



The Gospel of John - Chapter Ten

II. John 1:19-12:50 - The Signs of the Messiah (continues)

II.c John 5:1-10:42 - Mounting Jewish opposition, additional signs (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Ten

This chapter is essentially in two parts. During the first encounter between Jesus and the Jews, he refers to himself as the Good Shepherd and the Gate for the Sheep. These terms are deeply symbolic in terms of OT prophecy about the leaders who had failed to care for the people and God coming to claim them back as his own; but Jesus extends these claims by alluding to his people as now including the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

The second half is at a later winter festival in Jerusalem, where the people press Jesus to tell them if he is really the Messiah. He states that he has already told them and they would not listen. Since they were not able to understand him then they were not his sheep and were lost to him. Claiming again to be the Son of God, the crowd again tried to stone Jesus for blasphemy. Using Scripture, Jesus points out their error but they are not convinced, so Jesus leaves the city and travels east of the Jordan River.

II.c.x John 10:1-21 - Jesus the Good Shepherd

Jesus now puts the events of Chapter 9 into perspective by contrasting himself, the Good Shepherd, with the Pharisees, whom he identifies with the evil shepherds of Ezekiel Chapter 34.

The Pharisees have expelled from God's flock the man whom Christ himself enlightened. They are scattering the sheep whom Christ came to gather. In this way, Jesus' estrangement from official Judaism is further developed as he calls into being a people who follow him rather than the leaders of Israel.

¹ 'Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit.

John 10:1

The sheepfold was commonly a courtyard near or beside a house and bordered by a stone wall, in which one or several families kept their sheep, although caves and other natural formations were also used. Such sheepfolds may or may not have a formal gate and would be guarded at the entrance by a gatekeeper (v.3), who would be hired to stand watch, or by the shepherd himself (vv.7-10).

The word thief may focus on entering by covert means and bandit or robber on the use of violence, as depicted in the Parable of the Good Samaritan: <<*Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead'*>> (Luke 10:30).

² The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.

John 10:2-4

The one who enters by the gate. Jesus was the first one to go to God after his act of redemption for all of mankind, thus making a way for others to be able to follow: <<*Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'*>> (John 14:6).

The shepherd is recognised by the one who guards the sheepfold, and so his entrance by the gate is natural, out in the open, without forcing. Such has been Jesus' entrance into this world and amongst his own people. He has come in the appropriate manner, having been sent by the Father, in contrast to the Jewish leaders who are rejecting Jesus.

On God's appointing of human leaders to be shepherds of his people, refer to Numbers 27:15-23, Isaiah 63:11, and Ezekiel 34:1-24. Israel's exodus from Egypt is at times portrayed in terms of a flock being led by its shepherd: <<*You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron*>> (Psalm 77:20), <<*Then he led out his people like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock*>> (Psalm 78:52), and: <<*Then they remembered the days of old, of Moses his servant. Where is the one who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is the one who put within them his holy spirit*>> (Isaiah 63:11). OT prophetic literature envisioned a similar mode of end-time deliverance for God's people: <<*I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob, I will gather the survivors of Israel; I will set them together like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture; it will resound with people. The one who breaks out will go up before them; they will break through and pass the gate, going out by it. Their king will pass on before them, the Lord at their head*>> (Micah 2:12-13). On Christ as the true shepherd, refer to the comments on v.11.

The gatekeeper was to guard the entrance to the sheepfold (v.1). Jesus' phrases the sheep hear his voice and they know his voice repeat a common theme in John: people who truly belong to God listen to and believe in the words of Jesus.

That he opens the gate for them is a further indication that Jesus is the way into the Kingdom of God.

Jesus' call is a fulfilment of Wisdom's crying out in the streets to see if anyone hears and responds: <<*Wisdom cries out in the street; in the squares she raises her voice. At the busiest corner she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks*>> (Proverbs 1:20-21). The focus here, however, is not on a general call, for he calls his own sheep by name. Each particular sheep is known by this shepherd. They are not simply units in a flock.

When he has brought out all his own. The word for brought out, *ekballo*, is the same word used to describe the leaders throwing the man out of the synagogue (9:34-35). The picture of the shepherd who leads them out to find pasture and water thus interprets what has just occurred to the man born blind.

