

The Nature of Yeshua in the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews

salvation, and with the Messiah being a largely human figure or even a highly ranked supernatural figure. In Isaiah 45:21 we see that God alone is Savior and there is no other: “there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none except Me.”

Marshall & Towner observe how “Behind the NT usage [of *sōtēr*] lies that of the OT/LXX in which God is designated some thirty times as the deliverer of his people from dangers and the bestower of benefits.”⁵³ In a passage like Isaiah 45:21, the Hifil (casual action, active voice) participle *moshiya* (מוֹשִׁיעַ) is derived from the main verb *yasha* (יָשָׁע), the same root for the Messiah’s Hebrew name *Yeshua* (יֵשׁוּעַ), and rendered as *sōtēr* in the Septuagint. Given the quotation of Isaiah 45:23, “that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear *allegiance*,” in Philippians 2:10 where “at the name of Yeshua EVERY KNEE WILL BOW,” it is down near impossible to argue against Yeshua the Messiah being God, as much as He is also Savior (discussed previously). Fee concludes, “The interchanging of this title between God and Christ Jesus (cf. 3:4, 6) reflects the high Christology found in Paul from the beginning.”⁵⁴ D. Guthrie also states, “The apostle evidently used [this title] indiscriminately of Father and Son.”⁵⁵

Recognizing how both the Father (Titus 1:3) and Son (Titus 1:4) function together as Savior, some further observations need to be made from Titus 1:4, as Paul issues Titus “Grace and peace from God the Father and Messiah Yeshua our Savior,” *apo Theou patros kai Christou Iēsou tou sōtēros hēmōn* (ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν) Looking at the grammar here, Mounce asserts “The single preposition ἀπὸ [*apo*], ‘from,’ governs both θεοῦ [*Theou*], ‘God,’ and Χριστοῦ [*Christou*], ‘Christ,’ and is common in Paul’s writings, attesting to his high Christology.”⁵⁶ **Here, there should be no doubting that Paul considers Yeshua to be integrated into the Divine Identity as Savior.** Later in Titus 2:13 he will actually speak of “the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Messiah Yeshua.”

Titus 2:11-14 “God the Savior”

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Messiah Yeshua, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.”

With some instructions having been delivered to Titus to direct to the Cretan Believers about proper behavior (Titus 2:1-10), a strong theological and salvation historical reason is provided by Paul for living uprightly: “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people” (Titus 2:11, ESV).⁵⁷ Towner indicates that this “is a densely packed statement of theology that in some ways marks the rhetorical high point of the letter.”⁵⁸ Titus 1:11 is partially paralleled by 1 John 1:1, which asserts, “What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life.” Mounce also informs us that for Titus 2:11, “the language is decidedly Hellenistic because Paul is contrasting the appearance of the true savior with

⁵³ Ibid., 131.

Included among their references are: Deuteronomy 32:15; Psalm 24:5; 25:5; 28:8; 42:6; Isaiah 12:2; 17:10; 43:3; 60:16.

⁵⁴ Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 170.

⁵⁵ Guthrie, *Pastoral Epistles*, 195.

⁵⁶ Mounce, 382.

⁵⁷ This entry has been adapted from the author’s commentary *The Pastoral Epistles for the Practical Messianic*.

⁵⁸ Towner, 740.

Hellenistic ideas, especially emperor worship...Yet many of the terms and ideas are deeply rooted in the OT and Paul's own thought."⁵⁹ So, while the descriptions that we see regarding the Father and Son are witnessed in the Tanach, they were also used to a degree by the Emperor cult, and steps are taken to see that the One True God is declared to be supreme.

