

## The Nature of Yeshua in the General Epistles

‘glorious Lord,’ James effectively ascribes the divine attributes and importance to Christ.”<sup>9</sup> Peter Davids offers a much fuller thought on the title *doxa* ascribed to Yeshua, detailing how “this is not simply to say that ‘our Lord’ is most honorable or exalted, for to one who knew the LXX the term would immediately recall the OT use of δόξα [*doxa*] to translate the Hebrew *kābôd* [כְּבוֹד], characteristically meaning, ‘the luminous manifestation of God’s person’ particularly in bringing salvation to Israel (Ex. 14:17-18; Psa. 96:3; Isa. 60:1-2; Ezk. 39:21-22; Zc. 2:5-11...). Thus it is a term of exaltation, revelation, and eschatological salvation.”<sup>10</sup> James 2:1 is not the only place where *doxa* is applied to Yeshua the Messiah (cf. Titus 2:13).

### James 2:19

#### “The Demons Believe God is One”

“You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.”

Within his epistle, James is quite serious about the faith of his audience being demonstrated in action by appropriate works (James 2:14-18). To really hammer hard this point, he informs them, “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe -- and shudder” (James 2:19, RSV). The statement “God is one” (*eis estin ho Theos*, εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ θεός) is taken directly from the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4: “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!”; *Shema Yisrael, ADONAI Eloheinu, ADONAI echad* (שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד). The *Shema*, for both ancient Judaism and modern Judaism, remains something repeated multiple times, every day, in traditional prayers (and is also present in many traditional liturgies of many Christian sects). And, the *Shema* definitely served as a part of the Messianic understanding of God in the Apostolic Scriptures (i.e., 1 Corinthians 8:4-6). Aside from the different dynamics regarding the *Shema* and the co-existence of the Father and Son in the Godhead (see previous discussion in Volume I on **Deuteronomy 6:4-5**), the *Shema* is principally a declaration on the supremacy of the God of Israel in the lives of His people. Those who declare that He is the God of Creation, are bidden to Him exclusively.

James observes on the fact that the forces of Satan also believe in this same God, and they shudder. Demons can recognize who God is, and they acknowledge His existence, likely having a far more tangible understanding of His supernatural reality than most mortals do. But simply because demons may acknowledge God, it can do nothing for them, except instill a high level of fear into them, as their eternal damnation is secure. Davids comments to this regard, on how “the NT knows of the monotheism of demons (Mk. 1:24; 5:7; Acts 16:17; 19:15) and their fear before Christ, whom they recognize (Mk. 1:23, 24; 5:7). The point is that their knowledge of who God is does not save them; in fact, it is this very knowledge of which makes them shudder...A faith which cannot go beyond this level is worse than useless.”<sup>11</sup>

Are those who have a defective faith, and may believe that only a mental ascent of God, and then a selective obedience to Him is all that is necessary—not that much better off than the demons? Moo indicates, “James might be implying, as demons, knowing something of the true God, yet lacking true faith, shudder in fear of judgment, so also ought people whose verbal profession is not followed up with actions.”<sup>12</sup> An acknowledgment of God’s existence and primacy is not enough; James’ point is that the demons know that God is primary, but that is certainly not going to provide them with salvation as eternally condemned creatures. Those

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<sup>9</sup> McCartney, 137.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Davids, *New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Epistle of James* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 107.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>12</sup> Moo, *James*, 131.

who are committed to believing in the *Shema*, and who believe that Yeshua is the Messiah who provides eternal salvation to redeemed human beings, then have a duty to take such faith and demonstrate appropriate deeds.

To James the Just, a Believer cannot just say that he or she acknowledges the existence of God, go through a few religious motions, but then fail to act in the key works which should be present in all Believers. If a mental recognition of God is sufficient, then demons can apparently be saved—*which they obviously cannot*. James' argument is, admittedly, somewhat extreme, but it proves a valid point. If all that is required for salvation is a recognition that Yeshua died and rose again, then demons who likewise recognize this fact can be saved and redeemed from their fate. *This is why a human being's faith has to be more*. A man or woman's faith has to be evidenced in a transformation of heart and mind, which will enable the individual to carry out the good works that the Heavenly Father expects from each one of His children.

## **1 Peter 1:1-2**

### **"The Father, the Spirit, and the Son"**

**"Peter, an apostle of Yeshua the Messiah, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Yeshua the Messiah and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure."**

In discussions which frequently take place between those who hold to a high Christology of Yeshua being God, and integrated into the Divine Identity, and those who hold to a low Christology of Yeshua being a created entity—the latter will frequently claim that the traditional Christian doctrine of the Trinity is absolutely pagan, and foreign to the Scriptures. Notwithstanding the fact that there are various limitations to the traditional doctrine of the Trinity, in that it can be seen as placing limits onto an Eternal God, it is unavoidable that the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity—God made manifest in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is ultimately based upon some reading of the Bible. In the opening greeting of the Epistle of 1 Peter, one encounters how Believers are "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father and set apart by the Spirit for obeying Yeshua the Messiah and for sprinkling with his blood" (1 Peter 1:2, CJB/CJSB). Honest Bible readers cannot dart around the fact that the Apostle Peter has just referenced God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Yeshua the Messiah the Son in 1 Peter 1:2.

While they may use Christian jargon that employs the term "Trinity," the following thoughts from commentators on 1 Peter cannot go overlooked here, for our deliberations on the nature of Yeshua:

- Peter H. Davids: "[O]ur author now describes [the] choice of God in terms that...relate it to the three persons of the Trinity."<sup>13</sup>
- Wayne Grudem: "[T]he verse mentions the three persons of the Trinity: *God the Father...the Spirit...Jesus Christ*. Peter specifies them uniting to bring about a common goal, the eternal, full salvation of these 'chosen sojourners'."<sup>14</sup>
- I. Howard Marshall: "The basic description of...God's chosen people is developed in a clear trinitarian structure."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Peter H. Davids, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle of Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 47.

<sup>14</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: 1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 51.

<sup>15</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *IVP New Testament Commentary Series: 1 Peter* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991), 31.