

The Nature of Yeshua in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts

God” (American Standard Version). Contextually, readers are to understand this as being the One God of Israel or YHWH, and not Zeus or Jupiter.

Without reading too much into centurion’s declaration in Mark 15:39 and Matthew 27:54, it would seem reasonable that at the time of Yeshua’s death, and with significant natural and supernatural events taking place—that the centurion recognized that the Yeshua or Iēsous he was crucifying, was an important figure to be associated with Israel’s God. And indeed, recognizing the God of Israel as the True Creator is the first step that many pagans have to go through, *before* they can begin evaluating who or what the “Son of God” is, in association with this Deity.

Matthew 28:8-10

“The Resurrected Yeshua is Worshipped”

“And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples. And behold, Yeshua met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. Then Yeshua said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me.’”

When the two Marys recognize that Yeshua the Messiah had resurrected from the dead, their reaction is one of absolute elation. They are overwhelmed with joy and adoration for their Master. The actions that they demonstrate toward Yeshua, do bear some significance in evaluating the nature of the Messiah. As is seen in the source text of Matthew 28:9, *hai de proselthousai ekratēsan autou tous podas kai prosekunēsan autō* (αἱ δὲ προσελθούσαι ἐκράτησαν αὐτοῦ τοὺς πόδας καὶ προσεκύνησαν αὐτῷ). Matthew 28:9 includes a definite employment of the verb *proskuneō* (προσκυνέω) or “worship.” However, it is to be witnessed that various versions, which are employed in either Messianic Judaism and/or the Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement, indicate that their translators, or publishers, are unsure about the kind of honor or veneration issued by the Marys to Yeshua in Matthew 28:9:

- “They came up and took hold of his feet as they fell down in front of him” (CJB/CJSB).
- “And they, who had approached *Him*, took hold of His feet and they paid homage to Him” (Power New Testament).
- “And they came and held Him by the feet and did bow to Him” (ISR Scriptures-2009).
- “They came and took hold of his feet, and bowed down before him” (The Messianic Writings).²⁰³

It might be lexically acceptable to render *proskuneō* in Matthew 28:9 as either “fell down” (CJB/CJSB) or “did bow” (ISR Scriptures-2009), but is it theologically acceptable? Various commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew, recognizing that *proskuneō* can lexically mean “bow down,” actually argue on linguistic grounds that *proskuneō* should be translated as “worship,” given the prior usage in Matthew 28:9 of *ekratēsan autou tous podas*, “took hold of his {the} feet” (Mounce and Mounce):²⁰⁴

- Donald A. Hagner: “In that culture the grasping of feet (note the fact that Jesus was tangible) was to make an obeisance, usually to a ruler or king, expressing

²⁰³ One version, whose publishers unambiguously hold to a low Christology of Yeshua not being God, actually does translate *proskuneō* in Matthew 28:9 as “worship”:

“They went over to him, held onto his feet, and worshiped him” (Anthony F. Buzzard, trans., *The One God, the Father, One Man Messiah Translation* [Atlanta: Restoration Fellowship, 2014], 112).

²⁰⁴ Mounce and Mounce, 126.

submission and homage. When combined, as in the present context, with the verb προσεκύνησαν [*prosekunēsan*], worship is clearly entailed (the latter verb also signifies ‘worship’ in v. 17, as in 4:9-10; 14:33). The only way the women can react to their cumulative experience is to fall at Jesus’ feet in worship.”²⁰⁵

- Michael J. Wilkins: “The reality of Jesus’ resurrection tells the women something about him that evokes their profound adoration. The word for ‘worship’ (*proskyneō*) in Matthew can either indicate kneeling before an esteemed religious figure (e.g., 8:2) or, when linked with the action of grasping of feet, worship. By allowing this act of worship here and in 28:17, something which neither angels (Rev. 22:8-9) nor apostles allow of themselves (Acts 10:25-26; 14:11-15), Jesus accepts the acknowledgment of his deity. Only God is to be worshiped (cf. Matt. 4:9-10; 14:33; Rev. 22:9), and these women now prostrate themselves before the Risen One, who is rightly to be accorded that honor.”²⁰⁶
- John Nolland: “To take hold of the feet is at one and the same time intimate and profoundly self-subordinating. It may be compared to the anointing of Jesus’ feet in Luk. 7:38 and Jn. 11:2; 12:3. The nearest parallels all involve entreaty, but that is not evident here. Instead the linked ‘and they worshipped him’ (καὶ προσεκύνησαν αὐτῷ [*kai prosekunēsan autō*])—on the use of this verb see at Mt. 2:2; 14:33) takes up the self-subordination motif and makes of it an act of worship. The recognition of Jesus’ stature here is probably to be linked specifically to the women’s experience of God at work at the tomb: the one for whom God acts like this is no mere mortal. There will be a deliberate paralleling with the worship of the disciples in Mt. 28:17.”²⁰⁷
- R.T. France: “To take hold of the feet is a recognized act of supplication and homage (Mark 5:22; 7:25; Luke 17:16). Such an act requires a low posture, and it is possible that *proskyneō*, which we have seen elsewhere to denote homage or obeisance to someone of superior social status or authority....means only that they bowed down in order to touch Jesus’ feet. But the element of ‘worship’ which is also strongly built into the usage of this verb in Matthew (see especially 4:9, 10; 14:33) is surely also prominent here, as it will be in the meeting of the male disciples with the risen Jesus in 28:17. You do not simply offer conventional politeness to someone just raised from the dead.”²⁰⁸

The usage of *proskuneō* in Matthew 28:9 is not isolated from other areas in the Apostolic Writings or New Testament, where *proskuneō* is also employed, to describe some kind of honor or veneration directed toward Yeshua. But, if the Marys only intended to demonstrate honor and deference toward their resurrected Master, then it would have been entirely sufficient for Matthew 28:9 to have stopped at them grasping Yeshua’s feet: “And they came up and took hold of His feet [*ekratēsan autou tous podas*]...” The further inclusion of *kai prosekunēsan autō*, bears indication of religious veneration directed toward Yeshua. Among Messianic versions, the TLV appreciably translates Matthew 28:9 with, “They drew near, grasped his feet, and worshiped Him.”

²⁰⁵ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 874.

²⁰⁶ Wilkins, 941.

²⁰⁷ Nolland, *Matthew*, pp 1252-1253.

²⁰⁸ France, *Matthew*, 1102.