

ANALYZING PROFESSIONS OF FAITH IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL: IS EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES SAVED?

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ABSTRACT: This study will examine the different formulae used in the Fourth Gospel to see if they are the key indicator to whether a character being described has adequate or inadequate belief in Jesus. First, the Greek verb for believe in connection to prepositions will be examined. The two main categories are believing in Jesus and believing the correct content about Jesus. Verb tenses and moods in connection to the Greek verb for believe will also be studied. All of this examination concludes that the most important factor is the portrayal of the character in the narrative context. It is not the nuance of the Greek that is most important, but how characters are actually portrayed by the author of the Fourth Gospel. Johannine belief will be defined and two examples of application to characters in the Fourth Gospel will be given.

KEY WORDS: Belief, Gospel of John, Samaritans, Nathaniel, Nicodemus

Introduction

A definition of Johannine belief must be constructed in order to appropriately critique professions of faith in the Fourth Gospel. Then the portrayal of those who make these supposed saving professions can be analyzed. What does it mean to say that the one who believes will have eternal life?

I. The Definition of Johannine Believing

When studying a concept, like believing, one is naturally inclined to start by looking at the texts in which *pisteuō* occurs. This is an acceptable starting place, but the quest for a Johannine definition must not end there. The contexts where the concept is present, even if the word is not, also need to be studied. The exegete needs to study

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related words and focus on the main clusters. The plethora of errors occurring in exegesis due to an impoverished understanding of Greek words and linguistics has been well documented (Carson 1996; Thiselton 1977: 100; Cotterell and Turner 1989: 27–28; Silva 1994; Osborne 1991: 64–92; Poythress 1979: 113–77). Some of these errors have carried over into previous studies of believing in the Fourth Gospel.

A) *Pisteuō* Formulae

Many scholars have addressed the different formulae that John uses (see Dodd 1953: 183–84; Barrett 1978: 183–84; Hawthorne 1959: 118–20; Brown 1966–70: 1:512–13; Berkhof 1949: 495; Adkisson 1990: 50–63, 87–88; Christianson 1987: 70–199; Painter 1974: 38; Bultmann and Weiser 1968: 174–228; Melick 1976: 71–96; Warfield 1929: 474–80). While this study takes the view that some of the constructions have distinct purposes, a few scholars have seen a different purpose for nearly every construction (Brown 1966–70: 1:513; Dodd 1953: 183; Morris 1995: 297; Abbott 1905: 26, n. 3; Berkhof 1949: 495; Hawthorne 1959: 119–20; Warfield 1929: 474–78). The following are the conclusions reached in my unpublished Th. M. thesis (Croteau 2002) regarding an analysis of each Greek construction occurring with *pisteuō*.

1) *Pisteuō Eis*

The *pisteuō eis* construction is the characteristic construction in the Fourth Gospel because it is utilized more often than any other construction, thirty-six times which is about 37 percent of the uses. Since this construction has not been found in Greek literature prior to New Testament times (Bultmann and Weiser 1968: 210; Dodd 1953: 183; Brown 1966–70: 1:512), some believe it was created in order to communicate an aspect of *pisteuō* not contained within the word itself. Regardless, this construction is used synonymously with the *pisteuō* + dative and *pisteuō* absolute constructions at times. For example, the *pisteuō* + dative construction was used in 5:24 ([*ho*] *pisteuōn tōi pempanti me*) to describe a satisfactory response to Jesus, as Carson confirms saying it ‘clearly refers to genuine faith’ (Carson 1991: 346). For the *pisteuō* absolute construction, notice that while *pisteuō* occurs three times in 3:18: 1) the first time *pisteuō* is modified by *eis auton*; 2) the third time it is modified by *eis to onoma tou monogenous huiou tou theou*; and 3) since both of these refer to Jesus, it seems most likely that the context implies that the middle reference to *pisteuō* is modified (by implication) by *eis auton* (Adkisson 1990: 63). Therefore, the theory that *pisteuō eis* refers to some special formulation of Johannine faith stands refuted. The demonstration of the synonymous use of these constructions has also led to the denial that the *pisteuō eis* construction refers to a superior and more profound belief

than other constructions. In 2:23; 4:39; and 8:30, the *pisteuō eis* construction was used in a context which portrayed the belief negatively. Therefore, the *pisteuō eis* construction should not be understood as a super-faith, but as the typical Johannine expression for believing. Context remains determinative as to whether or not the belief referred to is viewed positively or negatively.

2) *Pisteuō* Absolute

While the *pisteuō eis* construction is used the most, the *pisteuō* absolute construction is not far behind. Its thirty occurrences demonstrate flexibility and the importance of context.

The use of the *pisteuō* absolute construction can be linked to other syntactical constructions. In John 1–12, it was always linked to either a *pisteuō eis* or a *pisteuō* + dative construction. In John 13–21, it was linked to those two constructions plus the *pisteuō hoti* construction. This was shown by the use of these constructions either before (usually the case) or after the use of the *pisteuō* absolute.

There are two main reasons for the use of the *pisteuō* absolute constructions: (1) stylistic variation; and (2) the centrality of faith (Morris 1996: 358) made greater specificity unnecessary. Finally, it is significant that the *pisteuō* absolute construction increased in frequency toward 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 specific content to it.

3) *Pisteuō* + Dative

The third most common construction in the Fourth Gospel is *pisteuō* followed by a dative noun. This construction has come under attack by some as referring to a weak or intermediate stage of 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 *pisteuō* + dative with *pisteuō* absolute is demonstrated by analyzing John 14:11 and with the *pisteuō eis* construction by analyzing John 8:30–31 (as examples). While a few contexts portrayed belief negatively when using a *pisteuō* + dative construction (i.e., 4:21, 50; 8:31), the uses at 2:22 and 5:24 are completely positive.

4) *Pisteuō* + Accusative and *Pisteuō Peri*

While nothing significant was concluded regarding the *pisteuō* + accusative construction, one possible conclusion of the *pisteuō peri* construction was reached. *Pis-*

teuō peri was deemed essentially to be equivalent to *pisteuō hoti*. The one distinction was that the *pisteuō peri* construction was used in a non-Christological context and the *pisteuō hoti* construction was always used in Christological contexts, usually at climactic points in the narrative. Therefore, it remains possible that the *pisteuō hoti* construction was saved for these uses and the *pisteuō peri* was substituted at 9:18 to maintain this consistency.

5) *Pisteuō Hoti*

The *pisteuō hoti* construction was analyzed to see whether it was synonymous with the other constructions or used distinctively. In every case, the *pisteuō hoti* 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 *pisteuō* absolute construction in 16:31 and 20:31 where it is synonymous with *pisteuō hoti*. This should be viewed as demonstrating the ambiguity of the *pisteuō* absolute construction and its flexibility, rather than as evidence that all constructions are synonymous.

The use of the *pisteuō hoti* construction seemed to increase as the Gospel narrative moved along. It did not occur until John 6, and a significant percentage of occurrences of *pisteuō hoti* occur toward the end of the Fourth Gospel. It appears that the beginning, John 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. The *pisteuō hoti* construction was used mostly to refer to Jesus as coming from or being sent by God the Father. And what is the content expected for those who believe in Jesus according to the Fourth Gospel? That Jesus is:

the Holy One of God (*ho hagios tou theou*) = 6:69¹

God (*egō eimi*) = 8:24; 13:19 (Carson 1991: 343–44; Köstenberger 2009: 359; Ridderbos 1997: 301)

the Christ = 11:27; 20:31

the Son of God = 11:27; 20:31

Sent from the Father = 11:42; 17:8, 21

Reciprocal indwelling between the Father and Son = 14:10 (Carson 1991: 494)

Came from the Father (origin) = 16:27, 30

¹ There are many variants possible here. The reading adopted here is supported by P75, 8, B, C*, D, L, W, as well as others. Tertullian has ‘the Christ’ (*ho Christos*), several have ‘the Christ, the Son of God’ (*ho Christos ho huios tou theou*; C³, Θ*), some early translations have ‘the Son of God’ (*ho huios tou theou*), and the Byzantine texts (and others) have ‘the Christ, the Son of the living God’ (*ho Christos ho huios tou theou zōntos*).

6) 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 *pisteuō eis* construction should be viewed as being synonymous with the *pisteuō* + dative construction. They both answer the question of “in whom” belief should be placed. The *pisteuō hoti* construction points to the content of belief. The *pisteuō* absolute construction is flexible and can be used to refer to any of the other constructions.

B) *Pisteuō* uses in Moods and Tenses

John uses many different moods and tenses when employing *pisteuō*. 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.

The conclusion to this analysis was that no verbal forms were considered to carry any time-related aspect within themselves, but in certain cases the context did demand it. The verbal form analysis 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 *pisteuō* was used to bring attention to itself (having a higher level of markedness than an aorist or present); (5) the perfect indicative was used to concentrate on the current condition of belief; (6) no verbal form is tied to any syntactical construction; and (7) no tense-mood combination pattern is consistent (besides the present imperative, but it was not statistically significant). This analysis has intensified the conviction that context is the most important indicator to John's concept of believing.

II. Belief Defined

Probably the clearest passage providing a definition of John's concept of believing is John 3:16–21. It also happens to provide the most statistically significant cluster of *pisteuō* in the Fourth Gospel. After looking at all the occurrences of *pisteuō* in the Fourth Gospel and analyzing the passages with the most occurrences, this chart was formed:

Pisteuō by Pericope

Pericope	# of hits	vss	# of vss	%
Nicodemus (ch. 3)	7	12–18	7	100.0%
Witnesses to Jesus (5:30-47)	6	38–47	10	60.0%
Feast of Dedication (10:22-42)	6	25–42	18	33.3%
Raising of Lazarus (ch. 11)	9	15–48	34	26.5%
John 12	9	11–46	36	25.0%
John 20	6	8–31	24	25.0%
John 14	7	1–29	29	24.1%
Bread of Life Discourse (ch. 6)	9	29–69	41	22.0%
Light of the World Discourse (8:12-59)	5	24–46	23	21.7%

Extra attention given to this passage is justified by the cluster of *pisteuō* in John 3.

Scholars have debated certain aspects of the Nicodemus narrative. If an interpreter 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. For example, Gary Burge seems to define Johannine believing only in terms of doctrinal beliefs (Burge 2000: 426). It encompasses only a believe that, a question of the content of one's belief. But this would be an incorrect view of John's presentation of belief in this verse.

John 3:16 comes in the context of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in 3:1–15. Both the preceding verses and the ones to follow lead the exegete 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 (Ridderbos 1997: 123; Brown 1966–70: 1:129; Borchert 1996: 169; Witherington 1995: 92; Burge 2000: 111; Morris 1995: 186, n. 3; Moloney 1998: 89; Wallace 1996: 597, n. 25) whose belief Jesus had rejected as inadequate. Many scholars support this conclusion because they interpret the connector between the two sections, *de*, as meaning 'now.' In an interesting entry, Michaels refers to the faith as genuine, but insufficient 'to identify them as those "born of God"' (Michaels 2010: 173, 204). The understanding in this paper is that if the faith is insufficient to render one 'born of God,' then it is not genuine/adequate. Nicodemus had seen a sign performed by Jesus, if not many. The text (2:23) hints at other signs Jesus did in Jerusalem, and Nicodemus himself mentions them (in the plural in 3:2: *sēmeia*). The precise nature of these signs and who was present for them is unknown. Specifically, he was present for the temple clearing (Köstenberger 1995: 87–103; Blomberg 1995: 6; Michaels 2010: 172–73). Based upon this sign, Nicodemus had come to some con-

clusions regarding Jesus. He concluded that: (1) Jesus was a rabbi; (2) Jesus was a teacher; and (3) Jesus was sent from God. Those descriptions of Jesus are all correct, and Jesus even describes himself in this way (see John 13:13 ('teacher'), 11:42; 17:8 (sent/comes from God), and the implication of 1:49-50), yet they are inadequate in and of themselves. They fail to proclaim Jesus as Messiah or Son of God (Carson 1991: 187; Barrett 1978: 205; Brown 1966-70: 1:138; Moloney 1998: 91; Morris 1995: 187). Barrett says that these confessions are 'an inadequate expression of faith' as they fall short of proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God (Barrett 1978: 205). Jesus' reaction to Nicodemus is a further indicator of this weak profession. Nicodemus' belief had an inadequate content to it (and 3:17-21 will show that he is unwilling to repent of his sins); he is portrayed negatively. Nicodemus fades away. As Blomberg concludes: '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' (Blomberg 1995: 7). The clinching argument, however, rests upon the verses that follow the narrative.

The Evangelist starts his reflections at verse 16. While not all commentators agree (Schnackenburg 1968-1982: 1:360; Moloney 1998: 90; Brown 1966-70: 1:149), a consensus is that by verse 16 Jesus has stopped speaking (Carson 1991: 185, 302; Burge 2000: 113, 117-18; Morris 1995: 202; Borchert 1996: 180). The three key pieces of evidence for this conclusion are: (1) the redundancy that would occur between 3:15 and 3:16; (2) the writing style and vocabulary that are used in 3:16 is more consistent with the apostle John and not Jesus; and (3) the 'giving' in 3:16 appears to refer to Jesus dying on the cross, something that had not occurred if Jesus had been speaking the words but would have happened by the time the author wrote them (Croteau 2015: 43-48). 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? Contemporary translations have begun moving in this direction. The NIV and NET Bible do not have John 3:16 in quotes. The ESV and HCSB each have a footnote with this possibility.

Verses 17-21 also shed some light on Nicodemus' belief and the meaning of John 3:16 regarding 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 truth are those who are described in verses 16 and 18 as believing. The grammar and context together help to discern that the 'doing of truth' or 'doing of evil' is a continual, repetitive action.

The Greek verb for 'doing' evil is *prassōn* and for 'doing' truth it is *poiōn*. Two factors lean toward understanding it as continual action. First, Louw and Nida define

the verb *prassō* as ‘to carry out some activity (with possible focus upon the procedures involved)’ (Louw and Nida 1988–89: 42.8). Second, John’s only other use of this verb is in John 5:29 where it is *also* paired with the adjective *phaulos* (evil, wicked). The context of John 5:29 appears to be the end time resurrection and judgment (Köstenberger 2004: 189–90; Carson 1991: 258). Thus the ‘doing of evil,’ which leads to condemnation (*kriseōs*; - note that the same noun occurs in 3:19), is from the perspective of looking back over the person’s life. It is a description of their ‘life-pattern.’ John never uses this verb again in the Fourth Gospel, his letters, or in Revelation. The verb for ‘doing’ truth (*poiōn*) is also used in John 5:29 and the same argument could be applied to this verb as well. Furthermore, the uses of this verb in 2:18, 23; 3:2; 4:1 in the present indicative and especially the three other uses of the present participle (5:18, 19; 8:34) all tend toward a continual action idea [Note the NET Bible translation of John 8:34: “I tell you the solemn truth, everyone who *practices* sin is a slave of sin” (emphasis added).]

Therefore, more than an intellectual assent was required, but also a belief that manifested itself in action. As Michaels concludes: ‘Deeds are in the picture as well as faith’ (Michaels 2010: 205). This reflection by the Evangelist explains *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’ (Von Wahlde 1980: 304–315). 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(s) and the underlying reason was his fear of his deeds being exposed. His reaction to the sign(s) is portrayed negatively.

Therefore, the Fourth Gospel called for a belief that was placed in Jesus. This belief should be manifested with an ethical component: repentance (Croteau 2013: 97–123). If one does not come to Jesus to have their deeds exposed then they hate the light and do not do the truth. Also, the Jesus they believed in had to be the one as described in the Fourth Gospel. One must believe that He was sent by the Father and God himself (see list above). With this introductory understanding, a few other professions can be analyzed: one negative and one positive.

III. Two Professions Critiqued

A) Nathanael’s Profession

Understanding Nathanael’s confession is the key to grasping whether or not Nathanael’s profession should be viewed positively or negatively. Nathanael gives Jesus

three titles: rabbi, the Son of God, and King of Israel. Ridderbos notes correctly that the latter two titles had the same meaning for Nathanael (Ridderbos 1997: 91). His confession reveals that he was expecting a national-political Messiah. His confession was bound by his 'own culture, history, and religion' (Moloney 1993: 72). This can be seen mainly by the use of the word *basileus* ('King'). For example, a member of a Latter Day Saint (Mormon) church could proclaim that they believe that Jesus was the Son of God, but their understanding of who Jesus is would be radically different than the Fourth Gospel's definition. Jesus responds by correcting Nathanael's confession (Moloney 1992: 72; contra Carson 1991: 161–62). As Ridderbos concludes: 'Jesus will reject every worldly understanding of his kingship' (Ridderbos 1997: 91).

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 (Moloney 1993: 73) and he 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 (Moloney 1993: 73). The entire section of 1:37–51 shows positive characteristics of many of the disciples' belief. However, since Jesus' response was to them (note that *humin* in 1:51 is plural), it appears that the disciples' belief has developed but still had negative/inadequate aspects to it (Moloney 1993: 73; contra Barrett 1978: 186). Moloney sums up this account: 'This leaves them [the disciples] short of true Johannine belief' (Moloney 1993: 73).

B) The Samaritans' Progression of Belief

Pisteuō occurs four times during this account (John 4:21, 39, 41, 42). The cluster that occurs between 4:39–41 is a significant passage. In 4:39 the construction is *pisteuō* modified by *eis auton*. 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 (Calvin 1949: 1:175; Hendriksen 1954: 1:175). 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 Samaritan woman negatively. However, it is best to see the Samaritan woman more positively than Nicodemus, but a neutral character overall (contra Carson 1991: 216; Blomberg 1995: 15; Koester 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. This is why it may be more appropriate to view her neutrally.

There are contextual clues that reveal that the initial belief of the Samaritans was less than satisfactory (Moloney 1998: 170–71; contra Michaels 2010: 269; Morris 1995: 283; Godet 1886: 1:440; Govett 1984: 1:171–72; Hodges 1980: 42; Lightfoot 1956: 127). The constructions used in verses 41 and 42 are *pisteuō* absolute. The implied object of *pisteuō* in verses 41 and 42 is *eis auton*. 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, *pisteuō* 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 aorist is typically used in narrative to provide background information.

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. Similarly, Michaels says: "Because of his word" stands in contrast to "because of the woman's word," but that the Samaritans are 'claiming to have verified' the woman's word, not disparaging it (Michael 2010: 269). Moloney notices this and remarks, 'There is a qualitative and a 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' (Moloney 1998: 170–71).

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.

The syntax of 4:29 has divided the commentaries. Typically, *mēti* is used to presuppose a negative answer. In other words, when Jesus says "Grapes are not gathered from thornbushes or figs from thistles, are they?" (Matthew 7:16), the expected answer is "they are not." In Matthew 26:22, "Not I, Lord?" is asked, and the expected answer is: "No, not you." In John 18:35, Pilate said, "I am not a Jew, am I?" The expected answer is: "No, you are not." In John 4:29, it would then read like this: "This one is not the Christ, is he?" The expected answer would appear to be: "No, he isn't." However, BDAG says that *mēti* can also be used 'in questions in which the questioner is in doubt concerning the answer,' with the meaning 'perhaps.' Besides John 4:29, Matthew 12:23 is given as an example. So John 4:29 (at best) should probably be understood as "Perhaps this one is the Christ?" This is a wavering, doubting confession. It is hopeful, but far from definite. The NET Bible mentions in a footnote that this verse 'may well be an example of "reverse psychology," designed to gain a hearing for

her testimony among those whose doubts about her background would obviate her claims.’ While this remains possible, it is far from certain.

Verse 41 is somewhat out of character for the Evangelist for it is a reflection upon the events before the events are narrated. It is different than the normal prolepsis since the events are narrated immediately after John’s reflection. Verse 42 gives the event: ‘no longer because of your word do we believe, for we ourselves have heard and we know that he is truly the Savior of the world.’ There is a change is they specify the change: they no longer believe based upon her testimony, but because they themselves heard from the Savior. The fronting of the prepositional phrase may indicate emphasis and the use of the perfect of *akouō* probably indicates that this is a highly marked word and is significant for understanding the text. 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. Adkisson concludes, ‘Physical movement, irony, misunderstanding, and vocabulary were all used to indicate a progression toward adequate believing’ (Adkisson 1990: 100). An adequate belief (in the Fourth Gospel) should not necessarily be understood as that which secures life, but that which is portrayed positively. In fact, they themselves appear to be disassociating themselves from their original belief in verse 39 (Moloney 1993: 171). The Samaritans’ profession in 4:42 is entirely positive. Nothing in it points to a misunderstanding of Jesus or a preoccupation on signs.

IV. Summary and Conclusion

While all the data cannot be presented now, here are some preliminary conclusions regarding those who either (1) are described as believing with the word *pisteuō* or (2) make professions regarding Jesus.

Professions/Belief in John 1-4

Character/ Group	Loca- tion	Professions	Belief Critiqued
Nathanael	1:49	Rabbi, Son of God, King of Israel	Inadequate
Crowd	2:12-25	n/a	Inadequate
Nicodemus	3:1-21	Rabbi, teacher, from God	Inadequate
Samaritan Woman	4:1-39	Exaggerated testimony, “perhaps he is the Christ?”	Inadequate
Samaritans	4:39-42	Truly Savior of the world	Adequate (with progression)

Character/ Group	Loca- tion	Professions	Belief Critiqued
Royal Official	4:43-54	n/a	Adequate (with progression)

Professions/Belief in John 5-12

Character/ Group	Location	Professions	Belief Cri- tiqued
Crowd	6:14-15	The Prophet	Inadequate
Simon Peter	6:68-69	Lord, you have the words of eternal life; believe/know Jesus is the Holy One of God	Adequate
Many/Jews	7:31	Will the Christ do more signs than Jesus?	Inadequate
Crowd	8:30-31	n/a	Inadequate
Blind Man -Stage 1	9:1-25	“man called Jesus” (vs. 11) A prophet (vs. 17) Doesn’t know if Jesus is a sinner, but knows he was healed (vs. 25)	Inadequate
-Stage 2	9:27-31	Asks Jewish leaders if they want to be Jesus’ disciples (boldness growing) (vs. 27); God listened to Jesus, so he must: (1) not be a sinner; (2) be a worshipper of God; (3) be a doer of God’s will	Progressing
-Stage 3	9:38	“I believe” “worshipped him” ²	Adequate
Others/Jews	10:21	“Is a demon able to open eyes of a blind man?”	Inadequate
Many	10:41-42	“Everything John said about this man was true”	Adequate ³

2 Some early manuscripts lack the blind man’s response (P75, $\aleph^*$, W). Most all of the rest have it. I favor including it, with Köstenberger, Metzger, Carson, and Beasley-Murray.

3 There is not enough data in this passage to be very certain. Note that this could be the only occurrence in the Fourth Gospel where “many” believed and the belief is adequate.

Character/ Group	Location	Professions	Belief Cri- tiqued
Martha	11:20-39	“Lord,” “I believe you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world”	Adequate
Jewish au- thorities	12:42	n/a	Inadequate

Some of the inadequate professions occur when there is an inadequate understanding about Jesus and his teachings or if the profession contains an element of doubt. The inadequate belief was present when the context made it clear that there was an unwillingness to live out the belief.

Inadequate Professions

An inadequate understanding (two particular descriptions fit into this category; (1) true statements with the wrong meaning; and (2) true statements that do not reveal they have an adequate knowledge of Jesus): Nathanael; Nicodemus; [Nicodemus had an inadequate understanding of Jesus and His teachings (cf. 3:10). However, the reflection in 3:16–21, which is about him and the “crowd” in John 2, also says that he was unwilling to live out his belief.] Crowd (6:14-15); Blind Man (stage 1)

Expression of doubt: Samaritan woman; Many/Jews (7:31); Others/Jews (10:21)

Inadequate Belief (no professions)

Unwillingness to live out belief: Crowd (2:12-25); Crowd (8:30-31); Jewish authorities (12:42)

V. Application

The way proclaimers of the gospel call people to faith should be nuanced with this understanding of Johannine believing. They are not simply calling people to pray a prayer, say some magical words, or join a church. People are being called into a submissive relationship to the Lord Jesus, himself God, who will test our love for Him by our lifestyle of obedience. In the presentation of the gospel, when redemption is described, proclaimers should not cease with ‘by grace you are saved through faith,’ but include that God has prepared beforehand good works for Christians to walk in (see Ephesians 2:8–10).

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