

## The Nature of Yeshua in the General Epistles

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...’<sup>57</sup>

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).<sup>58</sup> 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

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

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

of Nazareth was the prophesied Redeemer and King of Israel, and a denial that His accomplished work at Golgotha (Calvary) meant anything. The paralleling word of 2 John 7 says, “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Yeshua the Messiah *as* coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antimessiah.” As is implied by the previous indication (1 John 2:19), there were those once inside the local faith community to whom John wrote, who had once recognized Yeshua as the prophesied Messiah in some way, but later had denied Him.

(It is unfortunate to observe, but there are people today—Jewish *and* non-Jewish alike—who were once part of the Messianic movement, and have later denied Yeshua of Nazareth as the prophesied Messiah of Israel. While there is always a spiritual or supernatural component as to why people deny Yeshua, much of this can and does involve an evaluation of prophesies in the Tanach ascribed to Him.)<sup>59</sup>

That Yeshua the Son and God the Father are significantly interconnected, is seen in how John communicates *outos estin ho antichristos, ho arnoumenos ton patera kai ton huion* (οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀντίχριστος, ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱόν), “this one is the antichrist, the one denying the Father and the Son” (John 2:22b, Brown and Comfort).<sup>60</sup> The presence of the demonic force of antimessiah manifests not only when someone denies Yeshua the Son, but it also involves a denial of the Heavenly Father. The Son is not an independent actor in the salvation process, but nor is the Father the only actor in the salvation process, either. A seeming denial of the Son as the Messiah not meriting a denial of the Heavenly Father, is, according to John, something unsustainable. A supernatural experience involving both the Father and the Son, is necessary, according to John, in order to be truly redeemed: “No one who denies the Son has the Father; the one who acknowledges the Son also has the Father” (John 2:23, TLV).

Those who hold to a low Christology of Yeshua, perceive Him as a supernatural, albeit created, agent, which enables mortal humans to access the Heavenly Father. But, that there is a co-participation of Son and the Father is something further specified by John. He says, “Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you will abide in the Son and in the Father” (1 John 2:24, RSV). It is directed, *en tō huiō kai en tō patri meneite* (ἐν τῷ υἱῷ καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ μένετε), “in the Son and in the Father will remain (abide)” (Brown and Comfort).<sup>61</sup> It would hardly have been out of place for John to have said, “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 God” (1 John 2:24, NASU modified). Instead, John specifies the spiritual abiding, the Believer’s sphere of spiritual growth and maturation, to be in *both* the Son *and* the Father—with the Son notably mentioned first in 1 John 2:24. This could hardly be a statement by one seeing Yeshua the Son as a created entity.

Interestingly enough, with it just having been stated, “you will also remain in union with both the Son and the Father” (1 John 2:24, CJB/CJSB), John then communicates, “And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life” (1 John 2:25, ESV). What is intended by the statement, *kai autē estin hē epangelia hēn autos epēngeilato hēmin* (καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐπαγγελία ἣν αὐτὸς ἐπηγγείλατο ἡμῖν)? Specifically, who is the “He” of 1 John 2:25 intended to be? Is this the Father or the Son? Contextually it could be either, and preferably we should take the “He” as involving the Father and the Son as co-members of a plural Godhead, who were to both serve as the focal point of a Believer’s abiding in faith (1 John 2:24). While Smalley ultimately

<sup>59</sup> The succeeding volume, *Salvation on the Line, Volume III*, will be addressing the Messiahship of Yeshua.

<sup>60</sup> Brown and Comfort, 833.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

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concludes that the Son is the “He” mentioned in 1 John 2:25, he also indicates how interconnected the work of the Father and the Son are in salvation:

“In 1 John the pronoun αὐτός [*autos*] (‘he’) usually refers to God or to Jesus (but see 3:24; 4:15). Here the allusion could be to either or both: eternal life is a pledge which is given to the believer *from God through Jesus*...This accords with the fact that both the Son and the Father are mentioned in v. 24. However, perhaps...the primary reference is to the promise, or pledge, of Jesus himself.”<sup>62</sup>

### 1 John 3:19-24

#### “The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit”

“We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Yeshua the Messiah, and love one another, just as He commanded us. The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.”

Many people who believe in a plural Godhead of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, believe so on the basis of passages like 1 John 5:7, which in the King James Version reads as, “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.”<sup>63</sup> The authenticity of the statement made in the Greek Textus Receptus, the source text for the KJV, is denied by all Biblical scholars today, with the exception of various fundamentalists who regard the Textus Receptus as the only legitimate edition of the Greek New Testament to be used by God’s people. A version like the New American Standard, Updated Edition, employing more critical Greek resources, instead reads, “This is the One who came by water and blood, [Yeshua the Messiah]; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.”

Philip W. Comfort offers the following summary, on what is commonly called the Johannine Comma, of 1 John 5:7, in his massive *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary*:

John never wrote the following words: “in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth.” This famous passage, called “the heavenly witnesses” or *Comma Johanneum*, came from a gloss on 5:8 which explained that the three elements (water, blood, and Spirit) symbolize the Trinity (the Father, the Word [Son], and the Spirit).

This gloss had a Latin origin...The first time this passage appears in the longer form (with the heavenly witness) is in the treatise *Liber Apologeticus*, written by the Spanish heretic Priscillian (died ca. 385) or his follower, Bishop Instantius. Metzger said, “apparently the gloss arose when the original passage was understood to symbolize the Trinity (although the mention of the three witnesses: the Spirit, the water, and the blood), an interpretation which may have been written first as a marginal note that afterwards founds its way into the text” (TCGNT). The gloss showed up in the writings of Latin Fathers in North Africa and Italy (as part of the text of the Epistle) from the fifth century onward, and found its way into more and more copies of the Latin Vulgate. (The original translation of Jerome did not include it.) “The heavenly witness” passage has not been found in the text of any Greek manuscript prior to the fourteenth century,

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<sup>62</sup> Smalley, 121.

<sup>63</sup> The NKJV similarly has, “For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.”