

Asking the Wrong Question
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John 10:22-31
July 21, 2013

Please turn with me in your Bibles to John 10. I'll be reading Verses 22-31 of John 10 as we continue to make our way through this wonderful Gospel. We come to a new section this morning. The title of the message is 'Asking the Wrong Question'. We'll see, as we read the passage in a moment, and as we discuss it, that the Jews gather around Jesus and ask Him a question, and at first glance, if we're honest, the question seems to make a lot of sense. But in reality, they are completely, 180 degrees out of phase. They are asking the wrong question. Jesus, in His inimitable way, marvelously turns the question around back upon them. He poses the same question they asked to Him really back to them. We have an amazing ability to ask the wrong questions, don't we?

I mean, when bad things happen in our lives, and it could be big things or little things, I find these questions coming up in my mind. "This too, Lord?" Sometimes I don't say, "This too, Lord?" because I realize I don't need to be going there, but there is just something in the wiring, the hard-wiring of man, since the fall, that we always want to place blame out there, and ultimately up there. We rarely truly place blame where it really belongs, in our own hearts. We ask the question, "Why has God allowed this to happen to me?" We can rephrase that question, "Why is this bad thing happening to such a good person?" What we really ought to be asking is, "Why have all of these good things been happening to me, a sinful person?"

That is exactly how Jesus turns the question around in Luke 13. Remember that time that basically there is kind of a news flash that happens? People get word of the tragedy that happened in the temple, where Pilate, the Roman governor, sent troops into the temple compound. The Gentiles defile the temple by going into the temple itself and killing people who were there at the altar, taking shelter from the Romans. These were rebels against Rome who were just trying to hide out in the temple for ungodly reasons, and so they rush into the temple but Pilate sends his troops in afterwards and has them struck down so that the blood of these Jewish men is mingled with the blood of the sacrifices that are running down from the altar. That is a gruesome scene and a scene that should bring some indignation. "What were these Romans doing defiling our temple?" Jesus is asked that question. The crowd is talking about that they want a response from Him and He says, "Really the question isn't the question that you are asking because you are asking,

‘Why would God allow something like this to happen to these good people?’” He says this, “Do you suppose the Galileans that died were more sinful than other Galileans? I tell you the truth, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

Then there is another news item. He says, “Remember the Temple of Siloam that fell and killed 18 people now in Judea, closer to Jerusalem?” A tower fell and killed 18 people. He said, “Do you suppose those Judeans that died were worse sinners than others? I tell you the truth, no, but unless you repent you will likewise perish.” What He was saying was this: The reality is that if we really honestly look at ourselves before God, we are all sinful, we have all rebelled, we have all violated His commands. I mean, think about the Ten Commandments. Take yourself through them. First commandment, have no other gods before Me. Put God first in your life, always. Always put God first. Have you done that? Don’t make an idol for yourself, don’t put anything else in His place. There is nothing more important. Of course if you ran through the commandments, we’ve all committed all of the sins there, and we deserve the wrath of God. Jesus is saying, “You should be amazed that God is being so kind to you.” That is the right question. “Why are good things happening to a bad person?” We have this uncanny ability to ask the wrong questions, and we see this in the passage. Yeah, it looks like a reasonable question at first, but when we read it, you’ll see it. Chapter 10, the Gospel of John, Verse 22.

John 10:22-31 ~ At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; 23 it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. 24 The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, “How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.” 25 Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me. 26 But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. 27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 29 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. 30 I and the Father are one.” 31 The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him.

Let’s pray together.

Father, as we come to this passage of Scripture, our prayer is that You might grant the light of Your Holy Spirit to open the understanding of our hearts. That we could truly hear, and receive, and believe the truth of this passage and apply it to our hearts for the glory of our Savior. We pray in His name, Amen.

Now asking the wrong question, the wrong question there is in Verse 24. ... ***If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.***” Basically, they are asking a question of, “Why aren’t You being more plain spoken. Why aren’t You being more clear?” Now we’ll come to that in a moment. Before we do, I want us to, as we often do when we come to new passages, we try to unpack the meaning of the passage by doing some careful observation. One of the ways to do that as you read the Bible is to use those questions, to ask the right questions of the passage—the five W’s and an H. We’re going to go through four W’s and an H as the outline of the sermon today. We are going to ask *When? Where? What? Why?* and then *How?* The bulk of our time will be spent on that fifth point, *How? When? Where? What? Why?* and *How?*

1) When?

Look with me at the passage, Verse 22.

John 10:22-23 ~ At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; 23 it was winter,...

John is careful to point out to us that this dialogue that happens between Jesus and the Jews happened at a specific time, and He wants us to know what time it was. It was the time of the Feast of Dedication, and it was winter. Those two details we need to be careful to observe. Why did he want us to see exactly when it was? He could have told us this dialogue and not placed it on the calendar, but God inspired John as he wrote this down to recall that detail, and to make sure he put it in there. It was the Feast of Dedication. I think he did that because he wants that to be the backdrop for his readers, for us as we look at this.

Now, what is the Feast of Dedication? The Feast of Dedication, otherwise known as Hanukkah, is practiced by the Jewish people sometime around December 15 to December 25. The Jewish calendar is the lunar calendar, and the months move, and it is in the month of Kislev, and it usually falls around the time of Christmas. It was instituted in the 2nd Century, B.C., in the wake of a great deliverance of the Jewish people called the Maccabean Revolt.

Now those of you who have been with us for a few years remember we preached through the book of Daniel before we came to John, and in Daniel there was a character that Daniel prophesied 400 years before he came on the scene, and his name was Antiochus Epiphanes. Daniel talked about a ruler that would come and do terrible things to the Jews, would defile the temple, and would commit the abomination of desolation, that is to truly defile the altar itself, to desecrate the sacred, holy place of God. And sure enough, a fulfillment of God's prophecy, Antiochus Epiphanes was one of the Greek rulers over the Syrian area, and who came to rule over Palestine, over Israel. He reigned from 175-164 B.C. and around 168 he had some bad things happening in his kingdom, and he got mad. He was mad at God, as is evidence of the fact that we serve the true God, he really struck out against this little tiny nation of Judah under his reign, and against their temple because he was angry against the true God. Unbelievers know how to find the true God. That is where all their venom comes.

That's why when you watch, I mentioned before, you watch shows like *Larry King*, he used to have guys on from different faiths. If you watch long enough, everybody gathers against the one guy that is preaching the Gospel of Christ. It is so striking when I watched that dialogue back after 9/11 when you had a Muslim, and a Jewish rabbi, uniting themselves against the Christian. I mean, think about that, isn't that amazing? What would bring a Muslim and a Jew together? It is hatred of Jesus Christ.

So you see this in Antiochus Epiphanes. He hated the true God and he wanted to defile the temple. He did some terrible things. He outlawed Sabbath observance, he outlawed circumcision, he ordered all copies of the Scriptures to be burned. He made it a capital offense to have copy of any part of the law in your possession. Then he ordered that they sacrifice to Zeus. He sacrificed a pig on the altar in Jerusalem in the temple. That is the abomination of desolation. This was a time of great anguish and suffering. The Jews were under such tyranny, wickedness was raining, and it came in like a flood. In fact, they ordered sacrifices to Zeus, they were enforcing them, going around through the villages and towns forcing people to sacrifice to Zeus. They ordered an elderly priest named Mattathias to sacrifice to Zeus and he refused. He was going to be executed but another man ran forward to offer the sacrifice to Zeus. Mattathias, in his zeal for the Lord, struck that man down. "We cannot sacrifice to Zeus," and it started the Maccabean Revolt. Mattathias' third son was named Judas and he is the one we know as Judas Maccabeus.

In fact, it is interesting, Maccabeus is just a nickname, it is not a last name. It means *'The Hammer'*. Judas, *The Hammer'*, who lead a guerilla warfare against the Greek rule, and delivered Jerusalem, after three years of fighting, delivered Jerusalem, and three years to the day that the temple was defiled, they rededicated the temple. They were fighting off the Greeks outside of Jerusalem, but they had gained the temple, and so they purified the temple. They went through the temple, it was awful, just the terrible shape the temple was in by the defilement of the Gentiles. As the soldiers were fighting, they began to rededicate the temple. They cleaned it up and they were ready to begin now. "The temple has been cleansed. Worship is restored." They had a problem, they only had one day's worth of oil to light the candlestick that must never go out, the perpetual light that was to always burn in the temple. Of course it is out now because for three years it has been defiled, but they only had one flagon of oil which was able to keep the candlestick lit for one day, and it took seven or eight days to get that oil procured, and purified, and properly prepared so that it was holy. Well that one day's oil burned eight days, until they were able to get oil, so it never went out again from that time. That is where the Festival of Lights comes from. That is why Jews light a light, and keep lighting lights, each day throughout Hanukkah.

So what you had in that, the backdrop of that is that you had deliverance from an anti-Christ figure. Daniel 11:21-35 is the passage that talks about Antiochus Epiphanes and his wickedness, and then it is followed by a picture of an even worse ruler to come in Verses 36 and following. So you have the Feast of Dedication which is about deliverance from oppression, deliverance from spiritual tyranny, deliverance from evil, and the restoration of true worship. Now what you have here I think is John, characteristic to the apostle John, he was the youngest apostle, but now he is the oldest Gospel-writer, because he is writing probably in his 80's, reflecting on the glory of God throughout his life, and he has such wonderful insights into the way he presents his portrait of Jesus Christ. One of the things he is doing here is he uses irony again, and again, and again, and so I want you to keep that in mind. He has reminded us that the Feast of Dedication is going on. I think he tells us it is winter partly just to make that even more pronounced, so we don't miss it. I mean the original Jews reading this, that they would feel that. Because if I were to say to you, "This happened to me at Christmas time and it was cold out. It was icy." The word *'winter'* actually could be translated *'frosty'* or *'icy'*. It helps to create the mood, and the moment, and it creates more of a reminder. I think he is inviting people to think about all the Feasts of Dedication, the celebrations they've gone through. The Jews remember this wonderful story, and now, with that backdrop set, kind of like a well-done play, you have to have

good scenery behind the actors. With that scenery behind the actors now, he continues. So that's *When?* The first W. When does Jesus say what He says?

2) Where?

What he says, and secondly, *Where?* He makes it clear that He is in Jerusalem. He is walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. He is reminding us of this because this was one of the feasts you were not required to make as a Jewish man. There are three feasts a year in which you are required to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. This was not one where Jesus was required to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but He goes to Jerusalem anyway to celebrate the feast which is especially striking because we've seen, as we read John's Gospel, that He has been having to stay out of Jerusalem a good bit. He has fulfilled the law and been at every feast as He was required to. He has been more and more in Galilee, less and less in Judea because the Jews in Judea want to kill Him. You remember in John 7 when we were looking at that passage, Verse 1, it says:

John 7:1 ~ After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee (That is the Northern area of Israel.), for He was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him.

Nothing has changed since John 7:1, it is getting worse. But He is in Judea, He is in Jerusalem, He is in the temple, He is in the place of worship while they are celebrating the festival that celebrates the restoration of true worship, the purification of the temple. Jesus is there. Now that is the *When?* and *Where?*

3) What?

Now a third question, *What?* What do the Jews ask Him? What do they say and what do they do? Here in Verse 24, they ask Him one question and then they give Him a command. But this really is asking Him one bigger question—"How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." This is an emphatic question and they want to know from Jesus once and for all, "Are You the Christ?" The question really is, "Why won't You be more open? If You are the Christ, why don't You be more open about who You are?" There is an accusation in the question, and I think that sense of accusation and negative energy is also evidenced in what they do. They surround Him. The New American Standard in Verse 24 says, "They gathered around..." Really, I like the word '*surround*' better, the Greek verb '*kykloō*' which we transliterate those Greek letters into English for our word '*cycle*' and '*circle*'. It literally means they '*encircled*' Him. It is an aorist tense verb which means it is a point in time, it is a decisive act. He is walking

along the portico of Solomon. That is a colonnaded area on the outside of the temple that was a porch. It is winter so it is cold, it is possibly raining. It is the rainy season in Jerusalem. He is walking there and this is where the scribes would teach, this is where the Pharisees would hold their schools. As He walks, they surround Him, and that is the force of it. They gather around, they surround Him. It is one act, and then they begin asking Him. The New American Standard does a good job of translating this. They said, “They were saying to Him...” It wasn’t, “They said to Him...” One time. “They were saying to Him...” They surrounded Him and they are all just badgering Him. “Why won’t You be more open? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.”

And if we are honest, as we read the Gospels, we do have to acknowledge there is something to their question at first glance. There is the sense in which Jesus, in His ministry, seems to hold back things, and the fact is He does. But it is interesting, they ask the question, “Why aren’t You more open?” and we’re going to see Jesus basically turns it around and says, “Why aren’t you more open? If you were more open to the evidence, you would have already believed, because all that I have told you, and all that I have done proves who I am.” But the question is, “Why won’t You be more open?” They ask Him that.

There is this reality that I want to deal with. It is important for us to talk about it for a moment. Theologians have called it sometimes ‘*The Messianic Secret*’. In fact, this moves us into the fourth W, *Why? When? Where? What?* What is their question? “Why won’t You be more open?”

4) Why?

Why? Why is it that there is this sense of the need to ask the question? Because there is ‘*The Messianic Secret*’. ‘*The Messianic Secret*’, scholars refer to, as you study the Gospels, you do find Jesus telling people at times, “Tell no one.” I’ll give you an example in Matthew 8:4, He heals a leper. He tells him, “Tell no one what has happened to you, but go to the priest and make the offering that you are supposed to make.” Then in Matthew 16:20, after Jesus asks the disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” Remember that wonderful moment in Caesarea Philippi where He said, “What do men say about Me? Who do they say that I am?” “Some say You are John the Baptist. Some say You are Elijah. Some say You are a prophet.” “But who do *you* say that I am?” And Peter jumps up and says, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Matthew 16:17-18 ~ And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell will not prevail it.

Then it says Jesus instructed them to tell no one that He was the Christ. Why is that? That is a valid question, isn't it? Why is it? And there is this reality throughout His ministry, and we've talked about this before, but I want to remind you that basically what we see in the Gospel of John, as you read through it you see the answer to it again, and again, and again. There are really three reasons that I would say that you could say that Jesus holds back some of His information. He is only truthful, but He doesn't tell everything every time He is talking to people. There are three reasons:

A) Expectations of the People:

Firstly, is the expectations of the people. The reason He doesn't go and say, "I am the Messiah," is because the expectations of the people are for a very different kind of Messiah than Jesus is. And in a sense, if He were just to say, "Yes," to that question, He would actually be lying. It is like if somebody asks me a question and the premise is wrong. They ask Jesus, "Jesus, are You the Messiah, and by the Messiah we mean a political savior, a military genius and general who is going to deliver us from Roman bondage. Are You the Messiah?" Jesus has got to say, "No, not the kind of Messiah you are looking for." And to be proclaimed as Messiah would mean that the people would rush upon you. In fact, John 6, remember the account of the feeding of the 5,000, when Jesus takes five loaves and two fish and feeds 5,000 men? The number 5,000, 5,000 men, probably more like, when you add women and children, 20,000 people fed with five loaves and two fish. When they realize what has happened, they say, "Surely, this is the prophet," Verse 14, and Verse 15 says they rush Him to make Him king, to take Him by force and make Him their king. They want to proclaim, "We found the king and we want to lead Him into Jerusalem," have Him lead them into Jerusalem and defeat the Romans right then. They want to declare war. Jesus slips away from their midst, supernaturally, because that is not the way God intends the Messiah, His ministry, to be. The ministry of the Messiah is not something so paltry and insignificant as just delivering the Jews from Roman rule. It is not something that tiny and small. It is something far greater, it is to deliver the Jews and all people from the bondage and tyranny of sin, from the fear of death, and from the wrath of God, God's holy wrath against sin. It is to save us. So the reason Jesus doesn't announce His Messiahship is because He has to redefine in accordance with the Old Testament

what Messiah really means. That's the reason. The expectations of the people, that's the first reason. A second reason that they're asking Him to be more open is:

B) The Spiritual Blindness of the People:

The spiritual blindness of unbelievers, the spiritual blindness of all of us—I mean, there is, I think, a living parable for us we talked about in John 9 when Jesus heals a man born blind, and the parable is this: All of us are born blind spiritually. We can't see. We can't see what's right in front of our face. Now, think about this. A blind man who is truly blind—somebody was talking to me the other day, but I forget who it was, and he told me a story about how you say sometimes the wrong things, the foolish things, and they were saying they were somewhere and they had a cousin that was blind or an uncle or an aunt that was blind, and they were at their house. They had walked out of the room and came back in, and they said, “Do you want me to leave the light on?” and then the person said, “Well, it really doesn't matter to me. Light on, light off, doesn't matter.”

So imagine you're a blind person and you're saying, “Please turn the light up. You're not being clear.” That's what they're saying to Jesus. There are blind people saying, “Why won't you turn the light up?” And in reality, the light is blaring. The light is as bright as it can be, and in fact, it's the tenderness of Jesus, actually, to come to those who can't see and to let them see gradually.

I used the illustration when we were talking about the healing of the blind man back in John 9 about the Chilean miners. Remember the story? It's been about a year ago, it seems like now, where those miners were trapped for like 60 some-odd days hundreds of feet under the earth, and they didn't see the light of the sun for all that time. Remember they were coming up, and they sent stuff down to them. It was apparently hot down where they were, if I recall correctly, and so as they send this thing down to pull them up through this little shaft, and there's a heavy coat, and there's some water for them, and stuff like that, and there are sunglasses.

As they pull them up to the surface, it takes like 15 minutes to get one person up to the surface, the machine pulling them up, and they needed the coat because it was winter up there in Chile. It was chilly in Chile. You're going to need the coat. But they had not seen the light of the sun for 60 some-odd days, and they were really concerned. In fact, doctors didn't know what was going to be the impact. They were worried that they might have permanent damage to their eyesight. So they give them these glasses. You know the kind of face-hugging glasses, “Put these on as you come up.”

Well, in a sense, what Jesus is doing in His ministry is He is revealing the glory, the indescribable glory, of the living God to people who have never seen the light of the Son. There's a gentleness about it, and He comes in a way, in a measured way, like we saw in that passage earlier. A bruised reed He doesn't break. A smoldering flax He doesn't extinguish. There's a gentleness about Jesus. We sang that song earlier, *Immortal Invisible*. The last word of that song is: *'Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee*. It's only the splendor of the light that hides You, because we can't handle the light. So that's where it comes from. It's the expectations of the people, the blindness of the people, and then finally:

C) The Hostility of the People:

We see in this passage as He reveals Himself to them, inescapably He says:

John 10:30 ~ I and the Father are one."

He proclaims His deity. The light is on full blast. What do they do? Look at Verse 31:

John 10:31 ~ The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him.

It says *again* because they did the same thing just a couple chapters ago. When Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I am," another statement of deity, not, "Before Abraham was, I was," not just that He was preexistent to Abraham, but by saying, "Before Abraham was, I am," He's taking the divine Name of God. In Exodus 3, when Moses asked the Lord, "Who are You? What's Your Name?" God said, "I am that I am." Jesus says, "Before Abraham was, I am," and then they picked up stones to stone Him. There's the hostility of the human heart. In our sinfulness, we want to rule our own lives, and what we will not have is God take over. That's the reason the lost stay lost, and so it's the expectations, the blindness, and the hostility. That's the answer to *Why?* We've looked at *When? Where? What?* and *Why?*

5) How?

How does Jesus answer the question? Amazingly He's gracious in answering this question to these people who surrounded Him in this kind of aggressive act, and who are peppering Him with this question in different forms. How does He answer the question? He really turns it around, and He as the Good Shepherd is lovingly reaching out to whatever sheep might be there of His that are still in the dark. He

says, “You ask Me why I won’t be more open?” He’s really asking them, “Why won’t *you* be more open?” because look what He said in Verse 25. Here’s the answer. “Why won’t I be more open?”

John 10:25 ~ ...“I told you, and you do not believe;...

“I’ve already told you, and in addition to that:

John 10:25 ~ ... the works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me.

So He basically says, “Look, two things. I told you who I am and I showed you who I am.” These are the two sub-points under *How?* I told you and I showed you. As we look at these, it shows us again the reality of what we were just talking about, the blindness of the people, the willing blindness, and the fact that God is shining the glory right in their faces. You may have thought this many times yourself through the years at different times: *I wish God would be more clear. Why doesn’t He just write on the sky that He is God, something that people couldn’t deny?* Do you ever think that? I’ve thought about Jesus ministry. I mean, if His ministry, His desire, was to show that He was the Son of God, and if He created all things, which He clearly did—He sustains all things, He is the great I AM, He could do anything. I mean, He could have taken the moon out of the heavens and suspended the laws of gravity (that would have been a real problem if you didn’t suspend those) to bring the moon down to His finger, and He could have spun it like a basketball on His finger. It would have been a nice thing to see, wouldn’t it? He could have done that. He could have over-wowed the people by His awesome power, but you know what that would have failed to do? It would have failed to redeem their hearts. They would have practiced the kind of cowed submission, but inwardly still hated Him. He comes as a gentle Shepherd to show them who He is in more subtle and more wonderful ways.

Our God is not a God who displays power and wants this kind of a cowering submission. That’s not the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible is a God who is so humble and so approachable that He’s willing to leave the glory of heaven, come down and enter the womb of a young peasant girl, come into the world through the birth canal, be raised as a little baby, grow up, learn to walk, experience everything that we experience, yet without sin, live 33 years, a perfect life, and then offer Himself as a sacrifice, experiencing the wrath of God there on the cross, treated as if He had lived our lives.

That's what explains the brutality of the cross. It's not some cosmic accident. God has sent His Son to be an offering for sin, and there the spotless Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, there as He bleeds at Calvary, God is imputing the sins of everyone who would ever believe, crediting them to Christ, and then treating Him as if He was responsible for those, for all of the sins. Think about that. All of my sins—past, present, and future—and all of your sins—past, present, and future—all the sins of everyone who ever believed all throughout time, the guilt and the condemnation for those was placed upon the God-Man Jesus Christ. He hangs there in agony.

Remember the sky gets dark at twelve noon? He says, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" quoting Psalm 22:1. There in His humanity revealing the anguish, but in reality they're revealing that God has abandoned Him because God cannot abide in the presence of sin, until He says those wonderful words, "It is finished!" Moments before He dies, "It is finished." In Aramaic, those words were stamped on a document: *Paid in full*. The debt is paid in full. He says, "Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit," and at that moment the veil in the temple is torn from top to bottom. The way into the presence of God is made open because the sacrifice has been paid.

That's the kind of God that is revealing Himself to us. He comes gentle and lowly, riding on a donkey. He says, "Come to Me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden, for I am humble and lowly of heart. You will find rest for your souls." He is a glorious Savior and He rises from the dead on the third day to prove that His offering was acceptable. And there today the God of glory, the second Person of the Trinity, Yahweh Himself, the second Person of the Trinity, sits enrobed on the throne of the universe, still bearing a human body. Humanity, the dust of the earth, has been seated at the right hand of God. That's what God has done in our salvation. So that's the kind of God that we have.

A) I Told You:

Jesus is saying, "Look, I have been open. I've been as open as I could possibly be and still allow you to hear, for you to have any hope of hearing." Think about, "I told you." I think when He says, "I told you," He uses the aorist tense again to say, "It's a done thing. I told you." He doesn't say, "I was telling you," which I think would have been accurate. He was telling again, and again, and again. Why does He say, "I told you"? I think it's because He just had told them.

In fact, the Good Shepherd discourse of John 10, particularly Verses 11 and following, when He says, “I am the Good Shepherd,” what He was telling them is, “I am the Messiah.” He used different language because the word Messiah was polluted in their understanding. He uses the word that if they had studied their Old Testament, they would know, “I am the Good Shepherd.” That’s one of the ‘*I am*’ sayings. “I am the Good Shepherd.” In fact, I want you to think about this, one of the reasons that John, I think, shows us that it’s the Feast of Dedication is not just to show us the backdrop. It is that, but it’s more. Do you remember what time frame we were talking about before this? From John 7:1 to John 10:21, the environment is the Feast of Tabernacles. We’re in the last months of Jesus’ earthly life before He dies and is resurrected, and the Feast of Tabernacles that covers John 7:1 to John 10:21, the Shepherd discourse, is spoken at the Feast of Tabernacles or in the immediate aftermath of the Feast of Tabernacles. That’s October/November, an 8-day festival.

Now we’re mid-December, and this is the kind of thing we need to do, again, asking questions of the text. Why did John not tell us anything in between? Did nothing happen for six weeks? Did nothing interesting happen? Of course not. I mean, John tells us in the end of his book in John 20:31, “Many other things did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, but these are written so that you may believe...” He’s saying, “I’m being selective.” You can find that in Matthew, Mark and Luke, but John didn’t put any intervening material between the Good Shepherd discourse and this discourse, because he wants us to see them right side-by-side. God’s word is perfect, and there it is. “I am the Good Shepherd.” He says it three times. He says, “I am the Good Shepherd,” twice, but He uses the phrase Good Shepherd for Himself three times in the passage. Then you have it ending with them wondering who He is:

John 10:20 ~ Many of them were saying, “He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?” 21 Others were saying, “These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?”

Next chapter, next scene. It’s like a movie. You know how they go from scene to scene? The next scene is the Feast of Dedication, and Jesus is saying, “I told you who I was, the Good Shepherd.” Shepherd is the word for ruler in the Old Testament. It was used throughout antiquity as a word for the king or the prince, but in the Scriptures, it’s specifically used to speak of God’s Messiah. And He’s not just the Shepherd that God had promised—God had promised, and you can look up Ezekiel 34:23 as a Messianic promise. There are a number of these, but

that's where God speaking through Ezekiel says, "In that day, I will make them one people under one Shepherd," and He talks about a son of David that will be the Shepherd. Jesus is the son of David who is that Shepherd. When He says, "I am the Good Shepherd," He's saying, "I am the son of David that the Old Testament was talking about, and not only am I the Shepherd, I am the Good Shepherd."

Now, do you remember what Jesus said when the rich, young ruler came to Him and he said, "Good teacher"? Do you remember that? What did Jesus say? "Why do you call Me good? No one's good except God." He was saying, "Do you believe I'm God? I'm very hopeful about that comment." He's helping that man see, "Don't use those phrases unless you mean it." When He says, "I am the Good Shepherd," He's saying, "I am the Messiah, and not only am I the human Messiah, but I am God the Messiah." There are two themes of shepherding in the Old Testament. We're sheep. We're needy. We're defenseless. We're dumb. Spiritually we're blind. We need a shepherd. We need to be led.

How does that happen? We need God to send a shepherd. We need a human shepherd, the shepherd of David, and we need God to be our Shepherd. You have those two themes. The Lord is my Shepherd (Psalm 23). God's going to be our Shepherd. In Ezekiel 34, before He talks about in Verse 23, "I'm going to send My servant David," He says, "I'm going to shepherd My people, I, the Lord." Well, what happened? In Jesus, both are true. The son of David is shepherding his people and I the Lord am shepherding My people. So when He says, "I am the Good Shepherd," He's saying, "I am the Messiah." It's just amazing that it's blind people in the dark, saying, "Please turn up the lights," and they even have their eyes closed. He said, "I told you," but He also said, "I showed you."

B) I Showed You:

He says:

John 10:25 ~ ... the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me.

...the works that I do... The tense of the verb do, there, is present tense in English. In Greek, it's a Greek present which means ongoing, continuous action, as in *the works that I am doing, these testify*. And really, you could say *are testifying*. *The works that I am continually doing are continually testifying that I am the Messiah.*

Remember we read from Isaiah 42 earlier. How will you recognize the Messiah? When the Messiah comes, He's going to come in a spirit of gentleness. A bruised reed, He's not going to break, and He's going to come and He's going to open blind eyes. He's going to make lame people walk. He's going to unstop deaf ears. Read through all of the prophets and you see this is what Messiah looks like. And when Jesus came, what did He do? What has He been doing since the beginning of His ministry? He's been making lame people walk. He's been unstopping deaf ears. He's been delivering people from demon possession. In the chapter before this, He opened the eyes of a man born blind. All of the works that He's doing are testifying He is the Christ.

Think about how John has recorded seven miracles in his book, actually eight when you count the one post-resurrection when Peter and the disciples catch the 153 fish sometime after the resurrection. But think about the miracles in this gospel and how they testify who Jesus is, because John wants his readers to be thinking about this, because he's writing to Jews who were having the tendency to think just like the Jews in the text are thinking. He's writing like 55 years later to Jews who are still doubting. "Has Jesus really done enough to show me who He is? Has Jesus really said enough to show me who He is?" They're asking that, and John is offering this evidence to bring them to the verdict that yes, Jesus is the Christ.

So he gives these signs and he picks out seven. We've seen six so far in the gospel. The first miracle was He turned water into wine. He turned water into wine at a wedding. They were short of wine, which is a terrible thing to run out of wine at a Hebrew wedding. It wasn't really strong wine. It had alcoholic content, but it was low, but they needed the wine, and Jesus makes the best wine. Remember how the steward says, "Why did you bring out the best wine last? Usually you give that first, and then later when people have drunk, they don't realize that it's not such good wine later." Their palates have already been affected. He makes the best wine, and He makes so much of it that there's no way they can possibly use it all. That's fulfilling the prophecy about the Messiah in Isaiah 25, which is that He will usher in the era of new wine. Wine is the joy of God.

The second miracle He does is he heals a nobleman's son from a distance. He doesn't have to be there. He just speaks the word and the man is healed. At the same hour He speaks it, the man's son is healed. The third miracle is that He heals a man that's been lame 38 years at the pool of Bethesda. The fourth great sign is that He feeds 5,000 people with the loaves and fishes. He's greater than Moses. Moses fed them from heaven, and Jesus feed them out of Himself. There wasn't bread falling out of heaven. Jesus gives it Himself.

The fifth miracle is that He walks on water. He's greater than the laws of physics. The sixth miracle is that He heals a man born blind, and the seventh is about to happen. He's going to raise a man from the dead. "All of these miracles testify to who I am," Jesus is saying.

There's one other thing at the beginning of John's Gospel that I want to remind you of. It's not normally called a sign, but I think it's a sign in itself as well. Do you remember the first thing Jesus does when He gets to Jerusalem? After His ministry begins, He's just begun His ministry, He just made the water into wine, He goes to Jerusalem, He's at the Passover, and He cleanses the temple. At the beginning of His ministry, He cleanses the temple of the money changers. He drives out the defilement from the temple. When you read the other gospels and you put them together, John doesn't tell us about the second temple cleansing, but it's clear when you put all four gospels together that Jesus cleansed the temple at the beginning of His ministry, and He cleansed the temple at the end of His ministry, the last week before He was crucified. His ministry is bracketed by the cleansing of the house of God.

Now, think about the backdrop again. "Why won't You show us who You are? If You're the Christ, tell us plainly." "I am the Good Shepherd. I have come to deliver you." Remember John 8:31? Jesus said, "I've come to set you free," and the people said, "We don't need to be free. We're not slaves to anybody." Jesus said, "You're slaves to sin. You're slaves to Satan. I've come to deliver you from the tyranny of evil. I will deliver you from a tyranny far greater than you've ever been delivered from before, far greater than any Antiochus Epiphanes. I will deliver you from the tyranny of Satan and sin in your own heart, and I will restore true worship. I will cleanse the temple. In fact, I am the temple. I am the meeting place of God and man." He is the fulfillment of everything that we need.

How do you go to God? You go to God in His temple. His temple is no longer this building or any building. It is a Man. It is a body, Jesus Christ Himself. He's the temple. After He cleansed the temple in John 2, they came to Him and said, "By what sign do You show us Your authority to do these things?" and He says, "By this: Destroy this temple, and in three days I will rebuild it." John says, "We realized later that He was talking about the temple of His body." "Destroy this temple and I will rebuild it." He is the cleansing of the worship place of God. He is the one that can make us fit to go into the very throne room of God so that you and I, if you've repented of your sins and placed your faith in Christ, you can enter behind the veil. There is no longer any barrier. You go to Jesus and you go directly into the throne room of God forever. Nothing can change that.

That's the glory of this Savior. He's defeated the power of Satan, the power of death, the power of sin. He is our deliverer, and again, this is what we have to learn to do when we find ourselves asking the wrong questions. Instead of asking, "Why won't You be more open?" we have to turn it around on ourselves and ask, "Why am I not more open when He has done so much?"

Let's go to Him in prayer...

Father, we thank You for the glorious Savior that You have given us in Jesus Christ. We thank You, Lord, that You are a God who is so tender, and so compassionate, and so patient, so much longsuffering in Your nature, that You would put up with our foolishness and our arrogance, and You would look on us in our misery while we blame You, and You would have mercy upon us, that while we were yet sinners, You demonstrated Your love in that Christ died for us.

Father, we pray that You would help each one of us to go directly to Jesus Christ, and Christ alone, that He would be for each person here the access point to the living God. It means we have to repent, Lord, to turn from our sins, to turn from wanting to live our lives for our own purposes and our own agendas, and we have to surrender ourselves to You and then receive the glorious freedom and liberty of the sons of God. Father, help all of us to continue to see the glory of our Savior more and more, that we would with greater love, greater affection, follow Him more earnestly every day of our lives. We pray this in His Name, Amen.

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