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An Analysis of the Concept of Believing in the Narrative Contexts of John's Gospel

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF BELIEVING IN THE

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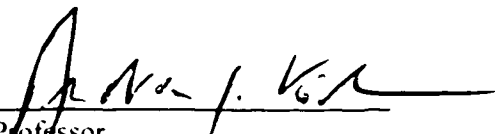
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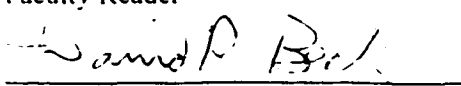
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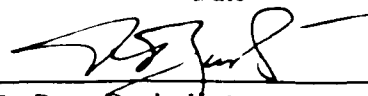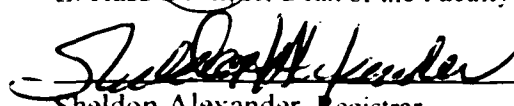
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Chapter

ABSTRACT

The thesis explores the meaning of the concept of believing in the Gospel of John. Chapter 1 provides a discussion of the relevance of the subject and the methodology employed in the research. The methodology is primarily a semantic field approach emphasizing the importance context adds to the interpretation process.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 follow the same basic outline. The goal is to provide an analysis of πιστεύω within its syntactical relationships and verbal forms. Any relevant conclusions are then integrated into an exegetical discussion. The Gospel of John is divided into three sections, one for each of these chapters: John 1–4, 5–12, 13–21.

In Chapter 2 (John 1–4) the evidence for interchangeableness of the πιστεύω εἰς and πιστεύω + dative constructions is presented. Πιστεύω εἰς constructions do not refer to a superior belief. Typically, verbal forms of πιστεύεω are not used formulaically. The crowd in 2:23–25 is portrayed negatively. The disciples, the Samaritans, and the royal official progressed in their belief.

In Chapter 3 (John 5–12) the πιστεύω ὅτι construction was determined to contain a different meaning than the πιστεύω εἰς and πιστεύω + dative constructions. John 5–12 can be characterized as, largely, many people rejecting Jesus. While four signs were performed by Jesus, there were seven negative reactions to them; the three signs performed in John 1–4 had mixed reactions. Three inadequate professions were made in John 5–12 (6:14; 7:31; 10:21) and four groups demonstrated deficient belief through poor

actions (6:22–66; 8:21–47; 10:22–39; 12:42–43). Positive portrayals were placed in contrast to negative portrayals. The antecedent to "they" (in 12:37) are the negative portrayals of those believing in John's Gospel, not one specific group.

In Chapter 4 (John 13–21) the πιστεύω absolute construction was in a synonymous relationship to a πιστεύω ὅτι construction, demonstrating the flexibility of this construction in the Gospel. Eternal life, understood in both its qualitative and quantitative aspects, was discussed in its relationship to believing. The relationship of knowing and believing should be understood as being reciprocal. John 13–21 begins with two pericopae in which Jesus calls his disciples into a deeper faith; later in the narrative they progress. All portrayals of believing were positive in this section. It appears that the beginning of the Gospel was more concerned with the question of whom belief should be placed in, while the latter part was more concerned with the content of this belief.

Chapter 5 summarizes the above conclusions while integrating them. Implications are drawn for Lordship Salvation and the doctrine of assurance.

To my wife:

Ann B. Croteau

who continuously strives for the One who is the Truth

CHAPTER 1

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction

A problem will inevitably arise when biblical texts are read outside of their contexts. Scholars used to consider the word the basic unit of meaning. As they allowed themselves to be informed by modern linguistic theory, they realized that at least the paragraph, if not the discourse level, was necessary for understanding meaning. The meaning of the concept of believing in the Gospel of John, which is usually represented by the Greek verb πιστευω, has been previously studied, but without utilizing a modern linguistic mindset. The concept of believing in John's Gospel will be unfolded by performing a synchronic analysis and interpreting each relevant context.

Why Study the Concept of Believing in John's Gospel

Cotterell and Turner offer two ways in which linguistics can help the exegete. First, linguistics can add further precision to the understanding of words. Secondly, linguistics can offer the exegete different ways of analyzing a text.[1] When studying a concept, like believing, one is naturally inclined to start by looking at the texts in which πιστευω occurs. This is acceptable. However, it is only a start. The contexts where the

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[1]See Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1989), 27-28.

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concept is present, even if the word is not, also need to be studied. The researcher needs

to study related words and focus on the main clusters. Thiselton offers a sobering remark

by saying that the exegete "can ignore [linguistic] methods and conclusions only at his

own peril."[2]

The plethora of errors occurring in exegesis due to an impoverished

understanding of Greek words and linguistics has been well documented.[3] Some of these

errors have carried over into the study of believing in John's Gospel.

The attention that scholars have given to the study of πιστεύω in John's Gospel

brings some validation to the current study. Research has been done solely for the

purpose of understanding Johannine faith. However, some research has been written from

a mostly narrative viewpoint without taking syntactical constructions or verbal forms into

serious consideration.[4] Others may find importance in these areas but fail to integrate

them effectively into the discussion when exegeting the narratives.[5] Though modern

linguistic theory may be accepted by the researchers, they do not adequately utilize

accepted linguistic tools in their research (e.g. semantic domains, componential analysis).

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[2]Anthony C. Thiselton, "Semantics and New Testament Interpretation," in *New Testament Interpretation*, ed. I. H. Marshall (Exeter, England: Eerdmans, 1977), 100.

[3]See D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996); Thiselton, "Semantics," 100; Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics*, 27-28; Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meanings*, revised and expanded ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994); Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991), 64-92; Vern S. Poythress, "Analysing a Biblical Text: Some Important Linguistic Distinctions," *Scotland Journal of Theology* 32, no. 2 (1979): 113-77.

[4]For example, see A. D. Hopkins, "A Narratological Approach to the Development of Faith in the Gospel of John" (Ph.D. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1992).

[5]For example, see Randall L. Adkisson, "An Examination of the Concept of Believing as a Dominant Motif in the Gospel of John" (Ph.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1990).

This integration has not been successfully accomplished in studying John's concept of believing.

It is vital in understanding John's Gospel to understand his concept of believing.[6] Not only does the author mention πιστευω ninety-eight times, but "(o)f every one of the Gospel's major personages, and of most of its minor ones, it is once or oftener affirmed or denied that they believe or know."[7]

Methodology

History

The debate in biblical academia over the correct way to understand words and how to incorporate linguistics into hermeneutics erupted in 1961 with the publication of James Barr's *The Semantics of Biblical Language*.[8] Barr successfully attacked Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* and its confusion of words and concepts.[9] with the result "that you are never sure when you are dealing with New Testament words and when you are dealing with the realities signified by them."[10] The thrust of Barr's work which relates to this discussion is his overall questioning of the word-centered

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[6] "The plot of the gospel is propelled by conflict between belief and unbelief as responses to Jesus" (R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel A Study in Literary Design* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983], 97).

[7] J. Gaffney, "Believing and Knowing in the Fourth Gospel," *Theological Studies* 26 (1965): 224. The only exception may be John the Baptist. Though he is not defined with either of these terms, the purpose for his coming is "so that all might believe through him" (John 1:7). So he is still connected to the concept of believing.

[8] See James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961).

[9] See Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976).

[10] Barr, *Semantics*, 211.

approach to interpreting biblical texts.[11] However, Barr's success has to be qualified since the incorporation of his ideas into practice has seemed to be a burden many biblical scholars have not been able to bear.[12] The methodological discussion which follows intends to build off of his and others' work to lay a proper foundation for this project.

General Principles and Problems

The field of linguistics will be a great friend when the distinctions between the concept-orientated approach and the field-orientated approach are comprehended. The field-orientated approach understands that meaning is based upon choice; the alternatives an author had at his disposal at the time of writing reveals "how much significance to attach to an author's use of" a word.[13] Statistical statements about how often a word occurs can be misleading, since the concept can be presented in different ways through the use of near synonyms or equivalent phrases.[14]

Köstenberger agrees with Nida, saying that "more use should be made of the methods of field semantics."[15] Words need to be understood in light of other words. While some may view the field-orientated approach as "anti-word-study," that is not true. It is simply trying to approach word studies from a linguistically informed mind-set.

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[11]See Peter Cotterell, "Sociolinguistics and Biblical Interpretation," *Vox Evangelica* 16 (1986): 63.

[12]See Carson, *Fallacies*, 44; see also Silva, *Biblical Words*, 19-20, and his multitude of quotes.

[13]Thiselton, "Semantics," 89. This may include choice in words, phrases, idioms, verbal forms, etc.

[14]See ibid., 97.

[15]Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples According to the Fourth Gospel With Implications for the Fourth Gospel's Purpose and the Mission of the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 25. This work applies to this study as it is an example of one who has successfully integrated the field-orientated approach into biblical studies.

rather than naïveté. Words play a significant role in the study of a biblical concept.[16] However, the context from which the word is derived places lexical meaning into subjection. A significant shift that will enhance the study of words will occur when more exegetes focus "primarily upon the analysis of related meanings of different words, not upon the different meanings of single words."[17] Even though it may be helpful to know the four (or so) meanings that πιστεύω can have, comparing each of the four meanings to semantically related terms will yield much benefit in narrowing down a definition in a certain context.[18]

The Diachronic Analysis Versus Synchronic Analysis Debate

Definition of Terms

A diachronic analysis studies what a certain word meant through time. It may look at how Plato or Aristotle used a word found in the New Testament. A synchronic analysis looks at how the word being researched was used in contemporaneous writings.

Synchronic Analysis: The Chosen Method

When studying a concept within a book of Scripture, one has to decide if he will do a diachronic study, a synchronic study, or both. Recently, scholars have called into question the usefulness of a diachronic study.[19] This study will give priority to a

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[16]See ibid., 26.

[17]Eugene A. Nida, "Implications of Contemporary Linguistics for Biblical Scholarship," *JBL* 91 (1972): 85.

[18]See Thiselton, "Semantics," 91, for this presentation.

[19]See Barr, *Semantics*, 109; Silva, *Biblical Words*, 38; Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics*, 131–33; Carson, *Fallacies*, 28–37; Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New*

synchronic analysis. The fallacies associated with a diachronic analysis are manifold.
and therefore caution is needed when this method is used. But the pendulum should not
swing too far in the other direction.

There is a definite need for diachronic analysis in the study of words. The New
Testament (and especially the Old Testament) has many *hapax legomena*.[20] When a
hapax occurs, a proper analysis of that word would include studying the literature of the
first and second centuries. But if that word is not found in the literature, then referring to
a word's history (maybe going back three or more centuries) and formation are the only
methods an exegete has besides analyzing the immediate context, which should rule out
any outlandish theses. When sufficient data exists for a synchronic study, the diachronic
information becomes mostly interesting, but not very useful. Silva agrees with de Moor
who said that "[a]n explanation which rests on the sole basis of etymology can never be
anything more than a plausible hypothesis."[21] Plenty of data exists in John's Gospel so
that a diachronic analysis is not necessary.

Conclusion

A proper understanding of a synchronic analysis is important. Though both are
useful, a synchronic analysis is more fundamental since a diachronic analysis always
assumes a synchronic analysis within the time it is studied.[22] Even though the books of

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Testament Based on Semantic Domains, 2 vols. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988, 1989),
introduction.

[20]A word occurring only once.

[21]J. C. de Moor, "Ugaritic Lexicography," in *Studies on Semitic Lexicography*, ed. Fronzaroli
(Florence: Istituto di Linguistica, 1973), 85; quoted in Silva, *Biblical Meanings*, 44.

[22]See Osborne, *Spiral*, 82-83.

the New Testament were written over time. the time span is too short to allow for

changes in word meaning.[23]

This not only relates to words. but also to phrases and syntactical constructions. The different syntactical constructions. and the meaning(s) that can be derived from them. will be studied. Whether or not the author used certain verb forms to indicate meaning will also be investigated.

The Synchronic Analysis

Three areas will be utilized in the synchronic analysis of πιστευω in the Gospel of John. The syntactical analysis will examine the various ways in which πιστευω is or is not modified. The verbal form analysis will attempt to investigate whether or not verb tenses or moods are used by the author to indicate a level or aspect of belief.[24] The paradigmatic analysis will discuss the relationship πιστευω has to other words in a given context.

Syntactical Analysis

Many scholars have addressed the different formulae that John uses.[25] While this study takes the view that some of the constructions have distinct purposes. a few scholars

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[23]See Poythress. "Analysing." 119.

[24]Even though some (Zane C. Hodges. "Untrustworthy Believers: John 2:23-25: problem passages in the Gospel of John. pt 2." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135 [1978]: 139-52: Richard W. Christianson. "The Soteriological Significance of PISTEUW in the Gospel of John" [Th.M. thesis. Grace Theological Seminary. 1987]. 119) appear to argue against levels of belief. really it is an argument over whether or not a mid-level belief secures life. Christianson himself discerns various levels of faith. See Christianson. "Soteriological." 119.

[25]For example. Charles H. Dodd. *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1953). 183-84: Charles K. Barrett. *The Gospel According to St John*. 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster. 1978). 163-64: Gerald Hawthorne. "The Concept of Faith in the Fourth

have seen a different purpose for nearly every construction.[26] This analysis will be done

by examining each construction in the context it is found. Every occurrence of πιστευω

will be considered.

Verbal Form Analysis

John uses many different moods and tenses when employing πιστευω. While

these different forms do not necessitate a certain kind of belief, they may help the

interpreter with different nuances of belief or emphases of the pericope.

There are various tenses and moods used with πιστευω in John's Gospel. Each of

these tenses and moods will be analyzed to see if patterns emerge which may aid in

understanding narratives and or the meaning of πιστευω. The moods will be examined in

conjunction with the various tenses that occur with them.

Paradigmatic Analysis

Through careful and repeated readings of John's Gospel, certain words have been

found to be in a paradigmatic relationship to πιστευω. Words have multiple nuances and

Gospel," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 116, no. 462 (1959): 118–20; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, The Anchor Bible, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1966–1970), 1:512–13; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 495; Adkisson, "Believing," 50–63, 87–88; Christianson, "Soteriological," 70–199; John Painter, "Eschatological Faith in the Gospel of John," in *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology*, ed. Robert J. Banks (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 38; Rudolph Bultmann and Arthur Weiser, "πιστευω, ktl." in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 174–228; Richard R. Melick, "A Study in the Concept of Belief: A Comparison of the Gospel of John and the Epistle to the Romans" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1976), 71–96; Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1929), 474–80.

[26]Brown, *John*, 1:513; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 183; Leon L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 297; Edwin A. Abbott, *Johannine Vocabulary: A Comparison of the Words of the Fourth Gospel with those of the Three* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1905), 26, n. 3; Berkhof, *Theology*, 495; Hawthorne, "Faith," 119–20; Warfield, *Doctrines*, 474–78.

senses. Therefore, all possible words will be discussed in reference to their usage. These words will be studied as they arise in the Gospel.

Exegetical Discussion

The Gospel has been divided into three sections for easier analysis: chapters 1–4, 5–12, 13–21.[27] After performing a synchronic analysis, semantic clusters of πιστευω will be isolated. The criteria used for deciding which passages will be discussed include: (1) are multiple occurrences of πιστευω present; (2) is the concept of believing present without the use of πιστευω; (3) is the sense of πιστευω Christological; (4) is the passage significant for understanding John's concept of believing; and (5) is the passage's interpretation, pertaining to believing, controversial. Once these passages have been located, the analysis will aim to discuss how believing is portrayed, paying special attention to reactions of those called to believe, those who are said to believe, and their actions afterward.

Literary Foundations

While many theories of redactions and apparent aporiae persist, the view of "cautious agnosticism regarding possible sources or redactions of the Fourth Gospel" will be accepted.[28] Even if all of these redactions and aporiae were included in discussion, the final authorship would then fall to the final redactor. Scholarship is far from coming to

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[27] See Gary M. Burge, "Interpreting the Gospel of John," in *Interpreting the New Testament Essays on Methods and Issues*, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman, 2001), 384, who divides John 1–12 into these two major sections.

[28] Köstenberger, *Missions*, 42–43. He cites Oscar Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle* (London: SCM, 1976); Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist, 1979), 20; and John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 246; for supporting the idea of using the existing Gospel as a basis for research.

any uniform conclusions on redactions and redactors. or on where aporiae exist. if they do at all. Some scholarship has shown a rather consistent theological theme throughout the Gospel.[29]

For the purposes of this study. it is best to view the current text as a literary unit and to trace the theme of believing through the entire Gospel in its narrative contexts.[30] The goal will be to discern the original meaning intended by the author.[31]

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[29]Culpepper. *Anatomy*.

[30]This would be similar to canon-critical. narrative-critical. or literary approaches.

[31]For a defense of authorial-intent-centered interpretation. see E. D. Hirsch. *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press. 1967); William W. Klein. Craig L. Blomberg. and Robert L. Hubbard. Jr.. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word. 1993). 5 12. 87 115; Kevin J. Vanhoozer. *Is There Meaning in This Text? the Bible. the reader. and the morality of literary knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan. 1998); and Osborne. *Spiral*. 366 415. Text used is: Barbara Aland. Kurt Aland. Johannes Karavidopoulos. Carlo M. Martini. and Bruce Metzger. eds.. *The Greek New Testament*. 4th ed. (Stuttgart. Germany: United Bible Societies. 1994).

CHAPTER 2

THE CONCEPT OF BELIEVING IN JOHN 1-4

Introduction

This chapter will follow the principles outlined in chapter 1 as they relate to the concept of believing in John 1-4. This concept is consistently present in this portion of John's Gospel. John's concept of believing in chapters 1-4 will be unfolded by utilizing a synchronic analysis and interpreting each significant context.[1]

Synchronic Analysis

For the synchronic analysis, a syntactical analysis and a verbal form analysis in chapters 2-4 will be performed. This will be followed by integrating the research into the context of each significant pericope.

Syntactical Analysis

While there are six constructions in the entire Gospel:[2] (1) there is *some* overlap in meaning; (2) the portrayal of belief cannot be determined by the syntactical construction alone; and (3) context must remain the priority for understanding John's concept of believing.

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[1] The criteria for which passages qualify was discussed above.

[2] Some would include the πιστευων εν construction at 3:15. More on the construction at 3:15 will be said below. Others may exclude πιστευω περι. The six are: πιστευω εις, πιστευω + dative, πιστευω absolute, πιστευω οτι, πιστευω + accusative, πιστευω περι. Two of these six, πιστευω οτι and πιστευω περι, are absent in chapters 1-4.

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Πιστεύω εἰς

The πιστεύω εἰς construction is considered the "characteristic construction"[3] in

the Gospel of John.[4] This construction cannot be found in Greek literature before New

Testament times.[5] This could indicate that the phrase was devised in order to convey an

aspect of πιστεύω that was not inherent within the word itself or that the manuscripts that

used this phrase do not exist.[6] This is the most frequent construction in the entire Gospel

and second most frequent in John 1–4.

Chart 1. Syntactical construction frequency[7]

	εἰς	absolute	dative	ὅτι	accusative	περι
Chapters 1–4	8	10	3	0	1	0
Entire Gospel	36	30	18	11	2	1

[3] Leon L. Morris, "Faith," in The New Bible Dictionary, ed. James D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 412.

[4] These can be found in Jn. 1:12, 2:11, 23, 3:16, 18 (twice), 36, 4:39

[5] Bultmann and Weiser, Dictionary, 210, call it "a linguistic phenomenon;" Dodd, Interpretation, 183; Brown, John, 1:512.

[6] Since this latter option is a possibility, not too much should be made of the former notion. However, Dodd, Interpretation, 183, thinks that πιστεύω + dative was ineffective to explain the full Johannine concept. As a result, Dodd thinks the Evangelist invented the πιστεύω εἰς construction. Agreeing, Hawthorne, "Faith," 119, says, "he [John] seems to be struggling with a new concept of or a new dimension of faith." Though there could be value in that assessment, it seems highly speculative.

[7] Different scholars have different counts. This appears to be mainly due to categorization and textual differences. For example, Melick, "Comparison," 72, does not have a category for περι. Gaffney, "Believing," 229, whose charts are extremely helpful, does have a few mistakes in it by way of omission. Hawthorne, "Faith," 118–20, also does a count of the different forms. We are in virtual agreement in most areas (eighteen uses of πιστεύω + dative, thirty-six of πιστεύω εἰς).

The πιστεύω εἰς construction has been the subject of much research.[8] Some scholars have decided that this is the construction that meant a genuine, superior, and more profound belief than other constructions.[9] In John 1–4, as well as the entire Gospel, the object of this phrase is always deity.[10] Many see this construction as more profound than simply "believing in Him," but as "believing *into* Him."[11]

The data will show that πιστεύω εἰς cannot be viewed as a formula for adjudicating between true Johannine believing and spurious Johannine believing. In the Exegetical Discussion section below, the negative portrayal of the belief of the "many" in 2:23 will be established. Also, the spuriousness of the faith initially held by the Samaritans in 4:39 will be explained. In the other six occurrences where a group is said to πιστεύω εἰς Jesus in John 1–4, they are portrayed positively.

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[8]One example would be Christianson, "Soteriological," 96–152, who spends fifty-seven pages (over one-quarter of his thesis) on the subject.

[9]Brown, *John*, 1:513; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 183; Morris, *John*, 297; Abbott, *Johannine Vocabulary*, 26, n. 3; Berkhof, *Theology*, 495; Barrett, *John*, 164; Hawthorne, "Faith," 119. The following scholars reject the view that πιστεύω εἰς represents a superior belief: George A. Buttrick, ed. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol 2 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), s.v. "Faith, Faithfulness," by E. C. Blackman, 225; Bultmann and Weiser, *Dictionary*, 203–4, 210, 222; Rudolph Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, trans. Kevin Smyth, Cecily Hastings, and others, 3 vols. (London: Burns & Oates, 1968, 1980, 1982), 1:563; Zane C. Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse: A Study on Eternal Rewards* (Dallas: Redencion Viva, 1981), 8. One scholar listed five places where he found the construction to portray an inadequate belief: 2:23; 4:39; 7:31, 48; 11:48. See Barry K. Keiser, "The Progressive Development of Πιστεύω" (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1962), 48. Agreement exists regarding the two which will be analyzed in this chapter (2:23; 4:39).

[10]See Adkisson, "Believing," 53. Of the thirty-five references in the entire Gospel, thirty-four times Jesus is the object and once God is the object.

[11]See Hawthorne, "Faith," 120; Morris, "Faith," 412–13; Paul Ellingworth, "More about Faith: synopsis of a discussion," *Bible Translator* 38 (1987): 331.

Πιστεύω absolute

The construction used most frequently in John 1–4 is πιστεύω absolute. There are ten instances of πιστεύω used absolutely in John 1–4.[12] Of those ten, eight have clear textual indicators to tell the reader what the implied modifier is of πιστεύω. Regarding the other two, even though they are ambiguous, they do not inhibit an understanding of πιστεύω.[13] Morris has satisfied the question as to why belief would ever be absolute in the New Testament: "Faith is so central to Christianity that one may speak of 'believing' without the necessity for further clarification."[14]

It appears that the implied object of πιστεύω in John 1:7 is τοῦ φωτός. Even though this is not completely clear from the context, this is most likely the best conclusion. The two options from this could be "believe the Light" or "believe in the Light."[15] Regardless, one can hardly defend a substantial distinction between these two options.[16]

In Nathanael's profession of Jesus in 1:49, he calls him Ῥαββί, ὁ υἱος τοῦ θεοῦ, and βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ. Jesus replied in 1:50, Ὅτι εἶπόν σοι ὅτι εἶδόν σε ὑποκάτω τῆς συκῆς, πιστεύεις? What was Nathanael believing in? Was Jesus referring to Nathanael believing in His words or to believing in Jesus himself? If the former, the statement becomes rather redundant. The belief should be understood as being in other

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[12]Jn. 1:7, 50; 3:12 (twice), 15, 18; 4:41, 42, 48, 53.

[13]Adkisson, "Believing," 62, says, "the term was never used without a clear contextual referent."

[14]Morris, "Faith," 413.

[15]Hawthorne, "Faith," 125, sides with "believe in the light."

[16]It is similar to those who distinguish between πιστεύω + dative and πιστεύω εἰς.

than Jesus' statement since Jesus says Ὅτι εἶπόν σοι ὅτι εἶδόν σε ὑποκάτω τῆς

συκῆς. Therefore. Nathanael's belief was in Jesus or εἰς αὐτόν.

Twice in 3:12 Jesus uses πιστεύω absolutely. Jesus says to Nicodemus. εἰ τὰ

ἐπίγεια εἶπον ὑμῖν καὶ οὐ πιστεύετε πῶς ἐὰν εἴπω ὑμῖν τὰ ἐπουράνια πιστεύσετε.

The implied object of πιστεύω is clear from the context. To paraphrase: If I told you

about earthly things and you do not believe *that which I told you*. how will you believe

what I say if I tell you about heavenly things? Therefore. the object of belief is Jesus'

words about regeneration.

John 3:15 poses a minor problem. While a few scholars view ἐν αὐτῷ as

modifying πιστεύω. the majority correctly agree that it modifies ζωήν leaving πιστεύω

absolute.[17] The πιστεύω ἐν construction does not appear anywhere (else) in the

Gospel.[18] Therefore. the verse should be translated "so that whoever believes will have

eternal life in Him." Both 3:14 and 3:16 give indicators of what is meant to modify

πιστεύω. The Son of Man is the implied modifier of πιστεύω in 3:15 (cf. 3:14). Πιστεύω

is modified by εἰς αὐτὸν in 3:16. Therefore. the implied modifier of πιστεύω in 3:15 is

most likely εἰς αὐτον or τον υἱον τοῦ ἀνθρωπου.

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[17]See Barrett. *John*. 214: Morris. *John*. 200. n. 68: D. A. Carson. *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Eerdmans. 1991). 202: Schnackenburg. *John*. 1:397: contra Herman N. Ridderbos. *The Gospel of John A Theological Commentary*. trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1997). 137: Daniel B. Wallace. *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan. 1996). 359.

[18]It does appear in Mk. 1:15: 1 Tim. 3:16: and 1 Thes. 1:7. In the occurrence in Acts 17:34. while it does appear similar. it has a thought separation between πιστευω and ἐν. In the LXX: 2 Chron. 20:20: Ps. 77:22. 32: 105:12: Jer. 12:6. In the Apocrypha: Sir. 32:21.

Πιστευω occurs three times in 3:18. The first time it is modified by εἰς αὐτόν. The third time it is modified by εἰς το ὄνομα του μονογενούς υἱοῦ του θεοῦ. Both of these refer to Jesus and therefore it seems that the context implies that the middle reference to πιστευω is modified by εἰς αὐτόν.[19]

The question of the object for πιστευω in John 4:41 is solved by the context. In 4:39 the object of πιστευω is εἰς αὐτόν. and it seems that this is the best object for 4:41 as well. The next reference follows in 4:42 and it simply builds off of the comments made on 4:41. Again. the implied object is εἰς αὐτόν.

The modifier for πιστευω in John 4:48 is much more ambiguous. This is an example where the context does not make obvious what the belief is in or what the content may be. When Jesus says. Εαν μη σημεια και τερατα ιδητε. οὐ μη πιστευσητε. it may be possible that he was referring to himself as the object of the belief. Jesus could also have been referring to his words or his authority. Based upon the plea of the royal official in 4:47. he already had some belief in Jesus. in his authority. and/or in his words. Since the result in verse 50 is that the man now believed in Jesus' word. it would seem that this would be the best modifier of πιστευω in verse 48. However. because verse 53 said that ἐπιστευσεν αὐτός. the man's belief in verse 50 does not seem to be portrayed entirely positively. Πιστευω in verse 53 is the final occurrence of the verb used absolutely. Based upon the man growing in his belief. the best modifier of πιστευω in verse 48 and 53 would be εἰς αὐτόν.[20] but this is a tentative conclusion.

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[19]Cf. Adkisson, "Believing." 63.

[20]Ibid.

In general. the absolute use of πιστευω is tied to other uses of πιστευω in John 1–4. Every time the author could have used either the πιστευω εις construction or the πιστευω + dative construction. Linguistic variation should be viewed as the best cause for πιστευω being used absolutely. The author is trying to avoid redundancy and therefore does not repeat εις αυτον or a dative object. And. as Morris stated above. the centrality of the concept of believing is so essential to New Testament theology that it was unnecessary to clarify every time.

Πιστευω + dative

The third most common construction is πιστευω followed by a dative noun.[21] Some have said that this is the "weakest" construction. Bernard refers to it as "an intermediate stage of development of faith."[22] Dodd says it means "simple credence" without "personal trust or reliance."[23]

The three instances in which this construction is used in John 1–4 will be studied to answer these claims. If it can be shown that a group which is described with this construction is portrayed entirely positively in one instance. then the validity of these claims would be placed in doubt.

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[21]Jn. 2:22; 4:21, 50.

[22]John H. Bernard. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*. The International Critical Commentary. 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928). 1:305.

[23]Dodd, *Interpretation*. 183. Others that view this construction as weak are: Edwin A. Abbott. *Johannine Grammar* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1906). 366, 382–3; Hawthorne. "Faith." 119; Archibald T. Robertson. *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934). 540; William Turner, "Believing and Everlasting Life – A Johannine Inquiry." *Expository Times* 64 (1952): 52; Brooke F. Westcott. *The Gospel According to St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes*. 2 vols. in 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1954). 2:12–14.

The first use occurs in John 2:22. The disciples are said to have believed in two things: τῇ γραφῇ καὶ τῷ λόγῳ ὃν εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς. The disciples had this belief after the resurrection. Based on this evidence, it would be nearly impossible to conclude that the Evangelist was trying to indicate a weak faith. Surely the disciples' belief in Jesus' message and in Scripture after the resurrection was greater than before.

The second of the three occurrences of πιστεύω + dative falls under a non-Christological use.[24] In 4:21, πιστεύω is not referring to believing in Jesus or his words for salvation. It refers to Jesus asking the Samaritan woman to place confidence in the words he is about to say concerning the place of worship. Christianson comments that "in this verse Jesus is calling for the woman to accept the validity of a certain statement which He is making, a statement which, though true, has nothing to do with the nature of His person."[25] However, caution seems called for when placing such a distance between trusting in someone's words and trusting in that person. The distinction between these two is not substantial. Though this use is non-Christological, that πιστεύω + dative is not an inherently weak construction is still demonstrated.[26] The idea that Jesus would be asking for a "weak" kind of faith be placed in his words is hard to defend.

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[24]Christianson, "Soteriological," 8-9, refers to certain uses as "christological," that is, "occurrences in which Jesus or truth about His person is the stated or implied object of the belief which the verb denotes." Using this terminology, the following occurrence of πιστεύω would be "non-Christological." Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:560, refers to two uses as a "[s]pecial construction and non-religious: 2:24; 9:18." He appears to refer to what Christianson titles "non-Christological." However, Schnackenburg left out a few examples (e.g., cf., 4:21).

[25]Ibid., 8.

[26]"This is one of the methodological errors that Christianson, "Soteriological," 8-11, employs when he disregards twenty-three uses of πιστεύω because they are non-Christological (he has different reasons for disregarding πιστεύω in different verses). The references that he disregards can still reveal information helpful to understanding πιστεύω in the Gospel.

The πιστεύω + dative construction can also be found in 4:50[27] in which the royal official has an inadequate faith that progresses in 4:53. This use agrees with Bernard's and Dodd's conclusion regarding πιστεύω + dative constructions.

While Christianson cites 2:22 and 4:50 as non-Christological uses of πιστεύω,[28] the context in both sections indicates that the author had more than viewing τῷ λόγῳ ὃν εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς as reliable in mind. Both 2:22 and 4:50 have soteriological ramifications attached to them, while 4:21 does not. The fact that Scripture and Jesus' word(s) are put on equal ground does say something about Jesus' nature.[29]

Therefore, while this construction is used one time in a context that might lead one to think the type of belief being referred to is inadequate, this cannot be formulaically applied in John 1–4. In only one of the three uses of πιστεύω + dative did the context confirm Bernard's and Dodd's conclusion. Therefore, new data will need to be presented in order to consider their conclusion as more than speculation.

Πιστεύω + accusative

The only occurrence of this construction in the section under consideration is found in 2:24. This is another example of a non-Christological use of πιστεύω. The sense

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[27]This is another example of πιστεύω that Christianson, "Soteriological," 8, says falls into a non-Christological use. He spent one parenthetical statement on this and it seems that this has caused him to overlook the significance: the growth of belief demonstrated by the royal official.

[28]Christianson, "Soteriological," 8–9, sees all three as non-Christological, while only 4:21 is viewed this way.

[29]See footnote 55.

of πιστεύω in 2:24 is unique in the Gospel.[30] This construction has no special force to it and occurs only once more in the Gospel.

Πιστεύω περί and πιστεύω ὅτι

Neither of these constructions was used in John 1–4. The general meaning of πιστεύω ὅτι, by consensus of scholarship, is that it points to the content of belief. Even though πιστεύω ὅτι is not used, John 1–4 does contain significant discussions on the content of belief.[31]

Conclusion of syntactical analysis

By this analysis, it can be seen that John used many different ways of referring to πιστεύω and of modifying πιστεύω. None of these constructions were used formulaically to indicate a level of belief. Rather, the context that surrounds each construction was used by John to indicate how the belief was to be viewed. Πιστεύω εἰς and πιστεύω + dative can overlap in meaning.[32] Πιστεύω was used absolutely to avoid redundancy and can always be tied to an implied syntactical construction. At this point, the syntactical analysis has not yielded much fruit for understanding John's concept of believing.

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[30]It appears with this meaning (entrust) eight times in the New Testament: Jn. 2:24; Lk. 16:11; Rom. 3:2; 1 Cor. 9:17; Gal. 2:7; 1 Thes. 2:4; 1 Tim. 1:11; and Tit. 1:3.

[31]See Nathanael's profession (Jn. 1:50), Nicodemus' greeting (Jn. 3:2), and the Samaritans confession (Jn. 4:42) as well as the Prologue which essentially defines who the αὐτον is in εἰς αὐτον

[32]Some have indicated that πιστεύω ὅτι is equivalent to πιστεύω εἰς, also. This will be dealt with later.

Verbal Form Analysis

The verbal form analysis will demonstrate that in John 1–4: (1) the aorist is frequently used ingressively, but not consistently; (2) present participles may be used to highlight continual action; and (3) no verbal form is tied to any syntactical construction.

Chart 2. Tense and mood combination frequency[33]

	Pres Indic	Pres Part	Pres Imper	Future Indic	Imperf Indic	Aorist Indic	Aorist Subj	Perfect Indic
John 1–4	3	6	1	1	1	7	2	1
Gospel	21	19	6	3	6	17	13	5

The Present Tense

Πιστεύω is found in the present tense most often in John 1–4, a total of ten times.[34] The present tense is used with three moods in John 1–4: imperative, indicative, and participle. The present participle is the most common form of πιστεύω in John's Gospel.[35]

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[33] The only combinations discussed or listed are those found in John 1–4. For extremely detailed data on the entire Gospel, see Melick, "Comparison," 43, 45–47. The data is based upon the UBS, 4th edition text. In six places the data are controversial: Jn. 14:1 (twice); 11 (twice); 19:35; 20:31. The first four could either be indicative, imperative, or a combination of each. The last two could either be aorist or present subjunctives. These will be discussed below and the conclusions will be included in future charts.

[34] Jn. 1:12, 50; 3:12, 15, 16, 18 (twice), 36; 4:21, 42.

[35] Note that in John 1–4 the aorist indicative is more common. This may give support to those who would argue that the aorist indicative refers to initial belief: the aorist indicative is used more in the beginning of the Gospel to discuss initial belief and the present participle is used later to discuss continuing belief. This presses the data and does not take individual contexts into account. Note also that 2:22 is an external prolepsis, a "reference to events which have not yet occurred at the point in the narrative at which they are foretold" (Culpepper, Anatomy, 61, 63, 67).

Present Indicative

Melick lists four uses in John's Gospel for the present indicative of πιστεύω: negative statements, declarations of faith, questions to those who previously expressed faith (1:50; 3:12), and positive statements (4:42).[36] Only two of the uses apply to John 1–4 and the data is very limited. Therefore, conclusions will be drawn when more data surface within the Gospel.

Present Participle

A concept that is often utilized when interpreting texts is looking at what could have been used (whether it is a word, phrase, or verbal form) and why another was chosen. John could have chosen to use an infinitive rather than a participle. However, in the five uses in John 1–4 the Evangelist chose the participle in order to relay the idea that the action is real and continual. The infinitive would have focused on the idea of potential.[37] Only a single conclusion will be offered because of the limited data.

Each time the Evangelist employs the present participle the presentation of the belief is entirely positive and an element of continuity appears to be present. One example will be explored: 3:18a. The contrast here is between those who are believing and those who are not believing. The results are contrasted also: the former are not condemned while the latter have already been condemned. Melick agrees that John only

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[36]Melick, "Comparison," 58–60.

[37]See ibid., 63; Harvey E. Dana, and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1927), 222. John does use the infinitive of πιστεύω twice: 5:24 and 12:39. Both are complementary infinitives to δυναμαι.

uses the present participle to describe those who truly believe.[38] Wallace concludes

that "(t)he idea seems to be both gnomic and continual . . . not due to the present tense

only, but to the use of the present participle of πιστεύω, especially in soteriological

contexts in the NT."[39] This will be explored more in the exegesis section below.

The Aorist Tense

The aorist tense occurs with πιστεύω in John 1–4 nine times.[40] The aorist tense is

considered the default tense.[41] When the aorist was used, the verb was generally left in

the background and hence not the ultimate focus. One scholar has concluded that the

"aorist tense points to a single act in past time and indicates the determinative character

of faith."[42] This method of overemphasizing the aorist should be avoided. The aorist does

not indicate that the belief was a momentary decision that happened at some point in the

past. Unless this is avoided, it will result in "abusing the aorist."[43] As Melick has stated,

there are two categories for the aorist in the Gospel: within the narrative account and

[38]3:15, 16, 18 (twice), 36. Melick, "Comparison," 65.

[39]Wallace, Grammar, 620-1.

[40]1:7; 2:11, 22, 23; 4:39, 41, 48, 50, 53.

[41]Stanley E. Porter, Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 90, 178. See also Andreas J. Köstenberger, "A Comparison of the Pericopae of Jesus' Anointing," in Studies on John and Gender A Decade of Scholarship (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 53.

[42]Morris, "Faith," 413.

[43]See Frank Stagg, "The Abused Aorist," Journal of Biblical Literature 91 (1972): 222-31. Stagg also mentions Morris by name (though not referring to this verse) in a refutation of this kind of thinking. The aorist, by itself, "tells nothing about the nature of the action under consideration" (ibid., 223). He refers to Morris' disease of "aoristitis" (ibid., 227) in another commentary.

reflections by the Evangelist.[44] These are the categories that will be used when looking at usage.

Aorist Indicative

John 1:14 is closely tied to 2:11. In fact, the original audience of the Gospel would surely have thought back to 1:14 when reading 2:11.[45] In 1:14, John says ἐθεασαμεθα την δοξαν αὐτου and in 2:11 he says that Jesus ἐοανερωσεν την δοξαν αὐτου. και ἐπιστευσαν εἰς αὐτον οἱ μαθηται αὐτου. The first occurrence of δοξα after 1:14 is in 2:11. The belief is presented as entirely positive since it is based upon seeing the δοξα of Jesus. Too much should not be read into the aorist. In fact, in eight out of the nine uses of the aorist with πιστευω the words are the reflections of the Evangelist which would most naturally be placed in the past.[46] This passage seems to fit the conclusion by Melick that when the aorist indicative is used "(t)he emphasis is on the initiation into the state of belief."[47] However, two passages do not seem to fit this conclusion: 2:22 and 4:53.

Could one still consider the belief in 2:22 as the "initial" belief after reflecting upon the context? First, the object of belief needs to be identified. In 2:22 the disciples believe in τῇ γραφῇ και τῷ λογῳ ὃν εἰπεν ὁ Ἰησους. This could still be an initiation into belief in spite of their belief of 2:11 because there it is placed in Jesus (εἰς αὐτον).

[44]Melick, "Comparison," 55.

[45]See George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 2d ed., Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36 (Waco: Word, 1999), 35.

[46]The one exception is Jn. 4:48.

[47]Melick, "Comparison," 55. This is called an ingressive aorist.

However, it is difficult to press the interpretation that the disciples did not start

believing in τῷ λόγῳ ὅν εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς until after the resurrection. Also, Simon

Peter's confession at 6:68 seems to rule out 2:22 as describing the initial belief in Jesus'

message occurring after the resurrection.[48]

The second passage that casts doubt on this conclusion is 4:53. After the royal

official had the healing performed by Jesus confirmed by his servant, he is said to

believe. This appears to be a good example of "initial" belief. However, the passage

already said he believed in 4:50. That verse seems to be the initial faith and the faith at

4:53 appears to be a faith that has matured past an initial stage. This interpretation will be

argued for below, but the fact remains that it seems highly dubious to refer to the faith at

4:53 as "initial."

Aorist Subjunctive

The other two uses of the aorist tense are with the subjunctive mood. Melick

concludes that aorist subjunctives are used ingressively.[49] There is nothing that

contradicts this in the contexts of 1:7 and 4:48, but there is nothing in the context that

demands this either. That John the Baptist's testimony would lead to an initial belief

seems highly possible. However, it is not certain that Jesus would be appealing for an

initial belief in 4:48. It should be noted that the belief in 4:48 would be based upon "signs

and wonders."

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[48]Ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ Σίμων Πέτρος. Κύριε, πρὸς τίνα ἀπελευσόμεθα; ῥήματα ζωῆς αἰωνίου ἔχεις. It is significant that Simon Peter also says ἡμεῖς πεπιστεύκαμεν right after this in 6:69.

[49]Melick, "Comparison," 55-57.

Conclusion to the Aorist Tense

Many times in John 1–4 the aorist (with the indicative and subjunctive) does coincide with a belief that has just commenced. However, this cannot be steadfastly applied throughout John 1–4, or the entire Gospel. The aorist in frequently ingressive, with the exceptions of 2:22 and 4:53 (and maybe 4:48). The aorist tense by itself adds nothing to the understanding of how believing is portrayed in each context.

Other tenses

The future, imperfect, and perfect tenses are each used once in John 1–4. In all three of these instances the verse focuses on πιστεύω. Utilizing these tenses is a way the author brings the word to the forefront.[50] The verses following 3:18 appears to be what the perfect is pointing to. In 2:24 Jesus is not entrusting himself to those who believed εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ. The imperfect seems to be used to bring to the readers' attention the shocking statement being made.[51]

Conclusion to Verbal Form Analysis

No pattern for a syntactical construction being tied to any tense-mood combination has been distinguished at this point (Chart 3).[52] The aorist and present tenses are used with εἰς, a dative object, and absolutely. There is not enough data yet to

[50] Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 90.

[51] Whether or not the continuous aspect of the imperfect should be focused on is in question. While Hodges, "Untrustworthy," 152, thinks it refers to Jesus being open to them in the future, Francis J. Moloney, *John*, Sacra Pagina, vol. 4 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 87, sees it as referring to a habitual action.

[52] The accusative object is only found with the imperfect indicative in John 1–4. However, later it appears with the present indicative.

determine if there is any pattern between tenses and either syntactical constructions or moods (Chart 4). There is also not enough data yet to determine if there is any pattern between moods and either syntactical constructions or tenses (Chart 5). The aorist tense should not be viewed as a "once-and-for all" or as "occurring at a point in time in the past" type of belief. Usually the aorist is used because the Evangelist is reflecting on past events and it is often, but not always, used ingressively. The present participle appears to be continual and gnomic.

Both the syntactical analysis and the verbal form analysis have shown themselves to be of somewhat limited use, up to this point, for understanding the concept of believing in the Fourth Gospel.

Chart 3. Syntactical constructions with tense-mood combinations in John 1-4

	Pres Ind	Pres Ptc	Pres Imp	Fut Ind	Imperfect Ind	Aor Ind	Aor Subj	Perfect Ind
Εἰς	0	4	0	0	0	3	0	1
absolute	3	2	0	1	0	2	2	0
dative	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0
accusative	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0

Chart 4. Tense with syntactical constructions and moods in John 1-4

	Εἰς	Absolute	Dative	Acc	Ind	Ptc	Imperative	Subj
Present	4	5	1	0	3	6	1	0
Future	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Imperfect	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Aorist	3	4	2	0	7	0	0	2
Perfect	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0

Chart 5. Moods with syntactical constructions and tenses in John 1-4

	Εἰς	Absolute	Dative	Acc	Present	Fut	Imperfect	Aorist	Perfect
Indicative	4	6	2	1	3	1	1	7	1
Participle	4	2	0	0	6	0	0	0	0
Imperative	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Subjunctive	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0

Exegetical Discussion

All pericopae in John 1–4 contain πιστευω or have clusters of it. Not only every section but also every major character is spoken of in terms of believing.[53] However, not every occurrence warrants discussion. Some occurrences are simply not that significant for understanding believing.[54] A few are non-Christological.[55] One occurrence utilizes a different sense of πιστευω.[56] Most in this portion of the Gospel are significant and will be discussed.

The Prologue

The occurrence of πιστευω in 1:12 should be viewed as significant for a few reasons: (1) it is in a parallel relationship with another significant Johannine term, λαμβανω; (2) it occurs near the center of the prologue's chiastic structure.

Culpepper's illuminating analysis of John's Prologue reveals that the central concept is becoming τεκνα θεου. Surrounding this are the parallel ideas of receiving and believing in Jesus. In 1:11 λαμβανω means "to come to believe something and to act in accordance with such a belief."[57] That λαμβανω should mean anything other than its generic sense is not immediately apparent from 1:11–12. However, since πιστευω is used

[53]See Gaffney, "Believing," 224. This list includes the disciples (2:11, 22), the "many" in Jerusalem (2:23–24), Nicodemus (3:12, 15–21), the Samaritans (4:39–42), and the royal official (4:50, 53). The only one excluded is John the Baptist. However, he is spoken of as testifying so that others might believe (1:5–7). His belief appears to be assumed.

[54]So Jn. 1:7.

[55]So Jn. 3:12 (twice); 4:21.

[56]So Jn. 2:24.

[57]Louw and Nida, *Lexicon*, 372.

in parallel to λαμβάνω in 1:12, the other sense is justified. This passage is building up, climaxing. In 1:10 their lack of knowledge is discussed. In 1:11 their lack of receiving is mentioned. And 1:12 is the contrast: those who were willing to come to believe and act accordingly were given the privilege of being children of God. Therefore, "receiving" or "accepting" is a part of the process of coming to believe. One cannot believe in Jesus until he has accepted Him and his words and are acting in accordance with their new belief.

The result of believing εἰς αὐτον is that one obtains the right to become a child of God. Verse 13 goes further and describes this as a birth ἐκ θεοῦ. Those who have received him and believed him are portrayed entirely positively, in contrast to the rejecters of verse 11. This passage communicates that John's concept of believing is central to his message and that it contains an aspect of reception.

Nathanael's Profession

Understanding Nathanael's confession is the key to grasping the use of πιστευω in Jesus' response and whether or not Nathanael's profession should be viewed positively or negatively. Nathanael gives Jesus three titles: Ῥαββι, ὁ υἱος τοῦ θεοῦ, and βασιλευς τοῦ Ἰσραηλ. Ridderbos notes correctly that the latter two titles have the same meaning.[58] Nathanael's confession reveals that he was expecting a national-political Messiah. His confession was bound by his "own culture, history, and religion."[59] Jesus

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[58]Ridderbos, *John*, 91.

[59]Francis J. Moloney, *Belief in the Word Reading the Gospel John 1-4* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 72. This can be seen mainly by the use of the word βασιλευς.

responds by correcting Nathanael's confession."[60] "Jesus will reject every worldly understanding of his kingship."[61]

Nathanael had a misunderstanding of Jesus' kingship. He was expecting a political king over Israel. Nathanael's faith was based upon false pretenses. Therefore, Nathanael's profession, which was based upon Jesus' supernatural knowledge, was viewed somewhat negatively by Jesus.[62] It was concluded earlier that the implied object to πιστευω here is εἰς αὐτὸν or Jesus. Jesus responds to all present in verse 51 after responding to Nathanael. This may indicate that all those present were of a similar mindset as Nathanael's.[63] The entire section of 1:37-51 shows positive characteristics of many of the disciples' belief. Since Jesus' response was to ὑμιν (plural), it appears that the disciples' belief has developed but still had negative aspects to it.[64]

The Disciples Believe

The discussion of this pericope focuses on 2:11. The setting to this verse is that of Jesus turning the water into wine at Cana of Galilee. This sign was given to demonstrate that what Jesus had to offer was superior to Jewish ritual purifications.

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[60]Ibid. Contra Carson, *John*, 161-62, who appears to say that Nathanael's confession is adequate.

[61]Ridderbos, *John*, 91.

[62]See Moloney, *Belief*, 73.

[63]Ibid. He applies the weakness of the faith confessed to all the disciples.

[64]Ibid. Moloney sums up this account: "This leaves them [the disciples] short of true Johannine belief." Contra Barrett, *John*, 186, who concludes that the faith of the disciples is real but inferior.

Much has been written about the relationship between signs and faith.[65] The

general position of this paper is that signs are inadequate initiators to adequate believing.

Jesus never answers the request for a sign. Those who seek signs are never commended.

However, signs should not be viewed completely negatively. When one believes, a sign

can strengthen that faith. When one believes, and has demonstrated that belief, a sign can

serve as a positive stimulant to grow that person in their trust and reliance upon Jesus.[66]

"Faith based on signs may be inferior, but it is better than unbelief (2:11; 10:38;

14:11)."[67]

The calling of the disciples is discussed at the end of John 1. Nathanael's

profession indicates that he did not comprehend Jesus' mission, and possibly others were

misunderstanding as well.[68] However, the disciples have shown aspects of maturity in

their faith. In 1:37 two disciples are said to have followed (from ἀκολουθέω) Jesus. In

1:39 they respond to Jesus' invitation to "come and see" (from ἔρχομαι and ὁράω). In

1:43 Jesus said to Philip "follow me" (from ἀκολουθέω), and though the text does not

say that Philip immediately followed,[69] it does say that he went and got Nathanael to go

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[65]See W. Thomas Campbell, "The Relationship of the Thomas Pericope to Signs and Belief in the Fourth Gospel" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2000); Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1996), 171; Morris, *John*, 607-13; Ridderbos, *John*, 173-4; Rudolph K. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, ed. R. W. N. Hoare and J. K. Riches, trans. George R. Beasley-Murray (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 104-5; Carson, *John*, 431, 447.

[66]See Christianson, "Soteriology," 114. For example, while signs are a stumbling block to the "many" in 2:23-25, they assist the royal official's faith in 4:50-53.

[67]Carson, *John*, 447.

[68]See footnote 94.

[69]Though it seems that this is implied.

to Jesus with him. In 2:2 they are called his "disciples."[70] Following, coming, and
seeing are all positive attributes that contribute to the growth of one's faith. Then Jesus
performs a sign at the wedding.

