

In the past, the big issue which has faced the Messianic movement has understandably been the Messiahship of Yeshua of Nazareth, widely connected to the purposes of Jewish evangelism. *For the present*, the big issue which is staring right at the broad Messianic movement—to which no congregation, fellowship, family, or individual is entirely immune—is how to approach the nature of Yeshua (Jesus). 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.

This publication, *Salvation on the Line: The Nature of Yeshua and His Divinity*, 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 for salvation, recognizing Yeshua as the Lord (YHWH/YHVH) of the Tanach Scriptures (Old Testament) most certainly is required for salvation (Romans 10:9, 13; cf. Joel 2:32).

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 “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 important, would be some of the excellent, thorough, and readable resources defending a high Christology, seen within the realm of broadly evangelical Christian theology.

The considerable bulk of *Salvation on the Line*, 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 decisively regarded by God’s people to be the Word of Life, but also because this 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. The author firmly believes 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

VOLUME II

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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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>	Grk: Greek
AMG: <i>Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament</i>	<i>halachah</i> : lit. "the way to walk," how the Torah is lived out in an individual's life or faith community
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)	HALOT: <i>Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Koehler and Baumgartner)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament	HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)
Ara: Aramaic	Heb: Hebrew
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)	HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)	ICC: <i>International Critical Commentary</i>
b. Babylonian Talmud (<i>Talmud Bavli</i>)	IDB: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.	IDBSup: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement</i>
BDAG: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)	ISBE: <i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
BDB: <i>Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>	IVPBBC: <i>IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)</i>
BECNT: <i>Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</i>	Jastrow: <i>Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature</i> (Marcus Jastrow)
BKCNT: <i>Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament</i>	JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.	JETS: <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
CEV: Contemporary English Version (1995)	KJV: King James Version
CGEDNT: <i>Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words</i> (Barclay M. Newman)	Lattimore: <i>The New Testament</i> by Richmond Lattimore (1996)
CHALOT: <i>Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>	LITV: <i>Literal Translation of the Holy Bible</i> by Jay P. Green (1986)
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)	LS: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Liddell & Scott)
CJSB: Complete Jewish Study Bible (2016)	LXE: <i>Septuagint with Apocrypha</i> by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition	LXX: Septuagint
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls	m. Mishnah
ECB: <i>Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible</i>	MT: Masoretic Text
EDB: <i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>	NASB: New American Standard Bible (1977)
eisegesis: "reading meaning into," or interjecting a preconceived or foreign meaning into a Biblical text	NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)
EJ: <i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>	NBCR: <i>New Bible Commentary: Revised</i>
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)	NEB: New English Bible (1970)
exegesis: "drawing meaning out of," or the process of trying to understand what a Biblical text means on its own	Nelson: <i>Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words</i>
EXP: <i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>	NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007)
Ger: German	NIB: <i>New Interpreter's Bible</i>
GNT: Greek New Testament	

NIGTC: *New International Greek Testament Commentary*
NICNT: *New International Commentary on the New Testament*
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
orthopraxy: lit. "the right action," how the Bible or one's theology is lived out in the world
OT: Old Testament
PME: Practical Messianic Edition of the Apostolic Scriptures
PreachC: *The Preacher's Commentary*
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*
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

ⁱ *Yeshua* is the original Hebrew name of Jesus meaning, "He is Salvation" (Matthew 1:21). Jesus is derived from the Greek transliteration of *Yeshua*, *Iēsous*, 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)."

holds to **some of the highest Christology witnessed in the Messianic movement.** Our ministry Statement of Faith forthrightly asserts,

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,

^{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.

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 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
Editor, *Messianic Apologetics*

^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.