

“to tempt” (LS),³⁹ Deuteronomy 6:16 appearing in the NETS with, “You shall not tempt the Lord your God, as you tempted in the Temptation.”

The Messiah, challenged by Satan as to His identity being “the Son of God,” responded in Matthew 4:7 and Luke 4:12 with a quotation from Deuteronomy 6:16. Here, human people—and by extension the Adversary—are prohibited from tempting God. Both Matthew 4:7 and Luke 4:12 include an essentially verbatim quotation of Deuteronomy 6:16 from the LXX, an indication that Satan’s tempting of Yeshua, “the Son of God,” is an act of temptation against the LORD (YHWH). No one reading the Gospels would have thought it inappropriate if Yeshua’s quotation of Deuteronomy 6:16 were adapted to read something like, “On the other hand, *as I shall obey*, ‘YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST,’” given the thought that if Yeshua had thrown Himself off of the pinnacle of the Temple, He would be tempting His Father to act in rescuing Him. Instead, recognizing how the temptation is being issued directly to Yeshua, Yeshua responds as though the subject of Deuteronomy 6:16 is Himself. The only way this is possible is if Yeshua is integrated into the Divine Identity as God. None of us, as human beings, would just quote Deuteronomy 6:16 during an incident of being tempted, without some kind of significant preface beyond “it is written.”

Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37

“Demons Confess Yeshua as the Holy One of God”

“They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach. They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, ‘What business do we have with each other, Yeshua of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!’ And Yeshua rebuked him, saying, ‘Be quiet, and come out of him!’ Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him. They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, ‘What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.’ Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee” (Mark 1:21-28).

“And He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and He was teaching them on the Sabbath; and they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority. In the synagogue there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Let us alone! What business do we have with each other, Yeshua of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!’ But Yeshua rebuked him, saying, ‘Be quiet and come out of him!’ And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst of *the people*, he came out of him without doing him any harm. And amazement came upon them all, and they began talking with one another saying, ‘What is this message? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits and they come out.’ And the report about Him was spreading into every locality in the surrounding district” (Luke 4:31-37).

Any reader of the Synoptic Gospels can easily recognize how Yeshua the Messiah has distinct supernatural powers. This is especially true when He encounters human beings who were demon possessed. At a particular Sabbath, while teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum, a person who was demon possessed identified something unique about this Yeshua who had been speaking (Mark 1:23; Luke 4:33), which went beyond His teaching abilities. Speaking in the plural, the demonic entities possessing the man ask the Messiah,

³⁹ LS, 242.

The Nature of Yeshua in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts

“Have you come to destroy us?” (Mark 1:24a; Luke 4:34a) or “Are you here to get rid of us?” (Contemporary English Version). If Yeshua were just a standard mortal, it seems most improbable that when encountering demonic entities, that they would ask a question involving some dimension of the final judgment of the forces of darkness (cf. Matthew 25:41).

The further statement that the demons make, necessarily begs some inquiry into the nature of Yeshua, as the demons state in unison, “I know who You are—the Holy One of God!” (Mark 1:23b; Luke 4:34b), *oída se tis ei, ho hagios tou Theou* (οἶδά σε τίς εἶ, ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ). Commentators of both Mark and Luke have had to deliberate over the title *ho hagios tou Theou* or “the Holy One of God.” Advocates of a low Christology, of Yeshua the Messiah being a created agent of God, would conclude that the title “Holy One of God” is exactly the kind of title that a supernatural agent of God would be expected to be called. Advocates of a high Christology, of Yeshua the Messiah being integrated into the Divine Identity, would argue that the title “Holy One of God” indicates that He is unique, in contrast to any human being who would encounter the demons, and that a further case will be built as more information is revealed in the Gospel narratives.

For the **Gospel of Mark**, C.E.B. Cranfield states something that those of both sides should recognize: the title “Holy One of God” is used “to designate Jesus as from beyond this world and belong[ing] to God.”⁴⁰ Yeshua is not some standard, mortal being. William L. Lane goes a little further, detailing, “The demoniacs...address Jesus as ‘the Holy One of God’ (Ch. 1:24), ‘the Son of God’ (Ch. 3:11) or ‘the Son of the Most High God’ (Ch. 5:7), formulations which identify Jesus as the divine Son of God.”⁴¹ Ben Witherington III makes the important point of how in this scene, the demons immediately identify Yeshua as supernatural via the title “Holy One of God,” versus how others, namely various humans, can only immediately identify Yeshua along the lines of titles such as “teacher” or “sir”:

