

Text: John 10:22-42

Title: "Believe because He gives His sheep eternal life"

Time: 3/23/2025 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: We last left the Apostle John's account of the life of Christ with the Lord confronting the unbelief of apostate Judaism at the September Feast of the Tabernacles. On that trip, Jesus claimed to be the Light of the World, from above, in existence before Abraham, and the Good Shepherd of God's sheep. Those who heard Him concluded that "no man ever spoke like this man" (7:46).

As we come again to John's account in our passage, we see the Lord Jesus on another visit to Jerusalem, two months later in early December. This would be His last December prior to His crucifixion the following spring. He is in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Dedication (v. 22). The original word meaning *dedication* is the word *Hanukkah*.

This feast was not prescribed by Moses or any of the other books of the Old Testament. Instead, it was a celebration that arose during the time of the Maccabean revolt against Rome. Also called "The Feast of Lights," Hanukkah commemorated the rededication of the temple by Judas Maccabaeus three years after Antiochus Epiphanes had defiled it with a pagan altar and sacrifice in 167 B.C.. It was celebrated for eight days on the anniversary of that rededication.

The reason for eight days is also the reason that Hanukkah is referred to as "The Feast of Lights." Legend has it that when the temple was rededicated, they found only one vial of the oil necessary to light the candlestick, which would typically last for only one day. To everyone's amazement, the single vial kept the candlestick lit for eight days. For

this reason, Jews light one candle for every member of their household on each of the days of Hanukkah. So if there are 10 in the home, there are 10 candles lit on the first day and eighty by the eighth day.

Of all the feasts of the Jewish people, this feast was the most patriotic time in terms of revolutionary anti-Rome spirit. With the winter weather, Jesus is in the portico of Solomon, where he is easily surrounded by some impatient Jewish patriots. They demand that Jesus answer a question plainly - "Are you the Christ?" Believing that their Christ would free them from Rome's oppression, that He would be the ultimate Judas Maccabaeus, they were losing patience with this Nazarene - "How long dost thou make us to doubt?"

Jesus is the Christ, but He was not the ultimate Judas Maccabaeus for the first century Jew. He is far more than this. He is the Shepherd of the sheep. He is the Son of God. He is the one who gives His sheep, not victory over Rome, but eternal life, a gift only God can give. And so John's purpose in this account is to convince us this morning to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing to have life in His name, because He gives His sheep eternal life.

Jesus teaches us three things here about His true sheep.

I. Jesus's sheep believe, hear, and follow their Shepherd, needing no more proof (vv. 22-27).

Illustration: One of the most important books I have ever read was written by a man who was an atheist philosopher, who eventually became a theist in response to the more recent overwhelming scientific evidence in creation for the existence of the Creator. The author is Antony Flew, and his

book was titled, *How To Think Straight: An Introduction to Critical Reasoning*.

In the introduction to the book, Flew identifies “a prime cause of our being deceived”: “A prime cause of our being deceived is, for all of us, always our own desire to be so deceived. . . . all of us constantly need to be asking ourselves what it is which we want to believe to be true, and whether our desires so to believe are stronger than our desires to know the truth, however uncongenial to us that truth may be. It is a truly existential challenge” (10).

Application: The Jews surrounding Jesus in the portico were failing to meet that challenge. They pose as truth-seekers who had been left to doubt by this mysterious rabbi. They feel that the reason they did not have an answer to their question was that Jesus had not been plain enough.

But truly, the prime cause these Jews were deceived about Christ was their own desire to be so deceived. They simply did not want to believe Jesus’s answer to their question (v. 25a). This answer had been given not merely in word, but also in deed (v. 25b). Our answers about Christ must also be in both word and deed.

The problem the Jews had was not that they needed more information. Their problem was that they were not Jesus’s sheep (v. 26). They were not Jesus’s sheep because they refused to hear Jesus’s voice, they refused a personal relationship with the Shepherd, and they did not want to follow Him, for this Christ was headed to a Roman cross.

Jesus’s sheep believe, hear, and follow the Shepherd, who went to the cross. He was clear that we must follow Him there. Luke 9:23, “And He was saying to them all, ‘If any-

one wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.” We follow Him carrying a cross, headed to our Calvary to be a living sacrifice for Him. He gave all for us; we give all for Him in response.

Are you Jesus’s sheep this morning? Do you believe, hear, and follow Him? Do you know He knows you and has saved you? Have you taken up your cross to be a living sacrifice for Him today? Or, like these Jews, are you telling yourself that you still do not have enough proof? This form of self-deception is uniquely damning. Jesus’s sheep believe, hear, and follow, needing no more proof. Let’s be one of those sheep.

II. Jesus’s sheep live forever, never to perish (vv. 28-29).

Illustration: In English we have the idiom, “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.” To be *in the hand* in this sense is to be *in secure possession of someone*.

The Jewish people had a similar idiom, although theirs carried military overtones. Deuteronomy 3:2a is a good example: “And the Lord said unto me [Moses], ‘Fear him [Og the king of Bashan that had come out to do battle against Israel] not; for I will deliver him, and all his people, and his land, *into thy hand*.” So to have something in hand is to have won it by a great victory in battle, and to have it snatched from your hand is to have been defeated in battle.

Application: When it comes to the battle for His sheep, the Good Shepherd sacrificed His life to win the victory that put us in His hand. Claiming that victory, Jesus literally says, “I Myself [emphatic] give unto them eternal life” (v. 28a). It is impossible that Jesus’s sheep should be plucked out of His hand because the war is over, and the victory of the cross is irreversible.

Jesus has died for our sins, and He is risen. The head of the serpent has been crushed by the bruised foot of our Savior.

Ultimately, it was the Father's victory too, His loving plan for His creatures (v. 29). Jesus's victory is the Father's victory, and no one can ever defeat this Father and Son in battle.

The blessed result for the sheep is eternal life. Jesus does not say in verse 28, "I shall give." He says, "I am giving." If we are Jesus's sheep this morning, we are living the first day of the rest of our eternal life today. We shall never perish, not because we won our own victory and manage to hang on to it, but rather because we are the sheep of the victorious Shepherd who shall never let us go.

Of course, what is implied here is terrifying for those who are not Jesus's sheep, those who refuse to believe, to hear, to be known as the Shepherd's own, and to follow. The sheep shall never perish. Those who refuse to be Jesus's sheep shall perish forever. Only Jesus's sheep live forever, never to perish. Which forever-future have you chosen?

III. Jesus's sheep know who He is – He is God, not a blasphemer (vv. 30-39).

Illustration: The Bible doctrine of the Trinity affirms that God is one essence or nature and three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We see this in passages like the Great Commission, where we are told by our exalted Lord to baptize His true disciples in the name [singular; not *names*] of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19).

This singular *name* refers to the common nature of the God of biblical monotheism, the teaching of the Bible that there is only one God, not multiple Gods. It is in defense of their misunderstanding of the monotheistic nature of God and in

denial of the true tri-personhood of God that the Jews take up stones to kill Jesus. Their charge is blasphemy, and their claim is that Jesus, being a man, makes Himself God.

Application: The Jews are reacting to Jesus's statement in verse 30, "I and the Father are one." Greek has three genders for their numbers; masculine, feminine, and neuter. The number *one* Jesus uses here is not masculine, but neuter. He is not saying that He and His Father are one personally, but rather that they are one thing, one in nature.

In their *New World Translation*, the Jehovah Witnesses, who deny the Bible doctrines of the Trinity and the deity of Jesus Christ, have an interpretive footnote on this verse, which explains that *one* here means that the Father and the Son are unified, one in cooperation with each other. That Jesus does not mean merely this is clear from verse 38 – "the Father is in Me, and I in Him." Jesus is not talking about what they do together. He is talking about what they are together.

The Jews understood exactly what Jesus was saying. Jesus exposes their malice against Him without telling them they are wrong in their conclusion that He was claiming to be God, though also a man. He points to Psalm 82:6, where the text calls corrupted human judges *gods* and *sons of the Most High* because they were given God's law at Sinai and consequently represented God's authority over the people. Jesus's point is that no one wanted to stone Asaph, the Psalmist who wrote that, because the Scripture cannot be broken.

And yet these Jews wanted to stone the very one whom the Father had sanctified as His Word and whom the Father had sent into the world because He claimed to be the Son of God (v. 36). Again, this lofty claim of the Lord Jesus was made not merely in word, but also in deed (vv. 37-38). This

is the truth of chapter 1 of this Gospel, “The Word was with God and the Word was God,” and “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1, 14).

In the end, Jesus, being a man, was indeed making himself God because He always was God. And it is equally true that those who deny Him His rightful authority in their lives are the true blasphemers.

How often do we, being mere men, make ourselves to be our own god? How often do we do what we want instead of what God wants? It is the sad irony of this passage that these Jews were committing the very blasphemy that they were accusing Jesus of. Mere men, they had made themselves God. May that irony never characterize our lives. May we treat the Lord Jesus as our God, and not ourselves.

Conclusion: Our passage concludes with Jesus’s departure from unbelieving Jerusalem to the place of the former ministry of John the Baptist, where saving faith was found (vv. 40-42). Significantly for this Gospel’s author, it was the place the Apostle John came to faith in Christ.

I cannot help but notice that John is careful to point out that John the Baptist did no miracle or sign (v. 41). The greatest prophet who ever lived never did a miracle. Rather, men believed because all that John had said about this man was true. We must believe for the same reason. We must challenge others to believe for the same reason. Like our Lord and John, our true words must be backed up by true deeds.

Edersheim reflects beautifully on what it meant for John to be a faithful witness to Christ and to be granted this post-

humous harvest of souls in saving faith: “they were the posthumous children of the Baptist. Thus did he, being dead, yet speak. And so will all that is sown for Christ, though it lie buried and forgotten of men, spring up and ripen, as in one day, to the deep, grateful, and eternal joy of them who had laboured in faith and gone to rest in hope.”

May we like John, believe, hear, and follow. May we continue to labor in faith that we may rest in hope of the eternal life that the Shepherd has given His sheep.

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching