

live and find themselves (materially) blessed.¹²² The point made in Colossians 3:1-4 is that having died to sin, and raised to new life with the Messiah, He is to be the source of where **eternal life** is found. There is no problem with today's Messianic movement placing a proper emphasis on the Torah as the high standard of God's holiness; but there is a problem when "Torah is life" equaling the means of inheriting eternal life is emphasized.¹²³

For a man like Paul, "to live is Messiah and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). Regardless of what happened in his life—even whether he lived or died—he did what he did because of who Yeshua was to him. Placing Yeshua at the center of one's being involves living properly in the current world, and looking forward to a future world where He reigns on Earth. O'Brien considers this to be "the life of the age to come which will be received on the final day and which through the resurrection of Christ from the dead has become for the believer a present reality,"¹²⁴ in what we might call an inaugurated eschatology. John's writings employ language that speaks of how those who belong to Yeshua pass from a realm of death to a realm of life (John 5:24-25; 11:25-26; 1 John 5:12).

One day in the future, Believers "will appear with him in glory" (Colossians 3:4, RSV), the verb *phaneroō* (φανερώω) meaning "to make manifest" (LS).¹²⁵ This speaks of the future glorification of Believers at the resurrection (Romans 8:17; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18), when the human person is fully restored (Hebrews 9:28), when the Lord "will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself" (Philippians 3:21). While experiencing great fulfillment in life on Earth with God's Spirit within Believers, there is a future coming and a definite return of the Messiah to Earth. Colossians 3:1-4 place an emphasis on living the life of the world to come *now*, before it is actually manifest, something which is undeniably important for every person for whom Yeshua the Messiah is the center of life.

Colossians 3:16-17

"psalms and hymns and spiritual songs"

"Let the word of Messiah richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Yeshua, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."

Paul instructs the Colossians, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God" (Colossians 3:16, NRSV).¹²⁶ The "word of Messiah" is likely a reference to either the gospel, or Yeshua's teachings, considered by the TNIV to be "the message of Christ."

There could very easily be a connection intended between Colossians 3:16 and the hymn that Paul used previously in Colossians 1:15-20, detailing what Yeshua has accomplished. Paul says, "Let the message of Christ continue to live in you in all its wealth of wisdom" (Colossians 3:16, Williams New Testament), the clause *en pasē sophia* (ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ) or "in all wisdom"

¹²² For further consideration, consult the thoughts expressed in Walter C. Kaiser, "Leviticus 18:5 and Paul: Do This and You Shall Live (Eternally?)" in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* Vol. 14 No. 1 (1971):19-27, with his conclusions also seen in his book *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

¹²³ If necessary, consult the relevant sections of the *Messianic Torah Helper* by Messianic Apologetics.

¹²⁴ O'Brien, *Colossians-Philemon*, 165.

¹²⁵ LS, 855.

¹²⁶ This entry has been adapted from the author's commentary *Colossians and Philemon for the Practical Messianic*.

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being a deliberate subversion of the false teachers' philosophy. This wisdom is only brought by the word of the Messiah, or the gospel. Furthermore, this message involves *didaskontes kai nouthetountes* (διδάσκοντες καὶ νουθετοῦντες) or "teaching and admonishing" (NASU). Teaching regards positive instruction, whereas admonishing often involves negative warnings.¹²⁷

As "the word of Messiah" dwells in the hearts of God's people, it will be evident by their character of worship. We see a wide array of worship techniques referred to by Paul in Colossians 3:16, including: psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Too many people today, perhaps because of extreme influences from the charismatic movement, often think that non-spontaneous worship is not spiritual (or even worse, non-spontaneous preaching), yet it is clear simply from Colossians 3:16, that formal styles of worship are to play a primary role to more spontaneous styles.

Today's Messianic Believers need to be quite consciously aware of how the First Century Messianic movement directly inherited a rich liturgical tradition from the Jewish Synagogue. In Romans 9:4, Paul observed that to his Jewish people "belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the *temple service*," with *latreia* (λατρεία) being of notable importance. The early Believers certainly employed many of the Psalms from the Tanach in their worship to God, but they were equally quite adept at producing their own songs and hymns. Many of the early hymns of the First Century Believers expressed key doctrinal confessions about Yeshua, such as Colossians 1:15-20, and also Philippians 2:6-11 and 1 Timothy 3:16.

Worshipping the Lord is notably something that *is not to end* in corporate meeting times, but extends to how a person functions throughout the normal work week. Paul tells the Colossians, "and all, whatever ye may do in word or in work, *do* all things in the name of the Lord Jesus—giving thanks to the God and Father, through him" (Colossians 3:17, YLT). All things considered pertain directly *en logō ē en ergō* (ἐν λόγῳ ἢ ἐν ἔργῳ), "in word or in work" (YLT/LITV). It could be argued that "in word" is a connection back to "the word of Messiah" (Colossians 3:16), although much more likely "in word or in work" regards "whatever you do or say" (NLT).

There are some important Jewish parallels to be considered with Colossians 3:17, indicating that Paul is only appropriating concepts in which he had been originally trained, and is now placing a life in Yeshua the Messiah as the prime focus. Sirach 47:8, describing King David, says, "In all that he did he gave thanks to the Holy One, the Most High, with ascriptions of glory; he sang praise with all his heart, and he loved his Maker." An admonition seen in the Mishnah explains, "may everything you do be for the sake of Heaven" (m.*Avot* 2:12).¹²⁸

How can Believers adequately perform what they say or what they do? They must invoke the approval of God. Specifically, Paul tells the Colossians that this is to be *en onomati Kurīou Iēsou* (ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου Ἰησοῦ), "in the name of the Lord Yeshua" (Colossians 3:17). We should be steadfastly reminded how the term "name" (Heb. *shem*, שֵׁם; Grk. *onoma*, ὄνομα) throughout the Scriptures often relates to one's authority or repute,¹²⁹ and not principally the pronunciation or spelling of something. What is significant to note in Colossians 3:17, is that the Colossians' devotion is to be focused around the Lord Yeshua. How one serves God, the Father, is accomplished through Yeshua, His Son, **with the Son integrated directly into the Divine Identity**. For the Apostle Paul, a life of faith is considered to be *a life of worship*, something emphasized both in Colossians 3:17 and in Romans 12:1-2:

¹²⁷ Moo, *Colossians-Philemon*, 289.

¹²⁸ Neusner, *Mishnah*, 677.

¹²⁹ Consult Walter C. Kaiser, "שֵׁם," in *TWOT*, 2:934-935; and H. Bietenhard, "ὄνομα," in *TDNT*, pp 694-700.

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

To do something through the name of the Lord is spoken affluently throughout the Tanach. In Genesis 12:8, it is recorded that Abraham “built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD.” In Micah 4:5, it is asserted that Israel is a people who “walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever,” meaning that they are devoted to Him and to His ways. In his book *Jesus and the God of Israel*, Richard Bauckham considers passages like Colossians 3:17 to play a role in “Paul’s christological interpretation of scriptural passages about YHWH, taking the name YHWH (*kurios* in LXX) to refer to Jesus Christ.”¹³⁰ These are places where Yeshua the Messiah directly takes the identity of His Father, YHWH (יהוה) or the LORD, and is served, worshipped, or obeyed as the LORD (often, but not always, connected to some Tanach intertextuality).¹³¹ This goes well beyond the title *Kurios* (κύριος) simply alluding to Yeshua as some kind of “Master” or authority figure, but how He is integrated into the Being of the Lord God of Israel, in an effort to recognize the LORD as the One True God and no other. The reference we see to “in the name of the Lord...” in Colossians 3:17, referring to Yeshua, is thus to be understood as being no different to *b’shem-ADONAI* (בְּשֵׁם־יְהוָה) in the Tanach. Moo concurs,

“[This] is, then, another (less direct) sign of the high Christology of this letter (and of the New Testament in general) that the ‘LORD’ is now identified with Jesus Christ. The phrase ‘in the name of the Lord’ takes on a wide variety of nuances, but often the focus is on the nature or character of the Lord. To do all things ‘in the name of the Lord Jesus,’ then, does not simply mean to utter Jesus’ name but to act always in concert with the nature and character of our Lord.”¹³²

Dunn, who broadly holds to a low Christology, even has to note the closeness of the Lord Yeshua to YHWH. He validly observes how this means, “Not that Jesus is thought to have taken over, far less usurped, the role of Yahweh...rather...God has shared his sovereign role with Christ.”¹³³ I do not think anyone holding to a high Christology of Yeshua being the Lord God actually believes that Yeshua takes over, or even usurps, His Father’s role. Rather, we see devotion for life by people—again, something Paul considers to be “worship”—focused around Yeshua, and through Yeshua it is directed to God the Father. Something done in the name of the Lord Yeshua is done as though it is *b’shem-ADONAI*. It is difficult to overlook how Yeshua is identified as a part of the Godhead here, with Yeshua being recognized as “Lord” and the Father as “God.”

¹³⁰ Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 186.

¹³¹ Cf. Bauckham’s detailed list in *Ibid.*, pp 186-188.

¹³² Moo, *Colossians-Philemon*, 291.

¹³³ Dunn, *Colossians-Philemon*, 240.