



JOHN 7–10

FEASTS OF THE TABERNACLES & DEDICATION
JOHN'S 5TH AND 6TH DISCOURSES AND 6TH MIRACLES

INTRODUCTION

John's Gospel (John) is known as the Spiritual Gospel. Jesus' discourses can stretch us to an eternal perspective and a spiritual view of life. In these four chapters, John includes discussions of many opposites: the triumph of light over darkness, living water and spiritual thirst, eternal freedom over slavery to sin, spiritual inheritance over earthy lineage, physical blindness, and spiritual blindness, 99 and 1, and good and bad shepherds.

Book of Mormon Insights

We find many of these same themes found in the Book of Mormon. To augment our NT study, here is a small sampling of references that consistently come from God to his "other sheep" (3 Nephi 15:21).

1. **Jesus as Life and Light of The World:** Mosiah 16:9; Alma 38:9; 3 Nephi 9:18; 11:11; Ether 4:12
2. **Jesus healing the Blind as a sign of the Messiah:** Mosiah 3:5; 3 Nephi 17:7–9; 26:15; 4 Nephi 1:5
3. **Jesus as the Good Shepherd:** Alma 5:38–39; 41, 57, 60; Helaman 7:18

SETTING: FEAST OF THE TABERNACLES

The setting for the next three chapters (John 7–9) is in Jerusalem at one of the three major pilgrimage feasts: The Feast of the Tabernacles / *Sukkot* / “Ingatherings” (Ex 23:16–17), or Feast of Booths (Lev. 23:40–44). That means it is in the early fall, about six months after the second Passover (John 6:4). Jesus built his discourse around the setting. To appreciate the interplay between the feast and his sermon, here are a few details about the Feast of the Tabernacles.

- The feast fell in the early fall, on Chislev 14–21, Jews from around the Roman Empire came to Jerusalem to worship at their temple for seven days, with an eight-day for a holy convocation of rest.
- They remembered the Israelites 40 years wandering in the wilderness, by creating little huts or booths out of branches and palm fronds. For the week of the feast, they lived in these makeshift tents as their ancestors had as they traveled from Egypt to their Promised Land. (In the Book of Mormon, it appears that King Benjamin’s sermon also fell this on this holy week. For evidence note that the Nephites lived in tents facing the temple, rehearsed the law, had a coronation, and made covenants.¹)
- They celebrated the harvest and prayed for early rains. The priests enacted this as a ritual. Each day they formed a procession carrying golden pitchers and paraded up and down Mount Moriah to the pool of Siloam. They sang Isaiah 12:3, “With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation,” as they filled golden pitchers with water and then carried them up the mount to the temple where they poured out the water on the temple altar as a libation. In the procession they sang the “Hillel Psalms” (Psalms 113–118) which ends, “O Lord, Save now, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.”
- The Court of Women was lit with massive 85-foot-high menorahs in each of the four corners. They were, figuratively, trees of light and life.
- Nathan dedicated Solomon’s Temple on this day, so the celebration often includes a temple motif.
- Priests offered 70 Bullocks in addition to the other sacrifices that were required for the week.
- The Jews renewed their covenants and read the law.

[Etrog, silver etrog box and lulav, used on the Jewish holiday of Sukkot. Photo by Gilabrand via Wikimedia Commons.](#)



Feast of Tabernacles 1st Scene

Jesus goes from Galilee to Jerusalem

John 7:1-13

John 7:1-2 “Jesus . . . would not walk in Jewry”

As the Jews in Jerusalem want to kill Jesus for breaking the Sabbath, He has stayed in Galilee for several months. He sent his disciples ahead to Jerusalem, and He follows later.

John 7:3-5 “neither did his brethren believe in him” By the context, we interpret the word “brother / *adelphos*” as Jesus’ half-brothers (but the Greek word is also used for kin, countrymen, or disciples). During Jesus’ ministry, it appears that his siblings did not have much faith or interest in following their big brother. Mark 6:3 and Matthew 13:55 lists four other sons born to Mary and Joseph, James, Joses, Juda, and Simon, as well as “daughters.” However, post Jesus’ resurrection the family became more active in the ministry.

It sounds as if up to this time, most of Jesus’ miracles had been done in Galilee, so Jesus’ half-siblings encourage, “show thyself to the world” (7:4). Yet, their request, to go show the crowds your miracles sounds similar to Satan’s temptations. Do you recognize it as another form of the devil wanting Jesus to display his power at the Temple for all to see? The author John does not want us to fall into that trap, so he notes that their request for miracles in 7:3 did not lead to faith in 7:5.

After the resurrection, we see Jesus’ family more actively involved in the growth of Christianity. His brother James became the Bishop, evangelist, or leader in Jerusalem, and possibly even later an apostle.² Tradition holds that he also became the author of the book of James. In AD 62, James’ was such a strong leader for Christianity that the Sanhedrin had him stoned. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, Ananus, “assembled the Sanhe-



Map of first-century Palestine. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

drin of the judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others... he delivered them to be stoned.”³

John 7:6–8 “My time is not yet come . . . go ye up unto this feast” Jesus, not interested in human praise in the slightest, answers them in a way that prophecies of his future glorification or return to his Father. His time of death and resurrection is not yet. When John uses, “go ye up” (7:8), he emphasizes the double meaning of “go up on the cross” which will become “the inevitable result of showing his glory in Jerusalem.”⁴ John regularly uses wordplay and records Jesus’ frequent use of words with double meanings (i.e. living water, born again, drink my blood, etc.).

John 7:10 “He also went up . . . secretly” (John 7:10–13, HCSB) Jesus’ instructions for others to go up to the feast, does not contradict his later decision to go to Jerusalem.

John 7:11–13, “Jews sought him . . . much murmuring” John points out the division between the Jews. *Murmuring* literally means: “guarded debate.” Privately, many debated if He were a good man or a deceiver. At this point, the discussions were not in public “for fear of the Jews” (7:13). I think these verses apply to our generation too. There is lots of diversity about who Jesus of Nazareth was, even among Christians.

Feast of Tabernacles 2nd Scene

Jesus Teaches at the Temple in the Midst of the Feast

John 7:14–39

John 7:14 “the midst of the feast” Jesus arrived on day three of four of the feast week. Herod’s expansion to the temple covered approximately 33 acres. This provided lots of places for gathering and teaching. The Court of the Gentiles was the largest place, but Jews often met in the “Court of the Women” for discussions and teaching because it was the largest place to gather for Jews only. (Ironically, the women and children were not to join in, but secluded to a raised gallery along three edges of the court.)

John 7:15 “How has this man become learned, having never been educated?” This is the day of great tutors from the Greek Socrates and Aristotle, to the Jewish Rabbis Hillel and Gamaliel. Master teachers were quoted as by students or disciples as the source of knowledge. Rabbinic literature is filled with “Rabbi So and So says . . .”⁵

John 7:16 “My doctrine is . . . his that sent me” Jesus defends his teaching by explaining that He learned and passes on messages from God, his Father. He speaks his Father’s words. John has used the word “sent” over thirty times, so far in his Gospel, but in here, and in the next three chapters, it takes on special meaning as wordplay which becomes an important theme in this section. In Greek, “one sent with authority,” is the word, *apostéllō*.

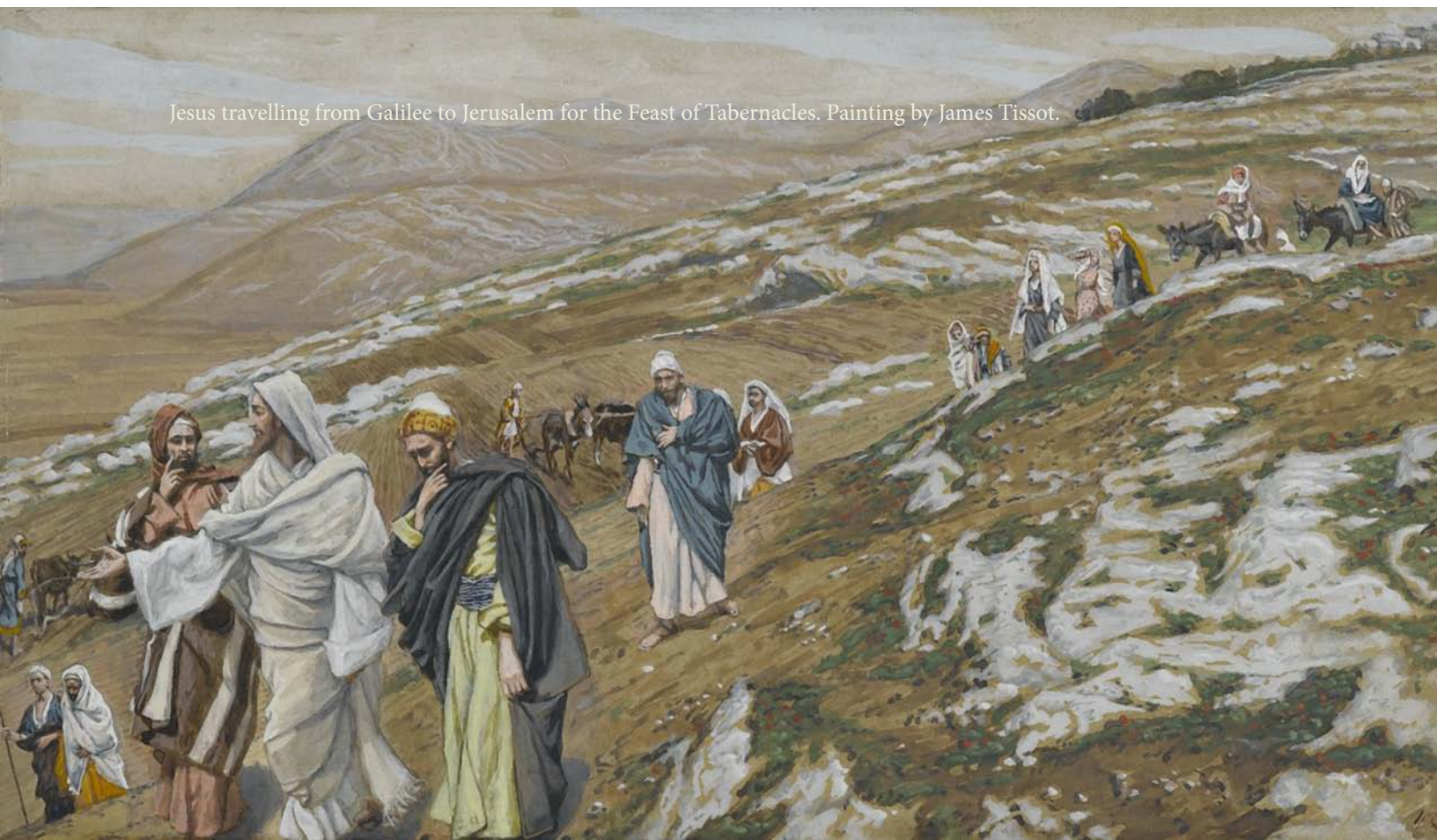
John 7:17–18 “. . . do his will, he will know of the doctrine” Another favorite guideline to learn truth: live Christ’s teachings and see if they bring you to God. Jesus challenges his listeners to learn by experience. Jesus is not trying to glorify Himself, but only God.

John 7:19–21 “none of you keepeth the law” Jesus remembers what happened the last time when He was in Jerusalem, the Jewish leaders tried to kill Him for healing a man on the Sabbath. Jesus challenges them, and they deny their motives. They try to save face and deny it.

John 7:22–24 “**Judge not according to your traditions . . . judge righteous judgment**” (JST) there are very few JST changes in this chapter, but this one is significant. We often judge according to our culture, perspective, or in other words, traditions. Jesus justifies his healing on the Sabbath on humanitarian grounds. If circumcision is appropriate on the Sabbath why not healing? In response, the Jews brush him off as one possessed with a devil who is corrupting the Sabbath and teaching false doctrine. The problem was, in the Jewish oral laws, healing made the body work, hence, “one may not perform an act of healing on the Sabbath.”⁶ For example, you couldn’t set a dislocated shoulder, take out a splinter, or even put cold water on an injury. Traditions like these are the ones that Jesus repeatedly attacked.

John 7:25–31 “**Do the rulers know that this is the very Christ?**” The word “Christ,” is Greek for Messiah, but in English, it is “Anointed One.” Initially, in the earliest disciples used the phrase, “Jesus the Christ,” which later

Jesus travelling from Galilee to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. Painting by James Tissot.



in the epistles and introductory material we find, “Jesus Christ.” His audience is divided as He does not fit their conception of the Promised Messiah.

John 7:32 “sent officers to take Him” The “*officers*” were the Levite temple police that kept order within the Temple courtyard.

John 7:33 “I go unto him that sent me” The police are sent by their leaders of authority, but Jesus explains that he too has One that sent him, and he will go and report. John includes these word plays for his audience, knowing that Jesus’ audience missed them.

John 7:34 “seek . . . not find” Those who seek for Jesus without the proper motives, or to do harm, will not find Him. But those who meekly seek with a repentant and broken heart will find Him. As Deuteronomy 4:29 taught, “thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.”

Jesus’ message on seeking and finding opens the way for a discourse on how to find and accept Jesus.

John 7:35 “will he . . . teach the gentiles?” John includes irony regularly—here it is the angry Jewish leadership proposition that Jesus teach the Gentiles, which is exactly what his church will do.

Feast of Tabernacles 3rd Scene

On the Last day of the Feast

John 7:37–52

John 7:37 “If any man thirst, let him come unto me” After seven days of watching the priests’ daily ceremony walking up and down Mount Moriah to refill their pitchers of water as a petition for early rains, the pilgrims in Jerusalem now heard Jesus proclaim Himself as the real source of water. He enlightens them on how to receive eternal refreshment. But they do not recognize who it was that stood in their midst.⁷ Jesus looks at both the Israelite history and Isaiah’s summary of it: “they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out” (Isaiah 48:21; also see 12:3).

Note how Jesus associates the water of life with the tree of life—Jesus is the source of living water, the true vine, and heavenly bread. It was He, as Jehovah, who empowered the prophet to receive water from the rock.

John 7:38–39 “He that believeth on me . . . shall flow rivers of living water” Water was the most important resource in ancient Israel. Clean water was essential to sustain life, yet it was a limited commodity. Unlike a cistern that stored rainwater, “living water” had to flow and was pure enough to drink. Jesus speaks of flowing

water as a symbol for how He, and later the Holy Spirit, will offer life. Jesus refers to Psalms 78:15–16 and 104:41 and equates that water to Himself. Without drinking or internalizing his teachings, spiritual death is inevitable.

The symbol of water gives a strong or powerful image, like “mighty rushing waters” (Isaiah 17:12–13). In the context of living water, even the great flood and Noah’s ark become symbols of our future Redeemer. Noah, and thus all humanity and land-dwelling animals, were saved by water and wood—just as Christ saves through baptism and acceptance of his sacrifice on the cross.

It is through the Holy Spirit that we “hear” God’s voice. The Spirit also is the cleansing agent by which the atonement is efficacious in our lives. Jesus suffered for us, and his Atonement covers our sins if we repent, but the Spirit is the agent that carries out the atoning gift and cleanses our souls (see Moroni 6:4).⁸ The JST took out the last phrases from vs. 39 and added: “*The Holy Ghost was promised unto them who believe, after that Jesus was glorified.*” This seems to say that Jesus’ Spirit may have been felt so that Jesus’ words have internal force only through the Spirit.

DIVISION AMONG THE JEWS

John 40–52

John 7:40 “the Prophet” This reference goes back to Moses’ prophecy from Deuteronomy 18:18, “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require *it* of him.” This “prophet” refers to the promised Messiah. The Jews did not see Jesus as a new Moses, though. Yet the Jews great law giver, Moses, was just a type of the Law Giver to come, the source of the water from the rock, and Eternal Life. Hosea 12:10 teaches that the lives of the prophets were to typify of the coming Messiah. We see this clear back to Adam. Jesus was also a new Adam, the next “son of God” (1 Corinthians 15:47).

John 7:41–42 “Shall Christ cometh out of Galilee?” John’s ironical touch, suggests he knew Jesus was born in Bethlehem, although, most of Jesus’ listeners assumed that He was born in Nazareth. John has already emphasized: “can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46; see also Mark 1:9). Throughout the Gospels it is assumed Jesus’ literal father was Joseph, “Whence hath this man this wisdom...is not this the carpenter’s son?” (Matt 13:53–58). It appears that the birth accounts at the beginning of Luke and Matthew were actually written last as there are no references to that information throughout the Gospels and they can stand alone.⁹

The underlying assumption of the crowd in Jerusalem is that Jesus was human. At the same time, most first-century Jews found a scriptural relationship between Bethlehem and the Messiah. Not just Herod’s chief priests and scribes who knew of this scriptural reference to the Messiah’s birthplace, most Jews did. John’s silence empha-

Jesus and the Woman Taken in Adultery by William Hole, 1905.



sizes his that suggests he knew of the birth tradition in Bethlehem.

John 7:45–46 “**why have you not brought him? . . . Never man spake like this**” Even though no signs are given, and the Jewish leaders do not believe, Jesus’ words convinced the Temple police.

John 7:47–53 “**Nicodemus saith . . . Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him . . .?**” The Jewish leaders claim that no one who is educated has been convinced. Then the previously timid Nicodemus provides a witness that some educated hear and believe. “Nicodemus is the living proof that in claiming knowledge they are ignorant, but his plea for justice is met with contempt.”¹⁰

Feast of Tabernacles 4th Scene

Woman (probably raped, but) Called An Adulteress

John 7:53–8:11

John 8:1–2 “**Jesus went to the Mount of Olives**” (NIV) All four Gospels record that when Jesus was in Jerusalem, he often spent his day times teaching at the temple (i.e. Luke 22:37), and his night times outside the city wall in the olive orchards that were planted on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. From the temple mount or Mount Moriah, he would have walked come down to sloped hillside to the seasonal brook, Kedron, and then over the base of the Mount of Olives that raises up on the other side. The disciples knew this as a favorite spot, called “*Gethsemane*,” the olive press (Luke 22:39).

John 8:3–4 “**this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act**” the best Greek manuscripts of John do not include this story. Some have it in Luke where the Greek matches better.¹¹ In any case, the story is another “no win” situation for Jesus. If he authorizes death by stoning, he violates Roman law, if mercy, he violates the Mosaic Law.¹² It appears that the whole thing is a fraud set up to ensnare Jesus. If the woman were “caught in the act,” where is *the guilty man*? The Pharisees use the poor defenseless woman as a pawn, possibly she was a raped victim. Women had only a few rights at that time, they couldn’t testify or act as a legal witness—even to defend themselves.¹³

John 8:5 “**Moses . . . commanded us . . .**” Repeatedly the Law of Moses requires the stoning of anyone who breaks the law of chastity: Leviticus 20:10, 22:15; Ezekiel 15:38–40; etc. The question that the scribes pose, requires Jesus to violate a law in either answer. The battle between the Jews and Romans played a significant role in the Jews anticipation and acceptance of their Promised Messiah. Some biblical scholars wonder if the Sanhedrin already tried her and they want to see if Jesus can prophetically duplicate their verdict?¹⁴

John 8:6 “**This they said . . . to accuse him**” Jesus refuses to play their game and appears to ignore them. He bends down and draws in the dirt. Interestingly, in Roman legal practice, the judge first wrote the sentence and

then read it aloud.¹⁵ Scholars debate what did Jesus write? An old Christian tradition, traced to Jerome, suggests that Jesus wrote the sins of the accusers in the dirt. Another connects the finger/handwriting of judgments with Daniel 5:24. Another suggested that He wrote Exodus 23:16, “You shall not join hands with a wicked man.” Possibly the writing dealt with judgment. All is mere speculation—the author was silent. John did not think that was important enough to record. John focused on the relationship between the woman and Jesus.

John 8:7–9 “He that is without sin . . . cast a stone” Jesus’ answer put the burden back on his questioners. It is also a good example to us on handling unrighteous judgment—leave it alone. I think it is admirable that the accusers were honest enough with themselves to allow their consciences to convict them. Or perhaps they may have left because Jesus did not respond as hoped. The point is that *we are all* sinners.



[Christ and the Adulteress by Tintoretto, ca. 1546. Image via Wikimedia Commons.](#)

John 8:10–11 “go and sin no more . . . And the woman glorified God from that hour, and believed on his name” (JST) The scene closes in great drama: The sinless Jesus and the sinful women stand alone.¹⁶ I also add that in the ancient world women were horrifically abused by modern standards, and Jesus wanted to free her from whatever caused the situation. We usually use this story to tell how Jesus, as the serene judge, balances justice and mercy. Or else that Jesus does not condone the sin, but forgives the sinner. To these good ideas, the conclusion from the JST suggests that she was soft hearted and became a converted witness of Jesus. We all can learn from his great challenge: “sin no more.”

Feast of Tabernacles 5th Scene

6th Discourse: Light of the World

John 8:12–20

John 8:12 “I am the light . . . never walk in darkness” (NIV) Jesus’ announces Himself as the creator. In the beginning God created light, thus making Jesus’ claim literally and figuratively true. The imagery of this claim flows from the Feast of the Tabernacles. For a week all have seen the great golden lamp stands that stood 85’ high in the four corners of the temple courtyard. They represent the pillar of light that shown at night for the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness. Their blazing light seems to have prompted this sermon, as a way for Jesus to announce his Messianic fulfillment of this festival. As the creator, He is the source of all light, including the pillar of light given in the wilderness.

As the “light of the world,” Christ exposed the depths of moral and spiritual darkness. Jesus called his disciples to do the same (Matthew 5:14). Yet, we can only do that when *we reflect his Light*. Jesus taught the Nephites: “Hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up” (3 Nephi 18:24).

“Light” also brings to mind the Urim and Thummim (meaning “lights and perfections”), which also symbolizes Jesus who enlightens with truths. Jesus also fulfills Isaiah 60:1–3, “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.” We can find many scriptures that describe the Creator’s relationship with light.¹⁷

John 8:13–16 “My record is true . . . Ye judge after the flesh . . . my judgement is true” John 5 and 7:51–53 also addressed the theme of witnesses in judgment. The Jews from the Second Temple era held the *law of witnesses* as absolutely essential. The Jewish Holy Writ, the “Law and the Prophets,” also witnesses of Jesus, the disciples witness, yet the Pharisees do not hear these other voices. Jesus tells them that by rejecting his witness, they do not know how to judge.

John 8:17–18 “I . . . bear witness . . . and the father that sent me beareth witness of me” Jesus acknowledges that two witnesses are required by the Law, so he explains that he and his Father testify of the same truths. This makes Jesus’ argument irrefutable. It also reflects John’s theme of unity between the Father and Son.



The Pillar of Fire, by Paul Hardy, 1896. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

John 8:19 “Where is thy Father?” The Jews assumed Jesus’ father was fellow a mortal. Ironically, the “hearers are asking for the Father, while the image of the Father is standing before their eyes.”¹⁸ They thought they knew Jesus. But I fear, that many generations have stood in their same shoes.

John 8:20 “. . . in the treasury” Within the temple the first level of sacred space was the “court of the women.” It was a large open courtyard where men gathered to discuss, teach, and learn. Along three of the outside walls of that courtyard were covered colonnades. Underneath the portico were thirteen chests for charitable contributions. This is likely the place referred to as “the treasury” where Jesus taught.¹⁹ At times the contributions had become corrupted, but they were supposed to go toward the sacrifices. Jesus is the sacrifice and location also speaks of Jesus’ message.



DISCUSSION WITH THE JEWS

John 8:21-29

John 8:21 “You will die in your sin” (ESV) The KJV word, “sins” is actually singular in Greek (and all other English translations I found). What was the sin Jesus meant? John 8:24, repeats this and adds “for if ye believe not that I am he,” suggesting that “the sin” is refusing to believe Jesus. All other sins are merely an outgrowth of that main sin.

John 8:22 “Will he kill himself?” This verse screams with irony as in a few pages, Jesus calls himself the Good Samaritan who will voluntarily lay down his life for his sheep.

John 8:23 “I am not of this world” Jesus also taught this to Nicodemus in John 3:13–15. John often recorded the Lord contrasting opposites. The comparison makes the differences more. In a sense, we too can be not of this world when we do not value worldliness. When we follow Jesus, we seek for a better world. This is a regular theme in the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 22:23; Alma 39:14; 60:36; 3 Nephi 6:15).

John 8:24 “If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” John records dozens of “I am” statements by Jesus, all of which build to the dialogue at the end of this sermon. He refers to Himself as the God of Israel, Moses’ leader from the burning bush to the top of Sinai.

John 8:25 “Who art thou?” The Jews repeat their question to Jesus, but He has already answered them in several of ways. His Messiahship should have been seen by his miracles, discourses, etc. The problem is they do not exert the faith necessary to hear, see, or feel it, so they keep asking without hearing his answers. To hear the Lord’s answers requires faith and meekness.

John 8:26–28 “I declare to the world what I have heard from him” (ESV) Jesus claimed two witnesses: his own, and his Father. With God as the second, there should not be any question about Jesus’ witness being true. Unfortunately, though, many do not believe either witness yet. Jesus prophesies that they will not believe until he is lifted up for crucifixion and lifted up as he ascended for his resurrection. As God lifts Jesus up, he draws us up to him.

John 8:29 “I do always those things that please Him” At this point, Jesus had never felt his Father leave him. Perhaps this is why that awful moment on the cross was even harder for Him. Just as God never left Jesus because Jesus always did what his father asked, so to for us, to always feel the Spirit, we must likewise “do always those things that please God”

“THE TRUTH WILL MAKE YOU FREE”

John 8:30–36

John 8:30–32 “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples” Some Jews at the temple believed and Jesus immediately instructed them to continue / *meno* (which also translated “abide” in John 8:35). By learning more truth, we will find ultimate freedom. God’s truth set us free. Satan’s lies enslave us. It is Jesus’ atonement and doctrine (which are truth) will free us from sin. Jesus teaches that of the many bondages, sin is the worst. We must seek real freedom and peace, not political counterfeits. This is the most important freedom (John 8:36).

John 8:33 “We be Abraham’s seed” Their nationalistic pride is paradoxical in light of the fact that the Romans rule Jerusalem right then (and previously they were under Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and Greek rule before that). They did not understand that Jesus did not speak to them of political freedom. Throughout John, the audience is often on a different level of understanding and miss the significance of Jesus’ messages (i.e. Nicodemus, the woman at the well, etc.).

John 8:34–36 “the servant of sin” This is even more powerful when we remember the word “servant” is also “slave” in Greek. One third of the Roman Empire, and one half of Jerusalem, were slaves or servants. Their culture was steeped in social hierarchy. The people understood what it meant to obey a master and be a servant to a mistress. Their social cast was often generational, and they rarely married outside of their class rank.

Jesus becomes the master in his Father’s house as the Son and heir. The foot note quotes Paul, “*you were once slaves of sin.*” 2 Peter 2:19 also adds, “*slaves of corruption*” (also see Hebrews 3:5–6 and Romans 8:2). In God’s kingdom, we can become free through receiving and living the truths taught there. Our master invites us to become “joint heirs” if we leave the servitude of Satan by forsaking our sins and serving Jesus as our master (Romans 8:17).

CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM OR THE DEVIL

John 8:37–57

John 8:37–39 “If ye were Abraham’s children ye would do the works of Abraham” Abraham was the most important person in the genealogy of the Jewish people. They believed that descending from Abraham protected them against God’s wrath. Their view tied salvation to Abraham’s birthright. Jews believed that merely being a descendant of Abraham would save one from eternal torture. JBpst also taught against this false notion. Jesus attacked this as apostasy and restored the truth by teaching that in heaven a real son or daughter is adopted or worthy of inheritance as heir if they act like their father. Jesus tells them if they want to be worthy of being Abraham’s descendants, then must do the works of Abraham. The Jews did not believe Jesus’ message because they did not have Abraham’s heart, only his lineage.

John 8:40–41a By this time in history, the Jews had replaced the *responsibility* of Abraham’s posterity to *bless the earth* with the selfish hope of being *blessed* “into the kingdom of God no matter what their personal lives had become.”²⁰ Jesus fought against this notion also in Luke 16:24; Matt 3:7–10; 8:11–12. He taught that their link to Abraham was not enough. More than a birthright—one needs a heart like Abraham’s in order to be his child. The same holds true with God the Father.

SINNERS ARE NOT OF GOD

John 8:41b “We were not born in fornication” Are the Jews defending their birthright from Abraham or were

there rumors of Jesus' birth being illegitimate? The Jews response suggests they may have understood a little pre-mortal doctrine. (In the modern religious world, an understanding of a premortal state, is unique to our faith.)

John 8:42–43 “If God were your Father, ye would love me” Jesus tries to teach a higher law—one's mortal birth-right is not as important as their spiritual adoption. Jesus challenges the Jews' status as God's people. They have become so obdurate that they can't hear Jesus' message. Jesus also taught that we must choose to be his chosen people by our actions in our dispensation: “Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I am the life and the light of the world. . . . As many as receive me, to them will I give power to become the sons of God” (D&C 11:28–30).

John 8:44–45 “Ye are of your father the devil” Satan fathers' sin. He became a liar and self-serving before the counsel in Heaven. He lied in the Garden of Eden and deceived our first parents by usurping the Lord's role and counterfeiting the place of God. However, at one point in his first estate, he was a bright light as Lucifer meant “shining one” or “morning star.”

John 8:46 “Who among you can convict me of sin?” (CSB) The placement of this question in contrast with the woman convicted of adultery is interesting. In John 8:7–9, the scribes and Pharisees admit they have all sinned and convict themselves. Jesus has no sin. Isaiah prophesied: “*he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth*” (Isaiah 53:9, also see Hebrews 4:15).

John 8:47 “He that is of God receiveth God's words” (JST) The JST changes *hearing to receiving*, thereby emphasizing the need for disciples to actively participate as God's children.

JESUS DECLARES MESSIAHSHIP AND IS REJECTED

John 8:48–59

John 8:48–50 “I have not a devil” Jesus first pointed out that the fault finders were acting as children of the devil (John 8:44), and now they return the blow and call Jesus “a Samaritan” and possessed with a devil. In addition to being enemies of the Jews for centuries, the Samaritans were famous for their magicians and diabolical possession.

We find an interesting juxtaposition here. In John 4, the Samaritans accept Jesus as their Messiah and one greater than Moses. While here, these Jews reject his Divinity and call him a devil and Samaritan. Jesus warns them that such blasphemy will be judged by the Father.

John 8:51 “Keep my saying” Keep is more than hearing alone, Jesus asks disciples to “hear and obey.” Similarly, “never see death” is not referring to mortal death which comes to most mortals, but the promise of Eternal Life (D&C 88:3–7).

Just as Jesus has done in many other conversations, when the audience refuses to understand, or cannot grasp his message, He throws out a curve ball. He adds something totally unexpected or shocking to shake them up to get them thinking in a different direction. The jolt comes when He promises that those who keep his saying, will not die.

John 8:52–56 “Art thou greater than . . . Abraham?” The conversation is beautifully set up for Jesus to testify of his Messiahship. With the startling news that some will not die, the attackers immediately find fault in his logic as their greatest ancestor has died, so Jesus must be speaking nonsense. They cannot understand Jesus without stretching their view to see an eternal perspective. At times we have the same problem of being on a physical plain vs. a spiritual plain, so we don't understand God's direction.

John 8:58–59 “Before Abraham was, I am” This is the most direct and intentionally stated as a divine, “I AM” statement among the many in John's Gospel (~12 probable so far). Moses asked God for His name and was told, “I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you” (Exodus 3:14). The names for God became so sacred that the Jews did not use them. Even when reading their holy writ, they read, “LORD / *Adonay*” rather than pronounce the name of “Jehovah / *Yahweh*.” Jesus' bold statement was extremely offensive to the Jews. He placed Himself above Moses and Abraham, and even equal to God. In their ears, this was blasphemy. They missed that Jesus was *Emanuel*, God with us.

The Gospels record Christ using “I AM” statements to declare His Messianic Divine Nature: John=41 times, and the Synoptic Gospels=17 times. Ironically this statement of “blasphemy” was worthy of being stoned to death. The temple was still being built so we presume stones were lying around among the building material.²¹ We don't know if the Sanhedrim had power to inflict capital punishment is not, but they tried on multiple occasions (i.e. Acts 7:59).

Feast of the Tabernacles 6th Scene

6th Miracle: Jesus Heals Man born Blind

John 9:1–41

John 9 describes a triumph of light over darkness. As a sign that Jesus is the *Light*, He gives sight to the blind. The healing of the blind was a sign of the promised Messiah (Hebrew) / Christ (Greek), as no one in the history of the world had ever healed blindness before Jesus. In the follow up discussion after the miracle Jesus declares that physical blindness is not caused by sin and demonstrates how spiritual blindness is caused by sin.

JESUS HEALS THE BLIND MAN

John 9:1 “Jesus passed by” Jesus is still in Jerusalem at the Feast of the Tabernacles. It is now the Sabbath (John 9:14). Even though some Jews wanted to stone him in the last scene, Jesus is not in hiding, but walks in a public



The Blind Man at the Pool of Siloam by Edmund Blair Leighton. Oil on canvas, 1879. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

place, and is about to demonstrate something that will draw even more attention to him. He also is about to provide evidence for everything he just talked about: He is the Light of the world, he is the righteous judge, he is the Messiah, and he is the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacle. This is one of the boldest examples he offers in Jerusalem that he is the Son of God.

“blind from his birth” John emphasizes that this man has been blind since birth—not from an accident or illness. (Matthew , Mark, Luke include five other accounts of Jesus healing the blind—it was an important sign of the Messiah.) Jews wrongly assumed that God gave one a birth defect, affliction, illness, or premature death because of sin.²² This legend perpetuated false impressions about disabilities.²³ The rabbis debated over whose *fault* birth defects were: the parents or child?²⁴ Jesus attacked this fallacy by healing the man born blind.²⁵

John 9:2–3 “who did sin?” A group of Jesus’ disciples call him Master (or Rabbi in Greek). This is the first reference to disciples since chapter 6 in Galilee. The society was so immersed in the cultural baggage that handicaps



[Healing of the man born blind by Orazio de Ferrari. Image via Wikimedia Commons.](#)

are a result of sin, that even the disciples needed correction. By blaming all handicaps or hardships on sin these Jews forgot or misunderstood the book of Job.

The disciples' question hints of a pre-earthly existence.²⁶ This notion of a pre-earth life may have been maintained or fostered by scriptures like Jeremiah 1:5, "*Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee. . .*" (or Job 38:4, 7 and Psalms 82:6). By assuming the possibility that the blind man may have done something before his birth that resulted in a disability in mortality. Their ques-

tion raised the issue of whether sin initiates from something one did before their mortal birth. Some Rabbis interpreted Exodus 20:5 as saying the sins of the parents could leave a mark on their infants. They went as far as supposing that an infant could sin in utero.²⁷

"Neither hath . . . sinned" Jesus does not denounce a pre-mortal state, but attacks the heresy that all disabilities result from sin. Jesus teaches that the real reason why this man was born blind is so that God can demonstrate His glory in the miracle about to happen. This man had a premortal mission to be a witness of the Messiah's healing. Nowhere in the OT list of miracles (the dead were raised, lame walked, etc.), are the blind healed. That was a miracle reserved to identify the Promised Messiah: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened . . ." (Isaiah 35:5-6; also 42:6-7; Exodus 4:11; Psalm 146:8; Mosiah 3:5-7).

John 9:4 "work the works of Him" Jesus' mission was dedicated to doing His Father's work. The same is true for all disciples. After the first phrase of this verse, there is a change in the JST "*while I am with you; the time cometh when I shall have finished my work, then I go unto the Father.*" When Jesus is present it is "daytime" and when he is put to death, "nighttime."

John 9:5 "I am the Light of the World" John ties this story back to Jesus' discourses in chapters 7 and 8. Jesus now puts action to His words and will act out the message as another witness of His Divinity. Jesus offers a demonstration of light and darkness with a faith filled man who receives his sight.

John 9:6 "He spat on the ground" John includes exactly where Jesus spit, because spitting on the ground was a form of breaking the Sabbath. (The oral laws, took the 39 forms of forbidden work on the Sabbath and micro-managed them into hundreds of rules. You could spit on a rock, but if you spit on the ground you were guilty of

cultivating).²⁸

“made clay . . . and anointed” The reference to working with dirt or clay, evokes the creation theme. God created Adam from the dust in Eden. Jesus’ miracle also evokes a story from Enoch, “And the Lord spake unto Enoch, and said unto him: Anoint thine eyes with clay, and wash them, and thou shalt see” (Moses 6:35). Early Christians also had their eyes anointed in their initiation rites.²⁹ The name Messiah means “anointed one.” It is as if Jesus shares His anointing with the blind man, and then has him “wash” before the blind man then sees.

John 9:7 “wash in the pool” Jesus had the blind man wash off the mud in the pool of Siloam near the temple. It sounds, similar to Elisha’s healing of Naaman in the Jordan River (2 Kings 5:10–13), the Lord sends the blind man on this quest to wash rather than just healing him immediately—almost as a test of faith, or a representation of “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26). The early Church Fathers Tertullian and Augustine saw the washing in pool of Siloam symbolic of baptism and used this story to prepare converts for baptism.³⁰

“. . . pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent)” Siloam/*sent*, symbolically corresponded to Jesus as the One “*sent*” from God. This favorite theme in John. Up to this point in his Gospel, we find “sent” used 33 times as a divine commission (and three times in common use). It was this pool of Siloam that the procession of Levites went to fill their golden pitchers on the “last and great day of the feast” of Tabernacles (John 7:37) to bring water to pour over the sacrifice, in memory of water from the rock of Rephidim (Ex 17:1–6). Archeologists have identified two major possibilities for the pool of Siloam.³¹ Josephus tell us that in his day the water was “sweet and abundant.”³²

Shortly before this miracle, Jesus made an illusion to the pool of Siloam when He cried, “if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink” (John 7:37). Then Jesus sends the blind man to the same pool wash off the clay from his eyes. The man’s healing comes only when he is washed/baptized by “the one sent.” Symbolically, Jesus sends all disciples to wash and see. God gives new sight and light to those in darkness. However, those who were blind in their sins (i.e. pride and greed) remain in darkness.³³

THREE INTERROGATIONS

1. Neighbors

John 9:8–12

John 9:11 “anoint . . . wash . . . receive sight” As the healed man tells his story to his neighbors, he uses verbs that have double meanings to John’s readers. They speak emblematically of initiatory promises which the early Christians practiced.³⁴

John 9:12 “Where is he?” This question is applicable today for all of us. Sadly, the healed man did not know. I presume that the crowds who came as pilgrims for the feast made it difficult to reunite. It appears that the Jewish inquisition helped him realize the truth of who Jesus was. Because we have the story, I assume the man became a devoted disciple after his healing, but miracles do not replace the need for faith.

2. Pharisees

John 9:13-34



John 9:13-16 “this man was not of God because he keepeth not the Sabbath” The next interrogation unfolds when the neighbors bring the healed man to the Pharisees. The man tells them the same simple truth. The Pharisees were trying to condemn Jesus for something. Jesus had kneaded the clay with his spit to make mud. Similar to Jesus’ Sabbath healing at Bethsaida, this healing was on the Sabbath (John 5:2). In Jewish thought, since the man’s life is not in jeopardy, the healing should have waited for another day.

John's theme of imminent judgment is brought out again. Underlying the Pharisee's belief is the understanding that if God worked miracles through a rabbi, then God approves of the rabbi's teachings. These Pharisees cannot get over their traditional view of the Sabbath even though Isaiah 56:2; 58:13 taught that on the Sabbath was a time to do God's works. Instead, for generations, Isaiah's perspective was overshadowed by their adopted oral laws.

John 9:17 “What do you say? . . . He is a prophet” To help the Pharisees settle the dispute, they ask for the healed man's perspective and he testifies that Jesus is a man of God, a prophet. This lets us know that he does not know much about Jesus yet, but that soon changes.

John 9:18–23 “His parents answered . . . ask him” This scene points to those too fearful to testify. To the early Christian community this was a matter of those who died for the faith and those who weakly denied their beliefs. The parents' witness only the obvious—their son was born blind. They are cowards in the face of the questioning Pharisees and shy away from acknowledging Jesus' great miracle. The parents fear excommunication and their place in society, more than they want to stand up for their son's healer! We learn that the blind man was of legal age. Over twelve and a half was old enough to marry.³⁵

John 9:24–25 “Give God the praise” This phrase was an old oath. Ironically, the blind man does give God the glory by telling the truth about Jesus' healing, but the Jews deny the miracle as a sign or witness of His Messiahship.³⁶

“I know that whereas I was blind, now I see” The healed man's courageous answer to the Pharisees borders on sarcasm. This opens a dialogue that lasts for ten verses and is one of the best in the NT.

John 9:27 “ye did not believe” (JST) This one-word change offers a significant message from “hear” to “believe.” Why were the Pharisees not content with the repeated answer? Are they trying to trap the man as well as Jesus in his words? They ask if Jesus has miraculous power and John answers a resounding, YES! The Law of Moses spoke against magicians, and it appears the Pharisees see Jesus in this category.

John 9:28–29 “We are Moses' disciples” Many rabbis did not believe in *another* “Moses” (or lawgiver). In reality, if they were actually Moses' disciples, they would be followers of Jesus too. The problem is that Moses Law was so contaminated with oral laws by it no longer clearly pointed to the coming of Messiah. Sadly, those who reject Jesus are disciples of the devil (Moroni 7:16–17).

John 9:30 “Ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.” The healed blind man points out their faulty logic. The man references the well-known sign of the Messiah (John 9:6). If Jesus brought sight—why isn't He recognized as the Messiah? Even though it appears that the Pharisees do not change their hearts



[The Healing of the Man Born Blind. A an etching by Jan Luyken via Wikimedia Commons.](#)

through this conversation, the healed man strengthens his faith by defending Jesus and coming to ultimate truth. Interestingly, the persecution increases his belief. This conversation has similarities with what the Lord taught Nicodemus. Both include an uncertainty about the Divinity of Jesus and both initially do not hear with faith. (Fortunately, Nicodemus developed more faith later and became a key figure at the cross.)

John 9:32–33 “except he be of God” (JST) This change (found in the footnote), insures that God performed this miracle; it is not a magic trick. For scriptures on the Messianic healing of the blind see Psalm 146:8; Isaiah 35:5; 42:7. Look at the progress in the man’s development of his testimony between 9:11 (he identifies healer as “a man they called Jesus”), 9:17 (“a prophet”),

9:33 (“from God”), and 9:37 (“the Son of Man”). Simultaneously the antagonists decrease in their faith and vilify Jesus (:15–17, 29, 34).

John 9:34 “they cast him out” The Pharisees resent the man and those whom they feel are unclean and unlearned. They resort to condemning the man as a sinner and excommunicate him from the synagogue.

3. Jesus

John 9:35–41

John 9:35 “Jesus heard . . . and . . . found him” Interestingly, the healed man does not go find Jesus on his own. The crowds, his new life, whatever his distractions were, he does not. But fortunately for him (and all of us), Jesus seeks him / us out. His first question is one for all disciples, “Do you believe on the Son of God?” (NIV)

John 9:36–38 “Who is he Lord, that I might believe?” This touching level of faith and spontaneous worship, is refreshing after the “blindness” of the Pharisees. Jesus and John chose to emphasize the miracle again by adding “thou hast . . . seen him” (37).

John 9:39 “For judgment I am come into the world” Jesus expounds on His role as judge—after just discussing it a few days earlier in the temple (John 7:24). He claims to be a judge who intimately knows the challenges of the world. Our Judge helps us become aware of our sins which leads us to become more humble, more motivated to change, and more meek. Also, the process of seeing through our pride allows us to more clearly understand what life is all about. Those who are blinded by pride are not able to come unto Christ with full purpose of heart though.

“they that see not might see . . . they that see might be made blind” Jesus introduces another opposite again. He is not speaking on a physical level of hurting anyone’s sight—but rather trying to point out blind spots to those in need of repentance. The irony of spiritual blindness dims the spiritual vision of the proudful well educated even now.

John 9:40–41 “Are we blind also?” Jesus seems to have a steady crowd around Him listening and asking questions. His warning answer is for a much larger crowd though. We all need to meekly accept Divine change and direction even when it goes counter to our cultural norm. The Lord also addresses faith. Those who can but will not see with an eye of faith, like these Pharisees, are worse than blind. In a way, He teaches them that their lack of faith is a choice. These fault finders are worse than the blind, because they chose not to see.

“Your sin remaineth” Sin is in the singular, possibly meaning the sin of not accepting their Savior. By rejecting Jesus, they chose to follow the devil by default. This tragic flaw will breed more sins as they do their master’s bidding.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

John 10:1–18

The setting appears to continue from the same fall feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem for the first part of this chapter (but it may also be a prelude to the feast of dedication that begins in John 10:22). As Jesus continues to preach at the temple, He uses the themes of sheep and shepherds overlapping with many shepherd texts in the OT. For example:

- **Psalms 23:1** “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters
- **Isaiah 40:11** “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.”
- **Isaiah 53:6** “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”
- **Isaiah 53:7** “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”
- **Jeremiah 31:10** “He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock”
- **Ezekiel 34:11–12** “I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock . . . so will I seek out my sheep”

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Opposite: Tomb showing Christ as the good shepherd at the central cemetery of Kufstein, middle of the 19th century. Image via Wikimedia Commons

This latter citation is part of a larger shepherd text that fills the better part of the whole chapter (Ezek 24:1–23). It was in the Jewish synagogue for a winter weekly cycle of scripture study.³⁷

Jesus builds on Ezekiel and other OT shepherd and sheep texts so that it becomes a NT theme as well (see Matthew 18:12; 25:32; Acts 20:28–29; 1 Peter 5:2–4; Hebrews 13:20; etc.). John 10:1–7 is as close as John’s Gospel ever gets to a parable (the others are more allegories).

The Parable

John 10:1–7

10:1 “a door into the sheepfold” Sheepfolds were built in many ways, but in Palestine, most were either in the yard adjacent to one’s house / tent, or if out in the field an enclosure surrounded by low stone walls and topped with briars. They often were in the yard just outside a house/tent. At night the sheep slept in these enclosures. The shepherd came in the morning and took their sheep to the pasture by calling to them.

“a thief and a robber” In Jesus’ parable, the thief or robber represents anyone who teaches against Jesus, like the Pharisees in John 9:13. As the Law of Moses requires, Jesus differentiates between a “thief” and “robber/bandit/*lestes*.” John Welch explains:

Although there is only a little difference between a thief and a robber in most modern minds, there were considerable differences between the two under ancient Near Eastern law. A thief (*ganab*) was usually a local person who stole from his neighbor. He was dealt with judicially. He was tried and punished civilly, most often by a court composed of his fellow townspeople. A *robber*, on the other hand, was treated as an outsider, as a brigand or highwayman. He was dealt with militarily, and he could be executed summarily.³⁸

This definition also sheds light on 1 Nephi 3, where Laban calls Laman “a robber.” He no longer identified him as an insider.

John 10:2–3 “the one who enters by the gate is the shepherd” (BSB). Jesus introduces Himself as the shepherd (and later as the gate) of the sheepfold. It harkens back to Numbers 27:17–18, where the Lord chooses Joshua (which is the Hebrew name for Jesus) as the “shepherd” of the Children of Israel. “Appoint a man over the congregation . . . who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the lord may not be like sheep without a shepherd. . . Take thee Joshua /Jesus ” (LXX).

Other OT references apply here too (see Micha 2:12–13; Ezekiel 34:9–17 and Isaiah 55:4). Lots of stories tell of sheep knowing their shepherd’s voice. Sheep are very social—they eat with their head together, cry when sepa-

rated, and don't seem to mind different sheepfolds drinking from the same watering trough. If taken or caught by a predator, sheep become submissive. They are generally docile, quiet and patient.

John 10:4–5 “goeth before them and the sheep follow him” A shepherd who is known by his sheep, can walk ahead of them and they will follow. If multiple herds of sheep are gathered together, they can recognize their individual shepherd's call and spontaneously follow the voice they know. But in John 10, the people of Jerusalem do not follow Jesus. This is because they are not His sheep.³⁹

Like sheep, people are helpless without the Savior. If they recognize His Spirit, they gladly follow Him. But if not, they follow another voice, or initially need to be pushed through the gate.

John 10:6 “they understood not” The Lord resorted to speaking in parables in the Synoptic Gospels when the people proved they couldn't comprehend his plain speech. This way only those who understood were/are held accountable.

Jesus Explains the Gate

John 10:7–10

John 10:7 “I am the gate for the sheep” (NIV) Unlike the many OT links to sheep (i.e. Isaiah 40:11; Jeremiah 23:4–5, etc.), Jesus' explanation of the parable centers in on His main point—which is entering through the gate or door. “*I am the door*,” This also implies “an entrance, way” preparing for “*I AM the Way*” (John 14:6). While the Synoptic Gospels quote the phrase: “The kingdom of God / heaven is like . . .,” John uses a parallel message with his many “I am . . .” statements (John 10:7,9,11,14). Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27; and Luke 12:32 also use shepherd imagery for the Lord.

John 10:8–9 “. . . came before me who testified not of me are thieves” (JST) The JST clarifies that these verses do not refer to all past prophets. Rather prideful leaders who do not lead the flock to Jesus are thieves. God provides only one way to be saved and to find lasting joy—and that is through the narrow opening where our Savior stands. Jesus' atonement and ordinances becomes the door to heaven and Eternal Life.

John 10:10 “I am come that they might have life . . . more abundantly” The pasture of life is the fullness of life. Jesus open the gate to full mortality and eternal lives. Jesus work and glory is to open that gate for all mortals (Moses 1:39).

Explanation of The Shepherd

John 10:11–21

John 10:11 “The Good” or “beautiful by reason of purity of heart and life, and hence praiseworthy; morally

good, noble.”⁴⁰ This contrasts with the custom of the day where shepherds were often considered as dishonest and outside the Law. Early rabbis excluded shepherds (along with women) from acting as a witness or judge in courts of law. They rationalized, many shepherds grazed their flocks on other people’s lands, so they must be dishonest.⁴¹ Ironically, the scriptures describe shepherds as righteous, humble, devote followers of their God (i.e. Jacob, Joshua, David, etc.).

“the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” When Jesus gives His life, it includes His entire life—His growing years, mission, and atoning sacrifice—were all for us. He gave His life as a sacrifice for us. He feeds His sheep with truth (“I am . . . the truth” John 14:6). The earliest Christians saw the Lord referring to Himself as “the Good Shepherd,” and repeated the symbol in Hebrews 13:20 and 1 Peter 5:4.

John 10:12–13 “an hireling” Unlike a true shepherd, a day worker, works for pay not for love. The outcome makes all the difference—one builds and the other takes. When danger or challenges come the day worker flees, while the Good Shepherd stays beside His sheep because of his love for them.

John 10:14–15 “I lay down my life for the sheep” Jesus adopts Moses and young David’s role as the good shepherd (Exodus 3:1, 1 Samuel 17:34–35). Both of these two great Israelite leaders typified Jesus, and both prophesied that another would follow in their steps. (Look for Davidic typology with Jesus.). Jesus goes beyond the service rendered by these earlier good shepherds, to actually lay down His life and become the “great and last sacrifice . . . an infinite and eternal sacrifice” (Alma 34:10).

John 10:16 “other sheep” This is our clearest reference in the NT to the Nephites and others we don’t know much about yet (3 Nephi 16:1).

John 10:17–18 “no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself” Jesus declares this as the reason why His Father loves Him, He willingly will give Himself as

Other Sheep by Matt Warrren. Winner of the 2016 Book of Mormon Central Art Contest.



our Redeemer and Savior. John's theme of Jesus' power over death, is seen throughout His Gospel, including the controlled and willing manner that John illustrates Jesus' passion narrative (which we will see in a few weeks as we compare and contrast each of the Gospel accounts of the Lord's death).

John 10:19–21 “division . . . again among the Jews” Do you see the same arguments today used against Christianity and the Restored Church of Jesus Christ?

FEAST OF DEDICATION OR “HANUKKAH”

John 10:22 “it was winter” John moves three months ahead to the Feast of Dedication (Chislev 20–27, November/ December), which is also called the Feast of Lights, or Hanukkah.⁴² It is a holiday that began between the OT and NT. After the Maccabean revolt against the Greeks (164–160 BC), the priests rededicated their temple and later in 138 BC, celebrated it with another holy celebration.⁴³ Looking back at the second temple's rededication, the winter feast claimed the tradition that a miracle of one jar of sacred temple oil lasted the entire eight days of ceremonial needs.⁴⁴ The winter celebration developed into eight days of feasting, special worship services, and extra lights. This is the last of the series of feasts which began in John 5 (the Sabbath, Passover, Tabernacles, and now Feast of Dedication).

John 10:23 “Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch” The Temple Mount under King Herod's design was a huge space measuring more than 157,000 square yards (144,000 square meters, approximately 33–36 acres). It was one of the largest in the Roman world. To appreciate its grandeur, here are a few comparisons. The Forum in Rome was only half its size, the Acropolis in Athens one-fifth that size, and the largest temple complex in the world, Karnak in Upper Egypt, is only a third bigger and took 2,000 years to build. The outer most space was known as the Court of the Gentiles, because all were allowed on that space. People from all over the Roman Empire gathered in this area to discuss and debate issues of life. There may even have been benches or seats along the outer walls.

The outer four walls of the Court of the Gentiles had covered areas, known as porches, halls or cloisters. The flat roofs were supported by three rows of Corinthian columns, 37.5 feet high, each cut from a single block of marble. On the south was the “Royal Porch” supported by 160 pillars arranged in four rows of forty pillars each. Jesus came to the east porch, out of the wind, and overlooking the Mount of Olives. It was called, “Solomon's Porch,” because that is where Solomon's stables once stood. It was the oldest and loveliest porch.

John 10:24–25 “If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly” Jesus’ audience thought of their Messiah (or in Greek, Christ) as a conqueror, with strong political overtones. Jesus did *not* want to encourage this nationalist image. Instead, His response recalled His works as a witness of who He was to take them back to the biblical context.⁴⁵ To unbelievers Jesus’ answers must include witnesses. He explains that His works witness of Him.

John 10:26–27 My sheep listen . . . and they follow me” Jesus reintroduces the theme of sheep and ties the two halves of chapter 10 together (see John 10:11). He recaps that if they don’t follow Him, it is not because He is not The Shepherd, but because they are not His sheep.

John 10:28–29 “I give them eternal life” (ESV) LDS understand Eternal Life to mean Exaltation. It is the realm of the Father, who is “*greater than all.*”

John 10:30 “I and my Father are one” Trinitarian controversy hinges on this verse. Note the plural “*are*” suggesting plural. John 10:38 defines Jesus’ use of one, “the Father *is* in me, and I in him”

[Jesus Walks in the Portico of Solomon by James Tissot, 1899.](#)



John 10:31–33 “for which of those works do ye stone me?” Ironically, when Jesus answers their question, they cry “*blasphemy*,” and try to stone Him. Their two basic questions include: 1. Is Jesus the Messiah? (John 10:24), and 2. Does Jesus make Himself God? (John 10:33).

John 10:34–35 “ye are gods . . .” Jesus quotes Psalm 82:6, and then defines “*gods*” as those through whom God speaks (i.e. 1 Samuel 15:10; Hosea 1:1, Jeremiah 1:2, etc.). If God’s mouthpieces can be called on to speak for God, why do we not believe that the Word of God is the Son of God?

John 10:36 “. . . the Father hath sanctified” Jesus also returns to the theme of the Feast of Rededication. Even more than the temple was sanctified then, it is sanctified now with the fulfillment of ancient temple ordinances about to take place. “*Sanctified*” also means “consecrated.” As the one who will bear the sins of the world vicariously, Jesus is consecrated to become the living temple altar and Lamb of God. Many sacred things in the temple pointed to or represented the Promised Messiah (i.e. the brazen sea for washing, the anointing oil, the veil as a connection between the presence of God and earth, the Holy of Holies, etc.). If we can see Jesus as a temple as it were, one who bridges heaven and earth, and realize that His body literally houses our God, then this connection with the temple is even more powerful.

“sent into the world” Jesus also returns to the theme of being *sent from God* again. Jesus is the only being sent as half God, literally the Son of God. Disciples too are commissioned or sent forth to do God’s works, and angels are sent. But only Jesus is sent with the title: Emanuel, God with us.

John 10:37–38 “. . . believe the works” Jesus’ logic is beautiful. If He is doing God’s works, then God is working through and in Him. He represents the Father. John also lets us know that Jesus escaped again. Jesus’ enemies had no power over Him

Jesus Withdraws Across the Jordan River

John 10:40–42

John 10:39–42 This is the conclusion of “Part Three: The principal feasts” of John’s Gospel (chapters 5–10).⁴⁶ Some scholars call it, “the Book of Signs” as Jesus demonstrates signs of his Messiahship.⁴⁷ He now leaves the hostile land and people of Palestine and crosses the Jordan River into Perea. Many follow Him. There He finds the faith that was lacking in his own land. The author John, deliberately reminds us of JBpst. The scene takes place near where John the Baptist was baptizing across the Jordan and the fact that he bore witness of Jesus as the Son of God.

Header Image: Stained glass of Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd at St John the Baptist’s Anglican Church. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

Parallels Between Jesus And

MOSES

1. Wicked kings tried to kill them at birth
2. Meek
3. Went to the wilderness to commune with God
4. Fasted 40 days, confronted by Satan
5. Called from Egypt to fulfill prophecy
6. Served as mediators, judges, and redeemers of Israel
7. Miracle workers—including controlling the elements
8. Turned water red (blood / wine)
9. Law givers and restorers
10. Miraculously feed thousands of people
11. Carried by the Spirit to a Mount and shown the world
12. Healed by looking up with faith
13. Rejected when first came to redeem Israel
14. Brought the children of Israel to the Promised Land

DAVID

1. Came when God had rejected those in authority
2. Came from Bethlehem
3. Came through Jesse
4. Good shepherds
5. Called “beloved son” (the meaning of David)
6. overlooked
7. Destroyed the enemy to Israel (Goliath, Satan)
8. Anointed to be kings of Israel
9. Became kings at age 30
10. Sacrificed on Mount Moriah to stop (the plague of) death



[Moses Breaks the Tablets of the Law by Anton Robert Leinweber, 1910.](#)

ENDNOTES

1. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks, *King Benjamin's Speech: That Ye May Learn Wisdom* (Provo, UT: Foundation of Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1998), 148. We find evidence of many Jewish feasts in the Book of Mormon even without being named. We are also told to things like “feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.” (2 Nephi 32:3; see also 3:20; 9:51; Jacob 2:9; 3:2; etc.)
2. There are multiple James in the NT, but scholars assume that Jesus’ half-brother is the one referred to in the resurrection accounts listed in 1 Corinthians 15:7, “after that, he was seen of *James* then of all the apostles.” Paul also mentions visiting “James, the Lord’s brother” in Jerusalem (Galatians 1:19). Paul refers to him in the same letter as one of the pillars of the church (Galatians 2:9) We understand this James, could not be Zebedee and Salome’s son James, the brother of John. We think of this James as a member of the first presidency at times as he worked closely with Peter and John the Beloved when they saw the Lord transfigured, and were asked to pray in Gethsemane. Acts 12:2 records that Herod Agrippa kills this James son of Zebedee, near a Passover sometime before Herod’s own death in AD 44.
3. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.9.1.
4. Raymond Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John* (Collegeville, MN: the Liturgical Press, 1988), 48.
5. *Ibid.*, 49.
6. Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: Religious Perspectives* (Boston, MA: Brill, 1999), 119. Also see, Mishnah, Shabbath, 22:6; 17:2 ; 14:3; 6:10.
7. Brown, *John*, 50.
8. Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, Reprint, 1980), vol. 5, 499–500. The prophet Joseph taught, “You might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the remission of sins and getting of the Holy Ghost. Baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the other half—that is, the baptism of the Holy Ghost.”
9. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to Luke* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 412 and Introduction.
10. Brown, *John*, 51.
11. *Ibid.*, “Some manuscripts place it in Luke among the cunning question presented to Jesus during Holy Week; this would be a far better setting . . . the Greek style is closer to Luke than to John.”
12. Raymond Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John 1–XII* (NYC, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 337.
13. Lynne Hilton Wilson, *Christ’s Emancipation of Women in the New Testament* (Palo Alto, CA: Good Publ., 2015), chapter 1.
14. Brown, *Anchor: John*, 334–337.
15. *Ibid.*, 334
16. Augustine, “*Relicti sunt duo, misera et misericordia*”
17. Isaiah 49:6 “...to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my sal-

- vation unto the end of the earth.” In D&C 88:7–9, Jesus announces that He is the source of all light, within and without. Jesus is “the light of the sun ... the light of the moon the light of the stars.” Other scriptures explain that He is the “true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9; D&C 93:2; Moroni 7:16–19). During the millennium we will “need no candle, neither light of the sun,” for the Lord will be their light (Revelation 22:5; Isaiah 60:19).
18. Brown, *John*, 52.
 19. Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple and its Ministry and Services as they were at the time of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, reprint, 1987), 48. These chests were narrow at the top and wide at the bottom like a trumpet, and hence were called “trumpets.”
 20. Brown, *Anchor: John*, 361–362.
 21. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 15.xi. Herod’s addition to the Second Temple became a 80 year project, built from 19 BC to AD 63 or 64.
 22. Avraham Steinberg, ed., *Encyclopedia of Jewish Medical Ethics* (Jerusalem Israel: Feldheim, 2003), 34, “Any illness may result from sin.” Their society incorrectly presumed that physical imperfections made one a sinner, because priests with birth defects were not allowed to serve at the altar of the temple: “No man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the LORD made by fire” (Leviticus 21:21, 17–23).
 23. *Ibid.*, 107.
 24. Margaret Barker, *Creation: A Biblical Vision for the Environment* (London and NYC: T & T Clark, 2010), 232.
 25. Wilson, *Emancipation of Women*, chapter 7. “In antiquity, blind people filled the cities and temples as alms collectors. Most blind people did not reach their potential, were considered worthless to society, were frequently hungry and sometimes starved to death. Blindness was universally considered to be a great tragedy, and mostly as punishment for sin.” Steinberg, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Medical Ethics*, 106.
 26. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ doctrine of a pre-mortal life is not generally shared by Jews or Christians currently
 27. Brown, *Anchor: John*, 371.
 28. *Ibid.*, 372. The Mishnah recorded a curse on anyone who uttered charms over a wound, notably, while spitting.
 29. Alonzo Gaskill, *Sacred Symbols: Finding Meaning in Rites, Rituals and Ordinances*, (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2017), 41–42. Cyril (AD 313 – 386) elaborated on early Christian anointings: “Ointment is symbolically applied to thy forehead and thy other senses; and while the body is anointed with the visible ointment, thy soul is sanctified by the Holy and life-giving Spirit. Ye were first anointed on the forehead, that ye might . . . *reflect as a mirror the glory of the Lord. Then on your ears; that ye might receive the ears which are quick to hear* the Divine Mysteries, of which Esaias said, The Lord gave me also an ear to hear [Isa 1:4 and Mark 4:9] . . . Then on the nostrils; . . . Afterwards on your breast; that having put on the *breastplate of righteousness, ye may stand against the wiles of the devil.*” The Bible records ritual anointings priests, kings, sacrifices, lepers, tabernacle and temple furnishings (Leviticus 14:15–18; Exodus 29:4–8; 29, 36; 40:9–15; Numbers 3:3; 6:15; 1 Samuel 16:1, 13; 1 Kings 1:39). They kept their special olive oil for anointings in horns to consecrate things or people to God (1 Samuel 16:1).
 30. Brown, *Anchor Bible: John*, 29:380–381.

31. One is near the Ghihon spring in the Kidron Valley, the other just south of the Temple, outside the wall.
32. Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, 335.
33. Studies in Scriptures: Gospels, 5:121).
34. Gaskill, *Sacred Symbols*, 39. Tertullian (160–225 AD) explained that what we do to the body is really for the Spirit: “The flesh, indeed, is washed, in order that the soul may be cleansed; the flesh in anointed, that the soul may be consecrated; . . . the flesh is shadowed with the imposition [or laying on] of hands that the soul may be illuminated by the Spirit.”
35. *Mishnah*, *Abot* 5:21, outlines stages of the ideal male life “At 5 to Scripture, 10 to Mishnah, 13 to religious duties, 15 to Talmud, 18 to the wedding canopy, 20 to responsibility for providing for a family, 30 to fullness of strength, 40 to understanding, 50 to counsel, 60 to old age, 70 to ripe old age, 80 to remarkable strength, 90 to a bowed back, and 100—he is like a corpse who has already passed and gone from this world.”
36. Brown, *John*, 57.
37. Brown, *Anchor: John*, 389. “In particular, Ezek xxxiv, which, as we shall see, is the most important single OT background passage for John x, served as the *haphtarah* or prophetic reading in the general time of Dedication in the second year of the cycle.”
38. John W. Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 248.
39. Kent Jackson, and Robert Millet. *Studies in Scriptures: Gospels vol 5* (SLC, UT: Deseret Book, 1986), 140.
40. Brown, *Anchor: John*, 386.
41. Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 374. Women were considered dishonest and the source of all sin since Eden.
42. B. H. Roberts, *Seventy’s Course in Theology*, 1:57. In 198 B.C., “After a series of contests Palestine was taken from Egypt by Antiochus the Great, annexed to Syria, and divided into five provinces, viz., Judea, Samaria, Galilee (W. of Jordan), Peraea [*sic*], and Trachonitis (E. of Jordan). From this time, owing to its position between the two great powers Egypt and Syria, this country [Israel] became a frequent prey to both, until Antiochus Epiphanes took Jerusalem (B. C. 170), foully polluted the temple, and compelled the Jews to sacrifice to idols. He erected the statue of Jupiter on the altar of burnt-offering, committed all books of scripture to the flames, and prohibited the worship of God. The high priests, corrupted by Greek licentiousness, prepared the way for declension, and encouraged the adoption of foreign customs. But the attempt to finally stamp out Judaism produced a recoil. It culminated in the attempt of Antiochus to force the Jews publicly to eat the flesh of swine sacrificed on God’s altar to the honor of Jupiter. One aged scribe refused, was followed by a mother and her seven sons, who all suffered martyrdom with the extremes of torture. This was followed by Mattathias, a priest of the Hasmoean family, who killed both a renegade Jew, when about to offer idolatrous sacrifice, and the royal officer who presided. Aided by his five sons, he rallied the faithful round him, threw down the heathen altars, fled to the mountains and raised the standard of liberty, on which were inscribed M. K. B. I., the initials of their Hebrew war-cry, *Mi-Kamoka Baelim, Ihovah*, ‘Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods?’ (Exodus xv: 11), from which the insurgents got the name of ‘Maccabees,’ whence the eldest son and successor of Mattathias is known in history as Judas Maccabaeus. Under him they were victorious. Antiochus died of a loathsome disease, stricken by God.”
43. Josephus, *Antiquities*, xii, 7:7.

44. The apocryphal books, 1 and 2 Maccabees, include two different origins of the holiday. As previous accounts of Moses' tabernacle and Solomon's Temple included God's blessing with extraordinary light, the later tradition including a miracle of light unfolded in 2 Maccabees. We also find records of this tradition by James Talmage: "After almost three years, Judas, son of the priest Mattathias had the Jews return to Jerusalem and found the Temple deserted, as it had been left by the army of Antiochus. Its gates had been broken down and burned; and within the walls weeds were growing. Judas tried to cleanse and rehabilitate the House; he brought in new vessels, and replaced the candlestick, the altar of incense, the table of shewbread, and the veils, and built a new altar for burnt offerings." (James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord*, 44). On the third anniversary of the day that it was polluted, Zerubbabel's Temple was purified (*Chislev* 20, B. C. 164). Decades later, they began celebrating this with another feast. The tradition claims that only one consecrated jar of oil was intact and bore the high priest's unbroken seal. Miraculously, this jar of oil burned for all eight days of the temple rededication.
45. Brown, *Anchor: John*, 406. Also see *Psalms of Solomon*, 17:21–25, dating from first and second century B.C. (<http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/psalmssolomon.html>)
46. Brown, *Anchor: John*, 404,
47. Brown, *John*, 24.