

REPENTANCE, BELIEF IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

THE PLACE OF AND PURPOSE FOR JOHN'S GOSPEL

When dealing with John's gospel, a striking feature about the gospel is that the word for "repent" (Gk., *metanoia*, *metaneo* [noun and verb forms]) *does not appear any place in the gospel*. And, with this gospel built around eight signs, and the stated purpose for these signs given (20:30, 31) — to bring about Israel's *belief*, requiring *repentance* (e.g., Matt. 3:1, 2; 4:17, 23) — the absence of this word would appear rather strange.

Then, in a similar respect, along with and in connection with the preceding, another striking feature about John's gospel is *the ninety-eight times that the word for "believe" appears, again, apart from a single mention of repentance* (Gk., *pisteuo*, verb form [the noun form, *pistis*, translated "faith," does not appear in this gospel]).

And this would seemingly appear strange, *for the Jewish people's repentance MUST precede their belief that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God"* (the preceding order is dealt with in the next two parts of this article, which begin with a definition of "repentance" [pp. 2b-7a]).

The three synoptic gospels and Acts (in reality, a fifth gospel) though are quite different in both of the preceding respects. The word for "repent," in both noun and verb forms, occurs twenty-six times in the three synoptic gospels and eleven times in Acts. And the word for "believe" and/or "faith" appears fifty-nine times in these three gospels and fifty-five times in Acts.

Individuals look at all of this, among a number of other differences between John and the three synoptic gospels (e.g., about ninety percent of the material found in John's gospel, which includes five of the eight signs, is peculiar to this gospel), and these individuals quite often come to *a completely wrong conclusion about and understanding of John's gospel*.

They see this gospel as *somewhat separate from the three synoptic gospels*. And, because of the *heavy emphasis* on the word “believe” and the *absence* of the word “repent,” they, accordingly, often look upon John’s gospel as *the one book in Scripture written to the unsaved, providing them, time and again, with the simple salvation message: “BELIEVE.”*

Then, in connection with this and to further show that this is the correct way to look at this gospel, they call attention to John 20:30, 31, which provides *the purpose for the eight signs in John’s gospel*.

But, the preceding has resulted in *major problems, with far-reaching ramifications*. Through this overall scenario, *a complete book has been removed from its contextual setting among the other three gospels, made to be something that it isn’t, and the whole of John 20:30, 31 has been made to say something that it doesn’t say at all*.

(For additional information on the preceding, refer to the author’s article, “Misuse of John 20:30, 31.”

Also, see Chapter III, “Subject of John’s Gospel,” in the author’s book, *From the Beginning*.)

Regarding Repentance and John’s Gospel

(The Greek word for “repent,” as previously seen, is *metanoia*, or the verb form, *metanoeo*. These are compound words — *meta* prefixed to *noia* and *noeo*.

The primary meaning of *meta* is “with.” But prefixed to *noia* [meaning “mind,” equivalent to “nous” (transliterated from the Greek word *nous*)], or *noeo* [meaning “to think”], *meta* [in *metanoia*] — doing something “with” the mind — takes on the thought of “changing” one’s mind.

Thus, *metanoia* and *metanoeo* mean, “to change one’s mind, one’s thinking.” Other things [turning from sin, etc.] *are subsequent to and emanate from repentance*, or things such

as "godly sorrow" *can effect repentance* [II Cor. 7:10; cf. Jonah 3:9, 10; Matt. 12:41].)

As previously seen, the word "repent" is not found in John's gospel. And this has contributed, in no small part, to the widely-held view that "believe" — used far more often in John's gospel than in any one of the other three gospels, or elsewhere in the N.T. — should be understood numerous places throughout this gospel as having to do with *salvation by grace*.

The thought of repentance, of course, has *NOTHING* to do with salvation by grace. A person may have to *repent* (i.e., "change his mind") before believing; but, if so, changing his mind *CANNOT* somehow be continued into and associated with believing.

These are two completely different things entirely. *Repentance* can do no more than place an individual in a position where he can believe and be saved. In actuality, unless the person is an unsaved Jew — believing that Jesus is not the Saviour — the person, prior to belief, would probably, more often than not, *find himself in the position of having to make up his mind rather than having to change his mind*.

But, either way, neither could have anything whatsoever to do with belief and the person's salvation.

In this respect, in one sense of the word, to emphasize the absence of the word for "repent" in John's gospel so that a clear salvation message could be proclaimed, is self-defeating, for some individuals would have to repent, i.e., change their minds, before belief (note again, unsaved Jews being saved).

Nor can *repentance* and *belief* be seen as two sides of the same coin, as some like to say, attempting to explain a misunderstood matter. They are two separate acts, completely unrelated. And, insofar as effecting one's eternal salvation, *BELIEF ALONE is seen*.

Again, repentance, if necessary, *ONLY* places the person in a position where he can BELIEVE.

But all of that is neither here nor there. *John's gospel WAS NOT written to tell an unsaved person how to be saved anyway (though it can be used in this manner in a secondary interpretative respect, BUT NEVER in a primary interpretative respect [again, refer to the author's article, "Misuse of John 20:30, 31"])*.

NOR does the absence of the word for "repent" and the heavy emphasis on the word for "believe" have anything whatsoever to do with the matter.

John's gospel has to be kept within its contextual setting, completely in line with that seen in the three synoptic gospels, leading into Acts, and then into the epistles.

And the purpose for and use of signs, as seen in John 20:30, 31, *HAS to be seen and understood EXACTLY the SAME WAY that the purpose for and use of signs is seen in the other three gospels and in Acts.*

Seeing this ANY other way is throwing ANY thought of allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture to the winds.

(For the proper contextual setting of John's gospel, refer to Ch. V, "Continuing in the Gospels [II]," in the author's book, *The Acts Period*.)

Signs seen throughout the three synoptic gospels provide a history of the manifestation of signs during Christ's ministry at His first coming. These were supernatural manifestations of power, not only establishing the credentials of the Messenger(s), but showing the Jewish people *WHAT the nation could have (supernatural healing, provision) IF national repentance was forthcoming.*

This is what occurred during the original offer of the kingdom, lasting slightly over three years, *ending with Israel's rejection and Christ's crucifixion, followed by His burial, resurrection, and ascension.*

Then, sometime between about 40-60 A.D., John was moved by the Spirit to pen his gospel, which is built around eight signs. And, as previously seen, the purpose for these signs was given toward the end of his gospel.

(The writing of John's gospel is often dated around 90 A.D. Late manuscript evidence though shows that it could have been, and probably was, written much earlier, possibly as early as about 40 A.D.

The stated purpose for the signs in the gospel [20:30, 31] though will show that it *HAD TO BE* written during the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, sometime before about 62 A.D. *IF* written following this time, the stated purpose for these signs would make absolutely NO sense whatsoever.)

The purpose for these signs, as plainly stated in these two verses, had to do with *EXACTLY* the same thing as the purpose for signs previously manifested during Christ's earthly ministry, as seen in the three synoptic gospels during the original offer of the kingdom.

The previously manifested signs had to do with the proclamation of the kingdom to Israel during this original offer.

Then, the Spirit led John to take eight of the signs which Jesus had previously performed and record them in his gospel during the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, *forming a written record directed to Israel during the same time that signs were being manifested throughout the Acts period — ALL having been or being done in a maximum effort to bring about Israel's repentance.*

Thus, though the word for "repent" is not found in John's gospel, *repentance could only be seen as IMPLICIT throughout anything having to do with the signs in this gospel. One simply CANNOT have repentance connected with signs in the synoptic gospels and NOT have repentance connected with signs in John.*

That, from any sound method of Biblical interpretation, would be IMPOSSIBLE!

Regarding Belief and John's Gospel

"Belief" throughout John's gospel *has to do with the message being proclaimed to Israel during BOTH the offer and re-offer of the kingdom* — during the offer, *EXACTLY* as seen throughout the three synoptics; and, during the re-offer, *EXACTLY* as seen in Acts, beginning with Peter's message to the Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 2:14-40) and ending with Paul's message to the Jewish religious leaders in Rome (Acts 28:17-28).

Further, "belief" throughout the four gospels and Acts, with respect to this message, has to do *SOLELY with saved individuals, NOT with the unsaved.*

(For information on the *SAVED* status of the Jewish people at this time, refer to Ch. IV, "Continuing in the Gospels [I]," in the author's book, *The Acts Period*.)

Then, "belief" throughout the four gospels is inseparably connected with *repentance*, for the Jewish people's repentance *HAD TO* precede their belief. The order, in this respect, *MUST ALWAYS* be seen as in Mark 1:15 and Acts 20:21 — *repentance before belief, before faith.*

And, with belief throughout John's gospel having to do with *Israel*, the manifested signs, and the message being proclaimed — belief mentioned almost twice as often as seen in the other three gospels combined — how does the nonuse of "repentance" in John's gospel, fit into all of this?

It is very simple. Kept within context and allowing Scripture to be its own interpreter, the signs in John's gospel and the different events throughout the gospels in connection with the signs, and/or belief, *MUST be seen as having to do with THE SAME THING occurring during THE SAME TIME, with THE SAME MESSAGE being proclaimed, as seen in the three synoptic gospels, continuing into Acts.*

To illustrate the preceding, note in the latter part of John 3, John the Baptist's and Christ's ministries are seen side-by-side, with baptism involved on the part of both (though the disciples were baptizing on Christ's part).

John's ministry involved a call for repentance prior to baptism (Matt. 3:1ff). Would Christ's ministry in this respect, with the same message to the same people (Matt. 4:17ff), have involved something different?

That could NOT be possible. Both proclaimed THE SAME MESSAGE to THE SAME PEOPLE.

