

Creeds of the Kehillah ~ Part 5

The Apostles' Creed ~ Part 4

This post will continue our closer look at the **Apostles' Creed** to learn more about what we affirm that we believe.

AND IN JESUS CHRIST, GOD'S ONLY SON, OUR LORD:

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell.
On the third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

AND IN JESUS CHRIST, GOD'S ONLY SON, OUR LORD

We tend to think of creeds as cold moralistic summaries of doctrine. But the real centerpiece of the **Apostles' Creed** is not a doctrine but a name.

Even before the ancient baptismal confession had taken shape, perhaps the earliest **Messianic** confession consisted of just three words: **Yeshua Is Adonai** (Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3). That early statement remains the spiritual heartbeat of the baptismal creed. Everything else in the creed radiates like the spokes of a wheel from that hub: personal attachment to **Yeshua**; total allegiance to him.

At the center of the **Messianic** faith is not an idea or a theory or even a vision of life but the name of a person, **Yeshua HaMashiach**. Our faith centers on personal attachment to Him.

Attachment to **Yeshua** is personal, but that is not to say that it is a private matter. **Sha'ul** reminds the Philippians that one day all worldly powers and authorities will speak the name of **Yeshua** and will confess that **Yeshua the Messiah is Adonai** (Lord) (Phil 2:9–11). To confess **Yeshua** as **Adonai** means to acknowledge him as the one who shares the identity of **Israel's God**. In the **Tanakh**, **God** is named **YHWH**, transliterated as **Adonai** (Lord); and in the **Brit Hadashah**, **Yeshua** is revealed as the one who bears that name. So, to confess **Yeshua** as **Adonai** is to set Him above all other loyalties. It is to make a universal claim. If **Yeshua** truly shares the identity of **YHWH**, then He is the hidden truth of creation, history, and every human life (Col 1:15–17). I confess Him as my **Adonai** only because I recognize him as **the Adonai**.

Such a universal claim might sound insensitive or even oppressive to modern pluralistic ears. And **Messianics** have indeed at times used the universality of the gospel to justify oppression and injustice. Rightly understood, however, the message of **Yeshua's** lordship is a word of comfort and hope for all people.

In the ancient church, the confession of **Yeshua's** lordship began to change the way **Messianics** thought about slavery. Societies were rigidly stratified and hierarchical. There were marked distinctions between men and women, rich and poor, Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free. But the **Messianic** community did not accept that those social distinctions defined people. All came to the same baptismal waters and confessed the same **Adonai**. When they entered naked into the waters of baptism, no one could tell the difference between rich and poor, slave and free. So even when the **Messianic** movement had barely begun, we find **Sha'ul** urging a believer to regard his **Messianic** slave as *no longer a slave ... but a dear brother* (Philemon 16).

Because **Yeshua** is the universal **Adonai**, all worldly power is limited and provisional. Because He is **Adonai**, social distinctions are relativized and will ultimately be set aside altogether. All people owe their allegiance, not to any other person but **Yeshua**. Before Him, they can recognize one another as sisters and brothers. And so, the logic of universal lordship gives rise to a classless society.

The ancient institution of slavery did not vanish all at once. But when slaves and free persons stood side by side and confessed that **Yeshua** is **Adonai**, the days of slavery were numbered. When early believers entered the waters and took the name of **Yeshua** on their lips, the tectonic plates shifted. The slow revolution had begun. ¹

In my next post, we will continue to unpack this second article of faith that **Yeshua is Adonai** in the **Apostle's Creed**.

¹ The Apostles' Creed: A Guide to the Ancient Catechism.