

The Nature of Yeshua in the General Epistles

“These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah to eternal life” (Jude 1:19).

A survey of each of these three passages shows how interconnected the activity of God the Father and Yeshua the Son is: “loved by God the Father and kept for Yeshua the Messiah” (Jude 1, CJB/CJSB), “who pervert God’s grace into a license for debauchery and disown our only Master and Lord, Yeshua the Messiah” (Jude 4, CJB/CJSB), “keep yourselves in God’s love, as you wait for our Lord Yeshua the Messiah to give you the mercy” (Jude 1, CJB/CJSB). Jude 25 concludes the letter, extolling “God alone, our Deliverer, through Yeshua the Messiah, our Lord” (CJB/CJSB). The Epistle of Jude, at twenty-five verses, was mainly composed to address a false teaching promoting licentiousness, but even within such a short letter, readers do see that Yeshua the Son is the agent by which “God our Savior” (*Theō sōtēri hēmōn*) can be experienced. Those who hold to a high Christology of Yeshua being integrated into the Divine Identity, hardly consider Yeshua being God as something to the dismissal of the Heavenly Father.

Not to be overlooked, though, is how Jude 20-21 makes light of “praying in the *Ruach ha-Kodesh*. Keep yourselves in the love of God, eagerly waiting for the mercy of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah that leads to eternal life” (TLV). Here a revealed tri-unity of the Godhead can be detected with the Spirit, God the Father, and the Lord Yeshua being referred to. While the traditional Christian doctrine of the Trinity may be recognized as being incomplete at times, it is hardly non-Biblical or even pagan, as it is derived from passages such as Jude 20-21.

1 John 1:1-4

“Yeshua the Word of Life”

“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Yeshua the Messiah. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.”

Various approaches are witnessed in contemporary scholarship, to the content of the Epistle of 1 John, mainly given the presence of late First Century false teachings and heresies. Some of these errors are thought to be associated with the full rise of Gnosticism by the Second Century, whereas these errors might just as well be incoherent ideas and concepts capable of doing nothing more than hurting the Body of Messiah. In view of the content of 1 John, it is easily deduced that the false teaching(s) addressed, promoted lawlessness and licentiousness. The false teaching(s) also detracted from a secure identification of Yeshua the Messiah as one sacrificed for the sins of human beings, and the proper lifestyle incumbent of those who have placed their trust in Him. When one surveys the Epistle of 1 John, warnings against sin are affluent, and statements about the nature of Yeshua are presented—not only to combat whatever amalgamation of errors the audience had encountered—but to most especially encourage the audience to live in accordance with the salvation they have been provided.

The author of 1 John attests to being a first hand witness of Yeshua the Messiah, having not only seen Him in person, but also having touched Him: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our

hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life” (1 John 1:1, NIV). This leads many, including this writer, to conclude that the author of 1 John is, in fact, the Apostle John. The subject of his letter is *peri tou logou tēs zōēs* (περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς), “regards the Word of Life” (LITV). Here, it is to be properly recognized how there is some connection to be made with the Word or Logos of John 1:1.

John, a firsthand witness of Yeshua of Nazareth, further communicates, “the life was revealed, and we have seen and testify and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us” (1 John 1:2, TLV). John first references *tēn zōēn tēn aiōnion* (τὴν ζῶην τὴν αἰώνιον) or “the eternal life.” Within a scope of Bible passages, it is reasonably concluded how there are multiple dimensions of eternal life, including being forgiven and redeemed from sins, as well as a quality of being that one is to experience with his or her Creator. Colin G. Kruse asserts that “the eternal life” of 1 John 1:2 should be taken as a reference to the person of Yeshua the Messiah Himself, who, to be sure, is the nexus of our understanding of what eternal life actually is:

“The expression ‘eternal life’...refers to the Word of life, the Son of God, who was found with the Father prior to his incarnation, and in whom eternal life is found (cf. 1 John 5:11-12). It was the eternal life which was with God from the beginning which, the author says, **has appeared to us** incarnate in Jesus Christ.”⁵⁴

Indeed, some of the closing words of the Epistle of 1 John, precisely confirm this:

“And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:11-13).

