

Vote for Jesus, Join the Church: The Role of Eschatology in the Gospel of John

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Abstrak

Eskatologi yang unik dalam Injil Yohanes membangkitkan satu pertanyaan: Apakah peran dari eskatologi ini dalam Injil tersebut? Tulisan ini menyimpulkan bahwa Injil Yohanes menerapkan suatu eskatologi untuk: (1) menampilkan identitas Yesus sebagai Mesias yang memajukan Eskaton, dan yang memberikan kehidupan kekal di masa kini; (2) menunjukkan bahwa eskatologi di dalam Kristus lebih unggul dan lebih progresif daripada eskatologi pada agama Yahudi, tidak hanya bagi orang-orang Yahudi itu sendiri, tetapi juga bagi orang-orang bukan Yahudi; dan (3) menyuarakan sebuah undangan untuk bergabung ke dalam Gereja, yang di dalamnya, kehidupan kekal dapat dialami pada masa kini melalui berdiamnya Roh Kudus, yang memberi berkat kehadiran Kristus yang transenden bagi kehidupan gereja yang imanen. Pada akhirnya, Injil Yohanes menggunakan eskatologi untuk mengajak para pembaca untuk beriman kepada Kristus dan untuk bergabung dengan Gereja.

Kata-Kata Kunci: eskatologi, Injil Yohanes, Gereja, kehidupan kekal

Abstract

The unique nature of eschatology in the Gospel of John raises a question: What is the role of this unique eschatology in the Gospel? This essay suggests that the Gospel employs eschatology for: (1) presenting the identity of Jesus as the Messiah who brings the Eschaton forward and who gives eternal life in the present; (2) showing that the eschatology in Christ is superior and more progressive than its Jewish counterpart, not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles; and (3) voicing out an invitation to join the church, in which the quality of eternal life can be experienced in the present time through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who brings the blessings of Christ's transcendent presence to the immanent life of the church. In the end, the Gospel of John uses eschatology to invite readers to have faith in Christ and to join the church.

Keywords: eschatology, the Gospel of John, church, eternal life

Introduction

Eschatology is an ever-hot topic. While it is typical to study the eschatology of Apocalyptic Books such as Revelation or Daniel, not many would think to do it on one of the Gospels. Indeed, the Gospels look more like biographies than prophecies. Nonetheless, it will prove true that the eschatology of the Fourth

Gospel (John) is extremely important to its message and is worth every drop of ink spilled for its study.

“A time is coming and has now come.” Many times in the Gospel of John, Jesus utters this paradoxical statement on eschatology. The statement indeed sounds awkward and illogical. The eschatology of John's Gospel has been under the spotlight among

scholars because it seems to be unique and distinctive to the one in the other three Gospels. For this reason, an immense discussion has blossomed in the study of Johannine eschatology. The uniqueness of eschatology in this Gospel raises a couple of questions: What is the role of eschatology in the Gospel of John? How does the author of the Gospel (hereinafter will be referred to as the Evangelist)¹ employ this unique eschatology to achieve his Gospel's purpose of writing?

This essay presents the analysis of these questions in three parts: (1) through the examination of the identity of Christ and its relation to eschatology, (2) through comparison between the eschatologies in the Gospel of John and traditional Judaism, and (3) through the exploration of the role of the church and its relation to eschatology. From the explanation of these three points, the function of eschatology in the Gospel of John should be obvious. However, before diving into the main discussion, it will prove helpful to begin with a short survey on what prominent scholars believe about the eschatology of the Gospel and why it is considered unique.

Now and Not Yet: Realized Eschatology?

Almost all scholars concur that the eschatology in this Gospel seems to focus more on the present than the future. John 3:18, for example, expresses that anyone who does not believe in Jesus “is already (ἤδη) condemned” (cf. the state of believers that *isoukrínetai*—“is not condemned”/present). It is obvious that such an understanding of eschatology is slightly different to what traditional Judaism claims, which has an emphasis on future judgment and the

resurrection of the body. For this reason, much debate has emerged among scholars. Rudolf Schnackenburg, for example, points out that the Evangelist might be less interested in the future dimension of eschatology because the idea of union with Christ in the present is more important to him.² Rudolf Bultmann takes a more extreme position and argues that only the passages which contain the present dimension of eschatology can come originally from the Evangelist, while the passages on the future eschatology merely exist as a result of the church's editorial work to reconcile the Gospel of John with the traditional, future-oriented understanding of eschatology.³

The coexistence of the two dimensions (present and future) of eschatology in this Gospel does seem awkward because they seem contradictory to each other. Even so, most scholars disagree with Bultmann's extreme view and have critically responded to his writings. Robert Kysar, for example, presents several reasons why Bultmann's literary-historical approach is unconvincing. Kysar argues that those passages, which Bultmann regards to be a result of editorial work (i.e., passages on future eschatology), have the language and concepts that had been widely recognized since before the general dating of the Gospel of John.⁴ This indicates that the concept of future eschatology is not necessarily a result of editorial work. In fact, it makes much more sense if the concept is regarded as being derived from one of the sources used by the

² See the discussion in Margaret Pamment, “Eschatology and the Fourth Gospel,” *JSNT* 15 (1982): 81. Cf. Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, Vol. 2 (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 432-434.

³ Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), 189-190. Also see Pamment, “Eschatology and the Fourth Gospel,” 81. Also R. S. Schellenberg, “Eschatology,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and The Gospels*, 2nd ed., ed. Joel B. Green (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2013), 238.

⁴ This assumes that the general dating of the Gospel of John is ca. 80-90 A.D. Bultmann also proposes a similar date, only with a larger range due to his redaction theory: 80-120 A.D. (see Bultmann, *John*, pp.11-12).

¹ Note that, in my opinion, the author of this Gospel is John Son of Zebedee, who is one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. However, it should also be noted that scholars (including those in Evangelical circles) have different opinions about the authorship of the Gospel of John. This issue will not be discussed in this paper and does not affect the discussion. Therefore, I will refer to the author of the Gospel of John simply as ‘the Evangelist’.

Evangelist.⁵ Moreover, although these two dimensions of eschatology seem to contradict each other, they both are present throughout the entire Gospel, albeit with different terminologies in many cases. Therefore, most modern scholars acknowledge that these two dimensions coexist as two sides of the same coin, and both are equally important for the Gospel of John.⁶

One example of this coexistence should suffice: the word “live” (ζάω) in the Gospel (e.g., Jn. 11:25) is usually expressed eschatologically with a double-perspective; that is, anyone who believes in Jesus *will be* resurrected in the future after they die, and *already have* eternal life in the present that makes death no longer irrelevant.⁷ This is apparent in John 5:24-25:

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

In the passage above, the phrase “eternal life” (ζωηναίωνιον), the word “hour” (ώρα), and the concept of resurrection (ἀνάστασις) appear simultaneously in the same passage, and so, a strong eschatological impression emerges. It is obvious here that the phrase “has eternal life” (ἔχειζωήν; present) is placed in parallel with the phrase “will live” (ζήσουσιν; future) and both are predicative to anyone “who hears.” In other words, anyone who hears the voice of the Son of God “has passed from death to life” in the present, but they also “will live” in the future. Moreover,

⁵ See Robert Kysar, “The Eschatology of the Fourth Gospel: A Correction of Bultmann’s Redactional Hypothesis,” *Perspective* 13.1 (1972): 25-29.

⁶ E.g., George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 2nd ed., WBC 36 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), lxxxvi-lxxxvii. Also Schellenberg, “Eschatology,” 238.

⁷ Pamment, “Eschatology and the Fourth Gospel,” 84. Also see Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966), cvxiii.

the phrase “is coming” (ἔρχεται) is accompanied by the qualifier “is now here” (νῦνἔστιν), eliminating the possibility of an exclusively futuristic, or exclusively realized, eschatology. This suggestion shows that, in the Gospel of John, there is a very close relationship between those who are considered to have eternal life in the present and those who will be resurrected in the future. In other words, those who are considered to have eternal life in the present are precisely those who will be raised in the future; i.e., those who hear the voice of the Son of God.⁸

If the above case is true, how do these two seemingly inconsistent dimensions exist together logically (or better yet, chronologically)? Should one dimension be prioritized over the other? N. T. Wright suggests that realized eschatology be prioritized, and future eschatology should be read through the framework of the former.⁹ However, I think it is unnecessary to take this position because the Gospel of John clearly places these two dimensions on an equal level, as shown in the passage above. I suspect that a simultaneous reading is more convincing. These two dimensions should be read side-by-side as in the concept of the Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Gospels (already/not yet).¹⁰ By using this

⁸ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Leicester: Apollos, 1991), 97-98, cf. 256-258. See Harold W. Attridge, “From Discord Rises Meaning: Resurrection Motifs in the Fourth Gospel,” in *Essays on John and Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 164-165. Attridge makes a comparison between 6:25 and 6:28-29 to show the contrast between these two concepts. He also shows that the present-eschatology that is obvious in the Lazarus narrative is further continued in Jn. 12:20, which shows Lazarus meeting the threat of death, and thus eliminating the possibility for an extreme present-oriented eschatology such as Bultmann’s (169).

⁹ See the discussion in Attridge, “From Discord Rises Meaning,” 162. Attridge argues that this opinion is unfair towards how the Gospel of John presents the two as equal. I agree. Also see G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Gospel of Life: Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 6-7. Beasley-Murray also argues that future eschatology cannot be superseded by present eschatology.

¹⁰ See Tim O’Donnell, “Complementary Eschatologies in John 5:19-30,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 70 (2008): 760. Also Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 431-432.

two-dimensional eschatology, the Evangelist confirms the concept of orthodox eschatology (future), and at the same time, offers the understanding that the Eschaton has been brought into the present by Jesus.¹¹ In turn, this realized eschatology extends again to the future because those who have eternal life now will be resurrected in the future.

Perhaps this survey should end here. A basic understanding of the uniqueness of eschatology in the Gospel of John as described above should be enough to bring this discussion to the core of the problem. I shall now begin to present the function of this unique eschatology in the purpose of the Gospel of John as a whole, starting with the identity of Christ.

Vote for Jesus Now: Jesus Brings the Future Forward

“Eschatological truth in John is basically Christological.”¹² I have mentioned above that the Gospel of John unifies the future and the present dimensions of its eschatology in the person of Jesus as the Christ. Three important implications of this are worth elaborating to show how Jesus is presented in the Gospel in relation to the role of eschatology.

The New Age Has Dawned

First, the Evangelist uses eschatology to present Jesus as the bringer of the Eschaton—and through this, he represents Jesus as the one fulfilling the Old Testament. A study of John 6:32-51 should make this concept clear; which, for the sake of clarity, is selectively pasted below.

Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the **bread** from heaven, but my Father gives you **the true bread** from heaven. For the **bread of God is he** who comes down from heaven and gives life to

the world.” They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” Jesus said to them, “**I am the bread of life**; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst . . . It is **written in the Prophets**, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ . . . Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes **has eternal life**. **I am the bread of life**. Your fathers ate the **manna** in the wilderness, and they died. **This is the bread** that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and **not die**. **I am the living bread** that came down from heaven. If anyone **eats of this bread**, he will **live forever**. And **the bread** that I will give for the life of the world is **my flesh**.¹³

Bultmann provides some observations that are useful for this discussion. He points out that the term “bread of life” refers to Christ as the bringer of the Eschaton. Just as God gave the manna in the OT to save his people, now Jesus shows the same act by giving the bread of life (and even *becomes* the bread of life).¹⁴ In other words, the Evangelist presents Jesus—or Jesus himself claims—as the long-awaited Messiah, the bringer of the Eschaton, who fulfills the promised salvation in the OT. The references to manna and to the Prophets that Jesus makes in the same context also support this notion. Along the same line, Wai-Yee Ng analyzes the use of the words “food” (βρῶσις; 4:32; 6:27, 55), “water” (ὕδωρ; 4:10, 14; 7:38; cf. 3:5 and Ezek. 36:25), and “bread” (ἄρτος; 6:31, 35, 50; cf. manna) in the whole Gospel and concludes that these words are pregnant with eschatological significance.¹⁵ This is true because Jesus often uses the word “life”, which is very much eschatological in the Gospel of John, to attribute to the words above (e.g., “food to eternal life,” “water of life,” and “bread of life”). Therefore, if the Gospel attributes these words to Jesus, then it is obvious that Jesus is presented as the bringer of the Eschaton, and even as the eschatological blessing itself.

