

Switch on with John

Part 2

John 10:22-33 Further conflict over Jesus' claims

²² Then came the Festival of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter,²³ and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon's Colonnade.²⁴ The Jews who were there gathered around him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly."

²⁵ Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me,²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. ²⁷ 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 will 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."

³¹ Again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him, ³² but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?"

³³ "We are not stoning you for any good work," they replied, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."

I watch a lot of news highlights online. One of the most popular part of modern journalism is the "Gotcha Question" – when the journalist tries to set a trap, get the Politician to fumble over an answer or just plain not know something that they probably should. And when it happens you will see it splashed all over the nightly news.

Here Jesus walks into a gotcha moment with the Jewish authorities. They ask him a question where no matter how he answers it he will find himself in difficulty.

This story is set at the festival of the dedication, in Jerusalem, its winter, you can imagine its cold, and often today you see snow in the Holy City. This helps set the scene for what is about to happen.

Once again Jesus is pitted against the Jewish authorities, which is a theme in John. They come with this question in verse 24. They are saying, yes or no ... are you the messiah, don't give us a parable, or dodge the question, just give us a straight answer are you the messiah?

This is the classic loaded question – a question used as a trap, to catch someone out. It's a question where no matter how you answer you get in trouble. If asked, "have you stopped beating your wife" you can't say yes or no. They are setting him up with a classic loaded question to tar his name. They ask him about being the Messiah, during the Feast of Dedication or Hanukah as it's now known because this feast centres on the coming of the Messiah. There is a heavy sense of expectation for the messiah at this time of year which gives them the opportunity to drop this clanger on Jesus because the plain answers is either yes or no. Yes would mean that he is claiming to be the man God has sent to lead Israel to kick out the Romans, and create all these political hurdles for him. Herod would want to bump him off, the Romans might see him as a threat worried that he might cause a rebellion. OR he

says NO, and then the people might stop talking about him like he was something really special and this whole Jesus phenomenon might just fade into nothing.

The response he gives is clever, but it doesn't keep him out of trouble. He says you have the answer, you have seen what I have done and know what I teach... **YOU** decide whether I am the Messiah or not. Jesus never makes that claim of himself but after he teaches and performs miracles people say "is this the Messiah".

If Jesus just says, hey guys, it's me I'm the Messiah, that doesn't hold much weight. People aren't going to jump up and down to believe him. BUT if people come to their own conclusion, through what he is saying and doing that is much more powerful.

As Jesus says this is because his sheep recognise him (verses 26-27).

Many years ago when it first came out, I read the "God delusion". It was not the most enjoyable experience, but very interesting. But what really struck me was how 2 people can look at the same evidence and come to 2 completely different conclusions. He describes his beliefs like this: if 0 is atheist and 10 if a full theist, then he is a 0.5. He believes in the possibility of God in the same way he believes in leprechauns. He can't fully disprove it, but he is almost 100% sure it's not possible based on studying and understanding the world around him – what he knows about the universe, through his scientific studies, the Bible, etc.

He looks at the evidence and says there is no God. But I look at the same evidence, creation of the universe, the placement of the planets, the evolution of species, the Bible and I decide that it's all true.

That is exactly what Jesus is talking about here, some people see and some don't. His sheep, the ones of his flock, hear his voice and know it.

I was helping out at MOPS on Wednesday, looking after the kiddies, 10+ kids from 1-5. Wes was tired and a bit crabby, but every time he cried, I instantly knew it was him. When other kids cried, I instantly knew it wasn't him – I know his voice I can pick it out of a crowd. Jesus' people, know his voice, can see him for who he is.

How do we hear his voice?

Well we have been hearing his voice today, in reading the Scripture, giving it a place of authority in our lives. This is key.

God has said all that needs to be said in Christ, and we see JC in the word, nothing from God will ever contradict his word.

You only hear when you're listening.

That sounds a bit stupid, but in the business of our 21 century life, the first thing that goes is our ability to listen and be aware.

You know that video of people playing basketball, and you're asked to count the number of passes and in the middle of it all a man in a monkey suit walks through. In the end 90% didn't see the monkey, why? Because they were busy, they had been given a task. We hear God when we set aside time to listen. Psalm 46:10 says, "*Be still, and know that I am God.*" Sometimes in the car I turn off radio, just think, or pray, have a time of quiet.

We don't hear God in the brain or the ear, but in the heart. In that nagging feeling that we should talk to that person or that strong sense that we should help a person

in need, or step out in faith for something scary in your life. And to hear it you need to be listening... need to be aware, open to leading. Jesus' people hear his voice.

I and the Father are one (verse 30). For Christ this has a double meaning. They are one in the trinity, but for him to say this openly and plainly would get him killed – it almost got him stoned to death then and there. But the other meaning is that they are one in purpose, body.

In a Peanuts cartoon Lucy demanded that Linus change TV channels, threatening him with her fist if he didn't. "What makes you think you can walk right in here and take over?" asks Linus.

"These five fingers," says Lucy. "Individually they're nothing but when I curl them together like this into a single unit, they form a weapon that is terrible to behold."

"Which channel do you want?" asks Linus. Turning away, he looks at his fingers and says, "Why can't you guys get organized like that?"

There is power in unity, power in being one, of one mind and one purpose. We can't be one with God like Jesus was but we are called to be of one mind, to share the vision of the gospel – to take the good news out to all the peoples of the world.

The Jews had lost the message of God, his vision his goals – they had turned the faith into something hard and loveless, a list of rules to obey under all circumstances. But Jesus brought the spirit of the Law to life, through mercy and love. So are we to be unified with the father in action and deed.

Jesus reveals himself in actions not words. His answer to the Jews was, judge me by my actions and deeds. If you want to decide who I am, messiah, prophet or something more look at what I do, then you will know me.

During the American civil war General Stonewall Jackson's army found itself on one side of a river when it needed to be on the other side. After telling his engineers to plan and build a bridge so the army could cross, he called his wagon master in to tell him that it was urgent the wagon train cross the river as soon as possible.

The wagon master started gathering all the logs, rocks and fence rails he could find and built a bridge. Long before day light General Jackson was told by his wagon master all the wagons and artillery had crossed the river. General Jackson asked where are the engineers and what are they doing? The wagon master's reply was that they were in their tent drawing up plans for a bridge.

Action is what defines us, it's what defines Christ and it's what defines us. Talking about doing something is very different from doing it. We are called to be people of action, to live out the gospel in our lives. To live lives worthy of the calling we have received.

Christ is calling out to his people, calling out for those who will listen and we live in a time when not many will. Not many will take the time to listen, and not many will hear but we are the few.

As you leave this place tonight listen for God's call on you, listen for what he might be saying. It may be something big or something small but Christ's call on our lives is something special.

²⁷ 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 will snatch them out of my hand.