

**THE 'I-AM' SAYINGS OF JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN AND QUESTIONS OF
HISTORY: TWO CASE STUDIES (JOHN 6 AND 8)**

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, reconstructions of the historical Jesus have been focused on the Synoptic Gospels. The Gospel of John has oftentimes been marginalised due to its high theological nature, despite containing Jesus' 'I-AM' sayings which are expressive of his identity. The research focuses on the question - Is there any possibility that the identity of Jesus could be explored historically through the lens of the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John? The research examines various scholars that have critically considered the issues such as the 'John, Jesus and History' group and commentary authors.

Most of the scholars I have investigated who supported aspects of historicity in the Gospel of John, limited it to the traditions behind and elements in the settings of the 'I-AM' sayings in the Johannine Gospel. I conclude that the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John are relevant in considering the identity of the historical Jesus, despite the difficulty of verifying them with historical facts. Recommendations are made that more work needs to be done by biblical scholars in looking historically into the Gospel of John and considering the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John in further historical research.

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INTRODUCTION

Jesus Christ was one of the most prominent and popular men that had ever lived in the surface of the earth. Although there was no book or material that can be ascribed to him as the author, his fame and popularity had been evident from the countless numbers of books and materials written about him, varying from different miraculous aspects of his life. These countless numbers of books and materials written about Jesus have stemmed from the most popular claimed source - the Bible. And traditionally, most people have come to accept that the information provided about Jesus was credible. This attitude can be mostly seen from those who believe that Jesus was the Messiah and object of their faith - a belief which is termed Christianity. There is an emphasis in Christianity that the identity of Jesus could be derived from the sayings attributed to Jesus in the bible – among these, those referred to as the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus.

The 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus can be seen in the Gospels of the New Testament. Most descriptions of Jesus' identities have been derived from the Synoptic Gospels. But the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John are presented by the author as purposeful words spoken by Jesus about his identity. The Johannine 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus have also received less acceptability due to their high theological nature. But in a more critical and logical sense, could these sayings claiming information about Jesus in the Gospel of John be considered from a historical point of view? This is the motivation behind this research, to attempt to look closely into the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John in relation to the identity of the historical Jesus, not to necessarily agree or object to already laid down positions of biblical scholars on the issue, and not trying to produce any fact or evidence historically about the identity of Jesus but to explore the relevant arguments that have been raised in this light.

As such, a literature review of the Gospel of John; the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John; some of the problems of the 'I-AM' sayings identified by the 'John, Jesus and History' research group; and survey of some commentaries may be relevant in fostering the understanding and exploration of the research. In addition, exegetical analysis of some passages in the Gospel of John containing the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus - John chapters 6 and 8 in particular - will be undertaken to see if there is any relevant insight that could be considered to give a direction as to proffer any possible recommendation for the historicity of the identity of Jesus through the lens of the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John.

The research work is divided into four chapters. The first chapter sets out the issues relating to the Gospel of John and historical scholarship, and in particular to the 'I-AM' statements / discourses in the Gospel of John. The second and third chapters will examine the exegetical investigation on the 'bread of life' and 'light of the world' discourses in the Gospel of John chapters 6 and 8 respectively. The exegetical investigation will draw out and survey the way that scholars and commentators have approached the Gospel of John chapters 6 and 8. Although, oftentimes, it seems that scholars and commentators on the Gospel of John chapters 6 and 8 are interested in issues other than the questions raised by the 'John, Jesus and History' research group about their significance for issues of Jesus and history; the research work will explore the Gospel of John chapters 6 and 8 for any possible connection to and relevance for Jesus and history. In regards to the third chapter - an exegetical investigation on the 'light of the world' discourse in the Gospel of John chapter 8, I am aware that these verses have been considered by most scholars as anti - Jewish, but my intention is to use these verses to extrapolate and focus on 'Jesus as the light'. Finally, the fourth chapter concludes the study, highlights the main findings, suggests recommendations and further research insights.

CHAPTER ONE

REVIEW OF SCHOLARSHIP

1.1 The Gospel of John

The Gospel of John can be easily observed to be different from the Synoptic Gospels by just merely reading through the New Testament. As such, current scholarships of the Gospel of John have tend to focus more on the unique conceptual world of its author or final compiler. The Gospel of John has been highly regarded as a religious writing due to its purpose of imparting faith in the person of Jesus as the Christ, as the author or final compiler clearly states that - the record of Jesus' signs in this book is to make whosoever that reads or hears about it, to believe in Jesus as the Christ and by believing, they will have life in his name (John 20:30-31). Sloyan (1991:50) explained the Gospel of John in this way, 'The Gospel of John tells the story of a man (Jesus) and what happened to him, what he did and what he said, whom he related to and how he ended - and will never end'.

There are different issues that have been raised in the study of the Gospel of John. That is, there are a lot of theological contradictions in the Gospel of John. For instance, there exist both an elevated Christology (John 1:1) and subordination Christology (John 5:30); the *signs* terminology were both emphasized as a valuable means to evoke faith (John 20:31) and as a mere existential significance (John 20:29); Furthermore, there exists a present eschatology (John 5:24) and a future eschatology (John 6:54). But the issues I intend to engage with in this research work is that, on the one hand, the Gospel of John has been denied historicity and has been concluded that it is not suitable for Jesus research because the distinctive portrayal of Jesus it portrays is seen to be spiritual / theological. Scholarships that has documented the dominance of the theological view of the Gospel of John include various reference works, dictionaries of John and the Gospels, the Anchor Bible Dictionary and Gerard Sloyan's book - *What are they saying about John?* On the other hand, the Gospel of

John has been critically examined for the relevance of its historical material. Scholarships that supports a more strongly historical view are Dodd C. H. (1963) *Historical tradition in the fourth Gospel*. Cambridge: Antony Rowe Ltd; Anderson, P. 2007 'Prologue: Critical Views of John, Jesus and History'. *John, Jesus and History, Volume 1: Critical Appraisals of Critical Views*, 1-7; Bauchkam, R. 2009. 'The Bethany Family in John 11-12: History or Fiction?'. *John, Jesus and History, Volume 2: Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel*, 185-202; Kostenberger, A. J., 1998. 'Jesus as Rabbi in the Fourth Gospel'. *Bulletin of Biblical Research Volume 8*, 97-128.

In reflecting on the problems of the Gospel of John, Ashton (1997:8) emphasized that the theological and historical views of the Gospel of John are the two main groups that 'most academic studies of the Gospel of John, irrespective of their range and diversity, may be conveniently grouped under'. Ashton further credited the genesis of both the theological and historical views of the Gospel of John to Bultmann's two great riddles highlighted in his classic article published in 1925 but still untranslated in 1997 when Ashton was writing. The first riddle was - where does the Gospel of John stand in relation to the development of early Christianity?, which Ashton referred to as *history* and the second riddle was- what is the central focus of the Gospel of John, its basic idea?, which Ashton reduced to *theology*. The explanation by Ashton on the problems of the Gospel of John supported the fact that the theological/spiritual and historical perspectives of the Gospel of John is worth engaging in and also, these historical and theological perspectives might have some level of significance in exploring the various views of scholars on the identity of the historical Jesus.

Recent scholarship about the Gospel of John that has been most relevant in critically discussing the issues in the Johannine's material is the work of the 'John, Jesus and History' research group. 'The 'John, Jesus and History' group is a forum of at least 350 scholars, who comes together annually to discuss issues relating to the historical background and composition history of the Johannine's literature - the fourth Gospel and 1, 2, 3 John' (Thatcher 2007: 9-11). The 'John, Jesus and History' group started November 2002, they

were granted Consultative status at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual meeting and within the first three years, they focused on topics relating to 'the relationship between the Johannine's literature and the study of the Historical Jesus. Especially preliminary issues relating to the study of the Gospel of John's 'historicity', including 'state of research' questions, discussions of the reasonable results of such an inquiry and methodological problems' (Thatcher 2007 :9-11). The 'John, Jesus and History' project are very much interested in the reasons why the Gospel of John has been interpreted as lacking historical perspective or context, and they are attempting to investigate critically the issues that have been raised in the denial of the Gospel of John a place in Jesus research. They are also trying to suggest aspects of historicity in the Johannine's material. The 'John, Jesus and History' group discussions seem to have generated new insights on questions that are relevant both to the interpretation of the Johannine literature and to the study of the life and teachings of Jesus. Although, the participants in (and the contributors to publications) of the 'John, Jesus and History' group reflect a wide range of theological and methodological background that serves as the primary strength of their discussions, they are also united by three key presuppositions:

First, that all canonical Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) are 'spiritual Gospels' not only the Gospel of John because no early Christian was interested in Jesus as a purely historical figure, despite the Gospel of John having a more theological interest than the Synoptic. Secondly, that a serious reconsideration of the context of the Johannine literature is relevant to significant problems in Christian origin. And thirdly, that any fresh attempt to explain the complex relationship between John, Jesus and history will require a substantial reconsideration, not only of the Johannine literature but also of the very meaning of the word 'history' and of current methods of studying the historical Jesus. (Thatcher 2007:9-12).

The Gospel of John, on the one hand, contains events such as the advent of the eternal Logos and concluding with the ongoing ministry of the resurrected Jesus; hence, Anderson (2007:1) observed that although the Johannine perspective is cosmic, how could that reflect an earth-fettered historical perspective? And as such, he emphasized that 'the prevalent scholarly opinion in the modern era has come to relegate the Johannine Gospel to the canons of myth and theology rather than history; therefore the Gospel of John has become

off-limits for historical quests for Jesus'. On the other hand, Anderson (2007:1-2) argued that the critical view of the non-historical Gospel of John creates new problems that cannot be solved by the mere relegation of the Gospel of John. Anderson proposes that:

The Gospel of John has more archaeological content and topographical details than all the other Gospels put together. The Gospel of John also bears many features of historical realism that contributes a more plausible view of Jesus' ministry than the Markan Gospels. In addition, the Gospel of John possesses a great deal of *mundane* and 'theologically innocent' materials that cannot be adequately explained on the basis of the Gospel of John's inferred ahistoricity. (Anderson 2007:2)

Anderson (2007:37) explained that the distinction made by Clement which emphasized that the Synoptic wrote about the bodily aspect of Jesus' ministry, while the Gospel of John wrote about the theological aspect of Jesus' ministry, has provided a heuristic key of denying the historicity of the Johannine witness. The Clement of Alexandria's late second century comment on the distinction of the Gospel of John - 'but, last of all, John, perceiving that the external facts have been made plain in the Synoptic Gospels, been urged by his friends and inspired by the Holy Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel' (Eusebius 6.14) - was the main reason why the difference between the Synoptic and the Gospel of John have been largely ascribed to as Synoptic 'factuality' versus Johannine 'spirituality'. (Anderson 2007:37).

Anderson (2007:38-43) argued that although the teachings and deeds of Jesus in the Gospel of John are seen to have a very high spiritual inclination, Clement was not declaring the Gospel of John to be historically inferior. Anderson explained that:

The words translated 'facts' in Clement statement - 'the Synoptic preserved facts in contrast to the Gospel of John' - is actually *somatika* referring to the bodily aspect of Jesus' ministry as contrasted to the spiritual perspective of John. In that case, it is a mistake to interpret Clement as making a historical judgement about the Gospel of John or the Synoptic. (Anderson 2007:38-39)

This can be seen as a misunderstanding on the part of modern scholars (who follows Eusebius' evaluation). This is not a historically based judgement, but a mere supposed statement as to how to make sense of the Gospel of John's distinctively theological and different presentation of the Jesus story. Anderson (2007:40-42) further supported his argument that Clement was not a 'modern positivist'. That Clement was merely declaring his inference of the Synoptic Gospel's tone and approach in contrast to the Gospel of John, not

respective degrees of their historical reliability, nearly a century after the completion of the four canonical Gospels.

Some of the reasons raised that have denied the Gospel of John a place in the historical Jesus research will be examined.

1.1.1 Materials found in the Synoptic Gospels but not in the Gospel of John:

Rather than beginning with a birth narrative (Matthew and Luke), and Jesus' ministering for only a year with the 'cleansing' of the temple at the end of his ministry in the Synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of John began with the eternal logos; three Passovers are mentioned in the Gospel of John and the temple cleansing is at the beginning. Also the Gospel of John does not include Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God; several aphoristic sayings; the end time discourse (Olivet); the Sermon on the Mount - including the Lord's Prayer; an account of Jesus' baptism; the institution of the Lord's Supper; transfiguration; Jesus' temptation by Satan; Gethsemane; and exorcism of demons.

As a result, Anderson (2007:17) explained that the 'Gospel of John's ahistoricity seems to be confirmed if one assumes a three (Synoptics) - against - one (Johannine) majority'. But he emphasized that 'if Luke and Matthew used Mark, then viewing the Gospel of John's difference from the Synoptic Gospels as three - against - one minority must be reconsidered'. Anderson (2007:17) asserted that 'if the Gospel of Mark got it wrong, so then the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. And he proposed that the Gospel of John and Mark need to be seen as a *bi-optic Gospels*'.

1.1.2 Materials found in the Gospel of John but not in the Synoptic Gospels:

Anderson (2007:24) emphasized that because events such as five of the Gospel of John's miracles (the wedding miracle, the healing of the official's son, the healing of the Jerusalem paralytic, the healing of the blind man and raising of Lazarus) and Jesus' dramatic dialogue with Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the Jewish leaders, Pilate and Peter in the Gospel of John are not recorded in the Synoptic Gospels; there is commonly in scholarship the conclusion that they were not known by the Synoptic writers and in general

terms they cannot be accurate historical rendering. Other materials in the Gospel of John not found in the Synoptic Gospels are teachings on eternal life rather than the Kingdom of God; extended discourses rather than aphoristic sayings; the farewell discourse (John 13-17); accounts of Jesus' interactions with John the Baptist, or of scenes in the upper room; Satan as Jesus' chief antagonists working through Judas Iscariot. Anderson (2007:25) has critically examined the above reasons and emphasized that, 'to argue that *everything significantly* said or done by Jesus would be included in the Synoptic, or even in all the Gospels record, is unsound'. Anderson submitted that the Gospel of John explicitly declared its intention in selecting these particular events (John 21:24-25), and the same was probably true of Mark and the other Gospels.

Reflecting on the differences of the materials found in the Synoptic Gospels and not in the Gospel of John, and those found in Gospel of John and not in the Synoptic Gospels, there is a general explanation that the traditional way of accounting for these differences is that the Gospel of John wrote to complement the Synoptic Gospels (Kostenberger 2013: 22-23). This traditional way of accounting that the Gospel of John wrote to complement the Synoptic Gospels is in line with Clement Alexandria's suggestion 'John been conscious that the external facts had been set forth by the Synoptic Gospels..., composed a spiritual Gospel'. But in order for scholars to be more critical and logical in accounting for these differences, there have been, more recently, the theory that the Gospel of John wrote independently from the Synoptic Gospels.

Kostenberger (2013:23) seemed to be in favour of the independence of the Gospel of John. Kostenberger (2013:23) further explained that the independent view of the Gospel of John does not mean that its author was unaware of the existence of the Synoptic Gospels or had never read them, to remain unaware of or exposed to the Synoptic Gospels. If the view of complete unawareness of the Johannine author is to be considered, it could only be maintained when the Gospel of John is presented as a sectarian document entirely outside the mainstream of apostolic Christianity. Also, if the view that the Johannine author had

never read the Synoptic Gospels is to be considered, it would raise further questions as to the location of the Johannine author, especially there is the unanimous agreement that the Johannine author wrote later after the Synoptic Gospels. Kostenberger (2013:23) then suggested that the independent view of the Gospel of John means that its author did not make extensive use of the Synoptic Gospel as he wrote or that he did not let his agenda be set by the Synoptic Gospels.

Due to the fact that the Gospel of John contained traces of acquaintances with the Synoptic tradition, for instance John 1:40; 3:24; 4:44; 11:1-2, Kostenberger (2013:23) came to this conclusion that 'the Gospel of John was almost certainly familiar with the Synoptic tradition... but for whatever reason, the author of the Gospel of John saw it fit not to let the Synoptic traditions set his agenda. In this sense, John wrote independently'.

1.1.3 The Gospel of John marginalization from Jesus studies:

Due to the issue that the Gospel of John was finalised least among the canonical Gospels and it had been generally accepted to be dated around 100 C.E (e.g., Brown 1971: lxxx-lxxxvi; Lincoln 2005: 17-26); the Gospel of John's claim to historicity is often rejected based on the conclusion that the earlier the traditional material of the Gospel, the greater the confidence on its historicity. In this view, the Gospel of John's Logos Christology combined with Jesus' supremacy betrays a distanced and confessional reflection, and the Gospel of John's historical claim is rejected. But Anderson (2007:48-54) argued that the Gospel of John's late finalization is not a reliable basis for determining the Gospel of John's historicity.

Anderson (2007:66) concluded that the findings of the 'John, Jesus and History' group on the Gospel of John, showed that neither the denial of the historicity of the Gospel of John nor the denial of the Gospel of John a place in Jesus research was constructed on solid materials, so neither was able to support much weight for constructing the figure of Jesus. Anderson emphasized that the Gospel is constructed in response to real problems, as not any single one was compelling enough to be dominant. Some of the logic used in most cases seem to be untrue and only part of the data are considered in most cases. Distortions

of the Johannine and Synoptic materials sometimes appear to make an argument sturdier, but, when analysed critically, the facts and procedures themselves raise question with the analyses and their conclusions.

1.1.4 Background to Johannine Studies / Historical Jesus:

Apart from the obvious observation that the Gospel of John has a different character to the Synoptic Gospels and seems difficult at times to understand rationally by a lay reader of the New Testament, Johannine scholars such as Lindars (1971:11) have also affirmed the difficulty of the Gospel of John as he writes: 'The literature of the Gospel of John is so immense, and even a scholar who devotes all his time to the study of the New Testament cannot keep up with'. Johannine literature has experienced recent transition from the long-standing tradition that followed the dominant exegetical paradigm - 'historical-critical' approach of interpretation, to a contemporary narrative approach as suggested by Culpepper in 1983.

Moloney's (2012:314) overview showed that Culpepper argued that 'the Gospel of John could be read as a deliberately designed unified narrative utterance, with each single part dependent upon the whole'. The emphasis for the narrative interpretative approach is that prior traditions that have been drawn into the composition of the Johannine literature should be interpreted in light of the Johannine story and not interpreted based on their supposed historical origin. Contrary to Lincoln's conclusion that the Gospel of John's Christological claims 'are the developed post-resurrection convictions about Jesus that have become contentious in the evangelist's own time and settings, and have been read back into the teachings of Jesus and the disputes of his day' (2005:40), Moloney (2012:315) asked 'where do those developed post-resurrection convictions have their source?' and asserted that there is no need to source the Johannine narrative in the Synoptic Gospels, because they are "theologically astute narratives that have their own 'distance' from the Jesus of history, in a search for 'truth'".

The connection of the brief background to the Johannine studies, to the research work can be hinge on the emphasis of two issues. The composition of the Johannine literature be interpreted in light of the Johannine story is one issue. And the Johannine Christological claims should be considered as theologically astute narrative is the other. This emphasis by Culpepper (1987: 105-110), amplified by Moloney (2012: 314) to consider the interpretation of the Gospel of John in its own unique presentation can be linked to one of the suggestions and considerations that had been made by Anderson (2007: 38-43) in the 'John, Jesus and History' research group. Hence as the research work tends to explore the Gospel of John, chapters 6 and 8 particularly, the unique presentation of the Johannine material will be considered. This will be done by focusing on the exegetical investigation of the elements within the discourses in the Gospel of John chapters 6 and 8 that could be relevant to Jesus and History.

Historical Jesus Studies often distances itself from Christology, as evidencing developing theologies and doctrines based on Jesus Christ and his teachings. Interest in Jesus grew as Christians in the second and third centuries, practised the worship of Jesus as Christ. The transition from prayers and thanksgiving, to actual worship of Jesus (Acts 13:2) was a relatively smooth, and perhaps, not evens a conscious process (Bauckham 1992:815). And as a result, by the fifth century, there were a lot of Christological emphasis through the Chalcedonian doctrine - 'one person, two natures'. This period of worship of Jesus as Christ was considered by Charlesworth (2011: 92) as phase one, which covered the years from 26 to 1738.

During the Enlightenment era, the second phase of historical Jesus research began, which was understood by Charlesworth (2011: 92) to be the first quest or 'Old Quest' is closely associated with the work of Albert Schweitzer. Schweitzer attributed the origin of the 'Old Quest' to Reimarus (1694 - 1768) (ed. C.H Talbert, trans. R.S Fraser 1985) but the English Deists, John Locke, Matthew Tindal and Thomas Chubb, were the real originators of critical Jesus study, as they sought a 'reasonable Christianity' (Anderson, ed. 1967:10-11).

This 'Old Quest' from 1738 to 1906 was motivated by theological concerns and designed for the church, as many of its authors thought they could produce a biography of Jesus (Charlesworth 2011: 92).

The third phase, also understood by Charlesworth (2011: 93) to be 'No Quest' from 1906 to 1953 was 'a period where the general optimism of discovering a relevant historical Jesus behind the portraits of the Gospels, an optimism which fuelled the 'Old Quest' was lost'. This was noted by Charlesworth (2011:93) as a saying of one chronicler of Jesus research as the chronicler observed that Christians typically looked down the well of history only to see their own reflected faces. And this, combined with scepticism about the Gospel of Mark historicity, the acids of form criticism and a new theology that isolated faith from history, was the cause oflack of interest in questions about Jesus (Allison 2000:135). During this 'No Quest' period, many of its authors like Bultmann, Barth, Brunner, Bonhoeffer and Tillich, built their theological edifice on the 'Christ of faith' to show their interest in Christian theology and not in archaeological, historiography or a search for the Jesus of history behind the Christ of the Gospels (Charlesworth 2011: 93).

After Schweitzer had terminated the first quest or 'Old Quest' and following Bultmann's 'No Quest' period, things began anew when in 1953, Bultmann's disciple, E. Kasemann held a lecture on 'the problem of the historical Jesus'; while still largely endorsing Bultmann's scepticism, argued against his former teacher that knowledge about the historical Jesus is essential and a requisite for the Christian faith. This fourth phase, which was understood by Charlesworth (2011: 94) to be the second quest or 'New Quest' continued from 1953 to ca. 1970.

The fifth phase, which is now often attached to the labours of the present moments from 1980, is termed 'third quest' – christened such by N.T Wright or understood by Charlesworth (2011: 94) as 'Jesus research'. Contrary to the nineteenth century scholars' quest for Jesus which stood within a context much more self-consciously theological, the 'Third Quest' have transferred into the critical and comparative world of the liberal arts. 'It is a scientific study of

Jesus in his time, in light of all relevant data, literary and non-literary - including archaeology and topography' (Charlesworth 2011: 94).

A paradigm shift from a Christology determined by the terminology of the Chalcedonian doctrine 'one person, two natures' in the fifth century, to one with a focus on Jesus in the context of his time occurred during the twentieth century. With Schillebeeckx, Rahner, Kasper and other's works in the 1970's, the emphasis moves from philosophical discussions about Christ's human nature to a focus on Jesus in the context of his time 'historical Jesus'. In this new paradigm, the Chalcedonian doctrine is still affirmed, yet it does not govern the debate (McEvoy 2001: 264).

