

## The Nature of Yeshua in the Gospel of John

was either demon-possessed or insane (John 10:20), and there were those who wondered, because He had healed a blind man (John 10:21; cf. ch 9).

### John 10:22-39

#### "I and the Father are one"

"At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Yeshua was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, 'How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Messiah, tell us plainly.' Yeshua answered them, 'I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me. But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.' The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. Yeshua answered them, 'I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?' The Jews answered Him, 'For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.' Yeshua answered them, 'Has it not been written in your Law, "I SAID, YOU ARE GODS" [Psalm 82:6]? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, "You are blaspheming," because I said, "I am the Son of God"? If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father.' Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp."

The statements in John 10:22-39 actually do get some traction in today's Messianic movement, because they testify to the fact that Yeshua the Messiah observed the Feast of Dedication or *Chanukah*.<sup>184</sup> Frequently, Yeshua's statement to the Jewish religious leaders of John 10:30, "I and the Father are one," gets quoted with some reference to the Deuteronomy 6:4-5 *Shema* being involved. Because of their response in wanting to stone the Messiah for blasphemy (John 10:31), this is taken as a declaration of Divinity by Him. And perhaps, Yeshua was indeed declaring Himself to be a part of the Divine Identity, a member of the Godhead, by His statement. However, there are surrounding statements in this scene which do need to be evaluated. This most especially includes a better handle on Yeshua responding to the claim of Him being guilty of the crime of self-deification (John 10:33) by quoting Psalm 82:6 (John 10:34). Advocates of a low Christology, believing Yeshua the Messiah to be a created entity, have exploited a great deal of our present avoidance of John 10:34-36, using the claim that by mortal humans somehow being called "gods," that Yeshua the Messiah similarly must be a created being.

Yeshua the Messiah was at the portico or colonnade of Solomon in Jerusalem during *Chanukah* (John 10:22-23). The presence of Yeshua had been causing a great deal of tension, particularly for the Jewish religious authorities. As it is narrated, "Then the Judean leaders surrounded Him, saying, 'How long will You hold us in suspense? If You are the Messiah, tell us outright!'" (John 10:24, TLV). With all of the statements He had previously been making about being the door or gate (John 10:7, 9), the Good Shepherd (John 10:11, 14), and His relationship to the Heavenly Father (John 10:15, 18), there were surely questions as to not only who this Yeshua was, but what He might do.

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<sup>184</sup> Cf. "Hanukkah: New Testament Observance," in *The Complete Jewish Study Bible*, 1538.

If necessary, consult the relevant sections of the *Messianic Winter Holiday Helper* by Messianic Apologetics.

Yeshua's response, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness to me" (John 10:25, RSV), is different from previous declarations of His identity (John 4:26; 9:35-36). Yeshua's response, to get the religious leaders focused on His good works and miracles, would not only help to expose their impatience with Him—but more especially reveal their misguided intentions and motives. Were these Jewish individuals really interested in giving Yeshua a fair hearing, investigating who He was, and taking some correction from Him?

Yeshua's word, "The things I do by my Father's authority show who I am" (John 10:25, Contemporary English Version), are proof enough that Yeshua was not just some independent agent, acting on His own. However, there was a chastising or rebuking quality to His following words, "But you don't believe, because you are not My sheep. My sheep hear My voice. I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:26-27, TLV). The Jewish religious leaders questioning Yeshua, do not believe in what they witness from Him, they are not His sheep, they do not hear His voice, and they neither know Yeshua nor follow Him. Yeshua was only stating the obvious to His detractors.

But while Yeshua asserted that His critics are not His followers, questions about the nature of Yeshua begin to be raised. Notwithstanding later debates over eternal security, Yeshua's statement of John 10:28 does bear significance regarding whether or not He is a created being: "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand" (NIV). Here we definitely see "and I give to them eternal-life" (Brown and Comfort),<sup>185</sup> *kagō didōmi autois zōēn aiōnion* (κἀγὼ δίδωμι αὐτοῖς ζωὴν αἰώνιον). In no uncertain terms, this claim goes beyond the sheep, i.e., students, of Yeshua the good rabbi, being granted a high quality of life, and good personal character, by following His teachings. Furthermore, Yeshua could very easily have said, "My Father gives eternal life to them, and they will never perish" (John 10:28, NASU modified). Would a supernatural, but ultimately created being, be able to legitimately be the entity which provides eternal life to human beings?

