## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. THE MEANING OF JOHANNINE SYMBOLISM</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 THE USAGE OF SYMBOLISM</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WATER MOTIF</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF JOHN’S USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 Old Testament Allusion and Theme in John</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2 Interpretive method: Salvation History</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3 A Creational Typology</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVES</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 The Historical books</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 The Psalms and her writings</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.3 The Prophets</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVES</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1 Books other than the Johannine writings</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2 The Johannine writings</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. ESCHATOLOGY AND THE SYMBOLIC MEANING OF WATER IN JOHN 4 33

3.1 HISTORICITY AND THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF JOHN 4 33

3.2 STRUCTURE AND THEMATIC CONNECTIONS 43

3.3 SYMBOLISM IN THE FIRST DIALOGUE 49

3.4 SYMBOLISM IN THE SECOND DIALOGUE 66

4. CONCLUSION 79

BIBLIOGRAPHY 80
INTRODUCTION

He spoke and galaxies whirled into place, stars burned the heavens, and planets began orbiting their suns – words of awesome, unlimited, unleashed power. He spoke again and the waters and lands were filled with plants and creatures, running, swimming, growing, and multiplying – words of animating, breathing, pulsing life. Again He spoke and man and woman were formed, thinking, speaking, and loving – words of personal and creative glory. Eternal, infinite, unlimited – He was, is, and always will be the Maker and Lord of all that exists.

And then He came in the flesh to a speck in the universe called planet earth. The mighty Creator became a part of the creation, limited by time and space and susceptible to age, sickness, and death. But love propelled Him, and so He came to rescue and save those who were lost and to give them the gift of eternity. He is the Word (John 1:1); He is the Bread of Life (6:35); He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6); He is the Giver of Living Water (4:13-14); He is Jesus, the Christ.

Without light, water, and food there could be no life. It is exactly these elements that John uses as symbols in his Gospel to present Jesus as the Light, Water and Food to the reader. Each of these symbols is a vital part of the context of eternal life though for this study the focus will be on water, and its symbolism in the book of John.

We will firstly consider the meaning of Johannine symbolism, Following, the significance of the water motif in the Old and New Testament, the characteristics of John’s use of the Old Testament and the Johannine writings. We will end our study with the eschatology and the symbolic meaning of water in John 4.
1. THE MEANING OF JOHANNINE SYMBOLISM

There is a vast range of definitions of symbols and Van Luxemburg *et al* (1988:242), concede that symbol is a term, which is complex to define, and that it could have numerous meanings. Koester (1995:4) define: ‘A symbol is an image, an action, or a person that is understood to have transcendent significance.’ He does not motivate his narrowing down of symbols to their ‘transcendent significance’, except that he points out that that is how it works in John. He further limits symbols to, ‘images that can be perceived by the senses’ and is criticised for this by Ng (2001:18). Ng (2001:5-22) provides an account of the various types of symbolism, which may be consulted. She concludes that the lack of generally accepted criteria for defining symbols is a serious problem.

Symbolism in John is an expression in the text intended to match with corresponding referents. However, what is the nature of these referents? How are they related to the symbols? How can we interpret this? Virtually, the essentials of the subject have not been sufficiently discovered. Meeks (NG 2001:23) contends “it is symptomatic of the impasse in NT hermeneutics that we have as yet no adequate monograph on the Johannine symbolism as such”. There have been numerous studies on the symbolic aspects of John, though as Seneiders (1977:371-372) points out, “since there do not seem to be any reliable or generally accepted criteria for the interpretation of symbols, any symbolic interpretation remains indemonstrable if not arbitrary.” This leads to the question of what type of treatment on Johannine symbolism is needed? Culpepper (1983:188-89) gives an account of the treatment of John’s symbolism, a treatment that, first, ‘is based on adequate definitions,’ second, ‘is sensitive to movement and development in the gospel,’ third, ‘relates the metaphors, symbols and motifs to one another,’ and fourth, ‘analyses their function within the gospel, as a literary whole.’

Ng (2001:43-48) concludes in her attempt to provide a balanced treatment, that the water symbol should not be interpreted with a single referent or described with a simplistic statement. Rather, the symbol should be interpreted in its multiple contexts, and its multifold meanings should be expounded.
“Water” in John 4, for example, symbolizes not only one’s physical need but also one’s dependence on earthly resources. As the symbol has an openness, which implies a multiplicity of meanings, it calls the reader to become involved in determining the meaning. Therefore, symbolism guides the reader to the wealth of reference and knowledge, which are not without difficulty understandable to perplexed thinking. Dulles (du Rand 1997:250) describes, “Symbolism elicit meaning. It does not merely exhibit meaning.”

1.1 THE USAGE OF SYMBOLISM.

The usage of symbols and symbolism in the Gospel of John is prominent and captivating. These Johannine symbols are obtained from daily life and find their meaning against the background of the Old Testament, Judaistic Greek and apocalyptic conceptual worlds.

A fundamental connection between the symbol and the reality it symbolizes, are found in John, for example, the geographical symbolism of Galilee and Samaria (the places where Jesus is received), over against Jerusalem (the place symbolizing Jesus’ rejection). Symbolism is an effort to make divine communication understandable and human consciousness is stirred by symbols, being visible signs. Thus, symbolism and symbols are communicators of revelation. For example, the healing of the blind man (John 9) can be understood symbolically as the breakthrough of spiritual insight in the revelation of Jesus Christ. The reader is guided by the symbol to the intention underlying the symbol. Du Randt (1997:36) contends that “hidden behind the healing of the blind is the insight which points to the true light, Jesus Christ, who came to save humanity from its spiritual blindness.” Culpepper (1983:180-198) describes the three core symbols, namely, light, water and bread, and writes that in ancient times, light was linked with intellectual clarity, divinity and dominion.
The prologue in the Gospel of John (1:1-18) relates the Logos (Jesus Christ) to life and light in order to call attention to His salvific function. Jesus as the light of the divine revelation engage in opposition over against darkness as symbol of the evil obstinacy of the world which rejected Christ (1:5, 8, 9; 3:19, 20, 21). John the Baptist is only a lamp used to place Jesus, the true light, into assistance. For example, the concept night entail much more than only the dark hours at night. So, the readers are urged to walk in the light (12:35-36). Likewise, water serves as an important symbol. John primarily linked it symbolically to the Holy Spirit, in the sense of cleansing and access to eternal life (cf. 3:5; 4:28). Bread serves to symbolise the identity of Jesus as the Son of God (6:35, 41, 48, 51).

Many other Johannine symbols: dove (1:32), lamb (1:29, 36), vine (15:1f), to mention a few can be listed in this way, however our focus with this study is the water symbol in John. It will be relevant therefore, to now look at water symbolism used in the Old and New Testament and its significance.
2. OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WATER MOTIF

2.1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF JOHN’S USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The reason why it has not been well discovered is that John’s use of the Old Testament as ‘citations’ is not as obvious as the Synoptics’. Though, there are various ‘allusions’ to the Old Testament in the Johannine writings, so that there is an excess of Old Testament thoughts.

The citations, significantly, are always christological, pointing to Jesus in one way or another. The Evangelist uses the Scriptures to prove the identity of Jesus as Christ, to explain his acts as messianic, and to reveal the details of his life and death as being expected in the Old Testament. In the account of the crying of John the Baptist in the wilderness, “Make straight the way for the Lord!” (1:23), it is not just the action of the Baptist that is clarified, but his role as being subservient to Jesus as the Christ. In the full context of the gospel’s theology, it is also eschatology and salvation history that is presented in these citations (cf. 1:51). According to Carson (1988:246-247) “the christology and eschatology of the Fourth Gospel can both be grounded in the Old Testament”. More than the Synoptics’, John's citations of the Old Testament, point out that Jesus is the Christ and that he has brought in the eschatological age.

Carson (1988:258) expresses preference for the theory that the Gospel is ‘designed primarily to evangelise diaspora Jews.’ From the author’s manner of composition, it is clear that he has given us only a sample of known citations. The impression gathered from the gospel is that all the scriptures speak of Christ and ought to be interpreted christological: ‘We have found the one Moses wrote about … whom the prophets also wrote’ (1:45; 2:22; 3:10; 5:39, 45f.; 20:8f).

Hengel (1994:395) talks about ‘the originality’ of John’s christological interpretation of scripture, as well as his scribal knowledge as a user of the Hebrew text and a corrector of Septuagintal formulations”.

7
The Post-resurrection’s detection of events in Jesus life is a distinct characteristic in John’s reference to the Old Testament. Hengel (1994:384, 391) suggests that John’s Christological understanding is a Spirit informed Christology coming from the ‘messianic testimony of Scripture,’ which is a later development in early Christian exegesis, whereas there is a charismatic and atomistic messianic interpretation in the gospel of Matthew, which comes from the “traditional Jesus-logia”. John’s remembrance motif reveals that there was a process of hermeneutical reflection going on during the apostolic age. Carson (1988:257, 259) points out that there is a tension in the gospel, between the presentation of christological interpretation as a moral obligation (e.g., 5:39f., 45f.) and the recognition that even the disciples came to understand it fully only after the resurrection (e.g., 2:22; 20:8f.). Thus, biblical theology was birthed. In this process of Jewish exegetical traditions forming the background and Christian apologetics making the breakthrough the Gospel of John is the most pioneering among the gospels. John’s use of the Old Testament for biblical interpretation and theology demonstrates a “Spirit-informed” model.

2.1.1 Old Testament Allusions and Themes in John

The numerous allusions and themes in the book of John over compensate the scarcity of citations. They involve an important part of John’s interpretation, and explanation for its characteristic. Barret (NG 2001:160) singled out three ‘allusions,’ in 1:29; 7:37f., and in 19:36, which he calls ‘cruxes’. It seems that these passages actually represent three different ways in referring to the Old Testament. First, “the lamb of God” in 1:29 may be called a theme. Barret (Ng 2001:160) continue by saying: “Here, a single theme, used in the O.T. several times and in different ways, is brought out once in the special form demanded by its special context in the ministry of Jesus; light as it were, from numerous O.T. sources is brought to a focus on that unique point”. The second crux is found in 7:37f. in which the words of Jesus form an “allusion to the Old Testament. The third crux is found in 19:36, a citation of three passages introduced by one fulfilment formula. These crux’s also identified as allusions, represent three important categories of John’s reference to the Old Testament: citations (19:36), allusions (7:37f.), and the use of OT themes (1:29).
Although water does not appear in John’s explicit citations, it plays a definite role in John’s allusions to the Old Testament (cf. 7:37f.), and is itself a dominant theme (cf. John 4). It corresponds with John’s use of the Old Testament, and therefore, we pursue the significance of Johannine water symbolism in biblical theology.

2.1.2 Interpretive Method: Salvation History

Looking at John’s method of interpretation an enquiry rises, what are his appropriation techniques and hermeneutical axioms? Two main approaches are, firstly of Historian and secondly of theologian interests. Historians locate John’s techniques along Jewish exegetical traditions but these attempts have not produced impressive results. It is probable that John’s appropriation methods bear resemblance to Judaistic methods. According to Moo (Ng 2001:161), “John could have re-oriented the text or modified the point of application as Jewish exegetes did, but, it is important to note that John’s hermeneutical axioms or interpretive goals remain distinctly Christian”. As mentioned above, John’s citations have the focussed purpose of witnessing for Jesus and proclaiming the coming of the eschatological age. It is the same with John’s use of water symbolism. Whenever “water” alludes to the Old Testament, a christological point is made in one way or another, and the perspective is always eschatological.

John’s theological or interpretive goals, rather than his appropriation techniques are distinctive.

The second approach to John’s interpretation is that of typology, a theological reading of the Old Testament, which depicts the account as salvation history. This has been considered a leading approach in John, and is defined by Carson (1988:249) as follows: “At the risk of oversimplification … typology … is itself based on a perception of patterns of continuity across the sweep of salvation history. The Davidic typology that surfaces repeatedly in the NT may well stand behind some of the Psalm quotations- in the FG ….”

Ng (2001:162) suggests the best model for understanding allusions and themes in John, are provided by the idea of that salvation history, which holds promises and fulfilment, as well as types and truths, was important to Jewish thinking.
If John’s interpretation has the whole of the Old Testament absorbed into his system, then the system is found in salvation history. Hanson explains (1994:365) as follows:

“By salvation history I mean the belief that God’s dealings with his people … should be regarded as a history of salvation; and that therefore one may expect a certain pattern in God’s dealings … which will be reflected in what happens in the messianic age. In this sense John’s exegesis of Scripture is not atomistic: he is not content to cite or echo individual texts from Scripture, isolated from their context … Scripture was being fulfilled … against the background of the saving events of the old dispensation ….”

This will be the approach we take as we relate Johannine water symbolism to its canonical context.

2.1.3. A Creational Typology

John’s unique typology in relation to creation and incarnation is characterized by a vertical dualism. His association of salvation with creation can be observed from the set out of the Johannine writings. “In the beginning” (1:1) refers to Gen 1:1 and John 1:3ff., Through him all things were made proclaims that the “Word” is the creator.

The basic theological formulation of the gospel is reflected in John’s typology. Hengel (1994:393) notify that in John, both creation and salvation come from the same source, Jesus Christ the Son, and all was then brought to completion on the cross.

Christ is exalted in John, and this effects what Goppelt calls a different point of view on typology. Goppelt (Ng 2001:164) has to say that “typology” is diminished in John since it is monopolized by a horizontal comparison between types and antitypes elsewhere in the New Testament. This is actually a vertical viewpoint on creation, incarnation and salvation and in this, the creator is observed as descending from heaven to earth to become a saviour.
A horizontal relationship between types and antitypes and by balanced individual typologies, characterize the traditional typology. John is set free from the traditional typology from the vertical perspective.

Therefore, it is the perspective of the vertical dimensions of double symbolism as in the use of “living water” (John 4) that accounts for the uniqueness of John’s characteristic typology. A vertical dimension is clear both to John’s symbolism, as well as in his typological thinking.

It is clear that John’s typology open up opportunities for our biblical theological study on the significance of water symbolism. We will continue with our study looking at various Old Testament perspectives.

2.2 OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVES

As most of the later theological use of water begins in the Pentateuch the theological significance of “water” cannot be emphasized enough.

Already at creation, water, which filled the universe started to play a significant role. The Spirit of God was hovering over the “waters” (Gen 1:2). A water-spirit imagery is formed here which may be referred to in consideration of the association of John’s water symbol. The waters under and above the expanse were separated and became the sky, land and the seas (Gen 1:6-10). “The extensive use of the term ‘waters’ in the creation account is a prelude to the extensive use of ‘water’ in biblical language” (Ng 2001:166). The repeatedly use of the word water helps us to envisage the significance of water in the universe that is visible. In Gen 2:5-6 the ground that was made to produce vegetation (Gen 1:11-12), was “watered”. In Gen 2:8-14 we envisage the fruitfulness and abundance of the garden, east in Eden, as a river flowing from Eden, “watered” the garden and from there separated in four headwaters. “Water coming out of the temple” in John 7 is similar to “water coming out of Eden”. Ng (2001:167) asserts that fruitfulness and abundance lies behind some of its use of water.
A similarity of use appears in Ezek 47:1-12 and the reappearance of this imagery speaks of a “paradise theme,” a “temple theme,” or a “tabernacle theme” in the biblical literature. Relations between the creation imagery and Johannine symbolism are based on John’s reference to Gen 1:1 and his distinctive use of allusions and themes from the Old Testament.

Water flowing out to water the earth that human race cultivate is not mentioned any more after the fall. Rather, flood arose to demolish the land and human race. The ‘flood’ imagery and God rescuing Noah are in Jewish literature and in Christian literature typical illustrations of divine judgement and the deliverance of the righteous. After the flood, history shows an essential need for water as life sustenance (Gen 21:15-19).

When Isaac settled in the Valley of Gerar he reopened the wells that had been dug in the time of Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died. His servants dug several wells (Gen 26:18-22). In Gen 26:32-33 Isaac’s servants told him about the well they dug and that they “found water”. Although at this point, water is featuring as an everyday essential need in life and not as a promise of salvation compared to “milk and honey”(Ex 3:8,17), the abundance of it is a sign of blessings (Num 24:7). Later in Ex 13-14; cf. Josh 3-4 the splitting up of seawaters at Exodus means salvation.

The need for water became a test of faith in the events of the Exodus and God’s people showed their rebellion by complaining of the lack of water, as of food (Ex 15:22-27, Num 20:1-13; cf. 21:4-9, Ex 17:1-6, Num 33:14). “The theological significance of these ‘water events’ is given in Deuteronomy: it is part of salvation to be tested, to be humbled and to be taught to remember the Lord of salvation” (Ng 2001:167). The land in Deut 8 is not described as a land of milk and honey, but as a land “with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills” (v7). The wilderness experience has obviously turned water into a symbol of divine provision and salvation. A different symbolic use of water, the representation of the word of the Lord, is found in the combination of bread, the counterpart of water, with every word of the Lord in the teaching on obedience.
“He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord” (Deut 8:3).

With the initial use of water as a main symbol in these biblical accounts, there is also Old Testament motifs such as the Exodus, the wilderness, the rebellion of God’s people, and the imagery of the rock, the manna, the springs and the snake. These motifs’ recurrence in the Johannine writings, attests that they are used as biblical theological language in referring to God’s salvation.

In its function of maintaining life, water also served as a cleansing agent in a variety of ritual ceremonies in the Mosaic Law. The inner parts and legs of animals had to be washed with water (Lev 1:9, 13; 8:21). The vessels used for cooking meat, first had to be rinsed with water (Lev 6:28). When the Aaronic priest and his sons were set apart as priests they had to be washed with water as a part of this ceremony (Ex 29:4; Lev 8:6).

The high priest had to, before he put on the special set-apart garments for the Day of Atonement, bath his body in water (Lev 16:4,24). The law was very specific towards the Levites in order for them to be cleansed. “and do this to them to cleanse them: sprinkle water of sin offering on them and they shall shave all their body and shall wash their garments, and cleanse themselves” (Num 8:7).

Some of these ritual procedures for ceremonial purity required running water. Lev 15:13 specify that “running water” is necessary for the cleansing of uncleanness. All these references speak of the association of water with cleansing, thus purification in the Israelite religion.

The abovementioned rituals are not specifically mentioned in the Johannine writings but they are important to John for the following reason: “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). As part of “the law that was given through Moses,” these cleansing rituals are in comparison with “the grace and truth that came through Christ” John shows us clearly in his Gospel that Jesus was the true fulfilment.
2.2.1. The Historical Books

There is some correlation between the water used in the Historical Books and the use of water in the Johannine writings. Elisha performed several water miracles in the time of the divided kingdoms.

In 2 Kings 2:19-22 Elisha changed the bad water into wholesome water. In 2 Kings 3:9-20 Elijah performed another miracle when the armies of Judah, Israel and Edom had no more water for themselves or for the animals with them. When the hand of the Lord came upon him, Elisha announced that the valley would be filled with water although the people would neither see wind nor rain (v15-17). The well from which Jacob and his sons and his flocks and herds drank, is mentioned in John 4:6 as Jacob’s well. This well was traditionally linked to the well in Num 21:16-10 where the Lord said to Moses “Gather the people together and I will give them water.” Ng (2001:170) refers to Reim who points out an allusion in John 9:7 to 2 Kings 5:10. The blind man, who was healed by Jesus, had to wash his eyes in the Pool of Soloam, which mean Sent. Naaman had to wash himself seven times in the Jordan. The waters of Israel is seen as having healing power and that power is to be realized in Jesus, the Sent One.

2.2.2. The Psalms and Other writings

The book of Psalms mentions water in various ways such as in a figurative use (Ps 1:3; 58:7; 63:1; 109:18), for describing nature as the omnipotent presence of God (Ps 18:11; 65:9; 77:17). Psalms 78-105 and 114 refer to water as part of the Exodus history. The wilderness theme and the rock image frequently appear along with the water symbol in the historical psalms.

“There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells” (Ps 46:4). The Scripture verse gives a river imagery that refers back to the paradise imagery of water coming out of Eden: “A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters” (Gen 2:10).
John in his writings (John 2:14) clearly refers to Ps 36, where the fountain of life describes the abundance of the Lord. “Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies … How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find a refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light” (Ps 36:5-9).

Noticeable here is the fountain imagery instead of water, which is also found in a number of passages in Proverbs. In fact, Proverbs uses fountain as its foremost imagery. “The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked” (Prov 10:11); “The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death” (Prov 13:14); “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death” (Prov 14:27); “Understanding is a fountain of life to those who have it, but folly brings punishment to fools” (Prov 16:22); and “The words of a man’s mouth are deep water, but the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook” (Prov 18:4). The considerable great number of references to wisdom as the fountain of life depicts a viewpoint found in the wisdom tradition, that is, water is related to God’s wisdom.

Ng (2001:172) refers to Brown with the following statement: “Brown appeals to wisdom writings in his interpretation of John 4:14 for a confirmation of the idea that ‘living water’ means ‘God’s wisdom that grants life.’ He specifically cites Sir 24:21, in which ‘Wisdom’ sings her own praises: ‘He who eats of me will hunger still; he who drinks of me will thirst for more.’” I agree with Ng’s (2001:172) perspective that the text that Brown refers to, explains literary parallelism to the text in John 4:14, but considering the many allusions there are in John, it is an oversimplification to limit the meaning of water to wisdom just because there might have been literary borrow from Sir 24:21. It is more appropriate to view wisdom as one of the items that constitute the abundance of the Lord as Psalm 36 depicts.
The word water appears more extensively in the prophetic books, especially in Isaiah and Ezekiel, than in the collection of writings above discussed. Not only is the word water used most frequently, but also is there a great advance in the symbolic meaning of water in these books. What is it that makes the frequently use of the word water so important? It is in the prophetic books that the water symbol takes on an eschatological allusion to the Spirit.

The exile is as if a second wilderness experience. “The water imagery, representing the nation’s trial in the wilderness and the Lord’s gift of salvation, now depicts the nation’s rebellion prior to the exile, and affictions because of the Lord’s punishment” (Ng 2001:172). “Your silver has become dross, your choice wine is diluted with water” (Isa 1:22); “As a well pours out its water, so she pours out her wickedness” (Jer 6:7); “See now, the Lord, the Lord Almighty, is about to take from Jerusalem and Judah both supply and support: all supplies of food and all supplies of water” (Isa 3:1); “See, I will make this people eat bitter food and drink poisoned water” (Jer 9:15); “The nobles send their servants for water; they go to the cistern but find no water” (Jer 14:3); “Judah’s leaders are like those who move boundary stones. I will pour out my wrath on them like a flood of water” (Hos 5:10).

The wisdom image continue in the prophetic books in that water stands for the Lord’s word, also known as law or will. In this respect the fountain image is used only a couple of times by Jeremiah. “My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water” (Jer 2:13; cf. Jer 17:13). In Amos 8:11 the Lord declares that the days are coming that he will send a famine through the land, not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. Note should be taken that there is also a theme of thirst in these writings.
Ng (2001:173) makes the following statement: “This theme shows that the prophets go beyond the Deuteronomist in understanding historical events as trials. They are able to see the brighter side of the Lord’s discipline and anticipate his salvation.”

The same metaphor of garden and water is used in conflicting ways. “You will be like an oak with fading leaves, like a garden without water” (Isa 1:30); “The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail” (Isa 58:11).

Having this as a background, there are water passages in the prophetic books, which clearly speak of salvation. It is noteworthy that the living water passages in John 4:4 shows similarity with two main passages of the same kind in Isaiah. “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation” (Isa 12:3); “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost” (Isa 55:1).

The eschatological Spirit

It is noteworthy that the combine imagery of water, wine, and milk make its appearance in Isa 55:1. This imagery is also in the book of Joel where the coming of the eschatological day of the Lord, and, specifically, the outpour of the Spirit are prophesied.

“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams; your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28-29). “Then you will know that I, the Lord your God, dwell in Zion, my holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy; never again will foreigners invade her. In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the Lord’s house and will water the valley of acacias” (Joel 3:17-18).
This is a prophetic passage in the OT in which the mentioning of the eschatological Spirit is placed alongside a water passage that describes the abundant blessings of that eschatological day.

The symbolic reference of water to the Spirit becomes evident in Isa 44.3-4: “For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams.” This concise but prominent presentation of water as God’s Spirit establishes a powerful symbolism that reminds of both God’s creation and salvation activities. The twofold imagery of water and spirit prompt us to go back to the creation in Gen 1:2: “the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”

The passages in Isa 44 and in Gen 1 explain a Creator and creature relationship: as the Spirit hovers over the waters, the Creator hovers over the land and the people. The Spirit, God’s own spirit, is the Creator of the creature of which water is part. Also is the symbol speaking of salvation which Isaiah announces as a promise. God will restore his chosen people for his own sake (cf. 43:25), just as water blesses the thirsty land with grass in a meadow, the Spirit of God blesses his offspring of his chosen. It is clear that Isaiah the prophet views the end of the exile as a new exodus, and this restoration as a new creation (Isa 44:3-4).

Some scholars combine the two aspects, that is, God’s hovering as Creator and restoration as Saviour. This same combination of creation and salvation is much characteristic of the typology in the Johannine writings. Goppelt (Ng 2001:176) emphasize that “In Jesus the redemptive gifts of the former salvation come in perfected form and this signifies that the first creation is being perfected in a new one.”

While the passages quoted so far indicate a one-to-one correspondence between water and the Spirit, the following water-spirit passage in Ezekiel indicates something diverse. “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all you idols.
I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws” (Ezek 36:25-27). Water in this passage is a key figure presented in combination with the thought of ceremonial cleansing (note the words sprinkling and impurities).

Listed as one among other gifts, the Spirit is given with a direct purpose, that is, to follow the decree of the Lord. Depending on how the Hebrew combination is understood, the relation between the cleansing with water and the giving of the Spirit may be variously understood. Nevertheless, still there is a symbolic relation between water and the Spirit. It is worthy to take note of that it is typical of Ezekiel to put prominence on cleansing and on the decree of the Lord.

*The temple or Zion*

“Then you will know that I, the Lord your God, dwell in Zion, my holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy; never again will foreigners invade her. In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the Lord’s house and will water the valley of acacias” (Joel 3:17-18). Counting here we find a composite symbol, that is, the fountain symbolizing salvation and the house, which is the temple, symbolizing the Lord.

The temple motif became significant in prophetic books such as Ezekiel and Zechariah, which were written during or after the exile, a time when temple worship had been abrogated. The water imagery is compounded with the temple theme, a liturgical element reflecting the hope of the nation for restoration. In Ezek 36:25-27, quoted above, ceremonial cleansing is the liturgical element and in Ezek 47:1-12, the temple is the liturgical element. Water dominates in the passage mentioned above.
It becomes a river that heals the sea and the banks so that fish and trees thrive (vv. 6-12). In verse 12 of this passage, we see that it is because of the water that flows from the sanctuary to the fruit trees, that the trees bear fruit and the fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing. Now, although the water-temple imagery is dominant in abovementioned passage, the water-spirit imagery also features in this passage, though not so on the forefront.

An impressive vision of the temple is described in Ezek 40-46 preceding the water-temple in Ezek 47:1-12. Prior to the issue of water in this vision, this temple was visited by the glory of God, the Spirit, who entered from the east gate. “Then the man brought me to the gate facing east, and I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. … The vision I saw was like the vision I had seen when he came to destroy the city and like the visions I had seen by the Kebar River, and I fell face-down. The glory of the Lord entered the temple through the gate facing east. Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple” (Ezek 43:1-5).

Where the Lord entered, and filled the temple, an abundant stream of water came forth. Therefore, the importance of this passage in biblical water symbolism should not be overlooked: water features as the main figure, but is at the same time coupled with the centrality of the temple, and ultimately with the glory of God (the Spirit) which fills the temple. Could it be that this biblical imagery was in the Johannine writer’s mind when he repeatedly referred to water in his Gospel?

The Day of the Lord

The fulfilment quotation in John 19:37 draws our attention to a passage in the book of Zechariah where an outpouring of the Spirit is indicated. “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son” (Zech 12:10).
Although no mention of water is made here, the passage, which is an oracle, begins with creation imagery in which water is, as always, included. “This is the word of the Lord concerning Israel. The Lord, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, and who forms the spirit of man within him, declares:” (Zech 12:1). In this imagery the spirit of the person is highlighted at the expense of water. However, later in Zechariah, the term fountain appears strongly. “On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleans them from sin and impurity” (Zech 13:1).

Another point to be noted about Zechariah’s oracle in chapters 12-14 is that a water-Jerusalem imagery is formed in Zech 14:6-11, its intensity comparable to that of the water-temple vision in Ezekiel 47:1-12. “On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime – a day known to the Lord. When evening comes, there will be light. On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter. The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name. The whole land, from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem, will become like the Arabah. But Jerusalem will be raised up and remain in its place, from the Benjamin Gate to the site of the First Gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the royal winepresses” (Zech 14:6-11). Whereas in Ezek 47:1-12 water comes out of the temple and heals the holy land, in Zech 14:6-11, living water comes out of the holy city and heals the whole earth. This imagery, involves an even broader picture, it covers the whole earth. The Hebrew concept is that the temple is the centre of Jerusalem and Jerusalem is the centre of the whole earth.

The abovementioned two passages give essentially the same message, that there will be restoration in the day of the Lord, beginning from the temple which symbolizes the Lord’s presence, and from there reaching out to all the earth. “These prophecies of Ezekiel and Zechariah slip back on the one hand to the Genesis accounts with their temple-water imagery, and on the other hand speak symbolically of a full eschatological redemption of the present creation” (Ng 2001:179).
2.3 NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVES

In the New Testament, the word water occurs most often in the Gospel of John and in the Book of Revelation. It occur almost twenty times in the Johannine writings and more than ten times in Revelation. On the first Epistle of John the word water occurs only twice, though with serious important overtones. It appears only a few times in each of the Synoptics and in Acts, and one to three times respectively in Ephesians, Hebrews, James, and the Epistles of Peter.

2.3.1. Books other than the Johannine Writings

The meaning of water in the New Testament is mainly related to Christian baptism, though there are significant references to the Old Testament as well.

*The Synoptics and Acts*

The meaning of water in these books barely goes beyond that of water baptism. The baptism of John is mentioned in all of the Synoptics (Matt 3:11, 16; Mark 9:22; Luke 3:16) and in John. Besides the baptism of John in Acts 1:5, Christian baptism is recorded several times (Acts 8:36, 38, 39; 10:47).

An issue following the Pentecost was whether spiritual baptism had priority over the water ritual (Acts 11:16). Acts 8 and 10 bear witness how this issue arose as consequential to the eschatological coming of the Messiah.

Water apart from used in baptism, rarely features as a symbolic theme in the Synoptics or Acts. Jesus’ walking on water (Mat 14:23-33) and Jesus’ commanding of the winds and the water to calm down (Luke 8:22-25; cf. Matt 8:23-27 and Mark 4:36-41) may be possible exceptions. Jesus’ sovereign power over nature corresponds to the victory of God in the Exodus events where water is not a blessing but an opposing force.

It is obvious that since water is used so limitedly in the Synoptics, there is purposeful meaning in the extensive use of water in John.
The Pauline Epistles

Again, the use of water in these writings is limited. In Ephesians the use of water is limited to a liturgical sense: “Husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word” (Eph 5:26). The words cleansing and washing implies ritual cleansing.

A more precise translation of cleansing is having cleansed, which cause it to be a prior act. In such case, the washing with water: would then be water baptism. Ng (2001:181) makes the following statement: “Alternatively, some scholars interpret it as ‘the bridal bath.’ Such a notion is not irrelevant to the passage (cf. Ezek 16:8-14), but a direct reference to the ritual is unlikely.”

There is also to some extent a different use in the first book of Corinthians where there is a reference to washing: “But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11). Because of an ethical issue being the focus point in verses 9-10, it is not likely that a direct reference to baptism is made here. Paul is stressing the supposedly clean status of the Corinthians in front of God, rather than any cleansing rituals.

Emphasis on the theological significance of baptism, that is, justification and sanctification, rather than on baptism itself, occur in the longer epistles of Paul for example (1 Cor 1:14-17). One significant reference of Paul to water is found in 1 Cor 10:1-5: “For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.”
In this passage a collection of images are taken from the Exodus event: the cloud, the sea, the food, the drink, the rock, and the wilderness. This passage portrays similarities between Paul’s typological view and Johns use of the Exodus themes. Firstly, the Exodus event is a type of Christ’s salvation (cf. John 1:29). Secondly, the images composed from the event, correspond typologically to different aspects of the salvation of Christ (cf. John 3:14).

The cloud and the sea speak of a baptism into Moses, which is a type of the baptism into Christ. The spiritual food, manna, and the spiritual drink, water from the rock, are all types of Christ’s blessings, just as John perceives them (John 4-6). Where the rebellion of the forefathers effect in Paul a warning against falling into temptation (1 Cor 10:11-13), we find that in John, in the polemic perspective and also in Jesus’ dispute with the Jews, the failure of the fathers effects a christological message (John 6-9; note John 6:49, 58; 8:41). The wilderness speaks of God’s displeasure and judgement, so does the writings of Paul as well as John (cf. 9:41). Noticeable is Paul’s identification of Christ as the spiritual rock.

The Johannine writings express this typology in the giving of living water by Jesus (John 4) and also the flow of water (and blood) from the pierced side of the crucified Christ (John 19:34). The typological views of Paul and John replicate each other remarkably, thus demonstrating that they are very much similar. Goppelt (Ng 2001:182) makes the following statement:

“When Jesus is portrayed by Paul as the second Adam and by John as God’s incarnate Logos these are really two sides of the same figure. It reflects the difference between a Pauline and a Johannine view of salvation and is congruent with the fact that the metaphor of the struggling church is developed in great detail by Paul, but scarcely at all by John. It is very significant that the antithesis (Paul’s)...is not missing from the figure of the world perfecter that is found in John. Only through his being lifted up does Jesus become the bread of life and giver of the Spirit who brings about the new creation.”

24
There is a difference between the typology of John and that of Paul, that is, the former being more of a vertical creational type and the latter horizontal and eschatological type, yet there is a unity.

*The Book of Hebrews*

Water, in the book of Hebrews, is associated with sacrifice and cleansing. The sprinkling of blood, part of Old Testament rituals for the inauguration of the old covenant is referred to in Heb 9:19:

“When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people.” The mention of water specifies the need of water in the purification of lepers (Lev 14:5-9) and the ceremonially unclean (Num 19:7-10).

Paul’s use of water cleansing in 1 Cor 6:11 is also used by the Hebrew author. “Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:22). Liturgical terms are used to speak of the ethical and religious status of a Christian: sincere, with full assurance of faith, and cleansed from a guilty conscience. Terms that stand for the obsolete rituals to illustrate the effectiveness of Christ’s salvation are used to teach perseverance in the new faith.

*First and Second Peter*

These two epistles, though they differ considerably from each other, both mention the flood, thus showing God’s patience in withholding judgment, and pointing out from it the significance of water in the Noah event.

First Peter’s message is addressed to Christians who were suffering from the ungodly. They are earnestly exhorted to look to Christ who died even for the unrighteous, and to God, who waited long-sufferingly for mankind to obey (1 Pet 3:17-20a).
“The days of Noah while the ark was being built,” is referring to a time “when God waited long-sufferingly” (1 Pet 3:20a). However, “in it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also” (1 Pet 3:20b-21a). The passage continues to explain how baptism saves, not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. The pledge signifies the believer’s appeal to God for a clear conscience or his request for God to help him making a decision to serve him. Noticeable is, saved through water, expresses the fact that Noah and his family were brought safely through the flood by means of the flood waters themselves.

Thus the waters are the medium of salvation. Then the author continues to emphasize the significance of this water by saying that it symbolizes baptism, “just as the flood waters saved Noah’s family, now what baptism signifies, saves you,” and that forms a typological relation.

Kistemaker (1987:147) makes the following statement: “As the flood waters cleansed the earth of man’s wickedness, so the water of baptism indicates man’s cleansing from sin. As the flood separated Noah and his family from the wicked world of their day, so baptism separates believers from the evil world of our day. Baptism, then, is the counterpart of the flood.” This further describes the comparison between the waters of the flood and the water of baptism.

Secondly, Peter’s message is a word of warning on the subject of judgment. 2 Pet 3:8-10 states clear that though “the Lord … is patient … the day of the Lord will come like a thief.” Believers are reminded to not forget as the scoffers do. In this passage, water is the medium of judgment. “But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men” (2 Pet 3:5-7).

The following two points are noticeable here. Firstly, there are pairs of words used in the passage, which connect a variety of aspects of creation with later events affecting an eschatological outlook.
The creation account in Genesis is recalled and the phrase out of water and by water, emphasize not only the significance of water in creation, but also the connection between the waters of creation and the waters of the flood. This passage shows a typological relation between the creation and the final judgment, both being effect by God’s very word. Secondly, the typological relation is now between the creation and the judgment as well as between the flood and the judgment. Both the creation and the judgment are effected by God’s word, and in both the flood and the judgment, the heavens and earth are flooded and destroyed.

A Typological relation through the creation, the flood and the final judgment is drawn from these passages in Peter.

Flood in 1 Pet 3:20, typifies salvation and in 2 Pet 3:5-6 it typifies judgment. Water in 1 Pet 3:20, features as the medium of salvation and in 2 Pet 3:5-6 it functions as the medium of creation and judgment. Therefore, both divine judgment and deliverance are observed as being mediated through water, just as the world is created out of waters.

2.3.2. The Johannine Writings

The Epistle of John

Two times in 1 John 5:6-8, water is symbolically used. Firstly, as one of the ways Jesus came and secondly as one of the three that testify. “This is the one who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement” (1 John 5:6-8).

Though the two successive clauses water and blood embrace the same constituent, the first clause points to Jesus Christ and the second clause emphasize the ways Jesus came. Various interpretations of water in Jesus’ coming in water and blood, that is, referring to the sacraments, or the incarnation, or the baptism and the death of Jesus, or the death of Jesus solely are interpreted.

But it is unlikely that water refers just to the sacrament of baptism or to Jesus’ incarnation, for a controversy seems to appear in the saying not by water only.
Neither does the controversy seem to involve a denial of the sacraments or the incarnation. Brown (1982:575-576) points out that the implied theory of the opponent does not involve a direct denial of the incarnation. It is also unlikely that water and blood refers solely to the death of Jesus, a theory supported from John 19:34.

Association should rather be made with the baptism of Jesus. Brown (1982:578), who associates the constituents solely with the death of Jesus, admits, “The adversaries may be emphasizing a coming in water, i.e., Jesus’ baptism”.

If so, it follows naturally that water symbolizes the baptism of Jesus and blood symbolizes Jesus’ death. The fact that the two terms have their own articles and prepositions in 1 John 5:6b support this interpretation.

The second use of water in 1 John 5:6-8 has to do with testifying, the confirmation of truth (cf. 4:1-3). Brown mentions various symbolic interpretations relating to the Spirit, the water and the blood, the three that testify in 1 John 5:8. Most of them are based on a shift of meaning from 5:6 to 5:7-8. Yet, considering the internal coherence of the passage, the three in 5:7-8 are interpreted as the same spirit, water and blood in 5:6. Marshall (1978:236) writes “the water and the blood in this context imply the same thing as in verse 6, that is, the water of Jesus’ baptism and the blood shed at His death.” In this passage, Johns seems to have personified the water and the blood, considering them witnesses alongside the Spirit. Therefore, if one rejects the testimony of the water and the blood, thus, denying the character of Jesus, one is, at the same time rejecting the witness of the Spirit. There is unity in testimony.

Water in this way, takes on a special meaning in 1 John, that is, Jesus’ being baptized in water at the beginning of his ministry on earth.

Revelation

Water passages in the book of Revelation appear in three groups, one group related to disaster, one to God’s promise of salvation, and one to the consummation.
In the disaster passages, water is part of the heavens and earth, which suffer from afflictions: “The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water – the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter” (Rev 8:10). At the pouring out of the third bowl, “the river and springs of water became blood” (Rev 16:4), and the sixth bowl, “the great river Euphrates, ant its water was dried up …” (16:12). Noticeable is the fact that Euphrates was one of the four headwaters flowing out from the river that watered the garden Eden (Gen 2:10-14).

The created world described in the creation accounts of Genesis is illustrated in the Apocalypse as the catastrophic universe. “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water” (Rev. 14:7).

Revelation 4 and 5 describe promises of salvation coming from the throne for those “who come out of the great tribulation”, that is, those who worship God. At the interlude between the seals and the trumpets those that came out of the great tribulation are described. “They are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Rev 7:15 -17).

Rev 21:1-6 describes the coming of the new heaven and earth, and the new Jerusalem. In this passage the promises of salvation is reaffirmed by a declaration coming from the throne, and “water” is the main feature in this declaration. “To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of Life” (21:6). This promise is recurring again in the epilogue of Revelation (22:7-21) as a summons. “Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life” (Rev 22:17).
It is not a coincidence that the key words in these passages are exactly those that appear in Jesus’ offer of living water to the Samaritan woman in John 4:10: “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water;” and “but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14).

At the interlude between the trumpets and the bowls there is an incident on the women and the dragon, in which water is issued from the mouth of the serpent: “The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time out of the serpent’s reach. Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent” (Rev 12:14-15). The association is not in the water, as if the water is promised by God, but in the Exodus typology which is distinct in John.

Mounce (1977:245) points out: “The pursuit of the woman is similar to Pharaoh’s pursuit of the children of Israel as they fled from Egypt (Ex 14:8). The two wings … echo the words of God from Sinai, “I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself” (Ex 19:4). The river of water, which flowed from the dragon’s mouth, may reflect Pharaoh’s charge to drown the male children of the Israelites in the Nile (Ex 1:22). The opening of the earth is reminiscent of the destruction of the men of Korah … (Num 16:31-33).”

The use of Exodus typology in Revelation differs from its use in John. In John, the wilderness items such as manna, water, rock, and Moses’ snake is singled out in different passages to recall God’s salvation.

The typology recalls the power struggle between God and Pharaoh and portrays a heavenly, spiritual war, instead of the salvation of humanity on earth by God. The woman represents symbolically the children of God, the serpent symbolically represents the woman’s persecutor, and the drowning of male children in the Nile is represented as the serpent’s issue of water from the mouth.
The passage demonstrates a different emphasis, that is, adversative in the use of the Exodus typology. Water symbolized destruction rather than salvation, and it originates from the serpent, the counterfeit god.

The third group of water passages occurs at the end of Revelation, in Rev 21-22. The adversative struggle we saw in Rev 12:14-15 has now ended, and water features as “river of water of life, clear as crystal” (22:1), a perfect item on the consummation scene. Rev 21:6 and Rev 22:17 are already noted as passages on the promise of salvation.

Both of these passages are declaration (spoken) passages in Rev 21 to 22, which presents us a striking picture of the new heaven and new earth, and the New Jerusalem. “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more light. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever (Rev 22:1-5).

Significant incidents in the biblical use of water in this passage are pointed out by Ng (2001:189), “In the pronouncement passages of Rev 21:6 and 22:17, it is the symbolic use of ‘water’ as salvific gifts that is recapitulated - a use originating from the Exodus accounts as life provision, from the writings as wisdom and law, and from the prophets as the Spirit. In the consummation picture of Rev 22:1-5, the role of water in God’s creation is recapitulated. Thus the passage harks back to Gen 1 to 2 (cf. Ps 46:4); Joel 3:17-18; Ezek 40 to 48 and Zech 12 to 14, in which we have grand visions of Eden, of Zion, of Jerusalem and the temple, locations of God’s presence among humankind.” In all these there is always water, or a river, to symbolize life, the life of humankind in the presence of God.
The final vision in Revelation 22:1-5 should be interpreted not only by analysis but also with appreciation of its biblical language. We should seek to understand it as a vision as well as in light of a unified biblical eschatology.

Commentators recognized that an accumulation of Old Testament concepts take place in this final vision of Rev 22:1-5. Swete (1977:298) relates the concept of water of life to the following passages: “In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the Lord’s house and will water the valley of acacias” (Joel 3:18),

“On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter” (Zech 14:8) and “Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live” (Ezek 47:9). Mounce (1977:387-388) relates the source of “the tree of life” to Gen 2:9; 3:22 and Ezek 47:12, and also relates “the lack of need for light” to Isa 60:19-20 and Zech 14:7.

Although this relating of concepts can be done in great details, allusions in the Apocalypse, more so than those in the Gospel of John, must be related not just by looking for similar words or concepts, but by comparing visions and pictures.

In his study on Rev 21 to 22 Dumbrell (1985:vii-viii) claims to have answered the question: “How did the seer of Revelation arrive at the content of his panoramic final vision.” He makes use of five themes in Rev 21:1-5, “the New Jerusalem, the New Temple, the New Covenant, the New Israel and the New Creation,” and relates the birth and growth of the idea through the Old Testament, the Gospels, and the Epistles,” and finally returns to Rev 21 to 22. The convergence of these themes speaks of the rich diversity of Scripture on the one hand and its profound unity on the other.
3. ESCHATOLOGY AND THE SYMBOLIC MEANING OF “WATER” IN JOHN 4

Water in John 4 symbolizes not only one’s physical need but also one’s dependence on earthly recourses. It does not merely symbolize a personal eternal life given by Jesus but points to the eschatology significantly developed in John. The water symbol should therefore, not be interpreted with a single referent or described with a simplistic statement. To expound the full significance, with eschatology in view, the symbol should rather be interpreted in its various settings.

The passage of John 4 will be explained both historical-grammatically and with a literary approach. Léon-Dufour’s concept of “double symbolism in the fourth Gospel” will be kept in consideration.

The water symbol will be interpreted in light of “the Jewish cultural milieu in which Jesus Himself lived, and the Christian cultural milieu which inspires John’s interpretation of the past (Léon-Dufour 1981:440-442).

3.1 HISTORICITY AND THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF JOHN 4

Though the original historical settings in this passage will not be fully reconstructed, an attempt will be made to determine the significance of a Samaritan theology in the interpretation of water symbolism.

Historicity and Internal Coherence

There are four main positions on the historical truthfulness of this version. Ng (2001:98) writes: “It is held that the episode is fictitious (e.g., Haenchlen), or that it is historically accurate (previous scholars), or that it is basically historical but has undergone literary modifications (e.g., Cullmann), or that it is created theologically with reliable items of information (e.g., Schackenburg).” It should be noted that the main arguments against historical trustworthiness are made up of critical problems. “Bultmann (1971:175) finds difficulties in the transitions of the narrative as evidence of the author’s clumsy combination of traditional and personal materials, none of which is considered by him historical” and makes the following statement: “These difficulties bolster distrust of historicity.”
The version in John 4, when considered from a literary perspective is considered as a coherent whole. It is never denied that there is use of traditions behind the composition, though, commentators distinguish a coherent structure and continuity within the text. Ng (2001:99) writes “Modern literary theorists attempt to elucidate that inner coherence by applying literary reading (G.R. O’Day), speech act reading (J.E. Botha), and semiotic analysis (H. Boers) to the text, and they all claim to see literary connections in what form critics consider difficult transitions”.

Historical trustworthiness is not proved by literary coherence. The coherence of a version should reinforce assurance in its historical reliability, so that a literary presentation of historical facts may be found in John 4.

Significant studies have been made on Samaritanism about the theology and religious practices of Samaritans in the New Testament times. A variety of proposals about the relation between Samaritanism and the Gospel of John, all targeted on the basis of either the gospel or Samaritanism, have been made. The focal point in these proposals is how one might have influenced the other. However, not much is said with regards to Samaritanism in John 4 itself.

Although the Samaritan background has not been sufficiently distinguished in discussions on the historical context of the gospel, there is a growing tendency today to take seriously the historical, social and geographical particulars uniquely found in the narratives of the gospel.

Brown (1966-7:-Xlii) asserts that in John 4 the references to the Samaritans, their theology, their practice of worshipping and the location of Jacob’s well all seem to be accurate. He also commends the Evangelist for a convincing handling of the Samaritan setting. “The ‘mise en scene’ is one of the most detailed in John, and the evangelist betrays a knowledge of local colour and Samaritan beliefs that is impressive … the well at the foot of Gerizim; the question of legal purity in vs.9, the spirited defence of the patriarchal well in vs. 12; the Samaritan belief in Gerizim and the Prophet-like Moses. “And if we analyse the repartee at the well, we find quite true-to-life the characterization of the woman as mincing and coy, with a certain light grace” (Brown 1966-70:175).
John 4 when interpreted reveals a version that has a foundation as support, a master of narration rather than fiction.

This passage could not have presented these coherent supports for the Samaritan background if the tradition had not been historical. In her dialogue with Jesus, the woman’s seemingly offensive response, which demonstrates obstinately Samaritan ethos, well indicates that the incident is not fabricated. We see thus that there is authenticity of Palestinian life during Jesus’ time reflected in John 4. The living water, the true worship, the food of doing God’s will, and the hope in the coming of the Messiah, are all Jewish and Samaritan in character.

The coherence of these subjects and their allusions to Judaistic eschatology support the view that an original historical setting has been involved.

The Conceptual Background

Hellenism is no longer the most obvious conceptual background for the gospel. Similarities exist among various conceptual backgrounds and there seemed to be an overlap between Judaistic and Hellenistic worlds. A variety of influences such as Gnosticism, Hellenistic thoughts, Hellenistic Judaism, and Palestinian Judaism of various kinds are all included in the gospel. Most people are comfortable with this view.

The message of the gospel, however, is distinguishable from its conceptual backgrounds. The gospel is, conceptually speaking, a christological interpretation of the Old Testament which is not found in other backgrounds. It is because of this allegiance to the Old Testament that the gospel bears similarity to the various factions of contemporary Judaism. However, Johannine theology is distinct from them because of its Christian witness. The cause of similarity between the gospel and non-Christian documents are also distinct. “Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:30-31). The gospel is not a synthesis of other philosophies but draws upon non-Christian terms and concepts to communicate its own faith in Jesus Christ.
Meeks’ (1967:318-319) study of the traditions of Moses as the “prophet-king” proves influential and it assumes view, that a rich diversity of influences has been incorporated into the essence of the gospel. In his study of the “overlapping traditions” in Palestine, Meeks studied the Samaritan sources alongside with Rabbinic and non-Rabbinic Jewish sources as well as Mandaean sources. His conclusion is as follows:

“The Johannine traditions were shaped, at least in part, by interaction between a Christian community and a hostile Jewish community whose piety accorded very great importance to Moses and the Sinai theophany … the Johannine church had drawn members from that Jewish group as well as from the Samaritan circles which held very similar beliefs, and it has been demonstrated to a high degree of probability that the depiction of Jesus as prophet and king in the Fourth Gospel owes much to traditions which the church inherited from the Moses piety.”

Scholars agree that the development of a Samaritan theology was well under way by Jesus’ time, and that includes beliefs in the coming of a Moses-like prophet (“Taheb”), referred to as the Messiah expected by the Samaritan woman. “The woman said, ‘I know that Messiah’ (called Christ) ‘is coming.’ When he comes, he will explain everything to us” (John 4:25).

Meeks (1967:286-319) suggest that John’s presentation of Jesus has been largely determined by the conviction that Jesus is the one of whom Moses speaks – the ultimate Prophet and Messianic King. Thus, it only remains controversial whether Johannine Christology, which emphasized the importance of Moses, has been informed by “traditions directly inherited from the Samaritan circles”. This are enthused, firstly, even though Mosaic Christology shares the common root of Old Testament eschatology with Judaistic and Samaritan beliefs in Moses, it was not essentially informed by these beliefs. Secondly, the gospel seeks to demonstrate Jesus’ superiority to Moses; therefore, the gospel is distinct from Judaistic and Samaritan traditions.
Thirdly, the Mosaic Christology, though significant, is but one element of the Johannine message and it is part of the Exodus motif from Old Testament traditions that is taken over by the gospel.

How then is the appearance of Mosaic Christology evaluated in the gospel? What is the relation between the gospel and Samaritan (and Jewish) beliefs? It should be noted that Johannine theology is distinctly a Christian interpretation of Old Testament traditions. The similarities between the gospel and Samaritan beliefs are made clear by the common root they share, rather than by the influence of the latter upon the former.

What is the effect of this upon Johannine water symbolism and eschatology? Likewise they are pronouncements of John’s distinct Christian message in a Judaistic and Samaritan conceptual milieu.

In studying John 4 we will see that both water and the messianic hope were common concerns for Jews and Samaritans in a similar way, and they are part of the conceptual background for the gospel. The distinctiveness of the gospel lies in its Christology, that is, its presentation of Jesus’ discourses on these subjects.

On the subject of the relation between the gospel and Samaritan beliefs a relevant question would be: what was the setting that prompted the presentation of Mosaic christology in the gospel? Were there Samaritans among the audience, with whom the author tried to communicate the gospel?

The Setting and the Purpose

Those who work on Samaritanism together with the Fourth Gospel hold that Samaritans were directly involved in the composition of the gospel. Bowman’s (Ng 2001:105) following suggestion is most frequently quoted “Is it not possible that the Gospel writer while not giving up the Jewish claim that salvation is of the Jews, is showing that Jesus is the fulfilment of all Israel’s’ hope, the hope of Judah and also of the Samaritans who claimed to be the descendants of Northern Israel? … Is it
not possible that the author of John is trying to make a bridge between Samaritans and Jews in Christ?"

Ng (2001:105) refers to Bowman’s suggestion, that Jesus is the fulfilment of all Israel’s eschatological hope, including the Samaritans’, is already affirmed. The symbol of water and its double meaning intricately speak for anticipation and fulfilment. The elements of Samaritan history and theology included in John 4 support specifically such an eschatological interpretation and will be showing further on in the this chapter. The second part of Bowman’s suggestion that the author of John is trying to make a bridge between Samaritans and Jews in Christ, has to do with the purpose of the gospel, and it will call for the explicit working out of a life setting to sustain.

The purpose stated in John 20:31 is to convince readers that Jesus is the eschatological figure who will bring salvation. Although it is not so clear whether it tries to make a bridge between Samaritans and Jews in Christ, there is no doubt that the gospel speaks for the inclusion of the Samaritans in this salvation.

Reasons for determining the presence of Samaritans in the gospel setting are: Firstly, Moses as prophet-king being central in Samaritan theology and also significantly reckoned in the gospel, should have appealed to Samaritan readers. Similarly the allusion with Jesus as prophet reminds them of their eschatological figure “Taheb,” which they associate with the divine promise to Moses. “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among your brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account” (Deut 18:18-19). Beasley-Murray (Ng 2001:106) expresses that, “The Fourth Gospel appears to relate both positively and negatively to Samaritan views of Moses.” Therefore, the king-prophet theme speaks of a counteractive significance of the gospel, other than a “bridge” between Jews and Samaritans.

Secondly, specifically in John 4 the Samaritans are mentioned favourably, when compared with the way they are mentioned in the Synoptics.
Mark is silent about them, Matthew stresses rather on Jewish particularism “These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: ‘Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans’ Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel’” (Mt 10:5-6), and Luke is sympathetic towards the Samaritans but shows no special interest “As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. He sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, ‘Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?’ But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went to another village” (Lk 9:51-55).

In John 8:48 “the Jews” called out to Jesus as “a Samaritan and demon-possessed.” A Samaritan is used here as a term of abuse (cf. John 4:9) “The Jews a heretic, a schismatic, an idolater, a man self excommunicated with whom no man should fellowship. Lindars (1981:332) refer to Bowman’s view that the description Samaritan is meant quite seriously, because the teaching of Jesus (as presented by John) is indebted to Samaritan traditions. Lindars (1981:337) writes: “Recent studies have laid much stress on John’s knowledge of the Samaritans, suggesting a closer community of ideas than has been formerly recognized.”

The apparent preferential treatment in John 4 towards the Samaritans refer indirectly to the polemic between hostile Jews and Jesus’ believers, rather than the author’s attempt to bridge Christian Jews and Samaritans.

A third reason for determining the presence of Samaritans in the gospel setting: Jesus says, “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep,” which alludes to God’s promise of a shepherd to take care of his flock (Ezek 34:1-24). Supporters of Samaritan influence refer Jesus’ saying also to Ezek 37:15-23, a prophetic symbol of God’s gathering Judah and Ephraim into one nation.

However, an appropriate interpretation of John 10:16 is that the gospel has a missionary character that originates from Jesus, who once preached to Samaritans (John 4) but actually had the nations in mind. Therefore the gospel proclaims
Jesus as Christ and “the Saviour of the world” (John 4:42) to both Jews and non-Jews. Pamment (1982:228) argues effectively on this point. This emphasis on the universal does not necessitate any attempt to bridge Jews and Samaritans.

On the basis of these arguments we may understand that Samaritans were among the audience of the gospel, but we may not know how actively the Samaritans were involved in the life setting of the church. I agree with Ng (2001:107) mentioning that proposals like Brown’s, “Jews who converted Samaritans had come in,” or Bowman’s, that “the author was trying to bridge Jews and Samaritans in Christ,” are speculative. What can be said is that the author had in mind, either historical witnesses or as objective persuasion, or both, of the faith that Jesus was the eschatological Christ, who has brought in salvation for all who believe (John 20:30-31). Its Christology and not the inclusion of a Samaritan interest characterize Johannine eschatology. Furthermore, the full significance of water symbolism in John 4 has to be recognized in terms of John’s eschatology, not just its historical setting.

Therefore we conclude speculating about settings behind the formation of the gospel and concentrate on the theological meanings of the historical event presented in the final composition.

Relation between the Event and the Composition

Léon-Dufour’s (1981:439-456) proposal of “double symbolism in the Fourth Gospel,” looks for symbolic significance in the Jewish milieu of the event, and the Christian milieu of John’s interpretation of the past. Thus, regaining the coherence and relevance of the speeches and dialogues by placing them in the Jewish context of the first century would be a first principle of interpretation.

Another principle would be to develop a deeper understanding of the present in light of the past, for the Evangelist does not only present Jesus in contact with his contemporaries but projects upon them the situation of those who encounter Jesus in post-Easter times. Léon-Dufour (1981:444-446), gives advice to, as it is indispensable for every Christian, to develop this deeper understanding.
The essence of Løn-Dufour’s interpretation is found in the way he deals with the misunderstanding of people who were in dialogue with Jesus such as Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, and the Galileans.

Ng (2001:108) makes the following statement: “Jesus’ revelation often consists initially in an invitation to conversion by unveiling a higher realization of Jewish expectation.” We find that when such a person misunderstands or doubt the possibility of Jesus’ revelation, Jesus continues to uphold it in a way that points ultimately to the Easter event. The double reference of Jesus’ dialogue with people is successfully pointed out: Firstly, it is through their common language, “that of the promises of Israel” that Jesus appeals to them. Secondly, though they usually fail to comprehend or believe that Jesus is the “fulfilment” of promises, Jesus continues with the deeper level revelation of his “paschal death,” which is the Christian or Easter faith of the gospel (Løn-Dufour 1981:444-445).

Two levels of reference in order with the eschatological interpretation of Johannine water symbolism are proposed. An association of promise and fulfilment occur in the early sections of the gospel, however, towards the end the expression for fulfilment, which is of the first level, becomes more implicit, and the expression for passion, which is of the second level, becomes emphatic. These two levels can easily be noticed in the version of the Samaritan woman in John 4. Jesus’ dialogue with this woman does not really end in a failure; rather, it ends in a digression, which is Jesus’ dialogue with his disciples. Following afterwards is the positive response of the Samaritans from the woman’s town. Jesus used the common language of the promises of Israel, which was to be understood in the Jewish milieu when he used the words “the gift of God” and “living water” in John 4:10. By saying: “a time is coming” (John 4:21, 23,) Jesus referred to the fulfilment of this promise by himself on the cross. It was only later on in the Christian milieu that this fulfilment became obvious.

There are two levels of revelation in the digression, that is, Jesus’ dialogue with the disciples. “Meanwhile his disciples urged him, ‘Rabbi, eat something.’ But he said to them, ‘I have food to eat that you know nothing about.’
Then his disciples said to each other, ‘Could someone have brought him food?’ ‘My food,’ said Jesus, ‘is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true” (John 4:31-38).

Jesus began the dialogue with talking about food, a common language in the Jewish milieu and a language of promises. Jesus continued to reveal a further truth, that of reaping and sowing, speaking of the future missionary activity of the church even though the disciples did not understand the first truth. Cullman (1956:185-192) in his interpretation of this passage, also points at this two-level significance of the symbolic language and comments: “one of the many interests of the author of the fourth Gospel is … to show that the Christ of the Church corresponds to the Jesus of history … And in this manner of recording the life of Jesus the fourth Gospel betrays a special interest in the missionary task … But his chief interest is in the actual origin of the preaching of the gospel beyond the Jewish people in the mission in Samaria. His aim is to prove that it was begun by Jesus himself even though, during his life, he counselled his followers to avoid the Samaritan towns.”

He makes a specific point about the setting of the gospel, that is, the Samaritans are targets of evangelism in the author’s mind, also, that by citing the Samaritan event from the life of Jesus, the author was providing grounds to the Samaritan mission. Regardless of how a major target Samaria was in the gospel setting, the proclamation of the eschatological Christ to all people is no doubt a purpose of the gospel.

Our objective is to interpret Johannine water symbolism at two different levels of Jesus’ revelation by knowing its significance in the Jewish milieu as well as in the Christian milieu. Both the historical event and the final composition will be kept in mind. Lόon-Dufour’s two-level interpretation of the symbol and Cullman’s similar approach to John 4, serve as a model to work from.
Theologically, there is a symbolic relationship that is eschatological between the two levels of meaning in the Gospel of John. Whereas water and food are Old Testament themes that symbolize the promises of Israel in the Gospel of John, they become symbols of Christological salvation and eschatological blessings in the Gospel of John. The two symbolic functions are eschatologically related. John 4 renders us a historical event in which these symbols function at two levels: Firstly, as eschatological promises understood by Jesus and his contemporaries in the Jewish milieu. Secondly as eschatological fulfilment in Christ, revealed by Jesus in the accomplishment of his death and resurrection. The post-Easter Church brought the two together in the composition of the Johannine Gospel. The result is a symbolism that relates themes with Christological salvation. Johannine symbolism in this respect is eschatological in character.

3.2 STRUCTURE AND THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

John 4:1-42 taken as a whole is well structured and proposed outlines are quite similar to one another. Connections between the water symbol and other significant ideas and themes will become more obvious when studied.

The Dialogue Structure

The general perception of this passage in John 4 is two successive dialogues that take place. Jesus’ two sets of interactions, one with the Samaritan woman and the next one with the Disciples of Jesus, form two of the core sections.
Various commentators and literary scholars’ work reflect this “common sense” approach. A typical example is O’Day’s (1986:51-54) outline, called bipartite division. He considers John 4:1-3 a section of the central Judea-Samaria itinerary and considers John 4:4 a diversion from it rather than a part of it.

4:4-6 Introduction: the setting of the narrative
4:7-26 First dialogue: Jesus and the woman,
   a) Vv. 7-15 “give me a drink”
   b) vv. 16-26 “Go, call your husband”
4:27-30 Transition scene
4:31-38 Second dialogue: Jesus and the disciples
4:39-42 Conclusion: Jesus and the Samaritans.

Brodie (1993:215) propose a tripartite structure which divides Jesus’ nine utterances in John 4 into three sections, each with utterances of increasing lengths: (1) 4:7b, 10, 13-15; (2) 4:16, 17b-18, 21-24; and (3) 4:26, 32, 34-38. However, this is a neat but artificial outline, which does not really indicate how the event proceeds.

Olssons (Ng 2001:112-113) divides the narrative into thirty-two event-units, though, he leaves the two dialogues (vv. 7-26 and vv. 31-38) intact and treats them separately as speeches instead of events. In his semic analysis of John 4, Boers (Ng 2001:112-113) studies speeches and events together as sequences. However, his division of units are similarly guided by the development of dialogues. Therefore he calls the two dialogues the sequence with the woman and the sequence with the disciples.

Okure(1988:76-77) demonstrates that Narration and exposition are the two prominent sections in her outline. Okure is noteworthy for not only seeing them as two structures of equal importance, but relating them logically as “thesis” and “consequential argument.” John 4:1-26(27) deals with this [Jesus’] mission dialogically from the standpoint of the non-believer, the Samaritan woman. John 4: 31-38 deals with it didactically from the standpoint of the disciples and vv. 28-30, 39-42 deals with it dramatically and conclusively by illustrating …
On a different level, the structural relationship between vv. 1-26 and 28-42 can be compared to that which exists elsewhere in the Gospel between the Semeion and its relevant explanatory discourse.

So, in Okure’s (1988:77) outline, the passage consists of two parts. The first part is Jesus’ missionary act, which she calls the thesis, and it mainly consists of the first dialogue. The second part is the explanation of that act, which consists of the rest of the passage including the second dialogue. Mission here is the emphasis and unifying theme of the whole passage.

4:1-26 Thesis or Narration
   vv. 1-6 Introduction
   vv. 7-26 The Missionary Dialogue
4:28-42 Consequential Argument:
   vv. (27) 28-30 Demonstratio
   vv. 31-38 Expositio (an instructional dialogue)
   vv. 39-42 Demonstratio.

The Drama Structure

Ng (2002:113) refers to Windisch, the first one who proposed a drama for the text and his translation of the text as a drama in seven scenes:

(1) At the well, Jesus comes to the well with his disciples …
(2) At the well, a Samaritan woman comes and Jesus talks with her …
(3) At the well, the disciples return and the woman leaves …
(4) In the city, the woman testifies and the people go with her …
(5) At the well, the disciples have brought food and Jesus talks …
(6) At the well, the Samaritans have come and Jesus goes with them …
(7) In the city, the Samaritans gather around the woman to say …

Although Windisch’s drama brings out the lively exchange of conversation and movement of characters and demonstrates the coherence of the passage, his dramatic structure did not attract attention.
Rather than satisfactorily describe the structure, the seven scenes at best, outline a drama made out of the text (Ng 2001:113). Brown (1966-70:177-185) proposes a structure of two scenes,

Scene One (John 4:4-26)
Scene 1a: The Living Water (vv. 6-15)
Scene 1b: True Worship of the Father (vv. 16-26)
Scene Two (4:27-38)
Embedding: the use of the two proverbs
Conclusion (4:39-42)

Lee’s (1991:66) outline ends up quite similar to Brown’s and brings out more or less the same themes. She separates the passage into three scenes, each with a central image: living water (vv.7-17), the place of true worship (vv. 16-29[30]), and food that the disciples know nothing about, and again food, (eating in action,) doing the will of the father (vv. [30] 31-42).

*Inner Thematic Connections*

John 4 is composed also of themes and not only dialogues and scenes. Bultmann (1971:175-76) discovered in the revelation-discourse he has extracted from John 4, the coherent theme of witness, that is, Jesus’ self-witness (vv. 1-30) and in verses 31-34, the Believers witness.

Ultimate concerns that are theological rather than literary repeatedly occurs and therefore, the unity or coherence of a passage not be argued for from a purely literary perspective. In the same way that symbolism may be used to speak of eschatology, scenes and dialogues are vehicles that convey theological ideas, often as themes. O’Day (1986:50) argues in this respect that the so-called “clumsy seams” in vv. 8 and 27 should be viewed as signs of careful and intentional procedure, because a thematic unity can be recognized as drawing the episodes together into a whole.
O’Day (1986:50) believes that a growing consensus regarding the theme of John 4 is the question of Jesus’ identity or self-revelation. There are in addition to the divisional themes such as the living water, the true worship and sowing and harvesting, at least three unifying themes in the passage. First, the Christological theme of who Jesus is seems to be the most obvious and significant. Commentators noted that “there is a ‘crescendo’ of the three confessions made about Jesus: the Prophet (4:19), the Christ (4:29) and the Saviour of the World (4:42). Key words used in John 4: a Jew (4:9), Sir (4:11), art thou greater than our father Jacob (4:12), a prophet (4:19) I am He, the Christ (4:26,29), Saviour of the world (4:42), point out that the revelation of “who Jesus is” remains a central and continual concern throughout the passage, regardless an obvious digression in the second dialogue. Therefore in confirmation, the passage communicates the overall emphasis of the Gospel, to reveal that Jesus is the Christ and that faith in him will bring about salvation (John 20:30-31).

Secondly, the whole passage is united by a mission emphasis. The final confession “This is truly the Saviour of the world” (v.42) is a climax to the theme. Carson (1988:214) regards Okure’s study as exceptional.

Structure critical scholars consider John 4:8 and 27 disturbing whereas Okure (1988:133) consider them as essential “intersections whose purpose is to prepare for the major insertion of vv. 31-38.” “For” in v.8 (For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food) is explanatory of the fact that Jesus was able to proceed with his missionary dialogue with the woman because the disciples, who were not ready for it, were away. The fact that the Disciples of Jesus were not ready and in need of Jesus’ teaching (vv. 31-38) to understand the mission Jesus was accomplishing and to learn to do likewise, was confirmed by their reaction when they saw Jesus talking to the woman. The apparent insertion of the second dialogue, therefore, is unified with the total passage under the theme of mission.
Close to this concept of mission, is the emphasis on work. Though the word mission may not be found in the text, the word work can be significant. Olson (Ng 2001:116) finds “Jesus’ ergon and the Samaritans” a more accurate definition of the theme of the narrative. Jesus’ ergon, he states, involves a revelation of Christ to the Samaritans and an incorporation of the Samaritans in the new people of God.”

A third subtle, however imperative inner thematic connection should be found in the use of symbolism throughout the passage, specifically, the water and food imagery and the harvest imagery. Most scholars are in agreement that in terms of misunderstanding, there is a literary parallel between the two dialogues, first of the woman and then of Jesus’ disciples.

Other’s, like Lee (1994:87-88) points out that between the two there is even a natural transition from the use of water to the use of food, as symbolic of the need and satisfaction of life. Note should be taken that water and food are Old Testament themes that speak of the needs of Israel, symbolizing God’s promise in providing for them. However, in this passage of John 4, they also turn out to be symbols of eschatological fulfilment. So there is a fulfilment theme that unifies them.

External Connection of Themes

Provable by external connections, the three unifying themes describe above, are also, overall themes of the Gospel. The Christological theme repeats itself throughout the gospel in various sections composed of either signs or discourses. It is spelled out at the end by the purpose statement, “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God …” (20:31). A number of the literary patterns used in the Gospel show a Christological interest. The misunderstandings, or symbolic narratives” as named by Lee (1994:11-15), have to do with faith in Jesus as Christ. Leidig (Ng 2001:117) states that a number of dialogues in John demonstrate a pattern of four steps: “Weckung des Interesses für das Heil”; “Angeb des heils”; “Zeichen order Erleben des Heils”; and “Bekenntnis zum Messias.”
The mission theme can be seen in the universalism that penetrates the gospel, “For God so loved the world …” (John 3:16-17), “I have other sheep …” (John 10:16), “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message” (John 17:20). A missionary intent is even revealed in the overall purpose of the gospel, “But these are written that you may believe …” (John 20:31). John 4 contributes to this theme in giving us a record of the Samaritan outreach.

The fulfilment theme prevails throughout the Gospel, in view of the fact that Johannine symbols and allusions to the Old Testament are repeatedly used. In John 4 we have water, food, harvest, most of which recur in other passages. Barret (Ng 2001:118) points out, “this section is linked with the preceding sections in two ways: (a) by their common theme that in Jesus Judaism and the Old Testament find their fulfilment … (b) by the use of the term ‘water’”.

3.3 SYMBOLSIM IN THE FIRST DIALOGUE

In this study of John 4 we will go through the symbols used in the two dialogues. It will be evident that the symbols used in these dialogues are all in one way or another related to the theme of living water. In this way they bear significance to the overall use of water symbolism in John.

We will start off to consider the references in the first dialogue that possibly have symbolic meaning. In addition to living water, which is the leading symbol, the others are Jacob’s well, the woman’s five husbands,” and this mountain or Jerusalem.

Arrival at Jacob’s well

The question rises if there is any significance in the transitional references made in John 4:1-9. A reference is given in 4:1-4 to make known that Jesus and his disciples were travelling into Samaria. The specific location of Sychar is described in 4:5-6, and the scene of Jesus’ discourse with the woman is set in v. 7a.
The isolation of their dialogue is made apparent in v. 8, “His disciples had gone into the town to buy food” and in v. 9b, the oddness, “How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans). Some scholars (Ng 2001:133) find that these references clarify the background, and that they are geographically truthful, while, others may find that there is ethnic intolerance between Jews and Samaritans, or that a women-and men issue current in the Johannine church is kept in view.

None of these finds confirmation in the context, though, the barrier between Jews and Samaritans may imply the need of mission, and the conversion of the woman suggest equality between disciples of different sexes (Okure 1988:133-36). The significance of these references, besides setting the background, is that the Samaritans were among those who anticipated the Messiah. Also, Jesus as the eschatological Christ met their need for salvation.

The account is positioned alongside the Cana episode, which occurred in Galilee, and the cleansing of the temple and the Nicodemus discourse, which occurred in Jerusalem. It is within a series of episodes revealing Jesus as the eschatological Christ. Two symbolic uses may be found in this transitional passage. First, the thematic symbolism as proposed by Meeks (1966:159-169), Jesus’ moving into Samaria to be met with positive responses can be part of a geographical framework that suggests a preference of Galilee and Samaria over against Judea. Second, subtly, but unambiguously, Jacob’s well stands for Samaritan religious traditions. Our focus is on the symbolic meaning of Jacob’s well. John 4 can be a significant piece of evidence for the centrality of Jacob’s well in Samaritanism, as well as the importance of other features such as Gerizim, Sychar and Jacob’s sons, reflected in many extra-biblical references.

Based on these, Olson (Ng 2001:134) has worked optimistically on the historical origin of the well: that Jacob gave a field and the well in the field to his son Joseph, and both were passed on to the Samaritans. Aside from being the site for the encounter between Jesus and the woman, this well may well have been a monument of Jacob’s greatness in Samaria.
Alter (1981:51-56) suggests that Jacob’s well at the Johannine level was used to create a type scene hinting at the encounter with the future betrothed at a well. Although type scene may be an effective language used by John, we do not see any frequent use of this device in the gospel to be confident about this interpretation. A straightforward interpretation is that Jacob’s well stand for the significance of Jacob in Samaria, and that the well, as a long time provider of life sustenance, symbolizes the credibility of traditional Samaritan doctrines, and to both of these the Samaritan woman gave her allegiance. So, the scene at the well is set for Jesus’ and the woman’s physical and social encounter as well as for their theological confrontation. The follow-on dialogue on water, with the repeated use of words such as fountain and well (4:7-15), confirms that Jacob’s well is an introductory symbol, introducing Jesus’ symbolic use of water.

Just as the woman’s leaving of her jar symbolizes renunciation of a former faith, arrivals at the well anticipate a challenge to her allegiance to that faith. Later on in the dialogue the woman raises a question “Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?” (4:12). The woman here express what Jacob’s well symbolizes for her.

Its well-recognized, close similarity to John 8:53a “Are you greater than our father Abraham?” make clear that Jacob’s well is mentioned at the Johannine level not so much as a type scene but as a counterpart of the fatherhood of Abraham (8:12-59). The Johannine message is that the Jews exalted Abraham and the Samaritans exalted Jacob, however, Jesus challenged both since he is the eschatological Christ.

The Living Water

A common approach to the first dialogue is to dissect it into two so that both sections are initiated by a request on Jesus’ part: “Give me a drink” (4:7), and, “Go, call your husband” (4:16). The effect of this is that living water appears to be a theme only in the first section (4:7-15), whereas “worship in spirit and truth” dominates the second section (4:16-26) as a second theme (see O’Day’s outline above).
However, living water could well be the major symbol used by Jesus in this dialogue to reveal to the woman who he is and what he has to give (4:10). Furthermore, Jesus’ revelation to the woman takes the full dialogue to complete. The question raised early in the dialogue “who it is that asks you for a drink…” (4:10), is not answered until the end, “I who speak to you am he” (4:26). Thus, the theme of living water appears to be central to the whole dialogue and in this case, dissection of the dialogue into sections, may obstruct interpretation.

Lee’s (1994:66) study of John 4 as a symbolic narrative is an example. She breaks the text up into three scenes with three respective images: “living water” (vv. 7-15), “place” (vv. 16-29), and……. meat, harvest (vv. 31-42,) and in each of them she looks for a common pattern: an opening request, a further statement, an initial response, christological revelation, and a faith response. In this way Lee perceives symbolism only in literary patterns. She overlooks the significance of the water symbol itself, a symbol extensively used in the linguistic and theological context of the New Testament times. Rather than a mere literary device, the water symbol in John 4 becomes a theme with an underlying reference to salvation.

It is a vehicle for Jesus’ revelation, which take the full dialogue to complete, for the living water (4:10, 14) cannot be understood without the knowledge of the Messiah (4:25). What Jesus was trying to reveal but the woman misunderstood, namely, the meaning of living water is obviously vital to interpretation. Ng (2001:136-137) suggests that Jesus’ use of living water should be understood as a double symbolism.

First, the earthly symbolizes the heavenly or the physical symbolizes the metaphysical. By offering fresh water Jesus was actually talking about the quickening of life (4:10). This may be called the vertical dimension of the water symbol, which the woman failed to understand in the early part of the dialogue (4:7-15). Second, there is a horizontal dimension to the water symbol in which the traditional worship symbolizes the eschatological worship. The woman was guided by Jesus to come to understanding with this in the latter part of the dialogue, as she inquired about the place of worship (4:16-26).
The latter discourse was an enlightenment rather than a discrete discussion, on the meaning of living water, which is both christological and eschatological in this context. The exposition of living water carries on throughout the first dialogue in spite of the apparent shift of topic from living water to true worship. Thus, it was only at the end of the full dialogue that the meaning of living water was sufficiently communicated to the woman.

In the first six exchanges of Jesus’ dialogues, he endeavoured two times to bring the conversation up from the earthly level to the heavenly. He first asked for a drink (4:7), and when he was mocked for doing so (4:9) he responds by introducing himself and his living water (4:10): “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water” (4:10).

In his second attempt, Jesus made it possible for the conversation to move from the earthly level to the metaphysical level by changing the topic from the need of a drink to the offer of living water. Jesus’ disclosure of truth at this occasion involves a double question, what the gift of God is and who he is? Judging from the coordinate structure of the conditional, the two questions are closely related and equally important. Schnackenburg (Ng 2001:137) suggests “The chiasm of the sentence, which goes from the ‘gift of God’ to the identity of the speaker and from the speaker back to the ‘living water,’ implies that the ‘gift of God’ must also be the ‘living water’, which Jesus offers.”

In the Judaistic background represented by rabbinic literature, the common semantic section of these two terms would be one classified as “Torah.” The rabbis mainly related the term gift with the Torah and a suggestion is, that the general conception of the term gift of God must have been familiar to the woman. It is doubtful however, that the Samaritan woman would think of the Torah just as a rabbi would do. The woman’s instant response “Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us the well ...” (4:12) strengthen the thought that Jesus must have expected that she would think of Jacob’s well in the first place when he mentioned the gift of God.
Jesus was obviously revealing that he himself was the gift of God, and that is confirmed by his comparison of the other question “if you knew the gift of God and ‘who it is’ that asks you for a drink, …” (4:10), and the Johannine teaching of God’s gift as this only begotten Son: the giver of gifts, is himself God’s gift (3:16). Who Jesus is, at this point, might have been harder for the woman to understand than what God’s gift is, and as we will see, the dialogue continues with water as a theme.

In the following two exchanges Jesus again endeavoured to bring the discourse up from the earthly level to the heavenly. The woman responded in 4:11-12 as if Jesus was talking about earthly water, also, as if Jesus was proclaiming to be greater than Jacob as a giver. Her response demonstrated a typical misunderstanding. As she was blind to Jesus’ symbolic use of water, Jesus differentiated it for her: “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (4:13-14).

Jesus’ differentiation takes the form of two contrastive notes, the first contrast, “everyone who …of this water” and “which I will give” is implicit in demonstratives, but symbolically “this water” (that was drawn from Jacob’s well) represents earthly water. The second contrast emerges as an elaboration of the effect of the latter “will never thirst” but “Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up to eternal life” with the latter clause explaining the former. The importance of this cannot be overstated. The two kinds of water do not merely differ in the duration of their effects, but they are inherently different. Jesus in particular about living water said It becomes a spring welling up to eternal life. So, here we have how the living water works in a person.

How was the symbol used among Jews and Samaritans and how was it understood in the Johannine composition? The water symbol has a broader connation than the gift of God in the Judaistic background. In the Old Testament the Lord is called “the spring of living water” (Jer 2:13). Alternatively, water signifies the Lord’s salvation (Isa 12:3).
It also signifies cleansing, and along that line it refers to the “Spirit” (Isa 44:3; Ezek 36:25-27). In wisdom literature it is applied to “wisdom” (Prov 18:4). In rabbinic literature water is very often used to refer to the “Torah,” sometimes also to the Spirit. Some believe that wisdom, knowledge and Torah represent a commonly accepted triple meaning for the water symbol in the New Testament Judaistic context. Scholarly consensus is that water in this context is pre-eminently either the Torah or the Spirit. It is unclear how the Samaritans used or understood the symbol.

With a canon of Scripture restricted to the Pentateuch, they might not have appreciated the prophetic allusions to water, though Bowman (Ng 2001:140) communicates that there is reference to the Taheb’s water in Samaritan literature, according to the Samaritan hymn Shira Yetima written by Abisha ben Pinhas of the fourteenth century “Water shall flow from the buckets of the Taheb.” This late document might have been influenced by Christian theology, but it might also reflect early Samaritan eschatology.

The use of the water symbol have to be interpreted in light of its close parallel in John 7:37-38: “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scriptures has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” The two passages are almost identical in the imagery used: water will be given and will flow out from either the believer or Christ.” Thus, the water imagery respectively portrays, in the two discourses, the situation of the believer and Jesus the giver. Okure (1988:103) points out that “shall become” and “springing up” (4:14b) describe both conceptually and visually the living and life-giving quality of the water.

These verbs may well describe the indwelling and out flowing of the Holy Spirit, or in New Testament thought, the baptism and gift of the Holy Spirit. The versatile symbol also has a common sense similarity to that of its neighbouring term; the gift of God, as the comparison of the two implies a degree of synonymy. In this common sense, the living water means the gifts of God including Christ himself and all that he bestows, salvation, purification, joy and eternal life.
The Holy Spirit, who is also symbolized by living water, and who has the living lifegiving quality symbolized by the constant quenching of thirst, fulfils these gifts in the life of a believer.

Macdonald (1964:276, 292, 435) suggests, “Although Samaritan liturgies such as Memar Markah mention the messianic use of living water, they are too late as sources to prove that a Samaritan theology existed at that time that refers water to ‘salvation.’” Neither can it be established that the Samaritans at Jesus’ time associated ‘water’ with the Torah or the Spirit. Thus, the Samaritan woman could not be perceptive about the symbolic sense of the living water as the Holy Spirit, and held only a general conception of the gift of God, such as the gift of a well. She responded a second time with perseverance about the earthly water, “Give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water” (4:15). The woman’s response to Jesus’ offer is a misunderstanding of it to be a solution to her need and problem.

The Five Husbands

Outwardly, the woman’s need and problem was to have to come to the well for water “Give me that water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water” (4:15). It is commonly assumed that her bad reputation had made it necessary for her to come at noontime “It was about the sixth hour” (4:6), or to walk a long distance to this particular well to avoid crowds.

However, bad reputation is among the best assumptions, because there is nothing disclose about the woman in the text except the fact that she had five husbands. Jesus’ sudden summons of her husband at the next exchange of the dialogue implies that her deeper need or problem is of a different kind. Earthly water symbolizes eschatological living water. The earthly action of coming to a well symbolizes the eschatological action of coming to the Messiah, who says to the woman, “Go, call your husband and come back” (4:16).
The next exchanges disclose Jesus’ omniscience (cf. 4:29) and the woman’s questionable marital status. It was once understood in the history of interpretation, that Jesus’ summons of her husbands was a challenge of the woman’s religion. The five husbands represents the five books of Moses, which is the Samaritan canon, or the foreign pagan gods introduce to them during the Assyrian conquest of Samarian, by people who came from five cities (2 Kings 17:24-41). The woman allegorically, would be a symbol of Samaria, but few agree with this today. The woman’s response to Jesus “I can see that you are a prophet” (4:19) and her testimony later on, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” (4:29) confirms that the emphasis of the passage is in fact on Jesus’ demonstration of superhuman knowledge as the eschatological Christ.

Consistent with the emphasis are the earlier question, “Who it is that asks you …” (4:10) and the following comments: “Could this be the Christ?” (4:29), and “this man really is the Saviour of the world” (4:42). It is quite obvious that Jesus’ identity is the foremost subject of the passage. Okure (1988:110-112) provides a fair coverage of positions taken by various scholars and finds that recent literary scholars is in accord that Jesus is presented as one making a self-revelation to the woman, rather than addressing the problem of her immorality. Some agree also, alternatively, that the latter is an issue only as the effect of the revelation.

It could be that Jesus was concerned about the woman’s sinfulness. Though the issue of faith is more pertinent than that of sin in the Gospel, the water symbol obtained a sense of purification. Okure (1988:110) maintains “nowhere in the entire gospel tradition does Jesus set out to confront individuals with their sinfulness.” Sin is often defined as not believing in Jesus (9:41; 15:22, 24; 16:9). It was suitable for the woman’s husband as leader of the family, to be invited by Jesus to share the salvation he was offering to her. The need for the living water symbolized the need for the eschatological blessings of Christ: salvation, purification, joy and eternal life. The necessity of coming to the well symbolizes the necessity of coming to the Messiah, with everything she had done (cf. 4:29).
Therefore, Jesus’ summons of her husband does not present a new subject; rather it is a continuation of the living water discourse. The result is a consciousness of Jesus’ omniscience and his identity that prepares the woman for seeing the meaning of Jesus’ water at a higher level. Thus, to know who He is and what he has to give.

“This Mountain” and “Jerusalem”

The woman’s confession, “I can see that you are a prophet” (4:19), was not a complete understanding though, but a breakthrough in her thinking. A latter utterance of the woman “I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming” (4:25) proves that she was not confessing Jesus the Messiah at this point. It was a confession coherent with the guiding question brought up in 4:10, “what the gift of God is” and “who he is.” A subtopic follows “Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem” (4:20). The respective use of the past and the present-day entail that the authority of her fathers is more important over the present Jewish insistence. The woman confronts this ‘Jewish prophet now talking to her’ (Okure 1988:115).

The cultic traditional worship “on the mountain” or “in Jerusalem” (4:21), were merely symbols pointing to the eschatological worship in Jesus’ discourse following the woman’s question. If living water symbolizes the gifts of God, reflecting a vertical dimension of symbolism, Jesus’ statements of this mountain and Jerusalem implicates a horizontal dimension of symbolism.

Although a sentence separates 4:21 from 4:23 and 24, there should be a connection between the statements in 4:21 “a time is coming when …” and its exposition in 4:23-24, since there is similarity in the beginnings of both.

The additional “and has come…” (4:23), emphasizes the nearness of “a time is coming” which reflects the present eschatology of the gospel. Carson (119:224) gives the best justification, “it is a powerful way to assert the proleptical presence of the Easter hour in Jesus’ ministry.”
Jesus in chapter 4:22 approved the tradition behind Jerusalem as the authentic advancement of salvation and not Jerusalem as the place of worship over against the woman’s mountain. Jesus discriminated against Samaritan history and tradition. This tradition is based on a history of salvation in the context of which Jesus proclaims eschatological fulfilment of Old Testament promises given to Israel. Carson (1991:223) comments “they stand outside the stream of God’s revelation, so that what they worship cannot possibly be characterized by truth and knowledge.”

John 4:23 and 24 feature the qualifier of worship “in spirit and truth,” Jesus’ counter response to the woman’s “in this mountain … in Jerusalem.” Jesus also, describes the worshippers as well as the God who is worshipped: “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is Spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth” (4:23, 24).

The worshippers are qualified as true, which mean, true in the sense of real rather than sincere, since Jesus was speaking in response to the woman’s concern about the place. The heavenly character of the worshippers and the worship is thus described as in spirit and truth, and a contrast is made between on this mountain and in Jerusalem, and in spirit and truth. Thus, the Father seeks heavenly worshippers who worship in the heavenly manner, and that manner is qualified by in spirit and truth.

Therefore, the discourse might assume a symbolic view of worship: cultic activities on the mountain and in Jerusalem symbolize the eschatological worship in spirit and truth, and only worshippers of the latter kind are called true.

This is in agreement with the Johannine concept of symbolism found in “the true light (1:9), “living water” (4:10), and now “the true worshippers” (4:23) and “spirit and truth” (4:23-24).
The totality of Johannine symbolism asks for the next inquiry: is there a personal reference to the Spirit “in spirit and truth?” (4:23-24). The Spirit is also called “the Spirit of truth” (16:13), which can be a parallel to “in spirit and truth” if the latter is taken as hendiadys. What's more, the giver of the Spirit, Jesus, is explicitly called “the truth” (14:6), a further example of a personal reference of the word. If in spirit and truth should simultaneously be interpreted with this personal sense, we have a dual reference here. At the same time it points to the eschatological worship as the true worship, in response to the woman’s concern for the place of worship, and it indicates at the Spirit of truth given by Jesus as the agent of true worship.

Jesus’ comments ends with an explanation for the necessity of heavenly worship: “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth” (4:24). God is spirit is a difficult statement since the term spirit is commonly used in pagan as well as Jewish religions to disprove anthropomorphic view of God. Okure (1988:116) and Carson (1991:225) are in agreement with other scholars that the Old Testament thought of God’s spirituality distinguishes itself in referring not to the nature of God as physical (cf. Stoicism) or metaphysical (cf. Gnosticism) but to the mode of his creative and life-giving activities.

God is never formally called spirit in the Old Testament, though, he is said to be superior because of the power of his Spirit (Isa 31:3) in Creation and Redemption. He is said to instruct the chosen people by the Spirit (Neh 9:20), lord over them and save them by the Spirit (Isa 63:10, 14), restore their life by the Spirit (Ezek 36:27) and send them the Spirit in the eschatological age (Ezek 39:29).

In contrast with this Schnackenburg (Ng 2001:147) points out that “formal parallels deduced from religions outside Christianity are only superficial, for it is mainly the ‘eschatological outlook’ which links this Johannine passage with the prophecy of the last days.”

“In the Johannine perspective, the ‘seeking’ by the Father signifies, not a passive desire on his part, but his causative action in the individual without which a genuine human response is impossible (cf. 6:44, 65; 15:1-2)” (Okure 1988:116).
In other words, it is an eschatological activity of the spirit of God to quicken worship in these last days. This discourse on true worship might be interpreted as a part of Jesus’ revelation on the living water. The Holy Spirit with his living and life-giving quality living water, quench (fulfils), the thirst (needs) of a Believer’s life of heavenly worship. Again, a double symbolism is involved. In the vertical sense the Holy Spirit enables a heavenly worship symbolized by the early one in this mountain and in Jerusalem. Thus, with the coming of Christ, the Holy Spirit will make this heavenly and eschatological worship viable.

In this double symbolism, the spirit signifies both the heavenly and the eschatological. In view of the heavenly, Schnackenburg (Ng 2001:148) suggests that “in John, Spirit signifies all that belongs to God and the heavenly world, in comparison to all that is earthly and human.” Ng (2001:148) says, for this reason she does not fully agree that the statement “God is spirit” (4:24), is parallel to “God is light” and “God is love” (1 John 1:5; 4:8). Carson (1991:225) and other commentators draw this comparison.

Because God is spirit those that worship him must worship in a manner that is conventional with God’s heavenly way, in this context “in spirit and truth” (4:24). In the eschatological sense, spirit typifies the revival or fulfilment of life and worship that will take place at the end times. In John this event is about to happen with the coming of Christ, as Jesus often reveals that he will send the Holy Spirit. Chronological references such as “forever, to eternal life” (4:14), “a time is coming, and has now come when” (4:21, 23), are indicators of this eschatology. Similarly is Jesus’ saying in the dialogue “for salvation is from the Jews” (4:22), which suggests a salvation history that expects the coming of the Holy Spirit. It is through the eschatological giving of the Spirit that “they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks” (4:23). In this context, worship in spirit and truth is made possible by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Granted that in spirit signifies the heavenly and eschatological in worship it is viewed by some that the additional and truth totally reshape the meaning of the phrase.
Similar to others, Okure (1988:116), interprets the phrase with an ethical meaning “The life quality of the worshipper, made proper by the Spirit, or right conduct in attitude and action as the essence of worship.”

Ng (2001:148-149) questions Schnackenburg’s argument that the gospel’s concept of worship revolves around Christ as follows: “This immediate, eschatological gift of the Spirit has come about through Jesus Christ. Hence true adoration in the Spirit is only possible in union with Christ. His glorified body is the holy temple of God (2:21); true worship is performed in him. To this extent, the ?? p?e?ματ? of John is akin to the ?? ?? θσ? of Paul.”

Scholars like Bultmann (1971:190-191), and Carson (1991:225-226), more boldly interpret the phrase as if the second word truth refers clearly to Christ. Burge (Ng 2001:149) considers the effect of it as drawing in the Christological stress and the strongest reason for this view is that truth is typically applied to Christ in the gospel: 1:14, 17; 14:6; 15:26; 16:13; cf. 8:32. Burge (Ng 2001:149) argues that the hendiadys spirit of truth denotes the Spirit of Christ.

It must be maintained that the phrase in spirit and truth refers primarily to heavenly reality, with both nouns hinting at the reality of worship made possible by the Holy Spirit, though, without denying the definitive role of Christ in the eschatological worship in spirit and truth. In the Johannine sense truth, refers to the divine reality revealed by Jesus for his believers in this eschatological age. The two nouns are ruled by the same preposition ??, and their closeness in meaning is commonly agreed upon. The structure of this phrase, which happens twice but only in this passage, is distinct from the other uses of truth in the gospel and therefore asks for a separate rendering. In her scriptures truth may refer to Christ (1:14, 17; 8:32; 14:6), to the Spirit of Christ (14:17; 15:26), or the word of God (17:17). Here it is used as a coordinate to reiterate in spirit. Louw and Nida (Ng 2001:149) suggest that its sense is therefore close to true, which describes the heavenly worshipers (4:23).

In the final exchange of the dialogue the speakers go right to the question of who Jesus is.
It is uncertain how much the woman understood what Jesus had said about worship, though she was led to think of the Messiah: “I know that Messiah … is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us” (4:25). The dialogue ends with Jesus’ final and personal revelation, “I who speak to you am he” (4:26). The climactic ending of this dialogue, thus the woman’s’ reactions “Could this be the Christ?” (4:29), implies that the misunderstanding had dissolve.

The Coherence of the First Dialogue

Two questions, right at the beginning, direct the rest of the conversation, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks …” (4:10a). The symbol of living water is at the same time depicted as a counterpart of the gift of God, “you would have asked him and he would have given you living water,”(4:10b). This first disclosure of who Jesus is, pressed the woman to confront Jesus, “Are you greater than our father Jacob?” (4:11-12), showing misunderstanding of who he is. Clarifying his point, Jesus elaborates on the gift, “the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (4:13-14). A further misunderstanding follows; the woman misunderstood the gift “give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw,” (4:15). However, after Jesus had said all that was explicit about the living water, the woman had not understood its authentic meaning. Though the specific mention of living water seems to stop her in the account, the disclosure of the symbolized truth has only begun. Jesus’ summons of the woman’s husband (4:16), lead to the disclosure of his omniscience as a divine person (4:17-18).

The woman’s response “Sir, I can see that you are a prophet,” (4:19) discloses a stirring in her thinking of who Jesus was. With this incomplete knowledge of Jesus’ identity she raised the question of where the place of worship should be, a disputed subject between the Samaritans and the Jews: “on the mountain or in Jerusalem” (4:20).
Jesus responded by talking about the eschatological worship of God, which is not defined by the place of worship (4:21). The eschatological worship of God is defined by the disclosure received in the traditions of the Jews (4:22). This worship is a heavenly worship and not an earthly worship. The Father himself seeks and enables worshippers to worship, thus, called “true worshippers” (4:23).

The way of worship, in spirit and truth, asks for the help of the Holy Spirit - an essential part of God’s eschatological gifts. Our interpretation of living water, the leading symbol of the passage, would be incomplete without referring to the whole dialogue. Jesus’ gift of living water includes the true worship in spirit, as well as God’s creative and life-giving activity as Spirit in seeking for worshippers (4:24).

Although the woman might not have fully comprehended this revelation of Jesus’, she was prompted to get back to the other question, “I know that Messiah is coming … he will explain everything to us” (4:25). The dialogue ends with Jesus’ climactic disclosure of his true identity, “I … am he” (4:26). Thus, the first dialogue is continuous and complete in relation the full meaning of living water.

*The Double Dimension of Johannine Symbolism*

We have seen that the symbol of water plays a double role in John 4. Tradition is symbolized by the water from the well, and the water Jesus offered symbolizes eschatological blessings. We see thus that the structure of water symbolism has an eschatological sense and it extends throughout the gospel. If eschatological symbolism is represented as horizontal, our study above shows a vertical dimension of Johannine water symbolism. In this, living water is offered as superior to water from Jacob’s well, and true worshippers is described as different from worshippers on the mountain or in Jerusalem, just as the true light is proclaimed in the gospel over against the world’s darkness.

This vertical symbolism can be noticed in Jesus’ discourse on worship, in which true worshippers, God is spirit and worship in spirit and truth refer continuously to a heavenly reality. This double symbolism as well as the present eschatology of the gospel is characteristic of John 4.
This present eschatology is seen in Jesus’ offering of the living water right where Jacob’s well was, and in his talking about heavenly worship as a present reality in contrast to Gerizim and Jerusalem. This present eschatology brings into our view a vertical dimension of symbolism because much of Jesus’ revelation was related in symbolic language. Because of the incarnation and revelation of the eschatological Christ, heavenly gifts have now come down: the true light (1:9); the new temple (raised in three days, 2:19); the living water (4:10, 13-14); the heavenly bread (6:32-33) (Ng 2001:152).

The Comprehensiveness of the Water Symbol

Where salvation and incarnation converge, and Christ comes to bring fulfilment to eschatological hope, the Holy Spirit plays a significant role. In John 4 we are told that the Spirit comes at the eschatological hour to quicken life and worship. In Jesus’ words, “the hour is coming and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, …God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth” (4:24). Jesus’ offer of the living water which is said to “become a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (4:14; cf. 7:39) also expresses this. Therefore, water stands out as the foremost symbol in John 4, and as a major symbol in the gospel.

When we examine the benefit of the eschatological role of the Holy Spirit, the symbol is associated with all the salvific blessings that influence the quickening of life: rebirth, purification, joy, satisfaction similar to the quenching of thirst, heavenly worship, eternal life. “This life-giving activity of the Spirit is the same as the eschatological salvation of Christ that brings along multiple life blessings, or God’s recreation of the world as if ‘bringing in a harvest.’ Therefore, ‘living water’ entails the ‘eschatological harvest’” (Ng 2001:153).

The work of the Spirit in a Believer, is symbolized as a spring of water welling up to eternal life, meaning, the believer’s life in Christ is continuously quickened by the Spirit to live in a manner that complies with God’s way – that entails participation in God’s harvest of gathering people into his kingdom.
The symbols of food and the harvest display the believer’s obedience and participation in Christian mission, which is also part of the eschatological salvation – symbolized as living water in John 4.

3.4 SYMBOLISM IN THE SECOND DIALOGUE

We will now consider the references in the second dialogue that might be symbolic in meaning.

The Leaving of the Water Jar

The woman’s action, “Then, leaving her water jar, the woman …” (4:28), asks for attention as one of the not many details in the course of events. Historico-grammatical exegetes are inclined to take it as a natural reaction and deny its symbolic meaning which literary scholars tend to affirm (Brown 1966-70:1:173; Carson 1991:227-228; Lee 1994:84-85). By symbolic meaning we refer to the woman’s acceptance of or arousing to the disclosure of Jesus, given in the first dialogue. The symbolic language of the living water obviously represents the leading idea of this dialogue.

In reference to the two historical settings our interpretation of this is twofold. At the historical level of the episode, it was natural that the woman left her water jar behind. She was either in a hurry to go, or planning to return, or leaving it for Jesus to use, however, the most probable reason was that she was eager to go back to town to spread the news. Her action was “psychologically” motivated (Okure 1988:169). At the Johannine level, it is also probable that the author makes a significant point of the woman’s action, though the meaning is unsaid. There are two possibilities of what the author is trying to communicate. He is either creating a literary or dramatic effect, or he is speaking symbolically of a theological conversion. He might be doing both. The obvious literary result is that the woman’s eagerness of response is emphasized. Scholars including O’Day (1986:75), and Okure (1988:169-170) propose literary explanations of this detail.
The subtle effect is a contrast between the woman’s enthusiasm about Jesus, expressed in her action, namely, leaving her jar behind at the end of the first dialogue, and the disciples’ misunderstanding of Jesus, expressed in their concern about food at the beginning of the second dialogue. Worth noting is O’Days’ (1986:75) literary explanation, “the function of v. 28 is identical with that of v. 8: the details about going for food and leaving the water jar both indicate that the character who is moving off-stage is not disappearing forever. Both details prepare the reader for the character’s return”. Above contrast can be interpreted as the author’s theological perception of the woman’s action as a renunciation of her old Samaritan religion. It is unclear whether John intends to say so much, because “unlike the water jars of 2:6ff., this one has no ritual purification tied up with it Carson (1991:227-228).

We note, however, that the jar in John 4:1-42 is tied up with all that the woman has to boast in her Samaritan tradition, in particular, the well of her father Jacob. So, the water jar symbolizes all that she held to prior to her conversion to Jesus. The extensive use of symbols in the gospel supports such an interpretation.

**The Food Imagery**

In what way is the food symbol here related to the water symbol, and in what way is Jesus’ explanation of the symbol “to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work” (4:34), related to his discourse in John 6, “for food that endures to eternal life” (6:27)? Ng (2001:120) argues that these related concepts are simultaneously parallel and dissimilar. Jesus’ discourse on food is closely connected with his preceding discourse on water.

A similar pattern of misunderstanding, a similar use of life sustenance as a symbol, and similar dominance of a theme that leads to her interests outside the immediate situation, is all found in this discourse similar to the previous one. Does this literary similarity suggest an identical relation between food and water? No the two are not all identical. Bultmann (1971:195) reminds us of the difference,
“Clearly one cannot show any close connection … For there the ʔd?? was a gift which he gives to men; here he himself lives from the β?? µa.”

When this discourse is compared with the one in John 6, the same difference is visible. Here food refers to Jesus’ carrying out God’s will to its completion, though there it refers to the gift of eternal life, which Jesus gives to believers. Among all the symbols” used in John, who so often symbolizes eschatological blessings for humankind, the food here distinguishes itself as being a blessing for Jesus himself.

Should the connection between food and water in the Old Testament and in Judaistic understanding, which are the main conceptual backgrounds, be ignored? In Odeberg’s (1929:187-188) commentary on John, which he claims to have composed “in its relation to contemporaneous religious currents,” a synonymous relation is drawn between water and food” in John 4:1-42, and between the concept of food in John 4:31-34 and that in 6:25-29. The fact that ?????esʔa? t? ???a t?? ?e?? is mentioned together with β?? s ?? in both passages provides a ground for Odeberg to say, “The significance of 4:32, 34 immediately becomes clear, when read in the light of 6:27-29 ....”

Odeberg (1929:187-188) refers to 4:32, 34 on commenting 6:27-29: “The conception of the ‘Bread from Heaven’ is to be understood as parallel to that of the ‘Water’, i.e., it falls under the category of the conceptions of the Divine, spiritual efflux … It is also apparent that the ‘Manna of Moses’ is the exact parallel of the ‘Water of the well of Jacob’ of 4:7-15 …The expressions ‘Bread from Heaven’, the ‘Imperishable Food’ correspond to current ideas and expressions … are in the mystical language further connected with the terms ‘water’, ‘rain’ etc. The parallelism between celestial bread and spiritual water’ is thus not confined to John (Odeberg 1929:238-240). Odeberg (1929:247-248) listed many quotations taken mostly from Jewish literature.

It is obvious from the comments made on the Old Testament by the Jewish people, that manna from heaven, along with water, stood for Jewish eschatological and messianic expectations (cf. Behm quoted by Ng 2001:122).
This conception is demonstrated by the following words of Midr. Qoh (Ng 2001:122): “just as the First Saviour [Moses] caused the manna to descend, as it is written (Ex 16:4) … the Last Saviour will cause the manna to descend, as it is written (Ps 72:16) … Just as the First Saviour brought up the well, so the Last Saviour will bring up the water, as it is written (Joel 3:18)”.

This quotation is also significant in, that Moses is acknowledged in it, as giver of the manna from heaven, a belief that John 6:32 prove false. Also, in that the wells, water, and the manna are compared in a style that agrees with the parallelism found in John 4 and 6. “The bread of life” in John 6 should, without doubt, be understood in the light of the Judaistic background, but can we interpret the food symbol in John 4 in precisely the same way? Both the similarity and the dissimilarity between the two passages must be taken seriously in order to answer this question. The dissimilarity is definite, as we have distinguished how the referents differ: John 4:31-34 points to a blessing given to Jesus, but John 6:25-29 points to the blessing of eternal life given to believers. The similarity is also definite, as the idea of work is in both cases, central to the meaning of the symbol. In both cases there is an antithesis between earthly food and food coming from the Father (note 6:27b) “Do not work for the food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him the Father has placed his seal of approval”(6:27).

In both cases the word β?? s ?? (the act of eating) or β?? µa (food of any kind) is used, instead of ι?? (bread, loaves, food; fig., spiritual nutriment). The two words were used interchangeably, though; according to BAGD (Ng 2001:122), β?? s ?? is applied more broadly to actions of eating, these words in our present context, can securely be treated as synonymous.

This last point of similarity is important to a right evaluation of the relationship between water and food in John 4: 1-42, and the relationship between the food discourses in 4:31-34 and 6:25-29. Note should be taken that the words β?? s ?? and β?? µa, are hardly ever used in either the Synoptics or the Gospel of John.
While none of these words even appear in the book of Acts they appear more often in the Pauline epistles and the book of Hebrews, referring to pagan food or food and drink in general. When food is talked about in a Palestinian setting, the word ??t?? is normally used. In the Septuagint, unleavened bread, showbread, and bread used for feasts and offerings are all translated ??t??, and the manna is commonly called ??t?? (??t??) ???a???. In the New Testament, sacramental bread is referred to as ??t??, which, precisely is Paul’s use of the word as well: ??t?? refers to the sacramental bread, and ß??s?? and ß??µa to food and drink that have no theological connation.

Characteristic of the Gospel of John, is the symbolic use of the word ??t?? as found in John 6:32-35 “bread of heaven” and “bread of life” (6:32-35). Also, ??t?? is mostly used in John twenty-four times while ß??s?? is used four times and ß??µa only once. It is significant therefore, that except for being in 6:55 “For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink”, ß??s?? and ß??µa are almost exclusively used in 4:32, 34 and 6:27. They are used here in exclusive reference to ????? (work), and outside the gospel of John we can hardly find them used with such a sense. In John 6, in which, ??t?? is used twenty times throughout and constitutes a bread” theme, the word ß??s?? is peculiarly used in 6:25-29, the well-established food discourse (instead of bread). In John 4 and John 6, ß??s?? and ß??µa, instead of ??t??, are intentionally used to achieve a meaning related to work.

