DID YESHUA THE MESSIAH HAVE A PRE-CARNAL EXISTENCE?

By Larry, June and Colista Acheson

A Response to *Trinity, Oneness, Duality and Pre-Existence*, by Chuck Henry

Did Yeshua the Messiah Have a Pre-Carnal Existence?

Part 1: The Overview

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I. Is this a "Salvational" Issue? ……..…….. 6

II. Researching and Preparing for the Public Debate 12

III. Chuck's Premise: Yahweh is one single "El" ……..…. 16

IV. De-Elohiming the Angel ……..…… 19

V. Is There a Second Elohim? ……..……...……. 27

VI. "They Shall Look Upon ME Whom They Have Pierced …" ……..…… 29

VII. Two "Firsts and Lasts"? ……..…….….. 33

VIII. Is Yeshua the Rock Who Followed Israel in the Wilderness? ……. 50

IX. The Root and Offspring of David …… 56

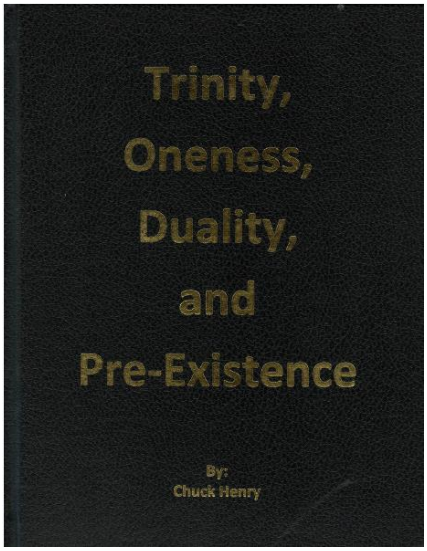
X. The Speaker of Isaiah 43-48 by June Acheson ……...……...…….. 78

Did Yeshua the Messiah Have a Pre-Carnal Existence?

By Larry, June and Colista Acheson[1]

Often Titled "Did Yeshua the Messiah Pre-Exist?"

I had long resolved to distance myself from any formal discussion of whether or not Yeshua the Messiah had an existence prior to His conception in Mary's womb. My reasons for avoiding this controversy will unravel during the course of this study. For now, all you need to know is that a Biblical Unitarian[2] named Chuck Henry authored a book that June, Colista and I believe requires distorting Biblical texts in order to interpret their meanings. Of course, Chuck feels otherwise and remains adamant that prior to Yeshua's conception in Mary's womb, He did not exist. One thing led to another, we had a couple of debates on the topic, and I finally feel as though I'm ready to put together a study of my own. I offer you, the reader, an opportunity to compare the two sides and draw your own conclusion based on the evidence.



Having never prepared for an actual public debate prior to my experience with Chuck, I found that the greatest challenge is encapsulating everything you want to cover into an agreed-upon time frame. We agreed to 45-minute individual presentations during our public debate and whittling all of my information into that time frame was far more challenging than I imagined. As a result, I had to cut out – or as I prefer to describe it – *sacrifice* a lot of material. In this study, I will incorporate some of the sacrificed information, but I also plan to expound on information that I should have included in my answers to questions during the second part of our public debate. Moreover, in my ongoing research into this topic after our debate, I found additional Scriptural validation of our position that is not covered in

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[1] Some individuals over the years have asked why, although I (Larry) am the primary author of most of my studies, I also include the name of my wife, June. The brief answer is this: Although most of the words are mine, much of my thought process has been so influenced by my wife's frequent "pearls of wisdom" that I it would be dishonest to only mention myself as the author. By identifying myself (and June) as authors, we accept responsibility for what we write with the desire to give all honor and glory to Yahweh. Unlike those who choose to anonymously cloak their identities, we understand the need for transparency. Transparency and responsibility go hand in hand. Another major contributor is our daughter, Colista, whose amazing insights and knowledge of the Hebrew language greatly enhance the accuracy and quality of this study. During the course of this study, I primarily speak in the first person because I am the one who engaged Chuck Henry in a debate addressing this topic.

[2] Chuck Henry does not refer to himself as a Biblical Unitarian; nevertheless, the following Biblical Unitarian belief as found at biblicalunitarian.com more or less matches what Chuck believes: "We believe that God was literally Jesus' father, in that God created Jesus' life in Mary (Luke 1:35)." Assuming Chuck agrees that Yeshua was born of a virgin and that Yahweh was literally Yeshua's father (I've learned to not assume anything), the only correction Chuck would likely make to the Biblical Unitarians' statement of belief involves the names used for the Father and Son. Briefly stated, Chuck believes that Yahweh fathered Yeshua through the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb and until then, Yeshua did not exist.

Chuck's book. From my perspective, this additional evidence stops all arguments. Another Biblical Unitarian attempts to refute it in a YouTube video, but I personally find his efforts to be severely lacking. Again, I invite you to draw your own conclusion.

A primary aspect of this discussion that I ended up cutting out of my debate presentation is that of whether or not how we believe in this matter has any bearing on our *salvation*. This is a component that, in my opinion, really needs to be addressed whenever *any* controversial Biblical topics of this nature surface. With that in mind, let's proceed to my first chapter in this study.

I. Is this a "Salvational" Issue?

One thing I couldn't get out of my mind after reading Chuck Henry's book *Trinity, Oneness, Duality & Pre-Existence* was the nagging question of what drove him to write it. Why is this topic so vitally important to Chuck that he was compelled to author such an extensive book presenting his view? Is our salvation hanging in the balance depending on which way we lean? I asked him why he decided to put out such a book, but his answer didn't seem to tell the whole story, plus he avoids addressing the issue of how our differing conclusions impact our salvation. Chuck explained that his book is the aftermath of a Trinity discussion he had with the minister of a local church. During the discussion Chuck realized the minister "knew his stuff" and Chuck didn't feel he adequately represented his own non-pre-carnal existence view. He decided to research the topic more thoroughly, putting his findings in written form.

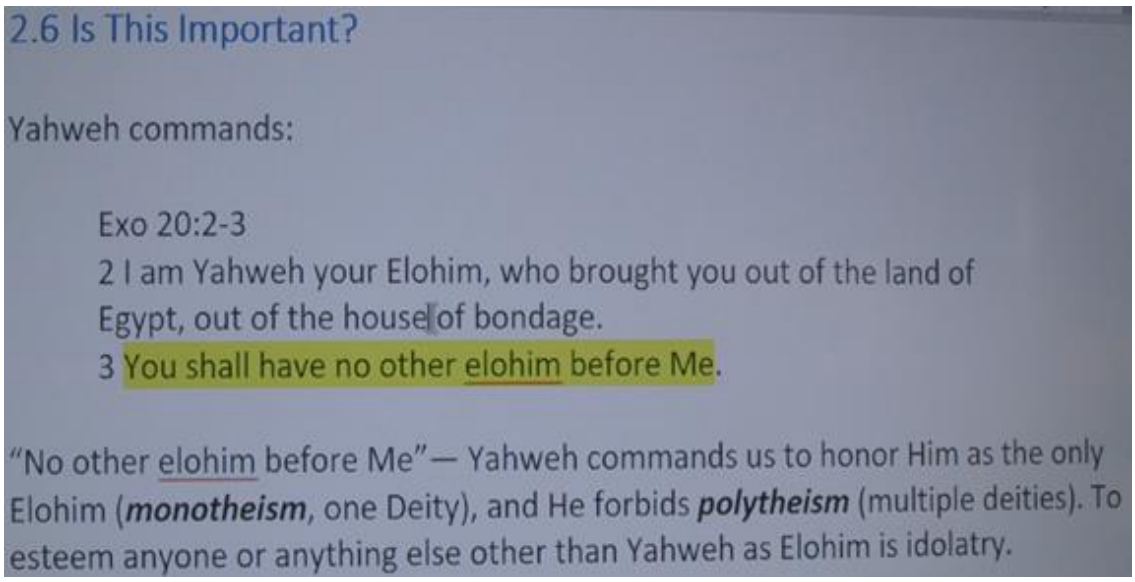
While I'm sure that Trinity discussion played a significant role in Chuck's decision to author a book, it doesn't address the fate of those who disagree with his view, and that's something I, as a reader and student of the Word, need to know. Does he believe we are headed for the Lake of Fire if we do not share his conclusion? I gleaned the answer to this question the day of a warm-up debate held a few months before our public debate on this topic. On that day in March 2019 I learned that if you believe Yeshua the Messiah had a pre-carnal existence, this makes you a potential *idol-worshipper* in Chuck's estimation. This only became apparent to me during the question/answer session of the debate. Here's the question, followed by Chuck's answer:

> QUESTION: "Do you believe that those who hold differing views regarding the precise essence of Yahweh and Yeshua His Son, whether Trinitarian, Dualist, Arian, etc., are guilty of idolatry?"
>
> Chuck's answer: "Well, I think they ***could*** be. Yahweh commands us to have no other elohim before Him, and I would go back to the statement that I made in my introduction that to assume anyone or anything else other than Yahweh is elohim is idolatry. Thank you."

On the surface, the above answer appears pious and in fact it goes right along with Exodus 20:3:

> 3 Thou shalt have no other elohim before Me.

Chuck cites the above verse during the course of his digitally-videoed presentation, meticulously pointing out that having another Elohim before Yahweh is idolatry:



The above commentary is a screen capture taken from the video of the informal March 9, 2019 warm-up debate and is not found in the first edition of Chuck's book.

Let's summarize why Chuck thinks that those who, like me, believe Yeshua had a pre-carnal existence are committing idolatry: Yahweh is the only true Elohim, so if we also esteem His Son as Elohim, that makes *two* and Yahweh is One (Deut. 6:4). By worshipping Yeshua as Elohim, we're putting another Elohim before Yahweh, which is idolatry. Let's further clarify his position: If you believe, as I do, that Yeshua is the Elohim/Angel who wrestled with Jacob (*cf.*, Gen. 32), Chuck considers you an idolater because the Angel was *not* the Most High Yahweh. Regrettably, Chuck ignores the fact that this same Angel identified Himself as Elohim – *another Elohim*. Since Chuck cannot accept that the Angel is a *second* Elohim, he finds it necessary to create an alternate explanation for how an Angel identifying Himself as Elohim isn't *really* Elohim. We'll address the account of the Angel who wrestled with Jacob a little later.

Would Chuck classify Trinitarians as idolaters? As noted from the answer he gave during our "warm-up" debate, they could be. However, Trinitarians would protest such a charge while reinforcing their belief that Yahweh and Yeshua are <u>One and the same in essence</u> (not <u>two</u>), and the One deity (in three Persons) is therefore co-eternal. They regard Yahweh and Yeshua as One and the same Elohim, i.e., *no other Elohim but One*. Therefore, since they do not see themselves as worshipping *two* (or three) deities, Trinitarians would reject any notion that their doctrine positions them as idolaters. Unlike Trinitarians, I am persuaded that Yeshua had an *origin* (Micah 5:2). In other words, He did not exist at one time in the distant past, but was the "beginning of the creation of Elohim" (Rev. 3:14). I will expound on these and other supporting texts throughout the course of our study. The potential enigma presented by believing that Yeshua had an origin in the distant past is that I must either reject Him as Elohim **<u>or</u>** I must regard Him as a *second Elohim*, thereby exposing myself as an idolater, at least in Chuck's view.

Is presenting someone as an idolater a serious charge? Yes, it is. The charge of idolatry is not to be taken lightly because, according to the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians, idolaters are among those who will not inherit eternal life. Notice what Paul wrote in Galatians 5:19-21:

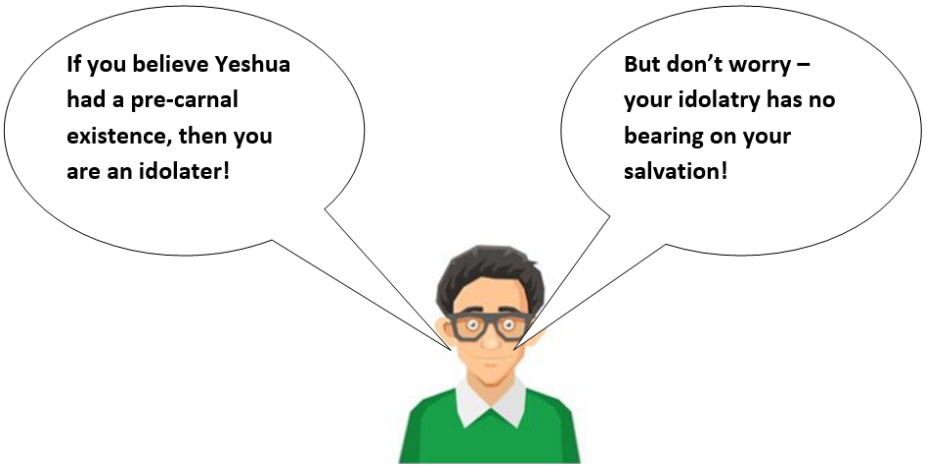
> 19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,
> 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,
> 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of the Almighty.

Let's put two and two together: According to Chuck's reasoning, if you consider Yeshua an Elohim who had a pre-carnal existence, you are an idolater because you have another Elohim "before Yahweh" in violation of Exodus 20:3. According to the Apostle Paul, you won't be in the Kingdom if you're an idolater, i.e., you won't be saved. The charge of idolatry is therefore a *salvational issue*, which is why I cannot ignore Chuck's book and his as-yet unpublished charge against those who disagree with him. Interestingly, during the warm-up debate referenced earlier, when asked if our salvation is hanging in the balance if we believe Yeshua had a pre-carnal existence, he answered no. Here's another excerpt from the March 2019 informal warm-up debate:

> The potential enigma presented by believing that Yeshua had an origin in the distant past is that we must either reject Him as Elohim **or** we must regard Him as a *second Elohim*, thereby exposing ourselves as idolaters, at least in Chuck's view.

> Question: "Is my salvation in question if I regard Yeshua as the Messiah, the Son of Yahweh, but I believe He pre-existed? This question assumes I live a humble life of faithful Torah obedience, trusting in Yeshua as my Savior."
>
> Chuck's answer: "My answer is no, I don't think it is."

When I heard the above answer, my brain was satisfied that Chuck's study is limited to a defense of his position rather than an exposé condemning those who disagree. The above statement somehow erased from my memory his previous "potential idolater" remark and it wasn't until later, when our daughter Colista pointed out this enormous discrepancy, that I realized Chuck was speaking with a foot in both camps. Frankly, I remain confused by his regard for those of my persuasion. On one hand, he must consider me an idolater for regarding Yeshua as a second Elohim; on the other hand, he says my salvation is not in



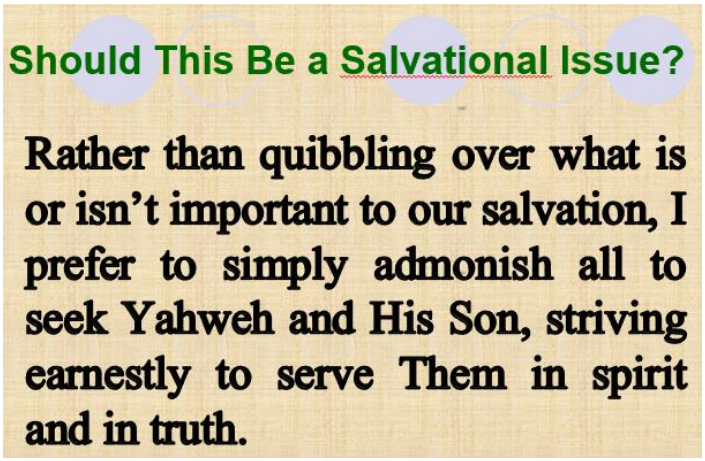
question if I live a lifestyle of faithful Torah obedience, trusting in Yeshua as my Savior. Does Chuck disagree with the Apostle Paul's teaching about unbelievers (including idolaters) in Galatians 5:19-21? Where does he *really* stand? Since Chuck avoids addressing this aspect of his belief in his book, I may never find out.

You won't read the charge of (potential) idolatry in Chuck's book, at least not in the first edition. He expresses himself in very polite and gentle terms, going to great lengths to avoid presenting this topic as one of salvational concern. However, the anonymous webmaster of a site offering a PDF version of *Trinity, Oneness, Duality & Pre-Existence* unreservedly states his or her opinion that this is indeed a *salvational issue*:

> Chuck Henry, a very sincere, dedicated student of Scripture has put together the most exhaustive study we have ever read regarding the "Trinity" and other doctrines. Have you ever heard of "oneness," "duality" or "twinity"? He explains these doctrines in quite some detail to insure one would have sufficient information to make a determination as to whether these doctrines have their root in Scripture or otherwise. In addition, he shows Scriptural proof why and how there absolutely can be only ***ONE*** YAHWEH in form or Name. These are all very important to our salvation. You may access this document to read online or download here. After reading this, should you have any questions or comments, feel free to contact us and we will gladly pass them onto him.[3]

Assuming that Chuck gave his blessing for the anonymous webmaster to host a PDF version of *Trinity, Oneness, Duality & Pre-Existence* on his web site, I would have expected him to insist that the webmaster remove any mention of this topic being "important to our salvation" as a condition for hosting his study. Obviously, no such demand was made. I first noticed the above commentary in May 2019; as of this writing (April 2020), it's still there. This conveys Chuck's agreement with the webmaster's "salvational" assessment.

As an aside, I have always wondered why allegedly "bold" servants of Yahweh, such as the anonymous webmaster of scripturenews2use.org, choose anonymity. Are they afraid of revealing their identity to the world and being held accountable for what they write? If the owner(s) of scripturenews2use.org fully trust in Yahweh, what do they fear that makes them want to remain anonymous? In oxymoronic fashion, they boldly proclaim the Almighty's name while timidly withholding their own.



For the record, I do not consider this a salvational issue. I trust that the Righteous Judge, Yeshua, will fairly and without partiality judge us all. Rather than quibbling over what is or isn't important to our salvation, I prefer to simply admonish all to seek Yahweh and

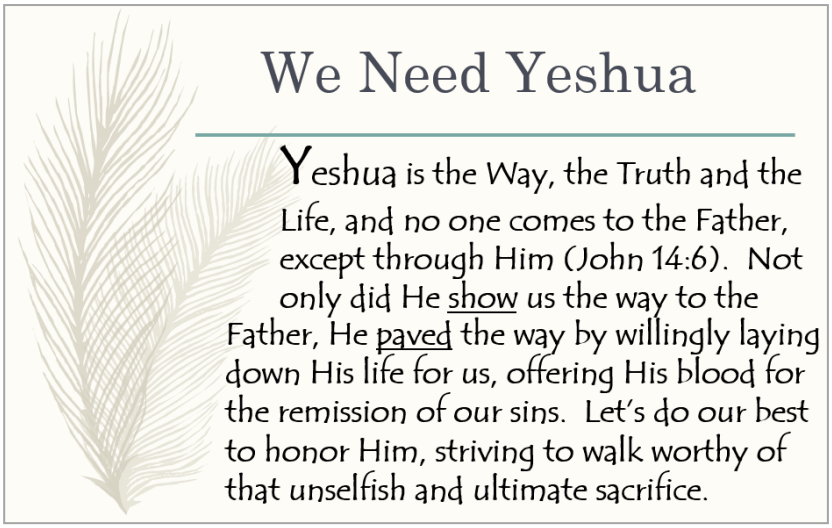
[3] From the anonymous webmaster of "Scripture News 2 Use" web site, accessed 11/10/2019 (https://scripturenews2use.org/advanced-reader/69-trinity-oneness-duality-and-pre-existence).

His Son, striving earnestly to serve Them in spirit and in truth. We're going to get some things wrong along the way and even mess up from time to time. Hopefully we return to the path of righteousness, doing our best to faithfully serve Yahweh and His Son. They know our hearts better than anyone.

Missing the Big Picture

On a final note as I close out this chapter, several days after completing this study my wife and I had a congenial visit with one of our neighbors that seems to fit right in with the topic of whether or not our personal conclusion about "who" Yeshua is should have any bearing on our salvation. During our visit, the topic eventually shifted to our religious beliefs and more specifically, "sin." He had been taught by his mother that all sins are equal in the eyes of the Almighty, but something about that teaching didn't seem right to him. "So if I steal a penny from someone, it's the same as *murder*?" he asked. He wanted to know where I stood, since I had already established that I strive to uphold the teachings of Torah.

I told him I agreed with his understanding and that there are different levels of sin with different levels of punishment corresponding with the nature of individual sins. For example, according to the Bible, if you steal from someone, the penalty is that you must not only restore that which was stolen, but you must also add one-fifth of its value (Lev. 6:1-5). However, if you kidnap ("steal") a man, the penalty is death (Ex. 21:16). There are even different levels of murder. I once corresponded with a prisoner who, in a "fit of passion," took the life of the man with whom his wife was having an affair. He was sentenced to 30 years of prison. But what of those who kill store clerks while committing a robbery? A news story I read about earlier this year involves a man who was sentenced to be executed for killing a store clerk during a $38.00 robbery.[4] How sad. The loss of life is a tragedy no matter how we look at it, but our judicial system, in their attempt to make the punishment fit the crime, tends to impose the death sentence for those who kill "in cold blood" versus those who do so in a "fit of passion." So yes, whether you look at it from a Scriptural perspective or a secular one, not all sins are considered equal. Our neighbor and I were in agreement.

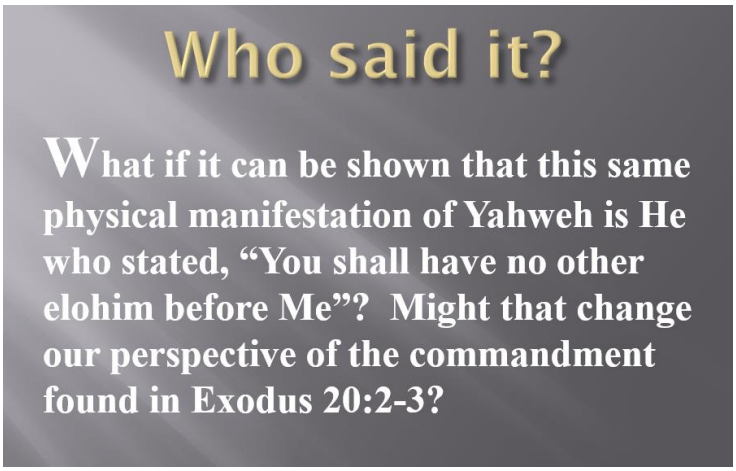


[4] On the same day as his scheduled execution, the Georgia State Board of Pardons and Parole commuted his death sentence to life without the possibility of parole.

After we returned home from that discussion, it occurred to me that I didn't give as complete an answer to our neighbor's question as I should have. On the one hand, his mother is correct – sin, no matter how minute or trivial, cannot bear up in the presence of the Almighty, and that's a problem because *all of us* have sinned. We **all** need forgiveness for our sins, but regrettably, there can be no forgiveness without the shedding of blood (Hebrews 9:22). Even if the only thing I ever did wrong was steal a penny, that one sin would keep me from the presence of the Almighty; in other words, I wouldn't be saved because I would not be forgiven. Moreover, since I'm a sinner, the shedding of my own blood would be ineffective because any blood offering to the Almighty must be without defect (Lev. 22:20). And since *all of us* have sinned in one way or another (or in some cases in *many* ways), none of us have any hope of salvation because we're *all* defective. That is precisely *why* we need Yahweh's mercy and forgiveness. Thankfully, He has provided a way through the shedding of the blood of His Son, Yeshua – the perfect Lamb, who *alone* is the way to the Father – the way to eternal life – the way to salvation. He shed His blood *in our stead*. Part of me is ashamed that we spend so much of our time arguing and debating "who" Yeshua really is, where He came from, when He came into being, etc., etc., but so little time rejoicing that Yahweh has offered us a way to Him in spite of who were are – *sinners*. Yeshua is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and no one comes to the Father, except through Him (John 14:6). Not only did He *show* us the way to the Father, He *paved* the way by willingly laying down His life for us, offering His blood for the remission of our sins. Let's do our best to honor Him, striving to walk worthy of that unselfish and ultimate sacrifice. I am saddened that despite my joy over the hope I've been given through Yeshua's perfect, atoning sacrifice, I must now direct my attention to the challenge with which I was presented when a book titled *Trinity, Oneness, Duality & Pre-Existence* was delivered to our door in 2018.

Is Worshipping Yeshua as Elohim Idolatry?

As previously shown from our March 2019 warm-up debate, Chuck writes, "To esteem anyone or anything else other than Yahweh as Elohim is idolatry." On the surface, this seems like a very reasonable summary of the first commandment. We are clearly commanded to have no other elohim before Yahweh. Some might believe that if Yahweh's Son had an origin eons before Moses received the Ten Commandments, then worshipping that Son as Elohim could be considered a violation of the first commandment. However, what if it can be shown that Yeshua truly *did* have a pre-carnal existence? What if it can be demonstrated that throughout the course of history He appeared to various individuals as the physical manifestation of Yahweh and identified Himself as Elohim? What if it can be further shown that this same physical manifestation of Yahweh, *identifying Himself as Yahweh*, is the One who brought Moses and the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage? Even more significantly, what if it can be shown that this same physical manifestation of Yahweh is He who stated, "You shall have no other elohim before Me"? Might that change our perspective of the commandment found in Exodus 20:2-3?



II. Researching and Preparing for the Public Debate

In June 2019, three months after my initial warm-up debate with Chuck Henry, I participated in my first-ever public debate. How did I make it to that chapter in my life? For some brief background information, I was raised a Trinitarian, but in 1987 my wife and I aligned ourselves with an organization whose overseer teaches, as Chuck does, that Yeshua did not have a pre-carnal existence. In fact, those who believe otherwise are deemed "anti-Messiah" and it goes without saying that they will not be saved (sound familiar?). To be clear, the group I just made reference to, like Chuck, does not believe Yeshua existed prior to His conception in Mary's womb. Not owning anything other than a *Strong's Concordance* at that time, we accepted their (mis)translation of John 17:5. When correctly translated, this is one of the clearest verses supporting the belief that Yeshua had a pre-carnal existence. This validates the understanding that when the Bible *says* He is the beginning of all creation, it *means* He's the beginning of all creation, dating to lonnnng before time as we know it began ticking. Here's what we read in John 17:5:

> 5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

You can look up the original Greek text and find that the King James Version translators captured the essence of Yeshua's words when translating those Greek words into English. However, the organization we aligned ourselves with back in 1987 taught that the King James Version translators blatantly distorted the above translation. On that basis, this group, known as The House of Yahweh, came out with their own translation, boldly claiming that the Holy Spirit was guiding them. A few years later, they came out with a vastly *different* translation of John 17:5, which makes me wonder what spirit guided them with their first translation. I'll display those two different translations later in our study.

Seven years after leaving that organization, we met Chuck Henry. Chuck and I forged a strong bond that held together for over 20 years, in spite of a friendly disagreement over whether or not Yeshua had a pre-carnal existence. We always managed to not "go there" and I frequently used that disagreement as a case in point for how believers don't have to agree on *everything* to be friends. It wasn't until Chuck published *Trinity, Oneness, Duality & Pre-Existence* that things began to change. As I began reading, it didn't take long to encounter errors, contradictions and inconsistencies. Of course, these deficiencies are minor compared to misrepresentations of Scripture found elsewhere in his book, yet they are concerning and foreshadow what comes with further reading.

