

Answering the “Frequently Avoided Questions” About the Divinity of Yeshua

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answering the claims of the anti-Divinity Messianics

Anyone who has surveyed the Messianic movement knows that it is very broad and diverse. There is a broad array of theologies and opinions evident in the Messianic movement just as in Christianity or Judaism. There are those who are theologically conservative and those who are theologically liberal. There are those who believe that God has the ultimate control over their lives, and those who believe that they can determine their own destiny and dictate to God who He is. In recent days, it is not surprising that one of the age-old theological controversies going back to the Second and Third Centuries has arisen in the Messianic movement:

Who is Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ)? Is He God—or is He just a human man?

Why does the Messiah have to be Divine?

The question of whether or not Yeshua the Messiah is Divine, God in the flesh, has been a cause of considerable debate since His ascension into Heaven. There are those who strongly believe that Yeshua must be God, and that any diversion from believing that He is *not* God must be viewed as theological heresy. There are those who strongly believe that Yeshua was just a human man, and He had some kind of special relationship with God and was quite possibly even empowered by God, but never God in the flesh. There are those who are confused and do not know what to believe. While we cannot fully understand our Creator, nor can we fully understand His ways as mortal human beings, the Scriptures do tell us some important things about the Lord.

God Himself tells us, “For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior” (Isaiah 43:3a). He follows up this statement with, “I, even I, am the LORD, and there is no savior besides Me” (Isaiah 43:11). He challenges the “fugitives of the nations” (Isaiah 45:20), “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). These verses from the Tanach (Old Testament) attest to the fact that the Lord, God Himself, is our only Savior and Redeemer. The processes of being redeemed and being saved are unmistakably connected together, and they are directly related to our Creator Himself. The key in properly dealing with the Divinity of Messiah issue is directly related to how we become “saved.”

The Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament) tell us some things about our salvation as well. 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). The Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 3:20, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Yeshua the Messiah.” Paul also writes about “the redemption which is in Messiah Yeshua” (Romans 3:24). We are told, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7). Yeshua the Messiah is the One, “in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:14). Four times in the epistle of 2 Peter, Yeshua is called “our Lord and Savior” (1:11; 2:20; 3:2, 18). This seems to be a contradiction. If the LORD God is our only Savior and Redeemer, then why is Yeshua referred to as the One saving us and redeeming us? Is not this something that can be done by only God alone?

The truth of the matter is that one being saved, forgiven of his or her sins, and being spiritually regenerated, is *directly connected* to whether or not Yeshua the Messiah is Divine. Consider the Scriptures from the Tanach that clearly tell us that God Himself is our only Savior and Redeemer. Consider the Scriptures which tell us that Yeshua is the only One in whom we have salvation and redemption. What is being communicated here? Is there a Divine connection between the Father and Son? Yes!

Consider the picture of the Ancient Israelites' Exodus from Egypt. Any one of you, who has studied the Passover and who knows that the Passover lamb is a type and shadow of Messiah Yeshua, knows that the Passover represents our exodus as Believers from slavery to sin to new life in Him. The Passover is a picture of our salvation. The Exodus account tells us that after the Lord had swallowed up the Egyptian armies that the Israelites began singing a song. They sang, “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). The Hebrew text says that *Yah v'yehi li l'yeshuah* (יְהוָה נִיְהוּרִלִי לְיִשׁוּעָה). Literally translated, “the LORD has become our *yeshuah*.”

This is not the only place where we see God becoming the “Yeshua” of the people. Psalm 118:14, 21 exclaims, “The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation...I shall give thanks to You, for You have answered me, and You have become my salvation.” Isaiah 12:2 says, “Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord GOD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation.” 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.” This verse tells us that the world has seen *yeshuat Eloheinu* (יִשׁוּעַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ).

These Scripture verses speak of a very important Biblical fact: God is the only One who can save us from our sins. God was the salvation for the Ancient Israelites out of their slavery in Egypt, being their salvation or “Yeshua.” If we are born again Believers, God has had to become “Yeshua” or salvation for us, leading us on an exodus out of the bondage we had to sin.

Our strong conviction that Yeshua the Messiah must be Divine and God in the flesh is deeply rooted in where the Source of our salvation lies. The Source of our salvation is God Himself. God Himself is the only One who can save us and redeem us from our sins. The Psalmist says, “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). If Yeshua was only a human man, then He could not have delivered us from Sheol. There is *no possible way* that He could be our Savior. Only if Yeshua was God made flesh, could He then be our Savior. The Bible is extremely adamant about the LORD God being our only Savior, and if Yeshua is not the LORD God, then who or what is He? How can He be the Source of our salvation if He is not God?

So am I saying that the Divinity of Yeshua is a salvation issue? Am I saying that you must believe in a Divine Redeemer to be saved? Yes! We may not fully understand the complexities of Yeshua's Divinity, but we must have a Divine Redeemer in order to be forgiven of our sins and be saved from eternal punishment.

False Presuppositions

When someone is convinced that what he or she believes is the truth, that person will then go to great lengths to prove it. In the realm of Biblical theology, what a person often starts out believing begins with presuppositions. If a person is convinced of one thing, then everything relating to that subject will often be keyed off of that one thing. If, for example, one believes that Yeshua the Messiah came to do away with the Torah or Law of Moses, then almost every Scripture written relating to the life of the Messiah and the period thereafter will be viewed with a negative connotation in relation to the Torah. If one believes that the Lord will rapture the saints prior to the Tribulation period, then Scriptures relating to the Last Days will be viewed through this lens.

But like many things, it goes beyond what the Scriptures themselves say. There is always an ideological reason as to why we believe what we believe, and hopefully that ideological reason is always in line with the character of God as demonstrated throughout the Bible, and how He has dealt with us in our lives. Those of us in the Messianic community who believe that Yeshua did not do away with the Torah, aside from the Scriptural proofs in favor of Torah observance, believe that it is inconsistent for God to codify all of these laws and commandments for the

Ancient Israelites, only to one day say later that they are all unimportant and meaningless.¹ Those of us who see the fallacies of pre-tribulationism do not see God removing His people from times of trouble, but always protecting them and preserving them.² This runs contrary to the unsound ideologies of antinomianism (the denial of God’s Law) and escapism.

When it comes to the Divinity of Yeshua, what is the ideological reason for those who deny Him being God in the flesh? My conviction for believing that He is God in the flesh is because only God can save us from our sins, and only God can forgive us of our sins. I do not see any Scriptural evidence that indicates that a human being can save us from our sins, or forgive us of our sins.

Some claim to have complicated historical arguments which tell us that it was not until the Second and Third Centuries when people started believing that Yeshua was God, and thus the First Century Believers only considered Him to be a human Messiah. But the truth of the matter is that people and religious authorities from the First Century to the Second and Third Centuries and all the way until today have never fully agreed as to whether Yeshua is Divine or human. There have always been those who have believed that Yeshua was just a man, perhaps the Messiah empowered by God, but never God in the flesh. And there have been those who have believed that He was indeed the Divine Savior.

The problem for us today in the Messianic movement is that many of the arguments against Yeshua’s Divinity are based on sensationalism which basically goes along the lines of, “The Catholic Church has said that if you deny the Deity of Jesus then you are a heretic.” Because it is presumed that everything that Roman Catholicism has advocated over the centuries is wrong—*regardless of whether or not it aligns with Scripture*—the logic goes that we must reject it. The naïve person who does not know the Bible falls as easy prey to these arguments. And sadly, many are unwilling to reasonably examine the Scriptures and instead are only hearing what they want to hear.

My reasons for believing in the Divinity of Yeshua are firmly based upon the Scriptures, and in the sound ideological reason that only God can save us from eternal punishment. It does not matter to me what theologians have believed in the centuries past, as the Bible itself must be our primary basis for believing anything. There has always been a divergence of opinion over the centuries. It does not matter if Catholicism said that denying the Divinity of the Messiah was heresy or not. What matters is whether or not the Divinity of Yeshua is a **clear teaching of Scripture** and is reflected in the testimony of the Apostles.

We pursue a Messianic Torah obedient lifestyle because we are trying to live lives that are fully consistent with Scripture. There are those in the Messianic movement who do not. We believe in the Divinity of Yeshua because we believe that it is in full alignment with Scripture. There are those in the Messianic movement who do not believe in Yeshua’s Divinity, because people have used belief or non-belief in it for self-serving purposes. Ultimately, their denial of Yeshua’s Divinity—and *the very Source of their salvation*—is tied up in bitterness and hatred, not objectivity and a contrite spirit wanting to examine what the Scriptures truly tell us.

Answering the “Frequently Avoided Questions”

There are many claims that those who deny the Divinity of Yeshua, and thus deny the Biblical reality that we must have a Divine Savior, make, by saying that Yeshua is not God. Many of these arguments are sensationalistic, and prey on individuals’ ignorance of the Scriptures. Those who are undiscerning, and especially those who have perhaps not had a spiritual encounter with the Creator through the Divine Messiah, are susceptible to these arguments.

There have been several lists floating around for some time which are often called the “Frequently Avoided Questions.” Perhaps it is because these questions are so easily answered that Messianic Bible teachers have not taken the time to answer them. This article compiles the

¹ Consult the editor’s book *The New Testament Validates Torah*.

² Consult the editor’s book *The Dangers of Pre-Tribulationism*.

following ten “Frequently Avoided Questions” based on the varied lists I have seen. You will discover that these questions can be easily answered, and they are based on a selective reading of Scripture only at the surface level.

False Claim #1: God cannot die. If Yeshua the Messiah is God, then how could He die on the cross?

On the surface, this first reason against believing that Yeshua the Messiah is God may seem to have some validity. If we suppose that God is an eternal and an immortal being, and that Yeshua the Messiah is God, then how could Yeshua be God if He died a human’s death on the cross?

The Apostle John writes in John 1:14, “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” His Gospel opens with the critical statement, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). The Word, the *devar* (דְּבַר) or *logos* (λόγος), we know is Messiah Yeshua. John plainly writes *Theos ēn ho logos* (θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος), “the Word was God.” Yeshua the Messiah “dwelt among us” or “made his dwelling among us” (NIV). John 1:14 says that He *sarx egeneto* (σὰρξ ἐγένετο) or “became flesh.” The Hebrew word for “flesh” used in the Tanach is *basar* (בָּשָׂר), which relates to “flesh for kindred, blood-relations,” “all living beings,” and “mankind” (BDB).³ Its Greek equivalent is *sarx* (σὰρξ), “the substance of the body” (Vine).⁴

The Creator God taking on the form of a human being is not something new. In Genesis 18:1-2, the Lord appears to Abraham not only in the form of a man, but in the form of *three men*:

“Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw *them*, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth.”

Yeshua the Messiah being God manifest to us in the flesh is nothing new as far as Scripture as a whole is concerned. However, when Yeshua came to the Earth, He did empty Himself of His exalted glory that He had in Heaven. The Apostle Paul writes, Yeshua “although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:6-7). Yeshua the Messiah is not equal with God the Father in position, but certainly had *morphē Theou* (μορφῆ θεοῦ), “being in very nature God” (NIV). When Yeshua came to Earth, He came in the *homoīōmati anthrōpōn* (ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων), “human likeness” (NRSV). As He came to Earth in the likeness of men, He was subject to many of the same things that we as human beings are subject to. However, the Gospels are clear that Yeshua maintained His authority as God, as the demons would immediately recognize who He was, and He commanded authority over illnesses, diseases, and the weather.

The argument that “God cannot die” is often delivered without any examination of any Biblical text regarding the crucifixion and subsequent death of Messiah Yeshua. We are told in the Scriptures that the Word, who was God, became flesh in the form of the Messiah and lived on Planet Earth. Human flesh is subject to a human death. Yeshua the Messiah was executed upon a Roman cross, bearing the sins of the world. But that does not necessarily mean that Yeshua “died.” Hebrews 5:7 says, “In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety.” The author of Hebrews speaks of *tais hēmerais tēs sarkos* (ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς σαρκὸς), the days of Yeshua being in the form of human flesh. **It was Yeshua’s flesh that died.** The mortal frame that the Word had become had expired. But that does not mean “God died.”

³ Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 142.

⁴ W.E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1980), 242.

The Apostle Peter writes, “For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit; in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison” (1 Peter 3:18-19, RSV). This Scripture, telling us that Yeshua died for our sins, and that He was put to death in the flesh, also says that He, “going in to the spirits in prison, He then proclaimed” (LITV). While there is debate as to whether or not Yeshua actually “preached the gospel” to those spirits who were in prison upon the time of His physical death at Golgotha (Calvary), He had to actually have *gone somewhere* in order for this to have occurred, even if it were just Yeshua proclaiming His arrival to those who were condemned. We know from the story of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16 that *Sheol* or *Hades*, the realm of the dead, was divided into a compartment for the righteous and a compartment for the wicked. When Yeshua died, His spirit went to the Paradise side for the righteous as He plainly attested to the thief on the cross beside Him:

“And he was saying, ‘Yeshua, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!’ And He said to him, ‘Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise’” (Luke 23:42-43).

Some who deny the Biblical reality of an afterlife say that the comma in English can be moved in Luke 23:42-43 to read “Truly I say to you today,” but that is not what the source text reads at all. *Sēmeron* (σήμερον), according to the *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, “generally designat[es] the present *today, this day*.”⁵ Yeshua was very plainly telling the thief on the cross next to Him that both of them, *that day*, would be in Paradise—not that it would be an event to come in the future. In order for them to be in Paradise, Yeshua would have had to continue to exist, even if it were in another dimension.

The claim that “God cannot die” used against Yeshua’s Divinity is invalid when we understand that it was not Yeshua that died, but rather it was His flesh, His human shell, that died. When Yeshua was killed on the cross, He told the thief beside Him that they would both be in Paradise that very day. When Yeshua was in Paradise, the righteous side of *Sheol* or *Hades*, He made a proclamation to those spirits who were in the side of the unrighteous in prison in Hell. Yeshua as God, a spirit being, continued to exist after His flesh expired.⁶ Later, we know that Yeshua was resurrected and it is in that resurrected form He now sits at the right hand of the Father.

False Claim #2: God cannot be tempted to sin. Yeshua the Messiah was tempted by Satan in the wilderness to sin. How can Yeshua be God if He was tempted to sin?

The claim that God cannot be tempted to sin is based on James 1:13, “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.” The logic that is used against Yeshua being God is that since He was tempted by Satan in the wilderness that He cannot be God. On the surface, it would appear that quite possibly this reasoning against Yeshua’s Divinity has some merit; but when we examine the Scriptures in more detail, we should find this to be flawed.

Matthew 4:1 says, “Then Yeshua was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (cf. Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2). We know in the Biblical account that Yeshua was tempted three times, and each time the Messiah responded with Scripture to Satan. The key temptation delivered by Satan to Yeshua appears in Matthew 4:5-6: “Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, “HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU’; and “ON *their* HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE”’” (cf. Luke 4:10-11). To this temptation, Yeshua responds

⁵ *BibleWorks 5.0: Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. MS Windows 9x. Norfolk: BibleWorks, LLC, 2002.

⁶ Note that many of the people who deny Yeshua’s Divinity also do not believe in an afterlife. The editor has responded to many of the claims against an afterlife in the article “To Be Absent from the Body.”

with, “On the other hand, it is written, ‘YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST’” (Matthew 4:7; cf. Luke 4:12).

Yeshua quoted directly from the Torah, and the admonition that we are not to “tempt the Lord your God” (RSV). He quoted from Deuteronomy 6:16, which reads, “You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested *Him* at Massah.” The Hebrew verb *nasah* (נָסָה) means “to test, to try, to prove” (AMG). The commentary provided with this definition validly states, “Although people were forbidden from putting God to the test, they often did so.”⁷ Psalm 78:41, 56 tells us, “Again and again they tempted [*nasah*] God, and pained the Holy One of Israel... Yet they tempted [*nasah*] and rebelled against the Most High God and did not keep His testimonies.” The Scriptures are clear that human beings have tempted God.

If we follow the logic that God cannot be tempted, and because Yeshua was tempted by Satan in the wilderness that He cannot be God, then how are we to consistently apply this in the Tanach? The Hebrew Scriptures are clear that the Ancient Israelites *tempted God* in the wilderness. Because God was tempted by them, does that make Him *anything less than God*? Is our Eternal Creator, because He has been tempted and tried, anything less than an Eternal Creator who is omniscient and omnipresent? **Of course not.**

The proper understanding about God being “tempted” is that God cannot succumb to temptation. Because God is perfect, He always has the power to overcome temptation and never fall prey to sin. Yeshua was tempted in the wilderness by Satan, but He overcame temptation. In telling Satan “You shall not tempt the Lord your God” (RSV), He was in essence declaring Himself to be God! What makes Yeshua God—different from us as human beings—is that Yeshua does not have the sin nature we inherited from Adam. Being God in the flesh Yeshua has the power to overcome sin. He cannot be tempted and thus sin as Satan tried to tempt Him in the wilderness, just as God the Father never fell prey to sin being tempted by the Ancient Israelites, and indeed how He is tested or tempted today by many atheists or agnostics who challenge His existence and the Divine plan He has for His Creation.

False Claim #3: The Scriptures always present a difference between the Messiah and God, proving that they are not one and the same. Because of the separation of the Messiah and God, how can He be God?

It is correct that the Scriptures present a co-existence between the Father and the Son. Because there is a separation between the Father and the Son, does this all of a sudden mean that the Son is something less than God? How can Yeshua be the Son of God if He does not have the substance of being “God”?

John 1:1-2 tells us, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.” The Apostle John writes that the Word, the Messiah Yeshua who took on the form of human flesh (John 1:14), was God. But notice that while the Word was God, He was also “in the beginning with God.” What is this to mean? How can the Word be God but at the same time be in the beginning with God? The Word being referred to here is the Son, and speaks of the co-existence of the Father and the Son, but denotes that the Son is subservient to the Father. The Son is God, but He is in full subservience to the Father.

The fact that the Godhead is plural, meaning that God the Father and God the Son are both Divine, is evident all the way back in the Book of Genesis. The Lord says in Genesis 1:26, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” Some say that the “Us” referred to is not God, meaning a plural Godhead, but rather is God speaking to His celestial court. But Genesis 1:27 says that “in the image of God He created him.” The “Us” referred to is clearly Elohim or God, as God originally created man in His own image, *not* the image of those in His celestial court. Ecclesiastes 12:1 admonishes

⁷ Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, eds., *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003), 736.

us to “Remember also thy Creators [Heb. *borecha*, בּוֹרְאֵיךָ] in days of thy youth” (YLT). This verse attests to the plurality of God, as we are told that “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being” (John 1:3), as Yeshua was responsible for creating the world.

In the Apostolic Writings, when God is most often referred to, the reference made is to the Father. This is because the Father is supreme over the Son. Paul frequently makes the statement “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua the Messiah” (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Philemon 3). Notice how “God” is most always a reference to the Father.⁸ But because “God” in Scripture is most always identified with the Father does not all of a sudden mean that Yeshua is not God. In Titus 2:13, Paul writes that we are “looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Messiah Yeshua,” identifying Yeshua as *megalou Theou* (μεγάλου θεοῦ) or “our great God.” The Disciple Thomas, upon seeing the resurrected Messiah, cried out to Him “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28). Thomas recognized Yeshua as being God.

In John 10:30, Yeshua told those assembled at the portico of Solomon, celebrating *Chanukah*, that “I and the Father are one.” In Hebrew, He would have said *v'ani v'ha'av echad* (וְאֲנִי וְהָאֵב אֶחָד, UBSHNT). In using the word *echad* (אֶחָד) for “one,” there was a direct correlation made with the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4, “the LORD is one” or “The LORD is our God, the LORD alone” (NJPS). In saying that He and the Father were one, He was not only declaring that He and the Father were of one accord, *but also of one substance!* The *Shema* is the declaration that only the LORD is the One True God. Notice the reaction of the Jews who heard this statement of His: “The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him” (John 10:31). Did they pick up stones because Yeshua claimed that He was just in one accord with the Father? No. They picked up stones because in claiming that He was *echad* or one with the Father, they saw He was claiming to be Divine, and they considered that blasphemous.

There is a co-existence between the Father and the Son in the Scriptures. But the Godhead has been plural ever since the beginning. There has always been a co-existence of the Father and the Son, but the Son in that makeup is subservient to the Father. References to “God” in the Scriptures (particularly in the Pauline Epistles) are most often referring to the Father, but that all of a sudden does not make the Son less than God (as Yeshua is most commonly referred to as “Lord.”)⁹ What it does is it places the Godhead in proper order. It should certainly get Christians who believe that Yeshua’s commandments and God’s commandments are different commandments to think, because Yeshua and the Father are of one accord. But They are of more than one accord—They are of one substance—because if Yeshua is not Divine, then He cannot possibly be our Savior.

False Claim #4: To worship Yeshua as God is to worship another god. This is idolatry. How can you worship Yeshua as God?

Deuteronomy 5:9 admonishes us, “You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me.” We are not permitted to worship entities other than the Holy One of Israel. To do otherwise is to commit idolatry. The Hebrew verb *shachah* (שָׁחָה), appearing in the Hitpael stem (intensive action, reflective voice), means “*bow down, prostrate oneself*, before a monarch or superior, in homage, etc.,” specifically relating to “before God, in worship” (BDB).¹⁰ If Yeshua is not God, then to worship Him would be considered idolatry according to the Torah.

⁸ Cf. D. Guthrie and R.P. Martin, “God: God as Father (2.2),” in Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 357.

⁹ Cf. L.W. Hurtado, “Lord: Appellation Formulas (3.3),” in *Ibid.*, p 566.

¹⁰ BDB, 1005.

Psalm 97:7 says "Let all those be ashamed who serve graven images, who boast themselves of idols; worship [*shachah*] Him, all you gods." This verse is quoted in Hebrews 1:6 in reference to the Messiah: "And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, 'AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM.'" The Greek equivalent of *shachah*, used in the Septuagint rendering of Psalm 97:7 and in Hebrews 1:6, is *proskuneō* (προσκυνέω), "to make obeisance, do reverence to," and "is the most frequent word rendered 'to worship'" (*Vine*).¹¹ *Proskuneō* is used numerous times in the Apostolic Writings to refer to people *worshipping Yeshua*:

"After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and **worshiped** [*proskuneō*] Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh" (Matthew 2:11).

"And those who were in the boat **worshiped** [*proskuneō*] Him, saying, 'You are certainly God's Son!'" (Matthew 14:33).

"And behold, Yeshua met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and **worshiped** [*proskuneō*] Him" (Matthew 28:9).

"And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, 'To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, *be* blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.' And the four living creatures kept saying, 'Amen.' And the elders fell down and **worshiped** [*proskuneō*]" (Revelation 5:13-14).

A notable instance where *proskuneō* is used in the Gospels appears in Mark 5:6-9, when Yeshua encounters Legion:

"And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and **worshiped** [*proskuneō*] him; and crying out with a loud voice, he said, 'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.' For he had said to him, 'Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!' And Jesus asked him, 'What is your name?' He replied, 'My name is Legion; for we are many'" (RSV).

The demons immediately recognized who Yeshua was as God in the flesh and had to worship Him.

If Yeshua is not God, then to worship Him would indeed be idolatry. However, the Messianic Scriptures are clear that Yeshua was worshipped. When we worship the Son we are worshipping God, because the Father and Son are one. They are of one accord, in that they are of one purpose. And the Father and the Son are of one substance, Deity. Those who would say that people "worshipping Yeshua" came later after the death of the original Disciples and Apostles, are not examining the Biblical record of human beings, angels, and demons worshipping the Son.

False Claim #5: Yeshua worshipped the LORD as "His God." How can God "worship" God?

The claim that because Yeshua the Messiah worshipped the LORD as His God, thus Yeshua cannot be God, is a surface-only level argument. Its primary flaw is that it fails to take into account the reality that Yeshua Himself was worshipped as God in the Scriptures by human beings, angels, and demons. Secondly, this reasoning also fails to take into account the context of *how* Yeshua worshipped the LORD. Yeshua is the Son, and as such He is subservient to the Father. The Son must always give the Father the respect and the honor, and indeed the homage *and* worship, He deserves.

In John 4:23-24 Yeshua says, "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." Here, Yeshua admonishes the Samaritan woman to worship God, who is a spirit. Notice also that when Yeshua refers to God, He refers to the Father. Yeshua, being the Son, is always subservient to His Father, and as such will worship and adore Him. Does this contradict the fact that the Son too is God?

¹¹ *Vine*, 686.

The problem that we have is that people who deny Yeshua’s Divinity are trying to compartmentalize God. They fail to recognize that there is a hierarchy between the Father and the Son, and that the Son, in honoring the Father, worships Him. This does not all of a sudden make the Son something less than God. We also have to recognize that the Son worships the Father in the context of Yeshua being on Earth, and Yeshua emptied Himself of His exalted glory when He came to Earth as a human being. Emptying Himself of His exalted glory, He was subject to the same frailties of human flesh as all of us are. Emptying Himself of His exalted glory, it was always necessary for Him to pray to and worship His Father, being our example of how we are to commune with the Father.

False Claim #6: Yeshua the Messiah had to be born to exist. He did not exist until He was born. How can Yeshua be God if He had to be born to exist?

The Apostle John writes in John 1:14 that “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us,” following His declaration that “In the beginning was the Word” (John 1:1). The Word is God. Those who think in entirely corporeal, linear, and humanistic terms, believe that in order for Yeshua to exist, He had to be physically born. But this is not what the Scriptures tell us. The Scriptures tell us that God took the form of human flesh and dwelt among mankind.

Genesis 1:1 says “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” In Hebrew this reads *b'reisheet bara Elohim et ha'shamayim v'et ha'erezt* (בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ). A non-translatable particle word, *et* (אֶת), appears in the Hebrew text, relating to the action of creation. Hebrew grammar requires *et* to often appear before a direct object, in this case the direct objects being “the heavens” and “the earth.” What is interesting about this small word is that it includes the *Alef* (א) and the *Tav* (ת), the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Why it is important that we know this in relation to Genesis 1:1? Consider what God the Father says in the opening words of Revelation:

“I am the Alef and the Tav,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8, HNV; cf. 21:6; 22:13).

The Son, Yeshua the Messiah, later says this of Himself:

“I am the Alef and the Tav, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (Revelation 22:13, HNV).

These words in Revelation are paralleled by Isaiah 44:6, 48:12, where the LORD is defined as the One who is the First and the Last:

“Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me’...Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called; I am He, I am the first, I am also the last.”

The actual words used in the source text in Revelation are “Alpha and Omega,” A and Ω, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. In fact, the Complete Jewish Bible renders this as “I am the ‘A’ and the ‘Z.’” But regardless of how you look at it, the conclusion is the same: Yeshua has existed from the very beginning. He was present at the Creation of the world, because He is indeed God. In Revelation 1:8 it is attested, “I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” Being the *Alef* and the *Tav*, or the *Alpha* and *Omega*, is a designation that God Almighty *only gives Himself*, comparable to meaning “the Eternal One.”¹² Yeshua is able to call Himself the *Alef* and the *Tav* because all that is associated with being the *Alef* and the *Tav* comes with being part of the Godhead. He is the Beginning and the End and the First and the Last.

Yeshua the Messiah *did not* have to be born to exist, because He pre-existed the Creation of the world. Yeshua the Messiah *did* have to be born to obtain human flesh and be the Second Adam. The Apostle Paul writes, “when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son,

¹² Cf. J.E. Harry, “Alpha and Omega,” in Geoffrey Bromiley, ed., *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 1:97-98; A.B. Caneday, “Alpha and Omega,” in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 45.

born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Galatians 4:4-5). Yeshua the Messiah came as a human, born through a human woman and born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law or subject to the Torah's penalties. Romans 8:3 says, "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh." Yeshua the Messiah came as a human being to redeem us from sin. But that does not mean that He did not pre-exist.

False Claim #7: The demons never confessed Yeshua to be God. How can Yeshua be God if the demons never confessed Him as such?

Yeshua's Divinity does not need to be demonstrated by the demons specifically confessing Him as "God," but rather by *the action* that the demons take when they see and encounter Him. In Mark 5:1, Yeshua and His Disciples go to the territory of the Gerasenes, which was on the far eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. This was a heavily Gentile populated area, where the people did not worship the God of Israel or follow the Torah. Mark 5:2-4 tells us, "When He got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, and he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him." Immediately upon arriving on land, getting off the boat, a demon-possessed man encounters Yeshua. This man was so demon-possessed that he could not be restrained and chains could not even hold him down.

We are told when this man encounters Yeshua, "Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones. Seeing Yeshua from a distance, he ran up and bowed down [*proskuneō*] before Him" (Mark 5:5-6). This man, being demon-possessed, immediately recognized who Yeshua was as God. The demons operating inside of him had no choice but to bow down and worship Him as the Holy One. The demons beg Yeshua, "What business do we have with each other, Yeshua, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!" (Mark 5:7). The demons recognize that Yeshua is the One who has the authority to cast them into the Lake of Fire and torment them.

Yeshua tells the Apostle John in Revelation 1:17-18, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades." Yeshua is the One who has the keys of "death and Hades." He also says "I am the Alef and the Tav, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End" (Revelation 22:13, HNV), and being the "Alpha and the Omega" is a title that is given only to God Himself (Revelation 1:8). Yeshua, because He is God, has the final authority over demons, and has the power to cast them into the eternal punishment of the Lake of Fire.

False Claim #8: The Scriptures emphatically tell us that God is a spirit and that He cannot be seen. How can Yeshua be God if He could be seen by men?

Yeshua the Messiah says in John 4:24 that "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." It would make sense for us to believe that if God is indeed a spirit, that He cannot be seen by anyone. This is why God warns us, "So watch yourselves, that you do not forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything *against* which the LORD your God has commanded you" (Deuteronomy 4:22). The Ancient Israelites were entering into a land where the Canaanites worshipped graven images as their gods. Israel was not to form graven images and worship them as "God." God was not to be contained to a gold or silver object, or a lump of carved rock. He is omniscient and omnipresent. Being a spirit, God is everywhere, and does not need to be restrained to one form or another.

Describing the fact that God is a spirit, the Apostle John writes, "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*" (John 1:18). If people saw the physical Yeshua, then the logic against His Divinity is that He cannot be

God because God cannot be seen. But this would contradict the plain reality that Moses saw the back of God and thus saw God: "Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen" (Exodus 33:23). Abraham saw God in the form of three men (Genesis 18:2-3). God has shown Himself to people before, even with Him taking on the form of human men.

But John is describing something very special in relationship to Yeshua and with Him coming to Earth. After saying that "No one has seen God," he then describes that people have seen "the only begotten God" or *monogenēs Theos* (μονογενῆς θεός). *Monogenēs* (μονογενής) means "single of its kind, only," specifically relating to "the sense in which he himself is the son of God [and] has no brethren" (Thayer).¹³ Why is Yeshua called "the only begotten God"? He is called "the only begotten God" because Yeshua is God in the flesh. This is because previously, John writes, "the Word," who is God, "became flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). Yeshua is "the only begotten God" because He is God and was born of a woman. John writes that because Yeshua has come in the flesh among us, He "is at the Father's side," and Yeshua "has made him known" (John 1:18, NIV) or "explained Him" (NASU). Yeshua came to Earth to be the intermediary between mankind and the Father. He came to explain the Father to us.

God is a spirit and because God is a spirit we are prohibited in the Scriptures from making any representation of Him. But this does not negate the reality that God has appeared in human form in both the Tanach and Apostolic Scriptures.

False Claim #9: Psalm 110:1 is a proof text that Yeshua the Messiah is not God, and has been purposefully mistranslated by those trying to make the Messiah God. How can Yeshua be God when *Adon* is a Hebrew title given only to human men?

Psalm 110:1 is one of the most frequently quoted verses in the Tanach that is directly quoted or referenced in the Apostolic Scriptures in relation to Yeshua the Messiah (Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42-43; Acts 2:34-35; Hebrews 1:13).

Yeshua quotes Psalm 110:1 in reference to the scribes' claim that He was only the son of David. Yeshua asks them why they are calling Him the son of David, when David calls Him "Lord":

"And Yeshua *began* to say, as He taught in the temple, 'How *is it that* the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David? David himself said in the Holy Spirit, "THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, 'SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET.'" David himself calls Him "Lord"; so in what sense is He his son?' And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him" (Mark 12:35-37).

The Apostle Peter quotes Psalm 110:1 in his proclamation that Yeshua was the Messiah at *Shavuot*/Pentecost, comparing the Messiah to David, and how David did not resurrect from the dead and subsequently ascend into Heaven as Yeshua did:

"For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: "THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, 'SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET'" (Acts 2:34-35).

When we examine how this verse is quoted by both Yeshua and His Disciples, it is obvious that it is done in the context of proving that the Messiah is more than just a human being. Yeshua asks the scribes the question, "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?" (Matthew 22:45), telling them to look at the Messiah as more than just the son of David and part of the Davidic line, but the LORD God Himself in the flesh. The Apostle Peter at *Shavuot*/Pentecost tells those gathered that Yeshua has ascended into Heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. This too is a proof of Yeshua's Divinity, confirmed by His own words before the Sanhedrin in Matthew 26:63-65:

¹³ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 417.

“But Yeshua kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, ‘I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Messiah, the Son of God.’ Yeshua said to him, ‘You have said it *yourself*; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, AND COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.’ Then the high priest tore his robes and said, ‘He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy.’”

The high priest considered Yeshua to be committing blasphemy because He said that He would be sitting at the right hand of the Father. Another instance where He was considered to be blaspheming occurs in John 10:32-33: “Yeshua answered them, ‘I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?’ The Jews answered Him, ‘For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out *to be* God.’” These Jews mentioned here considered Yeshua to be a blasphemer, because by performing miracles He demonstrated His Divinity, and to them to believe in a Divine Messiah was incompatible with their theology.

When we see how Psalm 110:1 is quoted in the Apostolic Scriptures, it is obviously in the context of proving Yeshua’s Divinity and the fact that He is God in the flesh. But what about the Hebrew text of Psalm 110:1? Has it been “purposefully mistranslated” to prove the Divinity of Yeshua as some claim?

Psalm 110:1 reads “The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.’” Most Bibles render the Divine Name of God as “the LORD.” In the Masoretic Hebrew text, this appears as *ne’um YHWH l’Adoni* (נְאֻם יְהוָה לַאֲדֹנָי).¹⁴ TWOT validly states “‘*ādôn* usually refers to men,” but it also states that “there are numerous passages, particularly in the Psalms, where these forms, which are the only ones to apply to men, refer to God.”¹⁵

It is not inappropriate or manipulative at all to understand Psalm 110:1 as correctly reading *ne’um YHWH l’Adonai*. This is because the vowel markings underneath the Hebrew letters were not added to the Hebrew text **until the Seventh-Tenth Centuries C.E.** *Unger’s Bible Handbook* notes, “Before A.D. 500 Hebrew manuscripts had no system of vowel indication, except certain consonants to indicate long vowels. Between A.D. 600 and 950 Jewish scholars, called Masoretes (Traditionalists), invented a full system of vowels and accents to punctuate the text.”¹⁶ Without the vowel markings, the consonants that appear for the words *Adoni* (אֲדֹנָי), which would be “lord” in the context of a human master, or *Adonai* (אֲדֹנָי), which would be “Lord” in the context of referring to God, appear **exactly the same** as *alef* (א), *dalet* (ד), *nun* (נ), and *yod* (י).

Old Testament textual criticism has determined that the Masoretes, while eloquently preserving the Hebrew text of the Tanach since the compilation of the Masoretic Text in the Middle Ages, have indeed made some alterations. This is evidenced by the fact when some verses from the Tanach are quoted in the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament), they do not fully align with the Tanach. Oftentimes, however, these quotations do align with the Greek Septuagint, and the Hebrew text being referred to in the Tanach can align with the Septuagint if in some cases the vowel markings are changed. Readings among the Dead Sea Scrolls may also confirm that an LXX reading is superior to the MT, or that the Hebrew *Vorlage* behind the LXX is different than today’s MT.¹⁷ Many of the alterations made by the Masoretes relate to Messianic prophecies, and it is for this reason why Christian Bibles do not exclusively use the Hebrew text for the Old

¹⁴ *The Jerusalem Bible* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 2000), 782.

¹⁵ Robert L. Alden, “*ādôn*,” in R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 1:12.

¹⁶ Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Bible Handbook* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1967), 883.

¹⁷ Biblical references where the LXX and/or DSS may prove superior to the MT must all be considered on a case-by-case basis. The able interpreter must be acquainted with good, technical commentaries (i.e., *New International Commentary*, *Word Biblical Commentary*, *New International Greek Testament Commentary*) that examine these issues in detail.

Testament, and consult outside sources like the Greek Septuagint, Latin Vulgate, Dead Sea Scrolls, etc. Messianics today should learn to do the same.

I am of the opinion that the Jewish Rabbis of the Middle Ages who were compiling the MT text widely used today knew that Psalm 110:1 was a Scripture quoted in the “Christian New Testament” to prove the Divinity and Messiahship of Yeshua. They probably altered the vowel markings so that *a-d-n-y* (אֲדֹנָי) would read with *Adoni*, a human master, rather than with *Adonai*, a clear reference to God.¹⁸

False Claim #10: Yeshua the Messiah never said “I am God.” How can Yeshua be God if He never said “I am God”?

Those who do not believe that Yeshua is God seem to have a case because there is no instance where the Messiah specifically says “I am God.” However, there are instances where He says “I am,” and it is “I am” of a very specific context.

In the Hebrew Tanach when the Lord appears to Moses at the burning bush, we are told, “Then Moses said to God, ‘Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you.” Now they may say to me, “What is His name?” What shall I say to them?’ God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM’; and He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:13-14). God specifically tells Moses that He is *ehyeh asher ehyeh* (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה), “I Shall Be As I Shall Be” (ATS). It is from the Hebrew verb *hayah* (הָיָה) or “to be” that the Divine Name YHWH is derived, a loose meaning of which would be “Eternal One.” In the Greek Septuagint, the Hebrew phrase *ehyeh asher ehyeh* was rendered as *egō eimi* (ἐγὼ εἰμι), “THE BEING” (LXE). *Egō eimi* or “I AM” is used numerous times in the Apostolic Scriptures by Yeshua, each instance being a proof of His Divinity.

In Matthew 14:24-27, the Disciples are in a boat on the Sea of Galilee and are being swayed to-and-fro by a storm. They see Yeshua walking on the water, and they are frightened, believing Him to be a ghost. The Messiah comforts them by telling them “I am”:

“And immediately Jesus made His disciples get into a boat and to go before Him to the other side until He should dismiss the crowds. And having dismissed the crowds, He went up into the mountain alone to pray. And evening coming on, He was there alone. But the boat was now in *the* middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. But in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went out to them, walking on the sea. And seeing Him walking on the sea, the disciples were troubled, saying, It is a phantom! And they cried out from the fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, Be comforted! I AM [*egō eimi*]! Do not fear” (LITV).

Peter goes out to meet Yeshua on the lake, but begins to sink because of his lack of belief. The two of them enter into the boat together. “When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, ‘You are certainly God’s Son!’” (Matthew 14:32-33). The Disciples ask themselves, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?” (Mark 4:41). Notice that the Disciples all worship Yeshua, and they recognize that as God among them He has the power and authority over the weather.

In John 8:56-59, Yeshua is talking to a group of Jews who ask Him about Abraham. Yeshua responds to them, telling them that Abraham rejoiced over His day. These Jews ask Him how He could possibly have known this, considering the fact that Yeshua was not even fifty years old, and Abraham was long since dead:

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad.’ So the Jews said to Him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?’ Yeshua said to them,

¹⁸ It is because of these types of alterations made by the Masoretes why we cannot totally “trust” the Rabbinical Hebrew text. We recommend that if you use a Hebrew text for the Tanach, that you have a critical text like the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1977). While this text reads practically identical to the Rabbinical text of today, it does offer in its footnotes alternate readings that appear in the Greek Septuagint, Latin Vulgate, Aramaic Targums, Dead Sea Scrolls, and other ancient translations and Hebrew manuscript fragments.

Consult the book *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* by Emanuel Tov (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001) for a more detailed examination of the preservation and copying of the Hebrew Tanach.

'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I **am** [*egō eimi*].' Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Yeshua hid Himself and went out of the temple."

Notice the reaction of the Jews here. Yeshua says the quintessential statement, "before Abraham was, I am." This speaks of Yeshua's preexistence as God, because He did not say, "before Abraham was born, I was" in the past tense. These Jews pick up stones to stone Yeshua because He was identifying Himself as God in the flesh. They considered this to be blasphemy.

In John 18:4-6, Judas and a mob of Roman soldiers come to arrest Yeshua. They ask Him who He is, and He responds by telling them that He is Yeshua of Nazareth and with "I am":

"So Yeshua, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, 'Whom do you seek?' They answered Him, 'Yeshua the Nazarene.' He said to them, 'I **am** [*egō eimi*] *He*.' And Judas also, who was betraying Him, was standing with them. So when He said to them, 'I **am** [*egō eimi*] *He*,' they drew back and fell to the ground."

What happens to those whose intent was to violently seize Yeshua when He tells them "I am"? "Then when He said to them, I AM, they departed into the rear and fell to the ground" (LITV). These Roman soldiers, total pagans, had no choice but to be overwhelmed by the power of Yeshua and they fell back when He spoke the word *ehyeh*.

We then see Yeshua using "I am" at His trial before the Sanhedrin:

"But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, 'Are You the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?' And Yeshua said, 'I **am** [*egō eimi*]; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, AND COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.' Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, 'What further need do we have of witnesses'" (Mark 14:61-63).

"And they all said, 'Are You the Son of God, then?' And He said to them, 'Yes, I **am** [*egō eimi*].' Then they said, 'What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth'" (Luke 22:70-71).

At this trial before the Sanhedrin, Yeshua is asked if He is the Messiah. Yeshua responds to them with *ehyeh*, which has been transcribed for us in the Apostolic Scriptures as *egō eimi*. He just does not say "I am," *but* He says "I am" connecting us back to Moses at the burning bush where God reveals Himself. Yeshua did *not* just say "I am He" in the context of Him being the Messiah as some would like to say. Ancient history proves that there were many people in the milieu of First Century Judaism who believed themselves to be the "messiah" or some kind of "savior" for Israel. But the difference between those others who believed themselves to be the messiah, is that Yeshua said He was God in the flesh. He evidenced this very clearly by saying "I am." The Sanhedrin court considered this blasphemy, and that is why Yeshua was executed.

Note that Pontius Pilate asked, in regard to Yeshua's conviction, "Why, what evil has He done?" (Matthew 27:23). Yeshua did not break any Roman law. If He wanted to call Himself the Messiah, or even call Himself God, He could not have been convicted by Roman law unless He advocated an uprising against Caesar. Pontius Pilate did not care if Yeshua called Himself the Messiah, or God, or whatever. But the Sanhedrin condemned Yeshua because He claimed not only to be the Messiah, but to be God.

Conclusion

This concludes our ministry response to the so-called "frequently avoided questions" relating to the Divinity of Yeshua. You have seen in the responses that arguments against the Divinity of our Savior are surface level, they purposefully ignore other Scriptures, and most of all they *ignore* the Biblical reality that only God and He alone can save us from our sins. The scribes recognized this in Yeshua when they said, "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mark 2:7). They believed Yeshua's forgiving people of their sins to be blasphemy because only God can forgive sins, as the Psalmist plainly declares, "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name; and deliver us and forgive our sins for Your name's sake" (Psalm 79:9).

Is believing in the Divinity of Yeshua a salvation issue? I answer this question with a question: If Yeshua the Messiah is not God, but yet the Scriptures tell us that only God can save us from our sins, then how can Yeshua be our Savior? If Yeshua is not God in the flesh, then who is He?

There are many issues in our faith that are not salvation issues, but this one clearly is. That is not to say that we can fully understand God or how Yeshua is Divine, because we are limited humans—but it is to say that we must understand that only God can save us and redeem us.

What are we to do about those who deny Yeshua as God in the flesh, yet still recognize Him as the Messiah? Have they left the faith? Thankfully, it is only up to the Lord to ultimately decide who is saved and unsaved, as only He knows the true heart intent of the individual. However, those who have denied Yeshua’s Divinity have denied Him being a Divine Savior, and they have denied the Source of their salvation and the Biblical reality that only God can save us. **God help them all!**

The subject of Yeshua’s Divinity is not going away anytime soon. There will be additional criticisms that will be given by those who are denying the Divine Savior. We need to be ready for them, and hold onto the fact that He is the Divine Savior, because a human being cannot redeem another human being. We must always question the motives of those who deny Yeshua’s Divinity and His part as a member of the Godhead, wondering why they are doing what they are doing. It is the established pattern that once you deny Him as God in the flesh, it is not that much longer before you deny Him as the Messiah.

J.K. McKee (B.A., University of Oklahoma; M.A., Asbury Theological Seminary) is the editor of TNN Online (www.tnnonline.net) and is a Messianic apologist. He is author of several books, including: *The New Testament Validates Torah*, *Torah In the Balance, Volume I*, and *When Will the Messiah Return?* He has also written many articles on the Two Houses of Israel and Biblical theology, and is presently focusing on Messianic commentaries on various books of the Bible.

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