

The Nature of Yeshua in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts

Further investigation of both the statements and actions of Yeshua the Messiah—particularly those which can only be performed by God proper—is warranted, for us to gain a fuller picture of whether or not He is truly God and integrated into the Divine Identity.

Mark 4:35-41; Matthew 8:23-27; Luke 8:22-25

“Yeshua Calms the Winds and the Sea”

“On that day, when evening came, He said to them, ‘Let us go over to the other side.’ Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. Yeshua Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, ‘Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?’ And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, ‘Hush, be still.’ And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. And He said to them, ‘Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?’ They became very much afraid and said to one another, ‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?’” (Mark 4:35-41).

“When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Yeshua Himself was asleep. And they came to *Him* and woke Him, saying, ‘Save us, Lord; we are perishing!’ He said to them, ‘Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?’ Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm. The men were amazed, and said, ‘What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?’” (Matthew 8:23-27).

“Now on one of *those* days Yeshua and His disciples got into a boat, and He said to them, ‘Let us go over to the other side of the lake.’ So they launched out. But as they were sailing along He fell asleep; and a fierce gale of wind descended on the lake, and they *began* to be swamped and to be in danger. They came to Yeshua and woke Him up, saying, ‘Master, Master, we are perishing!’ And He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm. And He said to them, ‘Where is your faith?’ They were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, ‘Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?’” (Luke 8:22-25).

Within the record of Mark 4:35-41; Matthew 8:23-27; and Luke 8:22-25, Yeshua and His Disciples take a boat to the east side of the Sea of Galilee. They encounter a fierce storm along the way, one that is so bad that they exclaim to their Teacher, who was asleep in the stern, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” (Matthew 8:25, NIV) or “Master, Master, we’re going to die!” (Luke 8:24, HCSB). Yeshua asks His Disciples why they have no faith (Mark 4:40; Matthew 8:26; Luke 8:25), because all He has to do is rebuke the wind and the waves, for the sea to be calm (Mark 4:39; Matthew 8:26; Luke 8:24). The response of the Disciples, to the actions of their Lord in exercising some significant degree of power over the weather, is one of significant bewilderment:

- “Who then is this, *is* that even the wind and the sea obey him⁸¹?” (Mark 4:41, Mounce and Mounce).⁸²
- “What sort of man is this that even the winds and the sea obey him⁸³?” (Matthew 8:27, Mounce and Mounce).⁸⁴

⁸¹ Grk. *tis ara houtos estin hoti kai ho anemos kai hē thalassa hupakouei autō* (τίς ἄρα οὗτός ἐστιν ὅτι καὶ ὁ ἄνεμος καὶ ἡ θάλασσα ὑπακούει αὐτῷ).

⁸² Mounce and Mounce, 145.

⁸³ Grk. *potapos estin houtos hoti kai hē thalassa autō hupakouousin* (ποταπὸς ἐστιν οὗτος ὅτι καὶ οἱ ἄνεμοι καὶ ἡ θάλασσα αὐτῷ ὑπακούουσιν).

⁸⁴ Mounce and Mounce, 28.

- “Who, then, is this *is* that he commands even the winds *he commands* and the water and they obey him⁸⁵?” (Luke 8:25, Mounce and Mounce).⁸⁶

How significant was it for Yeshua, at a direct command, to calm the sea and the waves? Wellum appropriately details how “the nature miracles are displays of the work of God. In Matthew 8:23-27 we are told that Jesus exercises his authority over nature. He speaks a word, and the storm instantly calms. But what would this bring to mind for the Old Testament reader? It would remind them of the Lord himself, who triumphs over the stormy sea.”⁸⁷ He then references a number of critical Tanach passages, where it is the LORD or YHWH, who does have mastery over the sea:

“Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do business on great waters; they have seen the works of the LORD, and His wonders in the deep. For He spoke and raised up a stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea. They rose up to the heavens, they went down to the depths; their soul melted away in *their* misery. They reeled and staggered like a drunken man, and were at their wits' end. Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and He brought them out of their distresses. He caused the storm to be still, so that the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad because they were quiet, so He guided them to their desired haven. Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, and for His wonders to the sons of men! Let them extol Him also in the congregation of the people, and praise Him at the seat of the elders” (Psalm 107:23-32).

“Who alone stretches out the heavens and tramples down the waves of the sea” (Job 9:8).

“Who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the tumult of the peoples” (Psalm 65:7).

“Your way was in the sea and Your paths in the mighty waters, and Your footprints may not be known” (Psalm 77:19).

“Thus says the LORD, who makes a way through the sea and a path through the mighty waters” (Isaiah 43:16).

“Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake as in the days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not You who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon? Was it not You who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; who made the depths of the sea a pathway for the redeemed to cross over?” (Isaiah 51:9-10).

“You trampled on the sea with Your horses, on the surge of many waters” (Habakkuk 3:15).

Seeing Yeshua exercise control over the water and the waves, believing that their small boat would capsize and they would all be killed, doubtlessly raised a number of questions in the minds of the Disciples. As Bible readers, when we see Yeshua exercise control over nature—coupled with Tanach passages where the Lord God is in complete control of nature—we ask the proper question of whether we should conclude that Yeshua is to be regarded as integrated into the Divine Identity. Those who hold to a low Christology, however, of Yeshua only being a supernatural entity, only an agent sent from Heaven by God, can often draw such a conclusion from further statements made by Yeshua about His Disciples exercising similar power (i.e.,

⁸⁵ Grk. *tis ara houtos estin hoti kai tois anemois epitassei kai to hudati, kai uptakouousin auto* (τίς ἄρα οὗτός ἐστιν ὅτι καὶ τοῖς ἀνέμοις ἐπιτάσσει καὶ τῷ ὕδατι, καὶ ὑπακούουσιν αὐτῷ).

⁸⁶ Mounce and Mounce, 252.

⁸⁷ Wellum, “The Deity of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels,” in *The Deity of Christ*, 75.

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Matthew 21:22; John 14:12). In response to this, Bowman and Komoszewski summarize in their book *Putting Jesus in His Place* that there are some key differences between the miracles performed by Yeshua, and those performed by His early followers:

“One possible counterargument at this point might be to appeal to Jesus’ saying that his apostles could do similar things. When he was in Jerusalem, Jesus saw a fruitless fig tree and cursed it, causing it to wither. When the disciples asked him how that had happened, Jesus told them that if they had faith and no doubts, they could even tell a mountain to go jump into the sea and it would obey. The traditional understanding of this passage is that Jesus was speaking hyperbolically about the performance of extraordinary miracles. Whatever type of event Jesus means here, he says it will happen in response to prayer: ‘And all things *you ask in prayer*, believing, you will receive’ (Matt. 21:18-22 NASB, emphasis added; likewise Mark 11:12-14, 20-24).

“A similar qualification applies to Jesus’ promise that those who believe in him will do the works that he did and even greater works (John 14:12). Jesus immediately explains, ‘I will do whatever you *ask in my name*, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. *If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it*’ (John 14:13-14, emphasis added). Jesus is the actual miracle worker; the disciples are merely the ‘petitioners of numinous power’ (PNP), asking Jesus in his name to perform the miracles in order to glorify the Father in the Son.

“As a matter of record, the apostles do not seem to have performed any ‘nature miracles’ after Christ’s ascension, such as walking on the sea. When the ship taking Paul to Rome encountered heavy seas, no miracle prevented its shipwreck, although God providentially protected Paul and his shipmates from death (Acts 27:14-44). The miracles the apostles performed appear to have consisted primarily of healings, exorcisms, and a couple of judgment miracles, inflicting blindness and death. The miracles that the Gospels report Jesus as performing go beyond anything reported of the apostles.

“The mastery of Christ over nature, for example, is so complete that he does not even need to be physically present at the location of the miracle. On two or three occasions, Jesus healed people at a distance, without his ever seeing or touching them (Matt. 8:5-13; 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30; Luke 7:1-10; John 4:46-54). In one amusing account, when Peter asked him whether they should pay the temple tax, Jesus responded by telling Peter to go fishing; the first fish Peter caught would have a shekel in its mouth, with which Peter was to pay the temple tax (Matt. 17:24-27).⁸⁸

Yeshua calming the sea at a simple command, in Mark 4:35-41; Matthew 8:23-27; and Luke 8:22-25, invites us to further investigate the actions of the Messiah, and what they indicate regarding His nature.

Mark 5:1-20; Matthew 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-39

“Yeshua Casts Out Legion”

“They came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes. 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. 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 before Him; and shouting with a loud voice, he said, ‘What business do we have with each other, Yeshua, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!’ For He had been saying to him, ‘Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!’ And He was asking him,

⁸⁸ Bowman and Komoszewski, pp 202-203.