

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **Jesus Defends His Deity**

Scripture: John 10:22-42

Code: 1530

In our studies of John, we have seen some recurring themes. And we shall see a major theme recurring again in this passage that we study this morning.

Now as we come to this particular portion beginning in verse 22, without giving you a whole lot of background because we have covered carefully the words of Jesus regarding the Good Shepherd in the first 21 verses, let me just say this. Jesus has in many ways announced His deity. When you talk about Jesus Christ, you're not talking about just a man, just another human being. Jesus Christ claimed to be God in a human body, nothing less than that.

And by many different words and works, Jesus Christ has corroborated that claim all through John's gospel. He has again and again said, "I am the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God. I and God are equal." But because of unbelief, willful, stubborn unbelief, the Jews remain still in a bewildered ignorance over His claims. As clear as they are, they have not yet understood them.

So, as we arrive at verse 22, we arrive at a time of year when the feast of dedications is going on, and again they confront Jesus Christ over the issue of His claims to be God. In this confrontation, Jesus makes profound reiteration of His claims and infuriates them to the point where they attempt to kill Him and He has to leave to escape for His life.

And incidentally, when He leaves, that's the last time He ever confronted Israel on a public basis. Chapter 10 ends the public ministry of Jesus Christ. The rest of the time spent prior to the cross is a time spent in private with those who had already declared their faith in Him. This you might say is the judicial act of Jesus Christ in setting into concrete the unbelief of the nation Israel.

Now it's kind of a strange thing about unbelief. Unbelief often asks the right questions, but then does not willfully accept the truthful answer. And in this particular case, the Jewish leaders that confront Jesus Christ ask Him the right question, and just like that they refuse the right answer. It reminded me of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus running, fell on his knees, and asked the right question, got the right answer, and left without ever knowing Jesus Christ. It's a strange thing about unbelief, but it often does that.

So here we come to a very familiar theme in John's gospel. Jesus is confronted by the Jews. Jesus reiterates His claim to be God. They are hostile, angry, full of hate, and determine right on the spot,

first of all, to stone Him, and then a little later to deliver Him to be stoned through the channels and the Sanhedrin. And the pattern is familiar. We've seen it again and again in John. This is just a repetition. And yet while it is a repetition, it has some uniquely significant things. This passage has to be for the Christian one of the most critical passages in all of God's revelation.

There are five scenes in this dialogue. Jesus now has a dialogue with these Jewish leaders, and when you see the word "Jews" in John's gospel, it has a predominant significance regarding the leaders, not the people. We see five scenes in the dialogue between Jesus and the Jews. We see the confrontation, which is an inquiry; the claim to deity; the charge, blasphemy; the challenge, objectivity; and the consequence, polarity. And we'll see these one by one, and you'll understand what those terms all refer to.

First of all, notice the initial confrontation which is based on an inquiry as the Jews face Christ with a question. And here we go again with Jesus and the Jewish leaders. Verse 22, "And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter." Now two months have passed since verse 21. During that period of two months Jesus has been in absence, He's been out of town.

It's speculative as to where He's been, but the fact that it says in verse 22, "It was at Jerusalem," indicates that there needs to be a designation where this occurred, which would mean that somehow in the middle of this they had been somewhere else. Also in verse 40 it says, "And they went away again beyond the Jordan into the place where John had first baptized," which may mean that for the two month period between the feast of tabernacles, which is in chapters 8 to the first part of chapter 10, and the feast of dedication which begins here in verse 22, for that two months Jesus has perhaps been back there in the area around the Jordan, and now returns to Jerusalem.

Now John gives to us the scene. The word "winter" there means wintry cold. Maybe it was even raining. And Jesus is in Solomon's Porch in the temple, and the reason He would be in Solomon's Porch was because it was one of the only enclosed areas of the Temple. It had high colonnades of 40 feet. It was very large. It even had a roof. And in the wintry cold and perhaps the rain, Jesus was walking there. And it was the time of the year for the feast of the dedication.

Now a little bit about this feast, because it really is fascinating. This is the last of all the feasts that was set into the Jewish calendar. It is a non-biblical feast. This was not an Old Testament feast. This was not one established by God. This is a feast that came about in the interval between the end of the Old Testament and the birth of Christ, a 400-year period.

During that 400-year period, a great event happened in the history of Israel to which this feast became a memorial. This feast of dedication is sometimes called the feast of lights because the people all put lights in their windows when it happened. The Jewish name for it which you're familiar with is Hanukkah, and I'm sure that identifies it in your mind. It is perhaps the most predominant of all

the Jewish festivals because it happens at the same time Christmas happens, and so it gets in on a lot of the fanfare, although it is not necessarily the most significant one in all the Jewish calendar. It took place originally on the 25th day of Kislev which is near our Christmas, Kislev being close to the equivalent of December. And so consequently we know about Hanukkah.

Now to show you how it happened, it's very, very interesting. The origin of the feast lies in one of the greatest acts of heroism in all of the history of Israel. There was a king of Syria during the period of time between the Old and the New Testament by the name of Antiochus. Now Antiochus was in love with himself, which is not uncommon. And because of this, he wanted everybody else to appreciate him, too, and he gave himself an extra name. His name was Antiochus and he added Antiochus Epiphanes and that means "the great one." So his name was, "Me, the Great One." A very modest fellow.

And the Jews not agreeing with Antiochus chose to call him - a little play on words - not Antiochus Epiphanes, but Antiochus Epimanes which means, "Me, the Madman." But nevertheless, Antiochus was the king of Syria and he reigned from about 175 B.C., before Christ, to about 164, about an eleven-year period.

And Antiochus was a great lover of Greek things. He loved Greek art, Greek philosophy, Greek religion, Greek everything. And he thought that he could establish in Palestine all of the Greek culture and do two things: take care of the thing he loved and obliterate the terrible nuisance of the Jewish religion. He hated Judaism and he wanted it out of the picture altogether. So he tried to be very diplomatic for the first few years and sort of sneak it on in by adding little cultural events in Palestine and it didn't work. A few turned to it. The vast majority of Jewish people were stubbornly loyal to their own ancestral faith.

So he decided he had to take the bull by the horns and about the year 170 the dam really broke and everything happened. In that year Antiochus Epiphanes in frustration over trying to destroy Judaism attacked the city of Jerusalem. In that attack he slew 80,000 Jews. He took another 80,000 to 100,000 Jews and sold them into slavery. He robbed the temple treasury of everything that was there.

He then established some principles. It became a capital offense to own a copy of the law, or the Old Testament. And people lost their lives if one was found in their home. It also became a capital offense to circumcise your child. He knew that circumcision being the sign of Judaism would perpetuate the thing and so he obliterated circumcision. And a mother who was caught circumcising her child would be crucified with her children hanging around her neck. That's how severe Antiochus Epiphanes took this particular attempt to destroy Judaism.

The temple then was turned into a prostitute den. The burnt offering altar was turned into an altar to Zeus, on which they offered pork as an offering to pagan gods. The entire temple court was profaned

and polluted.

Well, the Jews only tolerated this for a few years and then there rose to the occasion, as there often does in history, a man, and the man was Judas Maccabeus. He was a patriotic Jew. He was also very brilliant and a great leader. He had a lot of brothers, and a lot of uncles, and others, too. And he formed together a little hillside army, like a guerrilla band, and he began to really irritate the situation.

Pretty soon his rebellion turned into a whole scale revolution and by the year 164 Judas Maccabeus and his rebels had delivered Jerusalem from the hands of Antiochus Epiphanes altogether.

Well, needless to say this was a great day in Israel. The temple was immediately restored. The temple was cleansed. All the profane and polluted things were taken out of the temple. It was declared to be set for God. The altar was purified. All the robes and the utensils were brought back into use. Everything was set in order.

And then Judas Maccabaeus stood up and said, "From this day on the cleansing of this temple will be commemorated on the 25th of Kislev by a great feast called the feast of the dedication." Hanukkah, then, is the commemoration of the revolution that ended in the great cleansing of the temple. It's a memorial, then, to the purification of the temple, and it takes place two months after the feast of tabernacles, which we read about in chapters 8 to 10.

So it was in the winter, and it was cold, and it was the time of the feast of the dedication. You know, this must have really kind of had their minds in kind of a spin because here they were celebrating their revolutionary freedom while they were in abject bondage to Rome again. But nevertheless, the feast was going on and Jesus was walking in Solomon's Porch out of the cold.

Now what we see recorded in this scene is a tragic conclusion to the public ministry of Jesus Christ. From now on His ministry is a private ministry, beginning in chapter 11. And I've often thought to myself from an allegorical standpoint - and I'm not really an allegorist by any means - but I've often thought to myself, "How picturesque it is to compare the season with the attitude of Israel. It was not only winter in Israel in terms of the weather, but it was winter in Israel spiritually."

The season of the ingathering was over. The Son of righteousness has run full orbit and they hadn't recognized Him. The warmth of summer now gave place to the chilling frost of the winter of unbelief. And the summer of Israel's opportunity had turned to the bleakness of a winter with no opportunity.

So, Jesus walked in Solomon's Porch. Many people walk there. They walk there to meditate. The rabbis walk there with their students as they taught. It was a large place. And Jesus was there. And evidently some of these leaders surrounded Jesus. And we see that in verse 24. And they surrounded Him, I'm sure, because they wanted to make sure this time that if they got what they

wanted, He didn't get away.

Verse 24, "Then came the Jews round about Him and said unto Him, How long dost Thou make us to doubt? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." Now that's a good question. Very good, that's the right question. The only problem was they asked it for all the wrong reasons. You know, you try to figure out the mind of these people. Now why did they do this?

Some people say, "Well, they were really patriotic and here it was the feast of dedication and they were thinking, 'Wow, here we are celebrating, you know, freedom, and we're under the yoke of bondage to Rome. Hey, maybe this Jesus is our Messiah, let's get Him over here and, man, if He is, we'll just, you know, lead a rebellion and just throw the Romans out.' " And some people say they had an honest motive.

I don't believe that. I don't believe that for a minute. I don't believe they had an honest motive at all. You say, "Why don't you believe it?" Because for ten chapters prior they never had an honest motive. How come they get so honest now? And if they're so honest now, why does Jesus conclude His ministry here? If they're honest at this point, what are they doing with stones in their hand in verse 31 when He gives them the right answer?

They weren't honest. They were hypocrites. They wanted Jesus to restate His claim to be God so they could kill Him and have public justification. Some other people have thought that maybe they wanted Him to state some kind of rebellious statement against Rome so they could turn Him over to the Roman authorities.

Personally, I believe they wanted Him dead and they were ready to do it. All they wanted Him to do was make another blasphemous statement to the extent that He was God, and they were ready to go. They were sick of His division when He divided their ranks, splitting Israel over those who received Him and those who didn't. They were sick of the confusion that He caused. They were tired of His blasphemous claims. They were tired of the fact that He claimed to be Messiah, but He didn't do one single thing about Roman oppression. He hadn't created a welfare state. And they were really upset.

They were all geared for a political Messiah and they thought any Messiah, any so-called Messiah who is not involved politically, isn't where it's at. It's amazing. We get that all the time today. It's very typical, you know, anyone who is in ministry gets bombarded incessantly by everybody wanting him to jump on every political bandwagon there is, get into every social effort.

Listen, Jesus knew where He belonged and that was in the spiritual realm and that's where I belong. I have my own social feelings and concerns. I have my own political views - one or two of them. I don't really care to get involved in that. I have enough to do to be preoccupied with my relationship to God and my communicating His truth to people that I love and care about and to a world that doesn't know

Him.

And they're determined if this Jesus thinks He's going to get away this time, He's wrong. They've got Him surrounded now. And if He claims to be Messiah again, they've got the stones right there. The temple was always in repair, they were always rebuilding something and there were rocks all over everywhere.

You know, one kind of thing that kind of fascinated me about this, isn't it interesting that in two months absence - Jesus has been gone two months - their hatred was so volatile and their antagonism was so captivating that all they had to do was see His face and their anger was generated into a desire to kill Him? That's how hostile. That's how much they hated Jesus that to activate their murderous desire, all they had to do was see Him walking somewhere. Boy, that is some kind of hate. They were like beasts of prey, waiting to sink their claws into Him.

Then they asked the question, "How long dost Thou makest us doubt? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." Well, not as if He hadn't. He spent the last three years telling them plainly. He had made these declarations in words that were so simple, so plain, so obvious. The problem wasn't that He had not said who He was, the problem was they couldn't understand it. Whenever He spoke, they didn't understand it. They never comprehended it. They never understood anything He was talking about.

And to illustrate how they didn't understand, He talked to them in parables and parables, or allegories and similes, metaphors, in order that their blindness would be obvious. And here we come back to our key point that we've emphasized so many times in this book - and if you haven't gotten it now, you better get it. The point is this. Whenever somebody doesn't understand anything it's because of unbelief. Ignorance does not produce unbelief, friends, unbelief produces ignorance. "If any man - " John 7:17 " - wills to know His will, he shall know - " what? " - of the doctrine." If a man is willing to know, he'll know. Unbelief is the mother of ignorance. And they were locked in their own willful unbelief, and consequently they could not understand the simplest claims of Jesus Christ.

May I add this? Once their unbelief was known to Jesus, He never went a step further because Jesus never commits Himself to unbelief. That's principle number two. He doesn't waste His time. He doesn't commit Himself to unbelief.

Now I think there's another thought here that kind of bounced around in my brain a little bit as I read this and studied it. Another reason that they could never understand was because they wouldn't accept the first premise of understanding anything about Jesus, and that's the premise of sin, right? Jesus never could communicate with somebody who wouldn't acknowledge sin, could He?

In frustration on one occasion He said, "I came not to call the righteous, but - " what? " - sinners to repentance." He was frustrated in the sense of communicating to them by the fact that they never acknowledged their sin. So what did they need with a Savior? And the difference is in the disciples who acknowledged their sin and therefore knew the truth. The difference is in the woman of Samaria who acknowledged her sin and therefore knew the truth. The difference is in the blind beggar who acknowledged his sin and therefore knew the truth.

Jesus couldn't communicate with them, number one, their unbelief forbade it. Number two, their unbelief meant that He never committed Himself to them. Number three, because they would not recognize sin. And so there they are. He's told them all they need to know, and really they got the message, they just didn't want to admit it. Why, they've accused Him before of saying He was equal with God, didn't they?

Back in 5:18 they said, "Hey, He's claiming to be equal with God." Then here they say, "Who do You claim to be?" Ridiculous, you know who He is, who He claims to be. You don't believe it, but you know who He claims to be. Jesus claimed to be God. They knew that. All they wanted was a public statement from His mouth so that they could stone Him.

So they confront Jesus Christ with this hypocrisy, with this question that is no question, but is under the guise of a question, in order that they might kill Him. And so we see the confrontation and the inquiry. Now look at the claim to deity. And I like this. Jesus doesn't back off one inch. Verse 25, Jesus reiterates the claim, and if they want an answer, brother, they're about to get it.

Verse 25, He just answered them. I like this. "I told you." Do you like that? "I told you." It's not My problem, men. "I told you," over and over again. The problem is, "And ye - " what? " - believe not." That's the problem. Don't keep asking Me the same question when you never will believe when I give you the same answer.

Listen, anyone who listens to Jesus Christ only hears Him if there's faith there. So He says, "Ye believe not the works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me." Listen, if My words weren't enough, look at all the works I've done. I mean, where have you been, friends, when I've been doing those?

Well, you know where they were. They finally concluded in Matthew 12 that He did them by the power of Satan. I mean, you know, that's real good.

So Jesus reiterates His claim and He says, "I'm God. I've told you that, and I've proven it by My works: The healing of dead people, giving sight to blind, rearranging new and healthy organs in old sick bodies, the miracle of feeding 20,000 people, walking on the water. Where have you been," He says, "when all these happened? My works attest."

And that's the acid test. I mean, if you're going to come to Jesus Christ, look at His works. You want to know who He is? Examine His life. What did He do? Why, Nicodemus had enough sense to know that. He came to Jesus and said, "We know that Thou art a teacher come from God because no man can do these things except - " what? " - God be with Him." It's obvious. Obvious to everybody but the unbeliever, who has a solid, willful unbelief that cannot budge.

Well, the Jews had ignored all of His signs. They had ignored all of His wonders. And the trouble was not with a declaration of Christ, but with their own unbelief. And that's the key. As I said, unbelief is always the mother of ignorance. You get a willfully unbelieving person and you can't tell them anything. And as that is true, so is the reverse. Faith is the mother of understanding. When you first put your faith in Jesus Christ, understanding is the result. So important. Unbelief blinds, lack of faith in the person of Christ makes a lack of understanding in spiritual truth.

In 8:43 He says this, and this is the key to it all, "Why do you not understand My speech? Because you can't hear My words." Your minds are so closed to even hearing my words that you don't even know what I'm talking about. Now that's the human side of unbelief. He says to them, "You don't believe because you don't believe. You don't understand because you don't even listen to Me. I keep saying the same thing, verifying about My works, and you don't get the message because you don't believe." That's the human side.

Now watch this. We're going to shift gears as we go in to verse 26 and we're going to cross all of the universe and land in the sovereign mind of God when we hit verse 26. Watch it. "But - " now picking up on the idea of "Ye believe not," that's human responsibility, verse 25. "But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep, as I said unto you."

Now, friends, that is divine sovereignty. Now notice that verse again. It doesn't say, "You believe not, therefore you're not my sheep," does it? Which comes first? No, no. "You believe not because you aren't My sheep." You know what that is? You say, "You mean you can't believe unless you've been predestined to be a sheep?" That's right, that's what it says. You see, you have gone in verse 25 from human responsibility to verse 26 in absolute, total, divine sovereignty. He says in verse 25, "Your problem is you don't believe." In verse 26, "Your problem is you haven't been called to believe."

You say, "Well, how do those two go together?" I really don't know. I'm really not convinced that any man knows how to reconcile human responsibility and divine sovereignty. But the point here is obvious - and we'll talk more about it in a moment. The point is obvious. The reason from a divine side that they don't believe is because they're not sheep. They have not been called, or elected, or predestined. From a human side, the reason is because they just don't believe. And there you have the paradox of salvation.



Now, you see, the sheep of the Good Shepherd were given to Him by the Father. That's right. And He says in verse 26, "You are not My sheep." God did not choose you to be given to Me. Now it's just that simple. Verse 29, "My Father, who gave them to Me." All the sheep that come to Christ are love gifts from the Father to the Son. "All that the Father giveth Me - " John 6 " - shall - " what? " - come to Me." Everyone who ever comes to Christ is a gift of the Father. For example, Jesus said, "No man cometh unto Me except the Father draw him," see?

So in other words, there is an election involved here. There is a divine, sovereign power on the part of God by which He chooses those that come to Christ. At the same time, there is a free responsibility in the mind of man to choose Jesus Christ and if he does not, he is morally responsible.

You say, "Well, MacArthur, I mean, wow, those two don't even go together." And you know what I say? Praise the Lord. That means that it's too much for me and it must be in the mind of God, and that keeps God where He belongs and me where I belong. He says here, Jesus says - this is Jesus talking, not some misguided theologian. Jesus did this all the time. He threw these two together all over the place.

He said, "All that the Father gives to Me shall come to Me." That's election. And in the same verse He says, "And him that cometh unto Me I'll in no wise cast out." That's human choice. Jesus had no problem. You know why? He had the mind of God. There were no paradoxes in His mind. It's just our puny little heads. We don't understand this. Jesus had no problem with it.

Now I confess, humanly it's not possible to harmonize those two things. I can't harmonize human responsibility and divine sovereignty. I don't have the brain power to do it. Neither do you or any other human being. But I'm not going to stand here and deny either one of them because they're both in the Bible. In fact, Jesus taught them both Himself.

Let me give you two illustrations. These are terrific. Luke 22, now listen to what Jesus says, this is terrific. Now He's talking about Judas here and He says, "And truly the Son of Man goeth as it was determined." In other words, when Judas betrayed Jesus, he was only acting out the determined will of God, right? The Son of Man goes to be crucified "as it was determined." But then look at this. Jesus says this, "But woe unto the man by whom He is betrayed." Now just try to reconcile those two things in your mind.

How in the world can you say that Jesus was betrayed because God determined it and then hold the guy responsible who betrayed Him? I've got a problem with that. Jesus doesn't have any problem with it. He's God. He's got the mind of God. There's a paradox in our minds, not in His mind. It's nice to have a few paradoxes, folks. Then we know that God is on the throne, don't we? I mean, if I understood everything, I'd be God, and if I was God, you'd all be in lots of trouble.

Acts 2:23, listen to this one. Here's another one talking about the crucifixion of Christ. "Him - " that is Christ " - being delivered - " that is to the cross " - by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." You know why Jesus was crucified? Cause God predestined Him to be crucified. Then it says, "And you took Him, and by wicked hands crucified and slew Him." See? How can you hold those people responsible for doing it if it was in the determinate counsel of God? I don't know, but God does.

You are responsible for what you do with Jesus Christ and yet it's all in the mind of God before the world ever began. Everyone who ever came to Jesus Christ was chosen in Him before - what? - the foundation of the world. I'll tell you, that's a humbling thing. That's a humbling doctrine to realize that anyone who comes to Christ comes because God has ordained that he be a sheep, a gift of love to the Son. Now someday the Bible says - and oh, boy, am I going to be glad when this day comes - when we go to be with Jesus, we shall know as we are known. And then I want to say, "Hey, I understand. I got it all right there." Now I don't understand, but I just trust God.

Verse 27, He goes on to talk about His sheep. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." See, whoever is a sheep will come to Christ. Nobody who is elect is going to wind up in hell, no way. Whoever the true sheep are, they follow Him. Back in verse 4 and 5 He said in fact, the true sheep won't ever hear the voice of a stranger, will they? They always follow their Good Shepherd.

Well, verse 28, and here we get one of the greatest verses in the Bible. "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." Oh I like that. Tremendous verse. Now just think about this. If a sheep is an elect sheep - and all the sheep are elect - if you're a sheep chosen by God before the foundation of the world as a love gift to Christ, if you are a sheep elect, then there is no way that you can ever not be a sheep. No way that sheep become goats. Can't happen.

And Jesus says in verse 28, "And I give my sheep eternal life." Eternal life. Now that's a quality of life, not a quantity, cause there's no time in eternity. That's a kind of life, God life that doesn't end. And when do you get eternal life? When you die? No. The moment you receive Jesus Christ, and to talk about eternal life ever coming to an end is a contradiction in terms.

And then He adds a little emphatic, "And they shall never - " what? " - perish." Now "to perish" means "to be separated from God and blessedness forever" and that can't happen. I'll put it simple, folks. No one, no time, no way ever lost their salvation. Now I can't put it any simpler than that. That's exactly what Jesus is trying to say and saying so well. You say, "Well, I know my Uncle Fred, and he used to come to church all the time, and he went through all the stuff, and now he never comes, and he's just gone out there and he denies Christ." Why you have that in Matthew 7, "Many say, 'Lord, Lord,' and

He says, 'Depart from Me - " what? " - I never knew you.' "

Listen, there are so many people playing the religious game and they're not real. Listen, election determines who the sheep are and assures their security. "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me." And Jesus said, "I will not lose one of them."

Your salvation, friends, does not rest on the ability to keep saved, it rests on God's sovereign election. If anything can tear you out of God's hand, you want to know something? Then God's not God. Whatever tore you out of His hand, that's God, because that has more power than He does. You're His sheep.

And you'll notice that He even adds another emphatic at the end of verse 28. "Neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." There's no way. There is no way. No man. And somebody always comes along and says, "Well, but you can do it yourself." No you can't. Did you realize that you can't even pile up two sins in a row? Do you know that the instant you commit a sin it's under the blood of Jesus Christ as fast you commit it? If it isn't, friends, then the death of Jesus Christ was a mockery because He didn't die for all sins. As fast as you commit a sin, it's under the blood.

You say, "Oh, is that good to know." No, that's not how love works, is it? Paul says, "Should we sin that grace may abound?" Would you travesty on love like that? Listen, when I know somebody forgives me with that kind of forgiveness, that breaks my heart all the more when I sin. And just to show you how secure you are, if you're not secure in verse 28, try on verse 29 for size.

Verse 29 says, "My Father, who gave them to Me - " that is all the sheep were given by the Father, now watch this. "My Father, who gave them to Me is greater than all; who is going to take you out of His hand?" Romans 8 says, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies."

In other words, if God takes this little sinner and sets him up here and says, "Fella, you're justified," who is going to bring an accusation against him? Do you know anybody higher than God? If God says he's just, friends, that settles it. And that's why he can say, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Nothing.

And so He says there, "My Father who gave them to Me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." Now this is really good. You see, in verse 28 you have Christ's hand, in verse 29 you've got the Father's hand. You know where you are, believers? Right there. You're protected in the hand of Christ and the hand of the Father.

Jesus is saying, in effect, if you question My ability, friends, if you question My ability to hold the sheep, you don't need to question My Father's ability. I mean, sacrilegious violence may nail these

hands to the cross, and when the Shepherd is smitten, the sheep may scatter, but nobody is ever going to crucify God. Nothing can affect His care and love for His sheep. There's no stronger passage in all the Word of God than this for guaranteeing the absolute eternal security of every Christian.

There are seven strands to the rope that binds you to God here. Let me just reiterate them quickly. Number one, we are Christ's sheep, and if it's His duty to care for us as a Shepherd, then He's not a good shepherd if He doesn't take care of us, right? If Christ can't control His sheep, He's really in sad shape. You know something? To say that Christ is the Good Shepherd and that He keeps losing His sheep is to blaspheme the person of Christ. If He's the true Shepherd, He can control His sheep and keep them in the fold.

Secondly, it says the true sheep follow Christ, and there are no exceptions, and they will not hear strangers. Brother, that's security. If you won't hear strangers and turn and follow them, how could you lose your salvation?

Third thing, it says to the sheep is given eternal life, and to speak of eternal life as ending is a contradiction.

Fourthly, eternal life it says is given. Notice it. Verse 28, "I give them eternal life." Did you earn your eternal life? Did you get eternal life by doing something? No. Well you can't unget it by doing something either. If you didn't earn it, you can't lose it. It's a gift from beginning to end.

Fifth, the Lord Himself declares that they shall never perish and if one sheep goes to hell, Jesus Christ is a liar.

Sixth, from the Shepherd's hand none is able to pluck them, not even the devil. Nobody is more powerful than God.

And the last one, the seventh one, is the idea that Christ and God together hold the believer. My life is hid with Christ - what? - in God. Tremendous.

Then Jesus makes a direct statement in case they haven't gotten the answer yet. Verse 30, oh this is devastating. You want your answer, friends? "I and My Father are one." Now you can't say it any plainer than that. That's what they wanted to hear, and in verse 31 they grabbed the rocks.

Now, you know, "I and My Father are one" is an obvious claim to be equal with God. It's amazing how people are confused about this, just amazing. You wouldn't believe all the difficulty in interpreting that verse. "I and My Father are one." I've had people stand at my door for two hours telling me that verse doesn't mean what it says. "Well, you see, if you start with a conclusion, you can use anything you want to support it."

“I and My Father are one.” He means we’re one in power, we’re one in essence, we’re one in work. Everything I do the Father does, we’re one, we’re one. He’s talking about His indivisible union with God. Jesus is saying, “I’m God. I’m God.”

Of course, then they descend to the lowest level of conflict. Remember the levels of conflict? The lowest level is physical abuse, verse 31. “Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.” This is at least the fourth time they’ve tried to kill Him. And the stones are obviously there for them and they grab the stones and they’re ready to fire away.

Jesus had just answered their question. They said, “Tell us if You be the Christ.” He says, “I am.” Gave them the right answer. What did they do? You going to tell me their question was honest? Hypocrisy. All they wanted to do was have Him make that claim in the view of the public and they could kill Him.

So, we see the confrontation, the inquiry, the claim, deity. Now here comes the charge, and we’ll see this very quickly. They charge Him with blasphemy. Jews level a charge while they’re standing there with the stones in their hands. Before they do, Jesus in just dripping sarcasm speaks to them in verse 32, listen to what He said. “Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shown you from My Father, for which of those works do you stone Me?”

Oh, do you get the sarcasm in that? “Which of My good works has brought you to stone Me?” What a statement. Jesus doesn’t even flinch, doesn’t even flinch. And He puts the pressure on them. And the word kals is “excellent.” It means more than just good as opposed to moral bad. It’s “excellent, beautiful.”

He says, “I’ve spent all my life doing beautiful things, giving sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, and voices to the mute, and food to the hungry and et cetera, et cetera.” He says, “Which of those has caused you to stone Me?” So He meets their challenge.

And I love what He does in verse 32. He puts that little phrase in there, “From My Father.” You know, that’s almost like a defiant shot again, see? They are so upset that He claims to be one with the Father that He just keeps irritating it by saying, “Yes, I’m doing these works of My Father,” see? Just never lets up. That’s the key phrase. They’re ready to tear their hair out at this point.

And they level the charge in verse 33. “The Jews answered Him saying, For a good work we stone Thee not; but for blasphemy and because Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God.” Now they got the message. That’s more than what I can say for the Jehovah’s Witnesses. They don’t understand what verse 30 means. Those blind Jews knew He was claiming to be God. That’s exactly what He was claiming, and they knew it, and they wanted Him to claim it so they could stone Him. They said, “Aha,

You're a blasphemer. You can't do that. That's against the rules. You cannot claim to be God."

The sad part of it is that from the beginning of Jesus' ministry to the cross, His steps were dogged constantly by the implacable feet of these foes who thirsted for His blood. And He never let up. You know, that kind of grace is astounding, isn't it? I mean, He just never let up. He kept on making His claims. He kept on doing these things until He finally died for us. Such grace.

But their brains were so contaminated by their conclusion about Christ, that all of His works were meaningless. They couldn't see anything that meant anything they were so contaminated by the preconclusion that He was not God. "You make Yourself God," they said.

Well, they knew what He was claiming, no question about it. He was claiming to be God. They were right. And as I say, the Jews got the message and a lot of people today who come around trying to tell you that Jesus never claimed to be God just don't really know as much as the blind, unbelieving Jews do. They regarded Jesus as a mere man who committed the terrible sin of claiming to be God. And this was to be punished by death.

Isn't it an amazing thing, though, how unbelief disqualifies all the evidence? Isn't that interesting? Have you ever tried to talk to somebody about Christ and you've given them evidence, and evidence, and prophecy, and science, and miracles, and your experience and what Christ - and they just nothing, zero, zonk, nothing? You know, unbelief eliminates all the possibility of evidence.

These Jews never even considered His deeds. They were totally plagued with His blasphemous utterance and they could have cared less about what He did. They didn't even see the deeds in their perspective. They heard what they wanted to hear. He claimed to be God and they're ready to kill Him.

So we see the confrontation, the claim, and the charge. Then we see the challenge. And this is really good. Jesus challenges them. He challenges them to be objective. He challenges them with objectivity. Now let me show you what I mean by this. And Jesus really takes the bull by the horns here and gives us a very good passage to use in terms of dealing with people who are considering Christ.

Now there's two different kinds of approaches to any problem. One is the subjective approach, and the other is the objective. The subjective approach means that you have a preconceived conclusion and then you accept the evidence which supports that and throw out all the rest, see? In other words, don't bother me. I have my mind made up. Don't confuse me with the facts. That's the kind of attitude it is.

And you know what the point is? Here you have this approach to Jesus. The Jews said, "You aren't God. You're a blasphemer, therefore all your miracles didn't happen." See? Or, "The devil did them." You see, that's subjective. That's like going to your laboratory as a scientist and saying, "I think all of these ingredients will make Pepsi-Cola, I know they will," and just pour it all in there, and blow your brains out. That's not how you do research. You don't start with a preconceived conclusion, and then disregard the facts. That's subjective research. Objective says, "Aha - " unbiased " - I take the facts and they lead to a conclusion." Jesus says, "Listen, folks, will you be objective about Me?" This is what He's going to say in these verses. "Will you just be objective? Will you get rid of this preconceived idea?"

This is what people do to Jesus. "Wow, Jesus isn't the Son of God." How do you know? "Well, I know He's not the Son of God." Oh, you've read - I always say to people, "You must have studied the Bible a long time to come to that conclusion." "Well, no. I haven't really studied the Bible. I just know." That - you can't come to any conclusions subjectively, all you're going to do is eliminate all the evidence because it doesn't fit your already conclusion, see?

So Jesus tells them to be objective, and He does it from two angles, and I want you to see it in verse 34. Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, I said, you're God?" By the "law" He means the Old Testament. Here He quotes Psalm 82:6.

He says, "Well look here, fellows. You're all really bent out of shape because I claim to be God. God is only a word. I mean, God, of course, is a person, but the term that designates God, G-O-D, or whatever it may be - " theos in the Greek " - it's only a word. It's only a term. What are you so uptight about just because I claim to be God? I mean, after all - " now watch the reasoning here, verse 34, " - In your Old Testament, in your Old Testament, is it not written ye are gods?"

Now what does He mean by that? Here it comes, you've got to get this or you won't understand these three verses. In the Old Testament there were certain judges that were set to rule over Israel. They were to effect justice. And these judges had the responsibility of judging the people of Israel. They were like magistrates. They judged in the place of God who was, you know, the supreme judge. Any justice they did was God's justice. Any judgment they gave was God's judgment. Any rebellion against them was rebellion against God. They ruled in the place of God, and so they were called in the Old Testament "gods." It's just a term that means authority or rule. They were called "gods." And so the term referred, then, to those judges of Israel. They received their office by divine appointment. They were called "gods" since they ruled in the place of God.

Now, watch verse 35, "If he called them gods, - " that is human judges, okay? "If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, - " right? Those guys who were already on earth were called gods, and to them the word came " - and the Scripture can't be broken." In other words, He throws that in lest they say, "Well, that was a mistake. Didn't mean to call them gods. Using the wrong word.

Probably the writer got mixed up.” No, no.

Jesus reminds them you can't mess with Scripture, that's what it says. If he called them gods, and the Scripture doesn't error, if he called them gods, and all they were were human judges - now look at verse 36, “Say ye of Him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?” You see what He's saying here?

These guys were on earth to start with and they were called gods. Can't I even be called “Son of God” when I was up there to start with? In other words, He says if your own Old Testament, fellas - if you're all bugged about this idea of calling somebody God - if your own Old Testament called human judges “gods,” you think maybe your Messiah might be called the Son of God? Pretty good argument.

And He takes them right at the point of their law. “Be objective,” He says. “There are many judges. There is only one Messiah. May I not have the same title that your magistrates had?”

They were all bugged about this one little word. Jesus says, “Just consider the insignificance of that word in terms of your own people. Don't get tied down to one word. If your judges could be called ‘gods,’ are you going to call Me a blasphemer because I say I'm the ‘Son of God’ when your judges were here on earth and the word came to them, and I came from there with the Word? Don't I deserve even a greater title?”