It cannot go unnoticed that immediately after saying, "no one will snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:28), first person activity of Yeshua the Son, that the third person activity of the Heavenly Father is then appealed to: "My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand" (John 10:29). It is rightly concluded, given the plural *pantōn* (πάντων), that this is a reference to the Father's power over "all others" (Contemporary English Version), "everyone else" (NLT), or "all things," a key reference to the surety that exists for those who are God's own (cf. Isaiah 43:13; also Wisdom 3:1). What is really important, is how no outside entity can snatch away the sheep from the hand of Yeshua the Son (John 10:28b), or the Heavenly Father (John 10:29b). Keener thinks, "The inability of others to snatch sheep from Jesus' 'hand,' explicitly compared with the Father's hand in 10:2, probably is another Johannine allusion to Jesus' deity. It alludes to Ps 95:7 (94:7 LXX), where God's people are the 'sheep of his hand.'"<sup>186</sup>

That the Father and Son act together in concert is hard to avoid from their joint activity in salvation. So why was Yeshua's statement "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30) met with an immediate claim of blasphemy (John 10:31, 33)? The statement "I and the Father are one," could be read from the perspective of Yeshua the Son and the Heavenly Father being in one accord, or in agreement with one another, in purpose and action—even if such action involved salvation. And indeed, the Son and the Father being *only* in agreement, in purpose and action, is how supporters of a low Christology approach John 10:30.

<sup>185</sup> Brown and Comfort, 363.

<sup>186</sup> Keener, *John*, 825.

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From the source text of John 10:30, readers are hit with *egō kai ho patēr hen esmen* (ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατήρ ἓν ἐσμεν), with *hen* (ἓν) or “one” being neuter. A number of commentators of the Gospel of John, who would be regarded as holding to a high Christology of Yeshua being God, would consider “I and the Father are one” to relate to a unity of purpose and action, but not a unity of substance, given the presence of the neuter *hen*. Kruse is one who thinks that the oneness of the Father and Son here should be regarded as a functional oneness:

“Describing this oneness, the evangelist does not use the masculine form of the adjective ‘one’ (*heis*), which would suggest that Father and Son are one person. Instead, he uses the neuter form (*hen*), suggesting that the oneness of Father and Son here is oneness in mission and purpose. Father and Son are at one in their commitment to prevent anyone from snatching believers out of their hands. Here the nature of oneness is functional; later in the Gospel it involves unity of being (17:21-23).”<sup>187</sup>

Other examiners are seen to conclude that while the unity detailed in “I and the Father are one” in John 10:30 is first functional—the Father and Son functioning in the salvation of persons (John 10:28b, 29b), when investigated, is secondarily representative of an ontological unity. The oneness that the Father and Son have, does indeed go beyond the Son simply performing the Father’s will. The following are some conclusions drawn by various theologians:

- Leon Morris: “‘One’ is neuter, ‘one thing’ and not ‘one person’. Identity is not asserted, but essential unity is. These two belong together. The statement does not go beyond the opening words of the Gospel, but it can stand with them. It is another statement which puts Jesus Christ with God rather than with man. It may be true that this ought not to be understood as a metaphysical statement, but it is also true that it means more than that Jesus’ will was one with the Father’s.”<sup>188</sup>
- D.A. Carson: “The word for ‘one’ is the neuter *hen*, not the masculine *heis*: Jesus and his Father are not one person, as the masculine would suggest, for then the *distinction* between Jesus and God already introduced in 1:1b would be obliterated, and John could not refer to Jesus praying to his Father, being commissioned by and obedient to his Father, and so on. Rather, Jesus and his Father are perfectly one in action, in what they do: what Jesus does, the Father does, and vice versa....[A]lthough the words *I and the Father are one* do not affirm complete identity, in the context of this book they certainly suggest more than that Jesus’ will was one with the will of his Father, at least in the weak sense that a human being may at times regulate his own will and deed by the will of God. If instead Jesus’ will is exhaustively one with his Father’s will, some kind of metaphysical unity is presupposed, even if not articulated.”<sup>189</sup>
- Bruce Milne: “It should be clear from the context that it is an essentially functional unity which Jesus is referring to here. The Father and Son are one in the mission of the Son, and hence those whom the Son calls and undertakes to protect are simultaneously the concern of the Father...It would...be a mistake...to ignore this statement as far as our understanding of the person of Christ is concerned. This unity of action is finally inseparable from a unity of persons. To assert, as Jesus does here, that he is so at one with the living God that his action is

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<sup>187</sup> Kruse, *John*, 242; also Burge, *John*, 296.

<sup>188</sup> Morris, *John*, pp 522-523.

<sup>189</sup> Carson, *John*, pp 394, 395.

the action of God in and through him, is necessarily to say something about the way in which God and Jesus are related. A claim such as this reflects no merely human consciousness. It is nothing other than a ‘word made flesh’ consciousness. It is certainly not exceeding the limits of this text, therefore, to establish a connection with the prologue {John 1:1-18} and the confession there of the deity of Christ.”<sup>190</sup>

When seeing Yeshua the Messiah declare, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30), and then the reaction of the Jewish religious leaders (John 10:31, 33), it is difficult for readers to separate His statement from what is declared in the Deuteronomy 6:4 *Shema*: “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!” Among Christian commentators, Köstenberger draws out how the Deuteronomy 6:4 *Shema* has to be associated, in some way, with the statement of John 10:30:

“Jesus’ claim ‘I and the Father are one [entity]’ (cf. 5:17-18; 10:33-38) forms the climax of the present chapter, much as 8:58 does for John 8...The statement echoes the fundamental confession of Judaism: ‘Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one’ (Deut. 6:4). For Jesus to be one with the Father yet distinct from him amounts to a claim to deity (cf. John 1:1-2). To be sure, the emphasis here is on the unity of their works...yet an ontological (not just functional) unity between Jesus and the Father seems presupposed. Though not an affirmation of complete identity, clearly this statement has more in view than a mere oneness of will between Jesus and the Father.”<sup>191</sup>

While some previous examiners have taken the source text of John 10:30, *egō kai ho patēr hen esmen*, with the neuter *hen* being mainly representative of a functional unity between the Father and Son—it cannot go unnoticed how some are approaching the neuter *hen* from the perspective of the Father and Son being one entity. In its explanatory notes for “The Father and I are one,” the NET Bible details, “The phrase ἕν ἐσμεν (*hen esmen*) is a significant assertion with trinitarian implications. ἕν is neuter, not masculine, so the assertion is not that Jesus and the Father are one person, but one ‘thing.’ Identity of the two persons is not what is asserted, but essential unity (unity of essence).”<sup>192</sup> While unity of purpose and action is definitely seen in John 10:30, **only Yeshua the Son claiming to be a part of the same entity as God the Father, could have merited a charge of blasphemy.** Yeshua the Son claiming to simply follow the will of God the Father, as an obedient human child would a parent, or a student would in following a teacher or rabbi, could not account for the charge of self-deification issued against Yeshua (John 10:33).

Messianic readers, to be sure, would rightly emphasize that in all likelihood, in the Jerusalem Temple complex during *Chanukah*, that Yeshua the Messiah spoke “I and the Father are one” to the Jewish religious leaders in Hebrew. Two modern Hebrew versions of the Apostolic Writings have translated *egō kai ho patēr hen esmen* as either *ani v’ha’av echad* (אֲנִי וְהָאָב אֶחָד; Salkinson-Ginsburg) or *ani v’avi echad anachmu* (אֲנִי וְאָבִי אֶחָד אֲנַחְמוּ; Delitzsch). Hebrew lacks a neuter gender, and so any of the Jewish religious leaders originally hearing “I and the Father are one,” would have most probably heard *echad* (אֶחָד), and associated what Yeshua said with Him claiming an ontological oneness of being with the God of Israel. In his *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, David H. Stern makes a connection between Yeshua’s words, the *Shema*, and the statement of John 10:28, 29, all pointing to Yeshua being Divine:

<sup>190</sup> Milne, 154.

<sup>191</sup> Köstenberger, 312.

<sup>192</sup> *The NET Bible, New English Translation*, 2060.

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“**I and the Father are one**, the same One as in the *Sh’ma*: ‘*Adonai*, our God, *Adonai* is One’ (Deuteronomy 6:4). Yeshua’s self-assertion of his own divinity is occasioned by his regard for his followers ‘no one will snatch them from’ Yeshua’s (v. 28) or the Father’s (v. 29) hands. ‘*Ani veha’av, echad anachnu*’ (‘I and the Father are one’); therefore we who are in Yeshua’s care have complete assurance that nothing ‘will be able to separate us from the love of God which comes to us through the Messiah Yeshua, our Lord’ (Ro 8:31-39).”<sup>193</sup>

Upon seeing Yeshua make the declaration, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30), it is recorded, “the Judean leaders picked up stones to stone Him” (John 10:31, TLV). If Yeshua had only intended “I and the Father are one” to mean “I and the Father are of one accord,” would this have been a justified response? Instead, recognizing that their intent to stone Him to death is real, Yeshua questions these religious figures, “I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?” (John 10:32, NIV). The response to Yeshua’s inquiry is that He is guilty of the crime of self-deification:

“The Judean leaders answered, ‘We aren’t stoning you for a good work, but for blasphemy. Though You are a man, You make Yourself God!’” (John 10:33, TLV).

Here, the sentence of importance is *kai hoti su anthrōpos ōn poieis seauton Theon* (καὶ ὅτι σὺ ἄνθρωπος ὢν ποιεῖς σεαυτὸν θεόν), “because you, though only a human being, are making yourself God” (NRSV). As the verb *poieō* (ποιέω) can notably mean, “*Claim that someone is someth., pretend that someone is someth*” (BDAG).<sup>194</sup> From the perception of the Jewish religious leaders, Yeshua was a mortal human, and in claiming “I and the Father are one,” was making Himself out to be God. This was considered to be blasphemy to the God of Israel, and deserving of stoning (Leviticus 24:16; m.*Sanhedrin* 7:4). Reinhartz confirms in the *Jewish Annotated New Testament*, “Jesus reiterates his unity with God, which the Jews see as blasphemy (v. 33).”<sup>195</sup>

Yeshua’s response to those, who have accused Him of the crime of self-deification, is one which involves a quotation from the Tanach, particularly from Psalm 82:6. Yeshua directs His opponents, “Is it not written in your Torah, ‘I SAID, YOU ARE GODS’ [Psalm 82:6]?” (John 10:34, PME). In Psalm 82:1-8 (addressed previously), mortal judges in Ancient Israel are referred to as “gods,” and by extension such a titular position is held by the Jewish religious leaders of the Second Temple era:

“A Psalm of Asaph. God takes His stand in His own congregation; He judges in the midst of the rulers. How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Selah. Vindicate the weak and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and destitute. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them out of the hand of the wicked. They do not know nor do they understand; they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. **I said, ‘You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High.** Nevertheless you will die like men and fall like any one of the princes.’ Arise, O God, judge the earth! For it is You who possesses all the nations.”

Here, readers need to legitimately consider the flexibility present in the Hebrew term *elohim* (אֱלֹהִים), which while most frequently employed in terms of God proper, can, dependent on context to be sure, relate to “God, gods, judges, angels” (TWOT),<sup>196</sup> or “rulers, judges, either as divine representatives at sacred places or as reflecting divine majesty and power” (BDB).<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 188.

<sup>194</sup> BDAG, 840.

<sup>195</sup> Reinhartz, in *Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 179.

<sup>196</sup> Jack B. Scott, “‘ēlōhīm,” in TWOT, 1:44.

<sup>197</sup> BDB, 43.

In Psalm 82:6-7, bad rulers in Ancient Israel were told by the God of Israel, “You are gods, children of the Most High, all of you; nevertheless, you shall die like mortals, and fall like any prince” (NRSV). Yeshua the Messiah surely employed the message of Psalm 82:6-7 against His detractors: as God proper had once called corrupt judges in Ancient Israel “gods,” so the (broadly) corrupt Jewish religious leaders of the First Century were also “gods.” These leaders would meet a fate of rejection from God proper *and death*, despite bearing such an honorificate.

So, recognizing that corrupt mortals can be called “gods”—the same ones who accused Yeshua of a crime of self-deification—this should at least have *merited a pause* on their part, with the Messiah truly asking them to consider whether or not He has committed such a crime. If the God of Israel calls them “gods,” who are they to just immediately pick up stones and start throwing them at someone, without a little more consideration? As is seen in Yeshua’s poignant questioning of His opponents,

“If he called them ‘gods,’ to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken—what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son?’” (John 10:35-36, NIV).

Yeshua’s origins are associated with what it means for Him to be “the Son of God” (*huios tou Theou*, υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ). Upon initial glance, the title He bears of “Son of God” might seem to be less weighty than the judges or leaders called some sort of “gods.” But, Yeshua being the Son of God is innately connected with, “the Father sanctified and sent into the world” (Brown and Comfort)<sup>198</sup>, *ho patēr hēgiasmen kai apesteilen eis ton kosmon* (ὁ πατήρ ἡγίασεν καὶ ἀπέστειλεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον).

