



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

John 10: 32-42

Fall 2022

"Man Or God?"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning. We have been in John chapter 10 for some weeks now, one of the great chapters of the Word of God, and we're going to conclude the chapter this morning with verses 32 – 42.

Jesus has had discussions with the Jewish leaders and it's become contentious. In identifying Himself He said, in verse 30, "I and the Father are one." That was not received well by the Jewish leaders. And we read in verse 31, "The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him." So they understood exactly what He was saying.

³² Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" ³³ The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out *to be* God." ³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'? ³⁵ If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), ³⁶ do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? ³⁷ If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; ³⁸ but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father." ³⁹ Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp.

⁴⁰ And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there. ⁴¹ Many came to Him and were saying, "While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true." ⁴² Many believed in Him there.

John 10: 32-42

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word, and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

Father, what a privilege it is to be together with Your people and to come to the conclusion of this great chapter of Scripture, which exalts Your Son, rightly, as He revealed Himself to be Your Son. "I and the Father are one." Now that's a revelation that many men cannot endure—past and present. But it's true; and we know it's true because we know Your Word and Your Word is true, and You've revealed it to us. That's a supernatural work, to enable us, men who were born in sin, to understand Your bright and clear Light and revelation. And we pray for that continued ministry now that You'd illuminate our minds as we continue to study and we continue to think about who He is and what He's done—and that You would bless us with a clear understanding of the text we've just read, and how it applies to us.

So we look to You to bless, LORD, and thank You that Your people are given guidance for we have the Teacher within us, the Spirit of God, who is the Comforter: The one who encourages us, applies Your Word to us, and builds us up in the faith. So we pray for the ministry of the Word; we pray for the ministry of the Spirit within us; and we pray that we would be built up, encouraged, and strengthened that we might live a life that brings great honor and glory to You—and is a witness to this dark world in which we live.

We thank You for the privilege of studying together, the privilege of worshiping together, and the privilege of doing this, of praying. And we can pray for one another

and encourage one another. And it's an encouragement to know that You're with us now, and that You will teach us. And we look forward to that, Father. Build us up in the faith, and equip us for the week that's ahead of us, that we would live lives to Your honor and glory. And we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) In the 19th century there was a theological movement that was known as '*The Quest of the Historical Jesus*.' Albert Schweitzer wrote a book by that title critiquing that movement—and showing its failures. It was a search for the Jesus 'behind the gospels', the real Jesus, the Jesus of history, not the Jesus of the Bible.

Well, it was undertaken, of course, in unbelief. None of them believed the Scriptures; so inevitably, their quest ended in failure. Their conclusions about Jesus were generally: 'He was a just man, he was a reformer, he was a moral teacher, he was a martyr—not the Son of God.'

But that quest was not new. That 'quest' is as old as the Gospels. Jesus once asked His disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they answered, 'Well, some say you are John the Baptist; some say Elijah or one of the prophets.' (Luke 9: 18-19). So there was confusion about that even in those days. But when Jesus turned the question on the disciples and asked, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ." (Mark 8:29). And that was the answer of faith.

Well then, in John 10 the question was turned on Jesus and men asked Him, 'Who do you say that you are?'. "If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." (24b). Skeptics had already given their opinion. We read that earlier in verse 20, where some were saying, "He has a demon...". And others were saying, 'He was a lunatic', and asked, 'Why do you even listen to this man?'

So in John 10, verse 30, Jesus gave the answer to their question that really ends the quest when He said, "I and the Father are one." —'One thing', meaning, 'one in essence'; distinct persons of the same nature. It was a clear claim to deity—and the Jews

recognized that. They rejected the claim and in verse 31 we read, 'They picked up stones to stone Him.'

But the Lord, ever in control, disarmed them with a question. He said in verse 32, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" Were they going to stone him for healing the man who had been born blind? Or for healing the man who had been paralyzed for 38 years? Or was it for turning water into wine and saving the wedding celebration? Or for multiplying loaves and fishes and feeding a multitude. Or maybe His grace and kindness to a woman caught in adultery. "For which of them are you stoning Me?"

Now that alone should have given them pause: Lunatics don't do miracles; the devil and demons don't have compassion on people and bless them; yet Jesus had done that. He had done the supernatural. He had done "many good works", (which can literally be translated "many beautiful works"). (Jn 10:32).

And they were more than miracles. They were revelations: He had shown great acts of kindness and concern for people in need; He had remedied their situation as no one could. It was a revelation of His deity, of course, but also a revelation of His character and a revelation of Him embodying love and truth.

