

WHOM DO WE WORSHIP? TO WHOM DO WE PRAY?

by Michael Rudolph

For years, I have experienced discomfort every time I heard someone praying to Yeshua. Being a firm believer in Messiah's deity, I attributed this response to my roots in Judaism, and to the foreignness of "Dear Jesus" to my Jewish ears. As I grew in faith, however, and this reaction did not subside, I decided to research the New Covenant Scriptures to determine the Biblical correctness of praying to Yeshua.¹

What I found, was that although prayer and worship² were most often directed either to "God" or to God the "Father", there were a significant number of times when Yeshua did receive worship. A sampling of these are:³

Acts 7:59: *"Lord Yeshua, receive my spirit."*

Revelation 5:8: *"Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the lamb, ..."*

Revelation 1:17-18: *"And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead', ..."*

John 9:38: *"Then he said, 'Lord, I believe!' And he worshiped Him."*

Matthew 28:9: *"And as they went to tell His disciples, behold Yeshua met them, saying, 'Rejoice!' And they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him."*

Such Scriptures notwithstanding, most of the examples I found were of prayers and worship directed either to "God" or to the "Father;" a sampling of particularly instructive Scriptures of this sort is presented below:

Luke 11:1-2: *"...one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples'. So he said to them, 'When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven ...'"*

Matthew 4:10: *"...You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve."*

¹Bible quotations throughout this paper are from "The New King James Version", The Holy Bible (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982), with the words "Christ" replaced by "Messiah", and "Jesus" replaced by "Yeshua".

²By prayer, I mean petition. By worship, I mean falling on one's face in adoration.

³See also, Mark 5:6; Matthew 2:11, 8:2, 9:18, 14:33, 15:25, 28:17.

Colossians 3:17: *"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Yeshua, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."*⁴

Ephesians 5:17, 20: *"Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ...giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, ..."*⁵

Revelation 22:9: *"See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."*

Philippians 3:3: *"For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Messiah Yeshua, and have no confidence in the flesh."*

John 4:23: *"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him."*

Hebrews 13:15: *"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name."*

As I prayed for wisdom in reconciling these two groups of Scriptures, an analogy came to me. In a court of law, we do not choose our judge. It would be considered disrespectful to the Chief Judge sitting with his junior associate, were we to address our case to the junior associate – or while in the Chief Judge's presence, to give the junior associate deferential attention. The elder Judge would likely admonish us: "Gentlemen, you are before the Court – not merely before one or another judge! Judge-shopping in this court is not condoned!" On the other hand, if the Chief Judge were to appoint his junior colleague to hear our case and we consequently found ourselves standing before him only, it would then be proper to give that junior judge our undivided attention.

I believe it is the same with God the Father and His son Yeshua. As I studied the Scriptures, I was struck by the pattern that each time Yeshua received worship (or in Stephen's case prayer), the worshiper was directly before him either in vision or in fact. Stephen was overtaken by a vision of Yeshua, the twenty-four elders in John's vision were also before Yeshua, and those who worshiped Yeshua during his incarnate life were face to face with him physically. Yet in cases where the worshiper was not specifically confronted by Yeshua, but was engaged in ordinary prayer directed heavenward, there then being no natural reason to favor Yeshua over the other personages of God, the worshiper always addressed his prayer and worship to "God" or to "God

⁴.. there are two new factors at the very heart of the NT which bring about a decisive reorientation. The first of these is that Christian worship is in its very core and essence the worship of God the Father through God the Son. "Worship", The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, G.W. Bromiley, vol. 5, p. 989 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977).

⁵Ibid.

the Father".⁶

I cannot fathom that anyone, myself included, if confronted by Yeshua, would not fall at his feet and give him unfettered worship. Still, just as judge-shopping is not condoned, neither is God-shopping; for to seek out one personage of God over another, treats the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as though they were separate Gods. For this reason, whenever I call upon the name of the Lord in prayer, I may address it to "God" or "Father," but it is to God in his entirety that I am praying, remembering Deuteronomy 6:6: "*Hear O Israel, the Lord Your God, the Lord is One!*"

March 18, 1992

⁶Scripture nevertheless directs us to give Yeshua glory and honor; this is distinguished from prayer and worship in that when we give him honor, we are not addressing him, but are rather lifting him up in the eyes of men (Mark 11:7-10; Luke 4:15; John 5:22-23; Revelation 5:11-13).