

John 1:29-34

“Yeshua Existed Before John the Immerser”

“The next day he saw Yeshua coming to him and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He on behalf of whom I said, “After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.” I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water.’ John testified saying, ‘I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, “He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.” I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.’”

Some of the supernatural activity, associated with Yeshua the Messiah, is narrated, with the dialogue issuing some significant statements from John the Immerser/Baptist. When he sees Yeshua from afar, John the Immerser testifies, “Behold, that is God’s Lamb, who takes and bears away the sin of the world” (John 1:29, Montgomery New Testament), with likely associations with Isaiah 53:7, 10 and Genesis 22:8, 13, but almost certainly the Exodus 12 Passover lamb. A repetition of what was previously said in John 1:15 is seen in John 1:30: “This is He about whom I said, After me comes a Man who has been before me, for He was preceding me⁴⁷.” Within the scope of what has been communicated in this Gospel, Yeshua ranking before John—who was notably born after John—is something predicated on Yeshua’s pre-existence and Yeshua’s creation of the universe (John 1:1-3). While Yeshua and John the Immerser were both related as cousins, and had doubtlessly encountered each other multiple times before, John had not known that Yeshua was the promised Messiah, until He had been immersed by him in water: “I myself did not know who he was, but the reason I came immersing with water was so that he might be made known to Isra’el” (John 1:31, CJB/CJSB).

John the Immerser states how “I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of Heaven, and He abided upon Him” (John 1:32, PME), something which was recorded in the Synoptic Gospels (Mark 1:10; Matthew 3:16; Luke 3:22), and was a fulfillment of Tanach prophecy (Isaiah 11:1; 42:1; 61:1). John further acknowledges how he did not know that Yeshua was the Messiah, but how he had such a truth Divinely revealed to him. As he says, “I myself did not know who he was, but the one who sent me to immerse in water said to me, ‘The one on whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining, this is the one who immerses in the *Ruach HaKodesh*’” (John 1:33, CJB/CJSB). The entity labeled as “He who sent me to immerse in water” (PME) is obviously God proper, the Father. Yeshua, the Son, “is the One who immerses in the Holy Spirit” (PME), an anticipation of how resultant of His sacrificial work, the decisive presence and bestowal of the Holy Spirit would be granted to His followers (i.e., John 7:37-39; 14:15-17, 26; 15:26; 16:5-15; 20:22; also Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-4, 38-39). John concludes, “I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God” (John 1:34, RSV).

It is very easy for many Bible readers to encounter John 1:29-34, appreciate the testimony of John the Immerser, recognize some of the activities of Yeshua the Messiah, and continue reading on. However, when we read John 1:29-34, it cannot be avoided how we encounter the presence of God the Father (John 1:33a), Yeshua the Son (John 1:29-31, 32b, 33b, 34), and the Holy Spirit (John 1:32a, 33c). While there are many who today’s Messianic people will encounter, who will claim that the concept of a triune Godhead is completely pagan and non-Biblical, a (revealed) triune Godhead of Father, Son, and Spirit is something that can be

⁴⁷ Grk. *opisō mou erchetai anēr hos emprosthen mou gegonen, hoti prōtos mou ēn* (ὀπίσω μου ἔρχεται ἀνὴρ ὃς ἔμπροσθέν μου γέγονεν, ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν).

deduced from reading the Scriptural text. Father, Son, and Spirit are certainly all present in John 1:29-34.

John 1:43-51

“Angels Ascending and Descending on the Son of Man”

“The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Yeshua said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and *also* the Prophets wrote—Yeshua of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’ Nathanael said to him, ‘Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’ Yeshua saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, ‘Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!’ Nathanael said to Him, ‘How do You know me?’ Yeshua answered and said to him, ‘Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.’ Nathanael answered Him, ‘Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.’ Yeshua answered and said to him, ‘Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these.’ And He said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.’”

Within John’s record of the calling of the Twelve Disciples (John 1:40-44), Yeshua’s encounter with Nathanael does beg a few questions (John 1:45-46). While Nathanael’s question of Yeshua, “Nazareth? Can anything good come from there?” (John 1:46, CJB/CJSB), is then countered with Yeshua’s own declaration, “Look, a true Israelite! There’s nothing false in him” (John 1:47, TLV), the dialogue which follows merits some closer observations.

Nathanael asks how Yeshua knew of him. Yeshua was likely at prayer under a fig tree, and saw Nathanael and his friend Philip interacting with one another, as Yeshua states, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you” (John 1:48, NIV). Yeshua had a perceptiveness about Him, which caused Him to declare Nathanael “truly an Israelite in whom is no guile!” (John 1:47, LITV). All that this required, on the part of Yeshua, was an internal discernment or ability to ascertain character. It was not as though in this scene Philip and Nathanael were on the other side of the country, or even the other side of town, making it impossible for Yeshua to view their actions only by unique supernatural means.

The supernatural dynamics in play, however, had wooed Nathanael far enough for him to recognize that just as his friend had declared Yeshua to be “the One that Moses in the Torah, and also the prophets, wrote about” (John 1:45, TLV), so could he too exclaim, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Isra’el!” (John 1:49, CJB/CJSB). Here, Nathanael’s calling Yeshua *Ben-Elohim* (TLV; בְּנֵי־אֱלֹהִים, Delitzsch), probably has less to do with Yeshua’s Divine origins, and more to do with “Son of God” as a regal or Messianic title (cf. 2 Samuel 7:14; Psalm 2:6)—although with the definite article “the” appearing in the source text of *ho huios tou Theou* (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ), Yeshua’s status as *the* Son of God highlights an importance which requires further evaluation and inquiry. Yeshua informs Nathanael that if he believed in Him because He saw Him from the fig tree, that he will see even greater things (John 1:50).

Yeshua informs Nathanael about some of the greater things which will be witnessed: “Amen, amen I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God going up and coming down on the Son of Man!” (John 1:51, TLV). Here, the Genesis 28:10-12 scene of Jacob’s ladder is invoked:

“Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. He came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place. He had a dream, and behold, a ladder