John says that Jesus ἐφανέρωσεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ and ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν
οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ. It is important to note Jesus' manifestation of His glory. The strong
connection between 1:14 and 2:11 was discussed above. John 1:14 is spoken from the
first person plural ("we"). The one writing this Gospel is also one who believes. To the
author, seeing the glory of Jesus was a life-changing event which he details in 2:1-11.
The "servants saw the sign, but not the glory; the disciples by faith perceived Jesus' glory
behind the sign, and they" believed in him.[71]

The disciples' belief is εἰς αὐτόν. The use of εἰς αὐτόν does not necessitate a
positive view of the belief.[72] The Evangelist most likely used the aorist tense because he
was reflecting on events in the past.[73] However, considering the context given above, the
disciples' belief in this passage should be viewed entirely positively. Ridderbos correctly
defines πιστεύω in this passage as meaning "more and more they learned to understand
the person . . . it was faith therefore, that did not stop at astonishment over his power."[74]
Throughout the Gospel their belief may continue to grow and mature, but John's

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[70]At this point, one can only be sure that two disciples of John the Baptist (one of whom was Andrew), Simon Peter, Philip, and Nathanael (a total of five disciples) were at Cana, though more could have been there, possibly all twelve.

[71]Carson, *John*, 175.

[72]Ibid., 184.

[73]This probably is an example of the aorist being ingressive.

[74]Ridderbos, *John*, 113.

presentation of their belief in 2:11 is completely positive. This passage. in combination with 1:37-51. details the disciples' journey and growth in faith. Their response to Jesus' sign is viewed positively since they saw the glory behind it. They had already demonstrated willingness to obedience and discipleship; the sign served to strengthen and further mature their faith.

Many scholars have given their opinion of whether or not the disciples secured life at this point or even prior to this.[75] Regarding this verse. Culpepper says. "the faith of the disciples is established beyond question."[76] Moloney goes further and says the reader "has traced the journey of the disciples through failure into their acceptance of the revelation of the glory in the sēmeion of Cana."[77]

The Belief of the "Many"

The majority of scholars agree that the belief of the "many" should be viewed negatively. However. a few scholars have vehemently disagreed. The main question that will be dealt with in this section is whether or not the faith of those whom Jesus did not

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[75]Many scholars feel that the disciples had already secured eternal life before 2:11. See Bernard. *John*. 1 81. John Calvin. *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*. trans. William Pringle. 2 vols (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1949). 1:89; Frederic Godet. *Commentary on the Gospel of John with an Historical and Critical Introduction*. trans. Timothy Dwight. 2 vols. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls,1886). 1:352; William Hendriksen. *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*. 2 vols. in 1 (London: Banner of Truth. 1954). 1:118; Homer A. Kent. Jr . *Light in the Darkness: Studies in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker. 1974). 48; Richard C. H. Lenski. *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Columbus. OH: Lutheran Book Concern. 1943; reprinted. Minneapolis: Augsburg. 1961). 200; R. H. Lightfoot. *St. John's Gospel: A Commentary*. ed. C. F. Evans (Oxford: Clarendon. 1956). 93. However. some scholars view this verse as signaling the reception of eternal life for the disciples. See Westcott. *John*. 1:87; Hawthorne. "Faith." 124. who says. "[Faith] began in the disciples when they saw the miracle at Cana " Also. Morris. *John*. 186 (however. Morris does indicate that Nathanael already received eternal life).

[76]Culpepper. *Anatomy*. 90.

[77]Moloney. *Belief*. 88.

entrust should be viewed as positively represented or negatively and any impact this may have on John's concept of believing.

Most scholars think the belief in 2:23 is inadequate for receiving eternal life.[78] However, since not all agree that the belief is inadequate, and since the implications may be far reaching, a detailed look is required.

Πιστευω in this passage has some interesting characteristics. The verb is an aorist indicative leaving it in the background.[79] It is a reflection by the Evangelist on past events. The syntactical construction used is πιστευω εἰς. This is what some mistakenly refer to as a superior belief. However one interprets the belief of these "many," it appears obvious, at least by Jesus' reaction to them, that at the very least this formulation cannot be a superior construction for believing. There is another modifier to πιστευω not yet mentioned: πολλοι. This combination appears six times in the Gospel.[80] It will be argued that both contexts in John 1–4 portray the belief of the many negatively.[81] However,

[78]Ridderbos, *John*, 122; Carson, *John*, 184; Brown, *John*, 1 126 7; Benjamin Witherington, *John's Wisdom A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 89; Barrett, *John*, 194; Frederick F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 64; Bernard, *John*, 1:98-99; Edwin A Blum, "John," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, New Testament ed. (Wheaton: Victor, 1983), 280; Calvin, *John*, 1:100-101; Godet, *John*, 1:371; Hendriksen, *John* 1:127; Edwyn C. Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, ed. Francis N. Davey (London: Faber & Faber, 1947), 202; Lenski, *John*, 225; Lightfoot, *John*, 115; Morris, *John*, 205; Joseph N. Sanders, and B. A. Mastin, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: A. & C. Black, 1968), 121 22; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:358; Merrill C. Tenney, *John The Gospel of Belief* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 85; Westcott, *John*, 1:98; Bultmann, *John*, 131; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 47; Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 116; Contra Hodges, "Untrustworthy," 139-52; Campbell, "Signs and Belief," 85-87. In total, this sampling found twenty-two acknowledging the inadequacy while two felt it was adequate.

[79]Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 90, 178.

[80]Jn. 2:23; 4:39; 7:31; 8:30; 10:42; 12:42.

[81]This author also concludes that the groups in 7:31; 8:30; 12:42 are portrayed negatively. The portrayal of the group in 10:42 is very ambiguous since not much helpful context is available. Therefore, five of the six are taken as negative portrayals and the analysis of the sixth will show that it is mostly positive.

context still remains determinative: no formulaic conclusion can be deduced from the two uses in John 1–4.

Instead of the belief being εἰς αὐτον it is εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ. While some scholars view these as having distinct meanings, others see the terms as being equivalent.[82] Since there appears to be no compelling reason to distinguish these terms, and given John's pattern for avoiding redundancy,[83] nothing is added to the text to help clarify πιστευω in 2:23.

The main argument against the commonly accepted view is presented by Hodges. Hodges sees a parallel between 1:12–13 and 2:23 and he says "that there is nothing in the usage in 1:12 that in any way prepares the reader to understand 2:23 as most commentators understand it."[84] However, Hodges misses that the reader would be shocked by Jesus' reaction and, therefore, drawn deeper into the story and into reflection on saving faith. That is one reason why the Nicodemus account must be told: in order to illuminate further the situation of 2:23–25. Another example of surprise in the Gospel which draws the reader in is John 1:1: while the reader expects "in the beginning God," he gets "in the beginning was the Word" instead.[85] Therefore, it becomes "clear that not

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[82]Morris, *John*, 88; Brown, *John*, 1:11; Bernard, *John*, 1:17; Dodd, *Interpretation*, 184; Bultmann, *John*, 59, n. 2; Lightfoot, *John*, 115. For a good discussion, see Christianson, "Soteriological," 111-2, who also decides they are equivalent. Contra Westcott, *John*, 1:98; Merrill C. Tenney, "Growth of Belief," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132 (1975). 344; Abbott, *Johannine Vocabulary*, 36-37, 41. Barrett, *John*, 164, notices a distinction between this construction and πιστευω + dative.

[83]See Johannes P. Louw, "On Johannine Style," *Neotestamentica* 20 (1986): 5-12.

[84]Hodges, "Untrustworthy," 140. Though there may not be much significance to it, it should be pointed out that in 2:23 the verb is an aorist indicative, while in 1:12 it is a present active participle.

[85]Beasley-Murray, *John*, 10; Borchert, *John 1-11*, 102; Ernst A. Haenchen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, trans. Robert W. Funk, Hermenia, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 1:109. Surprising the reader can be an effective literary tool.

all 'believing' or 'believing in his name' could be equated with the belief mentioned in 1:12, where the link is made . . . with 'being born of God.'"[86]

Hodges has also made another error. Most commentators see Nicodemus as an example of one of the "many."[87] The account in 3:1-15 is a specific illustration of the reaction in 2:23-25. The following five reasons support this view. The link is first made by the ending of 2:25 and the beginning of 3:1: ἵνα τις μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου αὐτὸς γαρ ἐγίνωσκεν τι ἦν ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ. Ἦν δε ἀνθρωπος.[88] The connection is also made by the final verb in chapter two and the first one that Nicodemus employs in his conversation with Jesus. While Jesus ἐγίνωσκεν τι ἦν ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ. Nicodemus said, οἴδαμεν.[89] Thirdly, chapter 2 ends with a discussion on those who saw signs and Nicodemus refers to those signs.[90] Fourthly, the antecedent to αὐτὸν in 3:2 is found in 2:24, clearly connecting the thought patterns of the writer.[91] Finally, while chapter 2 ends with a statement about Jesus knowing what was in man, chapter 3 begins by Jesus demonstrating this in his conversation with Nicodemus. If Nicodemus is an

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[86]Ridderbos, *John*, 122.

[87]Hodges, "Untrustworthy," 150; Craig L. Blomberg, "The Globalization of Biblical Interpretation: A Test Case - John 3 -4," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 5 (1995): 6; David Rensberger, *Johannine Faith and Liberating Community* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1988), 38; Brown, *John*, 1:135; Haenchen, *John*, 1:199; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 55; Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 135; John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 44. Contra Bultmann, *John*, 133; Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:365. Carson, *John*, 185, takes a mediating position saying that though Nicodemus is here representing the "many," he later progresses

[88]Notice the use of the word ἀνθρωπος, which is used three times.

[89]See Morris, *John*, 187; Carson, *John*, 185.

[90]See Carson, *John*, 185.

[91]Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics*, 190, 279. They refer to the chapter division as an "intrusion."

illustration of the "many" in 2:23-25, what does his encounter with Jesus reveal about his spiritual state? Is Nicodemus' (and that of the "many") belief portrayed positively?

There is an[92] indicator in 3:1-15 that can assist in answering these questions. Not only did Nicodemus not understand Jesus,[93] but his response is never seen as he disappears from the narrative. Nicodemus is depicted as not understanding the concept of regeneration and is unregenerate himself at this point.[94]

Hodges himself says Nicodemus "was *not*, of course, a believer when he first met Jesus since he yet needed to be born again."[95] Somehow, even though he agrees that Nicodemus is "a specific illustration of the phenomenon described in 2:23-25,"[96] he fails

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[92]Another reason is John's use of the word σκότος in 3:19 to refer to those whose love was not for to σκότος, those who were fleeing from the light. It is put forth that surely there is some word play taking place with "night" and "darkness" (Kiyoshi Tsuchido, "The Composition of the Nicodemus-Episode, John ii 23 - iii 21," *Annual of the Japanese Biblical Institute* 1 [1975] 97; Campbell, "Signs and Belief," 87, n. 148; Michael Goulder, "Nicodemus," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 44 [1991] 154). However, Nicodemus' approaching of Jesus at night was part of the presuppositional pool of the Jews that Rabbis would speak to each other at night (see Cotterell and Turner, *Linguistics*, 268 71, 278 83; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary Volume 2: John, Acts* [ed. Clinton E. Arnold; Grand Rapids Zondervan, 2002], 33 34)

[93]Cf. Haenchen, *John*, 1 200; Morris, *John*, 190, Carson, *John*, 190; Bruce, *John*, 82 83; Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 135. Contra Tenney, *John*, 86, MacArthur, *Gospel*, 46.

[94]The following suggest that Nicodemus was unregenerate at the conclusion of this dialogue: Carson, *John*, 199 (he has a "failure to believe"); Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 135; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 359 (he hints to this by referring to Nicodemus being drawn to Jesus after his exaltation); Rensberger, *Johannine Faith*, 39 40; Haenchen, *John*, 1:205 (who says this account ends in "rejection"); M. R. Hillmer, "They Believed in Him: Discipleship in the Johannine Tradition," in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 84 ("The true disciple . . . must be open in acknowledging Jesus"); Dwight Moody Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John* New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 27, 166 ("there can be no further discussion until Nicodemus is born from above"); David Alan Black, "The Text of John 3:13," *Grace Theological Journal* 6 (1985) 61, n. 33; Hodges, "Untrustworthy," 150.

[95]Hodges, "Untrustworthy," 150. Emphasis in original.

[96]Ibid.

to carry out the logic that they are also unregenerate. Therefore, John must be portraying their belief at least neutrally, if not negatively.

However, their belief should not be viewed from an entirely negative viewpoint, for John does not view it this way. Unbelief is a horrible state to be in (3:17-18). The belief in 2:23-25 was not to be admired, but they were not in unbelief. Their belief was weak. It was based upon what they could see. Whether or not those in 2:23-25 eventually became regenerate is unknown. "Adequate faith will continue to hold fast to Jesus' teaching" or it is a "fickle faith."[97] But that was still to be decided therefore. Ἰησοῦς οὐκ ἐπίστευεν αὐτὸν αὐτοῖς. Notice also that Jesus' οὐκ ἐπίστευεν is in the imperfect, and "the tense leaves open the question of what He might have done at a later time."[98] Though this belief was inchoate, there was still time to bring it to a proper level of development. While Bultmann might view it as "the first steps towards Jesus,"[99] it seems more appropriate, given its negative portrayal, to view it as a belief that should be surpassed. The "many" never saw past the sign to the glory which Jesus manifested. Their response, though better than unbelief, is still short of what Jesus asked of them.[100] The two positive portrayals of believing discussed above described those believing as children of God (1:12) and as beholding Jesus' glory (2:11). Neither of those qualifiers is

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[97]Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey* (Nashville: Broadman, 1997), 297.

[98]Hodges, "Untrustworthy," 152. This logic obviously applies (even more) directly to the "many," also. Smith, *Theology*, 27, agrees that the chance for conversion still "remains open."

[99]Bultmann, *John*, 131.

[100]In fact, Ridderbos, *John*, 284, views this presentation so negatively, based on the following dialogue, that he concludes that it is "the same as not believing."

used here. No profession is immediately given by which to evaluate their belief.[101]

There are two indicators of how they should be viewed: (1) Jesus' reaction to them is clearly a negative one; and (2) the Nicodemus narrative.

Nicodemus and Belief

Scholars have debated certain aspects of the Nicodemus narrative. If one only reads the Evangelist's reflections in 3:16, the rash conclusion could be that if you believe then you have eternal life, with the definition of "believe" being a form of intellectual assent.[102] It encompasses only a "believe that," a question of the content of one's belief. But this would be an incorrect view of this verse's presentation of belief.

John 3:16 comes in the context of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in 3:1-15. Both the proceeding verses and the ones to follow, lead one to view belief with a fuller meaning.

Even though this passage has a few exegetical difficulties, the main message pertinent to this discussion is on fairly safe grounds. Nicodemus is an example of those mentioned in 2:23-25[103] whose belief Jesus had rejected as spurious. Nicodemus had seen a sign performed by Jesus,[104] if not many.[105] Based upon this sign, Nicodemus had

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[101]However, see Jn. 3:2.

[102]See Gary M. Burge, *John the NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 426, who seems to define "believing" only in terms of doctrinal beliefs.

[103]See above. Supporting this are: Ridderbos, *John*, 123; Brown, *John*, 1:129; Borchert, *John 1-11*, 169; Witherington, *Wisdom*, 92; Burge, *John*, 111; Morris, *John*, 186, n. 3; Moloney, *John*, 89; Wallace, *Grammar*, 597, n. 25, agrees and notes that the NRSV misses this point. Brown, *John*, 1:129 and Borchert, *John 1-11*, 169, see the connector between 2:23-25 and 3:1 as "now" (δε). Carson, *John*, 185-6, does not see this as a connection.

[104]Specifically, he was present for the temple clearing. For the defense that this is a sign, see Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Seventh Johannine Sign: A Study in John's Christology," *Bulletin for*

come to some conclusions regarding Jesus. He concluded that: (1) Jesus was a teacher;
and (2) Jesus was sent from God. Those descriptions of Jesus are both correct, and Jesus
even describes himself in this way, yet they are inadequate. They fail to proclaim Jesus as
Messiah or Son of God.[106] Barrett says that these confessions are "an inadequate
expression of faith" as they fall short of proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God.[107] Jesus'
reaction to Nicodemus is a further indicator of this weak profession. Nicodemus' belief
had an inadequate content to it; he is portrayed negatively. Nicodemus fades away: "a
person with one foot in the world of belief and one in the world of disbelief remains, for
the fourth evangelist, outside the kingdom."[108]

The Evangelist starts his reflections at verse 16.[109] Verses 17-21 also shed some
light on the belief. The contrast is between those who believe and those who do not
believe and the consequences that come with each. However, the discussion ends with a
contrast between those who do truth and those who do evil (verses 20-21). Those who do

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Biblical Research 5 (1995) 87-103. Blomberg, "Globalization," 6, also comments that Nicodemus had seen signs.

[105] The text (2:23) hints of other signs Jesus did in Jerusalem and Nicodemus himself mentions them (in the plural). The precise nature of these signs and who was present for them is unknown.

[106] Cf. Carson, *John*, 187; Barrett, *John*, 205; Brown, *John*, 1:138; Moloney, *John*, 91; Morris, *John*, 187.

[107] Barrett, *John*, 205.

[108] Blomberg, "Globalization," 7.

[109] Not all commentators agree, but a general consensus is that by verse 16 Jesus has stopped speaking. Carson, *John*, 185, 302; Burge, *John*, 113, 117-18; Morris, *John*, 202; Borchert, *John 1-11*, 180, believe the Evangelist starts at verse 16. As do Bernard, Lagrange, Westcott, Van den Bussche, Braun and Lightfoot (according to Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:360). However, Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:360, thinks the reflections started at verse 13 (he cites Calmes, Belser and Tillmann for support). Contra Moloney, *John*, 90, and Brown, *John*, 1:149, who say 3:16-21 are still Jesus' words. That 3:16 begins a reflection can be shown by: (1) the past tense of the verbs; and (2) the terminology is consistent with the author. To those who disagree, they must answer what "gave" refers to: the Incarnation or the crucifixion?

truth are those who are described in verses 16 and 18 as believing. The grammar and context together help to discern that this "doing of truth" or "doing of evil" is a continual, repetitive action. It also demonstrates that more than an intellectual assent was required, but a belief that manifested itself in action.

This reflection by the Evangelist tells why Nicodemus' belief was inadequate, and consequently, why those in 2:23-25 had an unacceptable faith: men love the darkness rather than the light. Rather than coming to the light (Jesus), they flee from it so they do not have to be exposed. Commenting on 3:19-21 Von Wahlde says, "one can determine one's allegiance by examining the nature of one's actions."[110] A Johannine positive view of belief is presented here as more than intellectual assent, but as something that will be seen in actions. Nicodemus (and the "many") failed to see beyond the sign and the underlying reason was his fear of his deeds being exposed. His reaction to the sign(s) is portrayed negatively.

Belief and Obedience

The inclusion of a discussion on 3:36 is based primarily on three reasons: (1) the relationship between believing and obedience has been controversial;[111] (2) the relationship is significant for understanding believing; and (3) the lack of attention given to this verse in relationship to this discussion.[112]

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[110]Urban C. Von Wahlde, "Faith and Works in Jn VI 28-29," *Novum Testamentum* 22 (1980): 304-315.

[111]See Kim Riddlebarger, "What is Faith?," in *Christ the Lord*, ed. Michael S. Horton (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 95-97.

[112]While Carson, *John*, 214, alludes to this discussion, Zane C. Hodges, *Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), does not. For a random sample,

The primary purpose of this verse is twofold: (1) unbelief is shown by disobedience; and (2) a contrast in the results of each. The verb which is in an antonymous relationship to πιστεύω is ἀπειθέω. The present participles in both verbs reinforce the concept of continuity. Belief is not obedience; obedience is not belief. This would make belief a work. Rather, obedience should be viewed as a natural result of one who believes.[113] Therefore, John's portrayal of people's belief can be known by their actions of obedience or disobedience to Jesus.

The Samaritans' Progression of Belief

Πιστεύω occurs four times during this account.[114] The cluster that occurs between 4:39–41 is a significant passage. In 4:39 the construction is πιστεύω modified by εἰς αὐτόν. Many of the Samaritans believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony. Some have postulated that this belief should be viewed negatively because it was based upon the testimony of a woman who had an incomplete understanding of Jesus.[115] Though it may be true that her understanding was lacking, the passage does not say that either her being a woman or her failure to comprehend Jesus was the reason the Samaritans' belief was initially deficient. This view begins by understanding the

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none of the following discuss it: Ridderbos, *John*, 151; Bruce, *John*, 97–98; or Leon Morris, *Reflections on the Gospel of John* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 119.

[113]Riddlebarger, "Faith," 104, says that "one who has exercised faith in Christ, and is united to Christ by that faith, will repent and will struggle to obey and yield. But these things are not conditions for nor component parts of faith itself. They are fruits of saving faith. They are the inevitable activity of the new nature."

[114]Jn. 4:21, 39, 41, 42.

[115]See Calvin, *John*, 1:175; Hendriksen, *John*, 1:175.

Samaritan woman negatively. However. it is best to see the Samaritan woman as a positive character and in contrast to Nicodemus.[116]

There are contextual clues that reveal that the initial belief of the Samaritans was less than satisfactory.[117] The constructions used in verses 41 and 42 are πιστευω absolute. As said above in the syntactical analysis, the implied object of πιστευω in verses 41 and 42 is εἰς αὐτον. So there is essentially no syntactical difference here to reveal differences in the belief.

All three times the verbs occur in the indicative. In verses 39 and 41 πιστευω is an aorist indicative and in verse 42 it is a present indicative. This is explained by the fact that verses 39 and 41 are reflections by the Evangelist, and the Samaritans are speaking in verse 42 about their own belief. Therefore, there is nothing by way of verbal form to indicate a positive or negative portrayal of belief.

The context is the last factor to consider. Notice the progression: in verse 39 many believed because of the woman's testimony, but in verse 41 they believed because of Jesus' own words. Moloney notices this and remarks. "There is a qualitative and a

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[116]Carson. *John*. 216; Blomberg. "Globalization." 15; Craig Koester. "Hearing. Seeing. and Believing in the Gospel of John." *Biblica* 70. no. 3 (1989): 334. The fact that her testimony led to a belief that was initially less than satisfactory may curb an entirely positive understanding of her. as well as the fact that the passage never says that she herself believed. It may be more appropriate to view her neutrally.

[117]Moloney. *Belief*. 170-1. Contra Morris. *John*. 283; Godet. *John*. 1:440; Robert Govett. *Govett on John*. 2 vols. in 1 (Miami Springs. FL: Conley & Schoettle. 1984). 1:171-72; Zane C. Hodges. *The Hungry Inherit Whetting Your Appetite for God*. 2d ed. (Portland: Multnomah. 1980). 42; Lightfoot. *John*. 127. Some see Jesus' witness as better. but they do not detract from the faith in 4:39: Barrett. *John*. 243; Carson. *John*. 231.

quantitative difference between the faith . . . that is the result of the word of the woman and the faith that is the result of the word of Jesus himself."[118]

The Samaritans' belief in 4:39 moves in a positive direction. since it is away from unbelief. But John also places the belief in verse 39 in comparison to the belief following it. A neutral presentation occurs here. The woman's testimony in 4:29 is less than exceptional. Her focus is on Jesus' supernatural knowledge. and the syntax indicates a level of doubt.

Verse 41 is somewhat out of character for the Evangelist for it is a reflection upon the events before the events are narrated.[119] Verse 42 gives the event: Ούκετι δια την σην λαλιαν πιστευομεν. αυτοι γαρ ακηκοαμεν και οιδαμεν ότι ουτος εστιν αληθώς ό σωτηρ του κόσμου. They no longer believe based upon her testimony. but because they themselves heard from the Savior. This passage concludes with an entirely positive view of the Samaritans' belief. They now knew that they could trust in the One about whom they had only heard before. "Physical movement. irony. misunderstanding. and vocabulary were all used to indicate a progression toward adequate believing."[120] In fact. they themselves actually appear to be disassociating themselves from their original belief in verse 39.[121] The Samaritans' profession in 4:42 is entirely positive. Nothing in it

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[118]Moloney. *Belief*. 170-71.

[119]It is different than the normal prolepsis since the events are narrated immediately after John's reflection.

[120]Adkisson. "Believing." 100. I would view "adequate believing" not as that which secures life. but that which is portrayed positively.

[121]See Moloney. *Belief*. 171. Christianson does not consider the evidence of this argument.

points to a misunderstanding of Jesus or a preoccupation on signs. The next passage in John also discusses a progression of belief.

The Royal Official's Progression of Belief

There are two points in 4:43–54 that make it possible to understand the belief of the royal official as progressing. However, many commentators do not view it this way. Moloney insightfully said that when the man placed his faith in Jesus, he did not back it up with words but with actions. Jesus said, πορευου, and the man went.[122] He immediately acted in obedience to Jesus (cf. 3:36). Also, the sign had not yet been confirmed when he obeyed. Moloney realizes that 4:53 is a problem. He says that the purpose of 4:53 is to show the fruit of authentic faith.[123] Finally, Moloney argues that the re-mentioning of πιστευω in 4:53 is in order to parallel the other sign done in Cana at 2:1–12. He understands πιστευω complexively rather than ingressively.[124] Barrett confidently claims that the royal official only became a believer in 4:53.[125] However, he does not offer much support.

The setting given by John is of a royal official coming to Jesus on behalf of his sick son. This man was seeking a miracle. In 4:45, John gives some context to assist in deciphering this man's state of mind when coming to Jesus. In 4:45 and 4:46 John mentions signs which Jesus had done. This was to set up the introduction of the man who

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[122]Ibid., 186.

[123]Ibid., 187.

[124]Ibid., 188. Carson, *John*, 239, appears to agree with Moloney's assessment. Bultmann, *John*, 208, is ambiguous.

[125]Barrett, *John*, 248.

came to Jesus to get his son healed. This man, upon coming to Jesus, was no different than those in 2:23–25. When the royal official implored Jesus to come and heal his son, Jesus' response (4:48) was a rebuke, which discloses that this man did not understand Jesus' message. Ridderbos says it means that the man would have had no interest in Jesus if not for his miracles.[126] The belief mentioned in 4:48, couched in a rebuke, is designed to be viewed negatively. However, Jesus knew his heart and proceeded to tell the man that his son at home was well. The Evangelist adds that the man believed. It seems doubtful that the man moved so quickly from being rebuked to having a belief in Jesus that is completely positive and satisfactory. Therefore, the passage continues.

