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The YHWH Christology of the Gospel of John¹

Charles A. Gieschen

Although there is little debate about the presentation of Jesus in the Gospel of John being a high Christology that climaxes in the post-resurrection confession of Thomas, “my Lord and my God” (John 20:28), misunderstanding still exists as to what the evangelist was doing in his presentation of Jesus.² Early in the twentieth century, scholars such as Wilhelm Bousset marginalized such a high confession of Jesus as “Lord and God” with the argument that such confessions were made in the latter part of the first century among Gentile Christians who had been polytheists confessing many gods and many lords before confessing Jesus as Lord and God.³ Larry Hurtado, among other scholars in the latter part of the twentieth century, dismantled this argument because the author of John is clearly a Jew writing to monotheistic Jewish Christians for whom there is only *one* Lord and God, namely, YHWH.⁴

Differences, however, exist among those who emphasize that an early high Christology is being reflected in the Gospel of John. For example, Richard Bauckham argues that writers like John are seeking to identify Jesus within the mystery of the one God YHWH, so they have a Divine Identity Christology that includes Jesus within the mystery of YHWH.⁵ While agreeing with Bauckham’s

¹ The transliteration of the tetragrammaton יהוה as YHWH will be used in this article. The title “YHWH Christology” is used to indicate that the Son, including the incarnate Son, is presented as the visible image of YHWH in this Gospel. Although the portrayal of the Son as divine is the focus of this study, I completely disagree with Ernst Käsemann’s well-known and influential conclusion that the Gospel of John is “naively docetic”; see *Jesu letzter Wille nach Johannes 17*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1971). For a balanced critique of Käsemann’s conclusion, see Marianne Meye Thompson, *The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

² All English translations of biblical texts are my own.

³ This is the primary thesis argued in Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus*, trans. J. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), which is a translation of the German fifth edition. The German first edition is *Kyrios Christos: Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Anfängen des Christentums bis Irenaeus*, FRLANT 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1913).

⁴ Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

⁵ This basic argument is expressed in Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

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emphasis on early expressions of divine Christology, the teaching of Jesus and the evangelist John in this Gospel requires one to think of Christology even more radically than Jesus as being identified within the mystery of YHWH. It was not so much that early Christians like the evangelist John had to fit the Son into their understanding of God, but that they understood the Son to be the visible YHWH seen throughout history, now climactically present in the flesh-and-blood Jesus. Thus, it was not so much of a need to express the identity of the Son within YHWH, as there was a need to express an understanding of the Father and the Spirit in relationship to the Son whom they confessed to be the visible YHWH seen and speaking all through history as recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures.

William Weinrich notes that John 5:39 is the hermeneutical key to this Gospel, which he summarizes as “all Scripture testifies to the incarnate Word.”⁶ Weinrich’s statement could be nuanced to say that Jesus’ statement, “It is they that bear witness to me” as well as his statement in the same discourse that “he [i.e., Moses] wrote of me” (John 5:46) both encapsulate a central revelation and theme of this Gospel: that all the Old Testament Scriptures testify to the eternal Son as the visible YHWH. *This study will demonstrate that the Gospel of John presents the flesh-and-blood Jesus as the eternal Son who has always been the visible YHWH throughout history.* In short, it will argue that John presents a YHWH Christology throughout his Gospel. The focus of this study is on the person of the Son in John, especially his divine nature and preexistence from eternity, not his work.⁷

I. The Son as Lord and God

An appropriate starting point for this study is the major confession in John by Thomas in John 20:28 noted above: ὁ κύριός μου καὶ ὁ θεός μου (“my Lord and my God”). Two things are striking in this confession. First, it is a distinct confession of Jesus’ divine identity from the more typical confession found in the Synoptic Gospels where Jesus is confessed to be “the Christ” by Jews like Peter (Matt 16:16; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20) and “the Son of God” by Gentiles like the centurion (Matt 27:54; Mark 15:39). The evangelist John is familiar with this more traditional confession and includes both “Christ” and “Son of God” in his narrative: in the list of messianic titles spoken by John the Baptist, Andrew, and Nathanael after they have encountered Jesus (John 1:34, 41, 49); in Martha’s confession before the raising of Lazarus (John 11:27); and also in the summary of the purpose of his Gospel (John

⁶ William C. Weinrich, *John 1:1–7:1* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 87.

⁷ For my discussion of the work of Christ as presented in John, see Charles A. Gieschen, “The Death of Jesus in the Gospel of John: Atonement for Sin?” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 72 (2008): 243–261. It should be noted that the repeated emphasis on the identity of the Son in this Gospel (i.e., his person) is done in service to one’s understanding of the Son’s work.

for “one” at the end or climax of the *Shema*. Bauckham explains the christological and monotheistic significance of Paul’s formulation.

Paul apportions the words of the *Shema* between Jesus and God in order to include Jesus in the unique identity of the one God YHWH confessed in the *Shema*. Similarly, he apportions between Jesus and God the threefold description of God’s unique identifying relationship as Creator to all things, in order to include Jesus in the unique identity of the one Creator.¹²

In contrast to this balanced expression of both monotheism and trinitarian theology of the Father as “God” and the Son as “Lord” in Paul, Thomas’s confession in John’s Gospel stresses that the crucified and risen Jesus is the embodied YHWH *Elohim* confessed by pious Jews in the *Shema*. Jesus is not just being stealthily slid into the identity of YHWH with this confession; he is being confessed as defining the identity of YHWH. Given John’s widespread use of Isaiah, Thomas’s confession may also function as an affirmation of Isaiah 42:8, “I am YHWH *Elohim* [LXX: κύριος ὁ θεός], this is my name.” In the Gospel of John, Jesus is not just “Lord” while the Father has the title “God”; he is both “Lord and God.” Obviously, the Father is also referred to as “God” regularly in this Gospel, most notably by Jesus in the resurrection narrative when he tells Mary Magdalene, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (John 20:17).

II. The Son as the Word

One of the most misunderstood titles for the Son in John, in my opinion, is the first one to appear in the Gospel: ὁ λόγος (“the Word” in John 1:1). The widespread way of understanding “Word” here is the Son as God’s speech, address, or communication.¹³ The use of λόγος as a title for the preexistent Son in the prologue is widely recognized (John 1:1, 14), but its source is often sought solely in traditions about a personal Wisdom (e.g., Prov 8:22–36) rather than in theophanic texts where God’s visible image is called “the Word,” “the Word of YHWH,” or “the Word of God.”¹⁴ Why is YHWH’s visible image in the Old Testament sometimes called “the

¹² Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 216–217.

¹³ E.g., Weinrich, *John 1:1–7:1*, 92–93. He also asserts that the Son as the Word should be understood as Torah (see 131–132).

¹⁴ For the understanding that the background of this language in the prologue is to be found in Second Temple Jewish wisdom tradition, see James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 163–250. For a corrective, see Charles A. Gieschen, “The Divine Name That the Son Shares with the Father in the Gospel of John,” *Reading the Gospel of John’s Christology as Jewish Messianism: Royal, Prophetic, and Divine Messiahs*, ed. Benjamin Reynolds and Gabriele Boccaccini, AGJU 106 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 387–410. Often overlooked is the evidence of the possible relationship between the Divine Name and the Aramaic *Memra* in the Targumim; see

Word of YHWH” (e.g., Jer 1:4–13)? Not just because he speaks words of YHWH, but because he shares the Divine Name. An important christological use of *λόγος* as shorthand for the eternal Son because he has the non-vocalized Divine Name is Revelation 19:12–13, where he is depicted as a warrior on a white horse in the last day battle having “a name that no one knows but himself” (namely, the Divine Name) and “the name by which he is called is the Word of God” (*ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ*). A similar usage appears to be present in the prologue of John: *ὁ λόγος* is used as a “safe” title for the Son who has the unvocalized Divine Name.

It is important to notice that the *λόγος* tradition is found in the Gospel beyond the prologue, despite opinions to the contrary. It is much more natural to expect this Gospel, with its dominant prologue introducing “the Word,” to continue this theme in some way in the body of the narrative. Although one does not find further examples of *ὁ λόγος* exactly as it appears in the prologue, one does find *λόγος* in the singular form modified by a personal pronoun in chapters 5, 8, and 17.¹⁵ In the polemical dialogue of chapter 5, Jesus speaks about God’s unique “Word” (singular) that is not abiding in those with whom he is dialoguing.

Neither his voice have you ever heard, nor his image have you ever seen, and
his Word [*τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ*] you do not have abiding in you. (John 5:37–38)

Based on the reciprocal relationship between Word and Name in the prologue, and the prominence of Name theology elsewhere in John, including in this immediate context (John 5:43), the referent of “his Word” in John 5:38 should be interpreted to be “his Name” rather than “his communication or teaching.” The sense of the sentence is this: these Jews have obviously neither heard the *voice* of the God of Israel (YHWH), nor seen the *image* of God, nor had the *name* of God in them, otherwise they would not be rejecting Jesus (in whom one *hears* God, *sees* God, and has his *name* revealed). The technical understanding of *λόγος* here as “name” is supported by the observation that the immediate context uses a plural form of *ῥήμα*—not *λόγος*—to refer to “words” in the sense of “teachings” (John 5:47; cf. 17:8): “But if you do not believe his [Moses’] writings, how will you believe my words [*τοῖς ἑμοῖς ῥήμασιν*]?”

Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence*, AGJU 42 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 112–114, 275; and especially John Ronning, *The Jewish Targums and John’s Logos Theology* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2010). For the theophanic “Word” traditions in the literature of ancient Israel and second temple Judaism, see Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 103–114.

¹⁵ John 14:23–24 is one text that does not fit neatly into this theory because it shifts between *λόγος* (singular), *λόγοι* (plural), and *λόγος* (singular). Even here, however, keeping “my Word [Name]” could be understood as the key to keeping “my words [teachings].”

This technical usage of *λόγος* is especially dense in John 8, as visible in these lines of that polemical dialogue.

If you abide *in my Word* [ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῷ ἐμῷ] you are truly my disciples and you will know the Truth, and the Truth will free you. (John 8:31–32)

I know that you are seed of Abraham, yet you are seeking to kill me, because *my Word* [ὁ λόγος ὁ ἐμός] finds no place in you. (John 8:37)

Why do you not understand *my speech* [τὴν λαλιὰν τὴν ἐμήν]? Because you are not able to hear *my Word* [τὸν λόγον τὸν ἐμόν]. (John 8:43)

Amen, Amen, I say to you, if anyone keeps *my Word* [τὸν ἐμόν λόγον], he will surely not see death unto the ages. (John 8:51)

But I know him [i.e., God/the Father] and I keep *his Word* [τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ]. (John 8:55)

The identity of Jesus is a central question throughout the Gospel, including this chapter. The sayings here about “my Word,” therefore, can better be understood if their referent is interpreted as Jesus’ “Name” rather than his “teaching.” For example, this approach enables one to make sense of John 8:43: “Why do you not understand *my speech*? Because you are not able to hear *my Word*” (i.e., “If you confessed my Word/Name to be the Divine Name, you would receive and understand my speech as the speech of YHWH”). Understanding John 8:31 in the sense of “abide in my Name” fits better with the organic and personal union described later in John with the same verb: “Abide in me, and I in you” (John 15:4). Furthermore, “keeps my Word” in John 8:51 fits better with the soteriology of the rest of the Gospel if understood in the sense of “confesses my Name,” rather than in the sense of “obeys my teaching.”

This relationship between Word and the Divine Name in the Gospel of John may have already been present in the Targumim that were read in the synagogues of the first century. Previous scholarship has confirmed that the Aramaic term *Memra* (“Word”) in the Targumim is very closely related to the Divine Name.¹⁶ An antecedent to the close linking of Word with the Divine Name in the Gospel of John may be reflected in the Targumim with the substitution of “the name of the *Memra*

¹⁶ See especially Ronning, *The Jewish Targums and John’s Logos Theology*; see also C. T. R. Hayward, “The Holy Name of the God of Moses and the Prologue of St John’s Gospel,” *New Testament Studies* 25 (1978): 16–32. While it is important to be aware of the methodological challenge presented by making proposals about the first century based upon Targumim manuscripts that date from a much later period, yet this evidence should not be ignored because it probably preserves traditions that existed in the first century.

of YHWH” for “YHWH” when it appears in the Masoretic Text (MT), as seen in these two examples.¹⁷

They believed in YHWH and in his servant Moses. (Exod 14:31)

They believed in the name of the Word of YHWH and in the prophecy of his servant Moses. (Tg. Neof. and Tg. Ps.-J. Exod 14:31)

Yet in this matter you were not believing in the YHWH your God, who goes before you on the way, to seek out a place for you to camp. (Deut 1:32–33)

Yet in this matter you were not believing in the name of the Word of YHWH your God, who led before you in the way to prepare a place for your encampment. (Tg. Neof. Deut 1:32–33)

The reciprocal relationship between Word and Name in John is woven tightly together in the prayer of John 17 at the close of the farewell discourse, a prayer that returns the reader to the central themes of the prologue.¹⁸

I revealed your Name [ἐφάνέρωσά σου τὸ ὄνομα] to those you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your Word [τὸν λόγον σου]. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words [τὰ ῥήματα] that you gave to me I have given to them. (John 17:6–8)

I have given them your Word [τὸν λόγον σου], and the world hated them. (John 17:14)

Sanctify them in the truth; your Word [ὁ λόγος ὁ σός] is truth. (John 17:17)

Gilles Quispel made the intriguing suggestion that one expects to read John 17:6 as: “I revealed your Name . . . and they have kept your Name.”¹⁹ That the author intends the reader to understand “Word” here in the sense of “Name” is supported by the careful switch in successive sentences from the singular τὸν λόγον (John 17:6) to the plural τὰ ῥήματα (John 17:7).²⁰ Furthermore, in light of Jesus’ earlier claim in

¹⁷ These English translations of the MT and Targumim are from Ronning, *The Jewish Targums and John’s Logos Theology*, 160, 176.

¹⁸ To state it another way, it is my understanding that the farewell prayer of John 17 is the source for much of the theology presented in the prologue (John 1:1–18).

¹⁹ Gilles Quispel, “John and Jewish Christianity,” *John and Qumran*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (London: Chapman, 1972), 137–155; see also Jarl E. Fossum, *Image of the Invisible God: Essays on the Influence of Jewish Mysticism on Early Christology*, NTOA 30 (Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Göttingen, 1995), 125–126.

²⁰ The same type of switch from the singular form of λόγος to the plural form of ῥήματα is found in John 5:47, as noted above. See also the similar contrast in John 8:43 between τὴν λαλίαν τὴν ἐμήν (“my speech”) and τὸν λόγον τὸν ἐμόν (“my Word”).

John 14:6 (“I am . . . the Truth”), his statement in John 17:17 could be understood as reinterpreting Psalm 119:160 as a self-reference: “Your Word [i.e., the Son] is [the] Truth.”²¹

III. The Son as the Name

There are many titles used for God, but only one personal name, the four-letter Divine Name יהוה (YHWH).²² Another important characteristic of God’s visible form in the Old Testament was interest in his Divine Name as well as the soteriological function of revealing the Divine Name. One does not have to look long or far in the Gospel of John for evidence of both.²³ Both already come forth in the prologue: “To whomever received him, he gave to them authority to become children of God, to the ones who are believing *in his name* [εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ]” (John 1:12). This is stating that faith is not to be placed in the person of Jesus apart from believing that this flesh-and-blood man is the incarnation of the visible form of YHWH. This Gospel unambiguously confesses that Jesus shares the name of the Father: “I have come *in my Father’s name* [ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ πατρὸς μου], and you do not receive me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive” (John 5:43). It also depicts Jesus demonstrating what his true name is by what he says (i.e., his words are YHWH’s words) and especially by what he does (i.e., his works are YHWH’s works): “The works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness to me” (John 10:25; cf. 14:10–11).²⁴ In light of the use of the verb σφραγίζω with the Divine Name in early baptismal texts, it is possible that the possession of the Divine Name is also behind Jesus’ claim that God the Father “sealed [ἐσφραγίσεν]” the Son of Man (John 6:27).²⁵

The Gospel of John even depicts Jesus as the embodiment of the Divine Name of the Father, to the extent that Jesus prays, “*Father, glorify your Name* [πάτερ,

²¹ This is similar to Jesus’ reference to himself as “your Name” in the prayer of John 12:28, “Glorify your Name,” which will be discussed below.

²² For a broad introduction to this area of research, see Gieschen, “The Divine Name in Antebiblical Christology,” 115–158. The discussion below draws on this previous research.

²³ For discussion of the Divine Name in the Christology of John, see especially Gieschen, “The Divine Name That the Father Shares with the Son in the Gospel of John,” 387–410; see also Joshua J. F. Coutts, *The Divine Name in the Gospel of John*, WUNT 2.447 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

²⁴ See further the discussion in Part VII below.

²⁵ E.g., see Revelation 7:2–3 and Herm. *Sim.* 9.16.3–4. John’s prologue indicates that the Son as the Word existed before creation and “became flesh” (John 1:14). In light of this and the use of a title in John 6:27 that emphasizes preexistence (“the Son of Man”) as well as the testimony that Jesus received the Glory of the Father in eternity before creation (John 17:5, 24), John 6:27 appears to reflect the understanding that the Son was also sealed with the Divine Name in eternity before creation. The idea of the Son of Man possessing the Divine Name prior to creation is present in 1 Enoch 48.2–3, a pre-Christian Jewish text (see also n. 27 below).

δόξασόν σου τὸ ὄνομα]” (John 12:28). This is not simply a pious prayer that God’s name be honored through Jesus’ death; it is the identification of Jesus as the Son of Man who shares the Divine Name. This indicates that he can be identified as “the Name,” much like the visible manifestations of the Name of YHWH in some Old Testament texts.²⁶ This personal identification of “the Name” as Jesus is supported by the parallel announcement that comes shortly before this prayer: “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (John 12:23). The “Son of Man,” therefore, is also known as “your [the Father’s] Name.”²⁷ That “glorify your Name” should be understood in this manner is confirmed by two strikingly similar petitions of Jesus in the farewell prayer: “glorify your Son” (John 17:1) and “glorify me” (John 17:5).

This prayer at the close of the farewell discourse is the most profound presentation of testimony in John that Jesus shares the Divine Name of the Father.

I revealed *your name* [σου τὸ ὄνομα] to those you gave me from the world. (John 17:6)

And I am no more in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to you, Holy Father, keep them *in your name which you have given me* [ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου ᾧ δέδωκάς μοι] that they be one, even as we are. While I was with them, I was keeping them *in your name* [ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου] which you have given me; and I guarded them, and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. (John 17:11–12)

I made *your name* [τὸ ὄνομά σου] known to them and will continue to make it known. (John 17:26)

A few conclusions can be drawn from these petitions. First, the repeated use of the personal pronoun makes it evident that the name discussed here is the Divine Name of the Father, to whom this prayer is directed.²⁸ Second, the Divine Name was given to the Son (John 17:11). Based upon the testimony in this prayer that the Son received the Father’s Glory before the foundation of the world (John 17:24), the

²⁶ E.g., Deuteronomy 12:5–11 and 1 Kings 8:12–21; see the discussion in Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 70–78. For a similar use of “the Name” as a title for Jesus, see 3 John 7.

²⁷ The relationship between this Divine Name tradition and the prominent Son of Man sayings in John can be understood in light of traditions like those in 1 Enoch 37–71; see Charles A. Gieschen, “The Name of the Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch,” *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 238–249.

²⁸ Most scholars argue that here “name” denotes the “revealed character and nature of God” rather than the Divine Name; e.g., Catrin H. Williams, *I Am He: The Interpretation of ‘Ani Hū’ in Jewish and Early Christian Literature*, WUNT 2.113 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 280 n. 85. Quispel argues that these verses refer to the Divine Name that was hidden but this Gospel presents as having been revealed by Jesus; see “John and Jewish Christianity,” 148–155.

giving of the Divine Name is probably also understood to have taken place before creation.²⁹ Third, the prayer states that Jesus has made the Divine Name, normally a hidden and heavenly mystery, known to his disciples on earth because it has a soteriological function.³⁰ The eschatological revelation of the Divine Name was promised in Isaiah and is now seen as being fulfilled in Jesus. For example, YHWH promises in Isaiah 52:6 that, after all the past despising of his name, finally “my people shall know my name; therefore in that day they shall know that I am he who speaks.”³¹ Fourth, the Divine Name that was revealed to the disciples by Jesus has protecting power (John 17:11). This power is especially reassuring to the disciples because earlier in the farewell discourse Jesus spoke of his departure (John 14:1–4) and warned of their suffering “on account of my name” (John 15:21). This power of the Divine Name for the one who believes in the true identity of Jesus (i.e., that he is the Glory and the Son of Man, the visible form of YHWH, incarnate) is a subject that is explained several times earlier in the farewell discourse (John 14:13–14; 15:16; 16:23–24, 26). Here is but one representative example: “[Jesus said:] ‘Whatever you ask *in my name* [ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου], I will do it, that the Father be glorified in the Son; if you ask anything *in my name* [ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου], I will do it’” (John 14:13–14). This certainly does not refer to using the personal name “Jesus” as some kind of theurgic formula, but asking in the confession that Jesus’ true name is YHWH, a word of power.

Testimony to the vital importance of knowing the name possessed by the Son is frequent in the Gospel of John. As noted above, this is seen already in John 1:12, where the focus is not only believing in the *person* Jesus, but specifically believing in his *name*. This idea is also expressed in the reaction of the disciples to Jesus’ sign at Cana: “*Many believed in his name* [πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ]” (John 2:23). Knowing the true name of Christ is the source of “life” according to the thematic conclusion of this Gospel: “in order that *you have life in his name because you believe* [πιστεύοντες ζῶν ἔχητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ]” (John 20:31). Conversely,

²⁹ This conclusion is also based upon the identification of the preexistent “Word” as the one who possesses the Divine Name in both the prologue and the farewell prayer; see Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 271–280, and Gieschen, “The Divine Name That the Father Shares with the Son,” 387–410.

³⁰ This function of the Divine Name is also found elsewhere in John (1:12; 2:23; 3:18; and 20:31). For the soteriological function of the Divine Name in relationship to Baptism in early Christianity, see Gieschen, “The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology,” 115–158; and Charles A. Gieschen, “Sacramental Theology in the Book of Revelation,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (2003): 149–174.

