

John 7-10 – Ep 199

Jesus goes up to Jerusalem to the Feast of Tabernacles¹

Differences of opinion about Jesus in John 7-9

How are we to judge in a difficult world filled with diverse opinion? John 7-9 gives examples of how this is to be done.

1. Don't let fear guide you in your quest for truth – John 9.22.
2. Do not let traditions be your guide in finding truth² – John 7.24 JST.
3. Do not let the authorities or an appeal to authority³ have the final say – John 7.47-48.
4. Try it, and if it is working, this should tell you something – John 7.17.
5. Hear out the argument, don't dismiss it out of hand before hearing it⁴ – John 7.50-53.

¹ The Feast of Tabernacles, also known as the Feast of Booths or Sukkot in Hebrew, is a Jewish holiday that occurs in the fall, usually in late September or early October. The exact date of the holiday varies each year according to the Jewish lunar calendar, which is based on the cycles of the moon. According to Leviticus 23.34-36, the Feast of Tabernacles was to be held on the fifteenth day of the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, which corresponds to the months of September or October in the Gregorian calendar. The festival lasted for seven days, during which time Jews would build temporary booths or shelters (sukkot) to remind them of the booths that the Israelites lived in during their time in the wilderness.

Today, the Feast of Tabernacles is still celebrated by Jews around the world, and it is considered one of the three pilgrimage festivals in Judaism, along with Passover and Shavuot (The Feast of Weeks). During the holiday, Jews gather in synagogues and homes to pray, sing, and share meals together, and they also build and decorate sukot to celebrate the holiday's themes of impermanence, humility, and gratitude. In their book [Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the Lord? The Psalms in Israel's Temple Worship in the Old Testament and in the Book of Mormon](#), Ricks and Baker discuss the role of the Feast of Tabernacles in the ancient Israelite temple worship. They argue that the Feast of Tabernacles was one of the most important festivals in the Jewish calendar, and that it was closely associated with the temple and its rituals, specifically as it relates to the [First Israelite Temple Drama](#).

² "I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the saints prepared to receive the things of God," wrote Joseph Smith, "but we frequently see some of them, after suffering all they have for the work of God, will fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions. . . ." *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 331.

³ Soon after the foregoing revelation was received, a woman came making great pretensions of revealing commandments, laws and other curious matters; and **as almost every person has advocates for both theory and practice, in the various notions and projects of the age**, it became necessary to inquire of the Lord, when I received the following: [Section 43]. Joseph Smith, *HC* 1:154, emphasis added.

⁴ **There are those who chronically misunderstand the Church because they are busy trying to explain the Church from the outside. They are so busy believing what they want to believe about the Church that they will not take the time to learn what they need to learn about the Church.** They prefer any explanation to the real explanation. Some prefer to believe the worst rather than to know the truth. Still others are afraid to part the smokescreen of allegations for fear of what they will see. Yet one cannot see the Louvre by remaining in it lobby. One cannot understand the Church by remaining outside...**Some insist upon studying the Church only through the eyes of its defectors--like interviewing Judas to understand Jesus.** Defectors always tell us more about themselves than about that from which they have departed. Some others patiently feed their pet peeve about the Church without realizing that such a pet will not only bite the hands of him who feeds it, but it will swallow his whole soul. Of course we are a very imperfect people! Remember, however, that while it is possible to have an imperfect people possessed of perfect doctrines (indeed, such is necessary to change their imperfections), you will never, never see the reverse: a perfect people with imperfect doctrines. Neal A. Maxwell, "All Hell Is Moved," *Speeches*, 8 Nov. 1977, emphasis added. Elder McConkie put it this way, "We feel it is not too much to ask, in this age of enlightenment

6. Ask yourself, “Will this please Heavenly Father?”⁵ – John 8.29.

John 7.1-13 (Jesus goes to the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem)

His brothers did not believe in him (John 7.5)

“Jesus’ brothers most likely refers to the sons of Mary and Joseph, all younger than Jesus himself. At this point they are unbelievers (v. 5), a point attested by the Synoptics (cf. Mk. 3:21, 31–35 par.), and a small indication of John’s care in avoiding anachronism: he does not at this point assume their subsequent conversion.”⁶

"The brothers knew something of Jesus' work and miracles and of his following, but they were doubtful themselves, or at least wished him to be more open about his mission. They did not believe in him, which may refer to the claims he made about being the Messiah and the Son of God. In fact, when the people of Nazareth rejected the Savior, he exclaimed, 'A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.' (Mark 6:4.) But evidently the brothers were converted shortly thereafter, for Luke records that immediately after Christ's ascension into heaven, the church met in 'prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.' (Acts 1:14.) Also, Paul includes James in his list of those who had seen the resurrected Lord. (See 1 Cor. 15:7.)"⁷

He went up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret (John 7.10)

In John 7.10, we read that Jesus goes to Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles, but he does so in secret rather than publicly. The reason for his secrecy is not entirely clear, but there are a few possible factors that may have influenced his decision.

First, Jesus may have been avoiding a confrontation with the religious authorities, who were already seeking to arrest him. In John 7.1, we are told that the Jewish leaders were looking for an opportunity to kill Jesus, and so he may have been trying to avoid drawing attention to himself.

Second, Jesus may have been trying to avoid a premature conflict with the Romans, who were in control of Judea at the time. The Feast of Tabernacles was a particularly politically charged time, as it commemorated the Israelites' time in the wilderness and their liberation from Egypt. It is possible that Jesus was trying to avoid provoking the Romans by keeping a low profile.

Finally, Jesus may have been waiting for the right moment to reveal himself publicly. Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus is portrayed as someone who is very intentional in his words and actions, and he often seems to be waiting for the right moment to reveal his true identity. It is possible that he was biding his time and waiting for a moment when his message would have the greatest impact.

and open dialogue, to ***let us be the ones who tell who we are, what we believe, and why our cause is going forward in such a marvelous way.*** Oct. 1979 General Conference, “The Mystery of Mormonism,” emphasis added.

⁵ “The object with me is to obey and teach others to obey God in just what He tells us to do. It mattereth not whether the principle is popular or unpopular, I will always maintain a true principle, even if I stand alone in it.” Joseph Smith, *HC*, 6:223; *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 332.

⁶ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Eerdmans, 1991, p. 238.

⁷ Gerald Lund, *Jesus Christ, Key to the Plan of Salvation*, Deseret Book, 1991, p. 47.

