

John, Part 43: “Believe the Works”

John 10:31 ESV The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. **32** Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?” **33** The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.” **34** Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’? **35** If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— **36** do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? **37** If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; **38** but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.” **39** Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands. **40** He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained. **41** And many came to him. And they said, “John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true.” **42** And many believed in him there.

- I. Last week we saw Jesus once again confronted by the Pharisees, while he was walking in the Temple during Chanukah. They asked for a direct statement of his identity, Jesus said that he *had* told them, over and over again that he was God.
 - A. Jesus reiterated the essential union between the Father and himself, stating without reservation to the Pharisees, **John 10:30 ESV** “*I and the Father are One.*”
 - B. This was (once again) way too much, and the Jews demonstrated their frustration by picking up rocks to stone him for the second time in John’s Gospel. The first time was at the end of chapter 8.
 1. **John 8:59 ESV** *So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.*
 2. Murdering Christ was an ongoing determination for the Jewish leaders. There were two reasons why they were so committed to take him out: First was his continued, unabashed, desecration of their rabbinical traditions.
 - a) This meant healing people on the Sabbath day. This irritated them, because they were the self-appointed sheriffs of Sabbath observance. To *heal* the sick on the Sabbath day was to *work* on the Sabbath day, and they were not about to let that slide.
 - b) Secondly, they were more upset by his ongoing insistence that he was so much more than a carpenter from Nazareth. He had said in no uncertain terms, beginning in chapter 5, that he was *God’s equal*; not another God, mind you; but *their* God! Yahweh himself!
 3. It was the “one, two” punch of defiling the Sabbath and claiming to be God that fueled their murderous rage. **John 5:18 ESV** *This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.*
 - C. But in the Chanukah dispute in the temple, which we began talking about last week, Jesus adds another dimension. He says: **John 10:25b ESV** “*The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me...*”
- II. So once again, Jesus is in a stand-off with the Scribes and Pharisees. They are ready to end his life, and he takes the opportunity to ask them a very pertinent question: “*I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?*”

- A. It is a legitimate question. If he is performing miracles in Yahweh's name to testify to his true identity, and God is allowing him to do those miracles, why would they want to stone him for that? The evidence would seem to point to the fact that Yahweh God, the Father, is confirming his testimony *by* miracles!
1. Although John chooses to focus on only seven miraculous signs, Matthew, Mark and Luke add many, many more; adding both specific instances and general ones, like when Mark 1 tells us "they brought to him *all* who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the *whole city* was gathered together at the door. And he *healed many* who were sick with various diseases, and *cast out many demons*." (Mark 1:32-34)
 2. On another occasion, in Luke 13, after Jesus had healed a woman, in the *Synagogue*, on a *Sabbath*, who had been disabled for 18 years, the Pharisees freaked out. Jesus rebuked them strongly saying they treated their livestock than they treated a daughter of Abraham!
 - a) **Luke 13:17 ESV** As he said these things, *all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.*
 - b) It seemed as though Christ was divinely empowered to restore the covenant benefits to the people of God! Why did they object?
- B. Clearly Jesus was doing glorious, God-ordained works of power! You didn't need a degree from the Pharisaical Divinity School to realize it! Do you remember what the Blind man who was healed in John 9 said to the Jews? "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and *yet he opened my eyes*. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. *If this man were not from God, he could do nothing*." (John 9:30-33)
- C. But there is something else to notice. The miracles of Jesus confirmed his relationship to the Father, because they were foreseen by God's prophets! Look at what Isaiah, who predicted the Messiah's coming, said:
1. **Isaiah 35:3 ESV** Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. **4** Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. *He will come and save you.*" **5** *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; 6 then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.* For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;
 2. Notice a few important things about this passage (written some 600 years before Jesus showed up in a manger!):
 - a) First; it's prophecy states that God himself, their God, will come and rescue them! He will not be sending another human judge, or prophet, or king. They can expect God HIMSELF to come to their rescue? But how will they know that he has arrived?
 - b) *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.* All of these things (and many more!) happened under the ministry of Jesus Christ! He was who he said he was, confirmed by miraculous signs.
- D. But the Pharisees were clueless and they had no intention of repenting. "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God."

1. As he had told them in chapter 9, they were blind. Though Christ demonstrated the approval of God with power, religious pride blinded them.
 2. They were blinded by the robes of a peasant, a lower-class upbringing, the band of commoners he surrounded himself with. This wannabe Messiah didn't look the part. He didn't fulfill their expectations. They were judging the book by its cover and missing the life-giving message written within.
- III. They stand there offended that Jesus has claimed an eternal connection with God himself, even calling him his Father, but Jesus uses the Old Testament to make a point. **“Is it not written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’?”** Jesus takes them to Psalm 82 and shows them that God had always wanted the people of the covenant to stand before the world as his direct representatives. Let's read Psalm 82:
- A. **Psalm 82:1 ESV** God has taken his place in the divine council; *in the midst of the gods* he holds judgment: **2** “How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? *Selah* **3** Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. **4** Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.” **5** They have neither knowledge nor understanding, *they walk about in darkness*; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. **6** I said, “*You are gods*, sons of the Most High, all of you **7** nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince.” **8** Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!
1. This Psalm was written by Asaph. Asaph was a man, who along with his descendants, was set aside by King David to provide music and praises to God for all succeeding generations. He wrote 12 of the Psalms in the Bible.
 - a) Psalm 82 is interesting in that it isn't like others Psalms, which are primarily poems or songs that praise God for his greatness, or cry out to God for a specific national or personal need for deliverance.
 - b) Psalm 82 is a strong admonition to Israelite leaders (judges, magistrates, etc.) to rule in a way that honors God, and represents his authority well.
 2. Apparently, these leaders have been guilty of a dereliction of duty. Asaph asks, “How long will you judge *unjustly* and *show partiality* to the wicked?” They are commanded to do an about face in their administrations and to “Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”
- B. The Psalm begins by saying that God has come to the “divine council” and is ready to judge. But it describes the place as “the midst of the gods”. Later in the Psalm, he says directly, “I said, ‘You are gods...’”. This can be very confusing! How many gods are there? The biblically correct answer is one.
1. Yet the Hebrew word used in this passage is “Elohim” - “in the midst of the Elohim”, and “I said, ‘You are Elohim’”. Elohim is the second most common word translated “God” in the Old Testament.
 2. It is found in familiar places as Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning, *Elohim* created the heavens and the earth” and Exodus 20:7 “You shall not take the name of the Lord your *Elohim* in vain.”
- C. Why the use of this term? Most people believe that Asaph is saying that no one has independent authority, but that all legitimate human authority has been delegated by God. They have literally been given his name, which represents his authority. By delegation, they are acting in his stead, as though he were physically there.

1. This is true for every politician, policeman, parent, teacher, pastor, etc. And the realization of this truth requires two responses:
 - a) First, our submission to said authorities are recognized as having been commanded by God himself.
 - b) Second, that those who are walking in the delegated authority of God should do so with fear and trembling before the judgements of a holy God who will certainly demand an accounting.
 2. **James 3:1 ESV** Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that *we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.*
- D. Contrary to many of the prosperity teachers on religious TV, neither Psalm 82 nor John 10, neither Asaph nor Jesus, are saying that you are a god on any level. You are a created being. Your life is but a vapor. It is but grass, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire. Any claim to the identity of Elohim is only delegated, and one day will no longer be necessary when I rise to my own “stricter judgement”.
1. This delegated state of authority can be voided by God at the moment he chooses to do so. “I said, ‘You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you *nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince.*’”
 2. It is God alone who will rise to give final judgement, with no help from the ones who were delegated ‘elohim’! Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you (alone) shall inherit all the nations!
- IV. Back to Jesus in John 10; what is he trying to communicate by using this passage? **John 10:34 ESV** “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’? **35** If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— **36** do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?”
- A. They were ready to stone him because he claimed to be God. Yet Asaph had designated their ancestors as ‘elohim’, yet without blasphemy!
 1. He says their ancestors had the word of God come to them, and were delegates of Yahweh! But, according to John 1, Jesus *is* the Word of God!
 2. God has clearly consecrated him (set him apart), and sent him into the world, appointed, anointed, and empowered! There is no blasphemy in his claim to be the Son of God!
 - B. But Jesus is saying so much more to them. Psalm 82, in describing the wicked judges, says three distinct things (even though they bore the name ‘elohim’),
 1. “*They have neither knowledge nor understanding*” How often did the Pharisees have to admit that they didn’t know where Christ came from? Or where his power came from? How many prophecies had Christ fulfilled and yet they were oblivious?
 2. “*they walk about in darkness*” This was Jesus judgement in the end of chapter nine. Though they claimed to see, they were totally blind, walking about in spiritual darkness!
 3. “*all the foundations of the earth are shaken*” Everything they trusted in was being tossed about and brought to nothing: traditions, ceremonies, influence! all of it was coming to an end.
 - C. **John 10:37 ESV** If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; **38** but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, *believe the works*, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.”

