

## John 10:22 – 42

<sup>10:22</sup> At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; <sup>23</sup> it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. <sup>24</sup> 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.’ <sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> But you do not believe because you are not of my sheep. <sup>27</sup> My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; <sup>28</sup> and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one.’ <sup>31</sup> The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. <sup>32</sup> Jesus answered them, ‘I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning me?’ <sup>33</sup> 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.’ <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, ‘Has it not been written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’? <sup>35</sup> If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), <sup>36</sup> 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’? <sup>37</sup> If I do not do the works of my Father, do not believe me; <sup>38</sup> 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.’ <sup>39</sup> Therefore they were seeking again to seize him, and he eluded their grasp. <sup>40</sup> And he went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and he was staying there. <sup>41</sup> Many came to him and were saying, ‘While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true.’ <sup>42</sup> Many believed in him there.

### Context:

- The Feast of Dedication is also known as ‘Hannukah’ and the ‘Festival of Lights’ and the ‘Feast of the Maccabees.’ It was a Jewish festival observed for eight days from the 25th of Kislev (which falls between late November to late December). It was instituted by Judas Maccabeus, his brothers, and the elders of Israel in 165 BC to commemorate the reconsecration of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem, and especially the altar of burnt offering. The Temple and the altar had been desecrated by Greek invader Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 BC. During the festival, Jews lit candles and lanterns in houses and synagogues, probably gestures taken from the Feast of Tabernacles, and recited Psalm 30:1 – 12, which is David’s praise to God for delivering him from death.
- The phrase, ‘I said, ‘You are gods’’ comes from Psalm 82:6, which continues, ‘And all of you are sons of the Most High.’ In Psalm 82, God is rebuking Israel’s political rulers and judges for being corrupt. Also, Psalm 2:7 declared each king of Israel to be God’s ‘son’. Jesus’ point is that the terms ‘gods’ and ‘sons of the Most High’ are honorific titles for rulers.
- The title of ‘shepherd’ was a title of both God (Ezk.34:11 – 16) and the Messiah (Ezk.34:23 – 24; Jer.23:1 – 6).

## Questions

1. How does the motif of light continue from John 8:12 – 51? How is Jesus shedding light on himself? Is he shedding light, or obscuring it?
2. Do you think Jesus is speaking plainly? How does he make his case?
  - a. He is walking in the portico of Solomon. Solomon was the royal son of David. Jesus is the ultimate royal son of David. The place is significant symbolically.
  - b. What are the many ‘good works’ (10:25, 32) that Jesus showed Israel? He cleansed the Temple (2:12 – 25), healed the official’s son of sickness (4:43 – 54), made the lame man walk (5:1 – 15), fed the five thousand with bread in the wilderness (6:1 – 14), walked on water (6:15 – 21), gave sight to the blind (9:1 – 41). These are things that God said He would do. Now, when you read Isaiah 35 and 42 and 61, or Ezekiel 34, you can get the impression that God would do all these miracles at once. But He is doing them through Jesus, as people come into relationship with Jesus. That is still a claim to represent God the Father.
  - c. Illus: In the movie *The Tourist*, with Angelina Jolie and Johnny Depp, there is an analogy. Depp plays a man who gives clues to his former love about who he is. He says in a letter, ‘Find a man with my height and build.’ Then she finds him on a train. Then he reveals himself to her at the end. He knows the secret combination to a safe that only he would know. Finally he expresses his love for her.
  - d. The manner in which he leads his followers, his ‘sheep.’ He is gathering the outcasts, the rejected. And he sees who they are; he knows them. Jesus saw something in Simon so he called him Peter in 1:35 – 42; Jesus saw Nathanael under the fig tree in 1:43 – 51, Jesus knew what is in all men according to 2:24 – 25; Jesus unnerved Nicodemus with that knowledge in 3:1 – 21; Jesus knew the Samaritan woman’s relational patterns in 4:1 – 30. Everyone who encounters Jesus realizes that he knows them better than they know themselves. But they know he knows who they truly are and who they could become, with him. For some, that knowledge is unnerving.
  - e. The Jewish leaders would have sharply questioned why Jesus hangs out with outcasts and sinners. But Jesus is saying that this is part of his argument. God said He would gather outcasts and sinners (e.g. Isaiah 35; Ezekiel 34; Psalm 107; etc.). What’s more, it’s what we say about Jesus knowing us that actually becomes part of Jesus’ argument for himself being the Messiah.
  - f. Reflection: How has Jesus treated you as a shepherd?
  - g. Notice that Jesus’ case is very relational. He claims to be acting on behalf of the Father in his miracles, to represent the Father and to contain and be contained by the Father. He also says that he has a relationship with his sheep that no one else does.
  - h. Illus: Napoleon expressed the following thoughts while he was exiled on the rock of St. Helena. There, the conqueror of civilized Europe had time to reflect on the measure of his accomplishments. He called an aide, Count Montholon, to his side and asked him, ‘Can you tell me who Jesus Christ was?’ The count declined to respond. Napoleon said: ‘Well then, I will tell you. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and I myself have founded great empires; but upon what did these creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this very day millions will die for Him... I think I understand something of human nature; and I tell you, all these were men, and I am a man; none else is like Him: Jesus Christ was more than a man... I have inspired multitudes with such an enthusiastic devotion that they would have died for me... but to do this it was necessary that I should be visibly present with the electric influence of my looks, my words, of my voice. When I saw men and spoke to them, I lightened up the flame of self-devotion in their hearts... Christ alone has succeeded in so raising the mind of man toward the unseen, that it becomes insensible to the barriers of time and space. Across a chasm of eighteen hundred years, Jesus Christ makes a demand which is beyond all others difficult to satisfy; He asks for that which a philosopher may often seek in vain at the hands of his friends, or a father of his children, or a bride of her spouse, or a man of his brother. He asks for the human heart; He will have it entirely to Himself. He demands it unconditionally; and forthwith His demand is granted. Wonderful! In defiance of time and space, the soul of man, with all its powers and faculties, becomes an annexation to the empire of Christ. All who sincerely believe in Him, experience that remarkable, supernatural love toward Him. This phenomenon is unaccountable; it is altogether beyond the scope of man’s creative powers. Time, the great destroyer, is powerless to extinguish this sacred flame; time can neither exhaust its strength nor put a limit to its range. This is it, which strikes me most; I have often thought of it. This it is

