

John 10:31-38 “Believe the Works”

JOH 10:31-38 Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, 32 but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" 33 "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God." 34 Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'? 35 If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came - and the Scripture cannot be broken - 36 what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'? 37 Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. 38 But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."

There's an expression we've all heard and that is, if you talk the talk then you need to walk the walk. And what we understand this to mean is that you better back up with your actions the things you claim with your mouth, which brings up the other expression, eating humble pie when your claims don't come to pass.

I don't think it's unreasonable for people to expect action based on someone's words. When we take our car to a mechanic and he says he can repair the problem we expect his actions to result in our car being fixed.

And if, over time, that same mechanic continues to deliver on his claim to be able to fix our car, we can reasonably assume that when he says he's a reliable mechanic that he therefore must be. We always judge the words with the works. And in our text this morning this is the case.

Our text begins, "Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him,..." Of course the reason for this is because Jesus has made some pretty outrageous claims.

JOH 10:27-30 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one."

The Jewish leaders took the words of Jesus and stopped there. They weren't willing to combine His works with His words because they had a preconception of Jesus which didn't include the possibility that He was the Messiah, not because they didn't have enough information, but because their spiritual condition was such that they would not see.

ROM 3:9-12 What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. 10 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; 11 there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. 12 All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

And this is why it is so important that God does a work in our hearts to open our eyes to our need for a Savior. This is precisely what God told the prophet Ezekiel concerning Israel.

EZE 36:26-27 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

This is what Jesus told Nicodemus.

JOH 3:3-6 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, *no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.*" 4 "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" 5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

These Jews in our text had hearts which only sought to fight against God and it was shown to be true as they rejected the very One who not only said with His words, but proved with His works, that He was the Son of God. And so, they picked up stones to stone Him.

But before they could cast the first stone Jesus puts a question to them which begs a reasonable answer; an answer that takes into consideration our Lord's words that He and the Father are one, along with His works, which He says come from the Father.

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?"

Evidently, Jesus was extending a great deal of mercy and kindness to many people as He makes the statement, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father."

The word many, in Greek, as in English, means a large amount. And so, Jesus was pointing out that it would be hard to miss the fact that He was no fly by night servant of God who only made claims of doing signs and wonders from God, but was actually doing a lot of miracles that anyone could check out.

In all of the gospels we have a number of miracles which we can look at. But the reality is that only a few of the miracles of Jesus are actually recorded. And John acknowledges this at the very end of his gospel.

JOH 21:25 Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

And so, it would seem that these Jewish leaders had no excuse for questioning the words of Jesus when His works were so prolific. And so our Lord places the facts back in their laps.

‘All right, in light of the reality that I have healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, given the lame their strength back to walk, all of which prove that God is obviously doing these things through Me, of which of these miracles do you want to kill Me?’

In this one question Jesus is showing the absurdity of their actions. But of course this doesn't faze the Jews. Remember, they're not reasoning in reality, they are reacting according to their bias. And their answer to Jesus points this out.

JOH 10:33 "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."

Now, if we dare to miss the utter insanity of this response let me point it out.

These Jews were fully aware of the many miracles of Jesus. They had just interrogated a blind man who was blind from birth when he told them that Jesus was the one responsible as He put spit on the ground and made mud, and then placed that mud on his eyes. After going to the pool of Siloam at the command of Jesus the man received his sight.

How do these Jewish leaders respond to this wonderful news? They excommunicate him from the Synagogue and all of the blessings that go along with it.

And so, it doesn't make any difference whether the recipient of a miracle is standing before them or the One who has performed the miracle. They are going to do everything they can to squash the blessings of God.

And what's even more amazing is that these Jews do not challenge the works or miracles of Jesus.

Think about their response for a moment. They are not going to stone Jesus for the miracles He is performing, which is to say that they must be acknowledging that the miracles are legitimately sanctioned by the Father.

Well, if they are not going to take legal action, (which is what stoning would have certainly been), against the works Jesus was doing, then how can you stone Jesus for blasphemy if the Father has just confirmed, through the miracles, that Jesus is His Son?

JOH 10:33 "We are not stoning you for any of these [miracles]," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."

But isn't this the point? If their Messiah isn't God what kind of Messiah were they looking for? Well, we know the answer to that in this very response and of course it is demonstrated in the fact that the people of Israel were also looking for a Messiah whom they thought would rule over the world by reestablishing Israel.

Where do you think they got that idea?

Through the leaders of Israel.

And in all of this they reject their Messiah as Isaiah makes clear.

Isaiah 8:21 - 9:1 ²¹ They will pass through the land hard-pressed and famished, and it will turn out that when they are hungry, they will be enraged and curse their king and their God as they face upward. ²² Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and *they will be* driven away into darkness.

But their own Scriptures bear witness as Isaiah prophesies of the very human Savior who is also none other than God.

Isaiah 9:6-7 ⁶ For *a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us*; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And *His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.* ⁷ *There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,* On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

It would be one thing for Jesus to simply make claims of being God without works that proved it. In that case these Jews would have a just cause in carrying out the law.

LEV 24:16 anyone who blasphemes the name of the LORD must be put to death. The entire assembly must stone him. Whether an alien or native-born, when he blasphemes the Name, he must be put to death.

Now obviously to claim to be God when you're not is blasphemy. But the greater blasphemy here is on the heads of these Jews who want to stone Jesus. They blaspheme God by denying God's presence in their very midst.

They slander the Lord Jesus by calling Him a mere man, when in fact He is the Son of God. He has told them that He is the Son of God and He has proved that He is the Son of God sent from the Father.

By the way, when people today suggest that Jesus never claimed to be God, then they don't understand what the Jews, who heard His words in their native tongue, understood Jesus to say.

They would never have reacted the way they did by wanting to stone Jesus if they thought for a moment that Jesus didn't clearly make Himself equal with God. And of course, that's precisely what they say in verse 33, "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."

Now it's at this point that Jesus reminds them that to associate oneself as God has a precedent in Scripture.

JOH 10:34-36 Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'?" ³⁵ If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came - and the Scripture cannot be broken - ³⁶ what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own

and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'?

Now this line of reasoning might seem strange to us today, but to these Jews it was something they would have readily understood.

Remember Jesus has just gotten through calling Himself equal with God as He said, I and the Father are one.

The Jews respond by wanting to stone Him for blasphemy, since they believe He's a mere man, and He has claimed to be God.

Jesus turns around and quotes the very Scriptures they claim to hold to and poses a question regarding a particular passage.

JOH 10:34 Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'?"

The passage that Jesus is quoting is taken from the 82nd psalm.

PSA 82:6 "I said, 'You are "gods"; you are all sons of the Most High.'

Now, before we get all excited into thinking that God is stating that we're all gods like many New Agers believe, or Kenneth Copeland, we need to put this passage into its context. But before we do that I just want to go on record as saying that I believe Jesus is taking this passage out of its context on purpose.

He is taking this passage out of context to prove to these Jews that their case against Him is false. How is He doing this?

Well, consider how many cults today take a passage out of context to create doctrines which the Scriptures simply don't support as we take the whole counsel of God's word into account.

Jesus is taking this passage in Psalm 82 out of context in the same way these Jews are taking His life out of context. They pick and choose what they want, and discard the whole of Christ's life and ministry, to arrive at the conclusion that He is a mere man.

Jesus turns around and picks and chooses a portion of God's word to prove that mere men can be called gods, thus disproving their contention that He can call Himself the Son of God.

Now, let's go and put Psalm 82 back in its context.

PSA 82:1-7 God presides in the great assembly; he gives judgment among the "gods": 2 "How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Selah 3 Defend the

cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. 4 Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked. 5 "They know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. 6 *"I said, 'You are "gods"; you are all sons of the Most High.'* 7 But you will die like mere men; you will fall like every other ruler."

In verse one of Psalm 82 the word gods is the Hebrew word *Elohim*. It is the same Hebrew word used in the beginning of Genesis to describe God who made man.

GEN 1:26 Then God [*Elohim*] said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

Elohim is the plural form of God. But the context determines how it is to be interpreted. Thus when *Elohim* describes God in Genesis 1:26 it implies Gods, plural, in the sense that He is one God with more than one person.

When the word *Elohim* or gods, plural, is used in Psalm 82 it is used to describe one with power and authority given by God. Again, the context determines this.

Psalm 82 is a psalm which rebukes the rulers of Israel for not judging the nation fairly with a proper justice.

PSA 82:1 God presides in the great assembly; he gives judgment among the "gods":

Verse one is saying that God presides among Israel. He gives judgment among the leaders, whom, in this passage are called gods, with the express purpose of emphasizing their guilt in light of their great responsibility.

That's why the psalmist goes on to say in verse 2, "'How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked?'"

He is addressing the leaders in Israel. And in fact, the very end of this psalm clearly shows this.

PSA 82:6-7 "I said, 'You are "gods"; you are all sons of the Most High.' 7 But you will die like mere men; you will fall like every other ruler."

The word gods and the word ruler are identifying the same person; the leaders in Israel.

And so, it's not as though mere men are gods like the one true God. But because God has given mere men great authority to rule His people He shows that when He judges them He imparts a higher culpability since they were chosen by Him specifically to rule and guide His people.

Jesus comes along and takes this passage out of its context and forces these Jews to think biblically. In other words, they must rebuke Jesus for taking this passage out its context if by it He means that men are truly gods. But to think biblically would force them to agree that what Jesus has said about Himself by proving it with His works, that He is in fact the Son of God and Messiah.

This is a brilliant move on the part of Jesus because they can't argue with the word of God which they claim as having come from the Father.

JOH 10:35-36 If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came - and the Scripture cannot be broken - 36 what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'?

Here is Jesus' reasoning. 'If God called the leaders in Israel elohim or gods, then why is it unreasonable for Me as a leader ordained by God to call myself the Son of God? How do you reconcile that and still call yourselves teachers of the law?'

He is calling into question their ability to rightly handle the word of God. If they can't reconcile how mere men could be called gods then how in the world will they recognize the true God who is now in their midst and has come on to the scene with abundant signs and wonders, in fulfillment of the Scriptures?

And so, in essence, Jesus is saying to them that they're not qualified to question His claim to be the Son of God. And like the rulers spoken of in Psalm 82 these rulers who are questioning Jesus will face the same charge.

PSA 82:6-7 "I said, 'You are "gods"; you are all sons of the Most High.' 7 ***But you will die like mere men; you will fall like every other ruler.***"

You see these Jews knew the context of that passage and they knew that it was a rebuke of the leaders of Israel. And so when Jesus uses the passage He knows they'll make the connection that He's talking about them.

Once again, Jesus uses the authority of Scripture to advance the truth that He is no mere man. Unlike the mere men spoken of in Psalm 82 who are called gods, Jesus has the moral authority, along with the power of God the Father, as seen in His many miracles, to show that when He calls Himself the Son of God, it is no mere title, as given to earthly rulers, but shows the authority He holds as God's Son sent into this world as One who left His throne of glory to redeem sinful men.

That's the challenge Jesus gives these Jews at the end of verse 36 of our text.

JOH 10: 36-38 Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'? 37 Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. 38 But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."

Jesus is saying, 'do you have a problem with Me calling Myself the Son of God? All right, let's examine that. You would have to agree with Scripture that sinful and unjust rulers in Israel were called gods, and they certainly didn't exhibit their ministries with miracles.'

'I on the other hand don't assume the title of God like them who couldn't prove it with lives of obedience or power. Rather, I assume not just the title of God, but the life of God in Me as I prove it with a sinless life and with power and authority which only God could demonstrate.'

And Jesus even goes further by saying, by all means don't believe Me and My words, unless I do what My Father does.

In other words, 'what you would expect the Father to do with miracles and wonders and signs, is what you should expect Me to do, if in fact, I am who I claim to be.'

What Jesus has just done is to put the burden of proof back in their laps. They must be able to show that Jesus' miracles are not the miracles of the Father. But if they are then they must conclude that Jesus is the One sent from the Father.

Jesus was always using His works to back up His words. In fact, He goes so far as to say that if His words were not enough for them, then believe the works.

JOH 10:38 But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."

To deny His claim of Messiah at this point would prove once and for all that they were not willing to accept the truth, which was expressed in both word and deed. And in this way Jesus was telling these leaders that to reject His works, which He has always claimed as the works of the Father, is to reject the Father.

And I might add that if Jesus proved His life and ministry in both word and deed, then it is incumbent upon us to follow Him in that same way.

To lay claim to Christ in word and yet not walk in that life, only adds fuel to the world when they say that being a Christian is a waste of time since it seems to be a waste of time for the one claiming to know God and yet who doesn't walk as a child of God through love and obedience.

None of us will walk a perfect life as a Christian, but not to put the effort in out of thanks and love for Christ who first loved us, is to practice what was being accused of these Jews. They wouldn't acknowledge His power and authority, and when we simply give up because life seems to be too hard to walk with Christ we in practice say the same thing.

Either the Scriptures are true or they're not. Are we more than conquerors in Christ who loved us, or are we simply hearers of the word and not doers?

The doing part is what Jesus focused on for these Jews in our text. And the doing part is what the Lord wants to accomplish in our lives to His honor and glory.

We need to put on the full armor of Christ as we live in the reality of the life we have in Christ. But this is to assume that we approach the spiritual battle as soldiers for Christ. A soldier is called to active duty when war approaches.

And you and I in Christ are in a spiritual war and we need to understand that we have been called by Christ to active duty; the

operative word being active. But praise God He enables us to walk and serve as soldiers of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is His life in us that allows us to go forward. And the more we move forward with Christ the further we get away from the things of this world which want to hold us back from being those faithful servants who love and obey our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And may we join with Christ in a way where we can say, if you don't believe my words then believe the works God is doing in my life. Let's give the world both. Let's give them the word of God which points them to Christ, and then let's give them the works which accompany the life He has given us by faith.

EPH 2:10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.