

## Sheep Questions John 10:22-42

For the past several weeks we have been looking at the teaching and events of Jesus' life in the 2 months that took place in between the Feast of Booths and the Feast of Dedication (which is today known as Hanukkah). Luke filled us in on the details of this 2-month time period, and now we turn back to John to tell us of the events that took place during the Hanukkah celebration. To put things into perspective, the life events we will be studying this morning and over the next few weeks, are taking place over the winter months, leading up to the months of spring in which Jesus will return again to Jerusalem and be crucified. The past couple of visits to Jerusalem have included attempts on Jesus' life, each visit He makes there seems to be more intense than the previous visit due to the growing hatred of the religious leaders. This morning's passage in John 10 contains Jesus' last major confrontation and last major appeal to the religious in Jerusalem, before He will be put on trial and be executed.

Biblically speaking, this passage presents itself as a pivotal moment in Jesus' life, but imbedded in this passage are answers to some pretty heavy questions that perhaps many of us have asked as His sheep. Questions like: Why doesn't everyone believe in Jesus? How do I know for sure that I'm one of His sheep- that I'm saved and will be in His Kingdom? Do God and Jesus really know me- as in- by name, my character, my actions, or do I just blend in with all the other sheep? Can anyone else mess up my salvation? Are Jesus and God really the same person? These are all legitimate theological questions that deserve to be answered. And this morning as we work our way through the text, we're going to answer each of these questions. Let's read the first segment of our passage, [John 10:22-30](#).

The answer to our first question, "why doesn't everyone believe in Jesus?" is contained in [verse 26](#). He tells the religious leaders "you do not believe because you are not of My sheep." Those who don't believe- they don't believe because they are not His sheep. Now this seems really simple, but perhaps we could benefit from letting the realization sink in that there are people out there that are simply not His sheep. They will choose to not believe Jesus. They will choose to not follow Jesus. They will choose to not surrender to Him.

Now the religious leaders had by now many proofs as to the validity of Jesus' claims. He has used scripture to point to Him being the Messiah sent from God, He has over and over performed impossible God sized miracles, and testimony from others (including a voice from Heaven) have confirmed the truth of His words. And yet still, there were those who chose not to believe. They had hardened hearts. And to them Jesus says, "you do not believe because you are not of My sheep." And yet still, as hard as their hearts were, as defiant and angry as they were towards Jesus, as much as they weren't sheep, skip down to verses 37-38, Jesus calls out to them yet another time asking them to believe and become His sheep. ([verses 37-38](#))

Jesus says, at least believe the miraculous works, and that will be a step towards realizing the truth of His words, and seeing that He is of God. So the question of why doesn't everyone believe in Jesus is answered: because not everyone is a sheep. But in these verses 37-38 Jesus flips the question around and in essence says you're not a sheep because you don't believe. It's a little bit of a circular equation. You don't believe because you're not a sheep, and you're not a sheep because, well... you don't believe. So, to all those who don't believe, you don't believe because you're not a sheep- but you can be a sheep if you would just choose to believe!

Ok, so now we've talked about others who are not sheep, but what about me? How do I know for certain if I am really a sheep or not? How do I know if I am really saved? Well, we've partially answered that question in answering our first question- do you believe? Jesus says here if you believe, then you are a sheep, if you don't believe you are not a sheep. But then He goes on to give us some other qualifiers in [verse 27](#), He says "My sheep hear My voice... and they follow Me." John Piper once said, "*don't ask 'Am I a sheep? Am I a sheep?'* [Rather] *Turn your eyes and your ears to Jesus, and when he speaks, if you are drawn to listen and to follow, you are a sheep!*" If when you read, or listen to Jesus' teaching, if your ears perk up and you are compelled to listen and follow His teaching- then you are a sheep! That desire to listen and follow is not present amongst those who are not His sheep. Don't rely on feelings, happiness, circumstances, or the presence of good things or bad things in your life to confirm if you are a true sheep or not. The confirmation is in how your ears, your mind, and your heart respond to His words.

And then what does He say about His sheep? In **verse 27** He says that He knows them, and in **verse 28**- that He gives eternal life to them, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of His hand. He knows them- if you are a sheep, Jesus knows you! And I don't think Jesus just means knows, as in He knows you as a name on a list- look back to **verse 14 and 15** of the same chapter, He says *"...I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father..."* This verse tells us just how well Jesus knows us personally. How well does God know Jesus and Jesus know God? Pretty well right? There doesn't exist someone who knows Jesus better than God, and who knows God better than Jesus. And Jesus chooses to use this example of unmatched intimacy and knowledge in a relationship to describe the way in which He knows His sheep. Jesus knows His sheep as well as He knows God. That's either a really comforting thought, or a really scary unnerving thought. And in like manner, His sheep are to know Jesus in the same way that God knows Jesus. Do you know Him like that? Now I don't mean to suggest that we can compete with God in our knowledge of Jesus, but I am suggesting that Jesus knows you infinitely, you are not just a number, not just a name on a list, but your past, present, and future is seen in complete fullness by Him, and that I hope it's your life's goal to attempt to know Him in a similar manner.

His sheep have eternal life, and just to be clear that we understand what that means, Jesus explains- *"they will never perish."* (**John 10:28**) They won't die- they will live forever! Well, can someone change that, can someone else mess that up, can I lose that benefit? Unfortunately, life has conditioned us from early on that things can be taken from us. As kids we experience loss- a toy car, a privilege, perhaps even a parent's love. As adults, we continue to experience loss- a house, a job, a spouse, a friend, health, retirement, stocks, job benefits. Even things promised to us are sometimes retracted. Life events condition us to feel insecure about many things. We sometimes transfer this understanding over to our spiritual life. We see the way the world operates, and doubts easily creep in- doubts like- will I lose God's love? What if I mess up big time, will God abandon me? If I jump in and believe all the Bible wholeheartedly, then will one day Jesus pull the rug out from under me and say "surprise, I didn't really mean everything I said"? Jesus understands our natural tendencies towards insecurity, and so he wants to be super clear and make sure that we fully understand the rock solid security He gives to His sheep. He says *"no one will snatch them out of My hand."* No one! How is He able to say that? **Verse 29**...

Jesus is able to say that no one will snatch His sheep out of His hand because He has God the Father's backing. But there's more going on here than just that. It says Jesus' Father (God) gives the sheep to Jesus, and God is greater than all, and no one is able to- there doesn't exist a power strong enough to- snatch the sheep out of... who's hand? He says, the Father's- God's hand. Now wait a second- [verse 28](#) says no one will snatch sheep out of Jesus' hand, [verse 29](#) says no one will snatch sheep out of God's hand- whose hand are the sheep in? Is it an "either or" situation? Maybe God's hand sounds a little more safe- He's the creator, the All-Powerful Super Being. On the other hand, Jesus said some strange things, He was a man from 2000 years ago, His teaching is kind of hard, a lot of people who like God don't like Him... But Jesus says in [verse 30](#) "*I and the Father are one.*" It's not an "either or" situation- if I'm in Jesus' hand, then I'm in God's hand, if I'm in God's hand, then I'm in Jesus' hand- it's the same hand! Mankind has long been searching for security that only God can provide, and in order to be secure in His hand, you have to be secure in Jesus' hand. And to be secure in Jesus' hand you have to be one of His sheep. And in order to be one of His sheep, you have to hear His voice, believe, and follow Him. It's really a simple equation.

To any who might be thinking, well, Jesus could have meant He and the Father are "one in spirit," or "one in actions," but not really "one" as in the "same being"- the religious leaders clearly understood Jesus as saying "one" as in the same being. They understood Him as declaring Himself one with God in being, in power, in essence. [Verses 31-33...](#)

And if Jesus didn't really mean for them to assume that He was declaring Himself to be God, after their accusation, He would have defended Himself. He would have said something like "Oh no, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to give you the impression that I am God- what I meant was that we're one in our... um... desire." But Jesus doesn't say that. What He says instead rather serves as a distraction. He does a little bit of word semantics, a diversion that buys a little more time before the rocks start flying. [Verses 34-36...](#)

