

## The Nature of Yeshua in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts

standing right there beside them, there was nothing they could say to discredit the healing” (CJB/CJSB). What is recorded is that the Sanhedrin council was very disturbed about what had taken place, as news was spreading throughout Jerusalem (Acts 4:15-16). And so, Peter and John are ordered by the Sanhedrin to no longer speak to or teach to the population about Yeshua of Nazareth (Acts 4:17-18). Whether some members of the Sanhedrin were curious to learn more about Yeshua—now with someone having been healed in His name—or not, the considerable majority of the Sanhedrin considered teachings and declarations of Yeshua to be off limits. Peter and John are broadly dismissive of the Sanhedrin’s orders, letting them know that the ultimate authority to which they must answer is God (Acts 4:19-20).

While threats are issued to Peter and John from the Sanhedrin, the authorities realized that they would have a real problem on their hands if they tried to do anything more. It is narrated by Luke, “They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened” (Acts 4:21, NIV). A crowd, which once stood in agreement with condemning Yeshua to death, has now seen a lame man healed in the name of Yeshua, and is praising the God of Israel for it. It is further noted, “For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old” (Acts 4:22, RSV). *There could be chaos in the streets if Peter and John were held indefinitely as criminals, for doing nothing more than seeing that a man was healed.*

Proponents of a low Christology, of Yeshua the Messiah being a created agent of God, would claim that the Apostles not saying anything about “Jesus is God, believe in Him,” serves to prove their case. Proponents of a high Christology, of Yeshua the Messiah being integrated into the Divine Identity, should instead draw readers’ attention to what is taking place in the scene of Acts ch. 4: the Apostles Peter and John are having to defend themselves to the very Sanhedrin that condemned Yeshua to die. If these two figures really did consider Yeshua to be integrated into the Divine Identity as God, and would ever have a legitimate chance at having a hearing, they would have to establish Yeshua as being a prophet and then as Messiah of Israel—which would be difficult enough—and following this be able to provide a case for His origins. A clue that the nature of Yeshua goes well beyond that of a created supernatural entity, is definitely seen in that He is the only source of salvation for human beings (Acts 4:12). *Would this be able to be affirmed about any supernatural agent of God, such as an archangel or the figure of Wisdom?*

Readers of Acts 4:30 following, as the prayer of the Believers is issued to God the Father, note the plea, “Stretch out your hand to heal and to do signs and miracles through the name of your holy servant Yeshua” (CJB/CJSB). They ask for more supernatural healings and miracles to take place, specifically so that the injustice which took place for Yeshua being turned over to the religious and political authorities (Acts 4:25-29), can be vindicated. With more miracles taking place, more can inquire about who this Yeshua is, and the multiple dimensions of both the salvation He provides and His true nature.

### Acts 5:27-32

#### “Yeshua as Prince and Savior”

“When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, saying, ‘We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.’ But Peter and the apostles answered, ‘We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Yeshua, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to

**Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.”**

The record of the Book of Acts bears testimony to how not only was the good news or gospel message being proclaimed en masse throughout Jerusalem and Judea, but that significant, supernatural works were manifesting. After the famed death of Annias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), Luke narrates,

“At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s portico. But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem. And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to *their number*, to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them. Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all being healed” (Acts 5:12-16).

For certain, there were varied responses to the presence of Apostles like Peter, by the population at large, but one thing is certain: the people who experienced the supernatural activities were placing their trust in the Lord Yeshua, and not God’s human agents. The religious authorities, particularly the high priest and the Saddusaical priesthood, are noted as being opponents to the spread of the good news. The presence of miracles being performed in the name of a criminal, who resurrected from the dead, was not just an embarrassment to some of the main figures who condemned Yeshua—but it was also politically inconvenient, as declarations about one resurrected from the dead, and who would return to judge the world and restore Israel, would prove to undermine the Sadducees. And so, it is hardly surprising that various apostles were arrested, but then they found themselves released via supernatural means:

“But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy. They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said, ‘Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life’” (Acts 5:17-20).

The apostles are released from prison by *angelos Kurious* (“ἄγγελος κυρίου”). It does need to be fairly recognized how various Hebrew translations of the Apostolic Writings render this as *malakh YHWH* (מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה; Delitzsch, Salkinson-Ginsburg, UBSHNT).<sup>227</sup> However, this entity’s identity is best taken to be as “a messenger of the Lord” (YLT) from the general Heavenly host, and not the specific figure of the *malakh YHWH* who takes the self-identity of the LORD or YHWH proper, as witnessed in various places throughout the Tanach (discussed previously). Per the direction of the angel, the apostles continue to declare the good news of Yeshua the Messiah, in spite of the intimidation and threats by the authorities. They return to the Temple complex, declaring the gospel to those gathered. When the Sanhedrin hears of it, they have soldiers bring the apostles in to their Council, to be interrogated:

“Upon hearing *this*, they entered into the temple about daybreak and *began* to teach. Now when the high priest and his associates came, they called the Council together, even all the Senate of

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<sup>227</sup> The Sacred Name ISR Scriptures (2009) actually has “messenger of יהוה” for Acts 5:19.

