

John 10:22-30

22 At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, 23 and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. 24 So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly." 25 Jesus answered, "I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; 26 but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. 27 My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. 30 The Father and I are one."

Jesus explains to the people that he is the shepherd who gives his life. Jesus used a figure of speech that the people could understand and relate to. However, in this case, the audience failed to understand. So, he uses the metaphor of shepherd and sheep to reveal his true nature once again. The contrast is the difference between the good shepherd and a hired hand. The good shepherd will guard the sheep with his life. Jesus is here to protect us from the abuses of the bad shepherds. Once again, the people that are not into listening to what Jesus is really saying have difficulty understanding.

The Scripture takes place in the winter during the Festival of the Dedication (Hanukkah) which is a celebration honoring the rededication of the Second Temple. The First Temple was built by Solomon and destroyed by Babylonians during the Exile. The Second Temple was built after the people returned from Exile. During the historic period between the Old Testament and the New Testament, political power continued to result in conquest and conflict. The Seleucid Empire persecuted the Jews defiled the temple and made sacrifices to Zeus. The Maccabean Revolt was an uprising led by Jewish priests. They were successful and had the temple reconsecrated. The word "Hanukkah" is a Hebrew word for dedication. They took their celebrations seriously taking a total of eight days of celebration for dedication, commitment, cleansing, and renewal.

Jesus is there in the temple. In chapter eight he was at the temple and they tried to stone him. Now he is back at the temple surrounded by Jews that are not his sheep. They simply do not understand his identity and do not want to come to faith. They only wish to accuse him. So, they demand to know if he is indeed the Messiah and to say so in plain terms. The response from Jesus is "I have told you already but you did not believe." The problem is not the words that are used; the problem is their lack of faith. The works that they and other have witnessed is God's testimony to the divine status of Jesus and still they do not believe. Jesus tells them that he is one with God.

The hostility of the religious leaders is predictable. Jesus condemned their hypocrisy more than anything else. He uses knowledge of the scriptures to prove his point. This challenge takes a new turn as Jesus responds intelligently and quotes Psalm 82:6 I say, "You are gods, children of the Most High, all of you." This is scripture and the scripture cannot be annulled. It is God that called the people gods so they can't justify accusing Jesus of blasphemy. Jesus was chosen by God and sent to the world but they did not believe him. It is according to their own law that people can be called gods. Therefore, it cannot be blasphemy. The logic of the argument prevented them from winning their debate so they tried to seize him but Jesus escaped. The rejection of Jesus is

a very significant event. It shows the true nature of God's problem with a fallen humanity. The people that claim to be with God are not true to God. The rejection of Jesus sets up the events to unfold. Persecution leads to his death and his death is necessary for the resurrection. The resurrected Jesus is what Paul encountered when he was persecuting the church. It is interesting to see that God's problem is not the demons but the religious people. They are the insiders and are supposed to know God's way. It is those that do not know God's nature that do not recognize it when they see it. Simply put, they failed God's test of loyalty and devotion.

It is a matter of interpretation. People see what they want to see, listen to what they want to hear, and believe what they want to believe. When I make an ambiguous statement, some will interpret it one way, others will interpret it another way and there is always some that will misinterpret it all together. The variable is in the interpretation. The Jews that pestered Jesus on previous festival visits now attack with a blunt challenge to quit dropping hints, quit beating around the bush, and tell us plainly if you are the Messiah. Jesus revealed his self and his mission to the Samaritan woman at the well, and to a man born blind, but he did not publicly at the temple. When he healed a cripple on the Sabbath a dispute broke out and Jesus declared that the works he did are eye witnesses to the fact that the Father sent the Son. The miracles testify to the divine status of Jesus. He now repeats this truth. It is their failure to believe that prevents them from recognizing him. Their attitudes blind them. The perfect devotion of the shepherd is proven by the sacrifice. The reciprocal relationship between shepherd and sheep corresponds to the relationship between the Father and the Son which is now publicly declared by Christ.

This took place during the winter festival of Hanukkah. We all know what happens during the Passover feast. This corresponds on the calendar with our Christmas and Easter. Approximately three months before Passover, Jesus publicly declares to his enemies that he and God are one. This is of course, is a divine relationship. As human beings we are to be one also. We are to be one with Jesus and when we are one with Jesus we care about what Jesus said and did. We study what Jesus said and did and we follow what Jesus said and did.