The feature of Titus 2:11-14 is to describe what the Lord has done in past history, what it means for the present, and what His people can look forward to in the future. For the past, Paul tells Titus, *Epephanē gar hē charis tou Theou* (Ἐπεφάνη γὰρ ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ), "For the grace of God has appeared" (Titus 2:11). This is to be understood in the sense of God's grace manifested in the historical arrival of Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ), declared in the gospel message.⁶⁰

The grace of God, made known to the world in the arrival of Yeshua and the power of the gospel, is to be about "instructing us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age" (Titus 2:12, HCSB). Paul specifically says that the grace of God has come to Believers, teaching "us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions" (Titus 2:12, NIV), with the verb *arneomai* (ἀρνέομαι) actually defined with "to say No, decline, refuse" (LS).⁶¹ All too frequently in life, Believers encounter the temptations of sin—and when they think that they do not have the constitution to refuse—all of a sudden the presence of the Holy Spirit takes over and *forcibly refuses* to fall prey.

We are people who presently live *en tō nun aiōni* (ἐν τῷ νῦν αἰῶνι), "in the present age" (Titus 2:12), also labeled by Paul in Galatians 1:4 to be "this present evil age."⁶² A two-age view is common to Paul's letters, where Believers are people of the age to come, living in the present age dominated by sin, despair, and injustice (cf. 1 Timothy 6:17; 2 Timothy 4:10). In their behavior before the fallen world, they are to present themselves as citizens of Heaven living the life of Heaven (cf. Philippians 3:21), drawing others to Yeshua and His salvation, anticipating His Second Coming. Towner indicates how "salvation here and now—must be regarded with reference to the future event that will complete the present experience. It is a real but unfinished (contingent) experience of salvation."⁶³ As much as we eagerly await Yeshua's return, glimpses of the future Messianic Age are to be realized in the lives of Messiah's followers today, as His love and power break the hold of evil!

As Paul directs in Titus 2:13, the anticipation of "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing" should build day by day in the life of a Believer. We do not know the exact time of Yeshua's return (cf. Mark 13:32; Matthew 24:36), and even with many different proposals made throughout history trying to calculate and figure it out, all we know for certain is that tomorrow we will be one day closer to it than we were yesterday. At the appearing or *epiphaneia* (ἐπιφάνεια) of the Lord, the righteous dead will be resurrected (1 Thessalonians 4:13) and the regime of the antimessiah/antichrist will be defeated (2 Thessalonians 2:8). It should be easy to detect how the blessed hope (*tēn makarian elpida*, τὴν μακαρίαν ἐλπίδα) is by no means some kind of random, pre-tribulation rapture, especially given Yeshua's word about "THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS [Daniel 7:13-14] with great power and glory" (Mark 13:26).⁶⁴ In 1 Timothy 3:16 we see that Yeshua the Messiah was "Taken up in glory," *doxa* (δόξα), and given the angels' word "This Yeshua, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11), such a return in glory testified in

⁵⁹ Mounce, 421.

⁶⁰ Knight, 318.

⁶¹ LS, 118.

⁶² Grk. *tou aiōnos tou enestōtos ponērou* (τοῦ αἰῶνος τοῦ ἐνεστῶτος πονηροῦ).

⁶³ Towner, 750.

⁶⁴ Consult the author's report *The Dangers of Pre-Tribulationism*.

The Nature of Yeshua in the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews

Titus 2:13 is undeniably what will be seen at the *parousia*.⁶⁵ The Apostle Peter also comments about the glory which is to manifest at His Second Coming:

“[B]ut to the degree that you share the sufferings of Messiah, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation...Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Messiah, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed” (1 Peter 4:13; 5:1).

The Apostle John also exhorts Believers, “everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:3). The return of Yeshua the Messiah to Planet Earth, the next anticipated event in salvation history, is to be something which surely motivates His people to live holy and upstanding lives (Titus 2:12)!

