

SALVATION ON THE LINE
THE NATURE OF YESHUA AND HIS DIVINITY

VOLUME II

BOOKS BY J.K. McKEE

Salvation on the Line, Volume I: The Nature of Yeshua and His Divinity—Gospels and Acts

*Salvation on the Line, Volume II: The Nature of Yeshua and His Divinity—General Epistles,
Pauline Epistles, & Later New Testament*

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SALVATION ON THE LINE

VOLUME II

**THE NATURE OF YESHUA AND HIS DIVINITY
THE GENERAL EPISTLES, PAULINE EPISTLES,
AND LATER NEW TESTAMENT**

J.K. MCKEE

**MESSIANIC
APOLOGETICS**
messianicapologetics.net

SALVATION ON THE LINE VOLUME II

THE NATURE OF YESHUA AND HIS DIVINITY

THE GENERAL EPISTLES, PAULINE EPISTLES, AND LATER NEW TESTAMENT

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“Have this mind among yourselves, which was also in Messiah Yeshua, who, existing in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a human being, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a wooden scaffold. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Yeshua EVERY KNEE WILL BOW [Isaiah 45:23], in Heaven and on Earth and under the Earth, and every tongue will confess that Yeshua the Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Philippians 2:5-11 (PME)

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ABBREVIATION CHART AND SPECIAL TERMS

The following is a chart of abbreviations for reference works and special terms that 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.

Special terms that may be used have been provided in this chart:

ABD: <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>	ISBE: <i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
AMG: <i>Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament</i>	IVPBBC: <i>IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)</i>
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)	Jastrow: <i>Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature</i> (Marcus Jastrow)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament	JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)
Ara: Aramaic	JETS: <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)	KJV: King James Version
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)	Lattimore: <i>The New Testament</i> by Richmond Lattimore (1996)
b. Babylonian Talmud (<i>Talmud Bavli</i>)	LITV: <i>Literal Translation of the Holy Bible</i> by Jay P. Green (1986)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.	LS: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Liddell & Scott)
BDAG: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)	LXE: <i>Septuagint with Apocrypha</i> by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
BDB: <i>Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>	LXX: Septuagint
BECNT: <i>Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</i>	m. Mishnah
BKCNT: <i>Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament</i>	MT: Masoretic Text
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.	NASB: New American Standard Bible (1977)
CEV: Contemporary English Version (1995)	NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)
CGEDNT: <i>Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words</i> (Barclay M. Newman)	NBCR: <i>New Bible Commentary: Revised</i>
CHALOT: <i>Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>	NEB: New English Bible (1970)
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)	Nelson: <i>Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words</i>
CJSB: Complete Jewish Study Bible (2016)	NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition	NIB: <i>New Interpreter's Bible</i>
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls	NIGTC: <i>New International Greek Testament Commentary</i>
ECB: <i>Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible</i>	NICNT: <i>New International Commentary on the New Testament</i>
EDB: <i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>	NIDB: <i>New International Dictionary of the Bible</i>
eisegesis: "reading meaning into," or interjecting a preconceived or foreign meaning into a Biblical text	NIV: New International Version (1984)
EJ: <i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>	NJB: New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic (1985)
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)	NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)
exegesis: "drawing meaning out of," or the process of trying to understand what a Biblical text means on its own	NKJV: New King James Version (1982)
EXP: <i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>	NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)
Ger: German	NLT: New Living Translation (1996)
GNT: Greek New Testament	NT: New Testament
Grk: Greek	orthopraxy: lit. "the right action," how the Bible or one's theology is lived out in the world
<i>halachah</i> : lit. "the way to walk," how the Torah is lived out in an individual's life or faith community	OT: Old Testament
HALOT: <i>Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Koehler and Baumgartner)	PME: Practical Messianic Edition of the Apostolic Scriptures
HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)	PreachC: <i>The Preacher's Commentary</i>
Heb: Hebrew	REB: Revised English Bible (1989)
HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible	RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)
ICC: <i>International Critical Commentary</i>	t. Tosefta
IDB: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>	Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
IDBSup: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement</i>	Thayer: <i>Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament</i>

TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TEV: Today's English Version (1976)
TLV: Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life
Version (2014)
TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)
TNTC: *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*
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
WBC: *Word Biblical Commentary*
Yid: Yiddish
YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)

INTRODUCTION

One of the biggest issues which is staring right at the broad Messianic movement—to which no congregation, fellowship, family, or individual are entirely immune—is how to approach the nature of Yeshua (Jesus).ⁱ **Is Yeshua the Messiah God, or is He a created being?** While many affirm Yeshua of Nazareth to be the eternal, uncreated Son of God who is indeed God—there are many others who express various levels of doubt about this, and then others who think that Yeshua is a created being and not God. There are those who will affirm that Yeshua is a supernatural being to be sure—perhaps even the first created being in the cosmic order, pre-existent of our known universe—but nevertheless created and not God.

In our family’s experience with Outreach Israel Ministries for the past decade-and-a-half, we recognized how very early on in 2003, that while we encountered a few people here or there who denied Yeshua as God, there was enough of a guard or governor, of sorts, present—in how many knew that to deny Yeshua as God was to cross a very dangerous red line. *Hearing that a particular person denied Yeshua as God, was something that largely remained on the fringes.* But as the 2000s progressed, and new social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube really began to take hold—combined with the greater prevalence of an online bookseller like Amazon.com and the emergence of the eBook—ideas about the nature of the Messiah which would have stayed on someone’s obscure personal website or blog, could now be promoted rather easily. Individual people, in what would be considered the more mainstream of the Messianic community, would be found expressing opinions and perspectives which were not affirming of Yeshua as God. Many of these opinions and perspectives can circulate unknown to congregational leaders and teachers.

While we have surely been involved in our fair share of controversies over the years among people in the Messianic movement, and there have been issues that we are in disagreement about with various personalitiesⁱⁱ—no one has ever been able to accuse Outreach Israel Ministries of holding to a low Christology,ⁱⁱⁱ or the view that Yeshua of Nazareth is a created being. It might be said, instead, that our ministry holds to **some of the highest Christology witnessed in the Messianic movement.** Our ministry Statement of Faith forthrightly asserts,

ⁱ *Yeshua* (יֵשׁוּעַ) is the original Hebrew name of Jesus meaning, “He is Salvation” (Matthew 1:21). Jesus is derived from the Greek transliteration of Yeshua, *Iēsous* (Ἰησοῦς), originally employed by the Greek Septuagint.

ⁱⁱ A number of these are evaluated in the author’s book *Confronting Critical Issues: An Analysis of Subjects that Affects the Growth and Stability of the Emerging Messianic Movement.*

ⁱⁱⁱ **Christology** is a theological term usually applied to the study of the Messiah’s nature and origin. An excellent definition of “Christology” is provided by Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 25:

“Christology is the theological study devoted to answering two main questions: Who is Jesus? (the question of his identity) and What is the nature and significance of what Jesus accomplished in the incarnation? (the question of his work).”

We fully affirm the complete Divinity of Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ), that Yeshua pre-existed the universe and created the universe (John 1:1-3; Philippians 2:5-7; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2-3), that Yeshua is to be worshipped (Mark 5:6-7; Matthew 2:2, 8, 11; Matthew 14:32-33; 28:9, 17; Luke 24:52; John 9:38; Hebrews 1:6), and even though in Yeshua's human Incarnation the Father is greater than the Son (John 14:28), that the Son is genuinely God (John 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1). We believe that acknowledging Yeshua as LORD, meaning YHWH/YHVH, is mandatory for salvation (Romans 10:9; Philippians 2:10-11). We believe that He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18, 20, 23, 25; Luke 1:26-33), and that He is the prophesied Messiah of Israel (John 1:45).

