

20. Jesus and the Father are One

John 10:22-42

The Gospel According to John

Two months had gone by since Jesus spoke of Himself as the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-21). John the Apostle now brings up another confrontation between Jesus and the Jewish leaders in the temple courts. It happened at the Festival of Dedication or Hanukah (v. 22). This festival had no biblical origin but occurred in the intervening years between Old and New Testaments in 164 BC. The Festival of Dedication (Hanukah) was so named because it commemorated the time of the rededication of the Temple called the Festival of Lights, which is celebrated in the winter. □

²²Then came the Festival of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon's Colonnade. ²⁴The Jews who were there gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly." ²⁵Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me, ²⁶but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. ²⁷My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one." ³¹Again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him, ³²but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" ³³"We are not stoning you for any good work," they replied, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God" (John 10:22-33).

Is Jesus the Messiah?

At 2,500 feet above the Mediterranean Sea level, December is a cold time of the year in Jerusalem. Every Jew is very familiar with the fact that Hanukah is in the wintertime, so the statement seems a bit redundant. It could be that John mentions this for the sake of the Gentiles who would not be familiar with the timing of Hanukah, or it could be that John wanted to set the scene by telling us that it was cold. It does occasionally snow in Jerusalem in the winter months. (I once had a snowball fight on the Mount of Olives just a few hundred yards from the Temple Mount!)

Imagine the setting for this confrontation. The spiritual atmosphere was dark, and there was a cold spiritual chill in the air toward Jesus. It is likely that this new attack was launched against Jesus after He had taught the early morning Scripture class under the roof of Solomon's Colonnade (v. 23). This Colonnade was on the East side of the Temple Mount. It was a series of columns that stood twenty-five cubits (around thirty-eight feet high) at regular intervals supporting a roof protecting the people from rain or snow. Josephus, the Roman-Jewish historian, tells us that each pillar was of one entire stone each and that stone was white marble. The roofs were adorned with cedar and beautifully carved.¹

Jesus often taught under this beautiful roofed colonnade, and this was also the place where the man at the Beautiful Gate came to rejoice when he was healed after Peter and John prayed for

¹ Josephus, Titus Flavius (*Jewish War* 5.5.2).

him (Acts 3:8-11). This colonnade was also the site where the early believers met together after the Day of Pentecost and the coming of the Spirit upon the new believers (Acts 5:12). □

The Jewish religious leaders gathered around Jesus as if to block His way as they confronted Him with the question, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly” (v. 24).

Question 1) Why would Jesus avoid answering this question publicly with a simple yes or no?

We should not think that this was a genuine desire to know the true identity of Jesus. No, this was a desire to have ammunition to incriminate Him. If they could get Him to say that He was the Messiah there in the Temple Courts, there would be plenty of religious Jews who would bear witness to His words and stone Him for blasphemy. If only they could get Him to say, "I am God," it would have been over. Messiah had revealed His identity to a few individuals in specific encounters. He had said to Nicodemus, for instance, that He was the Son of Man that came down from heaven (John 3:13-14). When Jesus chatted with the Samaritan woman at the well in John, chapter four, the woman said to him, “I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When He comes He will explain everything to us.’ Then Jesus declared, ‘I who speak to you am he’” (John 4:25-26).

When Jesus was at the Feast of Tabernacles, He stated that He knew God and came from Him and was sent by Him. At that time, they had also tried to seize Him (John 7:29-30). Again, in chapter eight of John’s Gospel, He said, “Before Abraham was born I am,” using the divine name that God used when He revealed Himself to Moses (John 8:58). In the other Gospels, also, Jesus declared that to receive Him was to receive God (Matthew 10:40), that to welcome Him was to welcome God (Mark 9:37), and that to have seen Him was to have seen God (John 14:9).

A child once drew a picture, and his mother asked him what he was doing. The child said, “I am drawing a picture of God.” The mother said, “Don’t be silly. You can’t draw a picture of God. No one knows what God looks like.” The child replied, “Well, they will by the time I have finished!” Jesus had said in effect, “If you want to know what God looks like, look at Me.”

The Lord was careful not to say publicly Who He was, but it was evident by the things that He did and His indirect claims that He made Himself known. Take, for instance, the time when He forgave the sins of the paralyzed man:

³Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. ⁵When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, **“Son, your sins are forgiven.”** ⁶Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷“Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! **Who can forgive sins but God alone?”** ⁸Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? ⁹Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? ¹⁰But I want you to know **that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.**” So he said to the

man, ¹¹“I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” ¹²He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!” (Mark 2:3-12).

Notice the magnificent courage of Jesus in this passage of Scripture. He knew that the teachers of the Law were there, yet in the full hearing of all of them, He forgave the man’s sins and healed him, knowing that it would bring a confrontation from the religious Jews.

C.S. Lewis, in his book *Mere Christianity*, has a few thoughts on the above passage:

One part of the claim tends to slip past us unnoticed because we have heard it so often that we no longer see what it amounts to. I mean the claim to forgive sins: any sins. Now unless the speaker is God, this is really so preposterous as to be comic. We can all understand how a man forgives offenses against himself. You tread on my toe, and I forgive you, you steal my money, and I forgive you. But what should we make of a man, himself unrobbed and untrodden on, who announced that he forgave you for treading on other men's toes and stealing other men's money? Extreme foolishness is the kindest description we should give his conduct. Yet, this is what Jesus did. He told people that their sins were forgiven, and never waited to consult all the other people whom their sins had undoubtedly injured. He unhesitatingly behaved as if He was the person chiefly offended in all offenses. This makes sense only if He really was the God whose laws were broken and whose love is wounded in every sin. In the mouth of any speaker who is not God, these words would imply what I can only regard as a silliness and conceit unrivaled by any other character in history.²

Of course, as we study the Book of John, there are plenty of other pieces of evidence that we will discover where Jesus made it clear Who He was and is, deliberately angering the religious Jews with His words, but at this point the Lord had not explicitly and publically stated that He was the Messiah. We must remember that the Jewish people were looking for a warrior King Messiah to deliver them from Roman rule, and a humble servant savior from sin was not on their agenda. The Jewish leaders and Pharisees did not see their need for a savior from sin. The Lord told them that the reason that they did not believe was that they were not His sheep. “**But you do not believe because you are not my sheep**” (v. 26).

Question 2) Isn’t everybody on planet earth a child of God? What do you think Jesus meant when He referred to some who were “not His sheep”? How could the Lord tell that those listening were not of His sheep?

The call has gone out to the whole world to repent and believe the Gospel, but there are some who harden their hearts and have chosen to stubbornly reject God’s offer of a free pardon for their sins. God knows ahead of time who will respond because He knows all things, even those things that are outside of time. It is hard for us to comprehend this, but God does not dwell in the confines of time as we do. He is not limited to knowing only what has been before or what is happening in the present. God's sovereignty and election operate even among those who do not believe. God's sovereignty does not remove their responsibility for their unbelief, nor does it

² C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Published by Simon and Shuster, New York. Page 55.

compromise the invitation to believe, which goes out to all. These men who refused to accept that Jesus was the Messiah had made their choice of whether or not to receive Jesus and acknowledge Him as Savior. The gift of eternal life is freely offered to all who will hear and respond to the call: □

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life (Revelation 22:17).

There are three stages to this act of believing or placing one's trust in Christ that brings about saving faith. First of all, there is listening or hearing His call; secondly, there is intimacy with Him, i.e., God knowing them, and thirdly, there is a call to follow after Him. “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me” (v. 27). Every one of us should look carefully at this verse and be honest with ourselves, for our very eternal lives depend on it. Are we seeking to hear God's Word and respond to it when we listen to it? Are we becoming more and more intimately acquainted with God through Christ? Is our life reflecting our belief by walking in the same way that Jesus lived His life, i.e., seeking to model our life after Him? Are we choosing to be a disciple, a learner? If not, do we honestly believe His Word?

Eternal Security

When we set our hearts no longer to serve ourselves but to be a servant of the Lord Jesus, there is an impartation of His Divine life to us that is a gift from God. The Holy Spirit comes to us, and we are born from above. The Apostle Peter put it like this:

²²Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. ²³For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God (1 Peter 1:22-23).

When we sincerely and unreservedly place our trust in the Lord Jesus, He gives us the gift of eternal life:

²⁸I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one (John 10:28-30).

He didn't say, “If they work hard at being good people, I will give them eternal life.” The Gospel message is about a divine transaction that takes place when sinners believe the Good News, repent of sin, and turn toward and place their trust in Christ. Salvation is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). God does not give and then take it back. It is not dependent on our works or on how well we walk out what we have received. We are given the gift of eternal life from the Lord Jesus, but each of us is also a gift from the Father to the Lord Jesus, for Christ says, “My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand” (v. 29).

There are two beautiful truths here. 1) God has given us to Christ, and we belong to Him. 2) If we are born again of the Spirit and belong to Christ, there is nothing that Satan can do to snatch us back. Jesus said, **“No one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.”** Yes, we can walk away and fall into sin, but a child of God that is born-again no longer wants to walk away. He wants to please the One he loves. Don’t get me wrong: we may still sin as believers, but we don’t have to! We are not bound to sin. The power to overcome sin is resident in us through the Holy Spirit.

As we grow in Christ, we are given strength, grace, and power from God to overcome our sin and our self-life. Edmund Hillary, the first climber of Mount Everest, got it right when he said, "It's not the mountain we conquer but ourselves." Peter the Great of Russia is quoted as saying, "I have been able to conquer an empire, but I have not been able to conquer myself." Hugo Grotius, the Dutch jurist, and scholar said, "A man cannot govern a nation if he cannot govern a city, he cannot govern a city if he cannot govern a family, and he cannot govern himself unless his passions are subject to reason."³ If I fall into habitual sin, God is well able to discipline me and make life so miserable for me that I will want to come back to Him, overcome my sins, and gain victory over self. God’s Word is clear that He can and does discipline us **“because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son”** (Hebrews 12:6). So, the question before us is how does He chasten or discipline us?

Question 3) Have you experienced God’s disciplinary power to turn you back after you have fallen into sin? What made you turn back to Him? How does God use natural consequences of our actions to teach us spiritual lessons?

We know that God is not the author of pain and suffering; however, when we are enticed, drawn away, and sin, we enter enemy territory. This should feel foreign to us as children of God. If we persist in sin, we can expect the natural fallout that will occur as we venture into enemy territory. What we sow, that shall we also reap (Galatians 6:7). God allows our circumstances for us to learn, but in our learning, He is well able to keep us.

According to the Lord Jesus in our passage today, no power on earth can tear us or snatch us out of God's hand. He has never torn up the Christian's birth certificate! The reason no Christian can be snatched out of the Father's hand is that it was the Father Who placed him there. John Cotton once wrote, “It may be that we are sinful; but God did not love us for our goodness, and neither will he cast us off for our wickedness.” We can walk away, but if we are truly born-again and one of His children, God is well able to bring us back and correct our path. God’s seed will come to God’s harvest! If we continue in sin with no feeling of guilt or moral scruple, then we have to ask ourselves if we have ever been truly born again of God’s Spirit. Donald Grey Barnhouse once said, “We do believe in eternal security, but we do not believe in eternal presumption. Let a man examine himself.” John, the Apostle, wrote:

We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the One who was born of God keeps them safe, and the evil one cannot harm them (1 John 5:18).

Christ’s Oneness with the Father

³ Taken from the devotional by Selwyn Hughes, *Every Day with Jesus*, written July Aug 2003, God’s Great Guarantee. Published by Crusade for World Revival.

The Lord was never one to draw away from a fight. He is a man's man. The very thing for which they were looking He gave them with His words, "I and the Father are one" (v. 30). When Jesus said this, they began picking up stones to kill Him. Again, we see the courage of Christ to speak the truth to them whatever the repercussions of His words. The Jewish leaders had come ready for a confrontation and had stones at the ready. Jesus said to them:

"I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For **which of them do you stone me?**" "We are not stoning you for any good work," they replied, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God" (John 10:32-33).

When they accused Jesus of claiming to be God, the Lord did not correct them. If He were only a prophet and not God, He would have said so! After all, He claimed to be the truth: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" (John 14:6). Someone who claimed to be the embodiment of truth would not allow such a grave misunderstanding to be believed about Him. Later, after the crucifixion and resurrection, when the risen Lord appeared to the disciple Thomas, He did not correct Thomas when the disciple fell to his knees in worship exclaiming to Jesus, "My Lord and My God!" (John 20:28). If Jesus were not God, He would have rebuked Thomas for such a blasphemous statement. Instead, the passage indicates that Thomas finally understood Who Jesus was as the Lord invited Thomas to examine His wounds, to stop doubting, and to believe (John 20:26-29).

If I were to ask you what is the chief Scripture that summarizes the Christian faith, you would probably quote, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). If you asked any Jewish person to choose the most important theological Scripture in Judaism, they would quote you, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4). That's why the Jews picked up stones to stone Him because Jesus had said that He and God are One (v. 30) in the very courts of the Temple of God.

When one is talking with Jewish people about Jesus being the Messiah, this can be a significant stumbling block to them, for they believe that Christians hold to a belief in not one but three gods. This kind of thinking is preposterous and blasphemous to the mind of a devout Jew as it should be to a Christian. The Hebrew word translated with the English word *one* in the passage above, Deuteronomy 6:4, is the word *Echad*. This Hebrew word is a compound-unity noun. What that means is that it is a noun that demonstrates unity, and yet is comprised of several parts. We see the word *Echad* used to illustrate a husband and wife becoming **one** flesh (Genesis 2:4). When the twelve spies were sent into the land of Canaan to spy out the land, they wanted to show the fruitfulness of the land, so they cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes. The word **one cluster** is our Hebrew compound word *Echad*. Also, in Ezra 2:64, we are told that "the whole company numbered 42,360." The word **whole company** is this same word, *Echad*.

When God wanted to communicate one and only one, he used a different Hebrew word, the word *Yachid*. We find this word used in the testing of Abraham: "Take your son, your **only** son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah" (Genesis 22:2). There was just one son that God recognized as the heir to the promises of Abraham, i.e., his **only** (*Yachid*) son Isaac, the child of the promise through Sarah, Abraham's wife.

When God wanted to communicate the tri-unity of God, He used the word *Echad*. John, the Apostle, told us about Jesus being in the beginning, “**He was with God in the beginning**” (John 1:2). Do we find God referred to in the plural in Genesis, chapter one? Yes! The Spirit is mentioned as hovering over the waters (Genesis 1:2) and then again in verse 26: “**Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule’**” (Genesis 1:26). The word translated into English as *God* is the Hebrew word *Elohim*, a plural noun. God Himself lives in a community of Oneness. I have used the example before of a human being. The Bible declares that each of us is made up of three parts to our nature: spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23); each of us is one, but we have three different parts to our “oneness.”

The Judge of All Judges

Jesus then responded to their attempt at stoning Him by bringing up a passage of Scripture from the Book of Psalms.

³⁴Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I have said you are “gods”’? ³⁵If he called them ‘gods,’ to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be set aside—³⁶what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’? ³⁷Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father. ³⁸But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.” ³⁹Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp. ⁴⁰Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. There he stayed, ⁴¹and many people came to him. They said, “Though John never performed a sign, all that John said about this man was true.” ⁴²And in that place many believed in Jesus (John 10:34-42).

The passage Jesus quoted from is found in Psalm 82 and speaks about God Himself coming among the judges who thought of their ministry as being gods:

¹God presides in the great assembly; he renders judgment among the “gods”: ²“How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? ³Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. ⁴Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked. ⁵“The ‘gods’ know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. ⁶“I said, ‘You are “gods”’; you are all sons of the Most High.’ ⁷But you will die like mere mortals; you will fall like every other ruler. ⁸Rise up, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are your inheritance (Psalm 82:1-8).

Writer and teacher Chuck Swindoll helps us better understand what Christ is saying to the faithless shepherds and the judges of the Sanhedrin of Israel standing before Him:

The psalmist reminded Israel’s appointed judges that they were like little gods in that the Supreme Judge had appointed them to rule in His stead; therefore, they were accountable to Him. Jesus identified the worthless judges in the psalm as the religious leaders before Him, and He declared Himself to be the fulfillment of the poem’s opening line: “God takes His stand in His own congregation; He judges in the midst of the [‘gods’]” (Psalm

82:1). For these apostate rulers of Israel to judge the Supreme judge was nothing short of blasphemy. It was *they* who should be stoned.⁴

In the Old Testament, the judges were commissioned by God to deliver God's judgment to men. They were to judge in place of God, knowing that they would stand before God one day and be judged by Him as to what they did with such power over men. The Hebrew word Elohim, most commonly translated into the English word *God*, is translated as *judges* in Exodus 21:6. Jesus was saying that, if Scripture can speak like that about men, how much more could the true Son of God speak so of Himself:

Jesus again made it clear to the Jews standing there in Solomon's Colonnade as to His identity that they may "**understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father**" (John 10:38). If it wasn't plain to them before, it was very plain to them then. Jesus said that He is One with the Father. Do you believe Him? Again, their response was to try to seize Him, but He escaped out of their grasp (verses 38-39). When Jesus escaped from their hands, He retreated to a familiar place, i.e., to the place where John baptized and where Jesus' ministry started. This place held a particular significance for Jesus. □

Question 4) Where's your favorite place to go to when you want to be alone to gather your thoughts or be spiritually refreshed?

There is something to be said about returning to specific places where we have encountered God, i.e., times when we need to be alone with our thoughts. For Jesus, it was down in the Jordan Valley where His ministry began, the place where He was baptized, and the Father had spoken audibly to those who witnessed the Spirit coming down upon Him (Matthew 3:16). When those there recalled John the Baptist's words about Jesus, they placed their trust in Him (v. 42).

What about you? Have you yet heard enough evidence as to the true nature of Christ? Have you placed your faith in Him and found Him to be the Good Shepherd of Israel? He stands waiting with His invitation for you to come to Him and find rest (Matthew 11:28-30).

Prayer: Your love amazes us, Lord. How beautiful for us that, You, the King of Heaven should come down and reveal Your love to us in so many ways. We invite You to make Your home in our hearts. Amen.

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⁴ Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's New Testament Insights on John*, published by Zondervan, Page 193.