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John 10:22-42 -- I and the Father are One

Notes:

Vss. 22,23 - *At that time* -- The Greek also could be rendered as "Then it came to pass/happened...", which would serve as an introduction to a new context. *the Feast of the Dedication* -- This would be Hanukkah, a festival commemorating the cleansing and rededication of the Temple after recapturing it from pagan hands. It had been under the control of Antiochus Epiphanes for three years, until his forces were driven out by Judas Maccabeus in December of 165 B.C. In our immediate context, about two months had passed since the preceding conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees had occurred. *It was winter, and Jesus was walking... in the portico of Solomon* -- Winter in Israel is the rainy season, so Jesus was walking in the covered colonnade of Solomon's porch, located on the eastern end of the Temple. This later became a favorite gathering place for the early church (Acts 3:11; 5:12). It was out of the main flow of traffic, and offered not only protection from the rain or hot sun, but also some relative privacy. Here, these same features also make it a good location for an ambush.

Vs. 24 - *The Jews therefore gathered around Him* -- The Greek verb means to "encircle" or "surround". They were hemming Him in so that He could not escape their insistent demand to reveal His identity. Their body language was certainly in tune with the content of their abrupt, direct, confrontational speech. *How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ tell us plainly.*

Vs. 25 - *I told you, and you do not believe* -- Cf. Jn. 5:19-47; 8:12-59. Obviously, words were not enough to convince them. In fact, His words had only aggravated them more, not persuaded them. *the works that I do in My Father's name, these bear witness of Me* -- The clearest, most unquestionable testimony of Jesus' identity was to watch what He did.

Vs. 26 - *But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep* -- The word, "but", is a strong negative comparative word, meaning "rather" or "on the contrary". The problem was not that they did not have enough information, or that Jesus had not spoken boldly enough. "On the contrary, you do not believe for/since you are not out from My sheep". Their inability or unwillingness to trust in Him was because they were not His.

Vs. 27, 28 - *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me* -- Interrelationship and intimacy produces trust. *and I give eternal life to them* -- The words in Greek place emphasis on Jesus as the subject, "I (myself) give to them age-type life". He claims to not just introduce them to the path that leads to life, but to actually give them life. *and they shall never perish* -- The Greek is very emphatic, "and not never might they perish/be lost unto the age". In Greek, the double negative adds emphasis. *and no one shall snatch them out of My hand* -- Note the usage of figures from the shepherd/sheep word-picture. A shepherd watches over the sheep to prevent their being lost, perishing, or from being snatched away by predators.

Vs. 29 - *My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all* -- The word for "has given" means "He gave them to Me and they are still Mine". The action happened in the past and has ongoing results or implications. By the way, this statement does not necessarily support the Calvinistic notion of "the elect", i.e., some individuals being predestined to become "His sheep", while others always being unable to come to faith. All Jesus is saying is that the Father has given Him "sheep", and that the Jewish leaders confronting Him were not at that moment in that relationship with Him. *and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand* -- Unquestionably, none could steal from the hand of Him who is "greater than all". These past two verses clearly convey the concept of the security of the sheep. I used to believe that we could walk away from the Shepherd. In my attempt to explain the phenomenon of "backslidden Christians" or "apostates", I supposed that God would respect our free will and allow us to walk away from Him, if we so chose. The images in these verses strongly disagree with this idea. The emphatic language ("not never shall they perish"), the definitive act of the Father ("has given" with ongoing result), the repeated guarantee of safety (no one can snatch the sheep from either Jesus or His Father), and the very word picture itself (shepherds are supposed to keep sheep from straying) strongly argue that once you are truly part of His flock, you will never be lost. The true sheep of Jesus are eternally secure in their salvation.

Vs. 30 - *I and the Father are one.* -- The word for "one" in Greek is in the neuter case, meaning "one thing". In other words, Jesus was not by any stretch saying that He and the Father were merely in agreement. He was claiming to be "one thing" with the Father. There are two possibilities here: (a.) Jesus may be saying that what He does, the Father also does. The identification between Jesus and the Father is so complete that to listen to Jesus is like listening to the Father, to deal with Jesus is like dealing with the Father. (b.) Jesus is claiming to be one in essence with the Father, that He and the Father are somehow one and the same Being. Marcus Dods, commenting in The Expositor's Greek Testament, writes, "An ambassador whose demands were contested might quite naturally say: 'I and my sovereign are one'; not meaning thereby to claim royal dignity, but only to assert that what he did his sovereign did, that his signature carried his sovereign's guarantee, and that his pledges would be fulfilled by all the resources of his sovereign. So here, as God's representative, Jesus introduces the Father's power as the final guarantee, and claims that in this respect He and the Father are one. Whether this does not involve metaphysical unity is another question." Other passages in John to examine in order to understand this concept: 10:38; 14:7-12; 17:20-23. It is especially interesting that in the Jn. 17 passage Jesus prays for the same oneness for those who would believe in Him.

Vss. 31-33 - *The Jews took up stones again to stone Him.* -- Cf. 8:59. *Jesus answered them* -- In Jesus' response, He directs their attention to the good works which He showed them "out from the Father" and asks, "for which of them do you stone me?" In their response, they assert: *For a good work we do not stone you, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man make yourself out to be God.* -- Their accusation of blasphemy would only be true if He was not God, a possibility they would not even begin to entertain.

Vss. 34-36 - Jesus' response to them has two dimensions. On the one hand, he seems to be using the OT to show that what He said was not all that outrageous. On the other hand, He actually further asserts His unique origin and special relationship to the Father. *Has it not been written in your law* -- The passage He is about to quote is Psalm 82:6. By referring to an argument from Scripture, Jesus uses the pride and strength of the Pharisees against them. They were preeminent Bible scholars, and took great pride in their studies. *'I said, you are gods'* -- In Psalm 82, God confronts rulers and judges who have been unjust, and have not brought about justice for the poor, needy, and powerless. The statement quoted by Jesus refers to how God had exalted them to a high position as His representatives on behalf of the people. They were "gods" in the sense that they were to be mediators of God's truth and justice (cf. Ex. 7:1; Deut. 1:16,17). Because they had abused their authority, God was reminding them that they were mere mortals, accountable to Him. "I said, 'You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High. Nevertheless you will die like men, and fall like any one of the princes.'" Cf. Ps. 58:1,2. *If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came... do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God?'* -- Note the logic. If God called mere men "gods", then how can you be upset that I called Myself the Son of God (a lesser title), since I am more than a mere man (a higher being). On the one hand, Jesus seems to be saying that He had not done anything wrong, because God had called human beings "gods" before. Yet, while His claim of being the Son of God seems on the surface to be a lesser title, it was definitely Messianic imagery (Psa. 2). The Pharisees had themselves seen a claim to equality with God in that statement before (Jn. 5:17,18). On the other hand, His description of Himself as the one "the Father sanctified and sent into the world" definitely sets Him apart from the rest of humankind. In fact, it is only upon the supposition that He is a higher personage than they, or than the judges and rulers of the OT context, that His argument makes sense. It actually is a further claim of His heavenly origin and commission. (*and the Scripture cannot be broken*) -- This was set into the heart of Jesus' question to ground His argument on the clear authority of Scripture. This forced the Pharisees to deal with what He was saying. Also, by leaving His argument in the form of a question, He places the burden of coming up with a response upon them, before they would carry out their desire to stone Him. This statement reminds us that neither Old nor New Testament Scriptures can be summarily discarded or disregarded (cf. Mt. 5:17-20).

Vss. 37-39 - *If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me* -- Jesus draws their attention back to His activities, especially His miraculous signs, as His accreditation. He in effect says that if He is all talk and no corresponding action, then do not believe what He says. *but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works* -- Even though they do not trust or believe His words, they had better not disregard the obvious reality indicated by His actions. *that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father* -- The signs indicate the Father's presence in and with Jesus, and also Jesus' relationship with Him (cf. 9:16,32,33). This remark incited their renewed desire to arrest Him, but He escaped their grasp.