

# Adult Teaching Resources

April 17, 2016



## Close Encounters of the Jesus Kind: Conversations with Jesus (April 3-May 8)

A Disciple We Can Like — John 20:19-31

One Shepherd to Another — John 21:1-19

**Ask the Sheep — John 10:22-30**

A Serious Summary — John 13:31-35

[www.baptiststoday.org](http://www.baptiststoday.org)

Subscribe to *Baptists Today* to access the core Bible content for this lesson.

[www.nurturingfaith.net](http://www.nurturingfaith.net)

Find links and videos related to this lesson.

# Ask the Sheep

John 10:22-30

## FIT Teaching Guide

by Rick Jordan

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

**Before the Lesson:** Have blank paper and pens/pencils for the Transformational Exercise.

### Fellowship Question

---

Use *one* of the following to break the ice, to begin discussion, and lead into the study:

What singer or actor's voice do you recognize immediately?

What is one regional thing that you identify yourself with? (a regional food, sports team, event, civic organization, etc.)

### Information

---

There are people who have very distinctive voices. We are not given a description of Jesus' voice. Was it deep and dramatic? Did he have a distinctive accent? We are not told these things. Apparently, this was not an important issue as far as the gospel writers were concerned. However, in the gospel of John, Jesus talks about his voice.

Here is the setting: Jesus is in the temple in Jerusalem. It is in the winter, during the festival time that we call Hanukkah. Hanukkah is a Jewish holiday that is not an explicitly religious holiday, as is the Day of Atonement or Passover. Hanukkah is a nationalistic holiday. In the second century BC, between the Old Testament days and the New Testament days, the Jews revolted against the occupying Syrians. A Jewish priest named Judas Maccabeus led the revolt. The Jews reclaimed the Temple, tore down the statue of Zeus that the Syrians had erected, ritually cleansed the temple, and held an eight day celebration. The Jews of Jesus' day celebrated Hanukkah, just as the Jews of today do. It is a time to celebrate the Jews as a people and to remember when Jews expunged those who once ruled over them. Flash forward 200 or so years, and the Jews, including Jesus and his disciples, are celebrating.

[Have a class member read John 10:22-27.]

Who were the people who questioned Jesus? ("the Jews") In Luke's gospel, it is the high priest that presents this challenge to Jesus. But John broadens the base. After all, who was in the temple if not Jews, and who was celebrating this festival if not Jews? And, in some ways, the Jews of Jesus' day and the Jews of Judas Maccabeus' day were in the same situation. A foreign power, in this case, Rome, ruled their land.

## Information *continued*

Generally speaking, Jews of the day were looking for the Messiah. And on Hanukkah, with the memory of their forefathers challenging an oppressive government, questions about a coming Messiah who would deliver his people from Roman occupation would come naturally. It seems, however, that the persons questioning Jesus were not as curious as they were calculating. At the very least, they were frustrated. Who was this man, they wondered.

Let's hear what happened just before this festival.

[Have a class member read John 10:14-21.]

What is it that the Jews want Jesus to make clear? (his identity; if he is or is not the Messiah) Jesus offers an entirely different image of who he is — a shepherd.

You can't get two roles much further apart than a shepherd and the Messiah, particularly as they saw the Messiah — a political powerhouse with military might. A shepherd had no political power and fought off thieves or animals with rocks and sticks. The Jews were sure that the coming Messiah would take lives. What would happen to Jesus, as the good shepherd? (he would lose his life; he would give his life up for the sheep, etc.)

The Messiah would be the savior of the Jews, but Jesus says that there are other sheep he also came to save. Who do you think Jesus meant? (the Gentiles — those who were not Jews; generations born after the ascension of Jesus; etc.)

John says the "the Jews were divided" over Jesus' words. Some credited his power to demons. Others argued that, at the very least, Jesus was not demon possessed, because a demon could not heal a blind man.

Let's listen to the story they were thinking of.

[Have a class member read John 9:1-11.]

One thing to notice about this text is the role of *words* and the role of *works*. Jesus, sometimes, merely spoke words for a healing to occur. In this situation, though, there are works — creating a paste, putting the paste on eyes, and taking a dip in a pool. We are not told why healings happen in one way or the other. Either way, John refers to supernatural stories as signs or as works. They were beneficial to the recipient, of course. Moreover, they were also evidence of Jesus' identity and of his clear purpose.

But, it was not clear for those who did not or could not believe in him.

[Have a class member read John 9:16.]

Let's return to our original passage, then. Consider the story of the blind man's healing, the religious leaders' rejection, and Jesus' claim to be a sacrificial shepherd as we hear this passage again:

[Have a class member read John 10:24-27.]

## Information *continued*

Jesus says he has offered words and he has offered works as evidence of his identity. They rejected both. How did they reject his words? (ignore them; rejected them; twisted their meaning, etc.) How did they reject Jesus' works? (denied they happened; attributed Jesus' power to demonic powers, etc.)

What do you think was within them that blocked them from accepting Jesus for who he was?

Jesus knew he was going to give up his life for his sheep. What happens to sheep when there is no shepherd? (they scatter; they get lost; they are attacked with ease by wolves; they are easily stolen by thieves, etc.)

Jesus knew sheep and he knew human nature. Once he was taken by the Roman authorities, he must have assumed that all would scatter in fear. At least one would deny being in Jesus' fold. So, Jesus told them something that might sustain them for those terrible three days.

[Have a class member read John 10:27-30.]

That last sentence was another clarifying identity statement, wasn't it? How do you think the religious leaders would react to that?

[Have a class member read John 10:31-33.]

Jesus responds...

[Have a class member read John 10:37-39.]

The clearer Jesus states his identity, the angrier the religious leaders become. Why?

## Transformational Exercise

---

Jesus is under attack. He is being threatened, pushed around, and bullied. He has "come to his own, but his own people reject him." (John 1:11)

Rejection can cause us to take a step back, to reassess our position, maybe to reaffirm our position. Jesus escapes another attempt to cause him physical harm, then he goes on a little retreat.

[Have a class member read John 10:40.]

Why do you feel Jesus chose this spot for his retreat?

[Distribute pen and paper.]

Throughout this lesson, we've seen how Jesus' words and works reveal his identity. But Jesus, even, feels a need to go back to the place where it all started. That place, that event, defined him.

What places and events have defined your faith pilgrimage? Use this paper to name or draw a sketch of places and events that have been most formative for you. After a little time, I will

## Transformational Exercise *continued*

invite you to share one of those places or events with a neighbor.

[After some time for reflection and writing...]

I'd like to invite you to share with a neighbor a story of one place or event that has helped to define your identity as a follower of Jesus.

[After time for sharing, call the class back together.]

What was that experience like for you? Did you have things in common? What is one thing you gained from hearing your neighbor's story?

[Close in a prayer something like this: *Help us, O God, as we seek to identify ourselves with you more and more clearly. May our words and our works be good. May they point others to you. Amen.* ]

**Comments or Questions for Rick Jordan?** You may send comments to the lesson plan author at [rjordan@cbfnc.org](mailto:rjordan@cbfnc.org). Rick is also available to lead workshops and conferences on Christian Education, with particular emphasis on how best to use the FIT Faith model.

## Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

**Maccabees** — The books of Maccabees, along with about a dozen others, are included in some editions of the Bible as a separate section between the Old and New Testaments. The section is generally known as the “Apocrypha.” Catholics consider the books to be “deuterocanonical,” and they are included in Roman and Orthodox Catholic editions of the Bible. Protestants generally do not consider the Apocrypha to be inspired scripture, though some readings from the apocrypha appear in various lectionaries used by Anglicans and Lutherans, as well as the Revised Common Lectionary.

**Daniel and Antiochus** — The book of Daniel, though set in the sixth century B.C.E. during the Jewish exile in Babylon, was probably written much later. The second half of Daniel, with its “predictions” of successive rulers and its apocalyptic forecast, was likely written about 165 B.C.E., during the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanies. Its predictions concerning the character represented by Antiochus are relatively accurate up to the middle of his rule, but go off track after that point.

**The Hammer?** — Jews of the period did not typically use surnames other than the name of the father, preceded by *ben* or *bar*, meaning “son of” in Hebrew and Aramaic, respectively. Thus, the leader of the revolt would be “Judah ben-Mattathias,” but his powerful leadership inspired a nickname popularly added as a surname, and he became known as Judas Maccabbeus, commonly translated as “Judah the Hammer.”

**Hannukah lights** — The “Feast of Dedication” was also referred to as the “Festival of Lights,” in part to commemorate how the lamps of the temple had been lighted again. Early on, a special lampstand or candelabra containing eight lamps or candles came to be used for home celebrations as well as temple worship. Early rabbis disagreed over whether the festival should begin with all lights burning, extinguishing one each day, or whether it should begin with one light, adding another during each of the eight days of the festival.

Most contemporary Hannukah candelabras have nine branches, with one (usually in the center) being distinct from the others. Typically, the ninth candle is lit first and then used to light a new candle each day of the festival.

