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Frequently Asked Questions

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Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

ABD: <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>	IVPBBC: <i>IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)</i>
AMG: <i>Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament</i>	Jastrow: <i>Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature</i> (Marcus Jastrow)
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)	JBK: <i>New Jerusalem Bible-Koren</i> (2000)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament	JETS: <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
Ara: Aramaic	KJV: King James Version
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)	Lattimore: <i>The New Testament</i> by Richmond Lattimore (1996)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)	LITV: <i>Literal Translation of the Holy Bible</i> by Jay P. Green (1986)
b. Babylonian Talmud (<i>Talmud Bavli</i>)	LES: <i>Lexham English Septuagint</i> (2019)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.	LS: <i>An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Liddell-Scott)
BDAG: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)	LSJM: <i>Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)
BDB: <i>Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>	LXE: <i>Septuagint with Apocrypha</i> by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.	LXX: Septuagint
CGEDNT: <i>Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words</i> (Barclay M. Newman)	m. Mishnah
CGL: <i>Cambridge Greek Lexicon</i> (2021)	MT: Masoretic Text
CHALOT: <i>Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Holladay)	NASB: <i>New American Standard Bible</i> (1977)
CJB: <i>Complete Jewish Bible</i> (1998)	NASU: <i>New American Standard Update</i> (1995)
CJSB: <i>Complete Jewish Study Bible</i> (2016)	NBCR: <i>New Bible Commentary: Revised</i>
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition	NEB: <i>New English Bible</i> (1970)
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls	Nelson: <i>Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words</i>
EDB: <i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>	NETS: <i>New English Translation of the Septuagint</i> (2007)
EJ: <i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>	NIB: <i>New Interpreter's Bible</i>
ESV: <i>English Standard Version</i> (2001)	NIDB: <i>New International Dictionary of the Bible</i>
Ger: German	NIV: <i>New International Version</i> (1984)
GNT: <i>Greek New Testament</i>	NJB: <i>New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic</i> (1985)
Grk: Greek	NJPS: <i>Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures</i> (1999)
HALOT: <i>Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Koehler and Baumgartner)	NKJV: <i>New King James Version</i> (1982)
HCSB: <i>Holman Christian Standard Bible</i> (2004)	NRSV: <i>New Revised Standard Version</i> (1989)
Heb: Hebrew	NLT: <i>New Living Translation</i> (1996)
HNV: <i>Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible</i>	NT: <i>New Testament</i>
IDB: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>	
IDBSup: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement</i>	
ISBE: <i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>	

OT: Old Testament
REB: Revised English Bible (1989)
RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TLV: Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version (2014)
TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)

TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition
v(s). verse(s)
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: Latin Vulgate
YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)
WMB: World Messianic Bible (2020)

Messiah, Divine

Blogcast, 13 May, 2019

Why does the Messiah have to be Divine? How significant is the debate over the Divinity of Yeshua to contemporary Messianic theology?

The question of whether or not Yeshua the Messiah is Divine, God in the flesh, has been a cause of considerable debate and dissension in various periods, since His ascension into Heaven. The Apostolic Scriptures record ancient hymns and creeds affirmed about Yeshua by the First Century Believers themselves (i.e., Philippians 2:6-11; Colossians 1:15-20; 1 Timothy 3:16), some of which may have been formulated to not only make key statements about who He is, but also subvert errant ideas which had circulated in various sectors of the *ekklēsia*.

In much of theological study since the First Century and ministry of the Apostles, we encounter the views of people who strongly believed that Yeshua (Jesus) must be God, and that any diversion of believing that He is not God must be viewed as theological heresy. There are also those who have strongly believed that Yeshua was only a human man, that He had some kind of special relationship with God and was quite possibly even the Messiah empowered by God, but was never God in the flesh.

Whether Yeshua the Messiah is Divine is an old debate, and while there are discussions about what this group of ancient Christian leaders insisted, or what that sect did—**this is an issue which ultimately tries a reader's loyalty to the claims of the Biblical text**. How Medieval Roman Catholic leaders handled those who they considered to be “heretics,” for example, *should not* be what guides our thoughts about this issue. What should guide our thoughts about this issue, is understanding the wide-sweeping Biblical ramifications of: “these have been written so that you may believe that Yeshua is the Messiah, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31, NASU). What matters for our deliberations is whether or not the Divinity of Yeshua **is a clear teaching of Scripture**, that the Divinity of Yeshua is something reflected in the testimony of the Apostles, and how the Divinity of Yeshua is something which affects our salvation.

As I approach the issue of whether or not Yeshua is the Divine Savior, my reasons for believing in His Divinity are firmly based within the text of Scripture. From Scripture, we see stated in numerous places that only God can save human beings from their diverse trials, and

allow His people to enter into His blessed purpose for them. The LORD God explicitly claims that He is the only Savior of people:

“For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I have given Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in your place” (Isaiah 43:3, NASU).

“I, even I, am the LORD, and there is no savior besides Me” (Isaiah 43:11, NASU).

“Declare and set forth *your case*; indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none except Me” (Isaiah 45:21, NASU).

“I will feed your oppressors with their own flesh, and they will become drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine; and all flesh will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob” (Isaiah 49:26, NASU).

“You will also suck the milk of nations and suck the breast of kings; then you will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob” (Isaiah 60:16, NASU).

“Yet I *have been* the LORD your God since the land of Egypt; and you were not to know any god except Me, for there is no savior besides Me” (Hosea 13:4, NASU).

These verses from the Tanach (Old Testament) attest to the fact that the LORD (YHWH) Himself is the only Savior and Redeemer, as demonstrated by great acts of deliverance and victory for His people. The claim of Isaiah 42:51, for example, is most exclusive: **“And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me”** (NIV). The process of being saved from the eternal punishment to be meted upon sinners, directly involves actions performed by God Himself.

The key to properly dealing with whether or not Yeshua is Divine, is with how He could possibly offer any person eternal redemption as Savior, if He were only a human man.

The Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament) surely affirm that Yeshua the Messiah is the Savior. The angels proclaimed at Yeshua’s birth, “for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord” (Luke 2:11, NASU). The Apostle Paul wrote, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Yeshua the Messiah” (Philippians 3:20, NASU), and he spoke about “the redemption which is in Messiah Yeshua” (Romans 3:24, NASU). He further says, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7, NASU; cf. Colossians 1:14), which is undeniably the activity of salvation. Four times in the Epistle of 2 Peter, Yeshua is called “our Lord and Savior” (2 Peter 1:11; 2:20; 3:2, 18). And indeed, there are many other places in the Apostolic Scriptures where Yeshua the

Messiah is unambiguously referred to as the Savior, including: John 4:42; Acts 5:31; 13:23; Ephesians 5:23; 2 Timothy 1:10; Titus 1:4; 2:13; 3:6; 1 John 4:14.

For some outsiders encountering the testimony of Scripture, there seems to be an issue. If the LORD God says that He is the only Savior and Redeemer of His people, then how can Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) also be referred to as the One who saves and redeems sinners? Is not this something which can only be done by God alone? The Biblical truth of the matter is that a human person being saved, forgiven of his or her sins, and being spiritually regenerated, **is directly connected to whether or not Yeshua the Messiah is Divine.**

We need to each consider the picture of the Ancient Israelites' Exodus from Egypt. Any one of us in the Messianic community, who has studied the Passover, should be fully aware of how the Passover lamb is a type and shadow of Messiah Yeshua (1 Corinthians 5:7), and that the Passover represents our exodus as Believers from slavery to sin to new life in Him. The Passover is a picture of an individual's salvation. The Exodus account records how after the Lord had swallowed up the Egyptian armies that the Israelites began singing a song: "The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will extol Him" (Exodus 15:2, NASU). The Hebrew text says that *Yah v'yehi-li l'yeshuah*, or "the LORD has become our *yeshuah*."

This is not the only place where Bible readers see God as the *yeshuah* of His people. Psalm 118:14, 21 exclaims, "The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation [*l'yeshuah*]...I shall give thanks to You, for You have answered me, and You have become my salvation [*l'yeshuah*]" (NASU). Isaiah 12:2 says, "Behold, God is my salvation [*yeshuati*], I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord GOD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation [*l'yeshuah*]" (NASU). Perhaps most intriguing is Psalm 98:3: "He has remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God" (NASU). This verse testifies how that the world has seen *yeshuat Eloheinu*, in that the salvation of God is to have global ramifications. Such salvation extends far beyond physical deliverance from worldly trials and situations.

These verses from the Tanach affirm how God alone is the only Source of salvation, redemption, and deliverance from not only peril—but that He is the only steadfast One in whom people can trust and rely. God was the salvation for the Ancient Israelites, as the Supreme One removed them from their slavery in Egypt, being their salvation or *yeshuah*. If we are born again Believers, God has had to surely be *yeshuah* or salvation for us, leading us on an exodus out of the bondage we once had to sin and the forces of darkness, and into new life and restored communion with Him.

Is God our Savior? The conviction that Yeshua the Messiah must be Divine, God in the flesh, is deeply rooted in where the Source of one's salvation is found. The Source of our salvation is God Himself. God Himself is the only One who can save and redeem human beings from sin and the realm of death. The Psalmist expressed how, "No man can by any means redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him—but God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, for He will receive me. Selah" (Psalm 49:7, 15, NASU). If Yeshua were only a

human man or mortal, or even a created supernatural being, then could He legitimately have the power to deliver people from the clutches of death and eternal punishment (cf. Revelation 1:18)?

It is entirely appropriate for one to conclude that there is **no possible way** for Yeshua to be the Savior, providing eternal redemption for those who look to Him, unless He is truly God. Only if Yeshua is Divine, can He then be our Savior. The Hebrew Tanach is adamant about the LORD God being the only Savior, and if Yeshua is not the LORD God—a part of the Divine Identity—then who or what is He? How can Yeshua genuinely be the Source of eternal salvation if He is not God? Some have said that Yeshua only acts as “the Savior,” meaning that He is God’s agent in the world, but that He is ultimately not God. Yet, when we look at something as important as the intertextual quote of Isaiah 45:23 in Philippians 2:10, it definitely forces us to acknowledge that Yeshua the Son is indeed the LORD (YHWH):

“Declare and set forth *your case*; indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none except Me. Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear *allegiance*” (Isaiah 45:21-23, NASU).

“God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Yeshua EVERY KNEE WILL BOW [Isaiah 45:23], of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Yeshua the Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11, NASU).

The implications, of Isaiah 45:21-23 and Philippians 2:9-11 viewed together, are completely unavoidable. The One God of Israel, who has directly insisted that He is the only Savior to which all must turn for deliverance—who specifically says “there is no other” (Isaiah 45:22)—has actually *shared* this status with Yeshua. This should not be surprising, as Yeshua is stated to be One “existing in the form of God” (Philippians 2:6, ASV). Not only is Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) the One to whom all of Creation and all created beings (human *and* supernatural) must give an account, confessing His supremacy and worshipping Him—but the Father and Son definitely co-exist as a part of a plural Godhead, with the Son having the same Divine Identity as His Father.

The statement of Isaiah 45:21-23 about God being the exclusive Savior to whom the whole Earth must turn and swear allegiance, and Yeshua being the One to whom every knee will likewise bow and every tongue confess—makes it definite “that Yeshua the Messiah is *ADONAI*” (CJSB), and not a mere human master. A word like Isaiah 45:21-23 applied to any mere human agent empowered by God, or some supernatural yet created agent, would immediately invoke an accusation of blasphemy, yet the *Carmen Christi* hymn of Philippians 2:5-11 is widely believed by conservative expositors to be a very early form of liturgy used by

the Body of Messiah, representing a high Christology of Yeshua being Divine, which the Apostle Paul incorporated into his letter.

Whether or not Yeshua the Messiah is God, **is indeed a salvation issue**. None of us as limited human beings may fully understand all of the complexities of Yeshua's Divinity, His pre-existence of Creation, and His co-existence with the Father—but we **must acknowledge** a Divine Redeemer in order to be forgiven of our sins and be saved from eternal punishment. We need to make sure that if we indeed must profess that Yeshua is Lord, it is those who have received the eternal redemption He offers—and not the condemned who will have to acknowledge Him at the Great White Throne judgment, before their final sentencing.