

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Tell Us Who You Are John 10:22-30 Part 1

During an interview on television, a reporter asked a girl involved in punk rock, "What are you looking forward to?" She said, "I'm looking forward to death." The reporter asked her why. She said, "I want to die so I can go to hell and have fun!" What a tragic statement! Hell is anything but fun.

One writer said, "There is no way to describe hell. Nothing on earth can compare with it. No living person has any real idea of it. No madman in his wildest flights of insanity ever beheld its horror. No man in delirium has ever pictured a place so utterly terrible as this. No nightmare racing across a fevered mind ever produces a terror to match that of the mildest hell. No murder scene with splashed blood and oozing wound ever suggested a revulsion that could touch the border lands of hell. Let the most gifted writer exhaust his skill in describing this roaring cavern of unending flame, and he would not even brush in fancy the nearest edge of hell."

If people truly understood the nature of hell, they would not be making light of it as this young girl did in that television interview. Listen to **Hebrews 10:31**. **"It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."**

The prospect of going to hell should scare the living daylight out of us. But thanks be to God. If we are a Christian any possible fear of judgment has been replaced by a wonderful and certain anticipation of future glory.

How can we be so confident of this? There are many different ways to answer this question, but certainly the passage that we will begin to examine this weekend will provide for us one of those answers.

The passage that we will begin to examine this weekend is John 10:22-42. In John 10:22-42, Jesus responded to the Jews' demand that He tell them who He was. And Jesus did this. He, in essence, told them two things about Himself.

Jesus, first of all, told the Jews, in essence, that He was the *Christ* (John 10:22-30). Let me read this passage for you. **"At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; (23) it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. (24) The Jews therefore gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, 'How long will You keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.' (25) Jesus answered them, 'I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these bear witness of Me. (26) But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep. (27) My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; (28) and I give them eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. (29) 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. (30) I and the Father are one.'"**

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Let us begin by looking at **John 10:22**. "**At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem.**"

So what is the Feast of the Dedication? First of all, we should note that this feast was not a biblically authorized feast. It was, in fact, a relatively recent institution when the Apostle John referred to it here in this verse. So what exactly brought this particular celebration about?

In 167 BC the Syrian, Antiochus Epiphanes, overran Jerusalem and polluted the temple, setting up a pagan altar. Chafing under the repression of Antiochus, under which possession of any part of the Hebrew Scriptures was a capital offence, many Jews revolted. Eventually they grew strong enough to overthrow Antiochus under the leadership of Judas Maccabaeus. And, of course, their highest priority was the re-consecration of the temple, which they did on December 25th, 164 BC. The Jewish people then celebrated that re-consecration of the temple for eight days.

What is the Feast of the dedication? The Feast of the Dedication is a yearly eight-day Jewish celebration commemorating the capture and rededication of the temple by Judas Maccabaeus in 164 BC. Today this Jewish celebration is known as HANNUKAH.

This is helpful. With this piece of information we can now deduct that the events that we are now considering took place two months after the events recorded for us earlier in **John 7:1** through **10:21**. How do we know this? We know this because the events recorded for us in **John 7:1** through **John 10:21** are associated with the biblically authorized feast of booths, which celebrated the tree and vine harvest and would have taken place two months earlier.

Let us now read the next verse. Let us read **John 10:23** "**It was winter** [of course we now know this from what we learned about the feast of the dedication and then it says], **and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon.**"

The main courtyard of the temple was surrounded by massive covered colonnades on all four sides, which were open to the court itself, but walled facing the outside. Solomon's colonnade, or in other words the "portico of Solomon," was on the east and though built by Herod the Great, took its name from the temple's first builder, King Solomon. In winter, such as was the case, teachers used these covered porches as a shelter from cold weather. **John 10:23** pictures Christ as walking in the shelter of this particular colonnade.

Now let us read **John 10:24**. "**The Jews therefore gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, 'How long will You keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.'**"

We should not see this as a particularly supportive group that were gathering around Jesus, in fact, quite the opposite was true. The word "gathered around" (KYKLOO) literally means, "circle in on him" (Luke 21:20). The mood communicated by this term is ominous. The word translated "gathered around" is used elsewhere only in **Luke 21:20** to describe how Rome would "surround", "gather around", or "circle in on" Jerusalem before its destruction. The word chosen by John clearly communicates the hostile mood of these Jews.

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This crowd of hostile Jews is looking for an unambiguous statement about Jesus identity. What did they say as they were circling in on Him, **"How long will You keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."**

The phrase "how long will you keep us in suspense" could also be translated "how long will you annoy us," which in light of this context would be the better translation.

These Jews, who were circling in on Christ, were not seeking clarity, but rather they are seeking an opportunity to bring judgment upon Christ. So how did they hope to accomplish that? It was through a personal challenge.

The Jews, who were antagonistic toward Jesus, challenged Him to tell them plainly if He was the Christ.

Let me ask you a question. Had Jesus up to this point in a public forum referred to Himself as the Christ? The answer is no! Jesus had not done this.

He did privately declare this to the Samaritan woman in **John 4:25-26**. He also declared it privately to the former blind man in **John 9:35-36**, but He had never up to this point in a public forum referred to Himself specifically as the Messiah. So if this is true, then how do we explain the next verse?

Let me read this verse for you. **"Jesus answered them, 'I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these bear witness of Me.'" When Jesus said, "I told you," He was not referring to an explicit statement, but rather He is referring to the sum total of His works, which bore witness to the fact that He was the Christ (John 7:31).**

Were the miracles of Jesus sufficient to convince people that He was the Christ without Jesus specifically using that term "Messiah" to describe Himself? Absolutely! We have seen this already multiple times in this Gospel.

Hopefully you remember how certain Jews, who came to believe that Jesus was the Christ in **John 7:31**, defended their faith. They defended their faith by asking the following question: **"When the Christ shall come, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?"** They, of course, expected that the answer to their question would be "no, He would not!" They expected that to be the answer because they themselves believed that Jesus was, in fact, the Christ.

And how had they come to this conclusion? Had they come to this conclusion that Jesus was the Christ because Jesus had specifically used that term to describe Himself, or did they come to that conclusion because He was doing the works that they believed would characterize the Messiah? They came to that conclusion because Jesus was doing the works they expected would characterize the Messiah.

Why hadn't Jesus up to this point referred to Himself as the Messiah in a public forum? There are several reasons. First of all, as we have seen, He really did not need to in light of the works that He was doing.

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But probably more to the point is that if Jesus had used the term "Messiah" to describe Himself, He would have had greater problems than He already had with the Jews who were looking to destroy Him.

So why was it that certain Jews were able to believe in Jesus, such as the Jews in **John 7:31**, and others such as these Jews here **John 10:24** were not able to believe even though they were witnessing the same things? Jesus wants to answer that question here in our passage, but He does not want to give a generic answer. Rather He wants to give a very personal answer directed specifically at these unbelieving Jews.

Let us now read **John 10:26-27**. "**But you do not believe, because you are not My sheep. (27) My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.**" The reason why these Jews did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah was because they were not one of His sheep (John 10:26-27).

Does this sound familiar to us? Jesus is once again using the imagery of sheep farming to communicate truths that He had earlier introduced to us in **John 10:1-21**, but this time He used these truths not to explain why certain Jews believed but rather why certain Jews did not believe. So we now see why the Apostle John linked **John 10:1-21** with **John 10:22-42** even though the feast of booths and the feast of the dedication were separated by over two months.

There are only two kinds of people in this world. There are those who are Christ's sheep and then there are those who are not Christ's sheep. In other words, there are those who have been chosen by God for salvation before the foundation of the world, and then there are those who have not been chosen by God for salvation before the foundation of this world. Those who are His sheep will hear Christ speaking through His Scriptures and will follow Him, and those who are not His sheep will not hear His voice speaking through His Scriptures and will therefore not follow Him.

Hopefully you are hearing the voice of Christ this morning speaking to you through these Scriptures. Hopefully you are accepting what He has to say about His special relationship with certain people and His lack of a special relationship with other people in explaining why certain people believe and others do not. Hopefully you have ears to hear, and rather than grumbling about what He is saying, hopefully, you can receive it.

When Christ's sheep hear His voice and believe His words, they receive the gift of eternal life (John 10:28). Let me read for you the very first part of **John 10:28**. "**And I give eternal life to them.**"

Eternal life is His gift. It is often emphasized that the important thing about eternal life is its quality rather than its quantity. It is life of a certain kind, not simply a life that goes on forever. While there is certainly truth in this, we should not overlook the point that eternal life means exactly what it says. It will never end. It will never end because those who possess it will never perish. Isn't that what the verse says? "**And I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish.**"

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When Jesus said that His sheep will never *perish*, He is promising that His sheep will never be in danger of participating in God's final judgment described in Revelation 20:11-15. Or in other words, when Jesus says that His sheep will never perish, He is promising that His sheep will never be in danger of being eternally tormented in the place we call "hell."

Why? Let us continue to read **John 10:28**. "**And I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.**" Not the thieves and robbers that Christ spoke about in **John 10:1, 8**, nor the marauding wolf in **John 10:12**, not anyone. His sheep will not perish because Christ's sheep, who have been entrusted to Him by His Father, cannot be *snatched* out of His hand (John 6:34-40).

We should be clear that perishing is a terrible fate and to be delivered from it is a priceless gift. And if we can trust the words of Christ here in **John 10:28**, this is exactly what has happened to us if we, in fact, are one of His sheep.

We have been given eternal life and we will never perish and no one will be able to snatch us out of Christ's hand, and therefore, we will never be threatened with eternal punishment. But Jesus is not satisfied with talking about His own determination to see His sheep preserved. Let us now read **John 10:29**, "**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.**"

Jesus, in making this statement, is once again driving home for these hostile Jews the special relationship that He enjoys with His Father. So how does this special relationship impact the preservation of Christ's sheep?

Like everything else that Christ does, even His preserving action is not independent of His Father. They are working together to preserve the sheep.

And that is obviously a very powerful duo. Notice what Jesus says about His Father being "greater than all." When Jesus says that His Father is greater than all, He is simply saying that there is no power arrayed *against* His sheep that is greater than the power that His Father possesses, whether that would be human foes, demons, or the devil Himself.

How closely are they linked in this action of preserving Christ's sheep? Jesus saw Himself as so closely linked with His Father that His sheep were not simply protected by His hand but also by His *Father's hand*.

John 10:28-29 tell us that both the Father and the Son are engaged in the perfect preservation of Jesus sheep. And this leads to the statement that Christ makes in **John 10:30**. Let me read this verse for you. "**I and the Father are one.**"

The word "one" is the neuter "HEN" rather than the masculine "HEIS." This means that Jesus was saying that He was one with His Father in *action* rather than in person.

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Is Jesus one with the Father in person, or in other words, in essence? Yes! But that is not what is specifically being taught here. What is specifically being taught here is that Jesus and His Father are together fully committed to doing one specific thing, and what would that one thing be? Christ and His Father are fully committed to preserving Christ's sheep from being snatched.

The Jews had challenged Jesus to tell them plainly whether or not He was the Christ? They, in other words, wanted Him to actually use the word "Christ" in referring to Himself. But He again would not give them this satisfaction. This did not mean that He did not answer plainly. It just simply meant that because they were not His sheep that they again would not be able to receive what He was clearly saying.

They, therefore, unlike His sheep, would not receive the gift of life that He was offering. This ultimately would mean that they would, unlike His sheep, perish. This would mean that they, unlike His sheep, would be cast in the Lake of Fire to be tormented forever and ever.

But this is not case with us if we are one of His sheep. We have been saved from this possibility when we received the gift of life for the simple reason that we were placed in the hand of Christ and the hand of the Father to be protected from any forced that threaten to snatch us away.

How secure are we? Perfectly secure! Let me read for you **Romans 8:31-39**. **"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? (32) He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? (33) Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; (34) who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. (35) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (36) Just as it is written, 'For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' (37) But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. (38) For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers (39) nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."**

God is very tightfisted when it comes to the security of His sheep. We can, therefore, having received the gift of life through faith in Christ, know that we shall *never* perish.