

John 9-10

Overview

Like the previous two sections (chs 7 and 8), this section grows out of the Lord's encounter with an individual (the man born blind). This encounter is distributed through 9:1-38, which also records this man's interactions with the Jews. The second half, 9:39-10:42, is the direct interaction of the Lord Jesus with the Jews as a result of this healing.

The two halves have striking parallels in their structure.

- A **description** of the Lord's works (9:1-15) or words (9:39-10:18), respectively, in which the Jews are described as “Pharisees,” never as “Jews”
- A statement of **division** among the Pharisees (9:16) or Jews (10:19-21), attributed in the first case to the Lord's works, and in the second to his words
- A **debate** between the Jews and the man (9:17-34) or Jesus (10:22-39a), featuring
 - References to “the Jews,” never “Pharisees”
 - A concluding hostile action on the part of the Jews (excommunicating the man born blind in 9:34; attempting to seize Jesus in 10:39a)
- A **decision** by those who follow the Lord to leave the temple and believe on him (9:35-38; 10:39b-42)

Interesting high-level ideas:

- Dual role of the words and works of Jesus
- The healed man takes the lead in debating with the Jews in the first panel, where the focus is on the Lord's **works**. Then the Lord steps in to back him up in the second panel, with emphasis on his **words**. Compare the healing of the lame man in 5:10-15 (**works**, 17), followed by the Lord's great chiasmic discourse on judgment in 19-45 (**words**, 24, 28, 38, 39, 47). The Lord exercises us in spiritual battles, but is there to back us up. (Contrast with 5: there, the Jews were united against him. Here, the division is emphasized.)
- The healed man in the first half as example of the sheep in the second; his submission to the Lord's words and instructions.
- Transition from ambivalent Pharisees to opposing Jews in both sections.

9:1-38, Response to the Works of Jesus

1-15, Description of the Lord's Work

The section unfolds through four scenes, marked by change in participants.

2-5, Jesus and the Disciples

2 Who did sin?--With v.2, compare 34. The disciples' initial assessment is like that of the Jews. They see the man's blindness as evidence of somebody's sin. And in some cases, physical affliction may be

the result of sin, cf. 1 Cor 11:30-32. But Job shows that it is not the case with all. There is another possible explanation, which the Lord sets forth in response:

3 Neither ... but that ...--Instead of being a *punishment* for sin, illness may be a *platform* for God's work, as in Job's case. Cf. 11:4, of Lazarus, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." This verse sets the theme of the first half, which is the works of God seen through Jesus.

4, 5 work ... day ... night.--These verses are a mini-parable, a metaphor. Let's unpack them. A metaphor has two parts: the *reality* being described, and the *illustration* that is used to convey it. We must understand these, and also the *application* to us.

Illustration: Though there are people who work at night, like Ron, the general pattern is that people work during the day and sleep at night:

Psalm 104:20-23 ²⁰ Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. ²¹ The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. ²² The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. ²³ Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening.

The day is the time for work; at night, especially in an age before electric lights, "no man can work." You can tell what kind of worker someone is by how they behave as the end of the day draws close.

- Lazy workers begin to close up shop even before the whistle blows.
- Diligent workers speed up in an effort to finish one more unit of work before the day is over.

Reality: The Lord identifies himself as the worker: "I must work." Like any worker, he can only work during "the day." He does not mean the physical day; cf. ch. 3, the work he did with Nicodemus at night. Rather, his point is that just as the physical day poses limits to ordinary physical work, there is a limited season available for his work.

What is this period? He appears to define it in v. 5. The only reason I can see for him to repeat here his claim "I am the light of the world" from 8:12 is because this is the basis for defining his "day." His season of work is the period during which "the light of the world" is shining, the period while he is in the world. That is, his lifetime.

He is aware that the time of his offering is at hand. If this is close to Dedication, as 10:22 suggests, he will die at the next Passover, just four months away. Like a diligent workman rushing to finish a task before sundown, he feels a special urgency to complete his work before he is taken from the earth.

Application: How many of us feel this same urgency about the work that the Lord has given us? In our secular occupations the pressure of deadlines urges us on, but we approach the Lord's work with a casualness that suggests we think we have all the time in the world. We should heed Moses' exhortation, "teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psa 90:12). This is the reason that the Lord would have us look daily for his return.

Text: The Egyptian text "we must work the works..." destroys the focus on the Lord's personal diligence in the light of the soon end of his day, the time while the "light of the world" is shining. The change was perhaps motivated by misunderstanding the "no man" not as part of the illustration, but as part of the reality. That is, the scribe who introduced "we" for "I" thought that "no man can work" was the reality being conveyed, and harmonized "we" with it.

It's clear that the focus here is on the Lord's works: "work the works of him that sent me."

6-7, Jesus and the Blind Man

Here we have the report of the specific work that is in view, the healing of the blind man. Note that this work is described three times in this section: here where it is first performed, then twice by the healed man, once in 11 to his neighbors, and again in 15 to the Pharisees.

The details of the healing invite meditation. Consider two of them.

He ... made clay ... and he anointed the eyes ... with the clay.--Spittle was considered in antiquity to have healing powers, and in two other cases the Lord used it in healing (a deaf and dumb man in Mark 7:33, and a blind man in Mark 8:23). But why the clay?

The best explanation I can find is to emphasize his divine power. God's role as creator is frequently described using the simile of a potter working with clay (Isa 29:16; 45:9; 64:7; Jer 18:6). Although the word itself is not used in Gen 2, the image of forming man from the dust of the earth suggests that God did something very much like what the Lord does here. Just as in ch. 8 he writes with his finger to show his authority with the God of Sinai who wrote with his finger, so here he creates with clay to show his identity with the divine potter.

If this is correct, the Lord's action is emphasizing his expression, "**I must work the works of him that sent me,**" v. 4. Creating man from dust is a work of God, and the Lord is showing that he can do that work.

7 [he] said unto him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is by interpretation, Sent).—This detail is also distinct from other healings. Elisha might send Naaman away to be healed (2 Kings 5:10), but the Lord's healings are generally immediate. What is the point of sending the man to Siloam?

The "pool of Siloam" is the reservoir fed by way of Hezekiah's water tunnel that starts at the spring Gihon and flows under the Ophel, the ancient city of David. John draws special attention to its Hebrew name *shiloax*, "sent," perhaps referring to the fact that its waters are sent from the spring by way of the tunnel.

The OT often describes God under the figure of a fountain or spring. Compare Jer 2:13, "my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Isa 8:6 uses these very waters (Siloam) as a metaphor for the Lord's protection of his people, which they refused in seeking foreign alliances: "this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son." Perhaps the Lord is drawing on this reference. Going to the pool of Siloam, the pool of waters sent forth, is a picture of going to the one whom the Father has sent forth.

This would again reinforce the reference to v. 4: "I must work the works of him **that sent me.**" The self-appointed religious leaders of the temple hierarchy are powerless to heal a blind man, much less to bring spiritual sight. The only hope lies in going to the true Siloam, the Sent One.

8-12, The Blind Man and his Neighbors

The neighbors.--Those who lived near the blind man. They recognize his appearance, but cannot believe that he can now see.

9, 11 He said.--The *nature* and *direction* of his testimony are an example to us.

Nature: It is a simple narration of what has happened to him, in response to their questions. He could have evaded the issue, but he was "ready to give an answer," 1 Pet 3:15.

Direction: His initial testimony is to those nearest to him, a principle that the Lord applies to the disciples as well in Acts 1:8

12 Where is he?--Jesus does not stay to see the man, or to be seen by him, after the healing takes place. His action here is similar to the healing of the lame man in 5:13. In both cases, he leaves the person to grapple with what has happened to them, and to have the initial encounter with the hostile temple leaders. Compare also the healing of the Gadarene demoniac in Mark 5:18,19, where the Lord refuses to let the man come with him, but leaves him with his acquaintances.

Application: We are tempted to think of new converts as fragile, requiring protection, sheltering, and instruction before being exposed to the world. Compare the JW's practice of moving in with a new convert. If the work of the Spirit is genuine, it is robust. There will be plenty of room for instruction and encouragement, but immediate engagement with the world is not harmful. Quite the contrary, it emphasizes to them that they have now changed their status and moved from darkness to light. They will not have all the answers, but the initial challenges by unbelievers will increase their hunger to learn more.

I know not.--This is the first of 11 uses of *oida* in this chapter, the most in any single chapter of the Greek Bible. The word refers to the knowledge of facts or propositions (as opposed to knowing people), and here it highlights what various groups know and do not know. Each group has partial knowledge, but they differ in how their speech aligns with their knowledge.

- The blind man does not know where Jesus is (12), or whether he is a sinner (25), but he knows that he is healed (25) and that God doesn't listen to sinners (31). He speaks exactly what he knows, because of his personal experience.
- His parents know that he is their child and was born blind (20), but claim not to know who healed him or how (21). They speak less than they know, because of fear.
- The Jews know that Jesus is a sinner (24), and that God spoke to Moses (29), but not Jesus' origin or authority (29, 30). They speak more than they know (that Jesus is a sinner), because of their pride.

13-15, The Blind Man and the Pharisees

They brought him to the Pharisees.--Why? Because he had boldly invoked the name of Jesus? Because of the Sabbath violation? They certainly know of the hostility of the institution to Jesus (7:25).

- Some of them may have been currying favor with the Pharisees (“Look, he's healing on the Sabbath again”).
- Others may have hoped that this would sway the Pharisees (“Look, he can really heal. Aren't you being a little hard on him?”).
- Still others may have been confused, not knowing what to think, and are turning to the leaders whom they have been trained to trust.

Just at the moment when they should have been focusing their attention on the Lord, they turn to the rusty old establishment. We should not be surprised if people do the same today.

14 Sabbath day.--Another point of similarity with ch. 5, and a hint of the controversy to come. Yet, in keeping with this section's emphasis on description rather than conflict, nothing is made of this until after the division verse (v. 16).

15 asked him how.--The Pharisees follow the same line of investigation as the neighbors. They ask the “how” question, and get the same answer, but shorter now with the frequent retelling.

16, Division because of the Lord's Work

In both halves (works and words), a division paragraph separates the description from the debate.

Some of the Pharisees ... others.--There is a division even among the officials. Some are preoccupied with their narrow interpretation of the Sabbath rules, while others recognize the notable nature of the healing.

Sabbath: There is nothing in Moses to forbid healing on the Sabbath. But making clay and extraordinary anointing were breaches of the Pharisaic laws (Morris, p. 480, n. 17).

Healing: They should have been more in touch with Isa 35:4ff, the miracles that were to mark the coming of “your God”:

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. ⁶ Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.

Perhaps the reason that the Lord made this miracle so similar to that in ch. 5 is that they together point to this prophecy.

There was a division.--The Lord brings, not peace, but a sword (Matt 10:34). This division sets up the contention in the next section of the story.

17-34, Debate over the Lord's Work

Again, several scenes.

17, The Pharisees and the Blind Man

They (antecedent “Pharisees” from v.16, but not named explicitly) ask him to interpret what has happened to him. To his characterization of Jesus as “a prophet,” they will demand that he view Jesus as a sinner.

18-23, The Jews and the Blind Man's Parents

Contrast their timidity with their son's boldness.

18 the Jews.--Notice the shift in names, as we move from the descriptive section to the debate.

Did not believe ... until they called the parents.--In itself, some skepticism in the face of a miracle is warranted. There are many charlatans who use stooges to create an illusion of their power. Speaking to the man's parents is a reasonable way of determining that the one who is supposed to have been healed was in fact healed.

19 They asked them.--Three questions, of which only two are really appropriate.

1. “Is this your son?” They want to make sure that the man is who he said he is, and not an imposter. This is appropriate, and lays the foundation for the next. (If he is not their son, then they can hardly have first-hand knowledge of his condition.)

2. “Ye say was born blind?” Given that he is their son, the Jews ask for confirmation of the supposed problem that was corrected. This is also appropriate.
3. “How then doth he now see?” This question is completely spurious to a true investigation. They have already heard from the man's own mouth how it happened. Once the parents establish that he was born blind, the Jews are face to face with a true miracle.

20 His parents answered.--They respond to the first two questions, but not the third. In itself, this lack is not troubling, because we have seen that the third question was spurious. Nor is their referral of the question to their son inappropriate. Even our Lord, when under trial by the Jews, sent them back to the primary witnesses:

¹⁹ The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. ²⁰ Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. ²¹ Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.

But one aspect of their response is completely inappropriate. They deny knowing either how he was healed or who did it. Twice they say, “We know not.” John tells us that this denial was motivated, not by lack of knowledge, but by their fear of excommunication. Their son has actively been telling every one who would listen how he was healed. They must have heard. But they do not want to give credit to the Lord Jesus, because the Jews have created a hostile environment against him.

Their denial anticipates another parallel with ch. 18. There, while his Lord is on trial before the Jews, Peter three times denies any association with him (vv. 17, 25, 27).

Application: It is easy to “praise God in his sanctuary” (Psa 150:1), to “lift up my hands in the sanctuary and praise the Lord” (Psa 134:2). “In his temple doth everyone speak of his glory” (Psa 29:9). It is right to call out, “Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul” (66:16) and to “pay my vows ... in the presence of all his people” (Psa 116:18).

But this is not enough.

The Lord prophesied that in the Messianic age “my name shall be great among the heathen” (Mal 1:11, 14), and the Lord sent us “to the uttermost parts of the earth” to realize this prophecy. We must be ready to give an answer to every man who asks us, not just to those who are sympathetic, but to those (like the Jews) who are hostile.

John openly acknowledges that the prospect of this can be terrifying. Four times he acknowledges the “fear of the Jews”

- 7:13, “no man spake openly of him **for fear of the Jews**”
- 9:22, “These words spake his parents, **because they feared the Jews**”
- 19:38, “Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly **for fear of the Jews**”
- 20:19, “the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled **for fear of the Jews**”

Even in Acts 1, after they know of the Lord's resurrection, the disciples keep to themselves until the Holy Spirit comes upon them, and then they speak boldly in the face of severe opposition. This is the clue to boldness in witness.

We know that you should speak, but we are afraid. This is natural, as John shows. How can we overcome it?

- Some preachers try to make us feel guilty unless we speak for the Lord. Then, when we speak to people, we are really uncomfortable, and they will sense it.
- Others try to teach us a canned method. Then we will seem superficial to our auditors.
- The solution that works best for me is to recognize that witness to hostility must be the work of the HS through me. I cannot do it in my own strength. What the Lord requires of me is not courage or articulateness, but willingness. Over and over, when I have found myself in the presence of an unbeliever, the fear and the guilt begin to fight with one another. Then I turn to the Lord in prayer. “Lord, I’m willing to be your messenger to this person, but I can’t do it in my own strength. Please do it through me.” And repeatedly, he will develop the conversation, leading to a relaxed, natural opportunity for me to exalt the Lord.

24-34, The Jews and the Blind Man

As the debate develops, notice the different roles that each participant assumes. Two major themes throughout this section are the Jews' different attacks against the Lord, and the man's growing persuasion that they are in fact not the godly leaders they make themselves out to be.

24, The Jews: Priestly Exhortation. Accusation: Deceptive Acting

Give God the praise.--In our version, it sounds as if they are telling him to render praise for his healing, not to this man whose sabbath carelessness shows him to be a sinner, but rather to God. But in fact their demand is far more hostile than just a desire to go beyond Jesus to the Father who empowered him. It echoes the words of Joshua to Achan in Josh 7:19. Achan had sought to hide his theft of valuables from Jericho, but was found out by casting lots. Then Joshua gives him four commands:

1. My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel,
2. and make confession unto him (lit. give thanks to him)
3. and tell me now what thou hast done;
4. hide it not from me.

The first two are parallel, as are the second two. Joshua is saying to Achan, “You tried to hide your sin from the Lord, but he has pointed you out through the lot. Acknowledge that he is more powerful than you, that he has won the challenge that you threw up against him. Give him glory and praise, and in doing so surrender your pride.” The expression has this same sense in Jer 13:16, where Jeremiah exhorts his contemporaries to humble repentance.

We know.--The Jews “know that this man is a sinner,” because he has broken (their customs concerning) the Sabbath. A sinner cannot possibly have healed someone; in this they agree with the man's own assessment in v. 31. So he must be lying about Jesus' role in his healing. They are demanding that he confess his complicity with what they see as a great Galilean deception.

25, The Man: Personal Testimony. Neutral attitude.

I know not.--This statement is probably to be understood facetiously. Later (31) he will insist, “we know that God heareth not sinners.”

No doubt his attitude toward the Jewish tradition was much like many of ours toward the tax code. It

had become so complex that it took an expert to know what was permitted and what was not. He refuses to submit to their authority in declaring Jesus a sinner, and turns away from that line of discussion entirely. Instead, he focuses on the area where *he* is an expert:

One thing I know.--They may claim to know the law better than he, but he knows better than they what he himself has experienced. He was blind and now can see.

His simple testimony here is a good example for us. We should steer clear of abstract theoretical arguments and focus on what we do know, which is our own experience of deliverance from sin. For some of us, this takes the form of a turn from a wicked life. For others who were saved younger, it may focus on the joys of a stable home with a loving family and the security that comes from living responsibly, all as a result of the Lord's direction in our lives.

26, The Jews: Inquisitorial Zeal. Accusation: Demonic involvement.

They cannot dissuade the man from the fact that he has been healed. So they now focus on the mechanism by which he was healed. It has plausibly been suggested that they are trying to build a case that Jesus used magic or invoked demons, which would make him clearly culpable (Deut 18:10-12). Such charges were leveled against the Lord by later generations of Jews (*b. Sanh.* 43a, cited by Borchert), and it's reasonable that these adversaries would think along the same lines.

27, The Man: Discerning Accusation. He detects their hostility.

I have told you already.--The more they press him to say something that would discredit the Lord, the more his resistance hardens. He has already repeatedly reported what happened, and sees no need to go over it again. The Lord discerns the same insincerity in their questions, and answers similarly, in 10:25.

His boldness in the face of these august authorities is in stark contrast with the cowardice of his parents. Calvin: "If that which was nothing more than a small preparation for faith gave him so much boldness, when he came to the struggle, what excuse can be pleaded by great preachers of the Gospel, who, though they are beyond the reach of darts, are silent as soon as danger is threatened?"

Will ye.--That is, "Do you wish to...?" The question is phrased in a way that expects a negative answer. "You people don't want to become his disciples, do you?" Here he is probing behind their question to understand their motives. If they were seeking to follow Jesus, he would gladly have clarified the wonderful thing that had happened to him. But he will not cast his pearls before swine and participate in their witch-hunt.

Application: So we are not obligated to respond to every question that unbelievers ask us. Peter requires us to have an answer for every *man*, but not necessarily every *question*. Sometimes the answer is better directed beyond the question to deal with the motive, as this man's answer does. One does not need to be an accomplished theologian to discern men's inner motives.

28-29, The Jews: Traditional Pride. Accusation: no credentials.

They reviled him.--In the Greek OT, the verb most often refers to the people's murmuring in the wilderness. John may be using it to highlight the Jews' rebellion here. They claim to be Moses' disciples, but in fact they are murmuring against the prophet like unto Moses.

His disciple ... Moses' disciples.--This is another version of the comparison of Jesus with traditional leaders, seen already in 4:12 ("Art thou greater than our father Jacob?") and 8:53 ("Art thou greater

than our father Abraham?") In all three cases, John invites his readers to see the Lord as superior.

- Jacob gave the well at Sychar, but Jesus gives living water.
- Abraham cast out the slave, but Jesus sets the slaves free.
- Moses was a prophet, but the Lord was the greater prophet (may be anticipated in the man's testimony in v.17).

We know ... we know not.--The contrast here is in the source or authority behind the teacher. "Moses," like "this fellow," is initial in its clause.

"So far as Moses is concerned, it was God who spoke to him." They claim to recognize the divine authority behind Moses' speech, but the Lord has already chided them, "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. ⁴⁶ For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. ⁴⁷ But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" 5:45-47

"As for this fellow," they return to their objection from 7:15, that he does not have formal rabbinic credentials. Yet this is a step backward, for Nicodemus in 3:2 was willing to recognize him as a Rabbi strictly on the basis of his works! "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."

30-33, The Man: Teaching the Teachers. They are the uncredentialed ones.

A marvellous thing.--The verb "marvel" and related words is usually applied in the gospels to people's response to the Lord. Cf.

- 5:20 he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.
- 7:21 I have done one work, and ye all marvel.

One might expect people to marvel at the blind man's healing. But the man finds something even more amazing: that such a miracle worker could be abroad in Jerusalem and not be recognized by the authorities. In effect, he is saying, "If you don't recognize his credentials, that delegitimizes you, not him."

If they do not know Jesus' credentials and origin, then he will explain it to them.

31 We know.--This is the last of the statements about "knowing" in the chapter. He is not claiming that only perfect people should pray: the Lord delights to hear the repentance of sinners, and to grant their plea for forgiveness. But he means that those in rebellion against God have no claim on his power, such as Jesus evidently does. Consider these testimonies:

- Isa 1:15, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.
- Isa 59:2, your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.
- Psa 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:
- James 4:3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

He and they agree on this point, but differ on the conclusion. They began conversation by reasoning, "Jesus is a sinner, God does not hear sinners, therefore the healing must be false." The man ends it by reasoning, "Jesus healed me, God does not hear sinners, therefore Jesus must be a righteous person."

32 Since the world began.--Most of the Lord's miracles are anticipated in the OT (Nave's Topical Bible is a convenient list, see also), but only one concerned blindness: when Elisha smote the army of Syria with blindness, and then restored their sight (2 Kings 6:18-20). But their blindness was not congenital, as this man's was. (Similarly, the other miracles mentioned in Isa 35:5,6 are not anticipated in the OT.) The man's argument is similar to Moses' in Deut 4:32-35.

³² For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? ³³ Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? ³⁴ Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? ³⁵ Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him.

Unanticipated miracles are a particular sign of God's intervention in the affairs of men. It's one thing to copy a previous miracle, but another to do something completely new.

32 If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.--His logic is exactly that which Nicodemus attributes to the Jewish leaders in 3:1,2, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Note the "we." John thus documents the inconsistency in the Jewish position, and shows how a blind beggar has become their equal in theological insight.

34, The Jews: Hardened Rejection

They answered and said.--For the first time in this exchange, they are depicted as the responders rather than the initiators. They have lost control of the conversation.

Dost thou teach us?--They recognize that he has risen to the level of instructing them, and cannot accept this, because they believe the following clause:

Thou wast altogether born in sins.--Their judgment is the same as that of the disciples in v.2. His physical condition must bear witness to his sin, and they are under no obligation to take any guff from such a person. Which is to say that they have descended from a principled criticism of the Lord to a strict *ad hominem*.

They cast him out.--That is, they excommunicated him from the synagogue, the fate that his parents tried to hard to avoid in v.22. Note that he has not met their condition for excommunication (confessing that Jesus is the Messiah). But he has challenged their authority, and pricked their conscience by relying on arguments that they had earlier supported, and they give expression to their anger with the only mechanism at their disposal.

35-38, Decision: Leave the Synagogue and Believe on the Lord

35 Jesus heard.--Their action was hardly a secret one. No doubt they sought to make a public example of the healed man by advertising his excommunication throughout the synagogues of Jerusalem.

He ... found him.--Here, as in 5:14, he seeks out the one who has collided with the authorities. He may allow us to go through difficult times, to develop our character, but he never leaves us without his

consolation and support, and just when we feel the lowest, he seeks us out to lift us up.

35 He said ... “Dost thou believe?”--The man has experienced the Lord's healing power, and by contrast has seen clearly the corruptness of the religious establishment. He is fully prepared for the decision to which the Lord now leads him.

Notice “son of God,” which is the clear majority reading in spite of the critical preference for “son of man.” The belief he here invites is the same set forth in 3:16, belief in God's son. Nowhere in the NT is anyone ever said to believe in the son of man. Belief is always directed toward the Lord as son of God (3:18; 11:27; 20:31; cf. confessions in 1:34, 49; Acts 8:37; 1 John 5:5, 10, 13). *This does make it strange that the title would be altered here, but the majority is overwhelming. If the text is indeed “son of Man,” there must be some extraordinary significance to the Lord's choice of this phrase that is not evident to me.*

“Son of God” is the title of the Messiah (2 Sam 7:14; Psa 2:7), whose hallmark was the delivery from blindness (Isa 35:4,5). So he is inviting the man to recognize him as the Messiah, the true deliverer of Israel.

36 Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?--“Lord” here means simply “sir,” as frequently when it is used in the vocative (as a term of direct address). The man's response indicates that he is fully prepared for this decision. The Lord does not try to argue him into faith, but recognizes when the fruit is ripe and ready to be picked.

37 Jesus said.--The Lord presents two credentials, which serve to link together this section with the one to follow.

1. “thou hast seen him,” the result of the miraculous **work** that is the focus of the first panel;
2. “It is he that talketh with thee,” anticipating the emphasis of the second panel on the Lord's **words**.

38 Lord, I believe.--There is no coercion, no persuasion necessary. He has already experienced the Lord's power, and naturally submits to him.

he worshipped him.--It is customary among commentators to assert that the verb means only to offer homage to someone, and it does have this sense in secular literature and in a few passages of the LXX (e.g., Gen 23:7,12). But its uses in the NT are far more restricted, as Bickersteth has analyzed (*The Trinity*, pp. 55-58). He identifies the following categories:

- 22x of worship offered to God, and 5x intransitively of divine worship
- 17x of idolatrous worship, condemned
- 15x of worship directed to Jesus
- 1x in a parable (Matt 18:26), to a king who is a figure of God
- 3x to men (Acts 10:25,26) or angels (Rev 19:10; 22:8,9), who refuse it

In only one case is it offered without objection to men: Rev 3:9, to the church at Philadelphia. But even here, note v. 12—this church bears the Lord's name, he is in her, and it is in this role that she receives this worship. The same sense can be attached to Isa 60:14, from which Rev 3:9 is drawn—people bow down to her because she is the “the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.”

Thus we should see here more than just respectful homage to a man. The Lord has presented himself to the healed man as “the son of God,” and his worship acknowledges this divine stature.

Excursus: The Lame Man (ch. 5) and the Blind Man (ch. 9)

Several times we have noted the similarities between these stories, but there are also some striking differences.

Similarities

Both had a lengthy illness (38 years; from birth to adulthood).

The healings share several distinctive characteristics:

- They are unsolicited and unsought. The Lord encounters the person and bestows the gift.
- The healing involves a commandment (5:8 “rise, take up thy bed and walk”; 9:7 “go wash in the pool of Siloam”)
- Both took place on the sabbath day

In both cases the Lord disappears afterward, leaving the man to fend for himself.

The healed man confronts the Jews over the Sabbath violation

The Lord later seeks out the man (“found him”) and speaks to him

Differences

The most striking difference is in the words that the Lord speaks to the man when he finds him.

- 5:14, he commands the lame man not to sin any more.
- 9:35, he invites the man born blind to believe.

The first is a hopeless challenge for sinful people; only the second offers hope of salvation. Why the difference?

Explanation of Difference

The clue may lie in three other differences between these men. Notice:

1. The duration of their illnesses. The blind man was stricken from birth. His illness was not the result of his sin, but a platform for God's glory. But “sin no more” to the lame man, the same words spoken to the woman taken in adultery, suggest that his illness was in fact chastisement for some sin, of which he needed to repent before faith could have any effect.
2. Where the Lord finds them. John is explicit that he found the lame man “in the temple” (5:14), while the blind man had been cast out [of the synagogue]. The lame man persists in the Jewish system, in spite of its hostility to Christ. The blind man sees its hypocrisy and opposes it.
3. Their responses to the Lord's words. The blind man believes, but the lame man goes and reports to the Jewish authorities, further confirming his dedication to the corrupt religious system.

It appears that the work of grace had already begun in the blind man, and he was ripe for the Lord to invite to faith. But the lame man was entrenched in the Jewish system, not at all ready to acknowledge the Lord as the messiah. Those who remain within Judaism have no option but to seek salvation by keeping the law. Only those who are willing to come “without the camp” can enjoy salvation by grace

through faith.

9:39-10:42, Response to the Words of Jesus

9:39-10:18, Description of the Lord's Words

An alternation of five members between the Lord's words and the words or thoughts of the Pharisees.

9:39, Jesus

For judgment.--Compare John 3:17 “not to condemn the world,” 8:15 “I judge no man,” 12:47 “I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.”

The difference is that the other references refer to the *process* of judgment, while this one refers to the *result*. *Krīma*, used only here in John, has the distinctive ending that points to the result of an action, contrasted with nouns in *-sis* (e.g., *krisis*), which refer to the process. The Lord is saying that his first coming has the effect of dividing people into two groups: those who receive him and those who do not. The next part of the verse identifies these two groups as those who see and those who do not.