Thus, though the word "repent" is not found in John's gospel, again, *the thought of "repentance" CAN ONLY be seen as IMPLICIT throughout the gospel. Repentance CAN ONLY be seen as IMPLICIT in Christ's complete ministry to Israel, which would involve centrally the "signs" and "belief."*

This can clearly be seen in John's gospel apart from the word being used. Or, it can also clearly be seen in the three synoptic gospels — *covering THE SAME MESSAGE to THE SAME PEOPLE during THE SAME TIME, with SIGNS and BELIEF involved* — where the word is used.

John's emphasis is on *BELIEF*, which would follow *REPENTANCE*. The whole of the matter can be seen *in the three synoptic gospels and Acts*. Or, as previously shown, the whole of the matter can be seen *in an IMPLICIT RESPECT in John*, for all four of the gospels, along with Acts, *MUST be understood and interpreted together, with each in line with the other* — again, *THE SAME MESSAGE to THE SAME PEOPLE regarding THE SAME SUBJECT, the kingdom.*

Regarding Belief, Possessing Life, in John 20:31 John's Gospel, the Synoptics, Acts, the Epistles

"But these [the preceding eight signs referenced in v. 30] are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the

Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (v. 31).

Taking this verse from John's gospel and attempting to associate it centrally with the message of salvation by grace, as so many do, is similar to taking Rom. 10:9, 10 and doing the same thing with these two verses, though many do this as well.

And since all three of these verses have to do with the same thing, first note the two verses in Romans. Then we'll move back to John's gospel and see the same thing there and elsewhere.

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Romans was written during the same time that John's gospel was written, *during the time covered by Acts. BOTH books were written during the time of the re-offer of the kingdom to Israel, and BOTH saved Jews* (still part of the Jewish nation, not part of the Church) *and saved Gentiles* (forming the Church) *were being dealt with throughout this time* (e.g., Acts 2-5, 20; Rom. 1:16; 2:9, 10).

This was a one-of-a-kind time — nothing like it before, nothing like it after — lasting for about thirty years. And certain events, though difficult to properly understand, are impossible to properly understand *UNLESS* the preceding is recognized.

Romans 10:9, 10 is in the Jewish section of this book (chs. 9-11), and Jews believing or not believing in relation to the re-offer of the kingdom are centrally in view throughout this section. The salvation spoken of has to do with *the*

Jewish people and this message — salvation and life in the kingdom, not with eternal verities, for the Jews being dealt with during both the offer and re-offer of the kingdom, as previously stated, were already saved (else there could have been no offer or re-offer of this kingdom).

The salvation in Rom. 10:9, 10 was associated with calling upon the Lord in verses 12, 13 (*cf.* Rom. 1:16; 2:9, 10), quoting a Messianic verse from Joel. And this is not at all in line with the way that a person is saved today; nor does it have to do with the same thing.

One had to do with *Messianic values for individuals already saved (with the kingdom in view)*; the other has to do with *eternal values for unsaved individuals (with the kingdom ultimately in view)*.

And that should be easy enough for an individual to see and understand, for, as previously seen, that stated in Rom. 10:9, 10 is simply part and parcel with that stated in John 20:31. And both passages have to do with the same thing, stated two different ways, *which is NOT the message of salvation by grace*. The context of either passage would clearly show this to be the case.

Using Rom. 10:9, 10 when dealing with the unsaved could easily result in confusion. And *EXACTLY the same problem* would exist when misusing John 20:30, 31 in this same respect.

Salvation by grace has to do with *death and shed blood*. *Burial and resurrection* move beyond this and have to do with present and future aspects of salvation. All of this can be clearly seen back in the types, beginning with Moses.

(*Death and shed blood, the death of the firstborn, occurred in Egypt; burial and resurrection [Rom. 10:9, 10] are seen in the subsequent Red Sea passage [Ex. 12:1ff] — buried in the Sea, raised on the eastern banks.*)

Then, note John 11:25-27 in relation to that stated in John 20:30, 31:

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die [*lit.*, ‘...certainly will not die with respect to the age’]. Believest thou this?

She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.”

Almost identical wording can be seen in John 11:27 and John 20:31 — believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Both are dealing with *life in relation to the same thing, as stated in so many words in John 11:26 — life in the coming age, during the Messianic Era, in the kingdom* (see preceding corrected translation).

Or, note Peter’s confession in Matt. 16:16: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Again, the statement is almost identical to Martha’s statement in John 11:27, or the statement in John 20:31.

These passages, by their very wording and contextual setting, *can ONLY be dealing with Israel, signs, and the message being proclaimed during the offer and re-offer of the kingdom.*

If an individual wants to deal with salvation by grace, he should go to passages that deal with the subject. And if he wants to do it the right way, seeing the matter in all of its clarity and purity, he needs to begin where God began, in Genesis.

(For information on the simplicity of the salvation message as seen beginning with foundational truths, beginning with Moses, refer to the author’s book, *Salvation by Grace through Faith*.)

Or, taking matters back to Moses in another respect, refer to the author’s article, “Salvation in the O.T., N.T.”)