He goes ahead of them. True leaders always lead from the front, just as God led his people out of Egyptian slavery: <<*When the Israelites cried to the Lord on account of the Midianites, the Lord sent a prophet to the Israelites; and he said to them, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: I led you up from Egypt, and brought you out of the house of slavery'*>> (Judges 6:7-8). Jesus, as the leader of his people, goes on ahead and his sheep follow him because they know his voice: <<*As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things*>> (Mark 6:34).

⁵ They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.' ⁶ Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

John 10:5-6

The sheep will not follow a stranger; indeed, they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers. The word for know and recognise are the same word in Greek, *oida*, so the sheep will be known by whom they know. Here is a beautiful picture of both divine sovereignty in the shepherd's call and the human response in the hearing, knowing and following by the sheep. Thus the sheep need discernment for there are more voices calling to them than just the shepherd's.

Jesus spoke this figure of speech to the Pharisees, but they did not get it. These are people who claim to be able to see (9:40-41), but their inability to understand Jesus is yet another example of their spiritual blindness, for they did not understand what he was saying to them. The word for figure of speech is *paroimia* and refers to an obscure saying that needs to be interpreted or else they cannot be correctly understood, a problem that even his disciples had: <<*But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him*>> (Mark 9:32). It is not just a figure of speech or a comparison, but a saying that is loaded with significance, the verbal equivalent of Jesus' signs. Little that Jesus says in this Gospel is not conveyed in this manner, as he will admit at the end of his teaching: <<*I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is*

coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures, but will tell you plainly of the Father>> (John 16:25).

⁷ So again Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.

John 10:7

So again Jesus said to them. Because these Jewish leaders did not understand what Jesus was saying he goes back over it again from a different perspective. In this repetition God’s graciousness is revealed, the same graciousness that caused the word of the Lord to come a second time to Jonah: <<*The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, ‘Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you’>> (Jonah 3:1-2), and suffered with Israel’s waywardness throughout its history. Repeating important instructions is both important and helpful: <<*To write the same things to you is not troublesome to me, and for you it is a safeguard>> (Philippians 3:1b).**

I am the gate for the sheep. Jesus is the only way by which one can become part of the people of God, i.e. Jesus’ flock: <<*This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it>> (Psalm 118:20). This is the third out of seven ‘I am’ statements by Jesus in this Gospel. A list of the ‘I am’ statements in John is included in the Supplementary Material on the website.*

⁸ All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them.

John 10:8

All who came before me may hint at messianic pretenders who promised their followers freedom but instead led them into armed conflict and doom: <<*For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him; but he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and disappeared. After him Judas the Galilæan rose up at the time of the census and got people to follow him; he also perished, and all who followed him were scattered>> (Acts 5:36-37), and: <<*Then you are not the Egyptian who recently stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?>> (Acts 21:38).**

Thieves and bandits. Some of Israel’s shepherds had been feeding themselves but not their sheep: <<*Mortal, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel: prophesy, and say to them – to the shepherds: Thus says the Lord God: Ah, you shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them>> (Ezekiel 34:2-4). Paul warns the elders from Ephesus to be watchful against such people: <<*I know that after I have gone, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Some even from your own group will come distorting the truth in order to entice the disciples to follow them>> (Acts 20:29-30).**

This sweeping generalisation does not include people like Moses, the prophets or John the Baptist, or indeed the law, for all of these witnessed to Jesus. The reference here is to all those in leadership who either oppose Jesus or simply fail to understand who he really is.

The sheep did not listen to them. True disciples should be able to distinguish between the genuine call of God and other voices: those of false prophets or the inner voice that wants to be independent from God.

⁹ I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.

John 10:9

I am the gate. The NT elsewhere speaks of entering God's Kingdom as through a gate: <<*Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it*>> (Matthew 7:13).

Whoever enters by me will be saved. The salvation spoken of refers to protection from the sheep's enemies, here understood to be false teachers as typified by the Jewish opponents. Such teachers threaten death by keeping people from a true knowledge of God, who is himself the sole source of life.

Jesus' language, will come in and go out, echoes covenant terminology, especially the blessings for obedience: <<*Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint someone over the congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the Lord may not be like sheep without a shepherd*>> (Numbers 27:16-17), <<*Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out*>> (Deuteronomy 28:6), and: <<*The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and for evermore*>> (Psalm 121:8).

Find pasture conveys the assurance of God's provision: <<*They journeyed to the entrance of Gedor, to the east side of the valley, to seek pasture for their flocks, where they found rich, good pasture, and the land was very broad, quiet, and peaceful; for the former inhabitants there belonged to Ham*>> (1 Chronicles 4:39-40), <<*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters*>> (Psalm 23:1-2), <<*Thus says the Lord: In a time of favour I have answered you, on a day of salvation I have helped you; I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages; saying to the prisoners, 'Come out', to those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves.' They shall feed along the ways, on all the bare heights shall be their pasture; they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them down, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them*>> (Isaiah 49:8-10), and: <<*As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I*>>

will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God>> (Ezekiel 34:12-15).

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

John 10:10

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. In contrast to the protection, freedom and pasture that come from entering through Jesus are the stealing, death and destruction brought by the thief. One has a positive effect on the sheep, whereas the effect of the other is negative. The thief acts for his own selfish ends and to the detriment of the sheep. Jesus, however, serves the sheep by providing for them the way of life, which he will do, as shown in the next section, at the cost of his own life. Thus, the contrast with the thief is complete.

I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. Jesus' promise of abundant life, which begins already in the here and now, brings to mind OT prophecies about abundant blessing, as just noted in Ezekiel 34:12-15. Jesus calls his followers, not to a dour, lifeless, miserable existence that squashes human potential, but to a rich, full, joyful life, one overflowing with meaningful activities under the personal favour: <<*You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with richness*>> (Psalm 65:11), and blessing of God and in continual fellowship with his people: <<*If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ*>> (Romans 5:17).

¹¹ 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

John 10:11

I am the good shepherd is the fourth 'I am' saying in John. In the OT, God as the true shepherd is contrasted with unfaithful shepherds who will be judged by him as noted in v.8. Refer also to Psalm 23, Isaiah 40:11, Jeremiah 23:1-4, Ezekiel Chapter 34, and Zechariah 11:4-17. Both David and the Davidic Messiah are also depicted as a good shepherd: <<*For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in. The Lord said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel*>> (2 Samuel 5:2), <<*He chose his servant David, and took him from the sheepfolds; from tending the nursing ewes he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel, his inheritance. With upright heart he tended them, and guided them with skilful hand*>> (Psalm 78:70-72), <<*My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statutes*>> (Ezekiel 37:24), <<*And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for*

now he shall be great to the ends of the earth>> (Micah 5:4); as is Moses: <<*You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron*>> (Psalm 77:20), and: <<*Then they remembered the days of old, of Moses his servant. Where is the one who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is the one who put within them his holy spirit*>> (Isaiah 63:11). Jesus as God and man is the fulfilment of both of these themes.

The reference to the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep calls to mind young David, who literally risked his life for his sheep: <<*But David said to Saul, 'Your servant used to keep sheep for his father; and whenever a lion or a bear came, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after it and struck it down, rescuing the lamb from its mouth; and if it turned against me, I would catch it by the jaw, strike it down, and kill it*>> (1 Samuel 17:34-35). However, Jesus surpassed David in that he gave his life on the Cross for his sheep.

¹² The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away – and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep.

John 10:12-13

The hired hand leaves the sheep and runs away. The conceptual background for these verses comes from the Zechariah 11:4-17, which contrasts two shepherds. One is the messianic shepherd-king who is rejected by the people, which, in turn, results in their condemnation. The second is the worthless shepherd who deserts the flock, the hired hand here. God's messianic shepherd will be struck down, causing the sheep to be scattered, leading to the judgment and refining of God's people, refer to Zechariah 13:7-9. This rejection by the leaders of the people and their own condemnation is echoed in John, as is the striking of the shepherd, although with a different effect. It will indeed lead to the scattering of Jesus' flock for a brief time, but it will also be central in the gathering of his own flock from among the nations: <<*And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself*>> (John 12:32).