He had given magnificent teaching. Even His enemies were forced to confess, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks." (Jn 7:46). There was no disputing any of this. And these men didn't dispute that; they answered, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God." (vs33).

The logic of their accusation must have seemed, to them, impossible to refute. He was a man, flesh and blood, who claimed to be equal with the eternal God. He might not be possessed, He might not be mad, but he certainly was a blasphemer. —His very words condemned Him.

Now they were right: He was a man with "a true body and a reasonable soul", as the catechism put it. (*Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Q. 22). That was necessary for

Him to be our substitute on the cross and the Savior of mankind—He had to be one of us.

But they were wrong that He was making Himself to be anything; He was and is God—God the Son, who by His works and by His Words had shown that to be true. But they ignored His works, His perfect and powerful life, and they accused Him on the basis of His words.

And so Jesus answered them from the Words of Scripture, (which they claimed to believe as the authoritative Word of God). He asked, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'?" (vs34). Now He's quoting from Psalm 82, verse 6, but referred to that Psalm as the "Law" because the entire Old Testament was sometimes referred to in that way.

Psalm 82 is about Israel's judges who were corrupt—they were dishonest judges. Rather than dispense justice, they perverted it. They didn't protect the weak from the strong. Instead, they used their profession for personal gain—personal profit. They abused their high position as men appointed by God, to pervert, (as I say), justice rather than dispense it.

So in light of that, we can't help but ask ourselves the question, 'Why were they called gods?' Well, because they represented God and they acted in His authority. Asaph wasn't attributing deity to them—but because they represented God, they are called "gods".

And we see examples of that in Scripture: For example, in regard to Moses and his role with Pharaoh, in Exodus chapter 7, in verse 1, the LORD told Moses, "See, I make you *as* God to Pharaoh." (And literally that is, "I make you God to Pharaoh.") Now it's the same word that's used here in the Psalm, the word *elohim*. It's a word that's very frequently used of the "Lord God". It's a plural noun, but it refers to god—or sometimes in various contexts to 'gods'. But that's the word that's used here, and He meant that, 'He made Moses the representative of Himself before Pharaoh'. And that's the idea in

the Psalm, that these men were 'gods' in the sense that they were representatives of the Lord God.

So Asaph, the psalmist, says of these judges, 'You are gods, sons of the Most High. But you will die like men.' (Ps 82:6-7). Now the Lord used this Psalm, and the one word, *god* or *gods*, to make His point. And He did it by means of an argument that was very common among the rabbis, (so these Jewish men would have understood the argument that He was using), it's an argument from 'the lesser to the greater': 'If it's true of them, then much more it's true of Me.'

And that's the pattern of His argument as we read it in verses 35 and 36: "If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came, (and the Scripture cannot be broken", (vs35), then, 'They cannot empty the word of God of its authority. It is absolute authority.' is what He is saying. "If He called them gods to whom the word of God came... do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming', because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?" (vs-35-36).

So His point is, since the Law properly applies the word *god* to men, (and in this case sinful men), then how much more should it be applied to Him who is not sinful, who in fact had been "sanctified", (as He said), who had been set apart and *sent* on a mission? Now that's another bold claim that He made, "sent", (vs36), 'sent from heaven'. No judge or prophet of Israel, no priest or king could make that claim—yet His life and His works supported the truth of it.

So His statement about Himself being 'one with the Father', His statement by implication that He is "the Son of God", didn't merit stoning. That, at least in part, is the meaning of the Lord's appeal to Scripture.

But there may be something more to it which is to be understood in connection with typology—typology from the Old Testament, the many persons and things that picture events or individuals—particularly our Lord to come.

Dr. Johnson made this point in a study that he did on the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament in this passage. Again, the Old Testament is filled with types and prophecies of Christ—and various people and institutions. The sacrificial lamb, for example, was a prophetic picture of Christ as our sacrifice. Back in chapter 1, John the Baptist spoke in that way. He spoke in terms of typology when he pointed to Jesus one day and he said to his disciples, "Behold, the Lamb of God." (vs29). He's the one pictured in those sacrificial animals.

But there are other examples of 'types of Christ'. Moses was one. Moses was a picture of Christ as 'the prophet'. Aaron was a picture of Christ as 'priest'; David a picture of Christ as 'king'; Melchizedek, a type of Christ as 'king-priest'. And also Israel's judges were pictures of Him as 'judge'—the final and 'Great Judge': But especially in this case from the Psalm, as 'The Divine Judge'.

And so, in referring to Psalm 82, verse six, the Lord was saying in effect, 'What was true of those men in name, ("Ye are gods"), is true of Him; it's true of Christ in reality.' He's the fulfillment of what they pictured in their office. They, in that office as judges, and as gods as it were, prefigured One who would come in whom it would really be true—both deity and humanity are united in one person. So He's the fulfillment of that and that's what He's suggesting. They were called '*gods*'—He is God, 'One with the Father', the eternal Son of God. Now I think that is the point that the Lord was making in quoting the Psalm.

But the way He made that point is also very important for what it says about the Scriptures; about their integrity and authority. The Lord based His response on the authority of the Bible when He said, "The Scripture cannot be broken." (vs35). But what is also important, and many of the commentators have made this very observation, is that His argument from Scripture is based on one word, a single word, *god* or *gods*, *elohim*.

So in the Lord's view, the authority of Scripture applies to the single words of Scripture, (and in this case from a rather obscure passage), which indicates that all

Scripture is authoritative. Each word in every passage is authoritative. It is verbally inspired—word for word inspired, and inerrant.

Now the Jews, and the rabbis who were there with them, who were surrounding Jesus at this moment, would not have argued with that. They would have agreed with that, agreed that every word of Scripture is inspired of God. They had a high view of Scripture. They prided themselves on their devotion to the Scriptures.

You remember back in chapter 5 Jesus said to them, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life..." (vs39). 'You are diligent students of Scripture', He was saying—He commends them for that. But then He added, "...it is these that testify about Me." (vs39b). He is the central figure of the Old Testament; it is filled with prophecies about Him, as well as types and pictures of Him.

But for all of their confidence in the Scripture and the way they honored the Scripture, they didn't believe that. So their quest for the Messiah would be as fruitless as that later *'quest of the historical Jesus'*. The search for truth; biblical, spiritual truth will always be a failure when it begins in unbelief.

As Augustin said, "I believe so that I may understand." Believing is seeing—that's biblical. It's Psalm 36, verse 9, "With You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light." That's where we begin; we begin with God's revelation. We don't begin with human reason, which is fallible, but with divine revelation—which is infallible.

It is the light that enlightens everything. We cannot understand reality if we don't begin with the Word of God and see everything in light of that. That enables us to see clearly. But these people, these scholars, these Jewish scholars didn't believe the very book that they were devoted to and had devoted their lives to studying any more than these modern scholars do.

Still, Jesus didn't give up on these men. He took another approach, what might be called a pragmatic approach: 'If you won't believe My words, and the words of

Scripture,' He says, 'then believe my works.' Verse 37 & 38, "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father."

He was prepared to stand or fall on His works, on His deeds, on what He had lived for, and what He had produced. If they weren't genuine deeds, if what He had done were not miracles from the Lord God, then they shouldn't believe in Him. If you can disprove these things, if it's all a sham, prove it—and don't believe in Me.

But, if they considered them they might be given some insight and understanding into who He is, into His being and His unity with the Father—because the works were patently supernatural. They were obviously of God.

So, the Lord's answer to the Jews' charge of blasphemy has two parts: The testimony of Scripture and of miracles; the Word of God and the works of God. And that is what people today must deal with in answering the question of Jesus' identity, 'Who is He?' Well, not merely a great moral teacher; there's nothing in the Gospels to support that.

And should a person fairly examine the Scriptures, the prophecies of the Old Testament, the Lord's work, (His miracles and deeds of mercy), the reasonable conclusion is that He is true. Not merely a moral teacher and certainly not a martyr. No, the things that He said about Himself, they will be demonstrated as true that He is 'one with the Father.' He fulfilled the prophecies, and pictures, and types of the Old Testament. He is the Redeemer Job hoped for and anticipated 'would at the last, take His stand on the earth.' (Job 19:25).

And the only one standing before those men who was both man and God could be that Redeemer. The claim He made, (and that they called blasphemy), was necessary for salvation. A man must also be God because, again, only a human Redeemer can be a substitute for humans. And only a divine Redeemer can offer a sacrifice that is sufficient to remove our sins—the sins of a multitude. In fact, it has to be sufficient for an infinite

number of sins, and that was certainly true of Christ, because He's not only man, which is necessary, but also God, 'God the Son.' The evidence from the Lord's life is more than adequate to prove that, to prove who He is: the Redeemer, the Christ and Savior.

But there's other evidence, and that evidence is from our own lives. The Lord urged men to look at His life, examine His works. People should do that with us as well. And they should be able to see in us something new, something different, something supernatural—the new birth, that we are a new creation. That's what He has made of us; that's what we've become.

I think one of the great examples of that from the Gospels, and one of the Lord's greatest miracles, is the conversion of Zacchaeus, the tax collector. He was notorious: He was a cutthroat businessman who had defrauded people. But he was converted and he promised publicly to repay those he had cheated four times as much—and to give to the poor. The change in him showed the character of God, who is called "holy and true". (Rev 6:10). Zacchaeus became true; he became honest and holy—and that was a great testimony to the transforming grace of Christ.

This is one of the profoundest, potent arguments for the truth that Christ is the Redeemer: That He has redeemed us, that He has changed us into people who reflect who He is—who reflect His character and not the character of the world.

The apostle Paul told the Corinthians, the kind of lives that they were to have and to exhibit, (and that we are to have). They were to be as a "sweet aroma", like incense, giving off "a fragrance of Christ" (2Cor 2:14-15). To some, he said, it would be "an aroma from life to life"; it will draw people to Christ and to salvation. But to others, he said, it will be "an aroma from death to death." (2Cor 2:16). The Lord's life was 'an aroma of death' to these who were opposing Him—and so we read that instead of considering His works, they were seeking again to seize Him. As He said later in chapter 15, (verse 25), "They hated Me without a cause."

So they tried to arrest Him, but were unable to. John wrote, "He eluded their grasp." (vs39). He left Jerusalem and the region of Judea, "And He went away again

beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He stayed there."
(vs40).

Well, this region was east; probably north of Jerusalem and east of the Jordan River, where John the Baptist had ministered; where the Lord, Himself had been baptized and where He returned and was now very active in that same region. He had retired from Jerusalem but He had not retired from ministry. And we read that He was very well received, "Many came to Him and were saying, 'While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true.' Many believed in Him there."
(vs41-42).

Well, there are a number of lessons, I think, that we can draw from all of this. The first one is one James Boyce suggested, "There is a time to advance in the ministry and there is a time to retreat from it. Not quit, but withdraw." The Lord knew when it was time to do that. He had given the Gospel clearly and the people of Jerusalem had rejected it—and rejected Him. So He didn't press the issue with them or inflame things with further argument. He withdrew.

We should do the same. We should take the opportunities that are given to us to give the Gospel and to speak the truth to people. But we do it in love—we don't do it in pride. We don't do it as though it's something that we ourselves are able to achieve and seek to push the point.

We don't convert people—God does that. And when we see that people are closed to the truth, closed or indifferent to the Gospel, we don't press the matter. There's a time to withdraw and wait on the Lord. Christ did that; He left Jerusalem and He went east across the Jordan River and He stayed there.

A second lesson has to do with our activity: What we are to do, what we can do. The ministry is not something that we can manipulate. It is under the control of God; it's

under control of the Spirit of God. We don't control its direction. We can only be faithful with what we have been given by the Lord.

"Follow providence," Charles Bridges said, "don't force it." Mike Black introduced me to that quote many years ago. It's an excellent quote because that is often how God leads us—through His providence, through the events of our life.

And we see that here. The Lord had been in Jerusalem from chapter 7 through chapter 10, (at least everything recorded in those chapters occurred in Jerusalem. He may have come and gone during that period, but in those chapters, it's all in Jerusalem), where He spoke, where He taught, where He did miracles. And so it was where He gave great revelation of Himself.

It's where He gave some of the greatest revelation in the Bible. He stood in the Temple one day, during the great feast, in John chapter 7, and He cried out, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water." (vs37-38). It's a prophecy of the coming of the Holy Spirit and what He would do within us.

Later He said, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." (Jn 8:12). He declared, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." (Jn 10:11). He said of His sheep, 'They hear My voice and I know them, I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.' (Jn 10:27-28). "I and the Father are one." (Jn 10:30).

He said all of that, (and more), did much, (He worked miracles), and yet when He came to the end of His ministry in Jerusalem the people didn't believe any of it. —They rejected Him. And so He left.

He went to the other side of the Jordan, to an obscure place and, "Many believed in Him there." (vs42). Did the Lord do anything different? Anything different from what He'd done in Jerusalem in this other place "beyond the Jordan?" No. No, He was faithful

and taught the truth and it was blessed. God closed the door in one place and He opened the door in another place. That is how He works.

Back in chapter 3, you'll remember the Lord explained the new birth to Nicodemus and He likened the work of the Holy Spirit to the wind: "It blows where it wishes..." He said. (vs8). The Spirit is sovereign. We can't control the wind; we don't direct the wind. And we can't control the work of the Spirit. We can't manipulate Him. He does what He wills—which is the Father's will. It is wise, it is perfect, and so we're to follow it. We're to be faithful to the truth and teach it. That's what the Lord's ministry is all about. That is what genuine ministry is built upon: The Word of God, revealing the Lord God in the Scriptures.

And we see that here in a third lesson. John the Baptist had preceded the Lord. And in a sense, the response of the people here in this remote place to the Lord, to Christ, was based upon John's previous ministry there. And he had a faithful testimony. The people were saying, "John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true." (vs41). John said many things, but his great witness as Christ's forerunner is given back in chapter 1, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."(vs29).

Now that brings us full circle here; that brings us full circle in our study. It is a way of saying that Christ is the Redeemer—and no blasphemer. He redeems, He saves as our sacrifice, who died for our sins, paid for them all, and removed them, "As far as the east is from the west..." (Ps 103:12).

John the Baptist was dead. He didn't see the results of his ministry but his testimony lived on and bore fruit. God's Word never returns empty. That's how He works—through His Word—I can't emphasize it any more than that. I've often said this, some of the last words that Paul uttered he uttered to Timothy, and his counsel to him,

his urgent, urgent counsel was, "Preach the Word, in season and out of season."
(2Ti 4:2). Whether it's popular or not, "Preach the Word"; there's no ministry apart from that. Timothy was to be faithful.

All the same, we're to be faithful as John was faithful. The Spirit blessed John's ministry which had Christ at its center. And as Christ becomes the center of our lives, and as we increasingly know Him and yield to Him, God blesses us. I don't want to put it in a sort of 'quid pro quo relationship', as though, 'You be good to God, you be faithful, then He'll be faithful to you.' No, if we're faithful it's because God is first, faithful to us. If we love Him it's because He first loved us. He is the initiator in all of it.

But the reality is, as we are responsible individuals, if we're going to grow in grace and in effectiveness, we must be a people that draw close to the Lord. And 'He'll come in and sup with us and we with Him.' (Rev 3:20). —And we will grow. And so, as we continue to center our lives on Him and know Him, He will bless us and use us.

So, who is He? Who was the historical Jesus? Certainly not a demoniac, or a lunatic. He was a great teacher for sure, (but He was far more than that), and not a martyr. He is the Son of God. The evidence of that is abundant for those who look and have eyes to see.

So if you're here this morning without Christ, believe in Him. Believe His words. Believe His own self-testimony, that He is the Son of God. Believe the testimony of others, that He is the eternal "Word"; John said that. That He is "the Lamb of God"; John the Baptist said that. That He is "the Savior of the world"; The Samaritans said that. Think about that. Think on His words and His works—His authority over men and over matter. It is the evidence of His divine authority and power.

Skeptics have done that, and become believers. Frank Morriss was an English journalist who set out to dispute the resurrection—to disprove it completely. But his

studies led him to the conclusion that the resurrection was not myth, but history. And he wrote a book, *Who Moved the Stone*. It's a defense of the resurrection. The evidence led him to faith. And there are others like that.

But you might listen to that statement and then think, 'Well, doesn't that contradict Augustin's statement that I just quoted?, "I believe so that I may understand." Believing is seeing. Isn't that an example of seeing is believing?'

No, because in examining the Scriptures, and the words and works of Christ, a person is looking into a unique book—one that, as the writer of Hebrews tells us, is "living and active." (Heb 4:12).

This is unique, this book. It analyzes us and it makes us know ourselves. It is self-authenticating. It rings true. It proves itself, and it produces faith in those who read it. It opens the eyes of the unbelieving to believe—and it does that because the Holy Spirit is in it, in every Word of it; and He deals with the reader.

So, unbeliever, if you are here, pray for an open mind and read the Scriptures. Those Words will be to you either an aroma "from life to life", or an aroma "from death to death." If a sweet aroma, then God has been merciful to you and He has given you eyes to see what is real and true, so that you might believe in the only Savior who is man and God—God's Son. Believe in Him and live. May God help you to do that.

And help all of us to rejoice in who He is, what He's doing in our lives, and what we can do in response by living a life that is a testimony to those around us. May God help us to do that.

Father, we owe everything we have to Your grace. And You've given us, as new creatures in Christ, abilities that we did not have before. You've made us something new and we can now live as sacrifices to Your praise. And so we pray that You would enable us to do that: To live for You and be an evidence to men around us of the transforming

grace that is Yours and that we can have by Your grace and through faith in Your Son. We thank You for Him, for His death for us, and all that we have.

Now the LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance on you and give you peace. In Christ's name, Amen.

(End of Audio)