

SUMMARY OF JOHANNINE CHRISTOLOGICAL TITLES IN *IBIBIO* CONTEXT

Vincent Etimeyoh

Department of Religious and Cultural Studies

University of Uyo

&

Joseph Okon Linus

Uma Ukpai School of Theology

Victory Cathedral

Abstract

A Summary of Johanine Christological Titles in Ibibio Context is coined out of the wonderful Johanine Literature of the Gospel of Saint John. There are ecclesiastical Christological titles given to Jesus Christ by the author of the Gospel of Saint John. To this end, such Christological titles of our Lord Jesus Christ make the understanding of the plethora of honorable, reverential names or titles given to Jesus Christ in Ibibio context simpler and impacting on Christians in Ibibioland of Akwa Ibom State. Therefore, this work using the descriptive method of survey perused such contextual titles given to Jesus in Ibibio dialect. It is evident that use of such titles as Okposong Abasi (The Almighty God), Otop Ama Ekim Abasi (The God You Shoot at and Exhaust your Arsenal Without Prevailing), Asanga Isang Ananantim Abasi (The God that Walks without Hearing His Gait), Oko Iberedem (The Wall of Defense), Akwa Itak Eto Ono Owo Mfud (A Great Tree that Gives Shadow), Enyin Enyin Oyoho Idem Abasi (The God that is Full of Eyes all Over) etc., elicit faith, reverence, revival, courage, comfort and trust in Jesus Christ more evident among the Christian adherents in Ibibio. More so, such titles are used in prayers, worships, songs and poems which go a long way to make believe in Jesus Christ the only Savior of the world more solid.

Keywords: Summary; Johanine; Christological; Titles; Ibibio; Context

Introduction

The Gospel of John presents a story about Jesus Christ. It was written between AD 85 and AD 95, towards the end of the first century. There are many reasons for writing the Gospel of John such as to complement the synoptic Gospels and fight Gnosticism that developed in the latter part of the first century. But for this essay, the author's stated purpose becomes very appropriate, "And truly, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may

believe that Jesus is Christ, the son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:30-31). It was written for the Greek or Gentile Christians such as Ibibio Christians so that they may believe in the Saviour, Jesus Christ.

John’s Christology seems to be more than a simple expansion of possibilities already in Jewish or earlier Christian sources. One cannot escape the novelty of the evangelist’s use of categories previously felt appropriate only to the transcendent reality of God in conjunction with a narrative which describes the earthly career of a human being¹. Johannine’s Christology seems to be more than a simple expansion of possibilities already in Jewish or earlier Christian sources, so also is its Christological titles.

In the ancient Near East, Semitic communities existed with various titles of rulership, kingship and so on. Likewise in ancient *Ibibio* society in Africa and till date a lot of chieftaincy titles, political titles and religious titles have been and are given to various people of various categories. And this makes it much simpler for a better understanding of the Christological titles already found in the Gospel of John which make the same Christological titles more relevant in *Ibibio* context.

Ibibio people constitute the major ethnic group of Akwa Ibom State sharing common boundaries with Abia, Cross River and Rivers States of Nigeria. Just as it is with Africans described to be notoriously religious, Ibibio, an African community is religious. That is to say, an Ibibio man or woman eats, dresses, bathes, farms and does everything religiously. As religious people, names given to people, places or things are conceived religiously. Ibibio titles are also envisaged in religious terms.

In theology, Christology is derived from the Greek words *Christos* and *logos* which stand for Christ and word or study respectively. Christology therefore means the study about Christ. Scholars and theologians identify the study of Christ basically with the person of Jesus Christ to be both divine and human, the Christological events – the virgin birth, his teachings, miracles, vicarious death, the resurrection and ascension of Christ as well as the great work of salvation- atonement or stereological effect on humanity. But in this paper, our focus is on the Christological titles, in St. John and the “I am” sayings of Christ. We will examine each title briefly and the seven “I am” sayings. We will compare and contrast majorly the various traditional, chieftaincies, political and religious titles of Ibibio in particular and Africa in general with that of Christ and how relevant the Christological titles are in African context.

Definition of Terms

Christology: The word “Christology means the study of Christ”². Needham says:

Even before the Council of Constantinople in 381 met, a new set of questions had begun to agitate the minds of Christian thinkers. This time, the issue was the relationship of the divine and the human within the person of Christ. The study of this subject is usually called christology³.

The concern of the church at such a time was the question of how Jesus Christ could be both God and man at the same time – how his divine nature and human nature related to each other⁴. The controversies about the person and nature of Christ however, are not our concern here.

Titles: This is plural of the word “title” Title means “a name such as “Mrs’ or “Dr”, that are used before someone’s name to show their rank, or profession, whether they are married etc”. Also, title means “a name that describes someone’s job or position”⁵. Here, we mean the titles or names given to Christ Jesus about his person (who he is), his works, and his office.

Ibibio Context: *Ibibio* speaking people occupy the present Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, comprising of the ethnic groups, such as *Anang*, *Oro* and *Ibibio* with minor dialectical differences. *Longman Dictionary* describes a context as “the situation, events or information that are related to something and that helps you to understand it better”. (In context - considered together with the related situation, events etc. rather than considered alone)”⁶. *Ibibio* context implies how the *Ibibio* titles borne by people in position of politics, religion, tradition help us understand better the titles of Christ in St. John’s Gospel. Also, *Ibibio* people have various invocative, honorific and praise names given to God. Indeed, the *Ibibio* have rich and vast titles given to God mainly during praise and worship such as, *Okposong Abasi*, *Otop Ama Ekim Abasi*, *Asanga Isang AnanaNtim Abasi*, *Uko ke Ekong Abasi*, *UtibeAbasi*, *Oko Iberebem*, *Akwa Itak Eto Ono Owo Mfud*, *Enyin Enyin Oyoho Idem Abasi* and so on.

Summary of Christological Titles in John’s Gospel

John 1:1-19:50 gathers together a number of the traditional messianic titles that form the basis for Christological assertions in the earliest Christian communities – messiah, Elijah, the Prophet, Lamb of God, Son of God, King of Israel”⁷. Let us consider the following titles:

Messiah

The word “Messiah” is the Hebrew word which is interpreted in Greek as *Kristos* meaning the anointed one. The hope of the coming messiah took many different forms, but the predominant one was the idea of the David King, who would establish an earthly kingdom for the people Israel and would banish Israel’s enemies. The Messiah was to be a political agent, but with a religious bias. The concept was a curious mixture of nationalistic and spiritual hopes⁸.

Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, John’s Gospel mentions two specific occasions when the title of messiah is applied to Jesus, on both occasions, early in his ministry. At the first instance, when Philip met Jesus, he proclaimed to his brother Simon, We have found the Messiah (John 1:41) and the second instance is when Jesus had an encounter with the Samaritan woman who claimed that she was expecting the messiah. In response, Jesus replied that he is the expected messiah (John 4:25). Although the gospel of John is dominated by the concept of Jesus as son of God, the messianic presentation plays an important part. The over-all impression of the gospel is that Jesus is the messiah, not in the sense of current speculation, but in a new spiritual sense which is unintelligible apart from the filial consciousness of Jesus⁹.

Son of David

Closely connected with the title messiah is the title son of David. The idea that messiah would be a king of the Davidic line can be traced back to the statement in 2 Samuel 7:16, containing God’s promise to David. Both the prophets and Qumran community hopes were that a messiah would arise from the seed of David. In the Johanne account of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, there is no mention of David (Jn. 12:13). There is, however, one passage in John which bears on the idea of Jesus as son of David, although the title is not used. Some of the people in discussing the position of Jesus were asking, “Has not the scriptures said that the Christ is descended from David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was” (John 7:42). The question itself reveals popular ignorance about the birthplace of Jesus, which is not surprising. But it records well with the synoptic evidence that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and with the Davidic origin of the Messiah¹⁰.

Servant

Although the title “the servant of God” was never used by Jesus and is never attributed to him by the evangelists, it seems to have become a conviction in early Christian belief and must therefore be considered as a contribution to Christology. Reference will be made to the suffering servant idea in the discussion on the meaning of the son of man title.

Greater weight can be given to the statement of John the Baptist in John 1:29, 36 where Jesus is declared to be the Lamb of God, a description which he did not deny. Since the Isaianic servant was described in terms of a lamb (Isa. 53:7), there is some probability that a connection of thought existed. Admittedly, it is difficult to maintain that “the lamb of God” as a title was recognized as being equivalent to “servant of God”, but it is equally difficult to avoid the conclusion that the reference to the lamb by John the Baptist carried overtones of the suffering servant of Isaiah¹¹.

Prophet and Teacher

The idea of a coming prophet was strong in Jewish belief. It was based on Deuteronomy 18:15 which declare that the Lord will rise up a prophet like Moses. There is much in the ministry of Jesus in the Gospel of John that fits into the prophetic role. His teaching ministry centered on the proclamation of the kingdom. He was addressed as Rabbi – Teacher (John 3:2, 10, 8:4, 11:28, 20:16) which showed that he was popularly regarded as an authoritative teacher, even although he was not officially recognized as such. Jesus himself showed acceptance of this title when he washed the feet of his disciples, he exclaimed, “you call me Teacher and Lord and you say well, for so I am”(John 13:13), his idea of a teacher was service to the people (John 13:14). As teacher-evangelist, in his teaching ministry, he went beyond the function of proclamation which the old prophets exercised. The fact that Jesus is a prophet was the testimony of people who witnessed his miracles and heard his teachings respectively (John 6:14, 7:40). He was himself the eschatological prophet, the one who inaugurated a new era¹².

Son of Man

The title, “Son of Man” is used to portray the humanity of Jesus. It also expresses that while he is God he is fully a human being who came to reveal true humanity after God. Jesus did not sin even while he was a human being to show that sin is not the very nature of humanity. God created human beings into his image not to sin. But whoever sins is a slave to sin and does not have a place in the family of God (John 8:34-36). Of statements about the origin and destiny of the son of man, perhaps the most significant feature which John focuses on is the descent and ascent of the son of man (Jn. 1:51; 3:13). The fact of the descent is integral to John’s whole approach to Jesus as the connecting link between earth and heaven. It at once differentiates Jesus from the pre- christian Jewish idea of son of man, where the idea of descent is wholly absent. It allows for the idea of incarnation of which John makes a special point in his logos doctrine. The corresponding idea of ascent (Jn. 6:62) is important because it makes clear that the real sphere of the son of man is in heaven not earth. In summing up the Johanne Son of Man teaching, we must note that it records completely with the synoptic representation, that it presents both heavenly and

earthly aspects that all the passages undoubtedly refer to Jesus and not to another and that it is in harmony with other expressions of Christology in the gospel¹³.

Lord

The word, *Kurios* (lord) was used as a title of respect in the world of the New Testament period. It was a title of courtesy when addressing a superior. The fourth gospel reflects a similar basic pattern of the non-theological use of the title before the resurrection and the theological use after. There are three occasions on which John describes Jesus as *ho kurios* in narrative (4:1, 6:23; 11:2). These instances are frequently regarded as editorial or textual glosses, in which case they are exercised from the evidence. But if the words are authentic, John's usage is in line with Luke's. The title became a normal way of describing Jesus after the resurrection. It is strange that John did not use it more often. In chapters 20 and 21 the title is used to refer to the risen Lord. The most striking instance is in Thomas' confession where it is linked with God (Jn. 20:28)¹⁴.

Son of God

The phrase, "Son of God" significantly reveals the divinity of Jesus. Since the purpose of the gospel of John is specifically slated to be that the readers might believe that Jesus is the son of God (John. 20:31), it is not surprising to discover considerably more emphasis on this concept than on Son of Man. The title itself occurs several times, but even more significant is the absolute use of the Father – Son relationship which permeates the words of Jesus in this gospel. The consciousness of Son-ship was present wherever he was. This indeed is the dominant feature in John's Christology and distinguishes it from that of the synoptic gospels. The widespread occurrences of the Son-ship idea can be seen in – "the uniqueness of Jesus as son of God", (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18); the various testimonies to Jesus as Son of God", by John the Baptist (1:34), Nathaniel (1:49) and Martha (11:27); the special characteristics of Jesus as Son of God; the striking features of the Son", first – the Son is sent by the Father and second, the love of the Father for the Son; the dependence of the Son on the Father (5:19; 14:31; 15:10 etc.).

John's Gospel is notable for the times that Jesus as Son prays to the Father (11:41; 12:28) Jn. 17:1, 5, 11, 21, 24-25). Jesus as Son makes the claim to be the exclusive revelation of the Father (8:19; 14:8-9). Also, the Son speaks the words of the Father (10:18; 15:15; 12:49; 14:24; 16:25). With regard to the future, the evidence is equally explicit – "the Father has given all things into the Son's hands". And several times Jesus speaks of returning to the Father. All of the above approve the Sonship of Jesus Christ¹⁵.

Logos

One of the distinctive terms used in John's gospel is the Greek *Logos*, normally rendered 'Word' in English. The writer uses *Logos* in this gospel to denote sometimes the message

of Jesus and sometimes the divine word about Jesus. It may be said that the ordinary use of *Logos* in John as distinct from the Christological, shows Jesus as proclaiming the *Logos*. But the distinctive feature of John's gospel is the use of *Logos* in the prologue (1:1-18) in what appears to be a more technical sense as a designation of Jesus.

We may note three main characteristics of Jesus Christ as seen in his *Logos* role. First, his relation to the Father; There can be no reasonable doubt that John intended his readers to understand that the Word had the nature of God. Second, the relationship between the *Logos* and the Word; His part in the creation is specified (1:13). Third, the relation of the *Logos* to human being; this is summed up in the incarnation of the *Logos*, who became flesh (1:14).

John's statements about *Logos* therefore combine the greatest possible exaltation with the humiliation in incarnation. This sums up his basic Christology. His gospel, moreover, links the *Logos* at the beginning with the Messiah and Son of God at the end (20:31). In all probability, the Christology of the Gospel, with its combination of true humanity with divine nature, was expressed in contemporary term with a view to offsetting the Docetic-type that overemphasizes on the divine nature at the expense of the human, or even Arianism which emphasizes the humanity over the divinity. Both of them constitute a real danger to the stability of early Christian Christology¹⁶.

The Summary of the 'I am' Sayings in John's Gospel

An important group of sayings which are peculiar to John's gospel have a significant function in Christological discussions. Since these are statements in the first person who attributes certain predicates to Jesus, they are, if authentic, invaluable as revelations of his self-consciousness. The reason for the special significance of the 'I am' sayings is that the presence is used in the Old Testament as a description of God. In Exodus 3:14, God names himself to Moses as I AM that I AM; which invests the 'I am' with a specific divine significance. If Jesus in any way had this usage in mind, it would throw proper light on the 'I am' sayings recorded in John¹⁷.

There are seven sayings in John's gospel in which Jesus uses the "I am" form to describe himself. They cover a wide range of metaphors – Bread (6:35); Light (8:12); Door (10:17); Shepherd (10:11); Resurrection and Life (11:25); Way, Truth and Life (14:6); Vine (15:1). In each case the 'I am' illustrates some function of Jesus to sustain, to illuminate, to admit, to care for, to give life, to guide and to make productive.

I am the Bread of Life (6:35)

Lenski writes, “Ordinary bread only sustains physical life but Jesus as the Bread of life not only sustains spiritual life but even gives us this life”¹⁸. The bread of life implies the fundamental, elementary role Jesus claims to fulfil in relation to the yearning of the human spirit. For Jesus audience, bread was of the staff of life, the primary source of nourishment, as it continues to be for millions in third world countries¹⁹; and the whole world at large.

I am the Light of the World (8:12)

The idea in ‘light’ is that of an active power which conquers the opposing power called ‘darkness’. Each constitutes a power, each stands opposed to the other and the light triumphs over darkness. ‘I am the light of the world, means to say according to Lenski. In the human person of Jesus, as in a focus of radiant light, the shining image of divine truth, holiness and blessedness opened in the human world, by its victorious radiance to penetrate the darkness of the world and to deliver it from the night of falsehood, sin and woe²⁰. As the feast ends and the lights are extinguished, Jesus proclaims himself as the true lights of the people of God, and not only Israel, but of the whole world²¹.

I am the Door (10:7)

This is the 3rd ‘I am’ saying of Jesus in the Johannean gospel. Jesus is the door of access to the Father. He is the door to heaven itself. The door is ever open. It may be straight, but those who enter will assuredly be saved. It is through Jesus (and only Jesus) that salvation can be obtained. He is the shepherd that will tend all who are obedient to his will. He is the provider of all that is necessary for the life of his true followers²³.

I am the Good Shepherd (10:11)

Jesus is the good shepherd, absolutely in a class by himself as the shepherd, and he is excellent with an excellence, unique and all his own. The good shepherd lays his life. The act of Jesus is absolutely without analogy. Heroes may risk and even lose their lives for others, but that is all they are able to do; they cannot recover their lives. Jesus lays his life down, in order to take it again²⁴. Like David, he expresses his life freely for the sake of the Father’s flock; he gives his life in their room and stead²⁵.

“I am the Resurrection and the life” (11:25)

The life he gives is nothing less than the indestructible life of the resurrection, the very life of the deathless God himself. Martha believes in some such life at the distant horizon of history when the Messiah eventually appears. Jesus invites her to reshape her hope radically. Resurrection life which triumphs over death is not confined to the distant future, but is present here and now in him who is the resurrection, the embodiment of the promised life and salvation of God. To believe in Jesus means death is defeated²⁶. The

miracles of rising from the death which Jesus wrought were included not only for the assuagement of human sorrow, but the attention away from the great work to the great worker. In him was life, and by his incarnation and sacrifice he brought the life of God to this world of sin and death²⁷.

“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life” (14:6)

In simple words Jesus here summarizes all his teaching (doctrine) and all his work. Koegel preaches, He does not say, ‘I show you the way’, like a second Moses; but ‘I am the Way’. Not, ‘I have the Truth’, like another Elijah; but, ‘I am the Truth’, not only. ‘I lead unto life,’ as one of his apostles, but, ‘I am the life’²⁸. Take away Jesus, and the way, the truth, and the life are gone; no way, no truth are left.

“I am the True Vine” (15:1)

Here, Jesus calls himself the ‘True’ Vine; showing that he is the true Israel of God and the true seed of Abraham. Christ is the true and essential life of his people. He lives in his people by his spirit. He is at once the Root and the Stock from which the branches draw their sap and nourishment²⁹. The true vine is to be found not in Israel, but in the Messiah, the Son of God. It is he who, by the shedding of his blood (the fruit of the vine), makes possible the existence of the true people of God, whose members are what they are in virtue not of their physical descent but of their abiding in him. As often in John, the Christological term draws attention rather to the work than to the essential status of Christ³⁰.

Theological Relevance of Christological Titles in *Ibibio* Context

As mentioned earlier the *Ibibio* have various titles given to some people before the advent of Christianity. However, for titles of respect and courtesy when addressing a superior, there abound invocative and honorific names and titles given to God during worship and praises. In *Ibibio* of South South Nigerians, God is called *Enyin Enyin Oyoho Idem Abasi* meaning, “God that have eyes over all his body”, *Asanga Isang Anana Ntim Abasi*, - “God that walks without gait”, *Otop Ama Ekim Abasi*, meaning “the God that you shoot at and your bullets will finish without hurting him”, and so on. All these give meaning and understanding to the *Ibibio* of the Christological titles in St. John.

Moreover, the fourth gospel sets the parameters for an incarnational Christology. It may also have exhausted the possibilities of narrative to express such a Christology, since story telling depends on over ability to connect events and persons in patterns from human experience³¹. St. John’s Christology (on the person of Jesus Christ) and its Christological titles have a strong connection and relevance in patterns from *Ibibio* human experience.

There have existed predominantly traditional, chieftaincies, political and religious titles in every part of *Ibibio* even before the advent of Christianity.

By extension, in African setting also, we hear of Oba of Binin (1481-95), king Mingo of Warri; King Jaja of Opopo, Ntufam of Efut etc. There were also the traditional rulers of Habe in Kano about AD 999,³² ‘Etsu of Nupe’ – ruler of Nupe. We hear of Akan kingdom of Ivory Coast, Akan Empire of Asante and their famous Golden stool of Asante (royal seat); Dahomey empire; empire of Oyo; the Duke of old Calabar (now Obong of Calabar) – Ijo and Efik States – all of the above with their traditional titled rulers, that space cannot permit us to narrate here. We hear of Olu of Warri, King Asunni of Borny. In Kalabari – King Amakiri c. 1750 – 1820, Oba Ozolua of Benin c. 1481 – 1504. We are told – Oba Ozolua was most imperialistic and a great warrior king³³. There are the Emirs, Sarduanas, Obas, Obis, Igwes, Chiefs, Obongs and so on.

In contemporary times there are uncountable traditional, chieftaincies, religious and political titles all over Africa. We must say that the ancient titles of people in Africa were on merit unlike some titles in our contemporary African society. Indeed, there is a great quest for chieftaincy titles today – sychophantic political titles and unworthy people are given religious titles. In our context, in *Ibibio*, we have traditional titles of Paramount Rulers. His Royal Highness”, “Oku Ibom Ibibio, Etubom, Ette Idung, Obong; Ntufam Edidem etc. In religious community among the *Ibibio*, titles are rampant. We have Reverend, Right Reverend, His Grace; His Eminence, Apostle Doctor, Most Reverend; Archbishop and so on. Some of these “men of God” have other traditional, chieftaincy and political titles also.

We will now try to compare and contrast some of the *Ibibio* titles and their holders with the Christological titles and their holders with the Christological titles with St. John’s Gospel in view. For example, the Executive Governor of Akwa Ibom State, Chief Godswill Obot Akpabio has the titles of “Utuenikang Ibibio” and “Ntataofiong Annang” meaning “the light of Ibibio” and “the star of Annang” respectively. The question is, is he truly the ‘light’ when Akwa Ibom does not have constant electricity? Is he truly the ‘star’ when people are wandering in darkness, hunger and poverty?

Some may have the title similar in name as ‘king’, ‘light’, ‘Lord’ (Obong), and Messiah to the Christological titles, which may help us for quick understanding of Christ’s titles, but that of Christ portray salvation and eternal life he gave to humanity. None of the titled Chiefs, Obong, Eteidung, Edidem, Ndidem, Okuku, Paramount Rulers, Governors, Presidents, Reverends, etc. in *Ibibio* that can give salvation and eternal life to his fellow man. Though titles abound among some privileged few, yet the people are languishing in hunger, poverty, darkness, suffering, high immortality rate, war, blood-shed, violence

(domestic, civil, political and religious), assassination, kidnapping, armed robbery, tears and sorrow in *Ibibio* land every day. Some of these societal ills are master-minded by these so called “lights”, Lords, Chiefs, Ete Idung. Edidem, Governors and political leaders. They are looting and embezzling our finances to foreign countries. They are getting richer and richer while the poor masses getting poorer and poorer in the midst of insecurity whereas Jesus fed the poor masses and also protected them. In Nigeria, when Obasanjo came up as the President in 1999, sychophants said he is the messiah we were expecting that will save Nigeria from its woes. But when he left in 2007 he left Nigeria, poorer, wretched, darkened and frustrated than before.

What would we say of some so-called prophets in *Ibibio*? Some are prophets of doom, greedy and full of covetousness – “commercial prophets”. They are divining for money. They are brandishing our children as withes and wizards causing a lot of them to be abandoned by their parents – tortured, ostracized and many have been killed because of their visions, dreams and prophecies³⁴. Ikechukwu Nwanze says, “Churches denounce African children as witches”³⁵. Why is this so? We are told, “false teaching finds really soil in Africa due to the traditional religiosity of African people”³⁶, which *Ibibio* belongs to.

The Guardian Newspaper carried a story that none of the African presidents could win the “Mo-Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership” award for two years running because of non-performance (in spite of many sychophantic titles hanging on their necks). We quote, “For the second year running, no former African head of state was found worthy to be awarded the \$5 million annual ‘Mo-Ibrahim prize for achievement in African leadership’”³⁷. It is because there had been no new development to warrant the award. “The standards are high”, says the organizers. Yea, the standards are high and none of our heads of state could meet the standard and none was worthy for the award. Only Jesus Christ can meet and even surpass the standards.

Furthermore, we had many founders of world religions as Budha, Confucius, Mohammed etc. claiming to be messengers of God, prophets of God and servants of God, yet none has ever declared “I am”, this is so because. “I am” is the name of God. It is a divine name of God Almighty, the Creator of the universe. None of these founders of world religions was God, Creator of the world. Only Jesus and Jesus Christ only – the *Logos*, the Son of God, the Lord, Messiah, King of kings, and Lord of lords – the Way, the Truth and the Life, the Resurrection and the Life, the Creator of the whole universe (Jn. 1:3) declared “I am”. ‘I am God.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have been able to outline the Christological titles and the seven ‘I am’ sayings of Christ in Johannine Gospel. We have seen how these titles have contextual relevance to *Ibibio* in particular and African landscape in general which made them much easier understood by Africans at the advent of Christianity into Africa. Traditional titles have long existed in Africa. And today religious traditional, chieftaincy and political titles still abound in *Ibibio* and Africa. We have also seen the alarming quest for chieftaincy titles today in *Ibibio* and Africa. We have seen that many political titles are sycophantic. Religious acclaimed and desecrated titles are being scampered for nowadays as so many want to be called “Apostles”, “Prophets” etc, even though they are not worthy. Some bring us doom, disaster, tears, and crises in the family and in the public. Some of these title holders are the roots of kidnapping, political killings, poverty and darkness we are experiencing now. They are not good examples, both at home, office, public and the community. Sometimes, a newspaper carried a story of how a titled “His Royal Highness/Majesty” fought in the public with: a woman in the Western part of Nigeria. They are not showing us the way.

Some of these titled leaders loot embezzle and siphon our finances to foreign banks leaving the masses poorer, wretched, frustrated and despaired. These monies would have been used for the development of the abundant natural and human resources that God has given to *Ibibio* and Africa. Indeed, they are not truthful. They are not living the life worthy of emulation. What happened in the Nigerian House of Representative and some States Houses of Assembly are good examples. People that are called “Honourable” fighting in the public glare of the whole world. And these men bearing “Honourable” are, at times bearing other chieftaincy titles in their communities, political titles in their constituencies and religious titles in their churches or mosques misbehaving in the public. Newspapers branded them with various derogative headlines such as “Reps Exchange Blows; The House of Reps yesterday erupted in anarchy of violence following the suspension of eleven members with seven of them receiving the beatings of their lives before they were bundled out of the chamber³⁸. Some newspapers call them “House of Commotion”. ‘House of Shame’, House of Wrecks³⁹, ‘House of Brawl’ “Alleged N9 billion fraud ignite exchange of blows”⁴⁰. Not too long ago, this same episode happened in the Rivers and Edo States’ Houses of Assembly.

In spite of all the above, Christ, the Messiah, the Lord of lords, the True Light, Bread of Life, Resurrection and the Life, the True Vine, the ‘I am’ – the Lord Jesus Christ, is the only hope of the world. We must urgently run to him for human salvation and eternal life for without him, no way, no truth, no life. For without him darkness will continue to be night the *Ibibio* land and African continent as a whole.

References

1. 1..Raymond E. Brown (eds), *The New Jerome Bible Commentary*, (London: Burns and Oats, 2007), p. 948.
2. Robert Preus (eds), *Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics: Christology* Vol. VI, (Michigan: Edwards Brothers Inc., 1993), p.10
3. N. R. Needham, *2000 years of Christ's Power*, (London: Grace Publications Trust, 2002), p.263.
4. Needham, 2002, p.263
5. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 3rd Edition, (Longman, 2000).
6. Longman Dictionary, 2000
7. Raymond E. Brown, 2007, p948
8. Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology*, (London: Inter-varsity Press, 1973), p.237
9. Guthrie, p.245
10. Guthrie, p.256
11. Guthrie, pp.258, 264
12. Guthrie, p.269
13. Guthrie, pp.285, 287
14. Guthrie, pp.293,294
15. Guthrie, pp.312, 316
16. Guthrie, pp.321, 327-329
17. Guthrie, pp.330-331
18. R.C.H. Lenski, *Interpretation of John's Gospel*, (Mineapolis: Augsburg Publishing Co, 1961), p.480
19. Bruce Milne, *The Message of John*, (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), p.111
20. Lenski,1961, pp 594, 596
21. Bruce Milne, 1993, p.127
22. H.D.M Spence and Joseph E. Exell, (eds), *The Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 17, Gospel of John* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, n.y.), p.54
23. Robert R. Woodwarth, *New Testament Studies* Vol. 1 (Printed in The United States of America 2001), p.843
24. RCH Lenski, 19961, pp. 723, 724
25. H.D.M Spense & Co., n.y., p.55
26. Bruce Milne, 1993, pp.163-164
27. H.D.M Spense & Co., n.y., pp. 107-108
28. Robert R. Woodwarth, 2001, p.978
29. H.D.M Spense & Co., n.y., p.277
30. Mathew Black, H. H. Rowley (eds) *Peake's Commentary On The Bible*, (Ontario: Thomas Nebon & Sons Ltd, 1962), p.801
31. Raymond E. Brown, 2007, 1949
32. G. T. Stride, Caroline Ifeka, *Peoples and Empires of West Africa (West Africa In History 1000-1800)*, (Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1978), p.90
33. G. T. Stride, 1978, pp 100, 249, 253, 258, 275, 280, 321-345, 313
34. Kekong E. Bisong (eds), *KOINONIA*, (Ikot Ekpene: St. Joseph Major Seminary, 2008 Vol. 4), pp. 72-75

35. Ikechukwu Nwanze, *Belief*, (Port-Harcourt: Renaissance Communications Ltd, 2010), pp. 480-484
36. Tukumboh Adeyemo (ed.), *Africa Bible Commentary*, (China: Word Alive Zondenam Publishers), p 1254
37. *The Nation*, Wednesday, June 16, 2010; p.64 (back page)
38. James Ojo, *Daily Sun*, Wednesday, June 23, 2010; p.4 “Reps Exchange Blows”.
39. *The Nation*, Monday, June 28, 2010
40. *The Guardian*, Wednesday, June 23, 2010, p.1
41. Wikipedia (2024). Abam.<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abam>