

**“THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE”**

Revisiting Seeing, Hearing, and Believing in John’s Gospel in Light of the Narrative  
Timeline

By

Andrew Kristanto

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## DECLARATION

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Matthew D. Jensen \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



## **ABSTRACT**

Scholars debate the relationship of seeing, hearing, and believing in John’s Gospel due to the tension between passages which depict hearing as the prominent instrument that leads to belief in Jesus (20:29), and those which present both seeing and hearing as legitimate mediums of believing (20:30). This present thesis offers an alternative view to explain the tension. By employing the perspective of a narrative timeline, it proposes that during the pre-resurrection era, seeing and hearing are portrayed as equal and complementary in leading the characters to belief in Jesus, while in the resurrection period hearing begins to take precedence over seeing, before finally hearing becomes the normative instrument of believing in the era after his ascension.

Chapter 1 introduces the tension regarding the relationship of seeing, hearing, and believing. It also briefly explains the position of the present research and the methodology used to address the issue.

Chapter 2 is a literature review which critically describes the views of the competing scholarly camps regarding the issue. This serves as an intellectual map of the issue in order to locate the contribution of this study.

Chapter 3 lays out the thesis’ methodology, which includes: (i) word studies of seeing, hearing, and believing in John’s Gospel; (ii) theories on character studies; and (iii) Johannine narrative timeline. It establishes the working framework and rationale for selecting and engaging with the relevant passages in John.

Chapter 4 elaborates the issue of the Johannine narrative timeline. It discusses the present and future aspects of Johannine eschatology which serve as a basis for the proposed narrative timeline.

Chapter 5 studies the Prologue (1:1-18). It argues that seeing and hearing are legitimate instruments of believing due to the Word’s revelatory acts of creation and incarnation.

Chapters 6 and 7 focus on Jesus’ pre-resurrection ministry (John 1:29-51 and 9:1-41). In both passages, seeing and hearing become necessary instruments of believing for the characters as a result of Jesus’ incarnation.

Chapter 8 studies John 20, which highlights the era of Jesus’ resurrection. The inclusion in 20:9 and 20:29 suggests that hearing begins to take prominence over seeing. Hence, John 20 depicts the rising role of hearing as Jesus’ bodily absence is imminent.

Chapter 9 discusses John 19:35 and 20:30-31 as the passages which directly refer to the era after Jesus’ ascension, thus his bodily absence. Consequently, hearing becomes the normative medium of believing.

Chapter 10 draws conclusions and implications based on the findings. It then provides a self-critique, and some suggestions for future research.

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## Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Literature Review .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.1. Seeing as an Inferior Medium to Faith.....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1.1. <i>Rudolf Bultmann</i> .....	5
2.1.2. <i>Raymond Brown</i> .....	8
2.1.3. <i>Francis Moloney</i> .....	10
2.1.4. <i>Craig Koester</i> .....	13
2.1.5. <i>D. A. Carson</i> .....	14
2.1.6. <i>Summary</i> .....	17
<b>2.2. Seeing and Hearing Together .....</b>	<b>18</b>
2.2.1. <i>Ernst Käsemann</i> .....	18
2.2.2. <i>Udo Schnelle</i> .....	20
2.2.3. <i>Sunny Kuan-Hui Wang</i> .....	22
2.2.4. <i>Josaphat C. Tam</i> .....	24
2.2.5. <i>Summary</i> .....	26
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>3. Methodology.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>3.1. Seeing, Hearing and Believing in John’s Gospel .....</b>	<b>29</b>
3.1.1. <i>Seeing</i> .....	30
3.1.1.1. <i>Keywords</i> .....	30
3.1.1.2. <i>Significant frequency of seeing keywords</i> .....	30
3.1.1.3. <i>The subject and object of seeing</i> .....	31
3.1.1.4. <i>Different expressions of seeing</i> .....	31
3.1.1.5. <i>Physical and metaphorical meanings of seeing</i> .....	32
3.1.1.6. <i>Seeing and Not Believing</i> .....	33
3.1.2. <i>Hearing</i> .....	35
3.1.2.1. <i>Keyword</i> .....	35
3.1.2.2. <i>The significant frequency of ἀκούω</i> .....	35
3.1.2.3. <i>The subject and object of hearing</i> .....	36
3.1.2.4. <i>Different expressions of hearing</i> .....	36
3.1.2.5. <i>Physical and metaphorical meanings of hearing</i> .....	37
3.1.3. <i>Believing</i> .....	37
3.1.3.1. <i>The locations of πιστεύω</i> .....	38
3.1.3.2. <i>The frequency of πιστεύω</i> .....	38
3.1.3.3. <i>The Christological content of πιστεύω</i> .....	39
3.1.3.4. <i>The use of πιστεύω in relation to Jesus as the object of faith</i> .....	40
3.1.3.5. <i>The various expressions of πιστεύω</i> .....	41
<b>3.2. Characterization in John’s Gospel.....</b>	<b>42</b>
3.2.1. <i>Approaches to the study of characters in John’s Gospel</i> .....	43
3.2.2. <i>Theories of characters</i> .....	44
3.2.3. <i>The implied reader/hearer</i> .....	46
<b>3.3. The Narrative Time of John’s Gospel.....</b>	<b>48</b>

3.3.1. <i>The Johannine eschatology and the narrative timeline</i> .....	51
<b>3.4. Rationale for the passages chosen</b> .....	<b>52</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>52</b>
<b>4. Eschatology and The Timeline of John’s Gospel</b> .....	<b>53</b>
<b>4.1. The Eschatology of John’s Gospel</b> .....	<b>53</b>
4.1.1. <i>Realized Eschatology</i> .....	54
4.1.2. <i>Future Eschatology</i> .....	55
4.1.2.1. <i>John 5:28-29</i> .....	55
4.1.2.2. <i>John 6:39-40</i> .....	56
4.1.2.3. <i>John 21:22</i> .....	57
4.1.2.4. <i>John 14:2-3</i> .....	57
4.1.3. <i>Realized and Future Eschatology Together</i> .....	61
<b>4.2. John’s Gospel’s Eschatology and the Narrative Timeline</b> .....	<b>63</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>65</b>
<b>5. The Prologue: John 1:1-18</b> .....	<b>66</b>
<b>5.1. “In the beginning was the Word” (John 1:1-13)</b> .....	<b>67</b>
5.1.1. <i>Seeing</i> .....	67
5.1.2. <i>Hearing</i> .....	69
5.1.3. <i>Believing</i> .....	70
5.1.4. <i>Summary</i> .....	72
<b>5.2. “The Word became flesh” (John 1:14-18)</b> .....	<b>72</b>
5.2.1. <i>Seeing</i> .....	72
5.2.2. <i>Hearing</i> .....	76
5.2.3. <i>Believing</i> .....	77
5.2.4. <i>Summary</i> .....	79
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>79</b>
<b>6. Pre-Resurrection: John 1:29-51</b> .....	<b>80</b>
<b>6.1. John the Baptist’s testimony (John 1:29-34)</b> .....	<b>81</b>
6.1.1. <i>Seeing</i> .....	81
6.1.2. <i>Hearing</i> .....	83
6.1.3. <i>Believing</i> .....	85
6.1.4. <i>Summary</i> .....	85
<b>6.2. The testimony and encounter of John’s disciples with Jesus (John 1:35-42)</b> .....	<b>86</b>
6.2.1. <i>Seeing</i> .....	86
6.2.2. <i>Hearing</i> .....	87
6.2.3. <i>Believing</i> .....	88
6.2.4. <i>Summary</i> .....	89
<b>6.3. The testimony of Philip and the encounter of Nathanael with Jesus (John 1:43-51)</b> .....	<b>89</b>
6.3.1. <i>Seeing</i> .....	89
6.3.2. <i>Hearing</i> .....	93
6.3.3. <i>Believing</i> .....	94
6.3.4. <i>Summary</i> .....	95
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>96</b>

<b>7. Pre-Resurrection: John 9:1-41 .....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>7.1. Jesus’ presence with the disciples and the blind man (John 9:1-7).....</b>	<b>98</b>
7.1.1. <i>Seeing</i> .....	98
7.1.2. <i>Hearing</i> .....	99
7.1.3. <i>Believing</i> .....	100
7.1.4. <i>Summary</i> .....	101
<b>7. 2. Jesus’ Absence (9:8-34) .....</b>	<b>101</b>
7.2.1. <i>Seeing</i> .....	101
7.2.1.1. <i>Seeing as a sign</i> .....	102
7.2.1.2. <i>Seeing as a falsification of Jesus’ identity</i> .....	102
7.2.1.3. <i>Seeing as a revelation of Jesus’ identity</i> .....	103
7.2.2. <i>Hearing</i> .....	104
7.2.2.1. <i>Hearing as the substitute for seeing</i> .....	104
7.2.2.2. <i>Hearing as the interpretive framework for Jesus’ sign</i> .....	107
7.2.3. <i>Believing</i> .....	109
7.2.3.1. <i>The man</i> .....	110
7.2.3.2. <i>Other characters</i> .....	111
7.2.4. <i>Summary</i> .....	112
<b>7.3. Jesus’ Presence with the Once-Blind Man and the Pharisees (John 9:35-41)</b>	<b>112</b>
7.3.1. <i>Seeing</i> .....	112
7.3.2. <i>Hearing</i> .....	113
7.3.3. <i>Believing</i> .....	115
7.3.4. <i>Summary</i> .....	116
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>8. The Resurrection: John 20:1-29.....</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>8.1. The Finding of the Empty Tomb (20:1-10) .....</b>	<b>119</b>
8.1.1. <i>Seeing</i> .....	119
8.1.2. <i>Hearing</i> .....	121
8.1.3. <i>Believing</i> .....	125
8.1.4. <i>Summary</i> .....	127
<b>8.2. Jesus and Mary (20:11-18).....</b>	<b>128</b>
8.2.1. <i>Seeing</i> .....	128
8.2.2. <i>Hearing</i> .....	129
8.2.3. <i>Believing</i> .....	130
8.2.4. <i>Summary</i> .....	131
<b>8.3. Jesus and the Disciples (20:19-23).....</b>	<b>131</b>
8.3.1. <i>Seeing</i> .....	131
8.3.2. <i>Hearing</i> .....	132
8.3.3. <i>Believing</i> .....	133
8.3.4. <i>Summary</i> .....	134
<b>8.4. Jesus and Thomas (20:24-29).....</b>	<b>135</b>
8.4.1. <i>Seeing</i> .....	135
8.4.2. <i>Hearing</i> .....	138
8.4.3. <i>Believing</i> .....	140
8.4.4. <i>Summary</i> .....	143

<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>9. The Ascension and Beyond: John 19:35-37 and 20:30-31 .....</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>9.1. John 19:35 .....</b>	<b>145</b>
<i>9.1.1. Seeing .....</i>	<i>145</i>
<i>9.1.2. Hearing.....</i>	<i>146</i>
<i>9.1.3. Believing .....</i>	<i>147</i>
<i>9.1.4. Summary.....</i>	<i>149</i>
<b>9.2. John 20:30-31 .....</b>	<b>150</b>
<i>9.2.1. Seeing .....</i>	<i>150</i>
<i>9.2.2. Hearing.....</i>	<i>152</i>
<i>9.2.3. Believing .....</i>	<i>155</i>
<i>9.2.4. Summary.....</i>	<i>157</i>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>10. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>Bibliography of Sources Cited.....</b>	<b>162</b>



## 1. Introduction

*“Have you believed because you have seen me?”*

*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*

*John 20:29*

Seeing, hearing, and believing are important concepts in John’s Gospel. Physical seeing and hearing are “the most prominent faculties” through which the purpose of believing in Jesus is served (20:30-31).<sup>1</sup> However, as Craig Koester observes, “A question throughout the Gospel is how believing is related to hearing and seeing.”<sup>2</sup> The persistence of this Johannine question is due to the seemingly ambiguous presentation of how seeing, hearing, and believing relate to each other.

On some occasions, seeing is portrayed rather negatively as a failed instrument of believing (cf. 2:23-24; 11:47-53) or a less favourable one (20:29). However, at other times both seeing and hearing seem to contribute positively to believing. The characters in John’s Gospel see Jesus and his signs, and hear his words before they finally believe in him (cf. 1:14, 33-34; 9:30-33). Indeed, John’s Gospel is written because the reader can no longer see Jesus’ signs (20:30-31).

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<sup>1</sup> Josaphat Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus in the Gospel of John* (WUNT 2/399; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 6. Cf. Dorothy Lee, “The Gospel of John and the Five Senses,” *JBL* 129.1 (2010): 115-127.

Believing (πιστεύω), on the other hand, is “the single word that can alone express the purpose of the entire Gospel” (Edward W. Klink, *John* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 882; cf. Robert Kysar, *John: The Maverick Gospel* (Revised edition; Louisville, KY: WJK, 1993), 82-83.

<sup>2</sup> Craig R. Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 163.

This apparent ambiguity splits scholars into two camps. Some scholars argue that hearing alone is the proper instrument of believing. However, others contend that both seeing and hearing are equally legitimate ways to bring characters to believe in Jesus. Due to the importance of the issue, revisiting the web of seeing, hearing and believing is essential to understanding the coherence of John’s Gospel.

Nevertheless, instead of taking sides with one camp over the other, there is a possibility that the narrative of John’s Gospel can accommodate both the scholarly positions. As Raymond Brown has hinted,

[F]or the use of the visible is an indispensable condition of the Word’s having become flesh. As long as Jesus stood among men, one had to come to faith through the visible. Now, at the end of the Gospel, another attitude becomes possible and necessary. This is the era of the Spirit or the invisible presence of Jesus (xiv 17), and the era of signs or appearances is passing away. The transition from 29a to 29b is not merely that one era precedes the other, but that one leads to the other.<sup>3</sup>

In other words, seeing and, arguably, hearing are the instruments of believing in a certain era where the Word is present in the flesh. However, once that era is no more, seeing’s role is diminished, and hearing becomes the main instrument in the following era. Unfortunately, Brown stops showing us the way forward and does not walk the path himself. So Brown leaves an unanswered question which this thesis will further explore.

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<sup>3</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII-XXI: A New Translation with the Introduction and Commentary* (AB 29A; Garden City, NY: Double Day, 1966), 1050.

In this research, it is proposed that seeing and hearing are both legitimate avenues to believing in the pre-resurrection era, before hearing gradually takes precedence over seeing in the resurrection era, and finally hearing becomes the normative instrument of believing after Jesus’ ascension. To demonstrate this, the Johannine question of seeing, hearing, and believing will be approached through the lens of the narrative timeline of Jesus’ pre-resurrection, resurrection, and ascension eras of ministry in John’s Gospel.

This research will begin with a survey of the scholarly discussions of seeing, hearing, and believing (chapter 2). Then, the research methodology will be described (chapter 3). To elaborate on the methodology, a separate discussion regarding the eschatology and the narrative timeline of John’s Gospel will be provided (chapter 4). It will then turn to seeing, hearing, and believing in the Prologue (chapter 5). Having established the role of the Prologue, the relationship of seeing, hearing, and believing as described in the era of the pre-resurrection (chapters 6 and 7), resurrection (chapter 8) and ascension (chapter 9) eras of Jesus’ ministry will be studied. Encouraged by the findings, a conclusion will be drawn to summarize the whole research and suggest further areas for exploration (chapter 10).



## 2. Literature Review

The challenge for scholars with this issue is how to harmonize passages which have “serious reservations” about seeing, in favour of hearing, with those that have a positive description of both seeing and hearing.<sup>1</sup>

Here the various scholarly opinions will be grouped into two main camps. The first camp understands seeing as an inherently inferior instrument of believing. It argues that believing by hearing is the appropriate or ideal state. The second position asserts that both seeing and hearing have equal epistemological value in bringing characters to believe in Jesus. For each position, the views of its leading proponents will be explained and a brief critique will be offered. Finally, a general summary and the implications for the thesis are presented at the end of the chapter.

### 2.1. Seeing as an Inferior Medium to Faith

This section discusses the views of several representative scholars in this camp: Rudolf Bultmann, Raymond Brown, Craig Koester, Francis Moloney, and D.A. Carson.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> cf. Kysar, *John*, 82.

<sup>2</sup> Others who hold this position include Kysar, *John*, 78-96; John Painter, *John: Witness and Theologian* (London: SPCK, 1975), 71-85; Ernst Haenchen, *John 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984); and Rudolf Schnakenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John vol 3* (trans. Kevin Smyth; NY: Crossroad, 1990), 330-331.

### 2.1.1. *Rudolf Bultmann*

Rudolf Bultmann understands seeing as the instrument of believing for the weak in faith. Should observable signs contribute to faith, they are merely a “stepping stone to true faith.”<sup>3</sup> On the contrary, those who are mature do not depend on seeing.<sup>4</sup> His view is explicitly stated in his comment regarding Thomas’ reaction to Jesus’ resurrection in John 20. Bultmann writes,

Rather the doubt of Thomas is representative of *the common attitude of men*, who cannot believe without seeing miracles (4.48). As the miracle is a concession to the weakness of man, so is the appearance of the Risen Jesus a concession to the weakness of the disciples. Fundamentally they ought not to need it! Fundamentally it ought not to be the sight of the Risen Lord that first moves the disciples to believe “the word that Jesus spoke” (2.22), for this word alone should have the power to convince them.<sup>5</sup>

Significantly, Bultmann understands the concessional role of seeing in the context of the “common attitude of men.” Seeing signs is not linked with a particular era of Jesus’ ministry, but to a general human weakness. This umbrella statement makes seeing less favourable than hearing.

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<sup>3</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (trans. G.R. Beasley-Murray; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 105.

<sup>4</sup> Bultmann (*John*, 25) seems to betray his existential assumption when, regarding John 1:1-2, he writes, “Here the chief interest lies in the question of man; he feels his being-in-the-world to be a being in exile, and believes that he belonged originally to the divine sphere.”

<sup>5</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 696. Emphasis added.

For Bultmann, the person of Jesus is identical to his words. Hence, hearing is fundamental. Believing is due to “the hearing of the word” which facilitates the encounter with the Revealer.<sup>6</sup> Bultmann writes,

[In] the person and word of Jesus one does not encounter anything that has origin in the world or in time; the encounter is with the reality that lies beyond the world and time. Jesus and his word not only bring release from the world and from time, they are also the means whereby the world and time are judged.<sup>7</sup>

[The Son] is the Revealer in whom we encounter God himself speaking and acting. This can be seen above all from the fact that the words spoken by Jesus never actually describe things he has seen or heard in the heavenly sphere ... In the same way, Jesus does not “show” us any particular thing (10.32; 14.8f.) in the sense of displaying an object or state of affair to our view. His “showing” consists in speaking to us and challenging us to believe.<sup>8</sup>

Interestingly, Bultmann’s existential view corresponds to his insistence on the Fourth Gospel’s realized eschatology. He explains away the notion of future eschatology in 5:28 (general resurrection) as the work of a later editor.<sup>9</sup> Conversely, in 5:25 (ἐρχεται

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<sup>6</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1965), 70.

<sup>7</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 32; cf. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 71.

<sup>8</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 253-254.

<sup>9</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 261.

ὅρα καὶ νῦν ἐστίν), Bultmann claims the verse “stresses with all possible emphasis that the eschatological moment is now present in the word of revelation.”<sup>10</sup>

Thus, it stands to reason that there is a link between Bultmann’s emphasis on Johannine realized eschatology and his preference for hearing as the medium of faith. The decision to believe in Jesus is an eschatological event driven by hearing because the word of Jesus “addresses man and confronts him with the decision of faith.”<sup>11</sup>

### *Critique*

Bultmann makes a valid point about hearing being the medium through which each generation can believe in Jesus and gain the eschatological blessing. However, approaching John’s Gospel as a compilation of several sources, and thereby presuming that a certain source is more authentic than others, makes his existential presupposition favour particular passages at the expense of those which challenge his presupposition. In this case, Bultmann’s presupposition leads him to focus on passages that emphasize hearing and ignore the Johannine passages that affirm the value of seeing.

In response to Bultmann, assuming that the final form of John’s Gospel is the version which the (implied) author intends it to be, this research will fully engage with the passages which affirm the positive role of seeing to believing in Jesus and those which present seeing as less favourable than hearing. The characters will be taken into consideration as well, since characters are the narrative tools which embody the issue of seeing, hearing, and believing. Further, it will also give serious consideration to clues regarding the future eschatology strand in John’s Gospel and its implications.

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<sup>10</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 258.

<sup>11</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 255, 261.

### 2.1.2. *Raymond Brown*

Raymond Brown’s position regarding this issue is less clear. At times, Brown seems to argue that seeing and hearing are equal for believing in Jesus. However, as mentioned in the *Introduction*, when commenting on 20:29, Brown explains that different eras of Jesus’ ministry necessitate different dynamics to believing.<sup>12</sup> While the incarnation era makes visible signs expected, a new era where Jesus’ physical presence is no longer possible makes the alternative non-seeing way of believing a necessity. Thus, Brown acknowledges that the different eras of Jesus’ ministry are a key to understanding how seeing and hearing relate to believing in Jesus.

Nevertheless, in *Appendix III: Signs and Works*, Brown states that seeing and hearing are parts of the “stages of faith,”<sup>13</sup> which are:

(a) The reaction of those who refuse to see the signs with any faith, eg., Caiaphas who counsels the Pharisees to kill Jesus even though they admit that Jesus is performing many signs (xi 47). [...] (b) The reaction of those who see the signs as wonders and believe in Jesus as a wonder-worker sent by God [...] indeed, the Gospel seems to indicate that a certain acceptance of signs is not real belief (vii 5). [...] (c) The reaction of those who see the true significance of the signs, and thus come to believe in Jesus and to know who he is and his relation to the Father. Such a faith, which seems to be satisfactory, is the culmination of several of the narratives of the miracles of Jesus (iv 53, vi 69, ix 38, xi 40) [...] Full salvific faith in Jesus is a gift of God which, like the gift of the Spirit, can come only after

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<sup>12</sup> Brown, *John XIII-XXI*, 1050.

<sup>13</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Gospel according to John I-XII: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 29; Garden City, NY: Double Day, 1966), 530.

the resurrection. This is seen in the fullest profession of faith in the Gospel (xx 28) [...] (d) The reaction of those who believe in Jesus even without seeing signs. This is praised by Jesus in xx 29. Such disciples believe on the word of those who were with Jesus (xvii 20), and Jesus blesses them and prays that they may see his glory (xvii 24). It is rather idle to speculate as to whether those who did not see the signs of Jesus and came to faith through them were inferior to those who would come to faith without them.<sup>14</sup>

Since the term “stages of faith” indicates a hierarchy, Brown’s division into “unsatisfactory” and “satisfactory” stages implies that believing in Jesus without seeing is the summit of the believing pyramid.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, on the one hand Brown avoids comparing seeing and hearing and even deems the discussion of seeing-based faith versus hearing-based faith to be speculative. However, on the other hand, his division favours hearing as the medium of faith.<sup>16</sup> These stages also indicate that Brown evaluates the various Johannine passages of seeing, hearing, and believing on the basis of 20:29, where believing without seeing is explicitly “praised by Jesus.”<sup>17</sup> The stage of believing-without-seeing is Brown’s narrative vantage point to assess other stages.

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<sup>14</sup> Brown, *John I-XII*, 530-531.

<sup>15</sup> Brown, *John I-XII*, 530.

<sup>16</sup> Brown, *John I-XII*, 530.

<sup>17</sup> Brown, *John I-XII*, 531.

### *Critique*

Brown has hinted at the significance of the different eras for the understanding of our issue. Unfortunately, Brown does not follow the pathway he discovers. Instead, he ignores the distinction of the eras and chooses to use the particular era after Jesus’ ascension as the epistemological basis for evaluating seeing, hearing, and believing in the other periods.

In response to Brown, the distinction of Jesus’ ministry eras will be maintained. As such, seeing, hearing, and believing in each era will be evaluated in their own right through the analysis of characters.

#### **2.1.3. Francis Moloney**

In his study of John 2-4, Francis Moloney sees 2:23-25 as “the most important signpost” of the Cana cycle.<sup>18</sup> Moloney uses 2:23-25 as the basis for investigating the chapters, asserting, “It appears that the ‘sight’ of Jesus and the things which he did would not necessarily lead to true faith.”<sup>19</sup>

Having established that 2:1-11 and 4:46-54 form an *inclusio*, Moloney highlights two important characters of the *inclusio*. He writes, “[The] most important point is that the Mother of Jesus and the official are used as examples of correct Johannine faith. They do not need “signs” to come to faith; they commit themselves to

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<sup>18</sup> Francis Moloney, “From Cana to Cana (John 2:1-4:54) and the Fourth Evangelist’s Concept of Correct and (Incorrect) Faith,” in *Johannine Studies 1975-2017* (WUNT 372; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 334.

<sup>19</sup> Moloney, “From Cana to Cana,” 333.

*the word of Jesus.*”<sup>20</sup> For Moloney, the mother of Jesus is representative of a “complete faith in a Jewish context”, while the Cana official is an example of a “complete faith in a non-Jewish context.”<sup>21</sup>

Moloney further discusses several Johannine characters who appear in-between the *inclusio*: the Jews (2:13-22), Nicodemus (3:1-21), John the Baptist (3:25-26), the Samaritan woman (4:7-15, 16-26), and the fellow Samaritans (4:27-30, 39-42). The Jews deliberately resist Jesus’ promissory words to raise the Temple again in three days. Thus, they display “no-faith”. Nicodemus has “partial faith”, since he only wants to accept Jesus on his terms. John the Baptist is a portrayal of “a complete faith”, since he demonstrates a knowledge of Jesus’s supremacy over him. The Samaritan woman displays a growth of faith. From a position where she misunderstands Jesus (4:7-15), thus “no faith”, she has a growing appreciation of Jesus, although her message carries ambiguity (4:29). Hence, she is a character of “partial faith”. Her fellow Samaritans move from “partial faith”, due to their shared understanding with the woman (4:29), to “complete faith”, through their meeting with Jesus (4:42). Moloney concludes, “For John, true faith means a radical openness to the word of Jesus.”<sup>22</sup> In relation to the episode of Thomas meeting the risen Jesus, Moloney writes,

Some, not without difficulties, have made their journey of faith *in the physical presence* of the risen Jesus: Mary Magdalene and Thomas [...] Their dependence on the physical presence of Jesus is evident in Mary Magdalene’s wish to cling to Jesus (cf. v. 17) and Thomas’ demand to touch Jesus’ wounds and place his hand

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<sup>20</sup> Moloney, “From Cana to Cana,” 339.

<sup>21</sup> Moloney, “From Cana to Cana,” 351.

<sup>22</sup> Moloney, “From Cana to Cana,” 353.



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; cf. v. 8). They have come to faith *in the absence of Jesus*.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, for Moloney, signs are for “fragile disciples” while “the greatest disciple”, the Beloved One, is characterized by believing without seeing.

### *Critique*

Moloney’s study of characters helpfully highlights the importance of hearing Jesus’ words. Nonetheless, in his attempt to present the Cana cycle neatly, Moloney’s grouping of faith seems artificial. For instance, John the Baptist does not only hear the Father’s voice, but he also has the vision of the Spirit descending upon Jesus (1:33). In fact, the detailed description of the Spirit’s descent and remaining on Jesus indicates that this is a visual phenomenon. This suggests that John should be in the category of fragile of faith. A similar case can be argued against the official who saw the signs and believed (4:53-54). He too is a model of fragile faith, not an example of perfect faith.

Regarding the Thomas episode, Moloney has correctly observed that Thomas’ mistake lies in his rigid demand to see and touch Jesus. Thomas is the one who utters the climactic Christological confession that Jesus is “Lord and God” when he believes (20:28). Thomas’ confession makes the Gospel come full circle in its Christology (1:1). This suggests that the link of seeing to believing cannot be easily overlooked. John

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<sup>23</sup> Francis Moloney, *The Gospel of John* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 538. Original emphasis.

20:30-31 even indicates that those who would believe without seeing can only do so based on the written testimony of those who have seen Jesus’ signs. As such, Moloney’s model of believing still leaves some room for exploration.

#### **2.1.4. Craig Koester**

Koester argues that hearing Jesus’ words is the true avenue to believing.<sup>24</sup> Using character studies, Koester juxtaposes several characters in John’s Gospel chronologically.<sup>25</sup> In every chapter of John’s Gospel, he claims, believing is achieved through hearing Jesus’ words. For Koester, seeing Jesus’ signs tends to be depicted negatively in John’s Gospel as being inadequate as the foundation of believing.

Koester begins by analyzing the character of John the Baptist in 1:19-51 and juxtaposing him with the Jerusalem envoy.<sup>26</sup> For Koester, John the Baptist explains how one can recognize Jesus. John has to hear the word of God before the vision of the Spirit confirms what he has heard. This principle is repeated in the following episodes. For instance, the disciples of John the Baptist become Jesus’ after they hear the testimony of John and see where Jesus stays.<sup>27</sup> The contrast between Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman also suggests the same principle in action.<sup>28</sup> Nicodemus, who believes because of the sign, is baffled and confused when he hears the word of Jesus. In contrast, the Samaritan woman truly believes in Jesus because of the word she hears. Koester

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<sup>24</sup> Craig R. Koester, “Hearing, Seeing, and Believing in the Gospel of John,” *Bib* 70 (1989): 347.

<sup>25</sup> Koester, “Hearing, Seeing, and Believing,” 328.

<sup>26</sup> Koester, “Hearing, Seeing, and Believing,” 329-330.

<sup>27</sup> Koester, “Hearing, Seeing and Believing,” 330.

<sup>28</sup> Koester, “Hearing, Seeing and Believing,” 335-336.

concludes “[T]he sign confirmed and was perceived by a faith that had been engendered through hearing.”<sup>29</sup> A sign is useful as long as a person has the belief that comes only from hearing Jesus’ words. To some extent, seeing signs is still important to the deepening faith elicited through hearing Jesus’ words.<sup>30</sup>

### *Critique*

Koester’s use of character studies helpfully presents the view that hearing is significant to engendering the correct interpretation of Jesus’ signs. However, Koester ignores the fact that even hearing the right interpretation does not necessarily lead the characters to believe in Jesus. There are characters who do not believe in Jesus irrespective of whether they hear Jesus’ words or see his signs.

Conversely, creation (1:3) and even incarnation (1:14) are revelatory of the invisible Word. It is, thus, difficult to maintain that the incarnation does not validate seeing. Rather, it demands that seeing Jesus and his signs are logical consequences which lead to believing. Koester overlooks the different eras of Jesus’ ministry, the narrative timeline, to shed some light on the belief demonstrated by the characters.

#### **2.1.5. D. A. Carson**

For D.A. Carson, the role of seeing is contingent. In the *Introduction* to his commentary, Carson explains his overall view of the topic:

The complexities that bind together election, faith and the function of signs deserve some reflection. John holds men and women responsible for believing;

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<sup>29</sup> Koester, “Hearing, Seeing and Believing,” 332.

<sup>30</sup> Koester, “Hearing, Seeing and Believing,” 347.

unbelief is morally culpable. If faith bursts forth in consequence of what is revealed in the ‘signs’, well and good: they legitimately serve as a basis for faith (e.g. 10:38). On the other hand, people are excoriated for their dependence on signs (4:48). It is a better faith that hears and believes rather than sees and believes (20:29).<sup>31</sup>

Thus, believing by hearing is the proper scenario, whereas seeing seems to be additional and less favourable. Commenting on 2:23, for instance, Carson says that “[to] exercise faith on the grounds of having witnessed miraculous signs is precarious.”<sup>32</sup>

Carson’s conclusion might be due to his conviction that miraculous signs are an encrypted message of Jesus’ glory. In and of themselves, signs cannot stimulate belief in Jesus.<sup>33</sup> Carson argues,

The miraculous sign was not itself unshielded glory; the eyes of faith were necessary to ‘see’ the glory that was revealed by the sign. Then, as the book progresses, the revelation of Jesus’ glory is especially tied to Jesus’ cross and the exaltation that ensues (cf. Thüsing)—and certainly only those who have faith ‘see’ the glory of God in the Word-made-flesh in events such as these. There is a hiddenness to the display of glory in the incarnate Word, a hiddenness penetrated by the Evangelist and the early witnesses who could say, We have seen his glory.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> D.A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (PNTC; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1991), 99-100.

<sup>32</sup> Carson, *John*, 184.

<sup>33</sup> Carson, *John*, 238.

<sup>34</sup> Carson, *John*, 130.

Seeing the miraculous signs, nevertheless, is still of some value. It serves apologetically to make the doubting characters open to Jesus.<sup>35</sup> As such, “Thomas’ faith is not depreciated”, even though it might not be the ideal kind of faith.<sup>36</sup>

### *Critique*

Carson rightly asserts the interpretive function of hearing when it comes to seeing signs. However, in John’s Gospel the “shield” lies on the darkened heart rather than on the medium of believing (cf. 8:44). As such, the determinant of believing is divine intervention, which enables the characters to believe in Jesus (6:37, 39). Any message can be considered as “shielded” to some degree, since both seeing and hearing are mere instruments. Hence, some characters can resist believing in Jesus even after they hear his speech (8:48). Carson’s preference for hearing seems to stem from treating 20:29 as the key verse to untie the knot of seeing, hearing, and believing. Unfortunately, this is done at the expense of other verses that portray seeing (signs) as the legitimate avenue to believing (cf. 20:30-31).

In response to Carson, the Johannine tension will be maintained by setting 20:29 in the unique era of resurrection and other presentations of seeing, hearing, and believing in their different eras, in order to see each contribution to the whole issue. Further, it will also use the narrative study of characters to better capture the dynamics of believing.

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<sup>35</sup> Carson, *John*, 238.

<sup>36</sup> Carson, *John*, 660.

### **2.1.6. Summary**

The first camp emphasizes the role of hearing for various reasons. Hearing is due to the urgency of the eschatological decision and its function in receiving the interpretation and the meaning of Jesus and his visible signs. However, the observation that there are characters who hear Jesus, yet do not believe in him, should temper this scholarly inclination to overstretch the role of hearing. Further, the revelatory character of creation (1:3), incarnation (1:14), and signs cannot be easily overlooked (cf. Pss. 19:1; Rom. 1:19-20).

The emphasis on hearing is also largely made on the basis of a retrospective evaluation from the perspective of the era of Jesus’ post-resurrection absence, or ascension (20:29-31). Thus, other eras of Jesus’ ministry tend to be downplayed. However, if it can be demonstrated that the distinction of the eras of Jesus’ ministry is essential, it might open a way to treat seeing, hearing, and believing differently in each era. As a result, the Johannine tension may be able to be resolved.

## 2.2. Seeing and Hearing Together

This section will engage with the views of Ernst Käsemann, Udo Schnelle, Sunny Kuan-Hui Wang, and Josaphat Tam as representatives of this camp.<sup>37</sup>

### 2.2.1. Ernst Käsemann

Ernst Käsemann builds his view regarding the value of seeing on Jesus’ incarnation. Incarnation necessitates visible and miraculous signs. As Käsemann puts it, “God does not manifest himself on earth without the splendor or miracles which characterize him as a Creator.”<sup>38</sup> It is natural for the contemporary characters in Jesus’ incarnation era to expect such demonstrations. “No Christian at the end of the first century could have come to the idea that God could enter the human scene without miracles,” Käsemann argues.<sup>39</sup>

To his credit, Käsemann also criticizes the “craving” to see miraculous signs. Käsemann says,

It is indeed correct to point out that John attacks a craving for miracles. That is not done, however, on the basis of a criticism of miracles in general, but in the

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<sup>37</sup> Other scholars who hold this position include Marianne Meye Thompson, *The Incarnate Word: Perspective on Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 53-86; Lee, “The Gospel of John and the Five Senses,” 115-127; Kasper Bro Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger: Recognition Scenes in the Gospel of John* (BIS 93; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008), and Nicholas Farely, *Discipleship in the Fourth Gospel: A Narrative Analysis of their Faith and Understanding* (WUNT 2/290; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

<sup>38</sup> Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the light of Chapter 17*. (trans. Gerhard Krodel; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 21.

<sup>39</sup> Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus*, 22.

interest of his one and only theme, namely, his Christology. His dominant interest which is everywhere apparent is that Christ himself may not be overshadowed by anything, not even by his gifts, miracles, and works. Jesus alone is the true divine gift to which all other gifts can and should only point.<sup>40</sup>

The internal criticism of John’s Gospel toward visible signs should be understood in the context of seeking the miracles at the expense of knowing Jesus.

The signs are accompanied by Christological discourses regarding the universal significance of Jesus. They are “in line with the Johannine declaration of the unity of the Son with the Father.”<sup>41</sup> Both the miracles and the discourses cannot be understood because their origin is from above, as opposed to the world which is from below.<sup>42</sup>

### *Critique*

Käsemann rightly considers the theological implications of creation and incarnation to understanding the role of seeing. Thus, seeing has a legitimate value which leads to believing in John’s Gospel.

However, in contrast to the first scholarly camp, Käsemann does not discuss the passages about the prominence of hearing. Especially in John 20, Jesus himself seals the prominence of hearing in his words to Thomas, even though Thomas believes after seeing (20:29-31). In light of Brown’s insight, Käsemann’s emphasis is more on the pre-resurrection era where most of Jesus’ signs are performed.

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<sup>40</sup> Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus*, 21-22.

<sup>41</sup> Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus*, 22.

<sup>42</sup> Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus*, 22.



Admittedly, Käsemann was operating in an era prior to the current interest in narrative critical studies. As a result, he largely ignores the role of characters in the narrative, although the Johannine characters are the embodiments through which the issue of seeing, hearing, and believing is demonstrated. The space which Käsemann leaves will be elaborated in this research.

### 2.2.2. *Udo Schnelle*

For Udo Schnelle, visible and miraculous signs are important to believing. Schnelle argues that miracles are revelatory and become the “locus” of the revelation of the Father and the Son.<sup>43</sup> In miracles, the glory of the Father and the Son are expressed.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, miracles do not merely point to the glory, but seeing miracles can truly evoke faith.<sup>45</sup> The relationship between seeing and miracles should be “non dualistic” (cf. 2:11, 23; 4:53; 6:14).<sup>46</sup> In Schnelle’s words,

It is not the case that faith has only the “that” of the revelatory event as its content; rather, the miracle describes, with a clarity and reality that can hardly be surpassed, the work of the Revealer in history. Seeing the miracle is thus not merely a spiritual perception but a true seeing of something that is in fact visible.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Udo Schnelle, “The Signs in the Gospel of John” in *John, Jesus, and History vol. III: Glimpses of Jesus through the Johannine Lens* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 237.

<sup>44</sup> Schnelle, “The Signs in the Gospel of John,” 235, 237.

<sup>45</sup> Schnelle, “The Signs in the Gospel of John,” 237.

<sup>46</sup> Schnelle, “The Signs in the Gospel of John,” 238.

<sup>47</sup> Schnelle, “The Signs in the Gospel of John,” 238.

Schnelle’s emphasis on the materiality and visibility of signs grows from his theological benchmark that the Word has become flesh.<sup>48</sup> Thus, John’s Gospel has been consistent in stressing the humanity of Jesus through the narrative.<sup>49</sup> In this regard, “[the miraculous signs’] mass and their reality [...] show that Jesus Christ has entered space and time.”<sup>50</sup> Hence, there is a mutual relationship between the narrative’s emphasis on Jesus as a human being and the materiality of signs which leads to believing.<sup>51</sup> The incarnation necessitates that the glory can be seen in the material signs, while the signs assume that Jesus is the Word enfleshed.

### *Critique*

Schnelle rightly takes the incarnation of the Word as the assumption on which seeing and believing are positively understood. However, Schnelle’s focus on the incarnation of the Word ignores the study of characters and competing verses like 19:35 or 20:29-31. These characters and verses suggest that John’s Gospel itself anticipates an instrumental and temporal shift from seeing and hearing to hearing alone. Thus, there is still a space to explore in his argument.

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<sup>48</sup> Schnelle, “The Signs in the Gospel of John,” 242.

<sup>49</sup> Schnelle, “The Signs in the Gospel of John,” 239.

<sup>50</sup> Schnelle, “The Signs in the Gospel of John,” 242.

<sup>51</sup> In contrast to believing as the proper response to signs, unbelief is a deliberate resistance to the revelatory signs, see Schnelle, “The Signs in the Gospel of John,” 239.

### 2.2.3. Sunny Kuan-Hui Wang

Sunny Wang investigates the relation between sense perception and testimony in John’s Gospel in light of the Old Testament and the Roman legal system. With regard to the Old Testament, sense perception is highly important in eliciting one’s faith in God and serves as the basis for giving testimony to others, which deepens believing.<sup>52</sup> This can be seen in Genesis, Exodus, and Deuteronomy, which accentuate communal seeing of God’s deeds in Egypt. Within the context of the Roman legal system, Wang explains that sense perception is essential in establishing a case and persuading the jury to favor a position.<sup>53</sup>

Against these religious and legal backgrounds, Wang argues that sense perception is the grounds for testimony in the context of the Johannine court room. Regarding the signs, Wang writes,

The positive role of the signs in the Old Testament is also shown in that the narratives of signs or miracles are always vivid, so that readers are led to see the scenes in their imagination. Similarly in John, we can also find this vivid narrative of signs that emphasizes the appeal to the physical sense. Thus, by giving the same positive role to signs in his Gospel as is found in the Old Testament, John shows that he values the importance of signs for faith.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Sunny Kuan-Hui Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony in the Gospel According to John* (WUNT 2/435; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 52-85.

<sup>53</sup> Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 87-117.

<sup>54</sup> Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 154.

Instead of undermining the value of seeing, a passage like 2:24-25 simply states that Jesus knows what lies inside the unbelieving characters.<sup>55</sup> After all, Jesus still performs signs in the following chapters.<sup>56</sup> Regarding 4:46-54, Wang does not think Jesus rebukes the people. Instead, it is merely a “statement of fact.”<sup>57</sup> After a short passage regarding how the phrase is used in the Old Testament (e.g. Exod. 7:3; Deut. 6:22; 26:8), Wang writes,

In the Hebrew Scriptures, seeing ‘signs and wonders’ is expected to bring people to grasp the truth that Yahweh is the Lord (Deut. 4:34-35), although at times God also expresses his frustration that belief has not followed after his people have seen signs and wonders (Num. 4:11). [...] Thus signs and wonders are always seen positively because they reveal God’s power and glory. They should have a positive role in evoking faith, even if they may fail to do so. [...] In John, we see the same theology of signs and wonders relocated in Jesus’ signs. Signs are seen as the revelation of Jesus’ power and nature and they are expected to evoke faith in Jesus.<sup>58</sup>

As such, Wang insists that both seeing and hearing are legitimate mediums of believing. For him, the belief of Thomas and the purpose statement highlight the importance of seeing signs for the characters in John’s Gospel.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 159.

<sup>56</sup> Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 159.

<sup>57</sup> Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 163.

<sup>58</sup> Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 163.

<sup>59</sup> Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 199.

### *Critique*

Wang roots the role of seeing and hearing in the Old Testament and Roman contexts. As such, the Johannine seeing and hearing are seen in a larger contemporary context.

However, in his attempt Wang overemphasizes the era of Jesus’ physical presence to maintain continuity with the theological and cultural backgrounds. He does this at the expense of the Fourth Gospel’s unique presentation of seeing, hearing, and believing. Thus, Wang treats John 20:1-31, a key Johannine passage on seeing and hearing, in a cursory manner. He fails to grasp that John’s Gospel has anticipated the transition from seeing and hearing to a situation where hearing alone takes prominence over seeing after John 20.

#### **2.2.4. Josaphat C. Tam**

Josaphat Tam studies how the various cognitive concepts of seeing, hearing, knowing, witnessing, remembering and believing lead the reader to the apprehension of Jesus in John’s Gospel.<sup>60</sup> After establishing the keyword for each concept, Tam traces the concepts chronologically through the Gospel’s plot.

Tam finds out that the Gospel uses the concepts to persuade the reader through positive encounters of the various characters with Jesus.<sup>61</sup> The effect is both “faith-engendering and fostering.”<sup>62</sup> Eventually, “signs and words, without losing their

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<sup>60</sup> Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus*, 1-208.

<sup>61</sup> Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus*, 71-72.

<sup>62</sup> Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus*, 75.

functions in pointing toward Jesus, are now subsumed under the category of the Paraclete.”<sup>63</sup> Therefore, for the reader, reading John’s Gospel is the instrument to believing. As such, “with the promised Paraclete, [the readers] are now able to encounter Jesus (and the Father) ‘realistically’ as the disciples did.”<sup>64</sup> Through the encounter of the characters with Jesus, readers from different stages of faith journeys are challenged to believe as they read how the characters respond to Jesus.<sup>65</sup>

In light of this understanding, Tam argues that both seeing and hearing are complementary.<sup>66</sup> Nonetheless, demanding a certain sign as the basis for faith is unfavourable.<sup>67</sup> In fact, “a desired faith is not automatic upon either seeing signs or hearing words.”<sup>68</sup> Regarding Jesus’ benediction in 20:29, Tam says that Jesus’ blessing addresses the future believers without negating the experience of Thomas.<sup>69</sup> Conversely, Jesus’ resurrection is a “special sign” that demands verification from the sense perception.<sup>70</sup> Thus, “Thomas’ insistence on seeing and touching Jesus is subtly differentiated from taking signs as “the criterion” for faith.”<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus*, 150.

<sup>64</sup> Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus*, 151.

<sup>65</sup> Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus*, 194.

<sup>66</sup> Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus*, 77, 206.

<sup>67</sup> Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus*, 119-120.

<sup>68</sup> Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus*, 120.

<sup>69</sup> Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus*, 201-202.

<sup>70</sup> Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus*, 191-192.

<sup>71</sup> Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus*, 206.

### *Critique*

Tam upholds the value of both seeing and hearing as legitimate instruments for bringing the characters to faith in Jesus. In contrast to Wang’s use of the background study, Tam approaches the issue from inside the narrative world of John’s Gospel by paying attention to the use of perception throughout the narrative.

However, while this approach is valuable, Tam does this at the expense of flattening the nuance of Jesus’ rebuke, especially in the case of Thomas (20:24-29). As such, the tension between passages that emphasize seeing on one side and hearing on the other side is overlooked.

#### **2.2.5. Summary**

This second group of scholars emphasizes the value of both seeing and hearing. This group roots the value of seeing and hearing in creation, incarnation and word studies, or externally in the studies of Old Testament and the Greco-Roman contexts. The focus of the discussion regarding seeing and hearing is largely on the Johannine pre-resurrection era of Jesus’ incarnation where most of the signs and dialogues are recorded.

However, these scholars are in danger of ignoring passages which speak about the prominence of hearing (cf. 20:29-31). As such, they flatten out the narrative tension by preferring one era over the others.

## **Conclusion**

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that both positions attempt to solve the tension by explicitly favoring one kind of passage over others and implicitly one particular era of Jesus’ ministry over the others. Working on the assumption that Jesus’ ministry happens in one monolithic context, they attempt to understand the ambivalent portrayal of seeing, hearing, and believing. As a result, the apparent tension is ignored and flattened. Further, not every scholar undertakes character studies; even though seeing, hearing, and believing are embodied in the depiction of the characters.

In light of the observations above, this research will attempt to maintain the tension of the different passages regarding seeing, hearing, and believing. This will be done by taking the different eras involved in Jesus’ ministry into account and preserving the sensitivity of the characters’ development. If Brown’s suggestion is right regarding the different relations between seeing, hearing, and believing due to the different eras of Jesus’ ministry, it might potentially provide a way to reconcile the competing positions



### 3. Methodology

John’s Gospel takes a narrative form. As such, according to Thatcher, it is “inherently meaningful,” thus, rendering narrative criticism an appropriate methodology to utilize.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the present study will employ several narrative tools to analyze the relationship between seeing, hearing, and believing.

First, this chapter will examine the keywords and concepts of seeing, hearing, and believing. “Keywords” are defined as the specific verbs which are used frequently in John’s Gospel to represent the concepts of seeing, hearing, and believing. Their frequency of appearance is highly significant in rendering them as recognizable keywords. A “concept” is defined as a particular thematic domain from which the keywords stem. Thus, a concept can be expressed differently without using the keywords. As such, the themes of seeing, hearing, and believing can also be implied by actions, events, and different vocabularies.

Second, since seeing, hearing, and believing are performed by the characters, characterization will be explored. In this study, a “character” refers to the character within the narrative world, including the implied reader as a narrative construct.

Third, the concept of narrative time in John’s Gospel will be discussed. If the relationship between seeing, hearing, and believing is truly shaped and portrayed differently in different periods of Jesus’ ministry — ranging from his pre-resurrection ministry, to the resurrection, and even beyond the ascension — it is important to see

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Thatcher, “Anatomies of the Fourth Gospel: Past, Present, and Future Probes” in *Anatomies of Narrative Criticism: The Past, Present, and Futures of the Fourth Gospel as Literature* (eds. Tom Thatcher and Stephen D. Moore; Atlanta: SBL, 2008), 1.

how the differentiation of the eras is indicated in the narrative of John’s Gospel.

Admittedly, the division of Jesus’ ministry into periods of pre-resurrection, resurrection, and beyond the ascension is tightly linked to John’s Gospel’s eschatology. Due to the importance of the issue, further discussion regarding the concept of eschatology and the narrative timeline will be provided in the following chapter. Meanwhile, this section will give a brief introduction to the issue. A conclusion will be given at the end of the chapter.

### **3.1. Seeing, Hearing and Believing in John’s Gospel**

Seeing and hearing are important to believing.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, how the concepts of seeing and hearing relate to believing is not always clear. This is partly due to the dual references of seeing and hearing in John’s Gospel. Seeing and hearing can be understood physically, as the capabilities of eyes and ears to perceive visual and aural phenomena. However, seeing and hearing can also be used metaphorically as synonyms for believing. Thus, a survey on how the keywords and concepts of seeing, hearing, and believing are used in John’s Gospel is important for clarity.

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<sup>2</sup> Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus*, 6. Cf. Lee, “The Five Senses,” 115-127.

### 3.1.1. *Seeing*

#### 3.1.1.1. *Keywords*

Seeing keywords in Greek include ὁράω (88 times), βλέπω (23 times), and θεωρέω/θέαομαι (30 times).<sup>3</sup> There is no specific function of each keyword; rather there is flexibility in usage of different keywords to address both the physical and metaphorical meaning.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the variety of the seeing keywords seems to be due to literary style.

#### 3.1.1.2. *Significant frequency of seeing keywords*

From all the appearances of the seeing keywords, there are three chapters in John’s Gospel where seeing words appear in a greater frequency than other chapters. They are: John 1 (19 times, including the interjection), John 9 (16 times), and John 20 (15 times).<sup>5</sup> John 1 speaks about the disciples coming to Jesus, John 9 about the sign of healing the blind man, and John 20 regarding the resurrection of Jesus. Consequently, these are the relevant chapters to study the role of seeing.

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<sup>3</sup> The various expressions for seeing are stylistic and the difference between the usage of each word is not significant, cf. Painter, *John: Witness & Theologian*, 71.

<sup>4</sup> C.C. Tarelli, “Johannine Synonyms,” *JTS* 47 (1946): 175-177; Edwin D. Freed, “Variations in the Language and Thought of John,” *ZNW* 55 (1964): 167-197.

<sup>5</sup> While seeing is usually associated with signs, curiously the seeing words appear quite a lot in John 1:29-51 before Jesus’ first sign (2:1-11); cf. Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus*, 7.

### 3.1.1.3. *The subject and object of seeing*

The *subjects* of seeing include Jesus himself (1:18, 37, 39, 42, 47, 48, 50; 3:11; 5:6, 14, 19; 6:5, 46; 8:38, 57; 9:1; 11:33, 34; 19:26), Abraham (8:56), Isaiah (12:41), John the Baptist (1:29, 32, 33, 36), Nathanael (1:50), the Greek (12:21), the Jews/Pharisees (2:23; 4:45, 48; 6:14, 24, 30, 36; 11:31; 12:45; 19:5), the disciples (1:14, 51; 6:62; 7:3; 13:22; 14:8, 9; 20:20, 25), Mary Magdalene (20:1, 12, 14, 18), Martha (11:32, 40), Simon (20:5), Thomas (20:25, 27, 29), the Beloved Disciple (19:35; 20:8), the blind man (9:7, 11, 15, 19, 21, 25, 37), the soldiers (19:33), and people in general (1:18; 3:3, 32, 36; 9:39, 40; 19:37).

The *objects* of seeing are God/the Father (1:18; 5:19, 37; 14:7, 8, 9), Jesus/the Son/Son of Man/the Lord (1:29, 33, 36, 46, 51; 3:26; 5:19; 6:19; 12:21, 41; 19:5, 14, 33, 37; 20:14, 18, 25, 28), the Spirit (1:33), life (3:36), Jesus’ mother (19:26, 27), the disciples (1:37), Nathanael (1:47, 48, 50), the Beloved Disciple (19:26; 21:20, 21), the lame man (5:6, 14), Jesus’ dwelling place (1:39), the kingdom of God (3:3, 11), the Jews/people (6:5), the works/signs of Jesus (2:23; 4:45, 48; 6:2, 14, 30), angels (1:51; 20:12), the glory of Jesus (1:14;), the wrapping cloths of Jesus (20:5, 6), the tomb of Jesus (20:1), and the pierced one (19:37).

### 3.1.1.4. *Different expressions of seeing*

There are several other expressions for seeing. Certain clauses (ἡνεώχθησάν σου οἱ ὀφθαλμοί, 9:10; ἀνέωξεν αὐτοῦ τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς, 9:14; ἡνέωξέν σου τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς, 9:17), verbs (ἀνέβλεπω, 9:11, 15, 18), or words (τυφλὸν, 9:1, 13, 17, 18, 20; τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς, 9:6, 11; σημεῖον, 6:14, 26; 20:30) imply synonymously or antonymously the concept of seeing without necessarily using the keywords.

Furthermore, in addition to being explicitly named, the concept of seeing can be demonstrated by visible acts or events. For instance, the act of incarnation itself strongly implies that the eternal Word can now be seen.

### 3.1.1.5. *Physical and metaphorical meanings of seeing*

The reference to seeing in relation to believing is multi-faceted.<sup>6</sup> Seeing can mean physical seeing without any connotation of believing. This kind of seeing is usually applied to unbelieving characters (cf. 2:23-25). They simply see Jesus because physically they can.

However, seeing can also be used when metaphorical and physical seeing occur concurrently. This is experienced by the characters who truly believe in Jesus (cf. 1:29-51; 9:1-41). As they physically see Jesus and his signs, the context suggests that the seeing also conceptually involves the metaphorical sense of seeing, which is synonymous to believing. This kind of seeing is depicted, for example, in 14:7-9. In 14:7 Jesus claims that the disciples have already seen the Father (καὶ ἀπ’ ὅρτι γινώσκετε αὐτὸν καὶ ἐώρακατε αὐτόν). The phrase ἀπ’ ὅρτι emphasizes that this kind of seeing is already a reality even during Jesus’ earthly ministry.<sup>7</sup> Philip then asks Jesus to show him the Father (δεῖξον ἡμῖν τὸν πατέρα, 14:8). However, Jesus replies that Philip’s request has already been granted before he asks, because seeing Jesus is identical to

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<sup>6</sup> cf. Painter, *John: Witness & Theologian*, 71; Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus*, 8.

<sup>7</sup> Ole Jakob Filtvedt, “Transcendence and Visibility of the Father in the Gospel of John,” *ZNW* 108.1 (2017): 95, n. 25; Carson, *John*, 493.

seeing the Father (ὁ ἑώρακὼς ἐμὲ ἑώρακεν τὸν πατέρα, 14:9).<sup>8</sup> In this case, seeing the Father in Jesus is metaphorical.

However, the metaphorical understanding is related to the narrative presentation that Philip is looking at Jesus physically. Philip has seen the previous miraculous signs of Jesus which testify to his divine identity and union with the Father. As Carson says, it is in Jesus that God has revealed himself “definitively, gloriously, *visibly*.”<sup>9</sup>

### 3.1.1.6. *Seeing and Not Believing*

Admittedly, several passages portray how seeing fails to generate belief in Jesus. In 2:23-24, for instance, the Jews see Jesus’ signs (θεωροῦντες αὐτοῦ τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ἐποίει, 2:23) and believe in his name (ἐπίστευσαν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ). Yet, Jesus does not entrust himself to them (2:24). Thus, at face value, one could make a case that seeing is a failed medium of believing.

Nevertheless, in light of the other passages which describe a positive relationship between seeing and believing (cf. 1:32-34; 9:35-38; 20:30-31), the problem of unbelieving lies in the characters themselves. Concerning this topic, it seems appropriate to discuss 12:37-41, which quotes Isa. 53:1 and 6:10. In 12:37, seeing Jesus’ signs (σημεῖα) does not make the people believe in him (οὐκ ἐπίστευον εἰς αὐτόν).<sup>10</sup> In 12:38, the narrator indicates this failure of believing fulfills Isa. 53:1 regarding the

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<sup>8</sup> Filtvedt, “Transcendence and Visibility,” 94.

<sup>9</sup> Carson, *John*, 494. Emphasis added.

<sup>10</sup> Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus*, 109

stubborn unbelief of the people of Israel (ἵνα ὁ λόγος Ἡσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου πληρωθῇ) after they saw and heard what Yahweh had done and said.<sup>11</sup>

This sense of fulfillment is emphasized in 12:39-40 where the unbelieving (οὐκ ἠδύναντο πιστεύειν) is understood in light of Yahweh’s own will (12:40).<sup>12</sup> In 12:40, the Isaianic quotation synonymously parallels blindness (τετύφλωκεν αὐτῶν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς, μὴ ἴδωσιν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς) with unbelieving (καὶ ἐπώρωσεν αὐτῶν τὴν καρδίαν, καὶ νοήσωσιν τῇ καρδίᾳ). The parallel suggests this is a metaphorical blindness to the works of God, which is identical to their stubbornness and hostility.

In contrast to the characters in 12:40, 12:41 describes that Isaiah has seen Jesus’ glory (εἶδεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ). The original context of Isaiah 6:1-11 indicates that his activity of seeing is not limited to the spiritual vision within his mind. Instead, the vision involves a truly visual demonstration of Yahweh’s glory in the Jerusalem temple.<sup>13</sup> Thus, while Isaiah has both the sight and the insight, the people described in 12:40 have the physical sight but lack the spiritual insight. The problem, therefore, lies

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<sup>11</sup> In the context of Johannine narrative, however, τίς ἐπίστευσεν τῇ ἀκοῇ ἡμῶν is understood as referring to the hearing of Jesus’ message, while καὶ ὁ βραχίον κυρίου τίνι ἀπεκαλύφθη is a metaphor for the visible signs which Jesus has done. Similar to the people of Israel, the people in John 12 also stubbornly resist believing in Jesus after they see his signs and hear his words. Thus, both seeing and hearing, while being misused, were naturally instrumental for believing in Isaiah.

<sup>12</sup> The harmony between the decision of men and the sovereignty of God is beyond the scope of this chapter. For further discussion, see Craig A. Evans, “The Function of Isaiah 6:9-10 in Mark and John,” *NovT* 24.2 (1982): 133-137.

<sup>13</sup> Brown, *John I-XII*, 487.

not with seeing as a medium, but with the mental reception which fails to give the appropriate response to the sight.<sup>14</sup>

### **3.1.2. Hearing**

#### *3.1.2.1. Keyword*

In contrast to the concept of seeing, which employs different Greek keywords, the concept of hearing uses only ἀκούω as the keyword, appearing 59 times in the narrative.

#### *3.1.2.2. The significant frequency of ἀκούω*

Overall, ἀκούω appears twice in John 1 (1:37, 40), 3 times in John 3 (3:8, 29, 32), 3 times in John 4 (4:1, 42, 47), 5 times in John 5 (5:24; 5:25 [2x], 28, 30, 37), twice in John 6 (6:45, 60), 3 times in John 7 (7:32, 40, 51), 7 times in John 8 (8:9, 26, 38, 40, 43, 47 [2x]), 7 times in John 9 (9:27 [2x], 9:31 [2x], 9:32, 9:35, 40), 5 times in John 10 (10:3, 8, 16, 20, 27), 6 times in John 11 (11:4, 6, 20, 29, 41, 42), 6 times in John 12 (12:12, 18, 29, 34, 38, 47), twice in John 14 (14:24, 28), once in John 15 (15:15), once in John 16 (16:13), twice in John 18 (18:21, 37), twice in John 19 (19:8, 13), and once in John 21 (21:7). Thus, while there are some chapters where ἀκούω appears more often, it is more evenly distributed than the seeing keywords.

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<sup>14</sup> cf. Evans, “The Function of Isaiah 6:9-10,” 136-137.



### 3.1.2.3. *The subject and object of hearing*

The subjects of hearing are: the two disciples of John the Baptist (1:37), Andrew (1:40), Nicodemus (3:8), John the Baptist (3:29), Jesus (3:32; 5:30; 8:40; 9:35; 11:4, 6), the Pharisees (4:1; 7:32; 9:40), Martha (11:20), Mary (10:29), the Samaritan people (4:42), the officer (4:47), the world/people in general (5:24, 25, 28; 6:45; 9:32; 12:47; 18:37), the disciples as a group (6:60), God/the Father (9:31; 11:41, 42), the Spirit (16:13), Peter (21:7), the Jews (5:37; 7:40, 51; 8:26, 38, 43; 9:27; 10:20; 12:12, 18, 29, 34, 38; 18:21), the sheep (10:3, 8, 16, 27), the Eleven (14:24, 28; 15:15), and Pilate (19:8, 13).

The objects of ἀκούω include the testimony of John the Baptist concerning Jesus (1:37, 40), the sound of the wind (3:8), the words/voice of God/the Father (3:32; 5:30, 37; 6:45; 8:26, 40, 47 [2x]; 12:29, 38; 14:24; 15:15), news/testimony about Jesus (4:1, 42, 47; 7:32; 9:27 [2x], 32; 11:20, 29; 12:12, 18; 21:7), Jesus’ own voice/words (3:29; 5:24, 25, 28; 6:60; 7:40; [8:9]; 8:43; 9:40; 10:3, 16, 20, 27; 11:41, 42; 12:47; 14:28; 16:13; 18:21, 37), a man’s testimony (7:51), Satan/the father of the Jews (8:38), sinners (9:31 [2x]), news about the blind man (9:35), thieves and robbers (10:8), news about Lazarus (11:4, 6), the Law (12:34), and the Jews’ accusation concerning Jesus (19:8, 13).

### 3.1.2.4. *Different expressions of hearing*

The word ἀκούω does not appear in some passages. However, the concept of hearing can be logically deduced from various dialogues and discourses in the narrative and the occurrence of words like λέγω, μαρτυρέω, ἀπεκρίνομαι, and ῥήματα. Through

them hearing is implied.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the concept of hearing occupies a major place in the Gospel.

#### *3.1.2.5. Physical and metaphorical meanings of hearing*

Similar to seeing, there are two ways ἀκούω is used in the Johannine narrative world. First, ἀκούω is used to refer to physical hearing. This type of hearing mostly applies to the characters who do not believe in Jesus (cf. 6:60; 8:44). They literally hear Jesus’ words or others’ testimony about him; however, they do not give the appropriate response to him.

Second, ἀκούω indicates a metaphorical hearing, which is synonymous to believing (cf. 5:24). In the Johannine narrative world, the metaphorical meaning of ἀκούω cannot be separated from the physical understanding. The characters who believe in Jesus hear his words physically and metaphorically. They hear the message with their ears and believe. As a result, both meanings of ἀκούω are relevant to the characters who believe in Jesus (cf. 1:33; 6:68-69).

#### *3.1.3. Believing*

Believing (πιστεύω) is central to John’s Gospel. Its centrality is shown by its location, frequency, and the Christological content of its appearance.

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<sup>15</sup> Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 102. Regarding μαρτυρέω, Wang asserts, “the senses of sight and hearing are related to testimony, for they provide the ‘personal experience and individual certainty’,” cf. Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 36.

### 3.1.3.1. *The locations of πιστεύω*

In terms of its location, πιστεύω is first used in the Prologue (τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, 1:12). It has been argued that 1:12 is at the centre of the chiastic structure of the Prologue, which accentuates the significance of πιστεύω in John’s Gospel.<sup>16</sup>

The last appearance of πιστεύω is in the purpose statement (πιστεύητε ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ἵνα πιστεύοντες ζωὴν ἔχητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ, 20:31). Consequently, the narrative of John’s Gospel is book-ended by πιστεύω. The theme develops through the conflict between believing and unbelieving characters.<sup>17</sup>

### 3.1.3.2. *The frequency of πιστεύω*

Of its 241 appearances in the New Testament *corpus*, John’s Gospel uses πιστεύω 98 times. Thus, John’s Gospel uses πιστεύω 40% of the times it appears in the New Testament. The statistic corresponds squarely with the Gospel’s purpose of convincing people to believe in Jesus (20:30-31).

With such a high frequency, πιστεύω is used in almost all the chapters of the Gospel. The chapters that mention πιστεύω are the following: 1:7, 12, 50 (3 times); 2:11, 22, 23, 24 (4 times); 3:2a, 12b, 15, 16, 18a, 18b, 18c, 36 (8 times); 4:1, 39, 41, 42, 48, 50, 53 (7 times); 5:24, 38, 44, 46a, 46b, 47a, 47b (7 times); 6:29, 30, 35, 36, 40, 47, 64a, 64b, 69 (9 times); 7:5, 31, 38, 39, 48 (5 times); 8:24, 30, 31, 45, 46 (5 times); 9:18,

<sup>16</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, “The Pivot of John’s Prologue,” *NTS* 27.1 (1980): 15-16.

<sup>17</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 145.

35, 36, 38 (4 times); 10:25, 26, 37, 38a, 38b, 42 (6 times); 11:15, 25, 26a, 26b, 27, 40, 42, 45, 48 (9 times); 12:11, 36, 37, 38, 39, 42, 44a, 44b, 46, 47 (10 times); 13:19 (once); 14:1a, 1b, 10, 11a, 11b, 12, 29 (7 times); 16:9, 27, 30, 31 (4 times); 17:8, 20, 21 (3 times); 19:35 (once); and 20:8, 25, 29a, 29b, 31a, 31b (6 times).

The adjectives ἄπιστος and πιστός both appear in 20:27. Πιστεύω appears 76 times in John 1-12, which are the chapters about Jesus’ public ministry, where he calls the people to believe and where the opposition against him is rising.<sup>18</sup> In stark contrast to John 1-12, πιστεύω makes only 22 appearances in John 13-21.<sup>19</sup>

### 3.1.3.3. *The Christological content of πιστεύω*

Jesus’ identity largely occupies the content of πιστεύω. The Prologue depicts Jesus as the divine Word, who is consubstantial with the Father, and who is always with the Father (1:1), even before the creation of the world (1:3). The Word incarnates to be human (σὰρξ ἐγένετο, 1:14). Thus, the reader has been presented with the ideological viewpoint of the Gospel, which equips him to participate in the process of unfolding Jesus’ identity in the narrative. The Prologue also portrays Jesus as the culmination of the revelatory tradition which began with the Old Testament, as stated by the clause νόμος διὰ Μωϋσέως ἐδόθη, ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐγένετο (1:17).

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<sup>18</sup> John Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah: The History, Literature, and Theology of the Johannine Community* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 384.

<sup>19</sup> From the observation above, it is evident that after the Farewell Discourse (John 13-17) there are a declining number of appearances of πιστεύω. This decrease might be due to the less polemical context, with fewer interactions between Jesus and the Jews in the second half of the Gospel.

In light of Jesus’ identity as God (1:1), Thomas’ confession about Jesus (ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου, 20:28) is the climactic expression of believing. The Prologue and Thomas’ Christological confession frame the Gospel. Nevertheless, Jesus’ identity is also described in a multi-faceted way. The Fourth Gospel portrays him as the Lamb of God (1:29, 36), the Messiah (1:41; 20:31), the Son of Man (cf. 1:50-51; 9:35), the Son of God (1:34, 49; 20:31), the king of Israel (1:49), and various other titles as described by the “I Am” (ἐγὼ εἰμί) sayings (cf. 8:12; 11:25; 14:6). Indeed, the absolute ἐγὼ εἰμί conveys the idea of Jesus’ divinity (8:58). Hence, the content of πιστεύω is complex.

#### 3.1.3.4. *The use of πιστεύω in relation to Jesus as the object of faith*

While the objects of πιστεύω can be plentiful, this thesis will focus on Jesus as the main object of the believing.<sup>20</sup> The narrative uses various expressions with different constructions of πιστεύω, such as πιστεύω ὅτι, πιστεύω + dative, πιστεύω + accusative, πιστεύω εἰς, and the absolute πιστεύω.<sup>21</sup>

First, John uses the construction πιστεύω ὅτι. This clause is used when Jesus explains what believing in him involves. This construction includes several objects: (i) that Jesus is the Christ (11:27; 20:31), (ii) that he is sent by the Father (11:42; 17:8, 21), (iii) that Jesus is the great “I Am” (8:24; 13:19), (iv) that he comes from the Father

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<sup>20</sup> Other objects of faith include God (5:24; 14:1), the people (2:24), the writings of Moses (5:47), the Scriptures (2:22).

<sup>21</sup> In other words, if Jesus is the main object of πιστεύω, several of the categories discussed below might be considered as the sub-objects of faith, which are directly related to Jesus. Cf. Dennis R. Lindsay, “Believing in Jesus: John’s Provocative Theology of Faith,” *Restoration Quarterly* 58.4 (2016): 194-197.

(16:27, 30), and (v) the mutual indwelling between the Father and the Son (14:10, 11). Second, πιστεύω is used with a dative. Under this construction, there are several other objects of faith such as (i) the Scripture (2:22), (ii) Jesus’ words (2:22; 4:50; 5:47), and (iii) Jesus’ work (10:38). Third, πιστεύω occurs with the accusative. There is only one appearance of this construction — 11:26 where the word τοῦτο refers to Jesus’ explanation of who he is and his promise to those who believe in him. Fourth, πιστεύω εἰς commonly refers to Jesus as its object of faith (3:18; 6:29, 40; 9:35-36; 11:25, 48; 12:36-37; 14:1; 16:9; and 17:20). Fifth, the absolute πιστεύω is generally used to point to Jesus. The absolute πιστεύω refers to “a bond with Jesus” (4:53; 6:47; 9:38; 20:29).<sup>22</sup> However, it can refer to other Christological derivative objects, which have been described by other constructions of πιστεύω. The particular context of the absolute πιστεύω should be the judge of what it refers to. This construction appears in 4:42; 5:44; 9:38; 11:15; 14:29; 16:31; 20:27, 29.

### 3.1.3.5. *The various expressions of πιστεύω*

As hinted at previously, the concept of believing itself can be expressed differently. Besides using the metaphorical connotation of seeing and hearing, the narrative of John’s Gospel also employs other words like eating (φάγητε), drinking (πίητε), remaining (μένει), coming (ἐρχόμενον), and so on to convey the synonymous

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<sup>22</sup> Koester, *The Word of Life*, 162.

meaning of πιστεύω.<sup>23</sup> The particular contexts of the words above strongly suggest those words are used as synonyms for believing.

Nevertheless, the closest concept to πιστεύω is “knowing” (οἶδα, 84 times; γινώσκω, 57 times), as shown in, for instance, 6:69 and 14:7, 10 where πιστεύω and γινώσκω are used interchangeably.<sup>24</sup> This is hardly surprising since the idea of believing in John’s Gospel is not merely an arbitrary act of volition. Believing includes, although it is not limited to, the conceptual knowledge of the object of belief (cf. 17:3; 20:28). In fact, knowing “expresses the perception and understanding of faith.”<sup>25</sup> As Painter says, “The combination of knowing and believing is of fundamental importance, drawing attention to the Christological understanding of faith.”<sup>26</sup> Similar to believing, knowing can also be implied by the Christological titles and confessions from the characters about Jesus’ identity.

### 3.2. Characterization in John’s Gospel

Studying characters in a Gospel whose plot is “propelled by conflict between belief and unbelief” is important.<sup>27</sup> Since a character is “an actor in a narrative,”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> For further discussions, see Lindsay, “Believing in Jesus,” 197-203; James Gaffney, “Believing and Knowing in the Fourth Gospel,” *Theological Studies* 26.2 (1965): 215-241.

<sup>24</sup> Both faith and knowledge have been treated as the response to revelation. See, for instance, Painter, *John: Witness and Theologian*, 71-102; Gaffney, “Believing and Knowing,” 215-241; Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus*, 15-16; Farely, *The Disciples of the Fourth Gospel*, 219-229.

<sup>25</sup> Painter, *Witness & Theologian*, 89.

<sup>26</sup> Painter, *Witness & Theologian*, 87.

<sup>27</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 97.

believing is acted out through him. In Koester's words, the narrative characters “give a human face to questions of belief and unbelief.”<sup>29</sup> Hence, without the characters, seeing, hearing, and believing are mere conceptual abstractions.

### ***3.2.1. Approaches to the study of characters in John's Gospel***

A character is presented to the reader in John's Gospel in two ways. First, by *telling*, through which the narrator openly mentions the trait of a particular character.<sup>30</sup> For instance, Judas is explicitly mentioned as the character who betrays Jesus (12:4, 6), the parents of the blind man are described as fearful (9:22), and the Jews are said to be unbelieving (6:14).

The second approach is by *showing*, where “the author invites the audience to compare and contrast various pieces of evidence based on what a character does or says and based on what other characters do or say about that character.”<sup>31</sup> For instance, Mary is shown to be yielding and persistent (2:4-5; 19:26), the blind man is seen to be courageous (9:30-33), Peter is portrayed as impulsive (13:37-38; 18:10-11), and

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<sup>28</sup> Britt Leslie, *One Thing I Know: How the Blind Man of John 9 Leads an Audience toward Belief* (Oregon: Pickwick, 2015), 76.

<sup>29</sup> Koester, *The Word of Life*, 162.

<sup>30</sup> James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 126-127; Jo-Ann A. Brant, “The Fourth Gospel as Narrative and Drama” in *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 190; Leslie, *One Thing I Know*, 76-77.

<sup>31</sup> Leslie, *One Thing I Know*, 77; cf. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), 114-130.



Thomas is pictured as realistic and critical (20:25). In this approach, the narrator does not verbally mention the traits of those characters. The reader infers their traits through the reactions, actions, and responses they give or receive from other characters.

### 3.2.2. *Theories of characters*

The narrative critical approach produces several theories for studying the Johannine characters.<sup>32</sup> While an exhaustive survey is not possible, theories of characters will be grouped into three main categories based on the degree of the trait’s complexity.

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<sup>32</sup> For a more elaborated survey, see Steven A. Hunt, D. Francois Tolmie, and Ruben Zimmermann, “An Introduction to Character and Characterization in John and Related New Testament Literature” in *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (WUNT 312; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 1-33; Christopher W. Skinner, “Misunderstanding, Christology, and Johannine Characterization: Reading John’s Characters through The Lens of The Prologue” in *Characters and Characterization in The Gospel of John* (ed. Christopher W. Skinner; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 111-128; James L. Resseguie, “A Narrative-Critical Approach to The Fourth Gospel” in *Characters and Characterization in The Gospel of John* (ed. Christopher W. Skinner; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 3-17; Judith C.S. Redman, “A Comprehensive Approach to Understanding Character in The Gospel of John” in *Characters and Characterization in The Gospel of John* (ed. Christopher W. Skinner; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 36-58; Raymond F. Collins, ““Who Are You?”: Comparison/Contrast and Fourth Gospel Characterization” in *Characters and Characterization in The Gospel of John* (ed. Christopher W. Skinner; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 79-95; Susan E. Hylen, “Three Ambiguities: Historical Context, Implied Reader, and The Nature of Faith” in *Characters and Characterization in The Gospel of John* (ed. Christopher W. Skinner; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 96-110; Cornelis Bennema, *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in The Gospel of John* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009), 12-15.

First, the characters are flat. This model argues that each character represents only one specific trait.<sup>33</sup> It believes that characters do not undergo any development as the narrative unfolds.<sup>34</sup> In other words, this model views the characters as static and is followed by, for example, scholars like Raymond Collins and R. Allan Culpepper.<sup>35</sup> For Collins, the characters in John’s Gospel “appear to have been definitely type-cast by the Evangelist.”<sup>36</sup> Culpepper’s inclination toward seeing the Johannine characters as “flat” is expressed by his statement, “When any of the minor characters convey an impression of personhood it is usually the personification of a single trait: Thomas doubts, Pilate wrestles with the claims of truth and political expediency, Peter is impulsive, the Beloved Disciple is perceptive.”<sup>37</sup>

Second, characters are round. A character can have development and complexity of traits as the narrative progresses.<sup>38</sup> This view is followed by Mark Stibbe and Cornelis Bennema, to name a few.<sup>39</sup> Bennema, for instance, argues that a theory of

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<sup>33</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 102; cf. Craig Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 33-77.

<sup>34</sup> Hunt, et al “Characterization in John,” 2.

<sup>35</sup> Raymond F. Collins, “The Representative Figures of the Fourth Gospel,” *The Downside Review* 94.314 (1976): 118-132; Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 102.

<sup>36</sup> Collins, “The Representative Figures of the Fourth Gospel,” 8.

<sup>37</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 102.

<sup>38</sup> Hunt, et al “Characterization in John,” 2.

<sup>39</sup> Mark W.G. Stibbe, *John as Storyteller: Narrative Criticism and the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 25, 97-99, 106-113; Bennema, *Encountering Jesus*; Cornelis Bennema, “A Theory of Character in the Fourth Gospel with Reference to Ancient and Modern Literature,” *BibInt* 17 (2009): 375-421.

characterization of John’s Gospel “must recognize that many Johannine characters are not flat, static, one-dimensional or typecast.”<sup>40</sup>

Third, characters are largely ambiguous, even self-defeating to the purpose of the narrative itself.<sup>41</sup> For Conway, “throughout the narrative, the Fourth Evangelist repeatedly portrays characters in indeterminate ways”, which resists a clear classification of trait.<sup>42</sup> The Johannine characters “do not line up on either side of the belief/unbelief divide”, which subverts the purpose of the Gospel itself (20:30-31).<sup>43</sup>

Since the coherence of the final form of John’s Gospel is already assumed, the third model of the theory of characters seems to be counter-intuitive to the purpose of the research. Between the first two models, approaching the characters as round is more helpful for observing the dynamics of seeing, hearing, and believing in the passages under scrutiny.<sup>44</sup> Thus, how the characters develop in terms of their believing attitude through seeing and hearing will be highlighted.

### 3.2.3. *The implied reader/hearer*

The characters that will be studied are not limited to those confined to the narrative world. Another character who is involved by the narrative is the character of

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<sup>40</sup> Bennema, “A Theory of Character in the Fourth Gospel,” 419.

<sup>41</sup> Colleen Conway, “Speaking Through Ambiguity: Minor Characters in the Fourth Gospel,” *BibInt* 10 (2002): 325; cf. Hylen, “Three Ambiguities,” 96-110.

<sup>42</sup> Conway, “Speaking Through Ambiguity,” 330.

<sup>43</sup> Conway, “Speaking Through Ambiguity,” 340.

<sup>44</sup> According to Farely, “[The] issue of belief and unbelief in the characterisation of the disciples is settled from the very beginning of the narrative” (Farely, *The Disciples in the Fourth Gospel*, 170).

the implied reader.<sup>45</sup> The implied reader is defined as “the one who performs all the mental moves required to enter into the narrative world and respond to it as the implied author intends.”<sup>46</sup>

Based on this definition, the “implied reader” also conceptually includes the “implied hearer” who hears the narrative read to them. This larger scope of an “implied reader” is potentially more faithful to the historical context of the early development of Christianity. The majority of the believers in the first century would not have owned a scroll, nor could they have read it themselves (cf. Luke 4:17; Rev. 1:3). Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity and simplicity, this character, who conceptually enters and gives response to the Johannine narrative world, will be called the “reader” in the present thesis.

The reader is intended to be moved by the narrative to believe Jesus (20:30-31). According to Culpepper,

Every narrative exerts some control over its readers. It sets up the mental moves required to experience and understand the text. Specifically, it hides and reveals in a sequence, it moves the reader about, it controls the reader’s clarity and confusion and his or her interest and emotional responses.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> The implied reader here refers to the reader presupposed by the narrative, who responds to the narrative appropriately as the narrative expects, cf. James Resseguie, *The Strange Gospel: Narrative Design and Point of View in John* (BIS 56; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 24-26.

<sup>46</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 7.

<sup>47</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 205-206.

Thus, the reader is not a passive observer.<sup>48</sup> Instead, through the narrative, the reader needs to “make up their own minds while being involved, included, and guided, as they are, within the narrative.”<sup>49</sup> This is so because, as O’ Day argues, “[the] Fourth Evangelist does not simply present Jesus as revealer to his reader but constructs the Gospel text in such a way as to allow his readers to enter into the revelatory dynamics themselves.”<sup>50</sup> As such, the reader of John’s Gospel discovers the meaning of the narrative rather than inventing it.<sup>51</sup>

### 3.3. The Narrative Time of John’s Gospel

While they are related, a narrative timeline is not to be confused with a narrative plot. A narrative plot deals more with the *thematic* arrangement of events.<sup>52</sup> A narrative plot is, thus, “the evangelist’s interpretation of the story” of Jesus.<sup>53</sup> It is “that which explains [a narrative’s] sequence, causality, unity, and affective power.”<sup>54</sup> There are several plot proposals for John’s Gospel, such as the conflict of belief and unbelief, the

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<sup>48</sup> Farelly, *The Disciples in the Fourth Gospel*, 9.

<sup>49</sup> Farelly, *The Disciples in the Fourth Gospel*, 97.

<sup>50</sup> Gail O’Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Mode and Theological Claim* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 95.

<sup>51</sup> Resseguie, *The Strange Gospel*, 25.

<sup>52</sup> For instance, the early cleansing of the Temple in the beginning (2:13-22), three Passover pilgrimages to Jerusalem, and the extended discourses. Contrast with the Synoptics implies that John’s Gospel has a unique plot.

<sup>53</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 86.

<sup>54</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, “The Plot of John’s Story of Jesus,” *Int* 49.4 (1995): 348; cf. Stibbe, *John’s Gospel*, 32-53.

actantial model, and the U-shaped comedy.<sup>55</sup> There is a certain degree of freedom that is claimed by the implied author in John’s Gospel to arrange the events in order to serve his purpose. It is clear from 20:30-31 and 21:25 that the implied author only selects a certain number of the many signs Jesus did to construct the narrative of John’s Gospel. Yet the selective nature of his work does not negate the trustworthiness of his testimonial narrative (cf. 19:35; 21:24).

In contrast to a narrative plot, to some extent a narrative timeline reflects the *chronology* of the events.<sup>56</sup> This is achieved as the sequence of events in the Johannine narrative is disrupted by the narrator’s or characters’ assertions regarding other events which have taken place before (analepses) or will occur after (prolepses) the current event which the narrator is telling.<sup>57</sup> Analapses take place in 1:32-33, 6:70, 8:58, and 12:41, where a character or the narrator alludes to events that happened in the past.<sup>58</sup> Prolepses include verses like 2:22, 7:39, 14:3, and 21:23, where the narrator or a character anticipates events that will happen in the future.<sup>59</sup> . In particular, the narrator’s use of both analepses and prolepses in John’s Gospel’s narrative helps to

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<sup>55</sup> Conflict of belief and unbelief, see Culpepper, “The Plot of John’s Story of Jesus,” 347-358; the actantial model, see Stibbe, *John’s Gospel*, 32-53; and the U-shaped comedy, see Resseguie, *Strange Gospel*, 173-196.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 54.

<sup>57</sup> Gail O’Day, “‘I Have Overcome the World (John 16:33)’: Narrative Time in John 13-17,” *Semeia* (1991): 154; Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 54, 56. Culpepper also observes that while analepses link Jesus to Israel, prolepses link him to the church, which might include the reader as well (*Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 64).

<sup>58</sup> O’Day, “‘I Have Overcome the World,” 154.

<sup>59</sup> O’Day, “‘I Have Overcome the World,” 154.

reveal faithfully the actual timeline of Jesus’ ministry eras of pre-resurrection, resurrection, and ascension as it is recorded elsewhere (cf. Acts 1:1-9; 1 Cor.15:3-4). As such, “narrative timeline” will be used in this study.

The analeptical distinction as to whether a past event happens within the narrative world of John’s Gospel (internal analepses) or beyond (external analepses, cf. 1:1-3) is not the current focus of this research. Conversely, the proleptic distinction between the internal and external prolepses (whether a future event takes place inside or outside the Johannine narrative world) has a significant impact for our purpose of reconstructing the narrative timeline of Jesus’ ministry.

Confusion occurs when it comes to deciding whether a future event should be located internally or externally. For instance, is the promise of the coming of the Spirit to believers fulfilled within the narrative world (20:22) or outside the Johannine narrative world (Acts 2:1-11)? Does Jesus’ promise to return to the disciples (14:18) happen inside the narrative world, thus in his resurrection (20:1-29), or in the future *parousia* (cf. 21:23) which is outside the narrative world and even beyond the lifetime of the reader? Is the eternal life available now in the narrative world (5:24) or also in the *parousia* as the general resurrection takes place (5:28-29)?<sup>60</sup> The answers to those questions depend on the understanding of the eschatology of John’s Gospel.

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<sup>60</sup> See Cornelis Bennema, *The Power of Saving Wisdom: An Investigation of Spirit and Wisdom in Revelation to the Soteriology of the Fourth Gospel* (WUNT 2/148; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002).

### 3.3.1. *The Johannine eschatology and the narrative timeline*

As has been briefly mentioned, reconstructing the prolepses would depend largely on the reader’s assumptions about Johannine eschatology.<sup>61</sup> The reader who presupposes John’s Gospel to be dominated by a realized eschatology will generally subsume all the future prolepses internally within the confinement of John’s Gospel’s narrative world. Thus, the coming of the Spirit, the return of Jesus to the Father, and the eternal life are seen to have taken place in the Johannine narrative. On the contrary, if John’s Gospel still retains future eschatology, it stands to reason that some of the future-oriented events will happen externally beyond the Gospel’s narrative.<sup>62</sup>

A more elaborate discussion regarding the relationship between Johannine eschatology and the narrative timeline will take place in the next chapter. At this stage, the present thesis assumes that while John’s Gospel has a strong realized eschatology, future eschatology is not totally diminished. The future aspect of the Johannine eschatology will later serve as the basis for the distinction between the pre-resurrection, the resurrection, and the ascension eras of Jesus’ ministry.

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<sup>61</sup> Severino Pancaro, “A Statistical Approach to the Concept of Time and Eschatology in the Fourth Gospel,” *Bib* 50.4 (1969): 511.

<sup>62</sup> There has been a discussion about whether authentic faith, and eternal life, can happen pre-resurrection of Jesus (Farely, *The Disciples in the Fourth Gospel*, 1-230) or only after the resurrection (Painter, *The Quest for The Messiah*, 414; Brown, *John I-XII*, cxviii), which renders authentic faith as *internally* proleptic from a certain point of view.



### **3.4. Rationale for the passages chosen**

As the present study focuses on seeing, hearing, and believing in different eras of Jesus’ ministry, it will ignore the passages which deal with the cases of unbelieving. Thus, passages like 2:23-25; 6:1-14, 22-70; and 12:37-43 will not be considered.

While there are a lot of passages in John’s Gospel about seeing, hearing, and believing, due to space limitations, the present thesis will only investigate the five crucial passages which specifically mention seeing, hearing, and believing. Those passages are (i) the Prologue (1:1-18), followed by two passages from the pre-resurrection periods: (ii) the beginning of discipleship (1:29-51) and (iii) the healing of the blind man (9:1-41); (iv) a chapter of Jesus’ resurrection (20:1-29), and finally, (v) the narrator’s direct address to the reader (19:35) and the purpose statement of John’s Gospel (20:30-31) which represent the era after Jesus’ ascension. These passages are chosen because the words and concepts of seeing, hearing, and believing are mentioned together and implied through various expressions within different periods of Jesus’ ministry in these verses.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a brief survey regarding how the words and concepts of seeing, hearing, and believing are used in the narrative of John’s Gospel. It also engaged with the theories of characterization to understand how characters have been viewed in scholarship. In particular, the view that characters are round and dynamic was deemed more suitable to use in the present thesis. Subsequently, it touched briefly on the issue of the narrative time of John’s Gospel and its relationship with eschatology which the following chapter will elaborate.

#### **4. Eschatology and The Timeline of John’s Gospel**

Since one’s view of the Fourth Gospel’s eschatology influences the reconstruction of its narrative timeline, particularly the prolepses, the present chapter will briefly discuss Johannine eschatology in order to determine a plausible angle from which to reconstruct the narrative timeline. Subsequently, it will explain how the timeline of pre-resurrection, resurrection, and ascension stems from the aforementioned eschatology. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

##### **4.1. The Eschatology of John’s Gospel**

The eschatology of John’s Gospel is not monolithic. While Jesus’ incarnation has brought the blessings of the life-to-come here and now, John’s Gospel still retains the traditional Jewish eschatology which describes future events, including the final judgment and the resurrection of the dead, in the apocalyptic sense.<sup>1</sup> This tension has been recognized by J.G. van der Watt as the “eschatological headache” in John’s Gospel.<sup>2</sup> Each strand of eschatology will be described below.

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<sup>1</sup> Ruben Zimmermann, “Eschatology and Time in John’s Gospel” in *The Oxford Handbook of Johannine Studies* (eds. Judith M. Lieu & Martinus de Boer; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 292.

<sup>2</sup> J.G. van der Watt, “A New Look at John 5:25-9 in the Light of the Use of the Term ‘Eternal Life’ in the Gospel according to John,” *NeoT* 19 (1985): 71.

#### 4.1.1. *Realized Eschatology*

Those who think that John has a realized eschatology argue that eschatological life has been fully realized in the present.<sup>3</sup> This realized eschatology is usually understood to take root in the reality of the incarnation of the Word (1:14). The incarnation of Jesus makes a crucial breakthrough which enables believers to have the eschatological life right now. As Moloney says, “John makes it clear that divine filiation (1:12), eternal life (3:15; 5:21, 24, 25, 26), judgment (3:16-18, 35; 5:22, 24, 27) and union with the Father (4:23) are available now to the one who believes in Jesus.”<sup>4</sup> As a result, “the decision about life and death is made in the present encounter with Jesus Christ.”<sup>5</sup> Bultmann, for instance, takes this view to the extreme when he says the clause ὅτι ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστὶν (5:25) “stresses with *all possible emphasis* that the eschatological moment is now present in the word of revelation.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In the attempts to find the timeless truth in John’s Gospel, several exegetes like F.C. Baur, Albrecht Ritschl, and H. J. Holtzmann emphasized realized eschatology at the expense of future eschatology (see Zimmermann, “Eschatology and Time,” 295). Thus, for Bultmann, the idea of eschatology in John’s Gospel can only mean “eschatological existence” which demands a decision (*John*, 146-147).

<sup>4</sup> Francis J. Moloney “God, Eschatology, and This-World Ethics in the Gospel of John” in *Johannine Theology 1975-2017* (WUNT 372; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 143. On 12:31, Bultmann writes, “The turn of the ages result now... Since this ‘now’ the ‘prince of the world’ is judged (16:11); the destiny of man has become definitive, according as each grasps the meaning of this ‘now,’ according as he believes or not (1:36; 5:25). No future in this world’s history can bring anything new, and all apocalyptic pictures of the future are empty dreams” (*John*, 431).

<sup>5</sup> Udo Schnelle, *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. Eugene M. Boring; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 743.

<sup>6</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 258.

#### 4.1.2. *Future Eschatology*

However, the strand of future eschatology, which understands all the blessings of the life-to-come as in the far future, is not absent in John’s Gospel. John’s Gospel actually “*never abandons* a traditional eschatology.”<sup>7</sup> Realized eschatology “[does] not cover the whole spectrum of Johannine eschatology.”<sup>8</sup>

Future eschatology’s fulfillment goes beyond the scope of the narrative and reaches to the *parousia*.<sup>9</sup> To substantiate this statement, this study will briefly look at several passages about the future aspect of the eschatology of John’s Gospel (5:28-29; 6:39-40; 14:2-3; and 21:22).

##### 4.1.2.1. *John 5:28-29*

In contrast to the realized eschatology description in 5:24-25, 5:28-29 asserts that eternal life is an apocalyptic reality. In fact, W.R. Cook says that “from John 5:24-

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<sup>7</sup> Moloney, “God, Eschatology, and This-World Ethics,” 138. Traditional eschatology here means eschatology that emphasizes the future fulfillment of God’s promise, contra John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 409.

<sup>8</sup> Schnelle, *Theology of the New Testament*, 742.

<sup>9</sup> In this case, the Farewell Discourses are seen as addressing the difficulties of the Johannine community who endured pressures (cf. 16:2, 4, 25, 32). As such, the author of John’s Gospel retrojected the ascension era, where the Spirit has been given, into Jesus’ Farewell Discourses within the pre-resurrection narrative world of John’s Gospel (Zimmermann, “Eschatology and Time,” 297). It is noteworthy to see that for Dodd, 14:2-3 is “the closest approach to the traditional language of the Church’s eschatology” (in Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 460).

29 alone (and there is much more evidence than this throughout the Gospel) it is inescapable that there are two dimensions to John's eschatology.”<sup>10</sup>

The clause ἔρχεται ὥρα (5:28) indicates that there is another definition of ὥρα which is not identical to “now here” (νῦν ἐστίν, 5:25). The “coming hour” in 5:28 addresses different characters, who are in the tombs (οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις ἀκούσουσιν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ, 5:28). They will come out and finally receive life and judgment (5:28-29). This kind of description cannot easily fit with the idea that realized eschatology is the only eschatology contained in John's Gospel. In Cook's opinion, “[The] most natural way to take all of the pertinent texts leads to the conclusion that the resurrection of life and the resurrection of judgment are not only related to two distinct groups of people (believers and unbelievers), but at two distinct times [...]”<sup>11</sup> This demonstrates that the future aspect of Jewish eschatology is present within the Johannine narrative.

#### 4.1.2.2. *John 6:39-40*

The clause ἀναστήσω αὐτὸ [ἐν] τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ in 6:39 (cf. 6:40) points to future eschatology, since this is Jesus' claim for the believers in general.<sup>12</sup> As such, the possession of eternal life (ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον, 6:40) is a future reality as well. In this regard, Köstenberger explains, “Precisely because believers' future raising up by Jesus

<sup>10</sup> W. Robert Cook, “Eschatology in John's Gospel,” *CTR* 3.1 (1988): 85.

<sup>11</sup> Cook, “Eschatology,” 91-92.

<sup>12</sup> Klink, *John*, 333.

is a certainty, it can be said that they have eternal life already in the here and now.”<sup>13</sup>

Thus, for Köstenberger, the future eschatology serves as the foundation of its present application to the believers.

#### 4.1.2.3. *John 21:22*

Assuming the unity of the narrative of John’s Gospel, the clause ἕως ἔρχομαι in 21:22 most probably refers to Jesus’ second coming, which will take place after the ascension, since his resurrection has already happened. For Carson, 21:22 is one piece of evidence that future eschatology is indeed inherent in John’s Gospel (cf. 6:39–40; 14:3).<sup>14</sup>

#### 4.1.2.4. *John 14:2-3*

The reference in 21:22 to Jesus’ second coming also sheds light on Jesus’ promise to go and return in 14:2-3. In 14:2, Jesus describes the Father’s house which has many rooms (ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου μοναὶ πολλαὶ εἰσιν). Since τῇ οἰκίᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου here could not mean the Jerusalem Temple (cf. τὸν οἶκον τοῦ πατρὸς μου, 2:16), it most probably refers to the heavenly place of God where Jesus also previously dwelt (1:1).<sup>15</sup> Thus, Jesus is going back to that heavenly place to prepare their place (πορεύομαι ἐτοιμάσαι τόπον ὑμῖν).

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<sup>13</sup> Andreas Köstenberger, *John* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 212.

<sup>14</sup> Carson, *John*, 681.

<sup>15</sup> Carson, *John*, 489; cf. Steven M. Bryan, “The Eschatological Temple in John 14,” *BBR* 15 (2005): 187-98.

In 14:3, Jesus promises that he will return (πάλιν ἔρχομαι) and take the disciples to himself (καὶ παραλήμψομαι ὑμᾶς πρὸς ἑμαυτόν). The result (ἵνα) is that they will be together in the same place with him (ὅπου εἰμὶ ἐγὼ καὶ ὑμεῖς ἦτε). Nevertheless, the narrative suggests that Jesus’ promise of being together cannot be realized within the scope of the narrative world alone.

On the contrary, as 21:22-23 indicates, even after his resurrection, Jesus is about to leave the disciples again in the turbulent world and the coming persecution (15:18-20; 16:1-3). Consequently, Jesus’ going to the Father’s house, his returning after making their place ready, and his promise that they would share his place in 14:2-3 cannot be fully explained with the idea of his death and resurrection, because his second departure is imminent.<sup>16</sup> Otherwise, it would be detrimental to the disciples facing imminent persecution if Jesus’ coming to them were not to end the persecution. William Dumbrell explains the relationship between the Farewell Discourse and 20:19-23,

This presence of Jesus in the upper room narratives [*i.e.* 20:19-23] seems not to be the return promised in chapters 14-16 since the presence of Jesus is only temporary. Jesus will go away again and withdraw himself from the disciples. Their joy and peace are at best provisional for severe persecution awaits them. Further, the circumstances and the giving of the Paraclete do not correspond to

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<sup>16</sup> Schnelle, *Theology of the New Testament*, 744. Contra Dodd who claims, “It means that after the death of Jesus, and because of it, His followers will enter into union with Him as their living Lord, and through Him with the Father, and so enter eternal life” (*Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 405).

the upper room promises. A real absence of Jesus from them was to be reckoned with, a lacuna which the Spirit/Paraclete would fill.<sup>17</sup>

Dumbrell’s observation that Jesus’ presence after the resurrection is temporary indicates that 14:2-3 anticipates another going and returning of Jesus to secure the disciples’ undisturbed abiding with him. It will happen far beyond the narrative world on the day of his ascension and *parousia*. Further, Dumbrell also claims that even after the resurrection, “[each] appearance of Jesus delays the coming of the Paraclete.”<sup>18</sup> He comments,

There is, in fact, very little in the upper room meeting of 20:20-22 that corresponds to the expectations bound up in the promise of the Paraclete in chapters 14-16. The conditions of 14:16, 26 and 16:7, 13 have not been fulfilled, and there is no trace of the Paraclete’s ministry from 20:20 to the end

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<sup>17</sup> William Dumbrell, “The Spirit in John’s Gospel” in *Spirit of the Living God part I* (ed. Barry G. Webb; Homebush West, NSW: Lancer, 1991), 88-89.

<sup>18</sup> Dumbrell, “The Spirit in John’s Gospel,” 89. Carson argues that 20:22 is symbolic, pointing to the Lukan Pentecost (*John*, 649-655). Nevertheless, the issue is highly debated among scholars, with some claiming John’s Gospel has one fulfilled Johannine Pentecost (e.g. Thomas R. Hatina, “John 20, 22 in Its Eschatological Context: Promise of Fulfillment,” *Bib* 74.2 (1993): 196-219; Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (trans. John Vriend; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 643; J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 1012, while others see two Pentecosts (James Swetnam, “Bestowal of the Spirit in the Fourth Gospel,” *Bib* 74.4 (1993): 556-576). In C.K. Barrett’s words, “It does not seem possible to harmonize this account of special bestowing of the Spirit with that contained in Acts 2” (*The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (second edition; London: SPCK, 1978), 570).



of the Gospel, which seems decisive. [...] Jesus’ different responses to Mary and Thomas are not to be explained as resulting from different needs and not by a change in his mode of existence.<sup>19</sup>

As a result, the most probable explanation of 14:2-3 would be that πορεύομαι is referring to Jesus’ ascension and πάλιν ἔρχομαι to his *parousia*.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, confidence in Jesus’ ascension and hope for *parousia* would strengthen and comfort the disciples as they wait for his return amidst the present affliction.<sup>21</sup>

In contrast to Dumbrell’s insistence, Barrett asserts that Jesus’ going and returning through the crucifixion and resurrection anticipate his final going (ascension) and his second return (*parousia*). In Barrett’s own words,

[The] sayings about coming and going can be interpreted throughout of the departure and return of Jesus in his death and resurrection; but they can equally well be interpreted of his departure to the Father at the ascension and of his return at the *parousia*. By this ambiguity John means to convey that the death and resurrection were themselves eschatological events which both prefigured and anticipated the final event.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Dumbrell, “The Spirit in John’s Gospel,” 89.

<sup>20</sup> Ruth Edwards, *Discovering John* (London: SPCK, 2003), 76; Peter C. Orr, *Exalted Above the Heavens: The Risen and Ascended Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: Apollos, 2018), 60.

<sup>21</sup> Schnelle, *Theology of the New Testament*, 744.

<sup>22</sup> Barrett, *John*, 97.

Nevertheless, even though both the realized and future aspects of Johannine eschatology are retained, the clause ὅπου εἰμι ἐγὼ καὶ ὑμεῖς ἦτε (14:3) seems to naturally tip 14:2-3 more to future eschatology’s side.<sup>23</sup>

Consequently, the verses above describe Jesus’ role as not limited to his incarnation on earth but reaching to his *parousia*. In light of the narrative approach used in the present thesis, the aspect of future eschatology in John’s Gospel is deliberate because “[from] the point of view of the internal narrative level of the gospel, the Johannine Christians are already in the future, so that it is precisely statements of future eschatology in the narrative that can refer to their own present.”<sup>24</sup>

#### 4.1.3. *Realized and Future Eschatology Together*

Both realized and future eschatology of John’s Gospel can be seen in the following instances.<sup>25</sup>

	<b>Realized Eschatology</b>	<b>Future Eschatology (Beyond the Text)</b>
Divine judgment	3:18-19; 5:24; 9:39	5:29
Resurrection	5:25; 11:25-26	5:25, 29; cf. 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:24
Eternal Life	3:16; 17:3	5:29
Jesus’ return	14:3	14:3; 21:22

<sup>23</sup> Cook, “Eschatology,” 97.

<sup>24</sup> Schnelle, *Theology of the New Testament*, 742; Barrett, *John*, 67-70.

<sup>25</sup> cf. Zimmermann, “Eschatology and Time,” 298-300.

In the *Realized Eschatology* column, the divine judgment, resurrection and eternal life are depicted as taking place in the present. However, the *Future Eschatology* column insists that there is also future fulfillment of those realities which goes beyond the confinement of the narrative world.

It is argued that these two aspects of eschatology in John’s Gospel should be held together.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the appearance of both realized and future eschatology are “regular and consistent” in the narrative of John’s Gospel.<sup>27</sup> In Beasley-Murray’s words, “[It] is characteristic of the Johannine emphasis on the future in the present that does not abandon hope for the future.”<sup>28</sup> The Johannine eschatology is both “*here* and *hereafter*.”<sup>29</sup> Consequently, there is no contradiction between the Synoptics and John’s Gospel regarding eschatology.<sup>30</sup> Any perceived difference should be understood as one of “emphasis” instead of “substance.”<sup>31</sup> As Klink says, “[For] John the promise of

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<sup>26</sup> Zimmermann, “Eschatology and Time,” 292; Paul N. Anderson, *The Riddles of the Fourth Gospel: An Introduction to John* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 32-34.

<sup>27</sup> Moloney, “God, Eschatology, and This-World Ethics,” 145.

<sup>28</sup> Beasley-Murray, G.R. *John* (second edition; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1999), lxxxvii.

<sup>29</sup> Moloney, “God, Eschatology, and This-World Ethics,” 147. Original emphasis. See also Tim O’Donnell, “Complementary Eschatologies in John 5:19-30,” *CBQ* 70.4 (2018): 750-765; David Wenham “Spirit and Life: Some Reflection on Johannine Theology,” *Themelios* 6.1 (1980): 4-8; and Craig Koester, who writes, “Neatly separating these categories, however, creates problems, as both perspectives play a role in the Gospel” (*The Word of Life*, 175).

<sup>30</sup> Peter Ensor, “Johannine Sayings of Jesus and the Question of Authenticity” in *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John* (ed. John Lierman; WUNT 219; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 21; cf. Jörg Frey, *The Glory of the Crucified One: Christology and Theology in the Gospel of John* (trans. Wayne Coppins & Christoph Heilig; Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018), 351.

<sup>31</sup> Ensor, “Johannine Sayings of Jesus,” 21.

future eschatology is the best argument for the reality of a present eschatology. The fact that Jesus will be the life and the Judge in the future is proof that he is serving as the life and the Judge in the present (5:28-29).”<sup>32</sup>

#### 4.2. John’s Gospel’s Eschatology and the Narrative Timeline

Since a timeline is essential to any narrative, being aware of its presence is important for a coherent understanding of John’s Gospel.<sup>33</sup> John’s Gospel presents its timeline as going beyond the scope of the book. The Prologue of John’s Gospel, for instance, displays the beginning of Jesus’ role as being from the eternity past (1:1-3). While the narrative seems to finish with Jesus’ resurrection and fellowship with his disciples (John 20-21), it also suggests that Jesus’ redemptive role does not end. On the contrary, the narrative curiously points forward to Jesus’ being with the Father as his final destination (cf. 14:2-3; 21:23). As has been mentioned before, the Johannine narrative indicates another coming of Jesus in his *parousia* to gather the disciples to him and his Father (21:22-23).

From this perspective, the Johannine narrative opens the possibility that the exaltation of Jesus, being the high point of the narrative, is not a single event.<sup>34</sup> Jesus’

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<sup>32</sup> Klink, *John*, 937.

<sup>33</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 7, 54.

<sup>34</sup> Contra Martinus C. de Boer, “Jesus’ Departure to the Father in John: Death or Resurrection” in *Theology and Christology in the Fourth Gospel* (eds. G. van Belle, J.G. van der Watt, P. Maritz; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), 1-20; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 381.

death and resurrection are not the final stages of his redemptive ministry.<sup>35</sup> Instead, they are transitory in light of Jesus’ role post-ascension.

An awareness regarding the eschatology of John’s Gospel, especially its future strand, is significant in understanding that the fulfillments of the prolepses are not all recorded within the Johannine narrative. Some of the realizations will happen outside the narrative world of John’s Gospel (external prolepses). This future aspect of the Fourth Gospel’s eschatology serves as a basis to stretch the narrative timeline to Jesus’ ascension and beyond.

To give a better focus and serve a better dialogue with scholarly discussions regarding the issue, the narrative timeline offered here will not include all possible eras implied by Jesus’ revelatory and redemptive role. Hence, the era before Jesus’ incarnation (1:1) and the era after his *parousia* will not be specifically engaged with. Jesus’ pre-incarnation era will be briefly tackled in the discussion of the Prologue, while all the external prolepses will be subsumed under the heading of the ascension era. The narrative timeline, thus, will focus on the following eras: *pre-resurrection*, *resurrection*, and *ascension*.<sup>36</sup> In light of this eschatologically-informed narrative timeline, the

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<sup>35</sup> Contra Schneiders who sees that the ascension is subsumed in the death of Jesus, see Sandra Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 57-58.

<sup>36</sup> Admittedly, while the pre-resurrection and resurrection eras are explicitly recorded in the Johannine narrative, there is no specific chapter describing Jesus’ ascension and his post-ascension role to the reader. Nonetheless, in light of the observations made above, John’s Gospel indeed indicates the future reality of ascension through passages like the future divine judgment (5:29), the general resurrection of the dead (5:25, 29), and eternal life as a future possession (5:28-29).

present thesis will analyze the movement of the concepts of seeing, hearing, and believing.

## **Conclusion**

Both realized and future strands of eschatology are present in John’s Gospel. While the coming of the Word-in-flesh made a breakthrough for the characters to encounter the eschatological blessings here and now, John’s Gospel still retains the idea that those blessings will find their final fulfillment beyond the ascension of Jesus.

This chapter has argued that the creative tension of the Johannine eschatology serves as a basis for understanding its narrative timeline as pre-resurrection, resurrection, and ascension eras of Jesus’ ministry. It is against this narrative timeline that seeing, hearing, and believing in the following passages 1:1-18; 1:29-51; 9:1-41; 20:1-29; 19:35 and 20:30-31 will be analyzed.

## 5. The Prologue: John 1:1-18

*“And the Word became flesh”*

*John 1:14*

Gheorge Dhobrin summarizes the relationship between the Prologue (1:1-18) and the narrative proper of John’s Gospel as the following, “What is patent in the Gospel is always latent in the Prologue; what the Prologue enfolds the Gospel unfolds.”<sup>1</sup> The Prologue serves to introduce the main character, *i.e.* Jesus, the incarnate Word (1:1, 14), who alone can reveal the Father (1:18) to both the characters in the narrative and the reader.<sup>2</sup> However, the reader has the advantage over the characters in the narrative world since he already knows Jesus’ identity from the beginning.<sup>3</sup>

The Prologue also gives a hindsight perspective about the major themes of the Gospel and how the narrative will develop.<sup>4</sup> Themes such as the duality between the realms of Creator and creation, the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, the

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<sup>1</sup> Gheorge Dhobrin, “The Introduction of the Concept of *Logos* in The Prologue of John’s Gospel,” *Perichoresis* 3.2 (2005): 215. This thesis will assume that 1:1-18 is the Prologue based on the thematic and verbal links between 1:1 and 1:18 such as: the relationship between Word and God (1:1-2, 18), the word θεός (1:1-2, 18), and reference to the eternity (cf. Köstenberger, *John*, 21). Nevertheless, there is discussion about whether 1:1-18 is originally the Prologue, cf. S. Smalley, *John: Evangelist and Interpreter* (Paternoster Press, 1998), 136; P.J. Williams, “Not the Prologue of John,” *JSNT* 33.4 (2011): 375-86; Martinus C. de Boer, “The Original Prologue to the Gospel of John,” *NTS* 61.4 (2015): 448-67.

<sup>2</sup> Klink, *John*, 81.

<sup>3</sup> cf. Morna D. Hooker, “The Johannine Prologue and the Messianic Secret,” *NTS* 21.1 (1974): 45, 49.

<sup>4</sup> Carson, *John*, 111; Klink, *John*, 81.

supremacy of Jesus over the prophets, and the competing responses toward Jesus are disclosed to the reader even before the narrative proper. The privilege which the reader has through reading the Prologue shapes him to comply with the purpose of the Gospel’s narrative (20:30-31).

Being thematically related to the Gospel’s narrative, it is expected that the Prologue will also bring the concepts of seeing, hearing, and believing into the reader’s view. To investigate the issue, 1:1-18 will be divided into two sections, 1:1-13 and 1:14-18. This division is based on the appearance of ὁ λόγος as the main character in the Prologue. Subsequently, the concepts of seeing, hearing, and believing in each section will be discussed. Finally, a conclusion will summarize the chapter findings.

## 5.1. “In the beginning was the Word” (John 1:1-13)

### 5.1.1. *Seeing*

The physical kind of seeing is introduced implicitly to the reader in 1:3 as the idea of creation appears through the positive πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο and the negative καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν. This visible realm of creation is contrasted against the invisible realm of God and the Word (1:1-2, 18). The contrast is supported by the different use of the imperfect ἦν (1:1, 2, 4) and the aorist ἐγένετο (1:3, 14).

Being the creation of the Word, the materiality and visibility of the creation are to be celebrated. The Prologue argues against the idea that matter is evil.<sup>5</sup> Creation is good because it is the work of its invisible Creator himself. As a result, creation is a revelation of God which man cannot deny (Pss. 19:1-3; Rom. 1:19-21; Acts 14:17).

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<sup>5</sup> Köstenberger, *John*, 40.



The goodness and the revelatory character of creation will be amplified subsequently by the incarnation of the invisible Word (1:14) and the miraculous signs as acts of re-creation.<sup>6</sup> In Thompson’s view, “It is hard to escape the conclusion that John wants us to understand the Word, incarnate in Jesus, as the mediator of both physical and spiritual life.”<sup>7</sup>

The concept of seeing is also indicated by the title Light (τὸ φῶς, 1:4-5). While the title Word addresses hearing, the “Light” is conceptually linked to seeing.<sup>8</sup> Admittedly, Light can be understood as a metaphor for understanding.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, pitting the metaphorical seeing of Light against physical seeing is a false dichotomy. As John 9 will make clear, both kinds of seeing can occur in the same event (cf. 9:1-42; 20:29).<sup>10</sup> For our purpose, the pairing of Word and Light is indicative of the significance of both hearing and seeing.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Mary Coloe, “The Structure of the Johannine Prologue and Genesis 1,” *ABR* (1997): 40-55; Peder Borgen, “Creation, Logos, and the Son: Observation on John 1:1-18 and 5:17-18,” *ExAud* 3 (1987): 88-97.

<sup>7</sup> M.M. Thompson, “Signs and Faith in the Fourth Gospel,” *BBR* 1 (1991): 100-101.

<sup>8</sup> Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 23.

<sup>9</sup> Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 23.

<sup>10</sup> Schnelle, “The Signs in the Gospel of John,” 237.

<sup>11</sup> Coloe, “Johannine Prologue and Genesis 1,” 47-48.

### 5.1.2. *Hearing*

The idea of hearing is introduced through the phrase ὁ λόγος. In view of the Old Testament, λόγος is generally understood as speech coming from the mouth of God.<sup>12</sup> It is the divine word spoken and written (cf. Luke 4:4; Rev. 1:3). Through his word, God accomplished his work in creation (*e.g.* Gen 1:3-; Ps 33:6), revelation (*e.g.* Isa 9:8; Ezek. 33:7) and redemption (cf. Ps 107:20; Isa 55:1).<sup>13</sup> In these three areas, God worked through real events which were perceptible to human senses.

Since creation is done by the Word (1:3), it is the Word that has the authority to give the right meaning regarding creation (cf. Gen. 1-2). Apart from the Word, other interpretations regarding creation cannot be rendered as faithful or accurate (cf. Gen. 3:1-5). This observation is important since the narrative proper portrays the true meaning of the visible signs as interpreted by Jesus’ words. This is not surprising, since it is through Jesus’ speech that the signs are performed (cf. 2:8-9; 5:8-9; 11:43-44). This makes Jesus the sole authority in matters of interpretation.

In 1:6-8, the idea of hearing is linked with the testimony of John the Baptist.<sup>14</sup> Being a witness sent from God, it is logical to assume that John’s testimony reflects God’s truth.<sup>15</sup> Thus, when John testifies about the Light who is yet to come, his testimony carries God’s authority to those who hear. Assuming that at this point the Word has not yet exercised the incarnation (cf. 1:9), this section also introduces the

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<sup>12</sup> Klink, *John*, 87.

<sup>13</sup> Carson, *John*, 115.

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion regarding the role of John the Baptist in the Prologue, see Morna Hooker, “John the Baptist and the Johannine Prologue,” *NTS* 16.4 (1970): 354-358.

<sup>15</sup> Cornelis Bennema, “The Character of John in the Fourth Gospel,” *JETS* 52.2 (2009): 272-274.

flexibility of verbal words as the medium of representation.<sup>16</sup> Verbal testimony, which is engaged by hearing, is flexible enough to represent the unseen event, either because it has not yet happened or it has already happened beyond the reach of the present characters. However, the case is different with seeing.

Physical seeing is limited temporally and spatially as seeing requires a concrete object in a certain time and place. On the other hand, hearing can receive verbal testimony about an event that has already happened in the past. In the case of John the Baptist, his testimony points to the coming of Jesus (cf. 1:26-27; 3:28-30). Hence, characters can access a past or future event through verbal testimony without necessarily being in the same place and time as the event which was witnessed. If this understanding is accurate, John’s testimony regarding the Light serves as a precedent to an era where seeing will no longer be possible (20:29).

### 5.1.3. *Believing*

Believing here is described as the purpose of John’s testimony (ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι’ αὐτοῦ, 1:7). While the role of seeing in 1:6-8 is not clear, the significance of John the Baptist in the narrative should be carefully considered. He is the one who prepares for the imminent coming of the Light for a certain period (1:29-37). Hence, before the Light himself reveals himself in person to other characters, what

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<sup>16</sup> Regarding 1:9-14 Klink writes, “As part of the prologue, this section is guiding the reader to see the invisible in the visible with the *climax* being the incarnation—the visible manifestation of the Word” (Klink, *John*, 99); emphasis added. Thus, Klink understands the Word’s coming into the world as a process.

they can know about him is made clear through the testimony of John the Baptist. In this regard, hearing testimony is central in bringing characters to believe in Jesus.

However, in John’s Gospel the idea of witnessing generally assumes that the witness has already seen the event he is witnessing to (cf. 1:14). In Coloe’s words, “[T]estimony is only valid through the personal experience of seeing and hearing.”<sup>17</sup> As the subsequent narrative will tell, John the Baptist is given the prophetic vision of God’s Spirit coming on Jesus (1:33) during his baptism (1:32). Now, John testifies to what he has seen (1:29-34). John the Baptist will point his disciples to Jesus for them to engage Jesus visually and aurally themselves (1:35-39). Thus, believing is achieved through seeing and hearing.

The issue of believing is subsequently described by the two responses to the Word: resistance (cf. οὐκ ἔγνων, 1:10; οὐ παρέλαβον, 1:11), and acceptance (ἔλαβον, 1:12), thus believing (τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, 1:12). The believing attitude is the result of God giving spiritual birth to the characters he chose, as the contrastive ἀλλ’ ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν indicates (cf. 6:37, 44). Without God’s divine intervention, there would be no appropriate believing response to the Word/Light. This observation indicates that seeing and hearing are the media through which characters believe in Jesus.

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<sup>17</sup> Coloe, “Johannine Prologue and Genesis 1,” 50.

#### 5.1.4. Summary

Seeing is implied by the physical creation, by the Word, and by the figure of the Light, while hearing is tightly linked with the figure of the Word who is and was with God. As such, both seeing and hearing are revelatory for the characters and, thus, assumed to be legitimate instruments to believing (1:12-13; cf. 20:30-31).

### 5.2. “The Word became flesh” (John 1:14-18)

#### 5.2.1. Seeing

Seeing here is both implicitly shown and explicitly mentioned (θεαεάομαι). It is implied through the emphatic καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο (1:14).<sup>18</sup> In particular, this clause describes how the incarnation of the Word assumes flesh (σὰρξ). Hence, the idea of the visual embodiment or enfleshment of the invisible Word elaborates the goodness and revelatory character of the material creation.<sup>19</sup> In Köstenberger’s words, “Jesus’ ministry is thus cast as the creative Word’s eschatological *enfleshment* and definitive revelation of God.”<sup>20</sup>

Being the “eschatological enfleshment,” the incarnation is instrumentally essential to enable the contemporary characters to see God (cf. 1:18; 14:7, 9). The juxtaposition of the divine Word (ὁ λόγος) and the flesh (σὰρξ) demands that both

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<sup>18</sup> Indeed Bultmann says anti-docetically that, “If man wishes to see the δόξα, then it is on the σὰρξ that he must concentrate his attention, without allowing himself to fall a victim to appearance” (*John*, 63). However, for Bultmann, this seeing is one of faith, which excludes the physical seeing (Bultmann, *John*, 69). See also Carson (*John*, 130) for a critique of Bultmann.

<sup>19</sup> cf. Frey, *The Glory of the Crucified One*, 264.

<sup>20</sup> Köstenberger, *John*, 23. Emphasis added.

metaphorical and physical seeing are normative to some degree.<sup>21</sup> As Thompson says, “Although in John ‘sight’ becomes metaphorical for ‘insight’ or faith (9:39-41), the metaphor does not eclipse the literal meaning of ‘sight’ as physically seeing. This is the precise point: when one sees (witnesses) a sign, one must see (understand) its meaning.”<sup>22</sup> A visible sign, thus, is not just a symbol. Thompson continues,

What the signs manifest and bring to men and women is, in Johannine terminology, life. Signs do not merely symbolize or point to the availability of eternal life through Jesus; they themselves offer life in the present. They effect what they promise. They are part and parcel of the substance of the gift of life. A helpful analogy is that of the signs which accompanied the Exodus. The plagues and wonders wrought by God through Moses foretold and promised the coming deliverance from Egypt; yet they were also part of God's acts on behalf of the people of Israel. God's signs through Moses both promise and are part of the liberation of the people from captivity.<sup>23</sup>

‘Seeing’ in this section is further implied by the *shekinah* language καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν.<sup>24</sup> While in the Old Testament God pitched his tent in the Tabernacle among the people of Israel (Exod. 25:8), the Word now pitches his tent through the visible incarnation. Hence, καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν serves as the “bridge” between the

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<sup>21</sup> W.E. Sproston, “‘Is Not This Jesus, The Son of Joseph ...?’ (John 6:42): Johannine Christology as A Challenge to Faith,” *JSNT* 24 (1985): 92.

<sup>22</sup> Thompson, “Signs and Faith,” 94, n. 16.

<sup>23</sup> Thompson, “Signs and Faith,” 97.

<sup>24</sup> Frey, *The Glory of the Crucified One*, 282-283.

statements of the Word’s becoming flesh and the seeing of his glory.<sup>25</sup> The allusion to Exodus brings the expectation that the glory of the Word (τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ) will be manifested visually to the audience within the narrative (cf. Exod. 24:16; 40:34-35; 1 Kings 8:10-11). Wang explains the conceptual link between the incarnation and the Exodus account,

The imagery of ‘tabernacling’ together with ‘glory’ continues the idea of ‘light,’ but articulates it through imagery drawn from the Old Testament where God’s *visible glory* came to dwell in the Tabernacle. It is not clear how that is realised in the Gospel at this stage, but the glimpse that is given in the Prologue underscores *the vivid, personal, eyewitness experience* of the believers. What ‘John’ testifies to has also been seen by the believing community.<sup>26</sup>

Seeing is explicitly mentioned as having occurred in the clause καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ (1:14). The word δόξα renders the Hebrew *kabod*, which the Old Testament uses “to denote the visible manifestation of God’s self-disclosure in a theophany (Ex. 33:22; Dt. 5:22).”<sup>27</sup> Through the incarnation of the Word, “we” can see his glory in his signs (cf. 2:11; 11:4).<sup>28</sup> This glory is “both the visible manifestation and so also revelation of character of being.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Frey, *The Glory of the Crucified One*, 282.

<sup>26</sup> Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 24 . Emphasis added.

<sup>27</sup> Carson, *John*, 128.

<sup>28</sup> Carson, *John*, 128, 130.

<sup>29</sup> Thompson, “Signs and Faith,” 94, n. 16.

In 1:18, the idea of seeing is described negatively by the emphatic θεόν οὐδεὶς ὥρακεν πώποτε which describes the physical invisibility of God. This is immediately contrasted with the visibility of the person Jesus Christ (1:14), who explains the Father (ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο, 1:18). This makes the incarnation of the Word essential for human beings to see God. In the narrative world, seeing the invisible God is mediated physically through the presence of Jesus Christ (14:9).<sup>30</sup> Since the reality of the incarnation of the Word is “indispensable,” it necessitates that believing should include seeing to some extent.<sup>31</sup> Seeing in 1:18 is positively indicated by the clause ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο (1:18). Just as the invisible divine Word has created the visible world (1:3), and now come in flesh (1:14) in the person of Jesus Christ (1:17), it is to be expected that he would also demonstrate and reveal who God is through both miraculous signs and speech to the characters in the narrative.<sup>32</sup>

The incarnate Word will be recognized visibly as “the concrete, earthly corporeal, and mortal human being Jesus of Nazareth” (1:17).<sup>33</sup> This incarnated Word is known as the son of Joseph (6:42), a true human being (7:31; 19:5).<sup>34</sup> Drawing a parallel between the Prologue and 1 John 1:1-3, Coloe concludes, “Both the Prologue and the introduction to the Epistle, emphasize the sensory nature of the community's

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<sup>30</sup> Thompson, “Signs and Faith,” 95, 98.

<sup>31</sup> W.E. Sproston, “‘Is Not This Jesus, The Son of Joseph ...?’,” 79.

<sup>32</sup> Schnelle, “The Signs in the Gospel of John,” 237.

<sup>33</sup> Frey, *The Glory of the Crucified One*, 270.

<sup>34</sup> W.E. Sproston, “‘Is Not This Jesus, The Son of Joseph ...?’,” 79.



experience. The pre-existent Word of God has become flesh and so is *accessible to ordinary human experience*; it has been seen, it has been heard, it has been touched.”<sup>35</sup>

This visual appearance in the flesh is certainly limited to space and time. Nevertheless, the temporal and spatial limitations do not necessarily imply the dispensability of the physicality of the incarnation. On the contrary, the limited period of the appearance of the Word in flesh is the most important moment in redemptive history (1:17, 18). The incarnated Word is the one in whom the Old Testament prophecy is fulfilled (5:39), the one whom Abraham saw (8:58), whom Moses wrote about (5:46), and whose glory Isaiah saw (12:41). He is the one in whom the believers in every age should believe (14:6). Perhaps it is not too much of a stretch to conclude with Carson, “[The] Prologue summarizes how the ‘Word’ which was with God in the very beginning came into the sphere of time, history, *tangibility*—in other words, how the Son of God was sent into the world to become the Jesus of history.”<sup>36</sup>

### 5.2.2. *Hearing*

Alluding to 1:6-8, the idea of hearing is implied by the testimony of John the Baptist about Jesus, through words like μαρτυρεῖ, κέκραγεν λέγων, and εἶπον (1:15).<sup>37</sup> Coloe observes, “The auditory nature of John's witness is so pronounced that in all the traditions he is described as “the Voice” (Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; Matt. 3:3; John 1:23).”<sup>38</sup> The Baptist’s testimony serves to explain the man Jesus theologically to his audience. In

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<sup>35</sup> Coloe, “Johannine Prologue and Genesis 1,” 46. Emphasis added.

<sup>36</sup> Carson, *John*, 111. Emphasis added.

<sup>37</sup> Coloe, “Johannine Prologue and Genesis 1,” 47-48.

<sup>38</sup> Coloe, “Johannine Prologue and Genesis 1,” 48.

contrast to 1:6-8, which highlights John’s testimony to the coming Light (1:9), here John interprets the already incarnated Word whom the characters can see, so that they can finally believe in him.

The idea of hearing is also indicated by the clause ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο (1:18). As ἐκεῖνος refers to Jesus Christ (1:17), the Word-in-flesh (1:1, 14), the exegesis of the unseen God includes verbal testimony, explanation and discourses. Discussing the origin of the titular Logos in light of the Gospel proper, Miller writes,

[We] should take into account the many discourses of Jesus (the Bread, Water, Resurrection and Life, Good Shepherd, Door, Vine, etc.), each of which constitutes a kind of extended Word and all of which characterize the Johannine Christ and his activity. The Johannine Christ is, perhaps more than anything else, one who is always addressing people, discoursing, and the fabric of this Gospel is, largely, just this succession of (often lengthy) discourses.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, hearing is implied as necessary for being receptive to the interpretation of the man Jesus seen.

### 5.2.3. *Believing*

In John’s Gospel, the appropriate response to the revelation of God in Jesus is believing (cf. 20:30-31). In this section, the concept of believing is implied in 1:18. While the clause θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε emphasizes the invisibility of God, this notion of God’s invisibility is balanced with the emphatic ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο. If ἐκεῖνος refers to Jesus, 1:18 suggests that in Jesus, the characters in the narrative world can have the experience of *visio Dei* (cf. 14:9). Since Jesus reveals God in his full humanity,

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<sup>39</sup> Ed Miller, “The Johannine Origins of the Johannine Logos,” *JBL* 112.3 (1993): 452.

seeing Jesus and his signs and hearing from him become necessary instruments to believing in him. In Sproston’s words, “Faith thus attains its object, not by looking away from the man Jesus, but by perceiving the δόξα θεοῦ revealed in his flesh. It thus perceives precisely in, and not apart from, this very real humanity the creative and revelatory work of the divine pre-existent Logos.”<sup>40</sup> This view is also supported by the Old Testament’s accounts of theophany. As Wang explains, “Whatever form [a theophany] takes, it is always sense-perceptible for there are always two components that accompany theophany: visual and verbal interaction.”<sup>41</sup>

In 1:29-51 seeing Jesus is so important that the characters who believe in Jesus in the narrative have to “come and see” Jesus for them to engage with him more deeply. John the Baptist’s testimony about Jesus now finds its concrete embodiment as they meet Jesus. While seeing is not the effective cause of believing, its instrumentality to believing is always acknowledged in John’s Gospel.

Concerning hearing, in light of the Old Testament understanding of the centrality of the word of God in creation, revelation, and redemption, it is logical to assume that the Word-in-flesh would speak many times regarding his identity and relationship with the Father. In fact, since John is described as the first human witness who testifies to the Word/Light (1:6-8, 15), it is natural to expect that the presence of the Word-in-flesh “among us” would give an unparalleled testimony regarding himself.

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<sup>40</sup> Sproston, “Is Not This Jesus,” 90.

<sup>41</sup> Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 54-55.

#### **5.2.4. Summary**

The incarnation, embodiment, or enfleshment of the invisible Word in Jesus necessitates physical seeing and hearing as the mediums of the revelation of the invisible God. Hence, it stands to reason that both seeing and hearing contribute positively to believing in Jesus.

#### **Conclusion**

The value of physical seeing is consistent and harmonious with the doctrine of creation and incarnation. Both creation and incarnation are God’s revelation, with which human eyes can visually engage. Indeed, the Prologue seems to draw an analogous link between Jesus’ seeing of the invisible Father and the disciples’ seeing of Jesus and his signs (cf. 14:9). The Prologue also depicts the sense of hearing as important in receiving the authoritative interpretation of the divine Word. The Word is the agent of creation and the actor of the incarnation. Through hearing the testimony about and of Jesus, the characters are assumed to have access to God’s word. Furthermore, the testimony of John about Jesus, even when he is not yet recognized through baptism, strongly indicates the flexibility that hearing carries in presenting an unseen event. This is potentially a precedent to Jesus’ benediction in 20:29.

It is, thus, logical to expect that the coupling of visual and oral ministry of the Light/Word would result in the believing attitude of certain characters as the Johannine narrative unfolds.

## 6. Pre-Resurrection: John 1:29-51

*“Come and you will see”*

*John 1:39*

John 1:29-51 is one example of how seeing, hearing, and believing interact with each other during the pre-resurrection era, even in the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry. In this passage, some characters utter Christological confessions, expressing their belief (cf. πιστεύεις, 1:49), after they see Jesus and hear from him. Those characters are important because through and together with them the reader is persuaded to believe in Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

The first character is John the Baptist, who is mentioned in the Prologue as the first witness to Jesus (1:6-8, 15). The other characters are the disciples, who follow Jesus through the pre-resurrection, resurrection, and ascension eras of his ministry. While John the Baptist is the first witness of Jesus before his crucifixion and resurrection, the disciples are the witnesses who see Jesus after his resurrection and beyond (cf. 1:14; 20:30-31).<sup>2</sup> These characters do not only believe, but they also testify about Jesus and invite other characters to see and hear from Jesus themselves.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 145.

<sup>2</sup> John the Baptist is also recognized as ‘the witness *par excellence*,’ see D.G. van der Merwe, “The Historical and Theological significance of John the Baptist as He Is Portrayed in John 1.”

*Neotestamentica* 33.2 (1999): 290. Larsen says that John the Baptist is “the ideal witness to Jesus by having access to the same kind of information as the reader” (*Recognizing The Stranger*, 101).

<sup>3</sup> Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 219.

This chapter analyzes 1:29-51 by dividing it into three sections based on the appearance of τῇ ἐπαύριον (1:29, 35, 43). These sections are about (i) John the Baptist’s public testimony of his full conviction about Jesus (1:29-34), (ii) the testimony and encounter of John’s disciples with Jesus (1:35-42), and (iii) the testimony of Philip and the encounter of Nathanael with Jesus (1:43-51). It will investigate the themes of seeing, hearing, and believing in each section. Finally, a conclusion will be drawn based on the findings.

## 6.1. John the Baptist’s testimony (John 1:29-34)

### 6.1.1. Seeing

The idea of seeing is expressed for the first time through the interjection ἴδε (behold).<sup>4</sup> The narrative characters and, by extension the reader, are invited to see Jesus as the Lamb of God (ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ) who will take away the sin of the world (ὁ αἴρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου).<sup>5</sup> Thus, physical seeing addresses Jesus as the embodiment of John the Baptist’s interpretation.

The importance of seeing to belief or knowledge is further highlighted through the role of seeing in ending John the Baptist’s ignorance of Jesus (1:31-32, 33). In 1:31, the clause καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ᾔδειν αὐτόν stresses John the Baptist’s ignorance about the identity of the Messiah. This might seem ironic since his mission (διὰ τοῦτο ἦλθον ἐγὼ ἐν ὕδατι βαπτίζων) is to reveal Jesus to be the Lamb of God visibly (ἵνα φανερωθῇ τῷ Ἰσραὴλ). However, it also emphasizes the divine origin of Jesus, whom the darkened creation

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<sup>4</sup> Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 98.

<sup>5</sup> See Klink, *John*, 133-134 for further discussion regarding the title ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.

does not know (cf. 1:9-10). In this passage, the character of John the Baptist is ignorant of who Jesus is, as the pluperfect *κἀγὼ οὐκ ᾔδειν αὐτόν* highlights (1:31, 33).<sup>6</sup> Thus, to some degree John the Baptist is identified by the narrator with the characters of the Jerusalem delegates, who also do not know Jesus (*μέσος ὑμῶν ἕστηκεν ὃν ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἶδατε*, 1:26).

John the Baptist’s ignorance of Jesus implies the importance of divine intervention to enable recognition of and belief in God’s Messiah (cf. 1:20).<sup>7</sup> This divine intervention is manifested in the descending of the Spirit upon Jesus. In 1:32, the perfect *τεθέαμαι* stresses John the Baptist’s visual experience of the dove-like descending Spirit (*τὸ πνεῦμα καταβαῖνον ὡς περιστερὰν*) from heaven (*ἐξ οὐρανοῦ*).<sup>8</sup> Seeing triumphs over his ignorance (1:33). Here *κἀγὼ οὐκ ᾔδειν αὐτόν* is once again contrasted with the hearing of divine promise that he would see (*ἰδεῖς*) the Spirit descending (*τὸ πνεῦμα καταβαῖνον*) and remaining upon Jesus so that he knows him for certain.

The value of seeing is emphasized as John the Baptist treats seeing the Spirit as the epistemological way of knowing Jesus. In 1:34, the perfect *κἀγὼ ἐώρακα* accentuates his previous seeing of the Spirit descending upon Jesus. The result is

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basic* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 583.

<sup>7</sup> The Spirit is the “recognition token,” writes Larsen (*Recognizing The Stranger*, 100).

<sup>8</sup> Larsen argues, “The fact that Jesus [...] was the Logos from the beginning of time implies that his relation to the heavenly world does not need to be initiated or strengthened but rather to be recognized” (*Recognizing the Stranger*, 100).

expressed through the perfect μεμαρτύρηκα ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ which contrasts with his previous ignorance of Jesus (cf. 19:35).<sup>9</sup>

The nature of John’s seeing of the Spirit is debated: was it a physical or a spiritual vision? Klink asserts that in the Old Testament, the phrase τὸ πνεῦμα “necessarily consisted of physical reality.”<sup>10</sup> As such, the assertion of seeing the Spirit descending like a dove upon Jesus is better understood to take place in the physical realm.<sup>11</sup> If Klink is correct, 1:29-35 provides evidence of the role of physical seeing for believing. The observation about how seeing is used in this section suggests a positive relationship between the physical seeing of the Spirit and believing in Jesus. By seeing the Spirit remain on Jesus, the character of John the Baptist is enabled to believe in him.

### 6.1.2. *Hearing*

Seeing in 1:29-34 cannot be separated from hearing. While ἀκούω does not appear in this section, the idea of hearing is implied by the verbs: “say” (λέγω) and “testify” (μαρτύρεω). John the Baptist both hears what God says to him and testifies to others.

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<sup>9</sup> The pair of “seeing” and “testifying” is important as it also appears in 19:35, where the narrator says καὶ ὁ ἑωρακὼς μεμαρτύρηκεν, and 20:30-31, where implicitly seeing signs is meant to lead the disciples to faith in Jesus.

<sup>10</sup> Klink, *John*, 135.

<sup>11</sup> Klink, *John*, 135.



In 1:33, John the Baptist hears from God (ἐκεῖνός μοι εἶπεν) that he would see the Spirit descending upon Jesus so that John would recognize him.<sup>12</sup> The promise of God provides John the Baptist with the epistemological framework to interpret his subsequent experience of seeing. God interprets the object of the seeing so that it becomes theologically intelligible to John the Baptist later. Thus, seeing and hearing become the avenues for him to believe in Jesus.

Convinced by seeing the Spirit remain on Jesus, John the Baptist testifies to his disciples. John sees (βλέπει) Jesus coming to him and interprets him as the Lamb of God to them (1:29).<sup>13</sup> In 1:31-34, there is a transmission and transformation of John the Baptist’s experience of seeing the Spirit and hearing God’s words. John the Baptist verbally describes his previous experience of seeing the Spirit and hearing God’s interpretation to the characters (the disciples), who no longer have access to the event. By giving testimony to the event of baptism, John the Baptist recreates his experience of seeing the Spirit and hearing God’s words for the disciples. As such, both the disciples within and the reader without the narrative world are transported into the event of Jesus’ baptism through the medium of John the Baptist’s testimony. Put differently, both the disciples and the reader are enabled to participate in John’s experience through hearing his words.

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<sup>12</sup> The character of God is implicitly mentioned in the nominative ὁ πένμψας με βαπτίζειν ἐν ὕδατι. Since 1:6 has already mentioned that John is sent by God (ἀπεσταλμένος παρὰ θεοῦ), the reference of ὁ πένμψας με is made clear.

<sup>13</sup> “The Lamb of God” might refer to Isaiah’s suffering Servant (Isa 52:13-53:12) or the *paschal* lamb (19:25), see Merwe, “John the Baptist,” 283.

### 6.1.3. *Believing*

Both seeing and hearing contribute uniquely to believing. In the case of John the Baptist, he knows and believes in Jesus through the vision of the Spirit and the hearing of God’s words.

His role as a witness to the Light (1:6-8) necessitates him bringing his audience to believe in Jesus through his testimony. What John previously saw and heard from God is recreated through the medium of his verbal testimony. It should be noted that no other characters are explicitly mentioned, although it potentially includes the characters of the disciples (1:35).<sup>14</sup> However, being undefined, the implied audience of John the Baptist’s testimony might deliberately be intended to include the reader as well.<sup>15</sup> Thus, as Thompson says, “[The] entire Gospel functions as a witness for its readers, so that they may be brought to encounter Jesus through it (20:30-31).”<sup>16</sup>

### 6.1.4. *Summary*

The character of John the Baptist moves from ignorance of who Jesus is to the full conviction that he is the Son of God (1:34) through the vision and the reality of Jesus’ baptism. Through both events, he sees the Spirit descending upon Jesus and hears God’s interpretation. Thus, through the senses of seeing (1:29, 32, 33, and 34) and hearing (1:33), the character of John the Baptist develops into the fully-convinced witness of Jesus.

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<sup>14</sup> cf. Bultmann, *John*, 65.

<sup>15</sup> cf. Merwe, “John the Baptist,” 267; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 18; Bultmann, *John*, 95.

<sup>16</sup> Thompson, *John*, 4.

## 6.2. The testimony and encounter of John’s disciples with Jesus (John 1:35-42)

### 6.2.1. Seeing

John 1:35 provides the setting for the disciples’ encounter with Jesus. As John the Baptist sees (ἐμβλέψας) Jesus, he directs his disciples’ sight to Jesus (ἴδε) and identifies him as the Lamb of God to them. Their seeing addresses Jesus as the embodiment of the concept of the Lamb of God. As such, it draws the characters to follow him. Their eagerness to follow Jesus to his dwelling place (ποῦ μένεις, 1:38) is met with Jesus’ invitation ἔρχεσθε καὶ ὄψεσθε (1:39). Seeing Jesus’ dwelling place is an invitation to engage with him more deeply. This is soon followed by their decision to stay with him (παρ’ αὐτῷ ἔμειναν τὴν ἡμέραν). In fact, they will also follow him afterwards.<sup>17</sup>

While admittedly there are no visual signs that Jesus makes, the narrative’s stress on seeing cannot be easily overlooked. There is an escalation of seeing both spatially and temporally. The spatial setting shifts the disciples’ seeing of Jesus from a distance in a public place upon John’s instruction (τῷ Ἰησοῦ περιπατοῦντι, 1:35) to seeing Jesus intimately in his own place. The temporal setting also changes, as now the disciples see Jesus for longer by staying with him (τὴν ἡμέραν).<sup>18</sup> Hence, the experience of seeing Jesus becomes more personal and intentional.

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<sup>17</sup> Koester, *The Word of Life*, 165.

<sup>18</sup> This duration is to be contrasted with the disciples’ earlier seeing of Jesus, which seems to be only in a moment, as John points to Jesus.

The seeing that is in view here includes the connotation of insight.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the disciples are invited to know Jesus more.<sup>20</sup> However, insight cannot be separated from physical sight. Being early disciples in the beginning of the public ministry of the incarnated Word, it seems natural and necessary for the disciples to see Jesus physically in person and hear how Jesus explains himself in light of the Scriptures. Both seeing and hearing Jesus result in the expression of believing εὐρήκαμεν τὸν Μεσσίαν (cf. 1:41). The title τὸν Μεσσίαν describes Jesus as the embodiment of the end-time Messiah whom the Old Testament has been waiting for (1:33; Isa. 61:1). Thus, insight is found in sight, in the context of the narrative world during the pre-resurrection period.

That Andrew brings Simon to Jesus stresses the importance of meeting and dealing with Jesus himself. Just as Andrew and the anonymous disciples hear John’s testimony and meet Jesus personally, Simon also sees Jesus and hears Jesus saying that his name will be changed to Peter, which seems to refer to Simon’s future transformation (1:42).

### 6.2.2. *Hearing*

The disciples’ seeing of Jesus is interpreted by John’s explanation of Jesus’ identity (ἶδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, 1:36). The disciples do not follow Jesus without a prior understanding of him. They have heard John’s testimony about Jesus as the Lamb of

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<sup>19</sup> As Farely says, “It is likely that Jesus, in his call to the disciples, is primarily calling them to believe in him” (*The Disciples in the Fourth Gospel*, 23).

<sup>20</sup> Thompson, *John*, 50.

God and, presumably, his experience of seeing the Spirit coming down on Jesus. Hence, their physical seeing of Jesus is theologically interpreted by what they have heard.

How meeting with Jesus deepened their understanding of his identity as the Messiah is not elaborated. However, the title τὸν Μεσσίαν, loaded with Old Testament theology, implies that discussion of Old Testament prophecies happened during the meeting (cf. 1:45). In light of 15:7-10, which links dwelling in Jesus and keeping his words, the repetition of μένω here (1:38, 39) implies hearing Jesus’ words as the medium of knowing him more deeply.

Hearing about and from Jesus is not only experienced by the first two disciples. Simon, who has not seen Jesus, hears Andrew’s testimony that he has found the Messiah (1:41). However, Andrew’s knowledge of Jesus does not stop there. His encounter with Jesus results in his personal testimony to Simon that Jesus is the Messiah. Thus, there is a development in Andrew’s character from accepting the witness of John the Baptist to bearing witness about Jesus to Simon (cf. 6:8; 12:22).<sup>21</sup> The gravity of Andrew’s testimony is highlighted by the perfect εὐρήκαμεν τὸν Μεσσίαν (1:41). Through this testimony, Simon is epistemologically prepared to meet and see Jesus himself, through which he will be transformed into Peter (1:42).

### 6.2.3. *Believing*

The believing of the disciples is expressed through the application of the Christological title τὸν Μεσσίαν to Jesus. Thus, seeing and hearing Jesus work together

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<sup>21</sup> Farelly, *The Disciples in the Fourth Gospel*, 23.

to bring the characters of Andrew and the anonymous disciple to their conclusion that Jesus is the Messiah.

This pattern is repeated when Andrew testifies to Simon about Jesus, whom Simon has not yet seen. While in this section Simon is silent about Jesus, Simon’s decision to follow Andrew hints that he is receptive to his brother’s testimony.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, as the previous encounters between the characters of John the Baptist and Jesus result in belief in Jesus, it seems that the same action of believing happens in Simon’s engagement with Jesus.

#### **6.2.4. Summary**

John 1:35-42 shifts the attention from John the Baptist to the characters of his two disciples and Simon after hearing the testimony about Jesus. There are no miraculous signs or visions in this pericope. However, seeing the embodiment of the soteriological Lamb of God, who passes before the characters of the disciples, and hearing the testimony about Jesus lead them to believe in him.

### **6.3. The testimony of Philip and the encounter of Nathanael with Jesus (John 1:43-51)**

#### **6.3.1. Seeing**

The first appearance of the seeing cognate is in Philip’s invitation to Nathanael to see Jesus for himself (ἔρχου καὶ ἴδε, 1:46). This is an intentional seeing which involves the development of an understanding of Jesus’ identity and the evaluation of

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<sup>22</sup> Farelly, *The Disciples in the Fourth Gospel*, 24.

Philip’s testimony about Jesus (1:45).<sup>23</sup> Previously, ἔρχεσθε καὶ ὄψεσθε describes the invitation of Jesus to the first two disciples which results in their confession. Thus, ἔρχου καὶ ἴδε here deliberately counters Nathanael’s initial doubt (1:46).<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, in the narrative world where Jesus is portrayed as the incarnate Word (1:14), the insight cannot be separated from the actual sight of him. Coming to Jesus and seeing him intentionally and personally in a meaningful engagement provides the way to know him more deeply.

When Nathanael finally meets Jesus, Jesus sees him and recognizes him as the true Israelite (ἀληθῶς Ἰσραηλῖτης, 1:47-48).<sup>25</sup> This supernatural seeing drives Nathanael to confess that Jesus is the King of Israel and Son of God. It confirms that the seeing which Philip means includes a deeper realization and recognition of Jesus, which includes hearing the words of Jesus about Nathanael (1:50). Larsen draws a parallel between 1:35-42 and 1:43-51.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Farely, *The Disciples in the Fourth Gospel*, 25, n. 45. Cf. Mark Stibbe, *John* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 41.

<sup>24</sup> The character of Nathanael with his doubt is important in the light of the whole narrative, as the character of Thomas will experience doubt too after he hears the testimony of the others disciples about Jesus.

<sup>25</sup> Thompson argues that ἀληθῶς Ἰσραηλῖτης is important since it describes Nathanael as superior to Jacob or Israel, who wrestled with the angel in Peniel “the face of God” (Gen. 32:28-30), since Nathanael has truly seen the Son of God (*John*, 52).

<sup>26</sup> Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 105.

Section 1 (1:35-42)	Section Two (1:43-51)
“The next day” Jesus goes to the Baptist and the Baptist’s two disciples (vv. 35-36a)	“The next day” Jesus goes to Galilee and meets Philip (v. 43a)
Jesus and the Baptist’s two disciples (vv. 36b-40).	Jesus and Philip (vv. 43b-44)
Andrew, one of the two disciples, informs his brother Simon (v. 41)	Philip informs Nathanael (vv. 45-46)
Andrew brings Simon to Jesus (v. 42a)	Nathanael goes to Jesus (v. 47a)
Jesus and Simon Peter (v. 42)	Jesus and Nathanael (vv. 47-51)

Based on the parallel above, it can be concluded that the verbal testimony about Jesus “tends toward seeing, both in order to put an end to cognitive resistance and with the purpose of eliminating physical distance.”<sup>27</sup> Seeing is subsequently described by Jesus as the peak of Nathanael’s and the disciples’ journey in knowing him. In 1:50, μείζω τούτων ὄψῃ refers to the future and greater seeing which Nathanael will have.<sup>28</sup> The τούτων seems to refer to the engagement with Jesus that Nathanael has just had. In his first seeing of Jesus, Nathanael realizes the divine knowledge that Jesus has, hence he knows Jesus’ identity.

The future seeing which Jesus describes as greater (μείζω) consists of seeing the Son of Man in his glory. The verb ὄψεσθε in 1:51 suggests that Jesus addresses the other disciples as well. The object of this seeing is the opening of heaven and the angels

<sup>27</sup> Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 105.

<sup>28</sup> The certainty of Jesus’ promise contrasts with his hypothetical ἐάν οὖν θεωρῆτε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀναβαίνοντα ὅπου ἦν τὸ πρότερον in 6:62 (Ashton, *John: Witness & Theologian*, 83).



ascending and descending on the Son of Man.<sup>29</sup> This vision alludes to Gen. 28:12, when in his dream Jacob saw a ladder which connected heaven and earth, with angels on the ladder.<sup>30</sup> In the context of 1:51, the ladder is transformed into the eschatological figure of the Son of Man in John’s Gospel.<sup>31</sup>

Seeing the exalted Son of Man is best understood as climaxing in seeing the risen Jesus, where the confession of Jesus as Lord and God is proclaimed.<sup>32</sup> However, they will also see Jesus’ signs, which reveal Jesus’ multi-faceted identity, as the narrative unfolds.<sup>33</sup> If this is true, then seeing is given an important place as the way the characters of the disciples come to know Jesus in the narrative world of John’s Gospel. Hence, “[John’s Gospel] invites them instead to look at what is right in front of them: to look at the Word made flesh, the man Jesus of Nazareth, and there to see the revelation

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<sup>29</sup> The opening of heaven means the “disclosing of heavenly secrets, allowing for the descent of heavenly beings or even the coming of God” (Thompson, *John*, 53). Consequently, the Son of Man is a heavenly figure (Benjamin Reynolds, *The Apocalyptic Son of Man in the Gospel of John* (WUNT 2/249, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 92-95).

<sup>30</sup> J.H. Neyrey, “The Jacob Allusions in John 1:51,” *CBQ* 44 (1982): 585-605.

<sup>31</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Theology of John’s Gospel and the Letters: Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 427. N.T. Wright mentions that this vision of the Son of Man as the connecting point of heaven and earth alludes to the Temple-Christology of the Gospel, which will find its culmination on the Resurrection day, when the angels sit at the head and at the feet of the tomb’s table, like the ark of the covenant (“History, Eschatology, and New Creation in the Fourth Gospel: Early Christian Perspectives on God’s Action in Jesus, with Special Reference to the Prologue of John,” *CATR* 8.1. (2019): 5).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Reynolds, *The Apocalyptic Son of Man*, 91, 102-103.

<sup>33</sup> Thompson, *John*, 54.

of the glory of God,” writes Thompson.<sup>34</sup> Consequently, physically seeing Jesus, accompanied with the right interpretation, is crucial to bringing the characters to believe in him within the context of the narrative world.

However, the characters’ seeing also affects the reader. In this regard, Larsen’s insight is worth quoting at length,

[We] are standing at the Gospel entrance where readers are being introduced to the presence of Jesus in the story-world. From this perspective, Jesus’ saying to Nathanael is not a reproach judging his recognition as being insufficient in some sort of way, and neither is it a general epistemological precept that elevates the perceptive mode of seeing (eyewitnessing) to a level of indispensability; but it points the reader, whose access to Jesus goes through secondary testimony, toward the direct seeing that is enabled by Jesus’ presence in the Gospel.<sup>35</sup>

The reader will metaphorically see Jesus. Nevertheless, their seeing of Jesus through the narrative cannot be separated from the characters’ physical seeing of Jesus in the narrative world itself.

### **6.3.2. Hearing**

Hearing always accompanies seeing so that the characters may believe in Jesus. After Nathanael hears Philip’s testimony about Jesus, in his doubt Nathanael goes to

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<sup>34</sup> Thompson, *John*, 54.

<sup>35</sup> Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 110.

meet Jesus and hears Jesus’ statement about him while Nathanael was under the tree (1:48).<sup>36</sup> Nathanael’s confession is preceded by Philip’s that Jesus is the one whom the whole Old Testament *corpus* prophesies, as the emphatic ὃν ἔγραψεν Μωϋσῆς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ καὶ οἱ προφῆται εὐρήκαμεν indicates (1:45). Later, the Messiahship of Jesus is confirmed by Jesus’ knowledge about Nathanael. Hence, hearing about and from Jesus is vital to understanding the identity of Jesus. Jesus also prepares the disciples to understand his visible resurrection when he interprets it as the exaltation of the Son of Man who bridges heaven and earth.

### 6.3.3. *Believing*

For Nathanael, believing in Jesus is achieved both through seeing and hearing. Nathanael first hears the testimony of Philip, which he questions. However, after Nathanael engages with Jesus through seeing him and hearing Jesus’ omniscience about him, he finally believes that Jesus is the King of Israel and Son of God. Hearing the right interpretation is important to processing the reality of Jesus’ physical presence.

However, in the context of the narrative world, the physical reality of Jesus serves to substantiate the interpretation. As has been argued, “Because the revelation occurred in history, the way of coming to faith is through normal historical experience, through seeing or hearing.”<sup>37</sup> The physical presence of Jesus makes this normal seeing and hearing possible. As such, this believing attitude deepens as the visual object and

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<sup>36</sup> This asymmetry of knowledge reveals the divine identity of Jesus, cf. Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 109.

<sup>37</sup> Painter, *John: Witness & Theologian*, 71.

understanding grow. Seeing the resurrection of Jesus and hearing his words will be the final event that seals the faith of the disciples that Jesus is the divine Messiah, the Son of God (20:30-31). For our purpose, it is also important to take note of Wang’s comment regarding John 1:29-51,

The extensive use of sense perception and the chain reaction of hearing, seeing and being-seen make the whole scene vivid. The readers are drawn into the narrative through different perspectives. Not only can they ‘see’ through what the characters see, but the dialogues in between the narratives also help the reader to ‘hear’ along with the characters. Even though there are some ambiguities in what they perceive and how they interpret it, this does not denigrate the vivid effect of the rhetorical power of the physical senses, conveying a sense of immediate presence.<sup>38</sup>

As such, the reader also sees, hears, and believes in Jesus through the recorded experience of the characters who believe in Jesus. The reader is not left aside as an observer. Instead, he is drawn in through the way seeing and hearing are used.

#### **6.3.4. Summary**

Jesus calls Philip to follow him and, thus Philip becomes his disciple. Subsequently, Philip testifies and brings Nathanael to Jesus, so that he believes that Jesus is the King of Israel. In this section, seeing addresses Jesus visually as the embodiment of the Old Testament prophecy. Hearing engages aurally the interpretation

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<sup>38</sup> Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 27.

of Jesus. Thus, both seeing and hearing work together to bring Nathanael to believe in Jesus.

## **Conclusion**

John 1:29-51 describes several characters’ interactions which lead to belief in Jesus. All these human characters believe in him initially through the testimony of other characters and then through a personal encounter with Jesus himself, which involves seeing and hearing.

Seeing cannot be overlooked because it engages the fact that Jesus embodies Old Testament prophecy, while hearing deals with verbal assertions about Jesus’ identity. Thus, while the disciples do not see any visible signs of Jesus, seeing and hearing Jesus in person contribute to a deeper engagement with him. Importantly, the disciples’ vivid experience of seeing and hearing also persuade the reader to believe in Jesus. In other words, the reader is piggybacking on the experience of the characters to see and hear Jesus.

## 7. Pre-Resurrection: John 9:1-41

*“You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you”*

*John 9:37*

Narrating a round character of a voiceless and blind beggar who finally becomes a bold eyewitness of Jesus to others, John 9:1-41 is a chapter where the words and concepts of seeing, hearing, and believing are dominant.<sup>1</sup> The vocabulary of seeing occurs 14 times in these verses: βλέπω (9:7, 15, 18, 21, 25, 39, 41), ἀναβλέπω (9:11, 15, 18), and ὁρᾶω (9:37). The concept of hearing is expressed in two ways. Implicitly, hearing is shown through the characters’ understanding of the Old Testament regarding the significance Jesus’ miraculous sign (9:28-33). Explicitly, it is mentioned through the keyword ἀκούω (9:27, 31, 32, 35). The keyword for believing, πιστεύω, is mentioned three times (9:35, 36, 38). However, the concept of believing has been demonstrated in several confessions regarding Jesus’ identity (cf. 9:17, 33, 35). Hence, John 9:1-41 portrays the dynamics of seeing and hearing in relation to believing in Jesus in the era of pre-resurrection.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The character of the blind man “does represent a rare development of character and plot twists that are intriguing and worth noting.” (Andy M. Reimer, “The Man Born Blind: True Disciple of Jesus” in *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel*, eds. Steven A. Hunt et al. (WUNT 314; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 429).

<sup>2</sup> It has been argued that the emphasis on mud as the instrument of healing alludes to creation theology, cf. Carlos R.S. Siliezar, *Creation Imagery in the Gospel of John* (JSNTS 546; London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 113-122.

John 9:1-41 will be divided into three sections based on the physical presence and absence of Jesus. Those sections are: Jesus’ presence with the disciples and the blind man (9:1-7), Jesus’ absence (9:8-34), and Jesus’ presence with the once-blind man and the Pharisees (9:35-41). In each section, the seeing, hearing, and believing will be analyzed. Finally, a conclusion will be made about the pattern of seeing, hearing, and believing as it is described in John 9:1-41.

## **7.1. Jesus’ presence with the disciples and the blind man (John 9:1-7)**

### **7.1.1. Seeing**

The concept of seeing is introduced by the clause εἶδεν ἄνθρωπον τυφλὸν ἐκ γενετῆς (9:1) which contrasts Jesus’ seeing and the man’s blindness (τυφλὸν ἐκ γενετῆς). Jesus’ seeing of the blind man is admittedly greater than physical seeing (cf. 1:42, 47; 5:5). It also connotes a deeper insight regarding the destiny of the blind man, as the purposive ἵνα φανερωθῇ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ (9:3) indicates.<sup>3</sup>

The contrast between the seeing of Jesus and the man’s blindness is subsequently escalated to the cosmic level by the description of Jesus as the Light of the World (ἕως ἡμέρα ἐστίν, 9:4; φῶς εἰμι τοῦ κόσμου, 9:5) against the world’s darkness and death (ἔρχεται νὺξ, 9:4).<sup>4</sup> In this regard, the healing of the blind man demonstrates how the Light of the World shines in the darkness and brings life (cf. 1:5).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus*, 101.

<sup>4</sup> The pairing of ἡμέρα and νὺξ alludes to the creation narrative in Gen 1 and John 1:3; cf. Klink, *John*, 438; Bultmann, *John*, 340-341.

<sup>5</sup> cf. Köstenberger, *John*, 281.

The concept of seeing is again implied by Jesus’ statement regarding the purpose of this blindness as being instrumental to the visible demonstration of God’s work (φανερῶθῃ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ, 9:3). As Wang argues, “The verb φανερῶ is an invitation to visualisation. [...] The intangible work of God is thus made perceptible to the disciples and this reinforces the foundation of their faith.”<sup>6</sup> In John’s Gospel, τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ carries the understanding of the life-giving activity of God (5:17-20; 6:27-29). Hence, the idea of the visibility of God’s work contrasts with the man’s condition of blindness, which is similar to death.<sup>7</sup>

The role of the Light of the world in providing sight is depicted in 9:6 as Jesus anoints the man’s eyes (τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς) with his mud (αὐτοῦ τὸν πηλὸν) made from his saliva.<sup>8</sup> The man’s obedient response of washing his eyes results in him gaining the physical seeing he has lacked since birth—as he comes back seeing (καὶ ἦλθεν βλέπων, 9:7) results in gaining the physical seeing he has lacked since he was born. So, physical seeing is an essential part of the belief journey of the once-blind man. In fact, his apologetic strategy is rooted in his experience of being healed (cf. 9:32-33).

### 7.1.2. *Hearing*

Hearing is implied by the discussion between Jesus and his disciples and his command to the blind man to wash his mud-anointed eyes in the Siloam pool. In 9:2,

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<sup>6</sup> Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 170-171.

<sup>7</sup> Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus*, 101.

<sup>8</sup> The use of mud in creating sight for the blind man refers possibly to the creative act of the first man itself. As Klink writes, “The moment described by the narrator is not between a miracle worker and an ailing blind man, but between the Creator and ‘his’ creation.” (Klink, *John*, 439).



the blindness (ἵνα τυφλὸς γεννηθῇ) is interpreted falsely by the disciples as the result of sin (τίς ἡμαρτεν, οὗτος ἢ οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ). This interpretation is rooted in several Old Testament texts regarding the link between physical disabilities and sin (Exod. 20:5; Ps. 89:32).<sup>9</sup> However, this interpretation is refuted by Jesus’ statement that sin is not the cause of the man’s blindness (οὔτε οὗτος ἡμαρτεν οὔτε οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ). Instead, his blindness is teleologically due to revealing God’s work (ἵνα φανερωθῇ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ, 9:3).<sup>10</sup>

The hearing that leads to the man’s believing is confined within Jesus’ instruction to him to wash his mud-anointed eyes in the pool of Siloam.<sup>11</sup> This initial reception of Jesus’ words will eventually lead the man to believe Jesus’ revelation that he is the Son of Man (9:38). The man’s reception will later be contrasted with the resistance of the Jews toward Jesus. Overall, the reader is already given a hint regarding the significance of hearing Jesus’ words to belief.

### 7.1.3. *Believing*

The believing of the blind man is not clearly narrated at this stage. However, Jesus’ statement that his blindness will serve as a public revelation of God’s work to the

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<sup>9</sup> Klink, *John*, 436.

<sup>10</sup> David Rensberger offers an observation, “Despite a hopeful beginning, as theodicy this is really worse yet. It seems to say that God did not even blind the man for his entire lifetime in order to show off his power by finally sending Jesus to heal him.” (Rensberger, *Johannine Faith and Liberating Community* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), 43-44). See also Ridderbos, *John*, 333.

<sup>11</sup> For a further discussion, see Bruce Grigsby, “Washing in the Pool of Siloam — A Thematic Anticipation of the Johannine Cross,” *NovT* 27 (1985): 27-35.

public suggests that his subsequent seeing is linked to his believing. His believing in Jesus is hinted at in his obedience to Jesus’ command to wash his mud-anointed eyes in the pool of Siloam. His believing will be confirmed and even developed in the polemics against the Pharisees regarding the identity of Jesus.

#### **7.1.4. Summary**

The concept of seeing is implied by the man’s inability to see and Jesus’ self-description as the Light of the world. The role of seeing for believing is hinted at by Jesus’ statement that the healing of the blind man will serve to glorify God. The interpretive role of hearing for believing is implied by the command to wash the man’s eyes and the dialogue regarding the cause and purpose of the blindness. In this case, while hearing Jesus’ explanation of the blindness will interpret the healing, the reality of the man’s newly-gained seeing makes Jesus’ explanation concrete for the characters of the disciples involved in John 9.

### **7. 2. Jesus’ Absence (9:8-34)**

#### **7.2.1. Seeing**

The concept of seeing and its antonym, blindness, are mentioned and implied several times in this section. Their appearance is due to their important roles in several areas. First, the miraculous seeing is explicitly depicted as a sign, which demands a response to Jesus. Second, the Pharisees understand the seeing as a falsification of Jesus’ identity. Third, the man understands the seeing as a revelation of Jesus’ identity.

#### *7.2.1.1. Seeing as a sign*

That the miraculous seeing is understood as a sign is explicitly mentioned by some members of the Pharisees (πῶς δύναται ἄνθρωπος ἀμαρτωλὸς τοιαῦτα σημεῖα ποιεῖν, 9:16). Being a miraculous sign, the reality of the recreated seeing demands a response from the other characters involved in the passages. Humorously, the Pharisees demand the right response from the man (τί σὺ λέγεις περὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι ἠνέφξέν σου τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς, 9:17), who has demonstrated a believing attitude in Jesus, while their own response to Jesus’ sign is depicted negatively from the beginning.

#### *7.2.1.2. Seeing as a falsification of Jesus’ identity*

For the Pharisees, the healing on the Sabbath works against the man’s correct understanding of Jesus’ identity. It becomes the ground on which they judge Jesus to be a sinner who breaks the Sabbath law (οὐκ ἔστιν οὗτος παρὰ θεοῦ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ὅτι τὸ σάββατον οὐ τηρεῖ, 9:16). This sign of Jesus ironically falsifies the man’s claim about Jesus, due to the Pharisaic interpretation of the event. Hence, a sign of Jesus can be received with an unbelieving attitude.

This incident highlights the importance of the right Christological interpretation of signs. Nevertheless, it does not deny the significance of the observable physical sign. Conversely, the Pharisees’ insistence on proof that the now-seeing man was formerly blind, to the point that they also interrogate his parents, assumes the persuasive character of the sign to make people believe in Jesus.

This is also acknowledged by several members of the Pharisees who think that Jesus cannot be a sinner (πῶς δύναται ἄνθρωπος ἀμαρτωλὸς τοιαῦτα σημεῖα ποιεῖν, 9:16). In light of the context of the discussion, this particular group seems to be open to

the possibility that Jesus could be “from God” (παρὰ θεοῦ, 9:16), due to his miraculous sign. In contrast to the first group of the Pharisees, the sign of healing the blind is received in a positive tone. However, their characters are not developed.

#### *7.2.1.3. Seeing as a revelation of Jesus’ identity*

Seeing is now tightly linked to the witnessing activity of the once-blind man’s character. His testimony includes three areas: his identity, the method of Jesus’ healing, and his growing Christological conviction of Jesus’ identity.

First, the healing of the eyes of the blind man gives him a new identity as a seeing character. His becoming a seeing man confuses his neighbours and the Pharisees. The neighbours ask him if he is the same person they knew before (9:8). The Pharisees even question his parents regarding the man’s identity (9:18-19). Their confusion serves as a crisis, on the basis of which the reader is challenged to decide on the identity of Jesus.

Second, in light of his new identity, the character of the once-blind man occupies the centre of attention during Jesus’ absence. In contrast to his being mute and silent in 9:1-7, the man now becomes a first-hand witness of the healing event, since the neighbours and the Pharisees did not see the healing event of the blind man themselves. This point highlights the previous assertion that seeing an event, be it Jesus in his incarnation or the miraculous signs which he performs, is temporally and spatially limited.

However, the verbal testimony enables a different kind of involvement. As will be made clear by the next section, the testimony is designed to approximate the healing event. The proximity with the narrative of the healing assumes the importance of seeing

the healing event itself and testifies to the importance of hearing testimony as a substitute for seeing a past event.

Third, seeing serves as the ground on which the man’s belief in Jesus grows. From confessing Jesus as a mere human being (ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ λεγόμενος Ἰησοῦς, 9:11), his confession develops to the belief that Jesus is a prophet, based on the fact that he now has restored eyes (cf. προφήτης ἐστίν, 9:17), before finally he concludes that Jesus is definitely from God (παρὰ θεοῦ, 9:11) since nobody has restored the eyes of a man born blind in the history of the Old Testament (9:32). Thus, while having a correct interpretation is important for understanding the significance of the healing event, his restored seeing renders the interpretation of the concrete reality even more correct, since an analogous healing is not recorded in the Old Testament.

### **7.2.2. *Hearing***

The concept of hearing can be deduced from the various conversations recorded in the passage which involve the once-blind man himself, his neighbours, his parents, and the Pharisees. Here, the role of hearing can be described as covering two areas: (i) hearing as the substitute for seeing, and (ii) hearing as the interpretive framework to understand Jesus’ sign.

#### **7.2.2.1. *Hearing as the substitute for seeing***

The first function of hearing testimony is to serve as a substitute to seeing the healing event, as the event itself has already occurred. This happens with the neighbours as they hear the testimony of the man. To the neighbours, the once-blind man testifies that he is the same man (ἐγώ εἰμι, 9:9). They knew he was previously blind. His reply

ἐγώ εἰμι affirms his identity and, thus, consequently confirms the event of the healing to be true.<sup>12</sup> Reimer draws the implication, “Jesus may not appear for a while, but a tested and testifying ‘I am’ will remain on the scene.”<sup>13</sup> It is important here to note that the man describes the event in terms close to the narrative of the healing in 9:6-7. Indeed, there are parallels between the event that happens to the man and his testimony as the following table shows:

	<b>The Healing Event (9:6-7)</b>	<b>The man’s testimony (9:11)</b>
Making Mud	ἐποίησεν πηλὸν ἐκ τοῦ πτύσματος, 9:6	πηλὸν ἐποίησεν
Anointing the eyes	καὶ ἐπέχρισεν αὐτοῦ τὸν πηλὸν ἐπὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς, 9:6	καὶ ἐπέχρισέν μου τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς
Telling the man to go and wash his eyes in the pool of Siloam	καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ὕπαγε νίψαι εἰς τὴν κολυμβήθραν τοῦ Σιλωάμ, 9:7a	καὶ εἶπέν μοι ὅτι ὕπαγε εἰς τὸν Σιλωάμ καὶ νίψαι
The man’s response	ἀπῆλθεν οὖν καὶ ἐνίψατο καὶ ἤλθεν βλέπων, 9:7b	ἀπελθὼν οὖν καὶ νιψάμενος ἀνέβλεψα

These actions of Jesus are quite accurately pictured as the man presents the healing event through his testimony. Hence, his testimony is the instrument of the mediated “seeing”, since his neighbours did not see the healing event themselves.<sup>14</sup> This detailed

<sup>12</sup> The clause ἐγώ εἰμι has been interpreted either as “purely secular” without any link to Jesus’ ἐγώ εἰμι (Brown, *John I-XII*, 373; Barrett, *John*, 359) or derivative of Jesus’ ἐγώ εἰμι (cf. Klink, *John*, 440).

<sup>13</sup> Andy Reimer, “The Man Born Blind,” 434.

<sup>14</sup> Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 171.

and verbal presentation also affects the reader who “even though not present at the scene, can see vividly in their imagination how Jesus heals the man.”<sup>15</sup>

Not only to the neighbours, hearing is also implied by the man’s verbal reconstruction to the Pharisees. In 9:15, the Pharisees ask the once-blind man to tell them the process of the healing (πάλιν οὖν ἠρώτων αὐτὸν καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι πῶς ἀνέβλεψεν). The man’s answer imitates the event of the healing itself (πηλὸν ἐπέθηκέν μου ἐπὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς καὶ ἐνιψάμην καὶ βλέπω).

Later, the Pharisees’ interrogation of the parents highlights the role of hearing testimony (9:18-19). In 9:20, the parents’ affirmation of the man’s identity as their son (οἶδαμεν ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς ἡμῶν) who was born blind (καὶ ὅτι τυφλὸς ἐγεννήθη) strengthens the reality of the miraculous sign. They are now obliged to accept the man’s testimony about his healing. The subsequent challenge of the parents for the Pharisees (ἡλικίαν ἔχει, αὐτὸν ἐπερωτήσατε, 9:23) further stresses the importance of hearing the testimony from the first-hand witness. There is no better witness the Pharisees can have other than the man himself.

In the final part of the interrogation, the Pharisees once again ask the man about the process of the healing (9:26). The double questions τί ἐποίησέν σοι and πῶς ἤνοιξέν σου τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς emphasize their eagerness to posit themselves as close as possible to the event, even though it is through the man’s testimony. However, their insistence is met with rejection from the man (9:27). His rejection stems from his assessment of their predetermined disbelieving attitude toward Jesus (ἡμεῖς οἶδαμεν ὅτι οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἁμαρτωλός ἐστιν, 9:24). Significantly, ἀκούω is explicitly used in the man’s challenge to the Pharisees (9:27). The man’s rebuke εἶπον ὑμῖν ἤδη καὶ οὐκ ἠκούσατε (9:27a) and

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<sup>15</sup> Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 172.

his sarcasm τί πάλιν θέλετε ἀκούειν (9:27b) depict that hearing testimony is the way by which the Pharisees can have mediated access to the event of his healing.

#### 7.2.2.2. *Hearing as the interpretive framework for Jesus’ sign*

Hearing serves as the interpretive framework through which the sign of the healing of the blind man is understood. The debate between the Pharisees and the blind man revolves around how seeing reveals the identity of Jesus. In Brown’s opinion, this debate is “one of the most cleverly written dialogues in the NT.”<sup>16</sup> In this case, hearing is implied in every argument that the Pharisees and the once-blind man pose to each other. The object of hearing here refers to the previous Old Testament theological tradition, which underlies each argument regarding the Old Testament signs narratives (cf. 9:29-33). This is depicted by the different theological interpretations ascribed to the healing, either by the man or the Pharisees, in their dispute.

The Pharisees understand Jesus’ sign as breaking the tradition of the Sabbath law. For the Pharisees, the miraculous recreation of seeing on the Sabbath day reveals that Jesus is a sinner (οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἁμαρτωλὸς ἐστίν, 9:24). Since Jesus breaks the Torah, he could not be from God. The Pharisees belittle Jesus’ status and credibility by comparing him to Moses, whom they know. For the reader, this assertion is ironic since Moses writes about Jesus, whom they now deliberately reject (cf. 5:45-46). Thus, their interpretation of Jesus is shown to be false testimony.

In 9:17, the man has already made a Christological claim that Jesus is a prophet (προφήτης ἐστίν). While at this point, the rationale behind his assertion about Jesus is

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<sup>16</sup> Brown, *John I-XII*, 377.



not clear, the subsequent polemics with the Pharisees in 9:24-34 reveal that he already has a theological presupposition through which he interprets the sign and Jesus himself. In 9:30, the man contrasts the statement of the Pharisees (ὕμεῖς οὐκ οἶδατε πόθεν ἐστὶν) with the reality of Jesus’ sign (καὶ ἤνοιξέν μου τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς). Earlier, the Pharisees claim that they know where Moses comes from, while Jesus’ origin is unknown. Their ignorance of Jesus’ origin implies that Jesus is not from God (cf. ἡμεῖς οἶδαμεν ὅτι οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἁμαρτωλὸς ἐστίν, 9:24).

However, for the man, the sign suggests Jesus’ origin cannot be easily framed as being unknown. In 9:31, the man links Jesus’ healing act with piety toward God. Jesus’ healing act is understood as the result of God’s approval of his piety. The man’s assertion that God does not hear a sinner (οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἁμαρτωλῶν ὁ θεὸς οὐκ ἀκούει, 9:31) reveals his knowledge of God’s character revealed in the Old Testament (cf. Isa. 1:15; Pss. 66:16-20).

The man subsequently makes an important observation in 9:32 regarding the healing of blindness from birth (ἐκ τοῦ αἰῶνος οὐκ ἠκούσθη ὅτι ἠνέφξεν τις ὀφθαλμούς τυφλοῦ γεγεννημένου, 9:32). The clause ἐκ τοῦ αἰῶνος οὐκ ἠκούσθη highlights the importance of hearing, for it is impossible for the characters involved in John 9 to witness redemptive history from the point of creation. Indeed, as Köstenberger explains, “Instances of blind persons being healed in Jewish tradition are extremely rare (Tob. 11:10–14; cf. 2:10). But the healing of a man born blind is without parallel.”<sup>17</sup> It is never recorded in the Old Testament.<sup>18</sup> Against this background, the once-blind man

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<sup>17</sup> Köstenberger, *John*, 292.

<sup>18</sup> Carson, *John*, 375.

concludes that Jesus’ sign reveals that he is from God (9:33), since in Judaism answers to prayer are linked with someone’s righteousness.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, the healing of the blind is an important feature in the eschatological era of the Messiah (Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7).<sup>20</sup> As such, the man probably sees Jesus as even greater than Moses and all the prophets. For the reader, this seems consistent with previous descriptions of Jesus as the God who creates with mud (9:6) and the Light of the world himself (9:5).<sup>21</sup> His brave testimony against the Pharisees portrays him to be “a model witness in the face of social and religious pressure.”<sup>22</sup> Indeed, “the man born blind is not just courageous but nothing short of a clever rabbi himself.”<sup>23</sup> Truly, he is an ideal disciple of Jesus (cf. 9:27).

### 7.2.3. *Believing*

Believing in 9:8-34 can be understood on two narrative levels. First, on the level of the blind man whom Jesus healed. Second, on the level of the other characters, the Pharisees in particular, who do not see the healing, but are nonetheless given mental access to the event through the testimony of the man.

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<sup>19</sup> Köstenberger, *John*, 292.

<sup>20</sup> John Painter, “John 9 and The Interpretation of The Fourth Gospel,” *JSNT* 28 (1986): 33; Köstenberger, *John*, 292.

<sup>21</sup> Klink, *John*, 439.

<sup>22</sup> Klink, *John*, 453.

<sup>23</sup> Reimer, “The Man Born Blind,” 435.

### 7.2.3.1. *The man*

The once-blind man is described as growing in his belief in Jesus through various confessions. At the beginning, he says that Jesus is just a man (ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ λεγόμενος Ἰησοῦς, 9:11). This reaction of the once-blind man is similar to the response of the healed paralyzed man in John 5, at this stage (5:15).<sup>24</sup> Both do not know who Jesus is and can only provide descriptive retelling about the event of the healing.<sup>25</sup> However, while the man in John 5 initiates giving the Pharisees his report about where Jesus is, the man in John 9 is passively brought to them. In contrast to the man in John 5, who disappears after his report, this once-blind man testifies to Jesus based on the healing of his eyes.

Subsequently, under interrogation he confesses that Jesus is a prophet (προφήτης ἐστίν, 9:17) and that he is from God (παρὰ θεοῦ, 9:33). Later on, he seems to put Jesus in his own unique category, as he argues that nowhere has it been heard, even since the beginning of the world, i.e. creation, that someone could heal a man blind from birth.

This confessional progression cannot be separated from the fact that he has experienced the miraculous healing which enables him to see. However, the healing is also accurately interpreted in light of the Old Testament healing narratives. Thus, for the man, seeing and hearing work together, each in its own way, to bring him to believe in Jesus.

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<sup>24</sup> Reimer, “The Man Born Blind,” 434.

<sup>25</sup> Culpepper, *Anatomy of The Fourth Gospel*, 139-140.

### 7.2.3.2. *Other characters*

Since the healing of the blind man is limited temporally and spatially, it is unrepeatable once it has passed. Thus, verbal testimony is essential to represent the event to other characters who did not see the healing event itself. This is already presented in 1:29-51, where verbal testimony becomes the substitute for both John the Baptist’s experience of seeing the vision and hearing God’s words, and the disciples’ encounter with Jesus himself. In 9:8-34, hearing the man’s testimony is presented as the only way to access the healing event and, thus, believe in Jesus.

However, this testimony can be disregarded, resulting in disbelief. In the case of the Pharisees, unbelieving is manifested in deliberate resistance to the faithful testimony of a sign which reveals Jesus’ identity. Thus, the clause οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν οὖν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι περὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι ἦν τυφλὸς καὶ ἀνέβλεψεν (9:18) highlights their stubborn refusal to acknowledge the veracity of the testimony. Their deliberate unbelief is heightened as they also question the testimony of the parents (cf. ἡμεῖς οἶδαμεν ὅτι οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἁμαρτωλὸς ἐστίν, 9:24). Thus, the characters of the Pharisees are shown to have a pre-meditated decision about Jesus’ identity.<sup>26</sup> As such, the Pharisees’ failure to believe is not caused by not seeing the event or hearing Jesus’ words, but by their own darkness (cf. 9:39). Their deliberate resistance to the testimony of the man and also his parents negatively affirms that hearing testimony is instrumental in itself with respect to believing in Jesus. Unfortunately, the Pharisees disregard the instrument.

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<sup>26</sup> It could be argued hypothetically that the Pharisees would have believed had they seen the healing themselves. However, given that they have been constantly opposing Jesus previously up to the point of deciding on the death penalty (5:18), their disbelief is not a spontaneous resistance to the man and his parents’ testimony.

#### **7.2.4. Summary**

Believing is served both by seeing and hearing. This is particularly demonstrated by the character of the formerly blind man. Seeing Jesus’ miraculous sign, when rightly understood, reveals Jesus’ identity. This contrasts with the Pharisees’ blind assumption that the sign falsifies Jesus’ claim. Hearing is presented as both the substitute for the event of the healing itself and the interpretive framework to the event and the report of the sign. Consequently, there is a positive relationship between seeing, hearing, and believing.

### **7.3. Jesus’ Presence with the Once-Blind Man and the Pharisees (John 9:35-41)**

#### **7.3.1. Seeing**

Seeing is assumed as the narrative describes Jesus meets the man. The narrative depicts the object of the man’s seeing moving from his neighbours, to the Pharisees, and finally to Jesus himself. Significantly, 9:35 is the first time the man sees Jesus (cf. 9:7). Thus, seeing Jesus is depicted as the climax of the man’s growing knowledge of him. It implies that seeing has a positive value in bringing a character to the attitude of believing in Jesus.

As the man sees Jesus, his previous knowledge about Jesus as the prophet who comes from God finds its concrete object. Nevertheless, his informed seeing of Jesus is moved further by Jesus’ self-revelation that he is the eschatological Son of Man (τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, 9:35) whom the man now sees (καὶ ἑώρακας αὐτὸν, 9:37).<sup>27</sup> The

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<sup>27</sup> cf. Bultmann, *John*, 338.

context of John’s Gospel suggests that the title “Son of Man” refers to “all the power, glory, and rule of God that resides in the person of Jesus, the ultimate Judge.”<sup>28</sup> This physical meeting with Jesus enables the man to finally believe and worship Jesus (9:38).<sup>29</sup> Hence, working together with Jesus’ revelation as the Son of Man, seeing Jesus brings the man’s faith to a climax.

However, Jesus highlights the metaphorical aspect of seeing as he says that his mission is to make the blind see (οἱ μὴ βλέποντες βλέπωσιν, 9:39) and those who see blind (οἱ βλέποντες τυφλοὶ γίνονται, 9:39).<sup>30</sup> As the narrative unfolds, this kind of seeing and blindness is linked with belief in Jesus (9:35).<sup>31</sup> The Pharisees seem to understand this polemical sarcasm when they say μὴ καὶ ἡμεῖς τυφλοὶ ἐσμεν (9:40). If that is correct, the Pharisees’ claim that they actually see (βλέπομεν, 9:41) might refer to the fact that they have received the witness from the once-blind man and his parents about his identity and healing. This highlights the role of verbal testimony as the medium to present an inaccessible event. It is to this topic that we now turn.

### 7.3.2. *Hearing*

With regard to the man, the self-revelation of Jesus is the object of his hearing. As Jesus reveals that he is the Son of Man who healed him, the man’s previous understanding of Jesus is made clear. As Larson writes,

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<sup>28</sup> Klink, *John*, 450.

<sup>29</sup> Klink adds that this seeing indicates “the two kinds of vision—physical and spiritual—have now completely come together.” (*John*, 451).

<sup>30</sup> Köstenberger, *John*, 295.

<sup>31</sup> cf. Judith Lieu, “Blindness in the Johannine Tradition,” *NTS* 34 (1988): 84.

The man’s own reflection regarding the sign he had experienced led him to the conclusion that Jesus was a prophet (v. 17) and from God (v. 33), but he is not able to attribute the divine Son of Man title to Jesus on the basis of his experience alone. Jesus has to assist him in his interpretation by *telling* him what he *sees* [...] On the basis of Jesus’ *telling* however, the man’s reaction is without reservation, “Lord, I believe [πιστεύω, κύριε]” (v. 38a).<sup>32</sup>

Bultmann notices the reciprocity between Jesus’ words and the man’s awareness, “But whereas the man’s experience would remain obscure to him without the intervention of the spoken word, so too the word itself is only intelligible because it reveals to man the meaning of his own experience.”<sup>33</sup> The man’s initial obedience to Jesus’ words in the event of his healing and his various confessions of Jesus in the polemics with the Pharisees find their climax in his Christological confession of faith and his worshipping gesture before Jesus. As such, it is shown that hearing Jesus’ words contributes to his believing in Jesus. The seeing of Jesus needs to be interpreted correctly so that he may recognize and believe in Jesus.

For our purpose, the Pharisees’ hearing of the man’s testimony is presented as the medium through which they “see” the past event of the healing (9:41). As has been previously demonstrated, this observation is consistent with the narrative in John 1:35-51. Admittedly, the Pharisees’ resistance to the man’s testimony renders them blind, being unable to believe in Jesus who reveals himself to be the Son of Man.<sup>34</sup> However,

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<sup>32</sup> Larson, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 158. Original emphasis.

<sup>33</sup> Bultmann, *John*. 339.

<sup>34</sup> Larson, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 161; Reimer, “The Man Born Blind,” 437.

the fact remains that hearing is presented here as both being necessary to provide interpretation to seeing and being the only alternative medium to believing once seeing is not possible.

### 7.3.3. *Believing*

In contrast to the Pharisees’ resistance and disbelieving, the man becomes a worshipping believer of Jesus (πιστεύω, κύριε· καὶ προσεκύνησεν αὐτῷ, 9:38). In contrast to Bultmann, who limits the man’s climax of believing to Jesus’ words, the believing of the once-blind man is served by his experience of both seeing and hearing.<sup>35</sup> Jesus’ emphatic question σὺ πιστεύεις εἰς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (9:35) is elaborated by his assertion that the Son of Man is he whom the man actually sees (καὶ ἑώρακας αὐτὸν, 9:37) and hears (καὶ ὁ λαλῶν μετὰ σοῦ ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν, 9:37). Wang makes an observation which summarizes the man’s experience,

The blind man sees the work of Jesus and also sees that this is the work of God. His physical sight becomes the basis of his spiritual insight. John tells us at the beginning of the story that Jesus saw the blind man (9:1) and now, at the end of the story, that the blind man is able to see Jesus (John 9:37). This is the real purpose of the gift of sight: to see Jesus and to believe that he is the Son of Man. Without physically having seen Jesus and his work and having heard Jesus’s words, he would not have gained spiritual insight to see that Jesus was the Son of Man.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> cf. Reynolds, *The Apocalyptic Son of Man*, 179-180. Contra Bultmann, *John*, 339.

<sup>36</sup> Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 171.



The man declares his faith in Jesus (πιστεύω, κύριε, 9:38), the heavenly Son of Man, with a humble gesture of worship (καὶ προσεκύνησεν αὐτῷ, 9:38). Significantly, προσκυνέω has been used in the context of worshipping God (4:20-24).<sup>37</sup> Thus, his act of reverence serves ultimately as “the only precrucifixion reference to worship of Jesus in this Gospel (cf. 20:28).”<sup>38</sup>

#### 7.3.4. Summary

In contrast to the Pharisees, his experience of seeing and hearing Jesus is the culmination of the man’s believing attitude. Hearing that Jesus is the Son of Man reveals clearly Jesus’ identity to the man, while seeing Jesus in person embodies the identity of the Son of Man vividly. As such, the man publicly worships Jesus and believes in him.

#### Conclusion

John 9:1-41 primarily describes the growth of the blind man’s belief in Jesus as it moves through the process of seeing which is interpreted through hearing. His believing starts with receiving the ability to see in general, and moves to seeing Jesus as the object of worship in particular. Within this process, the interpretation of Jesus who

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<sup>37</sup> Reynolds argues, “The depiction of the Son of Man being worshipped has parallels with the worship of the ‘one like a son of man’ in Daniel 7” (*The Apocalyptic Son of Man*, 181)

<sup>38</sup> Köstenberger, *John*, 295; cf. Andrew Lincoln, *Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), 102.

heals him is formed through his previous hearing of the Old Testament. His full faith in Jesus is finally gained through meeting Jesus, where he concretely sees and hears Jesus reveal himself to be the Son of Man and challenge him to believe. As such, both seeing and hearing are depicted as cultivating the attitude of believing in Jesus in the pre-resurrection era.

## 8. The Resurrection: John 20:1-29

*“Blessed are those who have not seen yet have believed”*

*John 20:29*

John 20:1-29 depicts the resurrection of Jesus as the high point of his incarnation (1:14). With regard to the narrative proper, 20:1-29 gives a sense of completion to the initial Christological confessions recorded in 1:29-51. While the confessions in 1:29-51 ascribe various Messianic titles to Jesus, the characters of the disciples climactically recognize Jesus as Lord and God in 20:1-29 (cf. 1:1), who transforms their status to that of children of God (20:17; cf. 1:12).<sup>1</sup> Relevant to our purpose, in both passages the concepts of seeing Jesus, hearing testimony about him, and believing in him are all involved.<sup>2</sup>

However, while both 1:29-51 and 20:1-29 deal with the recognition of Jesus, there is a contrast between Jesus’ promise of a greater seeing in their initial encounter (1:51) and his blessing to those who do not see yet believe in the resurrection appearance (20:29). The contrast hints at a shift of epistemological emphasis of the

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<sup>1</sup> Larson, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 187; Klink, *John*, 823. Carson comments, “The culminating faith that brings the disciples out of the era of the Mosaic covenant and into the era of the saving sovereignty of God mediated through the Son is based on the sheer facticity of the resurrection (20:8, 24-29)—or, better put, such faith trusts Jesus as the resurrected Lord.” (*John*, 632).

<sup>2</sup> Glenn W. Most, *Doubting Thomas* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2007), 28-29.

medium of believing in the pre-resurrection era toward the era after his ascension.<sup>3</sup> This makes examination of 20:1-29 important.

Here 20:1-29 will be divided into four sections based on the encounters between the characters.<sup>4</sup> The sections are as following: the finding of the empty tomb (20:1-10), Jesus and Mary (20:11-18), Jesus and the disciples (20:19-23), and Jesus and Thomas (20:24-29). This division, according to Larson, “emphasizes the questions of Jesus’ presence and absence.”<sup>5</sup> In each section the roles of seeing, hearing, and believing will be elaborated. A conclusion will be provided at the end of the chapter to summarize the findings.

## **8.1. The Finding of the Empty Tomb (20:1-10)**

### **8.1.1. Seeing**

Seeing in this section is distributed to three characters, i.e. Mary, Peter, and the Beloved Disciple, henceforth BD. The character of Mary is the first one who sees (βλέπει) that the stone has been rolled away from Jesus’ tomb (20:1). Afterward, Peter follows and sees (βλέπει, 20:5) the linen and the face cloths of Jesus inside the tomb (20:6-7). The detailed emphasis on the linen cloth and folded face cloth indicates the significance of the physical, observable, and eyewitness report of Jesus’ resurrection (cf. 1:14). Arguably, the expectation of a sensible and visual experience of Jesus’ resurrection in John 20 is heightened. Nevertheless, the seeing activity of both Mary and

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<sup>3</sup> Most, *Doubting Thomas*, 53-54.

<sup>4</sup> Klink, *John*, 823.

<sup>5</sup> Larson, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 188.

Peter does not result in believing at this stage. Peter is silent (cf. 20:10), while Mary is in despair (20:11-15).

The case is different with the BD.<sup>6</sup> The narrator explicitly makes a positive link between his seeing (εἶδεν, 20:8) and believing (ἐπίστευσεν, 20:8) even though potentially the BD sees the same wrapping cloth and veil which Peter also sees (20:5; cf. 11:44).<sup>7</sup> Importantly for our purpose, 20:9 states that the reason why the BD sees and believes is *because* he does not yet understand the Writing (τὴν γραφήν), which the explanatory clause οὐδέπω γὰρ ᾔδεισαν τὴν γραφήν shows.<sup>8</sup> In fact, 20:8-9 seems to imply that the BD’s seeing of the empty tomb is contingent and provisional, not to the seeing of the risen Jesus, but to the testimony of the Writing.<sup>9</sup> In other words, “because John did not yet understand the scripture, it was only because he saw that he believed this.”<sup>10</sup>

The significance of the Writing lies in its elaboration regarding the necessity of Jesus’ resurrection (δεῖ αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῆναι, 20:9). The complex portrayal of the BD’s believing transitions the instrumental weight of both seeing and hearing Jesus

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<sup>6</sup> Contra Bultmann, *John*, 684.

<sup>7</sup> It has been argued that the location of the wrapping linen and the folded face cloth of Jesus in the tomb are set in contrast with Lazarus’ resurrection, where others needed to unwrap his risen body; cf. Brendan Byrne, “The Faith of the Beloved Disciple and the Community in John 20,” *JSNT* 23 (1985): 87-88.

<sup>8</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 685; Most, *Doubting Thomas*, 31-32; cf. William Bonney, *Caused to Believe: The Doubting Thomas Story at the Climax of John’s Christological Narrative* (BIS 62. Leiden: Brill Academic, 2002), 149-150.

<sup>9</sup> Francis Moloney, “The Gospel of John as Scripture,” *CBQ* 67.3 (2007): 465; Byrne, “The Faith of the Beloved Disciple,” 89-90.

<sup>10</sup> Most, *Doubting Thomas*, 32.

(cf. 1:29-51; 9:1-41) to primarily hearing/reading. In this respect, the BD who believes without seeing Jesus could potentially become a model to the future believers in the era beyond Jesus’ ascension (20:29).<sup>11</sup>

Together with ταῦτα δὲ γέγραπται (20:31), τὴν γραφὴν in 20:9 functions as the *inclusio* or the frame of the growing significance of hearing with regard to believing in Jesus.<sup>12</sup> The *inclusio* of the written testimony at the beginning and the end of John 20 is crucial, as it drives belief in Jesus closer to hearing than seeing. According to Byrne, “various details in the account and the structure of the chapter as a whole suggest that the faith of the Beloved Disciple is to be seen as both precursive and typical of that of later generations of believers.”<sup>13</sup> If the link between the BD and the “later generation” is correct, this is a strong argument for understanding 20:9 as the transition of hearing over seeing in the era of Jesus’ resurrection. The following discussion will elaborate what “the Writing” is likely to be. Nevertheless, 20:1-10 should suffice to make the reader initially reconsider the role of seeing.

### 8.1.2. Hearing

Hearing can be found conceptually in the verbal report of Mary regarding the empty tomb. In 20:13, Mary interprets the cause of Jesus’ empty tomb (ἦραν τὸν κύριον ἐκ τοῦ μνημείου) and draws the implication (καὶ οὐκ οἶδαμεν ποῦ ἔθηκαν αὐτόν). In light of the whole of John 20, Mary’s interpretation is inaccurate, as she seems to

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<sup>11</sup> PHEME PERKINS, “‘I Have Seen The Lord’ (John 20:18): Women Witnesses to the Resurrection,”

*Interpretation* 46 (1992): 39; MOLONEY, “The Gospel of John as Scripture,” 465; BYRNE, “The Faith of the Beloved Disciple,” 90-91.

<sup>12</sup> MOLONEY, “The Gospel of John as Scripture,” 466-467; BYRNE, “The Faith of the Beloved Disciple,” 90.

<sup>13</sup> BYRNE, “The Faith of the Beloved Disciple,” 83.

understand the empty tomb based on the contemporary practice of tomb raiding.<sup>14</sup>

Contrary to Mary’s culturally-shaped interpretation, the authoritative interpretation of the Writings (τὴν γραφὴν, 20:9) asserts Jesus’ resurrection as the necessary explanation of his empty tomb (δεῖ αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῆναι, 20:9).

The phrase τὴν γραφὴν could refer to certain passages of the Old Testament, as parts of the Johannine narrative suggest (cf. 5:39).<sup>15</sup> However, τὴν γραφὴν may also point to the finished narrative of John’s Gospel (cf. γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τούτῳ, 20:30; ταῦτα δὲ γέγραπται, 20:31).<sup>16</sup> Throughout its narrative, the description of John’s Gospel as the fulfillment of the Old Testament’s prophecies assumes its scriptural character (17:12; 18:9).<sup>17</sup> Moloney points out the continuity between the Old Testament and John’s Gospel,

For the religion of Israel, Scripture (ἡ γραφή) was the definitive revelation of the word (ὁ λόγος) of God. For the Gospel of John, as for the religion of Israel, ὁ λόγος existed before all time (vv. 1-2). But for the Gospel, ὁ λόγος became flesh, set up his tent among us, and has made God known in a way that does

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<sup>14</sup> To the reader, however, the rolled away stone of Jesus’ tomb brings the miraculous sign in John 11 to memory. In John 11, the rolled stone covering Lazarus’ tomb anticipates the subsequent miracle of Lazarus’ resurrection. Hence, the report that the covering stone is taken away from Jesus’ tomb could be pointing to Jesus’ resurrection, just as the news of Lazarus’ resurrection spread to the masses (11:45ff).

<sup>15</sup> D. Moody Smith, “When Did The Gospels Become Scripture?,” *JBL* 119.1 (2000): 4; cf. Köstenberger, *John*, 564; Carson, *John*, 639.

<sup>16</sup> Smith, “The Gospels Become Scripture?,” 19-20.

<sup>17</sup> Moloney, “The Gospel of John as Scripture,” 460.

not negate the authority and importance of God's gift of the law through Moses, but perfects it in and through the gift of Jesus Christ (vv. 14-18).<sup>18</sup>

Thus, John's Gospel elaborates the Old Testament's concept of ὁ λόγος to the fullest in the person of Jesus. In that regard, a divine character is applied to the Johannine narrative as the continuity between the Old Testament and John's Gospel is emphasized. This continuity is further affirmed by 2:17 and 2:22, for instance, which tie the Old Testament Scripture and Jesus' words together. Particularly in 2:22, τῇ γραφῇ καὶ τῷ λόγῳ is a juxtaposition which suggests that both τῇ γραφῇ and τῷ λόγῳ are referring to the same category.<sup>19</sup> In other words, “The word of Jesus, who is the Word of God become flesh (1:1-2, 14), is Scripture, ‘remembered’ by the disciples after Jesus has been raised from the dead (2:22).”<sup>20</sup> This Scriptural character of John's Gospel is finally made evident by the sealing of the apostolic authority at the end of the Gospel (21:24; cf. 1:14). As Smith says,

The Gospel of John, however, claims apostolic authorship in its final colophon (21:24), in which it is attributed to the disciple whom Jesus loved. He has borne witness to these things and caused them to be written, and “we” (his circle of disciples?) know that his witness is true. Such a claim of apostolic origin is unique in the Gospels and stands in contrast with John's earlier colophon (20:30-31), which presents the purpose of the Gospel but not its authorization. Apostolic origin is mentioned at just the point that other books, which the world could not hold, come into view (21:25). *If these books were*

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<sup>18</sup> Moloney, “The Gospel of John as Scripture,” 460.

<sup>19</sup> Moloney, “The Gospel of John as Scripture,” 464.

<sup>20</sup> Moloney, “The Gospel of John as Scripture,” 464.



*other Gospels, one would need to know which ones to believe and on what basis.*<sup>21</sup>

In other words, 21:24 demonstrates the apostolic authority of John’s Gospel which “other books” do not provide. If truly John’s Gospel is “the fulfillment of Scripture, the consummate expression of the biblical narrative,” it functions as Christian Scripture, particularly for the Johannine community.<sup>22</sup>

Choosing one reference of τὴν γραφὴν over the other might be a false dichotomy. In light of John’s Gospel’s favor for ambiguity, the Johannine narrative probably demonstrates itself to be both the part and the peak of the categorical γραφὴν which has already included the Old Testament. Hence, as Moloney highlights, “The enigma of 20:9 is resolved if we recognize that, for its author, the Johannine narrative is itself ‘Scripture,’ but the characters *in the story* are not able to be *readers of the story*.”<sup>23</sup> Arguably, it is against this assertion that the clause καὶ εἶδεν καὶ ἐπίστευσεν (20:8) should be understood. There is, thus, a growing emphasis on the significance of hearing the authoritative Scriptural interpretation as it leads to believing, while seeing is not entirely excluded.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Smith, “The Gospels Become Scripture?,” 19-20, n. 41. Emphasis added.

<sup>22</sup> Moloney, “The Gospel of John as Scripture,” 465.

<sup>23</sup> Moloney, “The Gospel of John as Scripture,” 466. Original emphasis.

<sup>24</sup> Since the basis of the faith of the Beloved Disciple is not τὴν γραφὴν, the previous miraculous resurrection (John 11) might shed a light. Whilst in the case of Lazarus help from other people to unwrap his body is needed, there is no indication that Jesus’ body undergoes the same process of unwrapping here. In fact, the subsequent scene where Jesus can enter a locked room is hinting that, perhaps, Jesus somehow just exits through the wrapping linen.

### 8.1.3. *Believing*

The ignorance of Mary and Peter to some degree resonates with the ignorance of John the Baptist (1:31, 33) as these characters are at the dawn of a new, yet different, redemptive era. John the Baptist is at the dawn of Jesus’ pre-resurrection ministry, while Mary, Peter, and the BD are at the beginning of the resurrection era. Similar to John the Baptist’s experience, divine intervention is needed to lead the characters to believing in Jesus. In this respect, the character of the BD is emphasized as being exemplary due to his immediate believing (ἐπίστευσεν, 20:8) and his role as the ideal witness (19:35; 21:24). His perceptiveness will receive stress again in 21:7, as the BD is the one who recognizes Jesus as the Lord (ὁ κύριός ἐστιν) even after they all have believed that Jesus has risen.

For our purpose, the believing happens after the BD sees what lies inside the empty tomb (καὶ εἶδεν καὶ ἐπίστευσεν). However, the object of the BD’s seeing is not the risen Jesus himself. As Most puts it,

There can be little doubt about just what it was that John believed when he saw. For although the verb “he believed” (ἐπίστευσεν, 20:8) is used here in a grammatically ambiguous way without any explicit direct object, nonetheless the verb “to believe” (πιστεύειν) is a theologically loaded term in the Gospels and usually refers not to ordinary situations of belief concerning empirical states of affairs, but rather to religious faith in Jesus and, more specifically, to faith that he has risen from the dead. In a text as concerned as the Gospel of John is with belief in Jesus, we should therefore have little difficulty in understanding him to mean here that the disciple John believed what the author

John would always have us believe to be the truth, namely that Jesus was risen.<sup>25</sup>

Hence, in contrast to Mary and Peter, the BD points to a new era where believing can be achieved without necessarily seeing the risen Jesus himself. Indeed, 20:9 states that it is the lack of access to understanding of the Writing which explains why the seeing serves provisionally in the era of the resurrection to drive the Beloved Disciple to believing. Moloney writes,

The two disciples Peter and the Beloved Disciple, however, are characters in the story. They are not yet in a situation where they read the Scripture and find there that Jesus must rise from the dead (see 2:22). They belong to that situation in time paralleled by the disciples in 2:17 who “remember” the Scriptures but do not understand the Scriptures and the word of Jesus *until he is raised from the dead* (2:22).<sup>26</sup>

This observation contrasts with Bultmann’s generalized assertion that seeing is provisional, not to the different characteristic of the resurrection era, but to “the common attitude of men, who cannot believe without seeing miracles.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Most, *Doubting Thomas*, 32. Cf. Larson, however, writes that “the object of recognition in the present scene is ... not Jesus’ personal identity but that the fact that the resurrection, and not grave robbery, has occurred” (*Recognizing the Stranger*, 195).

<sup>26</sup> Moloney, “The Gospel of John as Scripture,” 465. Emphasis added.

<sup>27</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 696.

The believing that comes from seeing the empty tomb will be supported by a more vivid seeing of Jesus’ resurrection, since the full understanding of the Writing is not yet accessible. Arguably, the transition from believing without seeing the risen Jesus (the BD), to believing after seeing Jesus (Mary, the fellow disciples, and Thomas), to finally believing without seeing the risen Jesus again (the future believers) relativizes the importance of seeing.<sup>28</sup> As Wang says,

Unlike the disciples who did not yet understand the scripture when they saw the empty tomb (John 20:9), Christian readers do have scriptural knowledge that Jesus is about to die and will be resurrected when they read the Gospel.

They are more ready to believe in Jesus even though they have not seen Jesus physically.<sup>29</sup>

#### **8.1.4. Summary**

Seeing only Jesus’ empty tomb leaves the characters of Mary in grief and, presumably, Peter in silence. However, the BD is unique since he believes while not seeing Jesus. His believing is elicited through seeing the Jesus’ tomb and the things inside. This is subsequently explained as being in the situation where the Writing is not yet understood. It thus seems that seeing as the instrument of believing is relativized. The weight of the instrument of believing has shifted to hearing, which addresses the testimony of the Writing.

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<sup>28</sup> Byrne, “The Faith of the Beloved Disciple,” 92.

<sup>29</sup> Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 206.

## 8.2. Jesus and Mary (20:11-18)

### 8.2.1. Seeing

Mary is the character who stays in the tomb after Peter and the BD leave. Mary sees two angels (καὶ θεωρεῖ δύο ἀγγέλους, 20:12) and even Jesus himself (καὶ θεωρεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν, 20:14). The text highlights the details of Mary’s observation which, in effect, accentuates the physicality of the situation and the importance of sensible perception on those things.

However, seeing the angels does not stop Mary from thinking that Jesus’ body has been taken by thieves.<sup>30</sup> Even seeing Jesus himself does not make Mary realize that Jesus has risen. On the contrary, she thinks that the risen Jesus is a mere gardener, which affirms the physicality of Jesus’ appearance.<sup>31</sup>

While Mary’s misunderstanding of Jesus as a gardener could suggest that at this stage there might be no supernatural ambience in Jesus’ epiphany to Mary, from a larger point of view, there is a development from seeing the empty tomb to now seeing Jesus. Due to her own interpretive preoccupation with Jesus’ body being stolen, it is not until Jesus calls her by name that Mary realizes that Jesus is alive. Since the calling of a personal name implies a personal knowledge of that individual, it brings Mary to realize that it is the personal calling of the good Shepherd to his sheep (10:3).<sup>32</sup>

Hence, similar to the previous experience of seeing the empty tomb, seeing alone is depicted as ineffective to produce faith in Mary. It needs to be accompanied by hearing. As such, both seeing and hearing are important to Mary’s faith. Mary’s final

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<sup>30</sup> Bonney, *Caused to Believe*, 151.

<sup>31</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 688.

<sup>32</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 686.

confession *έώρακα τόν κύριον* (20:18) highlights the importance of seeing, as it is shown to be the fruit of hearing the right interpretation. It is seeing which is informed accurately by hearing Jesus’ words that leads Mary to believing.

### 8.2.2 *Hearing*

Hearing is implied by Mary’s conversation with the angels about the supposedly missing body of Jesus. The angels’ question *γύναι, τί κλαίεις* (20:13) is a mild rebuke. However, Mary’s reply that Jesus’ body has been stolen betrays the fact that she still thinks her interpretation of the empty tomb is accurate.

Hearing Jesus’ words is presented as the instrument which leads Mary to believe the risen Jesus whom she sees before her. After conversing with the angels, Mary has the opportunity to converse with Jesus. Unfortunately, Jesus’ rebuke *τί κλαίεις; τίνα ζητεῖς* (20:15) still does not move Mary to faith. Hearing her name (*Μαριάμ*) called by the supposed gardener, Mary realizes that it is Jesus who speaks to her (20:16).<sup>33</sup> Most describes the delicacy of the moment,

So intimate is the bond of connection which this one word immediately establishes between the two of them—by his acknowledgment that he knows who she is, by his indication to her thereby that she knows who he is, by his definition of her identity by means of her name which disperses at once the mists of her confusion, perhaps too (who knows?) by a particularly gentle tone of voice—that she must turn around once more (20:16).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Larson, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 201-202.

<sup>34</sup> Most, *Doubting Thomas*, 38.

Hearing Jesus’ words, thus, interprets the vision of the risen Jesus in such a way that leads Mary to have faith in her risen Rabbi.<sup>35</sup>

Hearing also happens when Jesus rebukes Mary that she should not touch him (μου ἄπτου, 20:17) due to his imminent ascension. Larson comments, “Jesus’ resurrection does not merely reestablish the tangible presence that was before, but points to a new mode of being together.”<sup>36</sup> In light of 20:30-31, this “new mode of being together” cannot be separated from the reading and hearing of the Gospel’s narrative. The rebuke itself is finally followed by Jesus’ command to Mary to testify. Thus, there is a significant development in Mary’s character from ignorance to becoming the first witness of Jesus’ resurrection. Intriguingly, not even the BD is pictured as such. Thus, the complexity of Mary’s understanding of the resurrection is stressed.

True to our purpose, the narrative describes Mary’s verbal testimony (ἑώρακα τὸν κύριον (20:18) as the medium by which her experience of seeing Jesus alive is conveyed to the disciples who do not see Jesus.<sup>37</sup> As such, hearing is depicted in an anticipatory fashion as the medium of believing once seeing is no longer plausible.

### 8.2.3. *Believing*

Both seeing and hearing are depicted as instrumental in Mary’s testimony ἑώρακα τὸν κύριον (20:18). Without seeing the risen Jesus, she probably would still

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<sup>35</sup> Brown, *John XIII-XXI*, 1009. The use of ραββουνι here may actually function as the substitute of Jesus’ proper name, cf. Larson, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 203. Contra Bultmann, *John*, 686-687.

<sup>36</sup> Larson, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 204.

<sup>37</sup> Larson, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 205.

think that Jesus’ body was missing. However, without hearing the accurate and authoritative interpretation of Jesus himself, Mary would never grasp, thus believe, the reality that Jesus has already risen. Both seeing and hearing have their unique role in Mary’s case.

It should be noted, nonetheless, that the object of the seeing is now clearly Jesus himself instead of the empty tomb. Thus, there is a growth regarding the object of seeing. However, the visual growth is tempered by the need of hearing so that the sight can be properly understood.

#### **8.2.4. Summary**

Both seeing and hearing work together to lead Mary to believe that Jesus is risen. However, it is Jesus’ call of Mary’s name which serves as the turning point of Mary’s grief to joy. Thus, the role of seeing is again relativized as an instrument of believing.

### **8.3. Jesus and the Disciples (20:19-23)**

#### **8.3.1. Seeing**

Seeing is now presented as the turning point for the disciples which leads them to believe in Jesus’ resurrection. The disciples have previously heard Mary’s testimony regarding Jesus’ resurrection (20:18). However, they do not demonstrate any joy and courage to testify about it. Having heard Mary’s testimony, the disciples lock themselves in a room due to their fear of the Jews (διὰ τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων, 20:19; cf. 9:22). Thus, without seeing Jesus, hearing alone is depicted as being not adequate in leading them to believe in his resurrection.



The setting of the locked room emphasizes the miraculous presence of the risen Jesus before them. The vividness of the appearance is highlighted as Jesus shows (ἔδειξεν) to the disciples his hands and side (20:20). Seeing Jesus makes the disciples glad (ἐχάρησαν, 20:20), while not seeing him results in fear (τὸν φόβον, 20:19).

Admittedly, this is a strong case for seeing as the preferred medium of believing. Nevertheless, it needs to be considered that Jesus’ physical presence is now more elusive, in contrast to 1:35-51.<sup>38</sup> While in 1:35-51 those who receive the testimony about Jesus can initiate seeing Jesus, the situation is different in John 20. It is Jesus who comes to them in his own time. The disciples seem to realize this by being static in the locked room. This suggests that they cannot rely on seeing in the same way and degree they used to. Thus, the elusiveness of seeing in 20:19-23 is growing, while the role of hearing is stable.

### 8.3.2. *Hearing*

Hearing the testimony of Jesus’ resurrection prepares the disciples to believe in Jesus. Previously Mary needed to hear Jesus’ words for her to understand whom she saw. Here the disciples’ hearing of the testimony needs to be affirmed by their following experience of seeing Jesus. Hence, seeing and hearing seem to support each other to some degree, even in the resurrection era.

Nevertheless, as O’Day has noticed, “The Gospel narrative itself (20:19-23) shows that Jesus’ words about his return (16:16), the gift of peace (14:27), the transformation of sorrow into joy (16:22), even the gift of the Spirit (16:27) are

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<sup>38</sup> Larson, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 190-191.

trustworthy.”<sup>39</sup> Hence, 20:19-23 is based on Jesus’ words during the Farewell Discourse. This is certainly an encouragement to trust Jesus’ words and the testimony about him after his absence.

The disciples subsequently hear Jesus’ command for mission (20:21) and receive the Spirit he breathes (20:22; cf. 16:7-15). This observation could explain why Thomas’ resistance against the disciples’ testimony is rebuked by Jesus, albeit gently (20:29).<sup>40</sup> Similar to Mary, the development from fearful disciples to joyful witnesses of Jesus’ resurrection suggests the complexity in their characters.

In general, the context of John 20, with the *inclusio* of 20:9 and 20:30-31, seems to curb the role of seeing in moderation.<sup>41</sup> While in 20:19-23 the role of seeing is still retained, the physical presence of Jesus has become elusive. Seeing now begins to lose its grip on its main object. In fact, the disciples’ seeing of Jesus’ appearance confirms what the BD has already believed in the tomb, even without seeing Jesus. Further, in light of the symbolic giving of the Spirit (20:22) the emphasis of 20:19-23 falls more on hearing as the medium of believing. This transition from seeing to hearing will be fully complete by the time the Gospel’s narrative is written (20:30-31).

### 8.3.3. *Believing*

While the previous section stresses Mary’s hearing of Jesus’ words, the emphasis of 20:19-23 is more on seeing the risen Jesus, which confirms Mary’s

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<sup>39</sup> O’Day, “I Have Overcome the World,” 161.

<sup>40</sup> Larson, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 208.

<sup>41</sup> Byrne, “The Faith of the Beloved Disciple,” 92.

testimony (ιδόντες τὸν κύριον, 20:20). The narrative goes further by describing the visual objects in detail, i.e. Jesus’ hands and side (ἔδειξεν τὰς χεῖρας καὶ τὴν πλευρὰν αὐτοῖς). Hence, the disciples are convinced that it is the same Jesus who has died on the cross and is now alive.<sup>42</sup> The believing of the disciples is demonstrated by the change of τὸν φόβον τῶν Ἰουδαίων (20:19) to ἐχάρησαν οὖν οἱ μαθηταὶ ἰδόντες τὸν κύριον (20:20).

Nevertheless, in light of 20:9 and 20:29-31 it is intriguing that the narrative subtly relativizes the role of seeing the risen Jesus.<sup>43</sup> As O’Brien writes, the discussion on John 20 should focus “not merely to the difficulty of believing that the resurrection occurred but to the even greater difficulty of believing someone else’s testimony that the resurrection occur.”<sup>44</sup> Indeed, the narrative seems to prepare the reader to anticipate a different way of believing once the understanding of the Writing is made clear and available through the Johannine narrative (20:30-31). This will become clearer in 20:29, as Jesus pushes this point further by giving his blessing to those who do not see yet believe through the Writing.

#### 8.3.4. Summary

Hearing Mary’s testimony that she has seen the risen Jesus does not relieve the disciples from their fear. It takes seeing Jesus himself in their midst to make the disciples turn to joy. However, their seeing confirms the attitude of the BD in Jesus’

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<sup>42</sup> Larson, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 210.

<sup>43</sup> Byrne, “The Faith of the Beloved Disciple,” 92.

<sup>44</sup> O’Brien, “Written That You May Believe,” 284.

empty tomb and Jesus’ Farewell Discourse. It is also noteworthy that the physical presence of Jesus is now becoming more elusive. Thus, while seeing is still presented as having a role in believing, its significance is slowly diminishing.

#### **8.4. Jesus and Thomas (20:24-29)**

##### **8.4.1. *Seeing***

The testimony of the disciples represents their communal experience of having seen the Lord (ἐωράκαμεν τὸν κύριον, 20:25). Nevertheless, their words are met with Thomas’ resistance. Thomas asserts that he needs, not only to see, but also to touch Jesus and puts his finger into his side in order to believe (20:25). Most draws an interesting parallel between Mary and Thomas,

[The] figure of grief (the emotional side of Mary’s false belief that Jesus is dead), which is then transmuted into joy, is answered by the paradigm of disbelief (the cognitive side of Thomas’s false belief that Jesus is dead), which is then transformed into belief; both characters are obsessed by the body of Jesus and seem to have little understanding of, or even interest in, his spiritual significance.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Most, *Doubting Thomas*, 39.

Seeing Jesus transforms Thomas’ resistance into acceptance of Jesus’ resurrection, and, thus, the testimony of the disciples. Indeed, Jesus’ invitation for Thomas to touch his body affirms the physicality of his incarnation.<sup>46</sup>

Seeing as the instrument of Thomas’ believing is confirmed by Jesus’ words, *ἐώρακάς με πεπίστευκας* (20:29). To Wang, Thomas’ demand is not entirely negative because, “Thomas is waiting for a sign that only Jesus can provide.”<sup>47</sup> As Wang subsequently elaborates,

It is understandable for Thomas to ask for tangible and solid evidence before he believes something contrary to knowledge and experience. Moreover, the disciples believe in Jesus’ resurrection not because of Mary’s account but because they, too, see the risen Jesus. In John, most of these characters who believe in Jesus have a physical encounter with Jesus. Thus, it is unfair [...] to see Thomas as being portrayed negatively because he should have believed the words of the disciples rather than demanding further proof.<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, Thomas’ high Christological confession happens only after he sees Jesus. Nevertheless, this section does not end with the glorification of seeing. Instead, this apparent significance of seeing will be tempered by Jesus’ emphatic response *καὶ μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος ἀλλὰ πιστός* (20:27) which suggests that hearing the testimony of the

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<sup>46</sup> Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 193; Larson, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 209; Bultmann, *John*, 688.

<sup>47</sup> Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 196.

<sup>48</sup> Wang, *Sense Perception and Testimony*, 194.

disciples can provide a basis for confidence to Thomas as the following discussion would elaborate.<sup>49</sup>

Responding to Wang’s statement above, contrary to Thomas’ reaction, the disciples demonstrate a receptive attitude of waiting for Jesus without demanding any further evidence after they hear Mary’s testimony. In the case of Thomas, his strong demand (ἐὰν μὴ, 20:25) to see and to touch is unprecedented in the previous signs narratives. Wang’s assertion that Jesus’ resurrection is “contrary to knowledge and experience” is inaccurate, as there is an analogous event in the resurrection of Lazarus which Thomas knows. This displays that Thomas’ demand for a physical experiment on Jesus’ body, while understandable, is rather excessive. Furthermore, the BD has already demonstrated that it is possible to believe in the resurrection without necessarily seeing Jesus’ risen body (20:8).<sup>50</sup> It should also be recognized that the resurrection of Jesus which transforms his bodily existence adds more complexity to seeing. In the words of Larson,

When Mary met Jesus, she brought her testimony to the disciples, but she did not take them back to Jesus, as did Andrew, Philip, and the Samaritan woman in chs. 1 and 4. Jesus appeared to the disciples, but they could not bring Thomas to the risen One. And when the Lord finally appears to Thomas, the recognizer is criticized precisely because he is unable to accept these new conditions of recognition.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Larson, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 210.

<sup>50</sup> Byrne, “The Faith of the Beloved Disciple,” 89-90.

<sup>51</sup> Larson, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 211.

Thus, Byrne is right when he says of Thomas’ faith, “But where such faith is negatively rated ...the problem is not so much that a sign initiates the process of faith as that *the preoccupation with the sign* proceeds from purely human categories and needs in a way that obscures rather than serves the divine revelation in Jesus.”<sup>52</sup>

#### 8.4.2. *Hearing*

The imperfect ἔλεγον in 20:25 hints that the other disciples testify to Thomas continuously about their seeing the risen Lord. Hearing is here described to be the medium by which Thomas can access their experience of seeing Jesus. Ironically, hearing of the testimony is ineffective in convincing Thomas, as he resists the testimony of the disciples (cf. 20:19-23).

Nevertheless, Jesus’ emphatic καὶ μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος ἀλλὰ πιστός (20:27) subtly suggests that Thomas could have relied on the disciples’ communal testimony and become more receptive than he is in terms of believing their message of resurrection. Bonney writes, “When Thomas identifies the risen Jesus as his Lord and his God, he does so in accordance with the preparation he received through the words Jesus spoke [...] and the works Jesus performed [...]”<sup>53</sup>

Thomas himself was present when Jesus made Lazarus alive (John 11:16). Moreover, it was Thomas who insisted that they should follow Jesus to Bethany. Hence, together with the other disciples, Thomas becomes the eye-witness of the miraculous sign of the resurrection of Lazarus and the ear-witness of Jesus’ claim that he is the

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<sup>52</sup> Byrne, “The Faith of the Beloved Disciple,” 89. Emphasis added.

<sup>53</sup> Bonney, *Caused to Believe*, 166.

Resurrection and the Life (11:25) who makes the eschatological life become a present reality. It is now those disciples who keep testifying to him that Jesus is risen. It is also possible that Thomas was one of the disciples who heard the testimony of Mary (Ἔρχεται Μαριὰμ ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ ἀγγέλλουσα τοῖς μαθηταῖς, 20:18) since there is no clear suggestion that he was absent in that meeting (cf. Θωμᾶς [...] οὐκ ἦν μετ’ αὐτῶν, 20:24).

In light of Jesus’ previous statement δύο ἀνθρώπων ἡ μαρτυρία ἀληθὴς ἐστὶν (8:17), this is indeed a strong and true testimony since it comes from more than two people. This communal testimony is the feature which differentiates 20:1-29 from John 1:29-51. While 1:29-51 only records individual testimony to another individual, 20:1-29 has the body of the disciples, who follow Jesus from the beginning to the resurrection, testify the same thing at the same time. Thus, Jesus’ καὶ μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος ἀλλὰ πιστός seems to indicate a shift of gravity toward hearing testimony.

Confining the disciples’ experience of seeing to a certain period, Jesus says μακάριοι οἱ μὴ ἰδόντες καὶ πιστεύσαντες (20:29). In light of the context, μακάριοι οἱ μὴ ἰδόντες is contrasted with Thomas’ experience of seeing the risen Jesus (cf. ἐώρακάς με πεπίστευκας). The nominative οἱ μὴ ἰδόντες, thus, conversely refers to those who receptively listen to the testimony of the disciples. The verbal testimony mediates the visual experience of Jesus to those who do not have access to see the risen Lord. This is not unprecedented, as 1:29-51 has already demonstrated that verbal testimony is the natural alternative medium once seeing is no longer plausible.



### 8.4.3. *Believing*

In this section, believing is mainly described as the result of informed seeing. It is “informed” because Thomas has previously heard the communal testimony regarding Jesus’ resurrection. Thus, the testimony prepares him to believe once Jesus appears to him with his risen body. The belief, which comes from seeing, is affirmed by Jesus’ command καὶ μὴ γίνου ἄπιστος ἀλλὰ πιστός after his appearance to Thomas (20:27).<sup>54</sup> The present imperative μὴ γίνου urges the termination of a progressing action.<sup>55</sup>

In light of the whole Gospel, Thomas’ confession ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου is the Christological climax of the Gospel.<sup>56</sup> The Prologue has revealed to the reader that Jesus is the Word (1:1), God (1:1, 18), and the Son (1:14), who becomes flesh (1:14). Jesus has demonstrated through his actions and words that he is the great I Am of the Old Testament. “Thomas has now seen Jesus in the way Jesus wills to be seen and ought to be seen,” praises Bultmann.<sup>57</sup> Thomas’ confession after seeing Jesus is the first occasion where a human character echoes the all-knowing view of the Prologue.<sup>58</sup> The radical change from being resistant to full surrender to Jesus as his Lord and God suggests the complexity of Thomas’ characterization.

Nevertheless, there is a critical view provided by the narrator, as Jesus’ further blessing addresses the future believer who, living beyond the era of his resurrection appearances, can no longer see Jesus. As Minear puts it,

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<sup>54</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 694.

<sup>55</sup> Bonney, *Caused to Believe*, 167.

<sup>56</sup> Brown, *John XIII-XXI*, 1047; Bonney, *Caused to Believe*, 163.

<sup>57</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 695.

<sup>58</sup> Bultmann, *John*, 695.

The central function of chapter 20 was not so much to demonstrate the actuality of the resurrection as to indicate the range of reactions on the part of the disciples to what they had seen, and thus to underscore the blessedness of those who would later come to faith apart from seeing. For that second group John’s written report now replaces the oral testimony of the original group of witnesses.<sup>59</sup>

The future instrument of their believing in the era after Jesus’ ascension, excluding physical seeing, is the verbal testimonies of the eye- and ear-witnesses of Jesus’ ministry.<sup>60</sup> This is confirmed by the purpose statement (20:30-31), which suggests that they will believe through the written verbal testimony in the Gospel’s narrative. To them, Jesus guarantees that their believing is not inferior to Thomas’ believing.<sup>61</sup> In the words of Most,

It is a central part of the rhetorical structure of these Gospels to play off both strands of this paradox against each other: on the one hand to privilege above all the faith of those who saw Jesus’ wonders and believed (for otherwise it would have been far more difficult to found the new religion in the first place); and on the other to privilege above all the faith of those who believed in Jesus without ever having seen him (for otherwise it would have been impossible for the new religion to survive beyond its origin). So it will not surprise us to find that the Gospel of John seems to have been intended to conclude climactically

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<sup>59</sup> Paul Minear, “The Original Function of John 21,” *JBL* 102.1 (1985): 90.

<sup>60</sup> Larson, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 211.

<sup>61</sup> Bonney, *Caused to Believe*, 170; Larson, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 211.

with the following passage, whose authenticity has never been questioned:

“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.”

(20:30–31)<sup>62</sup>

Concluding the resurrection narrative, Jesus’ assertion in 20:29 also seems to show a similar movement from seeing his resurrection to hearing the testimony of the written Book (cf. 20:8-9, 30-31). In comparison to the role of seeing in pre-resurrection (1:29-51; 9:1-41), 20:1-29 is unique. While the role of seeing in 20:1-29 is still retained (13 times), the contribution of hearing to believing is actually given a greater significance.<sup>63</sup>

Overall, 20:1-29 subtly ushers in the new era of Jesus’ post-ascension, where hearing testimony becomes the normative medium by which believing in Jesus is achieved.<sup>64</sup> In John 20, thus, “the whole movement of the narrative of this chapter has been directed toward substituting Jesus’ body, which can be touched and seen, with a verbal message, which can only be heard.”<sup>65</sup> The verbal testimony, now in the written form, becomes the medium through which the experience of seeing is communicated in order to lead the future disciples to believe in Jesus. As such, this alludes to the

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<sup>62</sup> Most, *Doubting Thomas*, 61.

<sup>63</sup> cf. 20:1, 3-10, 11-17, 19-23, 25, 26-28, 29.

<sup>64</sup> Granted, it may be argued that 20:9 is applied only to the characters of the Beloved Disciple and, perhaps, Peter. However, since the Beloved Disciple has been displayed as the ideal disciple in the narrative, it is to be expected that οὐδέπω γὰρ ἤδειςαν τὴν γραφὴν is also relevant to other characters’ journeys of believing in John 20; cf. Byrne, “The Faith of the Beloved Disciple,” 90-91.

<sup>65</sup> Most, *Doubting Thomas*, 60.

experience of the BD himself. The Writing makes future believers blessed in the eyes of Jesus (20:9).

#### **8.4.4. Summary**

While seeing Jesus contributes to Thomas’ belief, Jesus’ rebuke highlights the value of the disciples’ testimony. Significantly, Jesus juxtaposes the character of Thomas with the future generation who will have the same quality of believing although without seeing. Jesus’ blessing confirms the experience of believing in 20:8-9. Thus, the shift from seeing and hearing to primarily hearing happens in the resurrection era.

#### **Conclusion**

John 20 brackets the growing experience of seeing the risen Jesus with two important things. First, believing, as the BD and the future believers both do not see, yet believe. Second, the *inclusio* of γραφή (20:9, 30-31) which shifts the gravity of the medium of believing to hearing and understanding the Scripture instead of seeing.

Relevant to our purpose, this shift happens in the resurrection era and finds its confirmation in Jesus’ blessing to the future generation that will believe without seeing. Thus, 20:1-29 serves as a transition from the pre-resurrection era, which emphasizes both seeing and hearing, to the era after Jesus’ ascension, which renders seeing impossible, thus, granting hearing its prominence.

## 9. The Ascension and Beyond: John 19:35-37 and 20:30-31

*“But these are written so that you may believe”*

*John 20:31*

After Jesus’ ascension, the following generations could no longer physically engage with him in order to believe. In this context, John’s Gospel was written to respond to that situation. The narrative is written to mediate the encounter with Jesus so that future generations may believe in him.

The era of Jesus’ ascension receives particular emphasis in the narrator’s explanatory comments. In them, the narrator deliberately pauses the narrative flow and starts speaking directly to the reader.<sup>1</sup> This moment of pausing and addressing the reader creates an existential awareness for the reader that he is now in a different era where Jesus’ presence is no longer accessible to see and hear. Yet the reader is still expected to believe in Jesus as he reads or hears the Johannine narrative.

This chapter will look at two passages of the narrator’s comments which use the words and concepts of seeing, hearing, and believing. The first passage is 19:35 and the second one is 20:30-31. Both passages will be studied under the sections of seeing, hearing, and believing. At the end of the chapter, a conclusion will be drawn.

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<sup>1</sup> Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus*, 161-162.

## 9.1. John 19:35

### 9.1.1. Seeing

The concept of seeing is depicted by the nominative ὁ ἑωρακὼς (19:35), which refers to the narrator of John’s Gospel. In light of the context of John 19, “the narrator is revealed to be a character in the story, the anonymous “Beloved Disciple,” who was the only disciple mentioned by the narrative to be at the scene of the cross (vv. 26–27).”<sup>2</sup>

The character of the BD appears in important events during the Farewell Discourse (13:23), trial (18:15), crucifixion (19:26-27), and resurrection (20:8). He is even portrayed as outliving Peter (21:20-23). As a result, his eyewitness testimony is significant in affirming the reality of the incarnation (1:14) and, thus, helps future believers to know Jesus (20:30-31; 21:24).

After the narrator describes that he is the one who sees the event of Jesus’ crucifixion, the seeing of this event is transformed into verbal testimony (μεμαρτύρηκεν, 19:35) which is trustworthy. Admittedly, seeing the crucifixion of Jesus cannot be understood as a mere historical event without any redemptive significance. As 19:36-37 highlights, seeing Jesus crucified is equal to seeing Yahweh pierced (ὄψονται εἰς ὃν ἐξεκέντησαν, 19:37; cf. Zech. 12:10), where none of his bones is broken (19:36; cf. Exod. 12:46; Psa. 34:20). While 19:35 depicts the eyewitness’ report of Jesus’ crucifixion, 19:37 leans more to the metaphorical seeing, regarding the identity of Jesus informed by the understanding of the significance of Zechariah’s prophecy.

Nevertheless, the new understanding of Zechariah 12:10 cannot be separated from the historically visible event of Jesus’ crucifixion, resurrection, and, arguably, the

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<sup>2</sup> Klink, *John*, 815. Carson argues that it is the most natural reading of ὁ ἑωρακὼς (*John*, 626); cf. Brown, *John XIII-XXI*, 936. Contra Bultmann, *John*, 678.

ascension. In the words of Byrskog, “seeing [here] takes on a significance that transcends the specific event to which it primarily refers, without thereby losing its character of real sensual perception.”<sup>3</sup> The eyewitness’ seeing of Jesus serves as the foundation and the embodiment of the testimony. Without this kind of seeing, the trustworthiness of the testimony would be doubtful. As such, 19:35 highlights the value of seeing as the medium by which believing in Jesus is achieved.

### **9.1.2. Hearing**

The concept of hearing is conveyed by the verbal testimony which the verbs μεμαρτύρηκεν and ἀληθῆ λέγει describe. As mentioned above, verbal testimony is the normative medium for representing an event once the event has passed. Subsequent generations can still believe in Jesus because the Johannine apostolic testimony is trustworthy.

This movement from seeing to verbal representation of an event has been presented previously in the series of the disciples’ testimonies after they meet Jesus (1:29-51) and the testimony of the once-blind man to the neighbours and the Jewish leaders (9:1-41), for example. Henceforth, 19:35 merely confirms the pattern of this transmission.<sup>4</sup> Carson adds, “The benefits that flow from the death of the Son are appropriated by faith, and the witness of the Evangelist is given to foster such saving faith.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Samuel Byrskog, *Story as History-History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History* (WUNT 123; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 237.

<sup>4</sup> Tam, *Apprehension of Jesus*, 161.

<sup>5</sup> Carson, *John*, 627.

While in the narrative world, the testimony from the believing characters takes an oral testimony as its form, the fact that the narrator now turns to the reader (ὁμεῖς) highlights the written form of the testimony.<sup>6</sup> In this case, 19:35 anticipates 20:30-31, where the narrator explicitly mentions the writing of John’s Gospel.<sup>7</sup> Just as the oral testimony about Jesus is important for the characters to believe in Jesus, so it is with the narrative of John’s Gospel for the reader.

### 9.1.3. *Believing*

The clause ἵνα καὶ ὁμεῖς πιστεύ[σ]ητε describes that believing in Jesus is the sole purpose of the seeing-based written testimony. It assumes that the narrator himself is also a believer due to the things he saw and heard from Jesus as the narrative world describes.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, while the belief of the narrator is linked with both seeing and hearing, since the era assumed in 19:35 is the post-ascension of Jesus, 19:35 depicts hearing testimony as the main medium which leads to believing.

Just as the oral testimony within the narrative world of John’s Gospel enables the characters to encounter Jesus and believe in him, the written testimony of the Johannine narrator also generates the same result. It is noteworthy that the narrator uses the word ἀληθινός twice in this verse. Looking at John’s Gospel from the perspective of apocalypticism, Benjamin Reynolds offers an explanation about the significance of

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<sup>6</sup> Köstenberger, *John*, 553.

<sup>7</sup> Klink, *John*, 816.

<sup>8</sup> Klink, *John*, 816.



ἀληθινός.<sup>9</sup> For Reynolds, John’s Gospel shares similar characteristics with the Jewish apocalyptic literature which records the revelation of divine mystery seen and heard after heaven is opened (1:51).<sup>10</sup> However, while in Jewish apocalyptic literature the divinity of the intermediary figures is merely implied, John’s Gospel openly presents Jesus as the God of the Old Testament Scriptures (1:1).<sup>11</sup> Indeed, Jesus himself is the content of the divine mystery which is revealed.<sup>12</sup> As such, the trustworthiness of John’s Gospel is essential for future generations to believe in the revelation brought by Jesus, the intermediary figure *par excellence*. Reynolds’s explanation is worth quoting in full,

The testimony about Jesus is often referred to as being “true”, including that of John the Baptist and the beloved disciple (ἀληθής, 5:32; 10:41; 21:24; ἀληθινός, 19:35). Jesus himself is called “truth” (ἀλήθεια, 14:6), God is “true” (ἀληθής, 3:33; ἀληθινός, 17:3), and God’s word is “truth” (ἀλήθεια, 17:17). Ignace de la Potterie has argued that John’s use of “truth” has its roots in apocalyptic literature. For instance, the revelation recorded in a number of the Jewish apocalypses is described as being “true” or “truth”. In fact, George Nickelsburg states: “The seeking after or disclosure of ‘the truth’ (τὴν ἀληθείαν) is typical in contexts of (esp. angelic) revelation. *Enoch* 14.1 (cf. 13.10) refers to Enoch’s vision and God’s response to the Watchers as “the book of the words of truth”, and Enoch is called “scribe of truth” (15.1).

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<sup>9</sup> Benjamin E. Reynolds, “Apocalypticism in the Gospel of John’s Written Revelation of the Heavenly Things,” *EarlyCh* 4 (2013): 64-95.

<sup>10</sup> Reynolds, “Apocalypticism,” 69-85.

<sup>11</sup> Reynolds, “Apocalypticism,” 81-82.

<sup>12</sup> Reynolds, “Apocalypticism,” 94.

Further on in the Book of Watchers, Uriel refers to Enoch’s question about the Watchers and their destruction as being eager for the “truth” (21.5; also 25.1). And in Dan 11:2, the angelic figure says: “Now I come to show you the truth. Three kings will stand in Persia...” The content of Daniel’s vision is called “truth”. The description of apocalyptic revelation as “truth” may suggest that the Gospel of John’s reference to Jesus’ revelation as “truth” and the testimony about Jesus as “true” highlights further similarities between Jewish apocalypses and John’s Gospel.

The comparison above certainly highlights the importance of ἀληθινός in 19:35. It is a trustworthy record of the revelation of the Father’s Son which the future believers can read, hear, and thus believe without needing to have access to see and hear Jesus in person. Through the writing of John’s Gospel, they can participate in the heavenly mystery now revealed.

#### ***9.1.4. Summary***

The BD’s eye witnessing of the crucifixion of Jesus is transformed into the written testimony which will be read by the reader or mediated to the other characters outside the narrative world so that they may believe in Jesus. As such, seeing is assumed to hold a role in believing. However, the emphasis falls more on hearing, as the event of the crucifixion is no longer accessible. Thus, believing in the era after the ascension is served by hearing and mediated through the seeing of the eyewitnesses.

## 9.2. John 20:30-31<sup>13</sup>

### 9.2.1. Seeing

The idea of seeing is implied through the mention of “signs” (σημεῖα, 20:30), which have a physical and observable character in John’s Gospel. The emphasis on the role of seeing in the narrative world is expressed through the phrase πολλὰ μὲν οὖν καὶ ἄλλα σημεῖα. This phrase describes the numerous quantity of the miraculous signs Jesus performed (ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς) to testify regarding his identity as the divine Christ.<sup>14</sup> The prepositional ἐνώπιον τῶν μαθητῶν elaborates the vividness of the signs which the disciples engage with. Thus, seeing signs is not an individual experience whose accountability is vulnerable to doubt. On the contrary, the genitive plural τῶν μαθητῶν accentuates the genuineness of the experience and the object of seeing due to the multiple witnesses involved (20:19-29; cf. 1 Cor 15:5-6).

Hence, the purpose statement seems to affirm the role of seeing in leading the characters of the disciples to believe in Jesus. As Köstenberger says, “Coming as it does on the heels of Jesus’ implicit rebuke to Thomas (οὖν, oun, so then), the present penultimate concluding statement shows that faith based on Jesus’ “signs” ought not to

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<sup>13</sup> The textual variant in 20:31 between the present subjunctive πιστεύητε and the aorist subjunctive πιστεύσητε is a topic of debate among scholars. It is inconclusive and non-essential for our purpose. In fact, Klink could be right when he says, “The multiform and complex sense of “believe” in the Gospel must be held in tension, which engages all readers with the identity of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This certainly matches the use of the Gospel in Christian history.” (See Klink, *John*, 882.) Cf. D. A. Carson, “The Purpose of the Fourth Gospel: John 20:31 Reconsidered,” *JBL* 106 (1987): 639-651; D. A. Carson, “Syntactical and Text Critical Observation on John 20:30-31: One More Round on the Purpose of the Fourth Gospel,” *JBL* 124.4 (2005): 693-714; Bultmann, *John*, 698-699;

<sup>14</sup> O’Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel*, 94.

be disparaged.”<sup>15</sup> However, in light of 20:29, while physical seeing is presented as the legitimate avenue to believing in the narrative world, its significance to the characters of the future believers outside the narrative world slowly fades as Jesus’ bodily absence is imminent.

The dependent clause ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τούτῳ indicates that the narrator is speaking in an era where the opportunity of seeing Jesus and his signs has already ended. It implies that seeing Jesus’ signs is exclusive to the period when Jesus was present in bodily form with the disciples. After Jesus’ ascension, the role of the first-hand experience of physical seeing for believing diminishes and is eclipsed by hearing the reading of the written testimony of the Johannine narrative.

Interestingly, in ancient times, memory and testimony were conceived visually as a “theatre” where scenes are performed.<sup>16</sup> As Thatcher writes,

[When] John says that the disciples “remembered these things,” his first audiences would understand that Jesus’ followers later visualized their experiences with him; when John says that the Beloved Disciple “testified” about Jesus’ words and deeds, his audience would assume that this disciple sometimes told stories by reflecting on memorial images.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Köstenberger, *John*, 581; cf. Brown, *John vol II*, 1058.

<sup>16</sup> Tom Thatcher, “John’s Memory Theatre: The Fourth Gospel and Ancient Mnemo-Rhetoric,” *CBQ* 69.3 (2007): 487-505.

<sup>17</sup> Thatcher, “John’s Memory Theatre,” 501.

In that sense, the distinction between seeing the Christological events as the first-hand eyewitnesses and hearing their verbal testimony is not rigid. In other words, as they hear the narrative of John’s Gospel read, they are enabled to “see” Jesus and his signs.<sup>18</sup>

### 9.2.2. *Hearing*

In 20:30-31, the narrator’s speech serves as “a direct address to the reader, explicitly expressing intent to change the reader. This direct address is somewhat rare in both ancient and modern text.”<sup>19</sup> Being an “intentional partnership” of 20:29, 20:30-31 indicates that Jesus’ previous blessing in 20:29 is actually referring to the future believers who no longer have access to his bodily presence on earth.<sup>20</sup> This is a new era which happens only after his ascension to heaven (cf. 14:3; 21:23).

The idea of hearing is indicated by the word γεγραμμένα (20:30) and γέγραπται (20:31). The members of the Johannine community, whom the Gospel addresses, could no longer see Jesus physically. Nevertheless, to them is given the experience of the original disciples of seeing and hearing Jesus through the written Johannine narrative of Jesus.<sup>21</sup> Probably most of the members of the Johannine community would have heard the narrative being read aloud by a lector in their meeting (cf. Rev. 1:3).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Klink, *John*, 884.

<sup>19</sup> O’Brien, “Written that You May Believe,” 284; Klink, *John*, 881.

<sup>20</sup> Klink, *John*, 881.

<sup>21</sup> Fernando Segovia, “The Final Farewell of Jesus: A Reading of John 20:30–21:25,” *Semeia* 53 (1991): 175.

<sup>22</sup> Chris Keith, “The Competitive Textualization of the Jesus Tradition in John 20:30-31 and 21:24-25,” *CBQ* 78 (2016): 328.

Consequently, hearing here serves as the only realistic, thus normative, avenue to belief in Jesus in the period of his bodily absence. This is already preceded by several occasions in the narrative where characters testify to other characters about what they see and hear from Jesus, especially as Jesus himself highlights in 20:29 (cf. 1:35-51; 9:15; 20:18, 25).<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the character of the BD has demonstrated that to some extent it is possible to believe in Jesus’ resurrection without even seeing the risen Lord (20:8).<sup>24</sup> Hence, given that the subsequent believers now have the trustworthy Writing of John’s Gospel (ἀληθινή, 19:35; ἀληθῆς, 21:24), which the BD did not (20:9), they could believe in Jesus with the same quality of faith which the original disciples had within the narrative world.

Through the written form of the disciples’ trustworthy testimony, the audience is invited “to participate in the narrative and thus to experience how Jesus makes God known.”<sup>25</sup> There is a process of identification between the reader/hearer and the characters of the narrative that happens as they hear the narrative read to them. In the words of O’Brien,

That readers identify with characters is one of the narratives’ most powerful tools. Readers generally identify with characters with whom they have something in common. As argued above, one thing we know about the reader

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<sup>23</sup> Klink, *John*, 881.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Byrne, “The Faith of the Beloved Disciple,” 90-91.

<sup>25</sup> O’Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel*, 96. This participation is made possible by the narrative through the use of misunderstanding and irony which the implied author has deliberately used; cf. D.A. Carson, “Understanding Misunderstandings in the Fourth Gospel,” *TynBul* 33 (1982): 59-91; O’Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel*, 11-32; O’Brien, “Written That You May Believe,” 288-290.

of the Fourth Gospel is that she experiences confusion, uncertainty, and misunderstanding. She also learns from her mistakes and changes her interpretive strategies, so that her interpretation at the end of the Gospel is more reliable than it was at the beginning. So one could safely assume that the reader identifies with characters who experience confusion, uncertainty, or misunderstanding and who profit from the experience. In short, the reader identifies with characters who make mistakes and learn from them.<sup>26</sup>

The trustworthiness of the verbal testimony heralded in 20:30-31 contrasts with the doubt of Thomas when he receives the testimony of the fellow disciples (20:25).<sup>27</sup> While Thomas resists the testimony of the eyewitnesses, the narrative urges the reader to accept the written testimony as producing the same quality of faith.<sup>28</sup> In fact, the narrative “provides the possibility of a substitute experience for the reader.”<sup>29</sup> Thus, for example, “[in] identifying with Thomas, the reader also experiences the risen Lord and sees his wounds and hears Thomas express the pinnacle of Johannine Christology.”<sup>30</sup> In other words, through the Johannine narrative, the reader participates in the narrative and allows himself to be led to believe in Jesus.<sup>31</sup> The significance of the narrative of John’s Gospel to the belief of the reader is accentuated by the parallel of 20:30-31 and 21:24-

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<sup>26</sup> O’Brien, “Written That You May Believe,” 292.

<sup>27</sup> O’Brien, “Written That You May Believe,” 284-285.

<sup>28</sup> Dodd, *Interpretation*, 443.

<sup>29</sup> O’Brien, “Written That You May Believe,” 285.

<sup>30</sup> O’Brien, “Written That You May Believe,” 295.

<sup>31</sup> O’Brien, “Written That You May Believe,” 293.

25 which “assert[s] the superiority of the Gospel of John, as a Jesus book, to any other Jesus traditions that do exist or could exist in the future, particularly those that might also take the form of a book.”<sup>32</sup>

### 9.2.3. *Believing*

From the context of 20:30-31, it has been argued that the purpose of believing in the narrative world, the Christological conviction of Jesus’ identity (20:31a) and the following eschatological life (20:31b), is served instrumentally by both seeing (σημεῖα) and hearing (γέγραπται). Nevertheless, due to the limited period of Jesus’ earthly incarnation, seeing is exclusive temporally and spatially to the contemporary characters of Jesus, in particular his immediate disciples (ἐνώπιον τῶν μαθητῶν, 20:30). If the resurrection of Jesus has already made his bodily presence elusive (20:17, 19, 26), how much more would his ascension.<sup>33</sup>

This is due to the situation that the Johannine narrative is written for the benefit of the future believers (ταῦτα δὲ γέγραπται ἵνα πιστεύ[σ]ητε, 20:31) who cannot meet and engage with Jesus physically. Thus, as Brant puts it, “The Gospel does not suggest that faith is possible without Jesus’s signs, but the Gospel does suggest that people can come to faith through the witness of a story rather than relying on their own direct experience of an event.”<sup>34</sup> Indeed, “John inspires future believers, instilling in them the confidence that their faith will be equal to that seen in Thomas’ climactic confession

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<sup>32</sup> Keith, “The Competitive Textualization,” 326-327.

<sup>33</sup> Larson, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 211.

<sup>34</sup> Brant, *John*, 273.



(“My Lord and my God!”). They will share the same faith that the original apostles shared.”<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, in contrast to Jewish apocalyptic literature, the hearing of Johannine narrative that leads to believing is not devoid of Jesus’ Spiritual presence. While Jesus is physically absent, the Spirit serves as the identical substitute for Jesus (ἄλλον παράκλητον, 14:16). The Spirit is both the divine agent of the memory of Jesus that feeds the faith of the disciples (14:26) and the divine witness that testifies with the disciples as human witnesses (15:26-27).<sup>36</sup> The narrative of John’s Gospel is the fruit of the Spirit-aided exercise of memory and testimony.<sup>37</sup> It is “an extension of Jesus’ ministry.”<sup>38</sup> As Frey summarizes, “The mediation of the presence of Christ in the reading of the Gospel is ultimately made possible and accompanied by the continuum of the Spirit who has been promised and given to the disciples. In him, the life-creating word of Christ and its salvific history are made present. And, in Johannine view, the nature of God is revealed thereby.”<sup>39</sup>

The revelatory character of the Johannine narrative enables future believers to see and hear Jesus through a narrative-mediated encounter with Jesus.<sup>40</sup> This has an important implication which Dodd observes, “From this moment the company no longer consists solely of eleven disciples gathered at that particular time and place; every

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<sup>35</sup> Bonney, *Caused to Believe*, 170.

<sup>36</sup> Frey, *The Glory of the Crucified One*, 312.

<sup>37</sup> Painter, *John: Witness & Theologian*, 67-68.

<sup>38</sup> Klink, *John*, 881.

<sup>39</sup> Frey, *The Glory of the Crucified One*, 312.

<sup>40</sup> O’Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel*, 47, 94; Klink, *John*, 884.

reader of the Gospel who has faith, to the end of time, is included in Christ’s final beauty. ”<sup>41</sup> Thus, the reader is openly admitted as part of the characters of the Gospel’s narrative.

Consequently, after the ascension “the locus of revelation lies in the written narration of those things to which the reader of the Gospel is given access.”<sup>42</sup> In the words of Meeks, John’s Gospel “*functions for its readers in precisely the same way that the epiphany of its hero functions within its narrative and dialogues.*”<sup>43</sup> In this way, hearing the written narrative read can finally take prominence over seeing as the normative medium in promoting faith after Jesus’ ascension.

#### **9.2.4. Summary**

Since the eras of pre-resurrection and resurrection have finished, Jesus and his signs are no longer physically accessible. In that regard, the instrumental weight falls onto the text of John’s Gospel. Thus, in the era after the ascension, hearing the narrative of the Fourth Gospel read becomes the primary instrument of believing.

### **Conclusion**

The presentation of John’s Gospel as a complete piece of literature points to the era after Jesus’ ascension happens. As such, the narrative of John’s Gospel becomes the

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<sup>41</sup> Dodd, *Interpretation*, 443.

<sup>42</sup> O’Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel*, 94. Emphasis original.

<sup>43</sup> Wayne A. Meeks, “The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism,” *JBL* 91 (1972): 69. Original emphasis.

prominent medium through which the reader sees and hears the person of Jesus unfolding that they may begin to believe and grow in believing in Jesus.

## 10. Conclusion

The present research has dealt with the question of the apparently ambiguous relationship of seeing, hearing, and believing in John’s Gospel. This perceived ambiguity splits scholars into positions of either asserting that hearing is preferable to seeing or insisting that both seeing and hearing are equally legitimate in bringing characters to believe in Jesus. Against the scholarly inclination to prefer one position over the other, it is posited here that both seeing and hearing are legitimate instruments of believing in the era of pre-resurrection (1:29-51; 9:1-41), while the transition to hearing begins in the resurrection era (20:1-29), before finally hearing seals its preeminence over seeing in the era after Jesus’ ascension (19:35; 20:30-31).

In the present research, both seeing and hearing were understood to be the instruments which led the narrative characters to believe in Jesus. The theological significance of seeing was rooted in the fact of creation (1:3) and incarnation (1:14), which in themselves are revelatory. In the Johannine narrative, seeing addresses the embodiment of the incarnation of the Word and the signs he performed. On the other hand, hearing found its value in the reality of the authoritative words of God and engaged with the spoken words of the character of Jesus and the testimony of other characters about him, including the written Johannine narrative. Since the characters were crucial in this issue, characterization was also taken into consideration. In each chapter, the development of the narrative characters who consistently act out the concepts of seeing, hearing, and believing was considered, with particular attention paid to their journey of belief in Jesus. Further, to explain the tension of seeing, hearing, and believing, the Johannine narrative timeline was carefully studied on the basis of its present and realized eschatology. In this study, the uniqueness of each era of Jesus’

ministry was maintained and presented as the irreducible temporal background against which seeing, hearing, and believing can be better understood.

Admittedly, the present research could not be exhaustive due to space limitations. It has, thus, exclusively focused on John 1:1-18, 29-51; 9:1-41, 20:1-29; and 20:30-31, where the words and themes of seeing, hearing, and believing occur together. In the future, subsequent research needs to include and explore the issue of unbelieving, the Farewell Discourse (John 14-17), and the role of the Spirit, to enrich the discussion regarding seeing, hearing, and believing.

Nevertheless, the findings in the present research bring several implications regarding the coherence, consistency, and correspondence of John’s Gospel’s narrative. First, since it was demonstrated that John’s Gospel is capable of accommodating the tension of seeing, hearing, and believing, it can be concluded that the narrative of John’s Gospel is coherent in its presentation. Second, based on the assumption that the author of John’s Gospel is also the author of the Johannine epistles and the book of Revelation, the present findings encourage the view that John’s Gospel is consistent with the other Johannine literature. For example, consistent with John’s Gospel’s presentation of seeing, hearing, and believing, 1 John also affirms the important value of the sensible experience of Jesus as the basis of its testimony and pastoral instruction (1:1-4). With regard to Revelation, Rev. 1:1 highlights the importance of seeing and hearing to believing. Indeed, the vivid vision and hearing are major concepts in Revelation. Third, the findings of the present research also demonstrate that John’s Gospel corresponds well with the other New Testament books, which also affirm the value of seeing, especially in the era of Jesus’ physical presence (cf. 1 Cor. 15:5-7), and hearing in the era after his ascension (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-3; Rom. 10:9, 17) with regard to belief. As such,

it is humbly expected that the present research would serve Christian certitude that through the narrative of John’s Gospel one can truly see and hear Jesus himself, and will abundantly receive grace upon grace in his journey of believing.

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