

(and 1:6, 'his God') the oneness between Christ and the Father is emphasized (as also in 'my father,' 2:27; 3:5, 21; or 'his father,' 1:6; 14:1)."<sup>39</sup>

There is hardly enough information in Revelation 3:12 and its employment of "My God," to make a decisive declaration that Yeshua the Messiah cannot be integrated into the Divine Identity. There is enough information in Revelation 3:12 and its employment of "My God," as opposed to "our God," to recognize that Yeshua the Son and God the Father have a special relationship that no one else has. Further investigation of this relationship, and its various components and dynamics, is required. Revelation 3:12 requires it as much, as Yeshua speaks of "My new name" (*to onoma tou to kainon*, τὸ ὄνομά μου τὸ καινόν). While a mystery to many people, Yeshua's new name should be rightly associated with His return, the defeat of Israel's enemies, and the establishment of His reign (cf. Revelation 19:11-21).

## REVELATION 3:14-22

**"To the angel of the [assembly] in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and *that* the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the [assembly]."**

The message delivered by Yeshua the Messiah to the assembly at Laodicea, is commonly appropriated in a great deal of contemporary teaching and preaching to apply to the lukewarmness, and compromised state, of much of today's Christianity (Revelation 3:15-20). Within the immediate introduction of Yeshua the Messiah to the Laodicean assembly, are significant titles ascribed: "The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God's creation" (Revelation 3:14, NRSV). Of these titles, the one which immediately jumps out as bearing the most significance for evaluating the nature of Yeshua is *hē archē tēs ktiseōs tou Theou* (ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ), rendered by the NIV as "the ruler of God's creation." The term *archē* (ἀρχή) can notably mean both "the first cause, the beginning," and "an authority figure who initiates activity or process, ruler, authority" (BDAG).<sup>40</sup>

There have been a number of important thoughts interjected on what *archē* is to mean in regard to Revelation 3:14, and what is being communicated about the nature of Yeshua. Given how Paul's letter to the Colossians was intended to be read in Laodicea (Colossians 4:16), connections have logically been made between the hymn of Colossians 1:15-20 (addressed previously) and what the Apostle John records here. Previously, it has been declared that Yeshua is "the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:15-16). Commentators are often witnessed as making further connections with John 1:3, "All things came into being

<sup>39</sup> Osborne, *Revelation*, 197.

<sup>40</sup> BDAG, 138.

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through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being,” and frequently associating the ideas of *archē* involving beginning, rulership, and what has been said thus far about “first and last” (Revelation 1:17; 2:8; cf. Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12):

- Leon Morris: “*Ruler (archē)* combine the thoughts that Christ has the supreme authority over creation and that he is the origin of created being (cf. Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:15-18).”<sup>41</sup>
- George Eldon Ladd: “The phrase in itself is capable of two translations: the ‘beginning’ of creation, or the ‘source and origin’ of creation. The latter is quite certainly the correct meaning, for John clearly regards Christ as eternal.”<sup>42</sup>
- Craig S. Keener: “Elsewhere in Revelation ‘beginning’ is an explicitly divine title linked with ‘first’ (21:6; 22:13), a clear divine title in Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12. Cognates of the Greek word used here (*archē*) denote ‘ruler’—a word that can denote rule or power.”<sup>43</sup>
- Ben Witherington III: “Christ is called both the Amen (as God is at Isa. 65:16) and the beginning of God’s creation, an explicit reference to Christ’s preexistence.”<sup>44</sup>

Beasley-Murray draws attention to the NEB rendering of Revelation 3:14 as “the prime source of all God’s creation,” emphasizing “When John speaks of Christ as *the beginning of God’s creation*, he means not the first of God’s creatures but, as the NEB renders the phrase, ‘the prime source of all God’s creation’. The concept is the same as ‘alpha’ in the title ‘alpha and omega’.”<sup>45</sup> While *hē archē tēs ktiseōs tou Theou* is hardly exhaustive in explaining the nature of Yeshua, Yeshua as Creator, the Beginning, and the Ruler places Him decisively on the Divine side of things. For certain, it speaks of the pre-existence of Yeshua, a definite requirement for a high Christology of Yeshua being integrated into the Divine Identity.<sup>46</sup>

At the close of His words to the Laodiceans, Yeshua does promise, “He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Revelation 3:21). Yeshua’s exaltation came as a result of His suffering, and His faithful followers too will be similarly exalted: *hōs kagō enikēsa kai ekathisa* (ὡς κἀγὼ ἐνίκησα καὶ ἐκάθισα), “as I also overcome and sat” (Brown and Comfort).<sup>47</sup> Yeshua the Messiah’s exaltation involves His being recognized as Lord or YHWH (Philippians 2:10-11; Isaiah 45:23) and supremacy over all, but any association of Yeshua’s followers with Him does not involve their being recognized as Lord. Yeshua’s Disciples were instead promised, “in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28). Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:12, “If we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us.”

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<sup>41</sup> Morris, *Revelation*, 81.

<sup>42</sup> Ladd, 65.

<sup>43</sup> Keener, *Revelation*, 158.

<sup>44</sup> Witherington, *Revelation*, 107.

<sup>45</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 104.

<sup>46</sup> A slightly dissenting view, however, is offered by Beale, 301, who concludes that *hē archē tēs ktiseōs tou Theou* involves Yeshua being the initiator of the New Creation to come in the future Eternal State:

“John has in mind not Jesus as the principle, origin, or source of the original creation, but Jesus as the inaugurator of the new creation. τῆς κτίσεως [*tēs ktiseōs*] (‘of the creation’) is best taken as partitive genitive, although implicit in the idea of ἡ ἀρχὴ [*hē archē*] may be three ideas: inauguration, supremacy over, and temporal priority....Some commentators who assume that τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ [*tēs ktiseōs tou Theou*] (‘of the creation of God’) refers to the original creation do not like the translation ‘beginning’ for ἀρχὴ [*archē*] because they think this would necessitate viewing Jesus as a created being along with the rest of creation. However, seeing the phrase as a reference to the new creation results in [a] different understanding.”

<sup>47</sup> Brown and Comfort, 860.