

CONCERNING THE WAY

November 24, 2009

LESSON 82: THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



Chapter 9 – Christ the Sight Giver

In chapter 9 we have another story of the tremendous sovereignty of God. There is no break from chapter 8 so we can assume that Jesus is still in Jerusalem here. In chapter 8 Jesus talked about being the Light of the World, and He demonstrates it in this chapter by healing a man that was blind from birth. This is a real life illustration of what He was talking about, and a concrete example of the victory of light over darkness.

It should be pointed out that giving sight to the blind was considered by the Jews to be a Messianic activity (Isaiah 29:18, 35:5, 42:7). In the O.T. it is God Himself who is associated with it (Exodus 4:11, Psalm 146:8). Healing this man should have been proof to the religious leaders that He was God.

John 9:1-2 Now as Jesus was passing by, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. (2) His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who committed the sin that caused him to be born blind, this man or his parents?"

It's impossible to imagine what it must be like to be born blind. He would never have known what his parents looked like, or seen a sunset, a butterfly, or a rose. How we take for granted the gift of sight!

Since they could support themselves only by begging, blind people tended to hang out around the temple. There were a lot of people coming and going there and they tended to be more charitable when they were coming to worship.

In the Middle East in those times eye problems were fairly common. Many people were born blind, because of health problems and diseases of pregnant mothers. Because of limited access to medical treatment, it is still a problem there today.

It was believed by the Jews that if you were good, if you obeyed the Law, you would have good health. If you did bad things, you would have health problems. In this man's case, he was born this way, so even the disciples assumed that his parents had done something sinful that caused it.

They probably inferred that from verses in the Law which suggest that the sins of the parents bring consequences to the children (Exodus 20:5, 34:7, Numbers 14:18, Deuteronomy 5:9, Jeremiah 31:29-30, Ezekiel 18:2). Some Jews even believed it was possible for a person to commit sin before they were even born.

It sounds strange to us, but it's easy for us to have the same attitude today. We look at people who are sick, or out of work or homeless, and automatically assume that they did something wrong or sinful to get that way. Whether or not that's true isn't the issue, it's our attitude that is the issue. We should look for ways to help them, not focusing on who's to blame for their situation. This is what Jesus does:

John 9:3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but he was born blind so that the acts of God may be revealed through what happens to him."

Think about this, it's an amazing statement. This man was born blind just so that when Jesus passed by at this particular time and place, He would heal the man and it would be written down by the apostle John to reveal this great miracle of God to millions of people over two thousand years, that Jesus Christ has power over life and death, and power to heal. This doesn't mean that God deliberately inflicted the man with blindness, but he took what was a natural occurrence in this broken world and used it to demonstrate his love and power.

This is a very important verse. It is true that sin can result in physical suffering, but Jesus is saying that is not the only cause of health problems. God sometimes uses physical disabilities or suffering to demonstrate His power. Many Christian leaders in the past have had physical disabilities, but were used by God in a special way.

John 9:4-5 We must perform the deeds of the one who sent me as long as it is daytime. Night is coming when no one can work. (5) As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

Again Jesus claims to be the light of the world. This is a description of His effect on the world, forcing everyone in the world to 'choose up sides' for or against him. He knew His time was short on earth, which is "daytime". Jesus is the "light" eternally, but He was only the light of the world while He was on earth.

John 9:6-7 Having said this, he spat on the ground and made some mud with the saliva. He smeared the mud on the blind man's eyes (7) and said to him, "Go wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated "sent"). So the blind man went away and washed, and came back seeing.

Why did Christ choose this method to heal this man? He didn't have to do it this way, He could have just touched Him and He would be healed. It may have been that it involved a greater witness to the miracle by doing it this way. If Christ had just simply touched him, no one else may have noticed at all. But by sending the man to go wash in the pool, someone would have had to help him get to the pool, someone may have possibly had to help him go wash his face, and there would have been people there that saw him wash and then watched him as he realized that he could see for the first time in his life!

Can you imagine the reaction the man would have displayed to all the people as he left the pool and came back? Dozens, maybe even hundreds of people may have followed the man to see what was going on. Many more people would have seen the power of God at work by doing it this way.

Another reason may have been to figuratively rub mud in the Pharisee's eyes. Mixing clay with saliva was a common practice used for eye infections. But, not only was healing forbidden on the Sabbath, but one of the Sabbath laws also outlawed mixing clay with spittle! Does this give you an idea of the ridiculous extent the Jewish laws had reached? So Jesus was challenging the Pharisee's authority on more than one level.

John tells us that the pool of Siloam means "sent", which is fitting because God sent Jesus, and Jesus sent the man to this pool to wash. He also may have been looking for an expression of faith by the blind man, making him go to a pool which was further away than the pool of Bethesda.

This pool still exists in Jerusalem, its water comes through Hezekiah's tunnel (2 Kings 20:20) from the Gihon Spring. Here's a picture of the pool in the early 1900's, before the Muslims built on top of it:



And here it is today:



<http://www.bibleplaces.com/poolofsiloam.htm>

John 9:8-9 Then the neighbors and the people who had seen him previously as a beggar began saying, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" (9) Some people said, "This is the man!" while others said, "No, but he looks like him." The man himself kept insisting, "I am the one!"

This becomes kind of humorous if you can picture the situation. Everyone's arguing whether this is the blind beggar that they have known, and the man is standing there saying over and over, "Hey, it's me, it's me!"

It may have been hard to recognize him because his diseased eyes may have been shrunken in, or deformed in some way before, and now they're perfectly normal - he may have looked much different. Also, some people tend to not really notice what a beggar looks like, they purposely overlook them.

John 9:10-12 So they asked him, "How then were you made to see?" (11) He replied, "The man called Jesus made mud, smeared it on my eyes and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.'so I went and washed, and was able to see." (12) They said to him, "Where is that man?" He replied, "I don't know."

So Jesus slipped away again. Why did He do this? Why didn't He pass out business cards saying, "JESUS CHRIST - Messiah, Son of God, doer of great miracles"? Well, it seems like it was to create a conversation among the people who witnessed the miracle, to start them asking questions. We can be sure that Jesus always did exactly the right thing at exactly the right time for exactly the right reasons.

John 9:13-15 They brought the man who used to be blind to the Pharisees. (14) (Now the day on which Jesus made the mud and caused him to see was a Sabbath.) (15) So the Pharisees asked him again how he had gained his sight. He replied, "He put mud on my eyes and I washed, and now I am able to see."

Oh, boy, He did it again, He just had to heal somebody on the Sabbath, which was going to cause more trouble with the Pharisees. The Pharisees will condemn themselves again by not recognizing that Jesus was validating Himself as Messiah by doing these miracles. All they could see was that He was breaking their Law.

John 9:16 Then some of the Pharisees began to say, "This man is not from God, because he does not observe the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such miraculous signs?" Thus there was a division among them.

This was very confusing to them, because they couldn't conceive of a man who could sin by breaking the law of the Sabbath could do miracles. If He was truly godly, he wouldn't heal on the Sabbath, would he? They're missing the whole point as usual.

John 9:17 So again they asked the man who used to be blind, "What do you say about him, since he caused you to see?" "He is a prophet," the man replied.

The man realizes he's got to be a prophet, but He didn't say "The Prophet", or "The Messiah", so he doesn't recognize who Jesus is, but he knows he's someone special, since he did this miracle.

John 9:18-19 Now the Jewish religious leaders refused to believe that he had really been blind and had gained his sight until at last they summoned the parents of the man who had become able to see. (19) They asked the parents, "Is this your son, whom you say was born blind? Then how does he now see?"

This is pretty ridiculous. They won't believe the man, so they bring in his parents. They were probably hoping the parents would say that he had become blind by some kind of accident or illness, so then they could explain his recovery by natural means.

John 9:20-23 So his parents replied, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. (21) But we do not know how he is now able to see, nor do we know who caused him to see. Ask him, he is a mature adult. He will speak for himself." (22) (His parents said these things because they were afraid of the Jewish religious leaders. For the Jewish leaders had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. (23) For this reason his parents said, "He is a mature adult, ask him.")

Well, the parents are no help; they confirm that he was born blind. These poor people are probably scared to death, being forced to come here in front of these leaders and testify about their son. It was a big deal to be excommunicated from the synagogue, it would have been a disgrace for them. They would have been ostracized by everyone in the community. The Jews had three kinds of excommunication:

1. *Rebuke – lasted from seven to thirty days*
2. *Casting out – lasted from thirty to sixty days. Usually accompanied by curses and sometimes proclaimed by the blasting of a horn. People would keep a distance of six to seven feet from the one being disciplined, and stones were thrown on his coffin when he died.*
3. *Cutting off – duration was indefinitely, and the person was treated as if they were dead*

John 9:24-25 Then they summoned the man who used to be blind a second time and said to him, "Promise before God to tell the truth. We know that this man is a sinner." (25) He replied, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. I do know one thing – that although I was blind, now I can see."

The Pharisees were insinuating that the man was lying, that's why they said "Promise before God to tell the truth." He was presumed to be lying. But the man didn't change his story. At this point, he didn't know who Jesus was at all, he was just being honest. This is a classic answer by the man - I don't know about that, but I do know one thing - I was blind, but now I can see.

John 9:26-27 Then they said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he cause you to see?" (27) He answered, "I told you already and you didn't listen. Why do you want to hear it again? You people don't want to become his disciples too, do you?"

They're not satisfied with the answers they're getting, they can't prove it didn't happen, so now they're going to attack the method. This poor guy is getting fed up, and I love his answer. It looks like he was thinking of following Jesus, becoming a disciple. It's hard to tell if he's asking a serious question or if he's just being tongue in cheek.

By the way, where did John get this conversation? He wasn't a witness to this, and presumably none of the other disciples heard it, either. Well, it could have been told to him by the healed

man, if he did follow Jesus after this, or it could have been from Nicodemus, who may have been in that group of Pharisees who were questioning the man and was a witness to the entire conversation.

John 9:28-29 They heaped insults on him, saying, "You are his disciple! We are disciples of Moses! (29) We know that God has spoken to Moses! We do not know where this man comes from!"

You have to understand that in those days it was very important to the Jews, in judging whether a man was a true prophet, to know where he came from, who his parents were, and what his education was. This is what gave a prophet his authority. And these Pharisees didn't know any of those things about Jesus, so they could not accept His authority.

John 9:30-33 The man replied, "This is a remarkable thing, that you don't know where he comes from, and yet he caused me to see! (31) We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but if anyone is devout and does his will, God listens to him. (32) Never before has anyone heard of someone causing a man born blind to see. (33) If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

The man finds it incredible that the Pharisees would not know anything about Jesus. He probably wasn't a great intellect, but he was smart enough to see that it was very simple. He made me see, so he couldn't be a sinner. He sees that they are as blind as he ever was, so he tries to teach them, tries to open their eyes to this simple truth.

John 9:34 They replied, "You were born completely in sinfulness, and yet you presume to teach us?" So they threw him out.

They're hanging on to the idea that because he was born blind, that some kind of sin in his parents was responsible for it. Because of that, he was considered inferior by the Pharisees and would have been insulted by what the man said to them, and so they presumably excommunicated him from the synagogue.

John 9:35-38 Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, so he found the man and said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" (36) The man replied, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" (37) Jesus told him, "You have seen him; he is the one speaking with you." [(38) He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

Verse 38 and the beginning of 39, in brackets, is missing in some early important manuscripts. If authentic, the man came to be a true believer in Jesus Christ. It's the first place in John we see someone actually worshipping Christ, and Jesus doesn't stop him. Since worship is due to God alone, this is another proof of Jesus' divinity.

Jesus didn't abandon this man to wonder what had just happened to him. He tells him who He really is, and the man believes. And Jesus will draw nearer to us when we're rejected or left alone, He'll never abandon us!

What a day the blind man had! He woke up blind, stumbled his way to the temple (maybe with someone's help), sat and cried out for people to give for hours on end, another day just like so many others, and then Jesus came by. Jesus put mud pies on his eyes, and the man stumbled to the

pool with mud on his face wondering what was going on. He washed and all of a sudden for the first time in his life he could see! Then, as he had barely begun to enjoy the new sensations of seeing the colorful world around him, he gets dragged into court and grilled by the Pharisees! After suffering through this lengthy process, he gets rudely thrown out of the Synagogue! Finally, after all this, he meets the the Messiah, the creator of the universe, who has healed him, and so he ends the day by worshipping Jesus. That was, all in all, a great day!

John 9:39-41 Jesus said,] **"For judgment I have come into this world, so that those who do not see may gain their sight, and the ones who see may become blind."** (40) **Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and asked him, "We are not blind too, are we?"** (41) **Jesus replied, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin, but now because you claim that you can see, your guilt remains."**

The conversation with the blind man wasn't private; there were Pharisees that witnessed what went on between them. Now Jesus turns to them and begins a discourse that continues into chapter 10. Jesus came into this world to reverse what we think we know about God and spiritual things. Until we come to faith in Christ, we may think we can see, but in reality we're completely blind. Jesus opens our eyes to the things of God.

The blind man received sight physically, and this led him to see spiritually as well. But the Pharisees, who claimed to possess spiritual sight, were spiritually blinded. In other words, to receive Jesus was to receive the light of the world, to reject him was to reject the light, close your eyes, and become blind. This is the serious sin of which Jesus had warned before (John 8:21-24). The blindness of those people was incurable since they had rejected the only cure that exists (John 12:39-41).

"Jesus used the blind man to illustrate His purpose for coming into the world. To put it simply, He came to give spiritual sight to those who admit that they are spiritually blind, and He came to confirm the blindness of those who self-righteously think they can see.... The self-righteous hate the light, withdrawing to their own secret deeds, more determined than ever that they will not be exposed." Erwin W. Lutzer

Chapter 10 – Christ the Good Shepherd

In this chapter Jesus calls us "sheep", which is interesting. If you talk to people who know livestock, they'll tell you that there's nothing dumber than sheep. So that's what we are! Sheep are so stupid that they can't take care of themselves. Even if they're standing just a few feet from grass to eat or water to drink, they can't find either. They need a shepherd to lead them to it.

Sheep also get lost easily. They can wander away, eating one bite of grass at a time, and become lost with no hope of ever finding their way back. They need a shepherd to look for them and guide them home. Sheep are also helpless. They can't defend themselves, so they are easy prey for wild animals. They need a shepherd to protect them.

You can see that people are a lot like sheep. We sometimes do stupid things, and we easily get distracted and wander away from the truth, becoming lost. I sometimes get lost just trying to find my way out of a parking lot! And spiritually, we're all lost and totally defenseless. We all need a shepherd.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, does for us what a shepherd does for his sheep. In this chapter, we see a

beautiful picture of Jesus as our shepherd.

John 10:1 "I tell you the solemn truth, the one who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber."

There's no break or time indicator between this chapter and the last, so Jesus just switches from the topic of blindness to the topic of sheep tending as he continues to put the Pharisees in their place.

Often people would keep a sheep pen up next to their house, usually surrounded by a stone wall with briars on top for protection. Sheep were important financial investments in these times. People raised them to make a living, and they provided food, clothing, and gifts to bring to the Lord in worship at the temple.

The use of both the words "thief" and "robber" are intentional. There is a difference. The Greek word for "thief" always refers to stealing by a carefully thought out plan, very intentional and premeditated. The word for "robber" relates to someone who uses violence and is not necessarily planned in advance, more like a mugger. You will see the words used together again later.

John 10:2-3 The one who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. (3) The doorkeeper opens the door for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

This is speaking of a sheepfold in a village that may have held more than one flock. When the shepherd came he would call his flock, and they would know his voice and follow him. Jesus is saying that those people who hear Him will respond, and, just like sheep, they will not follow a stranger.

As the nation's religious leaders, it was their responsibility to shepherd God's people, but they had failed miserably. In fact, they had become false shepherds, driving people away from God. Jesus is the shepherd in this proverb, but who is the doorkeeper? We're not sure, some think it is the Holy Spirit, who opens the hearts of people to accept Christ, but in context Jesus was probably referring to John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Christ.

John 10:4-5 When he has brought all his own sheep out, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they recognize his voice. (5) They will never follow a stranger, but will run away from him, because they do not recognize the stranger's voice."

The sheep recognize their shepherd's voice and follow him everywhere he goes. They ignore everyone else. As "sheeple," if we truly belong to God, we'll be able to recognize His voice and follow Him, and ignore the voices of the religious false shepherds, of which there are many.

"To follow Christ means I become intimately identified with His plans and purposes for the planet and for me as a person. His wishes become my wishes. His work becomes my work. His words become my words. His standards, values, and priorities become mine. His interests become my interests. His life becomes my life." Phillip Keller

John 10:6-8 This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them. (7) So Jesus said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. (8) "All who came before

Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.

This wasn't a typical parable that Jesus told, but He was basically just using a figure of speech, a proverb, and the disciples didn't get it. So He proceeded to explain what He meant. Jesus is the door for the sheep. A door is for protection, it is an entranceway, a way to go out and come back, and all these can be applied to Jesus.

When the shepherd was out with the sheep and couldn't get back to the town for the night, he would usually get to a place where a sheepfold had been constructed, a temporary place of protection for the sheep. These usually didn't have gates, so the shepherd would lay down in the doorway and sleep there, keeping the sheep in and thieves and wild animals out. That gives meaning to the phrase, "over my dead body," doesn't it? The shepherd literally was the door.

So Jesus is the door to salvation - there is no other way in or out (notice Jesus didn't say He was "a" door, but "the" door). Some think this is intolerant, but this is the way God has provided for our salvation. No other religion provides an adequate atonement for sin. That is why Jesus qualifies as the door for salvation - there is no one else and no other way that has paid the price like He did.

The thieves and robbers were the religious leaders. They had added their own rules to God's Law, making it impossible for people to keep them all, and so instead of leading people to God, they were keeping people from Him.

John 10:9 I am the door. If anyone enters through me, he will be saved, and will come in and go out, and find pasture.

The Greek phrase for "come in and go out" here is in some places an idiom for living in relationship to a community, so Jesus may be speaking of a future community of believers, possibly the Church, and maybe even looking forward to the Millennial Kingdom. But it also speaks of the freedom we have through Christ.

<i>If anyone enters through Me...</i>	
<i>He will be saved</i>	<i>Salvation</i>
<i>He will come in and go out</i>	<i>Freedom</i>
<i>He will find pasture</i>	<i>Spiritual food</i>

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come so that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.

This "abundant life" Jesus is talking about is not physical life, but spiritual life. We already have physical life, and He has promised to give us everything we need to live, but Jesus came to give an abundant spiritual life, a life that really counts. The "abundant life" does not mean an abundance of possessions or wealth (Luke 12:15). It includes an "abundance of grace" (Romans 5:17, 20), an abundance of "every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8), an abundance of "consolation" (2 Corinthians 1:5), an abounding "love" (1 Thessalonians 3:12), an "abounding ... work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58), and "abounding" and thankful "faith" (Colossians 2:7).

True happiness and fulfillment only come from following Jesus, the Good Shepherd, not from following our selfish and worldly dreams.

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the

sheep.

Jesus is the shepherd, and not just any shepherd, but one who gives His life for the sheep. A good shepherd will do anything to protect the sheep. Jesus is predicting His death on the cross here. The word “good” in classical Greek was used to describe something beautiful, useful, noble, wholesome, competent, and morally good. All of these adjectives are true of Jesus! God describes Himself as a shepherd in Ezekiel 34:

Ezekiel 34:11-15 " 'For this is what the sovereign LORD says: Look, I myself will search for my sheep and seek them out. (12) As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will seek out my flock. I will rescue them from all the places where they have been scattered on a cloudy, dark day. (13) I will bring them out from among the peoples and gather them from foreign countries; I will bring them to their own land. I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams and all the inhabited places of the land. (14) In a good pasture I will feed them; the mountain heights of Israel will be their pasture. There they will lie down in a lush pasture, and they will feed on rich grass on the mountains of Israel. (15) I myself will feed my sheep and I myself will make them lie down, declares the sovereign LORD.

That entire chapter is a Millennial Kingdom prophecy of bringing the Jews out from the nations where they have been scattered, which reminds us that the sheep Jesus is speaking of here is the Jewish people. At this point He is not speaking of the Gentiles. But Jesus is taking on this same role of a good shepherd, and this is something else the Pharisees should have recognized as validation that He was the Messiah. Other related references to sheep are in Psalm 23, 74:1, 78:70-72, 79:13, 95:7, Isaiah 40:11, and 53:6.

John 10:12-15 The hired hand, who is not a shepherd and does not own sheep, sees the wolf coming and abandons the sheep and runs away. So the wolf attacks the sheep and scatters them. (13) Because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep, he runs away. (14) "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me — (15) just as the Father knows me and I know the Father — and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Jesus is contrasting the good shepherd with a hired hand. A hired hand is just doing it for the money, he has no vested interest in the sheep and he would run away if the sheep are in danger. But the good shepherd loves the sheep and gives His life for them. Jesus was comparing the priests to the hired hands. They were just concerned about themselves and their reputations instead of caring about the people and their spiritual welfare.

It’s important to note that the Pharisees were not part of God’s ordained plan for the leadership of Israel. God had appointed the priests as the spiritual leaders and teachers of the nation. But the priests had failed their responsibility. The table below explains the persons and groups represented in this proverb Jesus is using:

<i>Description of Person</i>	<i>Relation to Sheep</i>	<i>Purpose and Goal</i>	<i>Who They Symbolize</i>
<i>Doorkeeper</i>	<i>Care</i>	<i>Open door to Christ</i>	<i>John the Baptist</i>
<i>Shepherd</i>	<i>Owner</i>	<i>Lead, feed, give life for sheep</i>	<i>Christ</i>
<i>Thief and Robber</i>	<i>Rustlers</i>	<i>Steal, kill</i>	<i>Pharisees</i>

<i>Wolf</i>	<i>Enemy</i>	<i>Destroy</i>	<i>Satan</i>
<i>Hireling</i>	<i>Legal Guardian</i>	<i>Self interest, indifference toward sheep</i>	<i>Priests and/or Levites</i>

John 10:16 I have other sheep that do not come from this sheepfold. I must bring them too, and they will listen to my voice, so that there will be one flock and one shepherd.

The “other sheep” is obviously the Gentiles. Jesus came for the lost sheep of Israel, but He also came to save the world (John 3:16-17). These other sheep from a different sheepfold, the Church, will also hear the voice of Jesus, and eventually these two flocks will be combined into one, which is the case today. Now, in Christ there is no difference between Jew and Gentile.

John 10:17-18 This is why the Father loves me — because I lay down my life, so that I may take it back again. (18) No one takes it away from me, but I lay it down of my own free will. I have the authority to lay it down, and I have the authority to take it back again. This commandment I received from my Father."

Wow, this tells us something very important. Jesus is in charge of His own death and resurrection! He was not helpless, not dependent on anyone else at any point in His life. He may have looked powerless against the Roman soldiers that crucified Him, but He chose to allow that to happen to Him. He used human instruments in His death, but they were responsible for their own evil intentions. Jesus, being fully God, was in full control of everything that happened to Him, all the way to His death, and bringing Himself back to life.

John 10:19-21 Another sharp division took place among the Jewish people because of these words. (20) Many of them were saying, "He is possessed by a demon and has lost his mind! Why do you listen to him?" (21) Others said, "These are not the words of someone possessed by a demon. A demon cannot cause the blind to see, can it?"

As usual, Jesus’ words cause division in the crowd of people listening to Him.

John 10:22-23 Then came the feast of the Dedication in Jerusalem. (23) It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple area in Solomon's Portico.

We know the feast of the Dedication as Hanukkah or the “Festival of Lights”, and it’s the only place in the Bible it is mentioned. This feast is not one of the ones prescribed by God in the Mosaic Law, but is a remembrance of the Maccabean victories of 165-164 B.C., when Judas Maccabeus drove out the Greeks, rebuilt the altar, and rededicated the temple (1 Maccabees 4:41-61). It was the last great deliverance the Jewish people had experienced. Solomon's Portico was a covered walkway formed by rows of columns supporting a roof and open on the inner side facing the center of the temple complex.

John 10:24 The Jewish leaders surrounded him and asked, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

These guys are unbelievable - how many times has He told them? They were looking for a political leader who would free them from the Romans, not some guy who was going to upset their comfortable lives and their understanding of God and His Word. They didn’t expect the Messiah to

act and speak like this (although they should have), and they didn't like it. Sometimes we have the same problem today. We have a certain expectation of who God should be or what He should do, and when He doesn't act like we think He should, we get disappointed or disillusioned. It keeps us, like the Pharisees, from seeing who He really is.

John 10:25 Jesus replied, "I told you and you do not believe. The deeds I do in my Father's name testify about me."

He has told them over and over many times already, and they didn't accept it. The miracles He was performing validated Him as the Messiah, and they didn't accept that either. Jesus has testified about Himself, John the Baptist has testified about Him, the Father has testified about Him, and the miracles testified about Him. The Jews had it all, and they had the scriptures which spoke of Him, but it wasn't enough for the Jewish leaders to believe.

John 10:26-28 But you refuse to believe because you are not my sheep. (27) My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (28) I give them eternal life, and they will never perish; no one will snatch them from my hand.

If they were His sheep, they would listen to Him and follow Him. And Jesus repeats that all of His sheep will have eternal life, and they will never be lost. The Greek sense of verse 28 is present tense, and means that Jesus is continually, always giving them eternal life. The "they will never perish" is actually a double negative, and implies that His sheep can't in any way perish spiritually, not even if they try to destroy themselves. And Jesus makes it clear that they are in His hand, and there is no way, it is impossible for them to be taken out of His hand. You cannot get any more secure and protected than this! Once you are in the hand of Jesus, nothing can remove you. What incredible promises these are for us! Oh that we would actually live like we believe it!

This is one of the clearest statements in the Bible that one who believes in Jesus for salvation will never be lost. Believers sin and stumble, but Jesus as the perfect Shepherd loses none of His flock (Luke 22:31-32). Eternal life is a gift (John 3:16, 36; 5:24; 10:10; Romans 6:23). If one has it, he has it eternally. The security of the sheep is in the ability of the Shepherd to defend and preserve His flock. That security does not depend on the ability of the sheep to defend themselves, or even to stay in the sheepfold!

"Note that we do not hold on to Jesus or the Father. We are held by them. And before either man, thing, or devil can recapture to destroy us, such must overcome both the Son and the Father. And, of course, that is impossible." Herschel H. Hobbs

John 10:29-30 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one can snatch them from my Father's hand. (30) The Father and I are one."

Jesus is giving even more weight to what He just said by saying that the Father won't let them be taken from His hand either, and the fact that Jesus is saying the same thing about both He and the Father means He and the Father are one. Jesus is not saying that He and the Father are the same person, but they are the same essence, and unity of essence. His hand is like the Father's hand.

John 10:31-33 The Jewish leaders picked up rocks again to stone him to death. (32) Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many good deeds from the Father. For which one of them are you going to stone me?" (33) The Jewish leaders replied, "We are not going

to stone you for a good deed but for blasphemy, because you, a man, are claiming to be God."

OK, this apparently was clear enough for them, they understood that He was claiming to be God. But they were still blind about the significance of who He really was.

John 10:34-36 Jesus answered, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'? (35) If those people to whom the word of God came were called 'gods' (and the scripture cannot be broken), (36) do you say about the one whom the Father set apart and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"

Whoa, where does it say in the law that you are gods? Well, it's from Psalm 82:6. Technically the Psalms are not part of the law, but sometimes using the term "law" referred to the entire O.T.

Psalms 82:6-7 I thought, 'You are gods; all of you are sons of the Most High.' (7) Yet you will die like mortals; you will fall like all the other rulers."

In this chapter God is judging His rulers, who were corrupt. God is saying you are like gods (small g) in that you have power and authority over the people, but you will fall because you are mortal like everyone else and you are unfaithful. And Jesus is trying to get their attention here, He is using this to make a point.

Jesus is using a common form of rabbinic argument here, one the Pharisees would have understood. It is arguing from the lesser to the greater. He's saying, hey, if the priests of old could be called gods because of their godlike authority, then how much more is it appropriate for me to be called God, when I speak for the Father? He was hoping they, through using this scripture, would realize that He really is the Son of God.

Jesus was using scripture the way they used scripture, using the smallest detail to try to prove their point. He's trying to get them to think it through. All of the evidence showed He had godlike authority, so why wouldn't they consider the possibility?

Verse 35 shows that Jesus considered the scriptures to be inerrant when he said "the scripture cannot be broken." No one can break or annul the scripture. Jesus was confirming the authority of scripture, and that no one can take it away.

John 10:37-39 If I do not perform the deeds of my Father, do not believe me. (38) But if I do them, even if you do not believe me, believe the deeds, so that you may come to know and understand that I am in the Father and the Father is in me." (39) Then they attempted again to seize him, but he escaped their clutches.

The things that Jesus was doing were well known to the Jews to be things that the Messiah would do, that only someone sent from God would do. So Jesus is saying, don't believe me if I'm not doing the things the Messiah is supposed to do. But if I am doing those things, believe that! The Lord is trying to get them to take a baby step, but they won't even do that.

John 10:40-42 Jesus went back across the Jordan River again to the place where John had been baptizing at an earlier time, and he stayed there. (41) Many came to him and began to say, "John performed no miraculous sign, but everything John said about this

man was true!" (42) And many believed in Jesus there.

Jesus slipped away again, because it was not yet time for Him to be captured by the religious authorities, and went back to Bethany across the Jordan River. The majority of Jews did not believe Jesus while He was on earth, but many really did. Those sheep that heard the good shepherd's voice (those ones that the Father had given Him) followed Him. And the same is true today.

It's interesting that John the Baptist did not perform any miracles, but he was "filled with the Holy Spirit" and the greatest man ever born before Christ (Luke 1:15; Matthew 11:11). Signs and wonders are never a necessity to the ministry of a true man of God, especially today, when we have the complete Bible. They also tell us nothing about the spirituality and character of a person.