
John 10:22-23

At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon.

The feast of the dedication is what we call Chanukah. This celebration commemorates the rededication of the Temple after it had been desecrated by an evil Grecian ruler named Antiochus Epiphanes. This man had sacrificed a pig on the altar and spread its blood all over the Temple. This was one of the darkest times in Jewish history. It is said that the temple lay inactive for 3 years while the priests meticulously cleaned every part of the Temple.

It is now winter, which means we have jumped from September and the Feast of Tabernacles to mid December. John makes sure we know that Jesus came to Jerusalem for each of the big feasts—all in accordance with the law. He came to the feast of Passover in ***John 2:13***; the feast of Pentecost alluded to in ***John 5:1***; the feast of Tabernacles in ***John 7:9-10***, and now the feast of dedication.

John 10:24-25

The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me.

It should be clear by now that this line of questioning is spurious. They really have no interest in the truth—was He or wasn't He the Christ—they just wanted

Jesus to say something that they could use to accuse Him and turn Him into the Romans. They wanted Jesus out of the picture; His teachings were threatening their system of rule.

In response, Jesus first said: “*I told you; and you do not believe.*” When, when did He tell them? Did we miss something? So far He has not blatantly said “I Am the Messiah” but He has said plenty that there should be absolutely no doubt in their minds as to what He has attested. This just proves that their questioning has nothing to do with a desire to know the truth; they just want Him to say the “magic words” that will provide them grounds for legal indictment (which by the way He finally said at His trial and this gave the religious leaders the legal standing to drag Jesus before Pilot). So what has Jesus specifically said, in the presence of these religious leaders? To Nicodemus, one of their own He said:

John 3:13-18

No one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the Son of Man has come down from heaven. And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life. "For God loved the world so much that he gave his ***one and only*** Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. There is no judgment awaiting those who trust Him.

Then during the feast of Pentecost, He said:

John 5:19-23

"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing. In fact, the Father will show him how to do even greater works than healing this man. Then you will truly be astonished. For just as the Father gives life to those he raises from the dead, so the Son gives life to anyone he wants. In addition, the Father judges no one. Instead, he has given the Son absolute authority to judge, so that everyone will honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son is certainly not honoring the Father who sent him.

John 5:26-29

The Father has life in himself, and he has granted that same life-giving power to his Son. And he has given him authority to judge everyone because he is the Son of Man. Don't be so surprised! Indeed, the time is coming when all the dead in their graves will hear the voice of God's Son, and they will rise again.

Then during the feast of Tabernacles Jesus said:

John 7:28-29; 33-34

"Yes, you know me, and you know where I come from. But I'm not here on my own. The one who sent me is true, and you don't know him. But I know him because I come from him, and he sent me to you."... "I will be with you only a

little longer. Then I will return to the one who sent me. You will search for me but not find me. And you cannot go where I am going."

John 8:12, 19, 23-24

"I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."..."Since you don't know who I am, you don't know who my Father is. If you knew me, you would also know my Father." "You are from below; I am from above. You belong to this world; I do not. That is why I said that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I AM who I claim to be, you will die in your sins."

John 8:28-29, 42-43

When you have lifted up the Son of Man on the cross, then you will understand that I AM he. I do nothing on my own but say only what the Father taught me. And the one who sent me is with me—he has not deserted me. For I always do what pleases him...."If God were your Father, you would love me, because I have come to you from God. I am not here on my own, but he sent me.

John 8:51, 58

I tell you the truth, anyone who obeys my teaching will never die!"... "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was even born, I AM!"

John 10:7, 9, 11

I assure you, I am the gate for the sheep...Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. I am the good shepherd.

Jesus said things that no mere man could claim; and, as we know, they have already tried to kill Him. So it is clear to me they clearly understood His claims. Moreover, since Jesus drew from their own history, they also clearly understood all the idioms He used which were direct references to the Messiah: light, bread, water, the Son, the judge, the I Am, from above verses from below, the gate, and the good Shepherd. But none of that mattered, they were trying to coax Jesus to say the “magic words”—the words that the Romans could understand; words upon which He could be legitimately prosecuted.

Jesus also told them in *verse 25*, “*the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me.*” The supernatural had been performed in their midst all for the purpose of validating His claims to be the “I Am”—the Son of God. The miracles, the healings, the supernatural provision were for the purpose of convincing those who were both witnesses and participants that someone was in their presence that was greater than Abraham, greater than Moses, greater than the Prophets, and greater than any of the religious leaders in their incredible history. These works were a testimony that the Father had indeed sent His one and only Son.

This is very important to understand. Signs, wonders, miracles, and healings have always been for the purpose of validating the presence of God or ushering in a new move of God. Tracing the 4,000 years or so of Biblical history, we see that God always invaded the natural with the supernatural when He wanted us to understand that He was at work and we had better pay attention. Such great acts

always point us to God and are for the purpose of compelling us to follow God (*1 Corinthians 14:3*). The great acts are not an end unto themselves.

Similarly, our end, our goal, our focus is to abide with Christ so that we might be conformed into His image. If He desires to gift us and use us to perform signs, miracles, healings and wonders, then praise the Lord for it gives Him the glory. But we must never let it become our glory. It must never become an idol in our lives and the means through which we find our identity. Our identity must come in being loved by God and not in how God chooses to use us. Remember, He was willing to use a donkey to perform the supernatural; so the vehicle through which God chooses to work is really not the point.

Besides, as we read in *1 Corinthians 12* and *14*, it is possible to use your gifts in a total fleshy manner that builds up the “me” instead of building up the body. God grants us gifts but it is up to us to decide if we are going to present ourselves to God or present ourselves to our *Old Nature* in utilizing those gifts. So the presence of great supernatural acts in a person’s life is in no way a commentary on the godliness or authenticity of the person being used; rather, they only serve to validate the power, mercy, and love of God for fallen man.

I urge you to be careful. As God starts to use you in supernatural ways, do not get so caught up in what is happening that it becomes an area of pride in your life. Rather, as He uses you, enjoy it immensely but always let it draw you closer in dependence on the Lord. Let those great works remind you of your total need for His life to be in yours. In addition, although Jesus did many great works we cannot forget that He only did what His Father told Him to do. He was not driven by need, opportunity, gifting, or desire to be used by God. He *always* only did specifically what His Father assigned Him to do; and, as we saw in John 5 when Jesus went to the pool of Bethesda, there were many people that He just did not heal.

John 10:26-29

"But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

Even though Jesus seems to recap what He said in His last trip to Jerusalem and He continues with the sheep motif, He adds something very critical to our understanding. This promise of eternal life which He makes to you and to me is something that can never be withdrawn, removed, taken away, or even put at risk. When we enter into the *sheepfold* through the *gate*, our eternity is secure. Not only do we fall under the Son's personal protection, we also fall under the Father's personal protection. It was the Father who chose us before the foundation of the earth and gave us to His Son; and He will ensure that every gift that He has given to His Son will remain.

No one will snatch us out of the Son's hand. The verb "will" is in the future active indicative tense, meaning that it is simply not going to happen now or ever and this is a statement of fact! Moreover, no one is even able to snatch us out of the Father's hand—that is a physical, spiritual, and practical impossibility! The Greek says that no one or nothing even has the power to do such a thing, for the Father is literally greater than everyone and everything. The verb "is able" is in the present active indicative tense; which means that this is always true all the time. So the thought of us being taken captive by Satan, or any other created being, and having

our redemption in any way put at jeopardy is a double impossibility. If you belong to the Son then you belong to the Son and not even you can do anything about it. Not even you are big enough, bad enough, mean enough, or sinful enough, to remove you from either the Father's or the Son's loving care and protection of your eternity. Peter knew this to be true. He denied His Lord, and yet He could write that our inheritance is imperishable, undefiled and will not fade away reserved in heaven for we are protected by the power of God for a salvation to be revealed in the last days (*1 Peter 1:3-5*).

Furthermore, this truth is one of the most important aspects of your spiritual armor. *Ephesians 6:17* says that we are to put on salvation as our helmet. Remember, we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places and they want to mess up your head. If they can get you to believe the lie that your salvation is in any way at risk, it's like lopping off your head, and then they will get you to either 1) quit altogether (thinking that you have blown it so bad there is no recovery) or 2) start trying real hard to do things right because you are afraid that you might lose this promise. But either way, this lie will eat away at your ability to live in the freedom, power, mercy, and grace that has been given to you through Jesus' death on the cross. An effective dismantling of this truth will push you into either hard core religious legalism or absolute despair and you will no longer experience the peace that comes when, by faith, Jesus simply lives His life through you.

So hold on to this truth, it is powerful and it will keep you safe. You know it is a critical truth because Jesus emphasized it with this statement of double impossibility as if He was saying, I promise, I cross my heart, I pinky swear, you are safe now and forever—no one will take you away from me. I know you, I

chose you, you are the Father's gift to me, and we will be together always. So don't worry and don't listen to the lies.

John 10:30

"I and the Father are one."

This little phrase just put the capstone on this whole discussion and in essence seals the reasons Jesus could state that no one will take us from His hands. Now, don't be mistaken, Jesus is not saying that He is the Father and that the Father is the Son. No, that is a Unitarian view that is not supported by this text or the rest of the Bible. In the Greek, the word for one, "*heis*," is used. As we studied last week, it is a numerical word, but in this case this adjective is not in the Greek masculine (as in *verse 16* where Jesus said the flock will have one shepherd) but it is in the Greek neutered. In other words, Jesus is not saying the Father and I are one person; rather, we are one thing. We are one in nature and essence; one in all attributes of the godhead and one in all operation of those attributes.

This truth is critical to our understanding of God and is supported all the way back in *Genesis 1:1*: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The word for God is in the masculine plural and not the singular. God wanted us to understand how important this concept of the Godhead is that He put it at the very beginning of the Bible. And although the Godhead moves in absolute oneness, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are separate unique individuals.

Now that we have the theology clear, the religious leaders listening to Jesus understood exactly what He was claiming and they were angry. And although He did not say the "magic words" which were needed to drag Him before the Romans,

they were so incensed that they immediately took matters into their own hands and tried to kill Him.

John 10:31-33

The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?"

The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God."

Jesus knew exactly why they were mad, but He wraps the discussion back around to the supernatural works that He does. Why do you think He does this? I think He is making the point that His works are good; thus, He must be good and they should know it. In contrast, they are not good and never will be good and that is demonstrated by their deeds which do not come from the Father above; but, as He said in ***John 8:44*** come from their father the Devil. After all, they were going to stone Him right there in the Temple, which according to ***Leviticus 24:14-16*** was unlawful (I believe that is why John told us up front that Jesus was hanging out in Solomon's porch—it was not just an incidental fact). To do their dirty deed lawfully Jesus would have to be stoned outside of the city. Thus, they once again prove that their pretense regarding the Law is just for show; they do not really care about the Law, they care about their personal agenda.

Jesus then puts the exclamation mark on this point by really messing with their heads and their so called adherence to the Law.

John 10:34-36

Jesus answered them, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I SAID, YOU ARE GODS'? "If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"

Jesus invokes the entire Law—not the Torah (the first 5-books) which the phrase “Law” normally refers to—but the entire Old Testament for He quotes from *Psalm 82*. In so doing He gives the same authority to the rest of the Old Testament as He does to the Torah. But notice He also says “in your Law” and not in “the” Law. I think He is doing this to be factious and is merely making the point that they use the Law however they want. They do not let “the” Law be authoritative over their lives; rather, they pick the pieces that they want to apply in their lives and ignore the rest or they determine the times when it is convenient to enforce it. But either way, the Law does not reside in their hearts as the absolute “truth;” hence, Jesus says, “your Law.” Let’s look at this passage that Jesus quotes. I have included the Hebrew name for God so we can follow along and understand this passage.

Psalm 82:1-8

“Elohim [God] stands in the congregation of El [God]:

He judges among the elohim [judges/angels/gods]:

‘How long will you judge unjustly?...

I have said, “You are elohim [judges/angels/gods],

All of you are sons of the Most High.”

Nevertheless you will die like a man
And fall like one of the princes.’
Arise, Elohim [God (the Judge)], and judge the earth,
For you will inherit all the nations.”

This word Elohim, which we generally have translated big “G” God, is used interchangeably in this text with little “g” god. However, to avoid confusion, many translations use the word judge when the text is clearly talking about someone other than the one supreme big “G” God. This is ok because this is how this word Elohim is used in other places. In *Exodus 21:6* Elohim is used when referencing the master of a slave. In *Exodus 22:8* it refers to a magistrate, a judge who will decide legal matters.

So why do you think Jesus pulled out this esoteric verse? It sounds like He was playing mind games with them. And He may have been, but I believe that ultimately it was to drive home His point of their hypocrisy. Jesus adds the phrase: “and the Scripture cannot be broken” highlighting how they have been willing to break the Law so many times before, whenever it served their purposes, and they are ready to do it again and He wanted everyone to know it.

They threaten their own people not to speak favorably of Jesus or else they will be barred from Temple worship. They expelled a man from the Temple who had been born blind but healed. They coaxed the lawyers to join them in a conspiracy to trap Jesus and violated the Law by dragging only the woman who was “caught” in adultery before Jesus for judgment leaving the man to go free. And they have been trying to kill Jesus on many occasions and in this passage they were ready to stone Him right there in the Temple in complete violation of the Law. They are hypocrites and He was taking this verse and putting it in their faces. If evil man

whose judgment is so wacked out can be called a god, how much more so is Jesus who does inherently good works which come from the Father?

John 10:36-39

Why do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father." Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp.

Although He refused to use the “magic words,” Jesus clearly answered their original question. First He established the fact that the Father sanctified or set apart the Son. In the same way that they were all in Jerusalem to celebrate Chanukah, that time when the Temple was set apart as holy unto the Lord, so Jesus was set apart as Holy unto the Father’s purposes. Then Jesus said that the Father sent Him “into” the world. Make no mistake, the Son was not from the world like Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, Isaiah or any of the other Biblical greats; rather, He arrived here from above and entered into this natural realm via the command of the Father. Jesus is from heaven and we are not (***John 8:23***)! He reveals to us what He saw or discerned when He was with His Father (***John 8:38***). Then Jesus connects the dots by saying: “I am the Son of God.” This is sort of a triple affirmation of the deity of Christ. He was set apart, He was sent, and He is the one and only Son of God. He gave them the “plain” answer they asked for, but they would not believe it!

Jesus then makes a plea to their intellect and reason. Ok, sure, you might have a hard time understanding that God dwells among you as one of your own, a man. I can understand that, that is a strange thing indeed. But still you can believe based on the signs that can only be performed by the hand of God. Search your history you will know it to be true. No man can perform such good and great feats. For example, “Never since the world began has anyone been able to open the eyes of someone born blind. If this man were not from God, he couldn’t do it” (*John 9:32-33*).

Now comes the challenging question. Could they have believed? Jesus already said that they were not part of His flock. Yet, we see that Jesus invited them and urged them to believe, even if it was only on the basis of the intellect. But they refused to believe proving that logic does not matter, evidence does not matter, reason does not matter, miracles, signs, and wonders do not matter; it is all about the heart. They did not have hearts that were open to the Word of God. To them the Word was a tool—a weapon to yield for their own purposes. They claim all the while to see and Jesus just proves that they are truly blind. This is why in *John 5:30* Jesus said that on the day that He judges, His judgment will be entirely just; the evidence will be irrefutable—they refused to believe thus they could not believe.

John 10:40-42

And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there. Many came to Him and were saying, "While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true." Many believed in Him there.

So Jesus eluded capture once again; for it was not His time and He went to a territory that was outside of the jurisdiction of the religious leaders. Now, those in the area of the Jordan river who remember John's teachings understood that everything John said about Jesus was true so many believed in Him there. This take all of us back to the early part of this gospel where John drives home the difference between those who believe by hearing, those who believe by seeing, and those who simply won't believe.

As we close, let's take that to mind. Are you living as one who believes and follows, or are you still waiting for God to prove something to you and if He does, will it ever be enough? He has proved Himself enough, it is time for all of us to let Him be our "I Am"—our sufficiency for all that we could ever need.

Let's Pray.