

Johnson – John’s Son

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on the Occasion of Joel Johnson’s Bar Mitzvah**

Joel, welcome to the ranks of Ohev’s adult members. From this day forward, you will participate as an adult in all of Ohev’s services, and adult responsibilities will be expected of you.

The subject of this message, on the occasion of your Bar Mitzvah, was given to me during prayer two weeks ago. Today you were identified during the Torah Service as Yoel ben Ya’akov, which is correct, since you are Joel, son of your father James who, in Hebrew, is Ya’akov. But you may not have thought about another of your names, and that is Yoel ben Yochanan – “Joel son of John.” Wait a minute, you say – my father is James – not John. Well that is so, but you are also a son of John, because your family name happens to be “Johnson – John’s Son”. Get it? “Johnson – John’s Son.” I believe that coincidences do not generally happen in the lives of those who belong to God, so I am assuming that your family name Johnson is not a coincidence. Also, allowing names to be prophetic and blessing a person according to his name is Scriptural, so let’s look at what being a Johnson might mean for you.

The first question we ought to ask is which John of the Bible should we be talking about? There are two prominent ones – John the Immerser, and John the disciple. Either of the Johns is worthy of study, but John the disciple is the one I have in mind, and he is the one I will speak to you about today. Let’s see, therefore, what there is about that John, and his writings, that God may have you emulate and that may be in your future.

John wrote a book of the Bible that we call “The Gospel According to John;” he wrote other things also, but it is the Gospel book I will be speaking of. Of the four Gospels in the New Covenant Scriptures, John’s is unique in its disclosure of incidents in Yeshua’s life that are not mentioned in Matthew, Mark, or Luke. These three are sometimes referred to as the “synoptic” gospels in order to emphasize things they have in common that are different in the Book of John. For example, whereas in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Yeshua’s life is portrayed mainly from an historical perspective and from his birth to his death, John’s account of Yeshua begins before the creation, and his various disclosures are on an elevated spiritual and prophetic plane.

Joel, I believe your destiny in God is to be on an elevated spiritual plane as well, and it is that which I pray over you today – that you may have spiritual, doctrinal, and prophetic understanding, and a passion for truth as had John. Let’s look now at a few of the verses that John uses as he begins his Gospel:

John 1:1-5 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

John 1:14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

John 1:16-17 *And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Yeshua the Messiah.*

There is much wisdom in those words, and as John's son (Johnson), I urge you to seek to understand these words and to acquire the wisdom they convey. Joel, do you know why John says that the law was given through Moses but that grace and truth came through Yeshua?

I'll answer my own question because I want to show you how deep and important John's writing is. Many people are baffled when they read the statement, and some wrongly derive from it that Yeshua's grace replaced the Mosaic Law. They do that because they were taught that Moses came before Yeshua, and therefore they automatically assume that Moses' Law came before Yeshua's grace. But according to John, that's not so. Yeshua came first as "the Word;" in fact, He was there "in the beginning." So you see, God's grace and truth came first, and then came the Law. Grace and truth were always there, so there is no conflict and no replacement. Neat, isn't it? So, as a Johnson, you won't forget that, will you? And now you'll be able to teach it to others.

Throughout John's gospel book, John identifies Yeshua as being both God and the Son of God, and he also teaches the unity of the Father and the Son. In the end, John leaves them as mysteries, but his writing goes further than the other gospels in seeking to explain them.

Let's look a little further in John's gospel. Chapter 2, verses 13-16 tell us:

"Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Yeshua went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, 'Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!'"

Yeshua was very principled and, as a Johnson, "John's son," God expects you to be also. You will no doubt deal with other principles than those illustrated by Yeshua, and you will not be turning over money tables, but principled you are destined to be, and your life will be marked by the principles you stand for and teach to others.

One of the most prevalent themes of the Gospel according to John is salvation as it has to do with the Holy Spirit. In chapter 3, verses 6-8, Yeshua is recorded as teaching Nicodemus:

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

And in verses 16 and 17, we read the familiar salvation message:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

That is a positive message, but the fuller quote from verse 14 to verse 18 tells us the consequence of our not believing:

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

John's account of Yeshua did not avoid telling the truth and the whole truth, and as John's son (Johnson), neither will you. To accomplish it, and God will give you the boldness and confidence that you need to declare Yeshua's salvation message to both Jew and Gentile alike, and your willingness to share the gospel will be one of your lifelong virtues.