Hannukah usually occurs in December, before Christmas. It has become traditional in many Jewish households for children to receive a gift on each day of Hannukah.

**Chrysostom** — John Chrysostom was a fourth century church father who was popular for his straightforward interpretations of scripture, many of which were collected in a work known as *Homilies*. He served briefly as Archbishop of Constantinople, but his ascetic views and criticism of higher authorities made him controversial, and he was ultimately forced into exile.

The quotation found in the lesson was cited by Raymond E. Brown in *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, Anchor Bible Vol. 29 (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 406 as “Jo. LXI 2:PG 59:338.”

# The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

## What if Jesus had said “Yes, I am the Messiah”?

In today’s text, a group of “the Jews” gathered around Jesus and asked “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly” (John 10:24). Can we determine their motive? If Jesus had said “Yes, I am the Messiah,” would they have believed and followed him?

From this distance in time and space, we obviously cannot answer with certainty. Clues in the text, however, suggest that those who questioned Jesus would not have been inclined to believe he was the long-awaited Messiah, or to follow him, no matter how he had responded.

The roots of messianic expectation go back to 2 Samuel 7, where Nathan spoke to David in an oracle that was interpreted as a divine promise that David’s descendants would rule over Israel forever:

*“When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings. But I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever”* (2 Sam. 7:12-16).

A united kingdom of Israel lasted only through Solomon’s reign. Afterward, the kingdom split into a Northern Kingdom (Israel) and a Southern Kingdom (Judah). Descendants of David continued to rule in Judah, while others ruled in the north. The kingdom of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.E. The kingdom of Judah lived under the shadow of Assyria for many years, but remained an independent entity until 597 B.C.E., when Nebuchadnezzar’s army took King Jehoiachin captive, replaced him with Zedekiah, and forced the nation’s elite into exile. When Zedekiah rebelled 10 years later, the Babylonians razed Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, and carried a second wave of Hebrews into exile.

This turn of events seemed at odds with the promise that Israel would be established and David’s descendants would rule forever, but the exiles found hope in Jehoiachin’s continued survival. The book of 2 Kings, the closing chapter of what scholars call the “Deuteronomistic History,” concludes with the hopeful note that Evil Merodach (a transliterated version of the Babylonian name Amil-Marduk), Nebuchadnezzar’s son and successor, had released Jehoiachin from prison, elevated him above other captive kings, and provided him with a personal allowance and a seat at the royal table for as long as he lived (2 Kgs. 25:27-30).

## The Hardest Question *continued*

Amil-Marduk ruled for only a short period of time, however, before being replaced in a palace coup by Neriglissar, whose rule was also brief. He was replaced by a usurper named Nabonidus, whose rule (partly in a co-regency with his son Belshazzar) lasted until Babylon's defeat by the Persians in 538 B.C.E.

During the exile, prophets such as Jeremiah and Isaiah sought to harmonize the divine promise of 2 Samuel 7 and the cold reality of exile by predicting that a new king from David's line would arise to re-establish the nation. Jeremiah 23:5-6, for example, declares "The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'"

Isaiah 11:1-10 also speaks of "a shoot from the stump of Jesse" (David's father) who would arise to rule with righteousness. Although his predicted reign of peace sounds far more ideal than any earthly kingdom yet seen, some rabbis saw it as a messianic prophecy. During the post-exilic period, prophets such as Haggai and Zechariah were hopeful that Zerubbabel, a descendant of David who had been appointed governor of the returning exiles, might arise to rule as a great king (Hag. 2:20-23, Zech. 4:1-10).

Jews of the first century held widely divergent views regarding a Messiah. Some expected a Davidic descendant to arise, defeat the Romans, and rule with power. Others looked past history to an idyllic "messianic age" (such as described in Isaiah 11:1-10) when a hoped-for supernatural Messiah would reign. Others expected no Messiah at all.

Hence, even those who questioned Jesus may have had different expectations regarding a Messiah, which may help to explain Jesus' response to their question — "I have already told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep" (John 10:25-26).

Those who were looking for a political Messiah were bound to be disappointed, as were those who longed for a Messiah who would inaugurate a utopian world of peace and universal worship. Jesus' concept of what it meant to be a Messiah — the Christ — the anointed one of God who had come to save people from their sins — differed markedly from whatever expectations they might have had. As a result, even if Jesus had plainly said "Yes, I am the Messiah," it is unlikely that he would have gotten a positive response, because he was not the type of Messiah that any of them were looking for.