

Exegesis

Vs. 19-21 – It is now time to see how Jesus' audience responded to his teaching. John tells us that the crowd was unevenly divided into two camps. In the first camp, we're told that there were "many" who denied his teaching, which would imply they were the larger of the two sides. These cynics responded by saying that Jesus has "a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?" Claiming that Jesus was possessed and a lunatic was the religious leader's go-to slur whenever they didn't know how to respond (cf. 7:20; 8:48, 52). It's easier to defame a man's character than weigh the merits of his arguments. However, even though most of the crowd didn't believe Jesus, there were still "others" who countered the naysayers with, "These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?" This response is not only similar to that of 9:16 ("again" likely refers back to this earlier division), but its point is also identical to 9:30-33. It appears that some had been swayed even further by the blind man's arguments. Thus, despite efforts to mischaracterize Jesus, the facts could not be manipulated; a man who had never been able to see was given sight. Demons were thought to carry disease and sow mischief, not help people. That one would choose to heal a man's disability would be entirely out of character for beings known to be malicious. And, admittedly, this latter group was closer to the truth than those they argued against; however, while they said what Jesus was not, they seemed content to leave who they thought he was unsaid.¹

Vs. 22-24 – Rather abruptly, John tells us that "it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter." This marks a period of time and detaches what follows (vs. 22-42) from what precedes it (vs. 1-21), though precisely how much time has passed cannot be ascertained. But given that the last chronological marker given was the Feast of Tabernacles (7:2), which takes place at the end of September, the timeframe John is now referring to is around late December, as that's when the Feast of Dedication takes place. Thus, depending on where one places the Good Shepherd discourse, between one to two months have passed since vs. 21.² However, while there is a significant passage of time between the two halves of chapter 10, John maintains continuity³ between them as he does little more than note the change of season and then quickly moves on to more of Jesus' teaching. Furthermore, the latter half of chapter 10 contains multiple parallels with the former half. In verse 27, Jesus all but repeats what he said in vs. 3-4 and 16 with the "sheep" knowing the shepherd by the sound of his

¹ Morris (1995), p. 458.

² Köstenberger (2004), p. 309, suggest no more than a month.

³ Keener (2003), 1:821.

"voice." And just as Jesus spoke about the oneness of his flock in vs. 16, he will also talk about the oneness between himself and his heavenly Father in vs. 30. Thus, while there may be good arguments in favor of breaking up this chapter into two different scenes, and, indeed, they are distinctive, thematically, it is seemingly best to take the chapter as one unit.

The "Feast of Dedication," also known as the "Festival of Lights" or "Hanukkah" (itself the Hebrew term for "dedication"), is an eight-day celebration commemorating the Maccabean Revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes. Considering it was instituted on the 25th of Kislev in 164BC, this was a relatively new addition to the Jew's festival calendar.⁴ And it was not only distinct from its counterparts in that there was no scriptural command to observe it, but Hanukkah also stands out in that it was generally celebrated in the home rather than in the Temple.⁵ John's mention of the Feast of Dedication and its relation to Jesus will become apparent when he gets to verse 36.⁶

John also tells us that Jesus "walked in the temple in Solomon's porch." "Solomon's porch" was about 600 ft. long and 49 ft. wide, and it was located on the eastern side of the Temple grounds looking over the Kidron Valley. Rather than "porch," a better term would be "colonnade," as the structure sheltered people from the wind and sun by a roof supported by numerous marble *columns* or *pillars* which were 38 ft. tall.⁷ Given the time of year, it would've provided a reprieve from the wintry weather. Interestingly, this seems to have not only been a favorite gathering spot for the early church (cf. Ac. 5:12), but it was also the same place where Peter delivered his second sermon after being used to heal a man born lame (cf. Ac. 3:11).⁸ Even more interesting, however, is that the phrase "it was winter" might not only explain why Jesus was in Solomon's porch; it might also hold symbolic significance in the same way that "it was night" does in 13:13. As Beasley-Murray explains, "A great deliverance from an Antichrist and the triumph of true religion was being celebrated, but the frosty temperature without corresponded to the frozen spirits of the "the Jews."⁹ As they commemorated their deliverance from the Seleucid

⁴ Carson (1991), p. 391.

⁵ Köstenberger (2004), p. 309.

⁶ Keener (2003), 1:821-23, cautions on making too much of the Hanukkah reference as the parallelism between it and Jesus appears to be underplayed compared to how the author treated the other festivals. He seems to think that, had John wanted to use the Feast of Dedication as a backdrop to draw out some aspect of Christ's ministry, he would've been "more explicit." As he explains, "Most possible associations with Hanukkah are less clear than the clearest associations John provides with Sukkoth and Passover elsewhere; many of these potential associations with Hanukkah appear outside as well as inside this passage."

⁷ Kruse (2017), p. 276.

⁸ Keener (2003), 1:824.

⁹ Beasley-Murray (1999), p. 173.

Empire, the Jews rejected their long-promised Messiah, who would've delivered them from sin's dominion.

John tells us that while Jesus was walking, "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.'" The Greek phrase translated "round about" means that his opponents, quite literally, encircled and surrounded Jesus. Thus, given their hostile posturing, it is hard to read their question as anything but antagonistic. These Jews were not looking for an honest answer; they weren't engaging in good-faith arguments. They were looking for yet another way to incriminate Jesus.¹⁰ This is why Carson and Beasley-Murray propose that the thrust of their question was more like, "How long do you intend to *annoy* or *provoke* us?"¹¹ And they were looking for a straightforward answer to whether or not Jesus was the Messiah. The term "Christ" was hardly ever used by Jesus himself as, by the first century, the title had taken on a political edge with overt military implications.¹²

Vs. 25-30 – Jesus responds to their inquiry by saying, "I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." Careful readers of John's account might, at first, have been perplexed at this, as, apart from a few isolated instances (cf. 4:26; 9:35-37), Jesus never unambiguously said, "I am the Christ," to the religious leaders (cf. 8:58).¹³ However, it seems best to understand Jesus' claim, "I told you," with his immediate reference to "the works that [he did] in [his] Father's name" because, as he explains, "[those works] bear witness of me" (cf. 5:36; 9:3-4). Considering all the things that Jesus did, who else could he have been if not the Messiah? Or, as a somewhat humorous idiom puts it, "If it looks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then it probably is a duck." When many false messiahs were making sweeping claims, Jesus consistently pointing to his miracles should've been sufficient to prove his identity without him having to say it explicitly. As Wright puts it, "If they can't draw the right conclusion from what he's done, adding more words won't do any good."¹⁴

The problem that these religious leaders had wasn't that they lacked proof of the Lord's messiahship (cf. 2:23; 3:2; 7:21, 31; 9:16).¹⁵ No. There were so many such examples that it took four Gospels just to recount a small fraction of Christ's work (cf. 22:25). Jesus says that the

¹⁰ Kruse (2017), p. 276.

¹¹ Carson (1991), p. 392; Beasley-Murray (1999), p. 173.

¹² Köstenberger (2004), p. 311.

¹³ Morris (1995), p. 462.

¹⁴ Wright (2004), p. 157.

¹⁵ Kruse (2017), p. 277.

problem the Jews faced and the reason for their unbelief was "because [they weren't] of [his] sheep." And the critical component which distinguishes between sheep and non-sheep is faith (cf. 37-38).¹⁶ The religious leaders did not believe and thereby proved they were not of God's fold.¹⁷ In contrast, Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me..." One might've expected Jesus to say that his sheep "know" his voice, as he did before (vs. 4-5, 16). Instead, Jesus says that he knows them. The Good Shepherd initiates while the sheep reciprocate (cf. 1 Jn. 4:19).

And because the sheep follow the Good Shepherd, Jesus says, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Life without end is not a thing to be earned but a gift to be given by God to believers (cf. Rom. 6:23). The phrase "never perish" shouldn't be interpreted to mean that the sheep's body will not decay. All of us, at one point or another, will die. But death is no real threat; it's only the beginning of eternal life for the believer. So secure is the sheep's in their Shepherd's hand that no one will be able to "pluck them out of [his] hand." Safe within the palm of the Messiah, none can harm those entrusted into his care. "It is one of the precious things about the Christian faith that our continuance in eternal life depends not on our feeble hold on Christ, but on his firm grip on us."¹⁸ Try as they might, but no thief, robber (vs. 1, 8), or wolf (vs. 12) will be able to wrench the believer from the Master's hand.

Why are the sheep so unassailable? Because Jesus explains, "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." The Jews readily spoke of God as the Almighty precisely because nothing is stronger than God (cf. Gen. 17:2; Psa. 68:14; 91:1). After all, Jehovah is omnipotent. Thus, Jesus reasons that nothing can be plucked from God's hands because who is mightier than the Almighty (cf. Isa. 43:13)? Therefore, if one were to find themselves within his loving grip, like the disciples, they would be as secure as possible (cf. 6:37, 39; 17:2, 6, 9, 24; 18:9).¹⁹

But Jesus also had just said that the sheep were in his hand and that no one "shall...pluck them out [my] hand." Notice the change in verb tense between the two statements: "neither *shall* any man pluck them out of my hand" and "no man *is able* to pluck them out of my Father's

¹⁶ Beasley-Murray (1999), p. 174.

¹⁷ Keener (2003), 1:825, "One might believe to become one of Jesus' followers, but it was also those who were his sheep who could believe. John envisioned a conflict between free will and predestination no more than did most of his Jewish contemporaries....Johannine theology emphasizes that Jesus knows people's responses before they make them; from God's omniscient standpoint, only those who will ultimately persevere belong to Christ in any event (6:37-39; 10:29; 17:2, 9, 12; 18:9; 1 Jn. 2:19). These would never perish (cf. 3:16; Rev. 2:11; 20:6)."

¹⁸ Morris (1995), p. 463.

¹⁹ Kruse (2017), p. 278.

hand."²⁰ The former speaks about a future threat that will fail, and the latter speaks about a present danger that will likewise fail. The sheep are secure tomorrow and today. How so? Because Jesus correlated the security that he offers his sheep with the security found in the palm of the Father. The sheep's safekeeping is based on Jesus' oneness with God. This is why the Lord states, in no uncertain terms, "I and my Father are one." Jesus speaking about his hand and the Father's hand only makes sense if he talked about the *same* hand (cf. Col. 3:3).²¹ In the immediate context, we're not only speaking of Jesus and God having the same will in securing the believer but also, in the context of John's account that the Son and God are of the same metaphysical substance.²² As the Jew's response will show (vs. 31), Jesus wasn't merely aligning his will with God; he claimed to be equal with God.

The oneness that Jesus and the Father share is the climax of the entire chapter (cf. 8:58).²³ This statement also echoes the Shema, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deut. 6:4).²⁴ Judaism is indeed a monotheistic religion. However, even within the O.T. Scriptures, there is an expressed plurality within the Godhead itself (cf. Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Psa. 45:6-7; Isa. 6:8; 48:16). This is precisely John's point when he said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (1:1). Jesus, as the Word, is separate and distinct from God, yet, at the same time, the Lord is one and the same with God (cf. 17:21-23; Mat. 3:16-17; 22:41-46). "[The Jews] had asked Jesus for a plain statement of his messiahship, and they got more than they had bargained for."²⁵ Jesus confirmed he was the Christ, but he also affirmed that he was God.

²⁰ Morris (1995), p. 464.

²¹ Carson (1991), p. 394.

²² Carson (1991), p. 394-395.

²³ Köstenberger (2004), p. 312.

²⁴ Keener (2003), 1:826.

²⁵ Morris (1995), p. 465.

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Wednesday Night Live | John | Week 19

Text: **John 10:19-30**

As Christians, we believe in eternal security, which is the teaching that no matter what happens, our destinies are secure through Jesus Christ. But did you ever wonder where such a belief came from? Tonight's passage is just such a place where those who struggle with their salvation can turn to when they have their doubts. After all, if no one is stronger than God, who would be able to "pluck" us out of his hand once he has us?

Pastor's manuscript can be found here: