

An Answer For Any Skeptic

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[0:00] Thank you, Praise Team. Fitting songs to talk about our Great Shepherd, the one who came and accomplished everything for us.

and in this chapter 10, we've been looking at the Good Shepherd! and getting to see Him in a way that hopefully has been a great reminder of who He is and the wonder of being identified as one of His sheep.

We're coming to the last message in chapter 10, and to be honest with you, I kind of wanted to leave with the kids because this is one of those passages where I don't even know how to describe it except to say, if it were not for the fact that we believe in exposition, in moving verse at a time, this would be the passage that we would avoid.

Okay, this would be the one where we would say, well, I like this, it's there, but let's set this aside, let's move on to some things that are a little bit more clear.

But here we come to chapter 10, verses 33 to 42, and we are forced to take a look at some bold statements that Jesus makes.

[1:22] Bold statement that, I'll tell you what, runs the risk, runs the danger of being misunderstood. And so this morning, we desperately need to go to the Lord and ask for help, empowerment to share, and empowerment to hear as we approach this text.

So let's pray and ask God for His help today. Oh God, we need Your help to understand these amazing words.

Words that come with force. Words that can be so easily misunderstood and misapplied. Words that the cults have sought to take and use for their own benefit, to support their own misleading doctrines.

And so this morning, we come with fear and trepidation, asking for Your help. Help to speak and help to listen this morning.

As we come to this, what could be a very complex and difficult passage before us today. So give us Your Holy Spirit to help us through this process.

[2:38] We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Those of you who are familiar with the Gordian knot, that's kind of what I am thinking about when I come to this passage.

A passage that really has some complexities, and it's hard to unravel, it's hard to unscramble the difficulties of what is before us. Those of you who are unfamiliar with the Gordian knot, let me just share just the legend, as it were, of how this came to be.

Phrygia was an ancient kingdom in what is now central Turkey. And according to legend, once upon a time, Phrygia was out without a king. And so there was a prophet who spoke before the people and said, the next person to drive his ox cart into the city will be the king.

So a farmer named Gordius came with his ox cart into the city and was then declared king of the city. Gordius' son, whose name was Midas, and we're familiar with Midas because he later became king and was known for the Midas touch, decided to honor his newly exalted father by dedicating this ox cart to the pagan god of the city.

And he did this by tying that ox cart to a post that was there. And he used such a complex knot that no one could unscramble this knot.

[4:08] It was known as the Gordian knot. As legend continues, centuries went by, and that ox cart still remained securely tied to the pole. Then Alexander the Great came, was told about this prophecy, and in a fit of wisdom and power, struck that Gordian knot with his sword, broke it apart, and fulfilled that prophecy, and that is apparently why he was able to conquer Asia.

So the Gordian knot has become a symbol of the stubborn, complex problems of the day, and Alexander's sword has been a symbol for decisive and out-of-the-box leadership solutions.

Well, this morning we come to what some would call a Gordian knot, or that problem passage that is so typical of parts of the Scripture.

It would just be easy to pass over, and to overlook, and to move to the next part of the chapter. But here we are this morning.

We need to take a look at this important passage, and seek to unravel some of the complexities who are here, and ask for God's help in understanding, in appreciating the words of Jesus this morning before us.

[5:33] There is a danger, of course, of communicating ineffectively. So I want to apologize ahead of time if there's any confusion, and I trust that if there is confusion, that you'll have the grace to come and ask for my answers, and the ability to, or the opportunity at least, to try to answer the questions that come.

But in order to come to this passage, we need to catch ourselves up to where we are. And this morning what we'll find is that Jesus' answer to these Jews, these collection of religious leaders who have gathered before Him, His answer to them is an answer, really, for any skeptic.

This morning as we come to this passage, and we look at these verses that are here, we're going to hopefully walk away with the understanding that what we walk away with is a solution, an answer for any skeptic.

Are there any skeptics in your life? Are there any of those people who would say, show me the proof, help me to understand that your belief system is more than just faith, but it rests in substance, that there is something more significant and more substantial to your claims? And this morning, as we look at our passage, we're going to see that there is evidence, there is an answer for any skeptic. I want to buzz through some of our, some of what we've already gone through.

[7:13] This whole passage really begins in verse 22. We find that it's the feast of the dedication. We find that there is an accusation that is given by this group, this collective group of religious leaders who are titled the Jews.

We find them here throughout this passage. We see in verse 24, the Jews gathered. We find Jesus' response to them, and here they are again later on.

It says that, and the Jews answered Him in verse 33. Who were this group of Jews? Well, John uses this 66 times throughout his gospel to help draw attention to this group of individuals who were the religious leaders of the day.

Those who should have been the enlightened ones. Those who should have guarded the law.

Those who should have understood and taught the people faithfully.

And they bring their accusation to Christ, and they say here in verse 24, they say, how long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.

[8:23] Of course, Jesus, in this whole narrative, has opened the eyes of the blind. We saw that happening two months before as Jesus is there during the feast of tabernacles, and He has opened the eyes of this blind man.

This one who was blind was made to see, and He is the one who actually has not only now physical sight, but spiritual perception. And He is the one who at the end of chapter 9 is now informing these Pharisees in chapter 9, verse 30 and 33 when He says, why?

This is a marvelous thing that you don't know where He is from. He has opened my eyes. Now we know that God does not hear any sinner, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears Him.

Since the world began, it has been unheard that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.

You see, this blind man understood. This blind man got it. He saw that the answer for every skeptic was the evidence of the working of Jesus Christ in the world.

[9:40] He got it. And Jesus, and now flowing from that discussion, begins to talk about Himself as the Good Shepherd. That He is the Good Shepherd.

That He is the door. He sets Himself above these Jewish religious leaders. There is one leader. There is one Messiah. And that is me.

The Jews, in hearing Jesus' answer, say, okay, we understand the implications of what you're saying, but tell us plainly. Their accusation was that He wasn't being clear.

You're making bold claims, but if you're truly the Messiah, come clean. Help us know straight up, if you dare, who are you really? Tell us in clear terms.

Jesus gives His answer in verses 25 to 31. We saw that last week, and we saw that Jesus is definitively saying that I am the Messiah.

[10:41] I am the Christ. I am God. We saw 10 ways that Jesus did that last week. He spoke God's words. He did God's works.

He possesses God's knowledge. He exercises His authority. We saw that He gave His life. He wielded God's power. He was equal with the Father and one in fellowship with Him.

We saw that He showed God's mercy, and that He fulfilled God's promises. In 10 ways, in just 12 verses, Jesus states emphatically, I am the Messiah.

Jesus was that intersection point where fact and faith came together. Jesus was the embodiment of truth.

He was spirit and yet body, divinity yet humanity, invisible yet visible, eternal yet tangible. all of those things culminated in the person of Jesus Christ, and there He was standing in their midst.

[11:50] That was His answer. This morning, I want to focus our attention on their antagonism. The antagonism that we see here in verses 31 to 33.

They say, the Jews picked up stones to stone Him. And Jesus answered, I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of them are you going to stone Me?

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. Now, I want to help you to see, just here at the very beginning, the Jews in this verse, verse 33, are agreeing with Jesus that His works are good.

They're agreeing with Jesus that they saw the evidence of His life being worked out by the Father, the divine working of His miracles in His life, they're on center stage, and it wasn't for the good works that they were going to stone Him, but for blasphemy.

So what will Jesus do to address this antagonism? What will Jesus do to help remove the issue of blasphemy from them so they can get a full view of His works?

[13:14] So they can stand at the window of the glory of God and to see it, to take it in, and to be shocked and amazed at the wonder of who He is through His works.

They have said that His works are good. Do they mean that, or is that just a front for something deeper in their life? Their antagonism is addressed now in verses 34 to 38 when Jesus answers them by helping them understand that He is authentic, this authentication of Christ to them in verses 34 to 38.

and now that we're kind of caught up to where we are in the flow of this passage, now I want us to walk through this with fear and trepidation, with carefulness, and my desire this morning is to make this very practical.

So as we walk through this problem passage, as we kind of talk about the implications and complexities of this, I want to use this as a model for you.

This is what I did this week to try to arrive at the truth, and so I want to share that with you so that you, in coming to problem passages, will be able to navigate your way through these passages and arrive at a conclusion that is consistent with the rest of Scripture.

[14:53] So, we see that Jesus authenticates himself, first of all, through wisdom. Let me read our passage for us this morning in verses 34 to 39.

You'll see the difficulties here, and then we'll jump in. Jesus answers this antagonism in verse 34 and says, Is it not written in your law, I said you are gods?

If he called them gods to whom the word of God came, and Scripture cannot be broken, do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, you are blaspheming because I said I'm the Son of God?

If I am not going or doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. 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.

authentication through wisdom. Jesus knew the complexities of the issue, and his desire to set aside this accusation of blasphemy so they could get a front seat to see the works of God and make an evaluation for themselves, this answer for any skeptic, the work of God and the Father coming through Christ.

[16:21] Jesus uses this startling statement, you are gods, to begin this process. Where do we go?

You are gods. What in the world does this mean? The process of discovery, this process of coming to a problem passage, first of all, it begins with prayer and continues with prayer all the way through.

But what I've labeled here is step one, is asking the hard questions. Each of these steps must be bathed in prayer. Asking for God's wisdom, asking for his help as you walk your way through. Ask the hard questions. What are your knee-jerk reactions when you hear the phrase from Jesus' lips, you are gods? I can tell you what's coming through my mind.

Is Jesus really saying what I think he's saying? Isn't this counterproductive to his argument, his declaration of divinity? If there are other gods, then how does that help his argument?

[17:31] If there are other gods, then how can we identify them? What is their role? Is there a deeper meaning here? Something below the surface?

Which passage is Jesus quoting? And what is the context? Christ, what is Jesus trying to accomplish with this approach? Does this contradict everything that I know to be true about Jesus and about God?

God is one, and yet Jesus says, you are gods? Begin with the questions. Write them down. Be willing to be honest about what you see, and ask those questions and pray for God's guidance in arriving at the right conclusions.

Secondly, look at the quote in its context. So I would encourage you to keep your finger here in John chapter 10 and turn back with me to Psalm 82. Psalm 82.

This is where this quote is taken from. Psalm 82. I'm just going to want to read the first couple of verses and then verse 6 where this verse comes from.

[18:46] Psalm 82. A psalm of Asaph. God has taken his place in the divine council. In the midst of the gods he holds judgment.

How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? And dropping down to verse 6. I said you are gods, sons of the most high, all of you.

Nevertheless like men you shall die and fall like any prince. Arise O God, judge the earth for you shall inherit the nations. What you'll find here in this passage is you'll find this interplay between the divine name God being used for God Almighty and the divine name gods being used for those who are judging in his place.

You'll find throughout this passage that they are judging in a way that is ineffective. They're judging in a way that's partial. They're judging in a way that's unjust. They're judging in a way that is not representative of the commission that they've been given.

They're not honoring that divine commission that God has given to them and yet they're still acting in a way that God has placed them as authorities over the people.

[20:05] But their true identity will be revealed in the end. you will die like mortals because they have failed to honor and fulfill the responsibility of what God has called them to do.

And in some way Jesus applies this verse to himself. In a very liquid way what Jesus is saying is if this was true of the judges of old then it can be true of me too.

I have been given a divine commission. I have the divine word. And so I in that way am considered God as well. And this may remove some of the accusations of blasphemy but it still doesn't resolve the tension in our own life and our own hearts with what is Jesus talking about.

Step three of this process is to look at the words in phrases and any concordance will help you with this. Any Bible app will help you with this. Many times you actually get a good definition of the words from reading the gospel writer or reading the author of the book, the letter.

And that term is often defined through the course of the writing. But we find in this passage that when Jesus uses the word God, he uses the word theos.

[21:27] This is the divine title. And when the author of the Psalms uses the word God, he uses the word Elohim. That is the divine title.

So there is no misunderstanding here in interpretation. It's not a translational issue. This word is for God. Then you have to ask yourself the question, okay, so where are some other examples of how this word is used in the Old Testament?

And you'll find again through a concordance that it's used of angels in Job. Remember how the angels of God are presenting themselves before the Lord?

It's also used as Samuel. In 1 Samuel 28, his spirit is called up by Saul and by the witch that was there.

And his spirit comes and he refers to him as Elohim. It's used of Moses in his relationship with Aaron in Exodus chapter 4 16. It says, and he himself will be as a mouth for you, speaking of Aaron, and you Moses shall be to him as God Elohim.

[22 : 39] It's also used of Moses to Pharaoh. It says in Exodus 7, 1, so the Lord said to Moses, see I've made you as God to Pharaoh and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.

It's also used of the judges in Exodus 21. So we can see from this passage, we can see from the Old Testament that this divine title is used for those who are given a divine commission.

Now, did Jesus just blow up your theology? Did Jesus just create some unsettledness in your heart as even with me this past week?

How am I supposed to understand this argument? Who is a God? Then, and what does that make Jesus? Step number four in this process is to look for qualifying statements.

How does Jesus begin to answer this question in his dialogue with these Jews? We see here that Jesus seeks to emphasize the fact that the word of God cannot be broken.

[23 : 50] He emphasizes that on two occasions here in just a couple of verses. He says in verse 34, is it not written in your law? And then later on in verse 35, and the scripture cannot be broken.

Jesus wants his hearers to understand that he is speaking in a way that is consistent with the scriptures. Jesus is upholding the integrity and continuity of the word.

It almost takes your breath away, doesn't it? It is. For me, there's this check in my spirit. There is this hesitancy in my posture.

What in the world is Jesus trying to say? And we begin to actually feel some of the gravity of what the Jews were experiencing when Jesus made such bold claims.

Jesus turns everything upside down for them. He consistently wants them to reorient their perspective with the law. He says, you have heard it said, but I say to you.

[25 : 02] He says, bless those who curse you, bless and curse not. He says, blessed are the poor in spirit. The first shall be last, the greatest shall be least.

He who saves his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Jesus consistently turns everything upside down. He shatters expectations.

He wants to reorient your perspective. Maybe Jesus is helping us with that this morning.

Reorienting our perspective about the privilege of being called by the divine name.

There is unbelievable privilege, but there is unbearable responsibility apart from us. Jesus now though, he sets himself apart.

He sets himself apart in these next few verses. In verse 36 in particular, he says, do you say of him whom the father consecrated and sent into the world.

[26 : 11] Now Jesus is helping to move them from a point of lesser to greater. What would be common to those who have received the word, now moving to the one who is giving the word itself.

Jesus infinitely greater, sanctified by the father, bringing the immortal word, the flesh who has made word and dwelt among us.

He is infinitely greater because he is from the father. The only one who has come from the father, the only one who is set apart, the only one who is sanctified, the only one who stands by himself as the authority of the word.

Jesus is consecrated and dedicated and made holy by the father. He is distinct and this would have been particularly important during this time, this feast of dedication where they're purifying and sanctifying the temple and Jesus borrowing from that language which had been fresh in their minds helping them to understand that he was the sanctified one.

He was the consecrated one from the father. He stands apart from the crowd. He is the only one sent into the world. This alone can be assigned to Christ.

[27 : 34] step five in this process would be to ask yourself the question is it consistent with scripture? What do I know about this? Is it the conclusions that I have drawn?

Are they consistent with what I see everywhere else in the word? Who does Jesus refer to as gods? We find that here in verse 35.

it says if he called them gods to whom the word of God came. Those are the ones to whom God allows and shares his divine title with.

Those to whom the word of God came. Those who have been commissioned by God to represent his authority. Those who God shares his authority with in giving them permission to oversee the things of this life.

He's given them authority but there's also accountability. He's given them responsibility but there's also submission to his authority. Maybe this helps us appreciate the wonder of the psalmist in Psalm 8 who says what is man that you are mindful of him?

[28:48] And the son of man that you visit him you have made him a little lower than the angels you have crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands and you put all things under his feet.

Maybe it helps give us a sense of the seriousness of obeying and submitting to the leaders that God has placed over us. There's a passage that was read this morning in Romans 13.

Be subject to the governing authorities for there is no authority except from God. and those that exist have been instituted by God.

They are God's agents with a divine commission to exercise divine authority on the earth under the accountability and submission of God.

and I trust this this understanding of this phrase will help us to be blown away with the unbelievable privilege of wearing the divine name that God has given to us and shared with us.

[29:59] We are children of God as we find in 1 John 3 1. We are sons of God as we find in Romans 8 14. In Galatians it says for you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

God is called our father in Galatians 4 6. We are heirs with God in Galatians 4 7. You are no longer a slave but a son and if a son then an heir of God through Christ.

can you conceive of it? We will in some way be like God. In 1 John 3 2 it says beloved now we are children of God and has not yet been revealed what we shall be but we know that when he is revealed we will be like him for we shall see him as he is.

John continuing this theme says in 1 John chapter 3 7 and 9 he says we have the seed of God.

Whoever has been born of God does not sin for his seed remains in him and he cannot sin because he has been born of God.

We are being transformed into the image of God as we find in 2 Corinthians 3.18 it says but we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory just as by the spirit of our Lord and we are seated with him in the heavenly places Ephesians 2.5 says even when we were dead in our trespasses he made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved he raised us up and seated us with him in the heavenly places unbelievable breathtaking shocking truth of scripture you if you are in Christ through faith you wear the divine name what a privilege and it has been shared with you by God shared not by merit of your own and shared with you that does not come independently but comes through accountability and comes through submission to his authority it comes as we bear out the glory of God in this world and seek to make his glory known in this world oh amazing no wonder why

[32:47] John says behold the love of God he's blown away with the reality the truth the wonder of this fact God has by his grace allowed us to share with him in all things that belong to him unbelievable unbelievable but with privilege comes incredible responsibility and this is where Jesus takes it next in verses 37 to 38 now that he has moved the issue of blasphemy to the side now he wants these Jews to see the full glory of his works he says if I am not doing the works of my father then do not believe me 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 he has neutralized this antagonism he has taken the stinger out of their accusation so again they can stand on the edge of the wonder of the glory of God and take it in and drink in the wonder of God as evidenced through his works the works of the father bearing out in the person of Jesus Christ this is the answer for any skeptic the works of the father working through the son he says soak it in drink it up let the wonder of divine working wash over your skeptic heart you have affirmed!

my works as being good do you mean it what will you do with my works they are divine works they are evident works and as we looked a bit last week we saw the works of the father playing out in the son we saw in his miracles that they were convincing they were divine and they were divine because the results were immediate the results were complete the results were dramatic we saw that he exercised power over every dimension of life over demons and over nature and over death

and even over distance that Jesus sends the healing word ahead of him and those are healed to whom he sends the word he shows divine knowledge he knew the human heart he perceived the future he knew the will of the father he knew the word backwards and forwards he was able to answer all of his skeptics he was able to skillfully answer every challenge that came to him and he did those things which could only be ascribed to the father he forgave sin he cleansed the temple he spoke of his pre-existence before

Moses and before Abraham he lived a perfect life something only God could do Jesus showed the working of the father through his life as part of his works he makes this appeal at the end of verse 38 he says this he says I'm doing this that you may know and understand that the father is in me and I am in the father two times he uses the word gnosko the first is to use the word of a flash of knowledge that comes but the second is to understand which is this continuing knowledge he wants them to see it as it is and to continue in knowledge that leads them to relationship with God let that knowledge break through and continue in your life continue the grace of God through Christ to counterfeit sheep we see this marvelous grace of

Jesus another appeal another offer another invitation but the Jews here in our story are unwilling to respond in a way that would be redemptive in verses 39 to 42 quickly we'll see the final assessment the final assessment what will they do what will their skeptic heart do with the information that they have just become aware of verse 39 and they sought to arrest him but he escaped from their hands the Jews sought to seize him here again the Jews are antagonistic the Jews having all the evidence that they need to compile the right assessment of Jesus in his life instead turn a blind eye and a hard heart and reject their Messiah fortunately the story doesn't end there it moves to verses 40 to 42 and we see although the

[38:12] Jewish leaders were antagonistic and sought to seize Jesus we find the crowd actually believes the crowd believes he went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first and there he remained and many came to him and they said John did no sign but everything that John said about this man was true and many believed in him there we find that the crowd chose to believe they saw the works they identify the work of the father in Jesus they see that there's something distinctive about him he is the Messiah he is the shepherd he is the door he is the only one with the right to lead and the only one to speak truth into their life and their hearts are caught up in faith to him and many believe in his name oh the power of works the power of a life that bears forth the works of the father

Jesus had those works the question that we finish with this morning is what do your works say about your true identity do you have the kind of works that will address or answer the skeptic heart what do your works say about the God that you believe in what do your works say about the Messiah about your savior you say you're a child of God you say you're a son of the most high you say you're a Christian and you share in salvation I wonder how many times you like me have blasphemed the name of God through our works there is a confessional aspect of blasphemy but there is also the working out of a life of blasphemy that is not consistent with the title that we've been given we share the divine name we've been called sons of

God and children of God does our life blaspheme that name through works that are inconsistent with the commission that we've been given Jesus says in Matthew let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven Philippians 1:27 says only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ he says and don't be frightened in anything by your opponents this is a clear sign to them of their destruction but of your salvation and that from God 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 11 and 12 says keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable so that when they speak against you as evildoers they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation the working out of the life of

God in us is a way for us to bear out the true identity that we have Titus in Titus we find the inconsistency Titus 1:16 says they profess to know God but in their works they deny him being abominable disobedient and disqualified for every good work and as the book of James says faith without works is dead does your life show the identity that you've been given the divine title that God has graciously shared with you as sons of God and heirs with God does your life show consistency with that commission so that when people see your life they are attracted to your savior oh may we have a life like that and my challenge to us this morning as we wrap this up my challenge to us is to do what

Paul encourages the church of Corinth he says examine yourselves whether you're in the faith examine yourselves the calling that you've been given is it consistent is it consistent with the life that you live take an inventory right now for me at times it's a critical spirit God has not called us to being critical sometimes for us it's fear or anxiety and not living in peace God calls us to peace he says my peace I leave with you my peace I give to you not as the world gives give I unto you let not your heart be troubled you to let it be afraid do we set ourselves as being distinctive because of our peace or how about joy in the midst of hard times how about diligence in a difficult work situation how about a soft answer that turns away wrath how about the urgency of your life that you're walking circumspectly not as fools but as wise redeeming the time because the days are evil every aspect of life needs to be lived consistently in conformity with

[43:54] God are we living a life that is not blaspheming the calling that we've been given oh may God help us let's pray Lord as we've looked at a difficult passage this morning the passage actually calls us to the incredible responsibility of living consistently with the title that you've given to us as children of God as sons of God as those who have an inheritance with you as those who are being transformed into the image of God there is accountability to you there is submission to your authority in our life there is a desire to lead others to the glory of you alone that you alone deserve but it's something that you've shared with us and I pray God that you would help us to be faithful to live consistently in this world so we're not blaspheming you through our works oh help us we pray in Jesus name amen let's stand as we sing as we stand