This publication, *Salvation on the Line: The Nature of Yeshua and His Divinity* (now released in two volumes) affirms a high Christology. Not only does it affirm a high Christology of Yeshua being God, it very much defends the view that while understanding all of the intricacies of Yeshua being God is not required of human beings for salvation, recognizing Yeshua as the Lord (YHWH/YHVH) of the Tanach Scriptures **most certainly is required for salvation** (Romans 10:9, 13; cf. Joel 2:32).

This project has been an open file for Outreach Israel Ministries since 2003, as we first directly encountered a number of people denying Yeshua as God. Certainly we have written many things defending Yeshua the Messiah as God, notably including the 2004 article, updated in 2011, entitled, "Answering the 'Frequently Avoided Questions' About the Divinity of Yeshua." This was an important composition to address some of the basic criticisms that arise among Messianic people who like to "talk" and pass around a great deal of information: from various articles, books, or posts on social media. This article had the intention to help calm people down, who had been "broad sided" by a plenitude of statements requiring an immediate response. I have certainly also written about the nature of Yeshua in our *for the Practical Messianic* commentary series,^{iv} when passages of importance have been encountered. Yet, I have known for quite some time that a lengthy and voluminous examination, of a high Christology for today's Messianic people, was in store for the future.

This resource has consulted and engaged with a wide array of resources and perspectives across the Messianic movement, into the more independent sectors of the Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement, the views expressed by various Christians labeling themselves as "Biblical Unitarians," and even those few theologians of note who hold to a low Christology. This involves an array of articles, books, commentaries, and even a few Bible versions. Most importantly, would be some of the excellent, thorough, and readable resources defending a high Christology, seen within the realm of broadly evangelical Christian theology.^v

The considerable bulk of this resource, while defending a high Christology, is necessarily spent going to the text of the Holy Scriptures (Genesis-Revelation). This is not only because the Holy Scriptures are to be regarded by God's people to be the Word of Life, but also because this

^{iv} As of 2017, complete books of the Bible which have been covered in *Messianic Apologetics' for the Practical Messianic* commentary series, include, in canonical order: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians-Philemon, Philippians, 1&2 Thessalonians, the Pastoral Epistles (1&2 Timothy, Titus), Hebrews, and James.

^v Some of the studies which have decisively and positively influenced me a great deal, notably include Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); Robert M. Bowman, Jr. and J. Ed Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place: The Case for the Deity of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007); Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

All of these publications, in their own way, represent the Christological orientation of Yeshua of Nazareth being integrated into the Divine Identity. This would mean that the Son shares the same identity of the Father, largely being credited in the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament), often via some intertextuality, of performing the same function as the LORD (YHWH/YHVH) in the Tanach (Old Testament). To ascribe such a function to a created supernatural being, would be blasphemy to Second Temple Jewish monotheism, unless Yeshua of Nazareth is genuinely God.

is the venue where the rise and fall of theological concepts are to be found. None of us wants to be found holding to a view of Yeshua being God simply because of some kind of fundamentalist dogma—where if we hold to a different view our name will somehow end up on a list or in a white paper as being stigmatized as some kind of “cultists.” We want to be found holding to a view of Yeshua being God, precisely because that is where the witness of Scripture directs us, it is the genuine testimony of the Messiah and His early followers, **and because it is required for our redemption from sins as fallen human beings.** I firmly believe that such a principled case can be made in going to the text of Scripture, and that those who hold to a low Christology are decisively lacking in many areas.

Salvation on the Line: The Nature of Yeshua and His Divinity is a massive production, requiring it to be released in two volumes. The first release (2017) focused on the nature of Yeshua from the Gospels and Acts. This second release (2018) now covers the General Epistles, Pauline Epistles, and Later New Testament. The Bibliography for either volume covers only the quoted or referenced material for those specific releases, and is not cumulative.

Do be aware that there are also future volumes of *Salvation on the Line* presently in different stages of planning, which will be covering the Messiahship of Yeshua, presumed New Testament Difficulties, and Bible Difficulties.

J.K. McKee
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