

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

(BDAG).<sup>225</sup> Veneration, or worship of Yeshua the Messiah, is not something to be regarded in isolation of worship, praise, or formal blessing of the One God of Israel. Frequently, proponents of a low Christology, that promotes Yeshua as a created being, will accuse those who hold to a high Christology, of facilitating “Jesus-olatry.” But Luke 24:52-53, held together, should serve to indicate that veneration or worship of Yeshua the Messiah is not something that does, and certainly not should, occur independent of formal worship or blessing of what a wider audience recognizes to be worship of the God of Israel. Worship of the Son should take place in conjunction with worship of the Father.

### Acts 2:14-36

#### “Peter’s Shavuot Message Declaring Yeshua the Messiah”

“But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: ‘Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is *only* the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: “AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,” God says, “THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT and they shall prophesy. AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED” [Joel 2:28-32]. Men of Israel, listen to these words: Yeshua the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. For David says of Him, “I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN. THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE; BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE” [Psalm 16:8-11]. Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT *one* OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE [Psalm 132:11; 2 Samuel 7:12-13], he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID HIS FLESH SUFFER DECAY [Psalm 16:10]. This Yeshua God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: “THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, ‘SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET’” [Psalm 110:1]. Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Messiah—this Yeshua whom you crucified.”

Many advocates of a low Christology, thinking that Yeshua the Messiah is a supernatural but ultimately created being, tend to conclude that statements of a high Christology of Yeshua being God are absent from the Apostle Peter’s message declared at *Shavuot*/Pentecost. *What does*

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<sup>225</sup> BDAG, 408.

*the Apostle Peter say about Yeshua the Messiah in his dynamic preaching at Shavuot/Pentecost?* In the record of Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon those at the Upper Room, and those gathered began speaking in tongues or other languages (Acts 2:1-5), it is witnessed how the masses present were widely bewildered about what was happening (Acts 2:6-12), with some thinking that those speaking in other languages were actually drunk (Acts 2:13). It cannot go overlooked how a majority, or least large minority, of the crowd to which Peter spoke, was not native to Judea—but composed groups of Jewish people from the Diaspora, in Jerusalem to observe the Feast of Weeks. So within much of Peter’s message, a review of the major events that had preceded them was in order. **For many who would hear Peter’s message, this would be the first time they had even heard about Yeshua of Nazareth.**

Peter opens his message to the crowd, making the point that those speaking in tongues or other languages were not drunk (Acts 2:14-16). Instead—and with an obvious Jewish audience, obedient to the command to remember *Shavuot* (Deuteronomy 16:16), and seemingly well versed in the Tanach present—Peter makes a direct appeal to Joel 2:28-32 being the process of taking place (Acts 2:17-21). This especially highlights God’s decree of how “I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh” (Acts 2:17, RSV; cf. Joel 2:28), and how what was being witnessed was something foretold. Joel’s prophecy does explicitly communicate, “And then, whoever calls on the name of *ADONAI* will be saved” (Acts 2:21, CJB/CJSB; cf. Joel 2:32), and this word is explicitly applied to the salvation available in the Lord Yeshua in Romans 10:13 (discussed further).

The Holy Spirit being poured out was a consequence of Joel 2:28-32 being in play, and the cause of the Holy Spirit being poured out was the arrival of Yeshua the Messiah onto the scene of history. Peter’s message or sermon to the crowd offers some of the high points of who this Yeshua is, what He did, what happened to Him, and what His present disposition is.

Yeshua is firstly emphasized by Peter to have been a figure who came on the scene performing various miracles and wonders: “Men of Israel, hear these words: Yeshua of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know” (Acts 2:22, PME). At first introduction, Yeshua is treated as a man who was sent from God (*Iēsoun ton Nazōraion, andra apodedeigmenon apo tou Theou, Ἰησοῦν τὸν Ναζωραῖον, ἄνδρα ἀποδοειγμένον ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ*). Yeshua continues in a tradition from Ancient Israel of various Prophets and other figures who were sent from God and empowered by God.

Yeshua is secondly emphasized by Peter to have been a figure “delivered up according to the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, [who] you nailed to a cross by the hand of the lawless, and you killed Him” (Acts 2:23, PME). In the ears of the Jewish listeners, this should have immediately invoked how many Prophets and righteous figures of Ancient Israel were not only frequently persecuted, but also often met an untimely and unjust death.

Yeshua is thirdly emphasized by Peter to have been, as a vindication of His activities, to have been resurrected from the dead: “But God raised Him up, releasing Him from the pains of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held by it” (Acts 2:24, TLV). A Davidic quotation is then made from Psalm 16:8-11 in Acts 2:25-28, with intended connections to be made with King David speaking prophetically of Yeshua’s resurrection. With a Davidic association made with Yeshua, Peter details how King David died, was buried, and hence was not resurrected (Acts 2:29). Peter makes significant light of Yeshua being a descendant of David, seated on his throne, and how David actually foretold of Yeshua’s resurrection (Acts 2:30-31; Psalm 132:11; 2 Samuel 7:12-13; Psalm 16:10). Peter and his associates are firsthand witnesses of the resurrection of Yeshua (Acts 2:32).

After having established some significant Davidic, and hence Messianic, distinction for Yeshua of Nazareth, Yeshua is fourthly emphasized by Peter to have ascended into Heaven,

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and exalted at the right hand of God: “Therefore, being exalted to the right hand of God...” (Acts 2:33a, TLV). And, it is detailed how the Holy Spirit has been sent forth (Acts 2:33b), just as Yeshua had promised (Acts 1:4-5). That Yeshua is no ordinary person, and is certainly greater than King David, is certainly seen in Peter’s assertion of how, “For David did not ascend into the heavens” (Acts 2:34a, TLV). The narrative of King David’s life was that he died as an old man (2 Kings 2:10-11); David was not resurrected from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of God the Father.

Yeshua’s supernatural identity, for the purposes of Peter’s teaching to those at *Shavuot*/Pentecost, is emphasized via a Davidic motif. Just as King David is the one who is credited here with having prophesied of the resurrection of the Messiah (Acts 2:30), so is he the one appealed to regarding the exaltation of the Messiah. Psalm 110:1 is quoted in Acts 2:34b-35: “but he himself {David} says, ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, ‘SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET’” [Psalm 110:1].” For many hearing this for the first time, Yeshua the Messiah being exalted into Heaven as the second Lord of Psalm 110:1 (discussed previously), would mean that He, for sure, shared the ultimate in power. And as is further stated by Peter in Acts 2:36, closing this dynamic message, “Therefore, let the whole house of Israel know beyond doubt that God has made him both Lord and Messiah—this Yeshua, whom you executed on a stake!” (CJB/CJSB). Notice that Peter does not exclusively say that Yeshua is Messiah; Yeshua is also to be considered Lord.

Those who were hearing Peter’s sermon at *Shavuot*/Pentecost are said to have been cut to the quick, with around three thousand recognizing Yeshua as Savior (Acts 2:37-41). Peter’s message, however, as Spirit-inspired and directed as it was, covered a wide amount of material in a short space: (1) Yeshua’s identity as a prophet (Acts 2:22), (2) Yeshua’s identity as a martyr (Acts 2:23), (3) Yeshua’s identity as one resurrected from the dead (Acts 2:24-28) and as the Messianic descendant of David (Acts 2:29-32), and (4) Yeshua’s identity as the Lord who sits at the right hand of God in Heaven (Acts 2:33-35). **This message, joined with the activity of the Holy Spirit that was taking place, was convincing enough for many to turn from their sins in repentance.**

As important as Peter’s message was, though, it was hardly something which was comprehensive regarding the Messiah’s actions, the events that led up to His execution, as well as what it meant for Him to be the second Lord of Psalm 110:1. Keep in mind that nothing is stated in Peter’s message about Yeshua’s trial before the Sanhedrin, nor is anything said about some of Yeshua’s miracles or actions, much less His teachings. Peter’s sermon of Acts 2:14-36 encapsulates a message which was to confirm the activity of the Holy Spirit. Surely, it would have been up to those Jews who received the good news, and recognized Yeshua as “Lord and Messiah” (Acts 2:36), to then fellowship with those who had encountered Him in person, to learn more about His actions and teachings, before returning to their homes in the Diaspora (Acts 2:42). Likewise for any reader of the Book of Acts (or the Gospel of Luke which preceded it), it is necessary to continue to review statements which incorporate additional information and testimony as to the actions and identity of Yeshua.

### Acts 3:1-26

#### “Peter Declares Yeshua the Messiah”

“Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth *hour*, the hour of prayer. And a man who had been lame from his mother’s womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he *began* asking to receive alms. But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and