

“My God! My God! Why have you deserted me?” (Mark 15:34, CJB/CJSB). Usually, proponents of a high Christology of Yeshua being God, in instances where Yeshua is seen to call His Father, “God,” will conclude that the venue being witnessed is Yeshua operative via His incarnated humanity—which surely did take place at the scene of His execution and subsequent death. Commenting in *The Apologetics Study Bible* on Mark 15:34, Alan Hultberg says,

“The greatest mystery of the gospel is that Jesus was both God and man in one person. Though the Gospels do not tell us, we can deduce from the rest of Scripture that Jesus was forsaken by God due to His bearing the sin of the world on the cross (Is 59:2; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:24). The rupture in relationship was between God and Jesus in His humanity.”<sup>201</sup>

## **Mark 15:39; Matthew 27:54; Luke 23:47**

### **“Yeshua Dies”**

“When the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”” (Mark 15:39).

“Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Yeshua, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, ‘Truly this was the Son of God!’” (Matthew 27:54).

“Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he *began* praising God, saying, ‘Certainly this man was innocent’” (Luke 23:47).

The death of Yeshua triggered some rather significant phenomenon, as the sky had grown dark in the middle of the afternoon (Luke 23:45a). The Lord issued a loud cry with His final breath, “Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT [Psalm 31:5]” (Luke 23:46; cf. Mark 15:37; Matthew 27:50). At this moment, two groups of people have something communicated to them. The veil in the Temple, separating out the Holy of Holies, rips in two (Mark 15:38; Matthew 27:51a; Luke 23:45b), something that any of the Jewish priests present would have noticed, and probably anyone else present. Likewise, the Roman centurion attending to Yeshua’s crucifixion recognizes, at the earthquake which ensues, as he states in Luke 23:47, “Certainly this man was innocent.” Matthew also records a later sign, of how “many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many” (Matthew 27:52-53). While certainly a mystery to be pondered, we can safely speculate that those who were raised to life here were some of the recently deceased.

Significant questions are raised from the exclaim of the Roman centurion who witnessed the death of Yeshua. In Mark 15:39 we see, *alēthōs houtos ho anthrōpos huios Theou ēn* (ἀληθῶς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν), “Truly, this Man was Son of God” (LITV), followed in Matthew 27:54 with, *alēthōs Theou huios ēn houtos* (ἀληθῶς θεοῦ υἱὸς ἦν οὗτος), “Truly this One was Son of God” (LITV).<sup>202</sup>

Much has been debated by the centurion’s conclusion of Mark 15:39 and Matthew 27:54. In both passages, *Theou* or “of g/God” is in the singular. It would be quite impossible to render this with “Truly this was a son of the *gods*,” with the supernatural activities manifested somehow demonstrating that Yeshua was the offspring of mythological gods and goddesses. The testimony of Luke 23:47, in fact, is that “when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified

<sup>201</sup> Alan Hultberg, “Mark,” in *The Apologetics Study Bible*, 1501.

<sup>202</sup> It is safe to say that the Roman centurion could indeed have spoken this dialogue in Greek, upon witnessing the death of Yeshua.

# The Nature of Yeshua in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts

God” (American Standard Version). Contextually, readers are to understand this as being the One God of Israel or YHWH, and not Zeus or Jupiter.

Without reading too much into centurion’s declaration in Mark 15:39 and Matthew 27:54, it would seem reasonable that at the time of Yeshua’s death, and with significant natural and supernatural events taking place—that the centurion recognized that the Yeshua or Iēsous he was crucifying, was an important figure to be associated with Israel’s God. And indeed, recognizing the God of Israel as the True Creator is the first step that many pagans have to go through, *before* they can begin evaluating who or what the “Son of God” is, in association with this Deity.

## Matthew 28:8-10

### “The Resurrected Yeshua is Worshipped”

“And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples. And behold, Yeshua met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. Then Yeshua said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me.’”

When the two Marys recognize that Yeshua the Messiah had resurrected from the dead, their reaction is one of absolute elation. They are overwhelmed with joy and adoration for their Master. The actions that they demonstrate toward Yeshua, do bear some significance in evaluating the nature of the Messiah. As is seen in the source text of Matthew 28:9, *hai de proselthousai ekratēsan autou tous podas kai prosekunēsan autō* (αἱ δὲ προσελθοῦσαι ἐκράτησαν αὐτοῦ τοὺς πόδας καὶ προσεκύνησαν αὐτῷ). Matthew 28:9 includes a definite employment of the verb *proskuneō* (προσκυνέω) or “worship.” However, it is to be witnessed that various versions, which are employed in either Messianic Judaism and/or the Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement, indicate that their translators, or publishers, are unsure about the kind of honor or veneration issued by the Marys to Yeshua in Matthew 28:9:

- “They came up and took hold of his feet as they fell down in front of him” (CJB/CJSB).
- “And they, who had approached *Him*, took hold of His feet and they paid homage to Him” (Power New Testament).
- “And they came and held Him by the feet and did bow to Him” (ISR Scriptures-2009).
- “They came and took hold of his feet, and bowed down before him” (The Messianic Writings).<sup>203</sup>

It might be lexically acceptable to render *proskuneō* in Matthew 28:9 as either “fell down” (CJB/CJSB) or “did bow” (ISR Scriptures-2009), but is it theologically acceptable? Various commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew, recognizing that *proskuneō* can lexically mean “bow down,” actually argue on linguistic grounds that *proskuneō* should be translated as “worship,” given the prior usage in Matthew 28:9 of *ekratēsan autou tous podas*, “took hold of his {the} feet” (Mounce and Mounce):<sup>204</sup>

- Donald A. Hagner: “In that culture the grasping of feet (note the fact that Jesus was tangible) was to make an obeisance, usually to a ruler or king, expressing

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<sup>203</sup> One version, whose publishers unambiguously hold to a low Christology of Yeshua not being God, actually does translate *proskuneō* in Matthew 28:9 as “worship”:

“They went over to him, held onto his feet, and worshiped him” (Anthony F. Buzzard, trans., *The One God, the Father, One Man Messiah Translation* [Atlanta: Restoration Fellowship, 2014], 112).

<sup>204</sup> Mounce and Mounce, 126.