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Bible Review

John

Instructions: This is an open Bible, open note review. Do what you can from memory, and the rest with you Bible and notes. Essays that are unacceptable or lack substance must be rewritten. The objective of this review is to create a learning experience.

Agree/Disagree

1.\_D\_The theme of John is, "For the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many."

2.\_A\_\_The purpose of John's Gospel is found in John 20:30-31.

3.\_A\_\_The prologue of John's gospel (1:1-18) introduces the major themes which are developed later throughout the book.

4.\_D\_\_In John's Gospel, the word "believe" refers to one's intellectual acceptance of doctrine about Jesus.

5.\_D\_\_ Jesus’ first miracle was the healing of the nobleman’s son at Capernaum.

6.\_A\_\_ Eternal life, as described in John’s Gospel, has both a quantitative and qualitative dimension.

7.\_D\_\_ John’s use of the logos concept in his prologue shows that he was more familiar with Hellenistic philosophy than Jewish theology.

8.\_A\_\_ The Greek word monogenes (Jn. 1:14) is best rendered “unique” or “one of a kind.”

9.\_D \_ “Eating and drinking” the body and blood of Christ (John 6) refers to the worship experience of taking communion.

10.\_A\_\_Jesus’ words, “I am the light of the world,” can be best understood in the context Jewish customs observed at the Feast of Tabernacles.

11.\_A\_\_The key turning point in the development of John's gospel is found in 12:23, when Jesus said, "the hour has come."

12.\_A\_\_The miracles recorded by John are set forth as the basic evidences that Jesus of Nazareth is the divine Messiah.

13.\_A\_\_By washing the disciples’ feet, Jesus provided an example for them to pattern their lives after.

14. \_A\_\_In John 15:1-11, Jesus uses the term “abide” as a virtual synonym for “believing” in Jesus.

15.\_D\_\_When Jesus refers to his disciples as his “friends” (John 15), He is reminding them of the wonderful companionship they had shared together.

16.\_D\_\_After the Upper Room Discourse, James, the half-brother of Jesus, closed the session with prayer.

17.\_D\_\_On resurrection morning, Peter was the first of Jesus’ followers to discover the empty tomb.

18.\_A\_\_The only first century style of tomb where someone could sit at the head and foot would be an *archasolia* tomb.

19.\_D\_\_When the disciples returned to their fishing, it was an indication of their confusion and discouragement over the death of Jesus.

20\_A\_\_In fulfillment of Jesus’ words, Peter was executed in Rome under the persecution instigated by Nero (AD 64).

Essays

1. **What does John mean by the term "believe"? Explain some of the synonyms for “believe” which John uses in his gospel.**

The word “believe” (pisteuo) occurs 98 times in the Gospel of John and it essentially means “to trust”. John has never intended to let readers have the impression that “believing in Jesus” simply refers to “intellectually accepting the fact that Jesus is an extraordinary person”. One time “many came to believe in Him” (8:30), but Jesus said to them, “If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine.” (8:31) After some exchanges between Jesus and the tentatively believing Jews, they picked up stones and threw at Him.(8:59) Obviously John intended to educate readers that superficial “belief” was not true “belief”.

What then is the meaning of “believe” which John uses in his gospel? The best way to examine its meaning is studying the synonyms for “belief” in the book. Before we explore the synonyms of “belief” used by John, it is important to note that John has introduced a key idea that the Word is Jesus (1:1); the Word became Jesus in flesh (1:14) and the words spoken by Jesus are spirit and life (6:63). This concept will help us better understand why John used the following synonyms as equivalents to “belief”.

The first synonym is “know”. “And that is eternal life that they may know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” (17:3) John used the term “known” 5 times in 17:25 and 26 basically to refer to a perfect state of “belief”. So “belief”, according to John, can be equated with “truly knowing”. If one truly knows who Christ is, what His messages are and what He has done for us, he/she will be saved.

The second synonym is “receiving”. “As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.” (1:12) So, “belief”, according to John, must also display the quality of “receiving” somebody, i.e. letting Jesus come into one’s heart; letting His word renew one’s mind; respecting Him; giving Him the best spot in one’s heart”, “making Him feel comfortable”, “giving Him the best of one’s attention”, etc.

The third synonym used is “obeying”. “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life.” (3:36) We can see that John was trying to equate “believe” with “obey”. So, “belief”, according to John, must display the elements of “obey”, i.e. respecting Jesus’ word, seeing Jesus’ word as commands from one’s lord and complying with the commands to the best of one’s ability.

The fourth synonym used is “abiding”. In the discourse on the relationship between the vine and branches, we can see that “believing in Jesus” should be like “a branch abiding in the vine”. (15:1-8) So, “belief”, according to John, must display the property of “abiding in Jesus” or say “abiding in Jesus’ love” (15:9-10). A branch abiding in the vine does not only look connected to the vine, but shares the life fluid of the vine. The life fluid may be thought of as “love” and “word” (15:7, 10). From this perspective, “belief” will involve the unhindered communication of the inner elements of one’s life, i.e. explicit as well as hidden thoughts and emotions.

In brief, “belief” in Christ, according to John, is “truly knowing Christ, trusting Christ, receiving Him, obeying Him and abiding in Him”.

1. **Explain your understanding of what is meant by the "progress of belief" as it was presented and discussed in class. How is this concept rather different from our traditional understanding of what it means to “believe”?**

The theme of the “progress of belief” as experienced by the characters portrayed in the Gospel of John is very clear. The disciples “believed” the testimony made by John the Baptizer (1:36) and then sought to interact with Jesus. They “believed” He was the Messiah after staying with Him for a day (1:41). They “believed” Him after seeing His first miracle. (2:11) Jesus told them that He would raise Lazarus from the dead so that they might “believe” (11:15) and He also told them a few times that He told them what would be happening so that they might believe when those things happened (Ch. 14-17). Finally they saw the empty tomb and then “believed” (20:8). Obviously, according to John, there are different levels of “belief” and the disciples’ belief started on the initial acceptance of the testimony of John the Baptizer and then made progress until its consummation on seeing Christ’s resurrection.

We also see such progress of belief with other characters like the nobleman, the Samaritans and the man who was born blind. Their “belief” progressed from “seeing is believing” to “believing even before seeing”; from accepting another person’s testimony” to “accepting Jesus’ words directly”; and from “believing Jesus as a healer or a prophet from God” to “believing Him as the Messiah”.

John has also clearly laid down a message that Jesus did not value “superficial belief” (2:23-25) which would not progress and lead to eternal life. Such “superficial belief” was based only on external miracles and was not rooted in a clear understanding of the Person of Christ as Messiah and the Son of God. People holding such belief might turn around and attack Jesus (8:59).

However, even if the “belief” is a genuine kind of “belief”, it still has to go through a process of growth from “tentative belief” to “consummated belief”. In its consummation, “belief” can be equated with “truly knowing Christ as the Creator”, “fully trusting Him as the Savior”, “totally receiving Him as the Lord”, “unreservedly obeying Him as the King” and “constantly abiding in Him as the source of life”.

This concept of “progress of belief” is very different from our traditional understanding of “belief” in securing salvation. I have used the little book Four Spiritual Laws to share the gospel with quite a number of people. When they bowed and prayed with me to accept Jesus as their savior, I could add one to my list of people getting saved. The process took about as brief as 10 minutes. I would claim that they had “believed in Christ”. So, such “belief” happened at a point of time and it was “all or none”. I thought as long as he/she understood the message and was willing to open his/her mouth to pray with me, it was done. My mentality was: the process of growth in belief was just for reward (bonus), not salvation.

However the concept of “progress of belief” tells us that more work need to be done to help believers mature in their belief before we can rest. From this perspective, “initial belief” can be conceived as a fertilized egg which needs to be supplied with nutrients and a good environment for growth until the embryo becomes a baby and is successfully delivered. The “consummated belief” corresponds to the delivered baby, a new life.

1. **Trace the theme of belief through John's Gospel as we have done so often in class. Include an outline with references. Explain significant turning points in John’s development of the theme of belief**.

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|  | Tracing the Theme of Belief | Reference | Significant Turning Points |
| A | The Prologue | 1:1-18 | The theme of the book and the main messages of the book are clearly recorded in this text. It is presented in a chiasm with the central message that those who accept (trust) Jesus will become the children of God. The word Pisteuo (believe) appears 98 times in the book. |
| B | The Beginnings of Belief | 1:19-4:54 |  |
|  | 1. witness of John the Baptizer  - John identifying himself (1:19-28)  - John as Jesus’ witness (1:29-34) | 1:19-34 | Belief usually starts on hearing somebody’s testimony |
|  | 2. The first disciples | 1:35-51 | The first disciples start their belief as a result of John’s witnessing and their initial interaction with Him |
|  | 3. First miracle: turning water into wine | 2:1-12 | v.11 states that the disciples believed in Him because of this. Obviously it means their belief progressed. |
|  | 4. First temple cleansing | 2:13-22 |  |
|  | 5. Many beginning to believe | 2:23-25 | Only tentative belief because Jesus was not “entrusting” Himself to them v.24 |
|  | 6. The beginning of belief of Nicodemus | 3:1-12 | Nicodemus struggled in his beginning of belief because he only used “head knowledge” v. 3, 9 |
|  | 7. Clear testimony of John the Baptizer | 3:22-36 |  |
|  | 8. The beginning of belief of the Samaritans | 4:1-42 | It is highlighted that the Samaritans’ basis of belief progressed from “the woman’s word” to “His word” |
|  | 9. The beginning of belief of the nobleman | 4:43-54 | the Galileans’ belief was based on “seeing miracles” v. 45, 48; the nobleman’s belief progressed to “believing before seeing” v. 50 |
| C | The Development of Unbelief | Ch 5 -12 |  |
|  | **a. Controversy Over Christ** | Ch 5-6 |  |
|  | 1. Healing the lame man: challenged the Sabbath tradition and claimed deity | 5:1-18 | the book recorded this incident as the beginning of major conflicts between Jesus and the Jewish leaders |
|  | 2. Christ’s long discourse on His authority | 5:19-47 | Jesus claimed His authority in work, knowledge, judgment and giving life was from His relationship with the Father; and the Father, John the Baptizer, His works and the scripture all bore witness to Him; and Jesus exposed the Jews’ unbelief and the reasons behind that. |
|  | 3. Feeding a great multitude to help the followers progress in belief | 6:1-13 |  |
|  | 4. The immaturity of the people’s knowledge of who Jesus was and His agenda | 6:14-15 | They thought He was just a prophet and would make a great King for the nation of Israel |
|  | 5. Walking on the sea of Galilee | 6:16-21 |  |
|  | 6. Discourse on the Bread of Life causing more people fall into unbelief | 6:22-71 | Jesus rebuked the people’s materialistic desire and pointed out the key of “belief”; He encouraged them to shift to spiritual needs but He made His message difficult to understand. He explained the meaning only to the chosen ones and let them have a chance to verbalize their commitment while many were leaving |
|  | **b. Conflicts at the Feast of Tabernacles** | Ch. 7-9 |  |
|  | 1. Focused His ministry in Galilee | 7:1 | Chapter 7 starts with “after all these”, meaning all the above controversy was leading to a new phase of experience between Jesus and the Jews. In the coming few chapters, we can see the escalating conflicts because the phrase “seek to kill Him” appears 6 times (7:1, 19, 20, 25, 8:37, 40) and “seek to seize Him” 4 times (7:30, 32, 44, 8:20). |
|  | 2. The Unbelief of Jesus’ brother | 7:2-9 |  |
|  | 3. Debating about Jesus | 7:10-15 | We can see the conflicts between Jesus and the Jews; and also between the believing and unbelieving Jews. |
|  | 4. Jesus’ teaching in the temple in response to their unbelief and the Sabbath accusation against Him | 7:14-24 |  |
|  | 5. Bewilderment of the people | 7:25-27 |  |
|  | 6. Jesus’ strong proclamation of His origin | 7:28-29 |  |
|  | 7. Divided responses | 7:30-32 |  |
|  | 8. Further bewilderment following Jesus’ message about leaving | 7:33-36 | Only a brief message of His departure, not mentioning his sacrificial death upfront |
|  | 9. Divided responses to Jesus’ prophecy of the Spirit’s coming | 7:37-44 |  |
|  | 10. Disagreements over what to do with Jesus, even among the Jewish leaders | 7:45-52 |  |
|  | 11. Trying to test Jesus with the case of the adulterous woman | 8:1-11 |  |
|  | 12. Proclamation and exchanges at the Treasury | 8:12-29 |  |
|  | 13. Jews changed from tentative belief to calling Jesus demon-possessed, and attempting to stone Him | 8:30-59 | v.31 shows that the conflict and the unbelief were the result of their inability to abide in His word. |
|  | 14. The progress of belief of the blind man despite the organized efforts intimidate believers | Ch 9 | All these happenings led to the hour of crisis in which He directly talked about his sacrificial death |
|  | **C. The Hour of Crisis** | Ch. 10-11 |  |
|  | 1. Discourse on the Good Shepherd | 10: 1-18 | For the first time Jesus clearly spoke about laying down His life for His “sheep”, indicating that the hour of crisis had come |
|  | 2. Divided responses of the Jews | 10: 19-24 |  |
|  | 3. The Jews’ attempt to stone and seize Jesus during His discourse on His unity with the Father | 10:25-38 |  |
|  | 4. Jesus’ temporary withdrawal to Perea | 10:40-42 |  |
|  | 5. The Progress of belief for those who witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus | 11:1-45 |  |
|  | 6. The unbelief of the Jewish leaders and their plan to remove Him and Mary’s anointing Jesus for His burial | 11:46-12:1 | The physical symbolic action (being anointed for burial) let us feel the imminence of the crisis of being killed |
|  | 7. The result of Lazarus resurrection: The royal entry | 12:12-22 | The book of John depicted the raising of Lazarus as the immediate cause for the overwhelming responses of the public welcoming of Jesus’ entry to Jerusalem which caused the resolution of the Jewish leaders to take quick action to remove Him. |
|  | 8. Jesus’ last public discourse and God’s last public authentication and the Jews’ unbelief and some rulers’ secret tentative belief | 12:23-50 | Jesus clearly stated that “the hour for Him to die had come” v.12:23 |
| D | Strengthening of Belief | Ch. 13-17 |  |
|  | 1. Example of humble service | 13:1-17 | Only the book of John recorded this feet washing demonstration and teaching which clearly was focused on strengthening the belief (obeying His word to stay united as a crucial part of belief)of His 11 disciples in the face of His imminent physical departure. It ties in with the whole theme and purpose of the book, “belief”. |
|  | 2. The prophecy of the betrayal in order that the disciples might believe when it happened | 13: 18-26 |  |
|  | 3. The departure of the betrayer | 13:27-30 |  |
|  | 4. Discourse on keeping their belief during His departure | 13:31-16:33 | Only the book of John recorded this long discourse of Jesus which clearly was focused on strengthening the belief of His 11 disciples. In this discourse, Jesus clearly (1) confirmed His oneness with the Father; (2)prophesized the preparation of everlasting home, His coming back and the coming persecution; (3) commanded them to love one another and abide in Him; (4)promised that the Holy Spirit would come and help; they would have His peace and the Father would answer their prayer; (5) and let them know that His word would prevent them from falling and they would recall His word and be filled with joy. |
|  | 5. Praying for the present and future believers | Ch. 17 | Reporting to God, thanking God and requesting help from God regarding the belief (knowing Christ, abiding in His word, staying united, overcoming sin)of the group of believers. |
| E | The consummation of unbelief | Ch. 18-19 |  |
|  | 1. Betrayal | 18:1-11 |  |
|  | 2. Religious Trial | 18:12-27 | Peter “fell” (denied Jesus 3 times) because of his imperfect belief |
|  | 3. Civil Trial | 18:28 – 19:16 |  |
|  | 4. Crucifixion of Jesus | 19:17-37 |  |
|  | 5. Burial of Jesus | 19:38-42 | Some Jewish leaders like Nicodemus and Joseph showed imperfect belief because of their fear for the other Jewish leaders v.38, 39 |
| F | The confirmation of belief | Ch. 20 |  |
|  | 1. Belief confirmed as a result of Jesus’ resurrection | 20:1-27 | Belief consummated as a result of witnessing the empty tomb, the message of the angels and the appearances of Jesus |
|  | 2. Jesus pointed to the significance of unconditional belief | v. 30 |  |
|  | 3. The purpose of the book | v. 31 | The book was written in order that we might believe Jesus was the Messiah |
| G | Responsibility of Belief | Ch.21 |  |
|  | 1. Jesus’ third appearance | 21:1-14 |  |
|  | 2. Peter’s confirmation of his belief and taking on Jesus’ assignment of responsibility | 21:15-17 | Result of consummated belief: serving the Lord |
|  | 3. Different journeys of belief for different individuals | 21:18-23 |  |