

John on Jesus - The World's Greatest Hero

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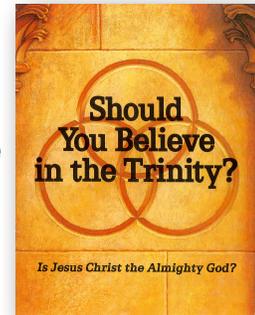
Turn to John 10:22-42.

Before we jump into the text, I have a story. I was 21 and had recently made the decision to begin seminary. I was not intending to be a pastor. I had questions about my faith. I loved Jesus but also had good friends of different beliefs. Who was I to say they were wrong?

It was August. I was in my first course, concentrated Greek. It is an entire semester compressed into one month. I don't remember why but one day we didn't have class. I drove two hours south to Harrisburg where I could hang out with an old college roommate. He was a car dealer. He brought me with him to a closed dealer auction. As the auctioneer rambled on the microphone, and whacked his rubber hose on the counter, I sat at a table in the corner of the room trying to study Greek.

This guy walked up to me. I never saw the dude before or after this. He noticed I was reading Greek. I remember his words. He said, "Did you know that if you could read the Bible in Greek, you would discover Jesus isn't God?" Then he handed me this pamphlet and walked away. The next week, I read the pamphlet. At first, I believed what it said because it appeared to make sense and soundly prove Jesus isn't God. As I reflected on it, I began finding verses out of context.

Let me compress the story. That winter, I did a self-study course where I researched and wrote a response to this pamphlet. What I learned is the



pamphlet is totally wrong. It twists Scripture and misrepresents history. The Jehovah's Witnesses, the group that publishes this pamphlet, are just dishonest with the Bible. I am not trying to pick on them. I am just telling truth you need to know.

As a result of that self-study course, I had a change of heart. I became strongly convinced that all religions are not the same. Some are clearly untrue and demonically-inspired. As a result of what I learned, I switched my major from a Master of Art in Religion to a Masters of Divinity and decided to become a pastor.

I want to begin this message by thanking a Jehovah's Witness for witnessing to me. God used his efforts to get me in my Bible, which God used to call me into the pastorate.

I bring this up because the point of this pamphlet is to convince us Jesus never claimed to be God. The point of our text is to show us that Jesus clearly and publicly claimed to be God. These religions are exact opposites.

Background

At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." John 10:22–24 (ESV)

If you were here for the series we just finished on the book of Daniel, this will be fun. This is a moment when events from the book of Daniel intersect with the Gospel of John.

Who remembers Antiochus Epiphanies from the book of Daniel? He is mentioned in Daniel 8 and 11. He was a descendant of Seleucis who ruled

Syria, one of Alexander the Great's generals. Antiochus ruled from 175 to 167 B.C. He loved Greek culture and, as a bully, he tried to force it on everyone. He had a personal goal to force Jews to become Greeks. If he needed to abolish the Jewish faith and, if need be, the Jewish people to accomplish that, it was an acceptable casualty. He put together an army and attacked Jerusalem. Some estimates say he killed and deported approximately 150,000 Jews from Jerusalem. He burned all copies of the scrolls of Scripture he found. If you practiced the Jewish faith, or observed a Jewish holiday, you were killed, no questions asked. If you circumcised your child, the child was strangled on a string in your front yard. He turned the temple courts into a house of prostitution, which gave a whole new meaning for Jewish men attending worship in the temple. He went into the Holy of Holies, sacrificed a pig on the altar and threw pig blood and guts all over the walls of the holy of holies to essentially flip God off. Then, he rededicated the temple to Zeus, building a new altar in the Holy of Holies with an image of Zeus next to it. This guy was a total nightmare. Daniel tells us he was the prototype of the final antichrist of world history. As part of Antiochus' attempt to destroy the Jewish people, he forced them to eat bacon. This was his undoing.

I know some of you think a forced diet of bacon is a good idea. The Jews didn't view it that way. In the Old Testament, pigs are unclean animals and Jews weren't to touch them. A forced diet of bacon was intended to defile the Jews, insult them and break their wills.

In the midst of this terrible oppression, God raised up a deliverer.

Antiochus' soldiers went to a small village named Modin, just 17 miles outside of Jerusalem. They planned to enforce the eat-bacon rule, community-wide. Antiochus' men gathered the villagers in the center of town and began looking for a volunteer to plunge a knife into the hog. Finally, someone stepped forward. An old priest in the crowd, named Matthias, couldn't handle it. He went berserk. He grabbed the knife, killed the volunteer and jumped on Antiochus' men. Thankfully, Matthias had five sons in the crowd that joined him. In a matter of moments, Antiochus' soldiers were dead.

That began a guerrilla war between the Jews and Antiochus Epiphanes' army that lasted three years. The most famous of Matthias' sons was Judas Maccabaeus. The word Maccabaeus, means, "The Hammer." You get the idea that this guy was a stud.

In spite of being outnumbered and outgunned, the Maccabees guerrilla force prevailed. They repeatedly conquered the Syrian army. The story of this struggle is written in the books of 1 and 2 Maccabees. They are not biblical books but they do contain interesting history. Three years after Antiochus Epiphanes committed the abomination of desolation by sacrificing pigs in the Holy of Holies of the temple, the Jews rededicated the temple to true worship. The Maccabees saw this as such a God-inspired victory they declared an annual celebration in remembrance of it. This celebration is known as the Feast of Dedication. It is also popularly called Hanukkah. It is not a feast from Old Testament history but it comes from intertestamental history. This is the feast Jesus was celebrating in Jerusalem in John 10.

As the scene opens, this was Jesus' last time in Jerusalem before his final week and the Passover when he is executed. It is 2½ months after the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Dedication takes place on the 24th day of Kislev in the Jewish calendar, which roughly corresponds to our month of December. The feast lasts eight days. It was cold.

To get the rest of the setting, let me show you Solomon's Colonnade. This was where Jesus taught. It was the only publicly roofed area that provided a shelter from the rain and the cold. The temple proper was in the center, and it provided shelter from the cold winter winds. On account of the columns, it was a place that was easy to get pinned down by the crowds. That is exactly what happened to Jesus. The Jews pinned him down. They pressed him for an answer. They wanted a quote for the local newspaper. "Are you the Messiah?"



The terms Messiah and Christ are synonymous. Messiah is Hebrew for the anointed one from God; Christ is Greek for the exact same thing. They wanted Jesus to tell them plainly and publicly that he was God.

Jesus had already claimed to be the Christ, God in the flesh, multiple times, but he did this in private, not publicly. For instance, he told the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4 he was the Messiah. He told the man born blind that in John 9 that he was the Messiah. Then the crowds were pinning him down looking for an answer for the newspaper.

Jesus shied away from a direct answer and told them to figure it out for themselves, just to look at his works.

Jesus did the works of the Messiah.

Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me," John 10:25 (ESV)

He fed a crowd of 25,000 off a McDonald's Happy Meal. He opened the eyes of a man born blind. He healed an invalid at the Pool of Siloam. He was doing things that only God could do. Incidentally, in Isaiah 35:5-6, it tells us the kind of miracles the Christ would do when he came. Isaiah tells us the blind would receive their sight, the deaf would hear, the lame would walk. Those were the miracles Jesus was performing. He was fitting the Messiah's profile like a hand in a glove. Many people can put the pieces together. Why is it that some people, like these Jews, can't put the pieces together?

To answer the question, Jesus took a little rabbit trail that is quite helpful.

Some will never believe.

It is common for people to say, "I would believe Jesus is God if he would just show up and do some miracles to prove himself." If I saw a few miracles, I would believe. Jesus said, "That is not true. The reason you don't believe is because you are not my sheep." The reason people have a lack of faith is a spiritual thing, not an evidence thing.

...but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one." John 10:26-30 (ESV)

So the issue is not a need for more miracles. These guys had tons of miracles. They had more than their fair share. The reason they didn't believe was because they were not his sheep. The biblical picture of salvation is God the Father has chosen out of the sea of humanity to give some people to Jesus. They are the ones who will be saved eternally. They were given to Jesus before the foundation of the world. What happens is when Jesus' sheep hear Jesus' voice and when they see the miracles of Jesus, they recognize Jesus as the Messiah. They follow Christ. The ability to see Christ for who he is and follow him is not a natural ability. It is not a choice we make on our own strength. It is a supernatural gift from God. Some people will hear the voice of Jesus and see the miracles of Jesus and even though they are more than adequate for faith, in their lives, they will not produce faith. The reason is because God has not given them to Jesus as his sheep.

Think of it this way. When my kids are in a crowd, they hear many voices and are skillful at ignoring most of them. When I yell their name in a crowd, something happens. Because they are my kids, they recognize my voice. They say, "That's my dad." They hear, and they respond. All the other kids ignore me, because they are not my kids.

Some people are given to Jesus by God the Father. They are Jesus' kids. The evidence somebody is a child of God is when they hear Jesus' voice, they respond by saying, "I just heard my dad!"

For us, that means when we read God's Word and when we hear it taught, we hear the voice of our father speaking to us through it. This is really helpful to

explain the way the world works. When I was younger, I tried to prove God's existence and prove Jesus as the Son of God to many people. I learned evidence for my faith. I read plenty of Josh McDowell. That evidence is good. I would show the evidence for Jesus being the Son of God to my friends, but they were not convinced; in fact, many of them didn't care. This verse tells us why. Recognizing Jesus as the Son of God is not ultimately a matter of having enough evidence, it is ultimately rooted in a supernatural choice by God the Father to give us to Jesus, his son so when we hear God's Word, we recognize it as our father. We respond. God is your father when you read the Bible and the Bible strikes you as if God were talking to you right through his word. You don't have this experience while reading the newspaper. It is the experience of hearing and responding to your father's voice.

When we share about Jesus, expect some people will think we are nuts, because God is not their father. Others will hear the voice of their father when God's Word is read and taught. They will respond to the voice of their dad.

We know we have eternal life because God is the one who gives it to us.

Jesus teased out what this means. He said, "I give them eternal life." I love this. Jesus *gives us* eternal life. There is nothing in us or about us that deserves eternal life. Nothing about us makes us deserve eternal life more than someone else. We have eternal life forever because God *chose* to give it to us. All we did was respond to the voice of our father. When we die, our relationship with God does not cease, but we are brought into God's presence where we

continue to live with him. Eternal life with God is not based on our perfection but upon the promise of Jesus and God the Father who give it to us as a gift.

Since we don't save ourselves, we can't lose ourselves.

Here is a great memory verse. Underline it in your Bible. *“My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.”* This is very important. Some people believe that after we come to Christ, get forgiven and cleaned up, if we sin again, God is done with us. Others think that since we chose to follow Christ, we can also choose to walk away from Christ. That is not the biblical picture.

Think of holding hands. The picture some people have is they are holding on to Jesus and so they better not let go. That is unbiblical. Others have the picture that they are holding on to Jesus and Jesus is holding on to them. If they let go, they may slip from God's grasp. That is also unbiblical. The picture is God chose to hold us. His hand wraps around us. Even if we want to get away from Jesus, we can't. Since we weren't responsible for saving ourselves, we can't be responsible for losing ourselves.

...he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:6 (NIV84)

What do we do with people who went to church for years but walked away from Christ? There are two options. Either they never knew Jesus in the first place or they are in a terrible state of rebellion. Those are the only two options. Because we didn't save ourselves, we can't lose ourselves. You see, some people will say, “Can we lose our salvation?” Technically that is saying, “Can we overpower God and tear ourselves out of his hand? Do we, or anything else,

have the power to take ourselves out of God's hand?" It is a rhetorical question.

The answer is "Of course not!"

Jesus publicly claimed to be God.

"I and the Father are one." The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God." John 10:30-33 (ESV)

Put on your theological wading boots. The Jews asked him to publicly claim to be God. He equated himself with God in the last few verses saying nothing can snatch his sheep out of his hand and his father's hand. Now he drops the bomb. "*I and the Father are one.*"

It is popular today for people to say Jesus never claimed to be God. For example, the Jehovah's Witness pamphlet I started out with says Jesus never claimed to be God. In that pamphlet, it talks about this phrase from John 10:30. It claims Jesus was not claiming to be God, he was simply saying he was united with God the Father in thought and purpose, just as all of us hope to be.

I want you to circle some phrases. Circle, "I and the Father are one." Now circle "because you, a mere man, claim to be God" and put a line between them tying them together. You will come back to these verses often. Jesus was not simply claiming to be united with God the Father in thought and purpose. Jesus publicly claimed to be God. The Jews clearly understood his claim to be

"I and the Father Are One" Jehovah's Witness Pamphlet Quote

THAT text, at John 10:30, is often cited to support the Trinity, even though no third person is mentioned there. But Jesus himself showed what he meant by his being "one" with the Father. At John 17:21, 22, he prayed to God that his disciples "may all be one, just as you, Father, are in union with me and I am in union with you, that they also may be in union with us... that they may be one just as we are one." Was Jesus praying that all his disciples would become a single entity? No, obviously Jesus was praying that they would be united in thought and purpose, as he and God were.—See also 1 Corinthians 1:10.

Should You Believe in the Trinity
Jehovah's Witness Pamphlet Quote

God. That is why they immediately responded by attempting to stone him! They even told him they understood him to be claiming to be God. To me, Jesus is pretty clear on this one. I do not understand how the Jehovah's Witnesses can come to the conclusion they do on this verse.

Some people claim Jesus was misunderstood. They only understood him to claim to be God but that wasn't his intention. If Jesus thought he was misunderstood, why didn't he clear it up? We don't find Jesus saying, "I am sorry, you misunderstood me when I said the Father and I are one. I didn't mean we are both God. I am just united in thought and purpose with my father." That didn't happen. Jesus just stuck with his claim.

In this Jehovah's Witness pamphlet, it says, "Jesus is not God and never claimed to be." Jehovah's Witnesses believe scores of people misrepresent him. The Jehovah's Witnesses also claim that the idea of Jesus being God opposes the entire testimony of the Bible. What did we just read? In this last public appearance in Jerusalem before his crucifixion week, Jesus clearly claimed to be God through his words and his works.

Father is greater than I."—John 14:28, RS, Catholic edition.

The fact is that Jesus is not God and never claimed to be. This is being recognized by an increasing number of scholars. As the Rylands *Bulletin* states: "The fact has to be faced that New Testament research over, say, the last thirty or forty years has been leading an increasing number of reputable New Testament scholars to the conclusion that Jesus . . . certainly never believed himself to be God."

The *Bulletin* also says of first-century Christians: "When, therefore, they assigned [Jesus] such honorific titles as Christ, Son of man, Son of God and Lord, these were ways of saying not that he was God, but that he did God's work."

Thus, even some religious scholars admit that the idea of Jesus' being God opposes the entire testimony of the Bible. There, God is always the superior, and Jesus is the subordinate servant.

Should You Believe in the Trinity
Jehovah's Witness Pamphlet Quote

Don't get hung up on his words, look at his works.

Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? If I am not

doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.” Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands. John 10:34–39 (ESV)

Verse 34 causes a lot of grief. This is some tough stuff. The Bible is insistent all over the place that there is only one God. Three times a day, the Jews recited the Shema from Deuteronomy, “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” Jews and Christians are strict monotheists. What is Jesus doing quoting an Old Testament passage that appears to teach there is more than one god?

Jesus quoted from Psalm 82:6. You can turn there in your Bibles. The context is important. This Psalm talks about God being the judge of all the earth. It says in the first verse that in the midst of the gods, the true God holds judgment. This Psalm is talking about the judges in Israel. Their job was to uphold God’s law on Earth. They acted as God’s representatives on Earth. It was as if God was passing judgment against sin through them. What we have is earthly judges are called gods with a little “g” because they are representing the real God with the big “G.”

In the Psalm, God chastises the earthly judges because they weren’t doing a good job of representing him on Earth. They were not rescuing the weak and needy. They were showing favoritism and acting unjust. As a result, they died. The Psalm ends on a messianic note saying that someday God would come to Earth and judge it himself. He would replace the earthly unjust judges and inherit the nations. This was pointing to the Messiah’s second coming.

Jesus pointed them to the middle of the Psalm and said, “Why are you freaking out because I claim to be God? Don’t get so freaked out over my words. There were times in the past when fallible human beings were called gods because they represented the one true God on Earth. I am the one God set apart God and sent into the world. I am doing the works that only God can do to prove this.

“Stop getting hung up in on my words and letting that be a barrier to belief, look at my works. Twenty-five thousand were fed off a small boy’s lunch. The blind had their eyes opened. The lame were healed.” In the next chapter, Lazarus, a dead man, is raised to life. As the book wraps up, Jesus is killed and raises himself to life. What man can do any of these things if he isn’t God? “Just observe my works and ask yourself, who but the Messiah could do this?”

Goals

This morning, there are four goals I have for your from these verses.

1. **Build your spiritual immune system against the false faiths which say Jesus never claimed to be God.** There are many of them out there: Islam, Hinduism, Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses. All say Jesus never claimed to be God. In his actions, Jesus did the things only God can do. In this passage, he publicly claimed to be God. This is important, especially for our high school and college students who live in a pluralistic world where everybody thinks all faiths are the same. That is not true. Only Jesus can save your soul and change your life.

2. **Understand my faith didn't start with me and it isn't sustained by me.**

Many of us thought we chose God. Some of us think we can choose to walk away from God. In reality, God chose us, and he will hold us. This is not because something in us makes us better than others. He just chose us out of his undeserved love. He gave us to Christ. The evidence that we are chosen by Christ is we hear Christ's voice and we respond like we heard the voice of our father. Because God is the one who chose us, we cannot choose to walk away. Jesus will sustain us to the end.

3. **Some people won't recognize Christ because they can't recognize**

Christ, no matter how much evidence we give. Evidence for faith is important but evidence. God uses evidence to bring out faith, but it doesn't create faith. This is why it will ultimately be impossible to prove Jesus is the Son of God to some people. They won't hear, because they can't hear. Faith is ultimately a supernatural gift from God that we can do nothing to deserve.

4. **Jesus is the world's greatest hero.** The Feast of Dedication was a time

when the Jews remembered their heroes. It was a pimped out version of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. In that feast, they remembered Judas

Maccabbeus, who saved them from slavery and genocide by the Syrians.

They also remembered Esther, the hero God used to save Israel from

genocide by the Persians through Haman. They remembered Moses, the

hero God used to saved them from slavery and genocide by the Egyptians.

They were blind to the world's great hero that soon in front of them,the

greatest hero to walk the planet. Jesus came to save them from slavery to sin and the genocide of eternal destruction.

As I close, I want to ask you about your hero. Who do you look up to? Is it a professional athlete? Is your hero a business success? The greatest hero of history stands before you. He is the one who came to save us from our slavery to sin and the genocide of eternal death by the wrath of God. This morning, as we opened the words of the Bible, did you hear the voice of your dad?



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