1. Jesus appeals to their reason and common sense. He has made a claim that they have rejected out of hand. Why? Because it defies what (in their minds) should be true.
 - a) Have you ever noticed that your preconceived notions can be the worst enemy of your ability to receive from God?
 - b) It could be a cultural, traditional, or a societal value; a religious idea, or just our own bent, but these are the things most likely to blind us, and rob us of the joy of seeing God.
 2. While they have failed in their representation of the Most High, failing to live up to the name *elohim*, Jesus has not! Everything he has done has testified to the reality of who he really is. He is the perfect representation of *Elohim*.
 3. But Jesus simply says, "Open your eyes!" If nothing I'm doing looks like God's work, call me a blasphemer and stone me! But if I am clearly doing God's works, even if you don't quite get me, believe the works! Then you'll know! Then you'll truly understand! I am in the Father! The Father is in me!"
- D. I wish that the story ended with the Pharisees dropping their rocks and crying out, "We believe! We see the works! You are from the Father!" But that is not the case.
1. **John 10:39 ESV** Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.
 2. Jesus said what he was to say, but they didn't soften one bit. They tried to grab him, control him, suppress him, silence him. So he left.
- E. If your goal is to get Jesus to conform to your idea of who he is, instead of submitting to his Lordship, his call, his kingdom, don't expect him to stick around. Jesus will always go to those who welcome and submit to him.
1. This is not an indictment of honest questions. Jesus can handle those. But when you begin to re-make Jesus into a Baptist, Methodist, Charismatic, Republican, Democrat, businessman, social justice, hippie, hipster, motivational speaker, cowboy, biker, skater, clown or any other such thing, you have missed Jesus, and he'll move on down the road. You must take him as he is, not as you're comfortable with him.
 2. He is King, Lord, Master, Ruler, Simultaneously the Servant of the Poor and Enthroned Potentate, the Good Shepherd and final Judge. He is God alone. You are none of these things. *His* terms are *the* terms.
- F. So if you haven't got him quite figured out, just believe the works.
1. How many people has he freed from sin? Depression? Anger? Lust? Addiction? Pride? How many have had bodies, souls, spirits, minds and emotions healed? How many ways has he rescued his sheep? How many many times has he made a mockery of the powers of hell?
 2. Believe the works, and you will soon believe the man!
- V. **John 10:40 ESV** He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained. **41** And many came to him. And they said, "John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true." **42** And many believed in him there.
- A. So here he is; surrounded by people that saw the signs and believed.
- B. It's interesting that John the Baptist is mentioned here. Matthew 11 tell us of when John was in prison, awaiting his execution, and had a moment of doubt. **Matthew 11:2 ESV** Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples **3** and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" **4** And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: **5** the blind receive their

sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. **6** And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”

1. In the moment John doubted, how did Jesus call him back to faith? “Believe the works, John! People are being healed and the gospel is being preached! Don’t lose faith! Don’t be offended by me because of your present circumstances! Believe the Works!”
2. How about you? Are you like John in prison? Believe the works! They point to who Jesus really is, you can trust them, because you can trust him.