

Does "Jesus is Lord" = "Jesus is Yahweh"?

By Richie Temple

It is sometimes stated that the confession "Jesus is Lord" is an acknowledgment of the deity of Christ and, therefore, equivalent to a confession "Jesus is God." Salvation is even said to be dependent on this. This idea is usually based on the fact that in the OT the personal name for the God of Israel, Yahweh, was translated into the Greek OT (the Septuagint) by the word "kurios", which means "lord." Since Jesus is called Lord in the NT and since some OT verses speaking of Yahweh are attributed to him, some would say Jesus is equated with Yahweh of the OT.

This reasoning, however, is clearly fallacious as most Bible scholars recognize. It was Yahweh, the God of our fathers, who raised up Jesus his Son (Acts 5:30). The Hebrew text of Psalm 110 reads, "Yahweh said to adoni, sit at my right hand." On this basis "God has **made** this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). It was God himself who **gave** Jesus "the name that is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). Obviously, these truths do

not mean that Jesus is God; instead, the confession that "Jesus Christ is Lord" is "to the glory of **God, the Father**" (Phil. 2:11). As NT scholar I.H. Marshall states in the *Tyndale NT Commentaries, Acts* (p. 80) "it is simply the attribute of lordship which is given to Jesus; he is not equated with Yahweh."

The application of OT verses about Yahweh to Jesus the Messiah in the NT are based on the Jewish *shaliach* principle where "one who is sent is as he who sends him" so that the agent, or representative, acts fully in the name of the sender. As the noted NT scholar G.B. Caird states in his *New Testament Theology* (p. 340), "Jesus is termed 'Lord' by the New Testament writers ... not because they are offering any ontological statements involving an inherent deity. It is because, like the other titles, it is an essentially functional idea of agency and function." In short, Jesus the Messiah is God's supreme representative to the world. As such he shares in God's titles and acts and speaks fully in God's name.

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