which proves to me quite convincingly the Divinity of Jesus Christ.’ (Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods* (Nashville, Tennessee: W. Publishing Group, 2000), quoting from Henry Parry Liddon, *Liddon’s Bampton Lectures 1866* (London: Rivingtons, 1869), p.148).

3. Why do the Jewish leaders reject Jesus?
  - a. The charge of blasphemy. They don’t like how he spoke about his relationship with God the Father.
  - b. How does Jesus respond? He doesn’t totally answer the question, but he does challenge them on their textual case. He is playing a textual chess match with them, and easily wins. He says that the Scriptures themselves, in Psalm 2 and 82, call Jewish rulers ‘gods’ and ‘sons of God.’ There is an intimacy with God that the Scriptures attest to. Jesus’ basic point is, ‘So what’s the problem?’
  - c. Notice that Jesus could have left out this bit about being one with the Father. Why does he press it? Is it possible that more people would have accepted his claim to royalty without the claim to divinity?
  - d. But Jesus wants to establish both his royalty and his divinity. This will become essential over time. It isn’t the right time now to do a full self-disclosure. But he has given hints with the ‘I am’ statements, even in the Temple two months prior to this, in John 8:58, ‘Before Abraham was, I am.’ He will repeat that claim to divinity much more openly and powerfully when he is arrested in the garden in John 18:5, 6, and 8.
  - e. Jesus unites royalty and divinity because the Old Testament left it open. It is possible to read Ezekiel 34 and conclude that the Messiah was acting on God’s behalf, or representing God, by being the shepherd. Not many people would assume just by reading the Old Testament that the Messiah is God enfleshed in humanity. But Jesus is making sure that his disciples understand that very thing.
  - f. Hence, Jesus is taking away the Jewish leadership’s scriptural objection to him claiming special intimacy with God. He is not elaborating on what he just said. But he is buying time to make a fuller argument.
  - g. Jesus challenged their self-concept, power, and role.
  - h. What they especially don’t like is the union with the Father claim.
4. Application: It was not a convincing argument for Jesus to say ‘I am God.’ It was not essential to the claim to be Messiah, either. Men who claimed to be the Jewish Messiahs could easily make a compelling case for royalty without making a case for divinity. It was, after all, very possibly and more than natural to read Ezekiel and view the Messiah as representing, or acting on behalf of, God, but not to be God Himself. That was popularly considered blasphemy. Why do skeptics think that the Christian disciples invented the idea? It would not have helped their cause to win others to Jesus. Hence, it is much more understandable as Jesus’ own claim, not words put into his mouth by later disciples.