> Chuck doesn't attribute a label to his particular belief structure, yet he labels everyone else.

We can start with the fact that Chuck doesn't label his particular belief structure, yet he labels everyone else. The very name of his book exemplifies this particular inconsistency: *Trinity, Oneness, Duality and Pre-Existence*. It goes without saying that Chuck does not apply any of these designations to himself. We know he isn't a Trinitarian; he certainly doesn't ascribe to the Oneness doctrine, he is not a "Dualist" or "Twinitarian," nor does he believe that Yeshua pre-existed. Since none of these titles or designations can be applied to Chuck, what label does he apply to himself? In

the absence of Chuck attributing a name to his own particular belief system, the only designation I can come up with is the one I used on page one of our introduction: *Biblical Unitarian*. The key aspect of this belief is that the Most High Yahweh was literally Yeshua's Father, Who created Yeshua's life in Mary's womb, prior to which Yeshua did not exist. Based on this particular aspect of the Biblical Unitarians' doctrine, I will henceforth refer to Chuck as a Biblical Unitarian. If he wishes to correct me, I am open to correction.

This brings us to me. *What am I?* I wondered how Chuck labeled me and believers who share my view that Yeshua is/was a created Being, the Son of the Most High Yahweh, Who appeared in pre-incarnate form to the patriarchs of Old and later divested Himself of His spiritual nature to become a flesh and blood human. If you browse through Chuck's introduction, you can read a brief synopsis of each of the belief systems that he seeks to address and refute. Chuck offers a name for each one. The closest he comes to identifying and defining those of my persuasion is "Duality," and let's just say I think he is guilty of "definition abuse." He addresses "Duality" on page 27:

Trinity, Oneness, Duality, and Pre-Existence

By: Chuck Henry **rev. 4/2/2018** **Page 27 of 510**

- **Duality:** As its name implies, Duality asserts a belief in two persons of deity, sometimes called a "Twinity." Duality asserts that the Father and the Son are persons of a deity, but the holy spirit is not regarded as a separate person; therefore, Duality is essentially the Trinity minus one. Dualist views vary: some regard the Son as a lesser deity, some believe that the Son is a created being, and thus not co-eternal, and yet He is considered part of the "Elohim family." Some dualists assert that there are "two Yahwehs," the Son being the second Yahweh.

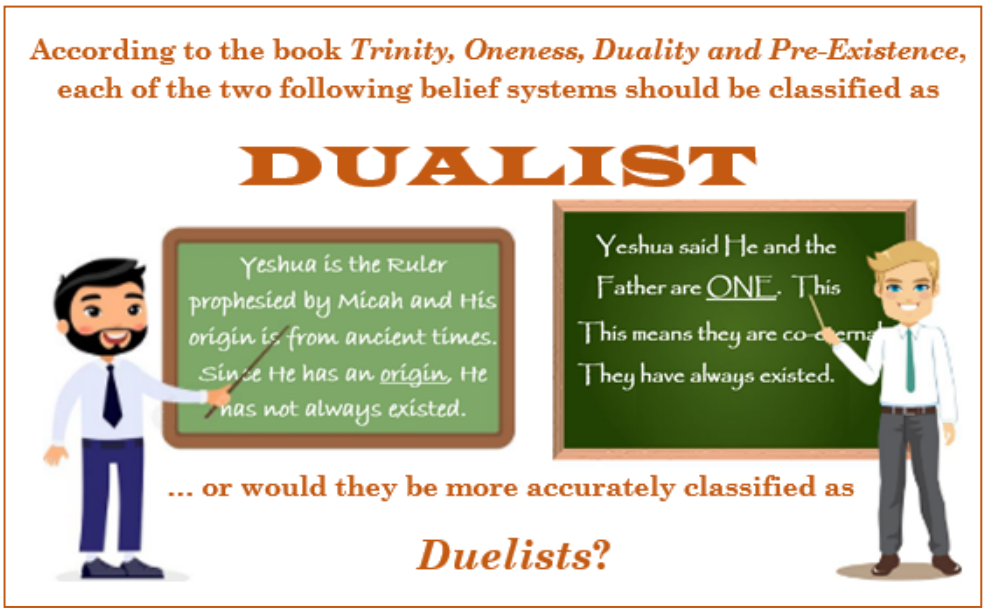
Duality emphasizes either one or two, depending on the answer needed, resulting in an impossible circuitous argument. Two are one, and one is two; and yet one is not two, and the two are not one.[5]

Let's examine the above definition of the "Duality" belief system. Chuck states, "Duality is essentially the Trinity minus one." If this definition is accurate, then "Dualists" must of necessity believe that Yeshua and Yahweh are co-eternal, having existed as "One" eternally, as in *forever and ever*. If this is true, then Yeshua could not have been a created Being, correct? If they have *always* existed as One, then there cannot have ever been a time when they *weren't* One. However, if we keep reading, we find that Chuck *further* defines "Duality" as inclusive of those who believe the Son is a created Being. In other words, with Chuck's broad brush, he paints "Dualists" as either believing that Yeshua is eternal and has *always* existed or they can believe He was created at some point in the distant past. That's quite a separation factor – one that has caused many divisions. If Chuck's definition of "Dualist" is to be considered accurate, maybe a better name for these believers would be "Duelists"! Suffice it to say I have a major problem with Chuck's method of defining what others believe. How can he lump those who believe Yahweh and Yeshua are co-eternal with those who believe Yeshua is a created Being, i.e., *not* co-eternal?

[5] Chuck Henry, *Trinity, Oneness, Duality & Pre-Existence*, H.V. Chapman & Sons Bookbinders, Abilene, TX, 2018, p. 27.

Chuck further confuses the "Duality" designation by relegating those of this persuasion to "an impossible circuitous argument," i.e., "two are one, and one is two; and yet one is not two and two are not one." How can this "impossible circuitous argument" apply to those who, like me, believe Yeshua is a created Being? At best, this is an unfair and even sloppy definition of "Dualist." My advice to Chuck: Either classify "Dualists" as those who believe Yahweh and Yeshua are co-eternal OR classify "Dualists" as those who believe Yeshua is a created Being – please do not assign both groups of believers to the same box because there is a *major* difference between believing Yeshua has always existed versus believing that He was created!

As for me, I'm removing myself from Chuck's enigmatic "Dualist" box. So what designation would I assign to myself? It's difficult to find a one-word designation that properly identifies me, so I'm calling myself a "Pre-Genesis Created Messiah" believer. I believe that prior to the creation described in Genesis, the Most High Supreme Father Yahweh created His Son Yeshua, who is the Messiah. For those who prefer a one-word designation describing our belief system, "Arian" might be sufficient. This name comes from a man named Arius (256 – 336 CE), who in the 4th century CE argued against the belief that Father and Son are both One and therefore co-eternal. Since Arius lived during the 3rd and 4th centuries, some might mistakenly regard this as evidence that no one believed as we do prior to the 3rd century. That would be a false assumption. As it turns out, not only do I believe that Scripture itself upholds my belief in this matter, but such ancients as Justin Martyr (100 – 165 CE) also shared this same view. In fact, historical evidence demonstrates that in antiquity, believers understood that Yeshua had a pre-carnal existence. I am unable find a record of anyone who did *not* believe Yeshua had a pre-carnal existence prior to the 16th century CE. I cover the historical aspect of this discussion later in my study (Part II).



I addressed my concern with Chuck's "Duality" definition during our private "warm-up" debate, at which we were able to cover more ground than we could at the public debate. At the "warm-up" debate, instead of following our pre-arranged half-hour presentations, Chuck graciously granted my last-minute request to share ***all*** the data I had by that time accumulated, which amounted to two hours of information. On the plus side, this last-minute change allowed Chuck to

I'm removing myself from Chuck's enigmatic "Dualist" box. So what designation would I apply to myself?

see everything I had to offer, which in turn helped him prepare for our upcoming public debate. On the negative side, I think this last-minute change may have been the catalyst for Chuck likewise asking me to make a last-minute change before our public debate three months later. Only minutes before that debate began, both Chuck and the moderator asked me to shorten our pre-arranged, allotted time to read and prepare answers to audience questions from one hour to 20 minutes. I gave in to the pressure and I know the dramatically-shortened time for mentally preparing best answers to questions detrimentally impacted my performance due to my ADHD diagnosis. I had requested this special accommodation two months in advance because it's a fact that ADHD folks need extra time to process questions before answering them. At the last minute, I was asked to go from one hour to fifteen minutes and I was only able to successfully negotiate a 20-minute compromise for reading and pondering questions. I address the circumstances of this change elsewhere and only mention it here as a means of briefly explaining my emotional state during the "Question & Answer" segment of our public debate. Those who understand the nature of ADHD will understand; those who do not won't.

Our public debate consisted of each party delivering a 45-minute presentation for the opening segment. As you may imagine, whittling a two-hour presentation down to 45 minutes required eliminating a lot of data, including the portion described above with its confusing definition of "Duality." This mis-definition is not only confusing, but it sets the stage for more of the same in a book some are lauding for its scholarship. If you are a truth-seeker, I urge you to earnestly read, study and compare both sides of the issue before forming your own conclusion.

Since my knowledge of Chuck's position from reading his book has been supplemented with two debates, I intend to include pertinent information from all three. Although I went first in the public debate, our presentations were each prepared beforehand. With that in mind, before I proceed with the arguments from my opening presentation, I would like to address the arguments Chuck raises. I obviously cannot cover each and every one, but I aim to address his most significant ones.

This is me on the left, delivering my 45-minute opening presentation at our public debate, held in Rising Star, TX on June 22, 2019.

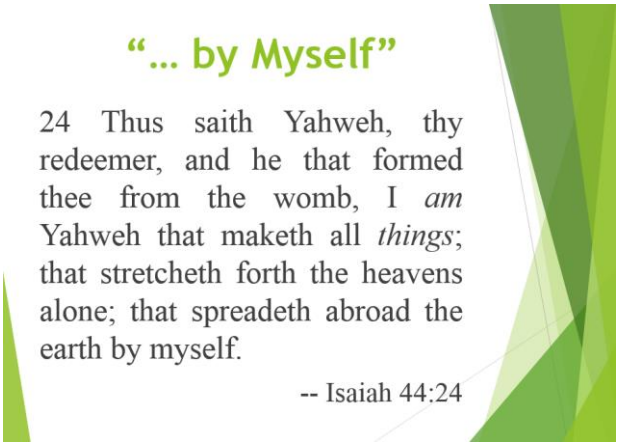
III. Chuck's Premise: Yahweh is one single "El"

In his debate presentation, Chuck Henry opened by citing the numerous times we are told in Scripture that Yahweh is one single "El." Here's an excerpt:

> Over 11,000 times, the Bible refers to "Yahweh" with singular pronouns, thus showing He is a single Person. Over 50 verses refer to Yahweh as the "Most High." Over 200 verses refer to Yahweh with the Hebrew word *El*,[6] which is singular, validating that Yahweh is one single *El*. Over 50 verses refer to Yahweh with the Hebrew word, *Eloah*, which is singular, further validating that Yahweh is one single *El*. Over 40 verses confirm there is one true *Elohim* and there is no other. Over 100 verses say that Yahweh is the Creator, several of which specify that He did it alone. Over 100 verses call the Son "a Man." Thousands of scriptures then confirm that Yahweh alone is the only true *Elohim*.[7]

On the surface, these opening remarks might seem to end the debate. Truly, Yahweh ***is*** One single *El* (Mighty One) and there is no other besides Him. From Chuck's perspective, the mere suggestion that Yeshua had a pre-carnal existence challenges the notion that Yahweh "alone" is the only *Elohim* because if Yeshua was there with Him, then Yahweh wasn't actually "alone." Here are some supportive verses that he cited:

> Over 100 verses say that Yahweh is the Creator, several of which specify He did it alone. So, I'm going read several of these—the first ones I have listed here. I've already listed – I already read Isaiah 44:24, and I would ask, "What do the words 'all alone' and 'by Myself' mean? Does it mean that Yahweh told someone else to do the work?" Also, consider that Adam was alone before Eve was created in Genesis 2:18. If "alone" constitutes more than one, then Adam was more than one.



- Nehemiah 9:6 -- You alone are Yahweh; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You.

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[6] The word *el* is a transliteration of the Hebrew word אֵל, which means "mighty" or "Almighty." See *Strong's Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary*, word #410. Variants of this same word are *Elohim* and *Eloah*.

[7] Chuck Henry, Pre-existence Debate held at the Assembly of Yahweh (7th Day), Rising Star, TX on June 22, 2019. This particular commentary begins at the 47:13 mark of the debate video.

- Job 9:8 [speaking of Yahweh] -- He alone spreads out the heavens, and treads on the waves of the sea.
- Isaiah 45:5-8 -- I am Yahweh, and there is no other; there is no Elohim besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides Me. I am Yahweh, and there is no other; I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, Yahweh, do all these things. Rain down, you heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together. I, Yahweh, have created it.
- Isaiah 45:11-12 -- Thus says Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker … (*when it says "and his Maker," it's speaking of Israel's Maker*) … Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons and concerning the work of My hands, you command Me. I have made the earth, and created man on it. I -- My hands -- have stretched out the heavens, and all their host I have commanded.
- Isaiah 45:18 -- For thus says Yahweh, Who created the heavens, Who is Elohim, Who formed the earth and made it, Who has established it, Who did not create it in vain, Who formed it to be inhabited: I am Yahweh, and there is no other.
- And then Malachi 2:10 -- Have we not all one Father? Has not one El created us?

Notice the difference between "one *El*" and "us." "One *El*" is singular; "us" is plural. That sets a contrast. Has not one *El* created us? That "one *El*," who is the Father, created us. The Son did not create us.[8]

On the surface, the above commentary might seem to end the debate. Truly, Yahweh ***is*** One single El (Mighty One) and He alone created the heavens and the earth. If there were no other Scripture texts for us to examine, I would heartily endorse Chuck's commentary as the final authority and I would join him in proclaiming that Yeshua *could not* have been present at creation, nor could He have had a pre-carnal existence. Yahweh Most High created the heavens and the earth in the presence of His holy angels, but His Son could not have been there. Again, that's what I would believe if I had nothing more than the verses from Chuck's commentary upon which to draw my conclusions.

However, we risk distorting the truth if we insist that all conflicting Scripture verses must either be reinterpreted or else labeled mistranslations in order to force a harmony with our personal conclusion. Sadly, in spite of Chuck's eloquent "one El" commentary, he goes on to infuse funky interpretations into the numerous conflicting Scripture passages in a quest to justify his conclusion. "Funky interpretations" is simply a term I'm using to define a method of reinterpreting otherwise obvious texts so as to force them to harmonize with a certain position. Don't get me wrong – some individual Scripture texts can seem conflicting and contradictory; explanations are often needed to reconcile apparent contradictions. One such apparent contradiction is the fact that we can find in Scripture Yahweh the Most High Supreme Elohim, but we can also find an *Angel* who identifies

[8] Ibid. This particular commentary begins at the 54:05 mark of the debate video.

Himself as “Yahweh Elohim.” How do we explain this apparent contradiction? How does Chuck Henry explain it?

IV. De-Elohiming the Angel

Chuck's contention that Yahweh is the only "El" would be ironclad and 100% doctrinally sound if it weren't for several additional verses that plainly present an Angel who is *also* an "Elohim" and identifies Himself as Yahweh. We know that Yahweh Most High is not an angel, so although this Angel identified Himself as "Yahweh," He *wasn't* Yahweh the Supreme Most High Father. This Angel appeared to Abraham. This Angel wrestled with Jacob. This same Angel engaged Moses at the burning bush and this Angel led the children of Israel to the Promised Land. This Angel had the power to forgive sins. If this Angel identified Himself as *Elohim*, you can be assured He wasn't lying. He was *Elohim*, He went by the name Yahweh, and yet He wasn't the Supreme Most High Yahweh. How do we know He wasn't the Most High Yahweh? We know because no flesh and blood human can see the Most High Yahweh and live (Ex. 33:20). We'll address this truth later in our study.

Chuck goes to no small effort to re-classify the Angel described above, and that effort represents only one in a long list of his manipulations of Scripture. Let's start with the Angel with whom Jacob wrestled, as presented in Genesis chapter 32. This passage introduces the Angel as being a *man*; but we quickly learn that this was "quite a man" – in fact, it was *Elohim*:

> 24 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.
> 25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.
> 26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.
> 27 And he said unto him, What *is* thy name? And he said, Jacob.
> 28 And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with Elohim and with men, and hast prevailed.
> 29 And Jacob asked *him*, and said, Tell *me*, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore *is* it *that* thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.
> 30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel [Face of *El*] for I have seen Elohim face to face, and my life is preserved.

When the "man" with whom Jacob wrestled identified Himself as *Elohim*, did He lie? Of course not! When Jacob stated that he had seen *Elohim* face to face, was this a case of mistaken identity? Chuck, regrettably, wants us to believe it was indeed a case of mistaken identity. As we will see shortly, he is persuaded that the "man" identifying Himself as *Elohim* was merely an "agent" of *Elohim* – not the real thing.

Before proceeding with Chuck's interpretation of the above passage, we need to establish that the "man" with whom Jacob wrestled was *also* an Angel. This fact is established by the prophet Hosea in Hosea 12:2-5:

> 2 Yahweh hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him.

> 3 He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with Elohim:
> 4 Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him *in* Bethel, and there he spake with us;
> 5 Even Yahweh Elohim of hosts; Yahweh *is* his memorial.

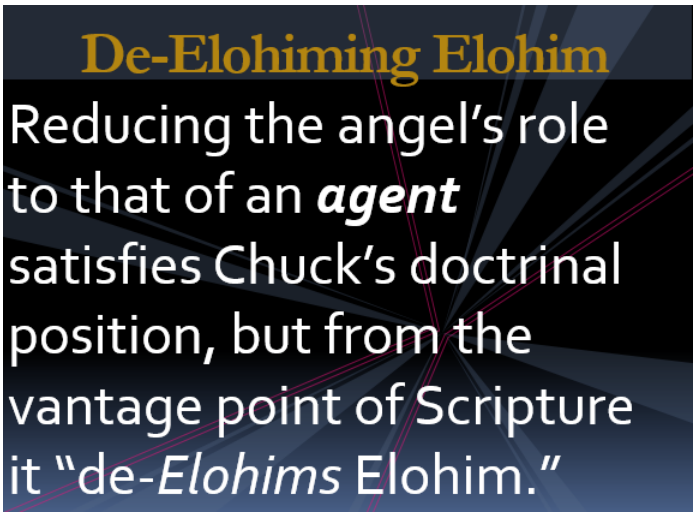
Not only does the prophet Hosea reinforce the fact that Jacob wrestled with *Elohim* (not an "agent"), but Hosea further understood that this "Elohim man" was *also* an Angel. Hosea goes on to state that Jacob "made supplication" to this Angel. "Made supplication" is *Strong's* Hebrew word #2603, which can also mean "pray," i.e., Jacob prayed to or sought favor from the Angel. Finally, it bears noting that Hosea isn't actually the "speaker" in the above passage; it's the Word of Yahweh.[9]

Please bear in mind from the accounts in Genesis 32 and Hosea 12 that (a) the man identified Himself as "Elohim" and (b) Jacob understood that he had seen "Elohim." Again I ask: *Was this a case of mistaken identity*? Chuck thinks it was, in spite of the fact that even the Word of Yahweh in Hosea 12 specifically identifies that Angel as "Elohim." In his estimation, Jacob didn't actually wrestle with "Elohim"; rather it was an "**agent** of Elohim." Notice the subtitle on page 221 of his book *Trinity, Oneness, Duality & Pre-Existence*:

> 38.7 Gen 32:24-30 — Jacob Wrestles with Elohim (i.e., an angel acting as His agent; cp. Hos 12:3-4)

Chuck goes on to summarize his interpretation:

> The one called Elohim in Genesis 32:28 is identified in Hosea 12:4 as an **angel**, thus giving a clear example of agency, where the angel acted on Yahweh's behalf, as His agent. Moreover, Jacob did not actually see Yahweh face to face; he saw Yahweh's agent face to face, which is why he lived to tell about it. "...For no man shall see Me, and live," says Yahweh (Exo 33:20b.).[10]



Please note the above author's subtle misrepresentation of Scripture. If it weren't subtle, there wouldn't be any need to call it to anyone's attention or to highlight the words as I did above. But it's quite subtle, so subtle that I'm not certain a novice believer would catch the stratagem. According to the Word, Jacob had "power with Elohim." According to Chuck, Jacob had power with "the one CALLED Elohim,"

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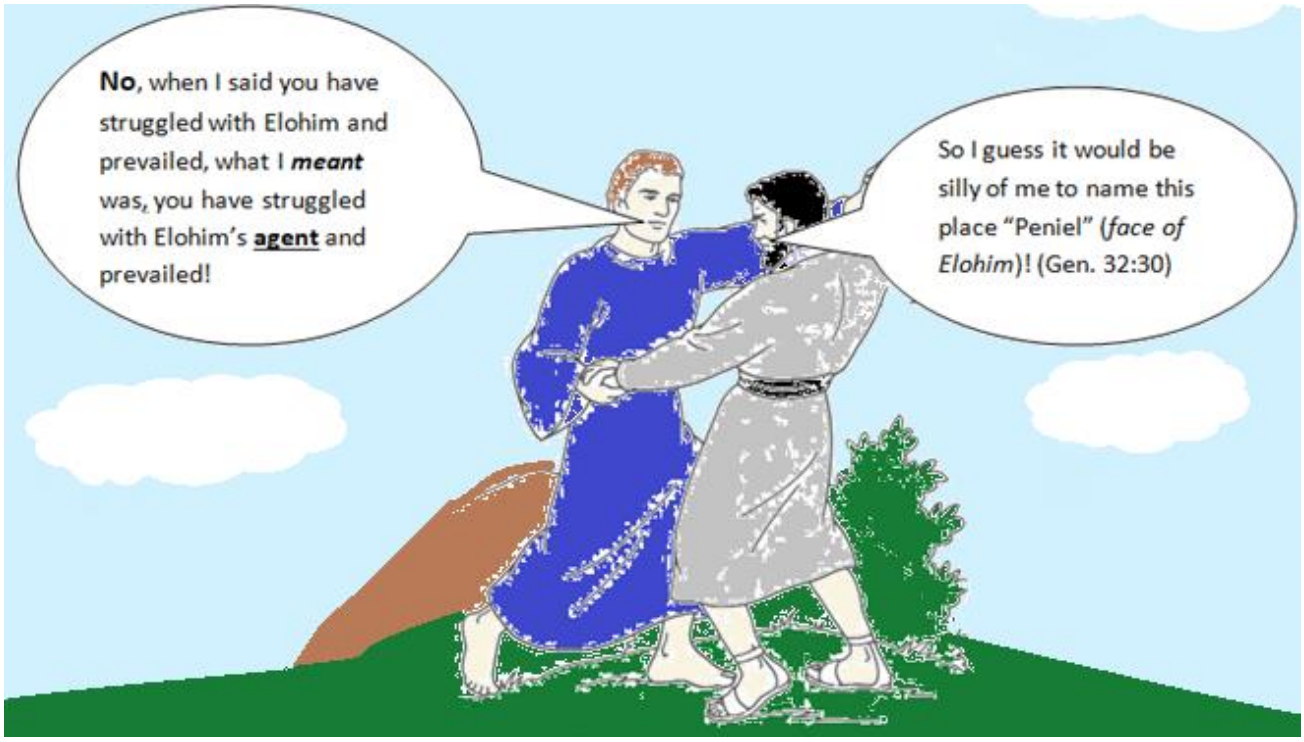
[9] *Cf.*, Hosea 1:1, 4:1.
[10] Chuck Henry, *Trinity, Oneness, Duality & Pre-Existence*, H.V. Chapman & Sons Bookbinders, Abilene, TX, 2018, pp. 222-223.

inferring that the Being wasn't *really* Elohim – he was merely CALLED Elohim. This is an example of Chuck's drive to reinterpret conflicting passages of Scripture in such a way as to justify his position. Here's the apparent reasoning for Biblical Unitarians not acknowledging the Angel of Genesis 32 as "Elohim": The Being with whom Jacob wrestled could not have *truly* been Elohim, but rather it was an ***angel***, and no angel can possibly be ***Elohim*** because there can only be ONE Elohim, Yahweh the Most High. In spite of the reinterpretation of this Scriptural passage, Yahweh's Word identifies the Being not only as a <u>man</u>, not only as an <u>Angel</u>, but ***also*** as <u>Elohim</u>; according to Chuck, this is an impossible equation insofar as his doctrinal position can allow. His best explanation is that the being was an angel acting as Elohim's ***agent***, but not truly Elohim. That's because if the being was *truly* Elohim, this would make Him a "second Elohim," an impossible equation that "throws a wrench" into Biblical Unitarians' interpretation of Scripture. Reducing the Angel's role to that of an ***agent*** satisfies their doctrinal position, but from the vantage point of Scripture it "de-*Elohims* Elohim," a point that I reinforce with the following illustration:



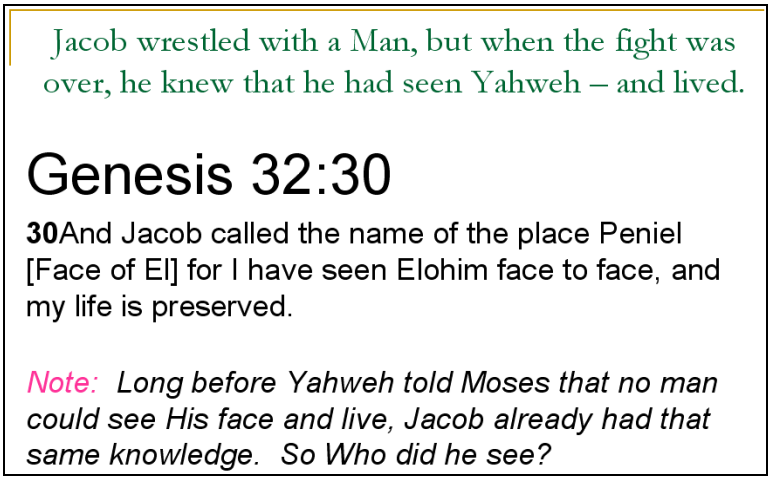
Truly, if Jacob didn't see the face of Elohim, he wouldn't have named that place *Peniel*, which means "face of Elohim." The only other option is to disbelieve what the Angel said to Jacob while simultaneously believing that Jacob mistakenly *thought* he wrestled with Elohim, whereas it was only an *agent* of Elohim.

For my PowerPoint debate presentation, I incorporated some slides to vividly illustrate the ridiculousness of these remarkable reinterpretations of Scripture, using various images lifted from the internet overlaid with text, much like the one above. A Biblical Unitarian who attended a separate

August 2019 Unity Conference presentation[11] that I gave on this same topic in Sterling, Illinois, wasn't appreciative of my approach. As with my debate presentation, I incorporated additional images with captions to illustrate the absurdity of various interpretations found in *Trinity, Oneness, Duality & Pre-Existence*. The Biblical Unitarian, who was friendly towards me and did not protest the content of my presentation at any time during the three-day event, later sent me e-mails critical of images such as the one depicted above, calling down shame on me for such antics. I was compelled to send a quick explanatory response, clarifying that I most certainly did *not* put together the illustrations with the intent of making fun of any individuals. I explained, "Even so, the intent behind the cartoons is not that of 'poking fun' at a person, but rather that of an easy-to-see & understand visual aid depicting an absurd interpretation of Bible texts. Directed at a position, not a person!!"

I can understand the Biblical Unitarian's mistaken impression of my motives. Even June initially suggested that I omit such illustrations. Then I asked her if she could remember Chuck's opinion of the identity of the Angel with whom Jacob wrestled. She could not and that's why I subsequently put together the above, which is new to my presentation. It's a visual aid reinforcing the fact that to Biblical Unitarians, the Angel with whom Jacob wrestled was not actually *Elohim*, but rather an *agent* of Elohim. Such a belief structure needs to be exposed, addressed and *remembered* as an example of how Chuck manipulates and distorts Bible texts. I also asked June if she could remember what Chuck thinks Yeshua meant when He said, "I came down from heaven …." She quickly replied, "He believes Yeshua meant, 'all good gifts come from above.'" *And how did she remember that?* It was from one of my illustrations that I used during the actual debate. In summary, I do not put together these illustrations to demean individuals, but rather to expose an interpretation of Scripture while helping others to remember various Scriptural misrepresentations for comparison purposes. They are directed at a *position*, not a person.

As I have just demonstrated via commentary and visual aid, Chuck does not believe that Jacob actually wrestled with *Elohim*; rather, in his view, Jacob only wrestled with an *agent* of Elohim. This is a fact that I've reinforced since our initial March 2019 "warm-up" debate, as exhibited by the following PowerPoint image:



[11] My presentation at the 2019 Unity Conference in Sterling, IL, though comprising many of the same elements included within my debate presentation, nevertheless honed in on other aspects, including an examination of John 17:5.

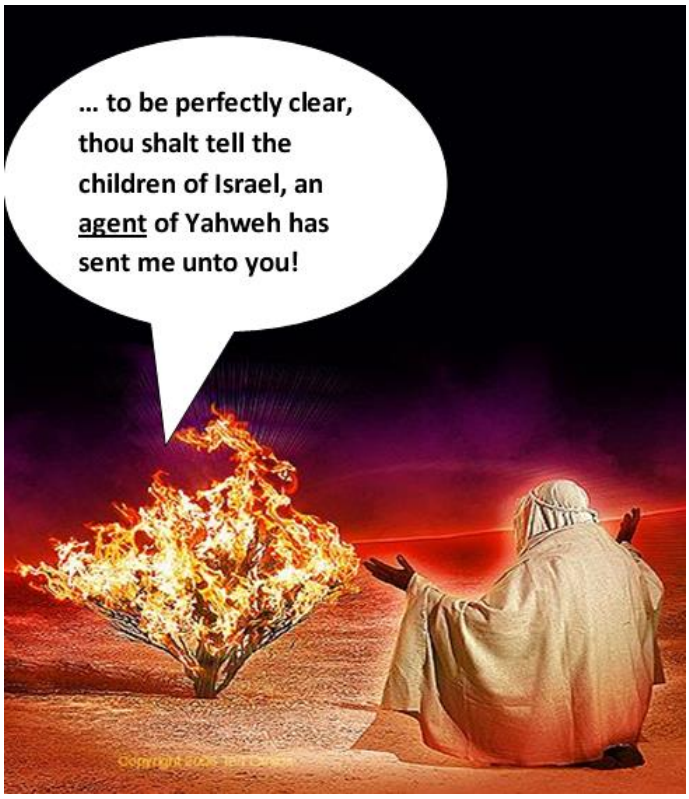
Let's go with what Scripture says. According to Scripture, Jacob wrestled with Elohim.

The same principle addressed above applies to the Angel who appeared to Moses in the burning bush (*cf.*, Exodus 3). I will here confess that in spite of having read this account many times over the years, for some reason I always glossed over the fact that it was an ***Angel*** who appeared to Moses in the flame of fire (Ex. 3:2). It truly ***was*** an Angel, make no mistake about it:

> 2 And the angel of Yahweh appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush *was* not consumed.

Did this Angel have a name?

When Moses asked the identity of the Being Who spoke to him from the flame – and please bear in mind that this is the same Being Who sent Him to the children of Israel to announce their deliverance from Egypt – the Angel did *not* say, "Tell them the angel of Yahweh has sent me unto you," nor did He instruct Moses to tell them that an ***agent*** of Yahweh had sent them. No, He charged Moses to say, "**Yahweh Elohim** of your fathers, the Elohim of Abraham, the Elohim of Isaac, and the Elohim of Jacob, hath sent me to you" (Ex. 3:15). It was the ***Angel*** who sent Moses and that same Angel identified Himself as "**Yahweh Elohim**." Did the Angel mean what He said? Or did He mean what Chuck *wants* Him to mean? The image on the left is not intended to ridicule anyone's belief, but to point out what Biblical Unitarians ***truly*** believe is the real identity of the Angel.



Of course, Biblical Unitarians do not recognize the possibility that this Angel was *also* Yahweh Elohim because that could only mean there's a *second* Yahweh and there cannot possibly be *two Yahwehs*, right? After all, Yahweh is ONE (Deut. 6:4). Here, then, is how Chuck explains the precise identity of the Angel who appeared to Moses at the "burning bush":

> Evidently, the angel not only appeared to Moses but also spoke to Moses on Yahweh's behalf, acting as Yahweh's agent.[12]

[12] Chuck Henry, *Trinity, Oneness, Duality & Pre-Existence*, H.V. Chapman & Sons Bookbinders, Abilene, TX, 2018, p. 224.

Of course, the above explanation should sound familiar because it's the same explanation Chuck offers in his attempt to identify the Angel who wrestled with Jacob. Due to the fact that there is only *one* true Elohim, Biblical Unitarians are unable to wrap their minds around the fact that there is a physical manifestation of this same Elohim with whom mankind can speak face to face. I can understand their dilemma because I once shared their view. Nevertheless, unless Biblical Unitarians can demonstrate that our Bibles have been tampered with, the fact remains that an Angel appeared to Abraham identifying Himself as Yahweh, an Angel identifying Himself as Elohim wrestled with Jacob and an Angel identifying Himself as both Yahweh *and* Elohim appeared to Moses in the midst of a bush that burned, yet was not consumed by the fire.

De-Elohiming the Angel = De-Elohiming Yeshua

Regrettably, Chuck Henry exhibits the inability to grasp that there is a physical manifestation of Elohim in his explanation of the *Logos* of John 1:1. He asks, "If John said the Son is Elohim in John 1:1, how could he later state, 'No one has seen Elohim at any time' (Joh 1:18, 1 Joh 4:12) and still record the face to face encounters people had with the Son? So let's face it, if the Son is Elohim, then people clearly saw the face of Elohim, but this would contradict John's own writings and other Scripture."[13] Here's the actual text from Chuck's book:

Trinity, Oneness, Duality, and Pre-Existence

By: Chuck Henry rev. 4/2/2018 Page 380 of 510

83. Joh 1:1-14 — Logos, etc.

> "The *Logos* was with Elohim" in the same way that your reasoning and plans are with you, and they are, in effect, *you*. Your reasoning and plans determine your actions and your attitude. Simply put, you are who you are!
>
> If John said the Son is Elohim in John 1:1, how could he later state "No one has seen Elohim at any time" (Joh 1:18, 1 Joh 4:12) and still record the face to face encounters people had with the Son. So let's face it, if the Son is Elohim, then people clearly saw the face of Elohim, but this would contradict John's own writings and other Scripture:

Please notice that Chuck more or less does the same thing to the Son that he does to the Angel: he "de-Elohims" Yeshua. Consider what Chuck would write about the Angel with whom Jacob wrestled:

> If the Bible says the Angel is Elohim in Gen 32:28, how could Yahweh later state, "There shall no man see me, and live" (Exodus 33:20) and still record the face to face encounters people had with the Angel? So let's face it, if the Angel is Elohim, then people clearly saw the face of Elohim, but this would contradict Yahweh's own Word and other Scripture.[14]

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[13] Chuck Henry, *Trinity, Oneness, Duality & Pre-Existence*, H.V. Chapman & Sons Bookbinders, Abilene, TX, 2018, p. 380.

[14] Just to be clear, this is a parody of what Chuck would *likely* say about the Angel with whom Jacob wrestled. Chuck cannot consider the *Angel* as being Elohim any more than he can accept *Yeshua* as being Elohim because in his understanding, there is only **one** Elohim and there can only be **one** Elohim. Of course,

As you can see from the above hypothetical statement that I'm 99.9% Chuck would agree with, he can no more accept the Angel as being Elohim than he can Yeshua. They're both "in the same boat," insofar as Chuck is concerned. The concept of a physical manifestation of the Father does not factor into his equation.

More than an Angel, More than an "Agent"

What do scholars have to say about the belief that Yeshua could not have been an angel? Both Hebrew and Greek scholars disagree with Chuck's conclusion. Take Spiros Zodhiates, for example. Spiros Zodhiates (1922 – 2009) was a Greek-American Bible scholar, best known for publishing the *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible*. Here's what he has to say about the association between Yeshua and the angel of Yahweh:

> **23:20-23** There is strong evidence that the appearances of the "angel of the LORD" are in fact preincarnate appearances of Christ, the Son of God. Things are said of the angel of the LORD that go beyond the category of angels, and are applicable only to Christ. Hagar called Him by the name of God (Gen. 16:13). When the angel of the LORD appeared to Moses from within the burning bush, the text of the Scripture, the angel Himself, and Moses all affirm that the angel is God (Ex. 3:2-6). Here in Exodus chapter twenty-three it is said of the angel of the LORD that He has the power to forgive sins and that He has the name of God in Him (cf Luke:7:49; Mark 2:7). No man could see God and live, but the Son of God, who is the fullness of the Godhead bodily, has declared Him (Ex. 33:20; John 1:18; Col. 2:9).

Apart from the names that Spiros Zodhiates applies to Yahweh and His Son, I fully agree with the reasoning presented above. Nevertheless, if you do not agree that the appearances of the "Angel of Yahweh" were in fact pre-incarnate appearances of Yeshua the Messiah, I respect your view. The viewpoint that I *do not* respect is that the Angel was not Elohim, but rather an "agent" of Elohim, because that's a subversion of Scripture.

From our perspective, Biblical Unitarians present us with a "lying Angel" because in the two incidents we referenced (i.e., the Angel who wrestled with Jacob and the Angel in the burning bush), an Angel identifies himself as "Elohim," yet Chuck doesn't believe the Angel was *really* Elohim. If I were in his position, I would certainly wish that Scripture was worded differently – something like this: "I come to you in the name of Yahweh Elohim of your fathers, the Elohim of Abraham, the Elohim of Isaac, and the Elohim of Jacob." After all, isn't that what an agent does? The agent comes *in the name of* the individual he represents and he identifies himself as such. Since I am persuaded that the Angel wasn't a "lying Angel," I think it is reasonable to conclude that when He identified

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we agree with that understanding, but we don't stop there because Scripture introduces us to an Elohim with whom mankind can visit face to face. In the Old Testament writings, this Elohim is an Angel, whom we consider the physical manifestation of the Most High Supreme Father. In the New Testament writings, this Angel divests himself of his pre-carnal nature and becomes a flesh and blood human, the Man we know as Yeshua the Messiah. Yeshua is the physical manifestation of the Father, He's Son of Yahweh and He is truly "El with us" (Isaiah 7:14).

himself as "Yahweh," He was telling the truth. It really *was* Yahweh. It really *was* Elohim. The effort to diminish the Angel's role, then, can truly be regarded as an attempt to "de-Elohim" the Angel.

Is the attempt to de-Elohim the Angel founded on a firm foundation? No, it is not. We are now faced with larger questions: ***Are there two Elohims? Are there two Yahwehs?***

De-Elohiming the Angel = De-Elohiming Yeshua

Biblical Unitarians cannot consider the *Angel* as being Elohim any more than they can accept *Yeshua* as being Elohim because in their understanding, there is only one Elohim and there can only be one Elohim. The concept of a physical manifestation of the Father does not factor into their equation.

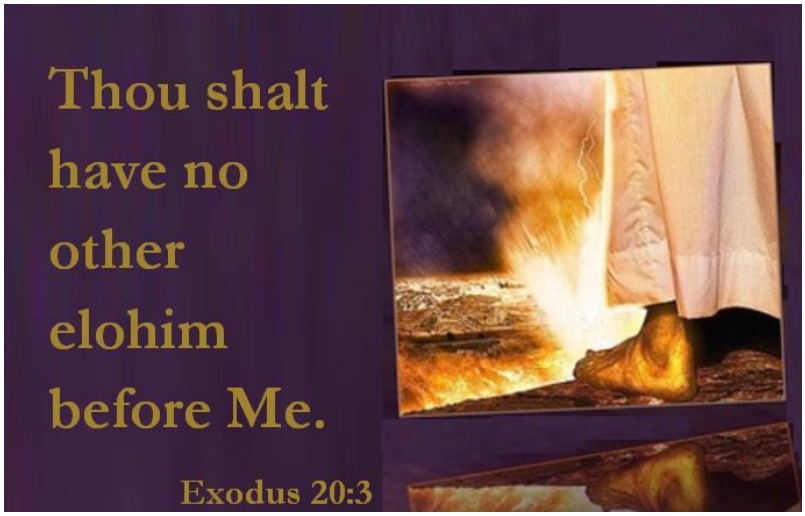
V. Is There a Second Elohim?

Is there a second Elohim? Are there two Yahwehs? The answers are yes and yes. By now, those two answers should be obvious; however, proving them definitively is not so easy. That's because if there truly ***are*** two Yahwehs, how do we distinguish One from the Other? Nevertheless, it's impossible to read Exodus chapter three without acknowledging that an Angel identified Himself to Moses as "Yahweh." You have two options: You can take Chuck's position and rationalize this event as a case of an angel acting as Yahweh's *agent*, i.e., it wasn't ***really*** Yahweh. OR you can consider the possibility that the Angel was the physical manifestation of Yahweh, a form of Yahweh upon Whom man can gaze face to face without suffering death. I choose the latter simply because I am persuaded the Angel meant what He said when He referred to Himself as *Elohim*. I do not believe the Angel *meant* that He was merely an "agent of Yahweh." He was the physical manifestation of Yahweh. As referenced within the actual text of Scripture, this Angel was *Yahweh Elohim*, nothing more, nothing less. I choose to believe what the text says, even if Chuck regards me and those who agree with my view as idolaters for so doing.

We have already answered the question, *Is there a second Elohim?* The answer is yes, which leads to a follow-up question: Which of those two Elohims thundered from Mount Sinai, "You shall have no other Elohim before Me" (Ex. 20:3)? Was it Yahweh the Supreme Most High or was it Yahweh, the physical manifestation of Yahweh Most High? Well, according to Stephen in Acts 7:38, it was an ***angel*** Who spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai:

> 37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall Yahweh your Elohim raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.
> 38 This is he, that was in the assembly in the wilderness with the angel which spoke to him in the mount Sinai, and *with* our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

Let us be clear: An Angel told Moses, "You shall have no other Elohim before Me." That's right, the same ***Angel*** who identified Himself to Moses as "Yahweh Elohim" later told Moses, "You shall have no other Elohim before Me." Was this just *any* angel who gave such orders to Israel's leader? Or could it have been the pre-carnal Yeshua – the physical manifestation of Yahweh? As we will see later in our study, Yeshua was indeed an Angel.



If the pre-incarnate Yeshua told Moses, "You shall have no other elohim before Me," then this would validate the existence of *two "Elohims"* – (1) the pre-carnal Yeshua who gave the command and (2) His Father Yahweh the Supreme Most High. If the pre-incarnate Yeshua told Moses that he was to

have "no other elohim before Me" (Yeshua), then this in turn would mean that if there is an Elohim greater than Yeshua, mankind had to go through Yeshua to worship Him. This understanding gives enhanced meaning to Yeshua's words in John 14:6:

> 6 Yeshua saith unto him [Thomas], I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.

When Yeshua states that no man comes to the Father but by Him, this means Yeshua comes **first**. He alone is the means to the Supreme Father. If we can understand that this same Yeshua, in His pre-incarnate state, gave orders that we are to have no other *elohim* before HIM, then we can simultaneously understand that "before HIM" meant "before" that very Angel – the pre-incarnate Yeshua. We are to have no *Elohim* before Yeshua, Who is our only means of gaining access to His (and our) Father, Yahweh the Supreme Most High.

VI. "They Shall Look Upon ME Whom They Have Pierced …"

The Word of Yahweh seals the matter that the Angel of Yahweh **is** Elohim as recorded by the prophet Zechariah. Displayed below is Zechariah 12:8:

> 8 In that day shall Yahweh defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David *shall be* as Elohim, as the angel of Yahweh before them.

Please bear in mind that the Speaker in the above verse is not Zechariah; rather, it's the **Word of Yahweh** (*cf.*, v. 1). Notice what more the Word of Yahweh has to say about Himself in the verses that follow:

> 9 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.
> 10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for *his* only *son*, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn.

To be sure, the above passage is a controversial one. From my perspective, "…Me Whom they have pierced" can only be a reference to Yeshua's then-future suffering on the cross and He, as the pre-incarnate Word of Yahweh, is making this known through the prophet Zechariah. Yet, Jewish commentators naturally take a different view. I've read at least one Jewish commentary claiming that "…Me Whom they have pierced" is actually a reference to Israel being attacked and that the Almighty identifies so intimately with His people that He figuratively takes part in the nation's "piercing."[15] From this perspective, to attack (pierce) Israel is to attack the Almighty. Needless to say, I find such an interpretation to be "grasping at straws." Chuck Henry believes "the Word of Yahweh" in Zechariah is Yahweh the Supreme Most High, not the pre-incarnate Yeshua, so according to Chuck it is Yahweh the Supreme Most High who is speaking. In verse 10, Chuck infers that "… **Me** Whom they have pierced" is an inaccurate rendering of the original text and that the Apostle John supplies the correct rendering in John 19:37. Chuck's commentary is rather extensive, but I don't want to leave anything out, so I am displaying it below in its entirety:

Trinity, Oneness, Duality, and Pre-Existence

78. Zec 12:10 — "…They will look on Me [or Him] whom they pierced"

Zec 12:8-10
8 In that day Yahweh will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the
one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and the

[15] Cf., "Does John 19:37 misquote Zechariah 12:10?" by Gerald Sigal, Jews for Judaism web site (https://jewsforjudaism.org/knowledge/articles/does-john-1937-misquote-zechariah-1210/).

> house of David shall be like Elohim, like the Angel of Yahweh before them.
> 9 It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.
> 10 And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on **Me** whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for **Him** as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for **Him** as one grieves for a firstborn.

78.1 Opposing Assertions

The Pre-Existence viewpoint is that the word "**Me**" indicates that the Messiah was there, in a pre-existent state, when Zechariah wrote his prophecy. Many would also likely assert that the Messiah is identified as Yahweh (from v. 8).

Rebuttal Points:

78.2 Indications are that "Me" should be "Him" in Zec 12:10

Notice that the pronouns in verse 10 are not uniform: "Me" occurs once while "Him" occurs twice. "…They will look on **Him** whom they pierced," would match the other "Him" pronouns.

In fact, the RSV says "him"—

> Zec 12:10 RSV
> And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion and supplication, so that, when they look on **him** whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a first-born.

Also, John 19:37 quotes Zechariah 12:10 and says "Him"—

> Joh 19:37
> And again another Scripture says, They shall look on **Him** whom they pierced.

Moreover, after consulting several translations of John 19:37, I have not found one that states "**Me**."

Additionally, compare Revelation 1:7 —

> Rev 1:7
> Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

78.3 Zec 12:10 is Prophecy of Future Events — neither the piercing nor the Messiah yet existed

At the writing of Zechariah 12:10, the Messiah had not yet been pierced, showing that this was a prophecy. The piercing did not yet exist at that time, nor did Him

whom they pierced, nor did they who pierced Him.[16]

By reviewing Chuck's above commentary, we discover that he considers the RSV (mis)translation of Zechariah 12:10 superior to the Hebrew text of this same verse. The Hebrew text has "… they will look upon **Me** whom they have pierced," whereas the RSV offers "… they will look upon **Him** whom they have pierced." Although the Hebrew text has "ME whom they have pierced," Chuck goes with that which is not found in the original text, casting his support in favor of the RSV's blatant mistranslation of this verse. Chuck is furthermore persuaded that the New Testament quote of this verse (Jn 19:37) supplies the correction. I submit that there is absolutely nothing wrong with the Hebrew text of Zechariah 12:10; moreover, the Septuagint text of Zechariah 12:10 agrees with the Hebrew, a validation of its accuracy. The problem, then, appears to not be with what the Apostle John *wrote* in John 19:37, but rather with how his words were later *transmitted*.

Translator James Scott Trimm agrees that such is the case. Trimm, in his *The Hebraic-Roots Version Scriptures* translation, offers an in-depth summary explaining why he is persuaded that John, in his original account, wrote, "...**Me** Whom they have pierced," *not* "…Him Whom they have pierced." James Trimm, by the way, asserts that the Greek New Testament text was translated from an Aramaic original. Displayed below is his footnote for John 19:37:

> Quoting Zech. 12:10. This portion of Zech. 12:10 reads in the Hebrew as:
> והביטו אלי את אשר דקרו "and they-shall-look toward-me whom they-pierced"
> The Aramaic Peshitta version of this portion of Zech 12:10 reads:
> דנחורון לותי במן דדקרו "they-shall-look toward-me at-him whom-they-pierced"
> In the quest for a word for word translation the Aramaic translator rendered the untranslatable Hebrew word את (which points to the next word as a direct object which receives the action) with Aramaic במן "at-him". The Aramaic of Jn. 19:37 quotes the Aramaic of Zech. 12:10 almost word for word, however the author of the Aramaic of Jn. 19:37 seems to have found the phrase לותי במן "toward-me at-him" to be redundant thus he eliminated the לותי "toward-me" producing the quote as we read it in the Aramaic of Jn. 19:37: דנחורון במן דדקרו "they shall look at him whom they pierced" as we read also in the Greek of Jn. 19:37. This shift from "toward-me" to "at-him" clearly occurred in the Aramaic tradition and was translated into the Greek.[17]

In summary of the above, the evidence supports believing that John composed his account in Hebrew, accurately quoting the Hebrew text of Zechariah 12:10. Both Zechariah and John were eventually translated into Aramaic and the Aramaic translator of John eliminated לותי, which means "toward me" or "at me," believing it to be redundant. This error of omission was perpetuated when the Aramaic translation was itself translated into Greek. If this is the case, as corroborated by the Septuagint translation, the Hebrew text of Zechariah 12:10 is completely correct "as is." Due to extreme bias, it can be expected that some would prefer to reject the Hebrew text of Zechariah 12:10 in favor of the Greek New Testament rendering. Of course, they cannot accept the literal Hebrew

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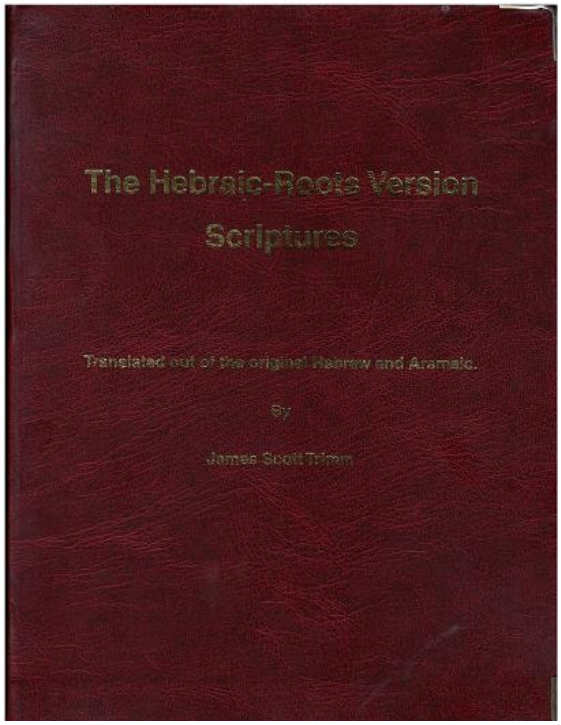
[16] Chuck Henry, *Trinity, Oneness, Duality & Pre-Existence*, H.V. Chapman & Sons Bookbinders, Abilene, TX, 2018, pp. 366-367.

[17] *The Hebraic-Roots Version Scriptures*, Translated out of the original Hebrew and Aramaic, By James Scott Trimm, The Society for the Advancement of Nazarene Judaism, Hurst, TX, 2004, p. 1364.

reading of Zechariah 12:10 because it, in and of itself, disproves the doctrine that Yeshua did not have a pre-carnal existence.

Due to bias, some will likely continue to regard the Greek text of John 19:37 as being more accurate than the extant Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek Septuagint texts of Zech. 12:10. Nevertheless, the Word of Yahweh, through the prophet Zechariah, plainly identifies the Angel of Yahweh as *Elohim*, and He (the Word of Yahweh) prophesies, "… they shall look upon **Me** Whom they have pierced." Calling a New Testament's citation of an Old Testament verse as being more accurate than the original is an example of interpreting the Old Testament in light of the New, instead of the reverse. We should always interpret the New Testament in light of the Old, *not* the reverse. Chuck here relies on a flawed New Testament translation to color his interpretation of an Old Testament verse which, when properly translated from either the Hebrew or Greek Septuagint text, proves Yeshua had a pre-carnal existence.



About Chuck's citing the Revised Standard Version's translation of Zechariah 12:10: I take issue with the fact that he actually offers the RSV English translation of Zechariah 12:10 as "evidence" validating his conclusion. Our concern should not rest with an ***English translation*** of the Hebrew text; the question should be, "*What does the **Hebrew** text actually say*?" Suffice it to say, the Hebrew text of Zechariah 12:10 truly includes the phrase, "they shall look upon **Me** Whom they have pierced." Thus, Chuck wants his readers to accept a blatantly false rendering of the Hebrew text as truth. But please don't take our word for it; check it out for yourself or contact any Hebrew scholar.

VII. Two "Firsts and Lasts"?

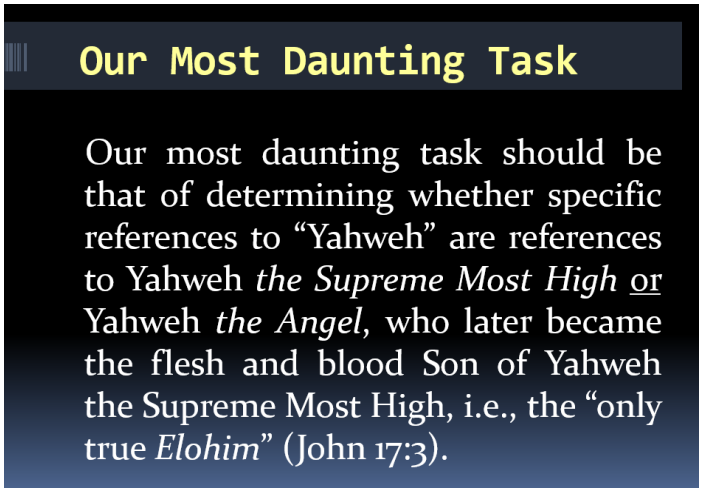
In Isaiah chapter 44, Yahweh tells Israel that He formed him from the womb and that He will pour out His blessing on Israel's offspring. Notice what He says in verse 6:

> 6 Thus saith Yahweh the King of Israel and his redeemer Yahweh of hosts; I *am* the first, and I *am* the last; and beside me *there is* no Elohim.

As the physical manifestation of Yahweh the Supreme Most High *Elohim*, the pre-incarnate Yeshua, the Redeemer of mankind, could very well have uttered the above words. Not only that, but notice the parallel in Revelation 22:13:

> 12 And behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.
> 13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

Our first reaction to such phrases as "Alpha and Omega," "Beginning and End" and "First and Last" might be to suggest that Yahweh Almighty doesn't have a beginning, whereas Yeshua does. However, if we apply such literal reasoning, we have to ***also*** attribute an "End" to Yeshua. Hopefully, we all know better. To that end (pardon the pun), we concede that terms such as "Alpha and Omega," "Beginning and End" and "First and Last" may be regarded as *metaphorical*. This is why Trinitarians have no issues with verses in which either Yeshua or the Almighty are attributed a "beginning and end." Metaphorically, I can see how the phrase, "I am the beginning and end" may be used to mean "endless" or "eternal." I say this in spite of the fact that I believe Scripture does attribute a *beginning* to Yeshua.



I am persuaded that the author of the book of Hebrews had tremendous insight into the meaning of *beginning and end* and that it goes beyond "point of origin" and "stopping point." Here's what he wrote in Hebrews 12:2, speaking of Yeshua:

> 1 Therefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,
> 2 Looking unto Yeshua the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of Elohim.

The *beginning page* of mankind's "race" on this planet, the figurative "page one," was penned by none other than Yeshua. He's the author. He did not abandon His book; he's the *finisher* as well.

The "ending" to Yeshua's story doesn't mean it's over and done; no, it's a "lived happily ever after" ending. It's an ending without end. Thus, He's the *beginning and end* – the author and finisher.

This brings us to some additional "Alpha and Omega" verses in the book of Revelation. Chuck Henry states in his book that some "Alpha and Omega" verses refer to Yahweh the Supreme Most High Elohim, while conceding that another one definitely refers to Yeshua the Messiah. I agree; I am persuaded that if Yeshua is the physical manifestation of Yahweh, "Alpha and Omega" can indeed equally apply to either the Most High Supreme Yahweh ***or*** His firstborn Son, Yeshua. The following is taken from page 58 of Chuck's book:

Trinity, Oneness, Duality, and Pre-Existence

By: Chuck Henry **rev. 4/2/2018** **Page 58 of 510**

7. Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End, First and Last

7. *Alpha and Omega,* Beginning and End, First and Last

7.1 Introduction: Some titles apply to the Father, the Son, and even other men, as determined by context

"*Alpha* and *Omega*," "Beginning and End," and "First and Last" are titles applied to both the Father and the Son. This chapter reviews the verses where these titles Appear.

Some assert that when the same title applies to both the Father and the Son, they must both be Elohim. However, it is not unusual that some titles apply, to the Father, to the Son, and even to other men as determined by context. Examples follow.

In his commentary above, Chuck makes the point that it is not unusual for some titles to apply, not only to Yahweh and Yeshua, but also to *men*. This is an irrelevant point to make in a chapter titled "**Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End, First and Last**" because this is a title that is nowhere ever applied to *men*. It bears noting that Chuck offers no examples of men who are referred to as "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last," so I am at a loss as to why he brings up such a point here in this chapter. We do not question the fact that some titles, such as *King* or *Shepherd*, may be applied to either Yahweh, Yeshua or even to men; but this topic in Chuck's book isn't about *those* titles, it's about "Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End, First and Last." As I just stated, Chuck does not offer any verses in which *men* are referred to as "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."

On the other hand, if Yahweh is the Supreme Most High Elohim and Yeshua is the physical manifestation of His Father Yahweh, and *especially* if Yeshua is *Elohim*, then it is understandable that He, like His Father, would be referred to as "Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last."

The following, taken from page 59 of Chuck's book, is an attempt to prove that any references to "Yahweh Almighty" must automatically eliminate any possibility that Yeshua is the One being referred to:

7.2 Rev 1:8 — Refers to the Father

Rev 1:8 (NKJV quoted verbatim with added emphasis and comments)
I am the **Alpha** and the **Omega**, the **Beginning** and the **End**, says **the Lord** [or "says Yahweh Elohim," see #1, below], who is and who was and who is to come [see #2, below], **the Almighty** [see #3, below].

1. "Says the Lord" [or "says Yahweh Elohim"]

- The NU-Text and M-Text reveal that a large amount of Greek manuscripts support what appears in many translations as "says the Lord God," which thus indicates Yahweh Elohim. For further information on the text sources mentioned, see 1.3 Textual Evidence (pg. 25).

- Examples of translations of Revelation 1:8 with "says the Lord God" are the RSV, NIV, NRSV, NASB, ESV, and NET. For convenience, the RSV and NIV are quoted below:

Rev 1:8 RSV (quoted verbatim)
I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

Rev 1:8 NIV (quoted verbatim)
I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.[18]

Please notice that the appearance of "Yahweh Elohim" or "the Almighty" apparently signals to Chuck that those names and titles exclude any *possibility* that they could refer to Yeshua. *And just why not?* We have already presented an Angel Who identified Himself as *Elohim* to Jacob and as *Yahweh Elohim* to Moses. This proves that just because a Being from Scripture identifies Himself as *Yahweh* doesn't necessarily mean He is the Supreme Most High Yahweh. While this may be a difficult concept around which to wrap our minds, nevertheless it is true. If we focus on the facts, what I stated above is absolutely true: *Not all Scriptural references to "Yahweh" identify the Supreme Most High Yahweh.* Such being the case, I am persuaded that our most daunting task when investigating this matter should be that of determining whether specific references to "Yahweh" are references to Yahweh the Supreme Most High or to Yahweh the Angel, the physical manifestation of His Father, the One who later became the flesh and blood Son of Yahweh the Supreme Most High, who is the "only true *Elohim*" (John 17:3). From my perspective, that should be the challenge most fervently addressed, researched and respectfully debated – not "just accepting" that every reference to *Yahweh* must link directly to the Supreme Most High Yahweh and *only* the Supreme Most High Yahweh.

In light of the above, we must ask ourselves, "Can the Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End, Who is, Who was, and Who is to come – *can that be a reference to Yeshua the Messiah*?" My answer is yes.

[18] Ibid, pp. 59-60.

Chuck next addresses Revelation 1:4-6. This is where the Apostle John extends greetings to the seven assemblies. From whom are these greetings extended? They come not only from "Him who is and who was and who is to come" (the Most Supreme High Yahweh), but also from the seven Spirits[19] ***and*** from Yeshua Messiah:

Trinity, Oneness, Duality, and Pre-Existence

2. "Who is and who was and who is to come":

- Matches the previous description of the Father included in the greeting in verses 4-6.

Rev 1:4-6
4 John, to the seven assemblies which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,
5 **and** from Yeshua Messiah, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. Tom Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,
6 and has made us kings and priests to His Elohim and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.[20]

Chuck offers no accompanying commentary to the above, so I would simply comment that the above appendage proves nothing, especially since He elsewhere concedes that "Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last" may refer to either Yahweh the Most High Supreme Elohim ***or*** Yeshua the Messiah (*c.f.*, Rev. 22:13).

Although Chuck doesn't offer anything in the way of pertinent commentary for the following verses (Rev. 1:17-18 and Rev. 2:8), I am persuaded that these verses *also* refer to Yeshua the Messiah. The following excerpt is taken from page 61 of his book:

[19] The seven "Spirits" are most likely seven angels. This would align with ancient Judaism's perspective of the seven angels who ministered before Yahweh's throne. For example, in the apocryphal *Tobit* xii:15 we read: "I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One." Further evidence that the "seven spirits" are actually seven angels can be found in Rev. 3:5.
[20] Ibid, p. 60.

7.4 Rev 1:17-18; 2:8 — "the First and the Last" who was "dead" *(not* eternal)

> Rev 1:17-18
> 17 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**.
> 18 I am He who lives, and **was dead**, and behold, I am **alive** forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades [i.e., the grave] and of Death.
>
> Rev 2:8
> And to the angel of the assembly in Smyrna write, These things says **the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life**.

Please notice that beside "the First and the Last," the texts also mention that the Messiah "**was dead**" but "**came to life**" and is "**alive forevermore**."
Last.

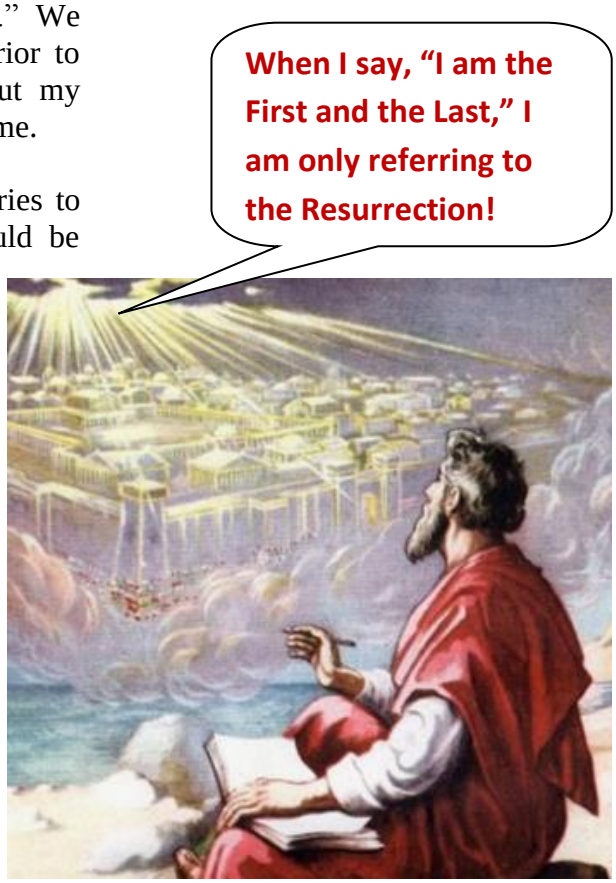
- Did the Almighty die? If so, He is not eternal.
- "Eternal" and "dead" are *incompatible* terms.[21]

Highlighting the phrases "the **First** and the **Last**" and "**was dead**, and behold, I am **alive**" above may represent Chuck's attempt to force a connection between "First → dead" and "Last → alive." The "First → dead" connection he seems to strive for is that Yeshua is the "First(born) from the dead," which in turn might suggest that "First" in Rev 1:17 and Rev 2:8 cannot mean "first of creation." I'm not certain what connection he intends between the words "Last→ alive" in those same verses.

It is possible that I misunderstood Chuck's above commentary because my wife, June, came away with a different understanding of his purpose in composing it. On a personal note, Chuck's tendency to offer multiple Bible verses with minimal or no commentary occasionally leads to confusion about what connection he's trying to make or what specific argument he's attempting to refute. I often find myself re-reading over and over certain of his commentaries in an attempt fully grasp exactly what he's hoping to convey. With that in mind, I'm not at all surprised that June sees Chuck's commentary above differently than me. June writes, "When reading Chuck's commentary, I thought he was addressing the 'Oneness' theology. Yeshua and Yahweh cannot be the same because Yeshua died. I did not come away thinking he is connecting First with dead or Last with alive." June may be right; however, since Chuck didn't elaborate enough to let his readers know which particular argument he attempts to refute in that entire chapter (chapter 7), I can only discern that he's attempting to validate his belief that Yeshua's role of being the "**First**" is a reference to His being the **First**born from the dead instead of a reference to His having a beginning prior to His conception in Mary's womb.

[21] Ibid, p. 61.

With only two brief bullet points to offer as his exegesis of the above texts, we are left to guess what exactly the author is trying to prove. My guess is, bullet point #1 is aimed at Trinitarians. It asks, "Did the Almighty die? If so, He is not eternal." We have never claimed that Yeshua is/was eternal prior to His resurrection, so bullet point #1 fails to rebut my position. Bullet point #2 only offers more of the same.



All said, I'm not at all sure of what Chuck tries to prove with the above commentary, since it should be obvious the "First and the Last" in Revelation 1:17 is none other than Yeshua the Messiah. Moreover, it is *reaching* to believe that when He says, "I am the First,' what He ***means*** is, "I'm the firstborn from the dead." Yet Chuck writes, "Due to the Messiah's death, He is *not* the first and last throughout eternity." Such a literal summary is nonsensical because if "First" must be understood that literally, then what is the equally literal understanding of "Last" in that same verse?

In fact, Yeshua further claims in Revelation 22:13 to be the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." Continuing His narrative in this very same passage, Yeshua identifies Himself as "the root and offspring [descendant] of David" (v. 16). I'm pretty sure Chuck would agree that Yeshua is King David's *descendant*, but would he agree or would he argue with Yeshua about His being the ***root*** [progenitor] of David? Only a Man who had a pre-carnal existence could dare to make such a claim. We'll address Yeshua's role as the root and offspring of David in greater detail later.

Chuck continues on the following page with his opinion that "first and last" doesn't mean "first and last throughout eternity," which, from my perspective, is the culmination of the point to which he was trying to guide his reading audience – that "**first** and last" means "**first**born of the resurrection":

Trinity, Oneness, Duality, and Pre-Existence

By: Chuck Henry rev. 4/2/2018 Page 62 of 510

7. Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End, First and Last

- Due to the Messiah's death, He is *not* the first and last throughout eternity; rather, He is the first to be resurrected to everlasting life, as He is given authority to confer life to those in the resurrection at the last day (cp. Joh 6:40; Rev 1:5; Col 1:18). —

Joh 6:40
And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have

everlasting life; and I will raise Him up at the last day.

Rev 1:5
And from Yeshua Messiah, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

Col 1:18
And He is the head of the body, the assembly, who is **the beginning, the firstborn from the dead**, that in all things He may have the preeminence.[22]

I believe the above commentary contains two errors in judgment. First, John 6:40 has absolutely nothing to do with determining the meaning of "First and Last." Neither does Revelation 1:5. Notice that neither "First and Last" nor "Beginning and End" appear in either verse. Chuck tries to establish and prove a connection that simply isn't there.

The second error is that of forcing a connection between the expressions "First and Last" and "firstborn from the dead." Sometimes all of us see "connections" that aren't really there, so we must be diligently careful not to force them. Over the years, I've seen several examples of false connections. The one I'm most familiar with is the connection made by lunar sabbatarians between the "moon" of Psalms 104:19 and the weekly Sabbath. Here's a summary of how it works: In Genesis 1:14, we read that the Almighty gave the two great lights for "signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years." The Hebrew word translated "seasons" is the word *moedim*, which can also be translated "appointments." In Psalms 104:19 we read that Yahweh appointed the moon for "seasons," (*moedim*/appointments). In Leviticus 23:1-3, the weekly Sabbath is classified as one of the "feasts" of Yahweh. The Hebrew word translated "feasts" in that passage is -- you guessed it -- *moedim*. Lunar sabbatarians thus reason that since the moon was designated for determining Yahweh's appointed times, and since one of those "appointed times" is the weekly Sabbath, then the weekly Sabbath must be based on the lunar cycle.

Scripturally, there are no recorded examples of believers determining the weekly Sabbath based on the lunar cycle, nor does the record of history validate such an understanding. Nevertheless, based on the above reasoning, the "Lunar Sabbath" doctrine flourishes today. This is an example of a forced connection in the same vein as a popular example in which we read that Judas went and hanged

[22] Ibid, p. 62.

himself (Matt 27:5) connected with "Go and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:37). Just because Judas hanged himself does not mean that we should go and do likewise and just because someone creates a connection between "First and Last" and "Firstborn from the dead" does not mean it's a *valid* connection. It's just an *interpretation* – an interpretation with which I disagree.

The above is an example of adding interpretative words to the Word whenever one encounters obvious contradictions to predetermined conclusions. Briefly put, Chuck believes that whenever "first and last" occurs in connection with Yahweh the Supreme Most High, it means "eternal," but whenever "first and last" occurs in connection with Yeshua the Messiah, it *then* means "firstborn from the dead." For clarity, I believe that "First and Last," "Alpha and Omega," "Beginning and the End" are all 100% connected to Yeshua the Messiah – no need for dual meanings.

Chuck's next "First and Last" verse is found in Revelation chapter 21, where the Speaker identifies Himself as "Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End" who gives of the fountain of the water of life to him who thirsts. The Speaker in this setting adds that he who overcomes will inherit all things and He (the Speaker) will be his Elohim and he (the overcomer) will be His son. The Speaker does not directly identify Himself, so it is up to us, the readers, to make that determination. Not surprisingly, Chuck and I do not agree on the identity of the Speaker. Let's read what Chuck has to say:

> **7.5 Rev 21:6 — Refers to the Father**
>
> Rev 21:6-7
> 6 And He said to me, It is done! I am the **Alpha** and the **Omega**, the **Beginning** and the **End**. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.
> 7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his **Elohim** and he shall be My son.
>
> In this context, the terms are applied to Yahweh, the only true Elohim, who is eternal and has *never* been dead (cp. Isa 44:6; 48:12). —[23]

It goes without saying that I do not agree with Chuck's "In this context …" remark, circled above. From my perspective, the "Alpha and the Omega" referenced above – **in context** – refers to Yeshua the Messiah. Consider that, in the same context, we have just read in Revelation 20 about what is known as the Great White Throne Judgment. Who sits on that throne? It is none other than Yeshua the Messiah. Although we aren't supplied with the precise identity of the Judge in Revelation 20, we know from Yeshua's own words in John 5:22 that **He** is the Judge:

> 22 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed **all** judgment unto the Son.

If we consider the truth of Yeshua's clear statement, the Judge seated on the throne in Revelation 20 is none other than Yeshua the Messiah. Does the context of Who is seated on the throne *change* when we reach chapter 21? No, it does not. Please read it for yourself. *Continuing with that same context*, the One seated on the throne has more to say in Revelation 21:5-6:

[23] Ibid, p. 62.

> 5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.
> 6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.
> 7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his Elohim, and he shall be my son.

Please take special note of the fact that the "Alpha and Omega" of Rev. 21:6 gives unto him that is thirsty of the fountain of the water of life freely. Does this sound familiar? How about John 4:13-14? This is what Yeshua said to the Samaritan woman:

> 13 Yeshua answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water [from Jacob's well] shall thirst again:
> 14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

If we can believe Yeshua's words in John 4:13-14, then we really shouldn't need to wonder Who is speaking in Revelation 21:6. Who is the One who gives him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely?

Someone may protest, "But in verse 7 it says He will be their Elohim and they will be his son. That would make Yeshua a 'Father,' and He cannot possibly be the *Father*!" Just in case someone might ask such a question, we would remind them of the prophecy found in Isaiah 9:6:

> 6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, mighty El, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Chuck seems willing to accept Yeshua as the promised Messiah; is he likewise willing to accept Him as his Father? The answer is yes! The following is taken from page 356 of his book:

Trinity, Oneness, Duality, and Pre-Existence

By: Chuck Henry **rev. 4/2/2018** **Page 356 of 510**

73. Isa 9:6 — His name will be called … Mighty El, Everlasting Father

In Isaiah 9:6, instead of "Everlasting Father," the *Apostolic Bible* translation of the Septuagint states:

> "father of the eon about to be"
> --*Apostolic Bible Septuagint*

"Father of the eon about to be" gives the perspective that this refers to the future Messianic era, an interpretation which fits the theme in verse 6 and which is continued in verse 7 —

> Isa 9:7 (NKJV)
> Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end,
> upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and

> establish it with judgment and justice **from that time forward**, even forever (*ad*). The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will perform this.
>
> This explains how the Son can indeed be referred to as an everlasting Father of the Messianic era to come without being the eternal Almighty.[24]

In this particular instance, we find ourselves in basic agreement with Chuck: Yeshua is the "Father of the eon about to be," i.e., the coming Messianic era, yet He is not the Supreme Most High Father Yahweh. Such being the case, if we truly follow the context of Revelation 20-21 with the understanding that Yeshua is the Judge on the throne and the One Who freely gives the water of everlasting life, we should have no problem understanding that He is the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end."

Finally, Chuck agrees that Yeshua is the "Alpha and the Omega" of Revelation 22:13, but he couldn't resist throwing in a side comment demonstrating that he simply cannot take that verse at face value. Shown below is an excerpt taken from page 63 of his book:

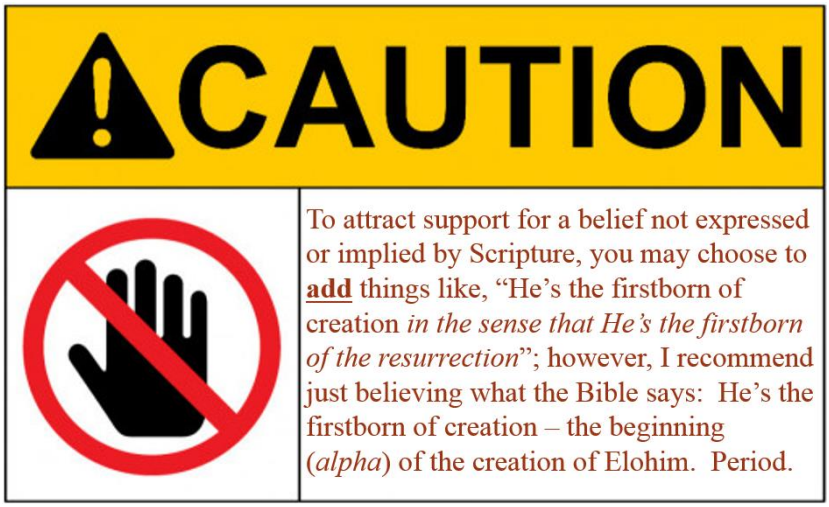
> ***Trinity, Oneness, Duality, and Pre-Existence***
>
> **By: Chuck Henry** **rev. 4/2/2018** **Page 63 of 510**
>
> **7. Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End, First and Last**
>
> **7.6 Rev 22:13 — Refers to the Messiah**
>
> Rev 22:13 (see vv. 8-16 for context)
> I am the **Alpha** and the **Omega**, the **Beginning** and the **End**, the **First** and the **Last**.
>
> As covered previously, it is not unusual that some terms apply, in context, to both the Father and the Son. The Son, *who died*, is not the first and last throughout eternity, but rather in relation to the resurrection from the dead. If necessary, review:
>
> **7.4 Rev 1:17-18; 2:8 — "the First and the Last" who was "dead" (not eternal),** pg. 61

In the above citation, I noticed that while recognizing Yeshua as the Alpha and Omega of Revelation 22:13, Chuck nevertheless infuses a disclaimer of sorts stating, "The Son, *who died*, is not the first and last throughout eternity, but rather in relation to the resurrection from the dead." There are several problems with this reasoning, chief of which is the fact that nowhere do we read the words "first and last throughout eternity" in the Bible. ***Those are Chuck's words***. I have never stated, nor do I believe, that Yeshua is the "first and last throughout eternity." I *have* stated that Yeshua is the "firstborn of all creation," and that's a direct quote from the Bible (Colossians 1:15). I have also stated that He is the "beginning of the creation of Elohim" (Revelation 3:14). To attract support for a belief not expressed or implied by Scripture, you may choose to add things like, "He's the firstborn of creation *in the sense that He's the firstborn of the resurrection*"; however, I recommend just believing what the Bible says: He's the firstborn of creation – the beginning (*alpha*) of the creation of Elohim. Period.

[24] Ibid, p. 356.

Adding to the Word

I need to address adding to the Word and infusing phrases to help "guide" otherwise unsuspecting believers with the intention of helping them to understand your perspective. Of course, the end goal is getting them to accept your doctrinal position as truth. This is a delicate topic because no one likes to be accused of "adding to the Word" (Deut. 4:2, Prov. 30:6, Rev. 22:18). Chuck, unlike a certain organization that shares his view, does not publish his own Bible. However, as I have brought out in this study and elsewhere, he nevertheless adds to the Word by infusing his interpretation into the text and expecting others to agree. I just supplied one example in which "firstborn of all creation," according to Chuck, doesn't really *mean* "firstborn of all creation." Rather, it means "firstborn of all creation in the sense that Yeshua is the firstborn of the resurrection." Other examples are his belief that when Yeshua asked His disciples if they would be offended if they saw Him ascend to where He was before, He *meant* would they be offended if they saw Him after He had risen from the dead? Another one: When Yeshua said, "Before Abraham was, I am," He *meant*, "Before Abraham was, I am the foreordained Messiah in Yahweh's plan." Another one: When Yeshua declared that He's the bread that came down from heaven, He didn't really *mean* that He came down from heaven; He *meant* that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17). Another one: When Yeshua prayed, "And now, Father, glorify thou Me with the glory I had with thee before the world was made," He *meant*, "And now, Father, glorify thou Me with the glory I had with thee *in thy plan* before the world was made." I could go on, but hopefully you get the picture. Before reading Chuck's book, I had no idea he held to such interpretations of Bible texts, but even more surprising is the fact that some folks agree with the interpretations he infuses. As evidence of this statement, Chuck's book is still available free of charge at the Assembly of Yahweh (7th Day) web site (last time I checked) and the ScriptureNews2Use web site continues to offer a PDF copy for anyone interested.



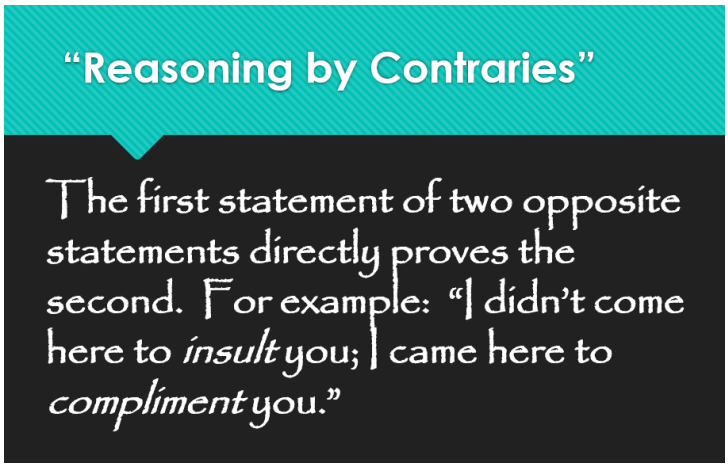
My purpose in bringing up Chuck's interpretational add-ons is to address the counter-charge that he levied against me during our June 2019 debate. He stated:

> In the short time I have, I believe I can address the accusations brought against me about adding words to scripture. For example, in Romans 6:14, "Sin shall not have dominion over you for you are not under the law but under grace." I believe that all of us probably have been called on from time to time to explain scriptures like this and I believe Larry has, too. That scripture sounds like you're not to be Torah-observant because you're under grace. Of course, the explanation is that Paul is talking about not being under the *penalty*. Paul is talking about not being under the *penalty* of the law. Do I add words to scripture there by explaining it? No! In fact, in Nehemiah 8, we find the teachers helped the people to understand

> and they gave them the sense. Nehemiah 8:8, for example, "So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of Elohim; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading." Another example of a passage requiring explanation is Colossians 2:16-17 to not let anyone judge you regarding the feast days. We have to explain that that's to not let anyone judge us for keeping them – the type of man, the type of philosophical man that the chapter talked about earlier. Those verses have to be explained in today's climate.[25]

Although I believe I gave an adequate response to the above during my Q&A time, I didn't address it as well as I should have. First, Chuck's actual point about helping others to understand the meaning of various texts is valid. Indeed, that's what many of us find ourselves doing from time to time, whether we're explaining our beliefs to others in the workplace or sharing our views during a Bible study. We learn from each other and certainly there are many Bible verses that require in-depth research and when our research is completed, we may need to explain our findings. But we have to careful! We *must* be careful – and I dare say much more careful than Chuck is within the pages of his book.

Chuck's example of Romans 6:14 is a poor attempt as justifying his approach to Scripture because the opposite of "grace" (which is undeserved pardon) is *condemnation*. Hence, if we properly apply the "Reasoning by Contraries" principle, we know that if we aren't "under law, but under grace," we simultaneously understand that we aren't under the *condemnation* of the law, but instead we are under grace – undeserved pardon. Being pardoned from having committed an unlawful act doesn't mean we are free to commit the same unlawful act again! Being pardoned doesn't free us from that law. According to the "Glossary of Rhetorical Terms"[26] definition of "Reasoning by Contraries," the first statement of two opposite statements directly proves the second. For example: "I didn't come here to *insult* you; I came here to *compliment* you." I then proceed to say something nice to you or about you (proving/validating the second clause). The verb in the second clause is the direct opposite of the verb used in the first clause. Or, "I didn't *walk* to the train station today; I *drove* there instead." Many truth seekers understand the principle of "Reasoning by Contraries" when reading Matthew 5:17-18, where Yeshua says He didn't come to *destroy* the law; rather He came to *fulfil* the law. Much of Christianity



[25] Chuck Henry, Pre-existence Debate held at the Assembly of Yahweh (7th Day), Rising Star, TX on June 22, 2019.

[26] "The Glossary of Rhetorical Terms" is available online at Wikipedia, 30 December 2019. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization. "Reasoning by contraries" is attributed to Cicero, from his book *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Book IV, ch. 18, published in the Loeb Classical Library, 1954. Cicero's full name was Marcus Tullius Cicero. He was a Roman statesman, lawyer and philosopher and lived from 106 BCE to 43 BCE. *Rhetorica ad Herennium* may be read in its entirety online.

believes "fulfil" means "to complete, bring to an end." However, that cannot be true, because if the law is "completed, brought to an end," then it's the same as "destroyed." If we understand that "fulfil" can also mean "show or demonstrate how the law is to be kept," only then does Yeshua's statement make sense.

If we understand and properly apply the "Reasoning by Contraries" approach to our examination of Romans 6:14, it really shouldn't require an in-depth study to understand the true meaning of the Apostle Paul's words. Indeed, when we are pardoned for breaking a law, this doesn't mean we are no longer subject to that law; it means we are not subject to the *penalty* for having broken it. The Apostle Paul affirms that an abrogated law was the furthest thing from his mind when, in the very next verse, he wrote, "What then? Shall we sin (break the law), because we are not under the law, but under grace? May that never be so!" Thus, in response to Chuck's counter-charge, I don't need to add interpretational words to verses such as Romans 6:14 to discern the intent of the author. Chuck cannot reasonably apply the "Reasoning by Contraries" principle to his exegesis of such verses as Micah 5:2, John 8:58, and John 6:62, where he has no choice but to add words *by interpretation* to make the texts align with his doctrinal view.

Although I am persuaded that Romans 6:14 is a poor example of how we sometimes need to explain the "true meaning" of a verse that might otherwise seem to go against our beliefs, nevertheless, Chuck's actual point is valid. We must not take each verse of the Bible at face value without being open to further examination and it is true that most of Christianity *does* interpret Romans 6:14 in such a way that the law, from their perspective, was "done away." Unless someone encourages the serious Bible student to do a more in-depth review of this entire passage, they are indeed likely to conclude that we are no longer subject to Yahweh's law. However, as I stated above, we must be careful. Certainly, if the law was done away, I do not want to be found teaching someone that it wasn't! Before I make such a bold claim, I need to do my "due diligence" and know that my conclusion is not at variance with Yahweh's intended understanding of the verse in question. In short, I must exercise great caution and above all, I must not regard my correct exegesis of *one* Bible passage as evidence that Yahweh is directing my understanding of *all* verses of the Bible!

> By properly applying the "Reasoning by Contraries" principle, we know that if we aren't "under law, but under grace," we simultaneously understand that we aren't under the *condemnation* of the law, but instead we are under grace – undeserved pardon.

I should also make a brief comment in response to Chuck's mentioning Colossians 2:16-17 as another example of a passage "requiring explanation." This is where we read that we are not to let anyone judge us regarding the feast days. As Chuck pointed out, we are periodically called upon to explain that the proper understanding of this passage is that we are not to let anyone judge us for keeping the Sabbath or the feast days. However, unlike the verses Chuck manipulates so as to infuse his doctrinal view, we frankly wouldn't need to explain this passage to others if certain words had been translated better. For example, another way of rendering Colossians 2:16 is, "Let no man therefore **condemn** [κρίνω] you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon,

or of the sabbath." The Greek word commonly translated "judge" in Colossians 2:16, *krino,* is a word that can *also* be translated "condemn." How many of us have been condemned by well-meaning Christians for choosing to obey the fourth commandment? If that verse had been translated differently, I'm sure Christianity as a whole would be much more tolerant and receptive towards Torah-observant believers. My point here is this: While we are indeed called upon to explain Colossians 2:16-17 from time to time, there is no need for us to say, "This verse doesn't mean what it says …." Rather, we can simply point out an alternate translation of the Greek word *krino* that changes how we should view Colossians 2:16. Finally, if we go a step beyond, we can include Colossians 2:14-15 as well, where a correct understanding is that it's a handwriting or manuscript of **sins** that are against us, not the law. What was nailed to the cross, then, was not the law, but rather the list of all the sins that truly are against us, i.e., they were forgiven. This method of exegesis has *nothing* to do with infusing interpretations into the text of Scripture to "guide" others into accepting our views.

As Chuck points out, we do indeed find ourselves being called on to explain verses such as Colossians 2:14-17 and Romans 6:14, but as exhibited above, it's simply a matter of pointing out (a) proper context, (b) translation variations, or in some cases translation errors and (c) cultural settings. I include cultural settings because in the case of Paul's letter to the Colossian believers, it's important to understand that he was writing to believers dwelling in the midst of a pagan city where idol worship abounded. They did not reside in a city where they would have been condemned or otherwise ridiculed by Jews for not observing the weekly Sabbath and holy days.

To be sure, we must be careful when it comes to interpreting Scripture and sharing our interpretations with others. A clear example of this would be the instruction that Yahweh gave to Adam in Genesis 2:17, warning him that in the day he would eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he would die. We know that both Adam and Eve eventually ate the forbidden fruit, but we also know that Adam lived to the age of 930 years, meaning he did not die on the day in which he ate the fruit. We can either reject the Bible due to this obvious discrepancy or we can seek an explanation. From one angle, we understand that if Adam and Eve had obeyed the command to not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they would have lived forever; conversely, once they disobeyed, they *began* to die. The "death process" was initiated on that very day. From another angle, we know the Psalmist wrote, "For a thousand years in thy sight *are but* as yesterday when it is past, and *as* a watch in the night" (Psalms 90:4). Peter wrote, "But beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with Yahweh as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8). If we take into consideration this principle, that a thousand of our years is as a day to Yahweh, then Adam died within that same "day" – seventy years before it ended. It takes some research and explaining to resolve the enigma of why Adam and Eve didn't die during the same

24-hour period in which they ate of the forbidden fruit, but that research needs to be done with extreme caution and care. That research gives us an explanation and *not* a reinterpretation of any verses.

We have not been given free license to reinterpret any verses that are not in harmony with our doctrinal beliefs, especially when it comes to forcing them to mean the exact opposite of what they say. The example I just gave from Genesis chapter 2:17 is an example of a verse that simply cannot be taken at face value due to the fact that Adam and Eve did not die within the space of a regular 24-hour day when they ate the forbidden fruit; however, with diligent research, we can find the explanation. The examples from Romans 6:14 and Colossians 2:14-17 are indeed more controversial and they need to be treated with "kid gloves" before delivering our understanding of what the Apostle Paul really and truly meant.

I am taking great pains to reinforce how careful we need to be with explaining verses that, on the surface, may not seem to harmonize with our doctrinal views. Hopefully this will help you, the reader, to better appreciate the tremendous responsibility we have when explaining our views to others. Those of us raised in nominal Christianity know we have emerged from a worldview that runs counter to the teachings of Torah and reinterprets obvious Torah-supporting passages in the New Testament, forcing them to mean the exact opposite of what they say. I previously citied Matthew 5:17-18 as an example of how the "Reasoning by Contraries" approach applies to a controversial statement made by Yeshua. In this passage, Yeshua emphasized that He had not come to destroy the law:

> 17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.
> 18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

I still remember when, during my first year of Sabbathkeeping, I presented this passage to a pastor from the First Christian Church in the local area where we lived. He quickly pointed out that I was apparently missing the key phrases "… *but to fulfil*" and "… *till all be fulfilled*." "You see," he explained, "when Jesus *fulfilled* the law, He nailed it to the cross, thus releasing us from the bondage of the law." That was a tough explanation for me to answer "on the spot" and I didn't have a ready answer. I had a similar feeling during my debate with Chuck – I needed some time to allow the audience questions to marinate, while formulating a gracious response that showed how

Chuck completely misinterprets Yeshua's words. In life, including debates, your opponent doesn't want to allow you that needed time.

So the preacher, in his estimation, "won" that mini-debate. Only later was I able to piece together why his reasoning is off-kilter. It's the "Reasoning by Contraries" principle I mentioned earlier. With "Reasoning by Contraries," the first statement of two opposite statements directly proves the second. In Matthew 5:17-18, Yeshua's first statement proved His second statement. If He did not come to destroy the law, then He obviously came to do the *opposite*, which was to uphold its permanence. The word "fulfill" is a tricky word because it *can* mean to fulfill, as in bring an obligation to an end. If a Major League pitcher fulfills his five-year contract with the Texas Rangers, he is no longer under obligation to pitch for them. It's finished! When we had our bathroom remodeled, we agreed to the basic terms with the contractor who performed the work. When his project was completed, we paid him because he fulfilled the terms of the contract. We didn't expect him to periodically return in order to add "finishing touches" to our bathroom.

If we have the above application of the word "fulfill" in mind as we read Matthew 5:17-18, I can *almost* see how someone might think that when Yeshua "fulfilled" the law, He simultaneously brought it to an end, which means we are no longer required to obey the law. However, there is *another* application of "fulfill" that must be considered before reaching our conclusion about what Yeshua meant in Matthew chapter five. Another application of "fulfill" is that we are often called on to fulfill certain responsibilities *all the time*, as in every day. We learn this application of "fulfill" at an early age with the simple responsibilities that our parents give us. One such responsibility is cleaning our room. I didn't clean my room once and then declare, "I am no longer under obligation to clean my room because I have fulfilled my responsibility!" The same goes for taking out the trash and other household chores. As we grow older, our responsibilities only expand. We don't obey traffic laws one day, then when we get pulled over for speeding, interrupt the officer to inform him that we are no longer obligated to obey the traffic laws because we have already fulfilled them. I doubt that rationale would carry much weight with the police officer. If we apply this same application of "fulfill" to our reading of Matthew 5:17-18, we understand that Yeshua was telling His audience, "Do not think I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to *exemplify*, i.e., demonstrate how the law should be fully kept as warned by the prophets." Indeed, this is precisely how *The New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* presents the understanding of the Greek word translated "fulfill" in Matthew 5:17-18:

> **γ**. universally and absolutely, *to fulfil*, i.e. *to cause God's will* (as made known in the law) *to be obeyed as it should be, and God's promises* (given through the prophets) *to receive fulfillment*: Mt. v. 17; cf. *Weiss*, Das Matthäusevang. u.s.w. p. 146 sq.[27]

It goes without saying that nominal Christianity prefers that we ignore the above understanding of "fulfil" in Matthew 5:17-18. Having experienced life within nominal Christianity, here's essentially how I once understood Yeshua's words:

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[27] From *The New Thayer's Greek – English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Joseph Henry Thayer, D.D., Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1981 (orig. published in 1885, 1889), p. 518. Note: The Greek word translated "fulfill" in Matthew 5:17 is *plerosai*, which is word #4137 in *Strong's Greek Dictionary of the New Testament*.

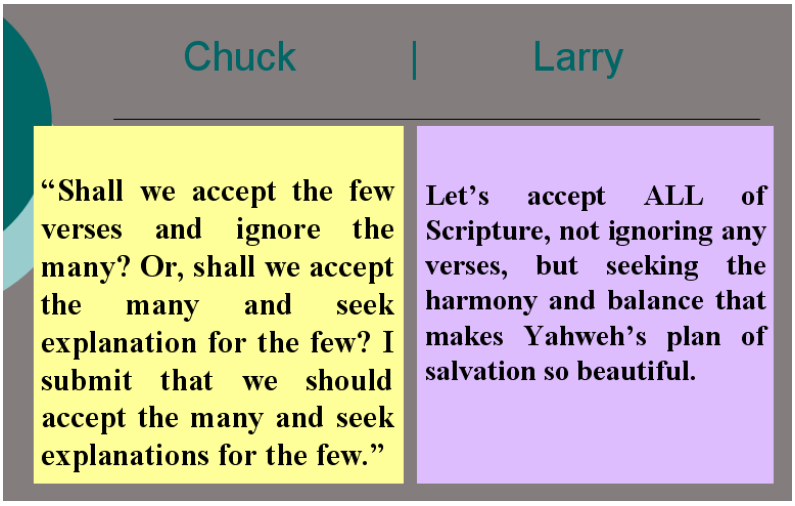
> 17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil the requirements of the law, *thus ending humanity's obligation to keep it*.
> 18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till *"it is finished," which are the very words that I will say on the cross, at which time the law will officially be "fulfilled."*

Of course, another way that nominal Christianity presents Matthew 5:17 is as follows:

> 17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to *bring them to an end*.

As ridiculous and contradictory as the above rendering of Matthew 5:17 is, this is what I once believed and this is what many of those within nominal Christianity *still* believe. They take a verse completely out of context and try to make it mean exactly the *opposite* of what it actually says. The key through all this is *balance*. I am persuaded that what Chuck does to the Bible in an attempt to justify his doctrinal stand is *unbalanced*. While on the one hand his argument that we both find ourselves explaining the "true meaning" of various Bible texts is correct, on the other hand, if we aren't careful we'll misrepresent Scripture. To be sure, when it comes to whether or not Yeshua the Messiah had a pre-carnal existence, one of us misrepresents Scripture. It is up to you, the reader, to research and determine the truth.

During the debate, Chuck on more than one occasion queried, "*Shall we accept the few verses and ignore the many? Or, shall we accept the many and seek explanation for the few? I submit that we should accept the many and seek explanations for the few*." This philosophical approach, on the surface, appears quite reasonable. Nevertheless, I remember thinking during the debate that something about his remark didn't quite ring true, but I couldn't put a handle on it, so I let it go. Upon deeper reflection after the debate, I realized that in his brief commentary, Chuck suggests that I "ignore the many" verses which seem to support his view while accepting the few that definitely support the view I hold to be true. I realized that he had good-naturedly insulted my approach to Scripture study. Even so, his remark is not only inaccurate in terms of my approach to Scripture study, but his method of "explaining the few" is *not* the correct approach because if we only "accept the many," then we don't accept the *few* that counter our understanding of truth. Rather, we find explanations or reinterpretations of otherwise obvious texts to help force-fit the pieces into the puzzle. Indeed, Chuck's approach is one of accepting the "many" verses that seem to jive with his understanding of Scripture while grossly manipulating the "few" that contradict his understanding. I propose that we go with *all* of Scripture, not ignoring any verses, but seeking the harmony and balance that makes Yahweh's plan of salvation so beautiful.



VIII. Is Yeshua the Rock Who Followed Israel in the Wilderness?

I have successfully demonstrated that there is more than one Elohim and that the "second Elohim" is the physical manifestation of Yahweh with Whom mankind can visit face to face without suffering death. That same Elohim not only visited with Abraham, but He rescued Isaac from his father's knife. He wrestled with Jacob and spoke with Moses from a bush that burned, yet was not consumed by fire. He led the Israelites to the Promised Land and gave the Israelites the Law through His servant Moses. The Apostle Paul, in bringing to mind the epic journey of the Israelites, referred to Yeshua as the "Rock that followed them." To best understand the identity of the Rock of Israel, I suggest starting with the Song of Moses, as found in Deuteronomy chapter 32. In his song, which Yahweh commanded him to compose, Moses calls Yahweh his Rock:

> 1 Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.
> 2 My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:
> 3 Because I will publish the name of Yahweh: ascribe ye greatness unto our Elohim.
> 4 *He is* the Rock, his work *is* perfect: for all his ways *are* judgment: an Elohim of truth and without iniquity, just and right *is* he.

Who is the Rock of Israel? Well, of course it's Yahweh, but wait – is it Yahweh the Supreme Most High, Whose face we cannot see without suffering death, or is it Yahweh the Elohim Who spoke with Moses from the burning bush, the same Angel Who later delivered the Law unto him? The same verse wherein we first hear Yahweh referred to as a Rock offers an amazing clue of which "Yahweh" is referred to: "… all His ways are **judgment**." *Who is the Judge*? As a reminder, in John chapter five, Yeshua Himself identifies "Who" the Judge is:

> 22 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed **all** judgment unto the Son.

Remember the Alpha and Omega of Revelation 21:6 – the One Who gives unto him that is thirsty of the fountain of the water of life freely? Do you also remember the connection to John 4:13-14, where Yeshua instructs the Samaritan woman that whosoever drinks of the water that He offers shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life? Can we connect this fountain of water to the Rock from which Moses, through Yahweh, quenched the thirst of the multitude of Israelites on their wilderness journey to the Promised Land? Is there some kind of "connection" between these "Rocks" and the water of life?

Yes, there is.

Hopefully, we're all familiar with the two accounts of Moses striking a Rock, which brought forth water for the thirsty Israelites. In the first account, found in Exodus 17, Moses was commanded to strike the rock:

> 5 And Yahweh said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, which thou struck the river with, take in thine hand, and go.
> 6 Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt strike the rock [Heb. צוּר *tsūr*], and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

What a wondrous miracle! A nation of people was on the verge of dehydration, desperate for water with none in sight, when suddenly Moses struck a rock and out came life-giving water! If the plagues of Egypt weren't enough to persuade the Israelites that Moses was Yahweh's chosen representative, if crossing the Red Sea on dry land with a wall of water on each side of the path wasn't enough, then surely bringing forth water from a rock should do it! Yet, some 20 years later, the Israelites found themselves facing the same situation – no water in sight and on the brink of dehydration. Here's what we read in Numbers 20:10-11:

> 10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock [Heb. סֶלַע, *sēlâ*], and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?
> 11 And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts *also*.

Of course, there's more to this story than Moses' role in quenching the Israelites' thirst on those two separate occasions. There is also more to it than the Israelites' short memory in terms of remembering who Yahweh put in charge. This is the story of two "rocks." I dare say the symbolism of the two rocks would have escaped me if it hadn't been for what the Apostle Paul wrote in I Corinthians chapter 10:

> 1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;
> 2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and the sea.
> 3 And did all eat the same spiritual food.
> 4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was the Messiah.

Can we follow what Paul is saying here? He is telling the Corinthian believers that the spiritual Rock that followed the Israelites on their journey through the wilderness was none other than Yeshua the Messiah. Does that make sense? Of course, if you're stuck on believing Yeshua could not have possibly had a pre-carnal existence, then this revelation cannot make any sense. In your paradigm He *couldn't* have been there because He wouldn't be born for another 1,400 years. If you cannot break that mindset, then the following will not likely have much meaning.

We have already identified the Rock as being *perfect*, as Yeshua is, and "all His ways are judgment." His ways can only be "judgment" if He is the Judge. We demonstrated that Yeshua Himself testifies that He alone is the Judge (Jn 5:22). I consider that a strong clue as to Who the Rock is.

If we need more assistance identifying the personage of the Rock of Israel, the Apostle Paul outright tells us: That Rock was the Messiah. Notice that Paul didn't state, "That Rock will be the Messiah." No, he wrote, "That Rock WAS [Gk, ήν] the Messiah." The Greek verb translated "was" is used in the *imperfect tense*, a verb tense often called the "continuing past," as in something that was ongoing in the past. A simple English example of this would be to say, "He was my best friend." If you translated this phrase into Greek, you would need to use ήν to show that the man being your best friend involved a continuing, ongoing friendship in the past. It wasn't over in a day. On the other hand, if you say, "My friend sent me a letter," this is describing a one-time action that was completed in the past. That's the *past tense*.

The above explanation is important, not only because it shows that Yeshua was a spiritual Rock in the past, a Rock Who accompanied the Israelites on their journey through the Wilderness, but also because the imperfect tense also plays a significant role in another misunderstood, misinterpreted verse that we will address later in our study.

We could go on and on about the identity of the Rock, including how both Paul and Peter present Yeshua as the "stumblingstone and rock of offense" (Romans 9:33, 1 Peter 2:8) and how Yeshua told Peter in Matthew 16:18, "… upon this rock [Gk *petra*] I will build My Assembly [Gk *ekklesia*]." This same Greek word for rock, *petran*, is the Greek word used in the Septuagint text for the rocks from which the Israelites drank.

The *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* offers an astonishing analogy between the two rocks that Moses struck:

> In the symbolism of the Bible, God is the Rock of His people (Moses, who first used the metaphor, had had an unusually wide experience of rocks!) and the NT transfers the image to make Christ the Rock from which His people drank (1 Cor 10:4). Some commentators, taking this into account, have seen a spiritual significance in the fact that the rock Moses was commanded to strike (Exod 17) was *tsūr*, the lowly rock, corresponding to the stricken and suffering Christ, while in Numbers 20 he was told only to speak to the rock (here *sēlâ*, the high rock) and made the mistake of striking it on this occasion too: they see in this a picture of the exalted Christ, who suffered only once to accomplish our salvation and is now glorified.[28]

If the Apostle Paul's outright identification of Yeshua as the Rock of Israel isn't sufficient, the above correlation adds richer meaning to the significance of the two Rocks. I personally find it fascinating that the Hebrew word for the second rock (*sēlâ*) is closely related to an Arabic word meaning "fissure," as in a rock that has been split into two parts.[29] This perfectly fits the "cloven rock" described in Isaiah 48:21:

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[28] From *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 5, Merrill C. Tenney, General Editor, article "Rock," by J. H. Paterson, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1978, p. 132.

[29] Cf, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 2, R. Laird Harris, Editor, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, Assoc. Editors, Moody Press, Chicago, IL, 1980, p. 627. We read, "This noun (*sela'*) is related to an Arabic root *sala'a* 'split' (hence *sil'un* 'fissure')."

> 21: And they thirsted not *when* he [Yahweh] led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out.

So again I ask, "Who is the Rock of Israel?" As I previously answered, of course it's *Yahweh*, but wait – is it Yahweh the Supreme Most High, Whose face we cannot see without suffering death, or is it Yahweh the Elohim Who spoke to Moses from the burning bush – the same Angel Who later delivered the Law unto Moses? I am persuaded that the Rock, the righteous Judge, is the Yahweh Who spoke to Moses from the burning bush ***and*** the Angel Who delivered the Law unto Moses, identifying Himself as Yahweh Elohim. The Rock is also Yahweh, who in Isaiah chapter 44 spoke the following through Isaiah the prophet:

> 8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared *it*? ye *are* even my witnesses. Is there an Eloah beside me? yea, *there is* no Rock; I know not *any*.

The above connections and symbolism, though striking, are lost on those who do not believe Yeshua had a pre-carnal existence. So exactly how do Biblical Unitarians regard "the spiritual Rock" who followed the Israelites on their Wilderness Journey? ***Who*** followed them and ***how*** did He follow them?

Yeshua "had their back"

In his drive to explain the "true meaning" of Paul's identification of Yeshua as the "Rock" that followed the Israelites, Chuck offers the incredible rationalization that He followed them *in time*, i.e., it was "forward-looking." The following commentary is taken from pages 438-39 of his book:

Trinity, Oneness, Duality, and Pre-Existence

By: Chuck Henry rev. 4/2/2018 Page 438 of 510

If the Messiah were there…

- Why were they "baptized into Moses" instead of into the Messiah?
- Surely, if the Messiah were there, He would have been *leading* instead of following.

Three times the word "spiritual" is used within these four verses ("spiritual food," "spiritual drink," and "spiritual Rock"), indicating that the meaning is spiritual. The Israelites' spiritual sustenance and deliverance was typical (forward-looking) of the work that would ultimately be accomplished through the Messiah for the salvation of Israel.

In Chuck's commentary above, he brings up two points which he believes adds weight to his argument. Let's address them:

His first point comes in the form of a question: "If the Messiah were there, why were they baptized into Moses instead of into the Messiah?"

My response: Couldn't we just as easily ask, "If **Yahweh** were there, why were they baptized into Moses instead of into Yahweh?" This irrelevant question proves nothing.

Chuck's second point: "Surely, if the Messiah were there, He would have been *leading* instead of following."

My response: I am persuaded that the Messiah was indeed present with the Israelites; not only did He *lead* them (Ex 23:20, 23), but He also *followed them*. To borrow a modern expression, "He had their back." Demonstrating this fact requires some background information before affirming the truth. First, we have already established a "second Elohim." The Angel who wrestled with Jacob was *Elohim*; that's how He identified Himself to Jacob, Chuck Henry's interpretation notwithstanding. The only way to believe the Angel was *not* Elohim is to disbelieve the Angel's own words. Moreover, the evidence bears out that this Angel later spoke to Moses from the burning bush, again identifying Himself as Yahweh Elohim. This same Angel took the form of a "pillar of cloud" which went *behind* the camp of the Israelites, i.e., ***it followed them***. Let's read an excerpt from the account of the Israelites as they were about to cross the Red Sea. Displayed below is Exodus 14:17-20 and to give some context, Yahweh is speaking to Moses:

> 17 And I [Yahweh], behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will gain honor over Pharaoh, and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen.
> 18 And the Egyptians shall know that I *am* Yahweh, when I have gained honor over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.
> 19 And the angel of Elohim, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them.
> 20 And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.

So exactly "Who" was the Rock that followed the Israelites, i.e., "went behind them"? The Apostle Paul would answer, "Yeshua." In fact, that's nearly verbatim what he wrote in I Corinthians 10:4.

Chuck has the notion that for Yeshua to have been with the Israelites on their wilderness journey, He would have had to *lead* them 100% of the time. In other words, the Being described in I Corinthians 10:4 could not have been Yeshua unless He was in front of the Israelites, leading them. This is certainly a mistaken notion, as can be seen within the following verses of Scripture:

From Isaiah 52:12: "For ye shall not go out in haste, nor go by flight: for Yahweh will go before you; and the Elohim of Israel *will be* your rear guard." Question: If Chuck opposes the notion that Yeshua would follow from behind, how must he feel about Elohim being our "rear guard"? Shouldn't Elohim be ***leading*** us?

From Isaiah 58:6-8:

> 6 *Is* not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?
> 7 *Is it* not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?
> 8 Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the honor of Yahweh shall be thy rear guard.

A "rear guard" is the part of a military force which protects it against attacks from behind, i.e., its rear. For the record, I have absolutely no problem with either Yahweh the Supreme Most High or the pre-incarnate Yeshua being my rear guard. In fact, I have no problem believing that Yeshua can both lead *and* follow from behind as my rear guard. He is all that and more. He is the Rock, the righteous Judge. Not only did He have the Israelites' back, but He will have ours, too, if we remain faithful to the end.

IX. The Root and Offspring of David

Because I was so intent on examining all the reasoning presented in *Trinity, Oneness, Duality & Pre-Existence*, it didn't occur to me until months after our debate that Chuck ignores some pertinent Bible verses. When working on refuting specific arguments from a book, it's easy to overlook the arguments that the author *doesn't* include, especially if you had never considered them yourself. While addressing Chuck's attempt to prove that "Alpha and Omega" usually refers to the Supreme Most High Yahweh instead of Yeshua, I found myself reading a verse I had read many times before. It didn't "click" until then that this verse and others related to it absolutely ***prove*** Yeshua's pre-carnal existence. That verse is Revelation 22:16. I alluded to this verse earlier, but will give it my full attention here. Of course, context is important, so let's start with verse 8:

> 8 And I John saw these things, and heard *them*. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things.
> 9 Then saith he unto me, See *thou do it* not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship Elohim.

Let's pause briefly to note that this angel, unlike the Angel with whom Jacob wrestled, made it clear that he is *not* Elohim and that he was *not* to be worshipped. This is an important distinction. As we're about to see, this angel serves as Yeshua's spokesman. Let's continue with our reading:

> 10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.
> 11 He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.
> 12 And behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.
> 13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.
> 14 Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.
> 15 For without *are* dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

> 16 I Yeshua have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the assemblies. **I am the root and the offspring of David**, *and* the bright and morning star.
> 17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

Although we know the one delivering the above message is the angel, the message is from *Yeshua* Himself and in verse 16 He makes this fact abundantly clear. As an aside, this passage reinforces a point I made earlier – that a major challenge, especially when reading from the Old Testament, is determining whether the speaker is the actual *speaker* or if he's the one delivering the message. Is it Yahweh speaking or the physical manifestation of Yahweh? In this particular instance, it is clear that the angel is the speaker, but the message is from Yeshua and He identifies Himself as "the **root** (Greek **ῥίξα**, *rhiza*) and the offspring of David." I'm sure most believers understand that Yeshua is of King David's lineage, having descended from King David. So yes, Yeshua is the "offspring of David." But does Chuck understand that Yeshua is ***also*** the root of David? And just what does "root of David" mean?

Simply put, if "offspring of David" means "David's descendant," then "root of David" means David's ancestor – his *progenitor*, as in He existed before David. He might have put it this way: "Before David was, I am!" In fact, it was prophesied that this same "Root of David" is also the "Root of Jesse." Jesse, of course, was King David's earthly father. Here's what we read in Isaiah 11:6-10:

> 6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.
> 7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
> 8 And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.
> 9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Yahweh, as the waters cover the sea.
> 10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be honorable.

I find the Greek Septuagint's rendering of verse 10 even more insightful than the above translation from the Hebrew Masoretic text. Here's Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton's English translation from the Septuagint:

> 10 And in that day there shall be a **root (ῥίξα) of Jesse**, and he that shall arise to rule over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust, and his rest shall be glorious.

The Apostle Paul understood that Isaiah prophesied of Yeshua and he quotes from the above Septuagint text in Romans 15:12:

> 12 And again, Isaiah saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

Notice from the Septuagint translation of Isaiah 11:10 that the "root of Jesse" is also identified as having a "glorious rest." Did not Yeshua offer rest to those who labor and are heavy laden? Displayed below is Matthew 11:28-30:

> 28 Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
> 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
> 30 For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.

It should be obvious to those familiar with the New Testament that Yeshua is the "root of Jesse." We just read in Isaiah 11:10 that a "root of Jesse" shall arise in Whom the Gentiles will trust. In addition to identifying this prophesied Ruler as a "root of Jesse," the prophet Isaiah *also* prophesies that He's a *branch* of Jesse. How can this be? How can a Ruler arise Who will be both a Branch of Jesse *and* a Root of Jesse? What follows is taken from Isaiah 11:1-4:

> 1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.
> 2 And the spirit of Yahweh shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Yahweh;
> 3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of Yahweh: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:
> 4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

The question before us is, "Is Yeshua the prophesied 'root of Jesse'?" I'm not sure where Chuck stands on this question because he doesn't deal with either "root of Jesse" or "root of David" in his book. We have already read Revelation 22:16, but for emphasis purposes, let's review it again:

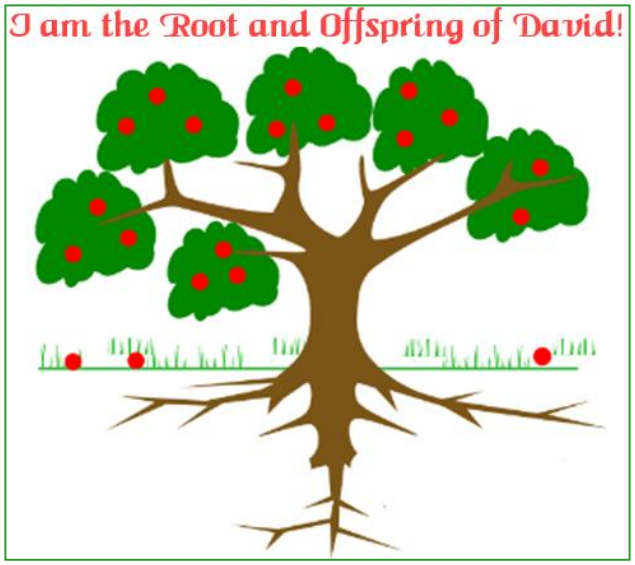
> 16 I Yeshua have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the assemblies. **I am the root (ῥίζα) and the offspring of David**, *and* the bright and morning star.

Let's compare Revelation 5:2-5:

> 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof.
> 3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.
> 4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

> 5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, **the Root (ῥίζα) of David**, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

By now it should be clear that Yeshua is not only the root of *Jesse*, but also the root of *David*. That means ***He came before them: He preceded them in time***. If I were of Chuck's persuasion, I would champion the part about Yeshua being the "offspring of David," but I would be greatly perplexed and frustrated over how this same Man can ***also*** be the "root of David." The "root" of something is commonly understood as being its ***source***. For example, when we hear about a "root problem," we understand it is where we can trace the ultimate predicament. It's the source of the predicament. As another example, the Apostle Paul describes the love of money as "the root of all evil," which we understand as the ***source*** of all evil. So if Yeshua is the "root of David," He is the ***source*** from which King David sprang. This is not talking about Yeshua being the "root of David" in the resurrection, just in case that's where Chuck goes with this. Yeshua is the "root of David" in the context of *time itself*.



The Jews of Yeshua's day did not understand how the Messiah could not only be King David's *descendant*, but also his *ancestor*. Notice how Yeshua put them in a quandary with his question about whose "son," or descendant, the Messiah was. The following is taken from Matthew 22:41-46:

> 41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Yeshua asked them,
> 42 Saying, What think ye of the Messiah? Whose son is he? They say unto him, *The Son* of David.
> 43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Sovereign, saying,
> 44 Yahweh said unto my Sovereign, Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?
> 45 If David then call him Sovereign, how is he his son?
> 46 And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any *man* from that day forth ask him any more *questions*.

For those who understand Isaiah's prophecy in chapter 11, the answer to Yeshua's question is not complicated. The Messiah is David's *descendant*, but since He is *also* King David's progenitor (his *root*), He is simultaneously David's *Sovereign*, or as the King James Version renders it, He is David's *Lord*. It would be highly unusual for a human father to address his son as "Sovereign" or "Lord"; it would be far more likely for a son to call his father his sovereign! The son might call his father "Sovereign," "Lord" or "Master," but not the reverse. So Yeshua's question is most certainly valid: If the Messiah is David's *son*, why did David address Him as "Sovereign"?

The Jews were unable to answer Yeshua's question.

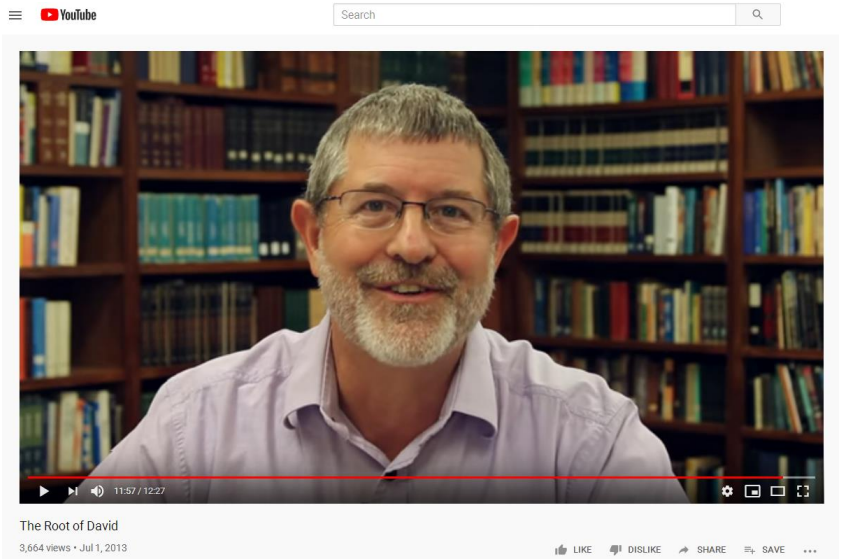
How might a Biblical Unitarian such as Chuck answer Yeshua's question? As previously stated, he does not address this particular passage in his book, so I can only speculate. He is welcome to correct me if my speculation is incorrect. So here's the question and a Biblical Unitarian answer:

> Yeshua: If King David called the Messiah Sovereign, how is he his son?
> Biblical Unitarian: He called Him Sovereign because David knew that his descendant, the Messiah, would also be his Saviour.

The above answer, on the surface, might seem sufficient; however, if David foreknew that Yeshua the Saviour would be his descendant, as wonderful and awesome as that reality is, it does not make Him Sovereign Elohim. However, if He is Elohim Who existed long before King David or even Jesse were born, this makes Him Sovereign. If He's the Root of David, He is Sovereign; He is Elohim.

There is much to be said about the vivid meaning of "Root of David." From the perspective of someone familiar with gardening or someone who was raised on a farm, it is common knowledge that plants derive their source of life from the ***root***. I remember that during my college days, one of my roommates and I used to enjoy propagating plants. We would remove some leaves from a healthy branch of a plant or tree, then secure some sphagnum moss around the leaf-stripped branch with plastic wrap and mist the moss daily with a spray mister. Eventually, a whole new root system began to envelop the moss. We would snip the branch off below the new root, then pot the new plant(s). They made inexpensive, yet welcome gifts!

The root is the source of life. The ancients understood this truth; I'm not certain whether or not Biblical Unitarians do. For Yeshua to be the Root of David, He is David's source of life. The only way for this to happen would be if Yeshua is Elohim. Since Biblical Unitarians cannot accept Yeshua as the pre-incarnate *source* of King David's life, they must create alternate explanations. The author of *Trinity, Oneness, Duality, and Pre-Existence* doesn't cover the "Root and Offspring of David," so I decided to search for explanations from other Biblical Unitarians. I did some online searching and found a video put out by Biblical Unitarian John Schoenheit. Like Chuck, John presents himself in a humble and gracious fashion. His explanation about what "Root of David" means, however, defies logic. I'm including below an excerpt from Mr. Schoenheit's commentary:



> What this title ["Root of David"] is saying is that Jesus Christ is the sustainer, the foundation, the stability of the people of Israel, the people of God. More importantly, and we'll see this as the sharing moves along, it points to the hope

> that Jesus Christ is -- that at a time when you're hopeless, here comes Jesus Christ, and He's this shoot, and we're going to see that the word "root" can be translated "shoot." You know, you look at a stump and out comes this shoot, and Jesus Christ is the Hope. Just when we think our life is hopeless and we need something to sustain us, to help us, to give us energy, give us a reason to keep on going, here's Jesus Christ, the Hope! Fabulous stuff!
>
> So as I start this teaching, I want to say there's some of our Trinitarian brothers who say that because the Bible says Jesus is the Root of David, or the Root of Jesse, that means He's the START, and therefore He must be God. That's not at all what the text is saying. When we read titles, we have to be especially careful to how they're introduced in the context to see how they're used and what they mean. And as we're going to see, both the Hebrew word and Greek word can mean either "root" or "a shoot" -- a little sprout from the root stock.[30]

Mr. Schoenheit goes on to reinforce his belief that a better translation of the Hebrew word commonly translated "root" (*sheresh*, שֹׁרֶשׁ, word #8328 in *Strong's Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary*), is "shoot" or "sprout." Schoenheit attributes this same meaning to the Greek word *rhiza* (**ῥίζα**), which is word #4491 in *Strong's Greek Dictionary of the New Testament*. Both the Hebrew word *sheresh* and the Greek word *rhiza*, according to Schoenheit, are better translated "shoot" or "sprout." Those who have studied either gardening or agriculture understand that "root" and "shoot" are two different things. *Root* is defined as "the undergrowth portion or descending axis of a plant, that absorbs moisture, obtains or stores nourishment, and provides support." This basic and primary definition comes from our dictionary, *The Reader's Digest Great Encyclopedic Dictionary*, published by The Reader's Digest Association, Inc., Pleasantville, NY in 1977. Interestingly, one of this dictionary's definitions of "root" addresses a genealogical perspective:

> **5.** An antecedent: ancestor.

By the way, *none* of this dictionary's ten definitions of "root" includes the term "shoot" or "sprout." A "shoot" or "sprout" is what springs forth *from the root*, but it is *not* the root! John Schoenheit continues his attempt to present a "better translation" of the Hebrew *sheresh* and the Greek *rhiza*:

> And I'm going to now make a case that I think the better translation than "root" should be "shoot," or "sprout," or as we would say, a "root sprout" — a sprout from the root.[31]

Is it true, as Mr. Schoenheit says, that "shoot" or "sprout" are better translations of the above Hebrew and Greek words? Most assuredly not, but since we are compelled to prove our case leaving no room for error, we need to continue our investigation. Let's take another look at the Kings James Version translation of Isaiah 11:10:

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[30] YouTube video "The Root of David," by John W. Schoenheit, Spirit and Truth Fellowship International, posted 07/01/2013 at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnJFU2TdD2A.
[31] Ibid.

> 10 And in that day there shall be a **root** of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be honorable.

Let's also take a look at the Jewish Publication Society's *Tanakh*, as it was translated in 1917:

> 10 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the **root** of Jesse, that standeth for an ensign of the peoples, unto him shall the nations seek; and his resting-place shall be glorious.

I include the Jewish Publication Society's translation of Isaiah 11:10 for a reason. If any group of people has a motivation to sever any potential connections between Yeshua and the "root of Jesse," it would be modern Judaism, which rejects Yeshua as Messiah. In fact, the 1988 edition of the JPS *Tanakh* "corrects" the above 1917 translation, favoring a "non-root" version:

> 10 In that day,
> The **stock** of Jesse, that has remained standing
> Shall become a standard to peoples—
> Nations shall seek his counsel
> And his abode shall be honored.

Replacing "root" with "stock" doesn't actually alter the meaning of the text because the word "stock" can indeed be understood as "root." Our *The Reader's Digest Great Encyclopedic Dictionary* lists the following definition of the word "stock":

> **7.** The original progenitor of a family line.

On the surface I have no problem with changing the word "root" to "stock." However, shouldn't we translate a word that *means* "root" as "root"? Also, please notice that the above definition is #7 in our dictionary's list of definitions of "stock." It actually lists 27 definitions of the *noun* "stock," seven definitions of the *verb* "stock" and six more definitions of the *adjective* "stock." With such an array of definitions, the originally-intended meaning can become clouded and the average reader may not understand that "stock," as used in Isaiah 11:10, can ***only*** refer to "the original progenitor of a family line" – the family line of Jesse.

It is understandable that normative Judaism might seek to remove the term "root of Jesse" in favor of something, *anything* else that might help sever an association with the Messiah of Revelation 5:5 and Revelation 22:16. But when nearly every other version translates the Hebrew *sheresh* (שֹׁרֶשׁ) as "**root**" – when every scholarly dictionary we consult specifies that *sheresh's* primary meaning is "root," it becomes clear that the only logical reason to *not* translate it as "root" is because the translator has an *agenda*. When even Judaism of the early 20th century understood the correct rendering as "root," the agenda of those who now want it to mean something else becomes even clearer. We invite you to explore biblehub.com for yourself and check out all the different translations of Isaiah 11:10. The only ones that seem to not translate *sheresh* as "root" are contemporary, watered-down versions like *The New Living Translation*[32], the *Contemporary English*

[32] It should be fairly obvious to most Bible students that *The New Living Bible Translation* should not be relied on for research purposes. It's more of a *paraphrase* than a translation. Here's a review I found on bible-

Version[33] and the *Good News Bible*[34] translation. The other 25 versions all translate *sheresh* as "root." That should tell us something. Displayed on the following page is a screen shot taken from biblehub.com's listing of the translations for Isaiah 11:10:

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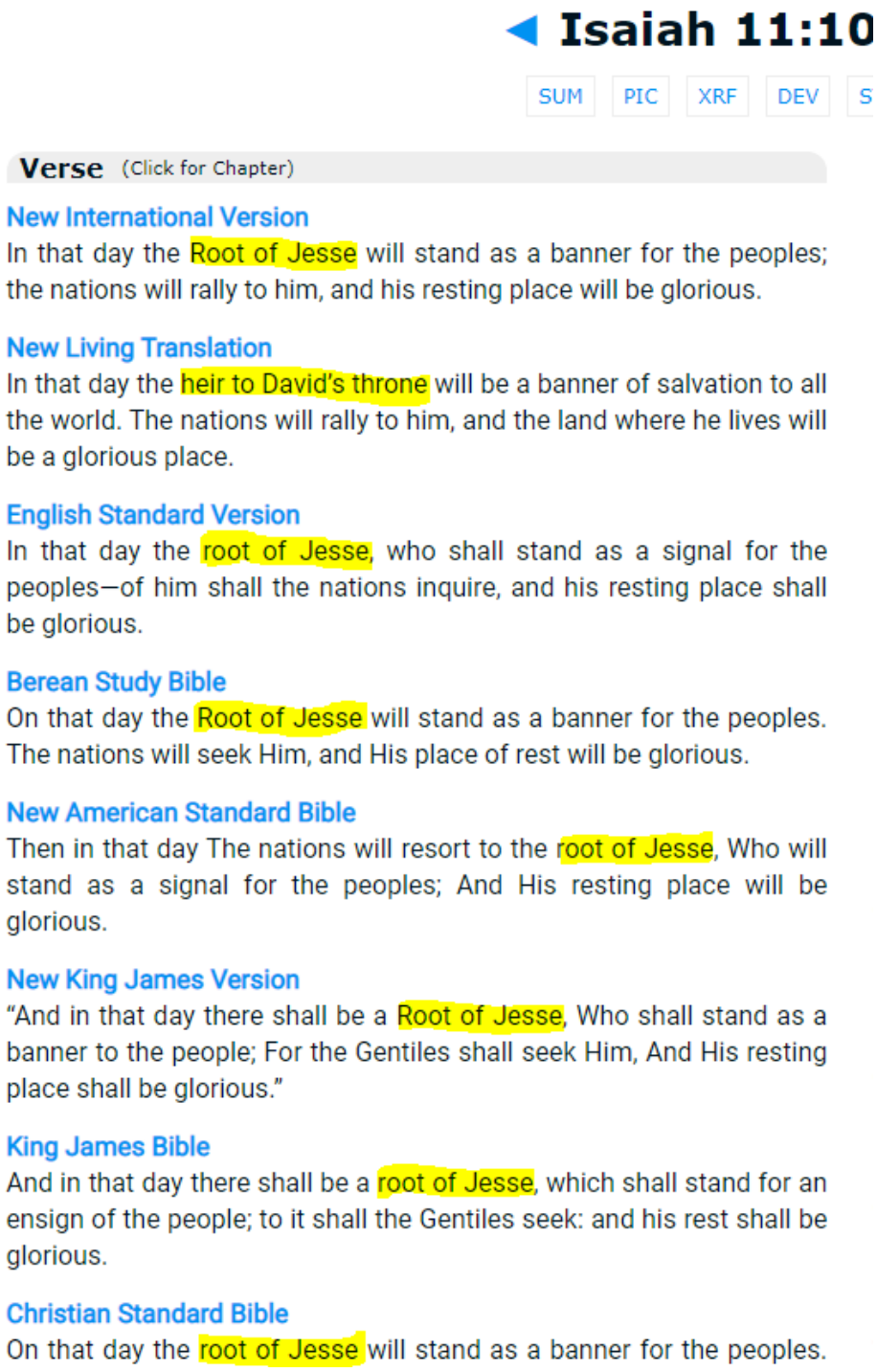
researcher.com: "There may be a place for this version in the education of children, but we conclude that it is not suitable for use by adults in the Church. The version carries over too much of the unsound paraphrasing of the *Living Bible*. The attempt to provide a blanket justification for this paraphrasing by calling it 'dynamic equivalence' is a mere fig leaf, as Poythress aptly calls it. It was a mistake to have used such a problematic version as the basis of the NLT to begin with."

[33] I have serious concerns about relying on *The Contemporary English Version* (CEV) of the Bible for any research projects. Here's an excerpt of a review found on bible-researcher.com: "The character of the CEV is largely determined by its attempt to put the Bible into words 'widely used in everyday speech' by modern readers who are 'unfamiliar with typical church language' (*Creating and Crafting*, pp. 26, 27). This inevitably leads to a great deal of interpretation being worked into the text and some problems of inaccuracy, because the books of the Bible were not written for modern children or for adults who are uninitiated. They were written for adults in ancient times who were already familiar with the religious traditions of ancient Israel. The authors of the New Testament assume that their readers are Christians who are already familiar with the Old Testament books, and also familiar with the 'insider's jargon' of the Church." – Michael Marlow, September 2005. This review of the CEV can be read in its entirety at http://www.bible-researcher.com/cev.html.

[34] The *Good News Bible* is yet another version that is not considered suitable for the serious Bible student conducting intense Bible research. According to bible-researcher.com, "The New Testament of the *Good News Bible* was translated by Dr. Robert G. Bratcher in consultation with a committee appointed by the American Bible Society. Bratcher had been on the staff of the American Bible Society since 1957, and he did his translation according to principles of translation set forth by Eugene Nida, who since 1946 had been the Executive Secretary of the ABS Translations Department. Nida called his theory of translation *Dynamic Equivalence*, which essentially amounts to sacrificing a *literal* translation of words from one language to another in favor of rendering the text in a more *flowing* manner that those of the target language can more easily understand and relate to. An example of this sacrifice was the 'Immanuel prophecy' of Isaiah 7:14. Here's what Michael Marlowe wrote in his review at bible-researcher.com:

> The translation of the Immanuel prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 ("a young woman who is pregnant will have a son") seems to show that the editors were not much concerned about acceptance of the version in conservative churches. After the publication of the Revised Standard Version's Old Testament in 1952, in which this verse was first translated with "young woman" instead of "virgin," this had become a litmus test for conservatives in their evaluation of Bible versions, and Bratcher and his committee must have known this. Moreover, it is evident from Bratcher's statements in the years following the publication of the Old Testament that he personally had nothing but contempt for conservatives and their teachings."



◀ Isaiah 11:10

SUM PIC XRF DEV S

Verse (Click for Chapter)

New International Version
In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious.

New Living Translation
In that day the heir to David's throne will be a banner of salvation to all the world. The nations will rally to him, and the land where he lives will be a glorious place.

English Standard Version
In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

Berean Study Bible
On that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples. The nations will seek Him, and His place of rest will be glorious.

New American Standard Bible
Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.

New King James Version
"And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious."

King James Bible
And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

Christian Standard Bible
On that day the root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples.

Of course, we suggest watching Mr. Schoenheit's video and drawing your own conclusions. From my perspective, he uses the same approach Chuck uses; in fact, it's the approach both men *must* use in order to resolve their "problem texts," reinterpreting them to make them square with their doctrinal view. The only way to accomplish such linguistic gymnastics is to reinterpret and even redefine key words. From a balanced linguistic perspective, the Hebrew word *sheresh* means "root," as in the root of a plant. Metaphorically, it means "source" or "origin."

Let's keep in mind the fact that *Strong's Greek Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* plainly lists both the Hebrew and Greek words as meaning "root," not "shoot" and *not* "sprout." But let's don't stop with *Strong's*. Let's examine the meaning of *sheresh*, as expounded upon in the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, where it is phonetically rendered *shōresh* in English: שֹׁרֶשׁ

> 2471a †שֹׁרֶשׁ (*shōresh*) ***root.***
>
> This noun has cognates in Ugaritic, Akkadian, Phoenician, Aramaic, South Arabic, and Ethiopic.
>
> *shōresh* is used mostly in a figurative sense in the Old Testament. It serves as a natural figure for the lower parts or foundations of something. Thus Job 28:9 speaks of miners' excavations at the roots of the mountains, and in Job 36:30 God covers the roots (i.e. depths) of the sea. The "root of a matter" is the key to a problem or a situation (Job 19:28).
>
> More frequent is the concept of *shōresh* as the source of an existence, whether personal or corporate. Thus in Jud 5:14 Ephraim's root is said to be in Amalek, that is, Ephraim's territory was in the hill country of the Amalekites (Jud 12:15). In Dan 11:7 a "branch of the roots" of the daughter of the king of the south will arise, that is, one of her descendants will gain prominence.
>
> The ability of the roots of certain trees, though they have been felled, to sprout again and develop new branches is used by Job (14:7-9) by way of contrast to man's future when he is struck down (but see *hālap*). It lies behind the imagery in Dan 4:15, 26, in which the Aramaic cognate is used. Nebuchadnezzar will be struck down, but his root remains so that ultimately he will flourish again. Most importantly, it underlies the Messianic use of the word. In Isa 11:1 a branch (Messiah) comes out of the (apparently defunct) root of Jesse. He will flourish and establish God's ideal kingdom. In v. 10 Messiah himself is referred to as the "root" of Jesse, that is, he is the root-sprout (cf. *hōter*, *nēser* and *semah*). This root-sprout is described in Isa 53:2 as being in an arid land, indicating the humble origins of, and seemingly unlikely prospects for, Jesus as the Messiah. In some passages the complete destruction of a nation's support in its past and its hope for a posterity is depicted as a destruction of root and branch (or fruit; cf. Amos 2:9; Mal 4:1 [H 3:19]).[35]

Just to be clear, the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* presents the Hebrew word *sheresh* (or *shōresh*) as meaning "root." Just as the root is the source for a plant's life, so is Yeshua the "root of Jesse," i.e., the source of life for both Jesse and his son, King David. I also consulted *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon*, where the Hebrew word שֹׁרֶשׁ is plainly listed as meaning "root."[36]

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[35] Cf, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 2, R. Laird Harris, Editor, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, Assoc. Editors, Moody Press, Chicago, IL, 1980, p. 957-958.

[36] Cf, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon*, by Francis Brown, D.D., D.Litt. with the cooperation of S.R. Driver, D.D., Litt.D. and Charles A. Briggs, D.D., D.Litt., based on the lexicon of Wilhelm Gesenius, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1979, p. 1057.

Other respected and trustworthy sources, such as *The Interlinear Bible*, Jay P. Green, Sr., General Editor and Translator[37], recognize that the "better translation" of *sheresh* in Isaiah 11:10 is "root":

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											it And be will ←	day in	that
3519	4496	1961	1875	1471		5971	5251	5975	834	3448	8328
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.glory	resting His place	shall and be	:seek shall	nations	Him to	;peoples	a as of banner	stands	that	Jesse (is it)	the ← of root

Video presenter John Schoenheit, fully persuaded that "root" is <u>not</u> the best translation of the Hebrew *sheresh* (שֹׁרֶשׁ), adds the following in his personal commentary on Isaiah 11:10:

> This title ["Root of David"] is referring to the <u>Shoot</u> that's going to come out - it's your Hope who's going to be your foundation and your sustenance. That's what the meaning of this verse is about.[38]

I need to emphasize the fact that Biblical Unitarian John Schoenheit does not think that "root" is the best translation of the Hebrew word *sheresh* (שֹׁרֶשׁ). Let's consider the seriousness of Schoenheit's teaching. Would Mr. Schoenheit likewise translate the Hebrew word *sheresh* as "shoot" in Jeremiah 17:8? Here's Jer 17:7-8:

> 7 Blessed *is* the man that trusteth in Yahweh, and whose hope Yahweh is.
> 8 For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and *that* spreadeth out her <u>roots</u> [Heb. plural possessive שָׁרָשָׁיו *sharashaw*, #8330 in *Strong's*] by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

The Hebrew word translated "roots" in Jeremiah 17:8 is the plural possessive of *sheresh* and is pronounced *sharashaw*. Here's a question for any truth-seeker: When in search of water, would a tree spread forth its *roots* or would it spread forth its *shoots*?

Or how about the word "root" in Job 14:8? For context, I am displaying Job 14:7-9:

> 7 For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease.

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[37] From *The Interlinear Bible*, Jay P. Green, Sr., General Editor and Translator, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 2016, pp. 546-547.

[38] YouTube video "The Root of David," by John W. Schoenheit, Spirit and Truth Fellowship International, posted 07/01/2013 at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnJFU2TdD2A.

> 8 Though the root thereof [Heb. שָׁרְשׁוֹ *shar'eshow*, #8328 in *Strong's*] wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground;
> 9 *Yet* through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant.

Notice that the root "waxes old in the earth." Are plant shoots found in the earth? Interestingly, if you look up the Hebrew phrase in verse seven translated "… the tender branch thereof will not cease," the literal Hebrew rendering of the word translated "branch" is **shoot** [Heb. יִנָּקְתּוֹ]. Based on these findings, it appears that the Hebrew word Biblical Unitarians would prefer to see in Isaiah 11:10 is the word *yanaqtow* (its tender shoot, sprout), instead of *sheresh* (root).

Hopefully, we can all see by now that the Hebrew word *sheresh* means "root," not "shoot" or "sprout." But what about the Greek word *rhiza* (**ῥίζα**), commonly translated "root," but presented by Mr. Schoenheit as being "better translated" as "shoot"? As I watched Mr. Schoenheit's YouTube video, I certainly came away with the impression that the prevailing view among scholars is that *rhiza* should be translated "shoot" instead of "root." Schoenheit even holds up some reference books in an attempt to bolster his conclusion. Here's what he says:

> Now what about translating this as "shoot"? Well, a whole bunch of heavy-hitter lexicons and commentaries think that it should be translated "shoot." Here's the "BDAG" [i.e., *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Revised and edited by Frederick William Danker]. This is an absolute standard in the Greek lexicon field. The BDAG lexicon says that this word should -- even both Old and New Testaments -- should be understood as a "shoot." Here's Meyer [*F. B. Meyer Bible Commentary*], very famous, well-known commentary, says "root-shoot," meaning a "shoot off the root." Here's *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Romans*, by Newman[39] and Nida, that says that we should go with -- actually, they go with the word "descendant." They say it's pointing out to a *descendant* -- see, not the source at all! But a ***descendant*** from Jesse and from David.[40]

I do not own either the "BDAG" lexicon or the above-mentioned commentaries, but upon listening to the above pitch, I found it extremely difficult to believe that *any* Greek lexicon would support the notion that *rhiza* is "more correctly" translated "shoot." Out of curiosity to view a lexicon that would go so far as to state that both the Hebrew and Greek words commonly translated "root" should instead be understood as "shoot," I decided to head over to a local library and examine the "BDAG" lexicon for myself. I was not impressed. First, the lexicon does indeed agree that the primary meaning of the Greek word *rhiza* is "root." Here's an excerpt from my scanned copy of page 905:

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[39] The reference to Newman is Barclay Newman, who was the brainchild behind *The Contemporary English Version* of the Bible. The following is taken from bible-researcher.com: "*The Contemporary English Version* is a simplified version of the Bible designed for children and uneducated adults (at a fourth grade reading level). It is similar to the *Good News Bible* previously published by the American Bible Society, though at a lower reading level. It was produced by employees of the American Bible Society (ABS) working under the direction of one of the Society's officers, Dr. Barclay M. Newman."

[40] YouTube video "The Root of David," by John W. Schoenheit, Spirit and Truth Fellowship International, posted 07/01/2013 at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnJFU2TdD2A.

ῥίζα, ης, ἡ (on the formation s. Schwyzer I 352, cp. Lat. radix; Hom.+; ins, pap, LXX; OdeSol 11:16b; TestJud 24:5; Philo; Jos., Ant. 3, 174 al.; Tat. 12, 3f).

❶ **the underground part of a plant, *root*—ⓐ** lit. **Mt 3:10; Lk 3:9;** Hs 9, 1, 6; 9, 21, 1. ἐκ ῥιζῶν *to its roots, root and branch* (Heraclid. Pont., fgm. 50 W.; Plut., Pomp. 629 [21, 3]; Polyaenus 2, 1, 10; Job 31:12; Aesop, Fab. 70 P.=101 Ch.//71 H-H.) **Mk 11:20.** ῥίζαν ἔχειν *have (deep) root(s)* **Mt 13:6; Mk 4:6** (Theophr., HP 6, 6, 7 πολλὴν ἔχουσα ῥίζαν; Reader, Polemo p. 372).

ⓑ in imagery and transferred sense (LXX; oft. Philo; SibOr 3, 396): in the parable οὐκ ἔχειν ῥίζαν (ἐν ἑαυτῷ) *have no firm root* and hence be easily inclined to fall away **Mt 13:21; Mk 4:17; Lk 8:13.**—In Paul's figure of the olive tree, its root and branches **Ro 11:16–18.** On ῥίζας βάλλειν 1 Cl 39:8 (Job 5:3) s. βάλλω 3c.—Of the beginnings fr. which someth. grows (Socrat., Ep. 14, 2; Herm. Wr. 4, 10): a family or nation (Ael. Aristid. 30, 16 K.=10 p. 120 D.; OGI 383, 30f [I BC] ἐμοῦ γένους ῥίζα) ἐκκόπτειν ἐκ ῥιζῶν *root out, destroy root and branch* B 12:9 (cp. ἐκ ῥιζῶν ἐξαιρεῖν Jos, Ant. 9, 181). ῥίζα πικρίας **Hb 12:15** (πικρία 1). ῥ. πάντων τῶν κακῶν **1 Ti 6:10** (cp. SibOr 3, 234; Constantin. Manasses 2, 9 H.: φθόνος ἡ ῥίζα τῶν κακῶν; Himerius, Ecl. 32, 5 W.: παιδεία ῥίζα τῶν ἀγαθῶν; Straub 31). τῆς πίστεως ῥ. Pol 1:2 (cp. Epicurus in Athen. 12, 67 p. 546f [HUsener, Epicurea 1887 p. 278, 10] ἀρχὴ καὶ ῥίζα παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ; Plut., [41]

As specified within this reference, the Greek word *rhiza* means "the underground part of a plant, *root*." This should be quite clear, then, that a root is something that is primarily *underground*, not above ground. It is true that some plants have root systems that emerge above ground, but that doesn't change the meaning and general understanding of how the word "root" is defined. The root is *not* regarded as the part of a plant that emerges above ground, and even those parts that do occasionally emerge are still considered parts of the root because of their characteristic twisting feature that continues the pattern of the underground portion of the plant. A plant that emerges above ground is called a "shoot." Thus, "root" and "shoot" are *not* the same thing. So why would a lexicon that defines *rhiza* as the underground part of a plant proceed to *also* define it as a "shoot"? Yet, as we are about to see, that is precisely what the "BDAG" lexicon does. This lexicon, in its second definition of *rhiza*, defines it as "that which grows from a root, *shoot, scion*" and it even identifies it in the metaphorical sense as "descendant"! Here's what we read on the following page of this lexicon:

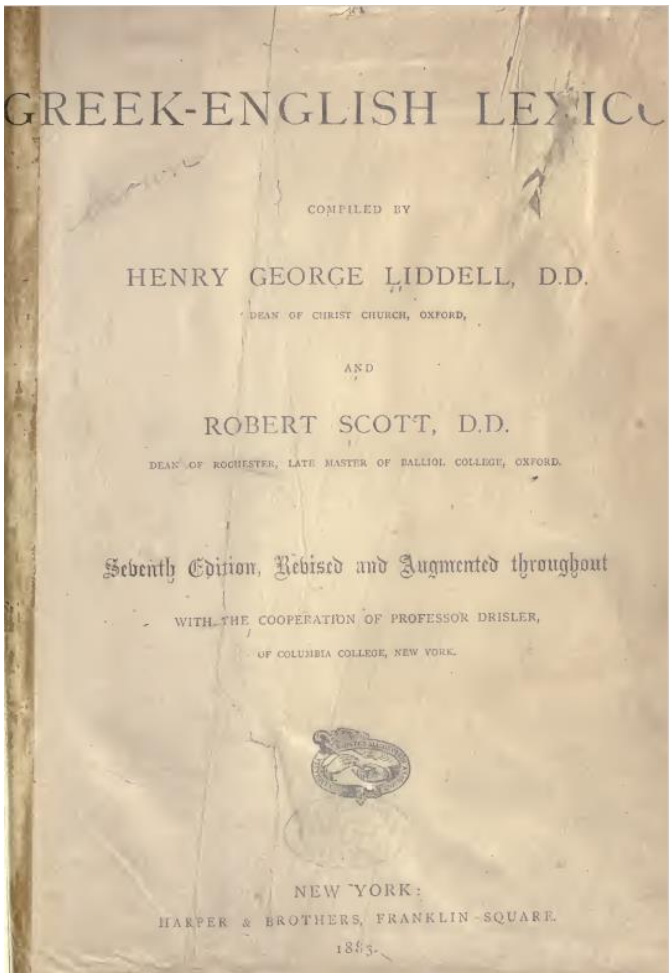
[41] From *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, revised and edited by Frederick William Danker, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 2000, p. 905.

Mor., 4b πηγὴ καὶ ῥίζα καλοκἀγαθίας; Sir 1:6, 20 ῥ. σοφίας; Wsd 15:3 ῥ. ἀθανασίας).

❷ **that which grows from a root, *shoot, scion,*** in our lit. in imagery ***descendant*** (Diod. S. 26, 16a μηδὲ ῥίζαν ἀπολιπεῖν συγγενείας=not a single scion of the family should survive; Ps.-Apollod. 2, 1, 4, 2 Ἀγήνωρ τῆς μεγάλης ῥίζης ἐγένετο γενεάρχης=the progenitor of the strong offshoot; Sir 40:15; 1 Macc 1:10) of the Messiah ἡ ῥίζα τοῦ Ἰεσσαί *the Scion from Jesse* **Ro 15:12** (Is 11:10); ἡ ῥίζα Δαυίδ (cp. Sir 47:22) **Rv 5:5; cp. 22:16.** ὡς ῥίζα ἐν γῇ διψώσῃ 1 Cl 16:3 (Is 53:2).

❸ Hs 9, 30, 1f speaks of the ῥίζαι τοῦ ὄρους (of a mountain, hill, etc. as its foot: Aeschyl., Prom. 365 [pl.]; Polyb. 2, 66, 10; Diod. S. 20, 41, 3; Plut., Sulla 461 [16, 1]; Jos., Bell. 5, 239).—B. 523. DELG. M-M. TW.[42]

Please consider the absurdity of the above translation of *rhiza*. Something that grows *from* a root is not a root in the same way that human hair emerging from a follicle is not the same as the follicle. They are not the same thing, though obviously closely related. To say that a *rhiza* is both a root and a shoot would be like saying a *batrakhos* is both a tadpole and a frog. *Batrakhos*, by the way, is the Greek word for *frog* (cf., word #944 in *Strong's Greek Dictionary of the New Testament*. A frog develops <u>from</u> a tadpole, but once it transforms into a frog, it is no longer a tadpole. The same principle applies to caterpillars. The caterpillar forms a cocoon and a week or so later, a butterfly emerges; but a butterfly is not a caterpillar, nor is a caterpillar a butterfly. It's the same with a root. Once a root emerges from beneath the surface to form a new plant, it's no longer a root; it's a *shoot*.


GREEK-ENGLISH LEXICON

COMPILED BY

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Seventh Edition, Revised and Augmented throughout

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1883.

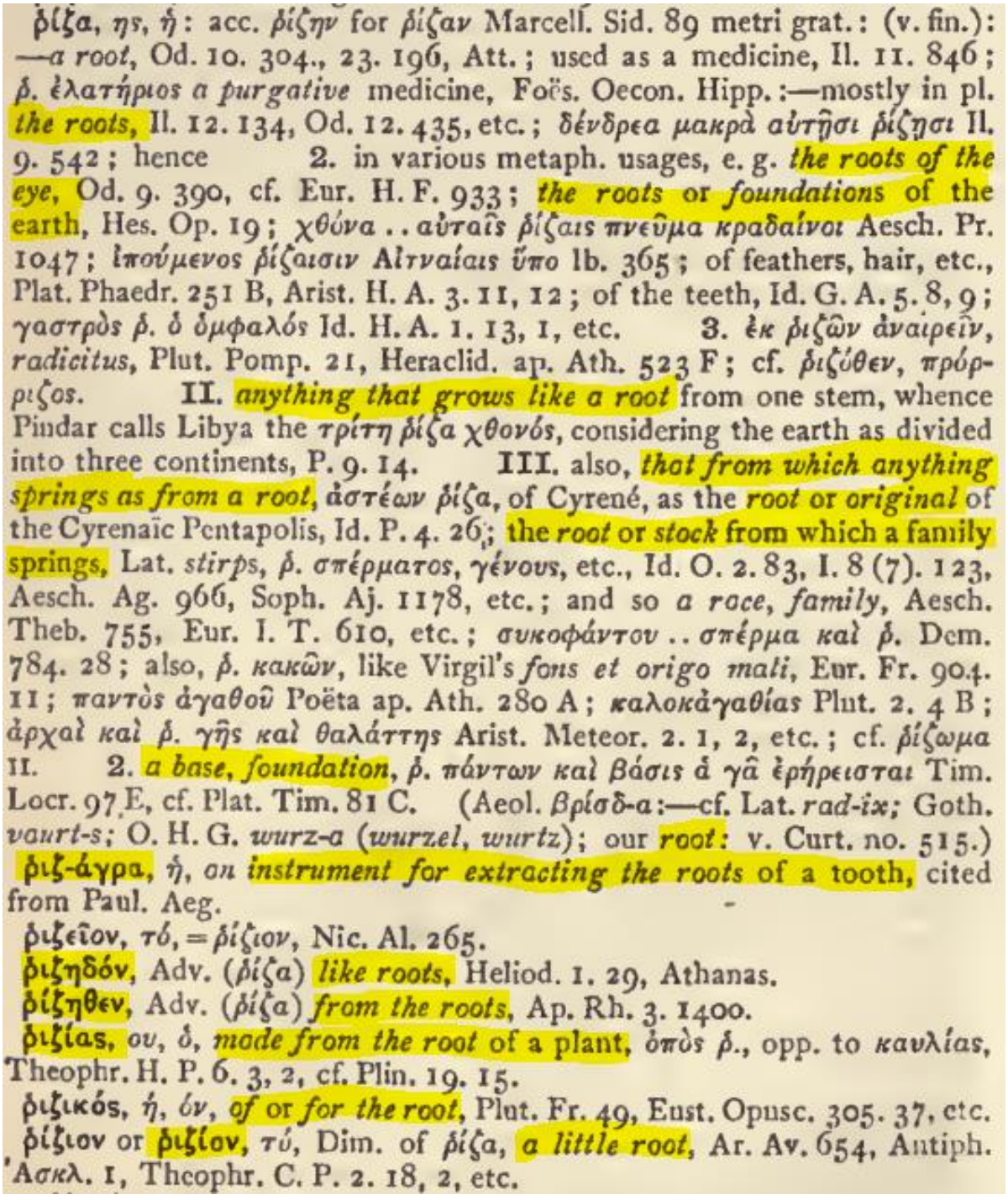
While I find it *disturbing* that John Schoenheit attempts to translate this key word so as to make it to mean the exact opposite of what it *really* means, I realize it's what he *must* do in order to keep his entire house of cards from collapsing. With a biased perspective, Biblical Unitarians need the word "root" to mean something else. Nevertheless, please consider the following: All the commentaries and lexicons I consulted agree that the Greek

[42] Ibid, p. 906.

word *rhiza* means "root," and metaphorically it is attributed to *source* or *origin*. The opposite meaning of *source* or *origin* is ***descendant***, yet that is precisely what Mr. Schoenheit passionately wants his viewers to believe – that this Greek word actually means the *opposite* of what trustworthy references and lexicons say it means. Based on the BDAG lexicon's conflicting translations of the Greek word *rhiza*, I cannot consider it as a trustworthy reference.

There is another widely-respected, trustworthy reference that has been around for many years: the *Greek-English Lexicon*, Compiled by Henry George Liddell, D.D. and Robert Scott, D.D. This lexicon is widely considered as being one of the most respected and scholarly Greek-English lexicons available.[43] By the way, this massive lexicon is not aimed exclusively at specific Greek words found in the Bible; rather, it is a comprehensive secular lexicon that explores the meanings of **all** Greek words used in the entire Greek language and culture. To give you an idea of how exhaustive this lexicon really is, it consists of 1,774 pages. Our *The Reader's Digest Great Encyclopedic Dictionary*, by comparison, only consists of 1,565 pages. Using John Schoenheit's terminology, I would call the Liddell & Scott *Greek-English Lexicon* a "heavy-hitter." According to *Greek-English Lexicon*, the word *rhiza* simply means "root." Displayed on the following page is a screen shot of this reference's listing of *rhiza* (**ῥίξα**). For good measure, I'm also including listings of a few related Greek words, all of which are associated with *root*, not with *shoot*:

[43] The *Greek-English Lexicon*, Compiled by Henry George Liddell, D.D. and Robert Scott, D.D., 7th Edition, Harper & Brothers, Franklin Square, New York, 1883. The listing for *rhiza* is found on page 1362.



ῥίζα, ης, ἡ: acc. ῥίζην for ῥίζαν Marcell. Sid. 89 metri grat.: (v. fin.): —*a root*, Od. 10. 304., 23. 196, Att.; used as a medicine, Il. 11. 846; ῥ. ἐλατήριος *a purgative* medicine, Foës. Oecon. Hipp.:—mostly in pl. *the roots*, Il. 12. 134, Od. 12. 435, etc.; δένδρεα μακρὰ αὐτῇσι ῥίζῃσι Il. 9. 542; hence 2. in various metaph. usages, e. g. *the roots of the eye*, Od. 9. 390, cf. Eur. H. F. 933; *the roots* or *foundations* of the earth, Hes. Op. 19; χθόνα .. αὐταῖς ῥίζαις πνεῦμα κραδαίνοι Aesch. Pr. 1047; ἰπνούμενος ῥίζαισιν Αἰτναίαις ὕπο Ib. 365; of feathers, hair, etc., Plat. Phaedr. 251 B, Arist. H. A. 3. 11, 12; of the teeth, Id. G. A. 5. 8, 9; γαστρὸς ῥ. ὁ ὀμφαλός Id. H. A. 1. 13, 1, etc. 3. ἐκ ῥιζῶν ἀναιρεῖν, *radicitus*, Plut. Pomp. 21, Heraclid. ap. Ath. 523 F; cf. ῥιζόθεν, πρόρριζος. II. *anything that grows like a root* from one stem, whence Pindar calls Libya the τρίτη ῥίζα χθονός, considering the earth as divided into three continents, P. 9. 14. III. also, *that from which anything springs as from a root*, ἀστέων ῥίζα, of Cyrené, as the *root* or *original* of the Cyrenaïc Pentapolis, Id. P. 4. 26; the *root* or *stock* from which a family springs, Lat. *stirps*, ῥ. σπέρματος, γένους, etc., Id. O. 2. 83, I. 8 (7). 123, Aesch. Ag. 966, Soph. Aj. 1178, etc.; and so *a race, family*, Aesch. Theb. 755, Eur. I. T. 610, etc.; συκοφάντου .. σπέρμα καὶ ῥ. Dem. 784. 28; also, ῥ. κακῶν, like Virgil's *fons et origo mali*, Eur. Fr. 904. 11; παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ Poëta ap. Ath. 280 A; καλοκἀγαθίας Plut. 2. 4 B; ἀρχαὶ καὶ ῥ. γῆς καὶ θαλάττης Arist. Meteor. 2. 1, 2, etc.; cf. ῥίζωμα II. 2. *a base, foundation*, ῥ. πάντων καὶ βάσις ἃ γᾶ ἐρήρεισται Tim. Locr. 97 E, cf. Plat. Tim. 81 C. (Aeol. βρίσδ-α:—cf. Lat. *rad-ix*; Goth. *vaurt-s*; O. H. G. *wurz-a* (*wurzel, wurtz*); our *root*: v. Curt. no. 515.)

ῥιζ-άγρα, ἡ, *an instrument for extracting the roots* of a tooth, cited from Paul. Aeg.

ῥιζεῖον, τό, = ῥίζιον, Nic. Al. 265.

ῥιζηδόν, Adv. (ῥίζα) *like roots*, Heliod. 1. 29, Athanas.

ῥίζηθεν, Adv. (ῥίζα) *from the roots*, Ap. Rh. 3. 1400.

ῥιζίας, ου, ὁ, *made from the root* of a plant, ὀπὸς ῥ., opp. to καυλίας, Theophr. H. P. 6. 3, 2, cf. Plin. 19. 15.

ῥιζικός, ή, όν, *of* or *for the root*, Plut. Fr. 49, Eust. Opusc. 305. 37, etc.

ῥίζιον or ῥιζίον, τό, Dim. of ῥίζα, *a little root*, Ar. Av. 654, Antiph. Ἀσκλ. 1, Theophr. C. P. 2. 18, 2, etc.

The above listings include related Greek words with meanings associated with "roots" (instead of "shoots"). The other related words are only a sampling; in addition to the above associated words, I counted at least 30 others, all of which have "root" connections.

I previously cited Jay P. Green Sr.'s *The Interlinear Bible* as an example of a respected, trustworthy source demonstrating that the Hebrew word *sheresh* (שֹׁרֶשׁ), as used in such verses as Isaiah 11:10, means "Root of Jesse," not "Shoot of Jesse." This same interlinear offers a word-for-

word translation of the Greek New Testament, where we find the English rendering of *rhiza* (**ῥίζα**) to be "root," not "shoot" or "sprout":

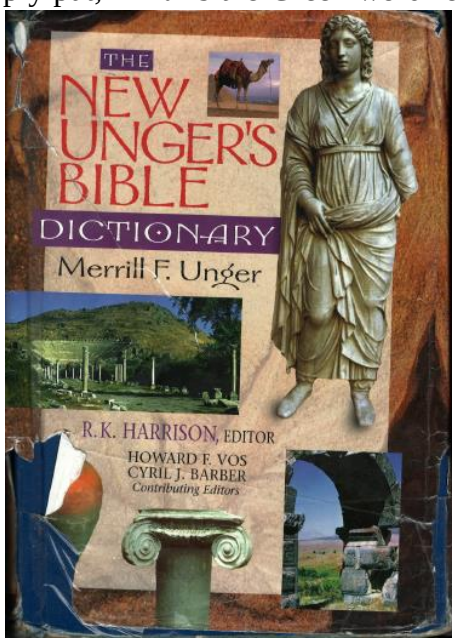
1473/1510		4491		1085		1138		792
ἐγώ	εἰμι	ἡ ῥίζα	καὶ	τὸ γένς	τοῦ	Δαβίδ,	ὁ	ἀστὴρ ὁ
I	am	the Root	and	the Offspring	of	David,	the	Star

2986		3720
λαμπρὸς	καὶ	ὀρθρινός.
bright	and	morning.

The *Analytical Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* agrees with Liddell & Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*'s translation of *rhiza*. Here's the *Analytical Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*'s listing for the Greek word *rhiza* (**ῥίζα**):

> **ῥίζα**], ης, ἡ, (§ 2. rem. 3) *a root* of a tree, Mat. 3.10; 13.6; met. ἔχειν ῥίξαν, or ἔχειν ῥίξαν ἐν ἑαυτῷ, *to be rooted* in faith, Mat 13.21; Mar. 4.17; Lu. 8.13; met. *cause, source, origin*, 1 Ti. 6:10; He. 12.15; by synced. *the trunk, stock* of a tree, met. Ro. 11.16, 17, 18; met. *offspring, progeny, a descendant*, Ro. 15:12; Re. 5.5; 22.16.
>
> ῥιξόω, ῶ, fut. ώσω, (§ 20. tab. T) *to root, cause to take root*; pass. part. perf. ἐῤῥιζωμένος, *firmly rooted, strengthened with roots*; met. *firm, constant, firmly fixed*, Ep. 3.18, Col. 2.7.[44]

Please notice that the plain meaning of *rhiza* is "root." Simply put, *rhiza* is the Greek word for "root." Also, you may have noticed this reference's use of the abbreviated word "met." That's the abbreviation of *metaphorically*. *Metaphorically*, as presented by the *Analytical Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, the word *rhiza* can mean "the *cause* or *origin* of something." It can be used to mean "trunk or stock of a tree," but that's not its basic, intrinsic meaning. *Metaphorically*, the word *rhiza* can mean "offspring, progeny" or "descendant," but again, that's not its intrinsic meaning. It literally means "root," and I need to reinforce the fact that just as the root is the source of life for a plant, so is Yeshua the source of life for Jesse and the source of life, the Root, of King David. So not only is Yeshua the *offspring*, or *descendant*, of King David, He is also the source of King David's existence — the Root of David.



