

The scene for this interaction with the Jews is set in Jerusalem during the Feast of Dedication (also called the Festival of Lights or Hanukkah) in the cold, wet month of December, a good reason to be in the covered portion of the Temple grounds, the portico of Solomon. The Jews, probably referring to the Jewish leadership, ask that Jesus tell them plainly if He were the Christ. They probably were looking for some statement from Jesus by which they could accuse Him and found in His response all the more cause to try to seize and kill Him. Jesus laid bare their hearts but at the same time explained what it meant to be a sheep belonging to Jesus the Good Shepherd.

I. *The Good Shepherd's sheep hear and follow His voice.*

1. *The Jews had not recognized Jesus as the Christ, because they were not His sheep.*

Jesus had been revealing to them that He was the Christ through His teaching and through the works which He did. His teaching forced people to think more deeply and seriously about the Old Testament presentation of the Messiah, rather than swallowing popular ideas. His works were signs from the Father pointing to His authority, origin and person.

The words and works of Jesus had been a sufficient testimony that Jesus was the Christ. The problem was not insufficient information but the wrong essential nature. They were not Jesus' sheep. Today as well people have sufficient information but suppress the truth in wickedness (Romans 1:18-20). They need to hear the gospel to believe (Romans 10:14), but must be granted repentance and have their hearts opened (Acts 11:18; 16:14).

2. *Those who are truly sheep of Jesus will listen to and follow His voice.*

Hearing and following, as defined by the earlier metaphor, means to respond in obedience and submit to the direction of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. The sheep respond because of the relationship with the Shepherd. He knows them and they Him. When we listen and follow, we demonstrate the relationship which we have to the Shepherd.

II. *The Good Shepherd's sheep are His forever.*

1. *The sheep are given to Jesus by the Father (10:29).*

Jesus said that He would lose none of those given to Him (John 6:39). He would give eternal life to all those the Father had given Him (John 17:1-2). The true sheep of Jesus hear and follow his voice. They belong to Him because they were given to Him by the Father. They follow because they are sheep; they don't become sheep because they follow. Because they are His sheep given by God, they will follow and continue to follow.

2. *The sheep of the Good Shepherd possess eternal life and shall never perish (10:28).*

3. *The sheep are in the protective grip of the Father and the Son (10:28-29).*

God the Father and God the Son guarantee that His sheep will not perish. In the Old Testament the hand of God spoke of His power and His mighty protection of His people. In this context the eternal destiny of the sheep is the initial application. But being in the grip of God has daily significance. Nothing comes upon us outside of His good purposes. We are in the powerful hands of a loving God. The Good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep. The Father did not spare the Son, and so will certainly graciously give us all things (Romans 8:32).

The Father and Son are fully united in this purpose. That they are one (10:30) does not mean one person, but at the least a unity of purpose. Because of the reaction we know Jesus was implying more, i.e., equality with God. Together, Father and Son, equal in person and united in purpose, guarantee the eternal life of the sheep.

III. *The Good Shepherd's sheep know and understand the unity of the Father and the Son.*

The unity of the Father and Son is expressed in the title of Jesus, the Son of God (10:36). Jesus again points to both His words and His works.

1. *Jesus explained that the offense taken by the Jews at His claim to be the Son of God was inappropriate and/or inconsistent.*

The citation from Psalm 82:6 referred to unrighteous judges, yet appointed by God to act in His place to give His judgments on the basis of His Word which they had received. As such God referred to them as gods, though certainly not having any divine nature, to which the Jews, who accepted Scripture, did not object. Jesus, who was so much more than those men, because he was consecrated by God and sent from Him, could certainly then be called the Son of God.

2. *The works which Jesus did were signs of God's power and revealed who Jesus truly was, the Son of God.*

3. *Acknowledging this unity with the Father distinguishes the Good Shepherd's sheep from other sheep.*

The Jews understood the significance of this claim. It distinguishes true Christianity from the false. To know and understand the unity of the Father and Son should affect our daily lives. We pray differently. We stand in daily awe of Jesus, who as God gave up riches to take on a servant's form to die for us.

When the Jews again tried to seize Jesus, he left and went back across the Jordan to an area where John the Baptist had earlier baptized people. These people accepted the testimony of John – though without signs – and believed in Jesus. Miracles are not necessary for people to believe, but the signs done by Jesus should have been reason to believe. Those who did believe, believed because they were His sheep. They heard His voice and they followed Him. Are we following Jesus? Are we awed by His person and drawn by His voice? Are we praising Him for what He has done, is doing and will do? He has given us life. He is holding us in His hand. All His sheep will never perish!