

The Church of the Servant King

Survey of the Bible Series – The Gospel of John **(SB_JN10B_Discourse at the Feast of Dedication)**

Setting

Between the events of chapter 10:1-21 and verse 22, several weeks elapse. Most likely, after Jesus experienced the hostility against Him while in Jerusalem during the 48-hour period or so covered by chapters 7:1-10:21, He returned to Galilee for a period before going back to Jerusalem. Here in the second half of chapter 10, we see that the Feast of Dedication is being celebrated. The Feast of Dedication is known today by the title Hanukkah.

The Feast of Dedication, now known as Hanukkah, was established as a memorial to the purification and rededication of the temple by Judas Maccabeus on Kislev (December) 25, 165 B.C., after its profanation three years earlier by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Antiochus, the king of Syria, had captured Jerusalem, plundered the temple treasury, and sacrificed a sow to Jupiter on the temple altar. His attempt to Hellenize Judea resulted in the Maccabean revolt, which, after three years, was successful in defeating the Syrian armies and liberating the Jewish people. Solomon's Colonnade (or Porch) was a long walkway covered by a roof supported on pillars on the east side of the temple, overlooking the Kidron Valley. The Colonnade served as a shelter from the heat of the sun in summer and from the cold rain in winter. Jesus used it as a center for informal teaching and preaching since there would almost always be some people present for worship at the temple.¹

Jesus was walking with His disciples in Solomon's Portico or Colonnade at the time of this discourse. Along the sides of the entrance court to the Temple, the Court of the Gentiles, there were two porches or colonnades – The Royal Colonnade and Solomon's Colonnade. Solomon's Colonnade was the eastern colonnade. Huge pillars that stood almost forty feet high supported the roofs of these colonnades and people gathered there to pray or meditate. The rabbis would teach their disciples there and others would listen.

The Discourse (10:24-38)

Verse 24 is the key to the interpretation of the tone of this encounter between Jesus and the "Jews" as well as the discourse that follows. The verb that is translated "gathered around Him" is the 3rd person, plural, aorist, active, indicative of *kukloo*. This verb can be translated – encircled – and it implies that the Jews wanted to compel Jesus to make a categorical statement of His identity.² If He was the Messiah, they wanted Him to get on with the job of establishing the independence of the nation. If He was not the Messiah, they wanted Him to leave. They could not deny the fact that His miracles had exceeded those of any prophet of Israel's history nor could they deny the fact that He taught with great authority. On the other hand, He had not presented Himself as the Messiah of Israel and He seemed to have no political ambitions. The "Jews" (the religious leaders) were determined to pin Jesus down. "His enigmatic sayings plagued them, and they wanted Him to declare Himself on their terms."³

¹ Frank E. Gaebelin, *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, electronic version, 1976 – 1992).

² Ibid.

³ Edwin A. Blum, "John," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, John Walvoord and Roy Zuck, editors (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1983), 311.

It is possible that the memories of Jewish victory over oppression that was celebrated this time of year in Jerusalem during the Feast of Dedication stirred up the desire of the Jews for freedom from the Roman occupation and for the political Messiah they desired. After all, the Old Testament contained many prophetic references that associated the Messiah with Israel's restored position of glory.

The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths.' For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations will not lift up sword against nation. And never again will they learn war. Come, house of Jacob, and let us walk in the light of the Lord. (Isa 2:1-5)

But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity. (Mic 5:2)

In many ways, this scene with the questioning by the "Jews" is just a reenactment of John 8:25 – "So they were saying to Him, 'Who are You?'" Whenever the Jews had asked Jesus who He was, He always gave them answers that were designed to broaden their narrow preconception of how the Messiah would present Himself when He came and open their eyes to the spiritual prerequisites to the establishment of the kingdom. From their responses, it is absolutely clear that they had no clue and were spiritually blind. Their paradigm was set in the stone of a hardened heart and was not open to change. They were only interested in the blessings of the Messianic kingdom where Israel would lead the world in the worship of God and the Roman yoke would be lifted as foretold in such passages as Isaiah 2.

Principle: Believers can become hardened to God's transforming desires in their lives by a "what's in it for me" approach that is in reality part of the cosmic way of thinking that still has a hold on their lives.

Application: Are there any areas of your life that you are not allowing God to transform because of a selfish focus or self-centered orientation to life that has been shaped by family or societal influences?

Application: Is your vision of Jesus blurred by certain preconceived notions of Who He is and How He works?

The next section of this passage presents Jesus' answer to the "Jews" question. It really has two parts: 1) a rebuke of the unbelief of those who refused to believe (vv. 25-26); and 2) promises to those who believe (vv. 27-29).

