

# Jesus of Nazareth – JHWH of Israel

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As I regularly come across revisionist views of the early Church and its beliefs, especially in regard to the Church's faith in the Trinity, I like to show with four examples why Christians do not have to be apologetic at all about this equation of Jesus Christ with JHWH, God of Israel. We follow in the footsteps of the earliest Church! The apostles Peter and Paul both preached the unity of Jesus of Nazareth and JHWH, the God of Israel.

## **Exhibit 1: Deuteronomy 6:4 and 1 Corinthians 8:6**

Read Deuteronomy 6:4. The NIV says: Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. This is the *Shema* (Hebrew for 'hear'), the statement that was repeated again and again in the synagogues and in all Jewish homes in the time of Jesus and St Paul, and even today. The word 'LORD' is the translation of the Hebrew JHWH.

Most Jews in the time of Jesus and Paul did not live in Israel, but spread all over the Roman Empire and in Persia. Most of them used a Greek version of their Scriptures, as they did not know Hebrew in such manner that they could understand the Hebrew Bible. In Deuteronomy 6:4, this Greek translation (the Septuagint, LXX), says:

*Akoue Israeel kurios ho theos hemoon kurios heis esti.*

*Listen, Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one*

St Paul writes to the Church in Corinth, in 1 Corinthians 8:6, in the NIV translation: 'For us there is but one God, the Father...and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ...'

The Greek text here is:

*... Humin heis theos ho pateer... kai heis kurios Jesous Christos.*

*There is one God for us, the Father... and one Lord, Jesus Christ*

St Paul knew very well that his Jewish readers would immediately understand that he referred to the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4. He purposely cre-

ated a parallel with this verse that was so central in Jewish faith. This shows how the identity of Jesus Christ was, in the view of Paul, intimately united with the identity of JHWH, the Lord and God of heaven and earth.

The words of St Paul suggest that JHWH and Jesus Christ were one and the same. If he did not believe this, his words would be blasphemous, as they would then suggest that *beside* the one and only God, there is another God.

### **Exhibit 2: Psalm 34:8 en 1 Peter 2:3-4**

In 1 Peter 2:3-4, St Peter quotes from Psalm 34:8. Psalm 34 is about JHWH, the God of Israel. St Peter uses a verse about JHWH and applies it to Jesus Christ. This is sacrilege, *except* if the identity of JHWH and that of Jesus Christ are in fact one and the same.

1 Peter 2:3-4 says, in the NIV translation: ‘... now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.’ The word ‘Lord’ is, given the context, absolutely a reference to Jesus Christ. The Greek here says:

*...ei egeusasthe hoti Chrestos ho kurios.*  
*...if you have tasted that good is the Lord.*

This is a quote from Psalm 34:8. The NIV translates this verse: ‘Taste and see that the LORD (JHWH) is good.’ The Greek (Septuagint, LXX) translation of Psalm 34:8 is:

*Geusasthe kai idete hoti Chrestos ho kurios.*  
*Taste and see that good is the Lord.*

Without being apologetic at all, St Peter cites a verse about JHWH and treats it as if that verse is about Jesus Christ.

### **Exhibit 3: Isaiah 8:13 and 1 Peter 3:15**

The prophet Isaiah speaks about the God of Israel in Isaiah 8:13: ‘The LORD Almighty [JHWH Sebaoth] is the one you are to regard as holy.’ In

the Septuagint, the Greek Bible translation that was current among Jews in the first century, we read:

*Kurion autov haciasate.*

*The Lord, him sanctify*

St Peter quotes and adapts this verse in 1 Peter 3:15. The NIV translation has there: ‘...set apart Christ as Lord’. The Greek original of this letter of St Peter has:

*Kurion de ton Christon haciasate*

*The Lord Christ sanctify*

Any Jewish man or woman who knew his religious classics would recognize Peter’s quote from Isaiah, and shiver. If we know that the creator of heaven and earth, JHWH of Israel, must be set apart as holy, would we not consider any similar statement about another person blasphemy? ‘The Lord Obama sanctify...’ The Lord Bush sanctify...’ Peter should be accused of blasphemy, except if he seriously means to say that the identity of JHWH and Jesus Christ the Lord are one and the same, and if that is actually true.

#### **Exhibit 4: Isaiah 45:23 and Philippians 2:10-11**

In Isaiah 45, JHWH, creator of heaven and earth, addresses the nation of Israel. The chapter underlines that there is no god beside JHWH. (See Isaiah 45:5-6,14,18,21-22) This one and only God, JHWH, says in Isaiah 45:23, in the NIV translation: ‘Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear...’ The Greek Septuagint that the Apostles and possibly even Jesus used, has here:

*Hoti emoi kampsei pan gonu, kai omeitai pasa gloossa ton theon...*

*That to me shall bend every knee, and swear every tongue by God...*

St Paul quotes and slightly adapts this verse in his letter to the Church in Philippi. In Philippians 2:10-11 he says, in the NIV translation: ‘...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.’

In the Greek original of his letter, Paul says:

Hina en tooi onomati Ieesou pan gonu kampsei... kai pasa gloossa  
exhomologeeseetai hoti kupios Ieesous Christos

*That in the name of Jesus all knee should bow... and all tongs confess that the Lord  
is Jesus Christ*

No Jewish listener to the words of St Paul could miss his quote from Isaiah, and they understood thereby that St Paul identified JWHW with Jesus Christ. Many scholars, by the way, believe St Paul is quoting here from a song that was used in the early Church. Christians in the early Church were 'singing' this theology of the divinity of Jesus Christ in their meetings.