³¹ Coutts, *The Divine Name in the Gospel of John*, 44. The fact that Isaiah 52:6 speaks about the Divine Name in the same context with the self-disclosure formula (i.e., “I am he” or “I am”) is also significant because these two are closely related in the Gospel of John, as will be discussed below. There is a direct allusion to Isaiah 52:6 LXX in John 4:26.

the lack of belief that Jesus possesses the Divine Name brings eschatological judgment: “he who does not believe is condemned already, because *he has not believed in the name* [μὴ πεπίστευκεν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα] of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). The Divine Name has a clear soteriological function. In light of this Gospel’s testimony that Jesus shares the Divine Name of the Father, “believe in his name” should be understood as trusting that Jesus possesses the Divine Name as the Glory and the Son of Man in the flesh and, thus, is identified as the visible YHWH in whom the one God of Israel is revealed.³²

IV. The Son as the Glory

Beholding the כבוד יהוה (“the Glory of YHWH”) is an important part of some major theophanies in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Exodus 24 and Ezekiel 1) as well as an important theme in several of the mystical ascent texts in Second Temple Jewish literature.³³ The Hebrew term כבוד signifies the weightiness or tangibility of YHWH; the use of δόξα to translate it in the Septuagint certainly nuances the understanding of δόξα among early Christians in the direction of it being used as a title for YHWH’s visible image.³⁴ There is significant interest within the Gospel of John in beholding Jesus as the visible image or form of God, the Glory of YHWH seen by Moses at Sinai, by Israel in the tabernacle and temple, then by the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel in their call visions. Isaiah, for example, states that YHWH gives his Glory to no other (Isa 42:8; 48:11) but also holds out the prophetic hope that “the Glory will be revealed and all flesh shall see it” (Isa 40:5). In light of John’s use of Isaiah elsewhere, there can be little doubt that this Gospel’s interest in Jesus as the Glory is influenced by the focus on the eschatological revelation of the Glory of YHWH.³⁵ For John, the Glory who departed from the first temple before its destruction in 587 BC had never returned to the temple; he came to tabernacle in the flesh of Jesus, who becomes the new temple, and the Glory never enters the Jerusalem temple but briefly in Jesus to cleanse it and declare, “Destroy this temple [i.e., the body of Jesus], and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19). One only

³² The sharing of the same Divine Name between the Father and the Son is a profound way of expressing their unity. It should also be noted that the Son states that the Father will send the Holy Spirit “in my name” (John 14:26), implying that the Spirit also shares the Name of the Son and the Father.

³³ For an overview of evidence in Israelite and Jewish literature, see Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 78–88.

³⁴ G. von Rad and G. Kittel, “δόξα,” *TDNT* 2:233–255. In light of its use in the LXX, BDAG, 258, offers the specialized meaning of “a transcendent being deserving of honor” (definition 4 of 4).

³⁵ Coutts, *The Divine Name in the Gospel of John*, 31–42.

needs to note the frequent use of the noun δόξα in the Gospel of John in order to see an unmistakable intertextual relationship between the theophanic Glory traditions found in the Old Testament (especially Exodus, Isaiah, and Ezekiel) and these Johannine texts.

The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld *his Glory* [τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ], *Glory* [δόξαν] as of the Only-Begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.³⁶ (John 1:14)

This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and *manifested his Glory* [ἐφανερώσεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ]; and his disciples believed in him. (John 2:11)

How are you able to believe while you are receiving *glory* [δόξαν] from one another, but you are not seeking *the Glory* [τὴν δόξαν] who comes from the only God?³⁷ (John 5:44)

Jesus said to her [Martha], “Did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see *the Glory of God* [τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ]?” (John 11:40)

Isaiah said these things [cf. quotations of Isa 53:1 and 6:10] because he saw *his Glory* [τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ] and he spoke concerning him [i.e., the Son]. . . . For they loved the glory of man more than *the Glory of God* [τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ]. (John 12:41, 43)

So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with *the Glory* [τῆ δόξῃ] that I had in your presence before the world began. (John 17:5)

The Glory [τὴν δόξαν] that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, even as we are one. (John 17:22)

Father, I desire that those also whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see *my Glory* [τὴν δόξαν τὴν ἐμὴν], which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. (John 17:24)

These texts indicate that Jesus himself and also the evangelist John understood Jesus’ identity in light of the theophanic traditions about the Glory, especially as found in Exodus, Isaiah, Ezekiel, widely in the Targumim, and also in the Second Temple Jewish literature that used these texts as their starting point.³⁸ Like the Old Testament and later Jewish apocalyptic literature, the Gospel of John is very intent

³⁶ There is a strong echo of Exodus 33–34 in John 1:14–18, especially with the repeated mention of “grace” in John 1:14, 16 (cf. Exod 34:6–7).

³⁷ The context for this statement is the prior revelation of YHWH in Israel’s past history, especially with Moses (John 5:37–38).

³⁸ Gieschen, “The Death of Jesus in the Gospel of John,” 243–261; see also Craig A. Evans, *Word and Glory: On the Exegetical and Theological Background of John’s Prologue*, JSNTSup, 89 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

on offering “revelation” of the Glory. The Glory is not seen in this Gospel by mystically ascending to a heavenly realm to behold him upon the *merkabah* throne, but through the Son of Man descending repeatedly over history and revealing himself as the Glory, especially when he becomes incarnate and is lifted up on the cross (John 3:13–14).³⁹ As Jesus states to Nicodemus, “No one has ascended, but he who has descended from heaven, the Son of Man” (John 3:13). The lifting up of Jesus on the cross becomes the holy place where one sees the ultimate vision of the enthroned Glory because one sees the Glory offering himself for the salvation of the world: “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I Am [ἐγώ εἰμι]” (John 8:28).⁴⁰

V. The Son as the Son of Man

Because of the opening vision in Ezekiel, interest in seeing the Glory within Jewish mystical literature is virtually synonymous with seeing the manlike form of YHWH. The primary title used for the manlike form of YHWH in John is not “the Glory,” however, but “the Son of Man.” Many scholars miss the strong intertextual relationship between the appearance of YHWH as “a man” in Ezekiel 1:26 and the appearance of one as “a son of man” enthroned in Daniel 7:13, and most scholars even dismiss the foundational significance of Daniel for interpreting the Son of Man in John.⁴¹ The Gospel of John is evidence of a close relationship between these two scenes, as well as the scenes in Jacob’s dream (Gen 28:10–17) and Isaiah’s call vision (Isa 6:1–7). The interrelationship of these texts is seen already in the promise given to Nathanael as well as the hearer/readers of this Gospel: “You will see greater things than these; you will see angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man” (John 1:51). The stark contrast that one finds between the Gospel of John and 1 Enoch 37–71 is that the revelation of the Son of Man does not happen through mystical *ascent* to view the sacred confines of *heaven*, but through the *descent* of the Son of Man in order to be widely seen on this *earth*, especially in his crucifixion. As

³⁹ See especially Charles A. Gieschen, “The Descending Son of Man in the Gospel of John: A Polemic against Mystical Ascent to See God,” *The Open Mind: Essays in Honour of Christopher Rowland*, ed. Jonathan Knight and Kevin Sullivan, LNTS 522 (London: Bloomsbury/T & T Clark, 2015), 105–129.