¹¹ See Beasley-Murray, *Gospel of Life*, 7-8. Also Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, cxvii.

¹² W. Robert Cook, “Eschatology in John’s Gospel,” *Criswell Theological Review* 3, no. 1 (1988): 99.

¹³ Emphasis mine.

¹⁴ Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 213-214.

¹⁵ Wai-Yee Ng, *Water Symbolism in John: An Eschatological Interpretation*, PME 15 (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 121.

In addition, the concept that Jesus is the bringer of the Eschaton is also apparent in the use of the term “Son of Man” (Jn. 6:53) in the same passage. The term comes from the OT (generally considered to be derived from Dan. 7) and is generally regarded to be related to the coming of the Messiah in the Eschaton. Because the term “Son of Man” here is attributed to Jesus, the eternal life promised in the Last Day—and the accompanying judgment—are also brought to the present by the person of Jesus (Jn. 6:54). The Son of Man is here now, and so are eternal life and the Eschaton. In John 5:27, Jesus is also referred to as the eschatological judge; which is also closely related to the role of the Son of Man in Daniel 7:10.¹⁶

Moving on from the discussion of John 6 towards the end of the Gospel, it is apparent that the term “Holy Scriptures” (usually in the context of its fulfillment) appears more often as the narrative approaches the event of the Cross. This shows that the Cross, at least in John’s Gospel, is the point of culmination where the OT is fulfilled. Out of the twelve occurrences of the word γραφή in the Gospel of John, four (33%) appear in chapter 19 (narrative of the Cross) alone, and the other eight are spread almost evenly among seven other chapters. Carson also notes that the term used in John 19:28 for “fulfilling the Scriptures” is not πληρώω, which is a common word for “fulfill,” but τελειωθῆ, a word that shares the same root as Jesus’ saying in 19:30 (τετέλεσται; it is finished) and which is more suitably translated not as “fulfill,” but as “complete” or “finish.”¹⁷ It is, therefore, evident that the Evangelist sees the Jesus’ crucifixion not only as the fulfillment of the OT but also as its “finisher.” For the Evangelist, history changes at the Cross; the past has come to its finish line, and the Eschaton has begun. As Corell points out, everything that exists in the ministry of Jesus leads up to the Cross, where he is glorified. At

this point, the Eschaton is brought to the present by the person of Christ on the Cross and resurrection. Although the resurrection of the dead is still going to happen in the future, the reality of eternal life is made real in the present through the resurrection of Jesus.¹⁸

The notion that Jesus is the bringer of the Eschaton can be found in every corner of the Gospel of John. Other examples can be given. However, it should be apparent from the above suggestions how the Evangelist indicates that the coming of Jesus is an eschatological event that marks the change of times, precisely because he is the bringer of the Eschaton.¹⁹

Who Does Not Want to Live?

Second, this Gospel also uses eschatology to present Jesus as the way to eternal life.²⁰ The word ζωῆ appears 36 times in 32 verses in the Gospel of John. In all of its appearances, the word is always connected—directly or otherwise—to the person of Jesus. From a careful reading of each of them, it is evident that, for the Evangelist, eternal life can only be found in the person of Jesus. The story of Lazarus in John 11 provides evidence that clearly supports this notion. The two-dimensional eschatology (present and future) is visible here. For example, in John 11:24-26:

Martha said to him, “I know that he **will rise again** in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me **shall never die**. Do you believe this?”²¹

¹⁸ Alf Corell, *Consummatum Est: Eschatology and Church in the Gospel of John* (London: S.P.C.K., 1958), 107. Also see Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 90.

¹⁹ Also see Brown, *The Gospel According to John LXII*, cxx-cxxi.

²⁰ See Pamment, “Eschatology and the Fourth Gospel,” 83. Note that the expression “Jesus is the way to eternal life” is a concept that is a bit different, albeit related, to “Jesus as the way to the Father” (Jn. 14:6).

²¹ Emphasis mine.

¹⁶ Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 260-261.

¹⁷ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 612-620.

In this passage, Martha's traditional Jewish understanding of the bodily resurrection in the future is met by Jesus' claim that believers should have eternal life in the present and shall never die. The Evangelist's purpose in bringing together these two dimensions in the story of Lazarus is quite palpable. The Gospel of John is prominent in using misunderstandings and irony to convey a particular message about the identity of Christ. Here, the Evangelist uses Martha's misunderstanding in the story to bring out the identity of Jesus as the way to eternal life. Those who are in Jesus can enjoy life in the present and will be raised on the Last Day.²²

Moreover, Jesus is presented not only as the way to eternal life but also as the initiator of eternal life himself. The literary details in the Lazarus narrative, for example, all present Jesus as the initiator of life; including the plot where Jesus deliberately arrives late (11:6), Jesus' claim as the resurrection and the life (11:25; not only as the way to resurrection and life), and his direct command to Lazarus to come out (11:43). This presentation is consistent with the description of Jesus in the Prologue (1:34). He who gave life in Creation now gives eternal life to those who believe.²³ It should be apparent now that the Evangelist uses his unique eschatology as an "advertising campaign" to bring his readers to believe in Jesus.²⁴ By attributing eschatology to Jesus as the bringer of the Eschaton and as the way to eternal life, the Gospel of John presents Jesus as "the way, the truth, and the life" (14:6), so that anyone who believes in him will have eternal life (3:16). This concept is in

accordance with the purpose of writing as expressed in 20:31.

Believe in Jesus Now!

Third, it seems that the Evangelist uses eschatology to present not only a need for faith in Jesus, but also the urgency of it. As noted above, the Evangelist present Jesus as the bringer of the Eschaton in fulfilling the OT and as the way to, and the initiator of, eternal life. From the discussion below, it shall be clear that the he delivers his presentation with a tone of urgency. It is as if the Evangelist wants to say, "Believe in Jesus now!"²⁵

There are two indications that show how the Evangelist presents this urgent tone. First is his use of realized eschatology. Because the future Eschaton has been brought into everyday life in the present through Christ's death and resurrection, there is a present hope in the battle against a fundamental (and everyday) problem that is death.²⁶ The resurrection of the body that was an abstract expectation of the future has now been made practical in the here-and-now in Christ. Therefore, faith in Christ is no longer merely a "future" need in the Final Judgment, but it has now become current and urgent. Second, the Evangelist also expresses this urgency using the concept of intimacy with Christ. The Gospel of John portrays eternal life as a reward for anyone who has an intimate relationship with Christ (e.g., 10:4-5). In the Lazarus narrative, for example, there are indications that the concept "knowing Jesus" is not only based on a cognitive knowledge of him or on an abstract faith in what happens in the distant future because of him, but also on an intimate relationship with him. This is apparent from the fact that Lazarus is raised because he is called "he whom Jesus loves" (11:3). This concept is also evident, albeit more vaguely, in Jesus' conversation with

²² Attridge, "From Discord Rises Meaning," 168-169.

²³ What is interesting is that this also shows God's initiative in the Gospel of John (e.g., 6:44-45). Eternal life is given as a gift on the Last Day (Eschaton), and it is not initiated by human works, but by God through the person of Jesus. It is almost as if the Evangelist presents Jesus as God (which he ultimately does). See Marianne Meye Thompson, "The Raising of Lazarus in John 11," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology*, eds. Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 242.

²⁴ Cf. Schellenberg, "Eschatology," 238.

²⁵ See Andreas J. Kostenberger, *Encountering John*, EBS (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 29.

²⁶ Cook, "Eschatology in John's Gospel," 99.

Nicodemus in John 3:1-15. In this passage, Nicodemus claims to know about Jesus (3:2). However, at the end of the conversation, Jesus pulls the discussion towards his own identity as the Son of Man who comes from heaven (3:13), and thus, knows the truth (3:11). In other words, Nicodemus' cognitive knowledge is not enough to enable him to see the truth about the Kingdom of God (3:5). Only an intimate relationship with the Person who is himself from God can do just that. Therefore, in the Gospel of John, the promise of eternal life and resurrection in the future is made available only through an intimate relationship with Christ.²⁷ Eternal life is not given to those who can claim cognitive knowledge about Jesus nor to those who can bribe Jesus with good works in the Final Judgment, but to those who develop intimate relationships with Jesus in the present time and associate with him. Using this unique eschatology, the Evangelist gives an urgent tone to his call for his readers to have faith in Christ now.

At this point, I shall conclude, first of all, that the Evangelist employs his unique eschatology to present Christ as the bringer of Eschaton who fulfills the OT, and he uses this as an urgent call for his readers to put their faith in Jesus and to have an intimate relationship with him. This call to believe in Jesus is also supported by the notion that Jesus is the way to, and the initiator of, eternal life. Because eternal life is only available in him, everyone needs to be in him now. The Evangelist uses all these eschatological depictions as an "advertising campaign" to bring his readers to believe in Jesus. Indeed, in the end, all the elements of eschatology in the Gospel of John always lead to Christology. Everything about eschatology in the Gospel of John always points to the person of Christ.²⁸

²⁷ Attridge, "From Discord Rises Meaning," 167-170. Also see Beasley-Murray, *John*, lxxxv-lxxxvi.

²⁸ See Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 95. Also see Cook, "Eschatology in John's Gospel," 87-99. Cook shows in details how eschatology in John always relates to Christology. Also Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A*

Choose the Better Eschatology: John Versus Judaism

In the discussion above I have been focusing on the realized eschatology in John. The realized eschatology points to Jesus Christ as the bringer of the Eschaton to the present, but the Evangelist does not just present a realized eschatology at the expense of the future dimension as if classical eschatology was suddenly abolished when Jesus came. It should be apparent in this discussion that the existence of futuristic eschatology also contributes to the Evangelist's purpose of writing, hence the necessity of the simultaneous reading. The Evangelist does not only use realized eschatology as an "advertising material" to invite urgent faith in Christ. He also uses futuristic eschatology for a slightly different, but complementary, purpose; i.e., to present a comparison between his eschatology in Jesus and one of Judaism.

It should be noted, first of all, that Second Temple Judaism did not exist in a mono-strand. Many systems of thought existed in different sects of Judaism. For example, the Qumran community seems to have had, to a certain extent, a realized eschatology as well, albeit with a focus more on ritual purity in present life rather than eternal life (e.g., 1QH^a 11.19-23; 1QS 11:5-9). However, when I mention of Judaism, I am pointing to its strand which the Gospel seems to largely address when it mentions the "Jews". It seems to me that this strand of Judaism in the Gospel is very close to the Pharisaic teaching—and perhaps it is, judging from the Jews' adherence to Mishnah in John 5:10 and their customary rabbinical education in John 7:15. This should be no surprise because, here in the Gospel (and, also in the Synoptics), Jesus is depicted to have a close contact with the Pharisees, and when the Gospel speaks of the Pharisees it relates them closely with the Jews (e.g., Jn. 1:19, 24; 3:1; 11:45-46). Further-

Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 8.

more, despite the rarity of documentation of their teachings in the present, it could be seen from the Gospel that the Pharisees might have had a strong influence among Jews during the time (e.g., Jn. 11:57; 12:42; 18:3). Thus, it can reasonably be expected that their teachings were widely held by general public in Jewish circles. If this is true, then, in presenting my case below, I can safely assume a Pharisaic understanding on eschatology when I mention about Judaism.

Live in a Better Age

If it is true that the mainstream Judaism at that time was heavily influenced by the Pharisees and if the Gospel of John particularly addresses this strand of Judaism in many occasions, then it might be appropriate to say that the Jews generally held an understanding of eschatology that was almost exclusively futuristic (at least until the Messiah comes, and then it becomes exclusively realized). They believed that the messianic age would totally replace the old one. In their understanding, the new age would be better than the old one because the world would succumb under the dominion of God's Messiah.²⁹ This is apparent in some Second Temple texts, such as Psalm of Solomon 17:23-37.

In light of this, the fact that the Evangelist does not exclude the future dimension from his eschatology, despite his presentation that the Eschaton is realized because the Messiah already came, indicates that he does not completely deny the traditional Jewish eschatology.³⁰ However, notwithstanding his concurrence with it, the Evangelist also adds to it a new element, which is the present dimension. In John's Gospel, the total discontinuity

between the old age and the new is no longer apparent. The new age is not in the future anymore because the Messiah is already here, but it is not totally in the present yet despite his coming. Tim O'Donnell gives a similar observation in his analysis of John 5:19-30. This passage presents a futuristic eschatology in many occasions (5:25, 28-29), which is quite syncretic with the Jewish understanding. However, the present dimension is also apparent in the same passage (5:24).³¹ This should be surprising to the Jewish readers of the Gospel.

I would argue here that the above suggestion shows the Evangelist's goal to present his eschatology—the one revealed by Christ—as a superior version to the traditional Jewish eschatology. For the Evangelist, the Christian understanding of eschatology is a result of a more progressive revelation compared to its Judaistic counterpart and he is being outspoken about it. This is not a surprise since the Gospel of John is prominent for its 'negative' portrayal of the Jews, and even the Pharisees. The term "Jew" (Ἰουδαῖος; in all its forms, but mostly in the plural as a collective term) is used 68 times in this Gospel, while it only occurs 15 times in the whole Synoptics combined; and most, if not all, of its uses are in the context of intra-religious battles between Christianity and Judaism.³² In light of this, the Evangelist employs eschatology as a ship from which he deploys his messianic

²⁹ Thompson, *John*, 63. Also see Andreas J. Kostenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 297. Also C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 145.

³⁰ Despite the mainstream speculation in previous decades about the Gospel of John being Hellenistic or even Gnostic, it is apparent to most scholars today that this Gospel is thoroughly Jewish.

³¹ O'Donnell, "Complementary Eschatologies in John 5:19-30," 758. O'Donnell also argues that the Evangelist uses the coexistence of the two dimensions of eschatology in this passage not only to invite Jews to accept the realized eschatology brought by Jesus, but also to invite the Johannine community to accept the futuristic eschatology, a concept which is foreign to them (pp. 762-763). This sounds like what Warren Carter calls "sectarian-synagogal reading" in his book *John and Empire*. It is unclear, however, whether this is the case. What is apparent is that the Evangelist seems to compare his eschatology with the traditional Jewish concept presents Jesus as the "glue" on which the two dimensions of eschatology meet.

³² Despite its long history of interpretation, I do not think that this Gospel is anti-Semitic. I think the Gospel of John does not portray anti-Semitism as much as it does a messianic apology for Jesus in the midst of unbelief of the Jews.

apology for Jesus in the midst of these battles. He presents a two-dimensional eschatology by using the person of Christ as the “glue”; i.e., the Giver of life in the present and the one who brings bodily resurrection in the future. With this, he presents a more progressive understanding of eschatology compared to the traditional Jewish concept.

Have a Better Life

Not only that the Evangelist presents a superior view of the messianic age, but he also offers a view of ζῶηαιώνιος that is more progressive compared to its Judaistic counterpart. Again, there are indications that the Evangelist uses the same foundational understanding of eternal life as the one in Judaism. The Jews at the time believed that the Kingdom of God would be established on earth when the Messiah came, which, in their understanding, would be in the form of a political restoration of Israel (hence, Act. 1:6; cf. Ps. of Sol. 17:23-37). Eternal life is the blessed life in the Kingdom; i.e., because the Kingdom of God is an eternal kingdom, the life inside it is an eternal life.³³ Therefore, they believed that eternal life was a condition of life in the future (because the Kingdom of God would be established in the future), which was qualitatively and quantitatively better than the one in the present.

John’s Gospel does not in any way deny this either. However, again, the Evangelist develops this understanding further via a more progressive revelation. For example, in the Lazarus narrative, Jesus says, “Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live” (Jn. 11:25b). This statement might refer to the resurrection of the dead in the future, which is the traditional Jewish understanding. Martha’s response in 11:24 might demonstrate this understanding. However, far from being an exclusively futurist, Jesus continues in the same sentence, “and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die” (Jn. 11:26).

This phrase sounds a little different to the former because it refers to eternal life in the present using the expression “shall never die” (non-Jewish understanding). What Jesus does at the end of the narrative when he raises Lazarus confirms this understanding. The life that is not affected by death is not only a future reality, as understood by the Jews, but rather a reality that has been extended into the present. Again, John’s Gospel does not deny future resurrection, but he adds the present reality of eternal life to the understanding. Although future resurrection is still going to happen, the Kingdom of God in which the eternal life exists is already here precisely because the Messiah who brings it is already here. It seems that the Evangelist aims to build an apology for the Cross using eschatology; i.e., despite the non-political restoration of Israel and notwithstanding the so-called ‘death’ of the Messiah (i.e., despite the fact that general public does not see Jesus anymore or the real result of his messiahship), the Kingdom and its eternal life are here precisely because of Jesus’ cross and resurrection.

A question arises here: Why does one need to be raised in the future if they already have eternal life in the present? This question makes the concept of ζῶηαιώνιος in Christianity sounds inconsistent and thus, seems less coherent than the traditional Jewish understanding. However, the Evangelist shows that the eternal life enjoyed by believers now has not been fully realized yet so as to make the resurrection of the body in the future irrelevant. Unlike the Jews who understood that eternal life could either be an exclusively future reality before the coming of the Messiah or an exclusively present reality after it, the Evangelist shows that eternal life is a present reality that extends to the future. Future resurrection is still going to happen as a vindication of present eternal life. Believers are already enjoying the quality of eternal life in the present, and the resurrection after

³³ See Beasley-Murray, *Gospel of Life*, 2-3.

death follows thereafter.³⁴ The eternal life in the present is still in its inauguration and it exists in terms of *quality*. Lazarus is still going to die again even after Jesus resurrects him (cf. Jn. 12:10), but, nonetheless, those who believe in Christ can enjoy the *quality* of eternal life now.

A more elaborate explanation on the quality of eternal life has to wait until the discussion on the role of the church below. The main thesis here is that the Evangelist presents an understanding of eschatology that can lie within, but also transcends, the traditional Jewish expectation. For the Evangelist, the eternal life is here because the Messiah has come, but it is also not yet because its consummation has to wait for the return of the King.

Everyone, Embrace this Faith

The above discussion should have demonstrated clearly the fact that the Evangelist uses eschatology to present faith in Christ as a superior system of faith to traditional Pharisaic/Rabbinic Judaism. However, there is one more important point to consider. I suspect that the Evangelist's presentation—that the eschatology in Christ is superior to the one in Judaism—is directed not only towards the Jews but also to the Gentiles. Compared to the Synoptics, which maintain the use of the OT term “Kingdom of God” to describe eschatology that is brought by Jesus, the Gospel of John chooses to use the term *ζωῆαἰώνιος* as a major theme related to his eschatology. This makes the discussion of eschatology becomes more easily recognized

³⁴ Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 146-148. Note that Dodd's insistence that the two concepts do not have to be inconsistent with each other is because he thinks that the Evangelist agrees with the classical belief of future resurrection of the dead, “but for him this is a truth of less importance than the fact that the believer already enjoys eternal life (now), and the former is a consequence of the latter.” I am unsure whether it is appropriate to call the future resurrection as of “less importance” than the present eternal life in John, but certainly in the purpose of contrasting the eschatology in Christ with the Jewish understanding there is much more focussed in the present.

by non-Jews who are not familiar with the term “Kingdom of God,” but who understand the issue of death, which is a common problem for everyone.³⁵ Therefore, by doing this, the Evangelist presents eschatology in Jesus as a concept that is superior to traditional Jewish eschatology, not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles. The Evangelist does this by eliminating the Jewish technical term “Kingdom of God.”³⁶ In other words, the “advertising campaign” that the Evangelist deploys is not only directed towards Jews but also to everyone. To the Jews who were waiting for a political Messiah, the Gospel presents Jesus as the Messiah from God who extends Kingdom of God forward. To the Gentiles who were facing the universal problem of death, the Gospel presents Jesus as the Savior of the world (4:42) who gives eternal life.³⁷

Another dimension of the role of eschatology in the Gospel of John is evident here. This Gospel uses eschatology as a rhetorical strategy to invite the response that is faith in Jesus Christ because there is a superior and more progressive concept of eschatology in Christ compared to the traditional Jewish one. The Eschaton is here and now because of Jesus. The Evangelist presents this not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles. The function of eschatology as an “advertising campaign” is apparent again here, but now it is used to invite faith in Jesus

³⁵ Thompson, *John*, 89.

³⁶ Way-Yee Ng also observes the same in John 4. Ng argues that John 4 presents Jesus not only as fulfilling the hope of the Jews but also of the Samaritans. See Ng, *Water Symbolism in John*, 105.

³⁷ In his excellent little evaluation on the existence of the Roman Empire in the Gospel of John, Christopher Skinner provides a helpful comment that there is an implicit comparison in the Gospel between Jesus and Caesar. Although the theme is not prominent, it is apparent that titles such as “Savior of the world” and “Son of God”, which were attributed to Caesar, are attributed to Jesus to make a subtle counter-imperial assertion. See Christopher W. Skinner, “John's Gospel and the Roman Imperial Context: An Evaluation of Recent Proposals,” *Jesus is Lord, Caesar is Not: Evaluating Empire in New Testament Studies*, eds. Joseph B. Modica and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 116-129.

through a comparison between the eschatologies of Christianity and of traditional Judaism.

Join the Church, Enjoy Eternal Life

I will once again use some space to criticize Bultmann because the implications of this criticism will be important for this discussion. Because of his highly subjective literary-historical assessment on the Gospel of John, Bultmann argues that the account of Jesus' resurrection in this Gospel does not have a clear literary-theological function. It is apparent that the resurrection accounts in the Synoptic Gospels serve to show Jesus' glorification in being triumphant over death. However, the majority of scholars agree that Jesus' glorification in the Gospel of John occurs in the Cross narrative instead, as indicated by, among others: (1) In John 12:23-28, Jesus mentions his glorification and this section refers to the Cross instead of the resurrection, (2) The sign "King of the Jews" that is placed on the cross in 19:19 seems to be used as an irony to show that Jesus is truly glorified as King, and (3) In 19:39, Nicodemus brings several burial gifts for Jesus which might symbolize royal gifts. Because of this, Bultmann argues that the resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John does not have any theological function.³⁸

However, Bultmann's opinion seems to be heavily influenced by his theory that the concept of resurrection of the body (which is futuristic eschatology by nature) in the Gospel of John is an editorial addition and it did not exist in the mind of the Evangelist. Due to this theory, Jesus' physical resurrection, which theologically represents the resurrection of believers' bodies, cannot have any theological function in the Gospel's framework. However, I have rejected Bultmann's theory on multiple occasions above. Bultmann is certainly right in arguing that, unlike in the

Synoptics, Jesus is glorified at the Cross in the Gospel of John. Nonetheless, Christ's resurrection still carries some literary-theological functions, and one of them has an important implication for this discussion. As Schneiders points out, one of the functions of the resurrection account in the Gospel of John is to show that the church is the real representation of the presence of Christ.³⁹ The Evangelist does this through his use of eschatology.

"Where Two or More Gather in My Name, There I Am"

It is true that the word "church" (ἐκκλησία) never occurs in this Gospel. In fact, it is never used in any of the four Gospels except in Mat. 16:18 & 18:17, and in one of them the word might only refer to the synagogue (assembly). However, the idea of the church appears many times in John using different terminologies. One of the most visible of these occurrences is in John 15, where Jesus claims to be the true vine (as opposed to the OT Israel who was the destroyed vine; cf. Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Hos. 10:1-2, etc.). Because Jesus is the true Israel, then the disciples, who are called the branches, are the true people of God. Anyone who believes in Jesus, therefore, is grafted into this true people of God in Jesus. In this light, the first disciples of Jesus represent this people of God or the body of Christ the Vine, which later grows as the church.⁴⁰ This is also reflected in Pauline writings, especially in Rom. 11:17 (although it uses a different tree metaphor).

Returning to the main thesis, it is true that the Gospel depicts the church, in many cases represented by the twelve disciples, as the real representation of the presence of Christ. To understand this, it should be noted that the Gospel of John always portrays Christ's presence as being shown in the life of the

³⁸ See Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), 56.

³⁹ Sandra M. Schneiders, *Jesus Risen in Our Midst: Essays on the Resurrection of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2013), 96.

⁴⁰ See Beasley-Murray, *Gospel of Life*, 104-105.

community of faith. For example, Jesus commands believers—again, represented by the disciples—to abide in him as he abides in them (15:4). Taking this further, it is apparent (e.g., from Jn. 20:21) that as the church is in communion with Christ and Christ abides in the church, the church’s mission is a continuation of the mission of Christ.⁴¹ In other words, the church lives according to the mission of Christ now. This concept is observable, for example, at the end of the Gospel (Jn. 21:15-17) when Jesus delegates his shepherding mission to Peter. Jesus, the Good Shepherd (Jn. 10:11) gives a mission to Peter—who, in this case, represents the community of believers—to shepherd his sheep. Note the expressions “my lambs” (ἀρνία μου) and “my sheep” (πρόβατά μου); i.e., the flock is not Peter’s, it is ultimately Jesus’, but Jesus delegates this shepherding task to him as an expression of Jesus’ presence and mission in the life of believers.⁴² This concept also appears, albeit more subtly, in John 20:21-23 when Jesus gives the authority to forgive sins to the disciples in doing their mission through the Spirit. The authority to forgive sins, which only belonged to God and was expressed through Jesus, is now given to the community of believers through the Spirit.

What does this have to do with eschatology? This manifestation of Jesus’ presence and mission in the church, for the Evangelist, only happens because the Eschaton is here. This is apparent especially in one eschatologically significant passage, in the imagery of the sower and the reaper in John 4:34-38, which is pregnant with eschatological language that is derived from the OT.⁴³ In this passage, Jesus says to the disciples:

⁴¹ See Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John*, 489.

⁴² Also note Jesus’ recurring question to Peter, “Do you love me?,” which might also point out that only those who have an intimate relationship with Jesus are called to represent the presence and the mission of Jesus in the eschatological age, and these people are precisely the ones who have eternal life now and will be resurrected in the future (see prior discussion).

⁴³ Ng, *Water Symbolism in John*, 127.

My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest?’ Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. **Already** the **one who reaps** is receiving wages and gathering fruit for **eternal life**, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ **I sent you to reap** that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.⁴⁴

Again, it is apparent here that the eschatological age has been brought forward. The harvest is not in the future (“four months”) but it is already here as Jesus brings the Eschaton to the present. Precisely because of this does Jesus send his disciples to participate in this work by reaping the harvest. If the language used here is eschatological, and if the language is attributed to the mission delegated to the disciples, then the mission of the church (as represented by Jesus’ disciples) should be seen as a continuation of the eschatological mission of Christ as the bringer of the Eschaton.⁴⁵ Precisely because Christ has brought the Eschaton to the present and made the fields “white for harvest” does the church have its mission to reap the harvest as an expression of the continuation of Christ’s mission.

In addition, in John 14:18-19, where the verb “to live” (ζάω) occurs, Jesus says to the disciples, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.” Two implications are important to note here. First, two key terms here are “come” and “see.” Schnackenburg suggests that these terms can implicitly refer to the concept of futuristic eschatology. It is undeniable that Jesus’ words in this passage sound eschatological and future-oriented. This futuristic eschatology is then realized in the present through Jesus’ resurrection in John 20. In this chapter,

⁴⁴ Emphasis mine.

⁴⁵ Ng, *Water Symbolism*, 132.

especially in vv. 19-20 and vv. 24-25, the two terms “come” and “see” co-appear again shortly after Jesus rises from the dead.⁴⁶ Jesus here “comes” to the disciples and they “see” him. What has been promised beforehand is realized here in the community of believers. Thus, Jesus’ life is manifested in the life of the believers because only they will be able to “see” Jesus’ presence. Second, v. 19 is particularly striking because Jesus says again here that as he lives the disciples will also live. In other words, it is precisely because Jesus’ presence is manifested in the church—and the church is his branches—that believers in the church are going to be resurrected through Jesus’ resurrection.

From the above suggestions, therefore, I firstly suggest that Christ the giver of life has chosen to express his worldly presence through, and in, the church in this eschatological age.⁴⁷ This is followed by the resurrection of the believers, which is made possible by the presence of the resurrected Christ in them.

Eternal Life is a Reality in the Church

There are indications that chapters 20-21 are the point where the two dimensions of eschatology (present and future) meet each other in the most real sense; i.e., when the future reality of eternal life is brought into the present in Christ through the Holy Spirit’s presence in the life of believers.⁴⁸ It is apparent in the verses exposed above (i.e., Jn. 20:19-20, 24-25) how futuristic eschatology meets with the present. In addition to that, however, there is an important event that occurs in these two chapters, namely the coming of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 20:22-23), which marks the change of the age. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the midst of the people of God has been promised in the OT (Joel 2:28-32; Isa. 44:3-5; Ezek. 36:26-27; Zech. 12:10). Therefore, the coming of the

Holy Spirit can be seen as a sign that the ideal messianic age has come. As Carson also suggests, the Gospel of John presents the Holy Spirit as the “down-payment” for the eternal life that is to come.⁴⁹ The reality of the Eschaton has been brought into the present through life in the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, when the Gospel of John shows that the Holy Spirit now lives among the saints in the church, it implies that the church is where the reality of the Eschaton exists. In the life of the church, the ideal messianic age can be seen. In the preceding discussion, I have briefly mentioned about the *quality* of eternal life which believers enjoy in the present; albeit it has not been fully realized and believers still experience physical death. I will here elaborate that the quality of eternal life that believers enjoy now is precisely due to the indwelling of the Spirit among them. The transcendent reality of eternal life breaks into the immanence through the work of the Spirit. The Spirit is the one who brings the spiritual blessings of Christ’s heavenly presence into reality in the worldly existence of the church, resulting in the blossom of the quality of eternal life. The eternal life manifests itself in believers’ communion with one another in love and in the Spirit. *This* is the ideal messianic age. The eternal life in the present is not one that renders physical death completely irrelevant. It is one in quality, which is characterized by love towards each other in the Spirit. This is the messianic age, which was to exist in the future but now has been brought to the present through the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church.

Therefore, I shall conclude that the Gospel of John also uses eschatology to show that the church is the community that reflects Christ’s worldly presence—and bears his mission—in the Eschaton. The Gospel shows this through the concept of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church, who enables believers to live the ideal life in perfect love because he is the

⁴⁶ Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 429-430.

⁴⁷ Schneiders, *Jesus Risen in Our Midst*, 118.

⁴⁸ Attridge, “From Discord Rises Meaning,” 175-176.

⁴⁹ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 97.

one who brings the transcendent presence of Christ from his heavenly throne to exist in the immanent existence of the church. It is apparent here that the Evangelist does not only use eschatology as an “advertising campaign” to invite faith in Christ, but also to invite readers to join the community of the church. This is due to the fact that the church is the representative of the real presence of Christ in this world, and therefore, the invitation to faith in Christ is always followed by the invitation to enter into the community of the church. One cannot be joined with the vine without being joined with the branches as well. Moreover, if the church is the community that reflects the real presence of Christ, the invitation to have faith in Christ must also be expressed *through* the holy and loving life of the church. The “advertising campaign” cannot be all-talk, but it has to be expressed in a real sense when people see the life of the church.

Conclusion and Implications

From the above discussions, I shall conclude several things about the function of this unique eschatology in the Gospel of John.

First, the Gospel of John uses eschatology to present Christ as the bringer of the Eschaton. The old age has ended and the messianic age has begun because of Christ. Eternal life, which was originally seen as an abstract reality in the future, has now been realized in the present through the coming of Christ, so that anyone who believes and has an intimate relationship with Christ shall have eternal life now. This does not nullify the importance of the future resurrection because a real resurrection will still be needed to vindicate the current eternal life.

Second, the Gospel also uses eschatology to present Christian faith as more progressive than the classical Jewish faith; i.e. faith in Christ brings a better understanding of eschatology which is based on the more

progressive revelation of history. In doing this, the Gospel of John does not deny the traditional concept of Jewish eschatology, which focuses on the resurrection of the dead on the Last Day. However, the Evangelist presents a new concept of the existence of eternal life in the present that extends to the future through the person of Christ. In addition to this, by eliminating the term “Kingdom of God”, which is Jewish by nature, the Evangelist presents this view not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles; because eternal life is the solution to the universal problem that is death. In the midst of a political situation where many faced the dilemma between worshipping the gods of the Romans, the God of Judaism, or joining the Emperor cult, the Gospel of John provides an apology for Jesus Christ and Christianity.

Third, the Gospel also uses eschatology to show that the church is the real representation of the presence of Jesus – and the successor of Jesus’ mission in this world – in the Eschaton. The quality of eternal life has been made real in the life of the community of the church through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the ideal eschatological age – which was originally conceived as existing only in the future – has been realized now in the life of the church.

All this goes back to the person of Christ. In the end, the Gospel of John uses eschatology as an “advertising campaign” to invite faith in Christ and to call readers to join the community of believers which is the church; so that anyone who believes might have eternal life through union with Christ that is manifested through union with the church. This function of eschatology is consistent with the Gospel’s purpose of writing, as stated in Jn. 20:31, “But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

There are some important implications. First, in this postmodern age where no truth is considered absolute, the Evangelist’s claim

becomes most crucial. There is no space to think of Jesus as only one of many ways to eternal life, there is no possibility where Christian faith can be regarded as only one of many good ways to live, and there is no reason why anyone claiming to follow Christ would live outside of the church. Faith in Christ is always followed by a life in the church. Second, if the church is the representation of Christ's presence in the Eschaton, then it is important for believers to express this to the public. It is imperative that every believer should reflect the compassion of Jesus, carry the mission of the Kingdom, and obey Jesus' commandments in this world; so that anyone who sees the church can say, through the Spirit, that Jesus is Lord (cf. Rom. 10:9). Third, if the quality of eternal life in the Eschaton exists in the church through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and it manifests itself in a life full of love towards each other, then it is also important for believers to live according to this concept. Paul strongly urges the church to live together in love (e.g. Eph. 4:1-6). The Evangelist himself also notes the same plea in Jn. 15:12. Hatred, slander and malice should not exist in any polity of the church. Fourth, if the Evangelist seems enthusiastic to use eschatology to campaign for "Team Jesus," why do we not? Let us break out of our comfort zone and let the world know that the eternal life is here, and that the church has it!

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