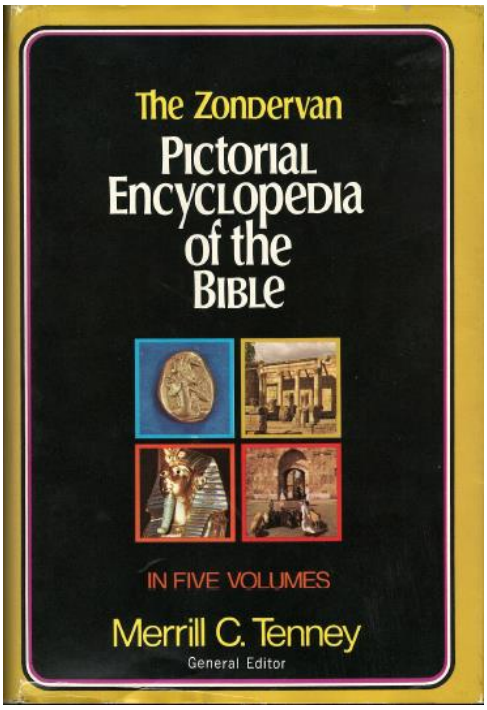
John Schoenheit, in his best persuasive mode, attempted to present himself as relying on "heavy-hitter" lexicons and commentaries. Rather, I found that his best supporters are those who produce watered-down versions of the Bible. In terms of "heavy-hitting" scholars, I know *The*

[44] *The Analytical Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, George V. Wigram, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1983, orig. published by Samuel Bagster & Sons, Ltd., London, 1852, p. 360.

New Unger's Bible Dictionary ranks up with the best. Here's what *Unger's* has to say about the word "root":

> 1. The root of a family is the progenitor from whom the race derives its name; thus, "from the serpent's root a viper will come out" (Isa. 14:29), meaning that though the Davidic kingdom was broken down by the Syro-Ephraimitish war, another would arise to be a scourge to Israel's oppressors. The Messiah is called "the root of Jesse" (11:10), as containing its sap and strength in His divine capacity (cf. Rev. 5:5; and 22:16, as "the root and the offspring of David," referring to both His divine and human nature). The progenitor of a race is also called its root (Prov. 12:3).
> 2. Root means the essential cause of anything, as "the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil" (1 Tim. 6:10; cf. Heb. 12:15, "that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble").[45]

The New Unger's Bible Dictionary leaves no room to doubt that both the Hebrew word *sheresh* and its Greek equivalent *rhiza* mean "root," as in the *progenitor* or *source*. Another "heavy-hitter" is *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Let's take a look at what it has to say about the meaning of the word translated "root":



> The root is the source of a moral or spiritual condition. "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim 6:10 ASV), and a "root of bitterness" causes the defilement of apostasy (Deut 29:18; Heb 12:15).
>
> The root of a family or nation is its progenitor (Rom 11:16). Messiah as the "root of Jesse" (Isa 11:10) is not a sucker from the root but Himself the origin and strength of the Messianic line; "the root and the offspring of David" (Rev 5:5; 22:16) denotes Christ's divine-human nature as the source and descendant of David. The Messianic Servant's appearance as a "root out of dry ground" (Isa 53:2) depicts His lowly surroundings in contrast to His inner vigor.[46]

The above author's insight into the Messiah not being a "sucker from the root," but rather the *origin* of the Messianic line, is significant. In John Schoenheit's attempt to make his doctrinal position appear credible, he has no choice but to mistranslate the Hebrew and Greek words for "root," forcing them to mean the exact opposite of what they really mean. Instead of "progenitor," then, they must mean "descendant," at least according to Mr.

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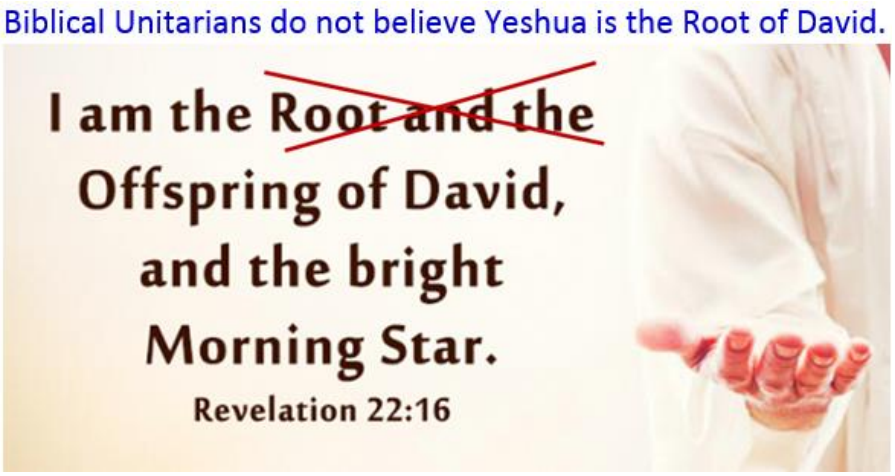
[45] From *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, by Merrill F. Unger, Moody Press, Chicago, IL, 1984, p. 1091.
[46] From *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 5, Merrill C. Tenney, Gen. Editor, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1978, article "ROOT," by D. E. Hiebert, p. 172.

Schoenheit. But think about the impact that such a "truth" would have on such verses as Revelation 22:16:

> 16 I Yeshua have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the assemblies. I am the **descendant** and the offspring of David, *and* the bright and morning star. (as John Schoenheit translates the Greek word *rhiza*)

Since an offspring *is* a descendant, use of the above terms is essentially redundant. It would be like saying, "I am the descendant and the descendant of David." Only the use of the contrasting terms "root" (source) and "offspring" (descendant) make sense, properly fitting the context.



I think it's time for us to focus on the metaphorical use of *rhiza* as the "origin" of something. One thing that Chuck and I agree on is that Yeshua had an origin. In other words, at some point in time in the distant past, He did not exist. Our difference of opinion lies in *when* we believe He came into existence. A major tenet of the Trinitarian doctrine holds that Yahweh and Yeshua are "one" in the sense that they are of the same essence and that they, along with the Holy Spirit, have *always* existed as an eternal Being, one Almighty in three Persons. Historically, however, hundreds of years before the ratification of the Trinity Doctrine, believers such as Justin Martyr understood that at some point in time, Yeshua did *not* exist, but that He was created prior to the creation of the heavens and the earth. If Yeshua is truly the "Root of Jesse," as in "the progenitor of Jesse," then He could not have sprung into existence in Miriam's womb.

I am persuaded that the prophecy of Isaiah 11:10 reveals that Yeshua is the *progenitor* of what is known as the "Davidic line." Since Yeshua is the "root of Jesse," does this mean that He fathered Jesse? I think we all know better than that! Rather, this verse metaphorically presents Yeshua as the creator of mankind. As the physical manifestation of Yahweh, He later chose Abraham's descendants to rule over Israel (Gen 15:18, Gen 18:19, Gen 22:18, Gen 26:4-5), and although the physical father of Jesse was a man named Obed, Yeshua is truly the "root." But not only is He the *root*, He is also the *offspring*, a phenomenon that defies explanation – unless we understand that Yeshua willfully gave up His incorporeal existence to become the flesh and blood *descendant* of King David.

I have a complementing supplement to add the finishing touch to this chapter. I find it fascinating that one night, as I was putting the final touches on my "Root and Offspring of David" commentary, I found myself watching a pre-recorded sermon by Televangelist Joel Osteen. It goes without saying that I have many doctrinal disagreements with Joel Osteen, but I have occasionally watched his program because I like his style, I appreciate his positive approach and he often offers valuable insights into Biblical narratives. The title of his message was "It's a Matter of Time," but before long I heard his underlying theme: *Roots*! The connection between Osteen's message title and

underlying theme is this: Once you destroy or cut off a plant's roots, it's only a matter of time before it dies. I love the insightful story that Mr. Osteen shared about Yeshua and the roots of the fig tree He cursed (Mark 11:12-22). Here's what he said:

> I want to talk to you today about: *It's Just a Matter of Time*. We all have things that we're believing will change: we're fighting an illness, we're struggling with an addiction, we're dealing with fear, depression, anxiety. We know what God promised – that He would restore our health, that He would free us from the fear; we prayed, we believed, but we don't see anything improving. But what you can't see is, the moment you prayed, in the unseen realm, the *source* of what was coming against you was cut off - the *source* of the fear, the *source* of the addiction, the *source* of the sickness.
>
> Now, you may not see any manifestation for some time, there may not be any evidence that things have changed, and this is when many people get discouraged. But there will always be a period of time, where it looks like God didn't do what He promised: the fear still comes, the medical report hasn't improved, the addiction looks just the same, but what's *feeding* those things has been cut off. It may *seem* like it's still alive, but the truth is: the fear is dead, the sickness is dead, the trouble at work is dead. Don't be discouraged because you don't see anything happening, *it's just a matter of time*.
>
>
>
> One day Jesus was leaving Bethany. He saw a fig tree off in the distance; He was hungry, so He went over to get something to eat, but the tree didn't have any figs. Jesus said to the tree: "May no person ever eat fruit from you again." He cursed the tree, but when He said it, nothing on the *outside* looked any different; the tree was still just as full and healthy as before. I can hear the disciples begin to whisper, "*What happened? It didn't work! Did He lose His power?*" They had seen Jesus speak to a blind man and heal his eyes, and they heard Him speak to the storm and calm the sea, but this time when Jesus spoke, nothing changed; there was no evidence that what He said had happened.
>
> But the next morning, as the disciples were passing by, they saw the tree. The scripture says, "The tree had withered from the roots [**ῥίζῶν**]." When Jesus spoke to the tree, nothing happened on the *outside*, but on the inside, down in the roots, the source was cut off. *When the roots are dead, the tree is dead*. It may

> still *look* alive, it may still have green leaves, still have wide branches, but it's just a matter of time before the outside catches up with the inside.[47]

Mr. Osteen goes on to offer inspirational hope that the various forms of suffering we experience, such as addictions, illnesses and anxieties that we've prayed about may *appear* to be unanswered prayers, but what we don't realize is that although those conditions appear to be thriving in spite of our fervent prayers, in reality the *source*, or *root cause*, has been cut off and it's a matter of time before healing comes. I'm not quite sure I completely agree with that particular portion of Mr. Osteen's message, and this aspect of suffering is something I cover extensively in our study "Why Does Yahweh Allow the Righteous to Suffer?" Nevertheless, the general principle behind Mr. Osteen's message is sound: When the *source* is stopped, it may take a while to notice any results. To illustrate an example of this, think about what happens to frozen food during a power outage. I've read that once the flow of electricity is stopped, a freezer full of food can typically keep the food cold for 48 hours before beginning to thaw. The root of the problem, then, occurs 48 hours before any noticeable effects are observed. Another example involves the sun. If our sun were somehow suddenly extinguished, we wouldn't know about it here on earth for another eight minutes because that's how long it takes light from the sun to reach earth. Again, the source is cut off, but no one notices any effects for eight minutes.

Using this same metaphorical approach, we know that all false teachings, like the roots of that fig tree, are already dead, yet the fruit emanating from those roots must persist to plague us for a season – until those false teachings are finally exposed for all to see. The teaching that Yeshua did not have a pre-carnal existence, though false, will continue to be preached and taught from the pulpit and yes, from YouTube. I will not go down in history as a world-class debater, so in the debate I had with Chuck Henry, my best efforts did not persuade the opposition that my position is correct. Nevertheless, I'm not worried because I know that, quite frankly, although some may feel the belief that Yeshua did not have a pre-carnal existence is alive and well, this teaching is *already dead* – it's just that the outside hasn't caught up with the inside – yet. As Joel Osteen said, "It's a matter of time." When the video of our debate was posted online, within a few short days two individuals posted comments lauding Chuck as the winner, whereas I was considered critical, condescending and unsuccessful in proving my case. It's too bad they came away with that impression, especially since they mistook the combination of my passion and nervousness for

"When the roots are dead, the tree is dead. It may still *look* alive, it may still have green leaves, still have wide branches, but it's just a matter of time before the outside catches up with the inside." -- Joel Osteen, "It's a Matter of Time," 01/12/2020.

[47] Joel Osteen, "It's Just a Matter of Time," 01/12/2020. You can watch or access the transcript of Joel Osteen's message at the following link: https://sermons.love/joel-osteen/5709-joel-osteen-its-just-a-matter-of-time.html

"condescension." Even worse, they have not yet presented any information to counter my presentation. As for my being critical, when you're responding to a book you strongly disagree with, it's difficult to *not* be critical of the book, even if the author is a nice guy. Nevertheless, I'm not the least bit worried because, again, I know the teaching that Yeshua did not have a pre-carnal existence is *dead*. It's been cut off by the roots, but I'm afraid some individuals may not come to this realization until the Messiah returns.

As I previously mentioned, one thing Chuck and I agree on is that Yeshua had an ***origin***; at some point in time in the distant past, He did not exist. Our difference of opinion lies in *when* we believe He came into existence. I have already shown that Yeshua is the progenitor of King David's line, which absolutely proves that He had a pre-carnal existence *befor*e His conception in Miriam's womb. Sadly, the significance of His being the "Root and Offspring" of David didn't enter my mind prior to the debate with Chuck. Nevertheless, in addition to the verses validating Yeshua as the "Root and Offspring of David," there is another seemingly unrelated verse that likewise proves He had a pre-carnal existence. The verse I'm referring to is the one on which I primarily focused during our debate. With that in mind, I would now like to offer that same presentation in written form. Unlike the debate videographer, I want you to ***see*** my full PowerPoint presentation. I will also include additional information that I had to exclude from my debate presentation due to time constraints.

X. The Speaker of Isaiah 43-48

By June Acheson

Larry's note: Sometimes we obtain more clarity by listening to someone else's perspective. In view of some of Chuck's commentary during the debate in which he frequently cited verses from the book of Isaiah, June felt led to share her own perspective, which I feel offers valuable insight into the identity of the speaker in Isaiah, chapters 43-48. June here focuses on Isaiah chapter 43:

During my daily Bible reading, I read Mark 2:3-7 about some scribes becoming upset that Yeshua forgave someone of their sins. This, they explained, is something only Elohim can do:

> 3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.
> 4 And when they could not come near unto him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken *it* up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.
> 5 When Yeshua saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.
> 6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,
> 7 Why doth this *man* thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but Elohim only?

Verbally, Yeshua neither confirmed nor denied the scribes' indignant remark, but He proceeded to heal the man from his infirmity. This intriguing account in the book of Mark motivated me to do some research, which in turn led me to Isaiah chapter 43.

> 1 But now thus saith Yahweh that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou art mine.
> 2 When thou passest through the water, I *will* be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.
> 3 For I *am* Yahweh thy Elohim, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior: I gave Egypt *for* thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.
> 4 Since thou was precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.
> 5 Fear not: for I *am* with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west:
> 6 I will say to the north, Give up: and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth;
> 7 *Even* every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

> 8 Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.
> 9 Let all the nations be gathered together and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, *It is* truth.
> 10 Ye *are* my witnesses, saith Yahweh, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I *am* he: before me there was no El formed, neither shall there be after me.
> 11 I, *even* I, *am* Yahweh; and beside me *there is* no savior.
> 12 I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed, when *there was* no strange *elohim* among you: therefore ye *are* my witnesses, saith Yahweh, that I *am* El.
> 13 Yea, before the day *was* I *am* he; and *there is* none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?

So, it was Isaiah 43:11 that those scribes were referencing. Isaiah 43:11 clearly identifies Yahweh as being the ***one and only Savior***. How can this be? I thought I had read in the "New Testament" that Yeshua the Messiah is our Savior. I did some research and found Ephesians 5:23:

> 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Messiah is the head of the assembly and he is the savior of the body.

I created the below diagram to help clarify and identify not only who Yeshua is, but who our Savior is:

Ephesians 5:23	Messiah	=	Savior
	↕		||
Isaiah 43:11	Yahweh	=	Savior

When the Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, identifies ***Messiah*** as the Savior, and Isaiah states that ***Yahweh*** is our only Savior, are we to conclude that there are *two* "only Saviors"? No, it becomes clear that Yeshua the Messiah is the Yahweh speaking in Isaiah 43. This makes verse 10 clearer when Yahweh declares that before *Him*, there was no El formed. Indeed, this Yahweh, the physical manifestation of Yahweh the Supreme Most High Elohim, is the first El to be formed: ***He is Elohim and He was formed***. We believe Yahweh, the Father, has been around forever but His Son was created/formed. Before Him – before the creation of Yahweh the pre-incarnate, physical manifestation of His Father, Yahweh – there was no El formed. There is none besides Him.

Now we are able to understand and know that the pre-incarnate Messiah is speaking in chapter 43. Please note that in verses one and seven He identifies Himself as the Creator. See also verses 14-15:

> 14 Thus saith Yahweh, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry *is* in the ships.

> 15 I am Yahweh, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King.

Notice in verse 14 above that Yahweh identifies Himself as Israel's ***redeemer***. Is Yahweh our redeemer? Isn't ***Yeshua*** our redeemer? Let's examine Revelation 5:8-10:

> 8 And when he [the Lamb] had taken the book, the four beasts and four *and* twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints.
> 9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to Elohim by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;
> 10 And hast made us unto our Elohim kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

For other verses attesting to the fact that Yeshua is our redeemer, please see Hebrews 9:12-15, 1 Peter 1:18-20, Romans 3:23-26.

So is Yahweh our redeemer or is it Yeshua? Is Yahweh our Shepherd (Psalms 23:1) or is it Yeshua (John 10:14)?

Biblical Unitarians answer that a thorough examination of the Bible reveals other verses where ***men*** are also called shepherds, thus dismissing the obvious correlation between Yahweh the Shepherd, in Whose house we will dwell forever, and Yeshua, the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep.[48] To dismiss this "Shepherd" connection by pointing out that *men* may also be called "shepherds" is nothing less than an insult, not only to the text of Scripture, but especially to Yahweh. Will Biblical Unitarians also minimize the role of "redeemer" by drawing our attention to men who redeemed others? How about the role of the Rock, as presented in chapter 8 of this study? Are there "men rocks"?

Now that we have identified the "speaker" of Isaiah 43, we have clarification of whether the pre-existent Messiah ***or*** the Most High Supreme El, His Father, is speaking in Chapter 44. Note verse 2:

> Thus saith Yahweh that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.

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[48] *C.f.*, Chuck Henry, *Trinity, Oneness, Duality & Pre-Existence*, H.V. Chapman & Sons Bookbinders, Abilene, TX, 2018, pp. 212. Quoting Chuck: "Some may suggest that since the Messiah is called a shepherd, He is also Yahweh, the shepherd of Psalm 23 - Psa 23:1 'Yahweh is my shepherd; I shall not want.' However, a thorough examination of the Bible reveals other verses where men are also called shepherds (examples below). If a man is called a shepherd, does it make him Yahweh? Certainly not. Thus, while Yahweh is the ultimate Shepherd, He also uses men to serve as shepherds, the chief of whom is the Messiah."

So in chapter 44, it is the One that created/formed us who is speaking. *This is the Messiah!* It is the Messiah who proclaims in chapter 44:6, "I *am* the first, and I am the last; and beside me *there is* no Elohim."

He is Yahweh the Messiah, the Creator of mankind, the Savior of mankind, the pre-existent Yeshua. He is also the physical manifestation of His Father, Yahweh the Supreme Most High. If you've seen Him, you've seen the Father. The only way for us to reach the Father is through Yeshua. Besides Him, there is no Elohim.

End of June's commentary.

I would like to build on what June contributed above by stating that Bible scholars agree that the "speaker" in these chapters of Isaiah (chapters 40-48) is actually the pre-incarnate Messiah, the physical manifestation of Yahweh. We naturally do not expect Biblical Unitarians to agree; however, for those who consider the reading of the text, as well as the understanding of early scholars, I am persuaded that the evidence is *overwhelming* that, indeed, the pre-incarnate Yeshua is speaking in chapters 40-48. Of particular interest is a little-known verse from chapter 48. From context, it is clear that, as incredible as it may sound, Yahweh sent Yahweh to deliver the message. Displayed below is Isaiah 48:12-18:

> 12 Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I *am* he; I *am* the first, I also *am* the last.
> 13 Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: *when* I call unto them, they stand up together.
> 14 All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these *things*? Yahweh hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm *shall be* on the Chaldeans.[49]
> 15 I, *even* I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.
> 16 Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there *am* I: and now the Sovereign Yahweh, and his Spirit, hath sent me.
> 17 Thus saith Yahweh, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I *am* Yahweh thy Elohim which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way *that* thou shouldest go.
> 18 O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea:
> 19 Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me.

So we have ***Yahweh*** doing the speaking in chapters 40-48 and in verse 16 of chapter 48 Yahweh states that ***the Sovereign Yahweh and His Spirit sent Him***? Scholars agree that the speaker in this

[49] The scholars whose references we have consulted agree that the individual referenced here is Cyrus II "the Great." For example, in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 1, article "Cyrus," p. 1055, we read, "Isaiah's prophecies concerning Cyrus begin with 41:2, 25, and end with 46:11; 48:15."

entire passage is *Yahweh*. In verse 16 Yahweh explains that **from the beginning** – from the time that it was – **there He was**; and now, the Sovereign Yahweh and His Spirit, has sent Him. Sent ***Who***? Answer: Yahweh. The "Yahweh" who was sent to deliver this message could have been none other than the pre-incarnate Yeshua. Notice what Franz Delitzsch writes in his commentary on the book of Isaiah, chapter 48:16:

> Up to this point Jehovah is speaking; but who is it that now proceeds to say, "And now—namely, now that the redemption of Israel is about to appear (וְעַתָּה being here, as in many other instances, e.g., ch. 33:10, the turning-point of salvation)—now hath the Lord Jehovah sent me and His Spirit?" The majority of the commentators assume that the prophet comes forward here in his own person, behind Him whom he has introduced, and interrupts Him. But although it is perfectly true, that in all prophecy, from Deuteronomy onwards, words of Jehovah through the prophet and words of the prophet of Jehovah alternate in constant, and often harsh transitions, and that our prophet has this mark of divine inspiration in common with all the other prophets (cf., ch. 62:5, 6), it must also be borne in mind, that hitherto he [Isaiah] has not spoken once objectively of himself, except quite indirectly (vid., ch. 40:6; 44:26), to say nothing of actually coming forward in his own person. Whether this takes place further on, more especially in ch. 61, we will leave for the present; but here, since the prophet has not spoken in his own person before, whereas, on the other hand, these words are followed in ch. 49:1ff. by an address concerning himself from that servant of Jehovah who announces himself as the restorer of Israel and light of the Gentiles, and who cannot therefore be either Israel as a nation or the author of these prophecies, nothing is more natural than to suppose that the words, "And now hath the Lord," etc., form a prelude to the words of the One unequalled servant of Jehovah concerning Himself which occur in ch. 49. The surprisingly mysterious way in which the words of Jehovah suddenly pass into those of His Messenger, which is only comparable to Zech. 2:12ff., 4:9 (where the speaker is also not the prophet, but a divine messenger exalted above him), can only be explained in this manner.[50]

Franz Delitzsch was no slouch when it came to understanding the nuances of the Hebrew language and that would include the complex structure of the phrasing of Isaiah 48:16. After all, he is best known for translating the Greek New Testament into Hebrew. Suffice it to say commentator Franz Delitzsch concludes that the speaker in this verse is *not* Yahweh the Supreme Most High Elohim, but rather a mysterious messenger who *also* identifies Himself as Yahweh. *Is this messenger the pre-incarnate Yeshua?*

I previously mentioned that early scholars understood that the pre-incarnate Yeshua is speaking in chapters 40-48. This point is brought out by 3rd century scholar Origen in his work *Contra Celsum*:

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[50] C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 7, "Isaiah," by F. Delitzsch, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 2001, originally published by T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1866-91, pp. 465-466.

> And as it is a Jew who is perplexed about the account of the Holy Spirit having descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove, we would say to him, "Sir, who is it that says in Isaiah, 'And now the Lord has sent me and his Spirit.'" In which sentence, as the meaning is doubtful – viz., whether the Father and the Holy Spirit sent Jesus, or the Father sent both Christ and the Holy Spirit – the latter is correct. For, because the Saviour was sent, afterwards the Holy Spirit was sent also, that the prediction of the prophet might be fulfilled; and as it was necessary that the fulfilment of the prophecy should be known to posterity, the disciples of Jesus for that reason committed the result to writing. in which, as the expression is ambiguous, is it the Father and the Holy Spirit who have sent Jesus; or the Father, who hath sent both Christ and the Holy Spirit? The latter is the true interpretation."[51]

According to Origen, the Most High Supreme Father Yahweh sent the Messiah and the Holy Spirit to deliver the message found in Isaiah 40-48. It may be of interest to note that Origen, in his writings, used the word "Trinity," but it should be understood that in the 3rd century the word "Trinity" did not hold the same meaning attributed to the word today. According to current Trinitarian doctrine, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are One in essence and are co-eternal. According to Origen, however, Yeshua "was born of the Father before all creatures":

> Secondly, that Jesus Christ Himself, who came (into the world), was born of the Father before all creatures; that, after He had been the servant of the Father in the creation of all things—"For by Him were all things made"—He in the last times, divesting Himself (of His glory), became a man, and was incarnate although God, and while made a man remained the God which He was; that He assumed a body like to our own, differing in this respect only, that it was born of a virgin and of the Holy Spirit: that this Jesus Christ was truly born, and did truly suffer, and did not endure this death common (to man) in appearance only, but did truly die; that He did truly rise from the dead; and that after His resurrection He conversed with His disciples, and was taken up (into heaven).[52]

Frankly, if it weren't for the names attributed to the Father and Son, I would be in complete agreement with Origen's statement above. Elsewhere in his writings, Origen delves more deeply into the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, occasionally coming up with some rather esoteric notions, so I'm not about to express agreement with everything proposed by Origen in his writings, but the above is sufficient common ground worth noting for the purposes of this study. We are moreover in agreement with his exegesis of Isaiah 48:16. We will address additional historical understanding of Yeshua's pre-carnal existence in Part 2.

NOTE: Part 2 of this study (my debate presentation), which includes screen shots from the PowerPoint presentation, is not currently available. I hope to make it available shortly. Thank you for your patience and may Yahweh bless!

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[51] Origen (c. 184 CE – c. 253 CE), *Contra Celsum*, Book I, ch. 46. This work is available for reading online at www.newadvent.org/fathers/04161.htm.

[52] Origen, *De Principiis*, Preface, 4. This work is available online at www.newadvent.org/fathers/04120.htm.