
Day 1

Learn: Prayerfully read John 10.22-26. Some time has passed, it is now winter. The Feast of Dedication [10.22] is what we in the US today call Hanukkah. It also was known as the Feast of Lights, because Jews would light lamps and candles in their homes. This feast is not mentioned in the Old Testament, because it commemorated an event that happened during the intertestamental period [between the end of the writing of the Old Testament and the birth of Jesus, which begins the New Testament account]. This celebration commemorates when Jewish rebels under Judas Maccabaeus recaptured Jerusalem and the Temple from the forces of Greek king Antiochus Epiphanes in 165BC, and reconsecrated the Temple to the true God. This was a big deal, because Antiochus had set up a pagan altar in the Temple and made possession of any part of the Old Testament a capital offense. The liberators celebrated eight days, and this became the tradition. Solomon's portico [or colonnade; 10.23] was a covered walkway on the edge of the Temple mount, formed by rows of columns supporting a roof, open on the side facing inward toward the Temple courts. Jesus likely was there because of the weather; later, this would be where the first believers after the resurrection would gather to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah/Christ [see Acts 3.11; 5.12]. Jewish religious leaders surrounded Jesus in this portico [10.24] and literally asked, "How long will you take away our life?" This was an idiom, for which there is some evidence it could mean, "How long will you keep us from coming to a conclusion?" or "How long will you keep us in suspense?" In modern Greek, it means "How long will you annoy us?" Then they demanded he tell them frankly whether he was the Messiah [Christ].

Reflect: Think back on the recent events right there in Jerusalem [re-read chapters 8-10 if you need to]. Jesus has said and done things that reveal who he is, yet the religious leaders remain confused and doubtful. Why do you think they were struggling with Jesus' identity? Do you remember what Jesus said about this [see 5.38-44; 8.43-47; 9.39; 10.26]? How can you help people who are unsure about Jesus find certainty, the answers, they need?

Day 2

Learn: Prayerfully read John 10.22-30. Jesus said he had told the religious leaders who he was, but they did not believe it; then he said they should consider the works he was doing in God the Father's name [10.25]. Others had performed miracles, but the signs Jesus gave related to Old Testament prophecies to indicate who he was. Jesus said his followers [his sheep] would recognize his voice and follow him [10.27], but the religious leaders were not his sheep [10.26], so they remained confused and doubtful. Those who receive God's grace and come to faith in Jesus receive the best gift: Jesus said he gives eternal life to them, and so they will not perish for all eternity, and nobody will snatch them out of his grasp [10.28]. Furthermore, it is God who gives us grace and thus gives us to Jesus [6.37], and he is mightier than everyone else, so nobody is able to undo this work of God.

Reflect: In 10.10, Jesus said he would give us true life abundantly, and here he says that is for eternity. If you have put your faith in Jesus and been born again spiritually, that is permanent and cannot be undone. There are at least ten scriptural evidences in support of the truth that once you are saved by grace through faith, it cannot be undone, you are assured of salvation forever. Can you believe in that? Do you trust that you are saved by trusting in Jesus to save you? Do you depend on him to protect and save you, not relying on yourself at all? How are you comforted to know these truths? If you want some materials to read about assurance, ask your pastor.

Day 3

Learn: Prayerfully read John 10.25-33. The way Jesus declares that he and God the Father are "one" [10.30] is significant: with the Greek used, he is not asserting that he and God the Father are the same *person*, but the same *thing*, in other words they have *unity in essence and will*, even though they are distinct individuals within the Godhead. This is an even more clear statement of identity than the religious leaders asked for [10.24]. So how did they react? They picked up stones in order to stone him to death [10.31]! When Jesus ironically asked them for which miracle were they going to kill him [10.32], they said it was because he was making himself out to be divine and thus blaspheming the one true God [10.33].

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Reflect: The religious leaders did not believe Jesus was the divine Son of God, so they thought he was a blasphemous liar. How does that affect the argument of some today that Jesus was a good person but not the divine Son of God? Do you understand what Jesus was saying about his relationship with God the Father? If not, ask your pastor for some materials about the triune nature of God. It is ironic that they wanted to kill the man for boasting to be the divine Son when the reality was that the divine Son had condescended to come as a man.

Day 4

Learn: Prayerfully read John 10.33-36. Jesus quoted the Greek translation of Psalm 82.6 [10.34]. Usually, the term “Law” referred to the books of Moses, which did not include the Psalms, but occasionally people would use the term as Jesus did here, to apply to the entire Old Testament. This is a notoriously difficult psalm to interpret. The thrust of Jesus’ contention is that if God himself referred to others as gods and sons of the Most High, then the religious leaders should not get so upset that he claims to be the Son of God [10.35-36]. In the line Jesus quoted, the original text is emphatic: God says, “I myself said, ‘You are gods, and all sons of the Most High.’” They were gods in the sense of being sons of the Most High God, Yahweh, and they were sons in the sense of representing God, reflecting his character, being his image. [Previously, God had told Moses that he would be like a god to Pharaoh and like a god to Aaron, in that he would represent God to them.] Given this, Jesus wonders at the religious leaders wanting to kill him for saying what he said.

But there is more meaning here behind Jesus’ words. In the psalm, God criticized those he had assigned to administrate justice in his name, because they had failed him by not upholding justice, and thus they would be condemned and God himself would administrate over his people. Sound familiar from what we read in John 10.1-21 last week? In other words, those who are trying to kill Jesus are the ones God the Father had called “gods” as his representatives, who have now failed him, and will face judgment! And Jesus said, the scripture cannot be “abolished” [10.35; or “broken” (NASB; NET) or “set aside” (NIV; ESV; HCSB; NKJV)]. No doubt the psalm had some historical basis when it was written, but it also was prophetic, in that Jesus was invoking it now for his situation. That being the case, these religious leaders would face God’s wrath.

Reflect: At creation, God made people in his image, to represent him and reflect his character. God later asked the family of Abraham, which grew to be the nation of Israel, to especially represent him and reflect his character with each other and to the other nations; and within Israel, God appointed certain religious and political leaders to represent him and reflect his character to the people of Israel, as they guided Israel. Today, God asks the church to be his people, representing him and reflecting his character within the church and outward to those who are not yet his people. That is a big responsibility, and God takes it seriously. In what ways should you improve in reflecting God’s character and representing him to others? What steps will you take toward making improvement?

Day 5

Learn: Prayerfully read John 10.37-42. Jesus again appealed to the works he had done among them as evidence of his identity [10.37-38]. He said that even if the religious leaders did not believe his words, did not believe in him, they should look at what he had done and see that it had been both the work God would have people do and an exhibition of the power of God by being miraculous. The religious leaders did not accept this argument and persisted in trying to arrest him [10.39]. Jesus escaped and went back to where John the Baptist had earlier baptized, and remained there [10.39-40]. This would be somewhere to the northeast of Jerusalem, north of Jericho. Usually, the Jews revered only people who could do a miracle to validate that they were from God, so it is significant that they showed such respect for John the Baptist here, quite some time after his death [10.41]. Reflecting upon what John the Baptist had said about Jesus now that Jesus was back among them, the people remembered that everything John had said about Jesus proved true. As a result of this, many believed in Jesus [10.42].

Reflect: Why do these people believe when the religious leaders would not? How did John the Baptist have an impact for the gospel mission long after he was gone? Is there anything you learn from this about how you should live and how you can take hope for your own effectiveness? You might never baptize anyone or be a prophet, but in what ways could you still be a witness for Jesus in your life?