

Galatians 1:1-5, 10-12

“Opening Greetings”

“Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Yeshua the Messiah and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), and all the brethren who are with me, to the [assemblies] of Galatia: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah, who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen... For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Messiah. For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Yeshua the Messiah.”

The considerable bulk of Paul’s letter to the Galatians, by any survey of its contents, has very little to do with the nature and origins of the Messiah, and far more to deal with the new, non-Jewish Believers in Galatia being warned against the dangers of being formally circumcised as proselytes to Judaism.¹ Still, in the opening statements of Galatians, Paul does have to assert who he is, and what he has been called to do. In the introduction of Galatians, some important claims about Paul’s ministry vocation do present key factors about the nature of the Messiah.

Paul opens his letter to the Galatians by stating how he is an apostle or an emissary. As it appears in a Messianic version like the TLV, “Paul, an emissary (sent not from men or by man, but by Yeshua the Messiah and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead)” (Galatians 1:1). Paul tells the Galatians that his being commissioned as an apostle or an emissary is *ouk ap’ anthrōpou oude di’ anthrōpou* (οὐκ ἀπ’ ἀνθρώπων οὐδὲ δι’ ἀνθρώπου): “sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities (NRSV); “doesn’t derive from human sources, nor did it come through a human being” (Kingdom New Testament); “not from mortals, neither through human agency” (PME). Instead, Paul’s commissioning as an apostle or an emissary is *dia Iēsou Christou kai Theou patros* (διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ πατρὸς), “through Yeshua the Messiah and God the Father” (CJB/CJSB). Together, both Yeshua the Messiah and God the Father stand on the supernatural side of the equation, in contrast to any others who might be errantly influencing the Galatians, who did not receive an apostolic commission from a supernatural source. At best, their activities are derived from some kind of human authority structure.

Some further statements about the relationship of Yeshua the Messiah and God the Father, are stated in Galatians 1:3 following, where Paul communicates, “Grace to you and *shalom* [peace] from God our Father and our Lord Yeshua the Messiah” (TLV). Paul writes that grace and peace come “from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah.” The Greek *apo Theou patros hēmōn kai Kurioū Iēsou Christou* (ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) has both the grace and peace coming from the same Source. Bruce remarks, “God and Christ are completely at one in the bestowal of salvation.”² Both the Father and Son are linked together, as “God” is typically used in the Pauline Epistles to refer to the Father,³ and “Lord” is used to refer to the Son.⁴ Paul’s usage of “Lord” is not by accident, as the Greek *Kurios* (κύριος) was used in

¹ This entry has been adapted from the author’s commentary *Galatians for the Practical Messianic*.

² F.F. Bruce, *New International Greek Testament Commentary: Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 74.

³ Cf. D. Guthrie and R.P. Martin, “God: God as Father (2.2),” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, p 357.

As is noted in this article: “In the opening salutation in all the letters under Paul’s name God is described as Father. It forms a basic assumption behind all that the apostle writes in these letters.”

⁴ Cf. L.W. Hurtado, “Lord: Appellation Formulas (3.3),” in *Ibid.*, p 566.

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the Septuagint to render the Divine Name YHWH (יהוה). In referring to Yeshua as *Kurios*, He was identifying Him as the Supreme LORD. Yet, Yeshua being integrated into the Divine Identity, is not something which is at all to the dismissal of the Father, as seen in the praise issued in Galatians 1:4b-5.

That Paul has little difficulty serving a Divine Being manifested to him as both Father and Son, is seen in the paralleling remarks of Galatians 1:10, where he again asserts that it was not from a human source that he received his apostolic calling. Paul inquires, “For am I now seeking the favor of mortals, or of God⁵? Or am I striving to please mortals⁶?” (Galatians 1:10a, PME). Paul answers, “If I were still pleasing mortals⁷, I would not be a servant of Messiah” (Galatians 1:10b, PME). In Galatians 1:10, *ē ton Theon* (ἢ τὸν θεόν), “or of God,” is paralleled by *Christou doulos* (Χριστοῦ δούλος), “servant of Messiah/Christ.” Paul could have just said, as he would later in Titus 1:1, *doulos Theou* (δούλος θεοῦ) or “servant of God.” But here in Galatians 1:10, in order to answer the question of whether he was trying to please or seek the favor of mortal humans, he said that he was a servant of Messiah.

The contrast intended in Galatians 1:10 is between human and supernatural, with Yeshua the Messiah decisively placed on the supernatural side of the equation. The further claim made to the Galatians is, “For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin” (Galatians 1:11, NRSV). The good news or gospel, as Paul declares it, *ouk estin kata anthrōpon* (οὐκ ἔστιν κατὰ ἄνθρωπον), what the HCSB has as, “is not based on human thought,” and in the CJB/CJSB as, “is not a human product.” Contrary to the good news originating from humans or mortals, Paul says, in Galatians 1:11: “For I neither received it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but *it came to me* through a revelation of Yeshua the Messiah⁸” (PME).

While there are few statements on Christology or the nature of Yeshua in Paul’s letter to the Galatians, what is communicated about grace and peace originating from “God our Father, and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah” (Galatians 1:3), Paul being commissioned as an apostle “through Yeshua the Messiah, and God the Father” (Galatians 1:1), and Paul’s ministry being one which was not of human origin but instead via a revelation of the Messiah (Galatians 1:10-12), **draws readers to Yeshua the Messiah being integrated into the Divine Identity**. More about the nature of Yeshua, for certain, appears in other Pauline letters. But what appears in Galatians bears all the key signs of a high Christology.

As noted in this article: “[T]he single most frequently found use of *kyrios* [or “Lord”] in Paul (about 100 times in the letters we are considering here) is as the designation of Jesus without any other title, simply ‘the Lord.’”

⁵ Grk. *anthrōpous peitō ē ton Theon* (ἀνθρώπους πείθω ἢ τὸν θεόν).

⁶ Grk. *ē zētō anthrōpous areskein* (ἢ ζητῶ ἀνθρώπους ἀρέσκειν).

⁷ Grk. *ei eti anthrōpous ēreskon* (εἰ ἔτι ἀνθρώπους ἤρεσκον).

⁸ Grk. *di’ apokalupseōs Iēsou Christou* (δι’ ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ).