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CONFRONTING
YESHUA'S DIVINITY AND MESSIAHSHIP

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J.K. McKee

MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.blog

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Abbreviation and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as *TWOT* for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament
Ara: Aramaic
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)
b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.
BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)
BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.
CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)
CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)
CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)
CJSB: Complete Jewish Study Bible (2016)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls
EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*
EJ: *Encylopaedia Judaica*
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)
Ger: German
GNT: Greek New Testament
Grk: Greek
HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)
HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)
Heb: Hebrew
HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*
ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*
Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)
JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)
JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
KJV: King James Version
Lattimore: The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore (1996)

LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)
LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)
LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)
LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)
LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
LXX: Septuagint
m. Mishnah
MT: Masoretic Text
NASB: New American Standard Bible (1977)
NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
NEB: New English Bible (1970)
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*
NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
NIV: New International Version (1984)
NJB: New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic (1985)
NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)
NKJV: New King James Version (1982)
NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)
NLT: New Living Translation (1996)
NT: New Testament
OT: Old Testament
REB: Revised English Bible (1989)
RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TLV: Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version (2014)
TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)
TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition
v(s). verse(s)
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: Latin Vulgate
YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)
WMB: World Messianic Bible (2020)

Introduction

There is no more pressing issue for Believers in Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah, than understanding who their Lord actually is. There are many statements appearing in the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament, which give witness to who He is. Yeshua is the Word made flesh (John 1:1, 14), He is the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36), He is One who had the audacity to say "before Abraham was born, I am" (John 8:58, NASU), and He is One "existing in the form of God" (Philippians 2:6, ASV). Yeshua is the Savior of the world, whose sacrifice for human transgressions provides permanent atonement and forgiveness. Yeshua, the Messiah of Israel, is the One "of whom Moses in the Law and *also* the Prophets wrote" (John 1:45, NASU). Yeshua the Messiah is One who the Scriptures definitely regard as no ordinary human, as He performed miracles, had control over the weather, and who was recognized as unique by the forces of evil. He is "the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Revelation 22:13, NASU).

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Messiahship. **There are answers to the claims against these foundational truths, which are available for those who need an immediate shoring up of their faith.**

Confronting Yeshua's Divinity and Messiahship has compiled a number of key articles which I have written, which are intended to directly combat errant ideas which circulate here and there within sectors of the broad Messianic community. Common claims which are issued against Yeshua being the Divine Savior, and Yeshua being the Messiah, are directly responded to with poignant observations and exegetical detail. If you have been in a situation where a rogue individual you have encountered had made a statement or two against who Yeshua is, as communicated to us in the Holy Scriptures, then this publication should serve as some useful ammunition against those claims. The most frequent statements which one will hear, which are made against Yeshua's Divinity and Messiahship, are directly confronted and responded to.

It is my sincere hope and prayer that you find *Confronting Yeshua's Divinity and Messiahship* to be a useful tool, which will aid many of you in your defense of not only the truth of who He is—but of your salvation!

J.K. McKee, Editor
Messianic Apologetics

Answering the
"Frequently Avoided Questions"
About the Divinity of Yeshua

answering claims of those who deny Yeshua as God

Anyone who has surveyed today's Messianic sphere of influence—whether it be relatively mainstream Messianic Judaism, to the independent and rather fringe Hebrew Roots movement—knows that it is very diverse. There is a huge array of theologies and opinions evident across the Messianic community and its environs, just as in Christianity or Judaism. There are those who are theologically conservative, and those who are theologically liberal. There are those who believe that God has the ultimate control over their lives, and those who believe that they can determine their own destiny and dictate to God who He is, ignoring His direction. There are those who think deeply, and there are those who think simplistically. There are those who let themselves be tossed and swayed by religious politics, and there are those who do not allow entangling alliances to have an influence over them.

Since the 1990s and 2000s, it is not surprising that an age-old theological controversy, going back to the Second and Third Centuries C.E., has arisen among many Messianic people: *Who is Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ)?* ***Is He God—or was He just a human man?***

This has now developed into a debate which is not so easily delineated along any kind of denominational, organizational, ministry, or even at times congregational lines, *as it affects everybody*. While various Messianic associations and ministries have rightfully taken strong stands against those who would deride Yeshua the Messiah as being the Divine Savior—the stark fact is that there are individual people who may attend Messianic congregations and synagogues which officially affirm Yeshua as God, yet who themselves many only think of the Messiah as a good man who was connected to God in a special way, or some kind of exalted supernatural being, yet ultimately created. It is certainly true that there are many Christian people who attend church every week, being members of denominations which officially affirm the Divinity of Jesus, who themselves do not believe in it and only think that Jesus was a good teacher or philosopher. So, individual people denying Yeshua's Divinity is not at all an isolated incident, nor is it uncommon to the world of Christian religion, at least.

What can make things in the Messianic movement much different, though, is our relatively small size, and the fact that many sub-groups and cliques have become quite reliant on promoting themselves via social media. It is very easy for an outspoken individual in the assembly, who does not believe that Yeshua is Divine, to cause quite a stir. In the past, this would have only taken place by a person passing out questionable literature on the side, not too different from a dealer offering free samples of illegal drugs. What happens now is usually seeing various opinions expressed via a personal blog page, YouTube channel, or Instagram feed. All too often, individuals are caught broadsided when various arguments are made or encountered, not quite knowing what to do. Too many can be persuaded, even if just for a little while, into thinking that Yeshua the Messiah might not really be God.

Sadly, too many of today's Messianic congregational leaders do not know what to do about this. And, given the fact that apostasy is indeed prophesied to be a sign of the Last Days (2 Thessalonians 2:3), people denying major tenets of our Messianic

faith is something which we are all going to have to deal with in increasing numbers as the Second Coming draws nearer. Pockets of individuals here and there denying Yeshua's Divinity is sure to be followed by much larger groups, and in time it will be found in some Messianic congregations' leadership and whole ministries. Those of us who are true to what the Scriptures communicate about Yeshua the Messiah, however, **can have confidence that He is indeed the LORD God, and He is indeed Divine!** There are fair-minded, Biblically-rooted answers for the questions and criticisms being made. *You do not have to be broadsided by some of the main, yet decidedly weak arguments, which are being bantered around.*

Approaching the Debate: Why does the Messiah have to be Divine?

The question of whether or not Yeshua the Messiah is Divine, God in the flesh, has been a cause of considerable debate and dissension in various periods, since His ascension into Heaven. The Apostolic Scriptures record ancient hymns and creeds affirmed about Yeshua by the First Century Believers themselves (i.e., Philippians 2:6-11; Colossians 1:15-20; 1 Timothy 3:16), some of which may have been formulated to not only make key statements about who He is, but also subvert errant ideas which had circulated in various sectors of the *ekklēsia*.

In much of theological study since the First Century and ministry of the Apostles, one will encounter the views of people who strongly believed that Yeshua (Jesus) must be God, and that any diversion of believing that He is not God must be viewed as theological heresy. There are also those who have strongly believed that Yeshua was only a human man, and that He had some kind of special relationship with God and was quite possibly even the Messiah empowered by God, but was never God in the flesh.

Whether Yeshua the Messiah is Divine is an old debate, and while there are discussions about what this group of Christian leaders insisted, or what that sect did—**this is an issue which**