That they which see not ...--This brief saying sets forth the previous panel as a parable. The twofold effect of his coming can be seen in the experiences of the characters in the previous episode.

- “they which see not might see” is clearly an allusion to the blind man's healing.
- “they which see might be made blind” can only then be an allusion to the Jews, as the Pharisees recognize in v. 40.

It is noteworthy that his statement implies that everybody is blind at one time or another. Either you acknowledge that you were blind and now the Lord has allowed you to see, or whatever sight you may have had is counted as blindness (in which case you probably don't recognize what has happened).

9:40, Pharisees

some of the Pharisees which were with him.--Better, “some of the Pharisees, the ones who were with him.” Some of the Pharisees chose to associate with Jesus, in spite of the opposition of the others, and that group heard these words, and said unto him,

Are we blind also?--The question is phrased to expect a negative answer. He has said that the two divisions into which his coming has divided all people are both characterized by blindness—one starts blind and gains sight, while the other begins sighted and ends up blind. This is one characteristic that they would never have associated with themselves. They don't think that they were blind before, and they certainly don't think that they are blind now. Probably, they missed the spiritual sense of blindness in his comment, and think he is speaking only of physical blindness.

9:41-10:5, Jesus

The Lord explains the nature and consequence of their spiritual discernment literally, and then in a figure.

If ye were blind, ye should have no sin.--The key to the meaning of this sentence is the clause, “have no sin.” Let's explore that first, and then look at its relation to blindness.

John is the only writer to use the expression “have sin,” and he uses it 5x:

- 9:41 is the first: “If ye were blind, ye should have no sin.”
- 15:22, “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin”
- 15:24, “If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin:”
- 19:11, “he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.”
- 1 John 1:8 “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

The last of these is particularly helpful. It contrasts “have sin” with “have sinned” (1:10). Those who say they have no sin deceive themselves; those who say they have not sinned make God a liar. All of us are sinners, but with respect to a given sin, we may be in two different states.

- We may be unaware of it. Still, God knows that we have deviated from his law. We “have sinned,” whether we know it or not, and if we deny this, we call God a liar, because he is the one who says that “all have sinned.”
- We may be aware of it. Now, if we try to deny it, “we deceive ourselves.” This is the situation described as “having sin.”

That is, when we “have sin,” we not only are guilty of sin, but we know it. To “have sin” is to sin against knowledge. It is comparable with the sin of high hand that Num 15:24, 30 contrasts with the sin of presumption.

This distinction explains 9:41, and also the two references in ch. 15. If they were physically blind, they would not have seen the Lord's unprecedented works (15:24). If they were spiritually blind, they would not have understood his words. While they would “have sinned,” they would not “have sin.”

but now ye say, We see.--Note, he does not grant that they see, only that they insist that they see. He judges them according to their own standard. But in fact, to judge by 3:2, they *did* in fact have considerable insight into his nature, before his challenges to their man-made system turned them against him.

Application: People generally do not reject the Lord because of sincere doubt as to his claims. They do so in spite of their conviction, because they do not want to yield to him.

therefore your sin remaineth.--Since they claim to have adequate spiritual vision, they are fully culpable for whatever they miss.

10:1 Verily, verily, I say unto you.--This expression appears in two ways in John:

1. As the introduction to the Lord's response to somebody, typically when he is disagreeing with them or correcting them.
2. Internal to his own speech, often introducing an expansion of something he has said in summary (thus inverse to Heb *ne'um yhw*).

This occurrence is an instance of the latter. The image of the shepherd, the sheep, and the robber is an amplification of what he has just said about their condition. To see this, we need to recognize its OT connections.

The imagery draws on two prominent OT passages that describe Israel's leaders under the metaphor of shepherds: Ezek 34 and Jer 23:1-8. Both passages follow the same basic outline (see analysis chart):

	<i>Jer 23</i>	<i>Ezek 34</i>
Judgment of Evil Shepherds	1-2	2-10
Restoration of the flock: regather from nations, restore to the land, care for them	3-4	11-16
Judgment of Evil Sheep	<lacking>	17-22
Messianic Shepherd	5-6	23-24
Other eschatological blessings	<lacking>	25-29
Peoples' Recognition	7-8	30-31

In the OT passages, the evil shepherds are the hierarchy of temple and palace. Against this background, the Lord's claim to be the good shepherd is a direct claim to be the promised Messiah, and his accusation of the Pharisees as sinful amounts to identifying them with the evil shepherds.

To a first approximation, we have here a parable in 1-5 and its interpretation in 7-18. But we'll see that it is not quite this simple. In fact, two different sheepfolds are in view in these sections.

Door ... sheepfold.--A sheepfold is a roofless enclosure, usually of field stones, into which the shepherd gathers the sheep at night to keep them from wandering away. It has a single narrow entrance, across which the shepherd or his helper sleeps.

He that ... climbeth up some other way.--If someone does not enter by the door, it is to avoid being seen by the guardian ("the porter"). Such a person is up to no good, and the Lord gives two examples:

- **a thief** is someone who steals that which belongs to another. The emphasis is on his violation of the eighth commandment, "thou shalt not steal." His objective is to take the sheep away from their proper owner, to enrich himself.
- **a robber** steals by violence; the word denotes a brigand, an insurrectionist, a highwayman (like the one who waylaid the poor man going down to Jericho in Luke 10:30. Thus he violates not only the eighth commandment, but also the sixth, "thou shalt not kill." He is willing to do violence to anyone who stands in his way.

The Jews were "thieves" in that they sought to deflect peoples' allegiance from the Lord, the true shepherd. Instead of encouraging people to respond to him as the Messiah, they tried to retain control themselves.

They were "robbers" in that they were willing to attack the shepherd in order to steal the sheep. This they did in plotting his death.

2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.--The one with a legitimate interest in the sheep does not hesitate to enter boldly by the door.

3 the porter.--In real life, the "porter" would be a watchman hired by the owners of several flocks to guard them in a common enclosure during the night. In the morning he would admit the various shepherds to lead away their flocks to pasture. T

Commentators have differed on who the porter represents. Some see him as God or the Holy Spirit, opening the believer's heart to the Savior. Others see him as John the Baptist, who introduced the Lord to the first disciples.

Unlike the door and the shepherd, whom the Lord later identifies, the porter receives no interpretation, and perhaps is just part of the machinery of the parable, not intended for detailed interpretation. But there are some points of correspondence to the interpretation in 7ff.

- He would have slept across the opening of the fold, and so corresponds to the “door” in vv. 7, 9.
- He would be hired by the shepherds, and so corresponds to the “hireling” of vv. 12, 13.

Recognize that the function of the porter is not to introduce the shepherd to the sheep. He needs no introduction; they recognize his voice. It is to give him access to the sheep. Nicodemus does this in ch. 3, when he comes to Jesus with a recognition from the Pharisees (“We know that thou art a teacher come from God”). He may be the porter. But unlike the Baptist, who later in that same chapter recognizes that “he must increase, but I must decrease,” the Pharisees were unwilling to “decrease” as the Lord's popularity grew.

the sheep hear his voice.--The several flocks have spent the night together, but when their shepherds arrive, they call the sheep to separate them. G.A. Smith, writing at the end of the 19th century of his experiences in Palestine, noted,

“Sometimes we enjoyed our noonday rest beside one of those Judaeen wells, to which three of four shepherds come down with their flocks. The flocks mixed with each other, and we wondered how each shepherd would get his own again. But after the watering and the playing were over, the shepherds one by one went up different sides of the valley, and each called out his peculiar call; and the sheep of each drew out of the crowd to their own shepherd.” Historical Geography of the Holy Land, 3rd edition, 1896, p. 312.

The Lord here emphasizes the use of the voice to guide the flock.

he calleth his own sheep by name.--Here he reflects on a particularly gentle and tender shepherd, who knows the name of each sheep.

Leadeth them out.--The verb is the same as in Ezek 34:13, where YHWH says that he will bring his people out of the lands to which they have been scattered. This parallel suggests that we should understand the sheepfold here as a worldly place, from which the Lord brings out his people, separating them from the other sheep who are not his. If Nicodemus and the Pharisees are the porters, the fold would be the temple, nominally believing but actually very mixed. This idea is substantiated in the next verse.

We will have to pay special attention when we get to v.9, since there the sheep are said to “go in and out.” Likely the Lord is there focusing on the new fold to which he brings them, cf. Ezek 34:14, where “their fold” is their destination, not their origin. They come from a mixed fold, and are brought into a unified one (“one fold, one shepherd,” v. 16).

4 he putteth forth his own sheep.--A most striking phrase: the verb is literally “casteth forth,” the same as in 9:34, 35. It almost always has a negative sense. In the context, we can hardly avoid linking this with what has happened to the blind man. The Jews thought they were in control in casting the man out. In fact, the Lord was graciously delivering him from the error and deception that characterizes the world's “fold.”

... he goeth before them.--Some shepherds drive their sheep ahead of them with a stick and by tossing stones, or with a rod. This shepherd guides them by leading them. He never asks them to go where he has not already gone himself.

the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.--Again, the Lord emphasizes the recognition of the

shepherd's voice as the key to the response of the sheep. He has been teaching. Some received his words, others did not. Their response to his voice shows whether they are his sheep or not.

5 a stranger will they not follow ... for they know not the voice of strangers.--Not only do the sheep of others not respond to him; his own sheep will not respond to the voice of others. The bond between shepherd and sheep is indicated by the recognition of his voice.

10:6, Pharisees

6 This parable.--The Greek word is not the same one translated elsewhere in the NT as "parable." It is rather the word for a "proverb" (translated thus in 16:25,29, and the word used in Prov 1:1). There is considerable semantic overlap between the two terms, but this one carries more the sense of something hidden and esoteric, which must be explained to be understood. This is borne out in their response:

they understood <knew> not.--Contrast this verse with Luke 20:19, "they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them." One expects people to understand a parable, but not a proverb.

He has just identified his sheep as those who recognize his voice. They do not understand his words, therefore showing that they are not his sheep. cf. v. 26.

10:7-18, Jesus

Faced with their lack of understanding, the Lord graciously offers an interpretation. But there is a subtle shift, since now he is speaking of the sheep's proper fold, which contains only one flock (v.16).

He identifies himself with two features of his proverb: the door, and the shepherd. Both of these echo features of the description in vv. 1-5. As the door, he corresponds to the porter of v.3; as the shepherd, he corresponds to the shepherd of v.2.

The fold of v.3 had a porter who was distinct from the shepherd and had to let the shepherd in. The existence of the porter suggests that several flocks were kept together for the night, an image of the mixed multitude in Israel. In the new fold to which the Lord brings his people, he is both door and shepherd. There is no distinction.

7-10, Jesus as the Door

7, I am the door.--He is not describing himself as a wooden structure blocking the opening. In the sheepfold, a person slept across the opening. In the first part, it was the porter. Now he insists that he himself, the shepherd, safeguards the flock at night.

the door of the sheep.--Compare "the shepherd of the sheep," v. 2. Perhaps the possessive is to contrast this door with the one in vv. 1,2.

- That door served to exclude or admit the *shepherd*; this one is for the use of the *sheep*.
- That door was provided by a hireling porter; this one is the sheep's own shepherd.
- That door pertained to all of the flocks within the fold; this one specifically belongs to the Lord's sheep, the ones whose shepherd he is.

All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers.--If he is the door, no one can come through the door before he arrives, and by v. 1, must be illegitimate.

What does this say about Moses, or the prophets, or righteous kings such as David or Josiah? The best

answer (due to Westcott) lies in the difference in tense of the two verbs. Those who “came” (past tense) “are” (present tense). They are still around. He is not looking back to ancient prophets, but to the false messiahs who were rampant in the first century, those who claimed to be “he that should come” (Matt 11:3). “Ever” is slightly misleading, since it encourages us to look further back, and has no Greek support, but the difference in tenses (obliterated in modern translations) makes the point clearly enough.

The sheep did not hear them.--Just as the true sheep discern his voice, they refuse to respond to the voices of charlatans.

9 If any man enter in, he shall be saved.--Contrast v.3, “leadeth them out.” First he leads them out of the mixed fold, the one with the porter, then they enter into the fold whose door is the Lord.

Saved.--This is another link to Ezekiel 34, used in v. 22 for what the shepherd does for his flock.

The first (3:17) and last (12:47) use of the verb in John describe eternal spiritual salvation, and even our Lord's prayer in 12:27, in view of his role as the sin bearer, should also be understood of salvation from sin.

Note that they are his sheep at the time that he “leads them out,” but they are not saved until they “enter in.” Being a sheep is not the result of believing, but the cause of it, which is exactly what v.26 says.

go in and out, and find pasture.--The imagery is fully within the scope of the fold here. There is no thought of repeatedly entering and leaving the flock—the flock as a whole goes out to graze, and returns to safety at night. Having found refuge in Christ, the sheep have all that they need: defense at night, food in the day. They lack for nothing, and need go nowhere else.

To “go in and out” is a common OT idiom for what a leader does with the flock, and draws directly on the shepherd idiom. Compare the idiom in Num 27:17, 21 (Joshua):

[Moses said,] “Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation,¹⁷ Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd.”¹⁸ And the LORD said unto Moses, “Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom *is* the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; ...²¹ at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, *both* he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation.”

See also Deut 31:2 (Moses); 1 Sam 18:13; 2 Sam 5:2 (David); 1 Kings 3:7 = 2 Chr 1:10 (Solomon), in each case concerning the role of the ruler as shepherd in caring for God's people. Christ is the fulfillment of what all of these promised.

This sentiment, here expressed figuratively, is made literal in the next verse.

10 The thief cometh.--The present tense echoes that of v.7, “are thieves and robbers.” He considers the continual stream of false messiahs.

to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.--His purpose is to enrich himself (“steal”), to slaughter the sheep for food (“kill”), or even to destroy them aimlessly, purely out of hatred (“destroy). He has no regard for the well-being of the sheep. “Steal” corresponds to the description of the intruders (vv. 1, 8) as “thieves,” while “slaughter and destroy” corresponds to their description as “robbers.”

I am come.--Better, “came.” He does not come repeatedly, but once for all.

that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.--Notice that “it” is

italicized. “Abundantly” is an accusative adjective. AV takes it as adverbial accusative to the verb “to have,” but it could also be the object: “that they might have abundance.” This interpretation is preferable:

- It better balances the action of the intruders. Two of the thief's actions take life; the Lord gives life. The first of the thief's actions is to steal; the Lord seeks to give abundance.
- Like so many other passage of John, it provides an echo of the synoptic teaching. Compare the promised twofold blessing of abundance in this life and then eternal life in Matt 19:29 // Mark 10:29-30 // Luke 18:29-30.

God has given us “all things that pertain to life and godliness,” 2 Pet 1:3. He has pledged to “supply all [our] need,” Phil 4:19. It is wrong to think that “in this life only we have hope in Christ,” 1 Cor 15:9, but it is also wrong to think that our salvation is purely a future thing. The finished work of Christ provides for us both abundance in this life and life eternal in the future.

11-16, Jesus as the Good Shepherd

The Lord twice calls himself the “good shepherd.” An important similarity between the two paragraphs is that both times he links it to giving his life for the sheep. But there is a difference in emphasis between the two paragraphs. The first emphasizes his love for the sheep, while the second emphasizes his obedience to the Father. Both of these make him a good, rather than an evil, shepherd.

11-13, The Good Shepherd who Cares for his Sheep

This paragraph emphasizes that the shepherd is good because he cares for the sheep. The Lord's languages suggests he may be thinking explicitly of David as his example here.

11 giveth his life ...15 lay down my life.--Typically Johannine: vv. 11, 15, 17; 15:13; 1 John 3:15. The idiom is the same throughout: *tighmi psuchn*. We'll consider the meaning in more detail when we get to v.17. For now, we note that it denotes a voluntary surrender of his life. In the OT, the phrase is commonly used with “hand” as a locative case, either “your hand” (1 Sam 28:21;), meaning “I entrusted myself to you,” or “my hand” (Judg 12:3; 1 Sam 19:5; Job 13:14), meaning “I took a risk.” (Someone else disposes of one's life in 1 Kings 19:2; Psa 66/65:9; Isa 53:10.) In both cases it indicates a deliberate, voluntary act. (But no one in the OT “lays down his life” absolutely, as here.)

We should note in particular 1 Sam 19:5, where Jonathan says of David, “he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel.” When David faced Goliath, he willingly undertook the risk of death, and “laid his life” in his hand. In this case, he did not in fact die, but his action was emblematic of our Saviour's work for us, as we will see.

12 He that is an hireling.--Likely to be identified with the porter of v.3. He will guard the sheep against minor threats, but if a wolf were to come prowling around the fold, he would be the first to flee. The sheep do not belong to him. He has no personal interest in them.

seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth.--The Lord's imagery calls to mind two aspects of 1 Sam 17, David's confrontation with Goliath. The parallel with the idiom “lay down my life” makes it more likely that this is intentional. He is presenting himself as the Messiah, David's promised descendant.

The first aspect is David's report on how he cared for his father's sheep in vv. 34-36. He confronted a bear and a lion when they dared to steal even a single sheep from the flock. Most men would be content

to drive the beast away with stones and let it keep the sheep, but David pursued them, delivered the sheep, and slew them.

The second aspect is the confrontation with Goliath himself. v. 24 reports that when Goliath appeared, “all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid.” None of them would stand up to defend their homes and families against this threat. Even Saul, equipped with armor, did not dare to do battle with him, but simply offered a reward for anyone who would vanquish him. But David perceived that Goliath had “defied the armies of the living God,” v. 36. Goliath threatened his heavenly father's sheep, and David could no more stand by and let that happen than he could let his father Jesse's flock be ravaged. The armies of Israel were precious to him because they were God's people, over whom he had been anointed as king (1 Sam 16:13).

In the terms adopted by our Lord here, Saul was merely a porter, a superficial caretaker who was not courageous enough to stand up to the threat, a hireling. (Note the implication of 1 Sam 10:27 that his supporters at his coronation gave him gifts.) David showed himself the true shepherd of the sheep by his willingness to risk his life to attack their foe.

Later, the Lord will describe his people as a gift entrusted to him by the Father (v.29), placing himself in the same position as David, who “kept his father's sheep,” 1 Sam 17:34.

13 The hireling ... careth not for the sheep.--This is why he flees. By contrast, Peter testifies of our Lord, “he careth for you” (1 Pet 5:7). Sometimes we may not perceive his care, like the disciples in the boat on the stormy sea (“Master, carest thou not that we perish?,” Mark 4:38) or Martha complaining about Mary (“Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?” Luke 10:40). But he showed his care in both cases because he did not desert them.

So this is the point of the Lord's first claim to be the good shepherd. He is motivated, not by a salary, but by his personal care and sense of responsibility for the sheep. The focus is on his attitude toward the sheep.

It is worth distinguishing the various characters who have been introduced. Augustine: this passage teaches us what we ought to desire, what we ought to avoid, and what we ought to endure in the government of the church.

