

Hebrew Heritage Bible Society

A division of the Gospel Research Foundation

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Theological Message

The Gospel of John also answers the question, “Who is Yeshua?” He is referred to as the “Word” [*logos* in Greek, Hebrew equivalent, *meamar*] (1:14). He is called the “lamb of God” by John the Baptist (1:29, 36). He is given messianic references, “Messiah” (1:41), “Son of God” (1:49), the “King of Yisrael” (1:49), the “Savior of the people of the world” (4:42), and in a climactic drama following the resurrection, the one who doubted, Thomas, proclaims, “My Lord and my God” (20:28). While the first three Gospels are more biographical, the Gospel of John is much more theological. The Last Supper in the earlier Gospels is a Passover meal. In John’s Gospel, chapter 13 describes a fellowship meal when Yeshua washes the feet of his disciples. Jesus is being crucified at the time that the Passover lambs are being offered in the Temple sacrifice. This contradiction and its significance is often debated. Quite probably, the best explanation is that Passover was celebrated on more than one night because of the different groups of Jewish people in Jerusalem. Jesus ate Passover with his followers according to the calendar of the Pharisees, while the Gospel of John describes the Passover of the Sadducees. At least, Jesus seems to be nearer to the teachings and the theology of the Pharisees than any other group.

Jesus explained to the disciples that he must go away. The theme of how the followers of the Lord manage without the physical presence of Yeshua is a powerful teaching motif. They need the Spirit of truth who will remind them of the teachings of Jesus and help them apply the message to a new and more strenuous situation. The advocate of the Father will assist them in facing new challenges. Encouragement for persistent prayer and unity in love is highly valued. After the trial before Pilate and the Roman cruelty in crucifixion, the resurrected Jesus appears to

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his followers. Interestingly, Mary Magdalene (Miryam Migdal) experiences the resurrected Jesus: “Miryam Migdal went back. ‘I have seen the Lord!’ she announced to the disciples, telling them everything that He had said to her” (20:18). Yeshua appears to Peter, John, and other disciples. Thomas cannot believe unless he touches the wounds from the crucifixion. When he sees the Lord, he believes. Yeshua told him, “Have you believed only because you have seen Me? O what blessing God shows to those who have not seen, and yet believe” (20:29). The theme of belief and faith, without seeing the resurrected Lord, is highly prized.

Simon Peter rejected and denied Jesus three times. He is given an opportunity to affirm his commitment to Jesus three times (21:15-19). Jesus asked Peter if he was a loyal friend. He asked the future leader if he really loved him. After three times, Jesus told him, “Then take care of my sheep” (21:17). The risen Lord tells Simon Peter, “Follow Me,” signifying that Peter would die a martyr. He would teach and disciple new believers to spiritual maturity, and he would give his life for his faith.

Moreover, the Gospel of John is characterized by the great “I am” declarations of Jesus. Yeshua declares, “I am” - the bread of life (6:35), the light of the world (8:12), the gate for the sheep pen (10:7), the good shepherd (10:11), the resurrection and the life (11:25), the way, the truth and the life (14:6), and the true vine (15:1). The “I am” statements throughout the Gospel text would have reminded Jewish readers of the call of Moshe in Exodus 3, where the root word for the verb of being, is used in the causitive sense meaning, “I am.” Perhaps another translation of the Hebrew is, “I will cause to be all that is needed to be” or “I will meet every need because I am with you always” (Exodus 3:12-13).