

grasp this point, the response even of Jesus' opponents in the story world confirms it (as in 8:59; 10:31, 33, 39): the divine name causes their involuntary prostration (18:6)."²⁶³

- Andreas J. Köstenberger: "'I am he' reads more literally 'I am.' In light of the response...the phrase probably has connotations of deity (see commentary at 8:24)...'They drew back and fell to the ground'...Falling to the ground is regularly a reaction to divine revelation {referencing: Ezekiel 1:28; 44:4; Daniel 2:46; 8:18; 10:9; Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14; Revelation 1:17; 19:10}. This striking response also conveys the powerlessness of Jesus' enemies when confronted with the power of God."²⁶⁴

There is no issue in recognizing that John 18:5, 6, and 8 all include a statement of self-identification on the part of Yeshua the Messiah, to the Roman soldiers arresting Him. But as it is stated, "When therefore He said to them, 'I AM,' they drew back and fell to the ground" (John 18:6, PME). Here, the reader is forced to recognize the significance of Yeshua saying "I am." And, given the fact that He is speaking this to pagan Romans, there is an excellent chance that rather than speaking the Hebrew *ani hu* (אני הוּ; Delitzsch) or Aramaic *ena* (אנא), that He may have actually spoken the Greek *egō eimi*—directly leading readers to Exodus 3:14 in the Septuagint.

What also need not escape our attention is that when approached by soldiers, it is witnessed how Simon Peter actually takes a sword, and slices off the ear of the high priest's servant, Malchus: "Then Shim'on Kefa, who had a sword, drew it and struck the slave of the *cohen hagadol*, cutting off his right ear; the slave's name was Melekh" (John 18:10, CJB/CJSB). Yeshua is incensed that Peter would interfere in what was taking place (John 18:11), and the record of Luke 22:51²⁶⁵ is that Yeshua healed him. So, not only did the soldiers arresting Yeshua experience something supernatural when He spoke "I am" to them; they also technically witnessed a miracle in Malchus' ear being healed.

John 19:1-9

"Yeshua is Mocked for His Claims"

"Pilate then took Yeshua and scourged Him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him; and they *began* to come up to Him and say, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and to give Him slaps *in the face*. Pilate came out again and said to them, 'Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him.' Yeshua then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. *Pilate* said to them, 'Behold, the Man!' So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, 'Crucify, crucify!' Pilate said to them, 'Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him.' The Jews answered him, 'We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out *to be* the Son of God.'"

The scene of Yeshua's humiliation is surely important, as it bears testimony to the unjustified and unwarranted torture He endured, particularly at the hands of Roman soldiers, who mocked the Lord, dressing Him up in a costume as though He were an Earthly king (John 19:1-4). Pontius Pilate, having let this take place, presents Yeshua before the crowd (John 19:5), which broadly exclaims "Put him to death on the stake! Put him to death on the stake!" (John 19:6a, CJB/CJSB). Pilate, being a customary Roman, does not think that any Roman law has

²⁶³ Keener, *John*, pp 1081-1082.

²⁶⁴ Köstenberger, pp 507-508.

²⁶⁵ "But Yeshua answered and said, 'Stop! No more of this.' And He touched his ear and healed him" (Luke 22:51).

been violated (John 19:6b), and so the crowd, and in particular the Jewish religious leaders, specify why Yeshua of Nazareth must be put to death:

“We have a Torah, and by that Torah He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God” (John 19:7, PME).

Apparently, according to the Torah or Law of Moses, because Yeshua identified Himself as “the Son of God” (*huios Theou*, υἱὸν θεοῦ), He was worthy of the death sentence. The statement “We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God” (NIV), does require some evaluation, given the titular usage of “Son of God.” Frequently, as is seen from the Tanach or Old Testament, the title of “Son of God,” is one of Messianic significance, given to the King of Israel:

“I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You’” (Psalm 2:7).

“He will cry to Me, ‘You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.’ I also shall make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth” (Psalm 89:26-27).

A figure like King David could be called “Son of God,” without any hint of Divinity. And so, it is to be fairly recognized that Yeshua of Nazareth, as the Messiah and as a descendant of David, could call Himself the “Son of God” in a similar manner. Somebody calling themselves “the Messiah,” and hence “the Son of God,” would hardly merit the death penalty by the Jewish religious leadership. Only if something greater were involved with Yeshua being the “Son of God,” could the Torah’s direction about blasphemy be possibly appealed to (Leviticus 24:16).²⁶⁶ Given the close identification and interconnection between Yeshua the Messiah and the God of Israel detailed within the Gospel of John, the crowd that was calling for Yeshua’s execution could only be doing so because they did recognize how Yeshua presented Himself as “the Son of God”—perhaps by various actions, or by various declarations—as being integrated into the Divine Identity. They considered this to be blasphemy. A number of commentators we have been examining concur with these conclusions:

- F.F. Bruce: “Their language presupposes that a claim to be Son of God was *ipso facto* blasphemous and rendered the claimant liable to the death penalty prescribed in Lev. 24:16, as indeed it is presupposed earlier in this Gospel (cf. 5:18; 10:33). In the OT the anointed king of Israel was son of God by adoption (cf. Ps. 2:7; 89:26f.); but our Lord’s contemporaries recognized (rightly) that much more than this official relationship was implied in the language he used.”²⁶⁷
- Leon Morris: “The term ‘law’ is used here, not of the whole Pentateuch, but of one particular ordinance, in this case clearly the law of blasphemy (Lev. 24:16). By this law, they say, Jesus ought to die because He has made Himself Son of God (cf. 5:18; 8:53; 10:33 for this accusation). It was His religious claims that antagonized them. ‘Son of God’ is an emphatic position. It was nothing less than this that He had made Himself.”²⁶⁸
- D.A. Carson: “The language of the Jewish officials, ‘he claimed to be *the Son of God*’, almost sounds as if the claim itself was sufficient to presume guilt of blasphemy. In many contexts that was demonstrably untrue. The anointed king

²⁶⁶ “Moreover, the one who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death” (Leviticus 24:16).

²⁶⁷ Bruce, *John*, 360.

²⁶⁸ Morris, *John*, 795.

The Nature of Yeshua in the Gospel of John

of Israel was sometimes referred to as God's Son in the Old Testament (Pss. 2:7; 89:26-27), and in some intertestamental sources 'Son of God' is parallel to Messiah (4Q *Florilegium*...). But Jesus' opponents rightly recognize that as he uses the title here there are overtones not only of messiahship but of sharing the rights and authority of God himself (cf. 1:34; 5:19-30)."²⁶⁹

- Gary M. Burge: "Was it illegal to claim to be the Son of God? This is hardly the case. The king of Israel enjoyed this title (see Ps. 2, 45, 89, and 110), and it appears for the Messiah in various writings of intertestamental Jewish literature (such as Qumran). But the language veils another worry: by 'son' Jesus has said more, implying that he bears the authority of God himself."²⁷⁰

There is no immediate reason for Yeshua, calling Himself the "Son of God," for Him to be condemned to death by the Torah as a blasphemer. However, if Yeshua being the "Son of God" involves His pre-existence of the universe and His integration into the Divine Identity, His being God—then the limited Jewish and Roman mortals depicted in this scene would, from their perspective, have some legitimate reason to sentence Him to death.

John 20:11-18

"My God and your God"

"But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Yeshua had been lying. And they said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.' When she had said this, she turned around and saw Yeshua standing *there*, and did not know that it was Yeshua. Yeshua said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?' Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, 'Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.' Yeshua said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, 'Rabboni!' (which means, Teacher). Yeshua said to her, 'Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, "I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God."' Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord,' and *that* He had said these things to her."

Within John's record of what transpired immediately after the resurrection of Yeshua, it is clear that Mary Magdalene is confused, thinking that the Messiah's body had been stolen (John 20:11-13). She then encounters a man who she thinks is the gardener (John 20:14-15), but as it is narrated, "Yeshua said to her, 'Miryam!' Turning, she cried out to him in Hebrew, 'Rabboni!' (that is, 'Teacher!')" (John 20:16, CJB/CJSB). Here, Mary recognized the resurrected Yeshua. A statement then appears, which has caused some confusion for a number of readers:

"Yeshua says to her, 'Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet gone up to the Father. Go to My brothers and tell them, "I am going up to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God"' (John 20:17, TLV).

Here, Yeshua informs Mary Magdalene to report to the remaining Eleven Disciples, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (RSV). Why is Yeshua seen making reference to "My God and to your God" (*theon mou kai theon humōn*, θεόν μου καὶ θεόν ὑμῶν)? Supporters of a low Christology frequently conclude that Yeshua's reference to the God of Israel as "My God," is indicative of a being or entity that by nature is not God.

²⁶⁹ Carson, *John*, 599.

²⁷⁰ Burge, *John*, 504.