It is almost impossible to avoid how Titus 2:13 describes the arrival of Yeshua the Messiah at His Second Coming, but **most important** to be recognized is how this is stated: “the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Messiah Yeshua” (NASU). From a straightforward reading of this English translation, Yeshua is titled “our great God and Savior,” and Titus 2:13 surely represents a very high Christology with Yeshua *directly* identified as “God.” This view of Titus 2:13 is debated in some circles, though, with grammatical points on *tou megalou Theou kai Sōtēros hēmōn Iēsou Christou* (τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) needing to be explored. Specifically, what do we do with the fact that there is only one definite article, *tou* (τοῦ), appearing in this clause? Does the single definite article really control both nouns, *Theou* (θεοῦ) and *Sōtēros* (σωτῆρος), together? Or, are two persons actually referred to in Titus 2:13? One will encounter two basic translations present in Bible versions:

1. “our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (RSV)
2. “the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (KJV)

Throughout the Epistle to Titus, it is unavoidable that the Messiah is referred to as being Savior (Titus 1:4; 3:6), and the Father (“God”) too is designated as Savior (Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4). In the Septuagint, the adjective *meγas* (μέγας) or “great” is frequently used to refer to the Lord God (Exodus 18:11; Deuteronomy 10:17; 2 Chronicles 2:4; Psalm 48:2; 77:14; 86:10; 95:3; Daniel 2:45; 4:20, 30a; 3 Maccabees 1:9), and *meγas* is witnessed in the Apostolic Scriptures as applying directly to Yeshua (Hebrews 13:20; cf. 2 Peter 1:16 with the related *meγaleiotēs*, μεγαλειότης).

As we consider the discussion over which rendering of *tou megalou Theou kai Sōtēros hēmōn Iēsou Christou* is correct, it must be emphasized that there are interpreters who fully believe that Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) is Divine, but who think that either two entities are referenced in Titus 2:13, or that Yeshua only being “the glory” of the Father is what is emphasized.⁶⁶ In the estimation of Mounce, “The doctrine of Christ’s divinity does not rest on this verse,”⁶⁷ although it should be considered substantially worthy of some investigation as it can be taken as **directly speaking of Yeshua as “God.”**

Those who argue that “our great God and Savior” speaks of Yeshua, and that a single entity is being referred to in Titus 2: 13, consider the definite article *tou* (τοῦ) to apply to *both* the titles “God and Savior.” A major feature of Greek grammar, which all students of Biblical Greek will learn about at one point or another,⁶⁸ is known as the Granville Sharp rule, named after Granville Sharp (1735-1813) who was an English linguist and son/grandson of clergy. Daniel B. Wallace describes this rule in his *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*:

⁶⁵ Also to be considered: Mark 8:38; Matthew 16:27; Luke 9:26; John 17:24.

⁶⁶ Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 196; Towner, 758.

⁶⁷ Mounce, 426.

⁶⁸ This included my own Greek language instruction at Asbury Theological Seminary.

Cf. David Alan Black, *Learn to Read New Testament Greek*, expanded edition (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), pp 181-182; David Alan Black, *It’s Still Greek to Me* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 80.

“In Greek, when two nouns are connected by [the conjunction] *καί* [*kai*, ‘and’] and the article precedes only the first noun, there is a close connection between the two. That connection always indicates at least some sort of *unity*. At a higher level it may connote *equality*. At the highest level it may indicate *identity*. When the construction meets three specific demands, then the two nouns *always* refer to the same person.”⁶⁹

The significance of this grammatical issue is heightened, as Wallace informs us, “according to Sharp, the rule applied absolutely *only* with personal, singular, and non-proper nouns.”⁷⁰

Theologically speaking, *who* is to specifically make an appearance before the world is really what should guide our conclusions. The grace of God has appeared by Yeshua’s sacrifice for humanity (Titus 2:13), and likewise “the glory of our great God and Savior” is demonstrated in the events of Yeshua’s return. So does Yeshua possess both of the titles “God and Savior”? Yeshua is the One who has made appearances throughout the Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 1:10; 4:1, 8), and the “glory” that is expected to manifest are the various actions associated with Yeshua’s return, the defeat of His enemies, and the establishment of His Messianic Kingdom with the restoration of Israel’s Kingdom (Hosea 1:11).

