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20 Hayman Road
Bentley 6102
t: 6313 6200 f: 6313 6299
office@vose.wa.edu.au

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| Student Name: Tim Parkin | ACT Number: 201018734 | |
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| Name of Lecturer/Tutor: Peter Christofedes | | |
| Assignment Title: Life in John | Assignment Number:2 | |
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Signature: Tim Parkin

Date: 19/10/2011

Abstract

The topic of this paper is life in John's gospel in relation to judgment, salvation and eschatology. For all these categories what is distinctive about John is that they are available in the present as well as being fulfilled in the future. This is John's realized eschatology. There is an emphasis in John on eschatological realities being fulfilled in the present whereas in the synoptics much of eschatology is in the future. Eternal Life is the result of salvation, the opposite of judgment and the center of eschatology in John.

Life is a dominant theme in the Gospel of John. In this essay I will explore various aspects of life in John, including the relationship to life of salvation, judgment and eschatology. A very important feature of this gospel is that this life is both in the present and in the future. This applies to salvation, judgment and eschatology. There is a tension in the gospel as to whether life or eternal life is given by Jesus in the present or in the future.

It is important to note that two different words are used for life, ψυχή is used for temporal physical life and ζωή is used for the life which Jesus gives, eternal life. ζωή is not so much the opposite of physical life, it is more life in its perfection, including physical life¹. ζωή is both life in the present age and life of the age to come².

Those who love their life (ψυχή) lose it, and those who hate their life (ψυχή) in this world will keep it for eternal life (ζωή). (John 12:25 NRSV)

When Jesus died on the cross he gave up his ψυχή but not his ζωή since only ψυχή can be given up³. ζωή and ζωήν αἰώνιον are used interchangeably in John to mean spiritual life without end⁴, the life of eternity. In John's gospel Eternal Life often appears to be a present reality for believers. Eternal Life refers to a quality and not just a quantity of life and it is contingent upon Jesus' resurrection⁵. In John what is said of Eternal Life is frequently said about the Kingdom of God in the synoptics. To bring Eternal Life to humanity through his death and resurrection was the purpose of Jesus coming into the world.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. (John 3:16 NRSV)

¹ Alf Corell, *Consumatum Est* (London:SPCK, 1958),140.

² Corell, *Consumatum Est* , 144.

³ Marianne Meye Thompson, "Eternal Life in the Gospel of John" ,*Ex auditu*, 5 (1989): 38.

⁴ Corell, *Consumatum Est* ,139.

⁵ Thompson, "Eternal Life in the Gospel of John", 37.

In the gospel of John to be saved is to have eternal life. The way to get eternal life is simply to believe, which differs from the synoptics in which it is required of the believer to repent as well as believe. However twice in the gospel Jesus tells those who believe to “sin no more” so repentance is not completely absent⁶. To “believe in” implies a more personal commitment than simply believing a fact⁷. To be saved is to be forgiven your sins and all forgiveness requires Jesus’ divine sacrifice⁸. Salvation begins with the new birth.

Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. (John 3:5 NRSV)

This new birth is preceded by the prevenient grace of the father drawing the believer to the son. This is the theme of election which has been controversial in the history of the church. There is a tension between a deterministic and a free will interpretation of salvation in the gospel of John. The Arminian argument is the father knows who will respond to the Son with repentance and belief and draws them while the Calvinist argument is that a subgroup of people are simply preordained to be saved.

No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. (John 6:44 NRSV)

To have Eternal Life is to know God personally and experientially, to be in relationship with Him⁹. To know Jesus is to know the truth.

And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (John 17:3 NRSV)

⁶ George A Turner, “Soteriology in the Gospel of John”, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 19 no 4 Fall (1976): 273.

⁷ Turner, “Soteriology in the Gospel of John”, 272.

⁸ Ronald F Marshall, “Our Serpent of Salvation: The Offence of Jesus in John’s Gospel” *Word & World*, 21 no 4 Fall (2001): 392.

⁹ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 1993), 298-9.

Eternal Life is the result of salvation, not the salvation itself. In between the new birth and resurrection the believer is required to mutually abide in Christ so that they may bear the fruit of good works¹⁰. Abiding in Christ also means living in continual dependence on him¹¹. It is a covenant relationship with Christ and the Father that requires that the believer keep the commandments of Christ¹². The believer is aided in this by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The selfish life of the world must be spurned to follow Jesus¹³. The bases on which Eternal Life is made available are Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, resurrection and the incarnation¹⁴. Truth in the Gospel of John is to know the truth about Jesus saving work and Jesus is truth embodied- his words are truth¹⁵. Salvation and the possession of Eternal Life makes one a child of God¹⁶. Judgement in John is an ambiguous theme. In some passages it appears that the first time Jesus comes to the world he is not in the world to judge.

You judge by human standards; I judge no one. (John 8:15 NRSV)

I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. (John 12:47 NRSV)

In other passages judgement will occur on the last day.

The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge; on the last day the word that I have spoken will serve as judge. (John 12:48 NRSV)

In some other passages it seems that judgment is a present reality and that Jesus has come to judge.

¹⁰ Charles H Talbert, "The Fourth Gospel's Soteriology between New Birth and Resurrection", *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, 37 no 2 Sum (2010): 136

¹¹ Talbert, "The Fourth Gospel's Soteriology between New Birth and Resurrection", 142.

¹² Talbert "The Fourth Gospel's Soteriology between New Birth and Resurrection", 143.

¹³ Marshall "Our Serpent of Salvation: The Offence of Jesus in John's Gospel", 391.

¹⁴ Turner, "Soteriology in the Gospel of John", 277.

¹⁵ Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 303.