Although the reasons for Jesus' decision to go to Jerusalem in secret are not entirely clear, we can probably be safe to assume that his reasons were a combination of factors that most likely related to his safety, the political situation, and his larger mission.⁸

Different opinions about Jesus (John 7.11-13)

There are several ways we can read this passage.⁹ It describes how some people are looking for Jesus and discussing him, while others are uncertain about his identity (just like today) and whether he will appear at the festival. Here are a few ways to understand this passage:

1. **Historical context:** To understand this passage, it is helpful to know the historical context in which it was written. The Feast of Tabernacles was one of the most important festivals in the Jewish calendar, and it was marked by a large pilgrimage of Jews from all over the world to Jerusalem. The passage reflects the tensions and debates surrounding Jesus' identity and teachings within this context. Many would assume that Jesus would come to this event. Some were probably hoping to see a miracle, while others were hoping to finally arrest him.
2. **Symbolism:** This passage can be read with a symbolic approach, as John uses things like this that can be read through a lens that sees the dynamic tensions between faith and doubt, or between light and darkness.¹⁰ The fact that Jesus is initially hidden and uncertain, and that some people are actively seeking him while others are unsure how to see him and his message, may reflect the way in which spiritual truths can be hidden or obscured, but are still sought after by those who seek deeper meaning.
3. **Characterization:** The passage also helps to further characterize Jesus and his followers. Jesus is portrayed as a mysterious figure who challenges traditional religious authority and draws people

⁸ For further discussion of these points, see Morris, p. 393-394. See also Raymond Brown, p. 309, where he says, "Is this journey to Jerusalem for Tabernacles to be identified with the only journey to Jerusalem in the Synoptic tradition of the ministry, the one at the end of Jesus' life? In John we never hear of Jesus returning again to Galilee after this journey to Jerusalem. We hear only that he went into the Transjordan (John 10.40) and that he spent some time at Ephraim in the region near the desert (John 11.54). Thus, if the Johannine chronology is complete, this is Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem from Galilee."

⁹ See: D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Eerdmans, 1990, p. 240. The crowds, made up not only of Judeans but of Galileans and of diaspora Jews... are frankly curious about Jesus, and clearly divided in their opinions. Some, doubtless because they remember the good results of his miracles, simply conclude, He is a good man, even if their categories prevent them from concluding anything very profound about him. Others, of a more cynical disposition (for the punishment of the liar is not so much that he is not believed but that he does not believe), suspect he is a charlatan.

¹⁰ John 1.4-5: "In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ***The light shines in the darkness***, and the darkness did not overcome it." These verses introduce the theme of light and darkness and set the tone for the rest of the gospel. We see this again in John 3.19-21: "And this is the judgment, that ***the light has come into the world***, and ***people loved darkness rather than light*** because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God." See also: John 8.12: "Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, ***I am the light of the world***. Whoever follows me will ***never walk in darkness*** but will have the light of life." See also: John 9.4-5; John 11.9-10; John 12.35-36, 46 and John 19.38. In John 19.38, we read of Joseph of Arimathea, who "in secret" and for his "fear of the Jews" asked Pilate to place Jesus' body in the tomb. This passage, which describes Joseph's clandestine removal of Jesus' body from the cross, underscores the contrast between the darkness of death and the light of Christ's resurrection.

to him, while his followers are divided in their understanding of his teachings and his identity.¹¹ This characterization is consistent with the themes of John's Gospel, which emphasizes Jesus' role as a teacher and spiritual guide who challenges conventional wisdom and calls his followers to a deeper understanding of God's love.

4. **Narrative tension:** This passage helps to create tension and suspense within the narrative, as John's readers are left wondering whether Jesus will appear at the festival and what will happen if he does. This tension helps to build interest in the story and engages readers in the unfolding drama of Jesus' life and teachings.

Jesus at Tabernacles – Scene 1 (John 7.14-36)

How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? (John 7.15)

The phrase "know letters" can be translated as "have learning" or "have studied," and refers to the level of education and knowledge that Jesus was demonstrating in his teaching. The Jews were surprised by Jesus' wisdom and ability to teach, given that he had not received formal education or training in the rabbinic schools of the time.

Some scholars interpret this verse as a reflection of the Jewish social and religious hierarchy of the time, which placed great importance on education and religious training. In this context, the people's amazement at Jesus' knowledge and teaching may be seen as a challenge to the authority and status of the religious leaders and teachers of the time.

Bruce R. McConkie stated:

"Jesus never attended a theological seminary; he never graduated from a divinity school; he was not trained for the ministry in the traditional sense; his religious learning was not born of the wisdom of men-and such also was true of the fishermen and others whom he called to hold the keys of his earthly Kingdom. None of them would have qualified as sectarian ministers or as Jewish rabbis. But all of them were called of God, held his authority, received revelation from him, and taught and spoke as the Holy Ghost gave utterance."¹²

Like Matthew 7.29, John's underlying concern is the question of Jesus' authority; unlike Mt. 7.29, however, John does not link the astonishment of the people to a contrast between Jesus' teaching and that of the scribes (who found it difficult to teach for long without citing lengthy lists of authoritative sources, while Jesus kept saying, 'But I say to you ...', or 'I tell you the truth'), but chooses to link their astonishment to Jesus' lack of formal training: How did this man get such learning without having studied? The question in Greek (lit. 'How does this man know letters [*grammata*] ...?') could mean, 'How is it that he can read and write?' But in fact, **such basic attainments were commonplace amongst Jews (especially males), and would evoke no amazement.** Rather, they were astonished that someone who had not studied in one of the great rabbinical centres of learning, or with one of the famous rabbis, could have such a command of Scripture, such telling mastery in his exposition. About a year later, Peter and John similarly confounded the religious authorities, who were compelled to observe that although

¹¹ I would say that this theme is more expressly given in Mark.

¹² Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. Bookcraft, 1965-1973, 1: 441.

they were ‘unschooled (*agrammatoi*), ordinary men’ (Acts 4:13), they had been with Jesus and apparently drew their knowledge and authority from that exposure.¹³

If any man will do his will, he will know the doctrine (John 7.17)

This verse suggests that a person's willingness to do God's will is the key to understanding and recognizing the truth of Jesus' teaching. Those who approach Jesus with an open mind and a sincere desire to follow God will be able to discern the authenticity and authority of his message. Conversely, those who are closed off to God and resistant to his will may be unable to recognize the truth of Jesus' teachings.

Some New Testament scholars¹⁴ interpret this verse as a reflection of the Johannine emphasis on the importance of faith and spiritual discernment in recognizing the truth of Jesus' message. According to this view, a person's ability to recognize the truth of Jesus' message depends not on external evidence or rational argument, but on their inner disposition and spiritual openness.

Others see this verse as a reflection of the divine inspiration and authority of Jesus' teaching. According to this view, Jesus' words are not mere human wisdom or opinion, but are rooted in the truth and authority of God. Those who are attuned to Heavenly Father's will are able to recognize the divine authority of Jesus' message, while those who are resistant to God may be unable to understand or accept it.

Elder Eyring put it this way:

“Real spiritual sight comes to the heart softened by obedience. It takes time, but it is the sure way to see. The Lord made that clear, at least to you and to me, when he said: 'My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.' (John 7:16-17.)”¹⁵

I know him, for I am from him, and he sent me! (John 7.29)

Jesus' "I" is emphatic and in sharp contrast with the preceding “ye.” He does not share their ignorance. He knows the Father. He gives a twofold account of this, namely in connection with His origin and His mission. He came out from a state of existence with the Father, and He was sent by the Father to accomplish the Father's purpose. Here once more we have a reference to one of the dominant ideas of this Gospel.¹⁶

Jesus at Tabernacles – Scene 2 (John 7.37-52)

If any man thirst, let him come and drink, he that believeth on me... out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water! (John 7.37-38)

On each of the seven days of the feast a priest drew water from the pool of Siloam in a golden flagon and brought it in procession to the temple with the joyful sounding of the trumpet. There the water was poured into a bowl beside the altar from which a tube took it to the base of the altar. Simultaneously

¹³ D.A. Carson, p. 242.

¹⁴ Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, Eerdmans, 1971, p. 413-414.

¹⁵ Elder Henry B. Eyring, *To Draw Closer to God: A Collection of Discourses*, Deseret Book, 1997, p. 151-152.

¹⁶ Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, Eerdmans, 1971, p. 414.

wine was poured through a similar bowl on the other side of the altar. These symbolic ceremonies were acted thanksgivings for God's mercies in giving water in past days (probably looking right back to the smiting of the rock in the wilderness and then on to the giving of rain in recent years). They were also an acted prayer for rain for the coming year. It is also significant that the words of Isaiah are associated with these ceremonies, "with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Isa. 12.3). The Jerusalem Talmud connects the ceremonies and this scripture with the Holy Spirit: "Why is the name of it called, The drawing out of water? Because of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, according to what is said: 'With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.'" Jesus' words are to be understood against this background. Up till now nothing has been recorded of His teaching at this feast, for all His words in this chapter hitherto have been replies to the accusations of His foes. But now, at the culmination of the greatest feast of the Jewish year, He unfolds its significance in terms of the life that He came to bring. He takes the water symbolism of the feast and presses it into service as He speaks of the living water that He will bestow. The people are thinking of rain, and of their bodily need. He turns their attention to the deep need of the soul, and to the way He would supply it.¹⁷

The woman taken in adultery (John 8.1-11)

This passage¹⁸ relates the account of a woman who was caught in the act of adultery and brought before Jesus by a group of scribes and Pharisees. The religious leaders were attempting to trap Jesus, as they believed that if he agreed with the punishment for adultery prescribed by Jewish law (stoning), he would be seen as a harsh and unforgiving teacher, and if he opposed it, he would be seen as a rebel against Jewish law.

¹⁷ Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, Eerdmans, 1971, p. 420-421. See also: Bruce Satterfield, "[John 7-9 in Light of the Feast of Tabernacles](#)," *The Testimony of John the Beloved: the 1998 Sperry Symposium on the New Testament*, Deseret Book, 1998, pp. 249-265.

¹⁸ There is some scholarly debate (see R. Brown, B. Ehrman and B. Metzger) and uncertainty regarding the authorship of the Gospel of John and the specific passage of John 8:1-11. One reason for this uncertainty is that the earliest known manuscripts of the Gospel of John do not include this story. The story is absent from the earliest and most reliable manuscripts of the Gospel of John, which suggests that it may have been added to the text at a later time. Additionally, the writing style and vocabulary used in John 8.1-11 is somewhat different from the rest of the Gospel of John, which has led some scholars to suggest that it was written by a different author. Some have proposed that the story was a later addition to the Gospel of John by a different author, possibly one who had heard the story as an oral tradition.

There are also some textual variations in the passage that suggest it may have been added later, such as the fact that it is omitted from some ancient manuscripts, and in other manuscripts it appears in different places within the Gospel of John. Even though it is difficult to say with certainty who wrote the story of the woman caught in adultery, the lack of early manuscript evidence and differences in writing style suggest that it may have been added to the Gospel of John at a later time by a different author. I would argue that a late author added this story, and that perhaps it was part of an oral tradition about the Savior and his mercy, and this argument leaves open the authenticity of the account even though the earliest manuscripts of John may have not included it. See: Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 335. He writes, "The fact that the story was added to the Gospel only at a later period does not rule out the possibility that we are dealing with a stray narrative composed in Johannine circles." Metzger writes, "The evidence for the non-Johannine origin of the pericope of the adulteress is overwhelming. It is absent from such early and diverse manuscripts... the account has all the earmarks of historical veracity. It is obviously a piece of oral tradition which circulated in certain parts of the Western church and which was subsequently incorporated into various manuscripts at various places." Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, third edition, United Bible Societies, 1975, p. 220-221.

When they brought the woman before Jesus, they asked him what he thought should be done with her. Jesus responded by saying, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Hearing this, the accusers left one by one, starting with the older ones, until no one was left except Jesus and the woman.

Jesus then asked the woman where her accusers were, and if anyone had condemned her. When she replied that no one had condemned her, Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more."

This narrative is often interpreted as an example of Jesus' compassion and forgiveness, as he did not condemn the woman but encouraged her to turn away from her sin. It is also seen as an example of the religious leaders' hypocrisy and their attempts to use the law to trap and condemn others.

Elder McConkie explains:

"This cunningly devised interrogatory was in no sense a search for guidance, nor did it raise any point with reference to an infamous act of adultery that needed a decision. Though it was the custom to consult distinguished Rabbis in cases of doubt or difficulty, this was not such a case. They knew, and everyone knew, that Moses decreed death for adulterers, both of them, the man and the woman, and that the accuser's hand should cast the first stone. This was not such a case. The guilty man was absent; the aggrieved husband was lodging no charge; and no witnesses had been summoned, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word might be established. Their purpose, rather, as John expresses it, was to tempt him, 'that they might have to accuse him.'"¹⁹

Jesus puts the burden on his accusers

"We see Jesus' wisdom when he is confronted by Jewish leaders who have discovered an adulterous woman. He knows that his enemies will criticize any sentence he pronounces, so he wisely puts the burden of responsibility on them, at the same time exhibiting a sensitive concern for the woman's embarrassment. Whereas she had been the focal point of a public scandal and trial, she was now able to quietly return home and, with the Savior's encouragement, repent of her sins. (John 8:3-11.)"²⁰

Jesus at Tabernacles – Scene 3 (John 8.12-59)

"I am the light of the world" (John 8.12, 9.5)²¹

Satterfield explains:

On the day following the Savior's challenge to come to him for living water, the Savior was once again at the temple teaching. While in the Court of Women,²² the Savior declared to the multitude, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8.12). Could there be any doubt in the minds of his listeners as to what he was claiming? ***In the very place where the huge candelabras were lit giving light*** to "every courtyard in Jerusalem," symbolizing the continuous light given to all the world during the messianic age, ***Jesus proclaimed that he was that***

¹⁹ Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, Deseret Book, 1979-1981, 4 vols, 3:141.

²⁰ Victor L. Ludlow, "John: The Once and Future Witness," *Ensign*, Dec. 1991, 52-53.

²¹ Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου "I am the light of the Cosmos!" (John 8.12 my translation)

²² John 8.20 tells us that he was in the treasury, which is the Court of the Women.

light.²³ **Not only the light of Jerusalem, but of all the world.**²⁴ Even Jewish tradition held that God gives man light.²⁵ It is obvious that he was claiming to be the Messiah in their own hearing.

To give credence to His claim, the Savior demonstrated his power to give light to the world through a miracle that is recorded only by John. In John 9.1-7, the story of a man born blind follows on the heels of the Feast of the Tabernacles. The story begins when Jesus "saw a man which was blind from his birth." When asked why, the Savior responded "that the works of God should be made manifest in him." Then he said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Upon that "he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." The man did exactly what he was told. After he had washed his eyes in the same pool that the priest had drawn water as part of the water drawing ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles, he came out seeing.

Two major symbols of the Feast of Tabernacles, water and light, were present in the miracle. **By spitting onto the ground, Jesus demonstrated that indeed the living waters** or the Spirit of the Holy Ghost which can give man light does indeed come from Him, for "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38). This is further emphasized by the washing of the waters in the pool of Siloam which symbolized the Holy Ghost.²⁶

"I am not of this world" (John 8.23)

"I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him" (John 8.26)

"When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am, and I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things" (John 8.28)²⁷

²³ J. H. Bernard sees the lighting of the candelabras as a possible background behind Jesus' saying, but offers another possible reason: "But Philo's account of the Feast of Tabernacles would furnish an equally plausible explanation. He says that this feast is held at the autumnal equinox, in order that the world (*kosmos*) may be full, not only by day but also by night, of the all-beautiful light (*tou pagkalou photos*), as at this season there is no twilight (*de septen*. 24) . . . The passage of Philo shows, however, that the Feast of Tabernacles suggested the idea of light to some minds" (J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, 2 Vols. The New International Critical Commentary [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985], 2:291).

²⁴ In the actual ceremonies of Tabernacles, as they had developed by Jesus' time, on the first night (and perhaps on the other nights as well) there was a ritual of lighting four golden candlesticks in the Court of the Women. Each of these, according to Mishnah *Sukkah* 5:2-4, had four golden bowls on top which were reached by ladders. Floating in these bowls were wicks made from the drawers and girdles of the priests; and when they were lit, it is said that all Jerusalem reflected the light that burned in the House of Water Drawing. See: Raymond Brown, p. 344.

²⁵ See for example, Psalms 27:1, Isa. 60:19. "The later Rabbis applied the thought to the Messiah: 'Light is the Name of Messiah,' they said" (Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, 2:292).

²⁶ Satterfield, [John 7-9 in Light of the Feast of Tabernacles](#).

²⁷ "That is the event which, though perpetrated by his enemies ('when you have lifted up the Son of Man'), establishes Jesus' claim most forcefully: then you will know that *egō eimi* (I AM). One of the functions of the cross is to reveal who Jesus is. That is when the Jews will know the truth. By this John is not saying that all of Jesus' opponents will be converted in the wake of the cross. But if they do come to know who Jesus is, they will know it most surely because of the cross. And even those who do not believe stand at the last day condemned by him whom they 'lifted up' on the cross, blinded to the glory that shone around them, yet one day forced to kneel and

“Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free!” (John 8.32)

The Jews say, “Abraham is our father”... he responds, “If God were your Father, ye would love me...” (John 8.39, 42)

“You are a Samaritan!” (John 8.48)

It is possible that the accusation that Jesus is a Samaritan was a unique insult used by the opponents of Jesus in the community in which the Gospel of John was written, and was not a widely-used insult against Jesus in other contexts. The unique nature of the accusation has led some scholars to suggest that it may reflect tensions between different groups of Jewish Christians in the community in which the Gospel of John was written, rather than reflecting historical events in the life of Jesus.²⁸

Carson gives the following:

When their theological argument fails, Jesus’ opponents turn to personal abuse. Jews and Samaritans did not enjoy easy dealings. As has been indicated, it is possible that some of Jesus’ opponents thought that by casting aspersions on their paternity he was rather traitorously siding with the despised Samaritans. **The charge that Jesus was a Samaritan is found only here in the four Gospels.** The charge of being demon-possessed is common enough (in John, cf. also 7:20; 8:52; 10:20), but **its precise link with the accusation of being a Samaritan is uncertain.** It may simply be that Jesus’ accusers thought that for a Jew to question the paternity of other Jews was so despicable that only demon-possession could explain it.²⁹

Discussing Abraham and his Superiority (John 8.52-53)

Jesus’ hearers misunderstood (8:52), yet should have understood his words about not dying ... some of Jesus’ Hellenistic Jewish contemporaries could claim that those who conquer fleshly passions, like the patriarchs of old, do not die but live for God (4 Macc 7:18–19; cf. Matt 22:32).³⁰ In one Jewish story possibly in circulation in some form by the time of the Fourth Gospel’s publication, Abraham refused to submit to the angel of death, requiring God to remind him that all the righteous before him, including the prophets, have died.³¹ Again, however, Jesus’ adversaries misinterpret his words about death by construing him more literally than necessary (8:52; cf. 6:52).

confess that Jesus is Lord (Phil. 2:10–11). Probably we should read a full stop after ‘I am.’” D.A. Carson, [The Gospel According to John](#), p. 268.

²⁸ The informed reader, however, knows that Jesus is not really a Samaritan: the reader recalls that Jesus denied the centrality of Mount Gerizim as well as that of Jerusalem’s temple (4:21), and told a Samaritan woman that salvation was from the Jews as a people (4:22). John’s Jewish-Christian readers, whose faithfulness to their heritage is being challenged by the synagogues, would take heart: Jesus’ fidelity to Israel was also wrongly questioned. Many of his own people charged him with being a Samaritan, whereas a Samaritan rightly identified him as a Jew (4:9). Craig Keener, [The Gospel of John: A Commentary](#), Baker Academic, 2003, p. 764.

²⁹ D.A. Carson, [The Gospel According to John](#), Eerdmans, 1990, p. 275.

³⁰ Cf. Philo Abraham 51–55; 4 Macc 16:25; *Eccl. Rab.* 9:5, §1. In other Jewish traditions, the prophets died (cf. also *T. Mos.* 1:14–15) but their words endure (*Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 13:3; *Pesiq. Rab.* 1:2). Of course, the observation that all great people have died and no one will escape this is a natural one (e.g., Lucretius *Nat.* 3.1024–1052).

³¹ *T. Ab.* 8:9A. Cf. Homer *Il.* 21.107, where Achilles reminds Lycaon that Patroclus was a better man than he and died anyway (then slays him, 21.115–119).

At the same time, they ironically draw legitimate implications from Jesus' words: if Abraham and the prophets died physically (cf. 6:49) but Jesus grants eternal life, he must claim to be greater than Abraham and the prophets (8:53). Grammatically, their question expects the answer, "No"; Jesus is assumed not to be greater than Abraham and the prophets. Ironically, however, the informed reader recognizes that Jesus is in fact greater than the prophets. Historically, Jesus probably made claims to be greater than earlier prophets (Q material in Matt 12:41–42; Luke 11:31–32);³² John's audience may have known of such traditions, but the irony would be sufficient even without them. In contrast to the Samaritan woman who at first assumes that Jesus cannot be greater than Jacob (4:12) but ultimately embraces him as the promised one (4:25–26, 29), Jesus' dialogue partners here become increasingly hostile. Their suggestion that he "makes himself" something (8:53) fits a pattern of accusation throughout the Gospel: he makes himself out to be equal with God (5:18); God (10:33); God's Son (19:7); or king (19:12). The irony is that Jesus has not made himself anything but, sent by the Father, became flesh (1:14; 3:17).³³

"Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8.58)

This is clearly invoking the divine name as found in Exodus 3.14. In John 8.58, Jesus says to the Jewish crowd, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." This statement caused the Jews much anger, as they most likely viewed his statement as that of invoking the divine name of Yahweh from Exodus 3:14 by using the phrase "I am."³⁴

One of the key arguments in favor of this interpretation is the fact that the Greek phrase used by Jesus, "*ego eimi*," is the same phrase used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible – see below) to translate the divine name Yahweh in Exodus 3.14. In that passage, God reveals the divine name to Moses as "I am who I am" (or "I will be who I will be" in some translations), using the Hebrew phrase "*ehyeh asher ehyeh*." (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה) The Septuagint translates this phrase as "*ego eimi ho on*" (ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν - "I am the one who is" or "I am the existing one").

Furthermore, the phrase "*ego eimi*" is also used throughout the Gospel of John as a self-designation by Jesus, including in several other instances where he is making claims to divinity. For example, in John 8.24, Jesus says, "Unless you believe that I am [*ego eimi*], you will die in your sins." In John 18.5, when Jesus is arrested in the garden, he responds to the soldiers' inquiry about his identity by saying, "I am [*ego eimi*]." This consistency in the use of "*ego eimi*" throughout the Gospel of John suggests that Jesus is deliberately invoking the divine name in John 8.58.

The reaction of the crowd helps us to interpret Jesus' words here as well. In John 8.59, the crowd picks up stones to throw at Jesus, which suggests that they understood his statement to be a claim to divinity and therefore blasphemous. If Jesus was not invoking the divine name, it is unclear why the crowd would react so strongly to his statement.

³² Q also polemicizes against false claims to descent from "Abraham our father" (Matt 3:9; Luke 3:8).

³³ Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, Baker Academic, 2003, p. 766.

³⁴ יֵאָמֵר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶהְיֶה שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם "And Elohim said to Moses, I AM that I AM. And he said, "Here is what you will say to the sons of Israel! "I AM" has sent me to you all!" (Ex. 3.14 My translation) The Greek reads as follows: καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸς Μωϋσῆν ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν καὶ εἶπεν οὕτως ἐρεῖς τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ ὁ ὢν ἀπέσταλκέν με πρὸς ὑμᾶς "And God said to Moses, I AM the one being/existing, and this is what you will say to the sons of Israel, the being/existing one has sent me to you all!" (My translation. The key here is that in both instances we are reading ἐγώ εἰμι as the name of God. John is emphasizing this in his narrative.)

The interpretation that Jesus is invoking the divine name is consistent with the overall themes of the Gospel of John, which presents Jesus as the pre-existent Son of God ([John 1.1-14](#)) who has come to reveal Heavenly Father to his children on earth. By invoking the divine name as his audience would have understood it, Jesus is making his claim – he is the Son of God, the Jehovah of the Hebrew Bible, the one who gave the Law to Moses and revealed himself to Abraham, the creator of the cosmos.

Other instances of the statement “I AM” in John’s Gospel

The phrase "ἐγώ εἰμι" (transliterated as "ego eimi") is used in the Gospel of John several times as a self-designation by Jesus. In addition to John 8:58, where Jesus says "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am," the phrase appears at least seven other times in the Gospel of John, depending on how one counts:

1. John 4.26: When Jesus speaks to the Samaritan woman at the well, he says, "I who speak to you am he" (literally, "I am").
2. John 6.20: When the disciples see Jesus walking on the water, he says to them, "It is I; do not be afraid" (literally, "I am").
3. John 6.35: "I am the bread of life." (Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς)
4. John 8.12: Jesus says, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."
5. John 8.24: Jesus says, "Unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins."
6. John 8.28: Jesus says, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me."
7. John 9.9: When the man born blind is questioned by the Pharisees about how he received his sight, he says, "I am."
8. John 10.7: "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep."
9. John 10.11: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."
10. John 11.25: Jesus says to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live."
11. John 13.19: Jesus says to his disciples, "I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he."
12. John 14.6: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
13. John 15.1: Jesus says, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser."
14. John 18.5: When Jesus is arrested in the garden, he responds to the soldiers' inquiry about his identity by saying, "I am."

In each of these instances, Jesus is using the phrase "ἐγώ εἰμι" to make a significant statement about his identity and mission. In some cases, as in John 8.58, he is making a claim to divinity. In others, he is emphasizing his authority, his ability to save, or his role as the promised Messiah. I would say that even in these instances, that John is using his artistic expression to convey Jesus' premortal identity, awesomeness, and purpose.

“Then they took up stones to cast at him” (John 8.59)

Jesus' hearers do not miss his point in 8:58; they take his words as blasphemy (a mere claim to messiahship was not considered blasphemous, although it could be offensive; they understood him to

claim deity). Stoning was an expected punishment for blasphemy (Lev 24:16, 23), but God's people had sometimes attempted it against God's own agents (Ex 17:4; Num 14:10; cf. 1 Sam 30:6). The temple was constructed from massive stone blocks, not the sort of stones that people could throw; but in Jesus' day construction was still going on, and mobs usually found objects to throw, as Josephus says Zealots later did in the temple and a crowd did in a synagogue. In the Greek tradition, deities sometimes made themselves or favorite mortals invisible. More relevant here, God had earlier hidden some of his servants for their safety (Jer 36:26); here Jesus hides himself. Jesus' departure from the temple might symbolize that: the glory had departed (Ezek 10–11); the departure of God's presence on account of Israel's sin was a common theme in later Jewish texts.³⁵

The Aftermath: Jesus heals a blind man (John 9.1-41)

“Master, who did sin? ... Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifested in him” (John 9.2-3)

Pre-Earth Life Understanding

"Apparently the Jews had some understanding of the doctrine of pre-existence. Among their righteous forbears it had been taught plainly as a basic gospel truth. (Moses 3:4-9; 4:1-4; 6:51; Abra. 3:22-28.) Such scriptures as were then available to them however, contained only passing allusions to it. (Num. 16:22; Isa. 14:12-20; Jer. 1:5.) But it was a doctrine implicit in the whole plan of salvation... Jesus' disciples-probably as a direct result of his teachings-knew and believed that men were the spirit children of God in pre-existence and that in such prior estate they were subject to law and endowed with agency. Otherwise they never would have asked nor would there have been any sense or reason to a question which is predicated upon the assumption that men can sin before they are born into mortality."³⁶

Afflictions are part of mortality

"For those who are impaired, trying to cope with life is often like trying to reach the unreachable. But recall the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith: 'All the minds and spirits that God ever sent into the world are susceptible of enlargement.' (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 354.) Certainly, in the infinite mercy of God, those with physical and mental limitations will not remain so after the Resurrection. At that time, Alma says, 'the spirit and the body shall be reunited again in perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame.' (Alma 11:43) Afflictions, like mortality, are temporary.

"Surely more sharing of the burden will contribute to the emotional salvation of the person who is the primary caregiver. Just an hour of help now and then would be appreciated. One mother of a child who is handicapped said, 'I could never dream of going to Hawaii on a vacation; all I can hope for is to have an evening away from home.'

"The Savior's teachings that handicaps are not punishment for sin, either in the parents or in the handicapped, can also be understood and applied in today's circumstances. How can it possibly be said that an innocent child born with a special problem is being punished? Why should parents who have kept themselves free from social disease, addicting chemicals, and other debilitating substances that

³⁵ Craig Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, IVP Academic, 2014, p. 275-276.

³⁶ Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. Bookcraft, 1965-1973, 1: 480.

might affect their offspring imagine that the birth of a disabled child is some form of divine disapproval? Usually, both the parents are blameless. The Savior of the world reminds us that God 'maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.' (Matthew 5:45.)

"May I express a word of gratitude and appreciation to those many who minister with such kindness and skill to our handicapped people. Special commendation belongs to parents and family members who have cared for their own children with special needs in the loving atmosphere of their own homes. The care of those who are diminished is a special service rendered to the Master himself, for 'inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' (Matthew 25:40.)"³⁷

“He spat on the ground, and made clay” (John 9.6)

Spittle was sometimes associated with healing in pagan circles, so it would naturally represent an agent of healing in popular thought... Some find here an allusion to the creative act in Genesis 2.7 (cf. Jn 20:22).³⁸ In the ancient world, healers operated in a variety of ways. One such method was the use of saliva or spittle. While it may seem strange to modern readers, there is historical evidence to suggest that the use of saliva as a healing agent was not uncommon. In fact, the ancient Greeks believed that saliva had healing properties, and physicians would sometimes use it to treat wounds and other ailments. It is possible that the use of spittle had symbolic significance for Jesus and his followers. In the Bible, spittle is often associated with the idea of purity. For example, in the Old Testament, a person with a skin disease was considered unclean, and if they spat on someone, that person would become unclean as well. ***By using his own spittle to heal people, Jesus may have been making a statement about his own purity and holiness.***

Jesus as the Good Shepherd (John 10.1-21)

“The sheep hear his voice” (John 10.3)

Shepherds normally became very familiar with their sheep, which would usually not be difficult if the average flock size was about one hundred.³⁹ “Calling by name” (John 10.3) most of all indicates familiarity, and often a degree of affection.⁴⁰

Elder Maxwell explains:

"We define the veil as the border between mortality and eternity; it is also a film of forgetting that covers the memories of earlier experiences. This forgetfulness will be lifted one day, and on that day we will see forever, rather than 'through a glass, darkly.' (1 Corinthians 13:12.)...No wonder the Savior said that His doctrines would be recognized by His sheep, that we would know His voice, that we would follow Him. (John 10:14.) We do not, therefore, follow strangers. Deep within us, His doctrines do strike the promised chord of familiarity and underscore our true identity. Our sense of belonging grows in spite

³⁷ James E. Faust, [Reach Up for the Light](#), Deseret Book, 1990, p. 88-90.

³⁸ Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, p. 276.

³⁹ With Jeremias, *Parables*, 133; Matt 18:12; Luke 15:4. Three hundred was large (*t. B. Qam.* 6:20); cf. eighty in P.Hib. 33.16 (245 B.C.E.); 12 in P.Oxy. 245 (26 C.E.); a poor widow had one sheep (Babrius 51.1).

⁴⁰ Keener, *The Gospel of John*, p. 805.

of our sense of separateness, for His teachings stir our souls, awakening feelings within us that have somehow survived underneath the encrusting experiences of mortality."⁴¹

The Fold and the Door (John 10.2-3, 7, 9)

Jesus uses the metaphor of a shepherd and sheep here in John 10 to portray his relationship with his followers. In John 10.1-5, he speaks of the relationship between a shepherd and his sheep, emphasizing the shepherd's responsibility to protect and care for the sheep. Then in John 10.7, he makes a statement that has invites us to ponder: "I am the door of the sheep" (γὼ εἰμι ἡ θύρα τῶν προβάτων). By referring to himself as the "door," Jesus is indicating that he is the only way for his followers to enter into the safety and security of the Kingdom of God. This is because he is the only one who can give us access to our Heavenly Father, his peace, his covenants, and it is only through his atoning blood that we can be saved in the mansions of the Father.

In the ancient world, a shepherd would lead his sheep into a pen or enclosure for safekeeping at night. In order to keep the sheep safe, the shepherd would often sleep in the opening of the enclosure, acting as a barrier between the sheep and any potential threats. The sheep would have to pass through the shepherd to enter or exit the pen, ensuring that they were always under the watchful eye of their protector.

Keener explains: A first-century C.E. Roman writer compares a general guarding his troops with a shepherd who sleeps securely knowing that his flock is penned safely with iron bars, protected from the hungry wolves raging fruitlessly against the fortification. Ancient Jewish sources provide less detail than we might like, but reports of Palestinian shepherds from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries may well preserve longstanding pastoral practice. It is unlikely that all sheepfolds were the same; variation in rank and resources would naturally produce somewhat different arrangements. One could build enclosures for sheep in various ways; one could use a cave (1 Sam 24:3), a square hillside enclosure made of stone walls to keep out animals and winter wind, a roofed enclosure, or a temporary shelter using thornbushes for sides, or (as some think more likely here) "a yard in front of a house, surrounded by a stone wall which was probably topped with briars." Such a sheepfold might have only one door, guarded by a porter and providing entrance to both the sheep and the house, or adjoining a house but with its own separate entrance.⁴²

Jesus uses this metaphor to illustrate that he is the only way for his followers to enter into a relationship with our Heavenly Father. In John 10.9-10, he explains that he is the door through which the sheep (those that trust in him [another one of John's main themes in his work]) must pass in order to have access to eternal life. He says, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." We can see a similar idea taught by King Benjamin in the Book of Mosiah. The prophet Samuel teaches that the reason why Jesus Christ's Atonement is the only way to salvation is that it is through his sacrifice that we are able to be reconciled to God. He says, "For behold, he [Christ] surely must die that salvation may come; yea, it behooveth him and becometh expedient that he dieth, to bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, that thereby men may be brought into the presence of the Lord" ([Helaman 14.15](#)).

⁴¹ Neal A. Maxwell, *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience*, Deseret Book, 1979, p. 8.

⁴² Keener, *The Gospel of John*, p. 809.

By identifying himself as the door, Jesus is emphasizing that he is the only way to Heavenly Father.⁴³ He is the true source of life, protection, and eternal covenants. This is a powerful statement of the exclusivity of Jesus' message and mission, and it highlights the unique role that he plays in the salvation of those who believe and trust in his name.

Jesus at the Dedication: Jesus as Messiah and Son of God (John 10.22-39)

The Feast of the Dedication (John 10.22)

The Winter Feast of the Dedication, also known as Hanukkah or Chanukah, is a Jewish holiday that commemorates the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem after it was desecrated by the Seleucid Empire.⁴⁴ The holiday is observed for eight days and nights, usually in December, and includes the lighting of candles on a special candelabrum known as a menorah.

The reference to the Winter Feast of the Dedication in the Gospel of John 10.22 provides some historical context for the events that took place during the ministry of Jesus. According to the passage, Jesus was in Jerusalem during the feast and was walking in the temple area known as Solomon's Colonnade when he was confronted by a group of Jews who demanded to know if he was the Messiah. Jesus replied by saying that he had already told them, but they did not believe him, and he went on to explain that his works testified to his identity.

Overall, the reference to the Winter Feast of the Dedication in the Gospel of John serves to place Jesus in the historical and religious context of first-century Judaism, highlighting his interactions with the Jewish community and his claim to be the Messiah.

Solomon's Porch (John 10.23)

The outermost court of the Temple was surrounded by magnificent covered colonnades or cloisters on all four sides. These porticoes were open on the inside facing the Temple, but closed on the outside. The oldest portico, the one on the east side, was popularly associated with Solomon, the builder of the first Temple.⁴⁵

"The Jews" ask Jesus to "tell us plainly"⁴⁶ if he is "The Christ" (John 10.24)

"I told you, and ye believed not..." (John 10.26)

⁴³ King Benjamin declares that "there shall be *no other name given nor any other way nor means* whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent" ([Mosiah 3:17](#)).

⁴⁴ For three years, 167-164 B.C., the Syrians had profaned the Temple by erecting the idol of Baal Shamem (the oriental version of Olympian Zeus) on the altar of holocausts (I Macc i 54; II Macc vi 1-7). This pollution of the holy place by the "abominable desolation" (Dan ix 27; Matt xxiv 15) came to an end when Judas Maccabeus drove out the Syrians, built a new altar, and rededicated the Temple on the twenty-fifth of Chislev (I Macc iv 41-61). The feast of Dedication was the annual celebration of the reconsecration of the altar and Temple. Raymond Brown, [The Gospel According to John I-XII](#), Anchor Bible Series, Vol. 29, Anchor Bible, 1966, p. 402.

⁴⁵ Brown, p. 402.

⁴⁶ εἰπὲ ἡμῖν παρρησίᾳ - This is an imperative: "tell us boldly" or "tell us openly." The KJV renders a good translation here. The verb παρρησία comes from πᾶς, meaning "all," or "all things," and ῥέω, meaning "to pour out," or "to speak."

In view of the erroneous ideas of messiahship held by His questioners, to answer either "Yes" or "No" would have been misleading. **But Jesus' assertion that He has already" told them raises a problem, for no answer to this question has been given in specific terms in this Gospel.** Jesus has spoken unequivocally to the Samaritan women (4: 26), and He has also disclosed Himself to the man born blind (9 : 35ff.) , but He has not said to any of the Jews in set terms that He is the Christ. He may mean that the general drift of His teaching is so clear that if they had come in the right attitude they would have believed, just as His disciples did (cJ. 6 : 68f.). Or He may mean that such statements as "before Abraham was born, I am" (8 : 58) are the answer. Or, as the rest of the verse indicates, He may mean that His works and His whole manner of life are such that the answer to the question is plain for all who really want to know. Notice His "ye believe not". It denotes a present attitude, and not simply a past state, and it indicates the root trouble. These people had no faith.⁴⁷

"My sheep hear my voice..." (John 10.27)

"There are only certain ones who are going to hear when that knock comes or His voice is raised...The pure in heart are the only ones who are qualified to see and to hear and listen and know His voice when He speaks."⁴⁸

"I and my Father are one."⁴⁹ (John 10.30)

"Who else could be linked with God the Father in this fashion? "One" is neuter, "one thing" and not "one person." Identity is not asserted, but essential unity is."⁵⁰

It may be true that this ought not to be understood as a metaphysical statement, but it is also true that it means more than that Jesus' will was one with the Father's. As Hoskyns remarks, "the Jews would not presumably have treated as blasphemy the idea that a man could regulate his words and actions according to the will of God." But they did regard this as blasphemy as the next verse shows. **They had asked Jesus for a plain assertion of His messiahship, and they got more than they had bargained for.**⁵¹

James E. Talmage gives the following explanation:

"By 'the Father' the Jews rightly understood the Eternal Father, God. In the original Greek 'one' appears in the neuter gender, and therefore expresses oneness in attributes, power, or purpose, and not a oneness of personality which would have required the masculine form."⁵²

The Jews take up stones⁵³ to stone Jesus (John 10.31)

⁴⁷ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, Eerdmans, 1971, p. 519-520.

⁴⁸ Harold B. Lee, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, edited by Clyde J. Williams, Bookcraft, 1996, p. 414.

⁴⁹ ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατήρ ἐν ἑσμεν "I and the Father are ONE" (my translation. The "Father" here being referred to is "The Father," not "My Father."

⁵⁰ Morris, p. 522.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² James E. Talmage, *Jesus The Christ*, p. 529.

⁵³ ἔβαστασαν οὖν πάλιν λίθους οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἵνα λιθάσωσιν αὐτόν "So the Jews then carried again stones in order that they might stone him" (my translation. The Greek word ἔβαστασαν carries with it the idea that the Jews carried stones from another place to this location. This makes sense, since there would not have been stones at this location in Solomon's colonnade. See Morris, p. 524.)

In John 10.31, the Jews pick up stones to stone Jesus, and the reason for their response can be understood in the context of the previous verses. In those verses, Jesus had been speaking to the Jews about his relationship with God the Father and his identity as the Son of God. When Jesus says, "I and the Father are one," his words implied to his hearers that he is claiming to be equal with his Heavenly Father. This would have been seen as blasphemy by the Jews, who believed in the oneness of God and the idea that no one could claim to be equal with God (Deuteronomy 6.4 "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One").

In response to Jesus' statement, the Jews accuse him of blasphemy and attempt to stone him. This indicates that they understood Jesus' words as a claim to divinity and, therefore, a violation of their understanding of God's nature and the commandment against blasphemy. It is noteworthy that the Jews' response to Jesus' words in John 10.30 is a source of theological debate and has been interpreted in different ways over the course of Christian history. Some argue that the Jews misunderstood Jesus' words and that he was not claiming to be God in the way that they thought. Others maintain that Jesus was making a clear claim to divinity, and that the Jews' response was appropriate given their theological beliefs. The debates between Arius and Alexander were hotly contested early in the fourth century.⁵⁴

Regardless of the interpretation, readers can see that the Jews' response in John 10.31 is driven by their understanding of Jesus' words as a claim to divinity and, therefore, a violation of their understanding of God's nature and the commandment against blasphemy.

Jesus questions his accusers, "For which of those works do you stone me?" (John 10.32)

We should not miss the calm courage He displayed. He did not run away, nor apparently show any signs of fear or the like. In the face of stoning He quietly resumed the discussion, and pointed out that He had done many good works. Notice that He adds, "from the Father." He is not acting in isolation. Then He inquires which⁵⁵ of these good works is the cause of the attempted stoning.⁵⁶

Jesus then asked, in effect, "For which of my good works do you want to stone me?" (John 10:32). His question was obviously ironic, and it is clear that he actually knew the real reason for their anger. The Jews responded that they weren't stoning him for good works, but "because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (John 10:33).⁵⁷

Is it not written in your law, I said, ye are gods? (John 10.34)

⁵⁴ The concept of the unity of the Father and the Son was certainly a key issue in the Arian controversy, and John 10.30 would have been a relevant verse in that context. The doctrine of the Trinity, which holds that God exists as three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) in one divine being, was developed in part as a response to the Arian controversy, and the unity of the Father and the Son was a key element of this doctrine. See: Everett Ferguson, *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, Routledge, 1990, p. 107-111. Although the Arian conflict must be viewed as a theological development, it had quite definite political features. When Constantine the Great called the Council at Nicaea, which met in 325, much if not all of his motivation was to keep the empire intact by having one solid religious pillar on which it could stand.

⁵⁵ διὰ ποῖον αὐτῶν ἔργων λιθάζετε με "For of what kind of works do you stone me?" (My translation). This refers to the quality of his works, which is inviting his hearers to consider the kinds of works he has performed.

⁵⁶ Morris, p. 524-525.

⁵⁷ Daniel C. Peterson, "Ye are Gods: Psalm 82 and John 10 as Witnesses to the Divine Nature of Humankind," Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges, eds., *The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, FARMS, 2000, 471-594.

Daniel Peterson⁵⁸ explains: What kind of a claim was Jesus asserting? First, we must keep in mind that the Greek here (in this verse) lacks the definite article. The Jews are, therefore, accusing Jesus of making himself “a god,” but not necessarily of making himself “the God.” **He is not claiming to be the Father.** This is consistent with the Latter-day Saint view of the Godhead, as well as with the ancient view of the relationship between Yahweh and his Father ... The same view, or something very much like it, also seems to appear in early Christian thought: “Justin,” Oxford’s Henry Chadwick notes of an important second-century Christian thinker, saint, and martyr, “had boldly spoken of the divine Logos as ‘another God’ beside the Father, qualified by the gloss ‘other, I mean, in number, not in will.’”⁵⁹

Who are these gods in the Divine Council portrayed in Psalm 82?

There are four standard interpretations of the “gods” in Psalm 82: They were either (1) ordinary mortal Israelite rulers or judges, (2) ordinary mortal rulers or judges of the other nations, (3) the ordinary mortal people of Israel gathered at Sinai for the revelation of the law, or (4) angelic or divine members of the council of El. Any of the first three would be compatible with Jesus’ use of the passage in John 10. Unfortunately, though, none of the three seems, on its own, to be compatible with the best recent scholarship on the original intent of the psalm itself. Only combined acceptance of the fourth interpretive option and one or more of the first three can make consistent sense of both Psalm 82 and John 10 without accusing Jesus, in the New Testament, of misrepresenting the real meaning of the former passage. More basically, only if the genus “gods” and the genus “humans” overlap can the Savior’s application of Psalm 82 to mortal human beings be a legitimate one. We have seen that, according to both the apostle Paul and a plausible reading of the Hebrew Bible, they do overlap. Yet, to my knowledge, in all Christendom it is only the Latter-day Saints, to whom a doctrine of the antemortal existence of human beings and of their literal kinship with God has been revealed, who recognize that gods and men form a single class, differentiated along a spectrum of holiness, wisdom, and power. Consequently, it would seem that the Latter-day Saints are in a uniquely strong position to reconcile the original sense of Psalm 82 with the Savior’s use of it in John 10.⁶⁰

Jesus leaves to go “beyond Jordan” where John the Baptist taught (John 10.40-42)

Why does he do this? In John 10:40-42, it is written that Jesus left the place where he was in Jerusalem and went to the area beyond the Jordan River, where he stayed and continued to teach. The reason for this departure is not explicitly stated in the text, but it is possible to infer a few possible reasons.

One possible reason is that Jesus may have left Jerusalem *to avoid arrest by the Jewish authorities* who were seeking to kill him. Earlier in John 10, Jesus had clashed with the religious leaders in Jerusalem and had declared that he and his Heavenly Father were One, a statement that was seen as blasphemy. His claim to divinity had enraged local Jewish leaders, who sought to arrest him, but Jesus had managed to elude them by leaving the city.

⁵⁸ Daniel C. Peterson, “Ye are Gods: Psalm 82 and John 10 as Witnesses to the Divine Nature of Humankind.”

⁵⁹ Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1967), 85–86.

⁶⁰ Peterson, “Ye Are Gods,” p. 40. Peterson explains, “If John 10:34 must refer to ordinary human beings in order to have the force Jesus intended it to have, and if Psalm 82 almost certainly refers to members of the divine court in heaven, the only way to save Jesus from a charge of misapplying the psalm is to understand ordinary human beings as “gods” and as at least onetime members of the divine, heavenly court.” See: Daniel Peterson, [“Exploring ‘gods’ scriptures,” Deseret News, Aug. 19, 2010.](#) Accessed 2.18.22.

Another possible reason is that Jesus may have wanted to continue his teaching ministry beyond the confines of Jerusalem, where he may have faced opposition from the religious establishment. By going to the area beyond the Jordan, he may have been able to reach a different audience and spread his message more freely.

Another possible reason why Jesus left Jerusalem may simply be due to the idea that he felt it was the right time to move on and preach his message elsewhere. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus is depicted as being constantly on the move, traveling from place to place to spread his gospel message and perform miracles.