

Pet. 1:3, which mention 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ' in the cry of dereliction (Mark 14:34 par. Matt. 27:46), at his resurrection (John 20:17), and in the letter to Sardis (Rev. 3:2). As in 3:2 (and 1:6, 'his God') the oneness between Christ and the Father is emphasized (as also in 'my father,' 2:27; 3:5, 21; or 'his father,' 1:6; 14:1)."<sup>39</sup>

There is hardly enough information in Revelation 3:12 and its employment of "My God," to make a decisive declaration that Yeshua the Messiah cannot be integrated into the Divine Identity. There is enough information in Revelation 3:12 and its employment of "My God," as opposed to "our God," to recognize that Yeshua the Son and God the Father have a special relationship that no one else has. Further investigation of this relationship, and its various components and dynamics, is required. Revelation 3:12 requires it as much, as Yeshua speaks of "My new name" (*to onoma tou to kainon*, τὸ ὄνομά μου τὸ καινόν). While a mystery to many people, Yeshua's new name should be rightly associated with His return, the defeat of Israel's enemies, and the establishment of His reign (cf. Revelation 19:11-21).

## **Revelation 3:14-22**

### **"the Beginning of the creation of God"**

*"To the angel of the [assembly] in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the [assembly].'"*

The message delivered by Yeshua the Messiah to the assembly at Laodicea, is commonly appropriated in a great deal of contemporary teaching and preaching to apply to the lukewarmness, and compromised state, of much of today's Christianity (Revelation 3:15-20). Within the immediate introduction of Yeshua the Messiah to the Laodicean assembly, are significant titles ascribed: "The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God's creation" (Revelation 3:14, NRSV). Of these titles, the one which immediately jumps out as bearing the most significance for evaluating the nature of Yeshua is *hē archē tēs ktiseōs tou Theou* (ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ), rendered by the NIV as "the ruler of God's creation." The term *archē* (ἀρχή) can notably mean both "the first cause, the beginning," and "an authority figure who initiates activity or process, ruler, authority" (BDAG).<sup>40</sup>

There have been a number of important thoughts interjected on what *archē* is to mean in regard to Revelation 3:14, and what is being communicated about the nature of Yeshua. Given how Paul's letter to the Colossians was intended to be read in Laodicea (Colossians 4:16), connections have logically been made between the hymn of Colossians 1:15-20 (addressed previously) and what the Apostle John records here. Previously, it has been declared that Yeshua is "the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens

<sup>39</sup> Osborne, *Revelation*, 197.

<sup>40</sup> BDAG, 138.

## The Nature of Yeshua in the Revelation Given to John

and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:15-16). Commentators are often witnessed as making further connections with John 1:3, “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being,” and frequently associating the ideas of *archē* involving beginning, rulership, and what has been said thus far about “first and last” (Revelation 1:17; 2:8; cf. Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12):

- Leon Morris: “*Ruler (archē)* combine the thoughts that Christ has the supreme authority over creation and that he is the origin of created being (cf. Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:15-18).”<sup>41</sup>
- George Eldon Ladd: “The phrase in itself is capable of two translations: the ‘beginning’ of creation, or the ‘source and origin’ of creation. The latter is quite certainly the correct meaning, for John clearly regards Christ as eternal.”<sup>42</sup>
- Craig S. Keener: “Elsewhere in Revelation ‘beginning’ is an explicitly divine title linked with ‘first’ (21:6; 22:13), a clear divine title in Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12. Cognates of the Greek word used here (*archē*) denote ‘ruler’—a word that can denote rule or power.”<sup>43</sup>
- Ben Witherington III: “Christ is called both the Amen (as God is at Isa. 65:16) and the beginning of God’s creation, an explicit reference to Christ’s preexistence.”<sup>44</sup>

Beasley-Murray draws attention to the NEB rendering of Revelation 3:14 as “the prime source of all God’s creation,” emphasizing “When John speaks of Christ as *the beginning of God’s creation*, he means not the first of God’s creatures but, as the NEB renders the phrase, ‘the prime source of all God’s creation’. The concept is the same as ‘alpha’ in the title ‘alpha and omega’.”<sup>45</sup> While *hē archē tēs ktiseōs tou Theou* is hardly exhaustive in explaining the nature of Yeshua, Yeshua as Creator, the Beginning, and the Ruler places Him decisively on the Divine side of things. For certain, it speaks of the pre-existence of Yeshua, a definite requirement for a high Christology of Yeshua being integrated into the Divine Identity.<sup>46</sup>

At the close of His words to the Laodiceans, Yeshua does promise, “He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Revelation 3:21). Yeshua’s exaltation came as a result of His suffering, and His faithful followers too will be similarly exalted: *hōs kagō enikēsa kai ekathisa* (ὡς κἀγὼ ἐνίκησα καὶ ἐκάθισα), “as I also overcome and sat” (Brown and Comfort).<sup>47</sup> Yeshua the Messiah’s exaltation involves His being recognized as Lord or YHWH (Philippians 2:10-11; Isaiah 45:23) and supremacy over all, but any association of Yeshua’s followers with Him does not involve their being recognized as Lord. Yeshua’s Disciples were instead promised, “in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones,

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<sup>41</sup> Morris, *Revelation*, 81.

<sup>42</sup> Ladd, 65.

<sup>43</sup> Keener, *Revelation*, 158.

<sup>44</sup> Witherington, *Revelation*, 107.

<sup>45</sup> Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, 104.

<sup>46</sup> A slightly dissenting view, however, is offered by Beale, 301, who concludes that *hē archē tēs ktiseōs tou Theou* involves Yeshua being the initiator of the New Creation to come in the future Eternal State:

“John has in mind not Jesus as the principle, origin, or source of the original creation, but Jesus as the inaugurator of the new creation. τῆς κτίσεως [*tēs ktiseōs*] (‘of the creation’) is best taken as partitive genitive, although implicit in the idea of ἡ ἀρχὴ [*hē archē*] may be three ideas: inauguration, supremacy over, and temporal priority....Some commentators who assume that τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ [*tēs ktiseōs tou Theou*] (‘of the creation of God’) refers to the original creation do not like the translation ‘beginning’ for ἀρχὴ [*archē*] because they think this would necessitate viewing Jesus as a created being along with the rest of creation. However, seeing the phrase as a reference to the new creation results in [a] different understanding.”

<sup>47</sup> Brown and Comfort, 860.

judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28). Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:12, “If we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us.”

## Revelation 4:1-11

### “Worship of God Before the Heavenly Throne”

“After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like *the sound* of a trumpet speaking with me, said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.’ Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting *was* like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and *there was* a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. Around the throne *were* twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones *I saw* twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads. Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; and before the throne *there was something* like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. The first creature *was* like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature *was* like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, ‘HOLY, HOLY, HOLY *is* THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME’ [Isaiah 6:3]. And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ‘Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.’”

Within the Apostle John’s being revealed the future (Revelation 4:1), he is asked to step into Heaven and be shown a significant supernatural scene: “At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne” (Revelation 4:2-3, NIV). Some association is properly made with what was seen previously in Ezekiel 1:26-27:

“Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, *was* a figure with the appearance of a man. Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and *there was* a radiance around Him.”

John encounters twenty-four elders in Heaven (Revelation 4:4), which is notably the sum of the Twelve Patriarchs of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, and the Twelve Apostles of Yeshua. The presence of these elders may cause one to recall the sentiment of Isaiah 24:23, “Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, for the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and *His* glory will be before His elders,” although the likelihood that John has actually been asked to step into the Eternal State and be revealed things which have already occurred—as far as the twenty-four elders is concerned—is rather strong.

Revelation 4:5-10 depicts a scene of great veneration taking place before the throne in Heaven, including “the seven Spirits of God” (Revelation 4:5) or “the sevenfold Spirit of God