Grammatically speaking, there is no second reference in the Greek to “the Savior Jesus Christ,” which is what one would expect in the syntax, separating out “the great God,” meaning the Father from the Son. Elsewhere in the Pastoral Epistles the definite article is used to separate out the title Savior (1 Timothy 2:3; 2 Timothy 1:10; Titus 1:3, 4; 2:10; 3:4, 6). Mounce, who is also a Greek grammarian, indicates how “If Paul was speaking of two persons, it would have been easy to say so unambiguously,”⁷¹ giving us two possible options:

1. *του megalou Theou kai Iēsou Christou του Sōtēros hēmōn* (τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν), “the great God and Jesus Christ our savior.”
2. *του megalou Theou hēmōn kai του Sōtēros Iēsou Christou* (τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ τοῦ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), “our great God and the savior Jesus Christ.”⁷²

The main point, as Mounce states, is that “If σωτῆρος [*sōtēros*] referred to a second person, it would have been preceded by the article,”⁷³ and this way *the* God and *the* Savior could then be referring to two different entities (cf. 1 Timothy 1:2). But this is not what appears in Titus 2:13, and as Mounce rightly concludes, “if Paul did not believe that Jesus was God, it seems highly unlikely that he would have been so sloppy in making such a significant theological statement. If Paul did believe that Jesus was God, it is not a surprise to read this.”⁷⁴ Marshall & Towner further point out, “The NT does not know of a future hope of the epiphany of God (the Father). God brings about the epiphany of his Son rather than himself appearing along with him.”⁷⁵ A single entity, Yeshua the Son, appears at the Second Coming. This is something confirmed from the Tanach, where the LORD (YHWH) is the One coming, but interpreters who affirm Yeshua’s Messiahship are agreed that this is actually the Son:

“I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the

⁶⁹ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 270.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 272

For a further summary of the Granville Sharp rule with Greek examples to be considered, consult *Ibid.*, pp 270-290.

⁷¹ Mounce, 427.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Marshall & Towner, 281.

The Nature of Yeshua in the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews

bitter weeping over a firstborn...You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come, *and* all the holy ones with Him!" (Zechariah 12:10; 14:5; cf. 1 Thessalonians 3:13).

While it is easy to associate Yeshua with being Savior in Titus 2:13, the implications regarding Him being labeled "God" are most important for a high Christology. In 3 Maccabees 7:2 we see, "We ourselves and our children are faring well, the great God guiding our affairs according to our desire," with *tou megalou Theou* (τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ) employed to obviously label "God." Knight asserts, "The use of θεός [*theos*] makes explicit what is implicit elsewhere in the NT, where Jesus is said to have the attributes of God, to do the work of God, and to receive the worship and allegiance due only to God."⁷⁶ Marshall & Towner also acknowledge, "It is difficult to see why the One in whom God is fully manifest should not thereby be entitled to the title of God."⁷⁷ Dunn, who broadly holds to a low Christology, still has to conclude "here we have one of very few instances in the NT where Christ is called 'God.'"⁷⁸ Titus 2:14 following, undeniably speaks of Messiah Yeshua and His giving of Himself for human redemption.

Yeshua being directly identified with the title "God"⁷⁹ is not something unique to Titus 2:13, as we do encounter it elsewhere in the Apostolic Scriptures:

"Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!'" (John 20:28).

"[W]hose are the fathers, and from whom is the Messiah according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen" (Romans 9:5).

"But of the Son *He says*, 'YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM. YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS [Psalm 45:6-7]'" (Hebrews 1:8-9).

"Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Yeshua the Messiah, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Yeshua the Messiah [*tou Theou hēmōn kai Sōtēros Iēsou Christou*, τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ]" (2 Peter 1:1).⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Knight, 326.

⁷⁷ Marshall & Towner, 282.

⁷⁸ Dunn, in *NIB*, 11:872; he references John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Hebrews 1:8; Romans 9:5.

The degree to which Dunn thinks that Titus 2:13 is authoritative for early Messianic doctrine, though, can be questioned, as he denies Pauline authorship of the Pastorals.

⁷⁹ Those Messianics who hold to a low Christology of Yeshua only being a supernaturally-empowered agent of God, frequently claim that "God" is only a title given to Him as the Father's servant, similar to how in Exodus 7:1 the Lord told Moses, "See, I make you as God to Pharaoh [*netati'kha Elohim l'Phar'oh*, לַפְרֹעֹה אֱלֹהִים יַתִּיבָהּ]." The primitive nature of the Hebrew *Elohim* does allow it to regard various angels or representatives of the Lord (*BDB*, 43). However in the case of Moses being "Elohim," Exodus 7:1 is notably preceded with a statement of agency in Exodus 4:16, "you will be as God [*l'Elohim*, לְאֱלֹהִים] to him" or "playing the role of God to him" (NJPS), which any responsible reader of the Book of Exodus will have noted.

Yeshua's status as "God" in Titus 2:13 is also connected with Him being "Savior," and nowhere in the Torah is Moses called "Savior"—and no human agent of God is claimed to ever provide *eternal salvation*, unlike Yeshua (Hebrews 5:9). Furthermore, in John 1:1 where Yeshua is also titled "God," it speaks of Him being present at the beginning, which it is not said of Moses (which at the very least requires Messianic pre-existence). Colossians 2:9 also speaks to a status that Moses, nor anyone else, possesses: "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form." The key Christological passages that establish Yeshua as being Divine do not only involve titles such as "God," but also "Lord" and "Savior," and frequently involve actions that only a Creator who existed before time and has supreme control and mastery of the universe can perform, as God is the One who is to save fallen humans from the power of sin.

⁸⁰ Cf. Wallace, pp 276-277.

Within the Complete Jewish Bible (CJB; also CJSB), a version which is used by many of today's Messianics, Titus 2:13 is translated from the perspective that two separate entities are referred to: "the appearing of the *Sh'khinah* of our great God and the appearing of our Deliverer, Yeshua the Messiah." In his *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, David H. Stern makes a reference to the RSV rendering "our great God and Savior Jesus Christ," but then argues that his is better. He claims, "The verse [would] then clearly [state] that Yeshua is God. But I think that understanding forces a statement about Yeshua's divinity into a passage not concerned with it. Yeshua's divine nature is not compromised by rendering as I have done. As I have pointed out elsewhere, the New Testament usually uses more indirect language to express Yeshua's God-aspect."⁸¹ Stern obviously errs by not even remotely engaging with the grammatical issues, or even acknowledging or mentioning scholastic discussions on the Granville Sharp rule (even though we should appreciate how Stern does hold to Yeshua's Divinity).

Sadly, it is to be further witnessed that additional versions which are employed in either Messianic Judaism and/or the Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement, indicate that their translators or publishers, are either unfamiliar with the role the Granville Sharp rule plays in Titus 2:13 and/or they might hold to either an ambiguous or various forms of a low Christology:

- "expecting the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and our Savior Jesus Messiah" (Power New Testament).
- "looking for the blessed expectation and esteemed appearance of the great Elohim and our Savior יהושע Messiah" (ISR Scriptures-2009).
- "looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior, Yeshua the Messiah" (The Messianic Writings).

It is to be commended, though, that the Tree of Life—Messianic Family Bible (TLV), does render Titus 2:13 with the Granville Sharp rule in mind, having the much appreciated translation, "We wait for the blessed hope and appearance of the glory of our great God and Savior, Messiah *Yeshua*."

Not only does Titus 2:13 and its reference to Yeshua the Messiah as "God and Savior" serve as a clear affirmation of Yeshua's Divinity, it would also stand against any First Century claims about Caesar being either the "great God" or "Savior" of the Roman Empire.⁸² Mounce states, "the use of μέγας, 'great,' distinguishes God from pagan deities, and great is no more than a summary of what Paul says about him in 1 Tim 5:15-16."⁸³ And, noting how terms like grace, salvation, appearance/epiphany were all used within Emperor worship, Towner describes that "the intended implication of such wordplay would be that the benefaction and gifts of God and Christ exceed those of human emperors, just as the salvation connected with the epiphanies of Christ cause the temporal acts of salvation provided by these human figures to pale in comparison."⁸⁴ One day the True Divine is going to appear, and is going to conquer all mortal kingdoms, revealing Caesar and those like him to truly be weak and impotent.

Continuing, Paul exhorts Titus on how Yeshua the Messiah "gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14, ESV). More of the current aspects of redemption are described in Titus 2:14, as individuals and the people of God as a whole are to live responsibly,

⁸¹ Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 656.

⁸² Mounce, 428.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 429.

⁸⁴ Towner, 741.

The Nature of Yeshua in the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews

reflecting the salvation that Yeshua has provided them. The main reason Yeshua was sacrificed was to deliver people *apo pasēs anomias* (ἀπὸ πάσης ἀνομίας), “from all violation of Torah” (CJB) or “from all lawlessness” (ESV/HCSB). Yeshua the Messiah frees born again Believers from what they have done contrary to God’s Torah, as “sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4), as He was sacrificed for those who stood under the Torah’s condemnation (Galatians 4:5). It is easy to see connections between Titus 2:14 and Tanach assertions about how Israel’s sins⁸⁵ will be remitted by the Holy One:

“And He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities [Heb. MT: *m’kol avonotayv*, מְכַל עֲוֹנוֹתָי; Grk. LXX: *ek pasōn tōn anomion autou*, ἐκ πασῶν τῶν ἀνομιῶν αὐτοῦ]” (Psalm 130:8).

“They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions [Heb. MT: *u’v’kol pish’eiheim*, וְיִבְרְכוּ כָּל פְּשָׁעֵיהֶם; Grk. LXX: *apo pasōn anomion autōn*, ἀπὸ πασῶν τῶν ἀνομιῶν αὐτῶν]; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God” (Ezekiel 37:23).⁸⁶

Titus 2:14 continues, detailing of the Messiah, *kai katharisē heautō* (καὶ καθαρίσῃ ἑαυτῶ), “and might purify to himself” (YLT), with the verb *katharizō* (καθαρίζω) meaning “**to purify through ritual cleansing, make clean, declare clean**” (BDAG).⁸⁷ To a degree, Paul and Titus declaring to the Believers that true cleansing is available in Yeshua would subvert whatever the Cretan troublemakers had said about being pure in whatever they espoused (Titus 1:15-16), as this is a supernatural cleansing only available in the gospel. Parallels between this and Tanach promises that Israel will be purified can be seen, such good news having been anticipated many centuries earlier:

“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness [Heb. MT: *u’teharttem m’kol tum’oteikhem*, וְיִשְׁחַרְטֶם מְכַל טִמְאוֹתֵיכֶם; Grk. LXX: *kai katharisthēsethe apo pasōn tōn akatharsion humōn*, καὶ καθαρισθήσεσθε ἀπὸ πασῶν τῶν ἀκαθαρσιῶν ὑμῶν] and from all your idols” (Ezekiel 36:25).

“Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness [Heb. MT: *m’kol tum’oteikhem*, מְכַל טִמְאוֹתֵיכֶם; Grk. LXX: *pasōn tōn akatharsion humōn*, πασῶν τῶν ἀκαθαρσιῶν ὑμῶν]; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you” (Ezekiel 36:29).

“Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities [Heb. MT: *m’kol avonoteikhem*, מְכַל עֲוֹנוֹתֵיכֶם; Grk. LXX: *ek pasōn tōn anomion humōn*, ἐκ πασῶν τῶν ἀνομιῶν ὑμῶν], I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places will be rebuilt’” (Ezekiel 36:33).⁸⁸

These linguistic connections between Titus 2:14 and Ezekiel chs. 36 and 37 regarding Yeshua’s salvation activity, point to the fact that *all* of those who acknowledge Him—Jewish or non-Jewish—as Savior are not only reckoned a part of the community of Israel, but they are also somehow to be participants in Israel’s restoration.⁸⁹ The most important stage within Israel’s restoration is seeing people cleansed of their sins, and restored to a right relationship with the

⁸⁵ It may surprise some Messianic Bible readers that there is really not a word in the Hebrew Tanach for “lawlessness,” as *avon* (אָוֹן) is typically translated “iniquity” (i.e., Jeremiah 31:34).

⁸⁶ Cf. Towner, 761.

⁸⁷ BDAG, 488.

⁸⁸ Cf. Towner, 762.

⁸⁹ The implications of this are further evaluated in the entry for Titus 2:13-14 in the author’s publication *Are Non-Jewish Believers Really a Part of Israel?*

Creator. The Ezekiel 36:25-27 promise is most important, because when coupled with Jeremiah 31:31-34, it is the New Covenant imperative that with remission of sin will come the supernatural capacity on behalf of God's people for them to truly follow His Torah/Law.⁹⁰ Even more so, for our purposes, we should especially appreciate the sentiment of Marshall & Towner, who comment that in Titus 2:14, "Christ here has the same roles as Yahweh; the 'high' Christology is maintained,"⁹¹ as the Messiah is the One who has claimed His followers, and purified them for His own possession and purposes.

Titus 3:4-7

"The Savior"

"But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Yeshua the Messiah our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

The Creator has taken a definite interest in the well being of His human creations,⁹² something manifested via His *philanthrōpia* (φιλιανθρωπία), an "**affectionate concern for and interest in humanity, (loving) kindness**" (BDAG).⁹³ Titus 3:4 appears in the Wesley New Testament with, "the kindness and philanthropy of God our Saviour appeared." In ancient times *philanthrōpia* was often a trait that benevolent rulers were to demonstrate to their subjects. The high priest Alcimus asked King Demetrius in 2 Maccabees 14:9, "Since you are acquainted, O king, with the details of this matter, deign to take thought for our country and our hard-pressed nation with the gracious kindness [*philanthrōpia*] which you show to all." Interestingly enough, though, if Messiah followers are to emulate God as Creator, then as Towner aptly explains, "qualities that Greco-Roman culture ascribes to the ideal 'ruler' are actually to be exhibited by ordinary [Believers] in society."⁹⁴ If the Cretans addressed via Titus could do this in their interactions with the Roman government, it would surely go a long way to them making a difference for the gospel!

Titus 3:4 includes a reference to "God our Savior," *tou Sōtēros hēmōn Theou* (τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεοῦ), with God the Father being in view. Later in Titus 3:6, though, Yeshua is recognized as Savior, which many take as a confirmation of how the Father and Son are so closely identified as both are part of the Godhead, the Son being integrated into the Divine Identity.

Taking action on behalf of His human creations, Paul testifies to Titus and the Cretans, "he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5, ESV). Paul is clear how actions cannot save people. What God has brought to the redeemed is *palingenesia* (παλιγγενεσία), which may be defined as "*a being born again, new birth*" (LS).⁹⁵ *Palingenesia* notably appears in Matthew 19:28, where Yeshua speaks of how "in the regeneration [*palingenesia*] when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne..."

While God the Father purposed to show His philanthropy for humankind (Titus 3:4), with the Holy Spirit washing people from their sins (Titus 3:5), it is in Yeshua the Son as Savior that

⁹⁰ Consult the author's exegetical paper "What is the New Covenant?", appearing in *The New Testament Validates Torah*.

⁹¹ Marshall & Towner, 284.

⁹² This entry has been adapted from the author's commentary *The Pastoral Epistles for the Practical Messianic*.

⁹³ BDAG, 1055.

⁹⁴ Towner, 779.

⁹⁵ LS, 587.