

# OpenTheo

## Misc. Teachings, Feast of Dedication (Part 1)



### **The Life and Teachings of Christ** - Steve Gregg

In this teaching by Steve Gregg, he discusses various topics related to the Feast of Dedication. Gregg opines on the motivations of the people who followed Jesus during his time, stating that some may have hoped for a political overthrow of the Romans. He then delves into the story of the fruitless fig tree and the healing of the disabled girl on the Sabbath. Gregg also explains the significance of Hanukkah and its relation to Christmas. Ultimately, he emphasizes the importance of accepting and following God's will, while still retaining free will.

### **Transcript**

We have a large amount of material that we should cover today in this class. We're going to begin by looking at Luke chapter 13. I think our last class brought us to the end of Luke 12, so at this point we're just picking up in the same order of events that they're recorded in the Gospel of Luke.

But we're going to take a portion of Luke 13, and then we're going to insert something before we take the rest of Luke 13. That insert is going to have to come from John. Whether we'll get through the entirety of Luke 13, including that insert in this class, is questionable.

There were present at that season some who told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered such things? I tell you no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell and killed them, do you think they were worse sinners than all the other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

Now, we're not given the motivations of those who came and brought this report to Jesus, nor do we know the details of it. It would appear that since it says Pilate had mingled these people's blood with their sacrifices, I think we're to assume that these people had been worshipping in the temple, offering their sacrifices, and were

mercilessly slaughtered in cold blood there. This is not unheard of for the Romans to do this kind of thing, and Pilate is known to have done this kind of thing on other occasions from history.

So there was apparently a case, it's not exceptional enough to be preserved in other history as far as I know, but apparently it either had happened recently, we don't know what the time frame was. Was this something that happened that day or earlier in the week, or was it an old complaint that the Jews were still holding a grudge against Pilate for something done years ago? We don't know, and therefore we don't know what the reason was that they brought this point to Jesus' attention. He suggests that they were thinking maybe the Galileans who suffered in this way were worse than other Jews.

Now, it doesn't seem likely that that was their principal thought, in bringing the point to Jesus' attention. It seems more likely that they were bringing the point to his attention to stir up his rage against Pilate. We know there were people who were hoping that Jesus, in fact, some hoped for nothing more than that Jesus would rise up with a band of followers and overthrow Pilate and the Romans and so forth.

And since Jesus was making no moves in that direction, some wanted to take matters into their own hands. We know of a case in John 6.15 where it says Jesus knew that they were about to come and take him forcibly and make him king. The Jews were.

But he hid himself and he prevented it. On another occasion later on that we have not come to, they're going to ask him a question about paying taxes to Caesar, which was a very politically volatile question at the time. It was one of the principal issues over which the Zealot Party had formed to say that it was unlawful for any Jew to pay taxes to a Gentile king, because that was in their mind a denial of God's kingship over them.

And the Zealot Party were a very controversial group. I think they had the general sympathy of most of the Jewish population, although most didn't join them actively. Sort of like Operation Rescue or something.

Most Christians don't go out and sit on the steps of abortion clinics, but most are secretly sympathetic, at least to their cause. And those who bomb abortion clinics and that stuff, they make up sort of a radical fringe of the pro-life movement. But most Christians are generally favorable toward pro-life as an issue.

And secretly applaud when progress is made or when people do radical things that may seem to advance the cause. I think that's probably how the Zealots were viewed, generally speaking. People try to get Jesus on the bandwagon.

They try to get Jesus involved in these political issues. Whether they were doing that here or not, we don't know. If they wanted to, they certainly failed in their effort.

It seems to me likely, though I can't say that it's certainly the case, that they were

hoping to get Jesus enraged. That people like his fellow Galileans, Jesus was known to be a Galilean, that people like himself had been innocently worshiping at their temple when the Romans came storming in and slaughtered them. And certainly that kind of thing makes the blood boil, even in people who are not Galileans.

I mean, just to hear of such outrage tends to make you want to stand up and do something. And since Jesus was himself a Galilean, perhaps they hoped even more that he would say, well, this is the last straw. I've been waiting too long.

I've been putting this off. It's time to overthrow that rascal Pilate. But if they were hoping that Jesus might do this, Jesus makes no allusion to that.

He raises the question of whether they thought maybe those Galileans were worse than other Jews. Which is a funny question to ask because that probably wasn't on their mind at all. But Jesus has a tendency to raise his own issues in situations where people are trying to raise an issue, try to get him off on a tangent.

But he's the one who sets the agenda for his conversations. And whatever they may have been hoping to accomplish by bringing this up, Jesus decides to give his own lesson from it. And he says, now, think about it for a moment.

Why do you suppose this happened to these Galileans? He doesn't even talk about Pilate and his wrong here. He just says, why do you suppose it happened to those people? Do you suppose that they were exceptional sinners under the judgment of God? Well, perhaps they were under the judgment of God, but they weren't exceptional in this respect because all of you can expect similar treatment from the Romans if you don't repent. There are going to be a lot more of you slain by the Romans if you don't repent.

And then he talks about the Tower of Siloam falling since he's on this vein. He says, and what about those 18 people whom the Tower of Siloam fell on? Now, there's a case you can't blame the Romans for, as far as we know. Again, we don't know much about this.

Maybe the Romans did knock it down on them, but there's no suggestion of it. It was probably just an old building that collapsed and there happened to be 18 hapless people standing in the wrong place and they got killed. Now, there's a case we can't blame the Romans for particularly, but a building falling, a natural disaster like that, maybe there's an earthquake, who knows.

Do you suppose that people who perish in those kinds of natural disasters are more the object of God's wrath than others who don't suffer in that way? And again, he says the same thing. No, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Now, the word likewise in verse 3 and verse 5 both suggest in the same manner.

He doesn't just say you're going to perish if you don't repent. He does say that, but that's not all that he says. He says you will perish in like manner.

So, he's not just talking about going to hell. We don't know for sure that any of these Galileans did go to hell or that the people on whom Siloam fell, the tower fell, that they were in hell. That's not the issue.

The issue is that their lives were cut short. Their lives were cut short by, in one case, Roman tyranny, Roman hostilities, and in the other case, by falling structures. And we know from Josephus' account of the destruction of Jerusalem that many hundreds of thousands of Jews died in similar manner.

They perished at the hands of the Romans. They perished by the walls being knocked down on them, the temple falling on them, and so forth. So, my thought is that Jesus says, well, listen, I'm not going to even get involved in this political question.

What do you expect of tyrants? I mean, it's not like we're here to disciple the pagans. Pilate does atrocities. Most kings do.

That's kind of what you expect from a pagan. The question is, where do you stand with God? Now, by the way, those whom Pilate slew, they came to an early death, but what difference would it have made if they had not come to an early death? Everyone comes to death. The issue is, where do you stand at the time of your death? Have you repented of your sins? Or are you a sinner? And all sinners are under God's judgment, in some sense.

And therefore, he's saying, you know, he uses this as a lesson not to talk about how corrupt Pilate is, which may be what they were hoping to underscore, or not even to give a theological teaching about whether God's hand is in natural disasters, like falling buildings. But he wants to use the lesson to say, well, these people have suffered nothing exceptional. They are no more sinful than you are.

And unless you repent, their doom is not much different than what yours will be. And that's the point he chose to make. So again, it's one of those times where he makes some kind of ominous prediction about his generation facing the Holocaust of 70 A.D. And then he illustrates with a parable, as he liked to do.

In verse 6, he also spoke this parable. A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard. And he came seeking fruit on it and found none.

Then he said to the keeper of the vineyard, look, for three years, I've come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down. Why does it use up the ground? But he answered and said to him, sir, let it alone this year also until I dig around it and fertilize it.

And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that, you can cut it down. Now, Jesus never explains the meaning of this parable, though it seems not difficult to imagine what it's talking about.

Here we have a fruitless fig tree. The owner of the fig tree has done a great deal and has shown great patience with it, although it has not produced the fruit he's hoped for. He's waited several years and it just hasn't really been any good.

So he's thinking about getting rid of it. But somebody else in the story says, well, let's just give it a little while more. Just the rest of this year.

And then if that doesn't produce any fruit, then we'll get rid of it. Now, who is whom or whatever? Who is who in this parable? Well, the fig tree almost certainly is a reference to Israel. Notwithstanding what I've said to you before, when talking about Jesus saying, behold, the fig tree, when it puts forth its buds and so forth, I've mentioned to you that many people in the Olivet Discourse, when Jesus mentions the fig tree blossoming and so forth, they apply that to Israel.

They usually do so by suggesting that the fig tree is a commonly used figure for Israel in the Bible. And my comments when we talked about that were that as near as I can tell, in the Old Testament, there is no case where the fig tree represents Israel, and therefore we can hardly call it an established symbol of the nation of Israel. But that doesn't mean that in some isolated cases, a fig tree or a vine or any other particular thing might not serve in a given context to represent Israel.

And in this case, it would seem to be. Another case would be when Jesus actually cursed, later than this time, in the final week of his life, he actually cursed a fig tree that didn't bear fruit. He said, no one shall ever eat fruit from you again.

Now, he never applied that to Israel, nor does he here. But most scholars would agree, I think most even casual readers would agree, that he probably was referring to Israel here. Just as in Isaiah 5, we have a similar situation with a vine, that the owner has done a great deal to try to get it to produce fruit, but because it doesn't, he decides he's getting rid of it.

And that vine and that vineyard are Israel. So here, it would seem to be the same idea, but with a different image. But not very different.

Now, the owner would probably be God himself. The maker of Israel, the boss, the king, the Lord. And his fig tree has not produced anything of value.

So he's thinking about getting rid of it. It's just burdening the ground. It's just taking up nutrients from the soil that other plants more fruitful might use, and bring more fruit to him.

So he's suggesting it's destruction, but somebody else in the parable says, well, let's just give it a little while more. And that other person is probably Jesus. He's saying, let me do a little more work on it.

Let me dig it, aerate the soil, fertilize it a little bit. Let's give it as much opportunity as we can. Let's just give it a little while longer.

And if it doesn't produce fruit, then we'll do what you say. We'll get rid of it. And that's how the parable ends.

We're not told whether the fig tree produced the fruit, whether it eventually got cut down or what. But the parable would seem to be suggesting that Israel was looking at the end of God's patience with them. That there was very little opportunity left for them to produce any fruit.

He had just said, if you don't repent, you're all going to perish. And I think he illustrates it with this parable. This fig tree is going to perish if it doesn't produce the fruits of repentance.

Now, it is Jesus who is giving it its final chance. They have not responded to former work done on them by the prophets, but Jesus is their last chance. He's going to give them a little more fertilizer.

He's going to give them a little more advantages. He's going to speak to them a little longer. A few more chances.

But if they don't receive him, that's the end. There's no more hope. They'll be cut down as God has suggested.

Now, a side issue here is that some people have thought this might be a reference to the length of Jesus' ministry. No one knows for sure how long Jesus' ministry was. We know there were at least three Passovers.

But that being so, his ministry might not have been much longer than two years, because he died at a Passover. If you measured exactly two years previous to that, you'd have a total of three Passovers. One at each end and one in the middle of the two years.

So, his ministry might not have been much more than two years, but it is thought by many that there was a fourth Passover alluded to in John 5. And even if it was not alluded to there, that there may have been one unmentioned elsewhere, which would make his ministry longer, more like three and a half years. In the prophecy of the 70 weeks, the Messiah comes, but he's cut off in the midst of a week. In the prophecy... Now, I'm talking about Daniel chapter 9, verses 24 through 27.

Daniel 9, 24 through 27. We won't look there now, but basically the Messiah is cut off in the midst of a week. In that prophecy, it is generally believed that a week represents seven years.

If he is literally cut off in the exact middle of that week, then it would be after three and

a half years' ministry. And some believe that is what is the length of his ministry. In fact, traditionally, most people talk as if that's an established biblical point, that Jesus' ministry was three and a half years.

It is nowhere said to be so. However, this parable of Jesus is sometimes thought to confirm that. Because the owner of the vineyard... Yeah, it's a vineyard, and of the tree.

He says, I've been waiting for three years. I've come seeking fruit on this tree, and there's none. And the person who appeals on behalf of the tree says, well, let's just give it the rest of this year.

Now, it may be that the three years represents the length of time Jesus had already been preaching to them, and they've not responded. But he's going to give them a portion of another year. Thus, speaking of the length of his ministry being about three years plus.

Not impossible. Although it's also possible that three years may just be a number picked from a hat that represents the whole period of time that God had been waiting for Israel and receiving no fruit. So, we can't establish too much on the basis of the three years there, as far as whether that's the length of Jesus' ministry or not.

But some have used it, and felt that that might give us a clue. Now, verse 10. Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath, and behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up.

But when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said to her, Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity. And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight and glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath.

And he said to the crowd, he didn't dare speak directly to Jesus, he spoke past Jesus to the crowd, There are six days on which men ought to work, therefore come and be healed on them, but not on the Sabbath day. The Lord then answered him and said, Hypocrite, imagine speaking to the pastor of the church in front of the whole congregation this way, Hypocrite, does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his donkey from his stall and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound, think of it, for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath? And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him. Well, another case of Jesus healing a person.

Now, was this person demonized? It says in verse 11 that she had a spirit of infirmity. It also says in verse 16 that she had been bound by Satan for eighteen years. Now, it's not certain whether this is just a matter of speaking about sickness.

I mean, after all, when Peter said in the household of Cornelius that Jesus went about healing all who were oppressed by the devil, there are some who feel that he's talking about the physical healing Jesus did and that all sickness is an oppression of the devil. In which case, this woman's condition, even if it were not specifically a result of demon possession, could have been regarded as something the devil was imposing on her. She was bound by Satan.

However, it's unusual for the gospel writer to use the word spirit in a context like this without meaning a demon. Almost always a dumb spirit, a deaf spirit, an unclean spirit refers to a demon. And I think it most likely that spirit of infirmity also refers to a demon.

Now, here's another case like that of a dumb spirit or a deaf spirit where demon possession does not result in erratic behavior. In some cases, of course, in the Bible it does, but in some cases it's not apparently the case. Nothing about her behavior is spoken of.

Apparently, her behavior is unexceptional. She was simply disabled. She was handicapped.

She was bent over. She couldn't stand up for 18 years. Now, this could have been, you know, the same kind of problem could have arisen from an injury or from some kind of, you know, disease like, I don't know, some spinal disease or something.

But it is said that she was bound by Satan. It is said that she had a spirit of infirmity. Therefore, I presume that this was not a biological problem.

It was not the result of an injury. It was the result of demon oppression of her life or demon possession. And Jesus, though one thing he didn't do on this occasion, which he did in most cases when casting out a demon, he didn't address a demon.

He didn't say, come out of her or anything like that. He just said, you are loose. He said she was loose.

But that in itself doesn't prove that it wasn't a demon. It is true that Jesus usually did, you know, speak directly to the demon. But not necessarily was that the universal way of his dealing with such things.

In Matthew chapter 15, a woman of Tyre and Sidon, a Syrophenician woman, came to Jesus saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David. My daughter is severely demon possessed. Matthew 15, 22.

And it goes on, but he answered her not a word, etc., etc. Then finally in verse 28, Jesus answered and said to her, O woman, great is your faith. Let it be to you as you desire.

And her daughter was healed from that very hour. Now note, here is a case of demon



possession. Yet her restoration was called healed in verse 28.

And Jesus did not command a demon to leave. He just announced that the situation was remedied. Therefore, there are occasions when Jesus did relieve demon possessed persons without speaking directly to the demon.

And even the result is called a healing. According to Matthew 15, verse 22 tells us the girl was demon possessed, but verse 28 says the girl was healed of her condition. Therefore, we have to allow some flexibility of language in the Gospels.

This woman was probably demonized with a spirit of infirmity. Like the girl, she needed to be healed. Like a man with a blind or a deaf or a dumb spirit had to be healed.

There was an epileptic demon Jesus dealt with once. And no doubt, the result of deliverance looks very much like a healing from that disease. Now, we have said before that not all sickness, not all handicaps are caused by demons, but some apparently are.

And therefore, we shouldn't have any stereotype ideas about what a demon possessed person looks like or behaves like. Some of them are quite normal people who just look sick or disabled in some way or handicapped. But again, we don't want to say that handicapped people are all, that their problem is always caused in this way by demons.

We just have to leave that door open. There's a possibility that the Bible has at least this and a few other similar cases. In verse 14, you'll notice that it says that Jesus healed her on the Sabbath.

So again, what happened is called a healing, but that doesn't rule out that it was a deliverance from a demon. Now, here Jesus told her she was loose from her infirmity, and he also put his hands on her. It's not common in the Gospels for Jesus to put his hands on demon-possessed people.

In fact, it's so uncommon, I remember reading a book by a fairly well-known Christian writer who said that when you pray for healing, you should lay hands on him, but you should not lay hands on him when you're trying to cast demons out. This person indicated that that was something Jesus did not do, and therefore the laying on of hands is not appropriate in such cases. But I'm of the impression this woman did have a spirit, a demon, and yet Jesus did put his hands on her.

While that was not ordinary procedure for casting out demons, there are other things about this passage that don't show his ordinary procedure, but no one has ever said that Jesus had to do it the same way every time. Now, as I said, the ruler of the synagogue, who was like the pastor of the church, or the master of ceremonies there, excuse me, Jesus was the guest speaker, you know, like the visiting evangelist or something. The pastor is upset with what the visiting evangelist has done.

He's broken protocol. He's done something that traditionally is not done in that church. Healing on the Sabbath, as we know from previous passages in the Gospels, it was something that was considered to be illegal on the Sabbath.

It was irreligious. It was a violation of God's law. But Jesus was no doubt a fairly intimidating type of person.

I get that impression, for example, from verse 17, when he had said these things, his adversaries were put to shame. Jesus often had people, his adversaries, so put to shame by showing the error of what they were thinking that they didn't dare to come back for more. And this guy was probably fairly intimidated, first of all, by the authority demonstrated by Jesus in healing this person.

And secondly, probably Jesus' whole manner and the evident truth of what he was saying seemed a little hard to debate against. And yet the man was still bound by his traditions. He couldn't believe that it was right, what Jesus did, because it happened to have happened on the Sabbath.

But the man won't address Jesus directly. He addresses the congregation. He blames them.

Here he beats the sheep because they happen to be sick. And they come to church on Sunday. Actually, this is, of course, the synagogue on Sabbath.

But because they come in their handicapped condition, he blames them. This obviously was a backhanded rebuke to Jesus. If this woman had come and Jesus had not healed her, she would have received no rebuke.

And she didn't ask for healing. Jesus initiated it and performed it from beginning to end. It obviously was not her doing, but the ruler of the synagogue, intimidated by Jesus, but wanting to criticize Jesus and rebuke him, did it in sort of a backhanded way.

And, you know, rebuked the people for coming for healing on the Sabbath. And Jesus just spoke directly up on their behalf and against this man. He called him a hypocrite in front of his own congregation.

And he points out again, as he frequently does in other situations, that this criticism that's been leveled against him reflects an inconsistency in the thinking of Jesus' critics. Sometimes he'll remind them of what David did and the parallel to what David did, which they don't criticize, and what Jesus' disciples do, which they do criticize. It's essentially the same thing.

Why do you criticize these guys, but you don't criticize David? Likewise, when Jesus healed the man with the withered hand, he pointed out that, you know, you will pull a sheep out of a ditch on the Sabbath morning, if you do a kind deed for a sheep, should

you not do a kind deed for a human, who's worth more than a sheep? And Jesus often pointed out that their own practices reflect an awareness of some of the principles that he lived under all the time. They had never really defined or identified what some of those principles were, so that they didn't apply them consistently in their own lives. But he points out, listen, your ox has to drink water every day, does it not? Therefore, I presume that even on the Sabbath day, you untie the ropes that bind it to the stall, and you leave it out, and you give it water.

Now, by unbinding an ox on the Sabbath day, you don't consider that you've violated the Sabbath law. I've done nothing more than this, except that I've done it for a human being, who's worth more and has God's sympathy more than an ox does. Furthermore, he didn't point this out, but his healing of this woman actually involved less actual labor than the leading of an ox out to drink.

Jesus actually just spoke a word and put a hand on her. They did more labor on the Sabbath by leading their ox to drink than he had done there, but that wasn't the point he made. He just points out that they're hypocritical and inconsistent, and they think that it's more important to loose an ox than to loose a human being.

He stresses that she's a daughter of Abraham, probably because women were not very well valued by the men of that society, and perhaps he felt that one reason that they were upset about this is that they actually did value their ox more than they valued a woman. They said, this isn't just a woman, she's a daughter of Abraham, just like your son's of Abraham. She's one of Abraham's children too.

And therefore, he should certainly think that she should be loosed if an ox should be, or a donkey. Then I certainly have done no harm by helping this woman. And so his adversaries were put to shame, and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

Now, the next four verses are the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the leaven. We've talked about those already, because they also occur in Matthew 13, in the parable discourse of Jesus in Matthew 13. We will skip over them now, and before we pick up at verse 22 of this chapter, we need to turn over to John chapter 10, because it would seem chronologically, I'm not sure how it was figured out that this is the next thing chronologically, because I don't see any real time markers here in the middle of Luke 13.

But, nonetheless, going with the established time of the Gospels that we're using, we're going to go ahead and assume that John chapter 22, John chapter 10, excuse me, verses 22 through 42 are to be inserted at this point. Now, we were in John 10 not very long ago. However, the things that happened there in John chapter 7, 8, 9, and the first part of chapter 10, all apparently happened at the Feast of Tabernacles, up to John 10, 21.

But then John 10, 22 has a different time, the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, John 10, 22, and it was winter. Now, the Feast of Dedication is that Feast which the modern Jews call Hanukkah. If you've paid attention at all, you notice that Jews celebrate Hanukkah about the same time that Christians traditionally celebrate Christmas.

Hanukkah falls in late December, and therefore is, you know, kind of celebrated at the same time as Christians celebrate Christmas. Hanukkah was a feast that was not commanded in Scripture for the Jews to observe. It was not one of the mosaic feasts, like Passover or Pentecost or Tabernacle.

It was a feast more like Purim. You remember Feast of Purim? We haven't studied together yet Esther, but if you've read the book of Esther, you know that while the Jews were in Persia, they came into great danger of being exterminated, and through the efforts of Esther and her uncle or cousin Mordecai, God delivered them, and forever afterward, the Jews have celebrated the Feast of Purim, which celebrates a great deliverance. They just took it on themselves to decide to celebrate that every year.

Well, they've done the same thing in the case of Hanukkah. Hanukkah, the historical event that it celebrates was the restoration of the Temple from its defilement after the Maccabean successes against Antiochus Epiphanes. You may remember some of that history, that the Assyrian king who dominated Israel about 170 years before Christ, 168 actually, years before Christ, was a Syrian king named Antiochus IV, who called himself Antiochus Epiphanes.

And he got upset with the Jews on a variety of occasions and did nasty things to them. One of the things he did on one occasion was he defiled the Temple. He set up an altar to Zeus in there and he sacrificed a pig on it.

And the Jews, feeling the Temple was defiled, ceased to use it for a time. They just abandoned the Temple because it was under defilement. Shortly after that, there was a revolt in the town of Modiin.

An old priest named Mattathias killed a Syrian official and he and his sons fled into the wilderness and many sympathizers joined with them and that became what was called the Maccabean Revolt. It went on for about three years. And finally, through guerrilla warfare and through Antiochus Epiphanes having battles to fight on other borders besides and being spread too thin, he finally withdrew his troops, gave Israel their freedom again.

And so for the first time in several centuries, through the Maccabean War, the Jews gained total freedom from pagan rulers. At that time, because the Maccabeans had won the victory, they took the liberty to go and rededicate the Temple, to cleanse it and rededicate it and put it back into operation. I'm not as familiar with that story as I wish I were.

I believe it's in 1 Maccabees, the apocryphal book that tells the story. As I recall, at the time of the dedication of the Temple, for some reason there was a shortage of oil for the lamps. There was a certain recipe for the oil for the lamps in the tabernacle.

You remember that the ingredients are mentioned and they were not allowed to make this particular concoction for anything else but to burn in the lamps in the tabernacle. And there was, for some reason, I forget the details, they had a shortage of this oil. They only had enough, I think, to burn one day.

And yet, for reasons again that elude me, I forget, they wanted to go ahead and start and it would take them eight days, I think, to get a new supply of oil. Well, miraculously, the oil that they had lasted for eight days until they could get some more oil. Now, I think I'm representing the story correctly.

Of course, it's not in the Bible and I'm not that familiar with the apocryphal literature, but this is as I recall the story. There was sort of a miraculous extension of the life of that oil for eight days so that the lamp burned continuously until they got more oil in. And therefore, Hanukkah is celebrated by lighting candles eight successive days in December.

And that is, of course, practiced by modern Jews. In fact, it's probably, next to Passover, the best known feast of the Jews in modern times, at least among Gentiles. Most of us are aware of Passover and we're aware of Hanukkah, but most of us are not very sure when Purim is taking place or Pentecost or Tabernacles.

Well, Hanukkah was the feast of dedication. And Jesus, apparently, was in Jerusalem again at Hanukkah. There's nothing in the law that required them to go there at Hanukkah.

In fact, the law didn't know anything about Hanukkah. But possibly because there were Jews gathering there, Jesus went there, perhaps the minister. And so the feast of dedication was in Jerusalem and it was winter.

December is generally in the winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. And the Jews surrounded him.

So they converged against him and it's kind of graphic how they just kind of swept in and surrounded him so he couldn't get away, so they could nail him with these questions, trying to find fault with him. And they said, How long do you keep us in doubt? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly. 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 my sheep, as I said. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.

Now, these statements were made earlier in the same chapter, although there was a good three months between the events of the earlier part of this chapter and this. The Feast of Tabernacles is in September or October. This was December.

But he alludes back to what he said the last time he was there about his sheep. If you are not my sheep, that's why you don't hear what I'm saying. You don't even recognize what my works are telling you.

You are asking me to tell you plainly if I'm the Messiah. I shouldn't have to say it. There's plenty of things to bear witness to that.

I've told you everything I need to tell you about that. And the reason you're not hearing is because you're not my sheep. 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. And I and my Father are one. Now, this statement, I and my Father are one, probably comes from, to explain that in verse 28 he said no one can snatch them out of my hand and then in verse 29 no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

Jesus had said earlier in the chapter he was the good shepherd. We're going back to Ezekiel 34 in the prophecy that God would come and Jehovah would shepherd his flock. But he also said in Ezekiel 34 that in addition to Jehovah saying I will come and shepherd my flock, I'll be a shepherd to them, he says and they will follow my servant David, which is a reference to Jesus in Ezekiel 34.

Now there's kind of two shepherds there, Jehovah and Jesus, who is called David in the passage. Now Jesus when he came in the early part of the chapter said I am the good shepherd, which either was identifying himself with Jehovah or with David in that passage. Now what Jesus points out is there's no difference.

I am both parties in the passage or we are one. He says the sheep are in my hand. That's a way of talking about in the care of a shepherd.

The sheep are under his care, under his hand or in his hand. He says my sheep are mine and they're in my hand and no one can take them from me because my Father is greater than everybody and no one can take them from his hand and the implication is his hand and mine are the same hand. He is the shepherd and I'm the shepherd and there's only one shepherd.

I and my Father are one. Now before we go on to their response to that statement, I need to just point out that verses 28 and 29 are considered to be some of the strong,

judging from the amount of times they have been quoted in favor of this proposition, they are considered to be proof of eternal security. When people wish to show that it is impossible to pass from a safe condition to an unsafe condition again, there are a certain number of passages they always quote and this is usually within the top three passages in the Bible that are said to support that notion.

Now it is true that these scriptures speak of a tremendous security that the sheep have in Christ's hand and in God's hand and even those who do not believe in eternal security, of which I would have to be included in that number, we do not try to say there's any insecurity on the part of the believer. We admit that being a believer is a very, very secure place to be. We are under God's care.

We are kept by the power of God through faith. And, you know, we're not vulnerable. We're not vulnerable to the devil or to persecutors.

No one can snatch us from his hand. There's no one greater than God and if he's on our side, who can be against us, Paul says in Romans 8. Well there is an answer to that, it would appear, and that is we can be our own worst enemy. If God be for us, who can be against us? Well, it says we can be against us.

Because even though God has redeemed us and has called us and has wooed us and persuaded us to receive him, he does not, after we've received him, remove our choices, remove our free will. Now I can't imagine anyone who's really been saved having the foolishness to exercise their free will in such a way as to deny the Lord. But though I can't imagine it, the Bible can.

The Bible talks about that happening. The Bible talks about people departing from the faith. The Bible talks about people trampling underfoot the blood of the covenant with which they had been previously sanctified.

The Bible does talk about these kinds of things happening. It's just hard to imagine because I doubt that it's common. But I don't know how common it is.

It seems to me that most people who have fallen away from Christ probably had some deficiency in their actual conversion in the first place and may not have even been saved in the first place. And that would agree with Calvinism. But the only part that's different is they'd say that's true of all cases.

I'd say in many cases. I think there's probably a lot of cases where people fall away and they fell away because they weren't really in in the first place. But these verses here do not compel us to believe that a person who is a believer and a Christian cannot wander away.

It's true, no one can steal these sheep from God. The devil, man, no one is sovereign but God. Only God can overwhelm any thieves or wolves or anything that tries to take the

sheep away.

But even though God is a wonderful shepherd, some of his sheep have been known to wander. Isaiah 53, 6 says, All we like sheep have gone astray. We've turned everyone to his own way.

That's not what the shepherd would prefer. And it's not a defect on the part of the shepherd. And it is not even saying that someone has come and stolen the sheep.

The sheep have just allowed themselves to wander away from the shepherd. And he goes looking for them. But I do believe that some of them still wander away to their doom.

At least if this is not so, then there's a number of passages of scripture that are hard to explain because we are warned as Christians not to fall away, not to bring upon ourselves the judgment that will fall on his adversaries and so forth. Anyway, it's not a point of which I have an emotional stake. I just as soon believe in eternal security, except that I can't find it in the Bible.

And I don't think the Bible, I think the Bible warns against a carnal kind of security that would suggest that no matter what you do, you're going to stay in the kingdom. The fact is, no outside force can separate you from God. But apparently by your own rejection, your own apostasy, you can.

Sheep can wander away even though no one can snatch them from God. Okay, now, that final statement, verse 30, I and my father are one, of course, got a rise out of the listeners. Verse 31 says, Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

And Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shown you from my father. For which of these works do you stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we do not stone you, but for blasphemy, and because you, being a man, make yourself God. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, you are gods? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken, do you say of him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, you blaspheme? Because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not do the works of my father, do not believe me.

But if I do, though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him. Therefore they sought again to seize him, but he escaped out of their hands. Now, there's been a lot of misunderstanding of this passage, and of what Jesus meant when he, first of all, made the statement, I and my father are one, and secondly, when he responded to their criticism.

What does it mean, I and my father are one? Well, it could mean any number of things. The Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus was simply saying, I and my father are one in purpose, that we both want the same thing. Well, of course, two people being one, it



could mean that, although it's hard to know why anyone would take up stone to stone a person for saying something like that.

I mean, if Jesus was saying nothing more than, you know, I agree with God, well, that's not blasphemy. They certainly understood him to be saying something far more than that. Now, to say, I and my father are one, might have more of a meaning, similar to when the scripture says that a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, the two become one flesh.

I can say that I and my wife are one. Now, that doesn't always mean that we're in agreement, because we're not always in agreement. But one, in this sense, has a more mystical meaning, a more sense of shared identity, shared authority, shared life in general.

Now, maybe there's something of that in what Jesus said. If so, that would possibly explain why they took up stone to stone. Notice how they interpreted his words.

They said, in verse 33, we're not stoning you for a good word, we're stoning you for blasphemy, because you being a man, make yourself God. Now, they understood his words to be claiming deity for himself. Now, I realize that Jehovah's Witnesses and some others may suggest, well, he wasn't claiming deity for himself, they misunderstood him.

He was just saying he was in agreement with God, or he was saying something much less, you know, scandalous than that. They just misunderstood him. In answer to that, I would say two things.

One is, Jesus could have cleared that up better than he did. If he was not claiming deity, he could have just said, hey, you've totally misunderstood me here. I didn't claim to be God.

Now, he doesn't say that. And that would have been the simplest way for him to clarify this. He could have said, now listen, let's not go overboard here.

You guys totally misunderstood what I meant. I only meant to say that I'm in agreement with God, that I'm one purpose with God. I didn't mean to say that I am God.

Instead of giving that kind of a disclaimer, he goes on almost to justify what he said and to point out that they have little reason to object to it. We'll talk about that particular argument in a moment. But there's something more to point out.

He seems to clarify his meaning, the meaning of his statement in verse 30, I and the Father are one, when you look at verse 38. He says, if I do through, but if I do, though you do not believe me, believe the works that you may know what? And believe that the Father is in me and I am in him. Now, no doubt that is synonymous with what he said in verse 30.

I and my Father are one. He is in me and I am in him. Look over at John 14 for a moment.

In John 14,