclusion	120
5.3 Recommendations.....	123
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 125



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY ISSUES

1.1 Background to the Study

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the turning point in human history and the basis of the Christian Faith. It constitutes the foundation of the gospel proclamation and the focus of Christian hope. During the years of Jesus' ministry, all his apostles had been very slow to perceive who he was. The full recognition came only after the resurrection, which was an integral part of the *kerygma* of the early church.¹ The four New Testament evangelists devoted portions of their writings to the passion and resurrection narrative of Jesus because no tenet of Christianity is more central than that. According to Joseph Fitzmyer, no New Testament writer ever depicts Christ's resurrection as if it were a mere resuscitation or a return to a former mode of natural terrestrial existence.²

So important was the resurrection for Paul that he hinged both preaching and faith upon its validity. He considered that Christianity without the resurrection would be empty and meaningless (1 Cor 15:12–19). Indeed, the resurrection for him was the unveiling of God's power in Jesus (Rom 1:4). This fact is attested to by Josh McDowell when he said, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most fantastic fact of history that without the historical bodily resurrection of Jesus, there would be no Christianity.³

¹ B. Ward Powers, *The Progressive Publication of Matthew: An Explanation of the Writing of the Synoptic Gospels* (Nashville: B &H Publishing Group, 2010), 264.

² Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke (X-XXIV): Introduction, Translation and Notes*, Anchor Bible, 28 (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 1538.

³ Josh McDowell, *The Resurrection Factor* (San Bernardino: Here's Life Publishers, 1981), 6-7.

The phenomenon of the resurrection which is implicit in Daniel 12, dates to more than a century and a half before Jesus was born (168 BCE).⁴ The term may be generally defined as the process that after death, the body will be reconstituted and revived by God as a reward for the righteous or the faithful.⁵ According to the George Nickelsburg, resurrection is the eschatological act by which God, the just judge, raises the dead in order to recompense them for their deeds, punishment or reward.⁶ But the resurrection is so central to Christianity in a way that it is not to any of the other first century sects of Judaism.⁷

With the advances in scientific tools since the Enlightenment and secularization among earlier Christian communities, belief in the resurrection of Jesus has become a passionately debated issue. There have been a lot of scholarly debates regarding Jesus' resurrection. Scholars argued from varying perspectives which include historical, hermeneutical, epistemological as well as exegetical. William L. Craig for instance, argues for the historicity of Jesus' resurrection, which includes the bodily resurrection as well as the empty tomb as historically highly plausible. Craig holds the view that Paul witnessed first-hand, the risen Jesus, and that his experience was not one of vision or mere delusion as some scholars believe. Though Craig agrees that Paul's experience was different from that of the other witnesses, he nonetheless posits that it was the same Jesus the others encountered.⁸

⁴ Alan E. Segal, "Resurrection: New Testament," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible vol. 4* edited by Katharine Doob Sakenfeld (New York: Abingdon Press, 2009), 772.

⁵ Segal, "Resurrection: New Testament," 772.

⁶ George W.E. Nickelsburg, "Resurrection: Early Judaism and Christianity," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary 5* edited by David Noel Fredman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 684.

⁷ Segal, "Resurrection: New Testament," 772.

⁸ William L. Craig, "Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus," *Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity* 16, (1989): 197.

Alexander Wedderburn however, rejects the resurrection of Jesus from the dead as a historical event and calls such a belief obsolete and also too vague to be credible. He attempts, like many before him, to establish Christian faith on what he considers a more credible foundation than the vulnerable and undefended historical claim that God raised Jesus from the dead. He discards efforts to narrow the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus to a singular historical category reserved for divine acts that is incapable of being investigated by critical historians, an interpretation which is similar to the Salvation-Historical perspective advocated by Karl Barth, Oscar Cullmann, and to some extent Jürgen Moltmann.⁹

In the view of Robert Stewart, *Historiography*, for instance, effectively precluded any affirmative judgment concerning the historicity of Jesus' resurrection. It states that Jesus' disciples stole his body: that Jesus' resurrection was a myth and that the early church grafted Greek and Hellenistic ideas onto Christianity and thus deified Jesus.¹⁰

Central to the writings and Christology of the apostle Paul was the resurrection of Christ. He relentlessly focuses on the redemptive moment of Christ's death and resurrection to explain how God justified and reconciled humanity to himself in and through Christ.¹¹ He devoted considerable amount of his works to explain the resurrection and its significance to the faith of the Christian. Paul begins with Christ's death and resurrection and presents him as the crucified Messiah, the risen Lord, the image of God, the eschatological Adam, the one who will come again.¹² He was of

⁹ Alexander J. M. Wedderburn, "Beyond Resurrection," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 111, (2001): 124.

¹⁰ Robert B. Stewart, "Resurrection of Jesus," in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity* ed. Daniel Patte (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 1074.

¹¹ Frank J. Matera, "Christ in the Theologies of Paul and John: A Study in the Diverse Unity of New Testament Theology," *Journal Theological Studies* 67 (2006): 237-56.

¹² Matera, "Christ in the Theologies of Paul and John," 239.

the understanding that if the Crucified One has been raised from the dead, then the general resurrection of the dead has already begun in the Messiah, and Christ will come again as the agent of God's final victory over sin and death.¹³

In 1 Cor 15, Paul declares the resurrection of Christ as a fact. He writes, “For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures” (1 Cor 15:3-4). He employed and built upon such Christological formulas to speak of Christ as the one who died for us (ὕπερ ἡμῶν ἀπέθανεν Rom 5:8; 1 Thess 5:9-10); the one who gave himself for our sins (τοῦ ἀποθανόντος ὑπερ ἡμῶν) that he might rescue us from the present evil age (Gal 1:4); the one who ransomed (ἐξηγόρασεν) us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us (Gal 3:13); the one who died for all (ὕπερ πάντων ἀπέθανεν, 2 Cor 5:14); the one whom God set forth as the place of atonement or expiation (ἱλαστήριον) for sins (Rom 3:25); the one who was handed over for our transgressions (ἠγέρθη διὰ τὴν δικαίωσιν ἡμῶν; Rom 4:25); the one who died for the ungodly (ὕπερ ἀσεβῶν ἀπέθανεν; Rom 5:6).

Frank. J. Matera posits that the resurrection influenced the faith of Paul in two distinct ways. First, the resurrection enabled Paul to confess the Crucified One as the risen Lord, the enthroned Messiah who presently reigns at God's right hand. Second, the resurrection allowed Paul to see Christ as the first fruits of the general resurrection of the dead. Paul understands that Christ's resurrection was not an isolated event that only affected him. Rather, it was the first in a series of like resurrections that will

¹³ Matera, “Christ in the Theologies of Paul and John,” 242.

occur at the *parousia* when the Lord returns and the dead will be raised incorruptible.¹⁴

The significance of the resurrection to the Christian faith compelled the synoptic evangelists to give it prominent attention in their respective gospel narratives. Matthew, on his part, concludes his gospel with the account of the resurrection¹⁵ and follows a similar pattern to that of Mark, including the important instruction to the disciples to go to Galilee. He however adds four distinct features; the earthquake, the rolling of the stone by the angel, the effect on the guards and the women's meeting with Jesus himself on their way to the tomb.¹⁶ This last feature according to R.T. France is a demonstration that Jesus has risen. David L. Turner however, maintains that by this, the resurrection of Jesus is announced, not explained and that the focus on the empty tomb and the announcement by the angel to the women signified that Jesus was the Messiah.¹⁷

It is the climax of Luke's Gospel as a whole and constitutes a transition to the Lucan second volume.¹⁸ Being the seventh and final part of his gospel, it coincides with the other three gospels beginning his narrative from the story of the women at the empty tomb, comments on the nature of the resurrection and the resurrection itself. The appearance of the angels, their testimony and invitation of the women to look into the tomb to see for themselves dispelled away fear from them and inspired faith and confidence as they hurried to inform the other disciples. Turner posits that the words

¹⁴ Matera, 'Christ in the Theologies of Paul and John,' 245-6.

¹⁵ David L. Turner, *Matthew*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2008), 679.

¹⁶ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew: The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 1097.

¹⁷ Turner, *Matthew*, 679.

¹⁸ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 1533.

“just as he said” reminded the women of Jesus’ repeated prediction of his resurrection (Matt. 12:40; 17:9, 23; 20:19; 26:32). As the words of the angels reiterate Jesus’ earlier promises, the resurrection will transform the deserters back into the disciples. This is because it gave credibility to all the things he told them whilst alive and so their faith in him would grow.

The resurrection narrative in the synoptic gospels show how earliest Christianity’s story tellers articulated their beliefs, confident that they expressed the “One Faith” generated by the resurrection of Jesus. According to Francis Moloney, the earliest Christian writers were mostly concerned about what the resurrection of Jesus meant. While some aspects of each narrative are unique, variations of the same theological message are communicated in a different way across the three gospel traditions, capturing some central theological themes, that is, what God did for Jesus and what the risen Jesus did for his followers (Mark 16; Matt 28; Luke 24).¹⁹

John, on his part composed a narrative that recounts the story of Jesus for a community of believers that found itself in a hostile world.²⁰ According to Craig R. Koester, the Gospel of John moves like a pendulum. It begins at the high point by announcing, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God” (1:1). Then the story unfolds in a downward arc, as the Word becomes flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. The first disciples receive Jesus gladly, hailing him as Rabbi, Messiah, Son of God, and King of Israel, and accompanying him to Cana’s wedding feast but the pendulum continues to plunge downward, as the crowds become confused, skeptical, and hostile to Jesus’ claims; they charge that he

¹⁹ Francis J. Moloney, *The Resurrection of the Messiah: A Narrative Commentary on the Resurrection Accounts in the Four Gospels* (New York: Paulist Press, 2013), 132.

²⁰ Matera, “Christ in the Theologies,” 1.

is a blasphemer, try to stone him, and finally plot his execution. The low point comes in the middle of the gospel, when Jesus' public ministry ends, and it becomes clear that "though he had done so many signs before them, yet they did not believe in him" (12:37).²¹

The story of the passion follows the upward movement of the pendulum. It begins with Jesus in the posture of a slave, washing his disciples' feet (chap. 13); but concludes with Thomas recognizing that Jesus is both Lord and God (20:28), bringing the story back to the high point where it began in 1:1.²² In Koester's view, John's narrative is masterfully told; the drama is bold, yet subtle. Those who contemplate its message are drawn into the very heart of the Christian faith.²³

The story of Jesus' resurrection in John begins with two scenes that offer incisive comment on the genesis of the resurrection faith (20:1-18).²⁴ Faith in the resurrection does not emerge easily or naively; from the beginning it arose despite claims to the contrary. From my analysis, the resurrection itself creates a new perspective from which to understand the foundations of the Christian faith. Proclamation of the resurrection will come only in response to an encounter with the risen Jesus himself.²⁵ In fact, the gospels would hardly have been good news if they did not conclude with the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

In this study, the researcher chose John's Gospel regarding Jesus' resurrection instead of the Synoptic Gospels because of the following reasons among others. According to

²¹ Craig R. Koester, "The Passion and Resurrection According to John" *Word & World* 11, no. 1 (1991): 84.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Koester, "The Passion and Resurrection", 84.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

Koester, Jesus' resurrection is essential for John's theology, since faith cannot be faith unless Jesus is raised from the dead and the conviction that the Jesus who was crucified and resurrected from the dead is again encountered by his disciples undergirds the whole of John's message.²⁶ Again, John explores the dynamics of belief and unbelief through his telling of the encounters that took place during Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. He does so to help readers discern the analogies between the situations of those who have seen Jesus and those who have not and this is not common in the synoptic account.²⁷ Also, he is the only evangelist who purposely wrote his work to bring people to believe in Jesus so that they might experience the marvel of a new way of life.

Furthermore, according to Hans-Ulrich Weidemann, the gospel of John, unlike the other gospels, does not end with the death of Jesus but proceeds to describe the discovery of the empty tomb and the appearances of the risen Jesus. However, the fourth evangelist does not simply narrate the Easter story after the passion account, the events of the passion and resurrection are anticipated by Jesus himself in the farewell discourses "before they occur."²⁸ Finally, Alan Culpepper intimates that with those who will believe without seeing, the gospel of John reaches its original ending, a conclusion which affirms that the gospel was written to lead readers and hearers to believe.²⁹

²⁶ Craig R. Koester, "Jesus' Resurrection, the Signs, and the Dynamics of Faith in the Gospel of John," In *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, ed. Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008): 48.

²⁷ Koester, "Jesus' Resurrection", 51.

²⁸ Hans-Ulrich Weidemann, "Eschatology as Liturgy: Jesus' Resurrection and Johannine Eschatology." In *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, ed. Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) : 276.

²⁹ R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 94-132.

The study interprets the resurrection narratives in John from the cultural worldview of the GaDangme's in general and the Osudoku's in particular. It examines their concept of death and resurrection from the Johannine perspective. This is due to their historical, geographical and socio-cultural worldview which is concomitant to John's narration.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

While it remains a fact that the evangelists wrote from different backgrounds and to a specific audience in order to achieve their intended aims and objectives, they however did not only write a history or biography of Jesus but aimed at presenting faith to the people. They composed their texts to suit their readers who apparently were from diverse cultural backgrounds.³⁰

Due to this, there are different accounts of the resurrection narrative which differ from one evangelist to the other. It is therefore necessary to examine the texts of the various accounts since they contribute greatly to the understanding of the resurrection account. Scholars over the years have attempted to show how the resurrection of Jesus has impacted the life of believers. As a fundamental and central phenomenon to the Christian faith, how is the ordinary believer supposed to comprehend or appreciate this happening in his or her daily walk of faith?

Moreover, how essential is the validity of the resurrection account in shaping the Christian understanding of whom the believer truly represents? Then again, how did

³⁰ Vincent P. Branick, *Understanding the New Testament and its Message: An Introduction* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 158-159.

the post resurrection appearance accounts of Jesus' resurrection communicate the doubts of the early disciples and serve as the basis for their kerygma?

From the scholarly arguments that have flowed so far, the immediate theological problem that quickly arises is: how is the resurrection of Jesus relevant to the believer? To some extent, these two other events, that is, the empty tomb and the post resurrection appearances affirmed the faith of the earlier disciples. In the light of this, one may want to investigate how unique and special John's account of the resurrection narrative is from the other gospels and what impact its interpretation has made on the Christian believer?

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

What message did John intend to communicate to his readers in his account of the resurrection narrative of Jesus? How does the interpretation of John's account of the resurrection narrative engage the cultural worldview of the GaDangme's, particularly the Osudoku's?

1.4 Literature Review

Due to the importance of the resurrection to the Christian faith, many scholarly works have been dedicated to it. A few of those that relate directly to my topic have been reviewed under the following themes discussed below.

1.4.1 Resurrection and the Question of Faith

Sandra M. Schneiders in the article, *Touching the Risen Jesus*, expounds the faith of the believer. For her, the Pharisees saw the blind man healed and the Jews saw Lazarus called forth from the tomb after four days. So one could probe the wounds of the risen Jesus and still not see the signs of his real presence. She however added that, similarly, in post- paschal time, Jesus is available, whether in the Eucharist or scripture or mystical experience, only to faith.³¹

Sandra further advances her position that Mary Magdalene and Thomas the twin episodes explore the personal appropriation by disciples of the new location and the new mode of experience of Jesus, risen bodily and now acting through his ecclesial body. According to her, the category of body, no longer equated with flesh, body that is material in the sense of being a principle of individuation but not in the sense of being a principle of physicality. This is employed by the evangelist to assure the reader that it is Jesus himself who is not only glorified in God's presence but who has returned to us and that we will see him, hear him, touch him, experience his real presence in our lives and our world, through our participation in the life of the ecclesial community.³²

In contributing to the discussion on resurrection and the question of faith, Reuben Zimmerman viewed it from a different lens in his work, *The Narrative Hermeneutics of John 11: Learning with Lazarus How to Understand Death, Life, and Resurrection*. He posed some questions relating to believers own death. He asked,

³¹ Sandra M. Schneiders, "Touching the Risen Jesus: Mary Magdalene and Thomas the Twin in John 20," In *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, ed. Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008): 173.

³² Schneiders, "Touching the Risen Jesus," 175-6.

How should one maintain one's faith in (eternal) life in the face of the reality of death? How should the believer deal with such a situation? In his bid to answer the question, Reuben explains that the resurrection narrative activates a process of understanding. Using the characters as models, readers of John 11 should discover their own position in dealing with death and in their faith in Jesus as the resurrection and the life.³³

Koester develops the discussion; He does not see faith in the resurrection and the post resurrection appearances as straight forward. He analyses the positive connections between seeing and believing at some points in the narrative. The disciples believed when Jesus turned water into wine, some of the people believed when Lazarus was raised from the dead, and Thomas confessed his faith when he saw the risen Jesus (2:11; 11:45; 20:26-28). But there are also many points at which the need to see something extraordinary is problematic, and the signs foster unreliable faith or unbelief. He maintains that Jesus does not trust those whose faith depends on the signs (2:23-25), and his public ministry concludes on a sharply negative note: "Although he had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in him" (12:37) but when the risen Jesus appears to Thomas, he says "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (20:29).³⁴

1.4.2 Motive of the Resurrection in John's Gospel

In the article of Johnny L. Sanders which is titled, "That You may Know Him", he did a comprehensive work on the last three chapters of John's gospel (19-21), which serve as a basis for this work. He started with the death sentence of Jesus (Chapter 19), the

³³ Reuben Zimmerman, "The Narrative Hermeneutics of John 11: Learning with Lazarus How to Understand Death, Life, and Resurrection," In *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, ed. Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008): 98.

³⁴ Koester, "Jesus' Resurrection," 53.

crucifixion, his death on the cross, his burial, resurrection (Empty Tomb) and the post resurrection appearances (Chapter 21). He indicates that the Gospels are not mere history books. They are testimonies concerning the life, death and resurrection of the most unique person ever to set foot on planet Earth. Moreover, the Johannine evangelist did not write his Gospel to give just a systematic account of all that Jesus did, as is stated clearly in the Gospel itself (20:30; 21:25). He purposely wrote his work to bring people to believe in Jesus so that they might experience the marvel of a new way of life (20:31).

He added that the Johannine evangelist was an evangelistic theologian, not a mere newspaper reporter.³⁵ For Sanders, the resurrection of Jesus Christ must be connected with the purpose of the Fourth Gospel. According to him, John states the purpose clearly: “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31).³⁶

Harold W. Attridge affirms the purpose of the fourth gospel in connection with the resurrection of Jesus in his work, *From Discord Rises Meaning: Resurrection Motifs in the Fourth Gospel*. He adds that for the fourth gospel, the resurrection of Christ is the *conditio sine qua non* for the life of faith, but not a warrant for that faith. For him, it is the ultimate σημεῖον in the text, an event that has meaning only as a pointer to a reality beyond itself. For him, the gospel’s critique of a naive belief on the basis of signs hangs as a background warning to the reader who will take the resurrection as

³⁵ Johnny L. Sanders, “The Gospel According to John (19-21): That You May Know Him,” *The Bible Notebook* 7 (2011): 48.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 52.

an event that suffices to compel belief in the Resurrected One.³⁷ Attridge explains further the purpose of the gospel that the overall thrust of the resurrection stories seems to reinforce the realized dimension of the Johannine resurrection theme (1 Cor 15:1-8).³⁸

Similarly, John Painter agrees with Attridge and Sanders on the motive of the resurrection but looked at it in the light of the Logos. He explains that in the resurrection, the life that comes from God in Jesus (the Logos incarnate) proved to be indestructible and communicable. In John, Jesus, who gives up his life that his disciples may go free raises himself from the dead. As the son, through whom the father does all his works, Jesus raises the dead and raises himself (5:17, 19-21). The one in whom was life (1:4), who was the resurrection and the life (11:25); the way, the truth and the life (14:6) is not only alive but is the Lord and giver of life (5:21, 26).

Painter further explains that in following the scene of the coming of Mary Magdalene to the tomb, the evangelist describes Mary's report to Peter and John and their frantic race to find the empty tomb (20:5-8) and the extraordinary manner in which the grave clothes, once on the body of Jesus, were left behind. According to Painter, the manner suggests that someone has come out from within rather than the removal of the clothes from the outside. In this way, the Johannine narrative portrays Jesus as the one in whom the life given power of God was present and that life-giving power was indestructible even by death.³⁹

³⁷ Harold W. Attridge, "From Discord Rises Meaning: Resurrection Motifs in the Fourth Gospel," in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, edited by Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008):18.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

³⁹ Painter, "The Light Shines in Darkness," 43-4

1.4.3 Significance of the Resurrection to the Reader

Considering the formidable task the evangelist had to face in making the resurrection story meaningful to the reader in order to invoke faith and belief in the Jesus who is no longer seen, Koester in his work, *Jesus' Resurrection, The Signs and the Dynamics of Faith in the Gospel According to John*, affirmed that in the past, people saw the incarnate and risen Jesus but that kind of seeing is no longer available. Readers are also given the promise of resurrection and with it, the prospect of seeing the glory of the risen and exalted Jesus for themselves but that kind of seeing remains in the future (17:24). Koester further explains that readers live in the time after Jesus' resurrection and before their own; therefore, the evangelist had the duty of calling people to believe in a Jesus who is no longer seen, but who has risen from the dead and remains alive in the present time of the reader. He added that the reader is called to believe and have faith during the time of "not seeing."⁴⁰

Significantly, Koester discusses two important dimensions of the Johannine approach to the question of faith in the present time. The first in his view is the way the evangelist presents Jesus to the reader through the words of his gospel: People living after the incarnation may not have seen Jesus' signs, yet they have the signs in the written form. Similarly, they may not have seen the risen Jesus, but they hear of his resurrection through the witness of the gospel, and this makes faith possible (20:29-31). Also, when recounting how the earliest followers of Jesus come to believe in his resurrection, the evangelist anticipates how later generations come to resurrection

⁴⁰ Koester, "Jesus' Resurrection," 49

faith. The readers of the gospel see something of themselves in the people described in the narrative.⁴¹

The second dimension, according to Koester, is the recognition that words alone does not evoke faith in the readers. The words about the risen Jesus must be made effective by the risen Jesus. The Spirit that is given to the disciples after Easter, is the means by which Jesus does this. It is the Spirit who brings about the new birth into faith (1:12-13; 3:5-8, 16-18), and the spirit carries its work through the witness that began with the earliest disciples (15:26-27). Conversely, the evangelist's witness to Jesus evokes faith when it is made effective through the Spirit given by the risen Christ.⁴²

Jesper Tang Nielsen, in his work, *Resurrection, Recognition, Reassuring: The Function of Jesus' Resurrection in the Fourth Gospel*, expresses that the Johannine Jesus places the recognition of the resurrection witnesses in relation to a belief that is not grounded in a vision (20: 29). He agrees with Koester that the group that believes without seeing is, of course, the recipients of the gospel. He adds that unlike Thomas and the other disciples in the narrative, they have not seen the resurrected one; hence their belief does not stem from meeting Jesus in his unambiguously divine nature. To him, that is the reason why Jesus praised their belief and called them "blessed" because they accomplished what the earlier disciples did not: believing without seeing.⁴³

Conversely, Karl Barth, writing on the significance of the resurrection of Christ to the Christian faith in his book *Resurrection of the Dead*, establishes a connection between

⁴¹ Koester, "Jesus' Resurrection," 50.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴³ Jesper Tang Nielsen, "Resurrection, Recognition, Reassuring: The Function of Jesus' Resurrection in the Fourth Gospel," In *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, ed. Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008): 203-4.

the Christian faith and the resurrection of Jesus. He points out that Christianity without the resurrection is ‘nonsense’ and asserts that the justice of God is manifested not only in the resurrection of Jesus but in the general Christian belief in the resurrection of the dead.⁴⁴

Barth argues that Paul writing to the Corinthian believers deduced serious implications that the faith in Christ’s resurrection will have on the Corinthian disciples. Barth contends that the meaning of this historical fact, that is, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, “stands and falls with the resurrection of the dead generally.” He holds the position that, if the resurrection of the dead generally is denied, there can be no special meaning to the resurrection of Jesus. In Barth’s own words, “that is our hope; the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus consists in this, that the resurrection is also the divine horizon also of our existence. Life and the world are finite. God is the end. Hence he is also the beginning.”⁴⁵ Barth sees in Paul an understanding of the resurrection of Jesus as the most tangible reality which undergirds all other reality.

In conclusion, the review of these relevant literatures from the various scholarly works established that the resurrection of Jesus plays a very significant role in building the faith of the believer. However, some of the scholars focused on verifying the historicity of Jesus’s resurrection account without due consideration of the theological import it has for Christian believers, an area that this work seeks to explore. The point nonetheless is that John’s enthusiastic concentration on the resurrection dwelt more on building the believer’s faith rather than proving Jesus’

⁴⁴ Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 44.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

resurrection. Scholars like Karl Barth, Jesper Tang Nielsen and Craig R. Koester emphasize this in their work. Altogether, they point out the need for believers to have faith in Jesus. Their faith should not only be based on their physical encounter with him as did the other disciples, but even more, on their spiritual relationship with him. Reading John's gospel without giving thought on the theological implication it has, as some scholars did is actually being short-sighted in one's analysis. This makes their interpretation of the resurrection account limited. It is for this reason that this exegetical study is significant in augmenting these other studies to help throw more light on the subject of the resurrection in John for the contemporary reader.

1.5 Methodology

The researcher used the literary critical method for the exegetical analysis. This method, according to Randolph Tate, is an explication of a text that attempts to understand the intention and accomplishment of the author by analyzing the compositional structural elements of the text.⁴⁶ Under this method, I used the Narrative approach which is the analysis of the narrative content within the context of relationship between author, text and readers.⁴⁷ The researcher chose this method because it is primarily oriented on the reader and the way in which the text makes them cooperate in deciphering the meaning.⁴⁸ In addition, because the text under consideration is a narrative, using this method enabled me to properly analyze the text following the sequences and plots in it.

⁴⁶ Randolph W. Tate, *Interpreting the Bible: Hand Book for Terms and Methods* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2006), 199.

⁴⁷ Randolph W. Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2008), 336.

⁴⁸ Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourguin, *How to Read Bible Stories* (London: SMC Press, 1997), 7.

I chose as my theoretical framework the speech act theory proposed by John Langshaw Austin. He formulated a method to describe a sentence in terms of the speech situation where it is uttered: by means of associated linguistic conventions, the speaker, with an associated intention, actually performs an act to the hearer, which induces a certain response from the hearer. The speech act theory as explained by Austin is an identification of a present speech with the speech situation indicated by a performative sentence.⁴⁹

Jeannine K. Brown expanded Austin's theory by stating that 'verbal utterances not only say things; they also do things.'⁵⁰ She adds that an utterance has locution which is, what is said by a person, an illocution, which refers to what is accomplished by what the person said and the intended effect inherent in what is said as perlocution.⁵¹ This assertion was also agreed to by Eugene Botha by saying that it is a theory of language use and its effect.⁵²

This theory is relevant as the framework for my research because it focuses on the performative aspect of a text. The biblical exegete seeks to comprehend meaning, his aim therefore is to tease the original intent of the author; as Botha intimates, that 'language and words are not neutral carriers of meaning but actually have effect and achieve'.⁵³ Also, Jesus' public ministry involves both speech and action which John refers to as signs. Koester argues that both the signs and resurrection appearances are

⁴⁹ Austin, John L, *How to Do Things with Words*, (Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 1956), 175-204.

⁵⁰ Jeannine K. Brown, *Scripture as Communication: Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 32.

⁵¹ Brown, *Scripture as Communication*, 32.

⁵² Eugene Botha, "Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation," *Neotestamentica* 41, no. 2 (2007): 275.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 282.

forms of action that are extraordinary and yet visible to the eye.⁵⁴ In the Johannine gospel, the sign that concludes Jesus' public ministry is raising Lazarus from the dead, an act that prepares for Jesus' own death and resurrection, as well as anticipating the future resurrection of believers (11:4, 25-26). This theory is therefore suitable for studying the resurrection of Jesus and how it contributes in building faith among Christians.

1.6 Organization of the Chapters

The research is structured into five chapters. The first chapter discusses the general introduction to the research which involves the background of the study on the resurrection narrative (an overview to the topic), the statement of the problem, methodology, literature review, among others.

The second chapter looks at the exegesis of the text which first begins with the delimitation of the text as a unit for the study, structure of the text (John 20:1-31), textual analysis and synthesis, and the text in communicative perspective. The textual analysis focuses on a detail analysis of semantics, phrases and sentences within the pericope. It again examines how the compositional structure of the text contributes in arriving at the intended meaning of the author.

Chapter three deals with Jesus' rising from the dead in John's gospel. It further discusses the related concepts to death and resurrection in John and the reader's role in the narrative.

Chapter four draws a comparison between the concept of death and resurrection in John and among the Dangmes. It considers the origin and history of the GaDangmes,

⁵⁴ Koester, "Jesus' Resurrection," 52.

death and afterlife from the traditional Ghanaian worldview, death and resurrection from the Osudoku perspective. It again examines some related concepts of death and resurrection in John in order to establish the understanding of the resurrection among the Osudoku tribe. Finally, it outlines the relevance of the resurrection to the contemporary Osudoku Christian. The fifth Chapter which is the last chapter deals with the summary, conclusive remarks and some recommendations for future study on the topic.



CHAPTER TWO

EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF JOHN 20:1-31

2.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses John 20:1-31, which is the culmination of the entire Johannine passion narrative. The passion narrative which begins with the arrest of Jesus in 18:1 and ends with the post resurrection appearances in 21:1 forms part of the section of John's Gospel, popularly called the Book of Glory. The exegesis begins with delimitation of the text, followed by a discussion of its structure; it concludes with a syntactic and semantic study of the constituent elements.

2.2 Delimitation of the Text

A careful study and analysis of the gospel reveals that 19:28-30 presents the death of Jesus followed by the resurrection narrative in 20:1-29. In the preceding verse (19:27), Jesus entrusted his mother to the beloved apostle who received her into his home. The vv. 28-42 narrates the suffering of Jesus on the cross and his final death. This illustrates a clear boundary of the resurrection narrative, placing it within a complete block for analysis.

Moreover, the setting in 20:1-29 (the resurrection narrative) is different from the preceding text 19: 28-42 (suffering and death narrative) and the concluding text 21:1-25 (the post resurrection narrative). Schneiders holds the view that the resurrection narrative in John is introduced with Mary Magdalene's coming to the tomb in darkness and finding the stone taken out of the tomb (vv.1-2).⁵⁵ From this point on, the resurrection account continued steadily up to v. 29 where the resurrected Jesus

⁵⁵Schneiders, "The Structure and Dynamics", 163.

encountered the doubting Thomas. This is an indication that the setting is different from the previous ones. Insofar as the setting of the narrative in the subsequent verses changed, it constitutes a unit.

In addition, the last two verses of the text (30-31) are considered by many Johannine scholars as the purpose of the gospel. Perkins comments on these two verses as similar to the conclusions in John 21:24-25 and 1 John 5:13. They appear to have stood as the conclusion to the gospel before the edition which appended chapter 21.⁵⁶

These verses therefore highlight the crux of John's message which is linked directly to the resurrection of Jesus. In the light of these observations, I consider the passage (20:1-31) as a unit within the larger block of the passion, death and resurrection narrative of Jesus in the gospel according to John.

2.3 Structure of John 20:1-31

Studies on John 20 propose different structures which include chronological and geographical, numerological and verbal, narrative and dramatic, theological and spiritual ones, many of which are complementary rather than contradictory, even though they lead to different interpretations.⁵⁷ Many Johannine scholars have shared their views on the structures.⁵⁸ According to Burge, for instance, the text of John is clearly made up of sources pieced together to form a unified narrative. At a careful

⁵⁶ PHEME PERKINS, "The Gospel according to John", in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy (Bath: The Bath Press, 1996), 984.

⁵⁷ SCHNEIDERS, "The Structure and Dynamics", 162.

⁵⁸ For an overview of the different structures, refer to the following: Schneiders, "The Structure and Dynamics", 163-4; Gary M. Burge, *Interpreting the Gospel of John: Guides to New Testament Exegesis* (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1998), 83-5; John Painter, "The Light Shines in Darkness: Creation, Incarnation, and Resurrection in John", In *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, ed. Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008): 22-24; Udo Schnelle, "Cross and Resurrection in the Gospel of John: The Hermeneutical Perspective," In *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, ed. Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008): 145-6.

look, one can discern seams where these sources have been stitched together. Some of them are rough, rugged signs of an awkward assembly.⁵⁹ In the Jerome biblical commentary, Pheme Perkins' explanation of the outline is not different from the other scholars mentioned.⁶⁰ He explains that the outline of the gospel is divided into four major blocks beginning with the prologue, followed by the two major divisions (The book of signs and the book of glory) and concludes with the epilogue.

The passage for the study falls within the third block which includes the resurrection narrative (20: 1-31) and proposed six steps for the structure, considering the movements of the various activities in the passage. John Painter on the other hand, proposed the following outline: Prologue (1:1-18); The quest for the Messiah (1:19-4:54); The rejection of the Messiah (5:1-12:50); The farewell of the Messiah (13:1-17-26); The death of the Messiah (18:1-19:42); The resurrection of the Messiah and conclusion (20:1-29 [30-31]); Epilogue: Resurrection appearance and unfinished business (21:1-25).⁶¹

In the view of Udo Schnelle,⁶² the structure of John 20 is marked by a twofold movement: In the first movement, there is an unmistakable heightening of the presence of the Risen One as crucified in a new, inaccessible corporeality: While Peter and the Beloved disciple see only the linen cloths in the empty tomb, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene without her being allowed to touch him. Jesus then shows the disciples the wounds in his hands and side which Thomas may actually touch in order clearly to grasp the identity of the crucified with the risen one. The second

⁵⁹ Burge, *Interpreting the Gospel of John*, 82.

⁶⁰ Perkins, "The Gospel According to John", 950.

⁶¹ Painter, "The Light Shines in Darkness," 22.

⁶² Schnelle, "Cross and Resurrection", 145.

movement, for Schnelle, is an opposite development and can be noticed with regard to the certainty of faith: While the beloved disciple believes without seeing, Mary Magdalene believes only when directly addressed by Jesus (20:16). By means of this opposite development, the beloved disciple embodies in an ideal way the principle, which is now also applicable to the community of hearers and readers outside the text: Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe (20:29b). As the study focuses on building faith from the resurrection experience, I adopted the structure proposed by some scholars which I felt would enable me do a systematic analysis of the text to arrive at the intended objective. The text may be divided into the follow structure:

Vv. 1-2: Introduction

Vv. 3-10: The Empty Tomb

Vv. 11-18: The Lord Appears to Mary Magdalene

Vv. 19-23: The Lord Appears to the Disciples

Vv. 24-29: The Lord Appears to Thomas

Vv. 30-31: Conclusion and Purpose of the Gospel

2.4 Textual Analysis of John 20:1-31

This section analyses the text following the structure provided. It examines how words, phrases, clauses, sentences, as well as the syntactic arrangement of the text are employed to expose the intended meaning of the author. In this exercise, the Greek text was analyzed following the structure provided in line with the various grammatical functions in the text to arrive at an informed understanding of the text.

2.4.1 Introduction to the Text (vv.1-2)

Τῇ δὲ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ ἔρχεται πρωτὶ σκοτίας ἔτι οὔσης εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον καὶ βλέπει τὸν λίθον ἠρμένον ἐκ τοῦ μνημείου.⁶³ τρέχει οὖν καὶ ἔρχεται πρὸς Σίμωνα Πέτρον καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἄλλον μαθητὴν ὃν ἐφίλει ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Ἦσαν τὸν κύριον ἐκ τοῦ μνημείου καὶ οὐκ οἶδαμεν ποῦ ἔθηκαν αὐτόν.

It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb⁶³ and came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb,' she said, 'and we don't know where they have put him.'

Verses 1-2, where Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb on the first day of the week,

(Τῇ δὲ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων) introduces the narrative. This 'day', according to Perkins, links the Johannine story with the earliest Christian tradition, that the tomb was found empty on that third day after Jesus' crucifixion. The evangelist may have added darkness to incorporate the scene into the light symbolism of the gospel. Some exegetes think that this short episode represents the most primitive tradition of the finding of the empty tomb, since the stone is removed away, but there are no elements of angelophany in either this story or the visit by Peter.⁶³ The indication of the time of the day focuses on the fact that it was still dark (πρωτὶ σκοτίας).⁶⁴ Mary Magdalene sees that the stone has been removed (τὸν λίθον ἠρμένον) from the tomb and reports to Simon Peter that, "they have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have put him"(20:2).

The use of the perfect passive ἠρμένον, according to Daniel J. Harrington, hints at the action of God. For Morris, the verb has the meaning 'lift up', 'take up' and is not the word that should have been anticipated. When the stone was put in place, it was 'rolled'. Morris adds that John may imply violence, all the more so since the

⁶³ Perkins, *The Gospel according to John*, 983.

⁶⁴ Daniel J. Harrington, ed., *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina 4 (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 518.

preposition following ἠρμένον is ἐκ, which seems to imply that the stone was “lifted out of the groove across the entrance of the tomb”.

The perfect form is unusual and may be intended to give an air of finality.⁶⁵ The use of the adjective adverb, πρῶτ̃, George R. Beasley-Murray indicates, is variously interpreted in the gospels. The evangelist Mark, for example defines it “the sun having risen” (16:12), Luke, “at deep dawn” (24:11), Matthew with an ambiguous phrase which may mean “as it was dawning towards the first day” (28:11) and John, “early, while it was still dark” (20:1b).⁶⁶ ‘They have taken.’ The verb indicative aorist, third person plural ἤραυ, may be referring to the soldiers who crucified Jesus or the Jewish authorities, particularly the Sanhedrin.⁶⁷

Donald Arthur Carson explains that the robbing of graves was a crime sufficiently common that the emperor Claudius (A.D 41-54) eventually ordered capital punishment to be meted out to those convicted of destroying tombs, removing bodies or even displacing the sealing stones. Carson concludes that it is not surprising that the sight of the removed stone prompted Mary Magdalene to draw the conclusion she did.⁶⁸ Leon Morris believes that the perfect tense would have been expected instead of the aorist ἤραυ but also adds that the perfect of the verb is rare, the only example in John being the participle in v. 1. It appears that the aorist was sometimes used in the sense that is associated with the perfect.⁶⁹ Mary Magdalene announces that the body

⁶⁵Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1995), 774.

⁶⁶George R. Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John 2nd ed*, in *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 366.

⁶⁷Tokunboh Adeyemo, “The Gospel according to John,” in *Africa Bible Commentary* ed. Samuel M. Ngewa (Nairobi: Word Alive Publishers, 2006), 1294.

⁶⁸Donald Arthur Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, in *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 636.

⁶⁹Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 734.

has been taken away by an unnamed plural ‘they’. Harrington expressed the view that Mary associates the two disciples with her lack of faith by creating another plural ‘we.’ For Mary Magdalene, there are two groups involved: the ‘they’ who have taken away the corpse of the Lord, and the ‘we’ who do not know οὐκ οἶδαμεν where they have laid it.

The verb οἶδαμεν marks the problem as not merely personal but communal, even though Mary was alone at the tomb.⁷⁰ The plural in v. 2 suggests that Mary Magdalene was not the only person at the tomb but Bultmann has a different view. He was convinced that οὐκ οἶδαμεν is not a genuine plural, rather it reflects an oriental mode of speech whereby plural can be used for singular.⁷¹ Morris is of the view that there were other women associated with Mary Magdalene. For Morris, a woman would scarcely have ventured outside the city alone at such an hour with Jerusalem crowded with visitors for the feast, visitors who might be of uncertain character and who might be bivouacking anywhere.⁷²

Perkins argues that John may have reduced the number to Mary Magdalene alone in order to fit the tradition in which she sees the risen Lord.⁷³ For Randolph Vincent G. Tasker, mention is made only of Mary, partly because she was the spokesperson of the group and partly because the evangelist intends to give, in greater and more personal detail than the other gospels, an account of the Lord’s appearance to her.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Schneiders, “The Structure and Dynamics”, 163.

⁷¹ Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John*, 371.

⁷² Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 734.

⁷³ Perkins, *The Gospel according to John*, 983.

⁷⁴ Randolph Vincent G. Tasker, *The Gospel according to John*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 224.

2.4.2 The Empty Tomb (vv. 3-10)

³ Ἐξῆλθεν οὖν ὁ Πέτρος καὶ ὁ ἄλλος μαθητῆς καὶ ἦρχοντο εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον. ⁴ ἔτρεχον δὲ οἱ δύο ὁμοῦ· καὶ ὁ ἄλλος μαθητῆς προέδραμιν τάχιον τοῦ Πέτρου καὶ ἦλθεν πρῶτος εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον, ⁵ καὶ παρακύψας βλέπει κείμενα τὰ ὀθόνια, οὐ μέντοι εἰσῆλθεν. ⁶ ἔρχεται οὖν καὶ Σίμων Πέτρος ἀκολουθῶν αὐτῷ καὶ εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον, καὶ θεωρεῖ τὰ ὀθόνια κείμενα, ⁷ καὶ τὸ σουδάριον, ὃ ἦν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ, οὐ μετὰ τῶν ὀθονίων κείμενον ἀλλὰ χωρὶς ἐντετυλιγμένον εἰς ἓνα τόπον. ⁸ τότε οὖν εἰσῆλθεν καὶ ὁ ἄλλος μαθητῆς ὁ ἐλθὼν πρῶτος εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον καὶ εἶδεν καὶ ἐπίστευσεν. ⁹ οὐδέπω γὰρ ἤδεισαν τὴν γραφὴν ὅτι δεῖ αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῆναι. ¹⁰ ἀπῆλθον οὖν πάλιν πρὸς αὐτοὺς οἱ μαθηταί.

³ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to their homes.

In this episode, Simon Peter and the beloved disciple run to the tomb. Schneiders argues that the evangelist carefully structures this story so that Peter enters the tomb first and sees its content: the grave clothes and the face veil, the σουδάριον of Jesus lying not with the clothes but carefully wrapped up and definitively put aside. The beloved disciple enters second and sees what he did not see from the outside when he first peered in. From outside he had seen only the grave clothes. Inside, he sees also the face veil and that he “saw and believed” (εἶδεν καὶ ἐπίστευσεν), an expression which John uses for the appropriate faith response to a sign.⁷⁵ Though the evangelist appears responsible for inserting the figure of the beloved disciple into this story, it is possible that one version of the tradition had an unspecified group of disciples visit the tomb.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Schneiders, “The Structure and Dynamics,” 164.

⁷⁶ Perkins, *The Gospel according to John*. 983.

This passage begins with the third person singular ἐξῆλθεν, with Peter first as subject, followed by ὁ ἄλλος μαθητής which according to Beasley-Murray, is a frequent construction in the gospel. The following ἦρχοντο is also common usage and should not be made the basis of conjecture that the reference to ‘the other disciple’ was added later.⁷⁷ ἦρχοντο pictures the action as in progress, “they were coming,” or perhaps, ‘they began to come.’ Much has been made of the running to the tomb, and it has sometimes been called a ‘race’.

Moloney maintains that there is no race, but the two disciples turn their backs on the situation in which they found themselves, through association with the unfaith of Mary Magdalene, and moved towards the place of the action of God: an empty tomb. At this scene, Simon Peter, now following the other disciple, arrives and penetrates farther into the tomb.⁷⁸ ‘The two were running together,’ but for Leon Morris, the use of the adjective adverb, ὁμοῦ in this context must be taken in the sense ‘at the same time’ rather than ‘in company with each other,’ for Peter evidently started out without the other, and the other passed Peter and arrived first.⁷⁹

The other disciple outrunning Peter to the tomb is given numerous interpretations by Johannine scholars (v. 4). In Beasley-Murray’s view, the evangelist may well have wished to hint that this was not simply because the beloved disciple was a faster runner than Peter; the beloved of the Lord, loved him especially and love made him more fleet of foot.⁸⁰ Perkins shares the same view of Beasley-Murray by indicating that just as the beloved disciple was closest to Jesus at the supper, so his exemplary

⁷⁷ Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John*, 366.

⁷⁸ Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 519.

⁷⁹ Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 735.

⁸⁰ Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John*, 372.

love for Jesus leads him to arrive at the tomb first but he did not enter.⁸¹ In v. 5a, παρακύψας, ‘stooping down and looking in,’ seems to have the nuance of ‘peering into’, because there is something important which the viewer desires to see even though it may be difficult for him to see it and grasp its significance at once.⁸² The beloved disciple looking into the tomb without entering in, in v. 5b, has a theological implication. Perkins intimates that by delaying his entry into the tomb, the evangelist makes the beloved disciple’s affirmation of faith the climax of the visit.⁸³

In the vv. 6-7, Simon Peter arrived, followed the beloved disciple, and went into the tomb and saw the linen clothes lying there, καὶ θεωρεῖ τὰ ὀθόνια κείμενά. He not only sees the ὀθόνια but the napkin used to wrap around Jesus’ head (τὸ σουδάριον). Morris gives detailed description to the σουδάριον. He explains that σουδάριον is a loan word from the Latin *sudarium*, a cloth for wiping off sweat (*sudor*); it denotes a cloth more or less like handkerchief. In the context of the evangelist, it apparently signifies a jaw band, a cloth that went “round the face and over the head” to hold the jaw in position.⁸⁴ It is lying apart, carefully folded and placed on one side. Lazarus came forth from the tomb still wrapped in the clothing of death, his face still covered with the σουδάριον (11:44), the risen Jesus had no such trappings.

According to Moloney, another passive voice has been introduced just as in v.1 to indicate that the napkin that covered Jesus’ head (τὸ σουδάριον) had been folded (ἐντετυλιγμένον) and that it was now lying to one side, separated from the cloths used to cover his body (τὰ ὀθόνια), reinforces the impression that God has entered the

⁸¹ Perkins, *The Gospel according to John*, 983.

⁸² Tasker, *The Gospel according to John*, 224.

⁸³ Perkins, *The Gospel according to John*, 983.

⁸⁴ Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 735.

story.⁸⁵ Simon Peter enters the tomb and sees the evidence but nothing is said of his response. The napkin not lying with the linen cloths in the tomb, for Perkins, is a sign that Jesus' body had not been stolen.⁸⁶

Beasley-Murray posits that the apologetic significance of this narrative could have a different slant: in Jewish eyes, the testimony of women was not acceptable; hence their report of the empty tomb was of small account. That the two disciples should verify the empty tomb was important, since they could fulfill the Jewish requirement of valid testimony according to Deut 19:15. For Beasley-Murray, the evangelist had penned the story of Lazarus and recorded how Lazarus, at the bidding of Jesus, came forth from the tomb, with the wrappings of the dead still binding him hand and foot and the napkin on his head; he had to be freed to take up life again in this world. Jesus on the contrary, left his wrappings in the grave as a sign of his resurrection into the life of God's eternal order.⁸⁷

The v. 8 begins with the adjective adverb, τότε. Tasker explains that τότε is not the inferential 'so then', as it is in v. 10, but temporal. It was at that moment that the beloved disciple, encouraged by the example of Peter, entered the tomb for the first time; and on the evidence of what he now saw, without having had any encounter with the risen Lord (καὶ εἶδεν καὶ ἐπίστευσεν), believed that the Lord's body had not been removed by human hands but raised by divine intervention. Morris played on the verb εἶδεν of ὁράω. For Morris, this is the third different verb for 'see' in this chapter. βλέπει is used of Mary Magdalene in v. 1 and of the beloved disciple in v. 5. θεωρεῖ

⁸⁵ Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 520.

⁸⁶ Perkins, *The Gospel according to John*, 983.

⁸⁷ Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John*, 372.

of Peter in v. 6 and εἶδεν in v. 8. Morris adds that it is however probable that θεωρεῖ in v. 6 denotes a more prolonged scrutiny than does βλέπει in vv. 1 and 5.⁸⁸

Tasker adds that the beloved disciple is thus in a real sense, the forerunner of those counted ‘blessed’ in v. 29, the innumerable company who ‘have not yet seen and yet have believed’.⁸⁹ Paralleling the experience of several characters in the opening pages of the gospel who moved from no faith through partial faith to full faith, the foundational disciples of the Johannine community and the model of the Johannine discipleship has moved from no faith (vv. 1-2) through partial faith (vv. 4-5) into the fullness of resurrection faith due to the faith of the beloved disciple, εἶδεν καὶ ἐπίστευσεν. The question that one will hurriedly ask is what did the beloved disciple believe? What he believed was that Jesus has risen as he foretold.⁹⁰

According to Beasley-Murray, for the beloved disciple, the mystery was of a different dimension. On entering the tomb, he saw not only the wrappings but their significance. In the gospel, however, πιστεύω when used absolutely, as in this context means genuine faith. The seeing and believing in the empty tomb is akin to the seeing and believing the signs of Jesus.⁹¹ He saw the vanquished signs of death: the empty tomb, the empty cloths including the σουδάριον. For Moloney, the sight of the things led the beloved disciple to faith.⁹² ἐπίστευσεν, the indicative aorist active and 3rd person singular of πιστεύω, appears only once in the text(v. 8). Schneiders states that in this episode, both Simon Peter and the beloved disciple see the face cloth. Schneiders adds that in this text, the disciples are offered as sign, an object that must

⁸⁸ Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 736.

⁸⁹ Tasker, *The Gospel according to John*, 224.

⁹⁰ Adeyemo, *The Gospel according to John*, 1294.

⁹¹ Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John*, 373.

⁹² Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 520.

be interpreted as revelatory, probably in terms of the face veil of Moses which he wore to shield the Israelites from the glory of his face but removed when he dealt “face to face” with God (Exod 34:29-35).⁹³

The finale of the scene (v. 9), “for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead,” in Schneiders opinion, has defied exegetes. She asked, so if not the resurrection, what did the beloved disciple believe? For her, the reader now has the beginning of the answer to the question, “where is the Lord?” He is with God, He is glorified.⁹⁴ Moloney shares the same view as Schneiders on the position of the Johannine reader in the v. 9. He comments on the word οὐδέπω to indicate that the disciples were not yet aware of the scriptures that said, Jesus must rise from the dead.⁹⁵ The observation that the disciples did not know or understand the scripture is so unexpected after v. 8 that some scholars have pronounced it a scribal gloss. Beasley-Murray posits that the introduction of the verb ἤδειςαι, shows that the ignorance of the scriptures applied to both disciples; in this context, however, it appears to emphasize the disparity between the faith of one and the incomprehension of the other.⁹⁶

In my analysis of v. 10, I realized that the English translation of the Greek text did not reveal its original meaning of the disciples’ returning to their homes. The English has, “then the disciples returned to their homes” (NRSV), while the Greek reads ἀπῆλθον οὖν πάλιν πρὸς αὐτοὺς οἱ μαθηταί (GNT). The point of departure here is with the phrase, “to their homes.” In 19:27, the evangelist used εἰς τὰ ἴδια which is translated

⁹³ Schneiders, “The Structure and Dynamics,” 164.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 164-65.

⁹⁵ Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 520.

⁹⁶ Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John*, 373.

“into one’s own” but ἴδια (one’s own) is in the plural and in 20:10, is rendered as πρὸς αὐτοὺς (to themselves) which is also in the plural. Hence, in Beasley-Murray’s view, the beloved disciple took the news of the empty tomb to Mary, the mother of Jesus in his own house (19:27b).⁹⁷

2.4.3 The Lord Appears to Mary Magdalene (vv. 11-18)

¹¹ Μαρία δὲ εἰστήκει πρὸς τῷ μνημείῳ ἔξω κλαίουσα. ὡς οὖν ἔκλαιεν, παρέκυψεν εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον ¹² καὶ θεωρεῖ δύο ἀγγέλους ἐν λευκοῖς καθεζομένους, ἓνα πρὸς τῇ κεφαλῇ καὶ ἓνα πρὸς τοῖς ποσίν, ὅπου ἔκειτο τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ. ¹³ καὶ λέγουσιν αὐτῇ ἐκεῖνοι, Γύναι, τί κλαίεις; λέγει αὐτοῖς ὅτι Ἦραν τὸν κύριόν μου, καὶ οὐκ οἶδα ποῦ ἔθηκαν αὐτόν. ¹⁴ ταῦτα εἰποῦσα ἐστράφη εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω καὶ θεωρεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐστῶτα καὶ οὐκ ᾔδει ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστίν. ¹⁵ λέγει αὐτῇ Ἰησοῦς, Γύναι, τί κλαίεις; τίνα ζητεῖς; ἐκείνη δοκοῦσα ὅτι ὁ κηπουρός ἐστιν λέγει αὐτῷ, Κύριε, εἰ σὺ ἐβάστασας αὐτόν, εἰπέ μοι ποῦ ἔθηκας αὐτόν, καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸν ἀρῶ. ¹⁶ λέγει αὐτῇ Ἰησοῦς, Μαριάμ. στραφείσα ἐκείνη λέγει αὐτῷ Ἑβραϊστί, Ραββουνι (ὃ λέγεται Διδάσκαλε). ¹⁷ λέγει αὐτῇ Ἰησοῦς, Μὴ μου ἅπτου, οὐπω γὰρ ἀναβέβηκα πρὸς τὸν πατέρα· πορεύου δὲ πρὸς τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου καὶ εἰπέ αὐτοῖς, Ἐναβαίνω πρὸς τὸν πατέρα μου καὶ πατέρα ὑμῶν καὶ θεὸν μου καὶ θεὸν ὑμῶν. ¹⁸ ἔρχεται Μαριάμ ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ ἀγγέλλουσα τοῖς μαθηταῖς ὅτι Ἐώρακα τὸν κύριον, καὶ ταῦτα εἶπεν αὐτῇ.

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹² and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.’ ¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?’ Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, ‘Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.’ ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabbouni!’ (Which means Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her ‘Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord’; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

This passage (vv. 11-18), Thomas Brodie argues, is sometimes seen as reflecting editorial confusion, particularly because it is not clear how Mary Magdalene came back to the tomb, and also because she seems to turn twice to Jesus. For Brodie, the

⁹⁷ Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John*, 374.

scene may be described as one of recognition and as such, it has some affinity with the Greco-Roman recognition scenes which tell of gods being recognized as they move among humans. Brodie therefore divided this action into three stages; the sighting of the two angels (11-13), the sighting of Jesus (14-15) and the recognition of Jesus (16-18).⁹⁸

In these texts, Mary Magdalene again comes to the tomb as she weeps and bends over to look into the tomb. Schneiders states that, this scene is redolent with allusions to the garden of the first creation and especially the place of trysting of the Song of Solomon, the wedding song of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel. In the tomb Mary sees not grave clothes and face veil but two angels sitting, one at the head and one at the feet of the place where the body of Jesus had lain. For Schneiders, this verbal picture, and even the words, recall the golden throne, the “mercy seat,” of the Ark of the Covenant (Ex 37:6-9) which was guarded by two cherubim, one at either end of “the meeting place of God and humans.”⁹⁹

The v. 11 contains the conjunction superordinate (δε), Μαρία δὲ εἰστήκει πρὸς τῷ μνημείῳ ἔξω κλαίουσα. In Moloney’s opinion, Mary standing outside the tomb in tears shows her continued inability to believe or understand what might have happened. She matches the initiative of both the beloved disciple and Peter as she stoops and peers into the tomb for the first time. Moloney believes that the presence of the angels (ἄγγελοι) are further evidence that God has entered the story.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel According to John*, A Literary and Theological Commentary (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1997), 564.

⁹⁹ Schneiders, “The Structure and Dynamics,” 165.

¹⁰⁰ Harrington, *The Gospel of John*. 525.

Beasley-Murray agrees with Moloney on the interpretation of the presence of the angels. He adds that the presence of the angels is a witness that the powers of heaven have been at work and that their position at the tomb, one at the head and the other at the feet where Jesus had lain, is a reminder of the silent testimony of the grave cloths but of another order; it witnesses that God, not robbers, has taken Jesus.¹⁰¹

Again, with the presence of the angels, Schnelle states that they signal an event that transcends natural understanding.¹⁰² In v. 13, the angels questioned Mary. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?". Mary answers with almost the same words she used to tell the disciples of the open tomb: "they" have taken away the body of Jesus, whom she calls her "Lord" (κύριόν μου). In this context, there is a slight change from her earlier words. In v. 2, she associated the disciples with her lack of faith and knowledge, claiming that 'we' did not know οὐκ οἶδαμεν where the body has been laid and in this verse, she states "I do not know" (οὐκ οἶδα). According to Moloney, the shift from the plural οὐκ οἶδαμεν to the singular (οὐκ οἶδα) accurately reflects the present situation of the characters in the unfolding story.¹⁰³

In v. 15, Jesus repeats the question asked by the angels but adds, "Whom do you seek?" recalling similar questions from earlier part of the narrative (1:41; 18:4). There is an irony here, the one whom she seeks rather asks her whom she is seeking but her lack of faith is intensified as she mistakenly identifies Jesus as the gardener. With deepening irony, the earlier "they" now becomes "you". Jesus, the supposed gardener, is asked where he, taken as a representative of the violent "they" who crucified Jesus,

¹⁰¹ Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John*, 374.

¹⁰² Udo Schnelle, "Cross and Resurrection," 144.

¹⁰³ Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 525.

has laid his body. Again, here is another irony, the one whose body she is seeking is asked for a solution to the mystery of the empty tomb.

Brodie elucidates, with further irony, Mary regards Jesus as the gardener to be addressed as ‘sir’ (Κύριε) and her reply, instead of being more developed, is rather less. She no longer says that she is looking for “my Lord”; now she simply refers, rather confusedly to “him” and she sees him as passive and dead. Brodie further explains that there is a yet more irony here; ἐβάστασας was the verb used to describe Jesus as “carrying his own cross” and thus expressing, even in the face of death, his sovereign freedom.¹⁰⁴ It is clear in this verse that Mary still persists in her belief that the body has been “taken away”. She said to the supposed gardener, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away” (λέγει αὐτῷ, Κύριε, εἰ σὺ ἐβάστασας αὐτόν, εἰπέ μοι ποῦ ἔθηκας αὐτόν, καὶ γὰρ αὐτόν ἀρῶ).

Moloney emphasizes this verse by explaining that there is no suggestion of resurrection and there is no recognition of the risen one. For him, Mary Magdalene remains in a situation of unbelief as she concerns herself with the removal of the corpse. Moloney adds that Mary Magdalene’s unbelief has been described with considerable detail across vv. 1-2 and 11-15.¹⁰⁵ Tasker shares similar view with Moloney on the position of Mary in the garden. He argues that Mary is convinced that someone has removed the body; and it seems to her most probable that the gardener has done so, for he was the only person likely to visit the garden at such an early hour.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 566.

¹⁰⁵ Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 525.

¹⁰⁶ Tasker, *The Gospel according to John*, 225.

Fulfilling the promise made in the good shepherd discourse (John 10:3, 14), Jesus calls Mary by her name, Μαριάμ. Beasley-Murray postulates that Jesus calling Mary by her name, is a sign that the ‘shepherd’ had called his ‘sheep’ by name and the sheep heard and joyfully responded. With this action, Jesus thereby re-established the personal relationship that Mary thought she had forever lost; only now it was to be on a deeper level than had been possible when Mary knew Jesus as “Rabbi.”¹⁰⁷ She turns again, recognizes him and ‘knows’ him, addressing him with the Aramaic name used throughout Jesus’ ministry, Ραββουνι, “my master.”

Moloney’s position on Jesus’ appearance to Mary in this text is to aid the reader. For him, the reader is made to recognize that Mary has made a partial confession of faith. Mary recognizes Jesus as the rabbi whom she had known throughout the ministry. Moloney adds that both by Mary’s address to Jesus as a teacher (Διδάσκαλε) and physical contact, she is tries to rapture the past. Like Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, used to exemplify the journey of faith at the beginning of the story, Mary Magdalene has arrived at a partial faith, a belief in the Jesus who best responded to her present hopes and needs.¹⁰⁸ Brodie comments on the verse 16 of the text as a reversal where Jesus said to her, “Mary” and she “turned” but this time, there is no “backwards” and her address of recognition, “Rabbouni” (Teacher) shows that she is emerging from her grief.¹⁰⁹ Beasley-Murray elucidates further Mary’s address of Jesus as Rabbouni (Ραββουνι).

He states that in the old Jewish literature, *Rabbouni* (an alternative form of the term) is hardly ever used in reference to men, never in addressing them but is reserved for

¹⁰⁷ Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John*. 375.

¹⁰⁸ Harrington, *The Gospel of John*. 526.

¹⁰⁹ Brodie, *The Gospel according to John*, 566.

address to God. Mary's use of the term therefore is parallel to Thomas' confession of faith in v. 28. He argues that it indicates greater respect and deference than the simple form, and adds that John is quite correct in supposing that a woman would use this form, whereas male disciples use the simple *rabbi*. Beasley-Murray adds that *Rabbouni* is a caritative of *Rabbi*, implying "my dear (or little) *rabbi*." For him, the evangelist translates Mary's use of it simply as "Teacher" (Διδάσκαλε) and that according to him, suits the context perfectly and should be accepted.¹¹⁰

Most Johannine scholars have considered v. 17 as one of the most perplexing of the gospel. Reimund Bieringer opines that v. 17 is mainly known in the Western world for the words of the risen Jesus to Mary Magdalene: Μή μου ἅπτου. These words became even more famous in the Latin translation, *Noli me tangere*, which gave the name to a longstanding tradition of representing the post-resurrection encounter of Jesus and Mary in the visual arts. However, for Bieringer, the most prevalent theme in v. 17 is not Μή μου ἅπτου but Jesus' ascension to the father: Ἀναβαίνω πρὸς τὸν πατέρα μου καὶ πατέρα ὑμῶν καὶ θεὸν μου καὶ θεὸν ὑμῶν. Bieringer further explains that v. 17 consists of six coordinated clauses that are linked with the conjunctions γὰρ, δὲ and καὶ (17a λέγει αὐτῇ Ἰησοῦς; 17b Μή μου ἅπτου; 17c οὐπω γὰρ ἀναβέβηκα πρὸς τὸν πατέρα; 17d πορεύου δὲ πρὸς τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου; 17e καὶ εἶπέ αὐτοῖς; 17f Ἀναβαίνω πρὸς τὸν πατέρα μου καὶ πατέρα ὑμῶν καὶ θεὸν μου καὶ θεὸν ὑμῶν). However, according to Bieringer, the logical progression of thought within the six

¹¹⁰ Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John*, 375.

clauses is far from unambiguous, since we do not know how the evangelist would have used punctuation with regard to these six clauses.¹¹¹

In v. 17, Mary attempted clinging to Jesus but he did not allow her. In Tasker's view, it might be supposed that Mary never touched the risen Jesus and was forbidden to do so; and if the variant reading found in some ancient authorities, which inserts after the word *Master* 'and she ran forward to touch Him', is accepted, this would seem to be the only possible interpretation. Tasker asked why Jesus should be so determined to prevent Mary from doing what later he invites Thomas to do? He added that moreover, in the Greek, the verb touch (ἅπτου), is a present imperative; and when used as a prohibition, this should normally give the meaning 'Stop touching me' or 'Do not touch me any more'. For Tasker, the right translation would therefore seem to be, 'Do not cling to me' (NRSV 'do not hold on to me').¹¹² Beasley-Murray indicates, there is a clear contact between Mary's attempt to take hold of Jesus and the scene in Matt 28: 9, where the women to whom Jesus appears "seized" (ἐκράτησαν) the feet of Jesus and prostrated themselves before him. In this context, the term κρατέω is virtually synonymous with ἀπτόμαι.¹¹³

Herman Ridderbos argues out the encounter between Jesus and Mary as very significant. For Herman, that everything has changed is also conveyed by what Jesus says to Mary next: "Do not hold on to me because I have not yet ascended to the father." Herman further explains that both parts of this statement, have given interpreters great difficulty as is evident from the multiplicity of explanations it has

¹¹¹ Reimund Bieringer, "I am Ascending to My Father and Your Father, to My God and Your God (John 20: 17): Resurrection and Ascension in the Gospel of John," in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, ed. Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008): 209.

¹¹² Tasker, *The Gospel according to John*, 225.

¹¹³ Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John*, 376.

received. Herman continues that the two clauses must be understood in close connection with each other. For that reason, the common translation “do not touch me” is not satisfactory. In his view, the meaning cannot be that Jesus not yet having ascended stands in the way of touching him or that one could touch him after he had ascended. For Herman, what is referred to is not touching but “clutching at” (with the intent or result of) “holding onto,” “holding back.”¹¹⁴ Jesus said to Mary, οὐπω γὰρ ἀναβέβηκα πρὸς τὸν πατέρα. The verb ἀναβέβηκα translated “I am not yet ascended” is in the perfect tense and implies, ‘I have not yet completed my ascent.’ The γὰρ, a subordinate conjunction linking the second clause to the first leads to a natural explanation why Jesus rejects such “holding on” by Mary, he has not yet arrived at his goal, his “ascent to the father” has not yet been completed.

The next statement (17b), according to Herman is entirely congruent with this understanding: “But go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my father and your father, to my God and your God’”.¹¹⁵ In this text, the second statement, πορεύου δὲ πρὸς τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου καὶ εἶπὲ αὐτοῖς is linked with a superordinate conjunction δὲ which makes it a continues statement. The verb imperative present πορεύου, “to go or proceed” is in an antithetical parallelism with a command for Mary Magdalene to act immediately with urgency. The Evangelist uses the word in a broader sense.

The verb indicative active Ἀναβαίνω, indicates that Jesus’ ascent to the father, his “departure from the world” has begun and is still being accomplished as an ongoing and still uncompleted event. Herman, in playing on the word ἀναβαίνω adds that some speak of it in the durative present, others of a futuristic use of the present as in the

¹¹⁴ Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 638.

¹¹⁵ Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 638.

verbs of “coming” and “going” so that the present in this context means “I am in the process of going or coming up,” with the point of arrival still in the future.¹¹⁶ Leon Morris agrees with Herman on the position of the word Ἀναβαίνω. According to him, the message to the “brothers” with the verb “I ascend”, which is also in the present tense, denotes a future action. Morris adds that in v. 17c, Jesus refers to God as, “my father and your father” and as “my God and your God.” With that expression, Jesus places himself in a different relationship to the father from that which his followers occupy and this for Morris has important implication for an understanding of Christ’s person. The disciples are no longer Jesus’ disciples but his brethren (ἀδελφούς).¹¹⁷

Mary Magdalene does exactly as Jesus commanded by announcing to the disciples what he had asked her to do. This episode began with a tearful Mary stationary at the tomb, still in the darkness of unfaith. Responding to the command of Jesus who tells her to go πρὸς τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου (v. 17). This renewed movement according to Moloney, indicates to the reader that Mary has reached another stage in her journey of faith and this is confirmed by her words. In vv. 2, 13 and 15, Mary used the respectful term ὁ κύριος to speak of the dead body of the man she had followed during his public ministry. The meaning of this term is transformed as she is the first to tell the disciples of Jesus’ resurrection: “I have seen the Lord (τὸν κύριον).”¹¹⁸

When Mary came proclaiming, the Easter gospel to those who are now the “brethren” of Jesus, she said explicitly, Ἐώρακα τὸν κύριον (“I have seen the Lord”). According to Perkins, Mary’s report to the disciples was in the traditional resurrection language rather than that of the fare-well discourses or the ascent/return schema in the

¹¹⁶ Ridderbos, *The Gospel according to John*, 639.

¹¹⁷ Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 743.

¹¹⁸ Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 527.

gospel.¹¹⁹ For Schneiders, the beloved disciple saw and believed through a sign that Jesus was glorified, alive with God and Mary Magdalene has experienced him risen.¹²⁰ Mary informs the disciples of the words that Jesus had spoken to her concerning his return to the father and the establishment of the oneness between Jesus' father and God and the father and God of the disciples (v. 17c). In the v. 18, Mary Magdalene departs and delivers her message to the disciples. The question is, how did they receive it?

According to the tradition in Mark 16:10, they refused to believe her just as in Luke 24:13, the women's story of seeing Jesus alive appeared to them as "idle tales." Beasley-Murray intimates that, it was therefore urgently necessary for Jesus himself to deal with the disciples.¹²¹ Jesus in dealing with the disciples leads us to the next episode where he appears to them himself.

2.4.4 The Lord Appears to the Disciples (vv. 19-23)

¹⁹ Οὔσης οὖν ὀψίας τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ τῇ μιᾷ σαββάτων καὶ τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων ὅπου ἦσαν οἱ μαθηταὶ διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων, ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἔστη εἰς τὸ μέσον καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν. ²⁰ καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἔδειξεν τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τὴν πλευρὰν αὐτοῖς. ἐχάρησαν οὖν οἱ μαθηταὶ ἰδόντες τὸν κύριον. ²¹ εἶπεν οὖν αὐτοῖς [ὁ Ἰησοῦς] πάλιν, Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν· καθὼς ἀπέσταλκέν με ὁ πατήρ, καὶ γὰρ πέμπω ὑμᾶς. ²² καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἐνεφύσησεν καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον· ²³ ἂν τινῶν ἀφῆτε τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἀφείωνται αὐτοῖς, ἂν τινῶν κρατῆτε κεκράτηται.

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

¹¹⁹ Perkins, *The Gospel according to John*, 983.

¹²⁰ Schneiders, "The Structure and Dynamics," 165.

¹²¹ Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John*, 378.

The conclusion of the report of Mary Magdalene's experience of the risen Jesus is sufficiently 'missionary' (vv. 17-18) to suggest to the reader that the faith experience of Mary Magdalene might be communicated beyond the boundaries of the characters and the time of the present story.¹²² John 20:19-23 is structured in two parts which are parallel to some extent: vv. 19-20 and vv. 20-23. The first part of the passage reports the coming of Jesus to his disciples and his being recognized by them, while the second part reports the commissioning of the disciples. It forms a separate unit which is set off from the preceding context by indications of time, place and participating persons.¹²³

With the proclamation of the Easter gospel that Jesus is both glorified and risen, the narrative enters its second phase, vv. 19-23, which takes place not at the dawn of the new era in the garden of the tomb but in the evening of the first day of that new era, in Jerusalem "where the disciples were gathered" as a community. The first scene of this second part (vv. 19-23), with Jesus coming to the community, is the centerpiece of the Johannine resurrection narrative.¹²⁴ The day, place and characters involved in the events of vv. 19-23, were already part of the closing moments of the immediately previous scene reported in vv. 11-18. The evangelist has taken a traditional account of Jesus' appearance to the disciples in Jerusalem to show that the promises of Jesus' return were being fulfilled in the "hour" of his exaltation and glorification (Luke 24:36-43, 47-48).¹²⁵

¹²² Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 530.

¹²³ Johannes Beutler, "Resurrection and the Forgiveness of Sins: John 20:23 against its Traditional Background," in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, ed. Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008): 238-9.

¹²⁴ Schneiders, "The Structure and Dynamics," 165.

¹²⁵ Perkins, *The Gospel according to John*, 983.

For Francis Moloney, there are indications that vv. 19-23 form a bridge between the scenes at the tomb and the final scene in the house reported in vv. 24-29.¹²⁶ In v. 19, the event took place “on the evening of that day” (Οὔσης οὖν ὀψίας τῆ ἡμέρα ἐκείνῃ), as Mary went from the tomb to announce Jesus’ message to the disciples (v. 18a), where they were for fear of the Jews (ὅπου ἦσαν οἱ μαθηταὶ διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων). There are no names given to the disciples present in the upper room, nor is there a number.

In Donald Carson’s opinion, how large a group is referred to by “the disciples” is not certain in the text but in the light of the circle at the last supper (made up of Jesus plus the twelve, and then, after Judas Iscariot left, the eleven), and in the light of the fact that Thomas is singled out as not having been present (v. 24), though doubtless, there were countless other ‘disciples’ less tightly connected with the Lord who were also not present, the probability is therefore given to the ten, that is, the twelve, less Judas and Thomas.¹²⁷

In the v. 19a, the disciples were in a locked door for fear of the Jews. Moloney explains this verse further by adding that the story of the original gathering of the disciples reflects the experience of all the disciples. For Moloney, the proclamation of the message of the resurrection does not dispel the disciples’ fear. The “we” and the “they” of v. 2 are still active forces in the account. The disciples (“we”) have not overcome the fear that “the Jews” (“they”) have created throughout the story of Jesus. The assembled disciples of Jesus know of the resurrection (vv. 17-18) but the fear of

¹²⁶ Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 527.

¹²⁷ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 646.

“the Jews” who might subject them to hatred, insult and death remains.¹²⁸ Carson contributes to the scene of the τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων “locked door” by saying that the Jewish authorities had seen to it that their leader was executed so it would have been relatively easy for them to pick off his followers had they decided to do so.¹²⁹

For Carson, the function of the “locked doors” in John’s narrative, both in v. 19 and in v. 26, is to stress the miraculous nature of Jesus’ appearance amongst his followers.¹³⁰

Despite locked doors, Jesus appeared in the midst of his disciples ἔστη εἰς τὸ μέσον.

Carson explains further that Jesus’ appearance to the disciples even in a “locked door,” suggests that Jesus’ resurrected body passed through the grave-cloths (vv. 6-8), so it passed through the locked doors and simply ‘materialized.’¹³¹ Behind the Greek ἔστη εἰς τὸ μέσον (literary, Jesus “stood into the midst” of the community), stands the Aramaic verb for “rise up” which can refer either to standing up physically or rising from the dead. This, in Schneiders view, is a fulfillment of Jesus’ own promise during his first public ministry in the temple of Jerusalem (John 2:18-22).¹³²

When Jesus stood in their midst (19c), he greeted them, εἰρήνη ὑμῖν “peace be with you” and the ὑμῖν is in the dative, 2nd person plural. Moloney postulates that, the greeting εἰρήνη ὑμῖν may be a regular form of greeting but within the present setting of Jesus’ sudden physical presence among his fear-filled disciples, it brings into effect Jesus’ promises of 14:27 and 16:33.¹³³ Bruce posits that, Jesus’ greeting of εἰρήνη ὑμῖν was the regular one used when friends met friend and is still used in Hebrew

¹²⁸ Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 530.

¹²⁹ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 646.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Schneiders, “The Structure and Dynamics,” 165-66.

¹³³ Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 530.

(Shalom) and Arabic today. Bruce explains that, the occasion on which Jesus used it bore its literal meaning to the fullest extent, ‘peace I leave with you, my peace I give you’ (John 14:27).¹³⁴ According to Beasley-Murray, the “shalom” greeting from Jesus to his disciples on the Easter evening is the complement of “It is fulfilled” on the cross, for the peace of reconciliation and life from God is now imparted. For him, “Shalom” accordingly, is supremely the Easter greeting and that is why it is not surprising that it is included, along with “Grace”, in the greeting of every epistle of Paul in the New Testament.¹³⁵

The v. 20 begins with, after he said this and the Greek text says, καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν, “he showed them his hands and his side” ἔδειξεν τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τὴν πλευρὰν αὐτοῖς. Schneiders indicates that, the character of Jesus’ action of showing them his nail-pierced hands and the wounded side is signaled by ἔδειξεν (“showed” or “manifested”), a Johannine term denoting revelation, of his glorification.¹³⁶

Moloney elucidates Jesus’ appearance to the disciple as very significant. He explains that, the disciples may need proof that the figure they see before them is the same Jesus of Nazareth whom they followed. Thus, closely associating a gesture with the greeting of peace (v. 20a), he showed them his hands and his side (v. 20b). His greeting brings peace in the midst of turmoil. The certain proof that Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified one, is among them as risen Lord brings joy in the midst of confusion and suffering. The message of Mary Magdalene has been confirmed by their own experience. Moloney adds that the Beloved Disciple and Mary Magdalene journeyed from unbelief through conditioned faith to an unconditional acceptance of the risen

¹³⁴ F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1994), 391.

¹³⁵ Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John*, 378-79.

¹³⁶ Schneiders “The Structure and Dynamics,” 166.

Lord (vv. 3-9, 11-18). This is not the same as that of the assembled disciples. They heard Mary's message, it had been confirmed and they responded with peace and joy.¹³⁷

In v. 21, Jesus repeats the "Peace be with you" as in v. 19. The verse begins with the phrase, εἶπεν οὖν αὐτοῖς [ὁ Ἰησοῦς] πάλιν, εἰρήνη ὑμῖν· καθὼς ἀπέσταλκέν με ὁ πατήρ, κἀγὼ πέμπω ὑμᾶς. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." In Tasker's view, the repetition of the salutation "Peace be with you," in vv. 19 and 21, is surely not without significance. In v. 19, it seems little more than ordinary semantic greeting. For Tasker, before, its occurrence in v. 21, Jesus had showed His disciples his hands and his side and they were glad. Tasker adds that the 'peace' of v. 21, is the peace of the pardoned sinner, the peace which Jesus calls 'my peace' (14:27), for He alone could bestow it and He could only bestow it after His passion.¹³⁸

Schneiders opines that, the second action following the repeated gift of peace, is a commissioning of this "new people" as God had commissioned Jesus.¹³⁹ For Moloney, Jesus bestowing peace again onto his disciples is an indication to them that his prayer for them on the night before he died was not in vain. For Jesus prayed to His father, "As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (17:18).¹⁴⁰

The verb used in the two clauses is not the same. "As the father has sent me (ἀπέσταλκέ), I am sending (πέμπω) you" hence, the verse lay in two kinds of 'sending.'

¹³⁷ Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 531.

¹³⁸ Tasker, *The Gospel according to John*, 226.

¹³⁹ Schneiders, "The Structure and Dynamics," 166.

¹⁴⁰ Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 531.

Bruce adds that the technical term ‘apostle’ is avoided by John but by the use of the cognate verb ἀπέσταλκέν, he indicates that the disciples now become effectively apostles in the sense of ‘sent ones’. The Son’s mission in the world is entrusted to them since he is returning to the Father.¹⁴¹ The mission of the Son has not finished with his “lifting up” to heaven. “As the father has sent me” (καθὼς ἀπέσταλκέν με ὁ πατήρ), implies a sending in the past that continues to hold good in the present and such is the force of the Greek past tense.

The mission of Christ in this context is regarded not in the point of its historical fulfillment (sent) but in the permanence of its effects (has sent).¹⁴² The perfect tense ἀπέσταλκέν suggests, at the risk of pedantry, that Jesus is in an ongoing state of ‘sentness’. Just because he ascends to his father does not mean he is no longer the ‘sent one’ *par excellence*.¹⁴³ The verse 21 according to most Johannine scholars is the verse of mission and commission.

Verse 21, in recent years, has generated controversy amongst Christians as to the mission of the church. On one side, the argument has it that this verse does more than draw vague parallels between Jesus’ mission in the past and that of today. Thus, the church should define its task in terms of its understanding of Jesus’ task. Since Jesus manifestly included healing the sick, helping the needy and preaching the gospel to the poor (Luke 4:18, 19; 7:22), today’s mission must do no less. For Carson, the church’s mission must not be restricted to evangelism and church planting; it embraces everything that is rightly done in imitating Christ, because we are both salt (a preservative function) and light (a revelatory function).

¹⁴¹ Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 391.

¹⁴² Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John*, 379.

¹⁴³ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 649.

The other side objects that this verse neglects the Johannine context which immediately introduces the centrality of the forgiveness of sins. Jesus came into the world as the unique Lamb of God to take away our sins; he came as the incarnate Word; and such central features intrinsic to the sending of Jesus cannot be precisely emulated. Without wanting to deny the church's obligations to do good to all men, especially those of the household of faith, this side of the discussion finds v. 21 incapable of supporting the weight that is being placed on it. He opined that both approaches to the text methodologically are faulty.

To appeal to several verses from Luke to establish what is central to John's understanding of mission is therefore, indefensible. If this verse has specific content, it must be deduced from the immediate context and especially from the matrix of themes connected with the 'sending' theme in the Fourth Gospel.¹⁴⁴

V. 22 is linked by a coordinate conjunction *καί* thereby, tying the commissioning to the giving of the spirit. The verse begins with, *καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν* (when he said this, NRSV) which could also mean after saying this. Jesus breathed (*ἐνεφύσησεν*) on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit (*λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον*). The verb *ἐνεφύσησεν* is a *hapax legomenon*, occurring only here in the whole New Testament. It occurs only twice in the Old Testament: in Genesis 2:7, when God, at the first creation, breathes life into the earth-creature and it becomes the first living human being and in Ezek 37:9-10, when the prophet in God's name breathes life into the dry bones to recreate, to raise from the dead, the people of Israel. Schneiders posits that the verb (*ἐνεφύσησεν*) actually appears four times in the LXX.

¹⁴⁴ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 648.

The two instances adduced (Gen 2:7 and Ezek 37:9-10); Wis 15:1, which recalls the enlivening of Adam and 1King 17:21, recounting the Prophet Elijah's reanimation of the son of the widow of Zarephath. She adds that the LXX, inaccurately but perhaps deliberately, translates the Hebrew for "stretched" or "measured" as "breathed," perhaps alluding to the creation narrative.¹⁴⁵

Brown agrees with Schneiders on the function of the verb ἐνεφύσησεν. He said Jesus' breathe on them recalled how God breathed on Adam when infusing in him the spirit of life. Jesus, by so doing re-created them with the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁶ Carson posits that the ἐνεφύσησεν has no auxiliary structure, not even a direct object. Apart from other compelling considerations, therefore, the verse should be translated, 'And with that he breathed and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."' Referring to the episode as the 'insufflation' is already begging the issue.

For Carson, there is no single English word to sum up taking a deep breath and exhaling; 'exhalation' describes only the latter half but it is closer to what is said 'insufflation'. In short, it is only the words "Receive the Holy Spirit" that has fostered the view that Jesus was somehow breathing "in" or "into" his disciples, thereby imparting the Spirit. Although, the issue is little discussed, virtually all sides would probably agree that Jesus' action was symbolic in some sense.

In the v. 22b, the statement of Jesus is in the imperative "Receive the Holy Spirit" (Λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον). Surprisingly, the reference to the Spirit as πνεῦμα ἅγιον, "Holy Spirit," is without the definite article. Whatever the reason for that in the

¹⁴⁵ Schneiders, "The Structure and Dynamics," 166.

¹⁴⁶ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel and Epistle of John: A Concise Commentary* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 99.

gospel, it is not to be interpreted in an impersonal sense, or simply as a gift of the Spirit. The important saying (7:39), also has “Spirit” without the definite article, following a clause in the same sentence with it.¹⁴⁷ Beasley-Murray highlights the phrase, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (Λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον) in v. 22b. The symbolic action primarily represents the impartation of life that the Holy Spirit gives in the new age, brought about through Christ’s exaltation in death and resurrection. New age and new creation are complementary ideas in eschatological contexts. Strictly speaking, one should not view this as the beginning of the new creation but rather as the beginning of the incorporation of man into that new creation which came into being in the Christ by his incarnation, death and resurrection, and is actualized in man by the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁸

V. 23 concludes this section by dwelling on the immediate context (v. 22b). “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” The passive perfects, ἀφέωνται and “they are not forgiven” κεκράτηνται, need not detain us. Carson explains that the construction is not as difficult as in Matthew. If these perfects are not temporary construed but are read aspectually, they will be rendered ‘they are in a state of forgiveness’, that is, ‘they stand forgiven’ and ‘they do not stand forgiven’; but even so, the passive voice implies it is God who is acting.

In the parallel statements of Matthew (16:19; 18:18), the context suggests church discipline; in this verse, where the context is the mission of Jesus’ disciples (v. 21)

¹⁴⁷Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John*, 380.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 381.

and the Spirit who empowers them (v. 22), the focus is on evangelism.¹⁴⁹ The saying is clearly independent and has been given varied contexts by the Evangelists. John has set it in the context of the resurrection commission of Jesus.¹⁵⁰ The problem with the interpretation of v. 23 starts with the translation of the verse.

Beutler argues that the remission of sins is to be distinguished from “forgiving sins,” since this ability belongs exclusively to God or his agent. The translation of *κεκράτηνται* from the verb *κρατέω* is more difficult. On the basis of a comparison with Matt 18:19, some translators render *κρατέω* as “to refuse forgiveness”. This proposal has been contested for good reasons since it overlooks the fact that passages in Matthew and John use different verbs.¹⁵¹

Schneiders suggests that *ἂν τινῶν κρατῆτε* should be understood in the sense of the community “holding fast” its members. However, it is unlikely that the meaning of *τινῶν* shifts from that of a possessive pronoun (retaining the sins “of any”) to that of a pronoun, functioning as the object of the verb (holding “any” person fast). The words of v. 23 are better translated with the NRSV, “if you retain the sins of others, they are retained.”¹⁵²

Beutler postulates that the saying of Jesus in v. 23 according to its form, follows an antithetical parallelism. Two conditional clauses, introduced by the typical Johannine *ἂν*, are placed opposite each other and the positive statement is mentioned first: “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (*ἂν τινῶν ἀφήτε τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἀφένονται αὐτοῖς, ἂν τινῶν κρατῆτε*

¹⁴⁹ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 655.

¹⁵⁰ Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John*, 383.

¹⁵¹ Beutler, “Resurrection and the Forgiveness,” 241.

¹⁵² Schneiders, “The Structure and Dynamics,” 167.

κεκράτηνται). Beutler opines further that the perfect tense ἀφέωνται is not attested in all ancient manuscripts, there are variant readings but it is confirmed by the parallel expression κεκράτηνται, which is attested unanimously.

The perfect that is used for the two verbs “being forgiven” and “being retained” (ἀφέωνται and κεκράτηνται) is in keeping with the Johannine perspective, according to which salvation in Christ has come definitively, and thus it is in keeping with Johannine eschatology. It is noted that John ordinarily uses the word ἁμαρτία in the singular. The plural is found in 8:24 “you will die in your sins,” but the parallel v. 21 uses the singular. Hence, the use of the plural in v. 23 can be explained by the assumption that John is using a formula that is also attested in 1 John 1:9 and 2:12.¹⁵³

2.4.5 The Lord Appears to Thomas (vv. 24-29)

²⁴ Θωμᾶς δὲ εἷς ἐκ τῶν δώδεκα, ὁ λεγόμενος Δίδυμος, οὐκ ἦν μετ’ αὐτῶν ὅτε ἦλθεν Ἰησοῦς.

²⁵ ἔλεγον οὖν αὐτῷ οἱ ἄλλοι μαθηταί, Ἐώρακαμεν τὸν κύριον. ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Ἐὰν μὴ ἴδω ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν αὐτοῦ τὸν τύπον τῶν ἥλων καὶ βάλω τὸν δάκτυλόν μου εἰς τὸν τύπον τῶν ἥλων καὶ βάλω μου τὴν χεῖρα εἰς τὴν πλευρὰν αὐτοῦ, οὐ μὴ πιστεύσω. ²⁶ Καὶ μεθ’ ἡμέρας ὀκτῶ πάλιν ἦσαν ἔσω οἱ μαθηταί αὐτοῦ καὶ Θωμᾶς μετ’ αὐτῶν. ἔρχεται ὁ Ἰησοῦς τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων καὶ ἔστη εἰς τὸ μέσον καὶ εἶπεν, Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν. ²⁷ εἶτα λέγει τῷ Θωμᾶ, Φέρε τὸν δάκτυλόν σου ὧδε καὶ ἴδε τὰς χεῖράς μου καὶ φέρε τὴν χεῖρά σου καὶ βάλε εἰς τὴν πλευρὰν μου, καὶ μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος ἀλλὰ πιστός. ²⁸ ἀπεκρίθη Θωμᾶς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου. ²⁹ λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ὅτι ἐώρακάς με πεπίστευκας; μακάριοι οἱ μὴ ἰδόντες καὶ πιστεύσαντες.

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." ²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." ²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

¹⁵³ Beutler, “Resurrection and the Forgiveness,” 245-6.

The Lord's appearance to Thomas constitutes the final scene in the Johannine resurrection narrative, where the narrative continues with Thomas, one of the twelve, called the twin, who was not with the disciples when Jesus came.

There is no indication of a change in time or place. It is still that "first day of the week" (vv. 1, 19) and the place is the upper room, where an atmosphere of peace and joy prevails among Spirit-filled disciples who have been commissioned to bring the holiness of God to the world. Thomas was not there (Θωμᾶς δὲ εἷς ἐκ τῶν δώδεκα, ὁ λεγόμενος Δίδυμος, οὐκ ἦν μετ' αὐτῶν). Moloney posits that this is Thomas' first movement in a journey of faith. Surrounded by peace and joy, signs of Easter faith (vv. 19, 20, 21),

Thomas, like Peter, the beloved disciple and Mary Magdalene in vv. 1-2 is in the darkness of unfaith.¹⁵⁴ Carson mentions that in Jesus' previous appearances (11:16 and 14:5), Thomas was less a doubter than a loyal but pessimistic and perhaps somewhat obtuse disciple of Jesus. He argues that the rubric 'doubting Thomas' is not entirely fair; had he been present when the risen Christ first manifested himself to the disciples, doubtless he too would have believed. Why he was not present that first Easter day is not told in the text but in the providence of God, his absence and subsequent coming to faith have generated one of the great Christological confessions in the New Testament.¹⁵⁵

Schneiders agrees with Carson that Thomas did not "doubt" as is so often averred. He refuses: "I will not believe" (οὐ μὴ πιστεύσω). The Greek used for this expression οὐ

¹⁵⁴ Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 536.

¹⁵⁵ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 656.

μη followed by a future tense, is particularly forceful.¹⁵⁶ She adds that in John's gospel, believing and refusing to believe are always a matter of free choice, not the natural response to irrefutable evidence or the lack thereof.¹⁵⁷ In v. 25a, Thomas' fellow disciples attempted to communicate their Easter faith to him (ἔλεγον οὖν αὐτῷ), repeating the confession of Mary Magdalene, "We have seen the Lord."

Thomas' response to the other disciples marks a second stage in his journey of faith. He is only prepared to lay aside his unfaith if the risen Jesus meets his criteria. "Unless" (Ἐὰν μὴ) Jesus fulfills his condition, he will remain in his present situation of unbelief (οὐ μὴ πιστεύσω). For even though Thomas is unable to accept at its face value the good news the other disciples conveyed to him, his doubts do not lead him to disloyalty.¹⁵⁸

As Mary wished to cling to the body of Jesus, Thomas asks that he experience the risen body of the person who was crucified, by seeing the nail-marks and placing his finger into (βάλλω) the wounds and by placing his hand in (βάλλω) his side. Moloney posits that, of the three journeys of faith told in this narrative, the conditioned responds (ἔὰν μὴ) of Thomas is the most dramatic. He insists that the risen body of Jesus fulfills his requirements. He has progressed from his situation of absence (v. 24) but the imposition of his own criteria for belief in the resurrection of Jesus indicates his conditioned commitment.¹⁵⁹

In commenting further on v. 25, Tasker opined that in place of the second reference to the print or mark of the nails, some ancient MSS read "the place" (τύπον). For Tasker,

¹⁵⁶ Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 539.

¹⁵⁷ Schneiders, "The Structure and Dynamics," 168.

¹⁵⁸ Tasker, *The Gospel according to John*, 226.

¹⁵⁹ Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 536-7.

this variation should probably be adopted. Thomas wants not only to see the scar made by the nails (ἥλων) in the hands (χερσίν) but also to put his finger (δάκτυλόν) into the place where the nails had been. The word “thrust,” for Tasker is too strong a translation, as the word it translates βάλλω was often used at this time with a weaker significance hence, the NRSV translation ‘put’ is more appropriate.

There is no mention in John’s gospel or in Matthew and Luke of the piercing of the feet. That the feet of Jesus may have been nailed to the cross, rather than fastened with a rope which was the common practice, is an inference from Luke 24:39.¹⁶⁰ “Eight days later” (καὶ μεθ’ ἡμέρας ὀκτώ), Jesus again stands among his disciples. Much of the details that surrounded Jesus’ earlier appearance returns. The doors are shut and he greets them with his peace, εἰρήνη ὑμῖν (v. 26, v. 19). The indication of time, eight days later, is also an association with the earlier appearance.

Scholars have rightly suggested that the rhythmic reference to “the first day of the week” (v. 1), “the evening of that same day” (v. 19) and “eight days later” (v. 26), deliberately situates all these events on the “day of the Lord.” The only new element in v. 26, in comparison with v. 21, is the fact that “Thomas was with them.”¹⁶¹ Beasley-Murray elucidates the “eight days later” (μεθ’ ἡμέρας ὀκτώ) by explaining that after eight days, the Lord appears in the same manner as before or the “eight” day, that is, the following Sunday. This is according to the Jewish mode of reckoning, counting of the first and the last days in the period. This language ‘Eight days later’ used in this context will have reminded early readers of their own meetings for

¹⁶⁰ Tasker, *The Gospel according to John*, 227.

¹⁶¹ Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 537.

worship on the first day of the week, marking the day when Jesus rose from the dead.¹⁶²

After Jesus had said εἰρήνη ὑμῖν in the v. 26c, it continues with v. 27, εἶτα λέγει τῷ Θωμᾷ (“Then he said to Thomas”). Jesus commands Thomas to put his hand into his open side from which had issued the life-giving blood and water, symbol of the gift of the spirit in baptism and the eucharist which Jesus had handed over in his death and had focused in the gift to the community a week earlier when Thomas was absent.

This is followed immediately by the imperative μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος ἀλλὰ πιστός (“Do not doubt but believe”). It is noted in the Greek text that Jesus did not say, “Do not doubt,” he rather said, “do not be faithless but believing” (v. 27c). For ἄπιστος means to refuse to believe, to be unfaithful, to be treacherous. Some scholars suggest that Thomas has never been an unbeliever and Jesus exhorts him to maintain his situation of belief.

In this interpretation, the expression πιστός. and ἄπιστος both found only here in the Fourth Gospel, are read as nouns and this sentence is translated: “Do not become an unbeliever but a believer. Hence, the author addresses the unbelievers in Thomas community, using the figure of Thomas as a literary device to summon them away from their false understanding of resurrection.”¹⁶³ Schneiders explained further that Thomas’ immediate responds, not an attempt to touch Jesus physically but an acknowledgement of what he can grasp only by faith, makes clear his conversion from unfaith to faith. One does not “see” with one’s finger. The imperative, ἴδε, “Behold!” or “See!”, according to Schneiders, functions in the fourth gospel as part of

¹⁶² Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John*, 385.

¹⁶³ Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 539.

a revelation formula. The invitation from Jesus to Thomas is not to see physically but to grasp what cannot be seen with the eyes of flesh.

The wounds of Jesus are not proof of physical reality but the source of a true understanding of the meaning of Jesus' revelatory death.¹⁶⁴ Carson posits that when the Romans crucified someone, they either tied or nailed the victim to the cross. If the latter, they drove the nails through his wrists; the hands will not have supported the weight. Both the Hebrew and Greek word for hand (χειρα) can include the wrist and forearm. Nails were commonly driven through the feet, one spike through both feet, one foot placed on top of the other.¹⁶⁵ Tasker explains that the command from Jesus, "be not faithless," implies that there can be no permanent faith in Jesus except faith in Him as the risen Lord who still bears the scars of His atoning death. Thomas was therefore faced with the alternative either of Christian faith or unfaith.¹⁶⁶

There is no indication in the text that Thomas touched Jesus. For Moloney, the requested ritual is forgotten as Thomas accepts the challenge of faith, responding: "My Lord and my God!" (ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου, v. 28). Scholars differ in their evaluation of this act of faith. For some, it is the 'supreme Christological pronouncement of the Fourth Gospel.' Others claim that the remarks of Jesus in v. 29: "You have believed because you have seen me.

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" show that there is a quality of faith without sight surpassing the faith that generated Thomas' confession. A confession that recognizes Jesus as Lord and God at a climactic moment in the narrative corresponds to Christology developed across the earlier parts of the story. It

¹⁶⁴ Schneiders, "The Structure and Dynamics," 168-9.

¹⁶⁵ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 656.

¹⁶⁶ Tasker, *The Gospel according to John*, 227.

recognizes the implications of the narrator's teaching on the 'logos' in 1:1-2, Jesus' unique use of the absolute ἐγὼ εἰμι and his claim, "I and the father are one" (10:30). Parallel with the faith journeys of the beloved disciple and Mary Magdalene (vv. 8, 18), the final statement of faith in Jesus concludes Thomas' journey of faith.¹⁶⁷

Thomas' statement is not simply a mode of address to Jesus, in the vocative "O my Lord and my God," still less an acclamation, to the praise of God confessing issue from the depths of his soul: "You are my Lord and my God." It so comes about that the obvious doubter of the resurrection of Jesus utters the greatest confession of the Lord who rose from the dead. Thomas' utterance does not simply acknowledge the reality of the resurrection of Jesus but expresses its ultimate meaning, that is, a revelation of who Jesus is. The personal pronoun, "My Lord and my God," is of vital importance.

He confesses to the risen Jesus that he belongs to him as his willing subject; he adores him and henceforth will serve him as he deserves. At all events, in so confessing Jesus "Thomas fulfills the Lord's words, 'That all may honour the son, even as they honour the father' (5:23) and human faith perceives the truth stated in the first verse of the prologue to the gospel, 'and the Word was God.'¹⁶⁸

The v. 29 of the passage concludes formally the entire resurrection narrative in John's gospel. It ends with beatitude on those who have not seen but have believed (μακάριοι οἱ μὴ ἰδόντες καὶ πιστεύσαντες). Tasker argues that this statement of Jesus to Thomas Ὅτι ἑώρακάς με ἐπίστευκας; in this verse, can also be taken as a question. Hence the NRSV puts it, "Have you believed because you have seen me?" Tasker opines that

¹⁶⁷ Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 537.

¹⁶⁸ Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John*, 385-6.

there is, however, little difference in the sense, for the question obviously expects an affirmative answer.¹⁶⁹ Moloney sees the translation as a statement rather than a question taking into account different versions of the bible.¹⁷⁰ Beasley-Murray considers that 1:50 and 16:31 favour understanding v. 29a also as a question but the present context is different.

He further states that in this solemn and impressive pronouncement, Jesus does not ask questions but declares the truth. He agrees and points out that with Thomas' confession, the theme of doubt is over. The saying of Jesus describes the faith of Thomas and that of believers who have not "seen" in verbs in the perfect tense ἐώρακάς, which indicates a firm faith; and v. 19b better follows on a statement than on a question. The emphasis in v. 29, of course, is not on Thomas but on those who have not "seen." They have not had the privilege of the disciples in seeing Jesus alive from the dead, nor of having their faith quickened in the extraordinary manner granted to Thomas.

Their commendation is set forth in a beatitude, a declaration of happiness in the sight of God that conveys a revelation. The effect of this beatitude is to apply the lesson of Thomas to all readers of the Gospel: Happy are they who, without having had Thomas' experience share Thomas' faith.¹⁷¹

The blessing of those who believe without seeing him recalls that one of the foundational disciples believed without seeing Jesus. The Beloved disciple had to make his journey out of the darkness (vv. 1-2) and came to faith without seeing Jesus (v. 8). He returned home and does not reappear in the narrative (v. 10). The

¹⁶⁹ Tasker, *The Gospel according to John*, 227.

¹⁷⁰ Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 540.

¹⁷¹ Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John*, 386.

foundational figure of the Johannine community Peter, led the way, he believed without seeing Jesus. Mary Magdalene wish to cling to Jesus and Thomas demand to touch Jesus' wounds and to place his hand in the pierced side (v. 25).

The risen Jesus led these fragile disciples through their hesitation into authentic belief, yet the faith of those who believe without seeing matches that of the greatest disciple (v. 29).¹⁷² Schneiders articulates that Thomas' confession is a narrative bridge between Easter Sunday and the life of the believing community. The point is neither that faith in response to signs is defective nor that sense experience, seeing and hearing and touching will have no further role in faith. The mode, not the fact, of seeing must change because the mode, not the fact, of Jesus' bodily presence to his disciples has changed.¹⁷³ Pheme Perkins states that the concluding blessing insists that all those Christians who have believed without seeing have a faith which is in no way different from that of the first disciples. Their faith is grounded in the presence of the Lord through the spirit.¹⁷⁴

2.5.6 Conclusion and Purpose of the Gospel (vv. 30-31)

³⁰ Πολλὰ μὲν οὖν καὶ ἄλλα σημεῖα ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐνώπιον τῶν μαθητῶν [αὐτοῦ], ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τούτῳ. ³¹ ταῦτα δὲ γέγραπται ἵνα πιστεύ[σ]ητε ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ἵνα πιστεύοντες ζωὴν ἔχητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

¹⁷² Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 538.

¹⁷³ Schneiders, "The Structure and Dynamics," 169-70.

¹⁷⁴ Perkins, *The Gospel according to John*, 984.

The Johannine story of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection has come to full conclusion with these two verses (vv. 30-31). It opened with the narrator instructing the reader about who Jesus was and what he did (1:1-18). The life story of Jesus has further developed that instruction but it has, above all, been concerned with telling the reader how Jesus was who he was and how he achieved his mission. As Jesus dies on the cross, the narrator again interrupts the story to speak directly to the reader. Moloney postulates that although the prologue was dedicated to sophisticated instruction, the clumsily passionate intervention of the narrator into the passion story makes his intention clear.

The author's chief concern is the faith of the reader. This theme returns as the narrator resumes direct address to the readers to bring the book to its end. Christians who have not seen yet believe are told that this account of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus has been written for them (20:30-31).

The Jesus proclaimed in the prologue has lived, has been slain and has risen through the story but the narrative exists so that the readers of the gospel might go further in their faith. It is not merely a recollection of things past but a proclamation addressing the present. Foundational disciples were summoned to reach beyond their unfaith and partial faith into genuine belief (20:1-29). The gospel has been written that Christian readers who believe without seeing might similarly go farther in their belief in Jesus (vv. 30-31).¹⁷⁵

The particles $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ $\omicron\upsilon\nu$ in v. 30, which rendered 'therefore' in RV and 'now' NRSV, connect vv. 30-31 with what precedes. The most common meaning of the $\omicron\upsilon\nu$ is

¹⁷⁵ Harrington, *The Gospel of John*, 542.

‘therefore’.¹⁷⁶ The flow of thought seems to be: Those who have not seen the risen Christ and yet have believed are blessed; therefore this book has been composed, to the end that you may believe. The first of the two particles μὲν is paired with δὲ, introducing v. 31. Together, they frame the thought of these two verses: On the other hand, there are, doubtless, many more signs Jesus did that could have been reported; but, on the other, these have been committed to writing so that you may believe. Carson opines that those who believe that John incorporated a ‘Sign Source’ think that these two verses (vv. 30-31) constitute the conclusion of that hypothetical document. Those who think there is insufficient evidence to justify such a source, find no difficulty in believing that the Evangelist composed his own conclusion.

Carson further explains, it is possible that miraculous signs (σημεῖα) refer only to the miracles reported in Chapters 2-12. Most of these have discourses or dialogues connected with them that are designed to unpack what the miracles signify. For Carson, to place this conclusion here, suggests that the greatest sign of them all is the death, resurrection and exaltation of the incarnate Word, the significance of which has been carefully set forth in the farewell discourse. This also goes some way to explaining why, when John writes down in one sentence the purpose of this book, he singles out the ‘signs’.¹⁷⁷

The statement Πολλὰ ἄλλα σημεῖα (“Many other signs”) in the v. 30 characterizes the content of the work as “signs,” which has led some to suggest that it was originally the conclusion to the collection of miracles used by the evangelist. In that context, Jesus’ resurrection would have been understood as the final “sign” of his relationship

¹⁷⁶ Tasker, *The Gospel according to John*, 228.

¹⁷⁷ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 661.

with the father, though the evangelist seems to limit the “signs” to the miracles which structure Jesus’ testimony before the world in the first part of the Gospel (12:37).¹⁷⁸

In v. 31, what John chose to write, he tells his readers, was written “that you may believe” πιστεύ[σ]ητε and that expresses the purpose of the book. The stated goal, “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God” (ἵνα πιστεύ[σ]ητε ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ), is interpreted to mean that the Evangelist intends by his book, to establish the faith of Christians rather than to bring non-Christians to faith. Beasley-Murray indicates that the statement, “these have been written that you may believe,” is written to quicken faith. He comments on the uncertainty of the verb “believe” as having double variance; as aorist subjunctive (πιστεύσητε) or a present subjunctive (πιστεύοντες).

He comments that strictly speaking, the former (πιστεύσητε) should indicate making an act of faith, putting one’s trust in Jesus as the Messiah; the latter (πιστεύοντες), a continuing to hold the faith already reposed in Jesus. The former therefore represents an evangelistic intention in writing the book; the latter, a desire to build up Christians in the faith. Beasley-Murray finally added that it is increasingly recognized, however, that a decision like this can hardly rest on a fine point of Greek grammar, not least in view of the fact that the evangelist does not always keep the rules in his use of tenses.¹⁷⁹

According to Carson, the turning points in this verse are three: Firstly, the words “that you may believe” hide a controversial variant. The textual evidence is fairly evenly divided between ἵνα πιστεύοντες (present subjunctive) and ἵνα πιστεύ[σ]ητε (aorist

¹⁷⁸ PHEME PERKINS, *The Gospel according to John*, 984.

¹⁷⁹ BEASLEY-MURRAY, *The Gospel according to John*, 386.

subjunctive), the latter marginally favoured. It is often assumed that the former, strictly interpreted, must be taken to mean ‘in order that you may continue to believe’, and the latter ‘that you may decisively believe’. Quite apart from the fact that this is a reductionistic analysis of what a ‘strict interpretation’ of the present and aorist tenses requires, it can easily be shown that John elsewhere in his gospel can use either tense to refer to both coming to faith and continuing in the faith.¹⁸⁰

Secondly, in a much excited essay, Carson argued that John commonly uses the present tense after ἵνα ‘in order that’ but most of his examples are drawn from 1John, where demonstrably the readers are Christians. Within the Fourth Gospel itself, the aorist subjunctive follows ἵνα approximately 88 times (‘approximately’ because of textual variants), the present subjunctive approximately 47 times.¹⁸¹

Above all, it can be shown that, with very high probability, the ἵνα clause must on syntactical grounds be rendered ‘that you may believe that the Christ, the son of God, is Jesus.’ That means that the fundamental question being addressed by the Evangelist is not ‘Who is Jesus?’, which might be asked by either Christians or non-Christians, if with slightly different emphases, but ‘Who is the Messiah?’¹⁸² V. 31 then summarizes the purpose of the gospel as having faith in Jesus as Messiah and son of God as the source of eternal life.¹⁸³

One of the reasons some have given for thinking that vv. 30-31 originally serve as the conclusion of the hypothetical ‘Signs Source’ is that the Christology expressed is somewhat ‘lower’ than what is articulated in the preceding two verses (vv. 28-29).

¹⁸⁰ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 662.

¹⁸¹ Donald Arthur Carson, “The Purpose of the Fourth Gospel: John 20:31 Reconsidered,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106, no. 4 (1987): 632.

¹⁸² Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 662.

¹⁸³ Perkins, *The Gospel according to John*, 984.

Carson opines that this is a serious misunderstanding of the Fourth Gospel. In John, the nature of Jesus' deity is profoundly and repeatedly tied to the exposition of his sonship, which is linked with his Messiahship.

For Carson, if one must use the somewhat question-begging categories 'higher' and 'lower', it is not that 'son of God' has been dragged lower by its connection with 'Messiah' but that 'Messiah' has been raised higher by its connection with 'son of God'.¹⁸⁴ The content of Christological faith in v. 31, Beasley-Murray explains is not to be viewed as a lower Christology than that of Thomas' confession but must be understood in its light and filled out by it.¹⁸⁵

2.5 Conclusion

From the analysis of the texts under study, it is obvious that the resurrection narrative of Jesus in the gospel according to John is very unique, juxtaposing it with the synoptic gospels. This is evident through the language, style and theology employed by the evangelist in carrying out the purpose of the book to his readers and audience. This section concludes by drawing some insights from the analysis of the text of study.

In the first place, from the analysis of the text, I have found out that the evangelist's purpose of writing the story is to lead the believer to faith in the resurrected Christ. But such faith is not an end in itself. It is directed toward the goal of personal, eschatological salvation, that is, by believing, they may have faith in his name. He wrote in order that the reader/audience may believe certain propositional truth, the

¹⁸⁴ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 663.

¹⁸⁵ Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel according to John*, 388.

truth that the Christ, the son of God, is Jesus, the Jesus whose portrait is drawn in this Gospel.¹⁸⁶

Secondly, through the semantic analysis of the word ἀνάστασις (resurrection), it is revealed that in the whole chapter under study (vv. 1-31), it appears only once (v. 9) as ἀναστῆναι. Surprisingly, John used ἀναστῆναι, an infinitive aorist active of ἀνίστημι which referred to the resurrection of Christ from the dead, instead of ἀνάστασις. It means that the term per se, does not exist in the evangelist's vocabulary in describing the rising of Jesus from the dead. The term ἀνάστασις is of the same semantic field as ἀνίστημι and ἐξανάστασις which all connote the idea of resurrection. Therefore, by metonymy, it refers to God as the author of resurrection.

Thirdly, the analysis shows that Mary Magdalene was the first person to break the news of the risen Lord to the disciples. She came to the garden alone but reported to the disciples in the plural, “they have taken away ἡρᾶν the corpse of the Lord, and we do not know οὐκ οἴδαμεν where they have laid it.” The use of the plural indicates to the researcher that she was not alone in the discovery of the empty tomb; she only acted as the spokesperson for the group.

Again, the analysis also suggests, that both Mary Magdalene and Thomas the twin underwent conversions that consist in turning away from a mode of experience that is no longer possible and turning towards a new, unfamiliar, but equally real mode of experiencing Jesus. Both in response to a negative imperative of Jesus (what they must not do: do not touch, do not be faithless) followed by a positive imperative (what they are now called to: find me in the community, recognize me in believing) must

¹⁸⁶ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 663.

pass over from the pre- to the post- Easter dispensation. The two actors, Mary Magdalene and Thomas, played different roles in the story; Mary Magdalene bridging the pre- Easter with the Easter time and Thomas the twin bridging the Easter with the post-Easter time. Their experiences in the narrative respond to two presiding questions: Where is the Lord encountered and how is the Lord encountered?¹⁸⁷

In addition to this, in the v. 8 of the text of study, when the beloved disciple entered into the tomb, “he saw and believed.” The question that quickly runs through one’s mind is what did he believe? There has been an understandable reluctance of exegetes to give this statement full value but the analysis has revealed that what the beloved disciple saw (εἶδεν) was the evidence of the trappings, signifying the empty tomb and what he believed (καὶ ἐπίστευσεν) was what Jesus had said to them that he will rise on the third day.

Finally, the analysis points out that Thomas, ‘doubter’ of the resurrection of Jesus, uttered the greatest Christological confession of the Lord, in the fourth Gospel: “My Lord and my God” (Ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου). Furthermore, it revealed that Thomas’ confession concludes his journey of faith and aids believers in their own faith in the resurrected Christ.

¹⁸⁷ Schneiders, “The Structure and Dynamics,” 171.

CHAPTER THREE

RISING FROM THE DEAD IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

3.1 Introduction

John introduced the story of Jesus in his gospel by saying, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God” (1:1). The evangelist also added that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (1:14). Craig R. Koester opines that this made God’s Word uniquely accessible to human beings, since flesh is what all people share.

The Word meets human beings in human terms. He made God known by the words he spoke, the actions he performed and by his death.¹⁸⁸ His public ministry culminated in his death by crucifixion; an action that he underwent willingly in obedience to his father’s wills (10:17-18). One might anticipate that death is what brings an end to seeing the embodied Jesus but according to the evangelist, Jesus’ death was a purposeful one. He died in a visible embodied way and then rose from the death before returning to his Father (20:17). This chapter attempts a study of how John educates the reader of his Gospel on the meaning of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

3.2 Related Concepts to death and Resurrection in John’s Gospel

The concept of death and resurrection in John’s Gospel is distinctive, and is often labeled “realized eschatology.” It recognizes the reality of physical death while maintaining that believers already participate in the eternal life of the resurrection. The verb “to die” (ἀποθνήσκω) occurs twenty-four times in John and in eight chapters

¹⁸⁸ Koester, “Jesus’ Resurrection,” 47.

(4, 6, 8, 11, 12, 18, 19 and 21). It occurs nine times in chapter 11, which means that about one third of all the occurrences in the gospel of John are found in this chapter alone. John uses the noun θάνατος (“death”) to express the notion. The noun “death” (θάνατος) occurs eight times in John and in six chapters (5, 8, 11, 12, 18 and 21) and again, the occurrences appear twice in chapter 11. This is probably because one of the central themes of John 11 is death and the various human reactions to the end of life.

Ruben Zimmerman expounds that this statistical evidence makes it obvious that the theme of dying and death plays an important role for John within the Lazarus passage. He opines that this is corroborated by the systematic placement and discussion of the subject in which all possible denotations and connotations of death are played out.¹⁸⁹ In John’s gospel, the verb “sleep” or “fall asleep” (κοιμάω) is also used to denote death and it appears twice only in 11:11-12. Jesus, being the first person to use that expression in John, used it figuratively and in the verb indicative perfect tense (κεκοίμηται): “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep.”

In following the path of the narrative of John, it is evident that there is a connection between sickness and death. When Jesus heard of the sickness of Lazarus, he classified it as a “non-deadly sickness” (Αὕτη ἡ ἀσθένεια οὐκ ἔστιν πρὸς θάνατον), “this sickness does not lead to death” (11:4). The impression this expression creates is that there are some kinds of death that God permits for his own glorification and the death of Lazarus is an example, “This sickness does not lead to death; rather it is for God’s glory, so that the son of God may be glorified through it”. Sickness leads to death and thus creates sensitivity to human mortality. According to Zimmerman, this

¹⁸⁹ Ruben Zimmerman, “The Narrative Hermeneutics of John 11: Learning with Lazarus How to Understand Death, Life and Resurrection,” ,” In *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, ed. Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008): 84.

natural dimension of death is presented in the example of the illness of a concrete person: the person is mortal, finite and corruptible as is shown in 11:39, even with the senses.¹⁹⁰

Those who believe have eternal life; they have passed from death to life (5:24). Those who keep Jesus' word will never see/taste death (8:51, 52). Lazarus' illness would not end in death (11:4) and Jesus spoke of Lazarus' death as sleep (11:13). The other three occurrences are proleptic references to the manner of the death of Jesus (12:33; 18:32). The adjective νεκρός ("dead") which is used substantively, occurs eight times in John, always in the plural, referring to death literary as "the dead" and often with the verb ἐγείρω, "to raise" (2:22; 5:21; 12:1, 9, 17; 21:14). The exception is 20:9, where it occurs with ἀνίστημι, "to rise." For Culpepper, the noun θάνατος is the more abstract term and can mean either physical or spiritual death and because John speaks of different kinds of death, one must be careful about discerning the different nuances of the verb ἀποθνήσκω, "to die" in John.¹⁹¹ The reality of Jesus' death is underscored by the opening lines of John's resurrection account.

Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb and sees that the stone has been removed from the entrance. What Mary sees requires interpretation and her conclusion is that the open tomb means that Jesus is still dead and that someone has taken the body: "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have laid him" (20:2). The evangelist makes it clear that Mary has accepted the fact that Jesus has died, and that she is not clinging to the hope that somehow he might still be alive. The Gospel does not explain why Mary thinks of grave robbery but assumes that her conclusion

¹⁹⁰ Zimmerman, "The Narrative Hermeneutics of John," 85.

¹⁹¹ Alan Culpepper, "Realized Eschatology in the Experience of the Johannine Community," in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, ed. Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008): 263.

will be plausible to the readers. Mary is convinced that Jesus is dead and that the open tomb can readily be explained by the practice of grave robbery. Koester submits that this is theologically important to the evangelist. It makes clear that resurrection is not the obvious answer to an open tomb. Therefore, any belief that Jesus has risen and is alive must overcome this alternative explanation of what Mary sees.¹⁹²

Ambiguity in what John's gospel teaches about the resurrection, thus parallels a significant element of tension in the treatment of the resurrection of Jesus and more specifically, the relationship between the cross, empty tomb and paschal appearances. Much of John's gospel focuses on the sign of the cross, which is the point where Jesus is "lifted up/exalted," where the 'work' he has come to do is completed (19:30), where an effective sign is given that epitomizes and encapsulates the precious signs.¹⁹³

The term "resurrection" (*ἀνάστασις*) occurs only four times in John's gospel and in all the four references, it lies in the eschatological future. In chapter 11:24, for example, at Lazarus' tomb, Martha replies to Jesus, "I know that he will rise again (*ἀναστήσει*) in the resurrection on the last day" and Jesus answers, "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25). The verb *ἀνίστημι* ("to raise up") occurs four times transitively, each time in reference to raising believers "in the last day" (6:39,40,44,54) and four times intransitively ("to rise again") for the resurrection of Lazarus (11:23-24) and the resurrection of Jesus (20:9). The verb is not used for the Father raising the Son. The verb *ἐγείρω*, to "raise" or "rise," is used in various ways including, raising the temple

¹⁹² Koester, "Jesus' Resurrection," 67.

¹⁹³ Attridge, "From Discord Rises Meaning," 1-2.

(metaphorically) in three days (2:19-20), the resurrection of Jesus (2:22; 21:14), the Father raising the dead (5:21) and the resurrection of Lazarus (11:29; 12:1,9,17).

Alan Culpepper expounds that John also maintains a distinction between eternal life and resurrection that is most apparent in the separation of the present from the future in John 6:40, 54. Whereas elsewhere, eternal life is typically linked to resurrection from the dead as the life of the resurrected person, John distinguishes eternal life from resurrection, claiming that it is the present experience of those who believe. In this way, John moves beyond the common early Christian understanding that the righteous dead are taken to the place of blessedness before the resurrection (Luke 16:22-24, 23:43; Phil 1:23; Rev 6:9-10).¹⁹⁴ John also regards the resurrection of Jesus from the dead as a protological and exemplary event by which God's life-creating activity begins, bringing about a new reality of salvation that abides and can already be experienced in a comprehensive way in the present.¹⁹⁵

In Harold Attridge's view, from a redactional or diachronic perspective, the characteristic core position of the Johannine tradition would be an interpretation of "resurrection" as a category relevant to the life of the believer in the here and now. This interpretation marks a radical rethinking of the apocalyptic heritage of the early followers of Jesus. Such a radical departure could not stand in a religious movement that found a prominent place for eschatological hope. The radical impulse was blurred in the final stages of the gospel which insisted on the reality of the physical resurrection of Jesus and on the futurity of resurrection hope for his followers.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴Culpepper, "Realized Eschatology," 255.

¹⁹⁵Schnelle, "Cross and Resurrection," 133.

¹⁹⁶Attridge, "From Discord Rises Meaning," 3

One interesting version of this position is represented by those who see Johannine theology engaging in critical dialogue with other identifiable branch of early Christianity, which was associated with the name of the apostle Thomas and attested by texts such as the Gospel of Thomas and Acts of Thomas. For “Thomasine” Christians, resurrection would have been understood as an allegorical cipher for the spiritual transformation of individuals rather than a future reality.¹⁹⁷

In John, the reality of the physical resurrection is vital. In addition to this, the resurrection of Jesus in the fourth Gospel has a function within the Johannine narrative and in relation to the reader. Even though the evangelist honoured the demands of tradition by including Jesus’s passion and resurrection in his gospel, he did not do so unwillingly. On the contrary, he incorporated it meaningfully into the narrative structures and gave it a function in the overall purpose of the gospel. By being firmly integrated in the narrative, the resurrection obtains a unique Johannine significance that is the basis for the intended effect on the readers.¹⁹⁸

In Schneiders’ view, the most important term in this anthropological semantic field in relation to the resurrection of Jesus, and the one which John uses in a subtle way that espouses semantic and Hellenistic understanding of the human, is the σῶμα, (body). For Schneiders, this is possible because moderns tend to think of the body as a distinct substance in the human composite, the physical component as distinguished from the spiritual, they tend to equate it with flesh, itself misunderstood as the soft, solid component in distinction from blood and bones. In other words, body tends to be understood as a physical substance which is integral to but only a part of the person.

¹⁹⁷ Attridge, “From Discord Rises Meaning,” 4.

¹⁹⁸ Nielsen, “Resurrection, Recognition, Reassuring,” 178.

For John, body is the person in symbolic self-presentation. The person may be living or dead but it is the whole self, the bodyself, who is living or dead. In semantic thought, once the body of the dead person begins to decay, to fall apart, the person is no longer a person.¹⁹⁹

Zimmerman argues that long before the term resurrection explicitly appears, such counteractions, relativizations, and reinterpretations of death occur. In 11:4, when the topic of death is first touched upon, a fundamental tension is formulated; death is counteracted by the glory of Jesus. For Zimmerman, Jesus uses the popular reaction of euphemizing death in order to allude to the resurrection. By speaking of Lazarus falling asleep, Jesus ironically adopts the death-sleep metaphor in order to remove the sharpness from death and simultaneously to allude to the original background of the resurrection metaphor in the sense of a “waking up” (ἐξυπνίζω) or “getting up” (ἀνίστημι). Such a re-metaphorization is a way of speaking that John uses in other contexts in order to make theological terms more understandable.²⁰⁰

The cleansing of the temple is the first text to consider (2:13-22). Jesus drives away all the people turning the father’s house into a market place, “Take these things out of here and stop turning my father’s house into a marketplace” (2:16). This action of Jesus generated into an argument between him and the Jews which made them demand for a sign from Jesus, “What sign can you show us for doing this (2:18)?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up.” Jesus answered them figuratively, referring to his own death and resurrection. After he was

¹⁹⁹ Schneiders, “Touching the Risen Jesus,” 160-1.

²⁰⁰ Zimmerman, “The Narrative Hermeneutics of John,” 86-7.

raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that he had spoken (2:22).

The encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus is implied in the text. In Jesus' answer to Nicodemus, he leads him to the understanding of the truth. Jesus told Nicodemus, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the son of man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life" (3: 14-15). There was a double lifting up in Jesus' life; the lifting on the cross and the lifting into glory and the two are inextricably connected. The one could not have happened without the other. For Jesus, the cross was the way to glory and had he evaded it, there would have been no glory for him. The evangelist took the story from the Old Testament and used it as a kind of parable of Jesus. The serpent was lifted up and the victims looked at it and they were healed.

The first principal text of death and resurrection appears in the forensic debate of John chapter 5, where Jesus refutes the charge of blasphemy for having made himself equal to God. Attridge postulates that there is an element of irony in the apologia, since all the defenses that Jesus offers finally are based on his, in fact, being equal to God. The references to the resurrection are woven into that defense.²⁰¹ In response to the charges of Sabbath violation and blasphemy, Jesus contends that "just as the father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the son gives life to whomever he wishes" (5:21).

The two solemn "Amen, Amen" sayings in the chapter 5 are relevant to the text. The first "Amen" saying combines the themes of resurrection, expressed in terms of

²⁰¹ Attridge, "From Discord Rises Meaning," 5.

eternal life and judgment: “Anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life” (5:24; 13:1; 1John 3:14).

The second “Amen, Amen” saying reinforced the point made in the first, foreshadowing the resurrection of Lazarus, Jesus claims that the hour is coming when the dead will hear the voice of the son of God and live (5:25), when “all who are in their graves will hear his voice and will come out...” (5:28-29). Attridge again argues that by insisting that the future resurrection will lead to a judgment based on deeds, rather than on the will of the son (5:21), only exacerbate the tension.²⁰² In Culpepper’s view, “the giving of life” is separated from resurrection of the dead. The verb μεταβέβηκεν, which literary means “crossed over” from death to life is a completed action with continuing effects.²⁰³

The conversation about the bread of life discourse in chapter 6, where the resurrection on the last day is mentioned four times (6: 39, 40, 44, and 54), is very crucial in this study. The first reference appears in the initial midrashic interpretation of the bread in Psalm 78, paraphrased in John 6:31. Here, Jesus identifies himself as the “bread” of the scriptural text and says that partaking of him provides “eternal life” plus “resurrection on the last day.” This is expressed in four different occurrences in the chapter. In the first text, Jesus said to them that it is the will of his father that he should not lose any of those He gave to him but that he should raise them up on the last day (6:39).

²⁰² Attridge, “From Discord Rises Meaning,” 7.

²⁰³ Culpepper, “Realized Eschatology,” 256.

The second text follows directly from the first: “For what my father wants is that all who see the son and believes in him should have eternal life and I will raise them to life on the last day” (6:40). In the third, Jesus said to them, “No one can come to me unless the father who sent me draws him to me and I will raise him up on the last day” (6:44). 6:54, which is the fourth, speaks about the eating of the flesh and drinking of the blood of Jesus. Whoever eats the flesh of Jesus and drinks his blood will have eternal life and Jesus will raise that person on the last day.

Harold Attridge argues that the bread of life discourse thus reinforces the dioptic view of resurrection encountered in chapter 5. The gospel of John expresses hope for some future resurrection while insisting that some form of “eternal life” is available in the life of the believer in the present, and it maintains that the two are intimately connected. The final stage of the development of the resurrection and the life themes in the discourse as it is, suggests that the true life, both present and future, is a function of a relationship with the father that is mediated by the son (6:56-58).²⁰⁴

The understanding of the resurrection of Jesus continues into the story of the resurrection of Lazarus. This well-known story, in fact, epitomizes the realized pole of the Johannine resurrection, though it also has elements, whether redactional or compositional. The key points arise in the exchanges between Jesus and Martha. For Attridge, the dramatic irony in the dialogue is patent. Martha reproaches Jesus since he could have prevented the death of Lazarus (11:21). Jesus offers the reassurance that Lazarus will rise. Martha takes the reassurance to be an expression of the conventional hope in eschatological resurrection, ‘on the last day.’ Jesus responds with the solemn declaration that he is resurrection and life (11:25). “I am the

²⁰⁴ Attridge, “From Discord Rises Meaning,” 7.

resurrection and the life” sums up the Christological focus of the resurrection message of the fourth gospel but because that message is Christological, it also has Trinitarian connotation and consequence for humanity. The return of Lazarus to mortal life is a sign of the giving of eternal life and of the death and resurrection of Jesus through which such life is made available.

In Andrew Lincoln’s view, were it not for the account of his resurrection, Jesus’ claim in this episode to be the resurrection and the life would ring rather hollow.²⁰⁵ For the believer, life is a reality even in the face of death. The reproachful encounter with a conventionally pious Martha is repeated in the first stage of the encounter with a worshipful Mary, sister of Martha (11:32). An emotional Jesus, perhaps frustrated that his friends do not seem to understand, does not bother to repeat that he is resurrection and life for the believer. Instead, he raises the dead friend from the tomb. Jesus is, quite dramatically, the resurrection and the life for Lazarus.²⁰⁶

When Jesus says “I am the resurrection and the life” and when the whole narrative witnesses to this claim, we, along with Martha are being asked: “Do you believe this?”(11: 26). To believe is to find our own story in this gospel’s story of Jesus. To find our story in the story of the crucified Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life, is to be linked to the life of the Triune God, to be empowered for mission and witness and to be given profound assurance in the face of the present painful reality of death.²⁰⁷ With the raising of Lazarus, the declaration that those in the tombs would hear the voice of Jesus and come forth (5:28-29) is dramatically realized.

²⁰⁵ Lincoln, *Life in the Face of Death*, 142.

²⁰⁶ Attridge, “From Discord Rises Meaning,” 10.

²⁰⁷ Lincoln, *Life in the face of Death*, 144.

With the anointing scene of John 12:1-8, attention shifts from the present and/or future promises of resurrection of Jesus. Attridge states that the details of this account have intrigued commentators. The fact that Mary wipes the precious nard from Jesus' feet with her hair may perhaps hint at the notion that Jesus' body will not need embalming unguents. He argues that whatever connotations the details may suggest, Jesus' explanation to Mary's action (12:7) orients the reader's attention to the future, to his burial, a destiny that awaits him, in part at least, because of his raising of Lazarus from the dead (12:9-11).²⁰⁸

Finally, the overall thrust of the resurrection stories, therefore, seems to reinforce the "realized" dimension of the Johannine resurrection themes and yet, all the stories are grounded in the presence of one who came back from the dead, in however mysterious a form. The dialectic that pervades the narrative also informs the ending, although in a reverse or chiasmic order. In conclusion, the evangelist seems most interested in the ways in which resurrected life have meaning in the present but also insists that they are intimately tied to the resurrection reality of Christ. The gospel's insistence on the real death of the truly human Jesus on the cross is indeed central to its construal of who Jesus is and what he, as revealer, in fact reveals.²⁰⁹

3.3 Journey of the Reader

According to Moloney, the experience of reading a classical text through the centuries indicates that a hard and fast definition of 'the reader' is impossible.²¹⁰ The evangelist summons his intended reader into a deeper appreciation of Jesus as the Christ, the Son

²⁰⁸ Attridge, "From Discord Rises Meaning," 13.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

²¹⁰ Francis J. Moloney, "Who is 'the Reader' in/of the Fourth Gospel?" *Australian Biblical Review* 40 (1992): 32.

of God (20:30-31). In writing his Gospel, the Fourth Evangelist used the stories about Jesus told and re-told in the Johannine community throughout its long life, from its earliest Jewish Christian days, down to its expulsion from the Synagogue into its mission in a new world.

Behind this story-telling, stands the figure of the Beloved Disciple. His appreciation of Jesus of Nazareth stands at the beginnings of the Johannine tradition. His ability to re-read, re-tell and re-teach that tradition, without betraying the fundamental elements of the Christian message is one of the main features of the developing Christological faith within the community. He challenged his community in his own time. After his death (21:21-23), these Christians were prepared to go on facing their new situation, re-reading, re-telling and re-teaching the heritage left them by the Beloved Disciple. This is what the author of 1John means when he reminds his community of "that which was from the beginning, which we heard"(1 John 1: 1) and "This is the message which you have heard from the beginning" (3: 11).²¹¹

Francis Moloney states that the Fourth Evangelist did not compose the final version of his Gospel with a modern reader in mind. Similarly, while the Evangelist wrote a Gospel narrative for the members of a given community at the end of the first century, he had no control over how they would respond to the narrative.

Within the text itself, there is a reader who emerges as the tale is told. He is twice addressed as "you" (19:35; 20:31). This so-called implied reader is an "intratextual" phenomenon. The implied reader knows what has already been read: the words, sentences, paragraphs and pages but the reader waits for the next word, sentence, paragraph and page to discover what the narrator has to tell. The implied reader,

²¹¹ Moloney, "Who is "the Reader," 29.

therefore, is not a person but a heuristic device used to trace the temporal flow of the narrative. The reader emerges as a forward-looking textual effect who also knows and recalls what has happened and has been revealed in the story so far.

The unexplained reference to the resurrection in 2:22, and the author's statement of intention in 20:30-31 shows that, the implied reader is credited with some knowledge of Jesus' story but the actual reader has no knowledge of the Johannine version of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Statements about "the hour" of Jesus (2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 13: 1; 17: 1;19:27) his being 'lifted up' (3: 14; 8:28; 12:32) and his glorification (7:39; 12: 16) can only puzzle the implied reader. Knowledge and understanding of the Johannine story evolves as the narrative unfolds.²¹²

Nielsen shares the same view with Moloney, when he states that, one of the ground breaking methodological insights from the pioneering work of narrative criticism, has been to conceive of a text as an autonomous meaning-producing construct. Neither the intentions of the author nor the effects of the reader determine its significance or exhaust its meaning. To prevent these fallacies, the intentional and the effective real readers and authors have been rigorously but rightfully separated from implied readers and authors. He adds that nowadays, it is common place in New Testament studies to place them on separate levels of communication.

Narrative studies have focused on the reading process of the fourth Gospel but it has primarily been to detect an implied reading strategy and thereby show the readers' contribution to the meaning production. This approach tends to overlook the fact that the text involves an implied reading strategy in order to influence its real readers.

²¹² Moloney, "Who is "the Reader," 20-1.

Even if a text constitutes an internal narrative universe that produces an autonomous meaning independent of external historical factors, it is constructed to affect the reader either by transforming or confirming a presupposed worldview.²¹³

The resurrection of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel has a function within the Johannine narrative and in relation to the reader. Even though the evangelist honored the demands of tradition by including Jesus' passion and resurrection in the gospel, he did not do so unwillingly. On the contrary, he incorporated it meaningfully into the narrative structures and gave it a function in the overall purpose of the gospel. By being firmly integrated in the narrative, the resurrection obtains a unique Johannine significance that is the basis for the intended effect on the reader.²¹⁴

According to Philip Wesley Comfort, John's gospel depicts three journeys in relation to the reader: The journey of the son of God in becoming a man, living among men, dying and rising to return to the Father; the journey of the disciples who followed Jesus in this journey; and the journey of all the believers who follow Jesus and the apostles on a spiritual journey that leads to full enjoyment of God. The purpose for such a journey, in Comfort's view, is for the disciples to know God the father through the son and spirit, and its ultimate goal is to bring the believers into a living relationship with the triune God, and a loving relationship with each other, so that they together can be a corporate testimony to the world of God's grace and Christ's salvation (12:20-21).²¹⁵

²¹³ Nielsen, "Resurrection, Recognition, Reassuring," 177.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 178.

²¹⁵ Philip Wesley Comfort, *I am the Way: A Spiritual Journey through the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 54.

This relationship however, is dependent on the believer's understanding of the death and resurrection of Jesus so that faith will be built in him. In John's gospel, the reader is carried along right from the beginning of the text as the narrator narrates the event of Jesus' public ministry, from the incarnation to the resurrection and post resurrection stories. The faith of the reader in the story is very paramount because unlike the implied reader, the real reader did not encounter Jesus in his physical, earthly ministry.

Koester explains that faith is highly possible for those who have "not seen" because Jesus is alive and this conviction is basic to John's theological perspective. He adds that the Jesus who visibly encountered people in the past, through his ministry and resurrection appearances, is understood to be alive and active in the time of the gospel's reader. There are, to be sure, statements within the gospel that seem to run counter to the idea that Jesus remains present with his followers. In the farewell discourses, Jesus speaks repeatedly about leaving the world and returning to his father (14:28; 16:5, 28; 17:11). Accordingly, one might assume that during the time of the reader, Jesus is absent and that he will remain absent until he comes again in the future, when he takes believers to himself and to their "dwelling" in the presence of God (14:2-3).²¹⁶

For John, the dwelling of the risen Jesus and his father within believers is understood to be a present reality. The faithful are not left waiting to enter the "dwelling" of God in the distant future; God already makes his 'dwelling' among the faithful. This dwelling of the risen Jesus and his father is not visible to the eye but is disclosed

²¹⁶ Koester, "Jesus' Resurrection," 72.

through the Spirit that abides or dwells within the circle of believers (14:17). It is not that the risen Jesus is present ‘in Spirit,’ as if the spirit has taken Jesus’ place.

The Spirit and Jesus retain their distinct identities in John’s gospel. For Koester, what the Spirit does is disclose the presence of the risen and unseen Christ to the believer at the time of reading. This, in turn, makes it possible for the believer to abide or dwell with Christ in the present (15:4, 9).

The continued presence of the risen Jesus means that patterns established during his ministry continue in the context of the reader in modified form. It is established that the words spoken by and about Jesus were the principal means of evoking faith during John’s account of his ministry. The disciples and other exemplars of faith were called to follow Jesus before seeing any miracles. Conversely those whose initial encounters with Jesus were based on the miracles regularly interpreted what they saw in ways that led them away from genuine faith.

Mary Magdalene saw the risen Jesus and failed to recognize him until he spoke, and Thomas’ climactic confession of resurrection faith meant acknowledging the truth of the words he had already heard from Jesus and other disciples. Words from and about Jesus continue coming to the reader in the period after the resurrection through the text of the gospel and witness of the community. Since words have been essential in fostering faith in the people depicted in the gospel, the reader has what is needed. The words of the text convey Jesus to the reader in ways that are designed to evoke and sustain faith.²¹⁷ John realizes that words in themselves do not generate belief. Rather, the words of the gospel are the means by which the risen Christ evokes faith through

²¹⁷Koester, “Jesus’ Resurrection,” 73.

the spirit that he sends. The witness of the early disciples becomes effective when the spirit bears witness in and with their witness (15:26-27).

Jesus both spoke and acted during the time of his incarnation and resurrection appearances. Afterward, the unseen Jesus continues to speak and act now through the witness of his followers and the activity of the spirit. During his ministry, Jesus performed signs that revealed his glory. Now the signs and resurrection appearances of the past are presented to the reader through the words of John's text. In this way, they remain accessible during this time of "not seeing."²¹⁸

3.4 Conclusion

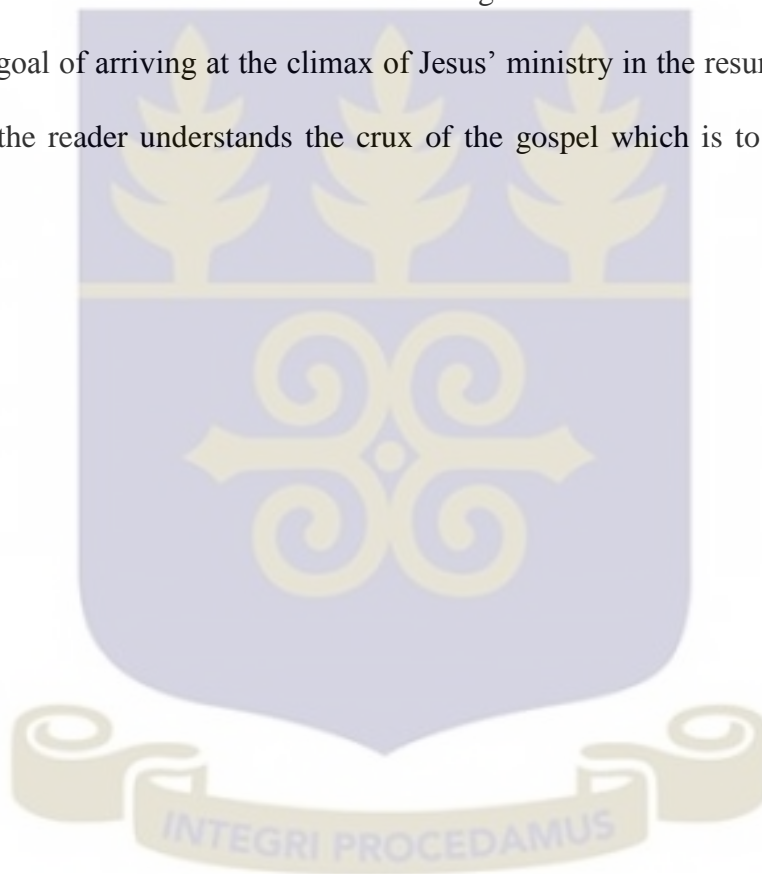
In conclusion, it is evident in the journey of the reader that the text plays a very prominent role. It affirms the reader's basic beliefs system and fundamental worldview. The conflict between the physical absence of Jesus and faith in him is worked out in the emotional responds to the events at the narrative level. In the end, the reader's understanding of Jesus is substantiated by his resurrection, their doubts are brought into accordance with the reason of the Fourth Gospel and their faith without or rather despite physical sight is validated.

Just as the resurrection verifies Jesus' proclamation, it confirms the reader's acceptance of it. Thus, the gospel is written that they may remain in their faith. In Nielsen's view, it is one thing to ask how the resurrection and the gospel text are meant to influence its reader; it is another thing to ask whether it achieves this ambition with real reader. Does the gospel manage to take the place of the resurrected

²¹⁸ Koester, "Jesus' Resurrection," 73-4.

Jesus and confirm the reader's belief system in the conflict between faith and physical sight? Apparently, it does not!

The text includes a new conflict between being and appearance. It claims to be fact but it appears to be fiction; it declares that it is true but it could be lie; it purports to be reality but it is a text. For that reason, the success of the gospel depends on its ability to convince its reader that it is more than it appears to be, just as the earthly Jesus had to do.²¹⁹ The reader is therefore walked through the narrative of the Gospel with the ultimate goal of arriving at the climax of Jesus' ministry in the resurrection narrative. By this, the reader understands the crux of the gospel which is to whip up faith in God.



²¹⁹ Nielsen, "Resurrection, Recognition, Reassuring," 207-8.

CHAPTER FOUR

A COMPARISON OF THE CONCEPT OF DEATH AND RESURRECTION IN JOHN AND AMONG THE DANGMES

4.1 Introduction

The phenomena of death and resurrection, in spite of having some significant ethnic variances, share common emotional trauma for what happens at the end of an individual's life. This chapter focuses on death and resurrection from the Dangme perspective in general and the people of Osudoku in particular. It gives a brief history of the GaDangmes and concludes with an analysis of some key words, metaphors and terminologies associated with the phenomena and relate it to the gospel according to John.

4.2 Origin and History of the GaDangmes

Debates are still on-going about the origin and history of the GaDangmes of Ghana. One school of thought contend that the proto-GaDangmes came from somewhere east of the Accra plains while other schools of thought suggests a distant locale beyond the West African Coast.

Inspite of such linguistic and historical theories among scholars, it is agreed that the GaDangmes settled in the Accra plains by the thirteenth century. Oral tradition has it that the GaDangmes; Shai, La, Ada, Osudoku, Gbugla (Prampram and Ningo), Krobo (Manya and Yilo) migrated from Israel through Egypt, then to Ethiopia and southern Sudan and settled for a period of time in Sameh in Niger and then to Ileife in Nigeria.

In 1100 A.D, they migrated again. They settled first at Dahome and later travelled to Huatsi in Togo where they stayed for a short season. From Huatsi, they travelled to the eastern banks of the river Volta, which was originally called Jor. From there, they crossed the Volta River at a place between the Old Kpong and Akuse and established settlements on the plains of Tag-logo where they lived till 1200 A.D. Later, the Ga-Dangmes migrated to the plains of Lorlorvor between Lorlorvor and Osudoku Hills. Archaeological research at the ancient site of Shai demonstrated that their settlement was already in existence by A.D 1300 and that it has expanded into large townships by 1500.²²⁰

Again oral history has it that the nucleus of the GaDangmes originated from Goshen and arrived in the Gold Coast via an early route which started immediately in Upper Egypt and Abyssinia (Ethiopia). Having crossed the Volta River in a parting of the waters reminiscent of Moses' parting of the Red Sea, the ancestors of the GaDangmes comprising the main direct and partial descendants of the two tribes of Gad and Dan (the fifth and seventh sons of Jacob), found the La Nimo kingdom.

In addition, there is another view that the GaDangmes claim their descent from Israel in the Middle East. From there, they migrated in different groups through Upper Egypt, along the river Nile in Ethiopia and subsequently Benin in Nigeria. They then settled in various places, including the grassy and water starved coast of present day Accra, the capital of Ghana. The GaDangmes who settled along the coast took to fishing in many lagoons, which dotted their domain, and later turned to sea fishing. Those who settled along the forest areas became farmers of cash crops such as pepper,

²²⁰ Joseph Nii Abekar Mensah, *Traditions and Customs of Gadangmes of Ghana: Descendants of Authentic Biblical Hebrew Israelites* (New York: Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Co, 2013), 2.

okro, tomatoes, corn, cassava, etc. Besides Southern -Eastern Ghana, there are sizable GaDangme communities in modern Togo and the Volta region of Ghana. These include the people of Ge or people of Anecho and Agotime.

The GaDangmes constitute one indivisible people. They are united in blood, common origin, culture and history. The Ga language is but a dialect of Dangmes of which the Krobo language is the prototype. Some of them presently occupy the Eastern part of the Accra plains. Moreover, pockets of Dangme's are found throughout the forest belt of Southern Ghana, particularly in the Eastern and Central regions, due to the aggressive acquisition of land entailed by the Krobo 'Huza system.' The linguistic evidence, which is supported by their own oral traditions, suggests that the GaDangmes are of the same stock.

Linguistically, Ga and Adangme are spoken in the south-east Coast from the mouth of the Volta to beyond Accra. Neighboring languages or dialects are Fante to the west, Ewe to the east and Akwapim in the north. Although Ga and Adangme have a considerable vocabulary in common and a marked resemblance in structure, they are not completely mutually intelligible and may be considered as two languages, each with sub-groups of dialects.

The Ga language is spoken along the coast from the river Densu just west of Accra to Temma in the east. Dialects are Teshie- Nungwa, Osu and a debased type of Ga spoken in Accra. The Adangme language is spoken along the coast from Kpone (where they are bilingual, speaking both the Ga and Adangme but consider themselves Adangmes) to Ada (Volta) and island within a line drawn approximately along the Volta through Akuse, Senchi, Bisa, Trom and under the Akwapim ridge

back to the coast at Kpone. The dialects are: Kpone, Ningo, Prampram, Osudoku, Shai, Krobo and Ada and grouped as follows: Krobo- in the native state of Manya krobo and Yilo krobo; Ada- in the native state of Ada; Shai in the native state of Shai; Confederation of the people of Prampram, Kpone and Ningo in the native state of Prampram; Osudoku- in the native state of Osudoku.

Each of these people speaks a different Adangme dialect but within each language, the dialects are mutually intelligible. They are very similar and show only slight differences of usage and pronunciation. The GaDangme language is a Sudanic language and has the following characteristic features: 1. Phonology, it has a system of seven distinct vowel sounds; the labio-velars (gb, kp), the palato-labial series (dzw); the voiced and voiceless series 2. Tonal system: They have a significant level of monosyllabic tone 3. They possess a definite article 4. Plural of nouns is formed by a suffix 5. Word order, genitive case precedes governing nouns; direct object follows the predicate; adjective follows the noun it qualifies 6. Vocabulary, they have their unique vocabulary which is so peculiar to them.²²¹

4.3 Death and Afterlife from Traditional Ghanaian World view

Death and the afterlife are two concepts that have always gone hand in hand in Ghanaian cultural thoughts and practices, as well as in the Ghanaian mode of philosophical reflections and religious beliefs. The core meanings of these concepts, as retained in tradition and carried through the diverse cultural histories of Ghana, relate to a general notion of the sanctity of human life within the society. This

²²¹ Madeline Manoukian, *Akan and Ga-Adangme Peoples of the Gold Coast* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), 66-69.

transcend into what happens in the afterlife. Ghanaian tradition also holds that solidarity based on interdependence and the fostering of harmonious and culturally appropriate relations is clearly exhibited during the death of a member of any given community. Notwithstanding, their involvement to a large extent is informed by the type of death whether good or bad and so members in the society always ensure proper or good death at most times. A good death will consequently ensure the most suitable and comfortable position among one's ancestral kin in the afterlife or the life of the "living dead."²²²

In spite of the diversities of cultures and cosmological world views existing in Ghana, there is the common notion that the passage from life through death to the afterlife is hardly ever known to be a straightforward one for any one individual either in terms of the opportunity of time of death or in the situational manner by which death comes. In other words, the time and manner of death for all humans are often likely to be distorted by life situations that are not always within human control.

Hence, ever since the dawn of Ghanaian cultural history, Ghanaian thought has focused on the development of elaborate funeral and other mortuary rites for the dead and the "living dead" and ancestors in order to ensure that each individual at death makes the appropriate transition into the afterlife and takes up appropriate position in that environment. The elaborate rites also serve to ensure that the world of the living continues to cultivate and maintain culturally desired relationships with the world of the dead and afterlife that will in turn ensure cosmic harmony for all beings.

²²² John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann Publishers, 1969), 85.

In general, throughout history and in spite of ongoing social transformations taking place within the diversities of traditional Ghanaian cultures and societies, the aesthetics and drama surrounding the rituals of death and the afterlife have remained focused on the expression of traditional Ghanaian ideas and notions about the meaning of life experiences. For most Ghanaian societies and peoples, social and cultural expressions, including religion, art, literatures and economic activities, have always directly and indirectly included forms of communication.

The thought processes occurs between the invisible world of the lost beings and spirits on the one hand and with the world of the living dead and divine beings on the other. For these communications, the living world of daily experiences is viewed as the midland and common ground for the living beings, including humans, to interact with the well-placed beings of the afterlife, such as the ancestors and the divine beings on the one hand and the “lost beings” unable to find their way to the world of the afterlife on the other hand. These communications occupy the greatest part of such sociocultural and religious activities as worship, festivals and other rituals, including rite of passage.

There is a mildly paradoxical unanimity in Ghanaian studies about the Ghanaian belief in, and attitude toward death and afterlife. It is universally noted that traditional Ghanaian generally believe that bodily death is not the end of life, but only the inauguration of life in another form. The crucial conceptual issue concerns the nature of the after-world. Not all Ghanaians are given to talking about death and the afterlife but wherever there are any intimations at all of what life in the land of the dead is like, the similarities between that form of life and the earthly one are striking. The

similarities are indeed so striking that the characterization of this life as earthly in contrast to the afterlife is already metaphysically inappropriate.

In Ghana, where people are not excessively quiet about eschatology, descriptions of the afterlife generally include explicit indications that the transition from this life to the next is by land travel; and of course, if one travels from one part of the earth by land, one can only arrive at another part of the earth. In Ghana, boundaries are often marked by rivers. Not surprisingly, the high point of the post-mortem journey is the crossing of a river. Once having crossed the river, one enters the land of the departed and joins the society of the ancestors. This cultural belief is a common thought pattern of many, if not all the ethnic groups in Ghana. The crossing of river to the other world of the living is commonly expressed by all. The belief that the dead continues a new life in the other world of the living cuts across all the ethnic groups of Ghana.

4.4 Death and Resurrection from an Osudoku Perspective

Since time immemorial, people have come to the realization that all persons who come into this world one day have to die and this notion is the same with the people of Osudoku. They know that there is no way of escaping death and express it in proverbs and in songs, for instance “Gbenɔ gbaitso kpasaawe si nge he kake” (Death’s ladder does not lean at only one place). They are all convinced that death like birth means a transition from one world to the other, a return to the other world, as everyone, prior to his birth, in his world of departure (sɛsɛɛ). Death expresses the connotation of separation from things and persons of this earth, as well as introduction

to the ancestral world. This does not exclude the fact that between the dead and the living, a close relationship is maintained.²²³

In the cultural worldview of the Osudoku's, death is thought of as a transition to another state and place of life (the crossing of a river). The idea of the crossing of a river to another world of the living is clearly expressed in the proverbs and songs. It is an age old belief that the estuary at Ada Foah known in the local language as 'Azizanya,' where the river and the sea meets is the crossing point of the dead to another world, a place of no return. It is a popular belief that the dead (gbogboe) who crosses the 'Azizanya' to the other world can come back in another form through rebirth (reincarnation).

It is a general belief among the Osudoku's that the soul (susuma) moves on to another world of the living. The soul is immortal and can even reappear in another form elsewhere in the world and live like an ordinary human being, who can re-marry and raise children. It is because of such a belief that many of the traditional people consider the existence of ghosts. For Nana Labokie, one does not die just for the sake of it, it is caused by a lot of factors; the popular cause of death is through sickness or disease, others are also orchestrated by witches and wizards, through natural disasters and sometimes through one's own sins. Children as well as the old die but premature death is dreaded the most. In all cases of death, they go to the soothsayers and diviners to consult to ascertain the cause of death but most especially, the mysterious ones.

²²³ Hugo Huber, *The Krobo: Traditional Social and Religious Life of a West African People* (Fribourg: University press, 1993), 192.

It is regarded as the ideal and natural goal of all mankind to pass in good health, a full life of this earth and to reach old age before one dies. Hence, the term “wa” or “wami” signifying “life” as well as “age” and “strength” is the wish of everyone. If death comes to a person at old age, it is rather taken as something unavoidable, natural, “ebe su” (his time has come) but whenever someone of a minor age dies, it is understood that some mystical agent or force must have killed him. The respective injury as to the particular cause of death is hardly ever omitted in this case. Certain cultural practices are performed to ascertain causes of death, especially the premature and mysterious ones. They may ask the dying person himself; they may, as is normally done, consult a diviner.

In the olden times, they also expected an answer from the corpse of the deceased or from peculiar ordeals. The diviner is believed to know the way of getting in contact with the spirit of the deceased so as to inquire from him the cause of the death.²²⁴ In regard to a person’s death, diviners use to reveal one of the following possible cases: If it was not that person’s own “sɛsɛɛ” (destiny), which calls him/her back to the other world, it must have been a deity or dead spirit who, through an oath “wɔ bɔmi” was invoked to kill the person, or one of the ancestors called him/her to account for neglecting particular social duties; or else, it must have been a “hialɔ” (wizard or witch); a “nyualɔ” (one who kills by means of evil medicine); or a “kpɔlɔ” (one who kills by spelling a person’s name at a particular spot) who caused the death. In their estimation, these three very powerful agents in the society (“hialɔ,” “nyualɔ” and “kpɔlɔ”) can cause premature death or hasten one’s death.

²²⁴ Huber, *The Krobo*, 194.

All such beliefs do not, however, exclude the fact, that the Osudoku from ancient times have been well aware of sickness and accidents as causing a person's death. Sickness and accident too, have to a great extent, been mystically conceived, that is, they are taken as a process that has been effected by the mentioned mystical agents or forces and which, if no remedy is found, leads to death. It is the diviner "gbalɔ" who, if consulted in a case of sickness, assigns the remedy that can remove the sickness.

The treatment itself, however, is given either by the "tsupatsɛ" (medicine-man) who applies ritual ablutions and potions or by an anti-witchcraft specialist, who through mystical or magical means, counteracts witches or by a "wɔnɔ" (priest), who, in a case of "wɔ bɔmi," stops his deity from killing.²²⁵ From the discussion so far, it is palpable that death could be caused by sickness, accident, natural disaster, through mystical means or natural death in the understanding of the Osudoku.

Etymologically, the term for "death" (gbenɔ) is connected with "gbemi" (to kill). The same verb "gbomi" (to die) stands in its continuous form "engɛ gbohe" (he is sick) and in its past tense "egbo" (he died). It is evident from the discussion that the term death is rendered in its three shades of meaning through semantic analysis. The verb "to die" (gbomi), in its noun form "death" (gbenu) and the adjective "dead" (gbogboe), express the state of departure or transition from the world. Thus, their concept of an internal connection between sickness and death is revealed in their language. Though death is thought of as a transition to another state and place of life, it is commonly looked upon as something strange and dreadful. It is expressed in the maxim "Nɔko nyiɛwe keyɛ gbedze" (Nobody goes on his own initiative to the world of death). Some of their stories reflect their belief that in the primeval times, people

²²⁵ Huber, *The Krobo*, 193.

did not die or if they did so, they returned to life again. It was a tragic event, an intrigue or a guilt of theirs that brought them death or prevented a deceased from rising up again.²²⁶

It has been revealed through the study that the term resurrection does not exist in the GaDangme lexicon in general and the Osudoku's in particular. The closest in meaning is "gbogboe sitemi" (rising of the dead / afterlife). Therefore the term 'resurrection' among the Osudoku's is "gbogboe sitemi". 'Gbogboe' means 'the dead', and 'sitemi' literally means 'rising up' or 'getting up' which translates as 'resurrection'. The idea of "gbogboe sitemi" indicates that death "gbogboe" and resurrection "sitemi" are not the same event. It suggests that one dies, and later resurrects. This however does not aptly represent life after death among the Osudoku's.

For the Osudoku, life after death is a reality which underpins the following;

- Death is a separation of "numlotso" body and "susuma" soul.
- This separation happens instantly or naturally.
- One does not die and later resurrect. Meaning the human soul 'susuma' never ceases to live.

The above belief manifests itself in the fact that, as soon as a person dies, others who are unaware of the death continue to see the person at various places. When later they hear of the person's demise, then they realize they have seen a ghost 'kpade.'

I wish however, to highlight the somehow subtle difference between 'susuma' and "kpade." 'Susuma' is a person's personal spirit, which grants life to the body. At

²²⁶ Huber, *The Krobo*, 195.

death, the “susuma” departs from the body. The “susuma” can even be consulted by diviners. “Kpade” is when the dead person’s spirit manifests itself (Apparition). “Kpade” therefore is the appearance of the self-manifested “susuma”. Thus, when the “susuma” decides to be seen, it is seen and called “kpade” (ghost).

Additionally, until the introduction of mortuaries into the Dangme society, dead bodies (gbogboe) were traditionally preserved through embalming, and announcement of the news of death is delayed, in the hope that the departed spirit may return to inhabit the body again for the individual to regain consciousness. Dead news is announced only after some time when it is certain that there is no hope of the body regaining consciousness. This shows that for the Osudoku, a person’s soul is capable of departing the body at least briefly and then returning.

The resurrection of Christ for that matter, which occurs on the third day after Christ’s death, is alien to the worldview of the Dangme people, for whom there is nothing like resurrection (rising from the dead). It is believed that in the past, stories were told of some people who died and came back to life again. In a popular traditional view, “gbogboe sitemi” (rising from the dead) is very significant in describing the resurrection since there is no such term as resurrection in the actual sense of the word.

In recent times, news has gone round of a young man from Assesewa (a Dangme) in the Eastern region of Ghana, who is purported to have died and came back to life again. In narrating the story in the local language as I listened, I realized that he could not associate his coming back from the dead to resurrection in the strict sense of the word. Instead, he used “i te si ke je gbeje” (I got up from the dead).²²⁷ The fact of his

²²⁷ Tv broadcast interview on Adom TV by Kofi Adomaah Owawani, March 15, 2015.

death was attested to because he was buried and funeral rite was celebrated, as it were for the dead but the fact of his coming back to life could not be verified as resurrection.

The term is not explicit even in the Dangme Bible of the New Testament. There is no adequate term to commensurate the term resurrection. It is rather associated with rising from the dead as used in the Dangme bible (gbogboe sitemi ke je gbeje). Joseph Nii Abekar Mensah has viewed the term differently. In his estimation, the ancient Nubians marked the river's highest period known to the Gadangmes as "Gbo" literary means "Dead" or "Died" in the GaDangme language. According to Abakar Mensah, "Gbo" linguistically means "risen," a beginning of another life. Philosophically, "Gbo" is a spiritual word which represents the resurrection of both the spiritual world and the physical world. The GaDangmes as a legacy from their ancestors use "Gbo" due to the nature of the river "Nai" (Nile)'s chronicle rising; as "the end and beginning period."²²⁸

4.5 Related Concept of Death and Resurrection in John's Gospel and in Osudoku

Throughout the New Testament: from the synoptic Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, Pauline epistles and especially in John, there is an acknowledgment that death and resurrection form part of the central themes of the kerygma of the early church. For the death and resurrection of Jesus are not mere interludes in the story of God's greater works, they are themselves at the heart of God's saving work; being the basis, means, and demonstration of the restoration of God's rule. In particular, the death and resurrection of Jesus, which is an intrinsically eschatological event, is both the proper

²²⁸ Mensah, *Traditions and Customs*, 202.

beginning of distinctly Christian eschatology and the foreshadowing of the coming resurrection of the dead. It is evident that the death and resurrection of Jesus is the high point in the Christology of the Fourth Gospel. For it is the death and resurrection that vindicates all that Jesus said, believed and did and so is the definitive answer to the cross. It is as well that which serve as the impetus for the Christological thinking of the early church.²²⁹

It is part of the traditional worldview of the Osudoku to see 'kpade' (ghost), which is the dead person's spirit (susuma). The biblical accounts of Christ's post-resurrection appearances (John 20:14-31; 21:1-24) to the apostles and disciples, are similar to the Osudoku's traditional experience of 'kpade'. It is highly probable, therefore, that the post-resurrection narratives in John may have facilitated the concept of Christ's resurrection into the worldview of the Osudoku's. In line with the above, it is important to examine any other issues related to the death and resurrection in John's account, which may have facilitated the concept among the people of Osudoku. In doing this, the death and resurrection scenario of Lazarus is employed as the prototype.

The first related concept to examine at this stage of the work is death and its concomitant issues. It is a universally accepted fact that death (gbenɔ) is a biological requirement for every creature that walks the face of the earth as expressed in the maxim 'Gbenɔ gbaitso kpasawe si nge he kake' (Death's ladder does not lean at only one place) but whether that requirement also generally applies to resurrection

²²⁹ Donald A. Hagner, *Gospel, Kingdom, and Resurrection in the Synoptic Gospels* (Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1998), 119.

(gbogboe sitemi ke je gbeje) or rising to life is so intriguing. In John's account of the death of Lazarus, for example, it is revealed in the account that Lazarus was ill, meaning Lazarus' death was caused by a sickness. The text (11:1-44) did not explain to the reader the kind of sickness that Lazarus was suffering from. What is important in this death scenario of Lazarus is that, it authenticates Jesus as the 'resurrection and the life' and the prefiguration of Jesus' own death and resurrection.

When the news of Lazarus' health condition was reported to Jesus, he delayed and went on a later date when he had already died and was buried for four days (11:39). In spite of the fact that Lazarus was buried for four days, Jesus still raised him back to life. In the traditional worldview of the Osudoku, death is acknowledged as a necessity for the living and that could be caused by health issues (In spite of the activities of the 'hialɔ' (wizard or witch); a 'nyualɔ' (one who kills by means of evil medicine); or a 'kpɔɔ' (one who kills by spelling a person's name at a particular spot), just as was the case of Lazarus.

Secondly, John employed different Greek terminologies, synonymously and interchangeably to express the various shades of meaning and action of death and this is similar in the Osudoku language. In John's gospel, the evangelist used the verb ἀποθνήσκω "to die" (4, 6, 8, 11, 12, 18, 19 and 21), the noun θάνατος "death" (5, 8, 11, 12, 18 and 21) and the adjective νεκρός "dead" (2:22; 5:21; 12:1, 9, 17; 21:14). These shades of meaning used by John in rendering the acts of death and dying are expressed in the Osudoku as; the verb to die "gbomi," the noun death "gbenɔ" and the adjective dead "gbogboe." It is realized that in both the Greek and Osudoku, the adjectival expression of the word "dead" (gbogboe and νεκρός) are in the plural and

often used with the verb “to raise.” In the Greek rendition, it is used with the verb ἐγείρω, “to raise” and with the verb “sitemi” to raise, in Osudoku.

The third related concept to examine in this segment is the term “resurrection” (ἀνάστασις, in Greek and gbogboe sitemi, in Osudoku). It is realized through the study that the evangelist’s usage of the term “ἀνάστασις” to denote the resurrection of Jesus is not so explicit in the gospel, the nuance is obvious. He employed various Greek terminologies interchangeably to express the mode of the resurrection. For instance, ἀνίστημι occurs eight (8) times in the Gospel of John, it occurs in six (6) forms and in eight (8) verses. In chapter 6, the evangelist used the term ἀναστήσω, the future indicative tense of ἀνίστημι four times (39, 40, 44 and 54) to refer to Christ’s resurrection which was yet to take place. Then in 11:23 and 24, he used ἀναστήσεταιί which is indicative future middle tense in reference to the resurrection of Lazarus, but in 11:31, he used ἀνέστη which was in reference to Mary (the sister of Lazarus) rising up to her feet. However in 20:9, John used ἀναστήναι, an infinitive aorist active of ἀνίστημι which referred to the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

From the analysis, John used the term five times to refer to Christ’s resurrection and twice to that of Lazarus which also in a way pointed to Christ’s own future resurrection. The term ἀνίστημι is of the same semantic field as ἀνάστασις and ἐξανάστασις. Hence, the nuances connote rising from the dead or resurrection from the dead. It is also evident from the gospel that John speaks about two kinds of death, spiritual and physical. Jasper Tang Nielsen opines that in John, for the gospel to reach its final form, the reality of the physical resurrection is very vital.²³⁰

²³⁰ Nielsen, “Resurrection, Recognition, Reassuring,” 178.

In relating the concept of the resurrection in John to the Osudoku, it is realized that the Osudoku language has also gone through somewhat seemingly difficulty in the rendering of the term ‘resurrection’ (gbogboe sitemi) in the proper sense of the word. It has already been established from the preceding paragraphs that there is no definitive term like resurrection in Dangme lexicon; rather, its meaning is derived by prefixing it with the adjective “gbogboe” (dead). For instance, “Gbogboe” means ‘the dead’, and “sitemi” literally means ‘rising up’ or ‘getting up,’ which is translated as ‘resurrection.’

This is in relation to John’s usage of the word ἀνάστημα which is in the same semantic field with ἀνάστασις. In the Dangme bible, the “gbogboe si temi” (rising from the dead) is so explicitly used as “resurrection.” In John 11: 23-25, for example, the dialogue between Jesus and Martha clearly spells it out. Jesus said to Martha, “*O nyeminyumu ɔ maa te si ke ba wami mi ekohu*” (11:23). Martha responded, “*I le kaa nyagbe ligbi ɔ ne ni gbogboehi maa te si ɔ, e maa te si ke ba wami*” (11: 24). Jesus then told Martha in the verse 25a that he is the “resurrection and the life” but in the Dangme bible, it is rendered as, “*Imi ji si temi ɔ ke wami ɔ ne,*” which is literary translated as, “I am the rising and the life” and this is what the Osudoku mean by resurrection. Again, in chapter 20 of John’s gospel, where one would have thought that it is the chapter that contains the resurrection narrative, it is even more surprising that the term “resurrection” in both Greek and Dangme is not explicit. In 20:9, it is expressed, they still did not understand from scripture that Jesus had “to rise from the dead.” The Greek text renders it as “ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῆναι” (rising from the dead) and in the Dangme, it is, “*e te si ke je gbeje*” (rising from the dead).

In addition to the above, another related concept to discuss in this work is Jesus' post resurrection appearances in John and in relation to the Osudoku concept of apparition. In John's account, Jesus' post resurrection appearance occurred three times: The first post resurrection appearance was to Mary Magdalene in the garden (20:11-17), secondly, he appeared to the disciples when they were gathered together behind locked doors (20:19-23) and the third appearance was to the seven disciples at the lake of Tiberias (21:1-14).

In 21:14, John states, “τοῦτο ἤδη τρίτον ἐφανερώθη Ἰησοῦς τοῖς μαθηταῖς ἐγερθεὶς ἐκ νεκρῶν” (This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead). It is also observed in this text that “ἐγερθεὶς ἐκ νεκρῶν” (raised up from the dead) is used instead of resurrection. The post resurrection appearances of Jesus are related to the Osudoku concept of apparition. In the traditional worldview of the Osudoku, there is the belief of appearances of some dead people to relations and friends and it is most often purported to be “kpade” (ghost). In my analysis of the post resurrection appearances of Jesus to Mary Magdalene and disciples, and the appearance of the dead (gbogboe) to relations and friends, there is a relation. It is believed that in the olden days it was very common to hear of the dead appearing to friends and relations but in this day and age, it is not common.

The “kpade” appears in the same physical form and sometimes settle in another location to perform normal human activity. They maintain that some people mistakenly marry “kpade” and raise children with them and that is why in the typical traditional Osudoku contraction of marriage, due diligence is made into the background of each party to be very sure of who the partner is.

4.6 Relevance of the Resurrection to Contemporary Osudoku Christian

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is very momentous to every Christian and the Christian of Osudoku is no exception. Every generation of believers in Jesus Christ for the last two thousand years and in recent times have had to wrestle with the issues of the resurrection and also denying the reality of bodily resurrection remains a central problem for our own culture today. In the light of the above, this section discusses how relevant the resurrection is to the contemporary Osudoku Christian.

The resurrection of Jesus plays a very significant role in the life of every Christian. Christianity stands or falls on the truth of the resurrection. If Christ has not resurrected from the dead then the faith of those who have believed in the gospel is in vain and the apostles are false witnesses by proclaiming an event that did not happen. In his days on earth, Jesus consistently alluded to his resurrection from the dead on the third day but it was always a hard saying which his disciples did not easily grasp. Even after his resurrection from the dead, they still had doubts in their minds if it was truly him who had come back to life.

The apostle Thomas is a typical example worthy of mention in this context. He was considered as the most outrageous doubter of Jesus' resurrection but at the same time, the person who made the greatest Christological profession (my Lord and my God) when he was finally convinced of the resurrection. The question that quickly runs through one's mind when it comes to the disciples inability to quickly believe in Jesus' resurrection is that; if they (apostles/disciples) who had first-hand encounter with Jesus (who moved with him, ate with him, saw the many signs he performed) were still slow to believe, then how much more the Christian in contemporary times, and most especially, the Osudoku Christian? This is why the faith of the beloved

disciple who “saw and believed” (20:8) is very applicable to the contemporary Christian who did not see Jesus but still believes in his resurrection.

The beloved disciple was convinced at the first sight and immediately believed. The positive connection between the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ consists in the fact that these two acts of God (death and resurrection) with and after one another are the two basic events of the one history of God with a sinful and corrupt world. For Cousar, the death and resurrection of Jesus is not the closure event on the incarnation but the inauguration of the new and final day.²³¹

It’s one thing to establish the relevance of the resurrection to the people of Jesus’ day, but what difference does that make to people today? Is it really relevant for our lives in this century? Is it relevant to the contemporary Osudoku Christian? Christ’s resurrection doesn’t lie within the realm of religious speculation or mythology but of historical, factual evidence. From the previous discussions on the sub-topic, “death and resurrection from an Osudoku perspective,” a number of issues were discussed. This section of the work examines them and their relevance to the contemporary Osudoku Christian.

The first relevance to discuss is that the resurrection of Christ guarantees the Christian’s own resurrection: It is the traditional belief of the Osudoku that when one dies, the soul (susuma) moves on to another world through the crossing of a river to begin a new form of life. It is also their belief that “gbogboe sitemi ke je gbeje” (resurrection of the dead/raising of the dead to life) is not part of their culture even though there have been stories of the dead appearing to others. The traditional

²³¹ Charles B. Cousar, *A Theology of the Cross: The Death of Jesus in the Pauline Letters* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 98.

Osudoku does not see Christ's resurrection from the dead as meaningful to him but it is relevant to the Christian because it enhances his faith. "Death could not hold him captive in the grave." It gives the Christian a sure hope of his own resurrection on the last day. This, Paul affirms in his first letter to the Thessalonians and Corinthians respectively. Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians is an offering of hope to those who are grieving deceased members of the community. They have reason to hope so Paul writes to them, "since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep" (4:14).

