

Yochanan ~ Part 1

Although I love all the **Gospels**, I have to count **Yochanan's** as my favorite, followed by **Mattityahu**, **Luke**, and **Mark**. **Yochanan** presents a unique story of our **Messiah**.

The **Gospel of Yochanan** is different from the **Synoptic Gospels** in that more than 90 percent of its material is unique. His **Gospel** does not focus on the miracles, parables, and public speeches that are so prominent in the other accounts. Instead, this **Gospel** emphasizes **Yeshua's** identity as the **Son of God** and how we, as **Believers**, should respond to **His** teaching.¹

Although the author's name does not appear in the **Gospel**, early church tradition strongly and consistently identified him as the **Apostle Yochanan**. The early church father Irenaeus (ca. a.d. 130–200) was a disciple of Polycarp (ca. a.d. 70–160), who was a disciple of the **Apostle Yochanan**, and he testified on **Polycarp's** authority that **Yochanan** wrote the **Gospel** during his residence at **Ephesus** in **Asia Minor** when he was advanced in age.²

In The Beginning

In his prologue to the **Good News**, **Yochanan** sets forth both the divine and human origin and nature of the **Messiah**. Contrary to modern **Jewish** opinion, which holds that the **Messiah** is to be human only, numerous **Jewish** sources speak of the supernatural features of the **Messiah**.

*1¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2² He was with God in the beginning. 3³ All things came to be through Him, and without Him nothing made had being. 4⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. 5⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not suppressed it. 6⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was Yochanan. 7⁷ He came to be a testimony, to bear witness concerning the light; so that through him, everyone might put his trust in God and be faithful to Him. 8⁸ He himself was not that light; no, he came to bear witness concerning the light. 9⁹ This was the true light, which gives light to everyone entering the world. 10¹⁰ He was in the world - the world came to be through Him - yet the world did not know Him. 11¹¹ He came to His own homeland, yet His own people did not receive Him. 12¹² But to as many as did receive Him, to those who put their trust in His person and power, He gave the right to become children of God, 13¹³ not because of bloodline, physical impulse or human intention, but because of God. 14¹⁴ The Word became a human being and lived with us, and we saw His Sh'khinah, the Sh'khinah of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth. 15¹⁵ Yochanan witnessed concerning Him when he cried out, "This is the man I was talking about when I said, 'The one coming after me has come to rank ahead of me, because He existed before me.' " 16¹⁶ We have all received from His fullness, yes, grace upon grace. 17¹⁷ For the Torah was given through Moshe; grace and truth came through Yeshua the Messiah. 18¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; but the only and unique Son, who is identical with God and is at the Father's side - He has made Him known.*³

¹ Andreas Köstenberger, "John," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Commentary*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen and Jeremy Royal Howard (Broadman & Holman, 2015), 1127.

² John F. MacArthur Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible: New American Standard Bible*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006). Introduction to John.

³ David H. Stern, *Yochanan 1:1-18*.

I didn't want to break up the flow of **Yochanon's** beautiful passage, so here are some notes of explanation:

1a - *In the beginning was the Word.* The language echoes the first sentence of **Genesis**, "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*" The **Word** which **was with God and ... was God** is not named as such in **Genesis** but is immediately seen in action: "**And God said, 'Let there be light'** " (Genesis 1:3).

1b–3 - Is **Yochanan** speaking about two (*the Word was with God*) or one (*the Word was God*)? *Yochanan's* answer expresses **Hebraic** rather than **Greek** thinking: it is a matter of both/and, not either/or. We learn in these verses that the **Word** was not a created being, as the fourth-century heretic **Arius** taught and as **Jehovah's Witnesses** teach today.

4 – 9 - **Yeshua** as the **true light** for the world is a major theme of **Yochanan**.

12 - **Put their trust in his person and power**, literally, "*put their trust in his name.*" The concept of "**name**" in the **Ancient Middle East** included everything a person was. We retain the sense today when we say someone speaks "*in a person's name,*" meaning with his authority and expressing his views. To "*trust in the name of Yeshua the Messiah*" certainly does not mean to attribute magic properties to the name itself.

The right to become children of God. Isn't everyone a child of **God**? In a sense, yes (Acts 17:28); indeed, all are created "*in his image*" (Genesis 1:26–27, James 3:9). In numerous places, **God** reveals himself as a **Father** (and in at least one place, Isaiah 49:14–15, as a **Mother**) to **Isra'el**. But here being a "**child of God**" means having an intimate personal relationship with him, as did **Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya'akov, Moshe,** and **David**. **God** spoke to them personally, and they spoke to **Him**. It is exactly the same way with everyone who comes to trust in the **Messiah**, meeting the conditions of the **New Covenant**: the **Believer** is able to be in touch **with God, His Father**. We will learn more about that in chapters 15–17 and numerous places in **Sha'ul's** letters.

In our next post, we will begin to explore the **Gospel of Yochanan** (John)

⁴ David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Commentary 1:1-18.