Then He tells them to be objective in another way. This is really good, verse 37. Here's the objective approach to Christ. You want to look at the facts. “If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not.” Now that's what He said. Just that simple.

If you're wondering whether Jesus is God, look at His life, go ahead. Jesus is not ashamed to open that up. There's the acid test. But don't come with some kind of preconceived conclusion based on your own little fertile brain that Jesus isn't God. Start objectively and look at the facts.

Jesus says, “If I do not the works of My Father, then don't believe Me. But - ” verse 38 “ - if I do, though you believe not Me, believe the works.” At least have honest research. Start with the works and if they are true, “Then that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.” Jesus says if you just be objective, you can come to the right answers, doesn't He? Don't even believe Me to start with. Just put Me out.

Listen, friend, if you really want to know Jesus Christ and you're really honest - now if you're a phony about it and your belief is willful and established, we can't do anything for you, neither can God. If you honestly want to know the truth of Jesus Christ, you can start from the objective standpoint. You pick up your Bible, and you read the four gospels, and you read the deeds of Jesus Christ.



And when you're done with that, then you find some Christian, and you sit down with that Christian, and you have that Christian tell you of the miraculous things that Christ has done in his life, and in the lives of thousands and millions of Christians throughout history. And then having charted the deeds that He did, then you see the conclusion is He can be no other than God in human flesh. All you have to do is be objective when you approach Jesus Christ.

But so many people have a predetermined subjectivity based on the love of their own sin and their own ego that they never can get to the truth. Jesus says, "Be objective. Start by believing the works that I do, and then you'll know that I am God. The Father is in Me and I in Him."

So we see the confrontation and inquiry; the claim, deity; the charge, blasphemy; the challenge, objectivity; lastly and very brief, the consequence, polarity. Every time Jesus made some devastating claims, boy, the crowd just went to the extremes. And you have two poles. They polarized here. Verse 39, this is the first group that we see in this last section, "Therefore they sought again to take Him: but He escaped out of their hands."

I don't know where He went or how He got away, but He did. I'm sure they were wondering what happened, too. He was gone. Now that's one group. You know, there are some people that are incensed by the claims of Christ. They hate Jesus in a flagrant kind of unbelief. Somebody told me this morning after I preached the sermon at the door that they had a teacher at school that got up and said, "I willfully reject God," and went on to talk about hating God. Well that's one pole, friends, and there are a lot more people at that pole than we would like to think and they're helpless, and they're hopeless, and they're damned to hell forever.

But there's another pole, verse 40, this is a beautiful little scene, three verses long. Well He left, escaped from Jerusalem, never going to come back until He came back on Palm Sunday, and they hailed Him King, and a few days later nailed Him to a cross. "He went away again - " maybe He had been there for the two months prior, " - beyond the Jordan into the place where John had first baptized; and there He abode."

You know, I believe that that was the place where He first met John, wasn't it? Back up there in Perea by Bethany and near Jordan. Jesus went back there. He started there. Three years later He went back there. In all the three years of His faithful, loving, tender ministry, hatred, violence, abuse, the threat of death, and He went back, and it looks like there was nothing different than when He left.

Boy, the life of Jesus Christ in that measure was tragic, wasn't it? Just tragic. I'm sure if Jesus wept other places, that He must have wept here, because three years later Israel's unbelief was set in cement, established and He went away. That's the final break.

Well, God wouldn't leave Jesus Christ with that kind of sorrow and anxiety, and we see a story of a little glorious revival that took place up there where John used to be, verse 41. "And many resorted unto Him, and said, John did no miracle." They all remembered John the Baptist. "But all things that John spoke of this man were true." In other words, John wasn't the Messiah but, boy, when John spoke about Him, he was right, He is. And verse 42, "And many - " what? " - believed on Him there."

I'm so glad that verse is there, aren't you? I mean, I would just hate to end the public ministry of Jesus Christ with all that hatred and violence. I'd just like to think that God had a little flock of His sheep stuck up there near Jordan and Jesus left Jerusalem and gathered that little flock.

You know what verse describes that record? Listen to this. "He was in the world, the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own and His own - " what? " - received Him not." He left Jerusalem. They didn't want a thing to do with Him. The very next verse, John 1:12 says, "But as many as received Him, to them gave He the power to become the sons of God, even them that believe on His name." That's exactly what you have here. They didn't believe Him in Jerusalem. He came unto His own. His own received Him not. He moved up there beyond Jordan, and there were some who did believe, and to them He gave the right to become the sons of God.

You know, it's still that way, friends. The mass of people don't want Jesus Christ. They're preprogrammed to unbelief. But here and there there are those who receive Christ and have the right to become the sons of God. Oh what a beautiful thing it is. I'm so glad that the ministry of Christ didn't end on a dark note, but that Jesus was not frustrated because what He did not do in Jerusalem He did everywhere where there was faith.

And the same is true today. Though the mass of the world may not receive Jesus Christ, there are still some all over the world every day coming into the fold of Christ. No, God's plan is not frustrated no matter what the devil does, and that's great to know that, isn't it?

Father, we thank You this morning for Your Word, teaching us again truths so important. Father, bless us as we close this service and speak to our hearts and cause us to respond in Christ's name. Amen.

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