

## The Nature of Yeshua in the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews

Believers, from whom the Savior arose. The significance of Yeshua being “God over all,” while important for everyone as the Creator taking a decisive interest in the affairs of humankind, is especially piqued, as noted by Wright, with the God of Israel being personally interested in the promises He issued to His chosen people:

“If we read v. 5 in this way, what force does it add to the opening paragraph as a whole? Just this: that the Messiah who is from Israel’s own race, their highest privilege and final hope, is the very embodiment of their sovereign Lord, their covenant God.”<sup>74</sup>

### Romans 10:9, 12-13

#### “Confessing Yeshua as Lord”

“that if you confess with your mouth Yeshua *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved... For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for ‘WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED’ [Joel 2:32].”

Romans 10:9<sup>75</sup> is a statement which obviously played a very important part in Paul’s word of Romans 10:7-8 preceding,<sup>76</sup> which is that finding the Savior is not too impossible, nor is salvation itself something entirely out of reach. As he asserts, “For if you confess with your mouth that *Yeshua* is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9, TLV). Even with additional components of being people exposed to the gravity of their sins, turning from their wicked ways, and being committed to a path of sanctified living—Romans 10:9 does encapsulate the core of the message of the good news.

One key element of Romans 10:9 that need not be overlooked, is how it employs the verb *homologeō* (ὁμολογέω), which can mean “to acknowledge someth., ordinarily in public, acknowledge, claim, profess, praise” (BDAG).<sup>77</sup> The CJB/CJSB actually renders it with, “acknowledge publicly,” with Stern asserting, “This public, open aspect of this agreeing is essential; this can be seen from the contexts elsewhere in the New Testament where the word ‘*omologeō*’ is used—Mt. 10:32; Lk 12:8; Yn 1:20, 9:22, 12:42; 1 Ti 6:13; 1 Yn 4:2-3, 15; 2 Yn 7.”<sup>78</sup> This is important to recognize, given some of the difficult, modern contours of the Jewish evangelism which makes up a great deal of the Messianic movement’s mission—and how there are various Jewish people who, when (presumably) coming to faith in Messiah Yeshua, might not be too keen on letting others know about it (after a very long time).

Romans 10:9 also has a significant place in Christological studies, per the assertion that true Believers must acknowledge who *Kurion Iēsoun* (κύριον Ἰησοῦν) truly is. Is this just an acknowledgment of Yeshua as a man or woman’s Master—or is more intended? One need not overlook the Christological association of a passage like 1 Corinthians 8:6, “yet for us there is *but* one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we *exist* for Him; and one Lord, Yeshua the Messiah, by whom are all things, and we *exist* through Him,” and how a figure like the Apostle Paul has reworked the Deuteronomy 6:4 *Shema* around both the Father and the Son. It is widely and rightly recognized that there is some connection between the title *Kurios* (κύριος), which renders the proper name YHWH/YHVH (יהוה) throughout the Greek Septuagint, and

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<sup>74</sup> Wright, in *NIB*, 10:631.

<sup>75</sup> This entry has been adapted from the author’s commentary *Romans for the Practical Messianic*.

<sup>76</sup> “or ‘WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?’ (that is, to bring Messiah up from the dead).” But what does it say? “THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART” [Deuteronomy 9:4; 30:12-14]—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching” (Romans 10:7-8).

<sup>77</sup> BDAG, 708.

<sup>78</sup> Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 400.

how here in Romans 10:9 Paul identifies the Lord Yeshua along the lines of the Lord God of Israel. As is summarized by Cranfield:

“What then did the confession ‘Jesus is Lord’ mean for Paul? The use of κύριος [*kurios*] more than six thousand times in the LXX to represent the Tetragrammaton must surely be regarded as of decisive importance here...[F]or Paul, the confession that Jesus is Lord meant the acknowledgment that Jesus shares the name and the nature, the holiness, the authority, power, majesty and eternity of the one and only true God. And, when, as is often the case, there is joined with the title κύριος a personal pronoun in the genitive, there is expressed in addition the sense of His ownership of those who acknowledge Him and of their consciousness of being His property, the sense of personal commitment and allegiance, of trust and confidence.”<sup>79</sup>

Much regarding what is intended by the usage of *Kurios* in Romans 10:9, is determined by the later appeal to Joel 2:32 (addressed previously in **Volume I**) in Romans 10:12-13 following:

“For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same *Lord* is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for ‘WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED’” (Romans 10:12-13).

