

John 10:22-42
Haggai 2
Psalm 122

“I and the Father Are One”

July 12, 2020

Are you familiar with the Jewish feast of Hanukkah?

What was Hanukkah—the Feast of Dedication?

More than 100 years before Jesus was born, the wicked king Antiochus Epiphanes had defiled the temple and left it empty.

For three and a half years, Antiochus prevented the Jews from offering sacrifices.

But then arose the Jewish hero Judas Maccabaeus

who defeated Antiochus’s armies and liberated Judea.

Judas was a great military leader.

He defeated an army of six thousand with an ill-equipped army of three thousand.

When the Syrians responded with an army of 60,000,

Judas routed them with only 10,000 men,

crying out to the “Savior of Israel, who crushed the attack of the mighty warrior by the hand of your servant David.” (1 Maccabees 4:30)

And on the 25th day of the 9th month (which is around the 25th of December on our calendar), Judas purified and rededicated the temple.

Since they had missed the Feast of Tabernacles by two months,

Judas Maccabaeus called for an eight-day feast to celebrate the restoration of the temple.

As the apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees puts it,

“They celebrated it for eight days with rejoicing,

in the manner of the festival of booths,

remembering how not long before, during the festival of booths,

they had been wandering in the mountains and caves

like wild animals.” (2 Maccabees 10:6)

It was remembered that Haggai 2 had spoken of how the word of the LORD

had come to Haggai the prophet on the 24th day of the ninth month,

declaring that “from this day onward,

from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month.

Since the day that the foundation of the LORD’s temple was laid, consider:

Is the seed yet in the barn?

Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate,

and the olive tree have yielded nothing.

But from this day on I will bless you.”

The Jews believed that this prophecy of Haggai was a sign.

Israel had not been blessed since the day of Haggai.

They had been ruled by foreign kings and persecuted in their own land.

But now Judas Maccabaeus would restore the fortunes of his people.

And so they kept the feast of Dedication–Hanukkah–
every year as a reminder of God’s faithfulness to his promises.

Psalm 122 is a pilgrim song – a Song of Ascents –
which Israel would sing as they were preparing for the feasts.

Sing Psalm TPH 122A
Read John 10:22-42

Did you know that Hanukkah is mentioned in the Bible?
In fact, did you know that Jesus celebrated Hanukkah?
He was in Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication–whose other title is Hanukkah.

There has been something of a debate in Reformed circles about this.
After all, the Feast of Dedication is *not* an inspired feast.
God never said to have a feast to celebrate the victory of Judas Maccabeus!

There is no divine authority for the Feast of Dedication –
just “church authority.”

In that way it’s sort of like “Christmas.”
God never said “Thou shalt celebrate Christmas” –
and as far as we know the apostles never did –
but the church has done it since at least the late third century.
But the Feast of Dedication is even more sketchy –
because it is not celebrating a biblical event –
it is celebrating an event in general church history.

So in that sense it’s more like “Reformation Day” – or “Thanksgiving Day” –
or, for that matter, “Saints Days.”

It’s worth noting that Jesus participates in the Feast of Dedication.
That’s not to say that Jesus is therefore endorsing every special holiday ever!
Having a saints day or three for every day of the year is hardly warranted from one verse!
But plainly Jesus was willing to dignify the Feast of Dedication with his presence.

Introduction: The Feast of Dedication...in the Colonnade of Solomon (v22-23)

²² *At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter,* ²³ *and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon.*

Jesus came to Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication,
the remembrance of the great victory of Judas Maccabaeus,
and how he had purified and rededicated the temple.
Why does John mention this?

Yes, John connects all of the events of his gospel with one of the feasts, probably because a great deal of Jesus public teaching would have occurred during the feasts when great crowds would gather in Jerusalem.

But John gives more detail in this introduction than he normally does. Normally he says, “now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast,” (3:23)
or “now the Passover, the feast of the Jews was at hand” (6:4)
or “Now the Jews’ Feast of Booths was at hand” (7:2)
or “Now it was the Sabbath day” (9:14)

If John gives more detail it is because the detail is important to the message. For instance, in 5:2, the additional detail describes the context of the invalid. And 7:37 mentions that it was the last day of the feast.

So when John says that “it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon,” he is doing more than just adding some color to the story.

(By the way, in Acts 3:11 we hear that Peter preached in Solomon’s portico... and in Acts 5:12 we are told that the apostles regularly gathered in Solomon’s portico – so this was a place that became well known to the early Christians as the place in the temple precincts where they would gather.)

Jesus comes to the temple that Judas Maccabaeus restored and rededicated (albeit, upgraded by Herod the Great) at the feast that Judas Maccabaeus instituted, and claims to be greater than Judas Maccabaeus.

He has already claimed to be the true temple (2:19), the “son of man” (9:35) and the “I am” who spoke to Abraham (8:56-58), but he has not yet openly claimed to be the Messiah.

1. “I and the Father Are One” (v24-30)

Our text starts with a question from the Jews (v24).

a. Are You the Christ? (v24)

²⁴ *So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.”*

The Jews gather around Jesus in the colonnade of Solomon— one of the porches around the outer court of the temple— and ask him, “how long will you keep us in suspense?
If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.”
The implicit question is,

“What are you going to do that is greater than Judas Maccabaeus?”
They think of the Messiah as a great military hero—like Judas.

And as Jesus walks in the colonnade of Solomon,
it is the perfect moment to claim the title of Messiah!
This is the portico that is *named* after the Son of David!
If you are the Messiah, this is the perfect location to proclaim yourself!

b. My Sheep Hear My Voice (v25-27)

²⁵ *Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me,* ²⁶ *but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.*

²⁷ *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*

But Jesus will not be lured into that trap.

He does not point to works like those of Judas Maccabaeus.

He says, “I told you, and you do not believe.

The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me,
but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock.”

The works that I do—giving sight to the blind, healing the lame, feeding the people—
these bear witness to Christ,
not the glorious victories of the great Judas Maccabaeus!

Yes, Jesus was willing to come to the temple and celebrate the works of Judas Maccabaeus,
because God had indeed blessed Judas and given him the victory
over those who dared to profane his temple.

Of course Jesus was willing to celebrate that,
because that *is* what he was about to do.

Jesus is about to destroy forever those who would profane his temple.

And so he tells the Jews

—and by “the Jews” John means the Pharisees and leaders of the Jews—

“You do not believe because you are not part of my flock.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”

The sheep hear the voice of the Good Shepherd and follow Jesus.

Do you hear Jesus?

Do you hear his voice as he calls you?!

c. I Give Them Eternal Life...My Father Has Given Them to Me (v28-30)

²⁸ *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.*

²⁹ *My Father, who has given them to me, ^[a] is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.”*

But Jesus goes on to distance himself from the image of Judas Maccabaeus.
The Maccabees had restored the worship of God,
and had defeated the enemies of the Jews,
but then came the Romans,
and the Jews were once again brought under foreign domination.

Jesus says that he gives his sheep “eternal life, and they will never perish,
and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”

The one who belongs to Jesus, who hears the voice of the Good Shepherd,
will never perish.

Why?

Because Jesus is the true son of his Father.

We have seen how Jesus does what he sees his Father doing,
he speaks what he has heard from the Father.

Now we hear how intimate is that relationship of Father and Son.

No one can snatch you from Christ,
because you have been given to Christ by the Father.

To be in the hand of the Son is to be in the hand of the Father,
because “I and the Father are one.”

I and the Father are one

Children, I want you to hear this.

Jesus says that he is one with the Father.

Because everything in the Christian faith comes back to this.

Jesus, this man who has been healing the sick and feeding the hungry,
is one with the Father.

After having sent Moses to destroy the Egyptians and lead his people out of slavery,
after having sent Joshua to be the great general who conquers Canaan,
after having sent David who felled the mighty Goliath,
after having sent Elijah who called down fire from heaven
against the soldiers who came to capture him,
after having sent Judas Maccabaeus who defeated armies
many times larger than his own,
he sent Jesus to heal sick people, feed the multitudes, and then die on the cross.

After sending all these humble men as glorious servants,
he sent his glorious Son as a humble servant.

But if you think about it – I gave a rather one-sided account of those heroes.

Before Moses lead his people out of slavery –
he had fled before the wrath of Pharaoh into the wilderness,
where he spent 40 years in exile.

Before David was crowned king of Israel,
 he spent many years in exile – running away from Saul.
Before Elijah called down fire from heaven –
 he also had fled from King Ahab into the wilderness.

When God bids a man come and follow him,
 he bids him come and die.

And yet Jesus says:

I and the Father are one.

What does that tell you about the Father?
 God had humbled *himself* to be captured by the Philistines –
 when they took captive the ark of the covenant
 and brought it into the temple of Dagon, their god.
Long before Israel ever went into exile –
 God himself went before them into exile,
 and demonstrated that he is a God who triumphs through weakness

Yes, there will be a Day of Judgment, when the Son will be revealed in all his glory,
 but first the Father sent his beloved Son on an errand of mercy

The whole of our covenantal relation to God hinges on this.
 It is only if the Father and the Son are one
 that we can have communion with God.
Over the centuries of prophets, priests and kings,
 many had claimed that God was the Father of Israel.
But no one had the courage to say it like this!

The Jews had asked Jesus to tell them plainly if he was the Christ.
 They got more than they bargained for!
 They got a simple summary of the entire gospel:
 that the eternal relationship of the Father and the Son
 now is made manifest in the relationship between Jesus and the Father,
 and that through this relationship between Jesus and the Father,
 the people of God will receive eternal life.

Jesus has not yet told them how he will do this (it will be through the cross),
 but it all comes back to the unity of the Father and the Son.

But when the Jews hear Jesus say that he is one with the Father,
 they immediately reach for the rocks.
But rather than run for the hills,
 Jesus stands his ground.

2. The Father Is in Me and I Am in the Father (v31-39)

And the second half of the passage also starts with a question.

The Jews had asked, “Are you the Christ?”

Now Jesus asks, “Why stone me?”

a. Why Stone Me? (v31-32)

³¹ *The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. ³² Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?”*

“I have shown you many good works from the Father;
for which of them are you going to stone me?”

The Jews reply “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.”

b. “You Are Gods” and the Son of God (v33-36)

³³ *The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.”*

Given the fact that Jesus had already claimed to be the “I am” who spoke to Abraham, Jesus’ answer is particularly interesting.

(Read 34-38)

³⁴ *Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’? ³⁵ If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— ³⁶ do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?”*

At first blush, it appears that he is backing off his claim to deity.

It appears as though he is saying, “hey, all Israelites are “gods” in a sense, so what’s the big deal?”

But you gotta read Psalm 82 first!

*God has taken his place in the divine council;
in the midst of the gods he holds judgment:*

² *“How long will you judge unjustly
and show partiality to the wicked? Selah*

³ *Give justice to the weak and the fatherless;
maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.*

⁴ *Rescue the weak and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”*

⁵ *They have neither knowledge nor understanding,
they walk about in darkness;
all the foundations of the earth are shaken.*

⁶ *I said, “You are gods,
sons of the Most High, all of you;
⁷ nevertheless, like men you shall die,
and fall like any prince.”^[a]*

⁸ *Arise, O God, judge the earth;
for you shall inherit all the nations!*

The problem in Psalm 82 is that the “gods” are judging unjustly.
The weak and the needy are being trampled under the feet of the judges of Israel.
But it is not every Israelite who is addressed as “gods,”
but only the judges of Israel are *elohim*,
and sons of the Most High.

Asaph declares the word of the LORD in verse 6:

“I said ‘you are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you;
nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince.’”

Psalm 82 was sung regularly in Israel’s worship.
Many Israelites would have had the entire Psalter memorized.
Certainly the leaders of the Jews would have known exactly which Psalm
Jesus was quoting from.

He’s not flattering them.

Why do you suppose Jesus says, “and Scripture cannot be broken”?

He’s not using Psalm 82 to level the playing field between himself and the Jews!

He’s saying you were supposed to be the *elohim*,
the sons of God who brought justice and righteousness to Israel.

But, Psalm 82 condemns you, and God will arise and judge the earth,
and he’s going to do that in me.

“If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken—
do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world,
‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said ‘I am the Son of God’?”

If you think about it –

and pretty obviously the Jewish leaders were smart enough to see it clearly! –
Jesus is saying that they were supposed to be ‘gods’ – sons of the Most High
who brought righteousness and justice to Israel.

But they have failed to do what they were supposed to do.

And so Jesus has come to succeed where Israel failed!

c. The Works of My Father (v37-39)

³⁷ If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; ³⁸ but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father. ” ³⁹ Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.

But watch how Jesus develops this, starting in verse 37:

“If I am not doing the works of my Father...”

What are these works?

The works that Jesus has been doing:

healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, feeding the multitudes...

If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me;

but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works,

that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.

The Pharisees are in Psalm 82:6-7—the unjust judges who are called gods,
and yet die like men.

Jesus is in Psalm 82:8—the God who judges the earth and inherits the nations.

The Father is in me.

I am in the Father.

This is just too much for the Jewish authorities.

Once again they seek to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.

It’s unlikely that this refers to some miraculous escape,

but you have to wonder:

was Jesus a sprinter?

or a big burly guy who just barreled through the temple?

or did he just slip away into the crowd?

But then again, Jesus *did* say in the previous chapter

that he had come to give sight to the blind –

and to blind the eyes of those who think that they see.

If Jesus can make blind eyes see,

then he can just as easily shut the eyes of the Jewish authorities.

Conclusion: “Everything John Said About This Man Was True” (v40-42)

⁴⁰ He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and

there he remained. ⁴¹ And many came to him. And they said, "John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true." ⁴² And many believed in him there.

So Jesus left Jerusalem—for the last time (save one!)
Now Jesus goes back to the place where John's gospel starts—
across the Jordan where John the Baptist had been baptizing.
Only one more time will he come to Jerusalem.

He came to the temple, but the Jews rejected him.
Or as John had put it in chapter 1:
"He came to his own, and his own did not receive him.
But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name,
he gave the right to become children of God." (1:11-12)

One last point...

The prophecy of Haggai was right.
It was indeed on the 24th day of the ninth month when God would bless his people.
Even Hanukkah—the Maccabean feast of Jewish nationality—points to Jesus!

And from that day on, the LORD indeed would bless his people!

And from the Feast of Dedication onward,
the flock is gathering.
At first Jesus' taught so as to prevent the crowds from coming to him,
but the voice of the good shepherd is irresistible
to those who have ears to hear.

Those who at first were uncertain are increasingly convinced
because while John did no sign,
everything that John said about "this man" was true.

And many believed in him there beyond the Jordan.

John tells us at the end of his gospel that these things were written so that you might believe.

Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?

That he is one with the Father?

Then let us sing Psalm 82 together,

as Jesus has taught us to sing it:

the Psalm of the overthrow of those who exalt themselves,
and the Psalm of the God who inherits all nations,

even our Lord Jesus Christ.