

The Nature of Yeshua in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts

“From the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have established strength [m’pi ‘ol’lim v’yonqim yissad’ta ‘oz, מִפִּי יְלָדִים וּמִשֵּׁיבֹטִים יִסְּדָהּ עֹז, because of Your adversaries, to make the enemy and the revengeful cease” (Psalm 8:2).

“Out of mouths of infants and nurslings you furnished praise for yourself [ek stomatos nēpiōn kai thēlazontōn katērtisō ainon heneka, ἐκ στόματος νηπίων καὶ θηλαζόντων κατηρτίσω αἶνον ἕνεκα], for the sake of your enemies, to put down enemy and avenger” (Psalm 8:3, NETS).

The point made in Yeshua’s quotation of Psalm 8:3, to the religious leaders, is that the veneration to be directed to the LORD or YHWH—“O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth, who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!” (Psalm 8:1)—is the veneration which is directed toward Yeshua the Messiah. Carson notes, “The children’s ‘Hosannas’ are not being directed to God but to the Son of David, the Messiah. Jesus is therefore not only acknowledging his messiahship but justifying the praise of the children by applying to himself a passage of Scripture applicable only to God.”¹⁵³ Indeed, the application of the praise offered to the LORD or YHWH in Psalm 8:3(2), could not be offered to Yeshua the Messiah, unless He were legitimately integrated into the Divine Identity. **Yeshua regards Himself as being more than just a significant reforming figure or prophet.**

Mark 12:28-37; Matthew 22:35-46; Luke 20:41-44 **“David Calls the Messiah ‘Lord’”**

“One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, ‘What commandment is the foremost of all?’ Yeshua answered, ‘The foremost is, “HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH” [Deuteronomy 6:4-5]. The second is this, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF” [Leviticus 19:18]. There is no other commandment greater than these.’ The scribe said to Him, ‘Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that HE IS ONE, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM [Deuteronomy 6:4]; AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE’S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF [Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18], is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.’ When Yeshua saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’ After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions. And Yeshua began to say, as He taught in the temple, ‘How is it that the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David? David himself said in the Holy Spirit, “THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, ‘SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET’ [Psalm 110:1].” David himself calls Him “Lord”; so in what sense is He his son?’ And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him” (Mark 12:28-37).

“But when the Pharisees heard that Yeshua had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ And He said to him, ““YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND” [Deuteronomy 6:5]. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF” [Leviticus 19:18]. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets. Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Yeshua asked them a question: ‘What do you think about the Messiah, whose son is He?’ They said to Him, ‘The son of David.’ He said to them, ‘Then how does David in the Spirit call Him “Lord,” saying, “THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, ‘SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET’ [Psalm 110:1]”? If David then calls Him “Lord,” how is He

¹⁵³ Carson, in *EXP*, 8:443.

his son? No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question" (Matthew 22:35-46).

"Then He said to them, 'How is it that they say the Messiah is David's son? For David himself says in the book of Psalms, "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 David calls Him "Lord," and how is He his son?'" (Luke 20:41-44).

It is a gross misunderstanding for readers of the Gospels to think that all of the Jewish religious leaders, in particular the Pharisees and scribes, were always negative and antagonistic toward Yeshua the Messiah. There were various Pharisees and scribes, who upon encountering Yeshua, were very impressed with His presence and what He had to say. When He was asked "Which is the most important *mitzvah* of them all?" (Mark 12:28, CJB/CJSB) or "Rabbi, which of the *mitzvot* in the *Torah* is the most important? (Matthew 22:36, CJB/CJSB), Yeshua responded with a repetition of the Deuteronomy 6:4-5 *Shema* and Leviticus 19:18 requirement to love one's neighbor (Mark 12:29-31; Matthew 22:36-40). It is seen in the record of Mark 12:32-34 that a scribe present agrees with what Yeshua has said, and that Yeshua acknowledges to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12:34). That Yeshua the Messiah expresses fidelity to the intentions of the Deuteronomy 6:4-5 *Shema*, Leviticus 19:18 requirement to love one's neighbor, and to how "All of the *Torah* and the Prophets are dependent on these two *mitzvot*" (Matthew 22:40, CJB/CJSB), is something that should be significantly recognized.

