

## The Nature of Yeshua in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts

and exalted at the right hand of God: “Therefore, being exalted to the right hand of God...” (Acts 2:33a, TLV). And, it is detailed how the Holy Spirit has been sent forth (Acts 2:33b), just as Yeshua had promised (Acts 1:4-5). That Yeshua is no ordinary person, and is certainly greater than King David, is certainly seen in Peter’s assertion of how, “For David did not ascend into the heavens” (Acts 2:34a, TLV). The narrative of King David’s life was that he died as an old man (2 Kings 2:10-11); David was not resurrected from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of God the Father.

Yeshua’s supernatural identity, for the purposes of Peter’s teaching to those at *Shavuot*/Pentecost, is emphasized via a Davidic motif. Just as King David is the one who is credited here with having prophesied of the resurrection of the Messiah (Acts 2:30), so is he the one appealed to regarding the exaltation of the Messiah. Psalm 110:1 is quoted in Acts 2:34b-35: “but he himself {David} says, ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, ‘SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET’” [Psalm 110:1].” For many hearing this for the first time, Yeshua the Messiah being exalted into Heaven as the second Lord of Psalm 110:1 (discussed previously), would mean that He, for sure, shared the ultimate in power. And as is further stated by Peter in Acts 2:36, closing this dynamic message, “Therefore, let the whole house of Israel know beyond doubt that God has made him both Lord and Messiah—this Yeshua, whom you executed on a stake!” (CJB/CJSB). Notice that Peter does not exclusively say that Yeshua is Messiah; Yeshua is also to be considered Lord.

Those who were hearing Peter’s sermon at *Shavuot*/Pentecost are said to have been cut to the quick, with around three thousand recognizing Yeshua as Savior (Acts 2:37-41). Peter’s message, however, as Spirit-inspired and directed as it was, covered a wide amount of material in a short space: (1) Yeshua’s identity as a prophet (Acts 2:22), (2) Yeshua’s identity as a martyr (Acts 2:23), (3) Yeshua’s identity as one resurrected from the dead (Acts 2:24-28) and as the Messianic descendant of David (Acts 2:29-32), and (4) Yeshua’s identity as the Lord who sits at the right hand of God in Heaven (Acts 2:33-35). **This message, joined with the activity of the Holy Spirit that was taking place, was convincing enough for many to turn from their sins in repentance.**

As important as Peter’s message was, though, it was hardly something which was comprehensive regarding the Messiah’s actions, the events that led up to His execution, as well as what it meant for Him to be the second Lord of Psalm 110:1. Keep in mind that nothing is stated in Peter’s message about Yeshua’s trial before the Sanhedrin, nor is anything said about some of Yeshua’s miracles or actions, much less His teachings. Peter’s sermon of Acts 2:14-36 encapsulates a message which was to confirm the activity of the Holy Spirit. Surely, it would have been up to those Jews who received the good news, and recognized Yeshua as “Lord and Messiah” (Acts 2:36), to then fellowship with those who had encountered Him in person, to learn more about His actions and teachings, before returning to their homes in the Diaspora (Acts 2:42). Likewise for any reader of the Book of Acts (or the Gospel of Luke which preceded it), it is necessary to continue to review statements which incorporate additional information and testimony as to the actions and identity of Yeshua.

### Acts 3:1-26

#### “Peter Declares Yeshua the Messiah”

“Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth *hour*, the hour of prayer. And a man who had been lame from his mother’s womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he *began* asking to receive alms. But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and

said, 'Look at us!' And he *began* to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, 'I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Yeshua the Messiah the Nazarene—walk!' And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. With a leap he stood upright and *began* to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God; and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to *beg* alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. While he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement. But when Peter saw *this*, he replied to the people, 'Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Yeshua, *the one* whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, but put to death the Prince of life, *the one* whom God raised from the dead, *a fact* to which we are witnesses. And on the basis of faith in His name, *it is* the name of Yeshua which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which *comes* through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all. And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Messiah would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Yeshua, the Messiah appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. Moses said, "THE LORD GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN; TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED [Deuteronomy 18:15-16] to everything He says to you. And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people." And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and *his* successors onward, also announced these days. It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, "AND IN YOUR SEED ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED" [Genesis 22:18; 26:4]. For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one *of you* from your wicked ways.'"

Subsequent to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at *Shavuot*/Pentecost, significant movements began to take place, and dynamic miracles began to be witnessed among those the Apostles encountered. While in the Temple complex for "the hour of *minchah* prayers" (Acts 3:1, CJB/CJSB), Peter and John encounter someone who had been lame from birth, who had regularly sat at the Beautiful Gate, begging for alms (Acts 3:2). As he had done with certainly hundreds, if not thousands of others, the lame man asked Peter and John for money (Acts 3:3). What happens instead permanently changed the man's life.

The narrative records how the two Apostles said, "Look at us!" (Acts 3:4), and so the lame man naturally expected to receive some significant sum from them (Acts 3:5). Quite contrary to his expectations, Peter tells the lame man, "I don't have silver, and I don't have gold, but what I do have I give to you: in the name of the Messiah, Yeshua of Natzeret, walk!" (Acts 3:6, CJB/CJSB). It is stated, "immediately his feet and ankles were made strong" (Acts 3:7, RSV). "He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God" (Acts 3:8, NIV). Those who were present to witness this once lame beggar, now healed of his life-long condition, are also seen praising God (Acts 3:9). Acts 3:10 specifically directs, "they were lost in awe and amazement at what had happened to him" (Moffat New Testament).

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While it has been noted how both the man who was healed (Acts 3:8) and the crowd which witnessed the healing (Acts 3:10) were “praising God,” the crowd runs to Peter and John in amazement (Acts 3:11). While those present had probably been moved by various spiritual activities within the Temple complex, none of these people appear to have really witnessed a miracle before. Peter and John ask them, “Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?” (Acts 3:12, NIV). The clause of interest is *hōs idia dunamei* (ὡς ἰδίᾳ δυνάμει), “as though by our own power” (NRSV). Peter and John explicitly deny that they had the ability of themselves to see the man healed of his malady; they had to instead invoke the power accessible in the authority of Yeshua the Messiah (Acts 3:6).

As the healing had taken place at the Temple complex in Jerusalem, Peter, who proceeds to speak, recognizes how those present had largely known of Yeshua and His execution at the hands of the Romans. *To many of those who would hear Peter’s testimony about Yeshua, they had perhaps heard of His various Messianic claims or indictments against various Jewish religious leaders. More than anything else, they probably regarded Yeshua as an executed failure.* This miracle, which had been witnessed as having been performed in His name (Acts 3:6), was going to definitely force a reevaluation of who He actually was.

How do you declare Yeshua the Messiah and His salvation, to an audience which you know has been conditioned to consider Him if not an enemy to the Temple and/or the Roman Empire, at least as just an agitator and a troublemaker who the Jewish community is better off without? Peter informs the crowd, “The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our ancestors, has glorified His servant Yeshua, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you” (Acts 3:13-14, PME). The crowd, many of whom were present to witness the events leading up to Yeshua’s execution, are told that in spite of their insistence that Barabbas be given to them (Mark 15:11; Matthew 27:20; Luke 23:18, 25), that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has glorified Yeshua His Servant. Far from Yeshua being an executed failure, Yeshua is instead a glorified success! *Some statements can now be made to the crowd about who this Yeshua is.*

Peter indicts the crowd, “[you] killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses” (Acts 3:15, RSV). English versions variably translate *ton...archēgon tēs zōēs* (τὸν...ἀρχηγὸν τῆς ζωῆς) as either “Prince of life” (NASU), “Author of life” (RSV/NRSV/ESV), or “source of life” (HCSB). The term *archēgos* (ἀρχηγός), can notably mean either “**one who has a preeminent position, leader, ruler, prince**” or “**one who begins or originates**” (BDAG).<sup>226</sup> While some look early on for Yeshua being designated as “Author of life” (TLV) to indicate, perhaps, a Divine nature of Yeshua being present at the Creation of the universe, the issue in view is contextually Yeshua being raised from the dead by God the Father. It is better to take Yeshua being the “Author of life” in Acts 3:15 as representing how Yeshua is the source of salvation, as “life” is synonymous with “salvation” in other passages in the Book of Acts (5:20; 11:18; 13:46, 48).

If you had been among those First Century Jews who had witnessed Yeshua executed by the Romans, while you may not have actively spoken any condemnation of Him—you had probably concluded in your mind that Yeshua was one failure of a man. To now hear this Yeshua called “the Author of life” (Acts 3:15), being resurrected from the dead by God, would have been quite shocking, if not scandalous! It was in the name of this Yeshua, as testified by Peter, that the lame man—who you may have seen hundreds of times at the Beautiful Gate—

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 138.

was healed, and was able to walk again: “Now through faith in the name of Yeshua, His name has strengthened this man whom you see and know. Indeed, the faith through Yeshua has given this man perfect health in front of you all” (Acts 3:16, TLV).

In his speech to the crowds, Peter fairly recognized how many of those who had witnessed Yeshua taken to Pilate and brutally executed, perhaps going along with it to some (high) degree, did it out of ignorance: “Now, brothers, I know that you did not understand the significance of what you were doing; neither did your leaders” (Acts 3:17, CJB/CJSB). While a large enough percentage of the First Century Jews in Jerusalem participated in Yeshua’s unjust execution, Peter simply says that what had happened was something that was foretold by Israel’s Prophets (Acts 3:18). He urges the crowd to repent of sins, with “times of refreshing” coming (Acts 3:19), and with it an anticipated return of Yeshua, the appointed Messiah (Acts 3:20). Peter stresses that the executed, but now risen Yeshua, has ascended into Heaven “until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old” (Acts 3:21, RSV). *Imagine how serious Peter’s words were—to an audience which was at least partly responsible for the death of Yeshua. The crucified failure was not only resurrected from the dead and ascended into Heaven—but this Yeshua has a central role to play in future history as foretold by Israel’s Prophets.*

While Peter recognizes how many in the audience had witnessed Yeshua’s death, with many indirectly participating in it to some degree—at least by thinking maliciously toward Yeshua—they did so in ignorance, according to God’s predetermined plan, as did the religious leaders (Acts 3:17), later specified in 1 Corinthians 2:8 to be “the rulers of this age.” But now, however, having witnessed significant miracles performed in the name of Yeshua, the crowd needed to recognize that should they be found to reject Him, they will be found to reject not only something anticipated in Ancient Israel’s history going back to the time of Moses—but that there will be severe individual consequences:

“Moses said, ‘ADONAI your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among your brothers. Hear and obey Him in all that He shall say to you. And it shall be that every soul that will not listen to that Prophet shall be completely cut off from the people [Deuteronomy 18:15-16].’ Indeed, all the prophets who have spoken from Samuel on have announced these days” (Acts 3:22-25, TLV).

Peter then reminds the crowd gathered, “It is you who are the children of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your ancestors, saying to Abraham, ‘AND IN YOUR SEED ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED’ [Genesis 22:18; 26:4]” (Acts 3:25, PME). The Jewish primacy in first being able to recognize the Messiah is emphasized: “God raised up His Servant and sent Him first to you, to bless you all by turning each of you from your wicked ways” (Acts 3:26, TLV). That a wider number of people would be anticipated to hear about Yeshua, and have an opportunity to recognize Him, is implied via the appeal to the Abrahamic promise.

Proponents of a low Christology of Yeshua only being a created supernatural agent sent from God, believe that a message like that seen in Acts ch. 3, may adequately serve to support their position. About as close as any statements may get, describing the nature of the Messiah, are remarks made about Him being “the Author of life” (Acts 3:15) and “who must remain in heaven until the time of universal restoration” (Acts 3:21, NRSV). In this message declared to the crowd, Yeshua is identified as “the Holy and Righteous One” (Acts 3:14), “the Messiah appointed for you” (Acts 3:20), and “His Servant” (Acts 3:26). Presumably, all of these titles could be given to an entity that is ultimately created.

The fact that the lame man is healed in the name of Yeshua (Acts 3:6), and not of the mortal abilities of either Peter or John (Acts 3:12), does beg some further inquiry into the nature of

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Yeshua. The Apostles could have just said something like, “As disciples of Yeshua the Messiah the Nazarene, in the name of the Almighty God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—walk!” This would have given some credit to Yeshua as a teacher or spiritual leader, but the supernatural power to the God of Israel. **But, Yeshua alone is invoked to see the lame man healed.**

Ultimately, the audience as being among those who “delivered up and disowned” (Acts 3:13) Yeshua, may be said to hold to a “low Messiahship” view of Yeshua. Rather than regarding Him as the prophesied Messiah of Israel, they regarded Him as an executed failure. *A reevaluation of who this Yeshua is would necessarily have to come after witnessing miracles performed in His name.* Admittedly in his message of Acts ch. 3, Peter does not come out and just say, “Yeshua is God” (unlike the opening greeting of 2 Peter 1:1). But how could Peter come out and just make such a claim, when it *first* had to be established that Yeshua was executed in concert with prophetic expectation (Acts 3:21-22) and that Yeshua’s words must be heeded (Acts 3:23), similar to other prophetic figures seen in Israel’s history?

Credibility for Yeshua of Nazareth as a legitimate prophetic figure, as the prophesied Messiah of Israel (Acts 3:20), and having been glorified by virtue of resurrection from the dead (Acts 3:13, 15)—must be established in the minds of the audience, *before* a further consideration about His real nature can be conducted. This follows the overarching pattern seen in the Gospels of Yeshua being recognized as a prophet, then as the Messiah, and then as One with abilities and authorities that God alone can possess. For what is seen in the Book of Acts, further reading and probing of Luke’s record is warranted, as more statements about Yeshua of Nazareth are made by the Apostles, with new factors to be considered about His Divine nature.

### Acts 4:1-22

#### “Miracles Performed in the Name of Yeshua”

“As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple *guard* and the Sadducees came up to them, being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Yeshua the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; and Annas the high priest *was there*, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. When they had placed them in the center, they *began to inquire*, ‘By what power, or in what name, have you done this?’ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers and elders of the people, if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Yeshua the Messiah the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this *name* this man stands here before you in good health. He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, *but* WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER *stone* [Psalm 118:22]. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.’ Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and *began to recognize* them as having been with Yeshua. And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply. But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they *began to confer* with one another, saying, ‘What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name.’ And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Yeshua. But Peter and John answered and said to them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.’ When they had