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the sons of Israel, and sent *orders* to the prison house for them to be brought. But the officers who came did not find them in the prison; and they returned and reported back, saying, 'We found the prison house locked quite securely and the guards standing at the doors; but when we had opened up, we found no one inside.' Now when the captain of the temple *guard* and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them as to what would come of this. But someone came and reported to them, 'The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!' Then the captain went along with the officers and *proceeded* to bring them *back* without violence (for they were afraid of the people, that they might be stoned)" (Acts 5:21-26).

This very early group of Messianic Jewish Believers in Israel's Messiah was a significant threat to the establishment. Once again, apostles of Yeshua find themselves standing before the Sanhedrin to answer questions. The high priest, who we may assume mainly represents the Sadducees—which had the most to lose by Yeshua being preached—issued (Acts 5:27) the question, "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name—and look, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring on us the blood of this Man!" (Acts 5:28, TLV). They consider their directive to the Apostles to have been violated, they are incensed that "you have flooded Jerusalem with your doctrine" (The Amplified Bible), and that their judgment in seeing Yeshua condemned to death has been scrutinized, perhaps with their institutional credibility at stake.

Luke indicates in his record that the position of the Sanhedrin did not matter too much to the representatives of Israel's Messiah: "Peter and the other apostles replied: 'We must obey God rather than human beings'" (Acts 5:29, TNIV). From the Apostles' perspective, the high priest and his Saddusaical associates were mere mortals, prohibiting things that went far beyond realities they could ever hope to comprehend!

The first statement issued by the Apostles before the Sanhedrin, detailing what they were doing, would have had more of an effect on the Sadducees, than any other party—as they categorically denied the resurrection of the dead (Acts 23:8). They are told, *from their perspective*, the scandalous word, "The God of our ancestors raised up Yeshua, whom you killed by hanging Him on a tree" (Acts 5:30, TLV).

The second statement issued by the Apostles before the Sanhedrin, detailing what they were doing, would have had to have been at least considered by the Pharisees and scribes sitting on the Council. The Pharisees and scribes did not deny the doctrine of resurrection, and those like Joseph of Arimathea (Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50) had actually been followers of Yeshua. While a legal defense is frequently not the place to give a lengthy diatribe on the identity of the Master you serve, a significant enough claim about Yeshua is made, which would have sparked further questions regarding who He was and where He came from. Acts 5:31 is a loaded statement: "This One God exalted at His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and removal of sins" (TLV).

Within Acts 5:31, Yeshua is called in the source text *archēgon kai sōtēra* (ἀρχηγὸν καὶ σωτῆρα), "Leader and Savior" (RSV/NRSV/ESV), also translated as "Prince and Savior" (NASU). Later, as witnessed in Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrin, the source text notes how Moses is designated by the similar titles *archonta kai lutrotēn* (ἀρχοντα καὶ λυτρωτήν), "a ruler and a deliverer." But while Moses was the leader of Ancient Israel, who guided the people out of Egypt and through their wilderness sojourn, Yeshua is depicted as the Leader who offers redemption and forgiveness from sin. For those Pharisees on the Sanhedrin who were open-minded, and who knew of various Messianic expectations from the Tanach (Old Testament), the Apostles' defense before them is that they believed in a Messiah who came to offer something concurrent with, *but more significant than*, the previous work of Moses. The real

question about the nature of this Yeshua, regarded His exaltation at the right hand of God, something to be considered from Psalm 110:1: "The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'"

The Apostles declare before the Sanhedrin that they have witnessed the actions of Yeshua, and are beneficiaries of the Holy Spirit and its attendant work (Acts 5:31). With much of the city of Jerusalem having been affected by the declaration of Yeshua as Messiah and Savior, any decision the Sanhedrin made regarding the Apostles, would impact the population. The initial response of the Sanhedrin, presumably to the claims that Yeshua had been exalted to the right hand of God in Heaven and was Leader and Savior (Acts 5:31), was not dissimilar from the statements made by Yeshua Himself at His trial. Luke's narrative indicates, "When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death" (Acts 5:33, NIV). But, unlike Yeshua, who had claimed Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13 for Himself (Mark 14:53-65; Matthew 26:57-68; Luke 22:63-71), all the Apostles were seen doing was repeating the claims of their Master. In stating that Yeshua had been exalted to the right hand of the God of Israel, various Pharisees probably considered this idea to be blasphemous and in violation with their understanding of monotheism.

In the record which follows, a moderate on the Sanhedrin, the Pharisee Gamaliel, urged restraint. He was seemingly open-minded enough that something supernatural was taking place in the name of an executed man whom His followers claimed had been resurrected from the dead, and this required further investigation. He also reminded the Sanhedrin that there had been multiple messianic figures appear in relatively recent history, that they had caused a ruckus or tumult for a season, and then they disappeared and their followers dispersed. He was fair enough to direct the Sanhedrin that if this movement of Yeshua followers were of human design, that it would fail, but that if it were of God, it would succeed:

"But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and intended to kill them. But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time. And he said to them, 'Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men. For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away *some* people after him; he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God.' They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Yeshua, and *then* released them. So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for *His* name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Yeshua *as* the Messiah" (Acts 5:33-42).

## **Acts 7:36-39**

### **"The Angel Present With Israel in the Wilderness"**

"This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years. This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, 'GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN' [Deuteronomy 18:15]. This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and *who was* with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you. Our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him, but repudiated him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt."