
John 10:22-42 *The Father's Hand!*

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: Jesus, during the next big Jewish Celebration of Hanukkah, continued His passionate illustration of portraying His people as sheep and Him as the Good Shepherd. Here is another boldface declaration that He is the One, True, Living Lord God of the universe who condescends into humanity to give us mercy, guidance, and salvation from a caring, loving, nurturing, yet Most Holy and Sovereign LORD. Jesus was walking under the Temple's great columns as he was pelted with admirers, antagonists, and questions. One was *when will you tell us plainly who you are?* Jesus said, *I have told you already but you do not listen or believe. The proof of what I say is what I do in the Name of my Father. But you are not of my flock, so you will not know; for if you did, you would recognize me just as a sheep recognizes its master's voice and you would follow. You would have eternal life and no one could hurt you spiritually. For God the Father is more powerful than anything or anyone and He and I are One; the Father and I are One!* This enraged the Jewish leaders who wanted to stone Him and tried to do so, but Jesus responded with a challenge to them to cool their wild tempers. *Why do you do this; for which deed?* They said, *because you claim to be God; you blasphemed.* Jesus replied, *the Scriptures testify to me, so how can you call it blasphemy? If you hear my words and see my work, then you would realize who I am.* This enraged them even further and they tried to arrest Him; but, Jesus miraculously slipped away to the Jordan River where John the Baptist ministered and many followed Him realizing the predictions of Him, as the Messiah, were true.

Contexts and Background

Here, Jesus continued His dialogue and challenge to these religious leaders while revealing His power and compassion to those who are faithful. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lovingly leads those whose trust and faith are in Him. This is in contrast to the false and prideful leaders who were thieves and who would steal what God has for us and manipulate people to their will. Christ leads us to His wondrous fold; they lead to despair. This is another powerful pronouncement of Jesus being fully God, because the metaphor of the Shepherd of Israel and how it is used here is only said of God. Being a Shepherd also means being God's commissioned leader; thus is Jesus the Holy One who gently leads us and guides His leaders to care for His flock, the Church.

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings

- *Feast of Dedication.* This feast is now called Hanukkah; it dates to the time of the Maccabees and the Jewish revolt (167-157 BC). It is celebrated in December and honors the event when, during a siege by the Greeks and Antiochus Epiphanies in 164 BC, the oil in the lamps lasted eight days when there was only enough for one day. It was not a required feast then due to the difficulty of travel at that time of the year. It lasted eight days and was a similar feast and celebration using lights as the final days of the Feast of Tabernacles. This inspired the people to refocus on God and use the Temple, which was restored and rededicated. It taught the people to center on God and not on circumstances (Ex. 16; 1 Kings 4; 17:6; 19:8; John 6:1-15; Heb. 13:31-40).
- *Solomon's Colonnade.* This is the outer "portico," the entrance section of the Temple by the Gentile court where the great supporting columns for the porches were. It was called this because part of the original section of Solomon's Temple remained. This is where the public lectures and announcements took place and had a natural breeze coming through that kept people cool in the summer and warm in the winter (Acts 3:11; 5:12).
- *Are you the Christ?* This is the essential question all of humanity must ask and then answer. The Disciples by this time knew, but the vast majority could not decide, because of all the various speculations and desires that were in the way (Matt. 16:16; 26:5; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20; John 6:69).
- *I did tell you/told you.* The Message of the Gospel had been clearly given; it was their fear of conviction and pride or of the establishment that was in the way (John 1: 49; 4:26; 8:28, 58; 9:37).

- *The miracles/works.* Here, it means the evidence had clearly been given. Jesus is trustworthy so we can be “faith-worthy,” begging the question *why did you not look and listen* (John 5:36; 14:11; 15:24)?
- *Do not believe.* They closed their eyes and minds and refused to have faith even with irrefutable and clear evidence at hand. They either did not think and thus misunderstood or else refused to think because of pride and used the information against Jesus to get rid of Him (John 14:26; 18:29-35; Col. 3:1-3).
- *Not my sheep/part of my flock.* Scripture tells us the Holy Spirit enables a person to receive Christ and the Father sends them to Him. Yet, there are those who refuse and therefore are not in the Kingdom of God. They are so self-deluded by pride, they can’t see beyond themselves to what disables their eyes and ears like sin, prejudice, and/or damage to emotions and thinking and conceit, all of which can easily be reversed in Christ. This is also a retort to those who refuse to listen to God and accept His most precious, undeserved gift. The Israelites heard God’s voice when they obeyed Him but went into apostasy and then judgment when they refused. This is a call to trust and obey (Ex. 33:12-17; Isa. 43:1; John 3:3-7; 16:13-15; Rom. 5:4-5; 8:14, 26-27; 1 Cor. 12:3; Gal. 4:6).
- *My sheep.* A metaphor for Christians and the Church, people whose faith is in Jesus Christ. Even though there are many churches and denominations, there is ultimately only one Flock, one Christ, the Body of Christ, and One Shepherd, Jesus Christ! Sheep, like people, are prone to wander and hurt themselves and make bad choices, and thus must have a good, nurturing shepherd to guide them. Sheep were also used for sacrifice, a depiction of our need to sacrifice our will, our mindsets, our hurts, and our fears over to Christ. Sheep also produced essential goods for an agrarian culture like wool for clothes, especially when it was cold. There was no better material; there was also the milk that was made into cheese, a necessary life sustaining food, and there was the meat (Psalm 23; Isa. 53:6; Rom. 8:36; 12:1-2; Acts 4:32; 1 Pet. 2:25; 2 Pet. 2:20-22).
- *Listen to my voice/sheep listen.* This is a metaphor of God allowing us to hear and to come to Him; for, without His lead we would not be willing or able to be saved. In theology, this is called “elected grace.” We are not forced; rather, we are inspired and given the ability to respond by the work of the Holy Spirit. Sheep have the uncanny ability to hear only their master, and will only follow that one person. A multitude of sheep from different owners were penned together then (as today); each shepherd would call to the sheep, but only their sheep would respond. This is also a metaphor of hearing God’s voice calling us by name, meaning by intimacy, true knowledge, and relationship. Additionally, this is a call to Christians to renew our faith with further dedication, confidence, and submission (Ex. 33:12-17; Isa. 43:1; John 16:13-15).
- *Follow me.* Means to follow another's teaching. Here, many of these people literally followed Him on the road, but this indicates a need for a response by faith. It means that when powered by the Spirit, this pronouncement of faith will change a person to the very core, so one pledges and commits to trust and to learn (Matt. 4:19; 9:9-13; Luke 6:39-40).
- *Eternal life.* The Good Shepherd protects His sheep from perishing spiritually and gives us everlasting fellowship and abundance beyond description. Jesus makes it emphatic; He is the only way, and we must believe in and trust Him by faith. It is faith in Christ, not faith in one’s religion or self or ideas that saves, no matter what the origins are, even from Moses himself.
- *Snatch them.* Meaning we are preserved in faith by the strength of Christ; our salvation is secure and cannot be lost. The Good Shepherd guards and preserves His sheep from spiritual thieves and gives us the resources and ability so we won’t be carried away. If we are, then it is by our own willful disobedience and apostasy (John 6:37-40; 10:28-29; 17:2-24; Rom. 8:29-30; Phil. 1:6; 1 Cor. 1:8; 9:1; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; 2 Thess. 3:32; Tim. 1:12; 4:18; 1 John 2:19).
- *I and the Father are one.* This echoes the “Shema,” the prime Jewish confession and declaration of

faith that God is One. It is another definitive statement that testifies to the Deity of Christ: He is God. It is also a statement of the Trinity—One God and three magnifications or Persons sharing the same essence and unity (Deut. 6:4; John 1:18; 6:25-51; 14:9)!

- *Father's hand.* Meaning our assurance, that we are doubly secure. The Supreme Omnipotence of God gently leads us to Christ and gives us the ultimate guarantee for spiritual safety and salvation. If God does not call you, you can't come, because you will not want to. This is also a warning to those pretenders who think they know God but only use Him for their purposes of power and control, or people who teach falsely.
- *Blasphemy.* This was a major crime, punishable by death. It could mean pronouncing oneself as divine, inviting others to worship other gods, or it could be an insult to God's honor (Num. 15:30). The penalty for such an act of forgiving sins was death (Lev. 24:10-23). Jesus obviously was not guilty of this or any offence. The real blasphemy is to reject Jesus' offer of His saving grace—refusing His salvation and refusing to repent—a sure sign a person is not saved (John 16:8; Rom. 10:9-10).
- *You are gods.* Jesus challenges them with Psalm 82 where judges who served God were called "gods" because of their role as being in God's place to represent God's council and today in Judaism seen as tradition. This term was also used to mean Israel as God's people; thus, Jesus uses this as an argument. He, being fully God, is even more so to be called God, and He told them so. The bad kings and judges thought they were divine; they were harshly judged and they died like mortals whereas Jesus is everlasting. Jesus also is using this to challenge the religious leaders who used it to justify their pious, fraudulent leadership. This does not mean that as Christians we are "little gods" as some misguided preachers have used this verse to say. There is only One God, and neither you or I is He (John 1:10-13; 8:17; Rom. 8:21; Phil. 2:15; 1 John 3:1-10; 5:19).
- *Scripture cannot be broken.* God's Word is True and no one can do anything to hurt it or break it; it stands on its own and forever. To listen and trust in God is a prime statute in our covenant with God as His people. It is our call and duty to pay attention to God, His precepts in His Word, the Bible, and the leading of the Holy Spirit that will not contradict the principles or character of the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 4:12).
- *Know and understand.* Meaning that if someone did not hear the teaching correctly, they would not understand. Here, this refers to obedience and trust. It stems from the person's motives as to whether they will obey or remain in their pride and sin. Jesus uses this feast day to challenge us to do as this feast testifies—to rededicate ourselves to our Most Holy God (Jer. 23:4; John 17:17).
- *Beyond the Jordan.* The area, called "Perea," was outside of Herod's and the religious leaders' jurisdiction.
- *Escaped their grasp.* Their plot to kill Jesus would culminate in the crucifixion (Ex. 17:4; Lev. 24:16; Num. 14:10; 1 Sam. 30:6; Matt. 26:65; John 10:31; 11:45-57).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications

This passage gives us a picture of an intimate, caring God who asks us to follow, who cares enough to listen and to communicate and commune with us, and who justly calls us to obey. These powerful words of *follow me* can easily be hindered when we are too puffed up with ourselves so that the Word He sends to us cannot be seen; the faith to respond will never grow in the shallow soil of pride. Thus, we must, allow Him to lead us rather than people, trends, past predicaments, or future woes. He wants to keep us in His pen, partaking of His wonders and blessings and to better grow and be used for His glory and our benefit. God wants to keep you. The question is *do you want to be kept?* We can only leave the sheepfold by our own volition, by our willful choice to disobey and go astray. Yet, He still calls us and wants to love and care for us. This is our motivation, by our gratitude for what He has done, to not only remain in Christ but also move forward in Him by a commitment of our will through our trust and for His glory.

The generation of Isaiah and Jeremiah refused to listen or accept the Father's hand; thus, they did not recognize that sins and willful disobedience to God would lead them and the next two generations into captivity. Even though every prophecy of Isaiah came true, they denounced this current prophecy, and refused to listen. Jesus faced a similar situation. Many today do the same with the Gospel—and many Christians do the same with the Word (Isa. 6:9-10).

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. What are some family and/or church outings and traditions you look forward to each year?
2. God wants to keep you; the question is *do you want to be kept?* How do you feel that no one can hurt you spiritually? How can or how have you hurt yourself?
3. How have you needed protection, comfort, and contentment? How have you shown these traits to others?
4. God gives power and compassion to those who are faithful. How have you shown this to others?
5. What do you need to say and do for God to give you mercy, guidance, and salvation (if you do not have it)? What does it mean to you that this all comes from a caring, loving, nurturing God?
6. How does one's own willful disobedience and apostasy get in the way of an effective, God-loving life? What must happen to renew your faith with further dedication, confidence, and submission?
7. Are you a sheep under His care or out on the lamb (pun intended) on the run? What have you done to declare your faith in **Jesus Christ?**
8. The evidence has clearly been given; Jesus is trustworthy for us to be "faith-worthy," begging the question *why do people not look and listen?*
9. How are false and prideful leaders actually thieves who steal what God has for us? What can your church do to help and warn its people in a loving way about those who are wolves within God's flock?
10. What gets in the way of His leading in you? How can you be better at producing milk and meat and be a sacrifice of your praise and will to His glory?
11. Jesus compares Christians with sheep that were cared for and loved, used to produce the livelihood of the community, and sacrificed to God in the Temple. How is this like your life?
12. How has God used you and your church to bring *other sheep* to Him? What can you do better to respond to His call?