¹⁶ Turner, "Soteriology in the Gospel of John", 276.

Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." (John 9:39 NRSV)

In the following passage it appears that judgment, of Satan at least, occurs on the cross.

Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. (John 12:31 NRSV)

The following passage indicates the depravity and rejection of God in all people- we all have evil deeds and cling to the darkness until grace works upon us.

And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. (John 3:19 NRSV)

It seems in some passages that believers will not come under judgment at all. In this case judgment is the opposite of eternal life and the word which means judgment, κρίνω, also means condemnation¹⁷.

Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life. (John 5:24 NRSV)

Where there is an informed choice to reject Christ, the gospel assumes that a person is under judgment¹⁸. A corollary of this is that where a person has not had the chance to make the choice they will not be judged. Judgment is in some senses a continuous ongoing process as a lack of belief at the moment one is confronted with the gospel brings instant judgment¹⁹ in

¹⁷ Anonymous "Judgement in the fourth gospel" <http://homepage.nflworld.com/rsposse/judgement.htm> (accessed 7/10/2011)

¹⁸ Anonymous, "Judgement in the fourth gospel"

¹⁹ Anonymous, "Judgement in the fourth gospel"

the present. This passage confirms judgment in the present where the word translated as condemn also means to judge.

Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. (John 3:18 NRSV)

The Holy Spirit also has a role in judgement. His role is to prove through Jesus death and resurrection that the "ruler of this world" has been judged²⁰.

And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned. (John 16:8-11 NRSV)

So there exists some tension as to the timing of judgment as it occurs at the moment someone believes or disbelieves but also in another sense it occurs on the last day. As for the judgment of Satan it is fairly clear that his judgment is occurs when Jesus goes to the cross.

The most important thing to understand about John's eschatology and its relationship to life is that some of John's eschatology is realized, that is things that are said to occur on the last day or at death in the synoptics occur in the present in John. However John does have some future eschatology as well. There is a tension between the "already" and the "not yet" which does not need to be thought of as contradiction²¹. John is more concerned with the existential situation of the individual in the eternal now than the synoptics²². Although some aspects of eschatology occur in the present, their full realization will only occur on the last

²⁰ Steven Coxhead, "The theme of Judgement in the Gospel of John" <http://berithroad.blogspot.com/2010/11/theme-of-judgment-in-gospel-of-john.html> (accessed 7/10/2011).

²¹ W Robert Cook, "Eschatology in John's Gospel" *Criswell Theological Review*, 3.1 (1988):99.

²² Cook, "Eschatology in John's Gospel", 83.

day when Jesus returns as righteous judge. I have already discussed eternal life and judgment. The remaining eschatological subjects are death, resurrection and heaven. One of the most important texts on resurrection is the following:

Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, (John 11:24-25 NRSV)

Jesus responds to Martha's fully future eschatology with the suggestion that, because eternal life is in some ways already present in him, so is the resurrection. He then demonstrates his point by raising Lazarus from the dead. This text also indicates that in some ways death is no longer a problem for the person who believes in Jesus. Death is a conquered enemy to which believers must submit only for a moment²³. We can reconcile this with the simple fact that believers experience physical death by understanding that physical life and physical death are very different from spiritual life and spiritual death. Before believing in Jesus we are all spiritually dead in our sins but with the new birth and indwelling of Holy Spirit we experience Eternal Life now, and this does not change at physical death. Yet another sense of death is death as self-denial: you must die to your old self to be born anew²⁴. John's gospel is definitely compatible with the notion of an intermediate state in paradise rather than soul sleep because to be asleep hardly captures the glory of Eternal Life in the now and in the future. Physical and Spiritual Life come together again at the resurrection on the last day. The physical nature of Jesus resurrection body is our insurance that we will eventually be in physical bodies again for the full realization of Eternal Life.

This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day." (John 6:40 NRSV)

²³ Corell, *Consumatum Est*, 149.

²⁴ R Alan Culpepper, "Realized Eschatology in the Experience of the Johannine Community", in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, eds Craig R Koester & Reimund Bieringer, (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008),264.

Eternal Death is the consequence of not accepting the offer of Eternal Life. Whether this is simply extinction or eternal conscious torment, or even a temporary purging is an open question in current theology. Without Christ there is separation from God, that much is for sure²⁵. This is the resurrection to condemnation (judgment) that was discussed in the section on judgment. In John there is no talk of Gehenna or Hades so from this gospel alone we are not sure of the punishment for John's cardinal sin of unbelief.

In John there is also talk of the reality of heaven in terms of "The Father's House".

In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also (Joh 14:2-3 NRSV)

So we know that the place where Eternal Life is experienced is in the heaven with the Father and that Jesus will come back to take us to where he has gone²⁶. This is one of the most comforting passages in the whole of the Bible. Believers' permanent dwelling place in the eschatological future will be with God.

We have explored the theme of life in John in relationship to salvation, judgment and eschatology. To be saved is to have eternal life and what is required is belief in Jesus which entails a personal relationship with him. Judgement (or condemnation) is the opposite of Eternal Life in John. Judgment is the result of not believing in Jesus when confronted with the gospel and in different ways it applies in the future and on the last day. John's eschatology is both realized and future. The resurrection in a spiritual sense occurs both in the now and in the future. We have also explored the many kinds of death discussed in the gospel and learned that through Jesus death is a defeated enemy. Eternal Life is located in the 'Father's

²⁵ Culpepper, "Realized Eschatology in the Experience of the Johannine Community", 266.

²⁶ Cook, "Eschatology in John's Gospel", 97.

House' with Jesus forever when he returns. Eternal Life in John is both present and future, both "already" and "not yet" and it is the result of a personal, loving relationship with God.

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