Questions should immediately be raised about the gravity of what it means for Yeshua the Son to be titled as “the eternal life” (1 John 1:2), whose “blood cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Could a supernatural, but ultimately created being, be legitimately labeled as “the eternal life”? Fortunately, John does not leave unanswered how he approached the Savior, further stating *hētis ēn pros ton patera* (ἦτις ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα), “which was with the Father” (Brown and Comfort).⁵⁵ Given how Yeshua has been just called “the Word of life” (1 John 1:1), and now how He “**was** with the Father” or *ēn pros ton patera*, a linguistic connection should be made with the declaration of John 1:1: “the Word **was** with God, and the Word **was** God” or *ho logos ēn pros ton Theon, kai Theos ēn ho logos* (ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος). Marshall recognizes how “The language used here is precisely that which was used of the personal Word which was with God in the beginning (Jn. 1:2). It was the personal manifestation of eternal life in the historical person of Jesus which was of crucial importance for the writer—and his readers.”⁵⁶

Identifying some of the grammatical features of 1 John 1:2 and John 1:1, Stephen S. Smalley further summarizes,

“[T]he christological reference is almost certainly primary, in view of the qualitative relative ἦτις (ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα) [*hētis (ēn pros ton patera)*], ‘which (existed with the Father),’ and the force of the imperfect ἦν [*ēn*], ‘was’ (note the connections with ν 1 ὁ ἦν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς [*ho ēn ap’ archēs*], ‘what was there from the beginning,’ and John 1:1, ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,’ where the Gr. has ἦν [*ēn*] in both sentences). In other words John seems to be saying: ‘we are proclaiming to you the life which is indeed eternal, *seeing that this life was* (not ‘is’) with

⁵⁴ Colin G. Kruse, *Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letters of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 57.

⁵⁵ Brown and Comfort, 829.

⁵⁶ I. Howard Marshall, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), pp 103-104.

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the Father (pre-existently).’...John’s lofty christology at this point may be intended to remind those of his readers who saw Jesus as human, and little more...that he was also divine...’⁵⁷

Yeshua, “the Word of life” (1 John 1:1) and “the eternal life,” was One who “was with the Father” (1 John 1:2). With thematic and linguistic connections properly made with John 1:1, this serves as sure evidence of Yeshua being integrated into the Divine Identity. But let it never be said that Yeshua the Son being God, is something that serves to the dismissal of the Heavenly Father. The major thrust of the Epistle of 1 John is that the Believers live in accordance with the ways and commandments of God, something which very much involves their fellowship with both the Father and the Son: “What we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so you may have fellowship with us. Indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and His Son, Yeshua the Messiah. These things we write so our joy may be full” (1 John 1:3-4, TLV).

1 John 2:18-21

“Denying the Father and the Son”

“Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antimessiah is coming, even now many antimessiahs have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but the one who denies that Yeshua is the Messiah? This is the antimessiah, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life. These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.”

The Apostle John warns his audience about the then-present activities of *antichristos* (ἀντίχριστος; 1 John 2:18). While there is a future antimessiah or antichrist figure to be anticipated in history (Daniel 8:9-12, 22-25; 9:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; Revelation 13:1-9), the demonic presence of a spirit of antimessiah is something that always has to be fought against. This was something that John’s audience had to guard itself against, as it is attested how various persons who had been among their faith community in the vicinity of Ephesus, were later shown to be of antimessiah: “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out, that it might be plain that they all are not of us” (1 John 2:19, RSV). John’s audience is attested to be those who know the truth and will not be deceived (1 John 2:20-21).

John inquires, *Tis estin ho pseustēs ei mē ho arnoumenos hoti Iēsous ouk estin ho Christos* (Τίς ἐστιν ὁ ψεύστης εἰ μὴ ὁ ἀρνούμενος ὅτι Ἰησοῦς οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ Χριστός), “Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus [not] is the Christ?” (1 John 2:22a, Mounce and Mounce).⁵⁸ We should rightly take the statement “Who is the liar, if not the one who denies that Yeshua is the Messiah?” (TLV), as being a denial of the Messiahship of Yeshua. This was a denial that Yeshua

⁵⁷ Stephen S. Smalley, *Word Biblical Commentary: 1,2,3 John*, Vol 51 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984), 10.

⁵⁸ William D. Mounce and Robert H. Mounce, eds., *The Zondervan Greek and English Interlinear New Testament (NASB/NIV)* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008, 2011), 917.