Far from usurping the position of God proper, as a standard human might in trying to make himself out to be God—Yeshua’s self-identity is predicated on His being sent from the Father, and in His detractors *probing His personal origins* associated with Him being “the Son of God.” Yeshua has not presented Himself at any time as someone who was trying to ascend into Heaven from the Earth, and take over God’s control of the universe; Yeshua had instead descended from Heaven (cf. John 3:13). Yeshua has presented Himself as someone who has been sent by God to perform an important service—one which all Bible readers recognize as being sacrificed for human transgressions.

Yeshua is clear that not only is He the One sent from the Father in Heaven, but that belief in Him is contingent on Him performing the works of the Father in Heaven: “If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me” (John 10:37, RSV). Yeshua is not an independent entity, but rather acts in concert with the Father in Heaven. He challenges His opponents, “but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works” (John 10:38a, RSV). When encountering the magnitude of the different miracles performed by Yeshua, such as healing the blind (John 10:21), those who are reasonable in mind and spirit, are naturally drawn to want to consider who it was who performed them—and where He actually came from. For those who do this, Yeshua concludes that they will recognize the interlocking relationship that He, the Son, has with the Father: “that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father” (John 10:38b, RSV).

The conclusion that we as Bible readers are to draw, from Yeshua the Messiah not only having declared “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30), but also that He was “sanctified and sent into the world” (John 10:35) by the Father, is: “that in me the Father [is] and I in the Father” (Brown and Comfort),<sup>199</sup> *hoti en emoi ho patēr kagō en tō patri* (ὅτι ἐν ἐμοὶ ὁ πατήρ καὶ γὼ ἐν

<sup>198</sup> Brown and Comfort, 364.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

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τῶ πατρὶ). The relationship that the Father and Son have, is notably not one where the Father is in the Son, but where the Son is in the Father. If Yeshua the Messiah were only a supernatural, but created entity, sent from the dimension of Heaven to the dimension of Planet Earth—then we might expect Yeshua to say that the Father, i.e., the Father's presence, was in the Son. Yet, for the Son to be in a reciprocal relationship of being in the Father, is something that readers of John's Gospel know is said by a figure who "was God" and "was in the beginning with God" (John 1:1, 2). In his book *Jesus and the God of Israel* Richard Bauckham offers some compelling thoughts on the interconnectivity, or intra-divine relationship, of the Father and Son, as not being in violation of the Deuteronomy 6:4 *Shema* of the One God of Israel—but certainly having to be portrayed as involving the internal makeup of this God:

"The Johannine Jesus' claim to oneness with the Father amounts to including himself with his Father in the unique identity of the one God as understood in Jewish monotheism. Within this divine identity, there is the uniquely intimate relationship of the Father and the Son. The oneness statements are clearly related to the statements of reciprocity: 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me' (10:38; 14:10, 11; cf. also 14:20; 17:21, 23). The first of these, in 10:38, is the climax of Jesus' defence of his earlier claim that 'I and the Father are one' (10:30). Both are taken to be blasphemous, and clearly they are, in some sense, equivalent claims. Evidently, this reciprocal indwelling—the closest conceivable intimacy of relationship—is the inner reality of the oneness of Father and Son. Their unity does not erase their difference, but differentiates them in an inseparable relationship. We should also notice that the terms 'Father' and 'Son' entail each other. The Father is called Father only because Jesus is his Son, and Jesus is called Son only because he is the Son of his divine Father. Each is essential to the identity of the other. So to say that Jesus and the Father are one is to say that the unique divine identity comprises the relationship in which the Father is who he is only in relation to the Son and vice versa. It is in the portrayal of this intra-divine relationship that John's Christology steps outside the categories of Jewish monotheistic definition of the unique identity of the one God. It does not all deny or contradict any of these (especially since the *Shema*' asserts the uniqueness of God, not his lack of internal self-differentiation) but, from Jesus' relationship of sonship to God, it redefines the divine identity as one in which Father and Son are inseparably united in differentiation from each other."<sup>200</sup>

### John 11:17-27

#### "Yeshua is the Resurrection and the Life"

"So when Yeshua came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off; and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary, to console them concerning *their* brother. Martha therefore, when she heard that Yeshua was coming, went to meet Him, but Mary stayed at the house. Martha then said to Yeshua, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. Even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.' Yeshua said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to Him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Yeshua said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?' She said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Messiah, the Son of God, *even* He who comes into the world.'"

The death and resuscitation of the deceased Lazarus (John 11:1-46) is certainly an important miracle for any reader of the Gospels to encounter! Within this scene, Lazarus' sister, Martha, inquires of Yeshua as to why He had not been present, because if He had been there,

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<sup>200</sup> Bauckham, pp 105-106.