

The Nature of Yeshua in the Gospel of John

of Israel was sometimes referred to as God's Son in the Old Testament (Pss. 2:7; 89:26-27), and in some intertestamental sources 'Son of God' is parallel to Messiah (4Q *Florilegium*...). But Jesus' opponents rightly recognize that as he uses the title here there are overtones not only of messiahship but of sharing the rights and authority of God himself (cf. 1:34; 5:19-30)."²⁶⁹

- Gary M. Burge: "Was it illegal to claim to be the Son of God? This is hardly the case. The king of Israel enjoyed this title (see Ps. 2, 45, 89, and 110), and it appears for the Messiah in various writings of intertestamental Jewish literature (such as Qumran). But the language veils another worry: by 'son' Jesus has said more, implying that he bears the authority of God himself."²⁷⁰

There is no immediate reason for Yeshua, calling Himself the "Son of God," for Him to be condemned to death by the Torah as a blasphemer. However, if Yeshua being the "Son of God" involves His pre-existence of the universe and His integration into the Divine Identity, His being God—then the limited Jewish and Roman mortals depicted in this scene would, from their perspective, have some legitimate reason to sentence Him to death.

John 20:11-18

"My God and your God"

"But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Yeshua had been lying. And they said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.' When she had said this, she turned around and saw Yeshua standing *there*, and did not know that it was Yeshua. Yeshua said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?' Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, 'Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.' Yeshua said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, 'Rabboni!' (which means, Teacher). Yeshua said to her, 'Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, "I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God."' Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord,' and *that* He had said these things to her."

Within John's record of what transpired immediately after the resurrection of Yeshua, it is clear that Mary Magdalene is confused, thinking that the Messiah's body had been stolen (John 20:11-13). She then encounters a man who she thinks is the gardener (John 20:14-15), but as it is narrated, "Yeshua said to her, 'Miryam!' Turning, she cried out to him in Hebrew, 'Rabboni!' (that is, 'Teacher!')" (John 20:16, CJB/CJSB). Here, Mary recognized the resurrected Yeshua. A statement then appears, which has caused some confusion for a number of readers:

"Yeshua says to her, 'Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet gone up to the Father. Go to My brothers and tell them, "I am going up to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God"' (John 20:17, TLV).

Here, Yeshua informs Mary Magdalene to report to the remaining Eleven Disciples, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (RSV). Why is Yeshua seen making reference to "My God and to your God" (*theon mou kai theon humōn*, θεόν μου καὶ θεόν ὑμῶν)? Supporters of a low Christology frequently conclude that Yeshua's reference to the God of Israel as "My God," is indicative of a being or entity that by nature is not God.

²⁶⁹ Carson, *John*, 599.

²⁷⁰ Burge, *John*, 504.

It should be fair to recognize from Yeshua's words about "My Father and your Father, and My God and your God," that Yeshua has a different relationship with the Father in Heaven, than do Mary and the other human disciples. Yeshua **does not tell** Mary that He is returning to "our Father and our God." What the reader of John's Gospel is aware of, is that Mary is being told that Yeshua—just as He had previously said—is returning to the Father in Heaven:

"Now before the Feast of the Passover, Yeshua knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end...*Yeshua*, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God..." (John 13:1, 3).

Those who hold to a high Christology of Yeshua, being uncreated and integrated into the Divine Identity, point to Yeshua's statement in John 20:17 about "My God and to your God," as Yeshua speaking in His human Incarnation. As the *Carmen Christi* hymn would assert, Yeshua "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. and being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:7-8, NRSV). At this part in John's Gospel, Yeshua has not only been incarnated as a human being and executed on the tree, He has now been resurrected from the dead. What still remains to transpire is, "Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name" (Philippians 2:9, NRSV), as Yeshua has yet to return to Heaven and be exalted by the Father (Philippians 2:10-11). In pre-exalted state of resurrected humanity, Yeshua will certainly refer to the Heavenly Father as "My God."²⁷¹

As Bowman and Komoszewski further explain in *Putting Jesus in His Place*,

"In order to bring glory to the Father and out of love for lost human beings, the Son humbled himself by becoming a human being (John 1:14; Phil. 2:6-7). In becoming a man, Christ put himself in a position of dependence on his Father, as *his God* (cf. John 20:17). This meant that he depended on his Father to exalt him....As a human being, the Son still honors and subjects himself to the Father as his God (e.g., John 20:17; 2 Cor. 1:3; Rev. 3:12)."²⁷²

John 20:19-23

"The Resurrected Yeshua Appears"

"So when it was evening on that day, the first *day* of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Yeshua came and stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace *be* with you.' And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. So Yeshua said to them again, 'Peace *be* with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.' And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, *their sins* have been forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they have been retained.'"

When Yeshua appeared before various disciples, after being resurrected from the dead, He showed them the wounds that He incurred from His brutal execution by the Romans (John 20:19-20). Yeshua issued peace or *shalom* to them (John 20:21). By breathing upon these followers, they would receive the Holy Spirit (John 20:22), likely a preview of what was to transpire later at *Shavuot* or Pentecost (Acts 2).

One statement which can be confusing for some readers, involves the Messiah's word of John 20:23, "If you forgive someone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you hold them, they are held" (CJB/CJSB). God Himself is the One to ultimately possess the authority to forgive all

²⁷¹ Further issues will certainly be explored regarding Revelation 3:2, 12.

²⁷² Bowman and Komoszewski, pp 261, 263.