The resurrection of the dead plays an important role in the argument of 1Thessalonians, where Paul assures his audience that at the *Parousia*, God will raise the dead who have believed in Christ. In 1 Corinthians 15 too, Paul addresses the Corinthian converts that the general resurrection of the dead is non-negotiable. In Philippians chapter 3, Paul professes his own hope that his body will be conformed to the glorious body of the risen Christ. Matera explains that the new element of eschatological hope in these letters, then, is the transformation of the believer that will occur at the resurrection of the dead, which will occur when Christ returns.²³²

The most important statement for Paul regarding the resurrection of the dead comes in 1 Corinthians 15 where he had to answer two theological questions: Will there be a resurrection from the dead (v. 12) and with what kind of body will the dead be raised (v. 35)? In answering these questions, Paul firstly reminds the Corinthians that Christ's resurrection is central to the gospel that he and the apostles preach (vv. 1-11). Secondly, he shows the intimate relationship between the resurrection of Christ and

²³² Frank J. Matera, *God's Saving Grace: A Pauline Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 195.

the resurrection of those who believe in him (vv. 12-34). If there is no general resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised from the dead, and if Christ has not been raised from the dead then the faith of those who have believed in the gospel is in vain. For Paul, if Christ has been raised from the dead, as the gospel proclaims, then there will be a general resurrection from the dead.

Thirdly, Paul argues that resurrection is a process of transformation rather than of resuscitation from the dead (vv.35-58). The body of the believer is changed and transformed by the power of God's spirit; it is no longer an earthly body but a spiritual body.²³³

In addition to the above, the other relevance of the resurrection to the Osudoku Christian is that it establishes the integrity of biblical revelation: Paul tells the Corinthian community, now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...(1Cor 15:1-8). With this, the Christian is convinced of what the scriptures say about the resurrection as the revealed truth.

The Christian of today did not have any physical contact of the Man Jesus who walked the face of the earth two thousand years ago like the disciples. The Christian today believes at the time of not seeing and this is possible through the scriptures.

²³³ Matera, *God's Saving Grace*, 195-6.

Again, the relevance of the resurrection to the Osudoku Christian is that it assures the Christian of eternal home and inheritance. The Christian is assured that this world is a temporal place and that the permanent place is prepared for him when he leaves this world.

John explains this in his Gospel when he says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where (I) am going you know the way." Thomas said to him, "Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, then you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him." (14:1-7).

The Christian is assured of the kingdom of heaven as his home when he leaves this world since Christ resurrected and sitting at the right hand of the father. The preparation of the room for the righteous Christian in Jesus' father's house is in line with the traditional Osudoku belief of transition from this world to the other world. This expression of John is also in line with Pauline theology of the Parousia. Paul, having established that there will be a general resurrection of the dead, in vv. 42-55; describes the resurrection that believers will enjoy in terms of transformation. The natural body that believers possess will be transformed into a spiritual body no longer subject to corruption. Rather, it will be transformed by the power of God's spirit and believers will enjoy the resurrection experience of their risen Lord. The Christian

therefore has the hope of the “beatific vision” because Jesus died and resurrected to life again.

Also, it is very relevant to allude to the death and resurrection of Lazarus in this context to the contemporary Christian. Lazarus was a man just like any Osudoku Christian of today. He died as a result of ill health and was buried in line with the Jewish customs and traditions. When Lazarus’ death was reported to Jesus, he considered Lazarus as “asleep.” He told his disciples, "Our friend Lazarus is asleep, but I am going to awaken him" (11:11). Martha showed signs of despondency when she dialogued with Jesus. Jesus led her gradually to the acceptance of the reality that he is the resurrection and the life. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. (But) even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise." Martha said to him, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world" (11:20-27).

The condition of Lazarus and the situation in which he found himself with the people around him evoked deep sense of faith and belief in Jesus as the resurrection and the life. The Osudoku Christian today who is beset with all the challenges and vicissitudes of life is encouraged that after the toils and labors of this world, his body will rest safely and on the day of resurrection, he will be raised to life again because his “Master” (Jesus) is the resurrection and the life. The apostle Paul encapsulates this

in his writing to the Corinthian community: It is Christ's resurrection, then, that undergirds the hope believers have for their own resurrection which will occur at the Parousia.

From the perspective of Pauline theology, the resurrection is the decisive event in human history. It is the event that brings an end to the old age and ushers the new age. Matera argues that before the resurrection, humankind lived in the old age dominated by the powers of sin and death but now that the resurrection of the dead has begun in Christ, his *Parousia* is always imminent for those who believe in him. In other words, whereas, formerly the Parousia could not have happened because Christ had not been raised from the dead, now it can happen any moment because God has raised Christ from the dead.²³⁴ In sum, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is very relevant to the Christian because it gives a sure hope of his own future resurrection, firm belief in Jesus as the resurrection and the life and deepening of their faith in him.

4.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, it is revealed in this chapter that the term "resurrection" in itself, is rendered in different shades of meaning which makes it very difficult to apply it to Jesus alone. This implies that the term is applicable to those who believe in Jesus as the resurrection and the life because it is Christ's resurrection from the dead that undergirds the hope believers have for their own resurrection which will occur at the Parousia. The contemporary Osudoku Christian, In spite of traditional belief about "gbogboe sitemi" (resurrection), with its concomitant nuances, has faith in Jesus as the resurrection and the life.

²³⁴ Matera, *God's Saving Grace*, 211-12.

The next chapter is a summary of the whole work. It gives some recommendations to be considered for future research on the subject matter, makes general conclusions on the entire research topic and some major findings in the study.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This last chapter presents the summary, conclusion and some recommendations of the entire thesis. It examines the core issues in the research and offers some possible areas for further academic study.

With the statement “he saw and believed” (John 20:8), the evangelist launches the resurrection narrative. He begins with Mary Magdalene’s visit to the tomb and concludes with Jesus’ post resurrection appearances. In reading the narrative, the question that lingers on in the mind of the reader is, “what did the beloved disciple see and believe?” This question spurs the reader on to unravel the meaning of that assertion from the beloved disciple. He saw the empty tomb together with the wrappings and believed that Jesus has risen from the dead. The focus of this research is not to ascertain the truth or falsity of the resurrection of Jesus but to explore how the resurrection invokes faith in the believer who believes in the resurrection of Jesus.

In summary, the research establishes that the evidence from the Greek New Testament, the characters, settings and change of subject matter for discussion in the text (20:1-29) validates why the passage forms a complete unit that could be studied together. In this narrative, Jesus’ role is so passive, unlike the suffering and death narrative and the post resurrection narrative where he was actively involved. Apart from his first post resurrection appearance to Mary Magdalene in the garden and his second post resurrection appearance to his disciples in a locked room, Jesus’ role in the narrative has been silent. This is precisely so because the resurrection narrative

serves as the climax of his ministry in John. The resurrection narrative in John is introduced with Mary Magdalene's coming to the tomb in darkness and finding the stone taken out of the tomb (vv.1-2).

The analysis in chapter two reveals that John's presentation of the resurrection narrative is unique compared to the synoptic gospels' account. Mary Magdalene is described as coming to the tomb alone but in reporting to the disciples, the evangelist used οὐκ οἶδαμεν (we do not know) and the "οἶδαμεν" is in the verb indicative perfect active, first person plural. This means that Mary Magdalene was not alone in the tomb but the evangelist narrated her coming to the tomb in the singular.

Furthermore, the analysis also indicates that it is only in John's gospel that Thomas the twin was absent when the Lord appeared to the rest of the disciples (20:24), and this is a *hapax legomenon* in the Gospels. The verb "breathe" (ἐνεφύσησεν) also occurs only here in the whole of the New Testament. Jesus breathed (ἐνεφύσησεν) on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit "Λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον." (20:22a). Brown agrees with Schneiders on the function of the verb ἐνεφύσησεν that Jesus' breathe on them recalled how God breathed on Adam when infusing in him the spirit of life. Jesus, by so doing re-created them with the Holy Spirit, a gesture that accentuates his relationship with God as divine.

The third chapter of the study looked at rising from the dead in John and the journey of the reader in John's gospel. In this chapter, we observe that the verb "to die" (ἀποθνήσκω) and the noun "death" (θάνατος) occur several times in John and there are two of the occurrences in chapter 11. The frequent usage of the verb and its related words in the chapter emphasize the fact that death is one of the central themes

of John 11 and goes a long way to express the purpose of the gospel. Ruben Zimmerman expounds that this statistical evidence makes it obvious that the theme of dying and death plays an important role for John within the Lazarus passage.

Again the term “resurrection” (ἀνάστασις) occurs only four times in John’s gospel and in all the four references, it relates to the eschatological future. In chapter 11:24, for example, at Lazarus’ tomb, Martha replies to Jesus, “I know that he will rise again (ἀναστάσει) in the resurrection on the last day” (11:24) and Jesus answers, “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25). The verb ἀνίστημι (“to raise up”) occurs four times transitively, each time in reference to raising believers “in the last day” (6:39,40,44,54) and four times intransitively (“to rise again”) for the resurrection of Lazarus (11:23-24) and the resurrection of Jesus (20:9). The verb is not used for the Father raising the Son. The verb ἐγείρω, to “raise” or “rise,” is used in various ways including, raising the temple (metaphorically) in three days (2:19-20), the resurrection of Jesus (2:22; 21:14), the Father raising the dead (5:21) and the resurrection of Lazarus (11:29; 12:1,9,17).

The analysis further revealed that there are two types of readers involved in the reading of the text; the implied reader and the actual reader. The implied reader knows what has already been read: the words, sentences, paragraphs and pages but the actual or real reader waits for the next word, sentence, paragraph and page to discover what the narrator has to tell. The implied reader, therefore, is not a person but a heuristic device used to trace the temporal flow of the narrative. It provides the actual reader with the necessary elements to understand the text in an adequate manner. The reader on the other hand emerges as a forward-looking textual effect, who also knows and recalls what has happened and has been revealed in the story so far.

The unexplained reference to the resurrection in 2:22, and the author's statement of intention in 20:30-31 shows that, the implied reader is credited with some knowledge of Jesus' story but the actual reader has no knowledge of the Johannine version of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The actual reader hence reads the story with the "eye of faith" in order to believe in Jesus as the protagonist in the narrative.

The fourth chapter attempts an engagement of the text with the GaDangme world view on death and resurrection. It discussed some key words, metaphors and terminologies associated with the phenomena and related it to the gospel according to John. Terms like "gbenɔ," "gbemi," "gbomi," "egbo," "sitemi," "gbogboe sitemi," "numlotso," "susuma," "Kpade" are but a few terminologies discussed in the chapter.

The chapter explored the relevance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ to the contemporary Osudoku Christian. The Osudoku Christian like any other Christian believes that since death could not hold Jesus captive in the grave but rose triumphant, they are also assured of the future resurrection of their bodies on the "last day." This belief is affirmed by the apostle Paul that if Christ has not resurrected from the dead then the faith of those who have believed in the gospel is in vain and the apostles are false witnesses by proclaiming an event that did not happen (1Cor 15:13-14).

From the study of the resurrection narrative in John, it has been established that the Johannine portrait of the Lord's resurrection is unique compared with the synoptic gospels. Mary Magdalene is portrayed as visiting the tomb alone while the synoptic accounts presented her with other women which creates some amount of confusion and doubt in the mind of the reader.

5.2 Conclusion

This research has shown that the resurrection of Jesus is not a verifiable historical event but a faith experience. It has established the relationship between the resurrection and faith which forms the main purpose of John's gospel. From the prologue of John's gospel which captures the pre-existent logos (1:1-18), through to the resurrection narrative in chapter 20, there have been several indications of the resurrection sayings that point to this fact. The synoptic evangelists presented portraits of the resurrection narrative in their respective gospels in almost a similar manner, despite some differences.

From the study, John's presentation of the resurrection narrative is different in style and in content from the synoptic account. John seeks to show that Jesus' death and resurrection was a purposeful action and not a meaningless tragedy and he shapes the passion narrative so that readers can see the will of God being carried through it.

Following from the above background, in the resurrection narrative (chapter 20), Peter and the beloved disciple run to the burial place of Jesus (3-10). At each point in the passage, these two disciples (Peter and the beloved disciple) "see" something and this builds intensity into the narrative. Readers are told that the beloved disciple arrived first, looks into the tomb and sees the grave cloths lying there (20:5). Peter, who follows later goes into the tomb and sees not only the grave cloths but the head cloths rolled up in a place by itself (20:6).

In contrast to Lazarus who comes out of the tomb still bound in the grave cloths, the grave cloths are left behind in Jesus' tomb. The beloved disciple who got there first finally enters the tomb and readers are told that he "saw and believed" (20:8), which

brings the story to its climax. What is puzzling is that after speaking of the beloved disciple's faith, the narrator explains that these disciples do not yet understand the scriptural necessity for Jesus to rise from the dead. So what does the beloved disciple believe after all?²³⁵ Did he believe what Mary Magdalene believed; that the body was stolen? Certainly not! The presence of the grave cloths and the fact that the head cloth is neatly rolled up, rules out body snatching. No grave robber would take the body while leaving the cloths and a thief would not bother to roll up the head cloth in such a tidy manner. What the beloved disciple believed is the fact that truly Jesus has risen from the dead as he foretold long ago.

Also, according to the gospel narrative, the disciples have also heard a lot from Jesus during the farewell discourses, which shape John's depiction of the resurrection appearances. Jesus said that he would come to the disciples and that they would see him again (14:16-19; 20:19). He also promised them peace and he meets them with the repeated expression of peace (14:27; 16:33; 20:19, 21). He promised to give them the spirit and now he breathes the spirit on them (14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7; 20:22). This empowered them to go all out without fear to the four corners of the earth to propagate the good news of the resurrected Christ.

In addition to these, the call to resurrection faith occurs for people of later generations, when the message about the risen Jesus is made effective by the risen Jesus himself. When Jesus appeared to the disciples as a group, Thomas was not with them and the disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord" (20:25a). Thomas replied, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the

²³⁵ Koester, "Jesus' Resurrection," 67-8.

nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe (20:25b). Thomas is often said to doubt but his words actually state his refusal to believe until certain conditions are met: if he sees and touches then he will believe. Thomas' role in the resurrection story is very relevant to the contemporary Christian but most exclusively to the Osudoku Christian who is also beset with doubt. Thomas accompanied Jesus to the tomb of Lazarus and experienced him raise Lazarus up from the dead but still doubted Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

The account in John shows that Thomas is later told two things which create the context in which the risen Jesus will work. The first saying comes at the last supper when Jesus speaks of going away and Thomas objects that he does not know where Jesus is going (14:7). The second saying comes after the resurrection, when the other disciples told Thomas, "we have seen the Lord," and he responds with a refusal to believe (20:25). When Jesus met Thomas after the resurrection, Thomas said, "My Lord and my God" (20:28). By calling Jesus "My Lord," Thomas makes the disciples' words his own. The disciples have spoken about having seen the Lord and Thomas echoes what they have said by calling the risen Jesus "my Lord."²³⁶ At the last supper Thomas heard that to see Jesus is to see God and Thomas makes this part of his confession by saying to Jesus, "my God."

From the study, it could be concluded that John's account of the resurrection shows that seeing does not guarantee believing: One can see the empty tomb, the grave cloths, the angels and even the risen Jesus himself without coming to faith. So when Jesus says, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (20:29), the reader

²³⁶ Koester, "Jesus' Resurrection," 71.

can be assured that those who have not seen Jesus are not disadvantaged but are blessed as the first group of disciples. Thomas eventually saw the risen Jesus, which is not the case of the reader, at least on “the last day” (6:39; 17:24). Yet the gospel assumes that resurrection faith continues to be generated because the risen Christ continues to be active, encountering people through the witness of his disciples and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, the signs and resurrection appearances also anticipate a future seeing which will come about through the believer’s own resurrection. The readers are like the disciples, who believed on the basis of words and hoped to see greater things in the future (1:50-51; 2:11); they are like the official, who travelled home on the basis of Jesus’ word, hoping to see his son delivered from death at the end of his journey (4:50-53). They are like the blind man, who responds to Jesus’ word and only later comes to see Jesus face to face (9:7, 37); and they are like Martha, who must believe before seeing the glory of God revealed (11:27, 40). They are like Thomas, who has already heard words from and about Jesus but who only later sees the risen Jesus for himself. The word of the gospel and the activity of the Spirit are what make such faith in the risen Christ possible during the time of “not seeing,” a time that extends from the resurrection of Jesus until the resurrection of those who follow him.

5.3 Recommendations

In view of the discussions made so far, I would like to make some recommendations for future study on the subject of the resurrection in John’s account. Based on the findings in the study from the Dangme perspective, I would like to recommend a future study of the resurrection narratives in John from an Akan perspective. As one

of the major ethnic groups in Ghana and the different ethnic groups which constitute the Akan tribe coupled with the similarity in the languages spoken by the various ethnic groups, a study of this nature will enable readers to appreciate the nuances of the resurrection narrative from different tribal worldviews.

Besides, in our day and age where rampant “church planting” and pastoring has become more of a business than genuine call to service of God through neighbor, the phenomenon of the resurrection of Jesus Christ has been questioned by many, Christians and non-Christians alike. The Osudoku Christian is beset with the challenges the traditional belief of resurrection (“gbogboe sitemi”) pose to them. The study has shown that in the traditional Osudoku world view, the term resurrection is not a straight forward one. It is rather prefixed by the noun “gbogboe” (death) and the verb “sitemi” (rising/raising) which is similar to John’s usage of ἀνάσθημι instead of ἀνάστασις in some circumstances. In view of the difficulty in the proper usage of the term, I recommend a further study by the Osudoku Christian into the term to aid their deep faith and belief in the resurrection of Jesus.

Finally, from a pastoral perspective, I recommend that pastors and ministers of the Word critically analyze biblical texts to arrive at an informed understanding before proposing meaning that speaks to their context. This, hopefully, may minimize inadequate contextualization of biblical texts which will go a long way to help Christians to a better appreciation of the resurrection message thereby building their faith.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alan, Culpepper. "Realized Eschatology in the Experience of the Johannine Community." In *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, edited by Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer, 253-276. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008.
- Attridge, Harold W. "From Discord Rises Meaning. Resurrection Motifs in the Fourth Gospel." In *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, edited by Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer, 1-20. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008.
- Beasley-Murray, George R. *The Gospel according to John 2nd ed.*, Word Biblical Commentary. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999.
- Beutler, Johannes. "Resurrection and the Forgiveness of Sins: John 20:23 Against its Traditional Background." In *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, edited by Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer, 237-352. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008.
- Bieringer, Reimund. "I am Ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God (John 20: 17): Resurrection and Ascension in the Gospel of John." In *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, edited by Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer, 209-235. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008.
- Botha, Eugene. "Speech Act Theory and Biblical Interpretation." *Neotestamentica* 41, no. 22 (2007): 274-294.
- Branick, Vincent P. *Understanding the New Testament and its Message: An Introduction*. New York: Paulist Press, 1998.
- Brodie, Thomas L. *The Gospel according to John*. A Literary and Theological Commentary. New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1997.

- Brown, Jeannine K. *Scripture as Communication: Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Brown, Raymond E. *The Gospel and Epistle of John: A Concise Commentary*. New York: Paulist Press, 1979.
- Bruce, F. F. *The Gospel of John*. Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1994.
- Burge, Gary M. *Interpreting the Gospel of John: Guides to New Testament Exegesis*. Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1998.
- Carson, Donald Arthur. "The Purpose of the Fourth Gospel: John 20:31 Reconsidered." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106, no. 4 (1987): 639-651.
- Carson, Donald Arthur. *The Gospel according to John*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991.
- Comfort, Philip Wesley. *I am the Way: A Spiritual Journey through the Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994.
- Cousar, Charles B. *A Theology of the Cross: The Death of Jesus in the Pauline Letters*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990.
- Craig, William L. *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus*. Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity. Ceredigion: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989.
- Culpepper, Alan R. *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.
- Elwell, Walter A., and Philip Wesley C. *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001.

- Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV): Introduction, Translation and Notes*. Anchor Bible Commentaries 28. New York: Doubleday, 1985.
- France R.T. *The Gospel of Matthew*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007.
- Hagner, Donald A. *Gospel, Kingdom, and Resurrection in the Synoptic Gospels*. Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1998.
- Harrington, Daniel J. *The Gospel of John*. Sacra Pagina, 4. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998.
- Huber, Hugo. *The Krobo: Traditional Social and Religious Life of a West African People*. Fribourg: University Press, 1993.
- Koester, Craig R. "Jesus' Resurrection, the Signs, and the Dynamics of Faith in the Gospel of John." In *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, edited by Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer, 47-74. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008.
- Langshaw, Austin J. *How to Do Things with Words*, Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 1956.
- Manoukian, Madeline. *Akan and Ga-Adangme Peoples of the Gold Coast*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950.
- Marguerat, Daniel, and Yvan Bourguin. *How to Read Bible Stories*. London: SMC Press, 1997.
- Matera, Frank J. "Christ in the Theologies of Paul and John: A Study in the Diverse Unity of New Testament Theology." *Journal of Theological Studies* 67 (2006), 237-56.

- Matera, Frank J. *God's Saving Grace: A Pauline Theology*. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2012.
- Mbiti, John. *African Religions and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann Publishers, 1969.
- McDowell, Josh. *The Resurrection Factor*. San Bernardino: Here's Life Publishers, 1981.
- McKim, Donald K., and Wright David, F. *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1992.
- Mensah, Joseph Nii Abekar. *Traditions and Customs of Gadangmes of Ghana: Descendants of Authentic Biblical Hebrew Israelites*. New York: Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Co, 2013.
- Moloney, Francis J. "Who is 'the Reader' in/of the Fourth Gospel?" *Australian Biblical Review* 40 (1992).
- Moore, C.A. *Tobit*. New York: Doubleday, 1996.
- Morris, Leon. *The Gospel according to John*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1995, 774.
- Myers, Allen C. *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987.
- Ngewa, Samuel M. "The Gospel According to John." In *Africa Bible Commentary*, edited by Adeyemo, Tokunboh, 1251-1296. Nairobi: Word Alive Publishers, 2006.
- Nickelsburg, George W. E. "Resurrection: Early Judaism and Christianity." In *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 5, edited by David Noel Fredman, 684-691. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Nielsen, Jasper Tang. "Resurrection, Recognition, Reassuring: The Function of Jesus's Resurrection in the Fourth Gospel." In *The Resurrection of Jesus in the*

- Gospel of John*, edited by Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer, 177-208. Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008.
- Oeming, Manfred. *Contemporary Biblical Hermeneutics: An Introduction*, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006.
- Ossom-Batsa, George. "Bread for the Broken: Pragmatic Meaning of Mark 14:22-25." *Neotestamentica* 40, no. 2 (2006): 6-29.
- Painter, John. "The Light Shines in Darkness: Creation, Incarnation, and Resurrection in John." In *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, edited by Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer, 21-46. Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008.
- Perkins, Pheme. "The Gospel according to John". In *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Edited by Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy, 942-984. Bath: The Bath Press, 1996.
- Ridderbos, Herman N. *The Gospel according to John. A Theological Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997.
- Sanders, Johnny L. "The Gospel According to John (19-21): That you may know Him." *The Bible Notebook* 7 (2011): 40-57.
- Schneiders, Sandra M. "The Structure and Dynamics of the Johannine Resurrection Narrative." In *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, edited by Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer, 152-176. Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008.
- Schnelle, Udo. "Cross and Resurrection in the Gospel of John: The Hermeneutical Perspective." In *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, edited by Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer, 127-151. Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008.

- Segal, Alan E. "Resurrection: New Testament", in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of The Bible* 4. Edited by Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, New York: Abingdon Press, 2009.
- Stewart, Robert B. "Resurrection of Jesus." In *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity* edited by Daniel Patte. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Tasker, Randolph Vincent G. *The Gospel According to John*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997.
- Tate, Randolph W. *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2008.
- Turner, David L. *Matthew: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2008.
- Wedderburn, Alexander J. M. "Beyond Resurrection." *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 111 (2001): 124.
- Wright, N.T. *The Resurrection of the Son of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.
- Zimmerman, Ruben. "The Narrative Hermeneutics of John 11: Learning with Lazarus How to Understand Death, Life and Resurrection." In *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, edited by Craig Koester and Reimund Bieringer, 75-101. Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008.