

(Through the Bible) John 9-10

by Chuck Smith

Jesus heals a man born blind to show God's power and love, and to demonstrate that He is the Son of God.

Duration: 1:24:47

Scripture: Exodus 22:8-9, Psalm 82:6, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Salvation Through Faith", "Jesus The Shepherd"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses a scenario where someone's jacket goes missing and their neighbor is found wearing it. The situation is taken to the judges to determine who the rightful owner is. The speaker then transitions to a spiritual message, emphasizing that trying to enter the kingdom of heaven through good works or religious acts is futile. Instead, Jesus is the only way to the Father. The speaker also references a book by Dr. Adam Smith, who provides insights into the culture of the people in the Holy Land, particularly regarding shepherds and their sheep. The analogy of the shepherd calling his sheep by name is used to illustrate the relationship between Jesus and his followers. The sermon concludes by highlighting that there are two types of people in the world: those who belong to Jesus and those who do not.

Transcript

Shall we turn now in our Bibles to the Gospel according to John chapter 9. Jesus had been having a dispute with the Pharisees in the temple at the time of the Feast of the Tabernacles, six months or so before the Passover in which he was crucified. And in the eighth chapter, it records his conversations with them, with his declaring unto them, before Abraham was, I am. And so the last time we saw Jesus, they were taking up stones to throw at him, and he passed by them and left the temple precincts.

And as Jesus passed by, the ninth chapter opens, so that's the background. They just have taken up stones to throw at him because of his claim of deity before Abraham was, I am. And as he passed by, he saw a man which was blind from birth.

As far as the Gospel records, and only as far as the Gospel records, surely there are others, but the Gospels only record this instance where Jesus healed a person of which the Scripture declared his malady came from birth. Now in the Acts, there are a couple who had their conditions from birth, and no doubt Jesus healed many with congenital type of illnesses, but this is the only one in the Gospel that is recorded distinctly as a condition that existed from birth. And so his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Now there were those who taught prenatal

sin, that a child could sin while he was still in the womb, and there were those who sort of held to this belief, and because this was being taught by some of the people, some of the rabbis, perhaps this is why the disciples said, who did sin, that he was born blind? Well, if he was born blind, and if he sinned, it meant that he had to sin sometime before he was born.

At this time in the history of the Jews, the rabbis had also adopted from Plato the idea that people preexisted as spirits and were waiting for bodies, and some of them were good spirits and some of them were bad spirits, but men preexisted as spirits waiting for bodies, the teaching of Plato, which of course is also the teaching of the Mormons, that we all preexisted as spirits in the heavenly King, bodies were given to us that we might go through this trial period on the earth to find out whether or not we will discover the truth of Mormonism and thus can be elevated to godhood in the next world and have our own little planet and our own little system and go on as gods, but the preexistence as spirits receiving our bodies for our testing upon the earth. So the question, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Is this God's judgment upon his parents for some sin they did? It is interesting to me that quite often we have that kind of a thought of a direct retribution from God when calamity comes to us. God is punishing me for something that I have done or something that I did and thus this hardship or this difficulty or this painful experience is coming to me as God's judgment upon me because of some wrongdoing.

If that were so, I wouldn't be here tonight. You see, if God brought that kind of a direct cause effect judgment upon people, then God would have to be fair in his justice system and thus every person who did the same kind of a deed would have to receive the same kind of a judgment for it. There is not that cause and effect type of judgment at the present time.

There will be and God will be just when he judges because it will be completely equal judgment. But right now God is seeking to draw men to himself and Jesus said, I didn't come to condemn the world, but that the world through me might be saved. And so their question reflected the constant attitude that people have had, that attitude that was expressed by the men who came to comfort Job in his affliction.

You must have done something horrible, man. Just confess to God and get it over with. Why are you going out in your misery? Don't try and tell us you're innocent.

No one would suffer like this unless he were an evil person. And yet the whole story of Job, seeing the whole picture as we have that opportunity in the Bible, we understand that it was not God's judgment upon Job for some sin that he had done. Satan was afflicting him in order to prove to God that Job would fail.

Who did sin? Jesus answered, neither this man nor his parents. Now, I believe at this point the translators made a mistake in punctuation. I think instead of a colon here, they should have put a period.

I think that Jesus answered their question, period. Neither of them. That's the answer.

And I think then he goes on in making a statement that is not really related to the question. The question is who did sin? The man or the parents that he was born blind? Jesus said neither. The man nor his parents.

But that the works of God should be made manifest in him, I must work the works of him. I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day. The night is coming when no man can work.

Jesus passed off the question saying neither of them. But I must do the work of my father. And in order that I might do the work of the father that sent me, he went ahead and healed the man to do the works of the father.

But his answer to the question was neither. Now, I do not believe that it is proper to interpret this, that God allowed this man this period of blindness just in order that Christ might do a work in him. In other words, that it was all preset by God in that sense that he was born blind in order that God might do a work of healing him.

I think that that is the wrong interpretation. And that interpretation comes by the colon instead of a period. In the Greek text, there are no punctuation marks.

This the translators did in order to try to give us an understanding. And at this point, I would prefer to put a period after Jesus said neither this man nor his parents, period. And then bringing in a new idea.

But that the works of God should be made manifest in him, I must work the works of the father. In order that God's works might be manifested in him, I've got to do the work of the father. For as long as I am in this world, I'm, you know, the night is coming, but while I'm here, I'm the light.

While I'm in the world, I'm the light of the world. And when he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle. And he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay.

Now, why do you suppose Jesus did that? I'm asking a question. I don't know the answer. Why did Jesus do the things? I don't know.

But it's interesting to me because I know that Jesus could have just spoken the word because he did speak the word to other blind men, to Bartimaeus down at Jericho. He said, what would you like? He said, Lord, that I might receive my sight. Jesus said, go that way.

And his eyes were open and he could see. Another blind man, Jesus touched his eyes. And then he said, now, can you see? And he says, a little bit.

Men look like trees walking around. It's very fuzzy. Jesus touched his eyes again.

And when he opened them, he could see clearly. Now, Jesus, rather than just speaking or rather than laying his hands on his eyes, does something quite interesting. Maybe he is trying to create further controversy with the religious leaders who were on his case for violating the Sabbath day by healing the lame man at the pool of Bethesda months earlier.

Because you see, it was against their law, traditional interpretation of it, to make clay on the Sabbath day. That was against the law. In fact, you could not wear shoes on the Sabbath day where the soles were fastened with nails.

Because that constituted bearing a burden if the soles were fastened with nails. That's a little bit too heavy. And they had all of these little weird interpretations of the law.

And to make clay on the Sabbath day was against their law. So his spitting in the ground and stirring it with his finger and making clay out of it was a definite violation of their Sabbath day law. And when he made this clay, he rubbed it in the guy's eyes.

And they said, now go down to the pool of Siloam and wash your eyes out. And so the fellow made his way down to the pool of Siloam, stuck his head in and washed his eyes out. And when he washed his eyes out, he could see.

And his neighbors and those which before had seen him begging said, is not this the blind man who sat there and begged all these years? And some of them said, yes, it is. And others said, it sure looks like him. And he said, I'm me.

Is this the fellow that was blind that was begging? Sure looks like him. Yeah, it's me. They said, how is it that you can now see? And he answered and said, a man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said unto me, go to the pool of Siloam and wash.

And I went and washed and I received sight. Now notice the progressive revelation of who Jesus is to this man. At this point, he just knows him as a man who is called Jesus.

How is it that you can see? Well, a man who is called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said unto me, go to the pool of Siloam and wash. And I went and washed and I received my sight. A man who is named Jesus.

Then they said unto him, where is he? And he said, I don't know. And so they brought the man to the Pharisees and it was the Sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Actually, it violated two Sabbath laws.

It was not lawful to heal on the Sabbath day. You could do nothing towards the healing. If you sprained your ankle, you could not run cold water on it because the cold water had a healing effect.

So you just had to suffer with the pain until the Sabbath day was over and then you could start running cold water on it. But then it was too late. The swelling had already begun.

But you could do nothing towards healing. You could save a life, do whatever you have to do to save a life, but nothing towards curing on the Sabbath day. So there's two counts against him.

He made clay and he healed him. And again, the Pharisees also asked him how he received his sight. And he said unto them, he put clay upon my eyes and I washed and I can see.

Therefore, said some of the Pharisees, this man is not of God because he doesn't keep the Sabbath day. And others said, well, how can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They were arguing among themselves.

And they said unto the blind man again, what do you say of him, the one that opened your eyes? And he said, he is a prophet. So he began, a man who is named Jesus. Now he is declaring he is a prophet.

And the Jews did not believe him that he had been blind until they called his parents. And they asked his parents saying, is this your son whom you say was born blind? We really don't believe that. How is it that he can see if he was born blind? How is it that he can see? And the parents answered them and said, we know that this is our son.

We know that he was born blind. But how it is that he can see, we don't know. Why don't you ask him? He's of age.

Now, they were fearful because the rulers had already determined that if anybody had confessed that Jesus was the Messiah, they were going to be thrown out of the synagogue. And they didn't want to be kicked out of church. And so they were afraid to answer them.

And that's why they said, he's of age. Why don't you ask him? So again, they called the man that was blind and they said unto him, give God the praise. We know that this man is a sinner.

And he answered and said, whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. But one thing I do know, whereas I was blind, now I can see. And they said unto him again, what did he do to you? Now, how did he open your eyes? And he said, I told you already and you didn't listen to me.

Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to be one of his disciples? Then they reviled him and said, thou art his disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spoke unto Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know from whence he's coming. And the man answered and said unto them, why, here's a marvelous thing that you don't know from whence he is.

And yet he has opened my eyes. Now we know that God hears not sinners, but if any man be a worshiper of God and does his will, him he hears. Now, a lot of people have taken this particular verse as doctrine and as Bible doctrine.

We know that God does not hear sinners. This verse in and of itself cannot be used as a basis for a biblical doctrine that God doesn't hear the sinner's prayers. Because this is only a part of a conversation between a blind man, who at this point isn't even saved, and the Pharisees.

And he is expressing just a common belief among the people, but not necessarily a biblical doctrine. And yet many people have taken this and you hear often people say, well, God doesn't hear sinners when they pray. That is not necessarily so.

And the scripture surely does not confirm that as biblical truth. Because this is only the statement of the blind man to the Pharisees in response to their interrogations. Does God hear sinners when they pray? How did you get saved? You see, if God didn't hear sinners when they prayed, none of us would be saved.

God does hear sinners and that's part of the grace and the mercy of God. However, if I, as a child of God, am regarding iniquity in my heart when I pray, then the Lord doesn't hear me. That's what David said.

Isaiah said, chapter 59, that God's hand is not short that he cannot save, neither is his ear heavy that he cannot hear. But your sins have separated you from God. And sin can separate you from God.