Jesus diverts their attention by bringing up [Psalm 82](#). There, the Psalmist refers to the nations' rulers and how they are likened to "gods" in how they should be bringing about justice and rescuing the weak and needy. He says these rulers are sons of the Most High, and yet they are showing partiality to the wicked and to

those walking in darkness. Jesus' argument is that if the Psalmist called these rulers "gods," then is it really a crime for Jesus whom God really did send to say He was the "Son of God?" I say this was really just a diversion, because Jesus' argument is only addressing the technicality of the words He was using to title Himself. His argument only defends against His use of the title "Son of God," but in reality, in a more roundabout way, He was in fact saying He was more than just the "Son of God." He was declaring Himself to be the *same* as God. So, while the religious leaders were scratching their heads over Psalm 82 instead of hurling rocks, Jesus offered the real defense for His claims of God-ness. [Verse 37...](#)

Again, Jesus doesn't deny the fact that He was claiming to be God, but He basically says "If I don't do what only God can do, then fine- don't believe that I am God." And then in [verse 38...](#) He tells them "If I do what only God can do, although it may be hard to believe My words, although it may be hard to believe that I am God, at least start believing that God is doing the works through me. If oneness with God is too big a step for you to believe right now, at least believe that God is in me and I am in God." Again, this would have been a perfect moment to retract His words and offer an apology for their misunderstanding, but no, after a stoning diversion He still comes back to this point He is trying to convey of who He really is. And they realize He's not backing down from His claims, so we see in [verse 39](#) they take another attempt at physically stopping Him...

This is really a sad, sobering moment. This is Jesus' final plea with those who had hardened their hearts there in Jerusalem. He has a couple more conversations with the religious leaders over the next 3-4 months before His death, but this seems to be the final call of decision for the religious leaders. He plainly lays out why they should believe, what the benefits are for those who believe, that following Him equates to following God. He even almost compromises with them- in his mercy, grace, and patience He calls on them to take even a little step of belief if it's too much to take a big step. But instead of taking that step towards belief, they hardened their hearts even further and took another step towards ending His life. And so what does He do? He simply goes elsewhere, to a different place to give others an opportunity to believe and become sheep. [Verses 40-42...](#)

It's as if John doesn't want us to get depressed that the religious leaders didn't believe in Jesus. He wants us to know that there were still some becoming sheep, He wants us to know that Jesus *is* worthy of us placing our trust, faith, and belief in Him. He wants us to know that wherever there are those who reject Him, there will also be those in other places that accept Him. There will be sheep, and there will be the "not sheep." And what separates them is what they chose to believe.

What is it that you are choosing to believe or not to believe? Perhaps it's time once and for all to settle the "am I saved or not saved" issue in your mind. Perhaps it's time to dispel any insecurities you have concerning Jesus really knowing you. Maybe this morning it's time to fully believe wholeheartedly that you are eternally secure in Him. Perhaps this morning will serve as the beginning of a new journey in understanding Jesus as divinely God Himself.

It has been said that "Your response to the Word determines your relationship with the Lord." Don't let your heart be hard because of circumstances, hurts, or because you feel that perhaps you just weren't meant to have a deep, fulfilling relationship with the Lord. Before entering into the promised land Joshua said to the people "choose for *yourselves* today whom you will serve." ([Joshua 24:14-15](#)) This is the same opportunity Jesus gave the religious leaders here in John 10- to assess His words and deeds and- believe or don't believe. We have the same opportunity. We can be persuaded to believe in Him less because there are others out there who aren't His sheep who seem to get by just fine without believing. Or we can read His words and chose to deepen our belief, faith, and trust in Him- realizing that we are His sheep, and He knows and understands us more intimately than anyone else. We can choose to continue to let life circumstances shake us, discourage us, distract us or we can choose to wholeheartedly believe that we are really secure in His hand and that no one can snatch us out of it- choosing to accept the fact that we are secure in Him, no matter what circumstances are taking place around us. We can choose to accept Jesus as a good man, who was a good teacher, whose teaching we can pick and choose from, or we can choose to receive His words as the very words of God who created us. The choice of belief is ours.

I believe that Jesus pursues each one of us, desiring for us to deepen our relationship with Him. Calling us to new levels of belief, faith, and trust. But we

can be resistant to Him, yet even so, He often continues to pursue us. But I imagine that if we continue to resist Him, He eventually goes away. He goes to the other side of the Jordan, where many will believe in Him there. I don't want that to happen in any of our lives. I want us each to consider is there any way in which Jesus is calling us to deepen our belief, faith, and trust in Him? May we each deal with that calling right now, taking steps towards Him in choosing to exchange our fears, doubts, unbelief, and incorrect mindsets for secure belief in Him.