When the man heard that his son became well at the very same hour he had talked to Jesus, the Evangelist said that he, and everyone in his household, believed. Why the re-mentioning of the man's belief? Wallace can be of some assistance. He states that when a compound subject is used with a singular verb, the emphasis lies in the first subject mentioned.[127] For example, in 3:22 Jesus and his disciples are the subjects of the singular verb ἐρχομαι. "It is almost as if the disciples are merely tagging along while all of the action centers on Jesus."[128] The royal official is mentioned first and then his household. Πιστευω in 4:53 is an aorist indicative singular. This matches Wallace's construction. The royal official is further emphasized by the reflexive αὐτὸν. Therefore, to say that

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[126]Ridderbos, John, 175.

[127]Wallace, Grammar, 401.

[128]Ibid.

4:53 is written to show the fruit of authentic belief, thereby focusing on ἡ οἰκία

αὐτοῦ ὅλη, ignores the grammar. The focus was on the royal official and his belief.

The two lines of evidence recorded here are as follows: Jesus' rebuke in 4:48

makes it unlikely that the man progressed so quickly; the grammar of 4:53 puts the focus

on the royal official. Therefore, the royal official believed in 4:50, but it was an initial

belief that should be viewed neutrally.[129] At best, it could be said that it was his first steps

towards Jesus.[130] He took a positive step away from the negatively portrayed belief in

4:48, but still distinguished from the belief in 4:53.[131]

This is similar to the state the disciples were in before Jesus' sign at Cana of

Galilee. The royal official, like the disciples (in 1:37-51), showed a willingness to obey.

However, after the sign his belief was strengthened. Initially, the royal official viewed

Jesus as a miracle worker (cf. 4:45-48). This grew as he came face-to-face with Jesus (cf.

4:40-41). Finally, his belief was strengthened by the sign of his son's healing (cf. 2:11).

Conclusion

Eight pericopae have been analyzed and twenty-two occurrences of the verb

πιστευω. The syntactical analysis revealed the reality that there are no formulaic

constructions for the interpreter to lean upon in discerning how believing was presented.

The verbal form analysis has exposed that, though tenses and moods are not used

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[129]Bultmann, *John*, 208, refers to the belief of 4:50 as an initial stage and the belief of 4:53 in its fullest sense.

[130]Similar to Bultmann's conclusion of the many in 2:23-25 mentioned above.

[131]Koester, "Hearing," 337, views this passage as possibly showing a growth in the royal official's faith from 4:50 to 4:53.

formulaically, at least the present participle helps in understanding the continual and gnomic aspect inherent within positive believing. The use of the aorist should not be overemphasized, though it is typically ingressive.[132]

The exegesis section led to various conclusions and showed different progressions and failures among characters (and groups) in the Gospel. The Prologue sets forth the distinguishing marker between unbelief and belief by way of the verb "receive." The disciples are then introduced and chapter 1 concludes with them lacking in faith, though significant initial steps had been taken. The first pericope in chapter 2 provides the consummation of the disciples' belief: they had now seen the glory of Jesus and their belief is viewed positively.

The next account reveals that the crowd in Jerusalem believed Jesus though that belief was portrayed negatively. The Evangelist continued to give an example from that crowd in the person of Nicodemus. Nicodemus should be seen as a person whose belief was weak and the results of such a belief: this is a negative presentation of believing.

Jesus then approached a Samaritan woman who went into the city and testified about him. Interestingly, these two characters (Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman) are never definitively said to believe or not. The groups to which they belonged to are discussed in that manner (cf. 2:23-25; 4:39–42). In 4:39–42 a progression exists, just like in the disciples from 1:37-51 through 2:11, where they came to a belief that was portrayed positively. The final pericope portrays a royal official whose belief grew after being rebuked by Jesus, acting obediently on Jesus' words, and beholding a sign.

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[132]The exceptions of Jn. 2:22 and 4:53 have been noted.

Three characters (or groups) are portrayed as having a positive response: the disciples (1:37–2:11), the Samaritans (4:39–42), and the royal official (4:45–53). In each of these a progression is seen. All have a point when their belief is at its infant stage (1:50–51; 4:39; 4:45–48). All progress to a point where they are said definitively to believe (2:11; 4:42; 4:53). The only way to discern the positive or negative portrayal of the belief is through the context.

CHAPTER 3

THE CONCEPT OF BELIEVING IN JOHN 5–12

Introduction

This chapter will follow the principles outlined in chapter 1 as they relate to the concept of believing in John 5–12. The structure of this chapter will be the same as the preceding chapter.

Synchronic Analysis

Syntactical Analysis

John 5–12 contains two constructions which John 1–4 did not include: πιστεύω ὅτι and πιστεύω περί. This section does not have a πιστεύω + accusative construction, but the other three constructions are present: πιστεύω εἰς, πιστεύω absolute, and πιστεύω + dative. The following analysis will focus on occurrences in John 5–12, but the conclusion will take all data considered thus far into account. The data in John 5–12 will continue to support: (1) the overlap between the πιστεύω εἰς, dative, and absolute constructions; (2) that the portrayal of belief cannot be determined by syntactical construction apart from context; and (3) this section will demonstrate a distinction between the πιστεύω εἰς and πιστεύω ὅτι constructions.

Πιστεύω εἰς

The πιστεύω εἰς construction appears twenty-three times in John 5-12.[1] This is

the most common construction used in this portion of the Gospel.

Chart 6. Syntactical construction frequency

	εἰς	absolute	dative	ὅτι	accusative	περί
Chapters 1–4	8	10	3	0	1	0
Chapters 5–12	23	11	14	4	1	1
Total of 1–12	31	21	17	4	2	1
Entire Gospel	36	30	18	11	2	1

The following analysis will further the argument presented in chapter 2 that the

πιστεύω εἰς construction is not a special construction that carries more potency than the

πιστεύω + dative construction.

John 8:30 says that many people believed in Jesus. But 8:37 makes it clear that

those who in 8:30 are said to believe in Jesus are also the people seeking to kill him. The

verses in between explain why their belief was viewed as deficient. At the very least, the

context demonstrates that their faith left something to be desired. John 8:30 and 8:31 are

describing the same people at the same point in time.[2] However, while 8:30 uses a

πιστεύω εἰς construction, 8:31 uses a πιστεύω + dative construction. These two

constructions used in parallel to one another are powerful evidence to the

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[1] Jn. 6:29, 35, 40; 7:5, 31, 38, 39, 48; 8:30; 9:35, 36; 10:42; 11:25, 26, 45, 48; 12:11, 36, 37, 42, 44 (twice), 46.

[2] Cf. Ridderbos, *John*, 305; Carson, *John*, 346-8; Morris, *John*, 404, n. 62.

interchangeableness between these two constructions. While it has been proposed that these constructions differ, "the linguistic distinction does not stand up."[3]

Πιστευω absolute

Every time πιστευω is used absolutely in John 5-12 the implied object is the person of Jesus.[4] Every use is Christological and employs the fullest meaning of believing possible, though seven of the eleven are negated. In every one John is discussing a belief that includes all the aspects of believing necessary for eventually obtaining eternal life.

One example will suffice for now. In 10:25, Jesus is telling the Jews (cf. 10:24) that he knows that they do not believe. The belief that he wants them to have is one that understands who he is, follows him, and continually obeys him. However, since πιστευω is negated by oύ, he is saying that they do not do these things.

There are really no problematic occurrences in this section. The conclusion arrived at in chapter 2 applies: the context is sufficient to establish what the implied referent is and it is used in order to avoid redundancy. In fact, in almost every pericope in John 5-12 in which a πιστευω absolute construction occurs, there is also a previous occurrence of another πιστευω construction.

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[3]Carson, *John*, 246. See also Bultmann, *John*, 252, n. 2.

[4]Jn. 5:44; 6:36, 47, 64 (twice); 9:38; 10:25, 26; 11:15, 40; 12:39.

Chart 7. Previous occurrences of πιστεύω constructions in pericopae which contain
πιστεύω absolute constructions[5]

Pericope	Absolute	Previously in pericope	Type of construction	The object
5:16–47	5:44	5:24	Πιστεύω + dative	τῷ πεμψαντι με
6:22–66	6:36	6:29, 30, 35	6:29, 35 – πιστευω εἰς 6:30 – πιστευω + dative	29 – εἰς ὃν ἀπεστειλεν ἐκεῖνος; 35 – εἰς ἐμε; 30 – σοι
	6:47	See above; also 6:40	πιστευω εἰς	εἰς αὐτον
	6:64 (twice)	See above	See above	See above
11:1–44	11:40	11:25, 26, 27	25 & 26 – πιστευω εἰς; 27 – πιστευω ὅτι	25 & 26 – εἰς ἐμε; 27 – συ εἶ ὁ Χριστος
12:37–50	12:39	12:37, 38	37 – πιστευω εἰς; 38 – πιστευω + dative	37 – εἰς αὐτον 38 – τῇ ἀκοῇ ἡμῶν

In 10:25, 26 and 11:15 there is not a construction preceding in the pericope.

However, following these in their respective pericopae are constructions.

Chart 8. Occurrences of πιστευω constructions in pericopae in which following the
πιστευω absolute constructions appear clarifying constructions

Pericope	Absolute	Following in pericope	Type of construction	The object
10:22–39	10:25	10:37, 38	37 – πιστευω εἰς; 38 – πιστευω + dative	37 – μοι 38 – ἐμοι
10:22–39	10:26	See above	See above	See above
11:1–44	11:15	11:25, 26, 27	25 & 26 – πιστευω εἰς; 27 – πιστευω ὅτι	25 & 26 - εἰς ἐμε; 27 – συ εἶ ὁ Χριστος

[5]The boundaries listed for each pericope is debatable. The boundaries given all agree with Carson, with one exception. He views Jn. 6:22–58 as a unit and this is extended, with Morris, to verse 66. Though the details of Morris' structure differ (he generally provides larger boundaries), none of the differences are such that would violate or invalidate the data presented here or in Chart 8. See Carson, *John*, 105-7; Morris, *John*, viii-x.

Πιστεύω + dative

While there were only three occurrences of this construction in John 1–4. fourteen occur in 5–12[6] and only once more does it appear in the Gospel.

In 5:24 Jesus gives a soteriological call to believe.[7] The result of believing τῷ πεμψαντι με is placed in unambiguous. strong terms: that one (1) has eternal life; (2) does not come into judgment; and (3) has passed from death into life. It would be nearly impossible to call this belief weak simply because a dative construction is used. The context clearly regards this belief as a satisfactory response to Jesus.[8]

John 8:30 and 8:31 are extremely important to the argument presented regarding the πιστευω + dative construction. In these two verses there is an example of a πιστευω εἰς construction used in parallel with a πιστευω + dative construction. Both of these are used to refer to the same people. at the same time. and both are shown to have displayed an insufficient response to Jesus.

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[6] Jn. 5:24, 38, 46 (twice), 47 (twice), 6:30; 8:31, 45, 46; 10:37, 38 (twice); 12:38

[7] This verse is an example of the realized eschatology that is present in John's Gospel. Some have argued that the obtaining of eternal life would occur immediately after believing However. whether or not it was possible to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit before he was sent is in question. While it is not possible to explore this issue further now, realized eschatology's relationship to believing remains an area that may lead to much fruitful study. For more information on realized eschatology in John's Gospel. see Charles H. Dodd. *Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1958); Charles H. Dodd. *History and the Gospel* (New York: Scribner's and Sons. 1938); Roderic Dunkerley. "Unrealized Eschatology," *The London Quarterly and Holborn Review* 186 (1961): 51–54; John T. Carroll. "Present and Future in Fourth Gospel Eschatology," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 19 (Ap 1989): 63–69; John F. Walvoord. "Realized Eschatology," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 127 (Oct.-Dec. 1970): 313–23; Robert Berkey. "Realized Eschatology and the post-Bultmannians." *Expository Times* 84 (Dec. 1972): 72–77; Robert Kysar. "Eschatology of the Fourth Gospel." *Perspective* 13. no. 1 (1972): 23–33; John Painter. "Theology, Eschatology, and the Prologue of John." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 46, no. 1 (1993): 27–42; Donald R. Sime and Jere Yates. "Eschatology in the Gospel of John," in *The Last Things*, ed. W. B. West and Jack Pearl Lewis (Austin: Sweet Publishing. 1972). 124–39; Severino Pancaro. "Statistical Approach to the Concept of Time and Eschatology in the Fourth Gospel." *Biblica* 50. no. 4 (1969): 511–24; Margaret Pamment. "Eschatology and the Fourth Gospel." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 15 (1982): 81–85; Bultmann. *John*. 155–7, 164–7, 219–20, 236, 256–62, 402–403; Brown. *John*. 1:lxviii, cxx cxxi, 2:741; Barrett. *John*, 215.

[8] Carson. *John*, 346. says this "clearly refers to genuine faith."

Πιστευω + accusative

In 11:26 πιστευω occurs followed by an accusative object for only the second

time in the Gospel. In 2:24 the object was αὐτον (himself) and πιστευω contained a

unique sense here in the Gospel. In 11:26 the object is τουτο (this); its antecedent is the

statement Jesus made in 11:25-26: it is a question of content. These occurrences of

πιστευω + accusative are distinct from each other mainly due to the sense of πιστευω in

2:24.

Πιστευω ὁτι

In John 5-12 the πιστευω ὁτι construction appears for the first time in the Gospel

and it occurs four times.[9] Because of this, all four passages will be looked at to try and

determine if πιστευω ὁτι is equivalent to πιστευω εἰς and or πιστευω + dative. Does

πιστευω ὁτι point only to the content of the belief or is it absolutely synonymous to

πιστευω εἰς and or πιστευω + dative?

The first occurrence in the Gospel is 6:69. This is a climactic passage: Peter is

confessing Jesus as the Holy One of God and that He is the only one with the words of

eternal life. If this confession was read as if it were synonymous with πιστευω εἰς and or

πιστευω + dative, it would have to be read "in" instead of "that." This does not work. It

would be appropriate to say that Peter believed "in" the Holy One of God. But the

grammar and syntax seem to point to an emphasis on the content of the belief, not what it

was "in."[10]

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[9]Jn. 6:69; 8:24; 11:27, 42.

[10]Ridderbos, *John*, 249, says Peter gives "new content" to the title Messiah.

John 8:24 contains the phrase ἐγώ εἰμι. This account could be considered another climactic point in the Gospel. Carson has argued convincingly that the expression should be taken absolutely and that the main background is Isaiah 40–55, especially 43:10.[11]

Therefore, if one were to read the other constructions as synonymous to πιστεύω ὅτι, that would result in meaning "unless you believe in I am." This would be understanding "I am" as a title. Though this is possible, the grammar and syntax do not favor this reading. Rather, Jesus is telling them that they need to believe that Jesus is who He says He is: deity.[12] This is supported by their eventual reaction in 8:59[13] and is a necessary component to their belief, one which they do not have (cf. 8:30 37). "This, of course, gives a certain intellectual content to faith."[14]

Martha's profession is another climactic point (11:27ff.). The presentation of Martha in this passage cannot be said to be overwhelmingly positive. Her statement in 11:24 reveals some misunderstandings on her part and receives a slight rebuke in Jesus' statement in 11:25–26. The πιστεύω εἰς construction appears twice in Jesus' statement. He closes his statement with a question asking Martha if she believed τοῦτο. This is a question pertaining to content. She replied positively that she did believe the content of

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[11]Carson, *John*, 343.

[12]See Carson, *John*, 343-44; Morris, *John*, 397, 419-20, n. 117; Leon Morris, *Jesus the Christ: Studies in the Theology of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 123 (Morris has an entire chapter on the "I am" statements in John which is very helpful). Contra Ridderbos, *John*, 301-2, who says that it refers to Jesus being the Sent One.

[13]So Carson, *John*, 343.

[14]Morris, *John*, 397. Cf. Barrett, *John*, 341, who says this construction refers to content.

Jesus' statement, which had within it statements of believing in Jesus.[15] Her use of

πιστευω in the perfect "reflects the state of her confident trust."[16] Therefore, while the

πιστευω ὁτι construction here primarily refers to content, part of the content included a

πιστευω εἰς Jesus. The portrayal of Martha's belief should be considered as mostly

positive.

After Jesus' conversation with Martha and Mary, and just after the stone was

removed from the grave, Jesus prays to the Father (11:41–42). A πιστευω ὁτι

construction occurs at the end of 11:42. The object of the construction is Jesus as the Sent

One from the Father. This phrase, or ones similar to it, occur frequently in John's

Gospel.[17] Jesus' prayer is that those who are περιεστωτα might come to know that he has

been sent from the Father. This is a prayer for an aspect of the content of their belief.[18]

Therefore, a distinction remains between the meanings of the πιστευω ὁτι construction

and the πιστευω εἰς dative constructions.

Πιστευω περι

John 9:18 contains the only πιστευω περι construction in the entire Gospel.[19]

Some analyses do not consider this a construction rather they view πιστευω as being

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[15]"Her faith . . . has content, and doctrinal content at that," according to Morris, *John*, 498.

[16]Carson, *John*, 414. Ridderbos, *John*, 399, n. 56, says it points to "the continuation of what has been completed."

[17]See Köstenberger, *Missions*, 96ff. for analysis.

[18]So Morris, *John*, 498.

[19]None more could be located in the NT, LXX, or Apocrypha.

used absolutely in this verse.[20] This somewhat awkward verse is not problematic. First.

the object is αὐτον. the man who had been born blind. Therefore. this is a non-

Christological occurrence of πιστευω.[21] Second. περι means "about." What did they not

believe about him? The answer is supplied in a ὃτι clause giving the content of περι.

Therefore. the πιστευω περι construction is essentially equivalent to the πιστευω ὃτι

construction. Since every occurrence of a πιστευω ὃτι construction. thus far. has been

used at climatic points in Christological contexts. this construction may have been

employed to preserve the πιστευω ὃτι construction for those contexts.

Conclusion to Syntactical Analysis

The parallel of πιστευω εἰς with the πιστευω + dative construction at 8:30–31

makes a strong case that neither construction is superior or inferior. stronger or weaker.

No problematic occurrences were found when πιστευω was used absolutely in John 5–

12. The context in each case gave sufficient data to conclude that Jesus was the object of

πιστευω in each instance. It was also demonstrated that each pericope that contained a

πιστευω absolute construction had another πιστευω construction within it. and most had

one prior to the πιστευω absolute.

While some have maligned the πιστευω + dative construction as weak. others had

placed all three occurrences in John 1–4 as non-Christological.[22] Now it is nearly

undeniable that there are some πιστευω + dative constructions that are used to indicate a

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[20]See Melick. "Comparison." 72. who does not have πιστευω περι as a category. Gaffney. "Believing." 229. refers to this occurrence as a πιστευω ὃτι construction.

[21]See Christianson. "Soteriological." 8. 205.

[22]See ibid.. 8–9.

completely. entirely. and incontrovertibly positive attitude towards believing (cf. discussion on 5:24 above). This enhances the thesis that context is the determinative key to deciding on the portrayal of believing.

The πιστεύω ὅτι construction has been discovered to have a distinct nuance from πιστεύω εἰς or dative constructions. This construction points to the content of a belief, rather than who or what it is in. While this distinction may seem nebulous, it appears that knowledge or understanding is what is in view.

The only occurrence of a πιστεύω περί construction is non-Christological. It was shown to be essentially equivalent to πιστεύω ὅτι. The πιστεύω περί was possibly used here to preserve πιστεύω ὅτι for Christological, climactic passages.

The syntactical analysis has yielded some limited, helpful results. The πιστεύω εἰς. πιστεύω + dative. and πιστεύω absolute constructions may overlap in meaning. The πιστεύω ὅτι construction primarily points to content. Thus far this analysis demonstrates that context must remain the priority when analyzing John's concept of believing.

Verbal Form Analysis

The Present Tense

The present tense occurs most often in this portion of John's Gospel. a total of twenty-eight times. It was decided that the three occurrences for the present indicative of πιστεύω in John 1–4 was too limited for analysis. Therefore. those verses will be included.[23]

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[23]Jn. 1:50; 3:12; 4:42.

Present Indicative

Each of the verses containing πιστεὐω in the present indicative in John 1-12 is placed within its category in the chart below.[24]

Chart 9. Different uses of the present indicative of πιστεὐω in John 1-12

Declarations of Faith	4:42; 9:38
Negative Statements	3:12; 5:38, 47; 6:36, 64; 8:45, 46; 10:25, 26, 37
Questions to those previously expressing faith	1:50; 9:35; 11:26
Positive Statements	12:44

As can be seen, the majority of the occurrences (nine of fourteen) are negative statements. Ten times it is used to describe an individual's or group's reaction to Jesus: twice the portrayal is positive (4:42; 9:38) and eight times it is negative (5:38, 47; 6:36, 64; 8:45, 46; 10:25, 26). All of the negative portrayals are πιστεὐω modified by a negative particle.

Present Participle

The present participle of πιστεὐω appears ten times in John 5-12.[25] The conclusion stated in chapter 2 was that the present participle of πιστεὐω may relay the connotation of continual believing with soteriological ramifications. Each group described by πιστεὐω in the present participle is entirely positive. While eight of the occurrences appear somewhat neutral in relation to continuity, two may lean in favor of that conclusion.

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[24]Melick, "Comparison," 57-60, is in complete agreement with this analysis thus far.

[25]Jn. 5:24; 6:35, 40, 47, 64; 7:38; 11:25, 26; 12:44, 46.

In 6:35 believing is the predecessor to οὐ μὴ διψήσει πώποτε. Since the idea of not thirsting is portrayed as being continual, it may be that this points also to the continual nature of the believing discussed here. "If a man truly has life-giving contact with Jesus he never ceases to be dependent on him . . . but the initial contact does not need to be repeated."[26] Again in 11:25 the result of believing is portrayed as a continual action: living. Ζήσεται is placed in contrast to ἀποθάνῃ and is what will happen to ὁ πιστεύων. This also seems to indicate that believing may have a continual aspect to it.

Present Subjunctive, Imperative, and Infinitive

There are only two present subjunctives (6:29; 10:38a), one present infinitive (12:39), and three present imperatives (10:37, 38; 12:36). This limited data prevents any detailed analysis. However, all imperatives in the Fourth Gospel are in the present tense. The present infinitive of πιστεύω in 12:39 is used as a complement to the preceding verb, ἠδύναντο. Therefore, both infinitives (the aorist and present) in John's Gospel are complementary to δύναμαι. The present subjunctive refers to a beginning of belief, not belief continuing.[27]

Conclusion to Present Tense

The present tense was employed ten times out of twenty-two occurrences in John 1–4 and twenty-seven times out of fifty-four occurrences in John 5–12. This shows some consistency in use, as the difference in frequency is negligible.

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[26]Barrett, *John*, 293.

[27]Witherington, *Wisdom*, 30.

Chart 10. The present tense in John 1–12

	Occurrences of present tense	Occurrences of πιστευω	Percentage of use
John 1–4	10	22	45%
John 5–12	27	54	50%

The only exegetically significant finding in this section is that the present

participle is again found to contain some leanings which may convey a continual aspect.

The Future Tense

The future tense, occurring only in the indicative mood, is utilized twice. The first

instance is in 5:47 where Jesus is calling for his listeners to believe his words. There is an

interesting presentation of believing in 11:48. The belief they mentioned is based upon

signs (cf. 11:47). The Johannine perspective on a belief based upon signs is that if it

serves as the only foundation, becoming the focal point of their belief, it should be

viewed negatively.

The Imperfect Tense

While only one occurrence of πιστευω in the imperfect appeared in John 1–4,

five appear in 5–12. The conclusion to this section will look back to 2:24 to see if any

further conclusions can be drawn.

All of the occurrences of the imperfect indicative which describe a group's

reaction to Jesus are portrayed negatively (7:5; 12:11, 37). In two of these (7:5; 12:37)

πιστευω is modified by a negative particle.

Jesus' brothers are explicitly identified as not believing in Jesus. They are in complete unbelief at this point, which is a horrible state to be in. Jesus' brothers are almost requesting that he go to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. 7:2). John reflects on their statements in 7:5 declaring that they did not believe in Jesus. John typically uses the aorist of πιστεύω when making statements like this (i.e., 2:23). While the imperfect may be used to convey that his brothers were continually rejecting him,[28] it is also used as a way to bring their unbelief to the forefront. The fact that Jesus' own brothers did not believe in him was surely a shocking statement. They should have known him better than most, but they did not believe. In fact, the only other time his brothers were mentioned was in 2:12 where they are following him to Capernaum and are listed between his mother and his disciples. The use of the imperfect highlights this shocking statement.

The portrayal of the belief of the group in 12:11 is a complex issue, and therefore extended attention will be devoted to it now. First, when comparing 12:11, 17-18, 29, and 34, it appears that this "great crowd" is the antecedent to 12:37; it should not be viewed this way. The structure of John's Gospel and this passage needs to be taken into consideration. While chapters 10-12 may be considered transitory and especially chapter 12, 12:37-50 is essentially the crux of the transition. The reference in 12:37 to τοσαῦτα should be understood as referring to "the people in general."[29] Though it may indirectly apply to those in 12:11 and 17, they are not the direct antecedents.

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[28]So Morris, John, 349.

[29]Ridderbos, John, 443; Barrett, John, 430, says "the gospel as a whole."