Within the dialogue of Mark 12:32-33, some questions can be raised regarding Yeshua's relationship to the One God of the *Shema*:

"Well said, Teacher,' the Torah scholar said to Him. 'You have spoken the truth, that He is *echad*, and besides Him there is no other! And "to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, and with all the strength," and "to love the neighbor as oneself," is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices'" (TLV).

The statement of Mark 12:32 includes a rewording of the Deuteronomy 6:4 *Shema*: *hoti heis estin kai ouk estin allos plēn autou* (ὅτι εἷς ἐστιν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλος πλὴν αὐτοῦ), "that there is~one and there is not another except him" (Brown and Comfort).¹⁵⁴ Proponents of a low Christology, holding to the view that Yeshua is a created supernatural being, will take the statement *plēn autou* (πλὴν αὐτοῦ), the preposition *plēn* meaning "except, but, besides" (CGEDNT),¹⁵⁵ and conclude that Yeshua is an entity independent of the One God of Deuteronomy 6:4, and thus cannot be God. What can significantly go overlooked, as recognized by a number of commentators, is that the phrasing *ouk estin allos plēn autou* or "there is no other but he" (RSV) in Mark 12:32, incorporates additional statements from the Tanach about the One God of Israel:

- C.E.B. Cranfield: "καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλος πλὴν αὐτοῦ. Cf. Deut. iv.35, Isa. xlv. 21, Exodus. viii. 10."¹⁵⁶
- William L. Lane: "The qualifying phrase 'and there is no other beside him' is drawn from Deut. 4:35 (cf. Ex. 8:10; Isa. 45:21)."¹⁵⁷
- James R. Edwards: "The scribe's rejoinder to Jesus reflects a collage of OT texts (Deut 4:35; 6:4; Lev 19:18; 1 Sam 15:22; Isa 45:21; Hos 6:6). His knowledge of Scripture, which is considerable, is not surprising for a scribe."¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Brown and Comfort, 171.

¹⁵⁵ CGEDNT, 144.

¹⁵⁶ Cranfield, *Mark*, 379.

¹⁵⁷ Lane, *Mark*, 433.

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- R.T. France: “The cause εἷς ἐστὶν derives directly from Dt. 6:4, but οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλος πλὴν αὐτοῦ is a more explicitly monotheistic formula which echoes Dt. 4:35 and the language of Deutero-Isaiah (e.g., Is. 45:21), and links the thought back again to the decalogue, οὐκ ἔσονται σοι θεοὶ ἕτεροι πλὴν ἐμοῦ (Ex. 20:3 [LXX]).”¹⁵⁹

When encountering the scribe’s statement of Mark 12:32, “and there is no other besides him” (ESV), it needs to be consciously recognized that this is not just a restatement of the Deuteronomy 6:4 *Shema*, but an incorporation of additional Tanach concepts and terms declaring the exclusivity of the God of Israel. To catalogue some of the Tanach or Old Testament passages listed by the commentators above,

“To you it was shown that you might know that the LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him” (Deuteronomy 4:35).

“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!” (Deuteronomy 6:4).

“You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:18).

“Samuel said, ‘Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *and* to heed than the fat of rams” (1 Samuel 15:22).

“Declare and set forth *your case*; indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none except Me” (Isaiah 45:21).

“For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings” (Hosea 6:6).

Recognizing that *plēn autou*, “besides Him” (LITV), has been taken from the Septuagint edition of Deuteronomy 4:35 (Heb. MT: *ein ‘od milvado*, עֵין עוֹד מִלְּבַדּוֹ), with Isaiah 45:21 in the Septuagint further communicating, *ouk estin allos plēn emou* (οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλος πλὴν ἐμοῦ), “no other besides me” (NETS; Heb. MT: *v‘ein ‘od efes elohim*, וְעֵין עוֹד אֶפֶס אֱלֹהִים), is critical. Yeshua the Messiah is recognized by a Jewish *sofer*, or scribe, as expressing fidelity to the intentions of the two greatest Torah commandments. Yeshua the Messiah is recognized as exercising teachings which correlate to the intentions of “no one else except Him” (Mark 12:32, HCSB), as Yeshua would recognize only the One God of Israel as the True Creator—hence making the gods and goddesses of the Greco-Roman pantheon imposters.

But where did Yeshua stand in relationship to this One God of Israel? With terminology from Isaiah 45:21 employed in Mark 12:32, it is of no small importance that the following statement of Isaiah 45:23¹⁶⁰ is quoted in the *Carmen Christi* hymn of Philippians 2:5-11 (discussed further). Isaiah 45:18-25 (discussed previously), declaring forth the exclusivity of the One God of Israel, is a passage which applied to the nature of Yeshua—as Yeshua is to be venerated by all beings in the cosmos as supreme! The very concept of “and besides him there is no other” (NRSV), which proponents of a low Christology believe disqualifies Yeshua from being God—is derived

¹⁵⁸ Edwards, *Mark*, 373.

¹⁵⁹ France, *Mark*, 481.

¹⁶⁰ “I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear *allegiance*” (Isaiah 45:23).

from Tanach passages later applied to Yeshua, to very much demonstrate that He is integrated into the Divine Identity as God (cf. Philippians 2:10-11)!

The Synoptic Gospels do not leave their readers wondering as to what the orientation of Yeshua the Messiah is, to the One God of Israel (Mark 12:35-37; Matthew 22:43-45; Luke 20:41-44). Referencing the place of Psalm 110:1, in regard to His self-identity, Yeshua questioned those present, “How is it that the *Torah*-teachers say the Messiah is the Son of David? David himself, inspired by the *Ruach HaKodesh*, said...{quoting Psalm 110:1}...David himself calls him 'Lord'; so how is he his son?” (Mark 12:35-36a, 37, CJB/CJSB). **Yeshua Himself says that He is more than just “the Son of David”; Yeshua is to be regarded as the “Lord” of Psalm 110:1.** And who is this “Lord”? Commenting on Matthew 22:45, “If then David calls him 'Lord,' how can he be his son?” (2011 NIV), the *NIV First-Century Study Bible* directs,

“In Hebrew, Ps 110:1 says: ‘YHWH said to *adon*,’ a shortened version of *adonai*. The title *adonai* in Hebrew means something like ‘master.’ However, in the first century *adonai* was widely used as a pseudonym for YHWH. In this respect, might *adon* be an allusion to divinity? At the very least, using the Hebrew alone, Jesus argued that the Messiah is far more than [sic] the ordinary offspring of David.”¹⁶¹

This resource has previously addressed some of the issues surrounding the Hebrew text of Psalm 110:1a.¹⁶² In light of Mark 12:32 raising the point that “there is no other besides him” (ESV), appropriating language from Deuteronomy 4:34 and Isaiah 45:21, this statement regards *the external exclusivity of the One God of Israel* to all other presumed gods and goddesses. Yeshua’s self-identity in relation to the One God of Israel, in contrast, concerns *the internal nature of this One God*. Yeshua’s Divine nature is immediately explained (Mark 12:35-37; Matthew 22:43-45; Luke 20:41-44) in association with Him being the second Lord of Psalm 110:1, “The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet,’” among other Tanach passages to be applied to Him. Psalm 110:1 notably features in statements made by Yeshua during His trial before the Sanhedrin where He is asked about His true identity (Mark 14:62; Matthew 26:64; Luke 22:69), and He is accused of blasphemy (discussed further).

Mark 13:23-27; Matthew 24:27-31; Luke 21:25-28 **“Yeshua’s Return to Planet Earth”**

“But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance. But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken [Isaiah 13:10; 34:4; Ezekiel 32:7-8; Joel 2:10]. Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS [Daniel 7:13-14] with great power and glory. And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven” (Mark 13:23-27).

“For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky [Isaiah 13:10; Ezekiel 32:7; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15], and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY [Zechariah 12:10, 14; Daniel 7:13-14] with power and

¹⁶¹ *NIV First-Century Study Bible*, 1230.

¹⁶² Heb. MT *ne’um YHWH l’adoni* (נְאֻם יְהוָה לַאֲדֹנָי); or, *ne’um YHWH l’Adonai*.