



Hermeneutical Foundation: A Reflection on John's Gospel as a Model for Contextualization of the Gospel to the Africans

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Abstract: Hermeneutics is all about right interpretation of the message of God as it is written in the Bible correctly without addition or subtraction as the case may be. The Bible was written to the Jews, but was also written for the Gentiles, for the sake of Salvation. What does the message meant then, when it was written to the Jews within their context? What does it mean to the Gentiles outside Israel? What does it mean in the past? What does it mean now? What does it mean in the future and what does it mean always? All these factors must be taken into consideration under the law of Hermeneutical exposition or exegesis of a particular text in the Bible. The correct and true meaning of the content, the context and the value of the message as it is written, should not lose its original meaning. The article is written to alert the contemporary teachers and preachers of the Bible on the need to strictly hold unto right interpretations of the Bible. Wrong interpretations of scriptures are not only incorrect, but is a serious sin against God, since it can mislead the people into error and heresy. Preachers and teachers of the Bible, most especially in Africa where the understanding of the Bible is limited and more required. Teachers and preachers of the Bible should form a contextual Theology for ideal interpretations of the Bible to their listeners as recorded in the Bible according to John's Gospel.

Keywords: Hermeneutical, Foundation, contextualization, Gospel, Africa, Teachers, Preacher, Heresy, Interpretation, Exposition, Exegesis and Reflection.

1. INTRODUCTION

The gospel of John was written by Apostle John, the brother of James and the son of Zebedee and Salome. He was a Jew from Galilee of Palestine. He was familiar with the geographical locations of his home land. He was also familiar with Jewish religious traditions as a Jew. But John's gospel was not necessarily written to people who were familiar with Palestine or the Jews traditional religious customs, hence he was careful to describe in his writing various locations of Palestine Jewish customs and traditions which his reader were not familiar with. John in his gospel did not specifically identify himself in the gospel, but Bible students identified him as the beloved disciple, a companion of Jesus. Therefore, John could simply identify himself as the beloved. The name John means, the lord is gracious.

There has been speculation about the date, when John wrote the gospel. However, many scholars have affirmed A. D 40 to 96, A.D 80 and 90 and A.D 60 and 70. The literary style and Greek language used in John's gospel 1,2,3 and Revelation was linked to the same author John the beloved.

1.1. Statement of Problems

Often times, there are occasions where preachers and teachers of the Bible do interpret the Bible wrongly or out of context. This is a serious problem of heresy that is misleading. Heresy is a serious problem in the Church and it has also serious spiritual and moral consequences. Some of these teachers and preachers do it due to ignorance, while some do it for their selfish reasons.

Set the Background for John's Gospel

- a. What was the Occasion of this Gospel

There was systematic theology of Gnosticism that became formulated in the first part of the 2nd century. Various concepts of Gnostic theology were finding their way into Christian thought and faith during

the middle and latter half of the 1st century. John wrote this document dealing with the foundational principles of Gnosticism, addressing his original audience on the danger of Gnostic heresy so that they will not be influenced by the Gnostic teaching and doctrines that may lead them to heresy and apostasy. The document will defend and guard the church against such teachings of those who deny the deity of Jesus the document is a relevant document to defend the validity of Christianity and Christians should focus on the fact that Jesus is the Christ and son of God (John 20:30 & 31). That believer should abide in true faith in Christ without them becoming victims of heretical teachings, J. D Douglas and Merrill .C Tenn(1987: 534-535), assert that:

The faith of believers was being undermined by the errors of men like Cerinthus, who taught that Jesus was not really God and that Christ had not actually come into the flesh (i.e., had not adopted human nature). The apostle seeing the danger and being guided by the Holy Spirit wrote this gospel in order that the church might abide in the true faith. Thus, Irenaeus definitely states that John sought by the proclamation of the gospel to remove the error that Cerinthus was trying to spread (against Heresies 3:11-1). According to Cerinthus at baptism the Christ in the form of a dove had descended on Jesus, but this same Christ had left him again on the eve of his (Jesus) suffering. Hence it was not really Christ who suffered and died and rose again but Jesus (Ibid 1:26 1, 3:3-4), over against this John defended the thesis that Jesus Christ is one, and that this one divine and human person came not only by water (baptism) but also by blood 37 1 John 5:6 from the very beginning, therefore, Jesus is himself God. He adopted human nature unto personal union with his divine nature and will keep it (the word became flesh John 1:1-14).

John so assumes that the document he writes will produce a faith response from his audience to reject anything contemporary their faith and practice.

b. What was John's purpose for Writing this Gospel?

The purpose or aim of John writing the gospel is principally with an evangelistic view to produce faith in Jesus as Christ and son of God to both believers and non-believers alike. John affirmed that Jesus' teachings were not invention of men. But they were revelation of God to man through Jesus Christ. God establishes a relationship with God that has reached humanity.

Power (2009), asserts that, "And true Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name (John 20:30-31). John writes in order that his audience will establish this relationship by accepting Jesus Christ as the Messiah and the son of God.

Carson (1994), notes that, "Many believe the gospel to be a presentation of Christianity in a Hellenized form. The prologue (1:1-18) many seem to lend support to this theory. But the crucial factor is the extent to which the prologue determines the purpose of the gospel as a whole the teaching of Jesus was sufficiently comprehensive to be understood by Greek as well as Jew.

c. What is the theme if John's Gospel

John recorded seven specific miracles signs as accounted for in John 20:30-31. "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that believing you might have life through his name (John 20: 30-31).

John made mention that "through believing in him you might have life his name "believe and life" are key Tunkunipon(2006:1277), says, "In John 20:31 John also speaks of life, which is another great in this gospel eternal life is available only to those who believe, and they receive it immediately when they believe. Everyone who believes is assumed of the possession of this life from that moment on. "The concept of believe in his name in John 1:12 and believing you might have life through his name in John 20:31 the general theme of John's gospel. John is anticipating that the reader of his gospel will produce faith in Christ as the son of God and believing in him, the reader may have life in his name (John 1:12, 20:31). The reader should also be aware of heretical teachings that are contrary to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. To remove that error spreading around most especially the Cerinthus heretical teaching that Christ in the form of a dove descended on Jesus at baptism, left him at the eve of his suffering.

e. Trace John's argument, how did he accomplish his purpose, by developing his them to lead his readers to the Anticipated reader response?

- i. John first established a strong argument that the tabernacle of God is with men. I Jesus Christ under which men may enjoy positive communion with God, whoever lives in love lives in God and God in him, He is the way the truth and the life (John 14:6).
- ii. John show that Christ is the express image of God, and that creation subsists in him and that by adoption through Christ men are the sons of God. He is light, and that people should believe in him as the light (John 12:36).
- iii. John also argues the messiahship of Jesus, his death his resurrection and exaltation, and the hope of his return to consummate the kingdom of God (John 4:25).
- iv. John also argues that fact that God had provided the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit for all those who repented and were baptized (John 3:5).
- v. There will be ultimate manifestation of all the sons of God in his glory (John 17:5,22-24).
- vi. John (535),defended the thesis that "Jesus Christ is one, and that this one and that this one divine and human person came not only by water (baptism, but also by blood (suffering and death) (John 19:34-37). From the very beginning, therefore, Jesus is himself God. He adopted human nature into personal union with his divine nature and will keep it (the word became flesh (John 1:1-14)."
- vii. John emphatically shows who Jesus is and his practical purpose for the redemption of mankind (John 20:31)
- viii. There clear focus of the glory of the Lord and the messianic office and deity of Christ (John 2:11, 3:16, 4:25-26).
- ix. John emphasis the promise of the coming and work of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17,15:26,16:13-14).
- x. John argues that, in the very death of Jesus Christ, he overcomes the world and brings to completion the glorious work of redemption (John 19:30,12:30-31,16:33).

The purpose of John's argument is for the readers to response by producing faith the Jesus is the son of God.

Complete a Semantically Analysis for the following key terms in 8:31-32

a. "Believed faith"

- i. *piseuw* (, *pisteuo*, (2006:61), generally means "to believe be convinced of something and more specified way "to have faith" in God or Christ. It can also mean "to entrust something to someone."
- ii. What are the words (61)range of meaning in literal, early human language? *dokew* (*dokeo*) means "to think, believe suppose"
- iii. How is this range of meanings expanded in the metaphorical languages *Pisteuo* (2006:62), means "to believe, be convinced of something (John 9:18,11:27) Before healing a group of blind men, Jesus asks them if they believe he is able to do it (Matthew 9:28). Martha is convinced that Jesus is the Christ (John 11:27), and Jesus disciples finally believe that God sent him (John 16:27,30:17:8). *Pisteuo* is used to express the central convictions of Christian faith, as in the assertion we believe that Jesus died and rose again and so believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him (1 Thess. 4:14) *Pisteuo* (2006: 62), also mean in the metaphorical languageof the Bible as "to accept as true what someone says, Jesus rebukes the chief priest and elders for not believing John the Baptist while tax collectors and prostitutes believed him (Matthew 21:25, 32)"

Another metaphorical language of the Bible for *Pisteuo* (2006:62), is "to have faith or trust in God (John 14:1). Thos who believe in God have their faith credited to them as righteousness (Rom. 4:5-24)."

- iv. Which of these possible meanings best fits the immediate context: The possible meaning that best fits context of John's gospel in the meaning of *Pisteuo* meaning "faith or trust in God. Those who believe in God have their faith credited to them as righteousness (Rom. 4:5-24).
- v. What did the word mean in its sense unit? (John 8:21-59) "Believed" (John 8:31) "Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed in him, if you continue in my word, then you are truly my disciples" what the word means in its sense unit (John 8:31) Those who have faith in Jesus and remain in his word, are his true disciples.
- vi. What did the word mean in the context of the book which it is written

The word "believed" in the context of the gospel of John is that his disciples believed him e.g., John 2:11, John 2:22, John 20:8, John 20:29.

