

(Brown and Comfort),⁸⁶ *alla kai patera idion elegen ton Theon ison heauton poiōn tō Theō* (ἀλλὰ καὶ πατέρα ἴδιον ἔλεγεν τὸν θεὸν ἴσον ἑαυτὸν ποιῶν τῷ θεῷ). The First Century Jewish philosopher Philo would assert, using similar terminology, “But the selfish and atheistical mind, thinking itself equal with God [*isos einai Theō*, ἴσος εἶναι θεῷ]...” (*Allegorical Interpretation* 1.49).⁸⁷ Indeed, any human being caught making himself out to be “God,” would be viewed as not only guilty of self-deification, but also in significant violation of the thrust of Isaiah 40:25, “To whom then will you liken Me that I would be *his* equal [*v’esveh*, וְאֵשֶׁה; that I should be like him, RSV; To whom can I be compared, NJPS]?’ says the Holy One.”

Bruce indicates that to the Jewish religious leaders in view, “here was a man whose words and actions implied a trespass across the inviolable boundary that separated God from mankind.”⁸⁸ Morris further notes, “They discerned that the {presumed} sabbath breaking was no isolated rootless phenomenon. It proceeded from Jesus’ view of His person and was consistent with it.”⁸⁹

Either Yeshua’s direct association with His Father’s sustaining actions on the Sabbath are legitimate—and thus Yeshua is Himself legitimately God—or Yeshua of Nazareth was a lunatic and blasphemer, making Himself out to be something He was not. A Messianic Jewish theologian like David H. Stern usefully interjects, “Some Jews would like to reclaim Yeshua for the Jewish people by regarding him as a great teacher, which he was, but only human, not divine. Yeshua’s claim here makes that option impossible.”⁹⁰

While in the minds of Yeshua’s detractors, He was guilty of the sin of self-deification, “making” Himself the equal of God—the discussion which will follow in John 5:19ff actually involves the unique agency of Yeshua as the Son. Far from Yeshua of Nazareth being a mortal man guilty of the blasphemous crime of self-deification, it is in the unique and significant actions that Yeshua is designated to perform, *as the Son sent from the Father*, where His true identity is to be investigated and weighed. Yeshua the Messiah did not “make” Himself God, but rather His unique identity—and integration into the Divine Identity—is predicated on His being sent from the Father.

John 5:19-24

“Honoring the Son the Same as the Father”

“Therefore Yeshua answered and was saying to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless *it is* something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and *the Father* will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel. For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.’”

Yeshua has just been accused of “calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God” (John 5:18b, TLV), the crime of self-deification. If Yeshua were a mortal claiming to be

⁸⁶ Brown and Comfort, 335.

⁸⁷ Philo Judaeus: *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. C.D. Yonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 30.

⁸⁸ Bruce, *John*, 127.

⁸⁹ Morris, *John*, 310.

⁹⁰ Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 169.

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God, then Yeshua would be guilty of blaspheming the God of Israel, being found in sure violation of principles such as what is seen in Deuteronomy 32:39a: “See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me; it is I who put to death and give life.” On a lesser scale, Yeshua portraying Himself as having a special relationship with God the Father could merit Him an accusation of being a crazed lunatic, usurping the ultimate authority of the One True God, and resulting in a definite censure. What Yeshua will say to the religious leaders present, who have accused Him of self-deification, is that He is the Son who has been sent from the Father. Yeshua’s identity, origins, and nature are to be investigated from the basis of *what it means for Him to be sent from the Father*. Far from Yeshua being a mere mortal who is claiming an origin and a nature that He does not possess, Yeshua makes some critical statements which indicate an origin and a nature which only a supernatural being *for sure* can possess.

Yeshua states very clearly how the actions He performs, He does not perform independent of His Father: “Amen, amen I tell you, the Son cannot do anything by Himself. He can do only what He sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise” (John 5:19, TLV). Having just been accused of a crime of self-deification, Yeshua instead states to those present, how He only does what He sees the Father doing. *Yeshua does not just act on His own*, but He acts in unique concert, a most dynamic unity, with a being in the Father that His detractors recognize is from another dimension imperceptible to them. This relationship, which is most unique to Yeshua the Son and God the Father, is where the actions performed by the Father, are those which the Son is likewise able to perform. As Yeshua asserts, “For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these” (John 5:20, NIV). The healing of the paralytic at Bethesda, which was just witnessed (John 5:5-17), will be exceeded by even greater actions, as He will explain.

Significant inquiries about who Yeshua is, should be raised by His statement, “For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever He wants” (John 5:21, TLV). With the Son on Earth acting in concert with the Father in Heaven, Yeshua notes that He has the power to raise the dead. Of course, raising the dead was an ability granted by God to various Prophets in the Tanach, as was seen in the actions of Elijah (1 Kings 17:22) and Elisha (2 Kings 4:32-35). Yeshua the Son being a supreme agent of God the Father, is most definitely stated here. But as Yeshua is seen to effectively “mimic” His Father, as it were, indicative of a close unity, could these qualities demonstrated by the Son be demonstrated by an entity that is supernatural but ultimately created?

While various Prophets in Ancient Israel were granted the ability by God to resurrect the dead, something witnessed in the ministry of Yeshua in the Fourth Gospel via the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11:14-44)—would one expect any entity in the cosmos, even a highly ranked member of the Heavenly host, or the supreme leader of God’s celestial army, to ever say a statement as which appears in John 5:22? Here, Yeshua the Messiah says, “The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son” (RSV) or “has entrusted all judgment to the Son” (NIV). Notice that the statement here is not just to some judgment in general, as though Yeshua the Son only has a discerning ability to evaluate situations, and issue fair-minded and reasonable decisions, which are equitable to resolve crises among God’s people. Instead, the source text communicates that *tēn krisin pasan* (τὴν κρίσιν πᾶσαν) or “all the judgment” (YLT) has been given over to the Son from the Father—**an eschatological judgment involving the final destiny of human beings**.

In Genesis 18:25 Abraham appeals to God as “the Judge of all the earth,” yet this is a status that Yeshua the Messiah, the Son, says that He possesses in John 5:22. What does this say about the nature of Yeshua? Milne indicates that “This is another supreme prerogative of deity. As creator, God holds all of his creatures accountable to him; is by definition ‘the Judge of all’ (Gn.

18:25). Jesus, however, has been appointed to judge (27).⁹¹ Köstenberger makes the point of how God proper, and not the Messiah, were widely anticipated to issue final judgment, hence making Yeshua's words fairly significant on His origins and nature:

"The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son. This is a remarkable assertion, since according to the Hebrew Scriptures, judgment is the exclusive prerogative of God (e.g., Gen. 18:25; cf. Judg. 11:27; though see Ps. 2:2). In Second Temple literature, too, the Messiah remains very much in the background as far as judgment is concerned, apart from carrying out God's judgment on his enemies, in keeping with Jewish nationalistic expectations (e.g., Ps. Sol. 17:21-27). Rabbinic writings likewise ascribe judging the world to God alone."⁹²

But as significant as it may be that Yeshua the Son has been given, by God the Father, the authority of "all the judgment" (John 5:22), Yeshua further states that this will occur "so that all should honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him" (John 5:23, TLV). Here in the source text, the verb *timāō* (τιμᾶω) means "to set a price on, estimate, value" and "to show high regard for, honor, revere" (BDAG).⁹³ The term "honor" has a pretty broad scope of applications, but how "honor" is qualified in John 5:23 requires a conclusion about the nature of Yeshua supportive of a high Christology of the Son being integrated into the Divine Identity: *pantes timōsi ton huion kathōs timōsi ton patera* (πάντες τιμῶσι τὸν υἱὸν καθὼς τιμῶσι τὸν πατέρα), "all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father" (ESV). The conjunction *kathōs* (καθὼς) often regards, "as, just as, in the manner that" (Mounce and Mounce).⁹⁴ The Phillips New Testament offers the slightly interpretive, but effective, "that all men may honour the Son equally with the Father." The statement of John 5:23—even with Yeshua stating that He does nothing that the Father Himself does not do (John 5:19)—is absolutely scandalous if Yeshua was a created being. While John 5:23 does not employ the term "worship" (*proskuneō*), the honor to be ascribed to the Father *and also* to the Son, would be worship. A number of commentators of the Gospel of John have made some key observations on these statements:

- D.A. Carson: "In a theistic universe, such a statement belongs to one who is himself to be addressed as God (cf. 10:28), or to stark insanity. The one who utters such things is to be dismissed with pity or scorn, or worshipped as Lord...Either John is supremely deluded and must be dismissed as a fool, or his witness is true and Jesus is to be ascribed the honours due God alone."⁹⁵
- Craig S. Keener: "[B]ecause Jesus claims that people should honor the Son even as (καθὼς) they honor the Father, he utters a claim to divine rank (cf. Isa. 48:11); one cannot have the Father without the Son or vice-versa (cf. 1 John 2:23)...That 'all' should honor him (5:23) emphasizes the universality of Christ's sovereign authority (1:7; 5:28-29)."⁹⁶

If any of us got up in a religious setting, and effectively exclaimed, "Honor me, the same way that you would honor God," we would be denounced as blasphemers, and we may even be committed to an insane asylum. Yeshua's statements, however, are reflective of One who in the opening statements of John's Gospel, was not just present with God at the creation of the universe, and who created the universe, but who is to be called God (John 1:1-18).

⁹¹ Milne, 99.

⁹² Köstenberger, pp 187-188.

⁹³ BDAG, 1004.

⁹⁴ Mounce and Mounce, 1087.

⁹⁵ Carson, *John*, 255.

⁹⁶ Keener, *John*, 652.

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Yeshua is not an independent entity, who acts entirely on His own, as His origins and identity are based in the relationship He has with the Heavenly Father. In order to have eternal life, Yeshua says that one has to believe both what He says and to believe in the Father who sent Him: “Amen, amen I tell you, whoever hears My word and trusts the One who sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed over from death into life” (John 5:24, TLV). Contrary to the accusation made against Him of “making Himself equal with God” (John 5:18), Yeshua has just presented Himself as being integrated into the Divine Identity, with the Father being “Him who sent Me” (John 5:24; *tō pempstanti me*, τῷ πέμψαντί με). The question of “From where was this Yeshua sent?” necessarily requires His origins to be not only not of this Earth, but not of this universe, and innately connected to the being of the Heavenly Father.

John 5:25-29

“The Son of Man Has Life in Himself”

“Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.”

Yeshua’s dialogue continues, as He has just asserted some of the significant interconnectivity that He, the Son, has with the Father (John 5:19-24). He speaks the profoundly important assertion, “Yes, indeed! I tell you that there is coming a time—in fact, it’s already here—when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who listen will come to life” (John 5:25, CJB/CJSB). While the terminology “the s/Son of God” need not always imply something supernatural, and instead be a regal title given to a monarch of Israel, the actions associated with “the Son of God” (*tou huiou tou Theou*, τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ) in John 5:25 decisively place Yeshua on the supernatural side here. Here, the actions of Yeshua the Messiah are associated with not just the future resurrection of the dead in the eschaton, but also a spiritual renewal taking place among those who encounter Him and receive His teachings. The actions of Yeshua have been associated with a variety of Tanach concepts by various examiners,⁹⁷ including Isaiah 55:3: “Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David” (RSV). Most important, though, would be Ezekiel 37:4: “Again He said to me, ‘Prophesy over these bones and say to them, “O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.””

That the resurrection life of the world to come is already accessible in the lives of Messiah followers—with obviously more to occur—is profoundly important to recognize for Believers’ present spirituality. In the narrative of John’s Gospel, one should also keep in mind the upcoming resurrection of the recently deceased Lazarus (John 11:43-44). But in John 5:25, it is explicitly declared from Yeshua, “the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live” (NIV), which is also an affirmation of the general resurrection (1 Thessalonians 4:16). This statement undeniably affects how Bible readers approach the nature of the Messiah. Keener indicates, “That God’s voice brings life would not surprise Jesus’ hearers, though such a claim for a human voice would sound jarring.”⁹⁸ Could a mortal human be responsible for

⁹⁷ Bruce, *John*, 131; Carson, *John*, 256; Köstenberger, 189; Michaels, 317.

⁹⁸ Keener, *John*, 653.