According to John, Yeshua was not a respecter of persons, and was not adverse to revealing Himself to those who were unpopular among his fellow Jews, but whose hearts were open. So we read in the Gospel of John, chapter 4, verses 6-14:

"Now Jacob's well was there. Yeshua therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Yeshua said to her, 'Give Me a drink.' For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, 'How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?' For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Yeshua answered and said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.'" The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" Yeshua answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

Joel son of John (Johnson), you, like John, will be bold in revealing Yeshua as the source of living water, and as not being a respecter of persons in the offering of his blessings. You will share the Good News of Yeshua with boldness and power to all whom you encounter, and you will come to know the Scriptures well. Here are some other verses from John that you must know:

John 3:35-36 *"The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. ³⁶ "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."*

John 6:35-40 *And Yeshua said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day."*

John 8:12 *Then Yeshua spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."*

John 8:58 *Yeshua said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."*

John 10:11 *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."*

John 11:25-27 *"Yeshua said to her" (Martha that is), "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."*

And so, Joel "son of John" (Johnson), through knowing these Scriptures and others, I pray over you and believe that you will bring many to the faith.

At Yeshua's final Passover *seder* with his disciples, after Judas departed to betray him, Yeshua spoke intimately to his remaining disciples, and taught them many things pertaining to the future. John records the following words in chapter 13, verses 33-35:

"Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' so now I say to you. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

It is interesting that Yeshua says to his disciples that loving one another as He loved them is a new commandment. It seems like it isn't new because Leviticus 19:18 says that we are to love our neighbor as ourself; it actually says:

"You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD."

So apparently, there is something different about Yeshua's disciples loving one another as He loved them. I think the answer to this lies in another Scripture:

John 15:12-13 *"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."*

Loving one another is not new, but the degree to which Yeshua loved his disciples appears to be a new and higher standard of love – not only as we love ourselves, but a love for others even unto sacrificing ourselves for them. In fact, the context of Yeshua declaring his love as a new commandment was immediately after he predicted his death that was soon to come. Anyway, the disciples were perplexed by Yeshua saying he was going away, and He responded in chapter 14, verses 1-4:

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know."

Yeshua is telling his disciples that they already know where He is going and the way to get there, yet Thomas does not grasp it, and so he asks Yeshua how they can know the way (verse 5)? It is then that Yeshua declares the extraordinary verses 6 and 7 of chapter 14:

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."

Philip is still mystified, because he says to Yeshua:

"Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us."

So Yeshua responds to him in verses 9-11:

"Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves."

Now Joel, that's deep, and as John's son (Johnson), I pray that you will often ponder the Scriptures in such a deep way. That means study Joel, so if you want to get the most out of the Scriptures, you must declare yourself to serious study of the Word your whole life.

John quotes Yeshua's teachings to his disciples extensively from chapter 13 to chapter 17. I cannot address it all here, but I want to touch on one thing of great importance, and that is Yeshua saying that though He must go away, He will return and, meanwhile, He will send the Holy Spirit to comfort:

John 16:7-16 *"Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you."*

And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you. A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father."

Joel, the Book of John is often the first Bible book that is recommended for a seeker to read, and there is a reason for it. The reason is that, of all the books of the Bible, it is the most complete in declaring Yeshua's bottom line for salvation and for a normal and blessed life with God. That is not to take away from the importance of the other books of the Bible, but if you properly understand and follow what is in the Book of John, you are assured of being on the right track.

Joel, your destiny in being a Johnson is to be what your name says – a son of John. To fulfill that destiny, you need to be like the Book of John – bottom-line sufficient in the doctrines of God for salvation, and for the assurance of a full and blessed life for yourself, and for the many others with whom you will share the Scriptures.

Joel, here and now, on the occasion of your *Bar Mitzvah* and in the presence of your family and friends, I hereby ask God to bestow unto you the ministry of proclaiming His Word, and to give you all the Gifts of the Spirit you need to accomplish it.

Yoel ben Ya-akov ben Yochanan – Joel Johnson, son of James, son of John:
Refer to the Book of John often, and keep it dear to your heart; it will be your constant guide in the ministry of God's Word I am confident you will have from this day forth.