Jesus Rebukes Unbelief (10:25-26)

Jesus knew that these "Jews" had hardened hearts with preconceived notions of the Messiah as a Person and of His activities when He would come. Sheep are willing to follow the shepherd. If Jesus had answered in the affirmative, they would not have followed His teaching. Rather, they would have operated based upon their paradigm and attempted to install Him by force considering the power He had displayed through His miracles. Jesus recognizes that they would not follow Him like His sheep and He can only attempt to change their paradigm by

appealing to a logic that examined His works and His words. His works should have been sufficient to establish His messianic mission and identity (e.g. 5:16-47; 6:32-59; 7:14-30).

Comment: Need to check these references.

Promises to Those Who Believe (10:27-31)

To the minority who believe, Jesus promised several things in these three verses – six to be exact. The eternal security of the believer represented by these six things is a principle that is true for believers of all dispensations. The reason is that the source of that eternal security and the basis for that eternal security is the same – Jesus Christ Himself. The six things that Jesus promised are:

- ❖ “My sheep hear My voice” (v. 27) – this principle is repeated or implied throughout this chapter (vv. 3-5, 8, 14, 16 and 27). This doesn’t mean that anyone Who hears is a believer. Rather, this means that those who hear and appropriate Jesus’ words and promises as his/her own is a believer.
- ❖ “I know them” (v. 27) – this principle indicates the personal and intimate nature of the relationship between the Good Shepherd (Jesus) and each of His sheep. He has His own name for each sheep which points to His tender affection for them (cf. 1:42; 20:16; 2 Tim 2:19).
- ❖ “They follow Me” (v. 27) – the Jewish religious establishment would never follow Jesus unless Jesus abandoned the Father’s plan and conformed Himself to their messianic paradigm. A true sheep wants the shepherd to be near and wants to enjoy His provision of pasture and His protection from evil. Jesus’ sheep do not listen to the voice of strangers (e.g. the blind man of chapter 9 who did not listen to the Pharisees) nor do they accept strange doctrines (1 Tim 6:5, 11; 1 Jn 2:19-20).
- ❖ “I give them eternal life” (v. 28) – this is a reference to life with God for eternity, not just life forever. All souls will live forever. The question is where and with whom?
- ❖ “They shall never perish” (v. 28) – this is an affirmation that believers will not spend eternity separated from God. The religious unbelievers probably found this statement very offensive since Jesus had indicated that they were not His sheep. Also, they may have mocked Him at His crucifixion as they reflected upon this and similar statements. Jesus has described the state of perishing in such texts as John 3:36; 5:29; 8:24; Matt 7:13; 13:41-42, 49-50; and 25:46.
- ❖ “No man can snatch them out of My (My Father’s) hand” (v. 29) – this is the most affirmative declaration yet of the eternal security of the believer. Not even the most powerful creation to come from the hand of God, i.e. Lucifer or Satan, can rob the believer from the protection of Jesus and His Father (cf. Ro 8:35-39).

Comment: Check these out

Comment: Check these out

Comment: Check these out

Jesus’ claims were incredible. In the presence of Israel’s most powerful, Jesus claimed the power to give eternal life with God and the power to preserve those who believed in Him. To top it off, He claimed to be one with the Father. The Jews reacted to these statements – particularly to Jesus’ claim to be in metaphysical union with the Father.⁴ His statements up to that point could have been dismissed as the ramblings of a fool, especially when He Himself would later die. But, His statement that He was in union with the Father would have especially raised their ire as they would have found this blasphemous. Therefore, they prepared to stone Him (v. 31). Stoning was the prescribed treatment under the Law for blasphemy (Lev 24:16).

Jesus Answers Their Accusation (10:32-38)

In His own defense, Jesus quotes from Psalm 82:6 – “I said, ‘You are “gods”; you are all sons of the Most High.’” In addition, He adds the statement that “Scripture cannot be broken” which is a strong affirmation by Jesus of the inerrancy of Scripture. Jesus rests His argument upon the veracity of Scripture. But, what did He mean?

⁴ Gaebelain, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, electronic version.

In the Old Testament, judges were called “gods” because God had granted them authority that ultimately only belonged to Him, i.e. to judge. Jesus’ argument followed this *a fortiori* line of logic – if the term “god” could be applied to ordinary mortal men, then how could Jesus be accused of blasphemy when He applied the term to Himself in view of the fact that God had sent Him into the world on a special mission?⁵ The fact that He had been sent by the Father was attested by His works. A mere mortal with a sin nature had never done the works Jesus did.

Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this man was not from God, He could do nothing. (Jn 9:32-33)

Others said, ‘These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?’ (Jn 10:21)

Jesus Retreats to the Area Across the Jordan (10:40-42)

In the area across the Jordan where John had baptized, the Jewish religious leaders had no authority.⁶ Perhaps that is why John had baptized there. Jesus knew that He would be relatively safe from arrest there. Many believed in Jesus there on the basis of His works and the fact that John had prophesied concerning Jesus’ works.

⁵ Gaebelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, electronic version.

⁶ Ibid.