

cross" (Philippians 2:7-8, NRSV). At this part in John's Gospel, Yeshua has not only been incarnated as a human being and executed on the tree, He has now been resurrected from the dead. What still remains to transpire is, "Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name" (Philippians 2:9, NRSV), as Yeshua has yet to return to Heaven and be exalted by the Father (Philippians 2:10-11). In pre-exalted state of resurrected humanity, Yeshua will certainly refer to the Heavenly Father as "My God."²⁷¹

As Bowman and Komoszewski further explain in *Putting Jesus in His Place*,

"In order to bring glory to the Father and out of love for lost human beings, the Son humbled himself by becoming a human being (John 1:14; Phil. 2:6-7). In becoming a man, Christ put himself in a position of dependence on his Father, as *his God* (cf. John 20:17). This meant that he depended on his Father to exalt him....As a human being, the Son still honors and subjects himself to the Father as his God (e.g., John 20:17; 2 Cor. 1:3; Rev. 3:12)."²⁷²

JOHN 20:19-23

"So when it was evening on that day, the first *day* of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Yeshua came and stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace *be* with you.' And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. So Yeshua said to them again, 'Peace *be* with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.' And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, *their sins* have been forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they have been retained.'"

When Yeshua appeared before various disciples, after being resurrected from the dead, He showed them the wounds that He incurred from His brutal execution by the Romans (John 20:19-20). Yeshua issued peace or *shalom* to them (John 20:21). By breathing upon these followers, they would receive the Holy Spirit (John 20:22), likely a preview of what was to transpire later at *Shaouot* or Pentecost (Acts 2).

One statement which can be confusing for some readers, involves the Messiah's word of John 20:23, "If you forgive someone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you hold them, they are held" (CJB/CJSB). God Himself is the One to ultimately possess the authority to forgive all the sins and transgressions of a person (cf. Mark 2:7), and so a few might wonder if created entities, such as human disciples of Yeshua, could possess such power. This could lead to some thinking that Yeshua might be created.

John 20:23 does not include a statement about these disciples having the power to forgive all of the sins of an individual human or mortal needing to be reconciled to his or her Creator. The intention of John 20:23 is properly taken as a restrictive power, concurrent with the Disciples' authority to determine *halachah* or orthopraxy for the faith community. Related statements from Yeshua appear in Matthew 16:19, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven," and Matthew 18:18, "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

Yeshua's direction, "If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; but if you hold back, they are held back" (John 20:23, TLV), probably involve the power to include or disclude

²⁷¹ Further issues will certainly be explored regarding Revelation 3:2, 12.

²⁷² Bowman and Komoszewski, pp 261, 263.

members from the assembly. John 20:23 is an authority granted by the Lord to these followers, to enact or withhold reconciliation to those who have committed an offense.

JOHN 20:24-29

"But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Yeshua came. So the other disciples were saying to him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.' After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Yeshua came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.' Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!' Yeshua said to him, 'Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.'"

Many of us, not only in our reading of the Bible—but also in various experiences in our lives—have taken some direction from the example of the disciple Thomas. Even though Thomas had heard about Yeshua's resurrection from the dead by many other disciples, he exclaimed how he would not believe until he touched Yeshua's physical wounds himself (John 20:24-25). At a gathering with various disciples, the resurrected Yeshua comes to them (John 20:26). As Yeshua directs Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe" (John 20:27, NIV). Thomas issues a word in the affirmative (John 20:28), and Yeshua says in response, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29, NIV).

What Thomas says to the resurrected Yeshua, bears significant importance as to how not only he, but also readers of the Gospel of John are to perceive His identity and origins: **"My Lord and my God!"** (John 20:28). Adherents of a high Christology of Yeshua being uncreated, and integrated into the Divine Identity, such as this writer, take Thomas' affirmation as direct evidence of him declaring Yeshua to be God.

When encountering the source text *ho Kurios mou kai ho Theos mou* (ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου), "the Lord of me and the God of me" (Brown and Comfort),²⁷³ what Yeshua is not stated to be is the Heavenly Father. Yeshua is stated to be Lord *and* God. John 1:1 opened this Gospel with the exclaim, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," but the Word is not all there is of a plural Godhead of *Elohim*. Yeshua's statement of John 5:23 should also be well taken here: "so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him." While Thomas declaring "My Lord and my God!" is hardly exhaustive as it regards the totality of God's Being, it is definitely a significant revelation of Yeshua integrated into the Divine Identity.

The author certainly had the ability to write something along the lines of *ho Kurios mou kai ho Despotēs mou* (ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ δεσπότης μου), "My Lord and my Master!", which would affirm that Yeshua was a significant authority, certainly a Rabbi of Rabbis, and most probably also a highly exalted supernatural entity. But the combination of "My Lord and my God!", and its likely Tanach background (Hosea 2:23; Psalm 35:23-24), necessarily takes examiners in another direction: of Yeshua being uncreated.

Those who hold to a low Christology of Yeshua being a created entity, even if a supernatural entity, either make a point to avoid Thomas' confession of John 20:28, or they will

²⁷³ Brown and Comfort, 404.