

THE BISRAT

Apologetics in African Terms

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JUDE 3 PROJECT

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AFRICAN TERMS

Amente: The Egyptian word for “Hell”

Bisrat: The Ethiopian word for “Good News” or “Gospel”

Nazrawi: An Ethiopian word meaning “Christian”
(literally: “Nazarene”)

Seuartu Ngiss: The Nubian/Kushite translation of “Holy Spirit”

Shajeh: A Coptic (Egyptian/Kemetic) word meaning “Word,” used
in reference to the Word of God (i.e. Bible)

Tilli: A Nubian/Kushite word meaning “God” from an ancient
Kushite female deity name before the embrace of the Bisrat

Urpeh: A Coptic (Egyptian/Kemetic) word meaning “temple”
(literally: “to practice heaven”), originally referring to
pagan Egyptian temples that the Egyptian Nazrawi used
to refer to the “church,” which were often converted from
pagan temples

Yeshua: The original Hebrew name of “Jesus”

WHY IS AFRICAN TERMINOLOGY USED?

The Shajeh teaches that Tilli desires the salvation of all people and that all races are made in His image. Tilli is glorified through the diversity of Creation and human culture. Indeed, Tilli is diversity – He exists forever as Father, Son, and Seuartu Ngiss – three in one. Unity is not uniformity. When a person becomes a Nazrawi and is saved, they do not cease to be a part of their culture. On the contrary, becoming a Nazrawi does not diminish your cultural identity; it fulfills your cultural identity. Becoming a Nazrawi doesn't make you less Black; it is the only way to be fully Black. Tilli is the one who created Blackness in His image. By being made right with Tilli through faith in Yeshua, your Blackness is brought to its fullest completion. And this is true for all people.

It is an insult to Tilli's Creation for all Nazrawi to speak, look, and live according to one culture. Rather, we must honor Tilli by glorifying Him according to our own cultures. By worshiping Tilli in uniquely Black ways, we are honoring Him and declaring that Black is beautiful, because Black (like every other people) is made in His image.

The Bisrat is presented here using terms that have been used for centuries by African Nazrawi from various parts of the continent. This also demonstrates that the Bisrat has been among Black people since the beginning of the Urpeh. Various ancient African cultures are embraced in this book to reflect the Pan-African ancestry of Black descendants of those who arrived in the Americas through slavery.¹

¹ Rom. 2:28-29, 9:1-3; 1 Cor. 12:12-30.



Coptic (Egyptian) inscription outside of the Hanging Church, the oldest urpeh in Africa



Thirteenth-century urpeh of Saint Giyorgis in Lalibela, Ethiopia



Entrance to the Hanging Church in Christian Cairo, oldest urpeh in Africa

THE BISRAT

Tilli, the Nubian or Kushite word for God, is perfect, loving, and exists forever as Father, Son and Seuartu Ngiss (Holy Spirit). Tilli created the entire universe out of His love and made humanity – male and female – the pinnacle of Creation. Humans were created in Tilli's image with a right relationship with Him and the rest of His Creation. People became spiritually dead and separated from Tilli when, like our ancestors Adam and Eve, we rejected Tilli's reign and did what was right in our own eyes. Because all of us are born in sin, we are lost and on our way to Amente.

Going to urpeh, living right, helping others, being a good person – these are important things that Tilli wants us to do, but they don't save you. The only way we can be saved and made right with Tilli is by believing in His death and resurrection for us. If you want to be made right, you can be saved right now simply by confessing with your mouth that Yeshua is Lord and believing in your heart that Tilli raised Him from the dead. When you do this, you are saved!²

² Gen. 1:27; Ps. 18:30; Mt. 28:19-20; Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:57; Heb. 4:15.

Questions in the Black Community about the Bisrat

IS CHRISTIANITY THE WHITE MAN'S RELIGION?

No. The Bisrat is Tilli's message of freedom from sin and death and is available to all people, regardless of their race. The Urpeh, or the Body of Christ, is made up of people from all backgrounds who have been saved by grace through faith in the Messiah. The Bisrat enters into, transforms, rejects, and embraces different aspects of all cultures.

All humans are made in the image of Tilli, and human cultural difference was a part of Tilli's creation. However, human cultures are also corrupted by sin. Therefore, all cultures reflect aspects of Tilli's character in some ways and offend Tilli's Law in others. When people are made right with Tilli by grace through faith in the Messiah Yeshua, the Seuartu Ngiss enters the believer and both adopt the parts of a culture that are in line with the Shajeh and reject the parts that are not. This is a lifelong process of sanctification that will only be completed at the glorious return of the Messiah.

Tilli exists forever in diversity – as Father, Son and Seuartu Ngiss. Therefore, out of His own diversity, He created humanity diverse. Even in eternity, the People of Tilli will have different cultures, races and languages. This diversity reflects His glory. The Urpeh can only reflect the glory of Tilli by embracing the full diversity of all human cultures.

Human culture is also specific to a certain area, time period, and group. While the Bisrat is a universal message from Tilli, our response to that message and how we function in the Urpeh is often culturally specific. Unlike Islam, which belongs to the Arabic language and culture, or Hinduism, which belongs to the Indian language and culture, Christianity cannot belong to any one culture. Instead, true Christianity embraces every race and culture. This means that there can be no one universal format for worship, preaching, ministry, or prayer. Any expression of the Urpeh that enforces one cultural expression is not the true Urpeh.³

³ Is. 49:6; Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 1:20, 3:23, 14:14; Gal. 2:14, 3:28; Rev. 7:9.



Eighteenth-century Kongo cross with African Jesus



Remains of sixth-century urpeh and citadel in Nubia, Nile is in background.

DID CHRISTIANITY COME TO BLACK PEOPLE THROUGH SLAVERY?

No. The first Black Nazrawi (Christian) in history was a Nubian diplomat who freely embraced the Bisrat from the Hebrew Apostle Philip long before slavery. In fact, the majority of ancient African literature and architecture following the appearance of the Bisrat is predominately Nazrawi in nature. Even Nubia and Ethiopia, the only Black

nation on earth that has never been colonized, became a Nazrawi nation over a thousand years before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Therefore, not only was the Bisrat present in ancient Africa, but it was the dominant religion and cultural force that gave birth to Black African culture and civilization.⁴

⁴ John of Ephesus, *Ecclesiastical History, The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History of John Bishop of Ephesus*, ed. Robert Payne Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1860); Getatchew Haile, "The Homily in Honour of St. Frumentius, Bishop of Axum (EMML¹ 1763 ff. 84^v-86^r)," in *Analecta Bollandiana* 97 (1979): 309-318.

DOES ANCIENT CHRISTIANITY IN EAST AFRICA HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH WEST AFRICA?

Yes. Nubia and Ethiopia were the only urbanized Black civilizations during the first few centuries of the Urpeh. Other nations like Mali, Ghana, Kongo, and Zimbabwe began to develop further west and south by trading with Nubia and Ethiopia, and thus, learned of the Bisrat from other Africans! In fact, some Central and West African people groups were Nazrawi before the arrival of Europeans. For example, in the 1300s, King Mansa Musa of the

Mali Empire said there were African Christians in his kingdom who owned the lands with the most gold. Whenever he tried to take the land, the gold stopped growing! Furthermore, the polluted form of religion that Europeans brought to the shores of Africa in the fifteenth century was not Christianity at all, but the work of the Devil. Therefore, the first introduction to the true Bisrat for West Africans was from other Africans, and it was free of oppression.⁵

⁵ Martens-Czarnecka, Małgorzata. "Wall Paintings Discovered in Dongola in the 2004 Season," *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 16 (2005): 273-284; N. Levitzion & J.F.P. Hopkins, *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 250.



An eleventh-century painting of Central Africans worshipping Yeshua in a Nubian monastery



Sixth-century baptistery from North Africa

⁶ Ex. 12:38; 1 Ki. 8:41-43; Jon. 4:11; Tudor Parfitt, *Black Jews in Africa and the Americas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); J.F.P. Hopkins, *Corpus of early Arabic Sources for West African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 97; Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Mark M. Smith, *Stono: Documenting and Interpreting a Southern Revolt* (Columbia, SC: The University of South Carolina Press, 2005); Giyorgis of Sagla, Mashafa Mestir, ed. Yaqob Beyene, in *Giyorgis di Sagla: Il Libro del Mistero, Parte Prima & Parte Seconda* CSCO 515/516 & 532/533, *Scriptores Aethiopici* 89/90 & 97/98 (Louvain: Secrétariat du SCO, 1990 & 1993).

ARE BLACK PEOPLE HEBREWS?

Some are; most are not. There have been Jewish people in Nubia and Ethiopia since ancient times, and some have migrated further south into Africa, such as the Lemba tribe in Zimbabwe. It is possible that some of these African Hebrews had descendants in West Africa who were victims of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, although there is no evidence thus far to indicate this. However, even if some African slaves in the Americas were Hebrews, they would have been a minority. Most African slaves in the Americas practiced traditional polytheistic African religions. A minority of African slaves were Muslim, like Omar ibn Said. Another minority included African slaves who were already Nazrawi, such as the Kongolesse slaves who were from the Kongo, which was a Nazrawi nation in the early 18th century.

The first Sub-Saharan African author in history, Giyorgis of Sagla, came from Ethiopia, which had been predominately Nazrawi since the fourth century. Giyorgis wrote his book,

Mashafa Mestir (“Book of Mystery”) in 1424 CE and clearly viewed Hebrews/Jews as a distinctly different people from Africans such as himself: “Therefore, the denial of the Jews and the Muslims is that Jesus Christ is not the Son of ‘Egziabher (“God”). We Christians, however, confess that ‘Egziabher will come with His Son and His Holy Spirit.” Giyorgis clearly demonstrates that some Africans did not think of themselves as Hebrews.

However, whether Black people are Hebrew or not, the salvation that was made possible by the death and resurrection of Yeshua is available to all people through faith, regardless of their race or ethnicity. Tilli made it clear, even in the Old Testament, that He desired salvation to include people who were not Hebrew. Whether or not Black people are Hebrews has no bearing on the reality that salvation is for all people who have faith in the Messiah.⁶

ARE BLACK PEOPLE MOORS?

Some are; most are not – and many people became mixed with “Moor” blood as a result of racism and oppression from North Africa. The word “moor” is a term that Romans used to refer to the inhabitants of North Africa, who are not Black. In fact, many Black, sub-Saharan Africans who live in North Africa today experience intense racism.

This racism was a big problem in ancient times as well. For example, the tenth-century Persian historian and traveler Al-Istakhri traveled throughout Africa and said that the North Africans were brown while the West Africans were black. In the eleventh century, the “Moorish” North African Almoravid dynasty invaded Black West Africa and forced Islam onto the inhabitants. In the fourteenth century, the North African Muslim historian Ibn Khaldun wrote, “Later, the authority of Ghana waned and its power declined, while that of the veiled people, their neighbors on the north next to the lands of the Berbers, increased. The latter triumphed over the Blacks, plundered their territories, imposed

tribute and poll-tax, and forced many of them to join Islam.” At the same time, “Moorish” North Africans invaded and destroyed the Ghana Empire and forced Islam in Ghana. In addition to these “Moorish” North African invasions into West Africa, North Africans also stole slaves from West Africa and brought them into North Africa. Through all of the invasion and slavery, some brown North Africans mixed with Black West Africans, and even today, some people in Mali, Mauritania, and Burkina Faso have “Moorish” North African descent.

So yes, some of the slaves brought to America were of partial North African descent. However, the majority of Black people’s ancestry is of sub-Saharan African people who were thought of as distinct from North Africans. It’s also worth noting that relationships between sub-Saharan and North Africans were made possible by colonialism and slavery. Therefore, Black people who claim to be “Moors” are also claiming ancestry to people who did and still do oppress Black people.⁷

⁷ Hopkins, *Corpus of early Arabic Sources*, 42; John Ralph Willis, *Studies in West African Islamic History, Vol. 1: The Cultivators of Islam* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1979), 103.



A Nazrawi cross in the Mosque of Kairouan, the oldest mosque in Africa, which was built with Nazrawi materials



Sixth-century Ankh-style cross from a Nazrawi monastery in Kemet (Egypt)

IS JESUS A COPY OF HERO / HORUS?

Not at all. Most Kemetic/Conscious people who make this claim are basing their arguments in white sources instead of a study of their own religion. If you look at sources from Kemet (Egypt) like the *Contendings of Horus and Seth*, you see their claims are nothing like those of the Shajeh. Mary was a virgin; Auset drew semen into herself from Ausar's dead body. Jesus actually died on a cross; Heru was bitten by a scorpion in an assassination attempt from his uncle Seb. Tilli the Father is eternal and rules over all; Ausar died and then ruled the underworld. Jesus holds all power; Heru was only granted kingship of Kemet by the supreme god Ra. Jesus' goal was the salvation of all humanity from sin; Heru's goal was becoming king of Kemet. These religions have very little in common.

In fact, Kemetic religion is more similar to other religions that are just as old. Sumerian and Assyrian

religions also believe in supreme sun gods and a pantheon of gods that require offerings for good fortune. The ancient Kemetics even borrowed deities like Anat from the Hyksos, Apedemak from the Nubians and Serapis from the Greeks. It wasn't until Kemetics adopted the Bisrat that they stopped adopting European religious practices.

When Kemetics became Nazrawi, they resisted white oppression and the theology of the Roman Empire after the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE – and were oppressed by Roman Christians for doing so. But when they worshipped Heru and Auset, they were sell-outs who embraced European religion. They didn't mind "copying" other religions – they did it themselves. Even if the Bisrat had copied Kemet, it would pale in comparison to their habit of copying other religions since ancient times.⁸

⁸ *The Contendings of Horus and Seth*, ed. Edward F. Wente, Jr. in *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry*, 3rd Ed., 91-103 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 91-103; George Hart, *The Routledge Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses*, 2nd Ed. (New York, Routledge, 2005), 29.

WAS CHRISTIANITY CREATED BY THE ROMAN EMPIRE?

No. The Bisrat was revealed through Yeshua the Messiah who is fully Tilli and fully human; a brown-skinned, Palestinian, Aramaic-speaking Hebrew man. Similarly, the first Nazrawi were Hebrews who lived in every nation on earth – the Roman Empire, the Persian Empire, Nubia, and India. These Hebrews of various ethnicities and races spread the Bisrat with their non-Hebrew kinfolk, making the Urpeh international from the first century. All of these Nazrawi believed in Yeshua, that He is Tilli and the only way to salvation.

When Tilli became a human in Yeshua, the Hebrews were oppressed by the Roman Empire – and the Romans looked down upon the Hebrews. In fact, the Hebrews waged war against the Roman Empire several times before and after the life of Yeshua. They even killed Nazrawi because of their refusal to worship their pagan gods. The Roman Empire could not have created a religion that it hated. Instead, in the fourth century, some Roman Christians came to believe Emperor Constantine was a Christian and the Roman Empire was God's chosen Empire. These fake Christians put their national identity and prosperity above their identity as Nazrawi.

The Roman Emperor Constantine was actually an Arian Christian, which means a "Christian" who doesn't believe that Jesus is Tilli. Ironically, he also presided over the Council of Niceae in 325 CE, whose theologians declared that Yeshua was Tilli. In fact, most Nazrawi in the Roman Empire had believed that Yeshua was Tilli for hundreds of years. Constantine was among the first in the empire to say that Yeshua was not Tilli.

The Roman Empire did not invent the Bisrat; they polluted it with their own sense of imperialism. And we still have many white so-called Christians today who make an idol out of the imperialistic, American exceptionalistic, white supremacist perversion of the Bisrat. So-called Christians today who support mass incarceration, drone attacks, and building walls to oppress our neighbors do not represent the Bisrat of the Shajeh. Neither did Constantine or the Roman Emperors after him.⁹ The true Bisrat of Yeshua teaches that our true citizenship is in Heaven.



Fourth-century stalae of Negus (King) Ezana of 'Agaze (Ethiopia) describing his belief in Yeshua

⁹ Mt. 25:31-46, 26:52; Jn. 18:36; Acts 2:5; Phil. 3:2, Heb. 13:1-3. Cicero, *De Provinciis Consularibus Oratio*, ed. Luca Grillo (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 57; Steve Mason, *A History of the Jewish War, A.D. 66-74* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Charles Matson Odahl, *Constantine and the Christian Empire* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004).



Thirteenth-century Ethiopian Urpeh with sun-image, influenced by pre-Nazrawi sun worship

IS AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY BAD?

Yes and no. African cultures, like every other culture in the world, are made in the image of Tilli. But when sin entered the world through Adam and Eve, all humans became separated from Tilli and slaves to sin. Therefore, every culture reflects Tilli's image in some ways, and is polluted by sin in others. For example, most African cultures believe in a supreme deity, a Creator that speaks through His creation, evil spirits that are defeated by the Creator, and that we must honor our ancestors. These are all good beliefs and virtues that reflect Tilli's teachings in the Shajeh. However, many African cultures believe in worshiping multiple gods, casting spells, and rendering prayer to our ancestors. These are unbiblical falsehoods that the African and African-descended Nazrawi must reject.

There are many aspects of African spirituality, such as dancing, masks, pouring libations, and music, that the Nazrawi can transform in the worship of Yeshua. This is no different than European-descended Nazrawi who have transformed European pagan traditions such as Christmas trees, wreaths, Celtic crosses, and Easter in order to worship Yeshua. Nazrawi are in every ethnic group and must both reject aspects of their ancestral traditions that are sinful, and embrace aspects of their ancestral traditions that are in line with the Shajeh. Tilli is glorified in the wonderful diversity with which His children worship and honor Him.¹⁰

¹⁰ Gen. 1:26-28; Ex. 20:12; Lev. 19:31; Ps. 19:1; 1 Cor. 9:19-23; Eph. 4:17-19; Heb. 13:7; Kwame Bediako, *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa: History and Experience* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000).



GLORY BE TO TILLI!

**THE BISRAT, OR GOOD NEWS, IS
THAT TILLI BECAME A HUMAN
NAMED YESHUA THE MESCHIACH.**

Tilli took on flesh as Yeshua and **experienced all the joys and sorrows we experience** without committing sin. He lived a **perfect life** and **died on a Roman cross for our sins**, suffering the consequences of our rebellion and establishing justice. Yeshua died and then defeated death when **He rose again in all power** through the Seuartu Ngiss. Now we have a Way to be made **alive again!** All who have faith that **Yeshua's death atones for our sin**, and **His resurrection gives us new life**, will be given a **right relationship with Tilli** again.

DOES THE BIBLE SUPPORT SLAVERY?

No. There is a vast difference between slavery – which is forced ownership of another human being – and servitude, which is a vocational situation for people in poverty. The Shajeh condemns slavery and it allows for servitude. English Bibles have erroneously used the word “slave” in places where it should say “servant.” The Hebrew word *ebed* and the Greek word *doulos* can mean both “slave” and “servant,” and the context determines how it should be translated. For example, when a verse is speaking against stealing or harsh treatment or ownership of people, these words should be translated as “slave.” But when the Shajeh talks about poor people entering into servitude as part of an arranged marriage, payment of debt, or a criminal sentence, the word should be translated as “servant.” The Shajeh allows for servitude and commands that an employer must treat their servant fairly, provide for them, and allow them to leave servitude when their payment is covered or after six years.

Sometimes servants found themselves under harsh employers. Unlike servitude to the Hebrews, servitude to nations like Babylon, Persia and Rome

was often unjust by design. The Shajeh commands that Nazrawi in such situations must not physically resist unjust employers or government. However this is not an endorsement of injustice, but a command that Nazrawi always live like Yeshua. While Nazrawi are not to physically resist those who do evil, we are called to boldly speak out against evil and try to escape persecution. In fact, servants who escaped unjust treatment were cared for and not returned unless the employer was also a Nazrawi who was told to treat their servants as “brothers and sisters.”

The Shajeh does not approve of the kind of chattel slavery that Europeans enforced upon Africans. The Hebrew Law code in the Old Testament calls for human-stealers to be put to death, and the New Testament also insists that stealing humans is contrary to the *Bisrat* of Yeshua. Therefore, the Europeans that supported American slavery were not Nazrawi, but were agents of the Devil. For this reason, they kept the Shajeh from slaves or gave slaves corrupted versions of the Shajeh that don't clearly call for the freedom of all people.¹¹

¹¹ Gen. 24:2-4; Ex. 8:1; 21:2-21; Lev. 22:11; Deut. 15:14, 24:18; Is. 1:17; Matt. 5:39, 10:23; Rom. 13:2; Eph. 6:5; Col. 4:1; Phil. 16; 1 Pet. 2:18; Dennis Edwards, *The Story of God Bible Commentary: 1 Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 2017), 117.



King Nzinga Mbemba of Kongo who freely embraced the Bislam and wrote letters denouncing the slave practices of the Portuguese in the 16th century



Ottobah Cugoano, an 18th-century West African who was taken as a slave to England, became free, became a leader in the abolition movement, and wrote against the European belief in the “Curse of Ham.”

ARE BLACK PEOPLE CURSED?

No. Like all human beings, Black people are made in the image (er'eya) of Tilli. However, people throughout history have believed that Black skin is cursed, ugly, or inferior. Ancient Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, and Romans all looked down on dark-skinned Blacks from sub-Saharan Africa. However, the Shajeh makes several positive references to Black people and Black skin. The bride of Solomon declared that "I am Black and beautiful... do not look down on me because I am black." Tilli knew that Black skin was looked down on in the ancient world, and that is why Black skin is the only skin color that is specifically mentioned in the Shajeh. This is not because Tilli loves Black people more than other people, but because Tilli always uplifts the very things that the world sees as inferior.

Many white people justified slavery and oppression by saying Black people are cursed descendants of Ham, who was cursed by his father Noah. This is wrong for two important reasons. First, Noah did not curse Ham, but his son Canaan, and this curse was fulfilled when Israel conquered Canaan. Second, not all Black people are descendants of Ham – some are the descendants of Shem as well. White people who use the Curse of Canaan to justify evil and oppression are twisting the Shajeh to support their own evil desires, just like the Jewish and Muslim people who believed this before them. The Shajeh, however, says that Black people are beautiful and are a part of the family of Tilli.¹²

¹² Ps. 68:31, 87:4; Song 1:5; Is. 18:7; Am. 9:7; Zeph. 3:10; Act 8:27-40; 1 Cor. 1:27; Ephraim Isaac, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Tawahido Church* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2013), 7; Rodney S. Sadler, Jr., *Can a Cushite Change His Skin? An Examination of Race, Ethnicity, and Othering in the Hebrew Bible* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2005).

DOES THE CHURCH CARE ABOUT INJUSTICE?

The true Church does; the fake church does not. The Shajeh makes it very clear that poverty, racism, and misogyny exist because of people who abuse their power. Tilli hears the cry of the oppressed and defends them. Tilli also demands that His Urpeh stand in solidarity with the oppressed, defend them, and empower them. Any church that teaches that racism does not exist, justice is not the prerogative of the Church, poor people are just lazy, we need to prevent poor people from coming to our country, or Black people just need to learn to respect police and there won't be any problems – these are NOT churches! These are pagan temples that worship wealth and power.

The true Urpeh of Yeshua gives resources to the poor and condemns the unjust policies of those in power. There are many so-called churches that are filled with people who do not live in or help the community. There are some churches that

give handouts but do not speak out against the gentrification, police brutality, mass incarceration, absentee landlords, and removal of resources that plague our community. For this reason, there is now a civil rights movement happening almost completely outside of the so-called church. These so-called churches are a disgrace to the true Urpeh of Yeshua that empowers the poor and calls the powerful to justice.¹⁵

Frederick Douglas understood the difference between the true Urpeh and fake churches: “Between the Christianity of this land, and the Christianity of Christ, I recognize the widest possible difference – so wide, that to receive the one as good, pure, and holy, is of necessity to reject the other as bad, corrupt, and wicked.” Do not judge the true Urpeh by false teachers and idolaters of power. Find a true Urpeh that teaches the Shajeh and fights for justice.

¹⁵ Deut. 15:4; Ps. 146:7; Is. 1:11-17; Am. 5:21-24; Mt. 7:15-23, 15:12-14, 16:25; Jas. 2:6; Frederick Douglas, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas: An American Slave* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2009).



Fifth-century North African mosaic of Daniel in the lion's den



Sixth-century Ethiopian illuminated prayer book

DID JESUS CLAIM TO BE GOD?

Yes. Yeshua claimed to be Tilli in ways that both Hebrews and Greeks could understand and urged His followers to worship him. Yeshua's apostles also taught that He was Tilli. Yeshua's beloved disciple, John, reported that Yeshua referred to Himself as "I Am" and the "Son of Man," ancient Hebrew terms for Tilli. John also called Yeshua the Logos. This was a Greek concept that Platonic and Stoic people used to talk about the creative force in the universe that gives life and thought to all creatures. As the apostles spread the Bisrat all over the world, Nazrawi from different nations came to believe and affirm that Yeshua is Tilli.

If Yeshua had not claimed to be Tilli, the Hebrew leaders would not have wanted so badly to kill Him. It wasn't until the 300s that a man named Arius became the first person to call themselves a Christian and yet claim that Yeshua was not Tilli – and Arius' theology was rejected by Nazrawi all around the world. The only people who embraced this idea were Roman Emperors like Constantine, Constadius, and Valens and Germanic Kings like Odoacer who conquered Rome in 476 CE. While these European leaders embraced the idea that Yeshua was not Tilli, African Nazrawi and Kings such as Athanasius of Kemet (Egypt) and King Ezana of 'Agaze (Ethiopia) embraced the true and age-old belief that Yeshua is indeed Tilli.¹⁴

¹⁴ Ex. 3:14; Mt. 14:62, 28:9; Lk. 19:40, 22:70-71; Jn. 1:1-5, 8:58-59; Col. 2:9; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 1:8; 1 Jn. 5:20; Stephanie L. Black, "'In the Power of God Christ': Greek Inscriptional Evidence for the Anti-Arian Theology of Ethiopia's First Christian King," in *Bulletin of SOAS* 71 (2008): 93-110; Athanasius of Alexandria, *Apologia ad Constantinum*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiæ Græcæ* 25, 593-642 (Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1857); Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003).



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