⁴⁰ For the use of the absolute form (i.e., without a predicate) of ἐγώ εἰμι as a divine disclosure formula, see the discussion below.

⁴¹ Benjamin E. Reynolds has very helpfully restored focus on Daniel 7 for interpretation of the Johannine Son of Man; see *The Apocalyptic Son of Man in the Gospel of John*, WUNT 2.249 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008). Reynolds could have drawn a clearer line back from Daniel 7 to Ezekiel 1.

noted by both John Ashton and Christopher Rowland, this Gospel is “an apocalypse in reverse.”⁴²

The promise to Nathanael comes as the climactic end of a narrative unit filled with titles that identify Jesus to be the fulfillment of various messianic expectations. The evangelist sees the revelation of “the Son of Man” as the ultimate Jewish hope, the proverbial icing on the messianic cake served to the hearer/reader in John 1:19–51. The close relationship between the Glory traditions discussed above and Son of Man traditions in this Gospel is especially found in the use of the verb *δοξάζω* (“I glorify”) with the Son of Man title (John 12:23; 13:31). With the movement in John 12 to passion week, the dialogue about Jesus’ death moves from the language of the Son of Man “being lifted up” to the language of him “being glorified,” the second verb in the pair of verbs drawn from Isaiah 52:13 LXX.⁴³ These are distinct verbs describing a synonymous reality as is very visible in the careful weaving together of both “lifting up” (John 12:32, 34) and “being glorified” language (John 12:23, 28) in the same context. Notice the abundant use of the verb *δοξάζω* in these texts.

And Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come for the Son of Man *to be glorified* [*δοξασθῆ*]. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (John 12:23–24)

[Jesus said:] “Now my entire self has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save me from this hour?’ But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, *glorify* [*δόξασσον*] your Name.” There came therefore a voice out of heaven: “I *have glorified* [*ἐδόξασα*] him and *will glorify* [*δοξάσω*] him again.” (John 12:27–28)

When therefore he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man *is glorified* [*ἐδόξασθη*], and God *is glorified* [*ἐδόξασθη*] in him; if God *is glorified* [*ἐδόξασθη*] in him, God also *will glorify* [*δοξάσει*] him in himself, and *will glorify* [*δοξάσει*] him immediately.” (John 13:31–32)

[Jesus prayed,] “Father, the hour has come; *glorify* [*δόξασσον*] your Son in order that the Son *glorify* [*δοξάσῃ*] you. . . . And now, Father, *glorify* [*δόξασσον*] me in your own presence with *the Glory* [*τῆ δόξῃ*] that I had with you before the world existed.” (John 17:1, 5)

⁴² Rowland expresses agreement with Ashton’s characterization in Christopher Rowland and Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 131. See also John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 383–406, esp. 405.

⁴³ What follows is from my discussion of these two verbs in Gieschen, “The Death of Jesus in the Gospel of John,” 246–254.

What does *δοξάζω* mean in these Johannine texts? Although the basic semantic field of *δοξάζω* centers on “to honor, praise, or extol” someone or something, it is necessary to understand this verb as used in the Gospel of John, especially in relationship to the use of the noun *δόξα*.⁴⁴ It has already been noted that this Gospel frequently uses the noun *δόξα* with its profound theophanic connotations from the Septuagint where it is used as a designation for YHWH’s visible form.⁴⁵ The use of the verb *δοξάζω* in these texts takes on the theophanic or revelatory connotations of the noun usage. A translation like “to honor by tangibly showing forth divine identity” is very clumsy, but it gets to the heart of what is being communicated. The irony is that the Son of Man is “glorified,” namely, honored by his divine identity being shown forth, not primarily in his resurrection and ascension, but in his death.⁴⁶ Many first-century Jews longed to see the Son of Man, the mystery of YHWH’s tangible form, revealed; John indicates that this apocalyptic vision took place in the crucifixion.⁴⁷ In this Gospel, Jesus stresses that even if people reject his words, they should believe his works (John 14:11). His death, above all, reveals his true identity.⁴⁸ It is the moment when one not only sees the presence of the Son of Man, but also sees him doing what only YHWH can do by bringing life through the giving of himself on behalf of the world. This is the apocalyptic vision promised to Nathanael and the hearer/readers of this Gospel: the Son of Man is seen enthroned on earth providing life and access to the Father in heaven through his death (John 1:51).

VI. The Son Speaks as YHWH: The I Am Self-Disclosure Formula

There has been some excellent research published on the *ἐγώ εἰμι* sayings in the Gospel of John in recent years.⁴⁹ These Greek words are the combination of the

⁴⁴ The definition offered in BDAG, 258, for the Johannine use of *δοξάζω* (“cause to have splendid greatness, clothe in splendor”) seems to emphasize outward appearance more than revelation of the divine identity of the Glory. G. Kittel, “*δοξάζω*,” *TDNT* 2:252, properly stresses the relationship with the noun *δόξα*.

⁴⁵ See Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 78–88.

⁴⁶ It is worthy to note again that this “glorification” language is from an interpretation of Isaiah 53 that sees glorification happening in the humiliating suffering of the servant.

⁴⁷ For a prominent example of first-century Jewish interest in the Son of Man, see I Enoch 37–71. See Charles A. Gieschen, “The Importance of *I Enoch* for Understanding the Son of Man in the Four Gospels,” *Jewish Roots of Eastern Christian Mysticism: Studies in Honor of Alexander Golitzin*, ed. Andrei A. Orlov (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 52–65.

⁴⁸ C. H. Dodd states that the death of Jesus is the “final and all-inclusive” sign in this Gospel because it reveals Jesus’ true identity in the ultimate manner; see *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 439.

⁴⁹ This summary draws on the research of the following scholars: David Mark Ball, “*I Am*” in *John’s Gospel: Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications*, JSNTSup 124 (Sheffield:

emphatic first person personal pronoun (ἐγώ) with the first person singular form of the “to be” verb (εἶμι). Depending upon the context in John, this construction is usually translated “I am” or “It is I,” the latter being used more frequently in most translations. All of its occurrences in John will be translated in this study consistently as “I Am” in order to help the English reader see that it is a technical formula used in this Gospel to disclose the divine identity of Jesus as YHWH. *The Lutheran Study Bible* directs the reader’s attention to these sayings in a helpful summary section, yet this section and the textual notes say very little about the occurrences of ἐγώ εἶμι where there is no predicate, especially the Old Testament background of these sayings in YHWH’s self-disclosure formulae found at the end of Deuteronomy and several places in the second half of Isaiah.⁵⁰ It will be demonstrated here that the Old Testament self-disclosure formulae are vital for understanding all of the sayings in the Gospel of John as Jesus identifying himself as YHWH, speaking as YHWH speaks (see John 3:34; 6:68; 7:16–18; 8:28; 12:47–50; 14:10). These *words*, along with the *works* of Jesus (see John 10:37–38; 14:11–12), especially his death and resurrection, prepare the hearer of the Gospel for the climactic confession of Thomas, “my Lord and my God” (John 20:28).

There are two different groups of sayings in the Gospel of John: predicate “I Am” sayings and absolute “I Am” sayings. Most readers of John are very familiar with the predicate sayings but much less aware of the absolute sayings, mainly because of variation in the way ἐγώ εἶμι is translated into English. It is significant that there are seven different occurrences of each of these constructions, although the individual predicate nominative construction is sometimes used two or three times in each occurrence.

Predicate “I Am” Sayings in John (Usually translated “I am . . .”)

1. I Am the Bread of Life (6:35, 41, 48).
2. I Am the Light of the World (8:12; cf. 9:5).
3. I Am the Gate (10:7, 9).
4. I Am the Good Shepherd (10:11, 14).
5. I Am the Resurrection and the Life (11:25).

Sheffield University Press, 1996); Catrin H. Williams, *I Am He: The Interpretation of ‘Aní Hú’ in Jewish and Early Christian Literature*; Richard Bauckham, “Monotheism and Christology in the Gospel of John,” *Contours of Christology in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 148–166 [this article subsequently became a chapter in Richard Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 239–252]. I have discussed this previously in Gieschen, “The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology,” 140–141.

⁵⁰ *The Lutheran Study Bible: English Standard Version* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 1784–1785.

6. I Am the Way and the Truth and the Life (14:6).
7. I Am the True Vine (15:1).

*Absolute "I Am" Sayings in John (Usually translated "I am he," except in 8:58)*⁵¹

1. Jesus said to her [the Samaritan woman], "I Am, the one who is speaking to you" (4:26).
2. But he said to them [the disciples in the boat], "I Am; do not be afraid" (6:20).
3. You [the Jews] will die in your sins unless you believe that I Am (8:24).
4. When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I Am, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me (8:28).
5. Amen, amen, I tell you, before Abraham was, I Am (8:58).
6. I tell you this now [Judas's betrayal], before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you believe that I Am (13:19).
7. "Whom are you looking for?" They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I Am." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, "I Am," they stepped back and fell to the ground. Again he asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answered, "I told you that I Am. So if you are looking for me, let these men go" (18:4–8).

The background for this usage of *ἐγώ εἰμι* is often connected to the revelation of the meaning of the Divine Name to Moses in Exodus 3:14, especially in light of the Greek translation in the Septuagint: *ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν* ("I am the one who is"). Several scholars have argued that a better antecedent of this usage in John is found in the *absolute* self-revelatory statements at the end of Deuteronomy and the second part of Isaiah (40–66). Richard Bauckham has noted that there are nine occurrences in Masoretic Text (MT) and seven in the Septuagint (LXX). The Gospel of John has seven occurrences, but the last one consists of three for a total of nine. These phrases are found in the Old Testament as follows:

Hebrew (MT)

אני הוּא (Deut 32:39)

אני הוּא (Isa 41:4; 43:10, 13; 46:4; 48:12; 52:6)

אני הוּא (Isa 43:25; 51:12)

⁵¹ Although not nearly as prominent as in John, similar absolute forms of *ἐγώ εἰμι* in the Synoptic Gospels that draw on the Old Testament self-disclosure formula are found in the following synoptic accounts: the stilling of the storm (Matt 14:27; Mark 6:50; but *not* Luke 8:24); the eschatological discourse (Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8; but *not* Matt 24:23); the trial before the council (Mark 14:62; Luke 22:70; but *not* Matt 26:64); and the resurrection (Matt 28:20; Luke 24:39).