John 12:11 locates the foundation of their faith in the raising of Lazarus. When this group is mentioned again, so is Lazarus' raising (cf. 12:17). John is putting an emphasis on Lazarus' raising and its connection to this group.[30] "This underscores anew the meaning that the Evangelist attributes to this great miracle of Jesus as the background of the events by which the crowd, until shortly before Jesus' death, display so much greater openness to Jesus' divine mission than their largely blinded leaders over and over 'believe in him.'"[31] This is not a permanent conversion, for their faith never went past the sign.[32]

The mentioning of their witnessing (cf. 12:18) does not detract from this view.[33] The Samaritan woman also was a witness for Jesus (cf. 4:25, 39), and her witness was based upon some supernatural knowledge Jesus had displayed. The "great crowd" in 7:31 also gave testimony for Jesus and their testimony was based upon Jesus' signs. So those in 12:11 and 12:17 who are witnessing about Jesus lead to another large crowd gathering around him in 12:18 who also based their testimony on a sign. The Samaritan woman is never said specifically to have believed and the Samaritans' initial faith, which was based upon her testimony, was shown to be portrayed as less than satisfactory. Similarly, the faith of those in 7:31 was portrayed negatively.

Now looking ahead to 12:37 its connection with 12:11 and 12:17 can be properly appreciated. The antecedent of "they" in 12:37 is all the negative portrayals of believing

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[30] Cf. Ridderbos, *John*, 425.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., 425–26. Though Carson, *John*, 431, describes those in 12:11 as moving toward a "genuine trust in Jesus," he also says it is not as "pure and strong as faith based on Jesus' word." Morris, *John*, 518, appears to refer to the faith of those in 12:11 as "a deep and genuine faith."

[33] For the crowd in verse 18 being a different group, see Morris, *John*, 523; Carson, *John*, 435.

in John's Gospel. This includes those in 2:23; 4:45–48; 6:14; 7:31; 8:30–31; 11:47;

and 12:11. Belief that has as its only foundation a sign is extremely tenuous. A faith that

has demonstrated itself through hearing Jesus' word and following him can then be

strengthened by signs (cf. 2:11). Therefore, the faith in 12:11 should be viewed

negatively.

Another question that arises is why the imperfect was ever used when it appears

that John had an affinity for the aorist. While three of the five uses seem neutral in regard

to whether or not they imply a continuity of believing (or disbelieving if negated), one

verse could be translated with continuous action (12:37) and one inceptively (12:11).

In 12:11 it seems that the imperfect was used to draw attention to the faith. As

Morris says, the phrase "many of the Jews" usually refers to a group "opposed to

Jesus."[34] The imperfect may be used inceptively,[35] though this is not certain.

While most translations view πιστευω in 12:37 as punctiliar, at least one views it

duratively.[36] The main reason the imperfect was used in 12:37 was to bring attention to

the verb. Since this is a climactic point in the Gospel, it is reasonable to assume John

wanted to bring attention to it.

However, the context also lends itself to the durative concept. The signs that Jesus

had done were τοσαυτα that they should have elicited the faith of the Jews.[37] Their

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[34]Morris, John, 517.

[35]Ibid.

[36]For example, NIV, NRSV, and KJV view it punctiliarly. The NASB (1995) views it duratively: "they were not believing." So Ridderbos, John, 443, n. 209; Morris, John, 536.

[37]According to Morris, John, 536, τοσαυτα refers to both in quality and quantity.

unbelief here is permanent. continual. and stable. Jesus had come to bring them the

light. but they have now rejected it.

The Aorist Tense

The aorist appears sixteen times in John 5-12. It appears with four different

moods: indicative. subjunctive. infinitive. and participle.

Aorist Indicative

The aorist indicative appears eight times.[38]

Chart 11. Occurrences of different verbal forms in John 5-12

	Present	Future	Imperfect	Aorist	Perfect
Indicative	12	2	5	8	2
Participle	10	0	0	1	1
Subjunctive	2	0	0	6	0
Imperative	3	0	0	0	0
Infinitive	1	0	0	1	0
Total	28	2	5	16	3

John 7:31 contains an example of a faith placed in Jesus that is not portrayed

positively. Πιστευω is an aorist indicative because it is a reflection by the evangelist

back on to the events from a future point. But the context gives a few indicators as to how

their believing should be viewed. First. they are placed in contrast to those in 7:30 who

sought to seize Jesus.[39] Verse 31 contains an adversative conjunction: δε. Those in 7:31

are viewed more positively than those in 7:30. However. their "profession" is lacking.

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[38]Jn. 7:31. 48: 8:30: 9:18: 10:42: 11:45: 12:38. 42.

[39]Morris. *John*. 367.

The closest "profession" to this one is that made by the Samaritan woman. When she went back to Sychar and asked, δεῦτε ἴδετε ἄνθρωπον ὅς εἶπεν μοι πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησα. μήτι οὗτὸς ἐστιν ὁ Χριστός: Her profession, put into the form of a question, is not very strong. As that passage was examined, it was seen that the Samaritans really needed to hear from Jesus themselves before they fully believed. This may have partly been because of her weak profession. Similarly, those in 7:31 ask a question. It certainly is not a strong profession.[40] In fact, the question itself seems to reveal some doubt on their behalf.[41] They seem to refer to the coming of the Christ as a still future event, but they are unsure. Notice that πολλοι is modifying πιστευω. This word seems to act as a way of generalizing the group. Every time πολλοι modifies πιστευω thus far in the Gospel, the group identified is not portrayed positively. Finally, their focus is not on the person of Jesus, but on the signs. Again, signs can be used as positive stimulants to grow faith, but they are intended to point beyond themselves. Those in 7:31 never seemed to have seen past the signs to what they pointed to: Jesus as the Son of God.[42] This sign "is where their faith ended."[43] Therefore, it seems best to view the portrayal of this group negatively.

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[40]Though Morris, *John*, 367, calls their reasoning "not profound," he goes on to say their faith is not inadequate because nothing negative is said (Morris, *John*, 368). This is an excellent example of how the Evangelist was saying something about their faith through the context of the particular pericope (cf. 8:30-59), and the Gospel as a whole (cf. 2:23-25), rather than directly. Morris misses this point.

[41]The statement in Jn. 7:19 that they were seeking to kill Jesus and in 7:20 where they accused him of having a demon has no effect on discerning how the group in 7:31 is portrayed. The mild contrastive δε prohibits this.

[42]Cf. Ridderbos, *John*, 421, 426; Carson, *John*, 319.

[43]Ridderbos, *John*, 426.

Of the seven Christological occurrences of aorist indicatives in John 5-12,[44] four groups are portrayed negatively (7:31; 8:30; 11:45; 12:42), twice it is used in a question (7:48; 12:38), and once it is used to portray a group's positive movement toward believing in Jesus (10:42).

Aorist Subjunctive

Of the six occurrences of the aorist subjunctive in John 5-12, three times it is used to describe people's or group's belief.[45] Twice they are portrayed negatively (6:30; 11:42) and once positively (9:36). However, do these occurrences support or detract from the previously stated thesis by Melick that aorist subjunctives are used ingressively?

While two times it appears obvious that the aorist subjunctive is used ingressively, and three other times it seems most likely, one time it is very doubtful. One example in each category will be analyzed.

Chart 12. The use of ingressive aorist subjunctives of πιστευω in John 5-12

Ingressive aorists	6:30; 9:36
Most likely ingressive aorists	8:24; 11:15, 42[46]
Not an ingressive aorist	11:40

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[44]Jn. 9:18 is understood as non-Christological.

[45]Jn. 6:30; 8:24; 9:36; 11:15, 40, 42.

[46]Morris, *John*, 498, says that the aorist in Jn. 11:42 "points to the beginning of faith."

In 6:30, the crowd asked Jesus for a sign so that they might believe in him. They currently did not believe in him, and if they were to see the "right" sign then they might start believing. Therefore, the aorist is used ingressively.

Jesus says that unless the Jews believe in him, they will die in their sins (8:24). There is no compelling reason to view this as other than a reference for them to start believing in Jesus.[47]

It would seem highly speculative to refer to the aorist subjunctive of πιστεύω in 11:40 as ingressive. Jesus is talking to Martha (cf. 11:39). In 11:26 Jesus asked Martha if she believed what he said (11:25-26). She replied that she did believe and she calls Jesus ὁ Χριστος, ὁ υἱος τοῦ Θεοῦ, and ὁ εἰς τον κοσμον ἐρχομενος. Nothing in this profession would lead one to doubt the validity of her belief. Therefore, 11:40 does not appear to be an example of an ingressive aorist.

This analysis leads to the conclusion that most aorist subjunctives are ingressive, but not all. Therefore, context needs to remain determinative.

Aorist Infinitive

Infinitives of πιστεύω in this Gospel are rare. The only aorist infinitive in the entire Gospel occurs in 5:44. This is a statement made by Jesus calling for the Jews to believe in him. It is a complementary infinitive to the verb δύναμαι. Morris correctly

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[47] I would like to note that sometimes the Greek can be over-analyzed. It seems doubtful to me in these references which are labeled "most likely ingressive aorists" that the author had in mind the concept of ingressiveness. However, it does seem to fit the meaning given the context.

views it somewhat ingressively saying it points to "putting one's trust in, rather than the continuing belief" like in 12:39.[48]

Aorist Participle

The only occurrence for the aorist participle in John 1-12 is 7:39. This verse is complex in its orientation to time. John is saying from a future standpoint that Jesus' statement in 7:38 refers to some time in the future from when Jesus said it, namely, after his glorification. It is a "retrospective" point of view.[49] John was reflecting on past events and therefore did not use the present participle like he normally would.

Conclusion to the Aorist Tense

The aorist tense was used to describe responses portrayed positively and negatively. The overriding factor in determining the portrayal of believing is context.

The aorist tense was employed nine times out of twenty-two occurrences in John 1-4 and sixteen times out of fifty-four occurrences in John 5-12. This may reveal that the evangelist is now reflecting less as he parades further into the narrative. However, the difference in frequency is not large and should not be pressed.

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[48]Morris. *John*. 294. n. 124.

[49]Culpepper. *Anatomy*. 28. He also refers to this as being another example of a prolepsis (63) and that it fits within the pattern of the narrator to use retrospective statements to foreshadow themes in the farewell discourse (39).

Chart 13. The aorist tense in John 1-12

	Occurrences of aorist tense	Occurrences of πιστεύω	Percentage of use
John 1–4	9	22	41%
John 5–12	16	54	30%

The Perfect Tense

The perfect tense occurs three times: twice with the indicative and once with the participle. Both occurrences in the indicative were discussed above: 6:69 and 11:27. John 8:31 was discussed above and it was labeled as a negative presentation. Nothing in the perfect tense itself assists in understanding the portrayal of belief. Conclusions on how John used the perfect tense will be deferred until the next chapter where two more occurrences surface.

Conclusion to Verbal Form Analysis

It should be noted that no syntactical construction is tied to any tense-mood combination (Chart 14).[50] The aorist and present tenses are used with εἰς, a dative object, and absolutely. The aorist is additionally used with ὅτι and περί. The data for these two categories is too limited to form conclusions. There is no consistent pattern discerned between tenses and either syntactical constructions or moods (Chart 15). There is also no consistent pattern between moods and either syntactical constructions or tenses (Chart 16). The aorist tense should not be viewed as a "once-and-for all" or as "occurring at a point in time in the past" type of belief. Usually the aorist is used because the Evangelist

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[50] Thus far, the accusative object is only found with the imperfect indicative. However, one instance does not make this a pattern.

is reflecting on past events and it is often, but not always, used ingressively. The

present participle may be both gnomic and continual.

Chart 14. Syntactical constructions with tense-mood combinations in John 1-12

	Pres Ind	Pres Ptc	Pres Imperative	Pres Subj	Pres Inf	Fut Ind	Imperfect Ind	Aor Ind	Aor Ptc	Aor Subj	Aor Inf	Perf Ind	Perf Ptc
Εἰς	2	11	1	1	0	1	3	9	1	1	0	1	0
absolute	8	4	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	4	1	0	0
dative	4	1	3	1	0	1	2	3	0	1	0	0	1
accusative	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
ὅτι	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0
περί	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

Chart 15. Tenses with syntactical constructions and moods in John 1-12

	Εἰς	Absolute	Dative	Acc	Ὅτι	Περί	Ind	Ptc	Imperative	Subj	Inf
Present	15	13	9	1	0	0	15	16	4	2	1
Future	1	1	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
Imperfect	3	0	2	1	0	0	6	0	0	0	0
Aorist	11	7	4	0	2	1	15	1	0	8	1
Perfect	1	0	1	0	2	0	3	1	0	0	0

Chart 16. Moods with syntactical constructions and tenses in John 1-12

	Εἰς	Absolute	Dat	Acc	Ὅτι	Περί	Present	Fut	Imperfect	Aorist	Perfect
Indicative	16	11	10	2	2	1	15	3	6	15	3
Participle	12	4	2	0	0	0	16	0	0	1	1
Imperative	1	0	3	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0
Subjunctive	2	4	2	0	2	0	2	0	0	8	0
Infinitive	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0

Exegetical Discussion

Introduction

A brief discussion on every pericope in which πιστευω arose has occurred. Two

sections do not contain the verb πιστευω but while one will aid in understanding John's

concept of believing (6:1–15), the other one will not (6:16–21).[51]

The Healing of the Lame Man

John 5:38 gives a test for belief: it provides a somewhat concrete way to figure

out if one believes. The question is: Do you have (ἔχετε) the Father's (cf. 5:37) word

abiding (μενοντα) in you?[52] Jesus clarifies that he is talking to men who study the

Scriptures intensely but come up with the wrong conclusions (5:37–40). For it is these

same Old Testament Scriptures that they had been studying their whole lives which told

about eternal life through Jesus (cf. 5:47–49).[53] But they were blind to see this. While the

man who had been healed in the earlier part of this section was still unable to believe in

Jesus, these Jews were also unbelieving.

The stumbling block to believing in 5:44 is that they became content with the

earthly reality (glory from men) and failed to see the glory from God. They were satisfied

with seeing the power demonstrated in signs, so they never saw beyond them. Jesus'

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[51] This does not include Jn. 7:53–8:11. For reasons for omitting this from the discussion, see Bruce M. Metzger. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. 2d ed. (New York: American Bible Society, 1994), 187–89.

[52] Barrett, *John*, 267, views this as the partial understanding. He says that the following two ideas are both present: "(a) You have not the word of God because you do not believe his Son; or (b) That you have not the word of God appears from the fact that you do not believe his Son."

[53] Cf. Morris, *John*, 295.

signs, by definition,[54] were meant to point beyond themselves. But when someone's

concerns are all-consumed with pleasing men, then he will fail to see what God is doing.

Those who believe must not become consumed with earthly thoughts but must remember

that there are spiritual realities behind what is seen. Those who believe will see the sign

and the reality which it points to (cf. 11:40). John says that they do not have the ability to

see because of this.[55]

In 5:47 Jesus says forthrightly what he alluded to in 5:38. Not only do they not

remain in the Father's words, but now they do not believe him. He accuses them of not

believing in the words of Moses, εἰς ὃν ὑμεῖς ἠλπίκατε. While their hope may be in

Moses, they failed to remain in the Father's word, and they seek glory from men and miss

the heavenly realities around them. Moses, in whom they place their hope, has now

become their judge. Since they have failed to hear or heed Moses' words, what could

possibly be done to move them to believe? Their ultimate doom is that they do not

believe the word (ῥήμασιν) of Jesus. Since "(t)he Jews' failure to grasp what Moses and

his writings were about is described as not *believing* what he wrote," then it can be

deciphered that when John uses πιστευω he "includes more than credence, but right

understanding and hearty obedience as well."[56] In 5:31–47, the portrayal of the Jews is

[54]Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Seventh Johannine Sign: A Study in John's Christology," in *Studies on John and Gender A Decade of Scholarship* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 107, after a detailed study on signs, defines it as "a symbol-laden, but not necessarily 'miraculous,' public work of Jesus selected and explicitly identified as such by John for the reason that it displays God's glory in Jesus who is thus shown to be God's true representative."

[55]Πιστεῦσαι is a complementary infinitive to δύνασθε.

[56]Carson, *John*, 266.

negative. Therefore, Jesus is trying to move their faith in a positive direction by explaining their areas of deficiency.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand

This is the first pericope in John's Gospel to not contain the verb πιστευω. However, concepts are present which will shed light on John's concept of believing.

The feeding of the five thousand is one of the few common stories in all four Gospels (Mt. 14:13-21; Mk. 6:30-44; Lk. 9:10-17). In none of the accounts does the verb πιστευω occur. However, the event in 6:13 can be identified as a sign.[57] The purpose for signs in John's Gospel is to bring about belief (cf. 20:30-31). In fact, after seeing this sign they make an apparent wonderful profession.[58] Less than perfect professions in John's Gospel have been seen already: Nathanael (1:49), Nicodemus (3:2-3), and the Samaritan woman (4:29, 39).[59] Another one now occurs in 6:14.[60] While the profession in 6:14 appears acceptable, their actions which follow betray their understanding of Jesus as Messiah. In fact, their misunderstanding is nearly identical to Nathanael's in 1:49: they viewed Jesus' messiahship through political lenses. Therefore,

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[57] The textual variant is a difficult one: should the text say "sign" or "signs." Carson, *John*, 273, is correct in stating that the singular should be read, though tentatively. So Morris, *John*, 306; Barrett, *John*, 277.

[58] See Deut. 18:15-19 for the Old Testament background.

[59] While the Roman official never makes a less than adequate profession, his opinion of Jesus started as a sign-worker, which was a misunderstanding.

[60] See Morris, *John*, 306, for those as viewing this profession as "confused."

rather than entrusting himself to them (cf. 2:24). ἀνεχώρησεν πάλιν εἰς τὸ ὄρος αὐτὸς μόνος. Their "faith yields to unbelief."[61]

The Bread of Life Discourse

The crowd in 6:22-66 is portrayed negatively. Not only does this section contain eight occurrences of πιστεύω, the departure of disciples makes this passage both significant and controversial. Jesus shows his understanding of people (cf. 2:24-25) by getting to the heart of the issue: they were seeking more signs rather than seeking the One behind the signs. When Jesus calls for them to believe in the Sent One (6:29), they ask for a sign (6:30-31). He had just finished admonishing them about their proclivity for sign-seeking (cf. 6:26-27), and they ignore his words and give him what appears to be an ultimatum: they refused to (start) believing unless they saw a sign.[62]

The main problem in 6:29 is the relationship presented between faith and works. Jesus describes "work" as believing. The phrase τὸ ἔργον τοῦ θεοῦ means "that which God requires of us."[63] However, Jesus is not saying that faith is a work.[64] He is declaring that God requires faith in one who receives life.

After they ask for a sign, they try to justify their request by appealing to Moses' providing of manna. Jesus claims that the true bread from heaven is now offered to them. When they ask for it, he tells them that he is this ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς.[65] Above, it was

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[61]Carroll, "Eschatology," 66.

[62]It seems best to view this aorist subjunctive as ingressive.

[63]Morris, John, 319.

[64]Riddlebarger, "Faith," 81-106, for the theological problems of this viewpoint.

[65]This expression is placed in an "I am" statement.

discussed how 6:35 appears to be indicating a continual nature to the concept of believing. While coming to Jesus is put in a parallel relationship with believing, the results of each, respectively, are never being hungry or thirsty. The presence of πώποτε brings out a continual aspect to what is being discussed and it "reinforces (that) faith eliminates any sense of lack."[66] Though this offer is given, sadly they have declined this invitation (6:36). The reason for their lack of acceptance is that the Father had not given them to Jesus. Here the concept of being chosen (or predestination) and believing intersect.[67]

The typical precursor to receiving eternal life in John's Gospel is believing. When some other expression is put in place of believing, that expression can teach us about John's view of belief. This occurs in 6:53-58. Instead of believing resulting in life, eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man results in life. Those who do this are also said to "remain in" Jesus, and he in them.

Carson sees a strong connection between 6:40 and 6:54:

> The only substantial difference is the one speaks of eating Jesus' flesh and drinking Jesus' blood, while the other, in precisely the same conceptual location, speaks of looking to the Son and believing in him. The conclusion is obvious: the former is the metaphorical way of referring to the latter.[68]

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[66]Carson, John, 289, n. 3.

[67]In this section, this concept is seen in Jn. 6:37, 44, 63 and 70. While some places in John's Gospel appear to focus on the individual's responsibility to respond in belief, other places focus on the concept that the belief of the individual may come from God. For more on this discussion, See D. A. Carson, Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility Biblical Perspectives in Tension (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981).

[68]Carson, John, 297.

Ridderbos defines eating and drinking as "believing," also.[69] Furthermore,

eating (ὁ τρώγων) and drinking (πινων), being present participles, "are not a one-time

event but a repeated activity of faith."[70] The concept of believing in John's Gospel is thus

shown to have an aspect of continual activity.

John 6:66 is an important transition point in the Gospel. Those who are referred to

as μαθητῶν have now left Jesus. In 6:61, Jesus turns to address his disciples who are

complaining (γογγυζουσιν) about what he said. He concludes his reaction by saying that

he realizes that some of his own disciples do not believe. This raises the question of the

Johannine view of a disciple.

John appears to use μαθητῶν in a very basic way. He does not attach the

contemporary Christian meaning onto it. The concept of Jesus as rabbi in the Fourth

Gospel has been researched.[71] Understanding that many saw Jesus as a rabbi reveals that

John's meaning of μαθητῶν was simply one who was a student.[72] Many who were

students of Jesus turn away from him at this point in his ministry. Jesus declared, just

before their turning away, that he knew they did not believe (cf. 6:64).[73] This is more

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[69] Ridderbos, *John*, 240. See also Morris, *John*, 335, n. 134, who approvingly cites Westcott as referring to a relationship between "eat" and "drink" to believing. Contra Barrett, *John*, 299, sees this as a reference to the Eucharist.

[70] Ridderbos, *John*, 243.

[71] For example, see Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Jesus as Rabbi in the Fourth Gospel," in *Studies on John and Gender A Decade of Scholarship* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 65-98.

[72] The relationship of "disciples" to believing will be discussed more in chapter 4.

[73] MacArthur, *Gospel*, 196, surely goes too far in claiming that there is no distinction between the words "disciple" and "believer," even calling them synonyms. For more on "discipleship" see Darrell L. Bock, "A Review of *The Gospel According to Jesus*," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146 (1989): 34-37. Note also Homer A. Kent, Jr., review of *The Gospel According to Jesus*, by John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Grace Theological Journal* 10, no. 1 (1989): 75, who says that "(t)hose who have separated discipleship from salvation have not done us any service."

evidence which leads to the conclusion that the concept of believing in John's Gospel has a continual nature. Their desertion of Jesus was only possible because they did not believe: had they believed, they would have remained for that is part of John's understanding of believing.[4] "More importantly, just as there is faith and faith (2:23–25), so are there disciples and disciples."[5] While the deserters are portrayed negatively, Jesus turns to the remaining disciples (the twelve) to address their faith.

Peter's confession in 6:69, in a πιστευω ὅτι construction which points to the content of belief, also provides evidence for the continual aspect of believing in the Fourth Gospel. Peter's response is set in the context of many of Jesus' disciples leaving. His confession of belief is also an affirmation of his decision to remain with Jesus. There is no other place for him to go. The twelve are placed in contrast to the deserted disciples and are portrayed positively.[6]

"I Am the Light" Discourse

The next relevant pericope of the Gospel can be broken into three sections: 8:12–20; 21–47; 48–59.[7] In another climactic "I am" saying in 8:12, "following," expressed with the present participle ἀκολουθῶν, is placed in contrast with not walking in darkness. This refers to "the conduct of life in a more comprehensive sense" than just "human conduct."[8] The result is having τὸ οὐῶς τῆς ζωῆς. This result is an equivalent

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[4]See 1 Jn. 2:19 for a similar theme.

[5]Carson, *John*, 300.

[6]All except one, Judas Iscariot (cf. Jn. 6:70–71), who did not continue.

[7]Similar to Ridderbos' structure, *John*, 291–317.

[8]Ridderbos, *John*, 293.

phrase to eternal life."[79] the typical Johannine result of believing. The concepts of "following" and "not walking in darkness" are ideas that by nature convey the idea of continuity. In this way, Johannine belief, and thus salvation in John's Gospel, is not viewed as a one-time decision only, but as something that has a continuing effect on one's actions and life. This will be especially significant given the lack of transformation demonstrated by those who "believe" in 8:30–31.

John 8:21–47 needs to be viewed as a whole and read carefully to fully understand all John is saying. In 8:24, Jesus gave a grave warning that if the Jews die in unbelief, they die in their sins. They must believe ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι. After they ask him a question (cf. 8:25), and he responds, the Evangelist gives his reflection upon the events and concludes that their understanding (ἔγνωσαν) was limited. Jesus continued his teaching and the results are seen in 8:30: πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν. John 8:31 continues Jesus' discussion with those same Jews τοὺς πεπιστευκότας.[80] He teaches those who have apparently come to a belief in him about continuing in his word and about true (versus false) disciples (cf. 6:66). Then Jesus accuses them of trying to kill him (8:37, 40). In 8:45 and 46 he says that they do not believe in him. "This section of discourse is addressed to those who believe, and yet do not believe."[81]

These Jews in 8:30 and 8:31 are said, twice, to believe in him. The phrase in 8:30 is a πιστεύω εἰς construction and in 8:31 it is a πιστεύω + dative construction; these

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[79]Morris, *John*, 389, n. 10, says that the most likely meaning is "the light that gives life," a parallel concept to eternal life. Contra Barrett, *John*, 338, who says it refers to the Law.

[80]So Ridderbos, *John*, 305; Carson, *John*, 347; Contra Melick, "Comparison," 125-26.

[81]Morris, *John*, 403.

phrases are equivalent and in parallel. The perfect in 8:31 should be understood as pointing back to those in 8:30.[82]

What are the indicators that this groups' belief should be viewed negatively? First. Jesus' initial teaching to them was on the subject of continuing and true versus false disciples. "Continuing" refers to "the activity. perseverance. and faithfulness of believers."[83] Second. Jesus mentions twice. and John mentions once. that they are trying to kill him. Finally. he twice says that. in fact. they do not believe.

Their belief was based on a lack of understanding (8:27). When Jesus went further into his teaching. their actual lack of belief became clear (cf. 8:33, 41, 43). The story continues in 8:48 when these same Jews call Jesus a Samaritan and accuse him of being demon possessed. They accuse him of having a demon again in 8:52. Finally in 8:59, they tried to kill him.

Here is the final description of these who are said to believe in Jesus in 8:30–31.

Description/Actions	Verse(s)
Non-understanding	8:27, 43
Seek to kill Jesus	8:37, 40, 59
Want to do the desires of the devil	8:44
Do not believe	8:45, 46
Do not hear the words of God	8:47
Call Jesus a Samaritan	8:48
Accuse Jesus of having a demon	8:48, 52
Dishonor Jesus	8:49
Say that Jesus is not greater than Abraham	8:53
They do not know (εγνωκατε) God	8:55
They are liars	8:55

[82] See Carson. John. 347.

[83] Ridderbos. John. 307

They are ignorant. murderous. devil-pleasing. unbelieving. non-hearers of God's word. name calling. blaspheming. dishonest. and lying people. This is hardly the description of one who believes in Jesus and will inherit eternal life.[84]

So what separates a "fickle faith" from an acceptable faith? One who remains in Jesus' teaching. a theme which will be discussed more in John 15. is a true disciple. "(S)uch a person obeys it. seeks to understand it better. and finds it more precious. more controlling. precisely when other forces flatly oppose it."[85] In a word. perseverance separates true belief from an untrustworthy one.[86] Similarly. Ridderbos says that the "genuineness of their discipleship must prove itself in persevering continuance in the word of Jesus and in doing his word (cf. 13:35; 15:8)."[87]

The Healing of the Blind Man

The story of the man who received sight in chapter 9 may be viewed in contrast to the lame man in chapter 5:[88] while the blind man is viewed positively. the lame man is portrayed negatively. In chapter 9. Jesus healed the blind man (9:1–7). the Jews reacted (9:8–12). and the Pharisees were informed (9:13). After it is mentioned that it was a Sabbath day (9:14). the reaction of the Pharisees is recounted (9:15–17).

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[84]Supporting a negative view of the belief in Jn. 8:30 and Jn. 8:31 are: G. H. C. MacGregor. *The Gospel of John*. The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (London: Hodder and Stoughton. n.d.). 216; Brown. *John*. 1:354; Hoskyns. *Fourth Gospel*. 338.

[85]Carson. *John*. 348.

[86]Morris. *John*. 404. says. "the test is 'abiding.'"

[87]Ridderbos. *John*. 308. He adds in a footnote that μαθητής and πιστευω "sometimes refers to a provisional. not permanent. decision for Jesus" (ibid.. 308. n. 172).

[88]See Culpepper. *Anatomy*. 139–40. for a detailed comparison and contrast.

John 9:30–31 presents the man's defense before the Pharisaic council. After he was expelled, Jesus found him and questions him about his belief in τον υιον του ανθρωπου. The man is willing to believe and wants to, but he needs Jesus to help him see (again) who the Son of Man is. The man believed (9:38) and worshipped Jesus. This man is portrayed entirely positively and in contrast to the lame man in John 5.

Enter through Jesus

Though πιστευω is not used in 10:1–21, there is a helpful concept to consider in this passage. The antecedent to "being saved" is δι εμου εισελθη (10:9). The Fourth Gospel is clear that when one believes, it must be "in Jesus." Belief in anyone or anything else will not help one to attain life. Similarly, the only way to enter into salvation, which is eternal life,[89] is through Jesus.

Unfortunately, Jesus' call in 10:9 was not heeded. In 10:19–20 many accused Jesus of having a demon. Some were more positive; they question whether a demon could do the miracle Jesus did in John 9. There are two indicators that reveal that this "profession" is weak. First, it is put into the form of a question. These "questioning professions" demonstrate a weakness in the professors. They appear fearful of making a bold confession. Secondly, it is based upon a sign. Therefore, the entire crowd in 10:1–21 is portrayed negatively.

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[89]Morris, *John*, 452, n. 34, notes that by "saved," John means "much the same as having eternal life."

The Sheep

John 10:25–42 contains a concentrated cluster of six occurrences of πιστεύω. Two groups are discussed: 10:25–39; 10:40–42. While the first is portrayed negatively, the second is portrayed positively.

Those in 10:25–39 are portrayed entirely negatively. It is not them who are discussed in 10:42, but another completely different group. Jesus was calling for them to move forward, in a positive direction, in their faith by believing in his works. John 10:25–26 makes it clear, by stating twice, that they did not believe. In 10:31 they even tried to stone him. Nothing in this discussion portrays them positively.

This is the one passage when πιστεύω is modified by πολλοι but the context is ambiguous enough to make it difficult to decide on how πιστεύω is portrayed. Jesus had just said to some Jews that even though they do not believe him, believe the works (10:38). They tried to seize him. But Jesus left that area and crossed the Jordan to where John the Baptist had baptized.

John 10:41a says that many people came to Jesus. Are these the same ones from 10:37–39? If so, it would seem, from the statement in 10:41b, that they obeyed and came to a belief in the works. However, this probably is not the case.

The text says that when Jesus crossed over the Jordan, he entered into the area where John the Baptist had ministered. The people who came to him were probably from that area because in their statement they mention John the Baptist twice: first in a comparison to Jesus, and then as John being a pointer to Jesus (10:41).[90]

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[90]So Carson, *John*, 400; Morris, *John*, 470-71.

John 10:41–42 shows people who have placed their belief in Jesus' works. This is not a bad place to be; it is first steps toward Jesus. Faith in Jesus' works as a witness of and to the Father was a positive move forward. While those in 10:25–29 rejected Jesus' call, John continues and speaks about a group who was willing to take their first steps, those who had heard John the Baptist. Their connection with John the Baptist, the last time he is mentioned in the Gospel, should be seen as adding a positive aspect to the portrayal. This is a beginning to the fulfillment of 1:7, John the Baptist's purpose.[91]

The Raising of Lazarus

In 11:25 another "I am" statement occurs, followed in 11:25 and 26 by a soteriological call to believe given by Jesus. Martha's answer, in 11:27, has been discussed above. Martha is portrayed mostly positively.

In 11:40, Jesus gives Martha a small rebuke[92] and reminds her of her profession made a little earlier (cf. 11:27). Jesus is warning her to stay believing in him. What does Jesus mean by τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ? He means that she will be able to see past the sign he is about to perform.[93] "The crowd would see the miracle, but only believers would perceive its real significance."[94] The πιστεύω ὅτι construction in 11:42 points to the content of belief, referenced in 11:15, that Jesus wished upon those standing by.

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[91]So Carson, *John*, 401.

[92]Morris, *John*, 497, calls it a "challenge to faith."

[93]See 5:44ff. Koester, "Hearing," 342, affirms this by saying that Jesus "indicated that faith is the presupposition for perceiving the significance of the miracle."

[94]Morris, *John*, 497. Carson, *John*, 175, commenting on Jesus turning the water into wine, said that the "servants saw the sign, but not the glory; the disciples by faith perceived Jesus' glory behind the sign, and they" believed in him.

One more person needs to be considered in this context: Mary. Mary reacted to her brother being raised from the dead by anointing Jesus. This was an act of faith. Whether or not Mary had the full knowledge and understanding of her actions, they were viewed entirely positively by Jesus.

The group in 11:45 has been referred to as a negative portrayal. Πιστεύω is an aorist indicative and is in a πιστεύω εἰς construction. 11:46 clarifies and defines their faith: ἀπῆλθον πρὸς τοὺς Φαρισαίους. This act of betrayal demonstrates that their belief was in nothing more than the sign in which Jesus had just done.[95] This is another negative example of a belief based upon signs.

The Jerusalem Entrance

The belief in 12:11 was discussed above. The emphasis that ties this belief with the sign (the raising of Lazarus) diminishes the portrayal of the crowd. In addition to what was said above, the presence of πολλοί in connection with πιστεύω frequently gives warning to the belief being discussed. The context is the determining factor in deciding upon the portrayal of belief, not the presence of πολλοί.

Transition Passage

The key verse in the transition passage is 12:37, which was discussed above. The antecedent to "they" are the negative portrayals of those believing in John's Gospel, not one specific group. It is a verse designed to begin a summary statement as Jesus draws in to focus upon his disciples. Πιστεύω, being in the imperfect, is aspectually highlighted

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[95] John does say that τινες (some) went to the Pharisees, not all. Notice also that 11:46 begins with δε, a mild adversative.

and draws attention to the stubborn denial of their continual disbelief. The two

occurrences of πιστεύω in 12:38-39 add to the negative portrayal of those who have

rejected Jesus in 12:37.

The ὅμως in 12:42 is somewhat startling and returns the topic to belief. Even

though God blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, some of the ruling Jews, as well

as many others, believed. Πιστεύω here is an aorist indicative because John is reflecting

on this event. The construction used is πιστεύω εἰς. The main indicator that this belief is

not entirely positive is the presence of the strong adversative ἀλλά.[96] This belief is now

downplayed because of their fear of being thrown out of the synagogue by the Pharisees.

A secondary indicator is πολλοί. Frequently in John's Gospel πολλοί has assisted the

context to portray belief negatively in the characters in the narrative.[97] These rulers did

not confess belief in Jesus publicly. They were more concerned with continuing their

worship in the synagogue than continuing their worship of Jesus, and their love was not

for God, but for men's approval. Therefore, the group discussed in 12:42 is portrayed

negatively.[98]

Πιστεύω is not mentioned in 12:47, but obedience is. The lack of keeping Jesus'

commands will lead to one being judged by Jesus' words. Obedience leads to a lack of

judgment and rejecting the message (disobedience) leads to judgment. This concept,

combined with the teaching in 3:18, demonstrates a relationship between obedience and

believing: belief which is true will have obedience to Jesus' message as fruit.

[96]Contra Morris, *John*, 538.

[97]Every time, except in Jn. 10:40-42, when πολλοί modifies πιστεύω, the portrayal of the group
is negative. The one exception demonstrates the necessity of context in interpretation.

[98]See Carson, *John*, 451, who concludes that "such secret faith will not do."

Conclusion

In John's Gospel. 77.5% of all references to πιστευω have now been analyzed.
The first half and the second half have a disproportionate amount of occurrences of
πιστευω. Being that 77.5% of all occurrences are in the first half, it seems fitting that for
all verbal forms where appropriate data exists, it appears that the verbal forms are evenly
distributed throughout the Gospel.

Chart 17. Distribution of verbal forms

	Present Indicative	Present Imperative	Aorist Indicative	Aorist Subjunctive	Perfect Indicative
John 1–12	14	4	15	8	3
John 13–21	7	2	2	5	2
Total	21	6	17	13	5
% in 1st half	67%	67%	88%	62%	60%

The aorist infinitive, aorist participle, present infinitive, and perfect participle
occur only once in the Gospel and all in the first half. The present subjunctive occurs
twice, the future indicative occurs three times, and the imperfect indicative occurs six
times; in each case all occurrences are limited to the first half of the Gospel.

John 5–12 can be characterized as, largely, many people rejecting Jesus. A few
patterns and categories have emerged.[90]

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[90]Some of the pericopae overlap into multiple categories.

Belief and Signs

Jesus performs four signs in John 5–12: (1) the healing of the lame man; (2) the feeding of the five thousand; (3) the healing of the blind man; and (4) the raising of Lazarus. The crowd in 5:1–47 (especially 46–47) is portrayed negatively, as are those in 6:1–15 (especially 14–15), 9:1–38 (especially 16, 24), and 11:1–12:36 (especially 11:46; 12:11, 17, 18, 36). Two groups' belief was based upon signs though the narrative was distanced from it: 7:20–31 (feeding of the five thousand) and 10:1–21 (healing of the blind man).

Chart 18 shows the signs and the seven negative portrayals linked to them in John 5–12.

Chart 18. Belief based upon signs

1) Healing of the Lame Man	Crowd in 5:1–47
2) Feeding of the five thousand	Crowd in 6:1–15
	Crowd in 7:20–31
3) Healing of the Blind Man	Crowd in 9:1–38
	Crowd in 10:1–21
4) Raising of Lazarus	Crowd in 11:1–12:36
	Pharisees in 11:1–57

The data from John 1–4 is more mixed. Three signs were done there: (1) Jesus turned the water into wine (2:1–12); (2) The Clearing of the Temple (2:13–25); and (3) The Healing of the royal official's Son (4:45–54). The reaction to the first sign and third sign were positive: both the disciples and the royal official had demonstrated a willingness to follow and obey Jesus before the sign was performed. The middle sign, the

Clearing of the Temple, was not received well. Both the crowd (2:23-25) and

Nicodemus (3:1-15), who was a representative of the crowd, were portrayed negatively.

Weak or Questionable Professions, Poor Actions, and Hard Teaching

Three weak professions were made: 6:14; 7:31; and 10:21. All of these were put

into the form of doubtful questions.

Four groups demonstrated their (deficient) belief through poor actions: 6:22-66;

8:21-47; 10:22-39; 12:42-43. The middle two groups wanted to kill Jesus and the third

feared the Jewish leaders. The groups in 6:22-66 and 10:22-39 could not accept some of

Jesus' hard teaching.

Positive Portrayals

All four positive portrayals happened in contrast to negative portrayals: 6:67-69;

9:1-38; 10:40-42; 11:1-46. In three of the four the negative example was given first.[100]

The twelve in 6:67-69 are contrasted to the Deserting Disciples; the Blind Man in 9:1-38

is contrasted to the Lame Man in John 5 and the Pharisees in John 9. The group in 10:40-

42 is contrasted to those in 10:37-39; Martha (11:1-46) and Mary (12:3-7) are contrasted

to the "many" in 11:46.

While John 1-4 contains some hope in regards to believing (Jesus' disciples, the

Samaritans, the royal official), John 5-12 paints a gloomier picture. Disbelief in Jesus is

rampant. The Jews reject Jesus and he ends his public ministry and recedes to teach his

disciples.

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[100]Jn. 11:1-46 is the exception.

Jesus has also dealt with the Jews at wherever they were at in terms of believing.[101] This can be seen with Nathanael (1:50–51), Nicodemus (3:12), and a crowd of Jews (5:46–47; 10:25–39, 40–42).

Chart 19. Portrayals by pericope

Person/Group	Pericope	Portrayal
Disciples	1:37–2:11	Positive
Crowd	2:12–25	Negative
Nicodemus	3:1–21	Negative
Samaritans	4:1–42	Positive
Royal Official	4:43–54	Positive
Lame Man	5:1–16	Negative
Crowd	5:1–47	Negative
Crowd	6:1–15	Negative
Disciples	6:22–66	Negative
The Twelve	6:67–69	Positive
Jesus' Brothers	7:1–10	Negative
Crowd	7:11–43	Negative
Pharisees	7:44–53	Negative
Crowd	8:12–59	Negative
Blind Man	9:1–38	Positive
Pharisees	9:1–38	Negative
Crowd	10:1–21	Negative
Crowd	10:25–39	Negative
Crowd	10:40–42	Positive
Martha	11:1–57	Positive
Mary	12:3–7	Positive
Pharisees	11:1–57	Negative
Crowd	11:1–12:36	Negative
Jews	12:37	Negative
Pharisees and Crowd	12:42–43	Negative

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[101]See Warfield, *Doctrines*, 493.

CHAPTER 4

THE CONCEPT OF BELIEVING IN JOHN 13-21

Introduction

This chapter will continue the pattern followed in the previous two chapters. The second half of the Fourth Gospel, chapters 13-21, will be analyzed. The evidence will continue to demonstrate that context must remain determinative for understanding John's concept of believing.

Synchronic Analysis

Syntactical Analysis

Four syntactical constructions appear in John 13-21. The following analysis will show that the πιστευω absolute construction will expand in its use, which will further demonstrate the importance of context. Also, the increase in the frequency of the πιστευω ὅτι construction will be discussed.

Chart 20. Syntactical construction frequency

	εἰς	absolute	dative	ὅτι	accusative	περι
Chapters 1-4	8	10	3	0	1	0
Chapters 5-12	23	11	14	4	1	1
Chapters 13-21	5	9	1	7	0	0
Entire Gospel	36	30	18	11	2	1

Πιστευω εις

The πιστευω εις construction occurs five times in the second half of the Fourth Gospel.[1] Generally, this construction appears in contexts in which those who believe are portrayed positively. For example, in 14:12 those who πιστευω εις Jesus will do greater works than Jesus.

Πιστευω absolute

The πιστευω absolute construction is the most frequent construction in the second half of the Gospel.[2] In John 1-12 this construction was used twenty-one times. As has been demonstrated, none of those verses proved problematic. In this section, more ambiguity occurs.

The πιστευω absolute construction in 14:11b is directly dependent upon 14:11a which contains a πιστευω + dative construction. These constructions are synonymous in this context. In 14:29, the belief is εις αυτον, as 14:12 makes clear. In 16:31, an unusual case occurs. The context is unmistakably clear that the question Jesus is asking refers back to the disciples' statement in 16:30, which is a πιστευω οτι construction. Therefore, Jesus is asking them if they now believe that He is from God.[3]

The occurrence in 19:35 is also unusual. Nowhere previously, or afterwards, in the pericope is the πιστευω absolute clarified by another πιστευω construction. Two thoughts will help clarify this. First, by this time in the Gospel the author's meaning and

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[1] Jn. 14:1 (twice), 12; 16:9; 17:20.

[2] Jn. 14:11, 29; 16:31; 19:35; 20:8, 25, 29 (twice), 31.

[3] This case is called unusual because the πιστευω absolute construction almost never refers to a content in belief (replacing a πιστευω οτι construction). Melick, "Comparison," 89, agrees that only here and at Jn. 20:31 does the πιστευω absolute have a οτι-clause as its implied object.

usage should be understood so that he does not have to clarify every time. Secondly,

the context, that Jesus has just been declared dead (19:34), makes the correlation that the

belief in 19:35 refers to εἰς αὐτόν.

In John 20 there are five occurrences of the πιστεύω absolute construction and it

is not until verse 31 in this chapter, the last verse, when another construction is used. It

appears that as the Fourth Gospel is coming to a close the need for clarification decreases.

John's point has been made clear: proper belief is placed in Jesus.

Πιστευω + dative

The πιστεύω + dative construction appears only once in this portion of the

Gospel: 14:11a. Jesus is calling for his disciples to believe him that ἐγώ ἐν τῷ πατρι

καὶ ὁ πατήρ ἐν ἐμοι. John 14:11b uses a πιστεύω absolute in a synonymous relation to

this use. The interchangeableness of the πιστεύω absolute with both the πιστεύω + dative

and πιστευω εἰς constructions demonstrates two things: (1) the πιστευω absolute

construction does not have any independent or transcendent meaning other than what is

derived from the context; (2) the non-distinctiveness between πιστευω + dative and

πιστευω εἰς constructions. This use, along with the evidence compiled above, is

sufficient to demonstrate the interchangeableness of the πιστευω εἰς and πιστευω +

dative constructions.

Πιστεύω ὅτι

The πιστεύω ὅτι construction occurs seven times in this section.[4] It seems that this construction has gained momentum as the narrative has moved along. It did not occur until the end of chapter 6, and over sixty percent of its occurrences are in the last portion of the Gospel which contains only one-fourth of the overall references to πιστεύω.

Chart 21. Πιστεύω ὅτι in John's Gospel

	Occurrences of πιστεύω ὅτι	Occurrences of πιστεύω	Percentage of use
John 1–4	0	22	0%
John 5–12	4	54	7%
John 13–21	7	22	32%

Five of the occurrences can be grouped under one category: explaining Jesus' relationship to the Father. John 14:10 highlights that Jesus and the Father are in each other. John 16:27, 30; 17:8, 21 all are statements about Jesus coming from the Father (or God). All of these point to content.

John 13:19 contains an equivalent to 8:24, where Jesus compels his disciples to believe ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι. As said above, this is a call to believe in the deity of Jesus.[5] Finally, 20:31 gives the purpose of the Gospel. It was written so that the readers might believe that the Messiah, the Christ, is Jesus.[6] All the πιστεύω ὅτι constructions point to content of belief.

[4] Jn. 13:19; 14:10; 16:27, 30; 17:8, 21; 20:31.

[5] See Carson, John, 343–4, 471; Morris, John, 553; Morris, Jesus, 123.

[6] For this view of 20:31, see D. A. Carson, "The Purpose of the Fourth Gospel: John 20:30–31

Conclusion to Syntactical Analysis

The syntactical analysis for John 13-21 has given three insights: (1) John used the absolute construction more frequently because he could assume that the reader had the understanding of the previous portions of the Gospel; (2) John used the πιστευω ότι construction more towards the end of the Gospel as the content of belief now became a primary focus; (3) the absolute construction is dependent upon the context, either of the specific verse, thought, pericope, or Gospel, from which to derive its meaning.

Verbal Form Analysis

The Present Tense

The present tense is the most frequent tense employed in John 13-21. Four moods are used by John: indicative, participle, subjunctive, and imperative. One of the most significant findings of Melick's study is that John uses πιστευω uniquely. He uses the present indicative and present participle more often than the other Gospel writers and the aorist indicative less often.

Reconsidered." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108 (1987): 639-51. Contra John W. Pryor, *John Evangelist of the Covenant People: The Narratives and Themes of the Fourth Gospel* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992), 204.

Melick, "Comparison," 48-49. This points to there being a reason for John's unique use of the present.

Chart 22. Occurrences of different verbal forms in John 13-21[8]

	Present	Aorist	Perfect
Indicative	4	2	2
Participle	3	1	0
Subjunctive	1	5	0
Imperative	4	0	0
Total	12	8	2

Present Indicative

Each of the verses containing πιστευω in the present indicative in the Fourth

Gospel is placed within its category in the chart below.[9]

Chart 23. Different uses of the present indicative of πιστευω in John's Gospel

Declarations of Faith	4:42; 9:38; 16:30
Negative Statements	3:12; 5:38, 47; 6:36, 64; 8:45, 46; 10:25, 26, 37; 14:10; 16:9
Questions to those previously expressing faith	1:50; 9:35; 11:26; 16:31
Positive Statements	12:44

Jesus asks the disciples about their current state of belief in 14:10. He was

presupposing "that all disciples *ought* to believe" this.[10] Eventually they will profess

belief (16:30-31), and that context illuminates that at this point they actually did not have

a confident belief.

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[8]Note that Jn. 14:1 (twice) and 14:11 (twice) are included as present imperatives. Also, the controversial form of πιστευω at Jn. 19:35 and 20:31 are included as aorist subjunctives.

[9]Melick. "Comparison," 57-60. is in complete agreement with this analysis.

[10]Carson. *John*, 494. Emphasis in original.

The ὅτι in 16:9 sets up a causal clause. The Holy Spirit will convict the world of its sin because it does not believe in Jesus. The relationship between sin and unbelief will be elucidated below. In 16:30–31 the disciples confess that they now (νῦν) believe that (ὅτι) Jesus has come from God and Jesus reacts to their statement by questioning their belief.

All of the present indicatives of πιστεύω seem to indicate the current belief: the focus appears to be on the here and now.

Present Participle

In 14:12 the present participle is portrayed as having future consequences. Those who believe in Jesus will do (ποιήσει), a future indicative, greater works. There is no doubt expressed: "*anyone who has faith* in Jesus . . . will enjoy" this.[11] Those who have a continuous belief will be easy to spot since their actions will bear the fruit of their belief.

The present participle in 17:20, combined with the context of 17:21, indicates that those described as believing in Jesus may have a future aspect: oneness. This is not necessarily described as a definite result as in 14:12, but as a prayer of Jesus. However, "it is a unity that must be brought to perfection."[12] The result of believing in 20:31 is that life is received. The meaning of life will be expanded upon below. The evidence for the gnomic and continual nature of the present participle of πιστεύω in soteriological contexts has grown greater through the Gospel.

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[11] Ibid., 495. Emphasis in original.

[12] Ibid., 568.

Present Subjunctive

As with the four aorist subjunctives, the only present subjunctive in John 13–21 is used in a ἵνα purpose clause. The present subjunctive in 17:21 refers to a coming to believe.[13]

Present Imperative

Whether or not the two presents of πιστεύω at 14:1 are imperatives, indicatives, or a combination of each, has been debated. Carson summarizes the four options for πιστεύω in 14:1 succinctly:[14] (1) indicative indicative – "You trust in God and you trust in me;" (2) indicative imperative – "You trust in God; trust also in me;"[15] (3) imperative imperative – "Trust in God; trust also in me;" (4) imperative indicative – "Trust in God; you trust also in me." While all are syntactically possible, the context narrows down the likelihood of the choices. (1) is very unlikely since Jesus is dealing with the disciples' want of trust. (2) has a problem in that it is not clear in the context that their trust in God was assured. (4) is simply "incoherent." Not only does (3) fit the context best, it was understood this way "in nearly all the Old Latin mss."[16] Barrett cites the presence of another imperative (ταρασσέσθω) and the Early Church Fathers for more support.[17] Therefore, both are accepted as present imperatives.[18]

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[13]Witherington, *Wisdom*, 30–31.

[14]See Carson, *John*, 488, for the following comments.

[15]See Ridderbos, *John*, 488.

[16]Carson, *John*, 488.

[17]Barrett, *John*, 456.

[18]So Carson, *John*, 487–8; Moloney, *John*, 393; Borchert, *John*, 103; Morris, *John*, 566; Barrett,

Regarding the presents in 14:11, most assume they are imperatives.[19] The context is clear that these are commands, especially when one understands 14:1 as imperatives. Therefore, both are accepted as imperatives.

Πιστευω imperatives occur four other times in the Gospel, for a total of eight times: 4:21; 10:37, 38; 12:36. The aorist imperative of πιστευω is never used. In general, aorist imperatives are used to command actions in specific situations, while present imperatives are used for attitudes and conduct.[20] This is not a rule to be applied without discernment, however, as exceptions exist.[21] The cases of prohibitions and commands need to be separated for analysis.[22]

The commands all seem to be ingressive-progressive present imperatives. These are the exception to the rule. In all five cases, the belief Jesus is commanding is one that previously did not exist. An ingressive-progressive present imperative means that the belief was commanded to begin and to continue.[23] If the aorist was used, it would have referred to either the beginning of the action (ingressive) or the solemnity and urgency of

John, 456; contra Ridderbos, John, 488. Bultmann's, John, 600, comment is interesting: "Even if one regards both πιστ. as indicatives, the sentence remains an indirect exhortation."

[19]So Carson, John, 490; Ridderbos, John, 496; Morris, John, 573.

[20]Wallace, Grammar, 719.

[21]Ibid., 721.

[22]Prohibitions: 10:37; Commands: 10:38; 12:36; 14:1 (twice), 11 (twice). Since 4:21 is a non-occurrence, it will not be included.

[23]The other two options that Wallace, Grammar, 722, gives are the customary (to continue) or the iterative (repeated action). Both of these would be significant for this discussion, as well. However, since in all five contexts it appears that the belief being commanded is one that previously did not exist, the ingressive nature of the command seems inherent.

the action.[24] Therefore. John's use of the present imperative is significant as it is the only discernible pattern of usage between tenses and moods of πιστευω in the Fourth Gospel.

The only prohibition to believe is in 10:37. While the present imperative allows one to view this as a command to stop an activity (cessation of activity), it is preferred to view this occurrence as a general precept. This means that the prohibition makes no comment about whether or not the action is already occurring.[25]

The Aorist Tense

The aorist tense appears eight times in John 13–21. It appears with three different moods: indicative. participle. and subjunctive.

Aorist Indicative

The aorist indicative appears twice.[26] Jesus refers to his disciples in 17:8 as having believed that he was sent from the Father (16:27–31). It remains possible that Jesus was referring to the initial belief in 16:27–31. which would make this an ingressive aorist. though this can be said only tentatively. In 20:8 the aorist was used since it was a reflection by the Evangelist upon what took place in ὁ ἄλλος μαθητής. This occurrence appears to be used ingressively. though the context does not demand this. The context in no way portrays this belief negatively.

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[24]Wallace. *Grammar*. 720.

[25]Ibid., 724. Wallace mentions John 10:37 as an example of a general precept prohibition.

[26]Jn. 17:8; 20:8.

Aorist Participle

The portrayal of Thomas in 20:25–29 will be discussed in detail below. The aorist

participle in 20:29 does not negatively effect the interpretation of the passage. John was

referring to Thomas' recent confession of belief in 20:28.[27] This is only the second aorist

participle used in the entire Gospel (cf. 7:39).

Aorist Subjunctive

Five aorist subjunctives appear in John 13–21. Four of them are used in a ἵνα

purpose clause.[28] This construction of the aorist subjunctive preceded by a ἵνα to indicate

purpose is very common in the New Testament. The ἵνα is "almost always" succeeded by

a subjunctive verb.[29] Three of these four seem clearly to indicate ingressiveness, while

the fourth has been hotly debated.[30]

In 20:25, Thomas says that he will not believe unless he is able to see Jesus. The

refusal to believe contains two negative particles followed by an aorist subjunctive. This

construction is the strongest form of negation in the Greek.[31] Thomas is emphatically

refusing to believe unless his demands are met. This is likely to be ingressive.

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[27]See Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 382–85, who says that frequently, though not formulaically, the aorist participle refers to antecedent action.

[28]Jn. 13:19; 14:29; 19:35; 20:31.

[29]William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 287.

[30]The possible exception is 20:31.

[31]Wallace, *Grammar*, 468.

Aorist Conclusion

The eight uses of the aorist tense of πιστεύω in John 13–21 adds little to the understanding. The only distinctive occurrences, 20:25 and 20:29, will be examined in greater detail below.[32] Both of the aorist indicatives and all five of the aorist subjunctives could plausibly be ingressives, though in some of these the context does not demand this reading.

The Perfect Tense

The perfect tenses of πιστεύω have been scattered throughout the Fourth Gospel.[33] Five occurrences of the perfect indicative of πιστεύω are in the Fourth Gospel: 3:18; 6:69; 11:27; 16:27; 20:29. All of these appear to be resultative perfects. Therefore, the focus is on the current state.[34] For example, in 11:27, Jesus is asking Martha about her belief and she responds that she does believe, using a perfect. She had believed in the past and this belief has continued to the present, but the focus is on the current state of her belief.[35] The substantival participle in 8:31 is used to refer to those mentioned in 8:30: πολλοι ἐπιστευσαν εἰς αὐτον.[36]

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[32]Jn. 20:25 contains one of only two aorist subjunctives of πιστευω emphatically negated (see 4:48, also), and 20:29 contains only the second occurrence of the aorist participle of πιστευω in the Fourth Gospel.

[33]Jn. 3:18; 6:69; 8:31; 11:27; 16:27; 20:29.

[34]See Melick, "Comparison," 57.

[35]Wallace, *Grammar*, 576, cites the perfect in Jn. 11:27 as an example of a resultative perfect.

[36]When a substantival participle is used in any tense but the present, its verbal aspect still exists (see Wallace, *Grammar*, 620, who also mentions that the present participle of πιστευω is the exception to this rule). Therefore, if anything, the perfect participle may be used to focus on the current state (resultative), on the completed action (consummative), or without reference to present consequences (aoristic).

Conclusion to Verbal Form Analysis

As the chart below demonstrates, there are thirteen tense-mood combinations of πιστεύω used in John's Gospel, with the present indicative and present participle being the two most frequent. John used many different ways to refer to believing.

The analysis of the aorist tense did not yield much. While all aorists could be considered ingressive, nothing in the context demands this understanding. The present participle seemed to contain continual and gnomic aspects as future consequences of the belief are stated. The present imperative revealed the most interesting results in the verbal form analysis in this chapter. All present imperative commands are considered ingressive-progressive imperatives, which means that the person people receiving the command are told to start and to continue believing. This meaning is not found in the aorist. The one prohibition of the present imperative appears to be a general precept. The perfect indicatives of πιστεύω throughout the entire Gospel seem to be resultative perfects, focusing on the current condition of the one who believes.

Chart 24. Tense-mood combinations distributed throughout John's Gospel[17]

	John 1–4	John 5–12	John 13–21	Total
Present Indicative	3	12	4	19
Present Participle	6	10	3	19
Present Imperative	1	3	4	8
Present Subjunctive	0	2	1	3
Present Infinitive	0	1	0	1
Future Indicative	1	2	0	3
Imperfect Indicative	1	5	0	6
Aorist Indicative	7	8	2	17
Aorist Participle	0	1	1	2
Aorist Subjunctive	2	6	5	13
Aorist Infinitive	0	1	0	1
Perfect Indicative	1	2	2	5
Perfect Participle	0	1	0	1

[17]There may be some discrepancies with other analyses since six verbs are in question: Jn. 14:1 (twice), 11 (twice); 19:35; 20:31. The reasons for the conclusions were all given above.

Chart 25. Syntactical constructions with tense-mood combinations

	Pres Ind	Pres Ptc	Pres Imperative	Pres Subj	Pres Inf	Fut Ind	Imperfect Ind	Aor Ind	Aor Ptc	Aor Subj	Aor Inf	Perf Ind	Perf Ptc
Εἰς	3	13	3	1	0	1	3	9	1	1	0	1	0
Absolute	9	5	1	0	1	1	0	3	1	7	1	1	
Dative	4	1	4	1	0	1	2	3	0	1	0	0	1
Accusative	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ὅτι	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	4	0	3	0
Περί	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

Chart 26. Tenses with syntactical constructions and moods

	Εἰς	Absolute	Dative	Acc	Ὅτι	Περί	Ind	Ptc	Imperative	Subj	Inf
Present	20	16	10	1	3	0	19	19	8	3	1
Future	1	1	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
Imperfect	3	0	2	1	0	0	6	0	0	0	0
Aorist	11	12	4	0	5	1	17	2	0	13	1
Perfect	1	1	1	0	3	0	5	1	0	0	0

Chart 27. Moods with syntactical constructions and tenses

	Εἰς	Absolute	Dat	Acc	Ὅτι	Περί	Present	Fut	Imperfect	Aorist	Perfect
Indicative	17	14	10	2	6	1	19	3	6	17	5
Participle	14	6	2	0	0	0	19	0	0	2	1
Imperative	3	1	4	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0
Subjunctive	2	7	2	0	5	0	3	0	0	13	0
Infinitive	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0

Exegetical Discussion

Five chapters in John 13–21 do not contain any significant references to believing: 13, 17, 18, 19 and 21. Even though 14:1 and 14:11 have already been discussed, a brief discussion here will summarize this passages contribution to John's concept of believing. Chapter 15 will be included mainly because the relationship between abiding and believing is highly significant. In chapter 16 an interesting discussion between Jesus and his disciples occurs. The relationship between οιλεω and πιστευω will be discussed, as well as sin and unbelief. Three sections in chapter 20 will aid in the analysis: the mentioning of the "other" disciple (20:8–10); the Thomas pericope (20:25–28); the purpose statement (20:30–31). This section will contain more paradigmatic analyses since the all the data can be analyzed.

The Command to Believe

The commands given in 14:1 are from a pastoral concern. The disciples were troubled and Jesus seeks to calm their anxiety by telling them to believe in God and himself. This use of πιστευω carries connotations of trusting since it is used to calm the disciples' worries.

Jesus moves on to ask them whether or not they have a specific content to their faith (14:10). Then he confirms his question by answering it: Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Him. Whether or not Jesus' use of πιστευω in 14:11a is Christological is ambiguous by itself.[38] But the second occurrence in verse 11 is unambiguously

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[38]Barrett, *John*, 460, sees this as a non-Christological occurrence.

Christological. Therefore, since they are connected by εἰ δὲ μή ("or else"), both will be viewed this way.

The connection between 10:37-38 and 14:11 has been noticed by commentators.[39] While in 10:38 Jesus asks the listeners to τοῖς ἔργοις πιστεύετε, in 14:11 he asks his disciples, for the sake of τα ἔργα αὐτα πιστεύετε. These phrases should be understood as being nearly synonymous. While the similarity needs to be stressed, a difference is also present. In 10:37-38 Jesus is trying to move the belief of his listeners into a positive direction. He is asking them to believe in his works. This would be a positive step. The only difference between the step in 10:37-38 and in 14:11, is that in 10:37-38 the step is from unbelief into belief, and in 14:11 it is from a type of belief into a deeper belief.[40] But in both cases, positive movement is the desired result.

John 14:11-12 has an interesting progression. John 14:11a tells what and who to believe (πιστεύετε μοι ὅτι). 14:11b gives a reason (the "why") to believe (διὰ τα ἔργα αὐτά), and 14:12 gives the result of this belief (μείζονα τουτων). Another result of believing will be discussed next: abiding.

Abiding and Believing

In 3:36 μένω means "to continue in an activity or state."[41] In that context, it means that the activity of God's wrath will continue in their lives because of their disobedience. While this use does not directly aid in understanding πιστεύω, it is possibly a slight

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[39] For example, Bultmann, *John*, 609; Carson, *John*, 495.

[40] Moloney, *John*, 396, surely goes too far by referring to the disciples here as "unbelieving."

[41] Louw and Nida, *Lexicon*, 656-57.

foreshadowing of John 15 where abiding may be used with a nuance of believing

and/or obedience. In John 15 those who abide are those who remain obedient; in 3:36

those who are disobedient will have God's wrath abiding on them.[42]

The best way to describe πιστευω in relation to John 15 is a "strange absence."[43]

This passage will help clarify the concept of believing in John's Gospel. Morris says that

abiding and believing mean basically the same thing.[44] It "is an exhortation to constancy

of faith in the language of μεινατε εν εμοι."[45]

This chapter contains an extended metaphor. The context is that of the eleven

disciples who are present and Judas who has just left in 13:30. Therefore, the branches

which remain in Jesus stand for those whose belief abides and bears fruit; the branches

which do not remain stand for those whose belief had some sort of deficiency (like Judas

[13:30], some disciples [6:60-66], and many of the Jews who are said to believe) and

then demonstrate a weakness or deficiency by their actions (i.e., 8:30-31).[46] Bearing fruit

refers to "movement, growth" and it demonstrates a "vitality of faith."[47]

Jesus has said other things in this Gospel that relate to this. For example, in

14:20-24, Jesus says that when υμεις εν εμοι καγω εν υμιν, they will keep his

commandments and will love him. In 5:38, the test for belief was whether or not one

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[42]Remaining and obedience are not identical, but remaining includes being obedient. See Bultmann, *John*, 535, n. 2.

[43]Morris, *John*, 297.

[44]Ibid. Morris also says that the abiding in John 15 could be viewed as "practically equivalent to believing."

[45]Bultmann, *John*, 529.

[46]Ridderbos, *John*, 518, refers to this as a "temporary faith and [temporary] fruitbearing," and cites Jn. 6:66ff. and 8:31ff., also.

[47]Bultmann, *John*, 532.

remained in the Father's word. Remaining in the Father's word means to obey the

Father's message. Therefore, obedience becomes the test for genuine belief.[48] In 6:56,

those who drink Jesus' blood and eat his flesh are those who remain in him. As

mentioned above, eating and drinking is a parallel expression to believing in Jesus.[49]

Therefore, those who believe in Jesus are those who remain in him. In 10:26–28, not

believing is equivalent to not being one of his sheep; the reverse of this is true: he who

believes is one of his sheep. The one who believes is then described as hearing his voice.

In this context, to hear is nearly synonymous with obeying.[50] After Jesus affirms his

knowledge of his sheep, he then identifies the sheep as one who follows Jesus.

Following, while it primarily means to accompany, also has connotations of becoming a

follower or disciple of someone. Jesus said in 8:51 that keeping his word was the means

to not die. Not dying in 8:51 is antonymous to having eternal life. Therefore, keeping

Jesus' word is the evidence that one has believed and has eternal life.[51] John 8:31

contains another parallel to John 15. In 8:30, a crowd is said to believe in Jesus; 8:31 also

refers to these believers. Jesus' first teaching to them after an apparent belief is that of

remaining in his message: Ἐὰν ὑμεῖς μείνητε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῷ ἐμῷ, ἀληθῶς μαθηταί

μου ἐστε. This crowd had an untrustworthy belief in Jesus. Knowing this, Jesus exhorts

them to remain in his message or stay obedient to his message.[52] If they were to fail to do

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[48]As MacArthur, *Gospel*, 192, notes, "*Perfection* is the standard; *direction* is the test."

[49]See Carson, *John*, 297; Ridderbos, *John*, 243

[50]So Schnackenburg, *John*, 1:564.

[51]Keeping frequently refers to obedience. It is used this way with τηρεω in Jn. 8:51, 52, 55; 9:16; 14:15, 21, 23, 24; 15:10, 20; 17:6, 11, 12, 15; and with φυλασσω in Jn. 12:47.

[52]Cf. Ridderbos, *John*, 307, who says that remaining in Jesus' message refers "to the activity,

this, then they are not truly his disciples. This group demonstrated, after this, that they were in fact not truly disciples of Jesus. Not keeping (from φυλασσω) Jesus' commands leads to judgment (12:47): "not keeping" refers to disobedience and judgment is the opposite of eternal life. Keeping, or obeying, Jesus' commands is the fruit of one who loves (ἀγαπᾷ) Jesus (14:24). "Genuine belief must abide."[53]

This is part of the picture of the fruit referred to in John 15: obedience to Jesus' message is evidence that one has truly believed. John 15:9-10 and 15:12-13 makes it clear that love is another fruit of remaining. Bultmann said that "faith . . . is authentic only when it leads to ἀγαπᾶν ἀλλήλους."[54] It is not the only fruit, but one of the evidences of remaining in Jesus. "Μενειν is persistence in the life of faith."[55]

Unbelief and Sin

The important correlation in 16:9 of not believing and being in sin cannot be understated. Brown has observed that sin is defined in John's Gospel as unbelief. This demonstrates the important place that belief has in the Gospel. Humankind's problem is based in their disbelief. "All other individual sins find expression in or are related to this basic sin of disbelief."[56] Barrett actually equates unbelief with the blasphemy of the Holy

perseverance, and faithfulness of believers."

[53] Carroll, "Eschatology," 67.

[54] Bultmann, *John*, 529.

[55] Ibid., 535. Christianson's, "Soteriological," 65, objections to this interpretation are based upon the disciples' already having possession of eternal life.

[56] Brown, *John*, 2:712.

Spirit in the Synoptics, surely an intriguing view.[57] This theme is also seen in 8:24, and possibly 15:22–24.

Love and Believing

In 16:27 Jesus uses οιλεω in a synonymous relationship with πιστευω. Both verbs are in the perfect indicative, which enhances their synonymous relationship.[58] The use of οιλεω with πιστευω enhances the aspect of action inherent within John's use of πιστευω. As many have observed, the Fourth Gospel contains no uses of the noun πιστις. It is suggested that part of the reason may be to emphasize the dynamic nature of πιστευω. All of the verbs and phrases that are used in parallel to πιστευω more clearly portray this active sense, and therefore help in understanding John's concept of believing.[59]

The Disciples Progress in their Belief

In 16:30–31, the disciples think they now understand all Jesus is saying. His words to them in 16:20ff. led them to believe, mistakenly, that he was referring to now. He said that the time was coming when he would speak plainly, and they thought he was referring to his current speech. However, he was referring to after the resurrection. The misunderstanding of the disciples is a theme throughout John's Gospel. John 16:29–30 shows how feeble their faith was throughout Jesus' ministry.[60] In reality, the disciples'

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[57] Barrett, *John*, 80.

[58] Cf. Jn. 3:36 and πιστευω with απειθεω.

[59] The absence of the noun πιστις can be explained by two thoughts: (1) an active connotation is achieved by the use of the verb (so Gaffney, "Believing," 219); and (2) it is possible that John sought to avoid any Gnostic terminology. While full blown Gnosticism was not in place at the time of writing, some form of Gnostic teaching may have been present.

[60] So Carson, *John*, 548.

words in 16:29-31 show that they really misunderstood Jesus again, but their misunderstanding does not affect their understanding of Jesus' providence.

Jesus' initial reaction appears somewhat harsh. He does not affirm their "profession," but he questions it and then tells them that they will be scattered. Bultmann says that the question has a judgmental sense.[61] Moloney says that the disciples' knowledge is lacking and their faith is incomplete and sees a parallel with the profession of Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman.[62] However, in 17:8 he affirms the belief that they expressed here. The statement made by Jesus may have negative aspects to it, but a parallel can be seen with Martha's profession at 11:26, which leads to the conclusion that this profession should be viewed positively. "Jesus thus does not unreservedly accept the disciples' confession of faith," and instead he tells them that their faith is about to be challenged.[63] Their profession had some aspects that were disappointing, as Jesus' reaction demonstrates. However, all is not lost. They said that they believed that Jesus had come from the Father, and Jesus affirms that segment of their profession in 17:8. Therefore, while the presentation of the disciples is not overwhelmingly positive, their belief is presented as a positive progression towards Jesus.

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[61] Bultmann, *John*, 591.

[62] Moloney, *John*, 454. Barrett, *John*, 497, says that the "complete inadequacy" of their faith is shown by 16:32. Morris, *John*, 631, says that their "confession is certainly an inadequate one." Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12-21*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 2002), 114, says the statement reveals a problem with their belief.

[63] Ridderbos, *John*, 545. Carson, *John*, 548, views Jesus' question as an almost exasperated statement: "Now you believe!"

Knowing and Eternal Life

The concepts of "eternal life" and "knowing" have been briefly touched on previously. However, 17:3 provides an opportunity to expand our thoughts on these important concepts as they relate to believing.

The concept of eternal life is referred to thirty-six times in John's Gospel. The phrase ζωὴν αἰώνιον is mentioned seventeen times and ζωή is mentioned nineteen times. Eternal life is consistently portrayed as being the result of one's belief, a total of ten times. At least seven different expressions, besides believing, preceded eternal life.[64] One time ζωή is modified by περισσόν ("abundant"). At least five other terms were used to modify life.[65] Eternal life is used in an antonymous relationship to phrases such as perishing, death, judgment, being killed, destroyed, and the wrath of God abiding on the one who disobeys.[66] Ζωή is distinguished from ψυχή, which refers to physical life or soul.[67]

Chart 28. Eternal life

ζωὴν αἰώνιον	3:15, 16, 36a; 4:14, 36; 5:24a, 39; 6:27, 40, 47, 54, 68; 10:28; 12:25, 50; 17:2, 3
ζωή	1:4a, 4b; 3:36b; 5:24b, 26a, 26b, 29, 40; 6:33, 35, 48, 51, 53, 63; 8:12; 10:10; 11:25; 14:6; 20:31
The result of belief	3:15, 16, 36; 5:24a, 24b; 6:35, 40, 47; 11:25; 20:31

[64] For example, drinking Jesus' water (4:14), coming to Him (5:40), beholding Him (6:40), eating His flesh (6:53), drinking His blood (6:53, 54), the Spirit gives eternal life (6:63), and knowing (17:3).

[65] For example, resurrection life (5:29), life abundant (10:10), bread of life (6:35), life of the world (6:51), bread of God (6:33, 48), light of life (8:12).

[66] See Jn. 3:16, 36; 5:24a, 24b, 29; 10:10, 28; 11:25.

[67] Ψυχή refers to physical life in Jn. 10:11, 15, 17, 24; 12:25 (twice); 13:37, 38; 15:13, and soul in 12:27.

Eternal life and πιστευω are so closely and frequently tied together, that when something else is said to lead to eternal life, that word or phrase is related to believing. What is eternal life? Morris gives two aspects of eternal life: (1) quantitative; (2) qualitative.

The typical meaning is the quantity of life. In other words, life will last forever, or be everlasting (as some versions translate it). To have eternal life now would mean that from this moment on you can know that you will spend forever with God.

However, the qualitative aspect of eternal life is often overlooked. This can be seen as a theme throughout John's Gospel, especially the farewell discourse, where joy, peace, and love are all present in one who remains in Jesus. It comes to its fullest expression in 10:10: abundant life. Not only does the possession of life mean that forever will be spent with God and that this can be known now, but also that a more abundant, joyful, and peaceful life can be enjoyed now on earth. Life can be enjoyed like never before, because no longer are those who believe slaves to sin, but slaves to righteousness. Freedom in Christ now exists. Both of these aspects need to be held in tension with one another when ζωην αιωνιον is mentioned.

In 17:3, knowing God and his Son is equated with belief, since the end result is eternal life. The relationship of knowing and believing is a complex one. Sometimes knowing precedes believing, and other times it appears to be reversed. True belief in Jesus has a knowledge aspect to it. In order to truly know Jesus you must believe in him.

John 1:10 ends with the phrase και ο κοσμος αυτον ουκ εγνω which is in parallel to αυτον ου παρελαβον in verse 11. Therefore, there is some relationship

between "know" and "receive." However, verse 12 puts "receive" and "believe" in relationship to one another. Therefore, "know" in verse 10 is, by way of "receive" in verse 11, in a relationship with πιστευω." The trio of believing, receiving, and knowing can be seen again in 17:8.

Believing and knowing are not completely synonymous in all contexts.[68] However, these "two concepts complete one another."[69] Believing should be viewed from a more volitional standpoint and knowing from an intellectual one. "In believing, one accepts the moral consequences, and orientates oneself in the direction to which they point."[71] Believing and knowing both culminate in the same place, eternal life. The knowledge which is referred to in the Fourth Gospel "implies relationship in addition to cognition: to know God is to be united with him."[72]

The "Other" Disciple Believes

The picture in 20:3-8 is that the Beloved Disciple has outrun Peter to the tomb, stood outside the tomb as Peter went in, and then followed Peter into the tomb. When he saw the grave clothes in the tomb, he believed. How does verse 9 fit into this picture?

It appears that the disciples were not aware that the Old Testament Scriptures declared that Jesus would rise from the dead.[73] The ουδεπω ("not yet," 20:9) refers to the

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[68]See Gaffney, "Believing," 221-22.

[69]See ibid., 232.

[70]Schnackenburg, John, 1 565.

[71]Gaffney, "Believing," 240.

[72]Barrett, John, 82.

[73]See Psalm 16:10; cf. Acts 2:25-28, 13 35.

fact that by the time the Gospel had been written, the church had come to know these Scriptures. This lack of knowledge on their part was obviously a negative assessment.[74]

However, the fact remains that the author is demonstrating positive movement by the Beloved Disciple to a deeper faith in Jesus.

Thomas' Belief

When Jesus appeared to the eleven, Thomas was not with them. Thomas' words appear somewhat reactionary: he demands to see the nail prints and touch the wounds of Jesus, or he refuses to believe. The construction used for his refusal to believe is the strongest form of negation in the Greek.

Jesus appeared again to the disciples, this time with Thomas present. He invited Thomas to do what he had requested. The text never says that Thomas did. Rather, he made one of the highest Christological professions in Scripture:[75] ὁ κυριος μου και ὁ θεος μου. This profession of Jesus can be held in contrast to the many other professions which were stated in a questioning format. This profession exuberated confidence, understanding, and belief. Jesus had invited Thomas to believe, and he responded to this invitation.

Jesus' response in 20:29 needs to be examined closely. While Borchert viewed Jesus' response in 20:29a as a question,[76] and Bultmann appears to view it as a rebuke,[77] Carson is probably right in viewing it neither way:

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[74] The third person plural of ηδεισαν definitely refers to Peter and John, but may refer to all the disciples.

[75] So Morris, *John*, 754.

[76] Borchert, *John 12-21*, 316.

Thomas' faith is not depreciated: rather. it is as if the step of faith Thomas has taken. displayed in his unrestrained confession. triggers in Jesus' mind the next step. the coming-to-faith of those who cannot see but who will believe – and so he pronounces a blessing on them.[78]

While Bultmann views Thomas' faith in light of those in 4:48. Ridderbos' view is

preferred that Thomas is not "miracle-hungry." but skeptical that the miracle of which the

disciples spoke has actually taken place.[79] In conclusion. "there is here no doubt

concerning the reliability of Thomas' faith (unlike 16:31)."[80]

The Purpose Statement and Belief

At this point in the analysis it should be sufficiently clear that the concept of

believing is persistently present in John's Gospel. The ninety-eight occurrences of

πιστευω and the multiple references in other contexts give an overwhelming amount of

data from which to draw conclusions. However. in 20:31 the purpose statement for the

writing of the Fourth Gospel appears. If it was not clear enough already. "The twin foci

of John's message are these: Jesus is the sent Son of God the Father; and the time for

believing is now."[81]

The main problem with the purpose statement is a textual variant.[82] This variant is

extremely difficult to decide upon. as the editorial committee's rating of a "C"

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[78] Bultmann. *John*. 694–95. cf. Morris. *John*. 754; Ridderbos. *John*. 649 who see a gentle. indirect rebuke.

[79] Carson. *John*. 660. Barrett. *John*. 573. also views Jesus' words as a non-rebuking statement.

[80] Bultmann. *John*. 694–5; contra Ridderbos. *John*. 646 7.

[81] Ridderbos. *John*. 648. n. 54.

[81] Andreas J. Köstenberger. *Encountering John: the Gospel in historical. literary. and theological perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker. 1999). 188.

[82] The same variant appears in Jn. 19:35 and 20:31. This discussion applies to both.

demonstrates.[83] In short, if the aorist is read, many would view this as an indicator

that John's Gospel was written to non-Christians with the hope that they would come to

believe in Christ. If the present is read, many would see this as an indicator that John's

Gospel was written to strengthen the faith of those who already believed.[84]

From a purely text-critical viewpoint, scholars are divided.[85] However, it has

become apparent that the tense really does not matter. Bultmann says that deciding

between these two is "without significance."[86] and many scholars agree that the tenses do

not decide the debate.[87] since those strict translations are not appropriate, especially for

John's Gospel. For example, Porter mentions the aorist and present subjunctives in

10:37–38. "These verses allude to the parallel aorist and present subjunctives in 10:37

38. These verses illustrate well the aspectual and non-temporal basis of Greek tense

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[83] Metzger. *Textual Commentary*. 219.

[84] The NEB shows this difference effectively: (present) "that you may hold to the faith." (aorist) "that you may come to believe."

[85] Favoring the present: Gordon D. Fee. "On the Text and Meaning of Jn 20,30 31." in *The Four Gospels festschrift Frans Neirynck* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 2193 2205; Porter. *Verbal Aspect*, 328; Moloney, *John*, 544; Schnackenburg, *John*, 3:337 8; Brown, *John*, 2:1056; Ridderbos, *John*, 652; Barrett, *John*, 575. Contra Carson, *John*, 661 62; Lenski, *John*, 7, and Theo C. de Kruijf. "'Hold the Faith' or 'Come to Believe'? A Note on John 20:31." *Bijdragen* 36 (1975): 439 49; and Christianson. "Soteriological." 35 43, who favor the aorist.

[86] Bultmann, *John*, 698, n. 7. He goes on to say: "(I)t is irrelevant whether the possible readers are already 'Christians,' or are not yet such; for to him the faith of 'Christians' is not a conviction that is present once for all, but it must perpetually make sure of itself anew, and therefore must continually hear the word anew" (Bultmann, *John*, 698–99).

[87] For example, Porter. *Verbal Aspect*, 328; Carson, *John*, 662; Morris, *John*, 755; Bultmann, *John*, 698 99.

usage."[88] Carson correctly notes that John can use either tense to refer to coming to faith or continuing in faith.[89]

While some see one distinct purpose, and some view the continuing faith as primary and evangelism as secondary, it seems best to view the evangelistic purpose as primary and the deepening of faith as secondary.[90] This is mainly due to Carson's translation as pointing out that the question for John was: who is the Messiah? Christian's would not ask this question, but non-believers would ask it. The Fourth Gospel can be used properly to edify believers and to bring others to the faith. The aorist will be accepted, but the strict and ingressive translation will be rejected.

A few examples of positive reactions to Jesus' signs occurred throughout the Gospel. The disciples believed after Jesus turned the water into wine (2:11); the royal official believed after Jesus healed his son (4:53); the blind man worshipped Jesus after being healed (9:38); Mary anointed Jesus after the raising of Lazarus (12:3-7). Even though the negative examples outnumber the positive, these examples should not be ignored.

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[88]Porter, Verbal Aspect, 328.

[89]Carson, John, 662. Though he did not provide any examples. The aorist in Jn. 4:53 was not ingressive and the present in Jn. 5:24 pointed to faith's genesis.

[90]Moloney, John, 544; Schnackenburg, John, 3:337-8; Brown, John, 2:1056 see one distinct purpose. Ridderbos, John, 652; Barrett, John, 575 view continuing faith as primary and evangelism secondary. Carson, John, 661–62; Morris, John, 755 view evangelism primary and deepening faith as secondary. Contra Borchert, John 12–21, 319, appears to weigh both equally and says, "It can be viewed as focused on both those within the community who need to have a more dynamic life of believing (or to use the Pauline term 'faith') and on those outside the community who need to be persuaded and discover for themselves the genuineness of Christian life in Jesus."

Conclusion

The analysis of this section of John's Gospel has continually sharpened our understanding. It should be remembered, however, that chapters 18–20 are essential to what it means to believe in Jesus and receive eternal life. His death and resurrection provide the basis from which the promises of eternal life can be realized. In this way, these chapters are still related to the concept of believing.

Jesus gives a command to his disciples to believe that he and the Father mutually indwell each other (14:11). With the parallel seen in 10:37–38, 14:11 is shown to be describing a positive movement to a deeper faith in Jesus. This chapter is followed by a discussion on remaining in Jesus (15:1–15). Πιστευω is not present, but the concept is. Jesus is now exhorting the disciples to remain in him, which is the evidence that their belief was authentic as it will bring forth fruit.

Reaction to the disciples' profession in 16:30–31 is mixed. Jesus does not affirm their profession immediately, but eventually affirms the belief that they claim (cf. 17:8). Their belief that Jesus came from God should be understood as a positive profession, though other aspects of their profession were disappointing.

John 17:3 raised the issues of eternal life and knowing. Eternal life was understood to incorporate both qualitative and quantitative aspects; these need to be held in tension. Both of these aspects of eternal life, which is itself a result of believing in Jesus, add to the understanding of what it means to believe. They both perpetuate the idea that believing in Jesus should not be viewed statically, but dynamically. There are consequences and results that continually last when one believes in Jesus. The πιστευω ὁτι construction reveals that there is a relationship between knowledge and belief. While

belief is said to precede knowledge, other times the order appears reversed. When one truly believes in Jesus he will know him; when one truly knows Jesus he will believe in him. The relationship is reciprocal.

While 20:3-8 reveals a lack of some knowledge on behalf of the beloved disciple, it portrays him positively as moving deeper in his faith. This is similar to the pericope about Thomas' belief. While Jesus' reaction reveals a slight rebuke, the overall analysis is positive since Thomas has moved deeper in his belief.

The first two sections analyzed discussed Jesus' calling the disciples into a deeper faith. In 16:30-31; 20:3-8; and 20:25-29 this call was realized; the disciples did move deeper in their faith. All portrayals of believing in John 13-21 were considered positive.

Chart 29. Portrayals by pericope

Person/Group	Pericope	Portrayal
Disciples	1:37–2:11	Positive
Crowd	2:12–25	Negative
Nicodemus	3:1–21	Negative
Samaritans	4:1–42	Positive
Royal Official	4:43–54	Positive
Lame Man	5:1–16	Negative
Crowd	5:1–47	Negative
Crowd	6:1–15	Negative
Disciples	6:22–66	Negative
The Twelve	6:67–69	Positive
Jesus' Brothers	7:1–10	Negative
Crowd	7:11–43	Negative
Pharisees	7:44–53	Negative
Crowd	8:12–59	Negative
Blind Man	9:1–38	Positive
Pharisees	9:1–38	Negative
Crowd	10:1–21	Negative
Crowd	10:25–39	Negative
Crowd	10:40–42	Positive
Martha	11:1–57	Positive
Mary	12:3–7	Positive
Pharisees	11:1–57	Negative
Crowd	11:1–12:36	Negative
Jews	12:37	Negative
Pharisees and Crowd	12:42–43	Negative
Jesus' Command to the Disciples	14:1–12	Positive
Jesus Exhortation to the Disciples to Remain	15:1–15	Positive
The Disciples Progress	16:30–32	Positive
The Other Disciple	20:3–8	Positive
Thomas	20:25–29	Positive

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY

Introduction

This chapter will begin by following the outline of previous chapters and synthesizing all data and conclusions. Two issues related to the church today will then be addressed: Lordship Salvation and the doctrine of assurance.

Synchronic Analysis

Syntactical Analysis

Πιστεύω εἰς

The πιστεύω εἰς construction is the characteristic construction in the Gospel of John since it is utilized more often than any other construction.[1] Since this construction has not been found in Greek literature prior to New Testament times, some believe it was created in order to communicate an aspect of πιστεύω not contained within the word itself. Since this construction has been shown to be used synonymously with the πιστεύω - dative and πιστεύω absolute constructions, this theory stands refuted. The demonstration of the synonymous use of these constructions has also led to the denial that the πιστεύω εἰς construction refers to a superior and more profound belief than other constructions. In 2:23; 4:39; and 8:30, the πιστεύω εἰς construction was used in a context

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[1] It was used thirty-six times, which is about 37% of the time.

which did not portray the belief in this manner. Rather, the belief was portrayed negatively. Therefore, the πιστεύω εἰς construction should not be understood as a super-faith, but as the typical Johannine expression of believing. Context remains determinative as to whether or not the belief referred to is viewed positively or negatively.

Πιστεύω absolute

While the πιστεύω εἰς construction is used the most, the πιστεύω absolute construction is not far behind. Its thirty occurrences demonstrate flexibility and the importance of context.

The use of the πιστεύω absolute construction can be linked to other syntactical constructions. In John 1–12, it was always linked to either a πιστεύω εἰς or a πιστεύω + dative construction. In John 13–21, it was linked to those two constructions plus the πιστεύω ὅτι construction. This was shown by the use of these constructions either before (usually the case) or after the use of the πιστεύω absolute.

Two main reasons for the use of πιστεύω absolute constructions have been arrived at: (1) stylistic variation; and (2) the centrality of faith made greater specificity unnecessary. Finally, it was deemed significant that the πιστεύω absolute construction increased in frequency towards the end of the Gospel: there was now no need for clarification. John has been entirely clear: proper belief is both placed in Jesus and has a certain content to it.

Πιστεύω + dative

The third most common construction in the Fourth Gospel is πιστεύω followed by a dative noun. This construction has come under attack by some as referring to a

"weak" or "intermediate stage" or belief. This can be undermined if it can be shown that this construction was used in contexts which portray the belief entirely positive and or if this construction is used synonymously in specific contexts with other constructions.

The synonymous relationship of πιστεύω - dative with πιστεύω absolute was demonstrated (i.e. 14:11) as it was with the πιστεύω εἰς construction (i.e., 8:30-31). While a few contexts portrayed belief negatively when using a πιστεύω - dative construction (i.e., 4:21, 50; 8:31), the uses at 2:22 and 5:24 were completely positive.

Πιστεύω - accusative and πιστεύω περι

While nothing significant was concluded regarding the πιστεύω - accusative construction, one possible conclusion of the πιστεύω περι construction was reached. Πιστεύω περι was deemed essentially to be equivalent to πιστεύω ὅτι. The one distinction was that the πιστεύω περι construction was used in a non-Christological context and the πιστεύω ὅτι construction was always used in Christological contexts, usually at climactic points in the narrative. Therefore, it remains possible that the πιστεύω ὅτι was saved for these uses and the πιστεύω περι was substituted at 9:18 to maintain this consistency.

Πιστεύω ὅτι

The πιστεύω ὅτι construction was analyzed to see whether it was synonymous with the other constructions or used distinctively. In every case, the πιστεύω ὅτι construction pointed to a content in belief, rather than pointing to whom the belief should be placed in. The only data which could be construed against this would be the use of the

πιστευω absolute construction in 16:31 and 20:31 where it is synonymous with

πιστευω ότι. This should be viewed as demonstrating the ambiguity of the πιστευω

absolute construction and its flexibility, rather than as evidence that all constructions are

synonymous.

The use of the πιστευω ότι construction seemed to increase as the Gospel

narrative moved along. It did not occur until John 6, and a significant percentage of

occurrences of πιστευω ότι occur towards the end of the Fourth Gospel. It appears that

the beginning of the Gospel was more concerned with the question of whom belief should

be placed in, while the latter part was more concerned with the content of this belief.[2]

Conclusion to Syntactical Analysis

There are six constructions in the Fourth Gospel. While some overlap in meaning

exists, some distinctions also occur. The portrayal of the belief in the narrative cannot be

determined based upon the syntactical construction present, but upon a detailed

examination of the context. The πιστευω εἰς construction should be viewed as being

synonymous with the πιστευω + dative construction. They both answer the question of in

whom belief should be placed in. The πιστευω ότι construction points to the content of

belief. The πιστευω absolute construction is flexible and can be used to refer to any of

the other constructions.

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[2]Specifically, this construction was used mostly to refer to Jesus as being sent from God the Father.

Verbal Form Analysis

The Present Tense

All of the present indicatives of πιστευω appear to concentrate on the current belief; the focus is on the here and now. The present participle occurs nineteen times. Each time the present participle is employed the presentation of the belief is entirely positive. Many times (i.e.. 14:12) the present participle is portrayed as having future consequences. Those who are believing will be seen by their actions. The present participle of πιστευω is many times both gnomic and continual. Present subjunctives appear to refer to the beginning of a belief, not that the belief continues.

The eight present imperatives of πιστευω are significant because they represent the only consistent pattern of usage of tenses with moods of πιστευω in the entire Fourth Gospel; the Evangelist never employs the aorist imperative of πιστευω. The present imperative commands all appear to be ingressive-progressive; the belief was commanded to begin and to continue.

The Imperfect Tense

Since the Evangelist has already demonstrated a proclivity towards using the aorist, the use of the imperfect may be significant. Most of the occurrences did not demand any special aspectual element. However, the imperfect in 12:11 may have been used inceptively and the durative aspect of the imperfect is likely present in πιστευω at 12:37. In both of these contexts, the Evangelist used the imperfect to bring attention to πιστευω that would otherwise have not been there.

The Aorist Tense

The use of the aorist tense with πιστευω poses two major questions: (1) does the aorist tense contribute to the narrative's portrayal of belief; (2) are aorists (specifically subjunctives) always used ingressively?

The aorist tense is considered the default tense; it was used when the verb was not the focus. Therefore, one should not read too much into the use of the aorist tense, unless the context demands otherwise. The aorist does not indicate that an inferior belief has occurred. The aorist indicative is used in a variety of ways and does not contribute to the positive or negative portrayal of belief in any passage. For example, while the portrayal of the disciples' belief in 2:11 was entirely positive, the portrayal of the Jerusalem crowd's belief in 2:23 was negative.[3]

Most aorist subjunctives are used ingressively. One instance of an aorist subjunctive was found not to be ingressive: 11:40. Six others were viewed as possible ingressives, but nothing demanded this understanding (1:7; 4:48; 8:24; 11:15, 42; 20:31). Finally, six occurrences were found to be ingressive aorists (6:30; 9:36; 13:19; 14:29; 19:35; 20:25). Therefore, context has to remain determinative of whether or not an aorist subjunctive of πιστευω should be accepted as ingressive. The conclusion regarding aorist indicatives is similar. While some appear to be ingressive, the exceptions of those at 2:22 and 4:53 means that only the context can be the deciding factor.

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[3] More examples of differing portrayals with the aorist can be given. The groups in Jn. 6:30; 7:31; 8:30; 11:42, 45; 12:42 are portrayed negatively. The groups in Jn. 9:36 and 10:42 are portrayed positively.

The Future and Perfect Tenses

While the analysis of the future tense did not yield any significant findings, the analysis of the perfect tense yields one helpful conclusion. Every occurrence of the perfect indicative appears to be a resultative perfect. Therefore, the focus is on the current state.

Conclusion to the Verbal Form Analysis

No verbal forms are considered to carry any time-related aspect within themselves, but in certain cases the context will demand it. The verbal form analysis has demonstrated that: (1) aorist indicatives and subjunctives are frequently used ingressively, but not consistently; (2) the aorist should not be used in deciding upon the portrayal of the belief; (3) present participles are sometimes used to highlight the continuous nature of the action; (4) it seems highly likely that the imperfect tense of πιστευω was used to bring attention to itself; (5) the perfect indicative was used to concentrate on the current condition of belief; (6) no verbal form is tied to any syntactical construction; (7) no tense-mood combination pattern is consistent, besides the present imperative.

Conclusion to Synchronic Analysis

The synchronic analysis has intensified the conviction that context is the most important indicator to John's concept of believing. Most of the conclusions mentioned above are negative. However, the analysis of the narratives will be constructive. Therefore, the synchronic analysis, while important and revealing some insights, remains less of a help than the narrative contexts.

Overview of Narrative Conclusions

John 1–4 is balanced in the portrayals of the different groups. The consistent theme in this section related to believing is the concept of progression. The disciples, the Samaritans, and the royal official all progressed in their believing. The disciples are continually shown to progress in their belief throughout the Gospel as demonstrated by 6:67–69; 14:1–12; 15:1–15; 16:30–32; 20:3–8; 20:25–29.

John 5–12 is characterized by the Jews' rejection of Jesus. In chart 30 above, it can be seen that of the twenty groups or people analyzed, fifteen of the portrayals were negative and only five were positive. These five positive portrayals were placed in contrast to negative portrayals. This pattern also emerges, though not quite as poignantly, in John 1–4. The disciples (1:37–2:11) can be viewed in contrast to the Jerusalem crowd (2:12–25); Nicodemus can be viewed in contrast to the Samaritans.[4] While no obvious contrast to the royal official emerges, this narrative well summarizes this section as he demonstrates one who sees a miraculous sign, like those in Jerusalem, yet continues to believe. This account also serves as an inclusio with John 2:1–12.

John 1–12 contains seven signs: Jesus turning the water into wine (2:1–11), Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem (2:12–25), the healing of the royal official's son (4:48–53), the healing of the lame man (5:1–15), the feeding of the five thousand (6:1–15), the healing of the blind man (9:1–12), and Jesus' raising of Lazarus (11:38–44). Reactions to the signs varied. The disciples responded positively to Jesus' first sign at Cana, but the servants knew (οἱ διάκονοι ᾔδεισαν) and are never said to believe. Jesus' second sign,

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[4] The irony in this passage that a religious leader would be portrayed negatively and the despised Samaritans would be viewed positively should not be overlooked.

done in Jerusalem, did not lead to a positive portrayal of neither the crowd nor

Nicodemus. The royal official's initial portrayal was negative, then neutral, and finally

positive. Neither the lame man nor the Jews in chapter 5 are portrayed positively. The

crowd's reaction to the feeding of the five thousand was a profession which was

portrayed negatively. The blind man who was healed was portrayed positively, but the

Jewish leaders were not. Finally, Martha and Mary were portrayed positively, but the

crowd and Pharisees were not. Thus, reactions to Jesus' signs were mixed. This should be

expected. While the purpose statement in 20:30–31 makes it clear that signs were given

so that people would believe, it did not *guarantee* that people would believe upon seeing

the signs. On a popular level, some have confused 20:30–31 to mean that every time a

sign is performed, all who see it must completely believe in Jesus. The Fourth Gospel

does not portray signs this way.[5]

A few times professions are made in the Fourth Gospel which are deemed

unsatisfactory: Nathanael (1:49–51), Nicodemus (3:1–2), the Samaritan woman (4:29),

the crowd at the feeding of the five thousand (6:14), the crowd at the Feast of

Tabernacles (7:31), and the crowd who saw Jesus heal the blind man (10:20–21).

However, other professions should be viewed as exemplary: the Samaritans (4:42), Peter

(6:68–69), the man who was previously blind (9:38), Martha (11:27), the disciples

(16:29–30),[6] and Thomas (20:28).[7]

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[5] So Koester, "Hearing," 348, who says that "'signs faith' cannot be understood as a first step towards genuine faith, since the characters who manifest signs faith consistently fail to move beyond it." Also, Barrett, *John*, 302, says "Miracles are an unsatisfying ground of faith."

[6] The mixed character of this profession has been discussed above.

[7] Witherington, *Wisdom*, 31, is close to our conclusion: "Any confession short of that [20:28] may well be good and accurate (cf., e.g., John 4:29), but it is not fully adequate." However, he goes on to say

John 14:1–12 and 15:1–16:28 are characterized as Jesus calling his disciples

into a deeper belief, mostly in regards to content, but also in love and obedience. The

disciples react in 16:29–31; 20:8; and 20:28 by progressing deeper in their belief.

Πολλοί is used six times to modify πιστεύω. Typically, these crowds are

portrayed negatively (2:23; 4:39; 7:31; 8:30; 12:42). However, this is not entirely

consistent through the Fourth Gospel as those in 10:42 are portrayed positively. In the

end, this phrase should be viewed as "a literary cliché of the author."[8] This evidence

confirms the focus upon the determinative nature of context.

Paradigmatic Conclusions

A few terms have been viewed as being in paradigmatic relationships to πιστεύω.

Λαμβάνω in 1:11 refers to an initial act of believing that is not considered a continuous

action.[9] The relationship of knowing (γινώσκω) Jesus and believing him proved to be

more complex. These terms are nearly synonymous in some places, but they also refer to

different aspects of inheriting eternal life. Terms relating to obedience (φυλάσσω, τηρέω,

ἀπειθέω, μένω) and love (φιλέω, αγαπαω) are not absolutely synonymous to

believing.[10] However, they should be understood as the result of one who truly believes:

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that "this is surely how we are meant to see almost all the confessions from John 1:35 through John 19,
leading up to the ones in John 20." Clarification of which one's he deemed "adequate" and which ones
were not would have been helpful.

[8] Gaffney, "Believing," 226.

[9] See also John 5:43 and 13:20.

[10] Warfield, *Doctrines*, 501–2, says that while faith is not obedience, it is "set in contrast with an
unbelief that is akin to disobedience."

they are fruit of belief. Finally, eternal life is the characteristic Johannine phrase which is the result of belief. It is understood as referring to life's longevity and abundancy.

Implications Regarding Lordship Salvation

Regarding the controversy over Lordship Salvation, the conclusions above place us opposite of the "free grace" proponents. Cocoris is correct when he concludes that the definition of faith as a key component in the controversy.[11] Kent rightly observes that the real issue is: "What does it mean to *believe* the gospel?"[12] It has been attempted to demonstrate that believing the gospel means more than intellectual assent, a belief in certain truths;[13] it means more than believing in some transcendent being. Believing refers to placing one's trust so deeply into the person of Jesus, the sent Son of the Father, that one's life will be transformed. "New life, obedience, enlistment as a disciple all of this is implicit in receiving Christ by faith."[14] The careful analyses by Bock and Horton are of note concerning this issue. Both consider their views modified from both extremes of Hodges and MacArthur.[15]

See G. Michael Cocoris, *Lordship Salvation—Is It Biblical?* (Dallas: Redencion Viva, 1983), 13

[12]Kent, "Review," 67.

[13]See Bock, "Review," 27.

[14]Kent, "Review," 76.

[15]Bock, "Review," 21-25, discusses MacArthur's extreme rhetoric versus his actual view which is more moderate than a first glance might assume.

Implications Regarding Assurance

One of the major problems some scholars have with Lordship Salvation teachers is that of their doctrine of assurance.[16] Are Christians going to be cast into fits of doubt every time they sin? Will not every form of assurance of salvation be lost if a transformed life and obedience are synonymous with faith?

Care was taken to avoid this pitfall. Perseverance is not the basis for assurance. However, "some forms of Christian assurance might be validly based on observably transformed conduct, without in anyway suggesting that such conduct wins or earns or gains salvation."[17] When sin persists, assurance will be undermined. "The *basis* of assurance is Christ and his work and its entailments."[18] Assurance is a result of true faith.[19]

Conclusion

Some questions arose during the study which could not be answered in this analysis and that may be fruitful for further study: (1) the many professions made in John's Gospel may deserve a closer look; (2) the absence of the word repentance; (3) how the Johannine definition of sin as unbelief can be integrated into thoughts on

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[16]Note, for example, Bob Wilkin, review of *The Gospel According to Jesus*, by John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Grace Evangelical Society News* 3 (1988): 1-2.

[17]Carson, "Assurance," 12.

[18]Ibid., 29.

[19]Bock, *Review*, 33, 37. Bock offers many nuanced insights into the believers' assurance in relation to Lordship Salvation.

presenting the gospel message:[20] (4) the relationship between John's realized eschatology and believing.

The πιστευω + dative and πιστευω εις constructions are only "stylistic variants."[21] The πιστευω ὁτι construction was used more frequently toward the end of the Gospel to provide more of an emphasis on the content of belief. The verbal form analysis affirmed that context is valuable in understanding John's portrayal of those who believe. As the concept of believing in John's Gospel is studied, one should keep in mind that the presentation may be positive or negative; context must reign over the meaning of the passage.

One of the most important conclusions in this analysis of believing in the Gospel of John is that "not all faith is genuine" faith.[22] The Evangelist uses one word, πιστευω, for both positive and negative portrayals of believing. While John 1-4 contained mixed reactions to Jesus' ministry, John 5-12 was marked by mostly negative responses. Finally, John 13-21 concluded the Fourth Gospel with all positive portrayals of the disciples' belief. A mixed reaction to Jesus' signs was also observed. While the purpose statement says that the signs were given so that they might believe, the signs did not guarantee belief.

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[20]In other words, if the Johannine view of sin is unbelief, should sin be mentioned when presenting the gospel other than in reference to unbelief.

[21]Louw, "Johannine Style," 8.

[22]Carroll, "Eschatology," 66.

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