“In Mark ordinarily sick individuals call Jesus names like teacher (9:17) or Son of David (10:47-48) or master (10:51) or good sir (‘lord’ as with a little *l*), while by contrast the demons address Jesus as the Holy One of God (here cf. John 6:69) or the Son of God (3:11) or the Son of the Most High God (5:7)...[T]hey identify Jesus as more than a teacher, indeed as a unique and even supernatural figure who is recognizably part of their world and capable of doing battle with them.”⁴²

For the **Gospel of Luke**, I. Howard Marshall notes that “The address of ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ [*ho hagios tou Theou*] suggests a contrast with the unclean demon, but its roots lie in the idea of Jesus as the Son of God (1:35), separated to his service (Jdg. 13:7; 16:17 with Num. 6:5, 8).”⁴³ The title “Holy One of God” indicating someone unique, consecrated for Divine Service, is a fair conclusion to draw. Morris moves to a more firm position of Divinity with Luke 4:34, asserting, “The demon recognized the opposition between Jesus and all of his kind. *The Holy One of God* (elsewhere only Mk. 1:24; Jn. 6:69) is an unusual title, stressing the thought of consecration to God’s service. In this place we should see it as an example of what James had in mind when he wrote ‘the demons believe—and shudder’ (Jas. 2:19).”⁴⁴

⁴⁰ C.E.B. Cranfield, *Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary: The Gospel According to St. Mark* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 77.

⁴¹ William L. Lane, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 74.

⁴² Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 91; also R.T. France, *New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 104.

⁴³ I. Howard Marshall, *New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 193.

⁴⁴ Morris, *Luke*, 120.

Wellum goes further than the Mark and Luke commentators just quoted, as He takes “Holy One of God” coupled with the title “Son of God,” as explicit references to the Divinity of Yeshua, as He is to be strictly identified as God:

“Jesus is portrayed in exalted terms...and his heavenly origin is evident when he is identified as the ‘Holy One of God’ and the ‘Son of God.’ Jesus’ coming in order to destroy the demons is presented as a visit from the heavenly realm, and, as such, it presupposes not only his preexistence but also that he transcends the human realm and is identified with God.”⁴⁵

While Wellum’s commitment to a high Christology is to be appreciated, Yeshua simply being called “the Holy One of God” or even “the Son of God,” by demonic entities, is insufficient to prove His Divinity, without a consideration of further data. Important clues are given by Mark 1:21-28 and Luke 4:31-38 about the nature of Yeshua, beyond those of His supernatural origins from Heaven. A created, supernatural agent of God would probably not be asked, “Have you come to destroy us?”, with some degree of finality associated with the final judgment in view.⁴⁶ More important to consider, is how Mark 1:21-28 and Luke 4:31-38 are not the only passages where Yeshua’s authority and supernatural abilities will be on display, as this is only an early scene of Yeshua being identified by an entity other than God the Father, as supernatural.

In their book *Putting Jesus in His Place*, Bowman and Komoszewski appropriately summarize how Yeshua’s ability, to be immediately obeyed by the demons, needs to be catalogued along with other, with a number of more significant supernatural acts, which will have more of a direct bearing on whether Yeshua the Messiah is indeed God:

“The complete and total command that Christ exhibits over the natural realm in his miracles reveals his deity. On two separate occasions—once before his resurrection and once after it—Jesus tells his disciples precisely where to lower their nets in order to catch a large haul of fish (Luke 5:1-11; John 21:1-11). **Jesus commands unclean spirits, and they immediately obey and come out of their host (Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37).** He rebukes a fever and it immediately leaves (Matt. 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39). Even more astonishing, he rebukes the winds and the waters during a dangerous storm on the sea, and they immediately become calm (Matt. 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25). The Gospels conclude this particular episode with the disciples’ question, ‘Who then is this?’ showing that the miracle points to Jesus’ unique (and, from a human point of view, hidden) identity”⁴⁷ (emphasis mine).

Mark 2:1-12; Matthew 9:1-8; Luke 5:17-26 **“Yeshua Forgives Sin”**

“When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them. And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. And Yeshua seeing their faith said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’ But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ‘Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?’ Immediately Yeshua, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, ‘Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven”; or to say, “Get up, and pick up your

⁴⁵ Wellum, “The Deity of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels,” in *The Deity of Christ*, 86.

⁴⁶ For the record, the author is not a supporter of the theological concept of annihilationism, or the belief that the unrighteous condemned suffer extinction from existence. Consult his publication *Why Hell Must Be Eternal*.

⁴⁷ Bowman and Komoszewski, 201.