Jesus' care for the sheep addresses two problems: the lack of care on the part of the hired hand and the threat of scattering by the wolf. Elsewhere the wolf is an image of false teachers who come both from outside the community and from within. Such a problem was present in John's day in Ephesus, since Paul's prediction to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:29-30) was already coming to pass in Paul's own day: <<*I urge you, as I did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine*>> (1 Timothy 1:3), and continued in John's time, as confirmed in 1 John. Likewise, the problem of hirelings continued in the church, as seen in Peter's exhortation to the elders to shepherd God's flock willingly and not just for money: <<*Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it – not for sordid gain but eagerly*>> (1 Peter 5:1-2).

¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.

John 10:14-15

I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. The themes introduced in a general way (vv.11-13) are then personalised and developed (vv.14-18). Jesus' knowledge of his flock and their knowledge of him are compared to the knowledge the Father and the Son have of one another. The conjunction translated just as, Greek *kathos*, is most often used as a comparative, but it can have a causal sense. Both senses are true here, for the relationship between God the Father and his Son is the original model and reason for Jesus' fellowship with his own. As always, Jesus' identity as the Son and his relationship with the Father are crucial for understanding what is being said. This knowledge is not simply knowledge about one another or merely the knowledge of an acquaintance. Rather, it is an intimacy that is love. The intimacy of the Father and the Son is so close it is described as a oneness (v.30), and a similar oneness of life is affirmed between Jesus and his disciples.

I lay down my life for the sheep. This death makes him the shepherd that is good, Greek *kalos*. This word refers in such a context to that which is beautiful, noble, honourable, and worthy of praise. In other words, Jesus is fulfilling his job as a shepherd in an exemplary fashion so that such goodness is able to be perceived. He is the admirable shepherd, and there is something admirable, heroic and attractive in his death. Consequently, it is in his death that he will draw all men to himself (12:32). The beauty of the Lord's character attracts those whose hearts are able to receive divine beauty. This is far more than an admirable death of a martyr. For it is in this death that the beauty of God himself is revealed, since God is love, and love, as John says, is the laying down of life: **<<We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us>>** (1 John 3:16a). It is precisely because he was in the form of God that he poured himself out and laid down his life: **<<Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross>>** (Philippians 2:5-8).

¹⁶ I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

John 10:16

The other sheep that do not belong to this fold are Gentiles: **<<Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered>>** (Isaiah 56:8). Jesus has always intended to gather them into his Kingdom as well: I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice, for Jesus' voice is now available to those who seek him through prayer, those who discern his presence through the indwelling of his Spirit and in written form through the Gospels.

The phrase one flock, one shepherd is not so much an allusion to but a development of: <<*I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken*>> (Ezekiel 34:23-24), and: <<*My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statutes*>> (Ezekiel 37:24), for here Jesus applies it more broadly, as Jews and Gentiles will be united in one messianic community; refer to Matthew 28:18-20 and Ephesians 2:11-22.

Jesus' words do not explicitly say how this new group will be formed and there was much debate in the early church as to whether the Gentiles had to convert to Judaism in order to follow Christ. Paul's views on this were quite clear especially in his letter to the Galatians and it would seem that Jesus too was clear in his earlier words, that were misinterpreted by the Jews: <<*So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed*>> (John 8:36).

¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.'

John 10:17-18

For this reason the Father loves me. The Father does not simply love the Son because of his obedience as God also loved the world (3:16), which certainly is not obedient to God. In the case of Christ, his sinless obedience maintains the harmony of relationship between himself and his Father; therefore God's love remains fulfilled toward him. Jesus refers to this when he says: <<*If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love*>> (John 15:10). Such obedience is the expression of love and is the condition for intimacy (14:23). Thus, in this passage Jesus would be saying that the Father is able to fulfil his love for the Son because the Son does the Father's will.

I lay down my life in order to take it up again indicates that Jesus voluntarily yielded up his life when he knew that his suffering was completed: <<*When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit*>> (John 19:30). At no point was Jesus' life and death driven by human agenda: <<*Then they tried to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come*>> (John 7:30), but was orchestrated according to the will of God. It also implies that the divine nature of Christ was active in his resurrection, for he also says: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again.

No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. The Jews and the Romans may have thought Jesus died according to their decision, but the truth is they were only fulfilling the will of God, even though they had no idea that is what they were doing: <<*Jesus answered him, 'You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin'*>> (John 19:11).

I have received this command from my Father. Once again, Jesus indicates an ordering within the Godhead even though it is accepted that each person is uniquely and fully God; part of the wonderful mystery of the triune God.

¹⁹ Again the Jews were divided because of these words. ²⁰ Many of them were saying, 'He has a demon and is out of his mind. Why listen to him?' ²¹ Others were saying, 'These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?'

John 10:19-21

The Jews were divided because of these words. As Jesus had said would be the case, there is division not harmony among those who hear him. Those that say: he has a demon and is out of his mind would have done so from the common idea at the time that mental health issues were caused by demon possession.

Can a demon open the eyes of the blind? The charge of demon possession (7:20) is contradicted by OT teaching that it is the Lord who gives sight to the blind: <<*Then the Lord said to him, 'Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?'*>> (Exodus 4:11), and: <<*The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind*>> (Psalm 146:7b-8a).

II.c.xi John 10:22-42 - Jesus Is Rejected by the Jews

In a sense, Jesus' ministry remains public until Chapter 13, but this encounter is the last public teaching before the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, which is the beginning of his Passion. Here he speaks as clearly as possible about himself and his opponents. This exchange is his last effort to get them to understand who he is.

The scene is once again a festival in Jerusalem. The arguments that Jesus makes are much the same as before, although his identification is made even clearer, and so is the response from his opponents who once again make a failed attempt to stone him for blasphemy. Following this encounter Jesus leaves the region and heads east across the River Jordan.

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.

John 10:22-23

The eight-day festival of the Dedication celebrates the rededication of the Jewish temple in December 164BC, after its desecration by the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 167BC, who forbade Jewish religion, tried to force them to worship Zeus and set up forbidden sacrificial services in the temple that included pigs. There are many who link this activity by Antiochus with Daniel's prophecy: <<*He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall make sacrifice and offering cease; and in their place shall be an abomination that desolates, until the decreed end is poured out upon the desolator*>> (Daniel 9:27).

The festival of the Dedication is held on the 25th day of Chislev (November/December), the day that Antiochus had the pagan altar first used in the temple. Today the festival is known as Hanukkah.

Jesus was walking in the temple denotes the larger temple area (2:14). Probably because of the cold winter weather, Jesus did not teach out in the open but in the area called the portico of Solomon. While this structure is not mentioned by name in other existing sources, it is likely that this should be identified with the stoa or covered walkway on the eastern side of the Temple Mount, near the Court of Gentiles, for it is here that the older parts of the temple were still remembered as Solomonic according to Josephus in Jewish Antiquities 20.220-221. Luke also makes reference to this part of the temple area: <<**While he clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's Portico, utterly astonished**>> (Acts 3:11).

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.

John 10:24-29

The Jews ask Jesus outright: If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly. When Jesus answered: I have told you, and you do not believe he was no longer using figures of speech but telling them quite plainly. It was not a case of lack of clarity by Jesus but a lack of perception and indeed faith on the part of his audience: <<**They said, 'If you are the Messiah, tell us.'** He replied, 'If I tell you, you will not believe>> (Luke 22:67).

The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me. In John's Gospel, the term works, Greek *ergon*, both singular and in the plural, is a broader term than signs. While signs in John are characteristically miracles that attest to Jesus' identity as the Christ and Son of God, and that lead unbelievers to faith, Jesus' works include both his miracles and his other activities and teachings, including the whole of his ministry.

Those who belong to Jesus' flock, i.e. those who are chosen by him, are those who believe. The reason people do not believe is because they do not belong to Jesus' sheep, implying that God must first give them the ability to believe and make them part of his people with a new heart.

Eternal life by definition can never be taken away, especially when Jesus' sheep belong to him and to his Father.

They will never perish. This does not apply to the physical body that will decay after death. It is referring to the restoration of all things that will come in a future

age, for God remembers those who belong to him: <<*For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, says the Lord, so shall your descendants and your name remain*>> (Isaiah 66:22).

Snatch denotes the use of force. Note the contrast with the hired hand in vv.12-13 who abandons the flock in times of danger: <<*I am God, and also henceforth I am He; there is no one who can deliver from my hand; I work and who can hinder it?*>> (Isaiah 43:13).

What my Father has given me is greater than all else. God had given his Son the people who were drawn to him. It is quite remarkable that Jesus believes this to be above everything else that his Father could have given him.

³⁰ The Father and I are one.'

John 10:30

Jesus' claim that the Father and I are one, i.e. one entity for the Greek is neuter and echoes the Shema, the basic confession of Judaism, whose first word in Deuteronomy 6:4 is shema', Hebrew for hear. Jesus' words thus amount to a claim to deity. Hence, the Jews pick up stones to put him to death. Jesus' unity with the Father is later said to constitute the basis on which Jesus' followers are to be unified: <<*The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one*>> (John 17:22). As in 1:1, here again the basic building blocks of the doctrine of the Trinity emerge: I and the Father implies more than one person in the Godhead, but are one implies that God is one being.

Jewish understanding of the Messiah did not include the possibility that he could be God or have equality with God, thus Jesus' statements to the effect that he was indeed divine scandalised the Jews who viewed this as blasphemy and worthy only of one outcome: death by stoning.

³¹ The Jews took up stones again to stone him.

John 10:31

The Jews took up stones again to stone him mirrors their action from before: <<*So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple*>> (John 8:59). Jesus, of course, did not die in this way but it was the fate for the first Christian martyr Stephen: <<*Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul*>> (Acts 7:58).

³² Jesus replied, 'I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these are you going to stone me?'

John 10:32

I have shown you many good works from the Father. This is a most amazing scene. They are standing there with stones and are ready to kill Jesus, and he calmly tries to help them see their error. He appeals to them on the basis of their own experience and the Scriptures. He begins with the deeds he has done; deeds that are from the Father, from the one they claim as their God. They are great,

kalos, the same word used to describe the shepherd as ‘good’ (v.11 and v.14). His deeds are not just great, they are truly admirable. These are deeds that should have provoked awe, admiration and praise; not anger and hostility.

³³ The Jews answered, ‘It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but for blasphemy, because you, though only a human being, are making yourself God.’ ³⁴ Jesus answered, ‘Is it not written in your law, “I said, you are gods”?’

John 10:33-34

You, though only a human being, are making yourself God. Jesus was of course fully human, something that was readily accepted by the early church and a key part of understanding how humankind could be reconciled through Jesus. However, Jesus is also fully God, equal in every way and part of the Godhead that is the one true God. Although the OT does point to the Trinity, it does not actually recognise it as such and it only became part of church language in about the 3rd Century AD. Thus Jesus’ claims to be one with God would be a clear case of blasphemy in their understanding of the law, although there was no specific written law, for no person ever spoke the full name of God, the Tetragrammaton *YHWH* for fear of committing blasphemy, let alone saying they were equal to God. Blasphemy was punishable by death: <<***One who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall be put to death; the whole congregation shall stone the blasphemer. Aliens as well as citizens, when they blaspheme the Name, shall be put to death***>> (Leviticus 24:16).

I said, you are gods. Jesus’ point in quoting Psalm 82:6 is that if human judges (Psalm 82:2-4) can in some sense be called gods, in light of their role as representatives of God, this designation is even more appropriate for the one who truly is the Son of God. The Psalms are of course not the law but the Jews viewed all of the Scriptures as part of the laws of God and therefore worthy of following.

³⁵ If those to whom the word of God came were called “gods” – and the scripture cannot be annulled – ³⁶ can you say that the one whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world is blaspheming because I said, “I am God’s Son”?

John 10:35-36

Some Jewish rabbis believe that Psalm 82:6 actually refers to the Jewish people as they receive the law rather than their judges but the interpretation remains the same. It seems that Jesus’ interpretation would agree with these rabbis for he says those to whom the word of God came were called “gods”. In this case the contrast between these gods and Jesus would be that Jesus is the one who both fulfils the law and is greater than the law. But this expression to whom the word of God came could also refer to the judges, as suggested by the rest of Psalm 82, who have received a commission from God to exercise the divine prerogative of judgment on his behalf. The psalm is actually a condemnation of the judges for not exercising their responsibility faithfully, thus corresponding both to the condemnation of these Jewish leaders in John and to Jesus as the true judge.

Jesus is depending on just one word **“gods”** in the OT for his argument. When he says that **scripture cannot be annulled**, he implies that every single word in Scripture is completely true and reliable: *<<Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart>>* (Hebrews 4:12), and that it will be fulfilled: *<<For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished>>* (Matthew 5:18). His opponents do not differ with this high view of Scripture, either here or anywhere else in the Gospels.

The one whom the Father has sanctified. The reference to Jesus having been consecrated for his mission echoes OT language regarding those appointed to an office, such as the Aaronic priests: *<<You shall put them on your brother Aaron, and on his sons with him, and shall anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them, so that they may serve me as priests>>* (Exodus 28:41), and: *<<Then Moses took some of the anointing-oil and some of the blood that was on the altar and sprinkled them on Aaron and his vestments, and also on his sons and their vestments. Thus he consecrated Aaron and his vestments, and also his sons and their vestments>>* (Leviticus 8:30), or the prophet Jeremiah: *<<Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations>>* (Jeremiah 1:5).

I am God’s Son. This argument goes beyond anything they had thought before, but it is not a denial of the truths of Scripture. Indeed, the Scripture itself, as illustrated by Psalm 82:6, contains hints of such a revelation. But, as with all other arguments, it only makes sense if the listener is open to entertaining the truth of who Jesus is.

³⁷ If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me.

³⁸ But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.’ ³⁹ Then they tried to arrest him again, but he escaped from their hands.

John 10:37-39

If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. For Jesus’ works as witnesses to his deity, refer to the comments on 5:31-47. His works are like the works of God, both in power and in graciousness. Miracles alone are not enough to confirm the truth of one who speaks for God, refer to the comments on 9:33. However, the point of these signs is not simply that they are powerful or awesome or supernatural but that they are in keeping with God’s own character for they manifest his gracious love.

If I do them believe the works. The crowd are challenged that, even if they **do not believe** what Jesus says of himself, or indeed what John the Baptist had said of him, then they should believe in the miraculous signs that Jesus was performing.

Jesus’ conclusion again transcends the category of an agent: **that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.** They are standing there with rocks in their hands, and he is appealing to them to accept the

evidence of their senses, as witnessed to by the Scriptures, that he is uniquely related to God. Again the antinomy between divine sovereignty and human responsibility is in evidence. These are the people of whom Jesus said they could not believe because they were not of his sheep (v.26), but here he is appealing to them to believe. The Gospel is to be shared with everyone.

Then they tried to arrest him again, but he escaped from their hands. The crowd did not accept Jesus' reasoning because they did not have the faith to come to him. Yet he remained under his Father's protection for they could manage to restrain him as they tried to once again: <<**He spoke these words while he was teaching in the treasury of the temple, but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come**>> (John 8:20).

⁴⁰ He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptising earlier, and he remained there. ⁴¹ Many came to him, and they were saying, 'John performed no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true.' ⁴² And many believed in him there.

John 10:40-42

He went away again across the Jordan indicates that Jesus crossed over onto the eastern side of the River Jordan and was no longer in Judæa, thus outside of the jurisdiction of the Jewish authorities.

Many came to him, and they were saying, 'John performed no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true.' That John performed no miracles makes his witness to Jesus stand out even more as the great accomplishment of his ministry. From a Christian point of view, such witness is a great work for it enables people to do the work of God, to believe in the one sent from God. The truth of what John had said about Jesus which had been accomplished at this stage would not be the salvation of the world or baptising with the Holy Spirit. Rather, the focus is on Jesus' identity as the one who was to come (1:26-31), as summarised in John's testimony: <<**And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God**>> (John 1:34). Now, in the light of all Jesus has said and done, the truth of this testimony has been made evident to those who are able to see.

And many believed in him there. Those living east of the River Jordan were a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. However, had Gentiles started to come to faith in Jesus as this time then John would no doubt have explicitly mentioned them.