From the theological perspective, the New Testament of the Bible showed that the person and work of Jesus reveals God and this is at the very heart of the Christian faith. Hence, faith in this God must be intimately connected to the facts of Jesus' life (McEvoy 2001: 264). But the understanding of who Jesus was, particularly in history, has been an outstanding question to answer; as Jesus had been treated as a mythological or ideological figure by different school of thoughts and the shape of his humanity is regarded as of no central importance to his identity. Furthermore due to the fact that many portraits of Jesus by mainstream scholars have produced contradictory features (Brown 2011:1416). And these contradictory features of Jesus from the canonical Gospels presupposed that either the Gospels' story of Jesus are not genuine or the scholars themselves are trying to reconstruct Jesus based on their own expectation and prejudice. It is obvious then that there seems to be a problem of the relationship between the Jesus of History and the Christ of faith. In addition, since Jesus is a prominent figure in history and featured in worldwide monotheistic religions - Christianity, Islam and Judaism, a clear historical expression is needed (Brown 2011: 1412). And growth in historical understanding of Jesus counters some of the Docetism impulses in the Christian community (Johnson 1984: 32-34).

Although the research work neither focuses on producing a portrait of Jesus' identity historically nor does it tend to provide evidence of the Historical Jesus, the background of the Historical Jesus briefly described, has some connections to the research work. Firstly, since the research work focus on questions of history, it seems relevant to note that previous efforts had been done in critical Jesus studies – even though these previous efforts had been done in light of all relevant data. Secondly, since the research work focus on exploring the 'I AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John – which had been traditionally presented by the author as purposeful words spoken by Jesus about his identity, it seems relevant to abreast with an overview of previous historical considerations of the identity of Jesus. Thirdly, the background of the historical Jesus in the research work lays more emphasis that it is important to consider and study Jesus historically to counter Docetism.

The research has engaged various books, journals, anthologies, commentaries and dictionaries in order to get some understanding about the various perspectives of Jesus' life and background, as the research also engaged in literature reviews and exegetical analysis. The various scholarly materials on the Gospel of John and historical Jesus portrayals, were widely disseminated and enhance the investigation to explore, issues relating to the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John and question of history; also relating to the identity of the historical Jesus.

1.2 The 'I-AM' sayings in the Gospel of John:

The 'I-AM' sayings in the Gospel of John focus on the personality and identity of Jesus of Nazareth. The phrase 'I AM' equates to the Greek *ego eimi*; a personal pronoun generally employed by the Greeks to lay more emphasis on the personality in the sentence. In some cases, the canonical Gospels have Jesus referring either to *ego* 'I' or *ego eimi* 'I AM', but in each case its emphasis on the person of Jesus is still intact. In the former case *ego*, the Gospel of Matthew has Jesus using it 29 times, the Gospel of Mark has Jesus using it 17 times, the Gospel of Luke has Jesus using it 23 times and the Gospel of John used it 134

times. In the latter case of *ego eimi*, the Gospel of Matthew used it 5 times (Matthew 14:27; 22:32; 24:5; 26:22, 25), the Gospel of Mark used it 3 times (Mark 6:50; 13:6; 14:62), the Gospel of Luke used it 4 times (Luke 1:19; 21:8; 22:70; 24:39) and the Gospel of John used it 30 times.

The *ego eimi* 'I AM' in the canonical Gospels were uttered by different personalities or characters in the different narratives, for instance John the Baptist and Pilate, but it is mostly used by Jesus of Nazareth (Burge 1992:354). Just reading the Gospel of John, it is difficult to ignore the fact that the 'I-AM' sayings represent a significant feature of the fourth Gospel. Ball writes that:

Like many of the major themes in the Gospel of John, the 'I-AM' sayings in the Gospel of John are interwoven in the fabric of the Gospel, gathering further meaning each time they occur. Because the 'I-AM' sayings also focus attention on the person of Jesus, each time the words occur they further reveal something of Jesus' role or identity so that the narrator's point of view first disclosed in the prologue is reinforced. (Ball 1996:149)

The comparison of the *ego* and the *ego eimi* in both the Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John is to show the level of interest the author of the Gospel of John had in trying to identify the personalities in its presentation of the Gospel story. As such, the Gospel of John should be given more consideration in the historical investigation of the person of Jesus.

Hence a brief background of the *ego eimi* 'I-AM', the 'I-AM' usage in the Synoptic Gospels, the distinctive 'I-AM' usage in the Gospel of John and some of the problems identified by the 'John, Jesus and History' group regarding the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John, will be examined.

1.2.1 Background to the phrase *ego eimi* 'I-AM':

The background sources of the *ego eimi* 'I-AM' that could have influenced the cultural setting in the Johannine community may play a significant role in showing that the 'I-AM' material of the Gospel of John may have existed during the lifetime of Jesus, and consequently may have been the exact words of the historical Jesus. There are different suggestions that have been considered by historical Jesus scholars regarding the source of

the 'I-AM' material in the Gospel of John.

Most of the religions of the ancient Near East have been seen to use the Greek formula, *ego eimi*. The magic formulas of Isis, The opening tract of the Hermetica (Poimandres) and Mandaean texts are non-Jewish sources that have been considered by scholars in this regard (Barrett 1978:291-293; Bultmann 1971: 225-226). Wetter and Deissmann favoured a Hellenistic background (Veres 2008: 112) while Bultmann (1971: 226) and Schweitzer (2000: 45-50) favoured Gnostic and Mandaen backgrounds. The research could not engage with Wetter and Deissmann directly as their materials were not available and were also written in German. In the non-Jewish usage of the *ego eimi*, it seems clear that either the predicate is supplied as in 'uncertain predicates', for instance "'I am Poimandres' Corp. Herm. 1.2; 'I am Isis' los inscription" or the form is used for self-identification as in 'common identification', for instance 'I am the one who'. But there is no case of the *ego eimi* in these non-Jewish materials that can be traced to the Johannine 'absolute use' in which the *ego eimi* is virtually considered as a 'title'.

The Septuagint of the Old Testament is another source that shows abundant usage of the *ego eimi* but in most cases with a predicate (Genesis 28:13; Exodus 3:6-14, 15:26; Psalms 35:3). The most important use is found in Exodus 3:6-14 where God, having introduced himself as 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob', revealed his divine name as 'I am who I am' upon Moses' request, which is translated in the LXX as *ego eimi ho on* 'I am the one who is'. This became the personal covenant name for God in Israel's faith and was used on its own as a title (Deut. 32:39). More recent biblical and historical Jesus scholars like Morris (1989:120-125) and particularly, Ball (1996:162) are of the opinion that the Old Testament represents the context or source of the Gospel of John's usage of the *ego eimi* 'I-AM' that demonstrate that the 'I-AM' statements in the Gospel of John are very similar to the Greek translation of the Old Testament (particularly Isaiah). In addition, there are traces of the 'I AM' usage in post-biblical Judaism. Materials in Palestinian Judaism like 1 Enoch 108:12, Jubilees 24:22 and

Philo's commentary on Exodus 3:14, all show the use of, and interest in *ego eimi* but are not directly connected to the Johannine Gospel.

Veres (2008:113) explained that some conclusions that have been drawn from the background of the *ego eimi* 'I-AM' is that 'the author of the Gospel of John simply assumed the affirmation of the 'I-AM' sayings and transposed them, giving them a Christian meaning and attributing them to Jesus'. Veres further explained that another conclusion is that the 'I-AM' sayings are the result of 'a certain development within the Johannine community, one that is bound up with the Christological centring and structuring'.

1.2.2 Use in the Synoptic Gospels:

There are couple of Synoptic texts which may betray a more specific meaning. For instance, Mark 6: 45-60 where Jesus identified himself with *ego eimi* 'it is I' while 'passing' the disciples during the storm, which have been explained by biblical scholars to be a parallel with the theophany encountered by Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 33LXX) and Elijah (1 Kings 19) as the Lord 'passed' by and revealed his divine name. Also, Mark 13: 6 where Jesus warned about a future age when many people will come in his name saying *ego eimi*. In addition, there is Mark 14: 62 where then priest asked Jesus if he was the Christ during his trial, and Jesus answered *ego eimi* and also in Luke 24: 39 in which after the resurrection Jesus showed himself to his disciples and said 'see my hands and my feet, it is I *ego eimi*'.

From these limited occurrences in the Synoptic Gospels (Mark 6: 45-60, 13:6, 14:62; Luke 24: 39), there are different questions that have been raised, whether Jesus was making an innocent expression of self-disclosure with the *ego eimi* simply to identify himself? Or, whether he was making a more profound declaration – revealing himself in relation to the divine name, as the fourth evangelist seemed to imply? These questions seems to have relevance to a greater degree in the Gospel of John than in the Synoptic authors.

1.2.3 Distinct use in the Gospel of John:

Although there is similar usage of 'I AM' in the Gospel of John as in the Synoptics, the usage of the *ego eimi* 'I AM' in the Gospel of John is more frequent than the Synoptics and seems to have a unique importance in the Johannine theology. Although there are not a large number of monographs that have focused specifically on the 'I-AM' sayings in the Gospel of John - to evaluate their unique importance and the role they play in the exploration of Jesus' identity, Catrin Williams' book '*I am He*' (2000: 250-270) is a noteworthy, and recent, example. Her work is significant for its detailed investigation of Jewish and early Christian literatures.

In answering the question 'who are you' or 'what are you', the Gospel of John used *ego eimi* with regards to characters other than Jesus, for instance John the Baptist's response that 'I am not the Christ' (John 1: 20). These are considered by Burge (1992: 354-356) as 'common identification' and have no theological meaning. But contrarily, 'the usage by John the Baptist is significant as the use of the negative is the exact opposite to Jesus' declaration and reveals the significance of who Jesus is by proclaiming who John the Baptist is not' (Vondey 2017: 6). Furthermore, in narrating how Jesus described himself metaphorically, the Gospel of John records seven passages where the *ego eimi* is used with an 'explicit predicate'; these are 'I am the bread of life' (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51), 'I am the light of the world' (John 8:12; 9:5), 'I am the door of the Sheep' (John 10:7, 9), 'I am the good shepherd' (John 10:11, 14), 'I am the resurrection and life' (John 11:25), 'I am the way, the truth and life' (John 14:6), 'I am the true vine' (John 15:1, 5). This manner of 'explicit predicate' usage of 'I AM', always portrayed in a discourse contrasting the teachings in Jesus' days, has significant theological meaning as it emphasizes the superiority of Jesus over the ideas of his counterparts, whoever that may be.

In addition, there are those considered 'uncertain predicate' as they leave the readers uncertain whether they should supply a predicate based on their own understanding of the context or to assume that they are 'common identification'. Some of these *ego eimi* with an

‘uncertain predicate’, may look quite easy for the readers to decide either to consider them as ‘common identification’ or supply a predicate, for instance, John 6:20 where Jesus comforted the frightened disciples by saying ‘*ego eimi*, do not be afraid’, which could mean ‘it is I’ as a ‘common identification’. But some of these ‘I AM’ with ‘uncertain predicate’ are also seen to produce double meaning. For instance, Jesus’ response to the Samaritan woman in John 4:26 indicates acknowledgement to be the Messiah. According to Williams (2000:257), John 4:26 is Jesus’ first pronouncement of *ego eimi* in John’s Gospel which represents the only occurrence of the expression communicated to an individual as Jesus revealed his identity to the Samaritan woman (4:26), other cases were communicated to the disciples (6:20; 13:19) or opponents (8:24, 28, 58; 18:5, 8). In favour of the first meaning of John 4: 26 as Jesus’ acknowledgement to Messiahship, Williams (2000: 258) was influenced by Okure’s (1988: 126) suggestion that the *ego eimi* here functions as a watershed in the discourse since it looks backward to verse 10 – ‘...you would have asked him and he would have given you living water’ and forward to verse 29b – ‘Could this be the Christ?’ and verse 42 – ‘Then they said to the woman, ‘now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard him and we know that this indeed is the Christ, the saviour of the world’. As a result, Williams (2000: 258) proposed that ‘the utterance is positioned at the centre of these various stages of scene’.

Hence, the most obvious and widely held interpretation of vs. 26 is that Jesus is affirming the truth of the Samaritan woman’s declaration and is identifying himself with the Messiah (Williams 2000:259). But when using the LXX explanation of Isaiah 45:19; 52:6, Burge (1999: 355) have suggested that it means more than an acknowledge of Jesus as the messiah. It emphasizes that Jesus is the sort of Messiah who is one with God. This, Williams (2000:260) also went further to show that, this is not the only possible interpretation of the declaration. Williams relate that ‘O’Day goes further and defines *ego eimi* of v. 26, as the ‘most direct statement of the dialogue’, which is an absolute occurrence totally independent

of Messiah, one which enables Jesus 'to identify himself as God's revealed, the sent one of God'. (William 2000:260).

There is also a similar case in John 18:5 where Jesus said *ego eimi* to the soldiers seeking for Jesus of Nazareth during his arrest, could mean 'I am the one you seek' as supplying a predicate to it; but putting it in the context, the Gospel of John reported in verse 6 that immediately Jesus said *ego eimi*, the soldiers drew back and fell on the floor. This, Kostenberger (2013: 166) have suggested to have a divine influence as the mere saying of *ego eimi* by Jesus, produced a powerful revelation that caused the soldiers to be overwhelmed and prostrated before God.

Lastly, the Gospel of John used the *ego eimi* spoken by Jesus in four instances where it seems incomplete. For instance, in John 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19, where Jesus said "For you will die in your sins, unless you believe that *ego eimi* 'I AM'"; "When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will know that *ego eimi* 'I AM'"; "Truly, Truly I say to you, before Abraham was *ego eimi* 'I AM'" and "I tell you this now - so that when it does take place, you may believe that *ego eimi* 'I AM'" respectively. These are considered by Burge (1992: 355) to be an 'absolute case' where the *ego eimi* is assumed to be a 'title'. And as such, there is a suggestion that the *ego eimi* has its root in the Septuagint translation in Deuteronomy 32:39 and Isaiah 41:4; 43:10,25; 45:18-19; 46:4; 51:12; 52:6; as the Isaiah references occur in the context of divine lawsuits with Israel and all other nations, as God claims sovereignty over history. This divine self-identification of God functions as an equivalent of his divine name.

Witherington (1995:156) argued that there are certainly no clear connections between some of the seven 'I am' sayings with predicate and the seven discourses. For instance it seems difficult to find the connection between the water of life discourse with the healing of the royal official's son in John 4 but regardless, Witherington (1995:156) explained that the seven 'I am' sayings with predicate deserved to be explored on their own, - 'for they are predicating something *about* Jesus, not simply making an identity statement' - as he puts it. Witherington also proposes that there seem to be more discourses in the Johannine Gospel

beyond the seven generally accepted discourses. According to Witherington, 'the Greek phrase *ego eimi* was a perfectly ordinary one, with a basic meaning of 'it is I', a simple way of identifying oneself to someone else or to a group who may be in doubt about the identity of the person they are seeing or to whom they are speaking' for instance John 6:20.

Furthermore, Witherington supported that the absolute case of the *ego eimi* in John 8:58 where Jesus said 'Before Abraham was, I am', clearly connote a pre-existent claim of Jesus before Abraham and using Isaiah 43:10 as a background to the text may connote that Jesus is making a divine claim to be 'I am' as Yahweh. Witherington divided the seven 'I am' sayings with predicates into two natures: most are associated with a particular miracle, in which the sayings either follow the miracle or precedes it. And some are in the nature of summarizing statements, for instance, I am the resurrection and life (John 11:35) and I am the way, truth and life (John 14:6). Using Wisd. Sol. 7:25-26; 8:8; 6:18, Witherington traces the 'I am' sayings of Jesus with predicates to Wisdom, which is God's divine Word, as having the same attributes to the identity of Jesus.

In view of the organisation of the *ego eimi* in the Gospel of John that is more frequent and seems to portray more unique significance than the Synoptic, Lincoln explains that the Gospel of John could be easily seen to narrate the life of Jesus so closely related to the God of Israel, that Christology and theology are intimately interwoven. Due to this, modern scholars propose that the author of the Gospel of John took for granted the fact that he was interpreting the life of a fully human figure, and so emphasised Jesus' divine, rather than human, qualities (Lincoln 2005:59). In line with this, Kasemann (1968:26, 27) argued that the resulting portrait of Jesus takes 'the form of a naive Docetism' in which, 'the gospel of John changes the Galilean teacher into the God who goes about on the earth'. As a result, there exists a consensus among most modern historical Jesus scholars that the Gospel of John's presentation of Jesus' proclamation of himself as the Son of God and his use of the 'I-AM' phrase to introduce himself and his roles is inconceivable historically in its description. This consensus is determined when aspects or items of the Gospel of John's portrayal of

Jesus and his ministry is placed on a scale from almost certain historically preferable, probably historically preferable, conceivably historically preferable to inconceivable historically preferable (Moody Smith D. 2011: 2036).

Of course, Jesus did not leave any direct writings of his own to ascertain if the 'I-AM' sayings were actually his words and if they reflect a true identity of how he understands himself. Also some scholars, De Boer (2001) and De Jonge (2001) argued that Jesus' words in the Gospel of John are not representative of his own thoughts, but a later struggle in the Johannine community; either due to the Johannine community reacting to persecution endured from non-Christian Jews (De Boer 2001: 156) or from non-Johannine Christian Jews (De Jonge 2001: 122-123). Be that as it may, Jesus' words serve as a key component to promote confidence that there is the existence of his character for those considering the Gospel as a whole. Among the words attributed to Jesus in the Gospels, especially that of the fourth evangelist, the 'I-AM' sayings seem to be the closest statements that could be linked to the self-understanding of Jesus even if this is phrased in the language of the evangelist.

1.3 Some of the problems of the 'I-AM' and reasons for focusing on John 6 and 8:

1.3.1 Johannine predicative 'I-AM' omissions in the Synoptic Gospels:

As arguably the leading figure of the 'John, Jesus and History' group, and editor of the two volumes produced by the group to date, Anderson (2007:24-25) explains that since the seven 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus with predicate such as (I am the bread of life, I am the light of the world, I am the resurrection and life, I am the true vine, I am the door and I am the Way, truth and life) are considered the most theologically significant statements uttered by Jesus about himself anywhere among the four canonical Gospels, the contrary question often asked is, 'how could they not have been included in the Synoptic if they were historical to Jesus'?

Conversely, Anderson (2007:24-25) observed that the language and diction of Jesus in the Gospel of John has been concluded to be 'nearly identical to that of John the Baptist (John 3:31-36) and the fourth evangelist. In that sense, the Johannine Jesus' discourses probably reflected the evangelist's paraphrasing of Jesus' teachings rather than a historical rendering of such teachings. Furthermore the I-AM sayings in the Gospel of John are far more self-referential than the Kingdom sayings of the Synoptic and the Markan messianic secret, and one can understand how the Gospel of John's presentation of Jesus would call for explanations other than historical ones'.

Although Anderson (2007: 26-27) agreed that the Gospel of John's presentation of Jesus' words were obviously in the language of the evangelist or its author, he objected to the claim that the Gospel of John's paraphrase has no root in the ministry of the historical Jesus. Anderson also argued that the I-AM sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John that made use of the predicate nominative are similar to the metaphorical character to the parables of the Synoptic Gospels. For instance, the light-of-the-world motif and the bread and sustenance motif, although they clearly are not couched in the same parabolic form as Synoptic teachings of Jesus. While it could be argued that Synoptic developments were constructed upon themes present in the Gospel of John, it is more likely to see the Johannine discourses as Christo-centric developments of plausible Jesus teachings. What cannot be said is that the Johannine I-AM metaphor are all missing in the Synoptics.

1.3.2 The Johannine Jesus speaks and acts in the mode of the evangelist:

An interesting problem posed by Anderson (2007:27-28) is 'one of the greatest puzzlement of the Gospel of John, is that the Johannine Jesus speaks in the voice of the evangelist'. When the language of the Johannine Jesus is so different to the Synoptic Jesus, this makes it extremely difficult to imagine the *ipsissima verba* of the historical Jesus coming to us through the Johannine text. Anderson (2007:28-29) further explains that since the Johannine witness comes to us explicitly from the perspective of the post resurrection consciousness, it must be read through a missional and theological lens. For instance,

several times the point is made that the disciples did not 'understand' the action or words of Jesus at that time, but later, after the resurrection, they understood fully what he was getting at (John 2:22; 12:16). Likewise Jesus himself emphasizes that their comprehension will be fuller in the future, as mediated by the Holy Spirit, and this prediction is borne out in the perceptions of the Johannine narrations (John 7:37-39; 13:7, 19-20).

From this perspective of the post resurrection consciousness, there was the conclusion that the Gospel of John's presentation of Jesus' words is largely influenced by later discovery. In addition, there was the conclusion that the Gospel of John presents the past by the light of future valuations, due to its own admission of the post resurrection consciousness perspective. In that sense, it presupposed that 'what really happened back then' mode of historicity is less important to the author of the Gospel of John than the connecting of 'what happened' to 'what it really meant..... and means now' mode of narration. As such the question, 'to what extent has the Gospel of John's presentation of Jesus teachings reflect the teaching of the historical Jesus as opposed to the evangelist's teaching within the evolving history of his situation?, may become relevant' (Anderson 2007: 28-29).

As a way to respond in favour of the Gospel of John, Anderson (2007: 29-32) argued that the assumption that the interpretive relevance of the Gospel of John completely eclipse originated history is not true. Anderson explained that true historicity is never limited to the irrelevant, and to assets such, misjudged the character of historiography itself. Furthermore Anderson asserts that every history project distinguishes events of greater significance from their alternatives, and that implies subjectivity of judgement.

Given the fact that the Gospel of John's presentation of Jesus' teachings were rendered in the modes of the evangelist's own teaching ministry, the following features were taken into by Anderson (2001: 29-32). That there are dozens of aphorisms in the Gospel of John that sound very much like the sorts of things the historical Jesus would have said was considered. That the historical Jesus spoke in characteristically terse, pithy aphorisms,

therefore did not deliver any longer discourses was also considered. Here a meaningful criterion for inclusion becomes used inappropriately as a measure of exclusion, which is faulty logic. For instance Anderson asked, how would Jesus hold the multitude attention for more than a few minutes at a time? Anderson (2007: 30-32) reiterated that if Jesus held the attention of the multitude for hours like in the case of the feeding narrative and in other sections as all four canonical Gospels suggested, then Jesus must have delivered longer discourses as well as short aphorisms. Thus, Anderson concluded that aphoristic sayings were probably included in these long discourses, but it is difficult to imagine that they were the only content or form delivered.

Furthermore, the assertion that the Johannine paraphrase of Jesus' teachings cannot represent the content or character of the teachings of the historical Jesus was considered. Anderson (2007: 31-32) argued that this assertion is not true because as earlier impressions are not necessarily more authentic than distanced reflections, so likewise historical presentations are not more authentic when they are not interpreted or paraphrased.

1.3.3 Why an exegesis of John 6 and 8?

From the above observations, the question that could be raised is, why have the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John being so problematic for Johannine scholars in relation to the Jesus of History? In order to explore further the approach of scholars on the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John, the exegesis serves to look in detail two examples (John 6 and 8) as case studies. Furthermore, the exegesis will provide the adequate platform to survey the various scholarship on John 6 and 8. In addition, the exegetical analysis is very helpful in identifying the areas where various scholars have discussed theological and historical issues.

In line with choosing an exegetical approach, this research chose John 6 and 8 as the case studies to focus upon. This is because among the seven great 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus with predicate in the Gospel of John, John 6 and 8 – 'I am the bread of life' and 'I am the light of the world' respectively seems to have more connections with 'physicality' and could

provide insights in regards to historicity. Despite the fact that the images of door, Shepherd and vine also have physicality, I chose John 6 and 8 due to the discourses surrounding them and their potential as the first major discourses to appear in the Gospel of John. John 6 and 8 have historical materials that are connected with the 'I-AM' sayings in the discourses. Furthermore, although John 6 and 8 have antecedents in Jewish literatures, like that of the other 'I-AM' sayings with predicate; I chose 'I am the bread of life' and 'I am the light of the world' because they simply appeared as first and second in the Gospel of John's presentation of the I-AM sayings of Jesus with predicate. This does not imply any form of superiority whatsoever. In addition, due to limited pages and time frame of the research work, it would be very difficult to carry out a thorough exegetical investigation of the seven 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John.

1.4 Survey of selected commentaries:

Most of the commentaries that I consulted while trying to understand the nature of the Gospel of John and the unique conceptual world of its author were very informative, as they express their views about the fourth Gospel from different perspectives. But among these commentaries, the commentaries written by R.E Brown and Ben Witherington stood out for me, as they seem to be more informative in regards to the focus of the thesis - which is about exploring the I-AM sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John in connection with questions of history to investigate if there is any relationship to the identity of the historical Jesus.

The research will refer to R. E Brown and Ben Witherington further in the exegetical sections, but want to show two examples where scholars are interested in historical issues related to the 'I AM' sayings. Brown and Witherington are good examples because they approach historical issues slightly differently. They show in their own ways the difficulties scholars have when it comes to the 'I AM' sayings (and surrounding material) and questions of the Gospel of John and history. They did their work prior to the 'John, Jesus and History'

group; as such, it gives an impression that the issue of the Gospel of John, in relation to history is worth investigating.

1.4.1 Why an attempt to do a survey of Brown and Witherington?

The research focused more on the commentary of R.E Brown because of its place as a key commentary by a Catholic scholar concerned with matters of history; also there is a very high consciousness of expressing the Gospel of John based on the historical tradition behind the fourth Gospel; And, because Brown's commentary is older (1971) it shows that these issues are not new and questions of history in relation to the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus have been raised in scholarship for a considerable length of time. In accepting that the Gospel of John is similar to the tradition behind the Synoptic gospels, Brown (1971: xxxiv) argued that 'the very fact that John is considered a Gospel presupposes that John is based on a tradition similar in character to the tradition behind the Synoptic Gospel'. Brown further backed his proposal by stating that 'even commentators, who treat the fourth Gospel simply as a work of theology devoid of historical value, must be impressed by the fact that this theology is written in a historical cast'. Despite the fact that Brown's commentary did not produce any cogent facts as accurate historical evidence in identifying the historical Jesus and connecting the Christ of faith to the historical Jesus, its emphasis on the tradition behind the Gospel of John is relevant in exploring the historicity of the Gospel of John and whether there may be any possible clue to the identity of the historical Jesus.

On the other hand, the research focused also on the commentary of Witherington because there was a strong emphasis of the connections between the Johannine materials to ancient Jewish materials. There is a strong emphasis on the sapiential view of the Gospel of John. The sapiential is seen in the language about before and after, as we can see in John 1:30 when John the Baptist was trying to explain who Jesus was to the multitude. This seems to reflect the wisdom literature/language pattern which focused on the origin of Jesus. It connotes the pre-existent nature of Jesus before the actual manifestation of the historical Jesus. The combined emphasis of the son of man language and the language of ascending

and descending (John 6:62) have made many scholars perplexed but according to Witherington (1995:21), when one grasp the Wisdom trajectory of Jesus' career or reads texts like *1 Enoch 70-72, Sir. 24*, then the language in the Gospel of John is easier to understand.

1.4.2 What is the approach of Brown and Witherington commentaries?

In terms of approach, both the commentary of Brown and Witherington, explained the reason for the Johannine problem, where by, scholarship considers the Gospel of John as unsuitable for Jesus research. For Brown's commentary, he begins by trying to explain the problems of the Gospel of John. He explains that the Gospel of John started receiving extreme scepticism during the end of the 1800s and towards the beginning of the 1900s. Brown (1971: xxi) also reiterated that the view of scholarly opinion in relegating the Gospel of John was due to the emergence of the study of the Hellenistic world, in which the Gospel of John was thought to be 'totally devoid of historical value and have little relation to the Palestine of Jesus of Nazareth' and the small elements of fact in the Johannine Gospel are considered to be taken from the Synoptic Gospels. Although there exist some of these critical issues, Brown argued that 'there is not one such position that has not been affected by a series of unexpected archaeological, documentary and textual discoveries' (1971: xxi), which have led to the challenge of the critical views and analysis of the Gospel of John.

Despite the objection of accepting the Gospel of John as it is - that is, due to claims that there have been some rearrangement of the text which may have led the Gospel of John to reflect the meaning of a subordinate editor rather than the meaning of the evangelist. Brown's commentary took the approach of taking the risk of interpreting the Bible in the presence of these rearrangements rather than taking a 'greater risk' as he observed - of imposing to passages a meaning they never had. Among Brown's (1971: xxxiv) approach to the commentary, he emphasized the existence of a body of traditional material pertaining to the words and work of Jesus - material similar to what has gone into the Synoptic gospel, but material whose origin were independent of the 'Synoptic tradition'. One of the focus is to

verify whether there is a primitive character behind the tradition of the Gospel of John. And to Brown, it seems that there exists to a degree some level of primitive character behind the Johannine Gospel tradition which may imply that the Gospel of John has an independent and native character.

Then on the other hand, in trying to explain the unique piece of the Gospel of John, Witherington (1995:3) is of the opinion that from the perspective of antiquity, the Gospel of John can be considered as biography despite the fact that the Gospel of John is not a biography in the modern sense of the word. Using Burridge's idea, Witherington (1995:3) emphasizes that 'if genre is the key to a work's interpretation, and the genre of the Gospel is *Bios*, then the key to their interpretation must be the person of their subject, Jesus of Nazareth'. For Witherington, the subject matter of the Gospel of John - which is the story of Jesus Christ - has been 'sifted, ruminated on and interpreted by the Beloved disciple'; hence Witherington's commentary acknowledge and emphasizes that the focus of the Gospel of John is not the contemporary and historical views of the Johannine Christians and community at large.

Furthermore, Witherington (1995:4) made his point that 'the simple fact that the evangelist has chosen to express himself through the means of the Gospel indicates that there is a real historical human life at the root of the central character of his witness. If flesh is irrelevant to the evangelist or if the revealer in no sense really took upon himself fleshly existence why did the evangelist write a *gospel*? Witherington is accepting the idea of the historical figure of Jesus but is also clearly looking at the Gospel of John from wisdom perspective. Because of its lengthy discourse material, the Gospel of John is seen to be in some way as an ancient philosophical biographies; and also because of its narration of the polemic between Jesus and the Jewish leaders, the Gospel of John is seen to be in some way as an ancient political biographies. In examining the Johannine voice and style, Witherington's (1995:18) commentary had argued that the Gospel of John should be seen as an attempt to read and present the story of Jesus in a sapiential manner; that is, a manner

that reflects ways of writing found in Jewish wisdom literature - and has arisen out of what may be called a school setting that centred on the teaching and thought of a particular sage, the Beloved disciple.

Although Witherington favoured the indication of a historical Jesus behind the Gospel of John's witness, Witherington's main focus anchored on Wisdom. Witherington is of the opinion that the Gospel of John wished to present Jesus as a universal saviour who is God's Wisdom came in the flesh to reveal God's character and to gather a community of the faithful from both Jews and Greeks. Witherington also explained that even most of the roles fulfilled by Jesus in the Gospel of John are very similar to the sorts of roles displayed by Wisdom in the Wisdom of Solomon 10 – 19. Hence, the Johannine Jesus is portrayed as someone who understood himself as the Wisdom of God, who had been in charge and had directed God's people throughout all previous generations. Witherington (1995: 18) emphasized that 'recognising that Jesus is been portrayed as God's Wisdom, indeed Wisdom incarnate, in the Gospel of John is the key to understanding the presentation of the central character of the Johannine story'. By this, Witherington (1995: 20) is not saying that Wisdom is the key to every aspect of the Gospel of John but insisted that Wisdom is the key to understanding the central issues of the Gospel of John.

1.4.3 What is their approach to the I-AM sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John?

The 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John have been considered to be highly theological statements with no mundane or historical relevance (Anderson 2007: 37). But both Brown and Witherington's commentaries tried to approach the I-AM sayings in the Gospel of John in a manner as to indicate relevance to some historical materials.

Brown (1971: xlii) explained the likelihood of the tradition concerning the works and words of Jesus and of its relation to the traditions underlying the Synoptic Gospels. Having accepted that the Gospel of John had some kerygmatic features in its outline, brown (1971: xlii) further investigated whether the kerygmatic features in the Gospel of John stemmed

from the primitive tradition by evaluating the information unique to the Gospel of John and also examined the material that was shared by both the Gospel of John and the Synoptic Gospels. That is, if what was found in the Gospel of John appeared to have some historical elements and if the Gospel of John does not draw materials from the Synoptics or the tradition behind them in many cases, then there are good grounds to assume that the Gospel of John had its roots in the primitive tradition about Jesus, which is independent. Even so, independence does not necessarily mean greater historicity.

Then from Witherington's (1995: 22) commentary, even the 'I-AM' are considered from the Wisdom perspective and another clue to the sapiential character of the Gospel of John's style is the high incidence of Father and Father-son language used, which is not characteristics of Old Testament naming of God in general but is a characteristics of especially late sapiential literatures. For Witherington's commentary, although there is an interest in historical and comparative aspects, it stops short of connecting the 'I-AM' language to Jesus himself.

From the introduction of this thesis, the research focus - Is there any possibility that the identity of Jesus could be explored historically through the lens of the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John? - had been set out. In this chapter, a more general understanding of the Gospel of John, in relation to the problems of its historical value that have resulted in the scholarly conclusion that the Gospel of John does not primarily constitute historical material and is therefore in some ways unsuitable for Jesus research, have been explored. The introduction of the research has also set out the proposal of the 'John, Jesus and History' group that the Gospel of John could be explored in greater depth for its historical relevance.

Furthermore, focusing on Brown and Witherington's commentaries as examples of scholars who are interested in historical matters in the Gospel of John, gave an example of how scholars approach the issues in the Johannine material through an historical lens. Brown and Witherington's commentaries - which are written prior to the investigation of the 'John, Jesus and History' group on the historicity of the Gospel of John - also projects the

proposal of historical relevance in the Johannine material; as they emphasize the settings in which Jesus is placed as historically authentic (Brown 1971: xlii) and focused on the historical interest of the author of the Gospel of John (Witherington 1995:35). In addition, Brown and Witherington's commentaries also considered the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John to be connected to historical aspects of the Johannine material (Brown 1971: xliii; Witherington 1995:36).

The research continues in the next chapters to narrow down the discussion to focus on the two case studies – John 6 and 8 as chapters 2 and 3 respectively. Although several commentators other than Brown and Witherington will be considered, the research will focus on the exegetical investigation of the elements within the discourses in John 6 and 8 considering theological and especially historical aspects. Though drawing on a broader range of scholarship, the next chapters will still be drawing from Brown and Witherington where relevant. The research will take note of how other scholars makes similar moves in relation to the text to that of Brown and Witherington. Case studies will allow the research to see where further may be beneficial and if there could be a need to explore issues further.

CHAPTER 2

AN EXEGETICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE 'I-AM' SAYINGS OF JESUS IN JOHN 6

2.1 Introduction - placement of the text and overall re-articulation of the research questions:

The 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in John 6 can be seen within the sections of verses 20 to 59. As explained in the introduction to the 'I-AM' in chapter one, the various 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus within this chapter falls into the different categories of the 'I-AM' formulation. In which, verse 20 falls in the category of 'uncertain predicate' where the frightened disciples were comforted when Jesus said, *ego eimi* "It is I' or 'I AM'", do not be afraid; and also verses 35, 41, 48 and 51 falls in the category of 'explicit predicate', where Jesus metaphorically described himself as he declared 'I am the bread of life' (v.35) and subsequently re-echoed it in emphasis on his 'origin' - 'I am the bread which came down from heaven' (vv. 41-42), in emphasis on 'belief' - 'Truly, truly, I say unto you, anyone that believes on me has everlasting life. I am that bread of life.' (vv. 47-48) and in emphasis on 'eternal life' - 'I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if anyone eat of this bread, that person shall live forever...' (vv. 49-51).

But the focus of the exegetical investigation in this chapter will be within the context of verses 22 to 59. As verse 20 falls in a different context - which is 'Jesus walking on the sea' and it seem not to contribute much to the identity of Jesus due to its 'uncertain predicate' and since it was not a discourse and the recipients were Jesus' disciples. However, Brown (1971; 254) thought otherwise and explained that the Gospel of John treated the 'Jesus walking on the sea' scene as a divine epiphany as its focus is on the expression '*ego eimi*'. Brown also suggested that the scene might be from the primitive form of the tradition, since the expression occurs in both the Synoptic and Johannine form of the story. The Gospel of John takes the expression as that form of the divine name which the Father has given to

Jesus and by which he identifies himself. It might also mean that the miracle gave expression on the majesty of Jesus unlike the transfiguration. The special emphasis of the *ego eimi* may connote that the majesty of Jesus is that he can bear the *divine* name.

Also in similar emphasis as of Brown, Kostenberger (2013:247) classified John 6:20 among the category of 'absolute I-AM saying' and explain that although the 'I-AM' can simply mean 'it is me', suggested that it is highly probable that John 6:20 is an absolute I-AM saying due to the preceding verse which tells us that, Jesus made the statement when walking on the sea. Focusing on the research enterprise, a close reading on the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in John 6:22-59 will be done in line with a further look at its place within the Gospel of John in terms of both the theological issues it raises and the historical settings behind the Johannine Gospel narrative of the discourse.

This investigation on the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus, in connection with some historical material in the discourse, will be done in order to see if the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus, which are considered highly theological statements, may be viewed as having a basis in connecting the Christ of faith with the Jesus of history. The research questions that will be pondered upon in this chapter are – Theologically speaking, do the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John give us a Jesus who came to establish himself as the only means of life's survival and nourishment?; Historically speaking, can the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the gospel of John - which are mostly found in discourses within the Jewish feasts - in connection to the Jewish feasts in particular - be used to explore any historical plausibility of the Johannine gospel and also be used to show any connection between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith?. Therefore in the analysis below, exegetical, theological and historical aspects of John 6:22-59 will be examined.

2.2 Exegetical investigation of the key verses in John 6:22-59:

In order to carry out a proper exegetical discussion of John 6:22-59, it is of paramount importance to determine the place it occupies in the overall structure of the Gospel of John.

There are some ideas that have been raised regarding John 6:22-59 that may seem to be significant in the analysis and explanation of the text. Firstly, a more generally accepted format of the division of the Gospel of John is that of considering 1:1-18 as a Prologue, 1:19 – 12:50 as the Book of Signs, 13:1 – 20:31 as the Book of Glory/exaltation and 21:1-25 as a later addition to the text. But since the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus are mostly found in discourses during the Jewish feasts, it would be better to subscribe to Bondi's (1997:478) format of division according to various Jewish feasts in the Gospel of John, in which 5:1-47 deals with the Sabbath, 6:1-7:1 concerns with the Passover, 7:1-10:21 takes place around the feast of Tabernacles, 10:22-42 deals with Dedication or Hanukkah and 11:1-20:31 all occurs around the time of the final Passover for Jesus. The format of the division of the Gospel of John according to various Jewish feasts, was also observed by Stephen Motyer (1997: 36) that 'the Jewish festivals are closely woven into the structure of the Gospel of John'.

Secondly, critical observations on the makeup of the Gospel of John by various scholars, have affirmed the possibility that the Gospel of John has been supplemented after the completion of the main composition. Lindars (1990: 138-139) explained that the idea that the Gospel of John had been supplemented after the completion of the main composition were done either by a later editor – presumably after the death of the evangelist, or that the evangelist had already supplemented the Gospel – so as to incorporate further sermon materials which would make the presentation of the Gospel of John stronger. Some of the passages involved in the debates as noted by Lindars (1990:139) are the prologue (1:1-18), Bread of life discourse (6:22-59), the woman caught in the act of adultery (7:53-8:11), chapters 15, 16, 17 and 21. Ashton (2007:42-53) added the Shepherd and the door narrative (10:1-18) and 20:30-31 and also affirmed modifications in relation to chapters 6 and 21. This shows that the idea that the Gospel of John have been supplemented after the completion of the main composition is almost universally recognised.

Thirdly, Ashton (2007:42-53) explained that the problem of John 6 has traditionally been seen as that of 'order'. Ashton argued that chapter 6 has no connection with chapter 5, since

the former - places Jesus going 'to the other side' of the lake and the latter - places him in Jerusalem. In addition, Ashton suggested that chapter 6 follows on from chapter 4 very well because Jesus had been staying in Jerusalem (Judea) and that the proposal of the arrangement of the gospel of John as chapter 4, 6, 5 and 7 has been put forward as early as the fourteenth century by Ludolph of Saxony. Contrary to Ashton's proposal on the arrangement of John 6, Lindars (1990: 139) argued that reasons can be found to suggest that chapter 6 was deliberately placed after chapter 5; seeing that the bread of life discourse is based on the manna story in Exodus 16, it makes a superb example of the claim of Jesus in 5:46 that Moses 'wrote of me'. Also there is the idea that the closing paragraph of chapter 5 which presents Jesus 'as one greater than Moses' - which becomes one of the themes surrounding the 'manna' and 'the bread of life' comparison in Chapter 6, affirmed that *meta tauta* 'after these things' is a common chronological transition device which favours the author of the Gospel of John's assumptions namely major chronological as well as geographical gaps (example 7:2; 10:22; 11:55). As interpolation is a more natural editorial procedure than accidental displacement, it seems Lindars' idea is more plausible.

The form of John 6:22-59 is obviously a discourse and also contains some distinct thoughts as narrative. Barrett (1978: 280) submitted that it may be accepted that chapter 6 manifests stylistic unity but it cannot be divided up on literary grounds. Borgen (1965), Guilding (1960) and Gartner (1959) support strongly and argue that the chapter as a whole could be regarded as an extended exegesis - by accepted methods - of Psalms 78:24. The structure of the theological thought is indebted also to pagan models and to the earlier Christian tradition. Lindars (1990: 139) suggested that the Gospel of John's style of Greek was simple and straightforward because of the repetitiveness and because it does not use long philosophical words. Verbs were preferred to abstract nouns - for instance, the gospel of John constantly summoned the hearers to *pisteuein eis* 'believed into' Jesus, which means to entrust themselves to Jesus; but the word for 'faith' *pistis* never occurred. In addition to the structure and movement of John 6:22-59, Lincoln (2005:223) explained that

there are various ways of presenting this synagogue sermon but the dialogue is called *yelammedu* by later rabbis (which can also be found in earlier Philo cf. *Quaest.* in Gen). The process of this *yelammedu* is to connect together part of the 'Law' *seder* and 'prophet' *haftarah* and apply them in an exposition and it will be related to their present situation in the community. The wording is a combination of Exodus 15 and 16:4 from the *seder* text (probably formulated by Psalm 77:24 LXX). Also in verse 45, there is a combination of Isaiah 54:13 and 55:2b-3a as verses 35, 37, 40, 44, 45, 47 affirmed. But the material in verses 25-59 can be seen as supplying a similar sort of commentary as in the preceding sayings of Jesus in verse 27 and in itself it contains allusions to Exodus 16:18-21 and Isaiah 55:2-3 both *seder* and *haftarah* respectively. So this passage is structured around an exposition of the saying of Jesus in verse 27. As this serves the development of Jesus' saying, the perspective is set out in 5:39,46,47 namely showing that scripture, when rightly understood, witnessed to Christ and that the Torah of Moses also speaks of Christ.

In view of the ideas regarding John 6:22-59, it seems necessary that John 6:22-59 can better be understood when an elaborate attention is given to the Passover feast - in considering what aspect of it can shed more light in understanding the 'manna' and 'bread of light' comparison and what aspect of it can also produce a tiny thread of connection between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. This is because the passage - John 6:22-59 - has a connection with the feeding miracle of the five thousand (6:1-16) which took place in the context of the feast of the Passover (6:4), recalling the images of Moses, Israel and the 'manna' in the wilderness. Furthermore, some scholars such as Gartner (1959:25) and Guilding (1960) have attempted to make some connections between Jesus' discourse and the Passover due to verses 4 and 59; to show that during Passover, when the central focus is on the history of the Israelites during exodus, the eating of manna was given special attention. In addition, the Gospel of John's quotation in verses 45 and 46 - 'It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that has heard and that has learned of the father, comes to me. Not that any man has seen the father, except he

who is from God, he has seen the father' has been suggested by Barrett (1978:298) to come from what appears to be a Passover *haftarah*. Both Barrett (1978:296) and Lincoln (2005:231) attested that that it is Isaiah 54:12-13 - 'Everyone who has listened to the father and learned'. This approach in focusing more on the Passover feast will be discussed later in details among the sub-sections. Furthermore, in view of the above form of John 6:22-59 that - although it manifest stylistic unity but cannot be divided on literary grounds as suggested by Barrett, it seems difficult to accurately divide the passage into different sections based on a context of thought, as various key issues raised in the passage such as Passover feast, sign, 'work', 'manna and bread of life', 'Jews', eternal life, and Eucharist all runs through the entire passage. For instance, a difficulty has been observed by various scholars in trying to ascertain a division in context between verses 47 to 51. Borgen (1965:86-87) emphasized that verses 47 and 48 are the 'natural conclusion of this pattern of exegetical debate' - and if it is so, it will follow that verse 49 is the beginning of a new paragraph which adds the supplement of *kai apethanon* 'and are dead', which runs to the end of the discourse. Bultmann on the other hand, thinks that the new section starts with the reference of *sarx* 'flesh' of Jesus in verse 51c and regards verses 51 to 58 as a Eucharistic supplement added to the discourse by the ecclesiastical redactor. In addition, Barrett (1978:298) believed that neither Borgen nor Bultmann's views was satisfactory. Here and elsewhere, Barrett explained that the Gospel of John built its discourse by ending one section with a provocative remark which arouses misunderstanding or opposition on the part of the audience. Hence Barrett concluded that verses 49 to 51 are a summarising conclusion of what precedes - with the word *sarx* 'flesh' introduced into the restatement so as to lead to the strife of verse 52, with which the new treatment of the theme of the 'bread of life' began.

2.2.1 The Jewish feasts - Passover feast in particular:

The Gospel of John seemed to introduce significant interactions of Jesus with an accurate designation of the place and time of the event. In this passage, the place of the event is 'the

other side of the sea of Galilee' (vv. 1, 22-23) and the time of the event is 'when the Judean feast of Passover was near' (v. 4). In analysing the place of the event - 'the other side of the sea' - in this obscure narrative (vv. 22-24), the Gospel of John tried to lay more emphasis on Jesus' disappearance from the disciples and multitude, and his reappearance to the disciples on the lake. Just reading this segment, one would think that it was on the day of 'the bread of life' discourse that the multitude took note of the only boat left in the sea shore. But Barrett (1978:283) suggested that reasonable amount of clarity would be achieved if *eidon* 'saw' (v.22) is translated as a pluperfect 'they had seen'. It would then read as 'Jesus had left the multitude on the eastern shore of the lake. They had seen on the day of the feeding miracle that only one boat was on the eastern shore, and they had seen the disciples embark in it without Jesus'. The author of the Gospel of John added verse 23 in parentheses to further show that no other boat was there in the shore the day of the feeding miracle, before the disciples left. But that the next day, boats only came from Tiberias on the west coast. This seems to support the assumption that Jesus actually walked on the sea. Even the word used for 'found him on the other side of the lake' *perantes thalasses* in verse 25, underlines the miracle of walking on the water.

Focusing on the time of the event - 'when the Judean feast of Passover was near', it is worthy of note that the frequent mention of the Jewish feasts - and the feast of Passover in particular - in the Gospel of John coupled with the teachings and actions displayed in them, shows that they are intentionally presented in the Gospel of John by its author. Johnson (2009: 118) submitted that different views of the function of the Jewish feasts in the Gospel of John have been proposed. Johnson (2009: 118) explained that either the Jewish feasts in the Gospel of John served as temporal or spartial markers for the action and teachings of Jesus – as such provided a progression throughout the year of Jesus' actions. Or that the Jewish feasts in the Gospel of John only provided occasions for Jesus to be in Jerusalem. But Johnson (2009:118) emphasized based on his examination of the Jewish feasts in the Gospel of John, the Jewish feasts have thematic connections with the teachings and actions

of Jesus that are portrayed in them and elements of the teachings and actions of Jesus bear a direct relationship to the feast that they accompany in the text. Johnson further argued that even the elements of the Jewish feasts themselves are used to further the Gospel of John's presentation of Jesus' identity - as a result, they provide content for the portrayal of Jesus in the Gospel of John. Since the Jewish feasts are directly connected to the sayings and actions of Jesus for which they provide settings in the narrative, these Jewish feasts are important in understanding the significance of what Jesus said and did.

The study of the reconstruction of the practices connected with the Jewish feasts in the first century seems to be full of difficulties. That is, the rabbinic literatures that are always called upon when answering the question 'what can be said about the Jewish feasts within the first century?', are said to appeal to traditions that can be traced back to the first century but it is difficult to determine with accuracy the reliability of these traditions, as Johnson (2009:118-119) reiterates. Be that as it may, some knowledge of the practices, themes and didactic content of the Jewish feasts as they were practiced in a first century context would be relevant to the investigation of any connection between the Jesus of history and Christ of faith, as Reinhartz (2005:110) suggested that the Gospel of John could be 'a potential source of knowledge for first century Judaism'.

2.2.2 The demand for a sign:

On several occasions in this exegetical passage, Jesus' audience - the multitude, demanded a sign from Jesus to validate his claims. Astonished as they saw Jesus in Capernaum, the multitude asked him *pote ode gegonas* which is usually translated by most Bible versions as 'when did you come here' (v. 25) NIV. The word *gegonas* is hardly expected after *pote* as Barrett (1978:283) observed. Literally the word *gegonas* means 'fact'. In other words, the multitude were not just asking vaguely, but wanted Jesus to give them a specific and convincing explanation as to how he got there, like a 'sign' so to speak. Barrett further suggested that it was a combination of 'when did you come' and 'how long have you been here'. Lincoln (2005:225) emphasized that it is not so much of time but the manner of

arrival and points more on 'how did you come here'. According to Malina (1998:129), this question put to Jesus is a typical double-meaning question characteristic of the Gospel of John's anti-language. Malina explained that culturally, it was very important to know where Jesus was from, so that he might be situated in the status ranking order in terms of geography and genealogy, as this was the way to obtain proper stereotypical knowledge of Jesus.

But as usual, as we often see in the Gospel of John, questions relating to Jesus' origin always lead to a dialogue - in which questions put to him are not answered directly and most times misunderstood. No longer was Jesus thought of as 'the prophet' and king (vv 14-15), but addressed as a 'rabbi' (v. 25). Brown (1971:261) explained that literally the question the crowd asked Jesus - 'when did you come here' means 'when have you been here' - a question that is a cross between 'when did you get here' and 'how long have you been here' (translated from the perfect of the verb *ginesthai* to the aorist *paraginesthai* 'to arrive'). Brown (1971:263) further suggested that the question 'when did you come here' may have a deeper theological meaning if the author of the Gospel of John is thinking here of Jesus' origin, which is a favourite theme (John 7:28). Although on the factual level the question remained unanswered, Brown proposed that in view of the suggestion regarding Jesus' origin, 'the mention of the Son of Man and the bread *from* heaven would constitute a theological answer to how Jesus had come here: he is the Son of Man who has come down from heaven (John 3:13).

In verse 26, Jesus ignored their question because, as Barrett (1978:284) suggested, there is no advantage in the multiplication of miracles. I also think that since the Gospel of John depicts Jesus as knowing what is in the mind of the multitude, Jesus knew that they were not interested in the previous feeding miracle but on the loaves they ate. So it was of no use telling them of another 'walking of the sea' miracle. As Jesus ignored the crowd's question about when he arrived at Capernaum, Witherington (1995:150) explained that Jesus replied to the thoughts of the multitude heart - which is their desire for more loaves.

Jesus' response, according to Witherington, does not connote that he despises physical things but that he desired to motivate the crowd to see his miraculous acts as a 'sign', pointing to a spiritual reality about the revelation of Jesus - in this context, he was the food that endures to eternal life. In another occasion, the multitude were said to have continued the discourse by demanding for a sign (vv. 31-32). Since the multitude have previously acknowledged that Jesus had performed a miracle - to the extent that they called him a prophet and were nursing the idea of forcibly making him King of Israel (vv. 14-15), they must now be asking for an even greater wonder than that performed by Moses (v. 31). This was because, as Barrett (1978:286) puts it, 'he who makes a greater claim than Moses must provide a more striking attestation of his right'. Their request was unanswered, even in the Gospel of Mark, because their request seems unanswerable. The emphasis is that no sign can prove (although many signs suggests as Barrett puts it) that Jesus is the messenger of God. Malina (1998:130) suggested that as important as the multitude demand for a sign is, it is also important to recognise that a question put to Jesus in public is a serious honour challenge. And despite the fact that Jesus had previously put his honour on the line by using the assertion formula 'truly, truly' (v. 26), his honour is now challenged directly with reference to Israel's exodus experience and a scriptural quotation from Exodus 16:15 (v. 31).

2.2.3 The 'work' required from the multitude:

Having refused to answer the multitude question directly (v. 25), Jesus reveal to them that their motive for their search of him was wrong and admonished them to labour for what will not perish. Thus, *ergazesthe* 'you work' is used and does not imply something that can be earned. The multitude showed their eagerness to respond, but misunderstood the message. Upon hearing the word *ergazesthai*, the crowd thought it was the same with their own religious beliefs of 'working' works which they hoped will be pleasing to God (v. 28). Here it is now used as a cognate verb of *ergon* to 'perform a work'.

In response to the multitude question, Jesus in verse 29 categorically corrects their impressions by using *ergon* in the singular form instead of *erga* in the plural form. Jesus

emphasized that it is only one 'work' that God requires. This 'work' is to 'believe' *pisteuete* on him whom has being sent. As in the Gospel of John's style of using verbs instead of abstract nouns, *pistis* 'faith' was never used. The present continuous tense of *pisteuete* is very significant. It is not talking about an 'act of faith', but 'a life of faith' - that is, a long-term continuous solidarity with Jesus. Since it was constructed with *eis*, 'trust in Christ' is implied, and Malina (1998:130) emphasized that believing 'into' is a characteristics Johannine idiom; and as pointed out by many commentators, the construction implies trust rather than intellectual assent. Malina further suggested that even more level of trust is implied, in view of the collective character in relationship in the ancient Mediterranean societies; As he assume that within the ancient Mediterranean societies, people are more interested in one another in deep unity and loyalty.

In v. 29, the work God required from the multitude is for them to believe in whom he has sent. This verse reflects Psalms 78 and Exodus 16, as Jesus is seen in verse 30 to correct the multitude understanding of the text - that it was not Moses who provided the manna in the wilderness but God and that the manna provided is only a mere physical sustenance but the bread Jesus talked about in the text gives eternal satisfaction (Witherington 1995:150). In verse 30, the *pisteuein* used was no longer constructed with *eis* but with the dative, to imply that the Jews contemplated no more than to put their credence in the words of Jesus. But as Malina (1998:130) observed, the decision of the multitude to put their trust in Jesus was not still totally complete because the Greek tense used in their response avoids the long-term implication of Jesus' demand that they 'believe'.

2.2.4 The comparison between the 'manna' and 'bread of life':

In verse 26, the Gospel of John clearly narrates that the core purpose of the multitude's search for Jesus - as revealed by Jesus - is because they did eat of the loaves of the feeding miracle of the five thousand and were filled. As such, Jesus warns them as he categorically asserts that humans are foolishly concerned about food for their bodies (physical nourishment) and not with the truth. In verse 27, Jesus went further to make a comparison

between the physical bread the multitude ate and the spiritual bread he intends to give. The word *chanomai* 'perish' or 'lose out' is used. This implies that even though bread is a food that gives sustenance, not all food is good for nourishment. Jesus emphasizes that humans must learn that there is a bread which conveys not earthly but eternal life. The nourishment of this bread, as we are told, does not perish or lose out but abides forever unto eternity. It is worthy of note that food as a metaphor for the divine gift of life was widespread in antiquity. Such a metaphor would be more relevant in societies where the vast majority of people lived at the bare sustenance level - a condition that lasted in nearly all the world until the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century. Having bread therefore, literally meant having life and as it was a difficult daily struggle for all, the multitude hoped that Jesus will provide more for them (Malina 1998:130).

In v. 27, Witherington (1995:150) explained that the agency language was used to describe Jesus - the Son of man. It is on the Son of man that God has placed his authority to act as his representative to provide everlasting food. In verse 31, as the multitude requested more miraculous proof from Jesus, they boasted that their fathers did eat manna in the desert. This seems to be a way for them to motivate Jesus to give them more bread, as they challenged him with a similar experience of their ancestors. This passage served to recall Moses and the Old Testament story of the manna, the bread from heaven (Exodus 16:15; Numbers 11:6; Deuteronomy 8:3). From these Old Testament passages, the 'manna' as described was clearly miraculous. The source of the word is the Hebrew *man-hu* which means - 'what is that?' (Malina 1998:131). It was used to represent moral and spiritual teachings. It also later became a symbol of the 'New age' (*Mekhilta Ex. 16:25; Ecclesiastes R. 1:28*). Barrett (1978:288) argued that the Gospel of John's use of this Old Testament material had been given much greater precision and significance by the work of P. Borgen (1965:59) - who, points out that 'several midrashic features', such as - the systematic paraphrase of words from the Old Testament quotations; fragments from the haggadic traditions and the use of widespread homiletic patterns, are common to parts of Philo, John

and the Palestinian midrash. That this exegetical pattern can be traced through the whole chapter, lends a great deal of weight to the view that the chapter is a unity. Barret (1965:288) shows that some scholars like Martyn, broadly accepts Borgen's view that the Gospel of John employed the Midrash exegesis, but he is not contented with Borgen's view that the Gospel of John employed it to counter Docetism. Rather, the Gospel of John is saying to the multitude:

The issue is not to be defined as an argument about an ancient text. By arguing about text, you seem to evade the present crisis. God is 'even now' giving you the true bread of heaven and you cannot hide from him in theological speculation or in any other type of midrashic activity. You must decide now with regards to this present gift of God' (Barrett 1978:288)

Barrett (1978: 189) explained that verse 32 had been taken in several ways. Firstly, it was not Moses who gave you the bread but God. Secondly, it was not bread from heaven that Moses gave you (but merely physical food, over against the true bread from heaven which the Father gives you). Thirdly, it is put as a question: 'did not Moses gave you bread from heaven? (Yes indeed. But the Father gives you the true bread from heaven)'. Barrett explained that if only one statement is to be chosen, it should be the first. Because in the phrase *ou Moysis dedoken* the name 'Moses' is in an emphatic position and the *ou* is placed so as to negative it. It would also be hard for the Gospel of John to deny what the Old Testament positively asserts and the emphatic position in the next clause of *alethinou* 'truth', which does not deny that the bread Moses supplied was from heaven. Rather it asserts that as such, it was a type of the heavenly bread given by Jesus. The manna was in fact a valuable type of the bread of life; it came down from God to undeserving sinners who were preserved and nourished by it. But only in a comparative crude sense can it be called 'bread from heaven'. It was in itself perishable and those who ate it remained mortal and liable to be hungry. In verse 33, *okatabilnon* can be rendered 'that which came down from heaven'. In this chapter, it is Christ the 'son of God'. Both present and aorist participle are used - here and in verse 50; *katabas* in verse 41, 51 and 58. There is no essential difference of reference, but of emphasis. The present participle are descriptive - Christ is the one who

descends and gives, and the aorist puts the same fact with a greater stress on history - that is, on a unique occasion in time when Christ did descend. The people eagerly requesting this bread in verse 34 is grammatically possible though not representing the Gospel of John's thought to the full. It does not yet occur to them that Jesus is the bread of God, although they perceive that he claim to give it. The use of *pantote* 'always' in their request showed that they hoped for continuous supplies, but what Jesus does for humanity he does once for all.

The formation in verse 35 - 'I am the bread of life' - used the language of divine self-identification followed by a predicate. In this self-identification declaration, Jesus claimed to be the embodiment of the revelation from God which is necessary for life. According to Deuteronomy 8:3, the manna had been given as an object lesson in order that Israel should 'understand that one does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord'. The latter clause clearly had in view the Torah in particular (cf. Wisdom. 16:20-26). Barrett (1978:287) considered the background of *ego eimi* - that in the Old Testament it is the divine word of self-revelation and of command (Exodus 3:6, 14; Isaiah 51:12).

In antiquity, bread really was a matter of life as Malina (1998:133) pointed out - and since bread provided about half a percentage of calories available for most non elite people, Jesus' metaphoric statement 'I am the bread of life' is seen as very important. Bultmann (1979:225-226) regarded most of the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John, including verse 35 as a 'recognition formula' (6:41,48,51; 8:12; 10:7,9,11,14; 15:1,5). That is, the 'recognition formula' answers to the question 'Who is the one who is expected, asked for, spoken to?' In each of the use of the 'recognition formula', it is assumed that there is more than one claimant to the title or role of the particular symbol in question, be it bread, light, Shepherd, and so forth, so that Jesus is asking his hearers to recognise him as the true bread, shepherd or light. And Moody (1999:154) concurred that certainly Jesus' claim to be the bread of life fit the 'recognition formula' exactly, for the exegetical discussion has to do

precisely with the question of what (or who) is this bread. Lincoln (2005:227) attested that the idea and language of the assertion, 'who ever comes to me will never hungry and whoever believes in me will never thirst' (v. 36), strongly brought to mind the wisdom tradition and of wisdom's invitation in Sir. 24:19-21. But Jesus' offer, however, out those that of wisdom in its promise of complete satisfaction for believers.

Witherington (1995: 22) observed that the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus with predicate can be compared with the Wisdom Motif. For instance, John 6: 35 which says 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty' is compared to Proverbs 9: 5 where Wisdom beckons 'come, at of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed...'

2.2.5 The audience of Jesus changed to the 'Jews':

In verses 41-42, Jesus' claim to have come down from heaven was objected to because his family and origin was well known. Lincoln (2005:230) suggested that since it was a negative response, the multitudes are now for the first time identified as the 'Jews'. From these verses, based on the Midrashim commentary on Exodus 16 as the crowd murmured against Moses, the passage is shaped into a form of dialogue as 'the Jews' murmured against Jesus. The argument given is that one whose local parentage is known cannot have come down from heaven. Malina (1998:134) explained that since the family lineage of a person determines the level of honour ascribed to that person, the 'Jews' - have known Jesus' father to be Joseph and mother to be Mary, two people known to be among the community non-elites - and concluded that Jesus cannot come down from heaven.

Ridderbos' (1997:231) view of 'the Jews' in this passage - the name that the Gospel of John often used for Jewish leaders and spokesmen hostile to Jesus, seems different. Ridderbos argued that the idea that a historical situation should be given to this verse beyond what the entire passage says, simply because of the title - 'the Jews' - is an unnecessary conclusion. Ridderbos emphasized that in view of the names of Jesus' parents mentioned in verse 42, the speakers are obviously Galileans. This connotes that the use of

‘the Jews’ in the Gospel of John does not refer only to ‘Judeans’. Lowe (1976:101) and Ashton (1985:40) also supported the view that the Gospel of John’s use of *Ioudaioi* ‘the Jews’ is far more beyond the ethnicity and geography of the Judeans.

2.2.6 The Eucharist?

The dialogue between Jesus and the ‘Jews’ came to its climax from verse 52, as the ‘Jews’ disputed among themselves what Jesus could possibly mean by speaking about ‘eating’ his flesh. Still in the state of confusion and despair of the ‘Jews’, Jesus intensifies the force of the issue by adding an element that would even be more offensive, which is ‘drinking of his blood’. The drinking of blood was strictly prohibited in Leviticus 17:10-14, hence Lincoln (2005:232) suggested that to imagine Jesus’ words in any literal cannibalistic sense would be to remain purely on earthly level of understanding, in the same way Nicodemus had understood the issue of being ‘born again’ (John 3:4). Lincoln further attested that, clearly the force is metaphorical and it is in continuity of the former metaphorical use of language as the verbs - ‘to see’, ‘to work’ and ‘to come’ have all signified ‘to believe’. Koester (1989: 338) also saw the metaphorical statement of signifying ‘to believe’ as he explained that even the stories of ‘the feeding miracle of the five thousand’ (vv. 16-21) introduced the theme of faith. This was done by contrasting the misguided response of the multitude, with the genuine response of the disciples, who were moved to receive Jesus as the one who came in the name of the Lord. Koester (1989: 338) also emphasized that in verses 22 to 29, the multitude again only understood Jesus in terms of human activity, but Jesus stated that he was speaking about faith as ‘the work of God’ and asserts that, it is only those who believe in him that will experience his identity as the ‘bread of life’ (v.35). This segment builds upon the already established revelation that Jesus is the bread of life and further emphasizes Jesus in his flesh-and-blood manifestation. This implies that the belief which produced life is in the incarnation.

On the other hand, there is an argument that the ‘eating of the flesh’ and ‘drinking of the blood’ (v. 52-53) presupposes that the flesh has been broken and the blood has been shed.

Due to this, the belief in connection to the Eucharist was established by Christians. Lincoln (2005:232) also suggested that it is highly probable that the Gospel of John had been influenced by the Synoptic tradition of the Last Supper, affecting the formulation here in the fourth gospel, which does not include a Eucharistic institution in its supper account (Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:19). Koester (1989:433) noted that the practice of celebrating the Lord's Supper was never mentioned in the Gospel of John, despite devoting five chapters to Jesus' last supper with his disciples. Malina (1998:135) argued that the context of the Gospel of John's use of 'flesh and blood', is totally different from the Synoptic view of Last supper and even that of Paul - at which Jesus offers bread and wine as symbolic representation of his body and blood (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 11:23-27). According to Malina, the difference is that the Gospel of John has only straightforward anti-language peculiar to the Johannine community, whereas in the Synoptic and Pauline, the 'flesh and blood' is represented by a prophetic symbolic action of the bread and wine. Another difference as observed by Lincoln is that, whereas the Synoptic used *soma* (Jesus' body), the Gospel of John used *sarx* (Jesus' flesh). Both are appropriate, but *sarx* fits better in the incarnation.

Also, the Gospel of John's use of *alethos* instead of *alethes* for 'truly' really emphasized that Jesus' body and blood are really the ideal, prototypal function of food and drink. That is in giving eternal life to those who received them. Then, the verb *phagein* has been used for 'eating of Jesus' flesh' but in verse 54 to 58, it was changed to *tragein* which can have the force of 'to chew'. Barrett (1978:299) point out that *tragein* was used from the time of Homer for the eating of herbivorous animals and from the time of Herodotus for the eating of humans. But the point of eating for pleasure is not supported. Barrett also explains that the Greek verb *trogo* means to 'munch' or eat audibly as animals do, and some commentators have suggested that this denotes a kind of earthiness and crudity. On the other hand, the Gospel of John does not elsewhere used the present form of the stem *phag* 'to eat' -which is *esthio* - and he may simply be substituting *trogo* without intending any special connotation.

However the change of *phagein* 'eat' to *tragein* 'chew' that seems to support the Eucharist, Koester (1989:433) argued that the word *trogein* 'chew' actually shows that John 6 should not be connected to the Supper. Koester explained that in verses 54 to 58, Jesus promised that the one who 'eats' would abide in him and live forever, but at the Last Supper the word 'eat' is used only for Judas, who was united with Satan, not Jesus (John 13:18, 26-27) and who found destruction rather than life (John 17:12). And Koester suggested that the Gospel of John's silence regarding the Lord's Supper does not mean that the Johannine writings are anti-sacramental, but we simply do not know if the Lord's Supper was familiar to Johannine Christians or if they perceive Jesus' flesh and blood as the Eucharist. For Witherington, John 6 is Christological inclined and not ecclesiological or sacramentally focused. Witherington (1995:149) emphasized that the main symbolic focus of John 6 is about the various Jewish manna traditions, where Torah or Wisdom is called or alluded to as manna/bread from God that feeds God's people. Witherington said that in John 6 where Jesus is speaking of eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood, immediately after referring to himself as the bread that came down from heaven, he and/or the evangelist is drawing on Wisdom text like Prov. 9:5, Sir. 24, and the wisdom reading of Exodus 16:4 in order to imply that Jesus is God's divine wisdom that feeds God's people.

The Gospel of John begins to conclude the exegetical passage in verses 56 to 59 by portraying that the goal is to produce a complete and reciprocal installing of Christ and the believer. The gospel of John's use of *menein* 'abide' is essential to discipleship as Barrett (1978:299) suggests that it is one of the gospel's most important words - in which it is used in regards to the Father and Son (14:10), in regards to the Spirit and Jesus (1:32) and in regards to believers and Christ (6:56; 15:4). Finally, the narrator's final comment that this had been Jesus' synagogue teaching serves as a reminder. On this note, Barrett (1978:300) affirmed that this synagogue is not the one excavated at Tell-hum, but it is not impossible that it was erected on the sight of the previous building. Along with the disciples, Lincoln (2005:234) submits that readers are invited to see a deeper significance in the bread that

has been broken first in a Jewish setting and then in a Gentile one. The reference to Mark 8:14; I Corinthians 10:17-18 is held by many commentators to give the Christological and Eucharistic clue to the deeper significance of the feeding. Hence, Jesus is both the embodiment and giver of eschatological life.

2.3 Drawing out the Christological significance of the 'I-am' sayings in John 6.

Focusing on the exegetical investigation, more emphasis will be considered on the theological and historical aspects of the passage, noting that they are interconnections within them. The theological and historical aspects cannot always be distinguished or separated from each other and this points us to the difficulties in the analysis of the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus. However, the research work will attempt to consider the theological (Christological) and historical aspects in different sections, so as to show specifically if there are any relevant issues that could be raised in relation to the broader research question. We begin with the more theological aspects, and the significance of the Passover feast in particular.

2.3.1 The Passover feast

As Jesus performed his miracles and delivered all his 'I-AM' sayings as discourses within the context of the Jewish feast (John 5 - 12), Kim (2007:309) suggested that Jesus demonstrated that he was the one who fulfilled the hopes and joys of the Jewish festivals. Focusing on the Passover feast which was established in Exodus 12:12-14, this feast epitomised God's claiming and releasing of his people from Egypt as well as his preservation of his people by supplying them with food and rescuing them from the threatening sea. As a result, the setting of John 6, which began with the crossing of the sea (6:1), the coming of the multitude out to a lonely mountain region (6:3), the miraculous feeding of the five thousand (6:11-14) and Jesus' miraculous walking on the sea (6:18-21) formed a picture-perfect setting for considering how Jesus could be related to the stories of the exodus.

The Passover feast is a multifaceted celebration and the author of the Gospel of John seems to know it well. Thus, Kim (2007:311) suggested that the author of the Gospel of

John's references to the Passover feast are more than just time indicators and emphasized that the settings of John 6 contributed significantly to the Gospel of John's aim to present Jesus as the promised Messiah and the Son of God. Furthermore, in an attempt to connect the Passover feast mentioned in John 6 with the Israelites experience in the exodus, Moloney (1998:195,197) suggested that the use of the definite article *to horos* 'the mountain' (6:3) in the settings of the place of the event, may mean that Jesus was adopting a position parallel to Moses who received the Law on a mountain; and also Jesus' question to Philip 'where are we to buy bread, so that the multitude may eat?' (6:5) may mean that Jesus' question is meant to parallel the question Moses asked God in the desert 'where am I to get meat to give to all these people?' (Numbers 11: 13). In addition, Carson (1991:271) emphasizes that surely Jesus' provision of bread in the wilderness area prompted the Jewish multitude to think of Moses' role in providing manna. Meeks (1967:1-2) puts it this way, the multitude must have reasoned that since Moses has fed the Israelites in the wilderness and also delivered them out of the Egyptian bondage, Jesus could also lead the nation out of the Roman bondage, since he also feed the people.

Also in first-century literature, the Jews in the first century expected that the Messiah will renew the miracle of manna to mark the opening of the messianic era 'And it will happen at that time the treasury of manna will come down again from on high, and they will eat of it in those years because these are they who will have arrived at the consummation of time' (2 Baruch 29:8). The multitude expected Jesus to establish his kingdom by overthrowing the Romans and providing for their physical needs, but Jesus was not proclaiming a materialistic kingdom. Kent Jr. (1974:102) emphasized that although the messianic Kingdom would be a literal kingdom, its basis was a spiritual revolution in which humans' heart would first be changed and in which perfect righteousness would prevail.

2.3.2 The demand for a sign:

Again in verse 26, although the factual level reflects the editing error of the Johannine Gospel - that is, 'how can Jesus tell the crowd that they are not looking for him because they

have seen signs, where in vv. 14 -15 we were told that the people wanted to come and carry Jesus off precisely because they have seen the signs he had performed?', as Brown asked - it correctly reflects the theological level of the author of the Gospel of John's understanding of the meaning of the word 'signs'. Brown (1971: 261-262) explained that 'the crowd's enthusiasm of vv. 14-15 was based on the physical seeing of the marvellous aspect of the signs, but there were no real sight of what the sign taught about Jesus - their concept of Jesus as a Davidic King was political. It is the deeper insight into the sign of which v. 26 spoke, contrasting it with the eating of the miraculous loaves. It would require the long discourse by Jesus to explain that the multiplication miracle was a sign of his power to give life through the bread of his teaching and of his flesh, a power that he has because he had come down from heaven'.

In the Gospel of John, the word *semeion* translated as 'sign' is most times considered as a miracle. In verse 26, it means a miracle that is symbolic or which has an inherent meaning embedded in it. The use of 'sign' is a Johannine distinctive that is not a mere portent, but a symbolic representation of the truth of the Gospel. The meaning of 'sign' in the Gospel of John is that it points beyond the physical, concrete reality to the reality of revelation. The emphasis here is not an act of understanding a symbolic miracle (noetic) but the act of seeing (visual) the miraculous event as the authenticating sign of another heavenly reality. The sign is designed to produce a corresponding 'faith' in the lives of the people (vv. 29, 30, 36) (Ridderbos 1997:224). But on the contrary, the multitude desire to seek Jesus was based on the loaves they had previously eaten and are still hungry of. So the multitude did not perceive the parabolic significance that the loaves of bread Jesus distributed are the signs of heavenly food -the bread of eternal life. Lincoln (2005:225) supported this view and suggested that Jesus' response took the discourse unto another level and challenged the multitude to rethink why they have followed him at all. Lincoln further attested that although the people have in fact seen the signs with their eyes (vv. 2, 14), they have failed to see past the external signs. Lincoln also submitted that to see properly would not be to remain

content with the merely earthly benefits supplied, but to believe in Jesus as the source of all life. The familiar phrase 'truly, truly, I say to you' used by Jesus is a word that announced a crucial idea in view of the misunderstanding of truth on the part of Jesus' audience. Moody (1999:151) concurs by stressing that the multitude have indeed eaten their fill of the loaves, that Jesus had miraculously provided (v.26), but they have scarcely partaken of Jesus himself who is the bread of life (v.35); which connotes that, the multitude have not understood the sign character of the loaves Jesus provided them, that is, they have not understood that the loaves signify Jesus' role as the bringer of salvation, indeed as salvation himself. In verse 30, Ridderbos (1997:226) explains that everything depends on who used the words 'seen' and 'sign'. From the perspective of the people, the 'sign' they had 'seen' was bread and for that they called Jesus a prophet and were willing to make Jesus King (vv. 14-15). But now, they are demanding a new sign, since Jesus is talking about another type of bread - one which gives everlasting light.

2.3.3 The 'work' required from the multitude:

From verses 27 to 29, the multitude understood that Jesus was admonishing them to seek for something higher than what has been their previous motivation. In v. 27, Jesus drove home the message in terms of the familiar Johannine dualism: perishable food and the food that last for eternal life. This food is not anything that money can buy, it is the word of God to which they must listen. Jesus identified the food that last for eternal life as the gift of the *Son of Man*. This is often an eschatological title and the use here probably reflects Johannine realised eschatology, but whether we read 'will give' or 'gives', the food that last for eternal life is in part a present gift, just as eternal life itself is a present gift. These heavenly realities are realised in the ministry of Jesus.

In v. 28, although the theme of 'works' which has been introduced in vs. 27 seems almost to constitute a separate motif in the larger discussion of food and bread, as Bultmann (p.164) thinks of it as a lost dialogue in reference to work, some of which is preserved in John 8: 39-41; Brown (1971:264) suggested that if the discourse of the Bread of Life

concerns Jesus' revelation, then since faith is the essential response to Jesus' revelation, vv. 28-29 have a place in the preface to the discourse in the sense that they give the traditional contrast between faith and works. The crowd has been led by Jesus to penetrate beyond the superficial, material level of food, but their response in v. 28 is in terms of works that they can do.

So the multitude ask what they are to do. Jesus told them that the only 'work' is to believe in him whom God has sent; as Moody (1999:152) emphasizes, Jesus' responds in verse 29 - 'this is the work of God, that you believe in whom he has sent' - is not unexpected, at least not in the Gospel of John, given that 'work' is defined as belief or faith. Jesus' emphasis is to open the eyes of the multitude to the fact that in the coming and work, God is in the process of addressing himself to them with his redeeming action, of introducing his kingdom, and fulfilling his promise. The appropriate response expected from the multitude is their openness for what God gives and does, not works as a human achievement. Every effort of the multitude to be closer to God will be considered in vain if they follow Jesus based on their human expectation and not on the basis of faith. Jesus in turn in v. 29 put the emphasis on faith. As a Johannine solution to the issue of faith and works, obtaining eternal life is not a question of works, as if faith does not matter; nor is it a question of faith without works. Rather, having faith is a work. Indeed, it is the important work of God. Yet, as Bultmann has remarked, this believing is not so much a work done by man as it is submission to God's work in Jesus.

2.3.4 The comparison between the 'manna' and 'the bread of life':

In v.30 the crowd became unfriendly as Jesus admonished them to have faith and they put to Jesus a demand for a sign. Verse 31 would indicate that the sign the crowd wants is a supply of bread; but it looks difficult to connect this with the indication that it is the same crowd that saw the multiplication the day before. Brown (1971:265) emphasized that 'what is important is the crowd's introduction of the theme of manna as the pattern for the sign. The

challenge to Jesus to produce manna or its equivalent as a sign is quite understandable if they thought of him as the prophet-like-Moses'. Brown (1971: 265) explained that the crowd have an expectation that in the final days, God would again provide Manna - an expectation that in the final days God would again provide manna - an expectation connected to the hopes of a second exodus.

In vv. 32-34, Jesus now tells the crowd that their eschatological expectation has been fulfilled. Jesus' emphasis centred on the fact that the manna given by Moses is only a foreshadow of the real bread from heaven, which is himself. The symbolism that Jesus was about to use in applying the manna or bread from heaven to his revelation was not new as there were already a certain level of preparation; that is, the contract between manna as a physical nourishment and the power of God to grant spiritual nourishment has had a background in Deut. 8:3 where Moses tells the people that God fed you with manna which you do not understand, not your ancestors understand, that he might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but that man live by every word that proceed out of the mouth of the Lord. But the crowd could not comprehend the symbolism and has a purely materialistic understanding of the bread and this made Jesus to begin the Bread of life discourse. Also in verse 31, the multitude bringing up the issue of the manna miracle indicates that they want to oppose Jesus' claim of having imperishable food. Jesus' bread miracle was associated with the manna because it was the time of Passover - the feast of the Exodus (v. 4), also more importantly is the connection the people had already made between Jesus and the 'prophet' promises by Moses (v. 14), along with ancient Jewish writings of manna as a gift of the eschaton: the ancient miracle in the wilderness, it was said, would be repeated; thus the Messiah, the 'second redeemer' would do what Moses, 'the first redeemer' had done (Ridderbos 1997:226). In verse 32 and 33, Jesus, in his regular manner of introducing a pronouncement relating to his mission - 'truly truly', he emphatically deny that it was Moses who gave the Israelites the bread from heaven but God, his father, who now gives them the 'true bread of life'. Ridderbos (1997:227) emphasized that the main

issue here is not 'bread' or 'bread from heaven', but the 'true' bread from heaven. Despite God upholding the Israelites through the wilderness to Canaan with the manna, it was not the true bread, not the bread of fulfilment, not of the full revelation of God in his Son.

Although the manna was also 'word, deed, power, proceeding from the mouth of God' (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4), and in that sense also bread from heaven, but it was not the Word incarnate in the Son. Evidently in verse 34, the multitude did not understand Jesus' indirect self-identification, but ignorantly - based on their pattern of expectation - being lured to desire the bread that will physically be available for them to have a continuous physical life, and not faith in Jesus that made them to ask Jesus for the bread. In verse 35, Jesus became very clear to them as he declared 'I am the bread of life'. Jesus showed to them that he did not only has the power to give the bread that will last forever but that he, himself, is the bread. Ridderbos (1997:229) considered the 'I' as the real predicate because of the great emphasis resting on it. The intent is not primarily to describe the salvation granted by Jesus, rather, that anyone who desires the bread that does not perish, should accept Jesus. The divine name 'I-AM' also has significant messianic implication. It is the covenant name by which Yahweh revealed himself repeatedly to Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 26:24; 28:13-15), to remind them that God would fulfil the promise he had made to their ancestors. Therefore, in using the 'I-AM' to identify himself, Jesus was claiming to be the very God who has revealed himself to the patriarchs, and in whom all the patriarchal promises will ultimately be fulfilled in his eschatological Kingdom.

Brown (1971:269) also thought the context demands that the phrase is translated as 'I Myself am the bread of life' and explains that the *ego eimi* with a predicate does not reveal Jesus' essence but reflects his dealings with men; in this instance, his presence nourishes men. In view of the meaning of the 'bread of life', Brown explains that there are different meanings ascribed to it by different scholars, even during the days of the early Church Fathers in antiquity. In modern times, Brown distinguished the various views as (1) verses 35-58 refers to the revelation by and in Jesus or his teachings; (2) only verses 35-50 has the

‘sapiential’ theme, but in verse 51-58 the bread refer to the Eucharistic flesh of Jesus; (3) verses 35-58 refer to the eucharistic bread and (4) the bread refers to *both* revelation and the Eucharistic flesh of Jesus. Brown then propose that verses 35-50 refers primarily to the revelation but secondarily to the Eucharist and verses 51-58 refers only to the Eucharist. Brown justified his claim that verses 35-50 primarily reflect the ‘sapiential’ theme by explaining that the fundamental reaction to Jesus’ presentation of himself as bread - which is that of belief - or of coming to him, which is also synonymous to belief (vv. 35, 37, 44, 45) and the fact that only once in verse 50 that the issue of eating the bread of life came up, shows that the focus in this section is on the revelation of Jesus’ identity. Also Brown observed that most of Jesus’ sayings in the Gospel of John have some Old Testament or Jewish background that makes them partially intelligible to the audience. For instance, the Old Testament background for the Bread of Life discourse is found in the description of the messianic banquet. In Jewish tradition, the joys of the messianic days were often pictured under the imagery of an intimate banquet with Yahweh or with his messiah. In the Synoptics, this banquet is picture as taking place in the afterlife or the second coming (Matt. 8:11, 26:29) but in the Gospel of John, Jesus announced that this banquet is at hand. Jesus is the bread of life for those servants of Yahweh who believe in the one Yahweh has sent. This is the realised eschatological context of the Gospel of John and Jesus speaks of himself as the Son of Man. Brown also justified his claim that verses 35-50 refer secondarily to the Eucharist. Brown explains that apart from the fact that the Gospel of John relates this discourse to the multiplication of the loaves - which has itself undergone Eucharistic adaptation - the placing together of hunger and thirst in verse 35 does seem strange since the discourse is only on bread and never mentions water. But it does make more sense if there is a reference to the Eucharist, which involved flesh and blood and is both to be eaten and drunk. Even the mention of manna which introduces the discourse gives an indication that the discourse would have had an Eucharistic associations for early Christian audience (1 Cor. 5:1-4), and as such there is evidence for holding that there is a secondary,

Eucharistic references in verse 35-50, and this reference will become primary in verses 51-58. Brown (1971:275) commenting on the value of the discourse as historical tradition explains that 'there is nothing that would automatically rule out the possibility that the sapiential sayings attributed to Jesus in this section may not represent early tradition. The collection of these sayings into one discourse probably reflects an editorial process; the skeleton of the discourse, however, along with the sequence of ideas, may well have been supplied by the tradition. This is also implied by comparing with the Synoptics (Mark 8:14, 16; Matthew 16:11-12).

2.3.5 The bread from heaven:

In verses 42b, the phrase 'come down from heaven' as been interpreted to mean the incarnation. Kim (2007:315) emphasized that the word *katabainon* 'come out of heaven' is used seven times in this discourse (vv.33,38,41,42,50,51,58) and is probably one of the gospel of John's many double meanings, referring to both the bread that came down during the wilderness experience and Jesus' incarnation. In support of the above, Moody (1999:156) explained that:

The classical paradox of the claim of incarnation, that a human being fully reveals God, so that he himself can be called *theos* (God) is rooted in the Gospel of John. Moreover it is quite clear that the claim that Jesus have come down from heaven is in the Gospel of John an assertion about Jesus' origin and mission, not about any literal descent. Thus it is reasonable to ask how Jesus could possibly say that he has come down from heaven. But to make that protest reveals that the 'Jews' have not understood the character of the claim' (Moody 1999:156).

It is worthy of note that the Gospel of John nowhere affirmed belief in the virgin birth of Jesus, but Barrett (1978: 295) suggested that probably he knew and accepted the doctrine (1:13). Thus, Lincoln accepts that the evangelist and those whom he represents, maintain the paradox of the incarnation in which both perspectives on Jesus' origins are true, because he is the divine Logos who has become flesh.

In verses 43-44, Jesus admonish 'the Jews' to stop murmuring but ignored their question. Instead he asserts that it is impossible for human to have proper perspective on his origin and identity unless God takes the initiative and enable them to believe. Barrett (1978: 296)

believed that the Synoptic Gospels are as emphatic as John that salvation apart from the initiative of God is quite impossible (Matthew 19:16-30; Mark 10:23-27; Luke 18:18-30). Lincoln (2005:230) argued that paradoxical Christology, in which Jesus has both human and divine origins, can only be understood in the paradoxical response - in which 'believing' is a matter of both human responsibility and divine initiative. Barrett (1978:296) warned that verses 45 and 46 must not be taken to mean that any one may enjoy a direct mystical experience of God and then, once enlightened, attach himself to Jesus. Jesus only had immediate knowledge of God *ton patera eoraken* and to others he is the mediator. Lincoln (2005:231) put it this way, 'to have listened to the Father does not, however, put believers in precisely the same category as Jesus himself. He remains unique because he alone has seen the Father and believers' knowledge of God is mediated by him'. Barrett (1978: 297) that the right reading was: A man is 'taught by God' by hearing Jesus and the result is that he is drawn to Jesus. The process is circular, but the gospel of John asserts that it is set in motion not by humanity's volition but by Jesus, or rather, by God's initiative in Jesus.

2.3.6 The Eucharist:

Jesus' revelation of his own messianic identity went beyond what the multitude could understand. While the people could not see beyond a political messiah who could bring them physical relief and provide for their physical needs, Jesus was addressing their spiritual needs for eternal life. Tenney (1975:149) explained how the multitude could not grasp Jesus' message, that the bread of life discourse spoke of spiritual not material sustenance, and Jesus' emphasis on the resurrection on the last day (v. 54) must have seemed irrelevant to the multitude. Furthermore, Jesus' declaration 'truly, truly, I say unto you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in yourselves' (v. 53) mystified the multitude. Even many of Jesus' disciples left him because they could not understand the meaning of his words.

The interpretation of the sign which has been given to demonstrate Jesus' sufficiency for human needs, proves to be an insurmountable obstacle for the multitude faith. Moody Smith

(1999:159) summed up the exegetical passage and suggested that it is significant that all the important elements of the text of verse 31 are taken up in verse 58, that is, 'God gave them bread from heaven to eat'. Moody explained that in the discourse, verses 32 to 51 deals with the giving of the bread from heaven and its true identity, and verses 52 to 58 with eating of the heavenly bread. Thus the exegesis of the text is incomplete without verses 52 to 58.

2.4 Drawing out historical aspects that are related to the text:

The exegetical passage in John 6:22-59 contained words or phrases such as 'sign', 'Manna', 'the bread of life', the bread from heaven, and the Eucharist that are regarded to be highly theological when the Gospel of John's use of the terms and imagery in its Gospel is considered. And from the Johannine theological perspective, these words or phrases point to Christology in the Gospel. But since proper exegesis is not void of the cultural context to which these words or phrases are utilised, the historical aspects of the exegetical passage will now be considered, from the most mundane areas such as the Passover feast and the Manna, to the 'bread of life' phrase, to investigate if there is the possibility that the identity of Jesus could be explored historically.

Furthermore, it is worthy to note that it is very difficult to understand Jesus' embodiment of the bread as historical, it could mean actual food. However, the sayings also points to the Eucharist historically (Vondey 2017: 8). But would not be considered within the historical aspects of the research work because the Eucharist tends to project more Christological implications in the Johannine community, as well as our present contemporary time.

2.4.1 The Jewish feast - Passover in particular:

Johnson (2009:128) proposed that the Jewish feasts in the Gospel of John provide provocative areas for considering the historicity of the account of Jesus' life. The enormous and systematic use of the Jewish feasts in the Gospel of John's presentation reflected well the picture of Jesus as a first-century Galilean Jew who regularly attends pilgrimages to Jerusalem. Also the thematic use of the Jewish feasts in the Gospel of John supersedes the

view of temporal settings for Jesus' ministry, and the narrative purpose of the Jewish feasts should be given high consideration over any chronology they may represent.

Kostenberger (2013:82), in trying to suggest historicity in the exegetical passage in John 6, explained that in comparing the Gospel of John's account of the feeding miracle of the five thousand with that of the Synoptic - in which the Gospel of John mentions the crossing of the sea (v. 1), the approaching Passover (v. 4), the involvement of Philip and Andrew (vv. 7-8), the fact that the five loaves contributed by the boy was loaves of barley (v. 9), and Jesus' command to his disciples to gather the fragments, so that nothing will be left (v. 12) - shows that the author of the Gospel of John provides his own independent account. And thus it adds value to the Gospel of John as a potential independent apostolic eyewitness testimony.

In considering if there was any value to the historical reconsideration of the Gospel of John and in view of the tradition found behind the Gospel of John, Brown's (1971: xlii) commentary supported the fact that modern investigations of antiquity, especially archaeology, have supported the potential accuracy of some of the elements in the Gospel of John. Brown highlighted some values of the information peculiar to the Gospel of John as most striking; for instance, in chapter 5 – the precise information about the pool of Bethesda, as to name, location and construction and details about Jerusalem seemed to have some level of plausibility to be accurate. And one of the values of the Gospel of John which was more related to this research enterprise is that 'the theological themes brought up in relation to Passover (chapter 6) and the feasts of Tabernacles (chapters 7-8) reflect an accurate knowledge of the festal ceremonies and the Synagogue readings associated with the feast' (Brown 1971: xlii). Brown (1971: xlii) suggested that this level of accuracy may mean that the Gospel of John reflected knowledge of Palestine as it was, before its destruction in A.D 70, when some of these landmarks perished. Brown clearly expressed that 'these do not mean that the Johannine information about Jesus has been verified, but at least the setting in which Jesus is placed was authentic' (Brown 1971: xlii).

Although in expanding the traditional materials about the works and words of Jesus in the Gospel of John, Brown (1971: xliii) reiterated that, of the anachronisms labelled against the Gospel of John, the most serious one is the abstract language – the dualistic references to light and darkness, truth and falsehood – the evangelist attributed to Jesus, which are not found in the Synoptic Gospels, which clearly seem to reflect the thought and language of a later time and another place than the time and place of the ministry of Jesus. Brown argued that the language attributed to Jesus in the Gospel of John was perfectly at home in the Palestine of the first century because the discovery of the Dead Sea scroll found at Qumran in 1947 had given us the library of a community whose span of existence covered the period from ca. 140 B.C to A.D 68. According to Brown, ‘these documents of the Dead Sea scroll offers the closest ideological and terminological parallels yet discovered for the dualism and the peculiar vocabulary of the Johannine Jesus’ (1971: xliii). Brown (1971: xliii) emphasized that although the discovery of the Dead Sea scroll does not prove that Jesus himself spoke in this abstract language, since the evangelist, being familiar with such language, may have merely reinterpreted Jesus in his terminology. ‘Yet it can be said that the abstract language used by Jesus in the Gospel of John is no longer a conclusive argument against the Johannine use of historical tradition’ (Brown 1971: xlv).

Brown’s commentary (1971: xlv) did an elaborate comparison of the Gospel of John with the Synoptic Gospels and proposed that regarding similarities, the Gospel of John tends to agree more with the Gospels of Mark and Luke than with the Gospel of Matthew. But over a series of scenes, Brown observed that the Gospel of John does not agree with any one of the Synoptic Gospels and proposed that if anyone was to posit dependency on the basis of similarities alone, then one would to agree that the author of the Gospel of John knew all three Synoptic Gospels and chose in an eclectic manner from each of them. But since this proposal did not hold up when the dissimilarities between the Gospel of John and the Synoptic Gospels were examined; that is – most of the details peculiar to the Gospel of John, some of which made the Johannine story to seem more difficult, cannot be explained

as deliberate changes of the Synoptic tradition. Brown is of the opinion that 'if one cannot accept the hypothesis of a careless evangelist who gratuitously changed, added and subtracted details, then one is forced to agree that the evangelist drew his material for his story from an independent tradition, similar to but different from the tradition represented in the Synoptic Gospel' (Brown 1971: xlv).

Witherington on the other hand, clearly refuted the general suggestion that the Gospel of John is a 'theological' or 'spiritual' Gospel while the Synoptic Gospels are historical, when both the Johannine and the Synoptic materials were placed on comparison. Witherington (1995: 35) supported on the other hand, based on the redaction's critics' thorough demonstration, that the Synoptic Gospels are also theological, even though less than the Johannine Gospel. And on the other hand, based on commentaries that focused more on the historicity of the Gospel of John – for instance Dodd (1963; 5) that a considerable amount of historical material can be seen in the Gospel of John. Witherington (1995: 35) emphasized that the author of the Gospel of John wrote as an 'ancient, tendentious biographer with historical interest but also missionary purposes'. Witherington (1995: 35) suggested that the author of the Gospel of John wrote with both the level of facts and on the level of their interpretations. The author of the Gospel of John wrote particularly to impact his audience with faith in the person of Jesus, as Jesus' words and deeds are presented in an interpretive manner to refute the erroneous teachings of his days concerning Jesus – 'the various Docetism and perhaps even some proto-Gnostics arguments about Jesus' nature and life' as Witherington (1995: 36) puts it.

While the author of the Gospel of John was more concerned in unveiling the theological meaning of the sayings or events of Jesus' life, he avoided being accused of the same Docetism offense by not neglecting to narrate the factual foundation of that meaning. Witherington went further to explain some reasons of the difference between the Synoptic Gospels and the Johannine Gospel, noting where the Johannine Gospel was considered to at least possess some historical elements. According to Witherington (1995: 36), despite the

clear missionary purpose of the author of the Gospel of John to project Jesus Christ as the 'universal saviour' – one who has the answers to the various situations of all sorts of people in the universe, and despite his observation that the author of the Gospel of John chose to produce a 'dramatic' mode of presentation of the life of Jesus, where Jesus is depicted as dramatically replacing some of the Jewish institutions. Witherington emphasized that the major difference is that the Gospel of John got its information from a traditions not available to the Synoptic Gospels. Particular information is the discourse material, in which it was presented in a sapiential manner.

Witherington (1995: 36) supported the historical relevance of the discourse materials and puts it in his own words as 'the Gospel itself presents us with a lengthy examples of discourse materials conveyed just to the disciples in an 'in house' setting (John 13-17), even went so far to suggest that while Jesus used figurative and metaphorical speech in such a context, he also 'spoke plainly' and elucidated the meaning of such symbolic language as well (John 16: 25-29)'. Witherington further compared the suggestion of historical relevance of the Gospel of John to the Synoptic Gospels and showed that the historical relevance of the Gospel of John 'bears a striking similarity to the independent testimony of the Gospel of Mark, that Jesus explained the mystery of the Kingdom and of his metaphorical speech to his disciples in-house (Mark 4: 10-13, 34) and the evangelist had portrayed this kind of discussion in John 13-17 and had appended some of these teachings into the sign narrative and public logia of Jesus in John 2-12' (Witherington 1995: 36). Witherington attested that despite the conclusion of historical relevance of the discourse materials in the Gospel of John, there is no denial that the author of the Gospel of John added his own comment in some places of the Gospel for instance John 3, but only to argue that the Gospel of John commentary was appended to and developed out of the Johannine author's own commentary.

2.4.2 The comparison between the 'manna' and the 'bread of life':

Andreas J. Kostenberger (2004:196; also 1998) asserted that in keeping with Jewish expectation, Jesus is presented as the antitype to Moses. Kostenberger (2013:205) argued that 'merely because the Gospel of John is particularly interested in drawing out the theological implications of Jesus' ministry, it does not mean that he is therefore uninterested in or even falsified history. Indeed the truthfulness of his theology arguably hinges on the historicity of the events on which it is based'.

Kostenberger (1998:97) in another scholarly article submitted that 'the Gospel of John is a very valuable historical source'. Kostenberger explained that the Gospel of John showed, in some ways even more clearly than the Synoptics, how Jesus contemporaries approached him primarily as a rabbi, a Jewish religious teacher. For instance, in the Synoptic Gospels (especially Luke), the word used for teacher is a Greek term *didaskalos* but the Gospel of John made use of the Aramaic term *rabbi* as in John 6:25. Hence despite the high christology in the Gospel of John, Kostenberger (2013:206) emphasized that 'the author of the Gospel of John made it very clear that Jesus took upon him a certain cultural identity appropriate for his day and environment - that of a Jewish rabbi'. Therefore Kostenberger concluded by arguing for the enormous value of the Gospel of John in the study of the historical Jesus. Historically, Barrett (1978: 298) explained that the notion of heavenly bread is not only rooted in the Old Testament and Jewish thoughts but in the Greeks, going back as far as Homer.

As a way of drawing out historical aspects from the text, Brown considered the Jewish background behind the technique and themes of the discourse: Brown (1971:277) examined the research by Peder Borgen, *Homiletic Technique in the Discourse*, who carefully studied homiletic patterns in Philo and the Palestinian Midrashim, as follows:

The homiletic pattern is to begin with a citation of scripture (usually Pentateuch) which is usually paraphrased. The body of the homily comments on the scripture text almost word for word, although a careful scrutiny will often show that the comments presupposed not only the main verse that has been cited but also other verses within the context. Usually, the statement that opened the homily is repeated at the end of the homily, perhaps not verbatim but at least by recalling its principal word. In the

Palestinian Midrashim, the scripture citation is repeated at the end of the homily. Commonly, within the homily, there is a subordinate citation (often from the Writings or the prophets) to which a few lines of commentary are devoted. This subordinate citation helps to develop the main commentary. John 6 is amazingly close to this pattern. The initial citation has been given in verse 31, and it is from the Pentateuch. Verses 32-33 constitute the paraphrase of the citation by Jesus. Then in verse 35-50 is the homily is the scripture citation. The subordinate citation from the Prophets appears in verse 45 with a short commentary. And according to the homiletic rules, the statement that opened the homily (v.35) is repeated exactly at the end (v. 48)'.

In line with the historical value of the discourse, based on these explanation of the *homiletic technique*, Brown (1971:278) explained that Borgen believed that the discourse is a Jewish-Christian construction following the typical homiletic pattern of the day, and asked if there is any important reason why the discourse could not have come from Jesus?, since verse 59 affirmed that Jesus is presented as speaking in a synagogue in Capernaum. And he also wondered that if the discourse truly came from Jesus, would he not have conformed himself to the ordinary homiletic style for synagogue preachers? Although the quotation of Borgen is a lengthy one, it seemed relevant as it gave a thorough explanation of the Synagogue's practise of delivering sermons in the first century. And this can infer to mean that the historical Jesus behind the Gospel of John was aware and had used it during his discourse with the multitude.

Brown (1971: 279) also examined the *Synagogue Lectionary and the Discourse* by Aileen Guilding on the cycle of scripture readings used in the Synagogues. Brown (1971: 279-280) explained how Guilding connected the *sedarim* (Pentateuchal reading) and the *haftarath* (Prophets) used during the six weeks around Passover - according to Guilding's theory- to the bread of life discourse. Brown observed that the parallels are very impressive and it seemed legitimate to maintain that John 6 reflected a medley of themes drawn from the synagogue readings at Passover time. Although, Guilding proposed that 'the setting in John 6 is fictional and it is a Christian author who has composed the discourse by blending the theme' , Brown, however, reflected that 'if Jesus did speak in the synagogue (v. 59), how can we be certain that he was not the one who was the theme of the discourse from the synagogue readings?; hence Brown concluded that 'both the observation of Borgen and

Guiding can be used, at least in part complementarily, to emphasize that both illumine the *possibility* that behind John 6, we have a homily preached by Jesus selected from a *seder* read in the Capernaum synagogue at Passover time.

2.5 Making connections and giving cautious conclusions about what these verses tell us about the connection between the Jesus of History and the Christ of faith:

Conclusively, throughout this exegetical passage, Jesus had been depicted by the narrator to have claimed to be the unique locus of God's revelation as he declared of himself in, the 'I AM' formulation. The Gospel of John's Jesus' strategy of using the Jewish feasts - the Passover feast in particular, as a perfect avenue and timing to reveal his identity as the 'I AM', seems to drive home his message. Since the Passover celebration focused on Israel's deliverance from Egypt and sustenance throughout the wilderness experience, Jesus is categorically declaring to his audience that he is the one to bring deliverance and sustenance to them. Having tasted a glimpse of Jesus' sustenance in the miraculous multiplication of five loaves of bread and two fishes to feed five thousand men - 'possibly fifteen thousand people' as Kim (2007:314) proposed - including women and children, the multitude took the initiative to seek for Jesus and engaged him in a discourse in order to motivate him to provide more loaves for them. Jesus, on the other hand, having displayed his divine ability to know the motive of the multitude as narrated by the author of the Gospel of John, frowns at the multitude's inability to see beyond the physical miracle as a 'sign' of an heavenly reality and their longing for more physical loaves, revealed to them that he is the 'bread of life' that can only satisfy and quench the hunger and thirst of the multitude forever. Jesus identified himself as the embodiment of the divine life-giving revelation. Then he progressed to the incarnate nature of the revelation. And he affirmed his violent sacrificial death that will bring the revelation into manifestation. He further attests that the revelation can only be appropriated by humans' 'continually believing', which is not solely on their ability but with God enablement. This will eventually produce eternal life which begins now,

carried them through death and culminates in the resurrection at the last day. The multitude expectation of the provision of physical loaves were dashed as they all angrily left Jesus, when he brought up the issue of 'eating' his flesh and 'drinking' his blood. A metaphoric statement seen by some to mean 'faith' or by others to mean the Eucharist.

The conclusion of this chapter indicated that the interpretation of scholars seemed to keep the interpretation of Jesus' words in the 'I-AM' sayings at the theological / Christological level, though there is extensive historical discussion, in particular in relation to the festivals. Also the conclusion stimulated that there are still difficult issues for scholars when it comes to the sayings themselves.

From the exegetical analysis of John 6, the research work has focused on both the theological and historical aspects of the passage at different sections. But has also emphasized that it is difficult to draw a demarcation as there are interconnections between both aspects. The research has been able to show that the main themes of discussion within the passage pointed to the Christology of the 'I-AM' sayings as similar manner to the Old Testament usage of 'I-AM'. The research has also been able to show that despite the highly theological nature of the passage, there are some historical aspects within the cultural context that could give an indication about the possibility of the identity of Jesus historically.

Hence the exegesis of John 6:22-59 in chapter 2 has shown that the research question - Is there the possibility that the identity of Jesus could be explored from the lens of the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John - may not achieve cogent answers historically as most scholars have dealt with the passage from more theological perspective. But the exegesis of John 6:22-59 has provided a further inquest and call for more historical investigation into the homiletic techniques of the discourse. As such, an exegesis on John 8:12-59 will be considered in chapter 3.

CHAPTER THREE

AN EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE 'I-AM' SAYINGS OF JESUS IN JOHN 8.

3.1 Introduction

The 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in John 8 can be seen within the sections of verses 12 to 59. A close reading will be done to these 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus but more emphasis will be on verse 12, which falls in the category of 'explicit predicate', where Jesus declared 'I am the Light of the world' as he metaphorically described himself; and verses 24, 28 and 58 which fall in the category of 'absolute predicate' – where Jesus replied to 'the Jews' 'For you will die in your sins, unless you believe that *ego eimi* 'I AM' (v. 24) - and where Jesus, due to the lack of understanding of 'the Jews', notified them that 'when you have lifted up the son of man, then you will know that *ego eimi* 'I-AM' (v. 28) and also where Jesus, answering the question of 'the Jews' as if he had seen Abraham, replied 'Truly, Truly, I say to you, before Abraham was *ego eimi* 'I-AM'.

The close reading of the 'I-AM' passages of John 8: 12-59 is the focus of this chapter as it will be done in line with a further look at its place within the Gospel of John in terms of both the theological issues it raises and the historical settings behind the Johannine Gospel's narrative of the discourse. This investigation of the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus, in connection with some historical material in the discourse will proffer some suggestions as to how the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus, which are considered as highly theological statements, may be viewed as having a basis in connecting the Christ of faith with the Jesus of history. Hence, the exegetical, theological and historical aspects of John 8: 12-59 will be examined.

3.2. Exegetical analysis of the key verses:

Within the division of the Gospel of John according to Jewish feasts as explained in chapter two, Bondi (1997:478) remarked that scholars have generally agreed that John 7-8

forms a subunit, not only within the Gospel of John, but more specifically within John 5-10. This is because, as Bondi explained, 'there are three common 'threads' that run throughout these chapters, which are the celebration of the feast of Tabernacles, the use of the word *apokteinein* 'to kill' and the issue of secrecy (*en Kruptōi*)'. The Gospel of John seems indifferent to details of sequence and movement in comparison with the Synoptic Gospels.

The form of John 8: 12-59 is a discourse between Jesus and the multitude, in which the forensic aspects of Jesus' encounter with opponents, became more concentrated (Lincoln 2000: 82) and the multitude as Jesus' debating partners, were described in different ways. These different description of Jesus' debating partners can help to create a structural division in the passage. In segment of verses 12 to 20, the opponents were designated as the Pharisees (v. 13), which focused on the setting of the discourse. In verses 21 to 30, the opponents were designated as 'the Jews' (v. 22), which focused on the response of belief on the part of many. In verses 31 to 47, the audience became 'the Jews who had believed' in Jesus (v. 31). While in verses 48 to 59, the opposition were again simply 'the Jews' (vv. 48, 57). In addition, Lincoln (2000: 82) suggested that these differing designations of these groups may well mean that different controversies from various stages in the community's history have been brought together in this trial scene.

More importantly in the structural movement in this John chapter 8, is the consistent character of the overall dispute which resembled that of a lawsuit. Jesus' opponents from the beginning of the passage were both his accusers and judge but as the discourse progressed Jesus - who started as a witness of his own defence - became the prosecutor and judge of the opponents, levelling counter-accusations and charges against them (Lincoln 2000: 82-85; 2005: 264). Kostenberger (2013:96) supported the idea that it appeared that the Gospel of John has reversed the Synoptic portrayal of Jesus as on trial before the Romans and 'the Jews'. Kostenberger also explained that according to the Gospel of John, it is really the world, including 'the Jews', who are on trial.

3.2.1 Feast of Tabernacles:

It is clear that the scene of the Johannine narrative has changed from the feast of Passover in chapter 6 to the feast of Tabernacles in chapter 7 and despite the interference of the story of the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53-8:11) which is commonly held by scholars not to be part of the original Gospel of John, the scene of the feast of Tabernacles continued in 8:12 as Jesus is seen still speaking with the crowd in the temple. The Feast of Tabernacles, based on the Old Testament, lasted for eight days from 15 Tishri, which fell in late September or early October, and was celebrated as the completion of the harvest and God's guidance of Israel, when they lived in tents during the wilderness experience at the time of the exodus. The feast of Tabernacles was also linked with the salvation God will provide at the *eschaton* 'last days' (Zach.14:6-8, 17). Jewish texts such as the Mishnah (e.g m. Sukk. 5.2-4) support the notion that four large lampstands are used during the feast of Tabernacles.

According to Witherington (1995:175), the feast of Tabernacles or Booths was an autumn harvest festival, and among other things, it involved a prayer for rain. One of the ceremonies that took place on each of the seven mornings of the feast was a procession down the hill from the temple to the Gihon stream, which supplied the sea of Siloam (John 9:7). There a priest filled a laver full of water, carried it back up the hill, passing through the water gate returning to the altar, where he poured the water into a funnel which dispersed it into the ground. Commenting on verse 12, Witherington further suggested that in the context, the light seems to have a soteriological content, that is, the transforming revelation that changes and save a person's life as there is an emphasis on the fact that the person who follows Jesus will never walk in darkness.

Emphasizing the feast of Tabernacle, Catrin Williams (2000:4) indicated, that according to Stauffer, 'Jesus' utterance of *ego eimi* does not constitute a Markan or Johannine invention, but can be traced back to his appropriation of a formula traditionally associated with the feast of Tabernacles'. In her argument, non-canonical Christian texts and polemical

Jewish traditions are seen to be independent evidence containing similar usage of *ego eimi* by the historical Jesus. Williams (2000:5) also noted that Stauffer believed that the absolute *ego eimi* functions in most Markan and Johannine traditions as a theophanic formula, although his pupil, J. Richter, carefully balanced the proclamatory use of the expression with its role as a form of self-identification to establish the grammatical, formal and theological continuity between *ani hu* and *ego eimi* as self-revelatory formulas. Richter also noted that Jesus' pronouncement of the absolute *ego eimi* is also linked to his forgiveness of sins (John 8:24; cf. Isa. 43:25), the judgement of his enemies (John 8:28; cf. Isa. 41:4-5; 43:9-10; 48:12-13), prediction and fulfilment (John 13:19; cf. Isa. 41:4; 43:10), and is even employed as an expression of eternal presence (John 8:58; cf. Isa. 43:13).

Williams (2000:7) further engaged with Zimmermann, who believed that the decisive factor when trying to evaluate the NT usage of *ego eimi* is to determine whether a predicate can be supplied from its context. Based on Christological implications, Zimmermann concluded that Jesus can indeed proclaim *ego eimi* because his primary goal is to reveal the Father. Williams (2000:8), in looking at the background to the Johannine use of *ego eimi*, submitted that although P. B. Harner acknowledged the significance of later Jewish liturgical and rabbinic texts, Harner proposed that Septuagintal renderings of *Ani hu* and the Synoptics usage are the most likely source of Johannine *ego eimi*. Harner made a clear distinction between the clearly absolute examples of *ego eimi* -those for which no predicate can be supplied (John 8:39; 13:19) - and the more ambivalent cases where the expression may possess a double meaning (8:24, 28; cf. 4:26; 6:20; 18:5, 8) I have engaged with Stauffer, Zimmermann, Richter and Harner through a secondary source because their materials were unavailable to me at the time of writing. To D. M. Ball in his book, '*I-AM*' in *John's Gospel: Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications*' (chapters 2-4), the *ego eimi* sayings were accompanied by an image emphasizing Jesus' role and mission, whereas the absolute statements stress his identity. Ball, like Harner, concluded that some

ego eimi statements such as John 4:26; 6:20; 18:5, 8, are deliberately intended to function on two levels due to the identification of Johannine irony in many parts of the text.

3.2.2 Lawsuits between Jesus and the Pharisees - the authorities of the law:

What ensued in the proceeding verses (John 8:13-20) is a discussion regarding who in fact bears witness to Jesus and therefore can assure the veracity of his words. Because, just as no defendant ought to sit in judgement in our contemporary court of Law alone without the defence lawyers and witnesses, Jesus' claim of his identity was objected and overruled in (vv. 13-14) as the Pharisees - the authorities of the Law, considered them irrelevant and untrustworthy based on the Jewish laws of testimony. Jesus, on the other hand, though he previously agreed with the reason of the authorities' verdict of dismissal (John 5:31), refuted their conclusion and asserted that his testimony of himself is true; because he has a distinctive and exceptional identity of knowing his origin and destiny, which is, he came from and is going to God.

Jesus, having justified himself as his own witness due to his exceptional knowledge of his origin and destiny, heightened his defence in (vv. 15-16) by showing that though he seemed alone in appearance in his witnessing, yet in fact, he is inseparable from the father and their combined witness needs to be acknowledged as valid based on the Jewish Law. Jesus further affirmed his defence by levelling a charge - 'You judge according to the flesh' (v. 15a) - against the Pharisees, the authorities of the Law. An indictment which connoted more than simply judging based on appearance, but emphasized the negative connotation of 'flesh' as in (John 3:6; 6:63) which is an opposition to God, demonstrated that the Pharisees are under the influence of this hostile unbelief and its values. Taking as a straightforward aporia by some, the contrast made by Jesus - 'I judge not' (v. 15b) - looks contradictory to his judging activities in (5:30; 8:26).

However, considering this contrast in its most immediate context with verses 15a and 16, it might neither be taken to mean an outright denial of any judging activity by Jesus nor harmonizing by interpreting judging as condemning. Hence Jesus' statement 'even if I judge,

my judgement is true because I am not alone, but it is I and my father who sent me' (v. 16), meant that Jesus' judgement is not based on worldly values of the flesh but a divine activity, in which, as the uniquely authorised divine agent, he is engaged in a joint enterprise with the Father who sent him (Lincoln 2000: 85; 2005: 266).

Jesus acknowledged the efficacy of the Jewish Law and used it ironically in (vv. 17-18). According to the Jewish Law in Deut. 19:15 that the 'witness of two people is true', a minimum of three persons are required in a lawsuit - the accused and two physical witnesses. But in the case of Jesus, he is the accused and presented both himself and God as the two witnesses, though divine, showing the unity between the son and the Father who sent him. This is affirmed by the periphrastic construction (The article *ho* 'the' with *marturion* 'witness' is to be noted as Barrett 1978:339 also suggest) with the *ego eimi* used by Jesus to mean 'I am the one who witnessed about me' (Lincoln 2000: 87; 2005: 227)

The question of the Pharisees - the authorities of the Law to Jesus, 'where is your father?' (v.19) gave an indication that either they are acknowledging a previous testimony made by the Father on behalf of Jesus and wanted him to be present or they are misunderstanding Jesus' father to mean Joseph and this gave Jesus another opportunity to level a second charge against them - 'You neither know me nor my Father'. This is an indictment that questions the very foundation of the Pharisees' authority as the teachers' of the Law. That is, they possess zeal in carrying out the Law without knowing the giver of the Law; because for Jesus, the unity between himself and his Father is such that if the Pharisees had known God, they would have known him. Another explanation to this is that, the Jews understand that by his father Jesus meant God, and this is perhaps borne out in verse 41, where 'the Jews' assert that it is they who could claim divine parentage, whereas Jesus was not born in wedlock.

This segment is rounded off by the emphasis on the location of the dispute - 'he spoke these words in the treasury' (v. 20), suggesting the setting as the Feast of Tabernacles. The temple treasuries were considered next to the court of women where the light celebration

happened, due to a note in the *Tosephta* (in Talmudic Aramaic: תוספתא, meaning "supplement, addition" - is a compilation of the Jewish oral Laws from the late 2nd century, the period of the Mishnah) that women as well as men had access to them, though this cannot precisely confirm accuracy (Barrett 1978:340).

3.2.3 The people called 'the Jews':

In the segment of verses 21-30, the audience of Jesus moved from the 'Pharisees' to the 'Jews' (v. 22). Of the one hundred and ninety-five occurrences of the word *oi Ioudaioi* 'the Jews' in the New Testament and eighty-seven occurrences in the Gospels, the Gospel of Matthew uses it five times, the Gospel of Mark six times, the Gospel of Luke five times, and the Gospel of John uses it seventy-one times. Among its occurrences in the fourth Gospel, it is used in its plural form sixty-seven. This shows the level of emphasis and how meticulous the Gospel of John is in relation to the Jewish people. As the audience of Jesus moved from the multitude to 'the Jews', so his action moved from defending himself through his supposed legal proof; to demonstrating his inclination using dualism of 'beneath' and 'of this world' for 'the Jews' in contrast to 'above' and 'not of this world' for himself (v. 23). The resumption of the discourse with *palin* 'again' (v. 21), showed that the issues discussed are developed and combined with one another and are used in contrast to the Jews. For instance, 'where Jesus did comes from?' is seen in verses 23, 26, 29, 41, 48 and 58, and as Jesus is *ek ton ano* 'from above', the Jews are *ek ton kato* 'from below'.

3.2.4 Sin:

Also in the phrase *en te hamartia humin apothaneisthe* 'You will die in your sin' (v. 21), the singular usage of *hamartia* 'sin' focuses attention upon the fundamental sin of rejecting Jesus (unbelief) and not much upon individual's sinful actions. This connotes that those who in their self-sufficiency reject the Light, place themselves outside the scope of its salutary and not its condemnatory effects (Barrett 1978:341), and this separation from the source of life leads to death. Jesus' statement of parallelism in verse 23 as a response to that of the Jews in verse 22 was not written by the narrator, based on the conscious attempt to write in

a Semitic style, but is based on the level of importance of the subject matter, which is the sin of unbelief. This dualism and many others often present in the Johannine Gospel is seen by some to indicate how the author of the Gospel of John sees within human existence the absolute division in which people are called to decide for or against Jesus in the present time. As Jesus re-echoes the subject matter, *hamartias* 'sins' in the plural was used in verse 24. This plural usage may be no more than stylistic but also indicates that the primary sin of unbelief is exhibited in a variety of ways (Lincoln 2005:268). Jesus declared that the only remedy to overcoming the capital sin of unbelief, is when they believe that he is 'I AM'.

3.2.5 Is the 'I-AM' a 'title' or 'representative'?

From the literary perspective, since the Jews asked Jesus 'who are you?' in the preceding verse as the dialogue continued, it gave an indication that 'the Jews' did not understand the *ego eimi* 'I-AM' as a claim to divine status. Furthermore 'the Jews' would have charged Jesus with blasphemy and would have earlier carried out their act of stoning in verse 59, if they actually understood the *ego eimi* 'I-AM' as a claim to divine status. Here it is suggested that since Jesus' response to 'the Jews' question 'who are you?' (v. 25) was 'the one who sent me is true, and what I have heard from him these things I speak to the world' (v. 26); Jesus is appealing to what he has been telling the Jews from the beginning about the Father and not claiming that the *ego eimi* 'I-AM' should be understood and considered as a claim to divine status (Painter 1991:256 - 257).

This is also the position of Funk (1984: 30) as he emphasized that the Gospel of John conceived Jesus' identity by way of the phrase constantly repeated by Jesus 'the Father who sent me'. Funk went on to explain that literally the phrase 'the Father who sent me' implied that Jesus represents God as someone sent to represent a dignitary; and the honour and significance that the sent one receives is based on the fact that the dignitary, which is the Father in the case of Jesus, spoke and acts powerfully through him. The sent one, which is Jesus in this case, has no message of himself but is fully devoted to the service of the sender and the degree of the devotion determined how identical the sent one will be to the

sender. Funk further asked if Jesus requested honour for himself, and suggested that by Jesus' statement 'who does not honour him, does not honour the Father who sent him' (vv.50, 54), showed Jesus indicated that the Jews were completely mistaken to accuse Jesus falsely.

3.2.6 Dualism

Due to the contrasting dualism of Jesus' reply 'above / below' and 'of this world / not of this world' in verse 23, Jesus' conditional statement in verse 24 is seen to heighten the boundaries that separate the Johannine community from that of the Jewish community (Malina 1998:159). Despite Jesus' effort to explain his identity in his conversation with 'the Jews' from the Jewish scriptures, familiar to them, 'the Jews' were still finding it difficult to comprehend the message of Jesus as they asked 'who are you?' (v. 25). Though Jesus was angry with 'the Jews' lack of understanding as he rhetorically asked them 'why am I even talking to you?' (v. 26), he refused to get frustrated and continued to emphasize his role as a judge. Jesus attests that his judgement is true and must prevail as he constantly gave a reminder of his role as the fully authorised representative of the one true judge, in which all he had spoken and will ever speak comes from. Still the Jews could not grasp the meaning of Jesus' words (v. 27).

Jesus' responded to the ignorance of 'the Jews', of not knowing he was speaking to them of the father, as he said, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me' (v.28). It is commonly suggested that the *ego eimi* 'I-AM' used is the short form of 'I am the Son of Man'. But still the relation between the Son and the Father as the one sent by the Father seems to be indicated in this context. That Jesus does the work of the Father and speaks the words of the Father reveals that the Father sent him (Painter 1991:257). Furthermore the 'I-AM' used in the context of 'being lifted up' connotes the allusion of keeping to the idea of the Johannine material that the clarity and validity of everything Jesus did and say will be made known during his exaltation and glorification (Malina 1998:159). As

this section comes to a close, the Gospel of John says that the Jews believed (v. 30), despite their continued lack of understanding of Jesus' words. As surprisingly striking as this may be, it prepares the reader for the exposure of the grave deficiencies of such 'tainted' belief in the next section (vv. 31-47). It may well be also that the response of some Jewish believers, which, from the narrator's perspective is to be seen as pseudo-belief, reflects the evangelist's experience in the setting from which the gospel emerged. There, some who initially believed were not able, when the time of testing from the synagogue came, to confess openly the communities' distinctive belief about Jesus' unique relationship as son of God to the Father and so became a major cause of disappointment and then disapprobation as apostles (Lincoln 2005:270).

3.2.7 Anti-Judaism:

Yet again, in the segment of verses 31 to 47, Jesus' audience was changed from 'the Jews' to 'the Jews who had believed' (v. 31a). By Jesus' statement, 'if you abide in my word, you are my disciples' (v. 31b), gives an indication that he was not fully convinced about the sincerity of the Jews who had believed. Malina (1998:161) explains that as part of the Gospel of John's distinctive language, it is better to translate the Greek particle *sun* as 'therefore, Jesus said' and not 'then Jesus said' as rendered in many other versions. This will make the 'resultant' or consequential sense of the particle to be effective, thereby bringing out the meaning that it is because many believed in him that Jesus now decided to put the matter to test. Thus the conditional statement 'if you abide in my word' becomes the central issue that will determine whether or not that they are truly Jesus' disciple.

From the following discussions of Jesus with 'the Jews who had believed' in this context, in which they were seen to be arguing thrice (vv. 33, 39, 41) with Jesus; Brown (1971: 354-355) and Lindars (1972: 323) considered 'the Jews who had believed' as not believers in the real sense of the word. Rather it was suggested that the Gospel of John was calling people 'believers' who were, in reality, deficient in their faith-understanding of Jesus based on the standard of the Johannine community's exalted Christological view. Contrarily, in the view of

Bondi (1997: 479), 'the Jews who had believed', were previously Christians who were in danger of collapsing due to pressure, fear or their inability to accept the new views of the Jewish Law and practise that the Johannine community projected based on Jesus' modifications.

Jesus raised questions about the 'Jews who had believed' truthfulness and asserted that it is only their continued allegiance and knowing of the truth that can set them free (v. 32). This idea of truth in the gospel of John as against its logical counterpart falsehood is not concerned with what might be called rational knowledge but is related with belief in Jesus. Jesus needs not to wait any further in trying to ascertain if 'the Jews who believed', were sincere and truthful to their belief, as these Jewish believers' response to Jesus' teachings, had said it all.

3.2.8 Slave or freeborn?

'The Jews who had believed' said they are Abraham's descendants and have never been enslaved to anyone (v. 33) as their first line of argument with Jesus. The issue of being free is quite significant in the agrarian economies of antiquity in which enslavement and slave holding are part of daily experience. Freed persons were of significantly lower social status than free persons who were never enslaved. So it is really insulting to say to a free born person that the truth will make you free. The ancient belief that birth determines character and genealogy is the only significant condition for honour and status is a better way to adequately understand this verse (Malina 1998:161). This is the first of eleven references in the Gospel of John to Abraham and the statement of 'the Jews who had believed' seemed obviously not historically true on face value. Based on their argumentative claim as 'Abraham's descendant', they seemed to show more concern to their ethnic identity rather than the divine identity as followers of Jesus which the Johannine community emphasized figuratively as connected to the Abrahamic descent.

Also based on their claim that 'they have never being enslaved to anyone', which sounded rather awkward when spoken by people who were politically under Roman

influence; they indirectly told Jesus that his message is irrelevant as they have no need for liberation. Barrett (1978: 345) explained that a reason for these Jewish believers' claim that 'they have never be enslaved by any one' could either mean that they have an internal religious freedom, including freedom from idolatry, on the basis of their relationship with God through the Abrahamic covenant. Or on the other hand, this claim of 'the Jews who had believed', uttered in human pride over against Jesus' claim to be the representative of God himself, was suggested to be an instance of the bondage referred to in verse 34. Jesus continued to persuade 'the Jews who had believed', by taking their minds back to his notion of captivity in the sphere of sin and death, as he emphasized that 'everyone who commit sin is a slave of sin' (v. 34).

The Gospel of John conceived the idea of sin to mean rejection of God and Jesus more than the issue of moral failing. Jesus' analogy of the slave, who has no permanent right to remain in the household, in contrast to, the son, who remains forever (v. 35), had been seen to emphasize that the condition for being a true disciple is to remain in Jesus' word. In verse 36, those who acknowledge their need for liberation will have the privilege of being set free by the son; a freedom that will permanently transform them from slavery into son ship. Though Jesus later acknowledged these Jewish believers' origin from Abraham descent (v. 37), he levelled another charge against them, that they are trying to kill him, which is an intention that reveals their attitude about their belief claims. Malina (1998:161) suggested that if character bespeaks breeding, then the claim of 'the Jews who had believed' that they are descendants of Abraham is being undermined and it is questionable whether Abraham is their father at all. Jesus made it very clear that the reason for such intention is because his word finds no place in them.

Jesus went further in (v. 38) to show that God's word abides in him, which is a true mark of any one who claims to have an allegiance to God; as he asserts that he only speaks what he has heard from God. The Jewish believers' responded that 'our father is Abraham' (v. 39) and thought that the fact of birth should settle the matter, regardless of behaviour. Jesus

clearly asserts that for them to claim this Abrahamic descent, they must be ready to do what Abraham did. On several occasions in the Old Testament, for instance, in Genesis 18:1-8, Abraham had welcomed God's messengers and literally fed them. Malina (1998:162) emphasizes that, their behaviour does not fit the Abrahamic mould, suggesting a different lineage than the one they claim. So since Jesus claimed to have come from above and only speaks the truth that he hears from the Father (v.40), his opponents would have welcomed and accepted him.

In verse 41, Jesus moved the discussion from a physical paternity descent (Abraham) to a spiritual and ultimate paternity, as he scolds 'the Jews who believed', as doing what their father does. Though not very explicit here as we will see in verse 44, he has been exerting his authority based on his consciousness from a spiritual descent. I think for the first time in this discourse, the Jews who believed understood Jesus in part, as referring to a spiritual paternity descent, as they responded 'we are not illegitimate children, we have one father God himself', but still failing to comprehend who the father was, that Jesus was referring to. The phrase *ek porneias* 'not born illegitimately' has been asserted by some scholars to mean an attack on Jesus based on his controversial virgin birth story but others have suggested that it will be best to explain it as a claim that they are not unfaithful idolaters, since 'fornication' is often a metaphor used of idolatry in the Jewish scriptures (Hosea 1:2; 2:4-5 LXX) but that they are faithful to the one God of Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4) (Lincoln 2005:272).

Jesus' response in verse 42 showed that individuals' love for him is the criteria to prove that they are indeed from God as he pointed to the paternity claim of the Jews who believed, which is contrary to their behaviour. Bondi (1997:481) stated that 'love' here carried not just the connotation of affection but also of accepting Jesus' teachings. Despite the ability of the Jews who believed to at least understood Jesus in part, Jesus was still not happy with their lack of proper understanding of his words (v. 43), as he had made frantic efforts to speak in clear terms, even drawn references from their own Jewish scriptures. From the grammatical

construction in Greek which connotes physical hearing as against hearing in the sense of understanding, Jesus was said to have accused 'the Jews who had believed' of being physically deaf to his words (Bondi 1997:481). But Lindars (2010: 328) proposed that it should be viewed from the Semitic sense of 'hearing' which is to 'obey', thus 'the Jews who had believed' cannot hear because they are controlled by and obedient to another father, namely the devil. As a result in verse 44, Jesus called these 'Jews who had believed', children of devil. This seems to be the most controversial and problematic statement made by Jesus in this discourse. In an attempt to respond to the issues that could be raised from this harsh statement, there is a suggestion that it should not be read from an ontological view but from an epistemological and ethical one (cf. 1:10-12; 3:19-20).

Furthermore, Lincoln (2000: 273) explained in reading this type of polemic, it should be remembered that the similar indictments by the prophets or by the Testament of Dan were also not so much ontological statements of judgement aimed in producing repentance but in the Gospel of John, it is perfectly compatible to see a division taking place within Judaism and humanity as a whole over the claims of Jesus and still to hold that the God of Jesus loves the world and has its salvation as the primary purpose of the Son's mission (cf. 3:16-17) (Lincoln 2005:273). In verse 45, the 'I' referring to Jesus, was rendered *ego de oti*, which is 'But I, because I' The addition of *ego* is to lay more emphasis on the personality of Jesus as the one who tells the truth, in contrast to the devil. In verse 46, Jesus' question to 'the Jews who had believed', 'which of you convicts me of sin?' seems more significant than the failure of 'the Jews who had believed' to answer, in that it showed Jesus had a clear conscience. So this segment of the dispute, which began by emphasizing that real belief involved knowing the liberating truth that Jesus reveals about himself (vv. 31-32), concludes with his condemnation of his hearers for not believing the truth he is telling them because they do not belong to God (v. 47)

3.2.9 Abrahamic:

In this last section of this discourse (vv. 48-59), the audience of Jesus was identified as simply from 'the Jews'. From considerations of scholarly debates and Jesus' statement in v. 55 'I would be a liar like you', the opponents designated as 'the Jews' in verses 48-59 are differentiated from those in verses 21-30 and they are suggested to be among the Jews who had believed in Jesus. But instead of Jesus' fierce statements of condemnation to have pricked their hearts, while arguing, to retrace their steps back to their initial level of belief, they became more hardened and completely leave the Johannine community's faith in Jesus (Lincoln 2005:264).

In verse 48, 'the Jews' in this passage called Jesus a Samaritan and demon possessed. Bondi 1997:483 have explained that being a Samaritan may imply that Jesus is being accused of blasphemy, heresy or idolatry when viewed from the Jewish standpoint, while being a demon imply that Jesus is called insane (Luke 7:33). Jesus, in responding to them in verse 49, ignored their allegation that he is a Samaritan but denied that he had a demon. Though concerned about the slight to his own honour by 'the Jews', Jesus made it very clear that it is God, the ultimate judge, that seeks his glory (v. 50). Jesus, acting as a judge, instead of prosecuting the Jews, pronounced a positive verdict that they will never see death, if they believe and keep to his teachings (v. 51). 'The Jews', not knowing that Jesus meant a spiritual death and not a physical one, however once more supposed that Jesus' words are meant literally, and therefore amount to proof that he is mad (v. 52). 'The Jews' - not satisfied using their Jewish heroes in the persons of Abraham and the prophets - as proof to discredit Jesus' life-verdict pronouncement, went ahead to ask 'Are you greater than our father Abraham?.... who do you think you are?' (v. 53).

By asking these questions, 'the Jews' thought that they are getting at Jesus because the question was framed so as to expect the answer 'No'. But little did they know that they were actually prompting Jesus and giving him the avenue to be more explicit in displaying his identity and authority. Due to the fact that Jesus is not interested in glorifying himself (v. 54),

but he is more concerned about his mission of making the one true God to be adequately known, in which this can only be made possible through the revelation that takes place in him (v. 55); Jesus tried to give a clue by saying that Abraham saw his day (all that was involved in the incarnation) by faith and rejoiced (v. 56), so as not to be angry and completely ignore the question about his identity as he previously did (v. 25).

As usual, 'the Jews' misunderstanding of Jesus again, and remaining on the earthly plain of reasoning, seems to mock at the sharp contrast between a short life-time and the great interval separating Jesus and Abraham as they assert, 'you are not yet fifty years old and you have seen Abraham' (v. 57). Jesus' affirmation of his identity 'Before Abraham was, I am' (v. 58) is the final usage of the 'I-AM' formulation in this dialogue. The significance of the *ego eimi* 'I AM' in this context is based on the 'before Abraham'.

3.2.10 Messiah

Literally 'the Jews' in this passage understood Jesus' statement as a claim to be older than Abraham and this made them furious and resulted in their reaction in trying to stone him as being blasphemous; Painter (1991:163) suggested that even though it was not a pronouncement of the divine name but a claim to be older than Abraham, it implies a divine descent. This is also seen as pointing to Jesus' existence 'in the beginning' (Malina 1998:163).

In line with the idea of Jesus' pre-existence, Freed (1983:52) suggested that most scholars see verse 58 as one of the clearest instances of the absolute *ego eimi* and as such it indicated some aspects of Jesus' divinity. According to Freed's suggestion, the meaning of the sentence 'Before Abraham was, I am' in the mind of the author was 'Before Abraham, I, the Christ, the Son of God, existed'. Freed suggested that due to the clarity of verse 58, it is difficult to argue the pre-existence of the Johannine Jesus. But also asserted that since the Johannine Jesus is considered as the Messiah, the argument is whether the Messiah himself or the name of the Messiah is thought to be pre-existent in the Jewish literatures around the time the Gospel of John was written. This argument was based on the one hand,

on Klausner's (1935: 358-359) emphasis that the Messiah 'existed before the creation of the world' (2 Esdr 12:32; Enoch 39:6, 7) and on the other hand, on Moore's (1932:344) emphasis that 'the name of the Messiah' was in the mind of God before the creation of the world'.

Using Enoch 48: 2, 3 and 6, where the Son of Man and Messiah are identified with reference to the pre-existence of both the name and the person of the Son of Man, it is possible to show the idea that the name of a person represents the essence of that person. As such, Freed (1983:57) suggested that it appeared that for the Gospel of John, as in Jewish thought, the 'name' represents the person, specifically the person of the Messiah under the designation *ego eimi*. And also the usage of the 'I-AM' formulation three times in a section full of controversy with 'the Jews', shows that the author of the Gospel of John has developed his presentation of Jesus as the Messiah obscure to Jewish understanding.

Now, for the first time, Jesus' audience seems to clearly understood what he was saying as the narrator understood that the Jews picked up stones to throw at him (v. 59). This brings the assumption that 'the Jews' had interpreted Jesus' emphatic declaration to be a blasphemy, because stoning was the punishment for blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16). Freed (1983: 57) explained that Jesus' solemn emphatic declaration was considered as echoing God's great affirmation of himself in Exodus 3:14; while a contrary one is that, Jesus does not mean to have claimed to be God. The narrator finally withdrew Jesus from the scene, an outworking of the plot's theological framework to show that Jesus' hour, the time for the final human verdict that will coincide with the decisive announcement of the divine verdict, has not yet come. In addition, it is to show that Jesus' adversaries are powerless against him until he wills his own death at the appointed time. But the absolute *ego eimi* in John 8: 58 does not have any connection to the Wisdom motif. What the author of the Wisdom of Solomon attributed to Wisdom or God's word, the Gospel of John attributed to Jesus.

3.3 Drawing out the Christological significance of the 'I-am' sayings in John 8.

It is again worthy to note that it is difficult to distinguish between the Christological / theological and historical aspects of the exegetical passage, as they are interconnected in the build-up of the Johannine witness. However, the research will again approach them in separate sections, in order to look more closely into the exegetical analysis for key issues regarding to Christology and historicity of the passage and to the identity of Jesus in particular.

3.3.1 The 'Light' of the world

The introductory statement of Jesus, 'I am the light of the world' (v. 12) sets up the episode, as Jesus was seen to be mainly bearing witness in defence of his identity to the Pharisees. The Gospel of John's approach in narrating this discourse focused more on the theological aspect of the declaration. The use of *phos* 'light' as regards to Jesus should be understood in the context of spiritual illumination and salvific awareness; as *phos* 'light' is synonymous with *zoes* 'life' in this context and denotes a genitive of quality that shows Jesus' light as an impartation of life. In fact, in this saying, the 'I' received so much emphasis that it no longer functions as the subject of the sentence and 'light' as predicate. Rather conversely the 'I' became the predicate and 'light', subject, reading as 'The Light of the world am I'. This is what Bultmann called the 'recognition formulae' which answered the question 'who is the one who is expected, asked for or spoken to? When the *ego eimi* 'I-AM' is used in this way, it places strong emphasis that Jesus' 'I' has always being in contrast to what is not 'real', 'true' or 'good'.

In support of this, Catrin Williams (2000:266) emphasized that 'the *phos* imagery is immediately linked to the theme of judgement, because a key function of 'the light' is to expose truth and falsehood, belief and unbelief' (cf. 12:46-48). This function of light, in regards to judgement, that brings to bear the comparison between truth and falsehood, is evident in the sharp dualistic contrast between light and darkness and the further pairs of opposites in the discourse. And Williams (2000:267) contends that 'this vast array of

contrasts illustrates the intensification of the opposition to Jesus as his true identity is gradually disclosed to 'the Jews' (vv. 24, 28, 58) and it becomes clear that Jesus' pronouncement of the word *ego eimi* plays a decisive role in his opponents' progression from incomprehension to an attempt to kill him (v. 59).

Therefore the Gospel of John's point in the narrative is not focusing on analysing what 'light' means in this context but emphasizing that the light which the world needs and by which a person can be saved from the darkness is Jesus. Even the Pharisees' reaction in verse 13, which is based on Jesus' claim to be the light and not the issue of the meaning of light, shows that the emphasis of the 'I-AM' declaration is concentrated on the person of Jesus (Ridderbos 1997:292-293). The noun *kosmou* 'world' is in the genitive case which means possession. It implies that the light that keeps the world alive belongs to Jesus. This self-identification of Jesus as the 'Light of the World' is clearly affirmed as the centre of focus in the dispute as the 'I-AM' formulation occurred throughout the segment, forming an *inclusio* for the passage as a whole (Lincoln 2005:264).

Since the Logos has been associated with light in the prologue of the Gospel of John (1:4); Jesus, the incarnate Logos, explicitly affirmed that he is the light of the world and extended this identity to all who will believe in him, as they will not walk in darkness but have the light of life. Brodie (1993:323-324) explained that when this arresting declaration of Jesus 'I am the light of the world' is taken along with the light-darkness contrast in the immediate context, it portrays the image of a guiding light in introducing the idea of Jesus' self-identifying relationship to God. According to Brodie, the emphasis is that the light revealed not an isolated Jesus but a Jesus in a relationship. That is, when Jesus revealed himself as a guiding light, a light to be followed, he does so in the context of showing himself to be in union with the father. This 'emphasis on relationship', Brodie suggested (1999:324) is implied in the prologue of the Johannine Gospel as the light is said to come from the Word which is in relationship with God (John 1:1). Zoes 'life' as used here is in the feminine gender and this shows that life itself can only be nurtured by the light which is Jesus. Some scholars

like Macgregor (1959:193) argued that the 'light of life' does not mean 'light which gives life' as in the phrase 'bread of life' but it should be seen as 'the light which results from the possession of life', that is the light which emanates from life. Other scholars like Temple (1952: 134) disagreed and said that 'the light of life' meant both the light that gave life to people and the light that issues from the source of life.

Yet for the Gospel of John, the 'light of the world' described what is essentially soteriological function rather than a cosmological status. 'Light' in the Gospel of John is not merely a component of the universe, it is active and saving (Barrett 1978:336-337). As narrated by the Gospel of John, the Pharisees could not grasp this Jesus' implied theological meaning as 'light' as they were able to see only what Brodie (1993:324) described as 'an isolated individual testifying against himself' (v. 13). And despite the fact that Jesus indirectly introduced the idea of his relationship with the father by saying that he has a sense of direction (v. 14), that he is not alone but sent by someone (v. 16) and that someone is the Father (v. 18), 'the Jews' in this passage still could not grasp Jesus' message and became judgemental based 'on the flesh' (vv. 14-15).

In trying to throw more light on Jesus' relationship with the father in contrast to 'the Jews' in this passage, Brodie (1993:324) suggested that though Jesus' main purpose is not to judge, his Judgement is inevitable because light always shows things for what they are. And since Jesus identifies himself to be 'light', his 'light-filled' presence must bring judgement; this is not based 'on the flesh' but on Jesus' inner parental relationship with the father. Brodie, therefore proposes that the concept of light in this context should be seen as relational, as coming from a parent instead of being seen as something glaring, as coming from an abstract force.

Jesus makes his relationship with the father clearer when he was asked 'where is your father' (v. 19) by the Pharisees. In a manner to show that knowledge of the father is not from the physical perspective, Jesus told the Pharisees that they do not know the father. He asserts that if they do, they would have known him; suggesting that he and the Father are

identical. Due to this, Brodie (1993:325) comments that the father is not far away but is within the human, even though the full knowledge of the father is still kept secret like the granting of the Spirit is being held back (John 7:37-39). In rounding up this section (vv. 12-20), Jesus is said to have spoken these things in the treasury (v. 20). A theological explanation for this is that the word 'treasury' in Greek as well as referring to something external, may also refer to something internal. Hence, while the external meaning has not yet been discovered by scholars, the internal meaning theologically is that within Jesus, there is a hidden treasure, a secret not yet revealed, and when Jesus speaks of the unknown father, it is from within that treasury that he spoke (Brodie 1993:325).

3.3.2 The consequences of refusing Jesus as 'light':

In the second section in this passage (vv. 21-30), Jesus warned of the consequences of refusing the light of life he offers (v. 21) as 'sin' used in this context connotes all that Jesus embodies. The Jews' response 'will he kill himself?' (v. 22) showed the reflection of their own sin-based reflection towards death. But theologically, it has been explained to ironically speak a truth as Jesus will definitely depart through death. The 'world' in Jesus' dualism as he tends to create a demarcation between him and that of the Jews – 'You are of this world, I am not of this world' - refers to the world apart from God and this difference indicates that the Jews in the passage are in the wrong side and needs to believe in Jesus as the 'I-AM' which is the only way out (Brodie 1993:326).

As Jesus engaged in his dialogue with 'the Jews', he declared that the only remedy to overcoming the capital sin of unbelief is when 'the Jews' believe that 'I-AM He' (v. 24). But the response of the Jews *su tis ei* 'who are you', shows their incomprehension. Catrin Williams (2000: 267) suggested that the question of 'the Jews' suggested that they were assuming that something is missing from the *ego eimi*. And William proposed that the reason might be that, 'either because the expression is understood by them as incomplete ('I am') or because they recognise that no antecedent can be identified from its immediate context ('I am he')'. Although there are other suggestions made that the question 'who are you' can be

understood as expressing a refusal on 'the Jews' part to accept Jesus' self-declaration about his identity; Williams 92000: 268) attested that 'from the perspective of the series of the dialogues (vv. 12-59), the motif of misunderstanding is intentional in order to give Jesus the opportunity to offer clarification and proceed further with the aid of statements which are similar in terms of their basic claim (*ego eimi*), but introduce new elements into his declaration (vv. 28, 58)'.

The phrase 'I-AM' used in this verse is in the absolute manner without predicate. There are two main explanations to the meaning of this absolute usage of the 'I-AM'. On one hand, some editors have argued that it is wrong to add the pronoun 'He', because it is its absence that indicated the absoluteness of Jesus' self-identification with God. In support of this, some scholars like Dodd (1953:94, 351) and Brown (1971:536-537) have emphasized that, theologically for John's Gospel, the absolute usage of 'I-AM' stands for Yahweh's claim to be the only God and only saviour of Israel as found in Isaiah 43:10c -13 LXX 'that you may know and believe me and understand that I am He' and became the equivalent of a divine name - hence the Johannine references to Jesus' name (John 5:43; 10:25; 17:6,11,12,26). They also suggests that the absolute usage of 'I-AM' confirms the 'mystery of Jesus' own eternal being, in unity with the Father'. In this context, Jesus is seen to be applying Yahweh's words of self-identification to himself and this means he is telling the Jews that their one God and saviour from sin and death is to be identified with himself (Lincoln 2005:268). On the other hand, Ridderbos (1997:301) suggested that if the 'I-AM' should function here as the name of God, it can hardly be itself the object of belief, which will now read 'that I AM 'I AM'' (cf. Isaiah 43:25; 44:19 - texts in which the name of God is thought to be thus referred to). In support of this, Ridderbos argued that there is no question here of a self-identification of Jesus with God or a self-designation of him as a divine being because in (v. 28) where the same absolute usage of the 'I-AM' occurs, the 'I AM He' is joined in one clause with 'and I do nothing of my own initiative but I speak these things as the Father taught me' without the repetition of *ego*. This brings the meaning of the 'I-AM' as faith in the

authority - the messianic power that Jesus represents, as he points to what the Father has taught him.

This is a way of Jesus relinquishing all references of himself or his own deity to emphasizing that the deity of the father is his source. Thus the 'I-AM' based on this explanation, presupposed a unique relationship with the Father, a Father-Son relationship that embraced more than the union of will and disposition. Jesus' response 'why from the beginning I speak to you' to the question of the Jews in this passage 'who are you?' (v. 25) has been regarded as puzzling by (Ridderbos 1997: 302). Grammatically, it has been explained that the phrase which is translated 'from the beginning' *ten archen* could mean 'primarily' or 'first of all', which could render the statement to be 'I am, primarily / first of all, what I say to you'. But in most translation, the phrase has been turned around and rendered to seem Jesus' refusal to reply as 'Why do I talk to you to begin with' or 'why do I talk to you at all'. In trying to bring a theological explanation of verse 25, Brodie (1993:327) suggested that account must be taken of the whole context (vv. 12-59) which is considerably concerned with roots, with people's ultimate starting point and presupposition. Brodie emphasized that the opening verses which spoke of the world, light and darkness (vv. 12) are similar to the beginning of the prologue of the Johannine Gospel (1:1-5). Also the immediate section, verses 12-30 are concerned about Jesus' relationship with the Father and with his closeness to the divine, to the 'I-AM'. In addition, the *archen* occurs between two reference to the 'I-AM' (vv. 24, 28), and hence this supports the idea that the *archen* speaks about the idea of beginnings and means that Jesus is saying he is a voice from out of time, associated with the 'I AM'. So the Revised Standard Version's rendering 'Even what I have told you from the beginning' fits the context more (Barrett 1978:343).

'The Jews' in this passage still could not understand the meaning of Jesus' message (vv. 26-27). In verses 28-29, despite the Jews' continued lack of understanding, Jesus made known to the Jews in the passage that a time will come when they will understand the intimate relationship that he had with the father; as Jesus once again attest that the one who

sent him is always with him and he does only what he hears and is pleasing to God, his sender. The appointed time as revealed by Jesus to be when they have – ‘lifted up the son of man’, is the time of Jesus’ exaltation to glory by means of his death by crucifixion. The Greek word used for ‘lifting up’ in this context is the only one of the three references in John’s gospel that lays stress on the human agent. The appropriate response to this event - realising what it reveals of Jesus’ relationship to the father - is once more formulated in terms of ‘I AM’. This emphasis indicates that it is the lifting up on the cross that will be the means that the divine identity and glory of Jesus, who is also the servant witness, will be revealed. Reacting to Jesus’ introduction of the word ‘lifting up’, Williams (2000:269) suggests that the focus of the discourse now ‘turns to the future, to events linked to the ‘lifting up’ of Jesus on the cross, interpreted as his exaltation (cf. 3:14; 12:32) and elsewhere described as his glorification (12:23; 13:31-32)’. Also what can be derived from this second *ego eimi* (v. 28) is Jesus’ emphasis on his dependence on the Father, which shows his obedience to and unity with the Father. In a way to establish an extent to which the significance of *ego eimi* could be derived from the discourse, Williams (2000:270) reiterates that ‘since *ego eimi* is presented in both verses 24 and 28 as the object of belief and knowledge respectively, it seems clearly inadequate to focus on its function in terms of an expression of self - identification’. Williams (2000:274) concluded, in view of its comparison with *ani hu* in Deutero-Isaianic passages, that the Johannine discourse of Chapter 8 verses 12 to 59 highlights ‘Jesus’ role as the agent of salvation for believers...’ and that ‘Jesus’ *ego eimi* pronouncement, especially in verse 24, emphasized that he is the one who secured salvation’.

The key moment in the divine verdict of the trial, the vindication of Jesus’ claim, is to be the same moment at which the opposition appear to have had their way, namely, their crucifixion of Jesus (Lincoln 2005:269). The words ‘believe that I AM He’ in this verse do not refer to the ontological relationship of the Son with the Father but to the action as the one sent by the Father. Despite the fact that the ‘I-AM He’ has been explained as Jesus not

identifying himself as God but revealing himself as the one sent by the Father, Ridderbos (1997:302) emphasizes that still one cannot say that Jesus' 'I-AM He' saying primarily reveals not himself but God; as the question of, what in Isaiah 43 does God reveals of himself as God that can be reflected upon what Jesus reveals of himself as the Son of God, sent by the Father?. Ridderbos argues that as the 'I-AM', Jesus does not identify himself more precisely, neither as Messiah or Son of God, because he is referring not primarily to what he is but to the exclusivity, absolute validity and trustworthiness of the fact he is in his unity with the Father and also in its distinction from the Father.

3.3.3 Jesus' response to his opponents as the Light

Due to the harsh words (vv.37, 39-47) that the Gospel of John narrated that Jesus used in addressing his audience in this section (vv. 31-47), Ridderbos (1997: 305) suggested that it is better to understand 'the Jews who had believed' (v. 31) as referring to different people from the 'many' who believed (v. 30). This, Brodie (1993:328) supported as he explained that in the Greek phrasing, the word 'Jews' comes last, after 'believed', which implies that those who believe are 'Jews', that is believers who do not really believe.

The 'truth' meant in verse 32 seems to be the revelation of Jesus because it is said that it is the Son who sets free (vs. 36). The word *sperma* 'descendant' is a collective singular that from the Jews perspective may mean 'we are the descendants of Abraham' but theologically, it is believed by some that the gospel of John is using the singular word to mean that Jesus is the real descendant of Abraham.

3.2.4 The opponents as 'the Jews'

Jesus, knowing full well in the narrative that the only way to conclude this dispute is to be more explicit in his self-identification rather than continuing in his metaphoric descriptions, climatically declared 'before Abraham was born, I am' (v. 58). Ridderbos (1997:322) suggested that the assertion word used 'truly, truly, I say to you' emphasized that, what the opponents of Jesus thought to be foolish was in fact the deepest reality underlying their argument about Jesus' identity in regards to Abraham's birth. Ridderbos also suggested that

against some expositors' thought that the 'I-AM' used here reflects Exodus 3:14 or Isaiah 43:10 implying Jesus' self-identification with the divine 'I', the 'I-AM' presupposed the unique relationship with the Father as in verse 24. On the other hand, Barrett explained that this final saying of the 'I AM', whose present tense contrast with the aorist infinitive *genesthai* that expresses the coming into existence of Abraham, indicates that more than a pre-existence is being made. Brown (1996:360) supported the idea that the obvious distinction is between *genesthai* which is used for mortals and *einai* 'to be' which is used for divine in the form of 'I-AM'. Here the meaning is: Before Abraham came into existence, I eternally was, as now I am, and ever continue to be. This Jesus' pronouncement of *ego eimi* (v. 58) took the dialogue between Jesus and 'the Jews' to the highest confrontational level, as 'the Jews' were reported to wanting to stone Jesus (v. 59) because he claim to be in existence before Abraham. Williams (2000:276) asserted that in general sense, Jesus' *ego eimi* pronouncement in verse 58 is 'testifying to his precedence over Abraham, and this is often identified as resulting for the deliberate distinction established in the statement between the Patriarch who came into existence at a particular moment in history, and the absolute form of being claimed by Jesus'.

From this theological analysis of the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus, it is obvious that the main theological contribution of the 'I-AM' sayings is Christology. It buttressed Jesus' divine status by showing that he can function in the father's stead. For the Gospel of John, Jesus became in his person the focus of religious desires - as the narrator of the Johannine Gospel portrays Jesus metaphorically as bread (6:35), water (7:37), light (8:12), truth and life (14:6) and often placed him standing in the midst of religious festivals (6-8, 10) or personal crises (11,14) directing spiritual longing and needs to himself. The Johannine Jesus is no mere human but the Word of God dwelling in human flesh. He is not just merely representing the Father but in a way, unveiling the father's presence to the world. As a result, Jesus is considered as the Lord incarnate and hence, bears the divine name 'I-AM' himself. The Gospel of John heightened Jesus' identity beyond a courier of revelation like the Old Testament prophets.

Jesus is climatically pictured as the revelation himself, in which his own name has power and significance (1:12; 2:23; 3:18; 14:26) and prayers in his name ultimately produce results (14:13; 15:16; 16:23-24, 26). In the many 'I-AM' sayings, Jesus is publicly applying the divine name of God – and God's authoritative presence – to himself. As the Gospel of John remarkably portrayed Jesus in this Christological manner, the emphasis was made that this Christological effect is only possible because the Father himself is glorified through the son, as he is himself present in the son (14:13).

3.4 Drawing out historical aspects that are related to the text:

Contrary to some scholars' belief that the whole 'historical' settings of the dialogue between Jesus and 'the Jews' in the passage are unrealistic, Ridderbos (1997:325-326) argued that within the framework of the entire Gospel, the historical setting of Jesus' discourse with 'the Jews', particularly the 'I-AM' sayings, not only has symbolic meanings but also a specific expression of the historic conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders in the passage about his identity as the divinely sent Messiah, that eventually led to Jesus' death. Ridderbos reiterated that although Jesus' identity was more concentrated on as the focus of the central point in the discourse, and other issues between the church and Judaism was considered as secondary matters; it does not mean that the real historical background of the dialogues described in the Gospel of John should not be considered as located in the life of Jesus himself, as some scholars argue that it can only be situated as a later church trajectory due to the persecution, the Johannine community experienced. More importantly, Ridderbos (1997:325-326) suggested that the Gospel of John proposed to trace all that had been said about Jesus, back to the 'Historical Jesus' - who Jesus actually was and not merely to what he became for the faith of the church after his resurrection. This, the author of the Gospel of John did not just narrate as a reporter but saw himself as a witness, one who understands his sender's knowledge of himself - and is himself involved in the mission of the Messiah (John 15:5; 17:18, 20).

In a way of evaluating the historical aspects related to John 8, Ridderbos (1997: 326) explained that there are fewer and fewer supporters of the view that the Gospel of John is a late second century document which lies closer to the Gnosticism or the Hellenistic world than to the Palestinian milieu of Jesus, seems to become relevant. This authentic Palestinian milieu of the Johannine tradition has been clarified by the Qumran discoveries, which we have not had opportunity to evaluate in this study, but is crucial in the wider context. Also the abstract language, the dualism of light and darkness and other features which were considered as hindrances for any Palestinian origin, now help to confirm it. Much of the vocabulary, mentality and theological outlook in the Gospel of John is also found in the Qumran, both before and after Jesus' time.

3.4.1 Can the Gospel of John be a witness to the historical Jesus?

Brown (1971: xlviii) carefully considered the question whether or not the Gospel of John can be a witness to the historical Jesus? Brown proposed that there are implications on each stage of the Johannine composition. Stage one emphasized that the works and words of Jesus that underlined the Gospel of John is similar to the tradition behind the Synoptic Gospels. Stages two and three focused on the theological and dramatic reshaping of the raw material from the Jesus tradition and the weaving of such reshaped stories and sayings into a conservative Gospel. The final redaction of the Gospel, stage five of their composition, places still more obstacles to the use of the Gospel of John, in reconstructing the ministry of Jesus.

Having carefully considered the various influences on the author of the Gospel of John, which could possibly affect the writings of the fourth Gospel, which are – Gnosticism, Hellenistic thought, Palestinian Judaism (categories that have been rethought in more scholarship); Brown suggested that into Johannine theological thought pattern has the influence of a particular combination of various ways of thinking that were current in Palestine during Jesus' own lifetime and after his death. Some of the background of Jesus' thoughts was to be found in the presuppositions of the Pharisaic theology of his time, as

these are known from the later rabbinic writings. Due to this, Brown believed that it is no accident that Jesus was called a rabbi more frequently in The Gospel of John, than in any other Gospel. Brown suggested that in the Gospel of John, the thought of Jesus was expressed in a peculiar theological vocabulary and that he had observed the particular theological vocabulary to have been used by an important sectarian Jewish group in Palestine.

3.4.2 What can be said to be historical in their interpretation of the Gospel of John, and in particular in relation to the 'I-AM' sayings?

In regards to what is allowed to be historical, Brown's commentary (1971: xlii) focused on the settings in which Jesus is placed as historical authentic. In contrast, Witherington's commentary (1995: 35) focused on the historical interest of the author of the Gospel of John.

Then in regards to how the commentaries approached the 'I-AM' sayings in the Gospel of John, Brown's commentary (1971: xliii) emphasized that the language attributed to Jesus in the Gospel of John fits perfectly with the language and thought pattern in first century Palestine. On the other hand, Brown was not specific in including the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus as part of the language pattern in comparison between the Gospel of John and first century Palestine. As such, there is uncertainty as to whether the 'I-AM' sayings in the Gospel of John could be considered as having any historical tradition behind the Johannine material and also having any connection with the historical Jesus.

Witherington's commentary (1995: 36) approach to the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John was to place an emphasis that the discourse materials in the Gospel of John are part of the tradition behind the Johannine material. And as such, since the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John are also part of the discourse materials in the Johannine Gospel, one could assume that the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus could be included as part of the traditions behind the Gospel of John. On the other hand, since Witherington's commentary does not relate specifically to chapters 6 to 14 in the Johannine Gospel – which particularly contains the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus and for which concerns the scope of the present

research enterprise, there is also uncertainty as to whether the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John could be considered as being part of the traditions behind the Johannine Gospel and also having any connection to the historical Jesus.

Hence, the proposal of historical relevance could be projected as they emphasized the settings in which Jesus was placed as historically authentic (Brown 1971: xlii) and focused on the historical interest of the author of the Gospel of John (Witherington 1995: 35). In addition, Brown and Witherington's commentaries also considered the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John to be connected to historical aspects of the Johannine material (Brown 1971: xliii; Witherington 1995: 36).

3.5 Making connections and giving cautious conclusions about what these verses tells us about the connections between the Jesus of History and Christ of Faith:

Conclusively, throughout this exegetical passage, Jesus had been depicted by the narrator to have claimed to be the unique locus of God's revelation as he declared of himself, the 'I AM' formulation. This self-identification, Jesus had demonstrated to the various audiences that confronted him while teaching in the temple during the feast of Tabernacles, was with great viscosity of authority. Playing different roles in the narrative framework to drive home his message, Jesus conspicuously showed that he, the earthly person is very much conscious of his heavenly descent and nature as a divine being. This projects the Christological belief among Jewish Christians in the Johannine community, as they engaged in a religious clash with their counterparts, whoever they may be.

The exegetical investigation of John 8:12-59 has contemplated the 'light' as one of the core issues of the passage in a symbolic and salvific manner. Furthermore the absolute 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus have been considered to project the identity of Jesus as the divinely sent one. But the settings of the passage, together with the dialogue between Jesus and 'the Jews', points to historical aspects of the passage and seems to give an indication about the

identity of Jesus in historical perspective. Hence, the research will now go on to draw out the conclusions in relation to the study of the Gospel of John.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

4.1 Summary:

The 'John, Jesus and History' group have suggested that the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John could be included as an approach to the study of the identity of the historical Jesus. This research enterprise has explored what scholars have said about the Gospel of John, the tradition behind the Johannine material, the Gospel of John's relation to historicity and theology. The research has also explored why it is common for biblical scholars and Johannine scholars in particular to accept the premise that the Gospel of John cannot be considered as reliable historical material and therefore would be unsuitable for Jesus research.

The research did not attempt to evaluate the historical evidence as such, but based on the 'John, Jesus and History' group's suggestion, the research explored the 'I-am' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John - in connection with some historical elements within the discourse, to see if there is any aspect that could shed more light on the identity of the historical Jesus. The research is not interested in determining one way or the other whether the 'I-am' sayings of Jesus can be linked to the identity of the historical Jesus, but rather the research have attempted to investigate the 'I-am' sayings of Jesus for how they have been investigated by scholars, drawing out any possible suggestions in regards to the historical Jesus through various survey of scholarly commentaries in the form of engagement with exegetical investigation of John 6 and 8.

4.2 Conclusion

Based on the thesis investigation, the research offers some findings about the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John. With regards to the identity of the historical Jesus, firstly, there are suggestions that the Gospel of John contains to some degree, a good

aspect of historicity in it (Kostenberger 1998; 2004; 2013). Secondly, there are suggestions that the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John reflect to some degree, historical resemblance as to words spoken within first-century Palestine (Brown 1971; 2011). Although it is very difficult to show that the 'I-AM sayings of Jesus' in the Gospel of John could be included among the words of Jesus that, the suggestions by different commentaries emphasizing the words of Jesus in light of plausible historical materials favours the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John being given historical consideration.

Thirdly, the traditions behind the Gospel of John have also been emphasized to some degree, showing where historical plausibility could be located in comparison to the traditions of the Synoptic Gospels. And this favours the fact that since the Synoptic Gospels have been concluded by scholars to be historical materials, the Gospel of John could also be similarly considered in that light of historicity. Fourthly, the elements within the discourses of the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus' passages in the Gospel of John have being suggested to have to some degree, high historical plausibility. And since it is difficult to separate the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus from the more historical elements of these 'I-AM' passages in the Gospel of John, this could also reflect the possibility that the 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John should not be ruled out of having potential historical considerations.

All these above discussions show that history is not just being objective, neutral or factual, but to continually attempt to understanding more fully, 'the complex interrelations between history and story, truth and faith, text and interpretation, past and present' (Just 2007:78). Critically observing the reasons for the denial of the Gospel of John as a historical material and its unsuitability for historical Jesus research, the 'John, Jesus and History' project argued that these reasons are not compelling enough to deprive the Gospel of John of all historicity and a place in historical Jesus research (Anderson 2007:62-67). It can also be argued that the strong claim and affirmation of John 19:35 and 21:24 suggests that it was an eye witness material and even the use of 'we', gave an authoritative and compelling

testimony that the Johannine material was well known and that the Gospel of John seemed to look more historical than the Synoptic Gospels in some regard.

4.3 Recommendation:

The 'John, Jesus and History' group have carried out some historical examination of the Gospel of John. The aspects of historicity in the Gospel of John that the 'John, Jesus and History' group proposed, gave indication that there are elements of history in the Gospel of John but they are not relating it to the particular 'I-AM' sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John. Hence, if the 'John, Jesus and History' group wants to look at how this phrase has more historical roots, they and in extension - other biblical scholars who are interested in the historical aspects of the Johannine Gospel - needs to address the 'I-AM' sayings in the Gospel of John and its surrounding text more further.

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