There is without doubt a close relationship between John 4:31-34 and 6:25-29, first, in referring to the concept of work, second, in the symbolic use of food, and third, in the peculiar choice of the words ß??s?? and ß??µa. Thus, it is reasonable to interpret the two passages together as Odeberg does, though; he never sorts out the reasons.

Odeberg (1929:247-48) points out that a further reason for interpreting the passages together is the importance of conceptual backgrounds. The respective emphasis on water as well as bread in both John 4 and John 6 reveals that the author has this Judaistic comparison of the two in mind.
John 4:31-34 and 6:25-29 are shorter discourses on β???s?? and ?????, embedded in the longer discourses of water and bread in John 4 and John 6. In other words, within the water and bread chapters of the Johannine gospel, we meet these two passages on food’ and work in 4:31-34 and 6:25-29. How is the relation between them to be understood? The similarity is recognized, that both concentrate on β???s?? and ?????, but the difference is also undeniable, that in 4:31-34 Jesus talks about his own food whereas in 6:25-29 he talks about the believers’. O’Day (1986:79) suggests that the shift of β???s?? to β??µa in 4:32 to β??µa in 4:34 (occurring only here in John) shows that Jesus was introducing a new category: Jesus’ own food which is to be distinguished from the disciples’ food. ??µa is a crystallization of Johannine Christology.

I agree with Ng’s (2001:124) disagreement with this interpretation, as the shift of word cannot possibly indicate such a special meaning, since β???s?? and β??µa are largely synonymous. A distinction occurs in these passages that calls for a different interpretation. Note should be taken that these two passages are educational in nature. In 4:31-34 Jesus teaches with his own example “I have food to eat that you know nothing about” (v. 32), and in 6:25-29 Jesus rebukes and instructs, “You are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had you fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life” (vv. 26, 27).

Note that Jesus gives a clear definition of food and work in both cases, “My Food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work” (4:34), and “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent” (6:29). Since these words are not mainly christological, what Jesus says about his own food in 4:34 should have a double reference. On the one hand Jesus is implying that he has a work to complete, on the other he is teaching his disciples to do the will of God. The rest of the dialogue, which features the harvest theme (4:35-38), will show that Jesus at this point is more concerned about the disciples’ mission than his own self-revelation.
John 4:31-31 must be treated as an integral part of the living water discourse, the same as the shorter food discourse being treated as an integral part of the longer bread discourse in John 6. The two levels of setting, the plain history and the Johannine composition should be kept in mind. At the time of the event, Jesus was teaching disciples during the course of his preaching to the Samaritans. The disciples who were no longer acquiring initial faith as the woman had to learn about that faith in different application. So, a different idea, namely, ????? (work), seems to have emerged. However, is work so incompatible with the acquiring of “water ... into eternal life”? (4:14). We will now look at John 6, in which case Jesus’ audience did not change, and so the compatibility between work and bread can be more easily seen: by doing the work of God and thus believing in his Sent One (6:29), one will acquire salvation and eternal life (6:35-40). That is as good as saying: by seeking the right “food” (6:27) one will get “bread of life” (6:35). The question then is whether there is a similar connection in John 4.

Can it be said that by doing God’s work of harvesting (also act of eating), one will acquire salvation and eternal life (water ... into eternal life)? This connection is difficult to draw at the level of plain history, since the disciples were preoccupied with the earthly food they bought and could not have learned about Jesus’ previous discourse immediately. However, this connection can without difficulty be drawn at the level of the Johannine composition. What Jesus had said was understood in retrospect and put into writing that reflects theological relation between ß??s ?? and ?d??, “work” and “eternal life.” At this level the author and readers were no longer preoccupied with food and drink (ß??s ??) as the first disciples were, but were more influenced by the Old Testament and Judaistic concepts that constituted the background of their understanding. In this context “bread” and “water” stood for messianic and eschatological blessings, and the Johannine conviction was that they were given by Jesus Christ. ??s??, then, was the term symbolizing ????? “work”, the obedience and cooperation on the part of believers and disciples who acquired those blessings.

In the Johannine perspective, work in working for the harvest (4:38) is as much as prerequisite for salvation and blessing as is work in believing in the One God has sent (6:29).
The common context of “water” and “bread” in John 4 and 6 supports this interpretation. Note that the woman instantaneously, as she believed in Jesus, participated in the work of the harvest, expressing her faith in terms of her work. Furthermore, Jesus spoke of the harvest as an eschatological blessing: “Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life” (4:36), as if harvest work has the same effect as the living water. It can be upheld therefore, that ??s??, with a subtle difference, is a counterpart of ??d?? and ??t?? symbolizing eschatological blessings. Related like two sides of a coin, ??d?? and ??t?? are counterparts on the same side of the coin symbolizing Jesus’ gift of salvation and blessings. ??s?? is a counterpart on the other side symbolizing the believers’ work of faith and obedience.

It is obvious that Jesus had in mind God’s eschatological work to finish when he instructed the disciples. At the Johannine level, this eschatological sense stays, although the work has become present mission (cf. 20:31). It is along this line that the harvest imagery directly follows.

The Harvest Imagery

Jesus’ following discourse on the harvest is a further proof that the focus of the discourse was not on “work” as such alone but on the coming of the eschaton and the disciples’ involvement in gathering people into eternal life. Okure (1988:145) makes a comment on 4:34 that fittingly explain this transition from Jesus’ work to the disciples’ work, “the verbs ‘to do’ and ‘to complete’ … underline Jesus’ unique role in the Father’s work … Only upon its completion do the disciples come in as active participants and beneficiaries.” This discourse is marked by two outwardly quoted sayings (4:35, 37), which introduce two main points: the time of the harvest (4:35-36) and the labourers for the harvest (4:37-38).

The passage is also marked with a combination of related ideas, the harvest, he that sows, he that reaps and pʔuʔaʔ, all symbolic of either participants or events in Jesus’ eschatological mission. They are also connected with the previous food symbol, forming an integral whole.
Many have tried to recover the meaning of a possible proverb behind the first saying, “Four months more and then the harvest”, while others are content to think that the saying was merely a comment made by the disciples on the journey. Okure (1988:149) and Brown (1966-70:1:182), among others, held this view. Jesus’ “I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest” (4:35b), suggest that Jesus was referring to the approaching Samaritans in their white garments as regards. Though, none of these are significant towards the main point of Jesus’ speech. Jesus at this point in time is simply pointing out “by ordinary reckoning there are four months remaining until harvest, but in the salvation-historical plane the harvest has already begun” (Carson 1991:230).

A symbolic relationship between the earthly harvest and the heavenly harvest is unquestionable here, as the harvest is a common eschatological symbol used in the Old Testament, the apocalyptic, the New Testament, and the rabbinical writings. Jesus himself confirms this eschatological sense by further defining the harvest work in 4:36: “the reaper draw his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life” A further confirmation can be found in 4:36b, “so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together”, for joy of the harvest is an early Old Testament saying (Ps 126:5) which later became associated with the messianic hope (Isa 9:3). Jesus’ announcement “they are white for harvest. The reaper draws wages” (4:35-36). The eschatological harvest has already come and is now present. Jesus was referring to himself as the one who already draws wages and to the Samaritans as the “crop for eternal life”

The food imagery and the harvest imagery should be interpreted as a coherent whole, so that the food Jesus earlier talked about (4:34) is the same as the wages he now said he was receiving (4:36), and that the harvest he now engaged in (s????e?, 4:36) is “part and parcel of the work the Father gave him to do” (4:34) (cf. Carson 1991:230). Thus food parallels wages, and work parallels the gathering of the crop for eternal life, and so the two discourses form a never-ending intact.
John 4:37-38 introduces a distinct emphasis on the sower and the reaper’s different roles: “Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true” (4:37). Regardless what the origin of this saying is, the sense is that during the eschatological harvest the role of sower and that of reaper will be filled by different people (Brown 1966-70:1:187-183). Two debated issues are involved here: the identity of the labourers, “others” and the nature of the sending, “I sent you” (4:38). The interpretation of “others” (a????) has been controversial and Okure (1988:153-164) has a long discussion on this issue.

Solutions have been proposed, first, Johannes von Neugebauer (Ng 2001:128) comments on the solutions that have been proposed, “in the very immediate context, assuming that the Samaritans were approaching as Jesus talked, the Samaritan woman may be the sower and Jesus the reaper.” Second, Robinson (Ng 2001:128) converse strongly, “in a wider literary and geographical context, John the Baptist and his followers may be the sower, and Jesus and his disciples the reapers. Third, in a theological context, Jesus might be referring to the traditional Samaritan faith as “the work of a Divine sowing” and his own coming as the Messiah as “a harvest, which he can reap” (Odeberg 1929:190). John the Baptist identified as “the last in the succession of prophets and of others who sowed the seed but did not live long enough to participate in the harvest” is an alternative of this theological connection (Carson 1991:231). Fourth, in the life setting of the New Testament church, the author might have applied Jesus’ words to a Samaritan mission that involved different groups of people as sowers and reapers. Cullman (1956:185-92) proposed that the Hellenists in the early church, such as Philip, were the “others” who had sowed in Samaria, and the apostles, Peter and John, were the reapers who came later.

Lastly, sin the so-called “structural” context suggested by Okure (1988:160-64), only the Father and Jesus are seen as the sowers (others), and disciples of all times (in both v. 36 and v. 38) are the reapers. This is acceptable except that the role of he that reaps cannot be limited to disciples only. The disciples could not have already harvested at the time of the discourse, and Jesus as already pointed out in v. 36, was “the reaper draws his wages” himself. It should be considered that these roles are variously filled at different stages of redemptive history.
Scholars who hold strong views on the issue are often concerned with different levels of history, the plain history and the gospel setting, and at different settings the two roles have to be filled differently. Cullman (1956:188) stresses the concern of the Johannine church with the Samaritan mission, but he also considers the episode a historical event and interprets v. 36, “harvests the crop for eternal life”, as Jesus’ Samaritan mission. Disputes arise only when details of the settings speculate.

Robinson’s (Ng 2001:129) idea that the Baptist himself had worked in Sychar to make way for Jesus seems assumed. Cullmann’s (1956:188) idea that “others” refers specifically to Philip’s kind of Hellenists is also supposed. He also treats vv. 35-36 and vv. 37-38 distinctively, so that the former applies only to Jesus’ level of history and the latter to the Johannine level.

Johannes von Neugebauer (Ng 2001:129) argues that the grammar of v. 37 (?? ??? t??t? ? ????? ?st?? ???????? ?t? ?????) is not epexegetical as often maintained, but that ?? t??t? links the saying to the preceding or resulting sentences, so that the discourse stays an integral whole. O’Day (1986:83) contends for the transitional function of v. 37, “The ‘for’ (gar) with which the verse opens indicates that the proverb … is connected with what preceded it, but the proverb can also be understood as introducing a new topic which is then expanded in v. 38. Verse 37 therefore has a transitional function in the series of harvest sayings.”

O’Day (1986:139) proposes that at the time Jesus spoke, that is, at the historical level of the event, the Father was the sender (v 34), the woman was the sower (v. 39), Jesus was the reaper (v. 41) and the Samaritans were the harvest field (v. 42). So, he reckons four roles: the sender, the sower, the reaper and the harvest, instead of just two. The harvest discourse moves on from one set of referents to another. As for the identity of the “others” who “have laboured” before the disciples, they may include Jesus, and perhaps the woman, and all those who had worked even before Jesus himself. Jesus was saying that various efforts had gone into making the field ready for the disciples to harvest.
This most favourable interpretation agrees with the fact that 4:31-34 is a educational section, in which Jesus instructs the disciples about eschatological work, using his own work in Samaria as an example.

In such a context, Jesus calls himself the “reaper” (4:35-36) but at the same time commissions the disciples to be reapers also, and that precisely is the significance of 4:38 “I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work.” The disciples must have already had a sense of being sent to make sense of Jesus’ instruction at 4:38. The symbols in the harvest metaphor should be interpreted with multiple references. Both the Father and Jesus were senders: the Father sent Jesus and Jesus sent the disciples. Both Jesus and the woman were sowers: they mad the Samaritans ready for harvest. Both the woman and the Samaritans were the harvest: the woman was the first crop and the Samaritans were the next. Both the disciples and Jesus were reapers: Jesus the Messiah was the eschatological reaper, and he was also the teacher and usher of following reapers, his disciples.

At the Johannine level, there is a mission emphasis in this harvest discourse. Schnackenburg (Ng 2001:131) points out, “words like ??p??? and ??p?? (4:38,) signifies ‘toil’ or ‘labor’ are typical Pauline terms for missionary work (cf. 1 Thess 3:5; 1 Cor 3:8; 15:10; Col 1:29 etc.).” Many agree on this missionary emphasis of the Johannine church, and various attempts have been made in recovering a situation of Samaritan mission in the Johannine church.

Cullman (Ng 2001:132) suggests that the Johannine church was using Jesus’ episode to authenticate missionary work in Samaria, and that “others” who had laboured referred to the Hellenist Christians who had gone ahead of the apostles themselves. Neugebauer (Ng 2001:132) who disagrees with Cullman, makes a different supposition that a distinct Samaritan group had already been formed in the Johannine church s a result of earlier Samaritan mission and it caused dissension in theological thinking.
The consensus is that mission activities must have been going on in the Johannine church. It is also probable that the gospel was composed not a mission minded community in which Samaritans were involved as witnesses or targets of gospel preaching.

Okure (1988:226-227) pointed out the centrality of Jesus is one of the most important features of the gospel’s mission emphasis. Eschatology is just as basic to this mission emphasis. The extremely inclusion of the Samaritan episode in John 4, with Jesus’ disclosure of his work as the harvest is ready, is an important contribution to the present eschatology of the gospel, as well as to its christology. At the level of the Johannine composition, therefore, the harvest imagery indicates that Christian mission is part and parcel of the eschatological coming of Christ. It speaks specifically of the joy and satisfaction of gathering people to Christ’s kingdom.

We may conclude, therefore, that the harvest is related to living water just as work and food is related to water and bread. They are counterparts in symbolizing eschatological joy: the joy of being gathered into the kingdom, and the joy of gathering people into the kingdom (Cf. Odeberg’s comment on 4:35-38), “In its deepest sense the ‘labour’ [for the harvest] perhaps means the longing for the ‘living water.” (Odeberg 1988:190.)
4. CONCLUSION.

From what we have studied it is evident that the use of water symbolism in John is far more extensive than in other writings of the Scripture. Water symbolism in John is prominent because of its repeated and thematic use and becomes most dominant in John 4 and 7 due the clear statements about water. Living water featuring as a leading symbol in John 4 demonstrates that water symbolism’s root is in its historical and conceptual background. Furthermore, In John 4:13-14 John significantly refers to Christ and the Holy Spirit, which becomes more clear in 7:37-39.

This study expounded the underlying eschatological framework and explored the historical significance of the water symbol in John (4:1-42). “In the horizontal dimension the historical anticipates the eschatological. In the vertical dimension the earthly symbolizes the heavenly. This double dimension is also a characteristic of Johannine eschatology.” (Ng 2001:194.)

The water that is from Jacob’s well might quench a thirst, but it could not prevent thirst from rising again. However, the living water that Jesus gives is such, that those who receive it are permanently satisfied.

John, the devoted follower of Christ, has given us through his use of the symbol of water, a personal and powerful look at Jesus Christ. Not only does His living water fills us with life, but also it is like a bubbling fountain constantly overflowing. The benefits of the living water that Christ gives is not limited to earth but will go on forever.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


