

Jesus' Unique Relationship with YHWH in Biblical Exegesis by David Capes

The following excerpts are from:

- Monotheism and Christology in Greco-Roman Antiquity
<https://www.amazon.com/Monotheism-Christology-Greco-Roman-Supplements-Testamentum/dp/9004437975>
- Chapter 5: Jesus' Unique Relationship with YHWH in Biblical Exegesis: A Response to Recent Objections, by David B. Capes https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004438088_006

Related: *YHWH Texts and Jesus*, by Larry Hurtado

- Part One <https://larryhurtado.wordpress.com/2019/05/06/capes-on-yhwh-texts-and-jesus/>
- Part Two <https://larryhurtado.wordpress.com/2019/05/07/yhwh-texts-and-jesus-a-follow-up/>

Abstract:

“This essay examines the apostle Paul’s citations of Jewish scriptures featuring the divine name YHWH/kurios where Paul takes kurios to refer to Jesus. Capes argues that this intertextual linkage of Jesus with the God of Israel is so strong that we must conclude that, already at the beginning of the Christian movement, influential figures such as Paul considered Jesus to be constitutive of God’s unique identity. Capes considers recent objections (e.g., from J. R. Daniel Kirk) to this interpretation of the evidence and defends his own case for the novelty and profundity of Paul’s citation practice.”

Begin Excerpt

“...we should not miss the fact that Paul’s use of YHWH texts to refer to Jesus has to do with a person of recent memory, a person whose years overlapped the life of the apostle and perhaps other early Christian authors. He is not applying these texts to a man of the distant past, a person shrouded in mystery (assuming Melchizedek refers to the priest-king of Genesis 14), or a heavenly being (assuming Melchizedek is to be identified with Michael, or some other principal angel). Granted, there may be a handful of pre-Christian Jewish texts which allude to a God text and associate certain phrases to another figure in some way, but the phenomenon we encounter in Paul’s letters is of a different order. The apostle describes Jesus as bestowed by God with the name above every name, YHWH/*kyrios*, and as someone who is worshiped “to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2.9–11); and he routinely refers to Jesus as *kyrios* in particular contexts. There is nothing quite like this in other Jewish texts from the era. At the same time, he sets Jesus in relation to the church as its Lord (*kyrios*) using the same terms and concepts that his ancestral scriptures employed to describe the relationship of YHWH to Israel. Furthermore, as I have emphasized in this and earlier publications, in those letters where he often quotes scripture, he

has no qualms about taking texts which originally refer to God by the divine name and applying them to Jesus. This he does right alongside quotations of YHWH texts that refer to God the Father. Taken together, what we have in Paul's letters is an unprecedented application of God's unique covenant name to Jesus that results in a lofty estimation of his significance for the churches. The apostle does not present this as something new or peculiar to his own thinking; instead, he appeals to this practice as if it is known and the common property of the churches."

End Excerpt.

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