“And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be delivered; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape, as the LORD has said, even among the survivors whom the LORD calls” (Joel 2:32).

It cannot go unnoticed, however, that a theologian like Dunn, who notably does hold to a low Christology, still recognizes that there could be some kind of connection intended between Paul’s use of *Kurios* and the Divine Name YHWH:

“κύριος [*kurios*] was recognized as at least an acceptable translation of יהוה in diaspora circles...as Paul’s own quotations of the scriptures (OT) also make clear...the reference of several such passages to *Jesus* as Lord is a striking feature in Paul’s letters (v 13; 1 Cor 2:16; Phil 2:11—using the powerfully monotheistic Isa 45:23; 1 Thess 5:2 and 2 Thess 2:2—‘the day of the Lord’). The clear implication is that Jesus as Lord shares in the one God’s Lordship.”<sup>80</sup>

Messianic teachers have certainly had to consider the relationship of *Kurios* to the Divine Name YHWH in Romans 10:9. Stern fairly summarizes a position of how recognizing Yeshua the Son as Lord or *Adonai* (אֲדֹנָי), should not be to the detriment of the Father as Lord, and is compatible with the Deuteronomy 6:4 *Shema*:

“[W]hat is the significance here of naming Yeshua’s Lordship and his resurrection as the two ‘articles of faith’ essential to righteousness and salvation? Here ‘**Lord**’ (Greek *kurios*) could be equivalent to either Hebrew *Adon* (‘Lord,’ applied to God in the sense of ‘Ruler’) or to God’s personal name *YHVH* (represented in Jewish liturgy as ‘*Adonai*’ and in English writing sometimes as ‘Jehovah’—see Mt. 1:20&N, 7:21&N). To **acknowledge...that Yeshua is Adon** implies committing oneself to obeying him (1:5); this is the meaning of ‘kurios’ at Mt 7:21-23. To acknowledge that he is *Adonai* means not only that, but also affirming that he is one with the Father (see Yn. 10:30N), fully divine, with all of God’s attributes and authority; this is the meaning of *kurios* at Pp 2:9-11&N. A case can be made for either meaning here. It must be

<sup>79</sup> Cranfield, *Romans* 9-16, 529.

<sup>80</sup> Dunn, *Romans*, 38b:608.

He goes on to deny, however, that Yeshua’s association as the Lord is something necessary to affirm His pre-existence, and concludes that it regards, rather, a post-resurrection status granted to a widely human, exalted figure (Ibid.; against Cranfield, “Some Comments on Professor J.D.G. Dunn’s *Christology in the Making*, With special reference to the evidence of the Epistle to the Romans,” in *On Romans and Other New Testament Essays* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998], pp 51-68).

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pointed out that to acknowledge Yeshua the Messiah as *Adonai* is not to deny that the Father and the Holy Spirit 'are' *Adonai* too, or to believe in anything but one God (Deuteronomy 6:4), or to believe anything that conflicts with the *Tanakh*.<sup>81</sup>

Hegg, weighing whether or not *Kurios* just means "Master," does draw the conclusion that there is an intended association between *Kurios* and the Divine Name of YHWH as well:

"[W]hat does it mean to confess 'Lord Yeshua'? That κύριος [*kurios*] was used extensively by the Lxx to translate יהוה makes it quite possible that the very thing that Paul expects by way of confession is that Yeshua is the long awaited Messiah, and that He is one with יהוה. Of course, κύριος may simply mean 'master,' in which case the confession would simply entail a confession of Yeshua as the Master of one's life. More than likely, the confession that Paul envisioned was declaring Yeshua to be the promised Messiah, and thus the Master to whom the righteous would attach themselves....In the final analysis {following Cranfield}, it seems most probable that Paul intends by his phrase 'confess Lord Yeshua' to equate (in all of its mystery) the person of Yeshua with the unchangeable יהוה."<sup>82</sup>

**This writer, as a Messianic teacher, would affirm that the intention of Romans 10:9, especially in view of Romans 10:12-13 following, is to affirm the Lord Yeshua as being Divine.** Given the statement that a confession of Yeshua as Lord (YHWH) is what will provide salvation for people, even if a full understanding or comprehension of all of the aspects of Yeshua's nature would not be necessary for salvation—an understanding that Yeshua is God, and is no created being, would be necessary for salvation.

Situationally speaking, Bruce further interjects how Romans 10:9 may be taken as relating to a confession of Yeshua not before people generally, but before those in power specifically. He also notes how the confession of Yeshua as Lord, is something that most imperatively takes place during the water immersion of a new Believer:

"Some commentators have thought particularly of the confession of his name before magistrates (*cf.* Lk. 21:12-15; 1 Pet. 3:13-16); but if we are to think of one outstanding occasion for such a confession to be made, we should more probably think of the initial confession made in Christian baptism—the pledge of a good conscience towards God' (1 Pet. 3:21, NIV)."<sup>83</sup>

The Apostle Peter's assertion, "baptism now saves you" (1 Peter 3:21), most probably relates to the confession of faith made by a person at his or her water immersion.

Paul lauds the great value of salvation in Romans 10:10-11, by writing his audience,

"[F]or with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, 'WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED [Isaiah 28:16].'"

While Paul's discussion has seen him emote on the great tragedy that many of his fellow Jews have missed their Messiah, the universality of salvation in Yeshua is emphasized: "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all—richly generous to all who call on Him" (Romans 9:12, TLV). Romans 9:12 is paraphrased in The Message with, "It's exactly the same no matter what a person's religious background may be: the same God for all of us, acting the same incredibly generous way to everyone who calls out for help."

Paul substantiates the universal availability of salvation in Israel's Messiah by quoting from Joel 2:32: "since *everyone* who calls on the name of *ADONAI* will be delivered" (Romans 9:13, CJB/CJSB). Romans 9:13 is Christologically loaded, as a Tanach passage describing the

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<sup>81</sup> Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 401.

<sup>82</sup> Hegg, *Romans 9-16*, pp 325, 326.

<sup>83</sup> Bruce, *Romans*, 192.

LORD or YHWH, is directly applied to Yeshua the Messiah and people calling upon Him for salvation. For a monotheistic First Century Jew to do this, is a testimony to either Paul's blasphemy against the One God of Israel, *or* a testimony to how Paul believed firmly that Yeshua the Son shared the Divine Identity of His Father. Cranfield observes, "The fact that Paul can think of prayer to the exalted Christ without the least repugnance is, in the light of the first and second commandments of the Decalogue, [provides] the decisive clarification of the significance which he attached to the title *kyrios* [κύριος] as applied to Christ (e.g. in this verse and in v. 9)." <sup>84</sup> Kruse further acknowledges,

"There would seem to be little doubt...that when Paul quotes Joel 2:32, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved', he would have his audience understand that to mean 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord [Jesus Christ] will be saved'. This implies a striking identification of Jesus Christ with Yahweh." <sup>85</sup>

Wright correctly recognizes the intended connection in v. 13, and its quotation of Joel 2:23, between Yeshua and the LORD God (YHWH), but also takes what was previously stated in 9:5 and applies it beyond the Messiah being God, recognizing the Messiah as the Supreme Sovereign over all other rulers:

"[T]he 'Lord' in question, while identified from the earlier verses as Jesus the Messiah, is equally the κύριος (*kyrios*) of the LXX. This is where the breathtaking assertion of 9:5, that the Messiah who belonged to Israel according to the flesh is also 'God over all, blessed for ever,' shows up at the heart of the argument. This is where christology determines ecclesiology—including where the church [meaning, the Body of Messiah] stands vis-à-vis the pagan emperor!—as well as soteriology. 'The same Lord is Lord of all!' That was what Caesar claimed, and it was what Paul claimed for Jesus! At the same time, Paul is picking up, and transforming, a regular Jewish theme: one God, therefore one people of Israel (cf. Zech 14:9-17). Where, before, 'no distinction' was explained by 'for all have sinned' (3:23), now it can be explained by 'for there is one Lord of all.' As in 3:27-30, monotheism undergirds the universality of the gospel—though, as elsewhere in Paul, it is monotheism with Jesus at the heart of it all." <sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Cranfield, *Romans* 9-16, 532.

<sup>85</sup> Kruse, *Romans*, 412.

<sup>86</sup> Wright, in *NIB*, 10:665.