- vii. What did the Word mean in the context of books by the same author? That God has given us his son Jesus Christ as his word and sign of love for us; to believed him as the Messiah. "For the father himself loves you because you have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from God (John 16:27).

What did the word mean in the Context of its Testament (NT)

The word "believed" is use in New Testament for

- a. Those who believed in the word of God for miracles e.g., the centurion (Mt 8:13)
- b. Thos who did not believed that word of God (Romans 10:16).
- c. Those who be believed in the name of Jesus (John 2:23).

Through the use of the LXX we can ask about the range of meanings of the word in its Biblical context.

Range of Meaning of the Word Believed in the Biblical Context

(O.T) *aivvzli (aman)*, means "believed, "to believe or trust worthy faithful. It can also be used to express of guardian to a child (Number 11:12), "aman" addresses nature of God as faithful and true, keeping his convents of love (Deut. 7:9, Psalm 145:13). New Testament (doceo) believe means to think, believe or suppose (Acts 4:4,8:12 Mt 21:25,32).

- b. "Hold" *mevnw (meno)*
 - i. What is the root meaning of the word? "hold" *mevnw* meaning Remains, abides to contribute into something.
 - ii. What are words range of meanings in Literal, earthly human (language), To continue in something once's had started living, abides or remains in it.
 - iii. How is this range of meanings expanded in the metaphorical language of the bible.

Hold means remains or abides, He who slander the Holy Spirit remains unforgiven to the end (Mark 3:29) He who believes in the son has immortal life. But he who rejects the son, remains under God's displeasure (John 3:36) And a slave does not remain in the home always, but a son remains always (John 8:35) unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground dies, it remains solitary but if it dies, it becomes fruitful; (12:24). A branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it remains united with the vine (John 15:4).

- iv. Which of these possible meanings best fits the immediate context

The possible meanings that best fit context of John's gospel is remains (abides) "He who takes my flesh for his food, and drinks my blood, remains united to me, and 1 to him (John 6:56).

- v. What did the word mean in its Sense Unit (John 8:21-59)

"Hold" Remains (abides) (John 8:35) "And the bond servant does not abide in the house forever. The son abides forever"

- vi. What the Word means in its Sense unit (John 8:35)

A servant cannot remain in a house forever or till his death. If he is disobedient, his sells him or turns him away. But son is a heir, he cannot be cast off or be sold. He has the right to remain in the family.

Hermeneutics

Jesus told the Jews if you are disobedient and rebellious can be rejected from being God's people and be deprived of your peculiar privileges "you are in condition of servant unless you are made free by the gospel.

vii. What did the Word mean in the Context of the Book in Which it is Written?

The word hold remain (abides) in the context John's gospel is that it is necessary for the disciples to remain or abide in Jesus for full relationship with him in obedience to his word.

viii. What did the word Mean in the Context of its Testament. Hold, remains (abides)

- a. Remains in sin (John 9:41)
- b. Remains in faith, truth and spirit of God (1 Cor. 7:40)
- c. Remains in doctrine teaching (1 John 2:27) and become entitled to the privilege of the sons of God."¹

ix. What did the word mean in the Context of Books written by the same Author?

The word "Hold" remains (abides) the author mean in his books, that Jesus disciples should remain (abide) in him and be united with him for fruitfulness "Abide in me and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me" (John 15:4)

x. Through the use of the Lxx we can ask about the range of meaning of the word in its Biblical context: Range of meaning of the word "Hold" meaning Abides

Old Testament (*Yasah*) meaning sit, sit down with the connotations of live, dwell, remain, settle it refers to be left (1 Sam. 16:11).

New Testament to remain to stay, continue remaining in place or state (Luke 8:27), Paul encouraged converts to remain in the situation which he was in when God called him (1 Cor. 7:20) John uses *Meno* frequently to describe the perseverance of believers to their relation to Christ, that is to remain or abide in him (John 8:31, 15:4, 1 John 2:6).

c. "Word" *logos* (2006: 803),

- i. What is the root meaning of the Word?
 - d. "Word" *logos* (*logos*) means "word, message, report and sometimes even "deed"
- ii. What are words range of meanings in literal, earthly human Languages

William (2006: 803), assert that, "The word (*Logos*) is used in the New Testament to express many forms of communication literally, both verbally and physically. It could be "Spoken word, a message, a deed, human speech (1Cor. 1:5) any statement (Matthew 5:37), question (Matthew 21:24), prayer (Mark 14:39), or manner of presentation (1 Cor. 2:4)."

iii. How is this Range of Meanings expanded in the metaphorical Language of the Bible?

New Testament the word (*Logos*) to mean Jesus Christ Himself (John 1:1) synoptic Gospels identify (*Logos*) as proclamation or preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ or God and his kingdom (Matthew 13:19, Luke 5:1) Jesus (*Logos*), signifies the presence of God in the flesh (John 3:16) Jesus is the fullness of God (Col. 1:19, 2:9) Paul was (*logos*) to churches as the word of God (1 Cor. 14:36, 1 Thess. 2:13) He also uses it as the final message of Jesus Christ, therefore carries the authoritative and living voice of God (Rev. 22:7) William (2006: 803), assert that, "rhema means word or matter, something that is said, whereas *logos* often designates the Christian proclamation as a whole rhema usually relates to individual words and utterances "man does not live on bread alone, but no every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4, 12:36, 18:16) rhema may also refer to an event that can be talked about, a thing object or matter."

iv. Which of these possible meanings best fits the immediate Context?

Logos best fits the gospel of John as "Jesus Christ is the "Word" (Logos) He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him (John 1:1).

v. What did the word mean in its sense Unit John 8:21-49

Word (Logos) (John 8:37, John 8:43, John 8:51, John 8:52 and John 8:55) (John 8:37, 8:43, 8:51, 8:52 mean keeping the word of Jesus Christ is important John 8:55, speaks about keeping the word of God. The word means in its sense unit that Jesus disciples should keep his word and the word of God his father as very important for their faith. "Truly, truly I say to you, if one keeps my word; "He will never see death (John 8:52).

vi. What did the word mean in the context of the book in which it is Written?

Word (Logos)

a. Jesus as the word (John 1:1)

b. The word of Jesus (John 5:24)

c. The word of God (John 17:14)

vii. What did the word mean in context of books written by the same author?

a. Jesus as the word (John 1:1)

b. The word of Jesus (1 John 5:7)

c. The word of God (Rev. 19:13)

viii. What did the word mean in the Context of it testament (NT)

a. The word of God (Mt. 13:22)

b. The word of Jesus (John 14:23)

c. The word of people (Mt. 2:8).

ix. Though the use of the Lxx we can ask about range of meanings of the word in Biblical Context

Word (Logos)

Old Testament Meaning -

(dabar) word "say, speak activity of speaking. God spoke to Noah (Gen 8:15) The Lord has spoken (Isaiah 1:2). He who speaks the truths from his heart does what is right (Psalm 15:2)

New Testament (Logos) (2006:745), meaning, word, message, report, or sometime deed. I could be used for human speech, statement. The word logos means Jesus (John 1;1) word of God (Luke 5:1) Paul calls message (1 Cor. 14:36).

d. "Truly" *avlhqwvs*

i. What is the meaning of the Word

e. Truly *avlhqwvs* (alethos), meaning truly, surely really and adverb of certainty."

ii. What is words range meaning early human language

All the occurrences of truly are in the gospel. William (2006: 745), assert that, "In Luke gospel the word functions to introduce a solemn pronouncement by Jesus "Truly I say to you (Luke 9:2, 12:44, 21:3 in the other gospels, this adverb makes a solid affirmation about the nature of Jesus or some other persons e.g. "surely this the prophet who is to come into the word (John 6:14) surely this man was the son of God (Mark 15:3a) In 2 Thessalonians 2:13 atethos certifies that Paul's preaching was the word of God."

iii. How is this range expanded in the metaphorical language of the Bible

The gospels use the word *alēthos* for real events that will come to pass “But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God (Luke 9:27). Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did said, “this is truly the prophet who is come unto the world” (John 6:14) “So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him saw that he cried out like thus and breathed his last, he said, truly this man was the son of God.” (Mark 15:39).

iv. Which of these possible meanings best fits the immediate

Alēthos meaning that best fits John's, gospel is “certainty” of certainty events and messages concerning believes, Jesus Christ, God and his kingdom.

v. What did the word mean in its sense unit? (John 8:21-59)

Truly (John 8:31)

True disciples of Jesus are those who continue in his word Christ.

vi. What did the word mean in the Context of the book in which it is written

- a. Jesus is truly the Christ, prophet and his performed signs (John 7:26,40 John 20:30)
- b. True confession from a woman who had married five husbands (John 4:18).

vii. What did the Word mean in the Context of the books written by the same author?

- a. Jesus is truly the Christ, prophet and he performed signs (John 7:26,40 John 20:30)
- b. Whoever keeps Jesus' word, truly the love of God is perfected in him (1 John 2:5)
- c. True confession from a woman who had married five husbands (John 4:18)

viii. What did the word mean in the context of its Testament New Testament

- a. Truly the harvest is plentiful (Mt. 9:37)
- b. Truly Jesus is the son of God (Mt. 14:33).
- c. True fellowship of believers, Christ and God (1 John 1:3).
- ix. Through the use of the Lxx we can ask about the range of meanings of the word in its Biblical context.

Old Testament denotes faithfulness in the sense of fidelity and trust worthiness and the New Testament, *alēthos* truly, surely, really an adverb of certainty.

d. “Disciples” *mathētai* William (2006: 183), assert that,

i. What is the root meaning of the Word?