Greek (LXX)

ἐγώ εἰμι (Deut 32:39; Isa 41:4; 43:10; 45:18)

ἐγώ εἰμι ἐγώ εἰμι (Isa 43:25; 46:4; 51:12)

Regarding the relationship between the seven signs,⁵² the seven predicate “I Am” sayings, and the seven absolute forms of “I Am,” Richard Bauckham states:

In their different ways all three series of sevens reveal who Jesus is and the salvation he gives. Salvation in the Fourth Gospel can be summarized as knowing the true God and receiving eternal life from him. The signs reveal God’s glory in Jesus and the salvation Jesus brings. As acts of evident divine power, they demonstrate what the sayings can only say, but the two sets of “I am” sayings make fully explicit what the signs signify. One series, the “I am” sayings with predicates, focus on Jesus as the only Savior, in a variety of images instancing the inexhaustible fullness of what salvation means. In these sayings, as in the signs, it is implicit that Jesus can be the only Savior only because he is identified with the only God. To reveal the glory of God’s unique identity, to give eternal life that God alone has in himself, Jesus must himself belong to God’s own unique identity. This is what the absolute “I am” sayings make fully explicit, in a sevenfold series of progressive clarity, in which Jesus utters the most concise and comprehensive expression for all that it means for God to be uniquely and truly God. They identify Jesus with God, not just in an abstract way, but in a way that the Scriptures associate with the universal revelation of God’s unique divinity in his eschatological act of salvation for Israel and the nations. Jesus’ identity with God is thus essential and intrinsic to his work of revelation and salvation.⁵³

VII. The Son Acts as YHWH

Another aspect of the YHWH Christology in this Gospel is that the Son acts as YHWH acts. This is established already in the prologue where it is stated that the Son was not only present at creation, but all things came to be through him (John 1:3). In light of the Old Testament testimony that YHWH created all things, not only in Genesis but especially in the Psalter, there is no more clear affirmation of the Son

⁵² These seven signs are as follows: (1) miracle at Cana (John 2:1–12); (2) healing of the official’s son (4:43–54); (3) healing at Bethzatha (5:1–47); (4) feeding of the five thousand (6:1–15); (5) walking on water (6:16–24); (6) healing of the blind man (9:1–41); and (7) the raising of Lazarus (11:1–54). There is some debate about whether the walking on water miracle is one of the seven signs. Some argue that John presents Jesus’ resurrection as the seventh sign; e.g., see Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 56.

⁵³ Bauckham, *Testimony of the Beloved Disciple*, 250.

being YHWH that could be expressed than confessing that all things were created through the Son.⁵⁴

That the Son acts as YHWH acts is also the argument of Jesus' extensive speech after the healing of the crippled man on the Sabbath (John 5:19–47). The Son does what he sees the Father doing (John 5:19). Testimony that Jesus acts as YHWH acts is vividly depicted in the seven signs presented in John's Gospel; all are actions that YHWH does (e.g., YHWH heals on the Sabbath, YHWH feeds Israel in the wilderness, YHWH walks on water and rescues Israel through water, and YHWH raises the dead). Furthermore, there are divine actions, such as eschatological judgment, that the Father has given to the Son (John 5:21–26). Jesus highlights the testimony of his works even over his words when he says, "If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father" (John 10:37–38; see also 5:19–20; 10:25; 14:10–11).

Perhaps one of the most vivid titles that identifies Jesus acting as YHWH is "the noble Shepherd" (John 10:11, 14). While shepherd is certainly an image used for David in the Old Testament, it is primarily an image used for YHWH himself (e.g., Ps 23). Ezekiel 34, where YHWH promises that he himself will come to shepherd his people, is the primary background for Jesus' applying this shepherd image as well as the act of shepherding to himself. He is depicting himself as YHWH, the shepherd of Israel, who gathers and protects his sheep by sacrificing his own self on their behalf (John 10:15, 17).

VIII. The Son Is Worshiped

Proper worship of YHWH is a significant theme in the Gospel of John, as introduced in the cleansing of the temple (John 2:13–22), further discussed in Jesus' exchange with the Samaritan woman (John 4:16–26), and illustrated by Jesus teaching in the context of various Jewish festivals throughout John 2–10. This Gospel depicts the place of YHWH's presence—which was the Jerusalem temple—is now Jesus, the source of "life" is Jesus, and the redemptive acts commemorated in the Jewish festivals now take on new eschatological significance in the redemptive action of Jesus. True and faithful Jewish worship is depicted as centered in Jesus. To worship other than where the Son is present, to meditate on the Torah without seeing the Son, and to observe the Jewish feasts without seeing their eschatological fulfillment in the Son lifted on the cross, is idolatry: "You are of your father the devil,

⁵⁴ See esp. Bauckham, *Testimony of the Beloved Disciple*, 240–242.

and your will is to do your father's desires" (John 8:44). The most striking scene in John with this worship theme is the action of the healed blind man after he has been excommunicated from the synagogue, the spiritual home where he worshiped YHWH. The healed blind man illustrates that the true "Jew" finds his true spiritual home in Jesus, who both fulfills and subsumes faithful Jewish worship of YHWH: "and *he worshiped him* [προσεκύνησεν αὐτῷ]" (John 9:38). Jesus is depicted here as YHWH, who is worthy of worship. If Jesus is not YHWH, then this would be a vivid example of idolatry.

IX. Conclusion

The message is clear in John's Gospel: Jesus is the eternal Word who shares the Divine Name, he is the manlike form of YHWH known as the Glory and the Son of Man. Jesus' work (seven signs) is the full revelation of YHWH's work, his words (seven predicate "I Am" sayings) are the full revelation of YHWH's words of salvation, and his self-declarations (seven absolute "I Am" sayings) are a complete revelation of himself as the same YHWH who made this type of self-declaration in the Old Testament. In sum, his saving works are those of YHWH, his saving words are those of YHWH, and his self-declarations are those of YHWH.

The Son is specifically the visible YHWH, as the conclusion to the prologue makes clear: "No one, at any time, has seen God [i.e., the Father] at any time; the only-begotten Son being at the side of the Father has exegeted him" (John 1:18). Abraham saw the Son (John 8:58), Jacob saw the Son (John 1:51), Moses saw the Son (John 5:46), and Isaiah saw the Son (John 12:41). In this YHWH Christology, the evangelist is simply reflecting the teaching of Jesus in this Gospel: "not that anyone has seen the Father, except the Son; that one has seen the Father" (John 6:46).