

John 10:22-42 and 11:1-57

Coming Full Circle - Jesus leaves for what is basically the conclusion of his ministry where it began - back in the region of John the Baptist.

Chapter 11 begins the final trip to Jerusalem and the road to the cross. So far John has devoted 10 chapters to three years of Jesus' ministry. Now he'll devote 10 more chapters to one final week. of those three years.

We have a little time pass between the healing of the blind man and the rest of chapter 10. Now it's winter, in the middle of December, and everybody has moved from the open courtyards into the two porches that ran along the walls of the temple.

They're there to celebrate Hanukkah or the Feast of Lights or the Festival of the Dedication of the Temple

They would've lit those giant menorah we talked about before, but this was also a festival that took place in the people's homes.

Unnamed people in the crowd confront Jesus and wind up nearly stoning him again on charges of blasphemy, when they correctly perceive that he's claiming deity for himself. He also says some interesting things about those who believe in him, and, as is John's pattern, we'll soon see a seventh and final sign to prove what he has been saying.

Perhaps we should review what Jesus said about sheep earlier in this chapter.

John 10:1-5

John 10:7-10

John 10:14-18

Is Jesus saying what it sounds like he's saying:

that those who are his sheep already know him or recognize his voice and follow him and those who aren't predestined to be his sheep won't hear him?

that he knows which of us will be his sheep?

that he is the only door for the sheep and that all others are thieves and robbers? that there are only two ways: his way and the thief's way?

that he came to earth for the purpose of laying down his life for the sheep?

that he came to collect both Jewish and Gentile sheep into one flock?

that nobody could take his life unless he is willing for them to do so?

that he will die and then rise again?

(John 10:25-26) Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do

in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. "But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. (NKJV)

Why are they not of his sheep? Does that mean that they were predestined from eternity past to not believe and to be lost? That they were created for disbelief and condemnation?

If you were at the Bible study last week, you heard the preacher say that Pharaoh was troubling to him and something that he had never quite figured out. It reads like God hardened Pharaoh's heart and then punished him for having a hard heart. That just doesn't sound fair, does it?

Do you find that troubling? Confusing? Contrary to United Methodist belief?

Let's trouble you some more:

Exodus 9:16

Exodus 10:1

Exodus 14:15-18

Proverbs 16:4

Romans 9:18-23

I Peter 2:6-8

Jude 1:4

II Thessalonians 2:13-14

I Thessalonians 5:9

John 6:44-45

Acts 13:48

Hopefully that'll trouble you into further study and prayer and thought during the week.

Moving right along.

What about verses 27-29?

(John 10:27-29) "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. (NKJV)

Does that mean that we're "once saved always saved"?

Just because no one can snatch them out of Jesus' and God's hands, does that mean that they couldn't jump out on their own if they decided to renounce their faith or backslide?

Colossians 3:1-3

Are you getting uncomfortable just a little, beginning to wonder if you need to rethink some things you've always thought?

Let's move on the chapter 11. We're fast forwarding from Hanukkah and mid-December all the way closer to spring and maybe around April? It's not far from the Passover when Lazarus becomes sick.

Lazarus is identified as the brother of Mary who poured perfume over Jesus. Some find it interest-

ing that John assumes that his readers are already familiar with her because she's won't actually do this until the next chapter.

Remember, the people John's writing this down for have probably been listening to him and others preach the Gospel for years already and Jesus told us in Matthew 26:13 that:

The purpose of this illness is to bring glory to God and to glorify the Son. Bringing glory to God that He in turn gives and shares with the Son is a recurring theme in Scripture. It's presented as the overriding reason for everything, good and bad, that happens, and the purpose of our existence - not our own happiness and well-being.

John also consistently refers to the death of Jesus as his being glorified, so for raising Lazarus to life to glorify Jesus it will become the catalyst that leads the authorities to finally decide to kill him. Of course, there's also the matter of the cleansing or second cleansing of the temple that's mentioned in the other Gospels as the final straw, but there's no reason why it couldn't be both. The other three Gospels emphasize the cleansing of the temple because they don't talk about the raising of Lazarus and John doesn't mention the cleansing of the temple either because he's moved it to the first of the ministry because he arranges his material thematically, not chronologically, and either this is the same cleansing that the other Gospels leave at the end or the one they mention is a second cleansing that John doesn't need to mention since he's already talked about the first one that they didn't mention.

Remember, these Gospel writers had far more material to choose from than they could possibly fit into one book, so they picked and chose their material and how they arranged it according to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to fulfill God's purposes, not necessarily their own.

It does not mean that every place they seem to disagree that it's a contradiction or a mistake that shows how unreliable they are as historians.

Jesus has already proclaimed that he's capable of raising Lazarus, another characteristic of deity.

(John 5:21) "For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. (NKJV)

Martha and Mary both reproach him for delaying, but Martha speaks of her belief that God would still do whatever Jesus ask of Him.

Jesus says and does some shocking things:

(John 11:25-26) Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. "And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (NKJV)

Here Jesus proclaims that he is both the power of the resurrection (raising the physically dead) and the life (giving of salvation life to some of those who are raised).

Do we really know any dead people? Well, yes and no.

Sorta redefines some of our reasons for questioning God's goodness during a death, doesn't it?

The other shocking thing that Jesus did was to feel the grief and sadness of the occasion and shake with emotion and weep. The Greeks thought of their gods as incapable of being swayed emotionally by people

Hebrews 4:15

Romans 12:15

There is a difference in the resurrection of Lazarus and that of Jesus, which is symbolized by the way they came out of the tomb. Lazarus had to have the help of people to roll away the stone and then he came out still bound up in his grave clothes and still in his earthly body that would die again.

Jesus came back in a glorified heavenly body that left the earthly grave clothes behind. He didn't need any human help to get out. His stone was rolled away to show that grave was already empty, despite what you may have seen in some Easter dramas.

The reaction of the crowd was typical. Many believed. Some didn't. Others went and reported to the authorities.

The reaction of the authorities is also typical. They didn't deny that a great miracle, one that only God could have done, had taken place. They claimed to be afraid that the crowd would declare Jesus king, which is how they saw the Messiah, and then the Romans would destroy the nation to quell the rebellion that they assumed would follow. They revealed more of their true concern when they said that the Romans would come and take "our place." These are the priests who are Sadducees who are more than willing to collaborate with Rome as long as they had power and wealth and comforts. Even if Rome didn't intervene, their rabbis had taught that Messiah would come and fulfill the law and do away with sacrifices and maybe even the temple system itself, so if the Romans didn't take their position, Messiah would, and either was unacceptable.

Even if this man were Messiah and really was Son of God, they'd rather kill him than not be able to have God on their own terms and for their own benefit.

Another of their beliefs was that the High Priest acted as a prophet who spoke the Will of God, hence verses 49-52.

Jesus knows all this and knew that it would be the result of this last miracle, but he also knows that his hour or time has not yet come, so he withdraws to wait for the time for his arrest and trial, leaving the people wondering if he'll dare come to Jerusalem for Passover.