- We ought to desire the good shepherd, the Messiah, who truly cares for the sheep.
- We ought to avoid the thieves and robbers, the false Messiahs, who seek only to destroy the sheep.
- We ought to endure the hireling porter, “those who retain the pure doctrine, and who proclaim the truth, as Paul says (Phil 2:21), to serve a purpose rather than from pure zeal” (Calvin). So David endured Saul for the sake of the office that he holds, so the Lord exhorts the disciples to give appropriate honor to the scribes and Pharisees because “they sit in Moses' seat” (Matt 23:2); and so Paul apologized for inadvertently reviling the high priest in Acts 23:3. Augustine (Tractate 46) has an excellent discussion of how the hireling flees from the wolf (Satan) by refusing to rebuke erring believers.

In addition, there is a difference among the sheep, between those who are the Lord's and those who are not, and between all the sheep and the wolf (Satan?), who seeks to destroy them.

14-16, The Good Shepherd who Obeys his Father

The next paragraph picks up the notion that he has this responsibility from his father. Vv. 14-15 are a

chiasm, ABBA, which is more clearly seen if we translate “even so” in v. 15 more accurately as simply “and.”

14 I am the good shepherd, ... and I lay down my life for the sheep.--This is the outer member. It describes the Lord as the good shepherd, in the same terms as v.11.

The inner members describe two instances of reciprocal knowledge: Christ and his sheep, and Christ and his Father. The “as” at the start of v. 15 looks backward, not forward, and compares the two: “My sheep and I know each other, in the same way as the Father and I know each other.”

I know my sheep, and am known of mine.--This repeats the theme of vv. 3-4.

- I know my sheep ~ he calleth his own sheep by name
- I ... am known of mine ~ they know his voice

We have seen that this knowledge precedes the sheep's salvation. They recognize their shepherd even while they are still in the mixed fold. This knowledge is not casual or incidental, but rooted in the most basic ordinances of the universe. *ginwskw* is the verb used to describe the intimate knowledge that joins a man and a woman (Gen 4:1). Christ and his people recognize one another deeply and intimately. He makes this clear by comparing it to another example of such knowledge.

15 the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father.--The mutual knowledge between the Father and the Son exceeds our imagination. Consider some of its characteristics:

It is eternal:

- **Proverbs 8:22** The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.
- **John 1:1-2** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.

It is glorious:

- **John 17:5** And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

It is loving:

- **John 14:31** But that the world may know that I love the Father;
- **John 15:9** As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you:

It is obedient:

- **John 8:55** Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying.

Amazingly, this reciprocal knowledge is here presented as the prototype and model for the mutual knowledge of Christ and his people!

- The Father chose us for the Son before the foundation of the world, Eph 1:4.
- The Son gives us his glory, John 17:22
- The Son loves us, John 15:9
- We are to obey the Son, John 14:15

We have already said that the advance of 14-16 over 11-13 is moving from the Savior's care for the

sheep to his relation to the Father. Here he introduces this second paragraph by basing the first on the second. "I have told you that I give my life for you because, unlike a hireling, I care for you. Now you need to understand that this care for you is grounded upon and reflects the loving relationship between me and the Father."

16 other sheep I have, which are not of this fold.--Jeremiah and Ezekiel foretold the coming of a Davidic shepherd to gather Israel and repair the damage done by Israel's unfaithful leaders. The mixed fold of 10:1-5 was the temple. But there are others who were never part of the temple, either in sincerity or in hypocrisy, as Isaiah foretold (49:6),

And [God] said [to his Servant, vv. 3,5], It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

Note that they are already his sheep, though they have not yet been brought into the one fold of the one shepherd. First we are his sheep, by divine decree; then we demonstrate that state by responding to his voice.

them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice.--That is, they enjoy the same mutual knowledge with him that the Jewish believers do.

there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.--Before, there were multiple allegiances (multiple shepherds) even within the Jewish fold, and there were others who were not even in that fold. When the Lord has finished his work, all of his sheep will be gathered into a single fold, over which there will be only one shepherd.

17 Therefore doth my Father love me.--The relation between the Father and the Son includes the Father's gift of his people to the Son and the Son's willingness to redeem them. Of course, the Father loves the Son absolutely and eternally (17:24, "thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world"; 15:9, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you"; cf. Prov 8:30), but takes special delight in the Son's obedience to his redemptive mission.

I lay down my life, that I might take it again.--The association of *tqhmi* with *lambanw* expands our understanding of why the Lord uses *tqhmi* to describe his death. These two verbs occur together again in 13:4, where they refer to removing and taking up an article of clothing. In fact, *tqhmi* is attested elsewhere in Greek literature in the sense of "doff [clothing]," cf. the parallels in Herodotus and Josephus cited in BDAG. Paul uses the same imagery (if not the same verbs) in Col 3:8-12.

The Lord views his life as a garment that he can lay down and take up again. His *person* is more than his physical *life*. He In the same way, we should not cling to this life as essential to who we are, but treat it as a garment, something of utility for our present circumstance, but of no lasting value.

18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.--His enemies will claim to have authority over him. Pilate will claim (19:10), "knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" But in fact his only power is what God has given him (19:11). The Lord's death happened on his timetable, and completely under his control.

power to lay it down ... to take it again.--The Greek word is better translated "authority." He has already mentioned his authority to judge (5:27), and will later mention his authority to give life to his people (17:2), but both of those depend on the transaction here described.

This commandment have I received of my Father.--After his claim to have "authority," one would expect him to say, "This authority have I received of my Father." But it is more than authority that he

has received—it is a commandment. His work of redemption is a matter of obedience to the Father's command, fulfilling the Father's work.

10:19-21, Division because of the Lord's Words

19 There was a division therefore again.--As in the first panel (9:16), so in the second, the Lord's revelation of himself leads to division. Yet there are several contrasts with the first division: its subjects, its cause, and its content.

among the Jews.--This division is distinct from that of v. 16 with regard to its *subjects*. There, the division was among the Pharisees, who are a mixed bunch in John. Nicodemus is sympathetic, while others oppose the Lord. But the title “the Jews” indicates a much more uniformly opposed group. Yet even here there is a division.

for these sayings.--There is also a distinction with regard to the *cause* of the division. In v. 16 the basis was the Lord's *deeds*, while here it is his *words*. This contrast characterizes the relation between the two panels: the first focuses on the miracle of healing the blind man, while the second focuses on the Lord's speech about the shepherd and the sheep.

The emphasis on the Lord's words is emphasized in the arguments of the two groups who are divided.

20 He hath a devil, and is mad.--The *content* of the division is whether or not the Lord has a devil. Before, it was whether or not he was a sinner. The charge has escalated, from simply not being of God to being of Satan.

why hear ye him? ... these are not the words.--Here again we see the emphasis on the Lord's words as the *cause* of the division, in contrast with his works in 16. But they have not forgotten those works, as the end of v. 21 reminds us, “Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?”

The escalation is interesting. The Jews were steadfastly united in denying the Lord's works, but his words open up a division even in that antagonistic group. Sometimes we may think that when a spoken testimony fails, it would be nice to have a miracle available. But it is the word of God that is quick and powerful (Heb 4:12) and able to reach people who are blind to the works of God in creation (Rom 1).

10:22-39a, Debate over the Lord's Words

Just as in the first panel the division over the Lord's works led to a debate, so here we have a debate growing out of the division over the Lord's words.

22 the feast of the dedication ... winter.--This is the only biblical reference to the Feast of the Dedication, which commemorated the victory of Judas Maccabaeus over the Syrians in 164 BC. Antiochus Epiphanes had defiled the temple three years earlier, but Judas and his comrades cast out the defilers, purified the temple, and restored the true worship of God.

After the events of the previous chapter, the casting out of the blind man and the Lord's disparaging description of the temple hierarchy as “porters” guarding a mixed flock and “hirelings” who do not truly care for the sheep, it is difficult to miss the significance of this time note. John is describing Jesus as the new Judas Maccabaeus, restoring the temple from the pollutions of those who had control over it.

23 Solomon's porch.--This was a portico, roofed but open on the sides, that surrounded the court of the Gentiles. It was part of the temple compound, but outside the most sacred area where only Jews

could go. The Lord had been in that inner area, the court of the women, in ch. 8, but now he is outside the wall of separation.

As in the first panel, the debate consists of three interchanges between the Jews and their adversary, followed by their rejection. Though the focus of this panel is on the Lord's words, each of his responses to them appeals as well to his miraculous works (25b, 32, 37-38).

24, The Jews: Direct Question

24 Then came the Jews round about him.--Encircling him, to prevent his escape. Cf. Psa 3:6 "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set *themselves* against me round about"; Psa 22:16, "for dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet"; Psalm 118:10-12 "All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them. ¹¹ They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. ¹² They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them."

How long dost thou make us to doubt?--We can improve this translation. The Greek expression is literally, "lift up our soul." It occurs elsewhere in the Greek Bible and in Josephus only of someone lifting up his own soul, e.g., Ps 25:1, "Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul." In this case, it refers to an attitude of spiritual expectation.

Morris claims that this sense is impossible here, but on the contrary, it is quite appropriate. "How long do you stir up our hopes?" They are pretending to be sympathetic, but in reality, they are trying to trap him, to get him to make an explicit claim that will allow them to condemn him, like David's adversary (probably Ahithophel) in Psa 55:21, "*The words* of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war *was* in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet *were* they drawn swords."

If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.--This is essentially the question posed to John the Baptist in 1:9ff. But that was before the opposition had arisen. Now they want a bold, unambiguous claim that they can use to accuse him.

25-30, Jesus: One with the Father

25 I told you.--He has made many claims already that none but the Messiah could make (5:17 God as his Father; 8:12 the light of the world; 8:24 I am; 8:58 before Abraham), but probably the reference here is to the immediate discourse, "I am the good shepherd." The clear parallels of the shepherd metaphor with Ezek 34:23,24; Jer 23:5,6 show that he is claiming to be this promised Davidic shepherd.

ye believed not.--Otherwise they would not be standing threateningly around him, and persisting in their questions. They are not really in doubt. Their motive here, as in the repeated question in 9:26, is to find something on which to condemn him, and he answers them just as did the man born blind.

the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.--5:31-37 identified three witnesses to Jesus: in increasing order of probative value, John, the works, and the Father through the Scriptures. They have rejected the scriptural claim based on the prophecies in Ezekiel and Jeremiah of the coming shepherd, so now he backs down one step to the miracles.

26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep.--A striking statement. Belief or unbelief results from one's status as a sheep, not the other way around. His flock consists of those whom the

Father has given him (v.29), and if one is not among those whom the Father has given to the Son, they will not believe. The same point has already been made in other words in 6:44, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.”

as I said unto you.--A reference either to 6:44, but since that was out of Jerusalem, more likely to 10:3-4, the parabolic version of the truth here presented. He now repeats that image.

<i>Vv. 3-4, 9</i>	<i>Vv. 27-28</i>
3 the sheep hear his voice:	27 My sheep hear my voice
and he calleth his own sheep by name,	and I know them
4 ... and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.	and they follow me

These close parallels with the proverb suggest that 28ff are also to be understood in its light.

28 Eternal life ... never perish.--This appears to be a commentary on “be saved” in v.9. “Eternal life” is a favorite with John—16/40 occurrences in the the Greek Bible are in John, and three more are in 1 John. The expression appears once in the OT (Dan 12:2; cf. the apocryphal Psalms of Solomon 3:12), but in both of those cases it is something that people receive after the resurrection. In John, believers have it now (3:36 “he that believeth [present tense] on the Son hath everlasting life”).

neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.--While this Greek expression does not appear in the Greek Bible, *arpazw* is the dominant translation of Heb *gazal*, and we do read of someone snatching something out of another's hand (*gazal miyyad*). In 2 Sam 23:21 and 1 Chr 11:23, Benaiah, one of David's mighty men, snatches a spear away from an Egyptian.

Here, the reference is to v. 12. “Pluck” is the same verb that describes what the wolf does to the sheep when the hireling runs away. As the promised good shepherd, he will not abandon his sheep.

29 My Father, which gave them me.--Once again, our mind is brought back to David, tending his father's sheep. The Lord holds his flock as a trust from his Father, and his love for his Father motivates him to care for them. But there is more.

My Father ... is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.--Not only are we protected by the Lord's zeal to honor his Father's trust, but we are also protected by the Father's own omnipotence. In entrusting us to his Son, the Father has not relinquished his own care for us, but continues to guard us with all his limitless strength.

This is certainly a contrast with David. He was faithful to Jesse's trust, but out in the wilderness, Jesse's strength could do him no good. By comparing his hand with the Father's hand, the Lord is leading up to a direct answer for their request for a clear claim to be the Messiah.

The reference to being secure in the Lord's hand and in the Father's appears to be an allusion to Deut 33:3.

Yea, he loved the people; all his saints *are* in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; *every one* shall receive of thy words.

Very few things are said to be in God's hand:

Individuals

- Psa 31:5 “into thine hand I commit my spirit”

- Psa 31:15 “my times are in thy hand”
- Prov 21:1 “The king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, *as* the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.”

Groups of people

Believers

- Eccl 9:1 “For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, *are* in the hand of God”

General

- 2 Sam 24:14 “And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies *are* great: and let me not fall into the hand of man.”
- Job 12:10 “in whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind”

Inanimate things

- Psa 95:4 “in his hand are the deep places of the earth”

Only Deut 33:3, Eccl 9:1, and John 10:28-29 speak of God's people (collectively, and distinct from unbelievers) as being in his hand. Eccl 9:1 in turn probably derives from Deut 33:3, so it is likely that the Lord has the Deut passage in view here.

There is a further link. The shift from “his” to “thy” in the second clause of Deut 33:3 is remarkable. “He” must be the Lord, from v.2, yet who can “thy hand” refer to? This must also be the Lord, yet the shift in number is reminiscent of what we see in Zech 12:10 nearly a thousand years later,

they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only *son*

The commentators say very little about this, but the reference must Messianic. Our Lord's words here reinforce that. Moses writes of God's people being protected by one who is God and yet distinct from the Lord, and the Lord speaks of our being in his hand, and also in the Father's hand.

But if he is indeed referring to Deut 33:3, the citation contains a stinging rebuke to the Jewish leaders. For the verse goes on to predict of Messiah,

“they sat down at thy feet; *every one* shall receive of thy words.”

This is what the man born blind did, and what the Jews refuse to do. The one into whose hand the Father has committed his saints is the one at whose feet they are to sit, in attention and obedience.

The hand and the foot remind us of two central elements in our relation to the Lord. His hand protects us while we sit at his feet to learn and obey. The two cannot be separated. Both elements pervade Deut 33:2-5:

- 2-3a, God gives his people the law, and loves them.
- 3b, the Messiah cares for them in his hand and teaches them at his feet.
- 4-5, Moses gave the law and was also king in Jeshurun.

Ultimately, we recognize this two-fold relationship when we call Jesus our Lord and Savior. A Savior who is not Lord has a hand but no feet; a Lord who is not Savior has feet but no hand. The Messiah has

both.

30 I and my Father are one.--This is a critical claim on the part of our Lord. We should note several things about it.

1. In English, the clause appears to be a claim to deity, and it was widely used in the early church in the christological controversies to counter Arianism. But if that is what it means, it goes too far, for it would make the Son identical with the Father, an early heresy known as Sabellianism or modalistic monarchianism, also called “patripassionism” because it leads to the conclusion that the Father died on Calvary.
2. It is important to recognize that “one” is neuter, not masculine. Contrast Gal 3:28, where “one” is masculine. In Gal, Paul speaks of believers' becoming collectively one new man in Christ (cf. Eph 2:15), a single new being, the body of Christ. Here, the Lord is not claiming to be identical with the Father (a claim that would be a new point in the context).
3. Thus Calvin correctly notes, “The ancients made a wrong use of this passage to prove that Christ is (*homoousious*) of the same essence with the Father. For Christ does not argue about the unity of substance, but about the agreement which he has with the Father, so that whatever is done by Christ will be confirmed by the power of his Father.” Other passages focus on the deity of Christ (e.g., John 1:1; 20:28), but that is not the point here.
4. Rather, the Lord Jesus is claiming to be united with the Father in purpose and power. This commonality of purpose is just what we see in the three-fold repetition of protection and direction in Deut 33:2-5. What the Father does, the Son does also, as did Moses as well. Like Moses, the Messiah zealously and perfectly pursues the Father's interests.
5. This same unity is offered to us in 17:11, 21-23, the same point that he made in vv. 14-15. (Thus this passage continues to follow the argument of that section.) We do not become the same essence as the Father, but we are united with him in purpose and bear his authority.
6. Yet, the Jew's response shows that this is still an extremely strong claim in their eyes. If he really is in complete alignment with the Father's purposes, they have no choice but to submit to his teaching, and that they will not do.

31, The Jews: Attempted Stoning

31 Then the Jews took up stones again.--The first time was in 8:59, when he took to himself the divine title “I am.”

32, Jesus: Why stone me?

Many good works.--Notably, healing the lame (ch. 5) and the blind (ch. 9), both distinctively Messianic miracles (Isa 35:5,6). Again, in the panel focusing on the Lord's words, his works continue to emerge as the back-up argument.

from my Father.--This is what is crucial. If he had simply done good works without claiming the Father's authority for them, if he had done them in his own name and for his own glory, they would have joined in praising him. But he claims to be one with the Father, bearing the Father's authority, and that is an office they are loathe to relinquish to him. *For deiknumi ek, cf. Jas 2:18; 3:13. The Father is the means by which he shows them the works.*

for which of those works do ye stone me?--A most pointed remark. He will force them to acknowledge that their objection is not to the works per se, but to the message that they convey.

33, The Jews: Accusation of Blasphemy

For a good work we stone thee not.--They cannot evade his argument. They cannot oppose the evidence of the works.

but for blasphemy; ... thou, being a man, makest thyself God.--This would be an appropriate response to 8:59, but not (as we have seen) to 10:30. Yet the Jews are not concerned about the details of his claim here. They hate him because he challenges their authority, because he insists that he and not the priesthood is the true representative of the Father. So they will trump up any charge they can to get at him.

34-38, Jesus: Defense of the Accusation

The Lord's defense shows that the point he was making was not his deity, but the authority he had from the Father.

In your law.--The reference is to Psa 82:6. "Law" here is used by synecdoche of the part for the whole; the Psalms were strictly part of the "writings" in the tripartite division of "law, prophets, writings." But here he uses the "law" to refer to the entire collection.

I said, Ye are gods?-- Compare also v. 1, which reads in Hebrew, "God stands in the congregation of god, he judges among the gods." This remarkable Psalm uses the title "God" of civil magistrates, as also in Exod 21:6; 22:8-9 ("judges"), to remind them that they minister to men on behalf of God, in his authority and stead (Rom 13:1-4). The Lord's interpretation of the verse is in keeping with this: he applies it to his claim to be of one purpose with the Father and to bear his authority. *The fact that the Lord takes this interpretation makes it difficult to accept the otherwise attractive suggestion of van Gemeren, followed in NET, that this is a polemic against the Canaanite gods.*

35 he called them gods.--That is, those who speak on God's behalf bear his title. Psa 82 makes it clear that these individuals in this case abused their position, yet God still refers to them by this title to emphasize the responsibility that they have abdicated.

unto whom the word of God came.--The phrase recalls the frequent prophetic claim, "the word of the Lord came unto me," 2 Sam 24:11; Hos 1:1; Joel 1:1; Zeph 1:1; Jer 32:6; Ezek 24:20. But here he speaks of "the word of God," and a more likely parallel is the exhortation to King Lemuel in Prov 31:8, "Open your mouth with the word of God, and judge all things fairly." Cf. Judg 3:20; Ezr 9:4, which are also contexts of judgment. Lemuel, Ehud, and Ezra deserved the title of "God" simply because, as king, he was a steward of the word of God.

and the scripture cannot be broken.--Here the Lord holds his hearers to the very word of Scripture. They cannot deny his argument without denying Scripture.

36 him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent.--This is an *a fortiori* argument. It was enough for those referred to in the Psalm to be called gods because "the word of God came" unto them after they were born. But some were designated much earlier. For example, the Lord told Jeremiah (1:5),

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."

If a king like Lemuel or a judge like Ehud, “unto whom the word of God came,” could be called “god,” how much more someone like Jeremiah, who was set apart before birth to represent the Lord. (And Jeremiah, like our Lord, needed this extra authority; Ehud judged the king of Moab, and Lemuel was over the lay population of Israel, but Jeremiah, like our Lord, clashed with the temple hierarchy of his day, Jer 26 and often.)

The Lord states it as a point to be assumed that he was sanctified and sent by the Father. This appears to be a claim to the Messianic prophecy of Isa 49:1,5,

The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. ... the LORD ... formed me from the womb to be his servant.

Their leading question in 24 was a request for a clear, plain statement that he is the Christ. He continues to provide this through applications of OT messianic prophecies to himself.

I said, I am the Son of God.--The Lord nowhere says this in John (though in 5:25 and 9:35 he indirectly describes himself as “the son of God” in the third person). He probably is referring to his common use of the title “my Father” (19x in John) or the vocative “Father” (7x in John) to describe God. John dominates other books in his use of these titles. It is one thing for a group to say, “God is our Father,” as we do in the Lord's Prayer and as Isaiah did in Isa 63:16. It is quite another for an individual to claim this direct and personal relationship, and it is preceded in the OT only in connection with the Messianic promises in 2 Sam 7:14 and Psa 89:26.

37 If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.--Because they do not accept his words, he turns their attention back to the witness of his works. Are they willing to deny his unprecedented healing of the lame and the blind, miracles that were unprecedented in the OT and that Isaiah 35:5,6 links with the messianic age? Like the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:16, they must have been saying among themselves, “that indeed a notable miracle hath been done ... *is* manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny *it*.”

38 If I do.--If you recognize my works as coming from God, and empowered by him, which you must, if you interpret them in the light of the OT prophecies.

Though ye believe not me ... that ye may know and believe.--Note the change in the object of belief. If they are unwilling to accept his words about himself, they should look at the witness of his works, and through them come to acknowledge that the Father has sent him. The discussion here goes back to the discussion in 5:31, 36 about his witness to himself. He here invokes the works as authentication of his claims.

the Father is in me, and I in him.--This reciprocal relationship is repeated in 14:10, 11, 20; 17:21. What is particularly striking is that it becomes the pattern for our relation with the Lord: 14:20; 17:21-23; 15:4. In fact, we have already been introduced to this relation in 6:56. Thus the Lord is here laying the foundation upon which he will develop the thought of 10:14, 15 that his relation with us is the same as his relation with the Father.

But what does it mean for one person to be “in” another? How should the Jews have understood our Lord's claim that the Father was in him, and he in the Father? Consider each relationship separately.

The Father is in me.--In 14:10, this is given as the power that lies behind the Lord's miracles:

the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

The very next verse (14:12) promises that believers will do great works “because I go unto my Father,”

which in turn will lead to the coming of the Holy Spirit. In past ages the Holy Spirit came “upon” people or was “with” them, but after the Lord's ascent, the Spirit will be “in” them (v. 17).

How could this have made sense to the Jews? The OT almost never talks about God or his Spirit being “in” people. The one exception is Ezek 36:27, where the indwelling Spirit causes people to walk in God's statutes and keep his judgments. Significantly, as we saw in 3:5, 10, the Lord expected Nicodemus to know of this passage (referring there to 36:25-27). This expectation suggests that here also, the Jews could be expected to know the passage

The Lord Jesus lived his life by the power of God's Holy Spirit within him. This is what it means for the Father to dwell in him. And in this he is our example. We enjoy that same indwelling, empowering Spirit, and on this basis can do great works for God.

I in him.--The New Covenant promise of Ezek 36 describes how God dwells in his people through his Spirit, but doesn't say anything about his people's dwelling in him. The New Testament does talk about this: our Lord's words here seem to anticipate Paul's extensive teaching about what it means to be “in Christ.” This relationship is the result of the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13), so this idea certainly fits into the New Covenant theme. But is there an OT root of this idea?

The closest I've been able to come is in David's frequent metaphor (Ps 18:2; 61:3; 91:2; 144:2), followed by Solomon (Prov 18:10), describing the Lord as his fortress and strong tower.

Psalm 61:3 For thou hast been a shelter for me, *and* a strong tower from the enemy. 4 I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings.

Proverbs 18:10 The name of the LORD *is* a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

David had the notion of God as a fortress into which he could flee for protection, and perhaps this is the Lord's sense here.

- Because the Father was in him, he had the power to do mighty works.
- Because he was in the Father, he was secure from all outward threats and dangers.

We enjoy these same two privileges. The Lord dwells in us through his Spirit, empowering us. And because we are in him, we are secure from all harm.

Looking back to the Psalms, our being in the Lord brings protection from harm. Looking forward to Paul, it refers to our place in the church, the body of Christ. This suggests that the church is a protection to us, and this idea is indeed borne out elsewhere in the NT.

- 1 Cor 5:5 and 1 Tim 1:20 speak of delivering someone to Satan, an apparent reference to excommunication (cf. 1 Cor 5:13), and suggest that this position entails great danger (“for the destruction of the flesh,” 1 Cor 5:5).
- Heb 10:19-25 speaks of the need not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, in relation to our need to exhort one another and to hold fast our profession.

We are not intended to live solitary lives in Christ. We are intended to build up one another, help one another, exhort one another. The body of Christ is a safe place to be. Outside it is danger. It is our rock, our fortress, our strong tower.

39a, The Jews: Attempt to take him

they sought again to take him.--This act of rejection corresponds to the excommunication of the man born blind in 9:34.

10:39b-42, Decision: Leave Judea and Believe on the Lord

he escaped out of their hand.--cf. 7:30, 44; 8:59; cf. Luke 4:29-30. John reminds us over and over that the Lord is immune to their opposition until the time comes for him to lay down his life.

40 And went away again beyond Jordan.--Recall the rhythm of the book, defined in 1:11, "he came unto his own [place]." Instead of the single journey from Galilee to Jerusalem in the synoptics, John relates no fewer than four visits of the Lord to Jerusalem. This is the end of the third; the fourth will be when he comes to die and rise again.

Just as the blind man withdrew from the temple, so the Lord here withdraws from the temple's city. The sentiment, if not the occasion, is that expressed in Matt. 23:37-38,

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not! 38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

into the place where John at first baptized—cf. 1:28. There are two likely reasons for this note.

First, the evangelist may intend here to draw a parallel between what preceded that note and what has preceded this one. Here, we have just heard the Jews' question, "If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly" (v. 24). There, John himself was fielding such questions from the Jews in Jerusalem (1:19ff). There, they had John's testimony concerning the Messiah; here, the Lord himself has recalled his own claims and his works. The evangelist is reminding us that their rejection of Jesus is not due to ignorance. Over and over they have directly confronted his claims, and have deliberately rejected them.

We'll see the second reason in a moment.

and there he abode.--This was apparently an absence of some time from Jerusalem. The events just reported were at the feast of dedication, December. He will return to Jerusalem for Passover, in April.

41 And many resorted unto him.--This is the second purpose for the comparison with John. The gospel opens with John baptizing in this place, and "Jesus coming unto him" (1:29). Since then, we have heard John yield place to Jesus in 3:30. Now Jesus is in the very same place where John was baptizing, and people are coming to him. The promises of ch. 1 have been fulfilled.

Thus the evangelist draws our attention to a comparison of Jesus with John.

John did no miracle.--The Lord has cited his miracles as evidence of who he is (5:36; 10:25, 32, 38). They set him apart from John.

all things that John spake of this man were true.--These people, unlike the Jews of Jerusalem, accepted the teaching of John about Jesus. They have recognized him as the promised lamb of God, who has come to take away the sins of the world.

This recollection of John's testimony is striking. Jesus has presented himself as the good shepherd, and now we are reminded that he is also the sacrificial lamb. As the hymn writer so poignantly reminds us,

Lo, the good shepherd for the sheep is offered.
The slave has sinned, and the son has suffered.

We are rapidly approaching the portion of the book that deals with the Lord's passion, so it is important that John's characterization of the Lord as the sacrificial lamb be brought back into view.

42 And many believed on him there.--Here is the final parallel with the panel describing the blind man. Just as that individual believed (9:38), so do these people.

Notes: Reciprocal Indwelling

The table shows the various links in this relationship. Those with 'm' describe it as “abiding” *menw*.

Inner	Outer	References
Son	Father	10:38; 14:10, 11, 20 ; 17:21
Father	Son	10:38; 14:10, 10m, 11; 17:21, 23
Son	Believer	6:56m; 14:20; 15:4m; 17:23
Believer	Son	6:56m; 14:20; 15:4m, 7m; 1 John 2:24m
Believer	Father	1 John 2:24m; 4:13m, 15m, 16m
Father	Believer	1 John 4:12m, 13m, 15m, 16m
Believers	Father and Son	17:21;
Father and Son	Believers	14:23; 2 John 1:9