

John 10:19-24 “Is Jesus Christ a Mad Man?”

JOH 10:17-24 The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life -only to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father." 19 At these words the Jews were again divided. 20 Many of them said, "He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?" 21 But others said, "These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?" 22 Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, 23 and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade. 24 The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

As we approach our text this morning we see the response of those Jews who were listening to Jesus explain His role as Great Shepherd of Israel. And as we'll see some of the Jews who were there were the leaders of Israel.

JOH 10:19 At these words the Jews were again divided.

The words over which the Jews were divided revolved around the incident of Jesus healing the blind man and included such statements to the Pharisees as found earlier in this context.

JOH 9:41 Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.

JOH 10:9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.

JOH 10:14, 17-18 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me- 17 The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life -only to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

These statements, and other similar statements Jesus has been teaching for some time, clearly point to Him as a prophet sent from God, and , together with being the very Son of God sent from the Father to redeem sinful men; in other words the very Messiah Israel longed for.

And so, all of these statements are things which your normal man on the street could not say without being accused of having an elevator that doesn't go all the way to the top. In other words, a lunatic.

And this is why the Jews were divided. Some of them were not willing to accept Christ's claims in light of the miraculous proof, while others could not imagine that such proof could be overlooked, even if they weren't totally convinced at this time.

And this is why the next statement meets with the same sort of division.

JOH 10:20-21 Many of them said, "He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?" 21 But others said, "These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

What we see here is what we have seen from the very beginning of man's existence. In the very beginning Eve, after being tempted, was not willing to look at the facts of her life in light of God giving her such life and proving His love for her and Adam.

In choosing to succumb to the temptation of Satan she essentially denied God's goodness to her and instead concluded that God was not honest with her as she agreed with Satan that God was denying her and Adam the ability to be like God.

The facts didn't matter. She chose to rebel, and so did Adam. In their case the sin was doubly heinous since they were created without a sin nature and thus proved that man's will to rebel against God was a choice without any excuse.

You and I, because of the sin of Adam, are born with a sin nature which desires to constantly rebel against our God. That's not an excuse, it's simply a fact.

And so, men with a sin nature continue to deny God and His will, despite the facts of who God is and what His redemptive plan for men is.

And so, we jump thousands of years ahead, from Adam and Eve, to our text and discover that sinful men still will not consider the facts, standing right in front of them in Jesus Christ, who has clearly shown that He is the Son of God come from the Father with power.

The hardness of men's hearts is undeniable.

JER 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

Well, God can understand it and knows every one of our hearts intimately. But more than that He is the only one who can cure the heart, and cure it He will as men and women have their hearts touched by the Spirit of God and then subsequently reach out to Christ for life eternal.

And so, in verse 20 we have the proponents who put forth their vote that Jesus is out of His mind.

JOH 10:20 Many of them said, "He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?"

This particular statement raises an interesting point. If such a person has proven himself to be unreasonable due to the fact that he is a mad man then the only logical conclusion is not to give him an audience; don't listen to him.

But, where their logic breaks down is that Jesus has not proven Himself to be a mad man or demon-possessed. And so, their conclusion is flawed. And this, by the way, is where a lot of people fail. Instead of looking to the facts and then making a logical conclusion people make decisions based on their philosophy or preconceived ideas, or emotions.

This is why I've always said, and the Scriptures bear this out, that if receiving the gospel of Jesus Christ were simply an intellectual exercise than everyone who could read and reason would come to Christ.

But what we find in many cases is that the most intellectual people in the world consider the gospel of Jesus Christ foolishness. Why? Because salvation is not merely intellectual. It also includes the heart, which we have already seen is beyond cure, unless God steps in.

And so, we should never be surprised after we have given a brilliant defense of our faith in Christ that people look at us with that look you sometimes see with your dog when he cocks his head and says with his eyes and body language, what?

And so, the point is that there will always be dissenters and haters of God without a cause, without reason. And sometimes these same people will get very ugly with such statements that we see in our text, where not only will they accuse our God and Savior of

being out of His mind, but you and I as well who are idiotic enough to follow Him.

JOH 15:20-21 Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. 21 They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.

Back to our text.

JOH 10:21 But others said, "These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

Here too is an interesting statement that from a logical stand-point must be considered if you're intellectually honest. Let's take the first response.

"These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon."

What sayings are they referring to? These are the teachings of Jesus Christ which were always pointing people to whom? To God. Even some of these people understood that for Satan to promote God and point people to Him would not make any sense.

The second statement is just as enlightening. "Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

Now, keep in mind that this statement is on the heels of Jesus promoting His Father. And so, in light of that they conclude that any miracle Jesus does is to bring glory, according to Jesus, to His Father. Again, something Satan would not do.

By the way, this does not suggest from a wider biblical context that Satan cannot open the eyes of the blind. We know, for example, that Satan was created by God and given certain power and authority as an angel. He is able to deceive in most dramatic ways to where he can even appear as an angel of light.

We know that he gave power to the magicians of Pharaoh's court to duplicate some of the miracles of Moses as God demonstrated His power through Moses.

Toward the end of the Scriptures we're told that Satan is able to deceive the nations as he performs many signs and wonders.

2TH 2:9-10 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, 10 and in every sort of evil that

deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

MAT 24:24 For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect - if that were possible.

Even in our day, there are many reported cases, and in some instances, confirmed cases where people are healed of all sorts of illnesses and maladies, including blindness, from the hands of people who are not Christians.

Gary North wrote a book entitled, "Unholy spirits," where he documents a number of cases of miracles at the hands of people who were not Christians. One particular person who lived in Brazil and went by the name of Arigo reportedly ran a clinic where he saw 300 patients a day, five days a week, for almost 20 years, from 1950 to 1970.

And his method of healing "was to take a pocket knife, jab it into the body of the patient, (usually the eye), twist it around violently, reach in and pull out the growth or whatever, seal up the flesh in a matter of seconds without stitches, and send the patient on his way. And most implausible by the standards of modern medicine, he accepted no pay." (Gary North)

Now, there have been charlatans who have done similar sorts of feats, but they were done on accomplices to deceive people with the express purpose of bilking them out of their money. No one was ever healed through these people.

In fact, the Brazilian government had to come to grips with Arigo due to the fact that he was practicing medicine without a license. They weren't able to arrest him on fraud since none of his patients came forward with a complaint of either not being healed, or having been deceived into taking their money.

"They finally could convict him only by using the testimony of supporters that he had healed, since this admission proved that he was indeed practicing medicine, and he did not have a license." (Gary North)

And by the way, it was reported that over a twenty year period he saw over two million people. Gary North makes the comment, "when no complaints out of two million possible clients can be ferreted out by the authorities, it seems safe to say that Arigo had a most remarkable practice." (GN)

“If he were in the United States today, he might well be the only medical practitioner who might be profitably insurable by the insurance companies against malpractice suits at the rates that anyone could reasonably afford.” (GN)

Of course, if this sort of demonic miraculous healing were not possible God would never have warned Israel the way He did.

DEU 13:1-3 If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, 2 and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," 3 you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul.

And this is really the issue at hand with those who practice with demonic power. Though they may claim to be doing it on behalf of God, they prove themselves to be doing it on behalf of false gods.

This individual on a recent television show who says he is able to reach beyond the grave and give messages of dead relatives to their survivors, may very well be receiving real messages that confirms that he knows something of these dead people without having ever met them.

And though I've never heard him suggest that he's getting these messages from God, the truth of the matter is that the Scriptures tell us that individuals can be used by the enemy to deceive people, either wittingly or unwittingly.

And so, if this individual is for real, then his messages are not coming from dead relatives, but from demons who can give such information. And even if such people claim to be doing it on behalf of God, God tells us otherwise in His word, as the word of God is to be the final determining factor as to how the gifts of the Spirit are to be used, which by the way, includes such miraculous gifts as the gift of prophecy or the gift of knowledge.

But those gifts always point people back to Jesus Christ and the one true God of the bible, not to some general god of your own choosing as your source of power, like the Edgar Cayce's, the Dione Warwick's or the Shirley McClain's of the world..

And again, this was the point some of these Jews were making in our text. They were saying that Jesus was pointing to the one true God of the bible and that all of His miracles did the same. Therefore, He was not some mad man, nor was He demon-possessed since demons or Satan would do no such thing.

And as a side-note, as William Barclay points out in his commentary on John, “[Jesus] healed the sick and fed the hungry and comforted the sorrowing. The madness of megalomania is essentially selfish. It seeks for nothing but its own glory and prestige. But Jesus’ life was spent in doing things for others.”

JOH 10:22-24 Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, 23 and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade. 24 The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

John uses a reference to a feast called the Feast of Dedication. This is important in a chronological sense in that it tells us that about three months have passed since the last holy day was referenced back in chapter seven which was the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles.

What this means, among other things, is that we are now only about three months away from the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This Feast of Dedication, which was sometimes called the Feast of Lights, is what we know as Hanukkah, which takes place for eight days around the first week of December.

From an historical perspective this was a celebration which was not originally given by God to Israel. As William Barclay points out, it came much later in their history around the time of the Syrian King Antiochus Epiphanes who reigned from 175 to 164 BC. In the year 170 BC he attacked Jerusalem and defeated the Jews killing some 80,000 and selling into slavery an equal number.

He ransacked the Temple and desecrated it by offering swine flesh on the altar to the pagan gods.

“It was then that Judas Maccabaeus and his brother arose to fight their epic fight for freedom. In 164 BC the struggle was finally won and the temple was cleansed and purified. It was to commemorate that purification of the Temple that the Feast of the Dedication was instituted [for eight days].”

And here is Jesus walking in the temple area in Solomon's Colonnade as this festival is about to get underway, where the Feast of Lights, will host the Light of the world.

The same Son of God who confronted Antiochus Epiphanes when that man died, as he was ushered into the presence of God, and was placed in hell awaiting to be delivered to the Lake of Fire at the very end, is the same Son of God standing in the temple Antiochus desecrated.

It's hard to fathom all of the thoughts that were going through Jesus' mind at this time as he walked in the temple area considering the feast at hand. Maybe He was thinking about what would happen in three short months when, instead of celebration, the Jews in Jerusalem would be shouting for His crucifixion.

He knew the Jewish leaders wanted to put Him to death now, but since His time had not yet come, He would continue to testify of the mission He was sent to accomplish for His Father and He would continue to exhort men to embrace Him as the Messiah.

And yet, in light of His clear teaching that He has come from the Father the Jews continue to doubt and in our text we see this as they ask a question, not to get to the truth, but to use Jesus' own words against Him.

JOH 10:24 The Jews gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

I find it ironic that these Jews would ask such a question in light of the fact that they have continually denied that He has come from the Father and that they accuse Him of having a demon and being a mad man.

If you really thought that someone was out of their mind and that they were only trying to deceive you the last thing you would be asking is, are you really the Messiah we long for?

This was not a sincere question. But you've got to love their tenacity to trip Him up. "How long will you keep us in suspense?"

Suspense? How in the world has Jesus kept these Jewish leaders in suspense? From the time of John the Baptist Jesus was portrayed as the Messiah. John made it clear when he said, here comes the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

For some three years Jesus has been doing the work of the Father as He has taught from the Scriptures that He is the Messiah and has

proved it with signs and wonders, which in verse 32 of this chapter Jesus brings to their attention when they wanted to stone Him.

JOH 10:32 but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?"

Again, it goes back to the issue of, "don't confuse me with the facts, I've already made up my mind." The facts don't matter to a heart bent on rebelling against God.

And yet, these Jews have the nerve to ask a question of Jesus they already have the answer to and yet are not willing to accept.

JOH 10:24 "..... If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

Another question needs to be raised here. If these people are not looking for an answer from Jesus so as to accept Him if He said yes, then why are they asking this question?

Good question. The answer is, though they were not interested in following Jesus as Messiah, if they could get Him to admit with His own words, with many witnesses around, that He is the Messiah, they can use that against Him in a court of law.

Interestingly enough, Jesus never revealed Himself to the crowds with the words, "I am the Messiah."

He clearly alluded to that truth, but only on a few occasions did He actually use language which strongly suggested that He was the Messiah.

We see Jesus, for example, not denying that He is the Messiah when His brand new disciples begin to follow Him.

JOH 1:49-50 Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." 50 Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that."

And so, clearly Jesus taught this truth to His disciples. And He evidently taught it to the Samaritans after Jesus dealt with the Samaritan woman at the well.

JOH 4:42 They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

Even with this man we've been discussing for some time in our immediate text, this blind man healed by Jesus, Jesus made it clear to this individual that He was the Messiah.

JOH 9:35-38 Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" 36 "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." 37 Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." 38 Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshipped him.

The Jewish leaders were more than aware that Jesus had made such claims to a few people in certain circumstances but to get Him to admit that He was the Messiah in public, in their presence, was a way to put the nail in His coffin, so to speak.

Remember the charge that the Jews finally brought to Pilate for justification of Christ's death?

JOH 19:12-13 From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar." 13 When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha).

Claiming to be a king under the Roman rule could result in a treason charge that was punishable by death. The Jews knew that the Messiah was viewed as the King of the Jews.

But in their minds their king would come to deliver them from Rome's rule, when all that Jesus wanted to do was deliver them from their sin and guilt before a holy God.

What a trade-off. But Jesus will not fall for their plan because His time has not yet come, though that will change in three months time. Men will use any and every excuse not to claim Jesus as their Messiah, their Savior. But that should never be our excuse for not sharing the truth with the world in love.

ROM 1:16-17 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

And living by faith includes the realization that we have been saved by Christ for a purpose: to live as God intended, loving God above all and being others oriented. We have a new nature in Christ and are empowered by the Holy Spirit to love and obey our Lord and to be a witness to the world.

If we have claimed Jesus to be our Messiah by faith, then we are no longer in suspense. Jesus has told us plainly in His word. We are saved by faith; may we live by faith with gladness and thankfulness all of our days.

And if we have any suspense may it be that suspense that Jesus is coming back for us as we long for His return to set up His everlasting Kingdom on the new earth amidst the new heavens. May we be found faithful.