

Romans 9:5

“The Messiah as ‘God blessed forever’”

“whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Messiah according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.”

Messianic readers recognize that within Romans chs. 9-11, the Apostle Paul is widely speaking salvation historically, as he is trying to not only reason, but also wrestle with the reality, that many of his fellow Jews have dismissed Yeshua as their prophesied Messiah.⁶⁷ Within his arguments, Paul lauds the high accolades and distinctions of the Jewish people, indicating that they have a great heritage rooted within the promises of the One True God and Tanach Scriptures: “[They] are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the *temple* service and the promises” (Romans 9:4).

A significant statement, further emphasizing what is possessed by the Jewish people, is made by Paul: “to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen” (Romans 9:5, NRSV). The patriarchs or “ancestors” (HCSB; *hoi pateres*, οἱ πατέρες) are to be rightly viewed as a reference to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and from this Paul makes a statement about the lineage of the Messiah (cf. Matthew 1; Luke 3), further described in Romans 15:8 in terms of, “I say that Messiah has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises *given* to the fathers.”

There is a big issue present in Romans 9:5, regarding the nature of the Messiah, and how to translate the Greek *ex hōn ho Christos to kata sarka, ho ōn epi pantōn Theos eulogētos eis tous aiōnas, Amēn* (ἐξ ὧν ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα, ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν). The Brown and Comfort interlinear renders this with,

“out of whom the Christ – according to flesh, the one being over all God blessed into the ages, Amen.”⁶⁸

If the reference to “God” is to be applied to Yeshua, then Romans 9:5 lays out a fair balance between Yeshua’s humanity and Divinity. If the reference to “God” is to the Father, then it serves to separate out an independent doxology of praise, not directed to the Son. There are two main ways that Romans 9:5 has been commonly translated among modern versions:

“to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen” (RSV).⁶⁹

“To them belong the patriarchs—and from them, according to the flesh, the Messiah, who is over all, God, blessed forever. Amen” (TLV).

Linguistically, a similar statement has appeared earlier in Romans 1:25: *ton ktisanta, hos estin eulogētos eis tous aiōnas, Amēn* (τὸν κτίσαντα, ὃς ἐστὶν εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν), “the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.” In Romans 1:25, the doxology is applied to “the Creator.” And so linguistically, the doxology of *ho ōn epi pantōn Theos eulogētos eis tous aiōnas* in

⁶⁷ This entry has been adapted from the author’s commentary *Romans for the Practical Messianic*.

⁶⁸ Brown and Comfort, 555.

⁶⁹ The CJB has a rendering consistent with this, although having taken some noticeable liberties:

“the Patriarchs are theirs; and from them, as far as his physical descent is concerned, came the Messiah, who is over all. Praised be *ADONAI* for ever! Amen.”

Romans 9:5, can certainly be applied to the Messiah. There are those who certainly regard this doxology as a direct Pauline reference to Yeshua being God,⁷⁰ although there are others who hold it to be an independent doxology that only issues praise to God the Father,⁷¹ which includes evangelical Christians who hold to an otherwise high Christology.⁷² What the issue ultimately comes down to, is whether or not the Apostle Paul would, or could, ever refer directly to the Messiah as “God.” It is to be witnessed, elsewhere in the Pauline letters, that there are definitely places where Paul holds Yeshua to be Divine, in association with the terminology “God”:

“[I]n whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Messiah, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

“[W]ho, existing in the form of God, did not consider [equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage” (Philippians 2:6, HCSB).

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation” (Colossians 1:15, HCSB).

It does have to be observed that the most common reference to Yeshua in Paul’s letters is not via the title *Theos* (θεός) or “God,” but instead *kurios* (κύριος) or “Lord.” With the Septuagint background of *Kurios* in mind, as the title represents the Tetragrammaton of YHWH/YHVH (יהוה), one has to consider a passage like 2 Thessalonians 2:12 as imploring the assumed Divinity of the Son next to the obvious Divinity of the Father: “so that the name of our Lord Yeshua will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and *the* Lord Yeshua the Messiah.” With “God” widely representing the Father in Pauline writing, and “Lord” representing the Son, in frequent and close proximity—it should not be considered irregular at all for there to be, even if a bit infrequent at times, instances when the Son is referred to directly as “God.” Noting some of these theological factors for Romans 9:5, Cranfield astutely concludes,

“(a) Paul’s application of LXX passages in which κύριος [*Kurios*] stands for the Tetragrammaton to Christ (e.g. 10.13); (b) his acceptance of the legitimacy of invoking Christ in prayer (e.g. 10.12-14); (g) his association of Christ with God in such a way as is to be seen in 1.7b; (d) his parallel references to Christ and God as in 8.35 and 39; (e) his reference to Christ in Phil 2.6 as ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων [*en morphē Theou huparchōn*], it seems to us that the superiority of the case for taking v. 5b to refer to Christ is so overwhelming...”⁷³

The humanity of Yeshua is affirmed to be Jewish *kata sarka* (κατὰ σάρκα) in Romans 9:5, yet along with this Yeshua is praised as *epi pantōn Theos* (ἐπὶ πάντων θεός) or “God over all” in Romans 9:5 as well. The significance of Yeshua being incarnated as a human being, from the line of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and later David—a Jewish line—is something that should serve as significantly distinctive of Paul’s fellow Jewish brethren, hopefully enabling the non-Jewish Believers in Rome to exhibit a bit more respect and honor to their fellow Jewish

⁷⁰ Bruce, *Romans*, 176; John R.W. Stott, *The Message of Romans* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), pp 265-266; Edwards, pp 234-235; Moo, *Romans*, pp 565-568; Osborne, *Romans*, pp 240-241; Wright, in *NIB*, 10:630-632; Witherington, *Romans*, pp 251-252.

Among Messianic interpreters, Tim Hegg, *Paul’s Epistle to the Romans: Chapters 9-16* (Tacoma, WA: TorahResource, 2007), 276, favors Yeshua being referenced as God here.

⁷¹ James D.G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary: Romans*, Vol. 38b. (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 529.

⁷² Kruse, *Romans*, pp 373-374.

⁷³ C.E.B. Cranfield, *International Critical Commentary: Romans 9-16* (London: T&T Clark, 1979), 468.

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.”⁷⁴

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 10:9⁷⁵ is a statement which obviously played a very important part in Paul’s word of Romans 10:7-8 preceding,⁷⁶ 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).⁷⁷ 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 ‘*omologein*’ 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.”⁷⁸ 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

⁷⁴ Wright, in *NIB*, 10:631.

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

⁷⁶ “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).

⁷⁷ BDAG, 708.

⁷⁸ Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 400.