“Disciples” *mathētai* (*mathētes*)

ii. Means “Learner disciples”

What is range meaning is literal earthly, human language

The word *mathētes* technically means followers of Jesus or those who learn from Jesus.

iii. How is this range of meanings expanded in the Metaphorical Language of the Bible

The common use of *mathētes* refers to Jesus twelve disciples, William (2006: 183), assert that, “Typically in the Jewish world, a disciple would voluntarily join a scholar otherwise seek out a master rabbi, however, Jesus seeks out and choose those whom he wants as his disciples (Mark 1:17). A dedicated disciple was generally expected some day to become a rabbi himself yet Jesus teaches his disciples that he will always be their rabbi and they will have a lifetime of discipleship (John 11:16). Jesus disciples are bound to him and to God's will (Matthew 12:46-50).

John the Baptist had loyal disciples (Matthew 1:2). He taught them to pray (Luke 11:2). The Pharisees likewise had disciples there were sent to test Jesus (Matthew 22:16) they too fasted like the disciples of John the Baptist (Mark 2:18).

Mathetes meaning of disciples and learner, best fits the disciples of Jesus Christ in John's Gospel who are directly related to the people of the kingdom of God in whom Jesus died, and resurrected to establish and that all who believe in him are his disciples (John 2:11).

- iv. What did the Word mean in its sense Unit? (John 8:21-59)

Disciples (John 8:31)

Jesus' assurance to those who believed is that if they continue in his word, then they are truly or really his disciples.

- v. What did the word mean in the Context of the Book in which it is Written

Disciples

- a. Twelve selected disciples (John 2:17)
- b. More Disciples (John 4:1)

The word disciples in the context of John used it for the twelve and selected disciples and more disciples he baptized through the twelve disciples known as apostles.

- vi. What did the word mean in the context books written by the same author?

The word disciples are used for the twelve selected disciples and more disciples by faith, who believed in Jesus Christ as the son of God.

- vii. What did the Word mean in the Context of its Testament New Testament?
 - a. Disciples of Jesus Christ (Mt. 5:1)
 - b. More disciples of Jesus (John 4:1)
 - c. Disciples of John the Baptist (Mt. 9:14)
 - d. Disciples of the Pharisees (Mt. 22:16)

- viii. Through the use of Lxx we can ask about the range of meanings of the word in its Biblical context

Old Testament Disciples

Old Testament disciples "Musar" personal instruction or correction

New Testament "Mathetes means learner, disciple.

- e. Truth avlhqeia, William (2006: 745), assert that,
 - i. What is the root meaning of the Word?
 - f. Truth avlhqeia (aletheia) Means faithfulness accurate
- ii. What are the words range of meaning in literal earth human language

The literal range of meaning for the word aletheia describes faithfulness of individual dealing with what is regarded as real or true. It is also literally use to describe an accurate situation or full account of an event, representing the right position of things as really they are. How is the rang meanings expanded in the metaphorical language of the Bible.

Jesus is full of grace and truth (John 1:14) Jesus himself is truth (John 14:6). The disciples should know the truth (John 8:32). William (2006: 745), assert that, "Jesus is the true vine through which his followers draw nourishment special reality about Jesus that is beyond the observable world. Jesus proclaims that his flesh is true food and his blood is true drink (John 6:55).

- iii. Which of these possible meanings best fits the immediate Context?

The possible best meanings of truth (aletheia) that best fits John's gospel is that "Jesus is truth" (John 14:6).

- iv. What did the Word mean in His sense unit (John 8:21-59)

Truth (John 8:32) "And you will know the truth and the truth will make you free" John uses the word truth in this sense unit to mean that, knowledge of the truth is the source of providing freedom.

- v. What did the word mean in the Context of the Book in which it is written?

Truth: Jesus is full of grace and truth and in knowing the truth, one shall be set free and have light (John 1:14).

- vi. What did the word mean in the Context of the books written by the same author?

- a. Jesus is truth (John 1:14)
- b. We should know the truth (8:22)
- c. We are of the truth (1 John 3:19)

- vii. What did the word mean in the context of its Testament New Testament

- a. God is truth (Mt. 22:16)
- b. Jesus is truth (John 1:14)
- c. Those who will worship God should worship him in truth (John 4:23).

There is truth in God and Jesus and that those who will worship God, must worship him in spirit and truth.

- viii. Through the use of the Lxx we can ask about the range of meanings of the word in its Biblical Context.

Old Testament "met" denotes "faithfulness, trustworthiness"

New Testament "aletheia" our testimony about Jesus is true and valid (John 5:31-32),

- g. "Freedom" eleuqrovw, eleuqepla William (2006: 273), assert that,
- i. What is the root meaning of the word?

"Freedom" eleuqepla (eleutheria) freedom, freedom in terms of forgiveness of sin; freedom from captivity (Luke 4:18) liberty

- ii. How is this range of meaning expanded in the metaphorical language of the Bible. Freedom is the metaphorical language of the Bible, describes that state of a person who is no longer enslaved by an oppressive force, the primary sense of freedom biblically is the freedom from the bondage of sin (Rom 8:21, James 1:25, 2:12). In order to possess freedom, Christ has set us free (Gal 5:1) there is also freedom from captivity (Luke 4:18)

- iii. What are the possible meanings best Fits immediate Contexts

Possible meanings that best fits gospel's gospel in the usage of the word freedom (eleutheria) is the freedom from sin by repentance and acceptance of Jesus as Lord and savior (John 3:16)

- iv. What did the word mean in its senenmits John 8:21-59

Freedom, free (John 8:32)

"And you will know the truth and the truth will make your free" John says, means of freedom is knowing the truth, through it one can be free,

- v. What did the Word mean in the Context of the Book in which it is Written
- a. Knowing the truth can make one free (John 8:32)
- b. If the son of man makes one free that person is free indeed (John 8:36)

- vi. What did the word mean in the Context of the Books Written by the Same Author?

Knowing the truth can make one free, and freedom that is given by Jesus Christ is a total freedom from sin and bondage.

- vii. What did the word mean in the Context of its Testament

Freedom from sin and bondage is by knowing the truth and that Christ himself is the truth.

viii. Through the use of the Lxx we can ask about the range of meaning of the word in the Biblical.

ix. Free.

Old and New Testament loose, untie, break, destroy freedom, New Testament "*aphesis* carried sense of forgiveness, release, no longer enslaved.

1. Supplement your Findings by Investigating these Questions

a. How did John introduce the "Word" Theme John 1:1-18. John introduces the word theme in his prologue as "the word became flesh and dwell amongst men."

i. In the Beginning was Word (John 1:1a) John begins the story of the word from eternity understanding the significance of the work of Christ from the beginning. Although the verb is used in the past tense, but there is idea of continuity. The word that now is, was in existence before the world began. That is God is beyond creation F. F Bruce (1979:1232), note that, "The word as a second person of trinity, existed in his own right."

ii. And the word was with God (John 1:1b)

That is from eternity there was no distinction, difference or separation between within the God head the fullness of God head and the word are identified to be together or one and they are beyond time and space Carson, (2011:1025) note that, "John must be affirming the God head of the word. It involves not only divinity but deity."

iii. And the Word was God (John 1:1c)

God head and the word are of equal statues, identified in fullness. The active word is not less than God head. They are both transcendent beyond all time and space with full divinity, deity and trinity.

iv. He was in the Beginning with God (John 1:2)

Both the word and his relationship to the eternal are eternal. The was never part of the word of his pre-existence which found him to be separated in any sense from the God head.

v. Through him all things were made (John 1:3a)

The word that came out of God in creation was an agent in person of Christ as the second person of the trinity.

vi. Nothing was made that has been made (John 1:3b)

That which has been made was life in him. John tells his readers that in Christ there is clear visible link between God and material world. This world rightly belongs to God and he made it.

vii. In him was Life (John 1:4a)

The whole universe was made by the word of God, in his living active will shows in itself that God is the organic active property of life, while this principle in the created world, shows, itself in Christ (the word) (John 10:10).

viii. This life Become the light of Men (John 1:4b)

The living development element in the universe that shows God to man.

ix. The Light shines in the Darkness (John 1:5)

God has provided man with continues revelation in his sinful nature, through Jesus Christ as the light that shines, darkness describes man's distance from God.

x. The Darkness is has not Understood it (John 1:5b)

Life and light are key words associated with John, God in Christ created life and light and sustains it. God is therefore the source of man's illumination.

- xi. From the Fullness of His grace, we have Received (John 1:16)

There is testimony that Christian life is full of blessing and experience of Christ loving help by grace leads to a fuller experience of God goodness.

- xii. No one has ever seen God: (John 1:18)

Jesus is the one that declared God to men, However God is seen in the incarnated Jesus.

- b. How did John develop the Truth Theme through the Seven Signs of Jesus and his Resurrection.

John presents and develop his truth theme through seven signs of Jesus. In seven divisions, John record seven miraculous works of Jesus to develop the truth them of Jesus as the son of God.

1. The changing of water to wine (John 2:1-11)
2. The healing of an officer's son (John 4:46-54)
3. The healing of a cripple (John 5:1-9)
4. The feed of five thousand (John 6:1-14)
5. The walking on water (John 6:16-30)
6. The healing of a blind man (John 9:1-12)
7. The raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-46)

Why did John include these signs The seven signs are evidence that Jesus Christ is the son of God, so that believing in him people might have life through his name (John 20:30-31).

- i. What "Truth" do they teach us about Jesus? Compare John 8:27,58, John 18:5-6?

The truth that the seven signs teach us about Jesus Christ, comparing John 8:27,58 and John 18:5-6 is that those who did not understand Jesus as the son of God, sent by him, should understand and believe him through signs performed by him (John 18:6).

- c. What does the Upper Room Discourse John 13-17, teach us about discipleship. The upper room discourse in John 13-17 teaches us lessons about discipleship as follows:

1. God and Jesus Christ loved his own disciples John 13:1
2. John 13:2 taught us about the danger of betrayal
3. Jesus washes the feet of his disciples. It taught us about humility and service John 13:5, 14
4. Beware of Satan's way of dealing with people negatively John 13:27
5. Christians should love one another John 13:34
6. Christian should not be worried about what the world can do to them for the sake of Christ John 14:1
7. Jesus is the way the truth and the life John 14:6
8. Loving Christ is by keeping his commandments John 14:14
9. Jesus is the true vine; in him Christians can bear more fruit John 15:3
10. Christ have chosen us (John 15:16)
11. The world may hate believers, because the world hated Christ (John 15:18)

Christians should keep from stumbling (John 16:1)

12. Believers should sanctify by the truth (John 17:17)
13. God is able to keeping his people away from evil ones (John 17:15)
14. All believers should be one (John 17:20)

d. How did John use the seven "I am" sayings with explicit predicates to develop his freedom theme?

i. I am the bread of life (John 6)

Jesus says, I am the bread of life (John 6:48) after the feedings of the five thousand in John 6:11-12, by Jesus with reference to God feedings the Israelites with manna in the wilderness, John 6:31,48,58. Both events are divine providence to supply people with food, that served as freedom from physical hunger. But Jesus is the bread of life that is sufficient for spiritual satisfaction of man "who comes to me will never go hungry." Total commitment to him will result in total salvation that is eternal. The explicit predicates them for freedom is that, Jesus is both responsible for physical and spiritual feeding of the people. And that people should eat his flesh and drink his blood for the spiritual feeding (John 6:54).

ii. I am the light of the World (John 8)

Jesus says, I am the light of the world (John 8:12) after Jesus freed and woman caught in adultery in John 8:4-11 "Go and sin no more" (John 8:11). He says I am the light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have light of life" (John 8:12). In the beginning God created light (Gen 1:2). The Jews were aware of lack of light in darkness and in blindness. But Jesus says "I am the light of the world" Bruce, (1979:1246), "Jesus declares that he is the light of which life is source and which shines on the way to a fuller experience of God." Darkness is where God is unknown while light is where God is known. The explicit predicate's theme for freedom is that Jesus is the source of physical freedom from blindness and spiritual freedom from darkness of sin. He who follows Jesus is free darkness and come to the light as it was created from the beginning in Gen 1:2 people will not lack guidance, direction and focus in their spiritual and physical endeavours.

iii. I am the door to the Sheep (John 10)

Jesus says, I am the door to the sheep (John 10:7). After Jesus, declares that "who does not enter by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber" (John 10:1). He now (1979:1246), says "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep" (John 10:7). The explicit predicates the theme for freedom that, "Christ is the only way in the security of the fold of God. But once entered enjoy the sheep enjoy complete freedom."

iv. I am the good shepherd (John 10)

Jesus says "I am the good shepherd (John 10:11). After Jesus told them that "the thief does not come except to steal, and to kill and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). He again says "I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep" John 10:11. John G. Mitchell, (2000:190), asserts that "He is going to have a flock, He's going to care for them. He's going to give them abundant life. He's going to protect them from their enemies. The son of God reveals himself as the true shepherd, and the good shepherd, the only shepherd the obedient shepherd, and as the faithful shepherd."

The explicit predicates the theme freedom is that Jesus is the only reliable way by which people can have life and protection from their enemies.

v. I am the resurrection and the Life (John 11)

Jesus said to her "I am the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). Jesus in assurance of the resurrection of Lazarus from the tomb in John 11:44, says to Martha "I am the resurrection and the life, He who believes in me, though he were dead, yet he will live" (John 11:25). Jesus shows within his power that, the eschatological hope of resurrection becomes actual and present. The explicit predicates the theme freedom; that Jesus and bring back to life both physically and spiritually. In Jesus issue of resurrection is both now and at eschatology.

vi. I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14)

When Jesus told his disciples that he was going and they will know the way in John 14:4, Thomas said to him, how can we know the way? Jesus said to him "I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the father, but through me" (John 14:6). What Jesus is, cannot be separated from what he

does. Christ himself is the link between heaven and earth. He is the truth and can work the way for salvation, where one can have life eternal. Hence, he is the way, the truth and the life without him, no one can get to God the father. He is the only link by which one can be united to God and his kingdom. The explicit predicate's theme for freedom is that Jesus can freely create the way, truly for life now and life eternal.

vii. I am the Vine (John 15)

"I am the true vine and my father is the vinedresser" (John 15:1). There is a door to the holy place where there is a golden vine that stands as the symbols of life of Israel (Isaiah 5:1-7, Jer. 2:21, Psalm 80:8-16). Now Jesus says, I am the true vine" Jesus is the true ideal vine to all people, by which if they are the branches can be more fruits. The explicit predicate's theme for freedom is that abiding in Christ is the source of fruitfulness, as freedom from fruitless and destruction.

2. What does John "Truth and Freedom" theme teach us about living the Christian life in Contemporary Nigeria?

"And you will know the truth and the truth will make you free (John 8:32) Truth and freedom are key for both spiritual and physical salvation as stated my John in his gospel truth and salvation is necessary for Christians or believers everywhere in the whole world, hence it is important for us to learn about living a Christian life in the contemporary Nigeria in the context of truth and freedom.

Ryle, (2010:223,224),Set down, lastly in your minds that there are unsearchable riches in the characteristic qualities, attributes, dispositions and intentions of Christ's mind towards man, as the find them revealed in the New Testament." Nigeria Christians must come to the understanding of how to serve God in spirit and in truth "But the hour is coming and now is when the truth worshippers will worship the father in spirit and truth for the father seeks such to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth." (John 4:23-24). Worshipping God in spirit and in truth is a requirement for Christ living knowing the truth also is a source of freedom (John 8:32). There every Christian must endeavour to abide by the truth that is revealed in the word of God.

Commitment to the truth is also doing the right thing honesty sincerity both in the church and the society. The truth should be seen been practiced in our religious, political and traditional institutions for both spiritual and physical freedom of the Nigerian people.

I concur with John Stott (1991: 7-8),who says: "Jesus Christ is the centre of Christianity, and that therefore both Christian faith and Christian life, if they are to be authentic, must focused on Christ. We are said to live our lives through him, on him, in him, under him, for him, with him, unto him, an like him.

3. What does it teach us about Syncretism with African Traditional beliefs

Encarta Dictionaries defines syncretism as, "combination of different beliefs or different systems of philosophical or religious belief or practice." There are several African traditional beliefs that the gospel can shape or change in the context of truth and freedom. But there are some African Christians who are holding unto Christian's beliefs and African traditional beliefs that actually formed the concept of syncretism, combining both traditional beliefs and Christian beliefs together. Yusuf Turaki states same African traditional beliefs that some African worshippers combined them with the Christian traditions. He states them as follow:

i. Belief in mystical power

Yusufu (2001: 17)"The impersonal powers can be used for both good and evil. The life of a traditional African with this belief is the impersonal power is at the mercy of the benevolent or wicked users of the mystical powers at their disposal. This belief is very much reflected in the traditional religious practices and behavior."

The concept of power in the traditional religious is for the power to be use for good or bad, which is contrary to the concept of God or Christ power in the scriptures. To same African these two concepts should go hand in hand. But the truth is that there is no absolute freedom in the African usage of power, since it can be used for both good and bad. But Jesus power is for total freedom from evil. (Luke 10:19). Believing in the gospel concept of knowing the reality about situation and believing

that fact that Jesus is the true answers to these situations, through signs and wonders as the son of God can change the traditional worldview of the African from fetish things that are act of bondage. Some African traditional beliefs are, beliefs in, charms, rituals spirits, magic, divinities etc. Africa should to combine these beliefs with believing in Jesus Christ who is the source of truth. There is no need for syncretism knowing the truth in Christ is enough for total from, sin, the world and the devil.

b. What does it teach us about syncretism with contemporary human philosophies.

The are so many contemporary human philosophies that are coming into the church, opening doors for syncretism and heresies in the church; with so many social and moral consequences in the society, some of these philosophies are Gay rights legalizing abortion, Women Liberation movement and Human Rights movement that are contrary to Christian faith and practice.

Gay Rights

“Gay rights movement in the United States, struggle for equal right for homosexual men and women know as gays and lesbians, in the United States. The basis goals of gay rights movement are to win equal rights for homosexuals under city, state and federal laws as well as respect and recognition for gays as a natural group with the society.”

This philosophy developed into gay marriage that directly involves in the church. Churches in America are now asked to conducted both gay marriages and the union of man and woman as husband and wife that of course is syncretism at the same time heresy. That truth is that, that is not what is was in the beginning “So God, created man in his own image, in the image of God he created male and female he created them (Gen 1:27). The human philosophy that man should have sexual affair with a fellow man or woman with her fellow woman is a contemporary philosophy that is contrary to the truth and freedom as stated by John. This philosophy has negative spiritual, moral and social implications both in the church and the society. The concept of truth and freedom mentioned by John in John 8:32 can address wrong philosophical concepts, ideas or worldviews that are of spiritual, ideas or worldview that are of spiritual, social and moral consequences both in the church and the society abiding by the word of God can bring and the truth and freedom the world needs both spiritually and physically.

2. CONCLUSION

The concept of truth and freedom both spiritual and physical, is very important in human existence people always want to be free, politically, socially economically and religiously. But reality of how to get the freedom is in Christ Jesus who came into the world and established the truth through his word and freedom through signs which John recorded seven of signs for people to believe in Jesus as the son of God and in believing they will have life (John 20:30-31).

The truth of Christ can change any wrong human philosophy and offer freedom for those who are victims of those philosophies and worldviews. The syncretism of African traditional beliefs and contemporary human philosophies that are contrary to the truth and freedom them of John are to be shaped by the itself. To know the truth in the word of Christ is the only way or source of freedom that the world needs.

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Citation: Bishop Emmanuel Morris PhD. "Hermeneutical Foundation: A Reflection on John's Gospel as a Model for Contextualization of the Gospel to the Africans" *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, vol 4, no. 12, 2017, pp. 154-168. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.20431/2349-0381.0412020>

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