It can separate your communion with God. But to just say God doesn't hear sinners when they pray is not true. God does hear sinners when they pray.

Jesus said, and the man who was a sinner went into the temple and bowed his head and would not even so much as lift his head towards God, but just smote on his breast and said, Oh God, be merciful to me, a sinner. And he said, and that man went to his house justified because God heard his prayer. Now, we do read that the ear of the Lord is open to the righteous and he hears their cries.

But God's ear is open also to the sinner when he is calling out to God for mercy and for help. God is a gracious God. Since the world began, he said, was it not heard that if any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind? You know, if a man can open up the eyes of a blind man, this is something quite unique.

If this man were not of God, he could do nothing. And they answered and said unto him, thou wast altogether born in sins. And are you trying to teach us? Now, they made the assumption that Jesus said was not true, that the blindness was the result of this man's sin.

You were born in sins. But Jesus said, no, no, that when the disciples asked who did sin, this man was born blind. Yet they made that assumption because of his blindness from birth.

And they cast him out. He got kicked out of the synagogue. So Jesus heard that they had cast him out.

And when he had found him, he said unto him, do you believe on the Son of God? And he said, who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, you have both seen him, and it is he who is talking to you. This takes us back to chapter four, when Jesus was talking with a woman at the well in Samaria. And she said, I know that when the Messiah comes, he's going to teach us all things.

And Jesus said, I who speak unto thee, am he. Do you believe in the Son of God? Who is he, Lord, that I might believe him? You have both seen him, and he's talking to you now. He said, Lord, I believe.

And he worshipped Jesus. So we see this interesting case of a man who was put out by organized religion. They put him outside the fold.

They cast him out. But Jesus found him and took him in. And some of the Pharisees, which were with him, heard these words.

And they said to Jesus, are we blind also? And Jesus said unto them, if you were blind, then you would have no sin. But now you say you can see, therefore your sin remains. There is a saying, there are none so blind as those who will not see.

That was the condition of the Pharisees. They said they could see. They claimed to have superior understanding of the Scriptures.

And yet they refused to see. None so blind as those who will not see. Jesus said, if you were really blind, then you could be forgiven.

But because you say you see, you're in big trouble. A man will be held responsible for that knowledge that he has. They had the knowledge.

They saw the light. They would not walk in that light. So chapter 10, it would seem to be, is just a continuation of this whole movement here of the blind man receiving his sight, being put out by the organized religious system, being taken in by Jesus Christ.

And so Jesus said, verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. Now later on he said, I am the door. If a man tries to come by any other system, by any other way, he's a thief and a robber, Jesus said, I'm the way.

I'm the door. There's one way into the sheepfold that's through the door. I'm the door.

Try to climb over the walls or whatever. That's the action of a thief, of a robber. If you try to enter the kingdom of heaven by your good works, if you try to enter the kingdom of heaven by being religious, you'll never make it.

Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man comes to the Father but by me. Dr. Adam Smith, who traveled extensively in the Holy Land for years, getting the insight into the culture of the people, has written a very fascinating book giving biblical background and color by the understanding of the culture of these people. And he relates of talking with a shepherd one day as the shepherd was pointing out this walled enclosure and explaining to him how that they would drive the sheep into that enclosure at night or lead them into the enclosure.

And there in the enclosure, the sheep would be safe. And Dr. Smith said to him, well, you don't have any door. How do you keep the sheep from going out? And he said, I am the door.

He said, once I have all of the sheep in, I lie across the opening here. And this is where I sleep. And no sheep can get out, or no wolf can get in, except it cross over me.

Now, he wasn't coming from any kind of a biblical, you know, thing. In fact, he probably didn't even know the scriptures. But just, I'm the door.

I'm the one. You've got to come over me to get in. You've got to come over me to get out.

Now, Jesus is talking about this kind of a sheepfold that they have over there. The walled-in enclosures where the sheep were driven in at night. And he said, he that enter in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

And to him the porter openeth, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calleth his own sheep by name, and he leads them out. So, in the evening, when they would drive them into these enclosures for safety, in the morning, when they were ready to leave, there would be several herds driven into these enclosures. And during the night they would mingle.

But in the morning, when the shepherd was ready to lead them out to the fields for pasture, he would go to the door and he would call. And his sheep knew his voice. They would come out of the herd and follow him.

And you could try to mimic that call, but the sheep would never follow you. They know the voice of the shepherd, they respond to him. And so he said, the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out.

And so it's a very colorful picture that was very familiar to those people in that culture, unfamiliar to us in our culture. But the idea is that the shepherd knew his sheep, for there were sheep that were his, and there were sheep that were not his. And in carrying that over into the spiritual allegory, tonight, the world is comprised of two kinds of people.

Those that are his sheep, and those who are not his sheep. Two classes in the world today. You're his, or you're not his.

He knows his sheep, he calls them by name. Now, to me, every sheep looks alike, basically. I mean, I can't tell the difference between sheep.

I've watched them block a sheep on the hillside. To me, they all look alike, but you go up to the shepherd that's watching those sheep. And you'll say, hey, there's one of your sheep that's straying away.

And you'll call it by name. Oh, I have trouble with that Joe, you know, he's a miserable sheep, you know. You call him, Joe, get back here, you know.

Maybe you'll let out a whistle, and his dog will go out and start yipping and drive him back into the herd. He knows his sheep, he calls them by name. So, the Lord knows you, if you're one of his sheep.

Calls you by name, knows your characteristics. And they know his voice. Now, when he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them.

And his sheep follow him, for they know his voice. So, he calls his own sheep, they hear his voice, and they follow him. Though all of the sheep hear the voice, only his sheep respond.

A week from Thursday night, we will be dealing in Romans chapter 8 with that interesting passage. For whom he did foreknow, he did also predestinate that they should be conformed to the image of his Son. And we're going to be talking about predestination.

And those whom he foreknew, he also chose. And those he chose, he called. And he calls.

And though all hear his call, only his sheep respond. And how do you know you're his sheep or not? By whether or not you've responded to his call. And if you have responded to his call, you are his sheep.

If you haven't responded to his call, then you're not his sheep. Just that simple. And yet, it isn't so simple.

When you start getting into it. My sheep, they hear my voice. They follow me.

A stranger, he said, they will not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers. And this parable spake Jesus unto them, but they did not understand the things of which he was speaking unto them. And so he began to explain it.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. Now, he's not referring to Moses and Elijah and the prophets when he said, all that came before me are thieves and robbers.

But he is referring to the decadent religious system that Judaism had degraded into. Trying to make another way to God. Trying to bring man to God through works, through the foolishness of the Pharisees in their endeavor to keep the traditional aspects of the law.

But the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. By me, if any man will enter in, he shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture.

I'm the door, Jesus said. You've got to come, you've got to enter by me. The religious system of Judaism isn't going to make it for you.

You've got to enter by me. Now, the thief comes not but for to steal and to kill and to destroy. And that's exactly what false religious systems will do for you.

They will steal from you. They will rob you. And ultimately, they'll destroy you.

But Jesus said, I am come. That they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly. What a contrast to the religious systems and to Christianity.

Unfortunately, Christianity is often ranked as one of the religions of the world. Christianity is far from a religious system. As I study and analyze religious systems and make a comparison to Christianity.

The basic difference lies in that religions are all man's endeavors to reach God. And so, if I were to draw a cartoon to represent religion. I would draw a circle, the earth.

And because of my artistic ability, I'd put a little stick man on the circle. With hands lifted up, trying to reach God. Man starting at his earth base.

I'd put him on his tiptoes. Trying to reach heaven. Trying to reach infinity.

Trying to reach God. The religious systems are man trying to build a bridge to God. But no matter how tall he may stretch.

You cannot bridge from the finite to the infinite. It's an impossibility. If I were to draw a picture of Christianity.

I would have the round circle of the earth. And hands coming out of heaven. Towards that little man on earth.

For Christianity is God's endeavor to reach man. When Jacob was fleeing from his brother Esau. And he came to Bethel.

And he found a rock. He used it for his pillow. Because of his exhaustion, he went to sleep.

As he was sleeping, he had a dream. And in his dream, he saw a ladder. And it was planted on earth and it went up to heaven.

And the Lord was standing at the top of the ladder. And the angels of God were ascending and descending on this ladder from heaven to earth. And when he awoke in the morning.

He was filled with a sense of awe. And he said, truly, the Lord is in this place. And I knew it not.

Last night when I arrived here, frightened, tired, weary, sore. I had no consciousness of the presence of God. A barren, rocky, desolate place.

I knew it not. But I know it now. Truly, the Lord is in this place and I knew it not.

Notice the tenses. The Lord is here. I didn't know it last night.

I sure know it now. That ladder. Between earth and heaven.

Now, religion tries to build that ladder from the earth to reach up to heaven. The finite trying to reach the infinite. But with Christianity, the infinite has reached the finite.

Now, I can accept that the infinite can reach down and touch the finite. That's no problem for the infinite God. And so, with Christianity, I have no problem at all.

With religion, I have tremendous problems. Because you have the finite trying to reach the infinite. How can it happen? It can't.

Now, Jesus, interestingly enough, declared to his disciples when he was first calling them. He said, hey, you're going to marvel at this. Just because I said I saw you on a fig tree, hey, stick around, you're going to see a lot more than this, man.

From now on, you're going to see the heavens open. And the angels of heaven ascending and descending on the Son of Man. What is he saying? I am Jacob's ladder.

I am the access to God. You're going to see heaven open for man. For God is reaching down.

God is building the ladder. And I am the ladder that God has made, whereby man might come to God. So, the vast difference between Christianity and religion.

The religious systems will rob a man. They'll destroy a man. Whereas Christianity will bring a man life and that more abundantly.

The religious systems all have their little formulas, the works that you must do in order that you might be accepted by God. And they have all of these little work trips that you've got to accomplish in order that you might be accepted by God. Christianity says, there's not a single work that you can do that God will accept.

They're like filthy rags in His sight. To be accepted by God, you must believe. Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but by faith.

Will God accept a man? Religion say you have to be good enough and worthy enough for God to accept you. Christianity says, there's no way you can be good enough or worthy enough that God will accept you. The only way God can accept you is in His Son.

So, he that has the Son has life and he who has not the Son has not life. So, we see the contrast between the religions which Jesus said were thieves and robbers. Trying to bring man into the sheepfold by another way.

And the door whereby a man may enter into the sheepfold. One system is based upon works. The other system based upon faith.

Now, Jesus said, I've come that they might have life. They might have it more abundantly. How Satan has lied to man about the Christian experience.

You see, it was Satan's ploy to make Christianity a religion. And unfortunately, he was quite successful. And so, in many places, Christianity became a religion.

And whenever that transition was accomplished, it died. True Christianity died. And it became a form.

And even in the biblical times, Paul spoke of those who had a form of godliness, but no power. No life. The religious system points and says, now that's the way you ought to live if you want God to accept you.

But it gives you no assistance to live that way. Jesus points and says, now this is the way. And you can't do it.

But as you believe in me, I'm going to come and I'm going to indwell you. I'm going to take over and I'm going to make you a new person. And I'm going to give you the power to do what you can't do.

Because I want you to have this abundant life of fellowship with the Father. And He does for us what we can't do for ourselves. By the indwelling.

You see, no religious system gives you the power to abide by its concepts. Only Christianity is the infusion of God's power to live. A life that God would have you to live.

That more abundant life in Christ. Jesus then went on to say, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.

But he that is a hireling and not the shepherd, whose own sheep, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees. And the wolf catches them and scatters the sheep. So Jesus points out the contrast between the shepherd, the true shepherd, and the hireling.

A young minister came to me, for he had been invited by a church to be its pastor. And he went to the church and preached a sermon that the people enjoyed. And he met the board.

And the board laid down for him his salary, his duties, and also the restrictions that they sought to put upon him. They gave him quite a list of what he could do and what he couldn't do. And he came to me because he was wondering whether or not he should accept the invitation to become their pastor.

And I encouraged him not to accept it. I said, they're really not looking for a shepherd, they're looking for a hireling. They're going to hire you to be their minister.

To say the things they want to hear. To do the things they want done, but they're not really looking for a shepherd, they're looking for a hireling. And I wouldn't be a hireling for anybody.

My services are not for sale. A hireling really doesn't care for the sheep. The shepherd does.

The shepherd knows the sheep. He loves the sheep. He would give his life for the sheep.

A hireling, danger comes, he'll run. Because he's only a hireling, what more do you expect? But the shepherd will hazard his life, he'll lay down his life if necessary for his flock. Because he loves them.

Jesus said, I'm the good shepherd. The other religious systems, they're hirelings. They'll run, they'll leave you to the wolves.

Who will rip and scatter the flock. But I'm the good shepherd, I'll lay down my life for the flock. A hireling flees because he is a hireling.

And doesn't really care for the sheep. Now unfortunately today, there are many men in the ministry who are hirelings. They're professionals.

They really don't care for the sheep. Because they're hirelings. And their only concern is to fleece the flock of God.

And there's a bunch of guys out there seeking to fleece the flock of God. They sit up night figuring new ways to extract money out of people. Now if we write this in a letter.

And you know they spend thousands of dollars having professionals write these letters. With the gimmicks. All designed to fleece the flock of God.

They're hirelings. They really don't care for the flock of God. Though in the letters it often says, oh I've been thinking about you today Charles.

Is everything alright? The Lord brought you to my mind when I was in prayer this morning. And how I would love to come to your house there in Costa Mesa. And sit down and talk with you.

But I know you're so busy, you probably wouldn't have time for me to come. But why don't you write to me your request. And please enclose an offering because our ministry is facing you know, hirelings.

Fleecing the flock of God. The shepherd's concern is to feed the flock of God. Bring them into good pasture.

Food that they might grow. Jesus said to Peter, feed my sheep. Peter wrote, feed the flock of God which is among you.

And the shepherd seeks to feed the flock. They might be strong and healthy. God has blessed us abundantly in many ways.

God has blessed investments that we have made. And has prospered us far beyond anything we ever dreamed. And because of God's blessings, I thank the Lord that I'm able to return over half of my salary to the church each year.

My son said to me, Dad, why do you keep preaching? Why do you keep going on? Man, you could retire. Because you give most of your salary back anyhow. Why don't you just retire, Dad, and take it easy? You know, why are you still pushing so hard when you don't have to anymore? And I just smiled and said, what would I do? You know, it's my heart.

It's my love. It's my life. Feeding the flock of God.

I love it. You realize this, but you could cut off my salary and I'd still be here. Because I love it.

It's just, to me, a glorious thing. To see God work. And to have this privilege.

It's wonderful when people call for me to come and speak in various areas. And they say, what honorarium do you charge? And it's a thrill to be able to say, well, I have a very wealthy father. And he has underwritten all of my expenses.

I don't charge anything. He covers for me. Oh, how glorious it is to have received freely so that we can give freely.

I thank God for the position that he has put me in. That as Paul, I'm really chargeable to no man. I'm responsible to God.

To be his servant. To do his work. Not a hireling.

You can't hire me. But I want to be his under-shepherd. Feeding his sheep.

Jesus said, I am the good shepherd and I know my sheep. And am known of mine. That beautiful relationship that we have with him.

He knows me, I know him. He loves me, I love him. And I have this beautiful relationship with the good shepherd.

And as the father knows me, even so I know the father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. Now he said earlier that he gives his life for the sheep.

Now he says, I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this full. And of course he's talking about the Gentiles.

Those who would believe in him. He's talking about you. You're a part of the other sheep.

That were not of that full. Them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice. And there shall be one fold and one shepherd.

And so in Christ there is neither Jew or Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free. We're all one together in him. There's neither status, rank, whatever.

We're just all common one in Jesus Christ. Long hair, short hair, coats, ties. Doesn't matter.

We're one in Jesus Christ. That common denominator who has broken down every barrier that man has built up to divide himself from others. One of the sad byproducts of existential philosophy is the way it divides man and isolates man into an island all by himself.

There is no universal base of truth according to these philosophers. It is only as you personally experience it and interpret it that it becomes truth to you. But it is only truth to you and not necessarily to the one next to you.

You're isolated. You're alone. And so you look at modern art, which is an expression of existential philosophy.

And you see these colors just like someone stood back at 10 paces, picked up a ball of red paint and threw it at the canvas. And you get this flattering effect. And then he picked up a blue ball and threw it.

And then he puts a title underneath. Sunset over the Grand Canyon. And you look at that thing and you study it.

And someone standing next to you, they say, Oh, isn't that beautiful? Isn't that glorious? And you think, man, what are they seeing? You know, and the critics acclaim it as marvelous art. There's an eye here. There's a toe down here.

And a hand out over here, you know. Oh, classic art. But for the life of me, I can't see it.

But that's the whole idea. You have to interpret it in these stories where it really leaves the end of the story hanging. The guy is walking down the road and you don't know if he's going to pull out his 45 and blow his brains out and that's the end.

Or you don't know if he's going to be reconciled to his wife and live happily ever after. They leave you hanging. You've got to put the end on yourself because that's an expression of existential philosophy.

Every man must interpret it for himself. So you've got to put your own interpretation on the story. What did it really say? What did it mean? Man, I don't know.

I think that it's really oftentimes an excuse for the senility of the writers. They don't know what they're trying to say either. But it appears very profound because nobody can understand it, you know.

And so everybody acclaims it as all marvelous. Nobody can understand it. That's glorious.

But what it does is isolate us. Puts me on this little island all by myself. And I'm alone.

In a great big world. And no one really shares my same feelings. No one really shares my same thoughts.

And I feel this horrible isolation. Man has a way of building up walls between himself and others. But Jesus has a way of breaking down those walls.

And he brings us all together and he makes us one and he declares, I am the truth. And he gives us a universal base for truth. He is that universal base for truth.

So together in him we are brought together. The walls are down. And so as Paul said, he has broken down that wall of partition that used to exist between us and has made us all one.

Other sheep have I. Who are not of this fold. I've got to go out and call them too. That there might be one fold and one shepherd.

Therefore does my Father love me because I lay down my life that I may take it again. So here he is prophesying both his death and resurrection. Which at this point are about five months away.

No man takes it from me but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down. I have power to take it again.

This commandment have I received in my father. Jesus testified I have the power to lay my life down. He demonstrated it on the cross.

No man takes my life from me. They did not kill Jesus on the cross. They hung him on the cross but he dismissed his spirit.

He robbed them of the opportunity of killing him. They couldn't have killed him. He dismissed his spirit.

He said father into your hands. I commend my spirit. And it says and he dismissed his spirit.

He gave his life. No man takes my life. I give my life.

I have the power to lay my life down. I have the power to take it up. He proved he had the power to lay it down.

And then three days later he proved that he had the power to take it up. And he rose from the dead. And we'll be celebrating that.

The tomb is empty. He has power to take it up again. Now there was a division again among the Jews because of these sayings.

Many of them said he has a devil. He's mad. Why are you even listening to him? And others said these are not the words of a madman or a man that has a devil.

Can a devil open the eyes of the blind? And so there came at this point a very sharp division among the people. Now time lapse. And between verse 21 and 22 there is a time lapse from October to December.

The things in verse 21 were taking place during the feast of tabernacles. In Jerusalem. In October.

Now John tells us. And it was at Jerusalem the feast of dedication. Also known as the feast of lights.

Which took place on the 25th of December. This feast of dedication was their celebration. Of the.

Cleansing of the temple by Judas Maccabeus. After it had been profaned. By Antiochus Epiphanes.

The. Syrian. Leader.

Or leader of Syria. He was actually a Greek. And.

This was the celebration of that. Cleansing again of the temple by this brave warrior. And Jesus was again in Jerusalem and it was winter.

December. And Jesus walked in the temple. In Solomon's porch.

And the Jews gathered around him and they said unto him. How long do you leave us in doubt. If you are the Messiah.

Tell us plainly. And Jesus answered them and said. I have already told you but you did not believe he had already told them.

Before Abraham was. I am. And so.

He said I've already told you. They wanted him to say plainly. I am the Messiah.

And he would not give them that satisfaction. Earlier Jesus said to his disciples. Who do you say that I am.

And Peter said thou art the Messiah. The son of the living God. And Jesus said blessed art thou Simon.

Flesh and blood didn't reveal this to you. But my father which is in heaven. He acknowledged it before the disciples.

To the woman of Samaria. Who said I know that when the Messiah comes. He's going to teach us all things.

He said woman. I who am speaking to you and me. But yet he had not plainly said it to the Jews.

And they were wanting this plain declaration. How long do you leave us in doubt. If you are the Messiah.

Tell us plainly. And Jesus answered them and said I've told you. And you believe not.

Now the works. That I do in my father's name. They.

Are bearing witness of me. The opening of the eyes of the blind. The healing of the man that was lame for 38 years.

These miracles that he was accomplishing. He said you don't need that I tell you plainly. These works.

Testify of who I am. And if you go back in the prophecy of Isaiah. Concerning the Messiah.
Chapter 61. You'll find these things written of him. But you do not believe me.
Because you are not my sheep. Interesting statement. We'll get into that when we get into predestination.
As I said unto you. My sheep. Hear my voice.
And I know them. And they follow me. Now it's three months later.
And he's coming right back. To the last thing he was talking to them about. His sheep.
Following him. So though there's been a lapse of time. Jesus brings him right back to this same subject.
That. He was talking to them about. Earlier.
Now he is making some very interesting statements. Between. Concerning his sheep.
And listen carefully. My sheep. Hear my voice.
I know them. They follow me. And I give.
Unto them. Eternal life. And they.
Shall never. Perish. Neither shall any man.
Pluck them out of my hand. You know when I read that. It makes me so thankful.
That I am one of his sheep. What a glorious assurance. That brings to me tonight.
To be one of his sheep. To have heard his voice. To have responded.
To follow him. To have received. That eternal life.
Realizing I will never perish. And no man can pluck me out of his hand. He said my father which gave them me.
Is greater than all. And no man is able. To pluck them out of my father's hand.
I am my father. Are one. You want me to tell you plainly.
How plain do you want it. I am my father. Are one.
That's plain enough. They took up stones. To stone him.
We got the message. Plain enough. Jesus is here claiming what is rightfully his claim.
Equality with the father. In Philippians the second chapter we read. That he.
Who was in the beginning with God. And thought it not robbery or something to be grasped. To be equal with God.
I am the father. Are one. Claiming the equality with God.

Claiming deity. They understood the claim. To them it was blasphemous.

And they were ready to stone him. According to their understanding of the law. For blasphemy.

People say well Jesus never claimed to be. God. They've never read the scriptures.

I am the father. Are one. How plain can you get.

Jesus answered them. Many good works have I showed you from my father. Now for which of these works are you going to stone me.

Are you going to stone me because I opened up the blind man's eyes. Or because I healed the lame man at the pool of Bethesda. Which of my works are you going to stone me for.

And they said. We're not stoning you for the good works. But for blasphemy.

Because that you being a man. Make yourself God. They understood exactly what he was saying.

When he said I am the father are one. You being a man. Are making yourself God.

And Jesus answered them. Is it not written in your law. I said.

Notice in your law that I said. Here he's claiming the authorship of their law. Have you not written in your law that I said.

Ye are God's. If he called them God's unto whom the word of God came. And the scripture cannot be broken.

Say ye of him whom the father hath sanctified and sent into the world. You blaspheming. You blasphemous.

Because I said I am the son of God. If I'm not doing the works of my father. Then don't believe me.

Again calling his works as a witness. Now. What.

Does he mean. Those to whom the word of God came were called God's. This we find quoted in Psalm 82 6. And you might look at it there.

In fact you might put a little note. In John Psalms 82 6. So that when the Mormons come to your door. And try and prove that.

They have every right to claim. An ascendancy to the. To God.

And to become God's. This is the basis. Because he said ye are God's.

And in Psalms 82 6. It said. I have said. Ye are God's.

And all of you are children. Of the most high. Now.

Notice. He is quoting there. I have said he's quoting the scripture.

What scripture is he quoting. Put in Psalms 82 6. Exodus. 22.

8 and 9. And now you have your own chain reference Bible. In Exodus 22. God is.

Now. Laying down. His law.

That the judges were to enact. Upon the people. And when these things would happen.

This kind of a condition existed. This is how the judges were to rule in those cases. And so the word of the Lord is coming to the judges over Israel.

That they might enact upon Israel the laws of God. So. In verse 8. As he's talking about a situation of a thief.

Is not found. Then the master of the house shall be brought. To the judges.

To see whether he has put his hand. Into his neighbor's goods. For all manner of trespass.

Whether it is for an ox. Or an ass. Or sheep.

Or raiment. Or for any manner of lust thing. Which another challenges to be his.

The cause of both parties shall come before the judges. And whom the judges shall condemn. He shall pay double his neighbor.

Now. You're missing your jacket. And you look all over the house.

And you can't find it. And you go down to the store. And you see your neighbor wearing your jacket.

And you say. That's my jacket. That's been missing out of my house.

Oh no. It's not. It's my jacket.

I bought it at Buffins. And so. You've got this dispute going.

The man denies that he stole it from you. So. You come before the judges.

And. The judges then are to make this decision. The cause of both parties brought before them.

Now. The interesting thing. Is that the word translated judges.

Is the Hebrew word. Elohim. Which is the word for God.

So that. The judges. Are as God.

Over the people. In that they are controlling the destiny of these people. As they meet out their judgment.

They are acting in God's place. And so. Those whom he called.

God's. Were actually those judges who were enacting. God's laws upon the people.

It was not a doctrine that you know. If you're a good Mormon. You and your wife can be God.

And have your own earth someplace. But it is just declaring. That.

The judges. Were called God's. Because of the responsibility they had.

Of enacting. God's judgments. Upon the people.

And so. To whom the word came. The judges.

The rules. Came to them. They were then called.

God's. And so. Jesus said.

Is it not written. In your law. That you're God's.

I said you're God's. So. He's not really referring to Psalms.

But he's referring directly back. To. The book of Exodus.

Chapter 22 verses eight and nine. While we're on the Mormons. I had a couple of young boys.

Come to the door this past week. And desired to engage me in conversation. And I told them that.

Somehow. We didn't believe in the same God. Though they used a lot of the same terms that I use.

And they talk about Jesus. And they talk about God. And they talk about salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

And through faith in his. Blood that was shed for our sins. And.

And to talk to them. It seems that they believe. Very fundamentally.

Much as I believe. But I said the problem is. When you talk about God.

You're talking about a different God. Than the God that I believe in. Because.

I do not believe that Adam. Is my God. He is not the God that I'm worshiping and serving.

Though your prophet. Whom you acknowledge is a prophet. Brigham Young did state.

That Adam is our God. And the only God with whom we have to do. He said.

Well you don't really understand. What the prophet was trying to tell us. I said.

Well. I don't know. I've read the sermon several times.

And I've read all of his defenses of the sermon. In the magazine articles. In the Morning Star that followed.

And I said. In reality. Don't you believe.

That you're going to be God. And he said. Yes.

I said. If you remain faithful to your Mormon beliefs. And faithful to the church.

That you can ascend. And you can be God. And you can have your own planet.

And all. Yes. We believe that.

I said. Then. In reality.

What Brigham Young was saying. Is in perfect consistency. With what you believe.

You are taking it one step ahead. You say. We're going to ascend.

We're going to be God. We'll have our own planet. He took it back one step.

And he is saying that Adam. Somewhere in some other world. Achieved this level of perfection.

Became God. And brought one of his celestial wives. Eve's to the earth.

And started the whole thing here on the earth. So he only took the Mormon doctrine back a step. Instead of forward a step.

And if the forward step is a logical step. Then the backward step would be a logical step. So.

Brigham Young was correct. In his interpretation. Of your doctrine.

That you're going to be God. Only taking it back a step. Instead of forward a step.

Because this progression. Must have been going on through eternity. And I said.

And you talk about believing in Jesus Christ. And salvation through your faith in him. But the Jesus that you believe in.

Is he the brother of Lucifer? And he said. Yes, we believe he's the brother of Lucifer. And I said.

Well then. He's not the same Jesus that I believe in. You're talking about another Jesus Christ.

I don't know the Jesus you are talking about. Because the Jesus that I believe in. Is not the brother of Lucifer.

Because that would make Lucifer a son of God. But the Jesus that I believe in. Is the only begotten son of God.

He's not a created being. And Lucifer is a created being of God. And if you believe that Jesus is the brother of Lucifer.

Then you brought Jesus down. Jesus said. I and the father are one.

So the Jesus I believe in. Is not. A brother of Lucifer.

But is one with the father. And so we believe. Actually in different gods.

And in different Jesuses. The poor boys were stunned. And they walked away shaking their heads.

And I'm praying for them. I'm praying for them very seriously. They were sweet young men.

I didn't like devastating them. But I felt that it was important. That they see.

That the Jesus that they are. Proclaiming. To believe in.

Is actually a different Jesus. Than the one who is my shepherd. Whose voice I have heard.

And am following. Because the Jesus I believe in. Is one with the father.

He can say. I and the father are one. So.

This business. You are gods. Is a reference to the judges.

Who are enacting God's laws. Upon the people. If he called them gods.

Unto whom the word of God came. The scripture cannot be broken. Say ye of him whom the father hath sanctified.

Now Jesus said. First of all the father has set me apart. And has sent me into the world.

And you're saying to me that I'm blaspheming. Because I say I'm the son of God. And if I do not the works of my father.

Then don't believe me again. He's calling the works. These are the testimony.

Philip said Lord show us the father. And we'll be satisfied. And he said have I been so long in time with you Philip.

Have you not seen me. He that seeth me hath seen the father. How sayest thou then show us the father.

Believest thou. That I am in the father and the father in me. Or else believe me.

For the very works sake. The works are testifying. No man can open the eyes of the blind.

No man can. Do these works except. God is with him.

As Nicodemus recognized in chapter three. But. If I do.

Though you believe not me. Believe the works. If I do not the works of my father.

Don't believe me. But if I do the works of my father. Then.

You don't believe me at least believe the works. That you may know and believe. That the father is in me.

And I in him. Therefore they sought again to take him. They were going to arrest him.

But his hour had not yet come. And thus he escaped. Out of their hand.

They had him surrounded. But he escaped out of their hand. And so now he went away again.

Beyond Jordan. Under the place where John at first was baptizing. And there he stayed.

Stayed until he made his final trip back to Jerusalem. At the call of Mary and Martha. To raise their brother Lazarus from the dead.

And then. To be. Arrested.

At the Passover. And to be crucified. So he's now down by the Jordan River.

Near the area where he began. His ministry with John the Baptist. And many resorted unto him.

And said John did no miracle. But all things that John spake of this man. Are true.

And many believed on him there. People who lived in the area. Who had heard John's ministry.

Said there's one coming after me mightier than I. The latchet of whose shoes I'm not worthy. To stoop down and unloose. They said everything John said about this man is true.

And many believed on him. Down there by the Jordan River. And he spent the next couple of months.

Actually from December. January, February, March. Until the month of April.

He spent down there by the Jordan River. Before making his journey back to Jerusalem. From now in chapter 11.

We get him coming back to the area of Bethany. To Lazarus. And that marvelous miracle.

Again the works. If you don't believe me. Believe the works.

And now he is showing works that are indisputable. As he raises Lazarus from the dead. And we enter into the final aspects of the life of Christ.

Prior to his crucifixion. So chapters 11 and 12. For next Sunday.

Again we pray that the Lord will just give you a marvelous week. May he strengthen you. May he give wisdom to you.

May he bless you on your jobs. And your various activities. May he open up opportunities of service.

And of witnessing. And may he use your life as an instrument. To do his work.

In this needy world. May his spirit rest upon you in a very special way. And may as you celebrate.

The resurrection. You just be filled with that joy. And that power of the spirit.

That same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. As he dwells within you. Making you alive unto God.

And to the things of God. All to the glory of Jesus our Lord.

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