

The Nature of Yeshua in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts

agent sent from Heaven, which could be a created being, would be enacting the expectations foretold by Isaiah 40:3-5. Instead, the LORD or YHWH of Isaiah 40:3 is directly invoked, intending to be read as John the Immerser/Baptist preparing the way for the arrival of YHWH/Adonai/HaShem. **Such is an assertion of a high Christology of Yeshua the Messiah being God, integrated into the Divine Identity.** As Robert M. Bowman, Jr. and J. Ed Komoszewski concur in their book *Putting Jesus in His Place*,

“...Isaiah states repeatedly that *God* is coming to redeem, restore, and rule over his people (Isa. 40:9-11; 43:10-13; 59:15-20). Perhaps the most famous such statement in Isaiah is the following....{quotes Isaiah 40:3, NKJV}....The Synoptic Gospels quote this passage and apply it to John the Baptist preparing the way for the Lord Jesus (Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4-6). The New Testament teaching that Jesus is God...has significant precedent in Isaiah.”³²

Mark 1:9-11; Matthew 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22

“The Holy Spirit Rests Upon the Immersed Yeshua”

“In those days Yeshua came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: ‘You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased’” (Mark 1:9-11).

“Then Yeshua arrived from Galilee at the Jordan *coming* to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, ‘I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?’ But Yeshua answering said to him, ‘Permit *it* at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he permitted Him. After being baptized, Yeshua came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove *and* lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased’” (Matthew 3:13-17).

“Now when all the people were baptized, Yeshua was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, ‘You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased’” (Luke 3:21-22).

Questions about the nature of Yeshua have been asked throughout religious history, based on what took place at His immersion or baptism by John. As Yeshua emerged from the water, a voice from Heaven, clearly that of God the Father, spoke out “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased” (Matthew 3:17), which was a certain statement of approval about what the Messiah was about to perform.

In much of religious history, those who have held to some kind of low Christology may have perhaps proposed that at this point, Yeshua was to be regarded as the Son of the Father, and received some sort of Divine status. Often labeled as Adoptionism, the *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* defines it as, “A view of Jesus Christ that sees him as a human who was adopted or chosen by God to be elevated into being God’s divine Son or a member of the Trinity.”³³ The *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* further describes it as, “The theory that asserts that God adopted Jesus of Nazareth as his Son. In other words, Jesus was born human

³² Bowman and Komoszewski, pp 137-138.

³³ *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 4.

but became God's Son at a particular point in his life. This theory fails to reflect scriptural texts that point to Jesus' eternal relationship with the Father (e.g., Jn 17:5)."³⁴

Previously in the narrative of the Synoptics, John the Immerser/Baptist, preparing the way for Yeshua as the LORD or YHWH, is recorded (Mark 1:1-3; Matthew 3:2-3; Luke 3:3-6; cf. Isaiah 40:3-5). In the scene of Yeshua's immersion by John, He states that He is to be immersed with the intention, "to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). The source text employs the verb *plēroō* (πληρώω), which here should be taken as regarding "to bring to a designed end, fulfill a prophecy, an obligation, a promise, a law, a request, a purpose, a desire, a hope, a duty, a fate, a destiny, etc." (BDAG).³⁵ That Yeshua has now formally come on the scene, at this immersion or baptism by John, to begin to fulfill some significant prophetic expectations of Him from the Tanach, is fairly recognized.

Where does the terminology "My beloved Son" (ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, *ho huios mou ho agapētos*) originate? One place to be considered would be in the descriptions of Abraham being willing to sacrifice his only son Isaac (Genesis 22:2, 12, 16). In the Gospel of Matthew, the appeal in Matthew 2:15 to the Hosea 1:11 statement of "OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON," intertwines the mission of the Messiah with the narrative of Israel and Israel's Kingdom in the Tanach. Wellum thinks that "My beloved Son" is a title taken from the statements of Psalm 2:7, "He said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You,'" and Isaiah 42:1, "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations." He sees a combination of factors in view when Yeshua is referred to as "My beloved Son," which go back to statements and emphases previously witnessed:

"These words are probably a combination of Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1. Anyone familiar with the Old Testament would hear these words as messianic. Here is David's greater son, who is also linked with the suffering servant who, in the words of Jesus himself, has come to 'fulfill all righteousness' (Matt. 3:15). Jesus, then, in this context understands himself to be the obedient Son who not only identifies with his people but in so doing has come to inaugurate God's saving reign in this world. Moreover, the title 'Son' underscores this...[T]he title 'Son' takes on typological connotations—Jesus in all of his humanness is the fulfillment of Israel and supremely of David—but it is more than this. Given the emphasis on the virginal conception in Matthew and Luke (Matt. 1:18-15; cf. Luke 1:26-38), the emphasis on the 'beloved' (*agapētos*) Son, and the entire context of Jesus as the one who inaugurates God's reign, it is certainly legitimate to regard Jesus' sonship in more than merely functional terms. This title also carries a hint of ontological sonship (which is made explicit in such places as Matthew 11:25-27 and John's Gospel).

"...[I]n the act of baptism and the affirmation of the Father, we have Jesus presented as the Davidic king who inaugurates God's kingdom, the suffering servant and representative of his people, and the 'Son' of God both functionally and ontologically...."³⁶

A reader of Yeshua's immersion by John in Mark 1:9-11; Matthew 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22 is on good footing in rejecting the theory of adoptionism—that Yeshua became Divine or anointed or chosen of God subsequent to His immersion in water, as there are statements made prior to this, supportive of His Divinity. What can be recognized is that at Yeshua's immersion, this

³⁴ Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 7.

³⁵ BDAG, 828.

The association of Matthew 3:15 with Matthew 5:17-19 following, is addressed in the author's exegetical paper, "Has the Law Been Fulfilled?", appearing in his book *The New Testament Validates Torah*.

³⁶ Wellum, "The Deity of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels," in *The Deity of Christ*, pp 72-73.

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signaled the beginning of His fulfillment of all righteousness (Matthew 3:15), and with it the accomplishment of some significant Messianic prophecies. Yeshua being proclaimed as “My beloved Son” is primarily a declaration of His Messianic Kingship and association with the hopes and aspirations of Israel in the Tanach. And, it may be that “My beloved Son” has additional components to it, when the Sonship of the Messiah is described in other passages, more directly speaking of His Divine origins.

Mark 1:12-13; Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13

“Yeshua is Tempted in the Wilderness by Satan”

“Immediately the Spirit impelled Him *to go* out into the wilderness. And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him” (Mark 1:12-13).

“Then Yeshua was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’ But He answered and said, ‘It is written, “MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD” [Deuteronomy 8:3].’ 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” [Psalm 91:11-12].’ Yeshua said to him, ‘On the other hand, it is written, “YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST” [Deuteronomy 6:16].’ Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.’ Then Yeshua said to him, ‘Go, Satan! For it is written, “YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY” [Deuteronomy 6:13].’ Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and *began* to minister to Him” (Matthew 4:1-11).

“Yeshua, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry. And the devil said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.’ And Yeshua answered him, ‘It is written, “MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE” [Deuteronomy 8:3].’ And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, ‘I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.’ Yeshua answered him, ‘It is written, “YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY” [Deuteronomy 6:13].’ And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; for it is written, “HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU TO GUARD YOU” [Psalm 91:11], and, “ON *their* HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE” [Psalm 91:12].’ And Yeshua answered and said to him, ‘It is said, “YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST” [Deuteronomy 6:16].’ When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time” (Luke 4:1-13).

The Synoptic Gospels all depict Yeshua being taken out into the wilderness, to encounter Satan or the Adversary, subsequent to His water immersion or baptism. Many have interjected how within the ministry record of the Messiah, that various experiences of Ancient Israel in the Torah are repeated to some degree—in particular those events where the Israelites quantitatively failed, and Yeshua will succeed. Wellum states, “Jesus is presented as the true Israel who, like the Israel of old, was called out of Egypt (Matt. 2:13-15; Hosea 1:11), was tested