

# **Exposing The Truth About Unbelievers**

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**John 10:22-26**

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I don't know about you, but in my mind, I often say to myself, "All good things must end." It's one of the horrible things about life in this world, that our good times don't last forever. As we enter verse 22 of John chapter 10, we've got something really good, something infinitely good that's coming to an end. What we'll see until the end of chapter 10 is the end of Jesus' public ministry as told to us by John, maybe His closest friend. This is the end of that. The rest of John will be much more private ministry until He is arrested and executed and then rises from the dead. That will happen three and a half months from the events in John 10, making this the Jews' last chance to believe in their Messiah. They won't. They're not going to, though. By the end of this chapter, you can see it for yourself, they will try to kill Jesus again, which just amazes me.

With a heart full of love for rebels like these people here, Jesus not only puts up with their blasphemy, but He gives them the truth again and again and again. As He does this, we get a front row seat for how unbelief reacts to Jesus. More importantly, we get to see and we get to learn from Jesus how to interact with unbelief. In our text today, Jesus will expose the truth about unbelievers. What is the truth about unbelievers? What do we need to know about unbelievers? What can we expect to experience from them when we share the truth with them? All of this is in our text today, and all of that is relevant for us because all of us has people in our lives, people we love dearly who are as of now unbelievers who need the truth.

Now, before we get into that, I need to set the context for these events. This last section begins with what is called the Feast of Dedication or what is called today, Hanukkah. This is about two months. There's about two months between the end of verse 21 and the beginning of verse 22 where the text says, "At that time, the Feast of Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter." Holiday is celebrated every December, and it is the only holiday that they celebrate that was not authorized by God In the Bible. Its background is the reclaiming of Jerusalem and the purification of the temple in 164 BC, which happened in between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the new.

Three years earlier, 167 BC, a leader named Antiochus Epiphanes conquered Jerusalem. You've got to have a pretty excessive view of yourself if you make your last name Epiphanes, which means God manifest in the flesh. That's what he thought of himself. He wanted to make all his conquered nations into Greeks and he wanted to unite his kingdom under one religion. What that meant was in Israel it was a crime to have an Old Testament to observe the Sabbath and to circumcise baby boys. All of that was punishable by death. He turned the temple courts into brothels. He demanded the Jews worship Zeus. He actually set up a statue of Zeus in the holy of holies and had a pig sacrificed there in Zeus' honor. Well, the Jews rebel against this tyranny,

and after three years of guerrilla warfare, after some 80,000 Jews were killed and many were sold into slavery, they eventually win their independence. They reclaim Jerusalem and reclaimed the Temple Mount. It is also called the Festival of Lights because Jews light lamps like these in the temple and in their homes for eight days. The festival then remembers the historic fight for independence, the historic victory over very powerful pagan enemies.

Now fast-forward to Jesus' day; this holiday encouraged the Jews to hope that God would deliver them again. They're remembering a deliverance from over a century ago, and then they're going, "Well, wait a minute, God, do it again." Deliver us from Roman tyranny this time. Give us our independence, and do it by sending us our Messiah who will destroy the Romans and set us free. That's in the background of everything going on. To help those who weren't familiar with this holiday, John adds at the end of verse 22, it was wintertime.

Then in verse 23, Jesus enters the scene. As Jesus was walking in the temple in the colonnade of Solomon. Colonnade of Solomon consisted of long covered hallways that looked something like this. Now, ironically, while the people celebrated God saving the Jews from pagan tyranny, here we have the Savior of the world from the spiritual tyranny of sin, death, and hell. Here He is walking unrecognized as their Messiah in Jerusalem unreceived by the people He came to save.

You remember the last time He was there; He was almost murdered. Here He comes back because He's courageous, but He can't be there very long without the Jews coming up to Him, verse 24. The Jews gathered around Him and said to Him, "how long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." It might sound like it, but this is not a search for truth. Those words gathered around Him means that they surrounded Him, they encircled Him, they closed Him in. He's got nowhere to go. They're determined to get their questions answered. They're frustrated with Jesus. What they mean by this first question is, "How long are you going to kill us with this suspense? You're frustrating us by not giving us the answers we want in a very simple way. Tell us in a way that's easy to understand. Make it clear. Are you the Christ, yes, or no?" They want Him to act on their terms. They want Him to act in ways that are acceptable to them. They have expectations, after all, you better meet our expectations, we're in charge here. That they don't believe, they may be implying is His fault. "It's your fault that we don't believe because you haven't been clear enough."

However, keep in mind that what we learn from throughout this book and from the other gospels is behind all of their questions, including these two, is their deep desire to trap Him in His words to get more and more evidence in order to have Him executed. Jesus is not going to agree with this complaint. He's going to confront them. Verse 25, Jesus answers them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, but you do not believe." He disagrees with their assessment. He'd spoken clearly. He may not have called Himself the Christ, but He made it clear who He was numerous times saying that He's the son of God, numerous times He calls himself the son of man. Both of these are titles for the Messiah. He makes it clear then that their unbelief was their fault. The blame lies with them because they don't believe.

Think about it. If Jesus said, "Yes, I am the Messiah," everybody listening to him would have thought war, Rome, military. Kill them all. Let's get an army and destroy the Romans. That's what Hanukkah is celebrating. That's what's in the background. That's what they would have heard if he said, "Yes, I'm the Messiah." They didn't have a concept of a dying Messiah like Isaiah 53 teaches. But He also couldn't say, "No, I'm not the Messiah." Why? Well, because He really was the Messiah. He couldn't do that either.

Then notice in verse 25 from His words, "I told you," then He moves to His works, and those are His miracles. "Those," He says, "which I did in my Father's name," meaning I did in cooperation with the Father under His direction. He says, "Those established my credentials. They give clear evidence that I am the Messiah." When He healed a paralyzed man, a man had been paralyzed for 38 years, or He heals a man who was born blind, He did what the Old Testament said the Messiah would do when He arrived, which proves that He is that, Messiah. Their problem, therefore, was not a lack of evidence, they didn't believe the truth of miracles pointed to. They didn't lack the information that they asked for, they lacked a love for the truth. To emphasize this, He repeats himself, that despite His miracles being clear, look at verse 26, "You do not believe." Miracles actually harden their hearts against them, which just seems crazy. He pulls off this thing that only God can do, this is seriously the guy, but they reject because that's what stony, unbelieving hearts do with the truth.

But here in verse 25, Jesus is not letting these men off the hook, He's pressing the truth down on their souls by exposing their hypocrisy. From this, we learn that we must, ***point #1), Accept Personal Responsibility For Unbelief.*** If you're taking notes, point number one, ***Accept Personal Responsibility For Unbelief.*** He doesn't give them an out, He exposes their hearts, which is the real issue. He'd spoken to them directly for over a year. The responsibility for their continued confusion about who He is not due to His lack of clarity, it's due to their unbelief. They don't believe, so they don't understand this guy. They don't understand Jesus.

He told them in John 6:36 that they had seen Him, meaning the miracle showed them very clearly who He really is, and yet they did not believe. In John 5:40. He says to them, "You refuse to come to me, that you may have life." Jesus will say to them, and as He will say as he enters Jerusalem for the last time, they did not come to Him basically because they didn't want to. Just boil everything down; they just didn't want to.

Why don't people want to believe in Jesus? Well, I'm not going to give you an exhaustive list right now, but here's what I found just after surveying John a little bit, John 3:19 says people don't believe in Jesus because they love their sin. People love darkness rather than light because their works were evil. That's why they don't believe. John 5:44 says people don't believe in Jesus because of pride. He says, "How can you believe when you receive glory from one another? You're not going to get that glory if you believe in me." John 7:17 says people don't believe in Jesus because they are the authority, not God. He says, "If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether my teaching is from God or not." John 8:24 says people don't believe in Jesus because they deny His deity. He says, "Unless you believe I am, you will die in your sins." John

8:45 says people don't believe in Jesus because they hate the truth. Listen to how Jesus puts it. He says, "Because I tell the truth, you do not believe me." Hearing the truth, get that away from... I don't want anything to do with that. One more, John 5:38 says people don't believe in Jesus because they reject His word. He says, "You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom He has sent."

It's clear from this list that people are personally responsible for their unbelief. They love sin so they don't believe. They'd rather have earthly prestige than believe. They refuse to give up authority over their lives. They hear the truth, and instead of believing it, they reject it and they stay hardened to the truth.

When you interact with non-Christians that you know and love in your life, do what Jesus does here; call on them to believe in Jesus. In grace and in truth, confront them in their rebellion, their obstinance, their refusal to give themselves to the truth that they already know is true. Like the men there that day, the issue was never a lack of evidence. Christianity has been attacked from the very beginning. There isn't an objection that hasn't already been answered in probably dozens of times. The heart of the matter is never information; it's always the heart. Again summarizing what we just looked at, they love their sin instead of Christ. They love their glory instead of Christ. They love their own will instead of God's will. They love their version of Jesus instead of the real one. They love lies instead of the truth. They love their ideas instead of God's word.

Now, in all of that, it doesn't mean we give up on them. Never. There are people here now who would say, "Praise God nobody gave up on me because that's why I'm here now." It also means we need to pray for them all the time and it also means that we need to keep telling it. We keep telling it. Why? Because it may be the next time that we tell it, but that'll be the time that God uses to save them like Jesus did with these people that day in John 10, help non-Christians accept personal responsibility for their unbelief. Their unbelief is not their parents' fault. It's not the fault of the church they grew up in or some church that was mean to them or treated them in unjust, horrible ways. It's not the fault of who someone they loved voted for or didn't vote for. It's not even the fault of some horrific tragedy that happened in their life. It's not even God's fault. Responsibility for their unbelief rests squarely on their shoulders. If that's you here today, put aside the excuses, put aside the justifications. Unlike the people in this text, come to Jesus, come to Jesus.

Some of you are here right now because your mom bribed you to be here right now. She said something to you like, "I don't want anything from you for Mother's Day except that you would come to church with me." This is why. She loves you dearly. Because she loves you, she wants you to get the gift on this Mother's Day, which is Jesus, so come to Him today.

Having said all that, Jesus confronts them with something else, something that is going to startle many of us, but something that is nonetheless true. Look back at verse 26. "But you do not believe because you are not among my sheep." This is a simple, easy to understand, clear, straightforward statement of fact. "You do not believe because you are not my sheep." Jesus' sheep are a group of people that the people He's talking to do not belong to. Notice verse 26 does

not say, "You are not among my sheep because you do not believe." You see that? Doesn't say that does it? If it said that, we would just move on. No issue at all. But look at it again. What does it say? If it said, "You do not believe; you are not among my sheep," there would also be no problem. They don't believe; they're not His sheep. Move on. However, Jesus said what? Look at it. "You do not believe because you are not among my sheep." The part of the verse that makes people very uncomfortable is the because. That word in Greek is used to give the cause of something or to give the reason for something. The reason you do not believe is because you are not among my sheep.

Follow me now. According to Jesus, in this text, in order to believe, what must a person be first? Do you hear those little whispers? It sounded, shh, shh, shh, shh, shh because they said, "Sheep." According to Jesus, why don't these people believe in Him? What does it say? Because they are not what? They are not His sheep. Again, according to Jesus here, what comes first, being a sheep or believing? What was that sheep?

Being a sheep. Is it hot in here? Now, how do we check to see if that is in fact what Jesus is saying? What we do is we compare scripture to scripture. Go up to verse 16. In verse 16, Jesus said, "I have other sheep." He has them. These are his sheep. "I have other sheep who are not of this fold." The idea there is these are Jewish believers in Jesus; that's this fold. I have other sheep that's non-Jewish believers in Jesus. He says, "I have other sheep who are not of this Jewish fold." But notice these words. "I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice, so there will be one flock, one shepherd." Look at that. Jesus said there were people who weren't with Him yet who hadn't listened to His voice yet, which means they hadn't believed in Him yet who weren't part of His flock yet, but they were still what? They were still His sheep even though they hadn't believed in Him yet.

Now, Jesus says this to who? Does He have a theology class in front of Him? "Hey, I'm going to write this on the board." No, He's saying this to who? People that are vehemently opposed to Him. It's like He's saying, "It does not surprise me at all that you reject me. If you were among my sheep, you would believe in me, but" verse 26, "you do not believe because you are not among my sheep."

Here's the thing. Many of you have told me how grateful you are to be at a church that preaches the Bible, even if it's hard. We preach it anyway. We don't just do series that we know everybody's going to love and we don't skip verses with hard truths; we just preach it all. You like that; some of you even admire that. Well, today is going to test that, at least for some because we're back looking at the words of Jesus in regard to a Christian cuss word, the word election, God determining the destination of people before time began.

Like everything I do, I'm not going to be heavy-handed about it. I'm going to preach this truth like a shepherd, not a prophet. Based on Jesus' words, here we must, ***point #2), Admit Divine Sovereignty Over Unbelief***. Point number two, ***Admit Divine Sovereignty Over Unbelief*** and don't come to the Bible demanding that it say what we want it to say. In case you're unaware, I don't come up here saying, "Well, I'm going to preach this part, but I'm not going to preach that

part." Sadly, I've seen far too many, "We preach the Bible," but skip verses like this one. The most they do, which is great, is they read it, but they don't start their explanation of the text until after this verse.

Verse 1 says, "My sheep hear my voice. I know them. They follow me. Praise the Lord." We don't do that. My conviction is that every word is inspired. Every word came from God; therefore every word must be preached. To be honest, at times like now, I wish verses like this weren't in the Bible because every single time I preach on texts like this, people leave. Precious people I know, precious people I love dearly no longer go here because it's like in their minds I've been keeping a secret from them, but because I didn't skip the text or I didn't explain it away and deal with it honestly, they go, "I can't handle that." But I'm convinced because it's God's word. This truth is for our good and for our blessing, and I'm going to try to make that case today. My job is not to edit the text, my job is to proclaim what it says even though I know doing that means I will be filling up other churches with former members. Some say, "Hey, that's just the way it goes. Suck it up." My response is, "Yeah, I know, but I love those people and I miss those people. I miss seeing them around here." But we'll proclaim it anyway. Before a person can believe, Jesus says he must be a sheep. If a person is not one of His sheep, verse 26, he will not believe in Him.

Now, I want you to see something. Look at verse 29, verse 29. We'll look at this more in-depth next weekend, but Jesus again, talking about His sheep, says this: "Notice my Father, who has given them to me." Stop there. The Father gave the sheep to Jesus. Before these people were Jesus' sheep, they belonged to the Father. Says similar thing in John 6:37, Jesus speaks of people who will believe in Him in the future, and He says about them, "All that the Father gives me will come to me. All the people that the Father gives me will come to me; that is they will believe in me." He's saying it's guaranteed. This is how He's comforting Himself in the midst of incredibly disrespectful rejection in that moment in John 6. People belong to God before they're Jesus' sheep and then they believe.

Jesus talks about this in John 8:47 saying, "Whoever is of God..." That phrase being of God means belongs to God. "Whoever belongs to God hears the words of God." Then He says something very similar to verse 26. "The reason why you do not hear the words of God is that you are not of God. The reason you don't take my words seriously and believe in me is because you do not belong to God."

Then to round all of this out with what Jesus says on this subject, in John He adds this, John 6:65, "No one can come to me unless the Father... Unless it is granted him by the Father." When He says that word can, He's talking about ability. No one has the ability to believe in Jesus unless one condition is met; that believing in Jesus is granted to them by the Father. Putting what Jesus said about this in John altogether, before a person believes in Jesus, he must belong to the Father. Then this person must be given by the Father to the son, making him a sheep. Then it must be granted to him by the Father to come to Jesus, and then that person believes.

Now let's back up for a second and say these are the words of Jesus. These are not my words. These are not the words of some 16th century Swiss theologian. Don't give a rip about theologians and what they teach unless what they teach matches what Jesus says, and Jesus said, "You do not believe because you are not one of my sheep." He said that which means that as the Lord, it's our job not to argue with Him. Knowing how hard it might be, it's our job to accept what He says, to take our thinking and bend it to what He said because we're His followers. We follow Him and what He did and what He said and what He taught, and that includes verse 26.

Now, that doesn't mean that accepting it doesn't come with serious questions like how does all that work out? There are many questions, but we have to start here. If the Bible teaches this, then I must believe it. Regardless of what anyone else says or has said to you in the past, it's right here, verse 26. I know you can find preachers that'll teach you whatever you want to hear. I know that. YouTube, that's what it's for almost. It's like a theological echo chamber. Don't bother me with stuff I disagree with; just give me all the stuff I agree with; get all that other stuff out of there.

What I've done today, knowing that people who disagree with me are going to be in here today, I've done my very best to simply say what the text says and then support it with other texts that say the same thing. That's how you check your interpretation of a text; you compare scripture with scripture. Now, I can't possibly answer every question that this subject brings up because often I've found that there are as many questions as there are people, but I'm here, the other pastors are here, love to walk with you. It's Acts 17:11 that the Berean Christians listened to the Apostle Paul, and they said, "That's really good, but you know what? I'm going to check that against scripture to make sure what you're saying matches what God says." Do that with us, please.

Now, in saying all of that, I want to say three more things, and then I'll close. First, notice that point number one and point number two are both true. One is not more true than the other. The Bible teaches both personal responsibility for unbelief and it teaches divine sovereignty over unbelief. The Bible does not attempt to make them fit together, which is another proof, for me at least, that we're dealing with God as the ultimate author of the Bible. Why? Because men would just take this out or they would make it very easy to understand. The Bible doesn't try to take this out or make it easy to understand. The Bible doesn't try to harmonize these two ideas. It doesn't apologize for one of them or use the other one to silence one of them or overpower them. They're both true. God is sovereign over salvation and people are responsible to believe. We are not sovereign over our own salvation even though we do believe, and God is not responsible for unbelief, though He is sovereign over it.

Now, I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I am not smart enough to reconcile those two things. Nobody else is either, though. But since they're both true, they don't really need to be reconciled, just like there's one God and three persons are equally God. God has no problem understanding how these truths fit together and here's the cool thing: One day we're not going to have a problem understanding that either.

The second thing I want to say is to you who have no problem with what I said just now, let me remind you that the result of these truths are not to get in fights and debates or to make it the only truth that we ever talk about, the goal of this truth is worship, it's worship. You can turn to Ephesians chapter 1 if you would like, Ephesians chapter 1. It's on page 1,078 in the Bibles that we give away. It's to the right. If you get to a book that starts with a T, you've gone too far, and so you bring it back. Ephesians chapter 1, starting in verse 4, the Bible says, "God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before Him." He chose us, that we would be holy, that we would live for Him, that we would show the family resemblance. In love, He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ. Why did He do that? The verse continues, "According to the purpose of His will." Why did he do that? Verse continues, "To the praise of his glorious grace."

If you believe in Jesus, it is because of verse 4, God chose you before the foundation of the world to be His. He predestined you. Verse 5, notice to adopt you into His family. He did that. Why did he do that? He did that because, verse 4, He loved you and He did it, verse 5, because He wanted to. It happened, verse 5, according to the purpose of His will. Not your will, His will.

If you believe in Jesus or if you will one day believe in Jesus, using the Bible's words in Ephesians 1, it's because He chose you and predestined you, and He did that because he wanted to and He wanted to because he loved you and He loved you so that you would, in the words of verse 6, "Praise Him for His glorious grace," that you would stand in awe that in spite of all your rebellion, He showed you mercy. He didn't show you justice. What you deserve for your crimes against God, instead of justice, He showed you grace. He gave you what you don't deserve: Mercy.

God is not like the security guard in front of the most exclusive club in existence where everybody just really wants to get in there, but He only allows some to enter and not others. Now, remember, apart from Him, we love our sin, not Him. We love our glory instead of His. We love our own will instead of His. We love our version of Jesus instead of the real one. We love lies instead of the truth. We love our own ideas instead of His word. Nobody wants God. What we've seen is because of our sin, nobody has the ability to believe in Jesus apart from God's granting grace. We hate Him and we want nothing to do with Him, but in His mercy, in His grace to rebels, He saves.

The picture that Paul uses in verse 5 is what? The picture he uses in all of this is the picture of adoption. Like any orphan, we didn't deserve to be adopted. We don't deserve to believe in Jesus. It's not ultimately because we figured something out and other people haven't yet. It isn't because God knew that you would believe and so He chose you. He chose you so that you would believe so that when you get to heaven, there's not even a fraction of a fraction of a fraction of 1% of being there. That's thanks to you. But 100% of it, you're there because of Him.

Now, listen, the goal of this message, as is the goal of every message, is to preach the text. It's not to convert anyone to a system of theology. Listen, it's not your job to do that either. Everybody here is in a different place when it comes to these ideas. This should not be the only



doctrine you talk about or try to convert people to or convert people away from, so don't use your group time this week to have many inquisitions. "Do you believe this or not? Okay, you can come in," standing at the door. "We're going to test you on this." No. No, don't use your group time to try to convert people one way or another. Don't get people to ask some theologian into their hearts. That's not what our group times are for. Truth is epically important, and so is love and peace maintained between Christians.

Don't fight about this. Don't get obnoxious about this. People have real questions and real struggles in regard to these ideas, and I want Redeemer so badly to be a place where we can struggle to understand the truth together. Let's consider others more important than ourselves. Remember that if you do agree with everything I said today, there was a day that you did it and you had to struggle, you had to think and you had to pray and you had to ask questions and have conversations to get to where you are today, and that's okay. None of us is a finished product in any way, including our theology.

I remember my pastor while I was in seminary saying, "We all have errors in our theology, we just don't know where they are." You're like, "Well, I know one for you right now, preacher boy." Just be patient with me because I don't know where it is at this point. In other words, let's love each other as we learn God's word together.

Now, listen, after all of that, unfortunately the third thing that I am going to end up saying to some of you with a heavy heart is, "Goodbye." Every single time I've taught through a book of the Bible and a text like this one has come up, people I know and love have left Redeemer, people who've been in my home, people I've met with and shared meals with, people who I've loved getting to know. Despite all of that, to hear a message like this and say, "We love you." It's always how it goes. "We love you and we love the church, but we can't stay if you teach that." As a shepherd, it pains me to see that, but I had a choice to make this week. Am I going to edit the text in order to keep you? My answer to that was no, no. You admire me for not doing that with other offensive parts of the Bible, so I can't do that here.

To those of you who know this is what we teach and you disagree, thank you for sticking it out at a church that you love and mostly agree with except on this. You're treating this issue for what it is, a secondary issue, not as a salvation issue, which unfortunately some people do. We don't do that. Some throw out words like, "This view's idolatry or that view's work salvation," we don't do that. Listen, people will be in heaven together who disagree on this issue.

If you're wondering, of course you can come to church here if you disagree with us. You can not only come to church here, you can be a member here, you can serve here, you can even teach here, just not your disagreement. But you can teach here too. Again, in issues of theology that don't impact salvation, let's build strong, solid biblical fences, but let's build them low enough to hug Christians who are on the other side of that fence from us.

Well, happy Mother's Day, happy Mother's Day. I told the pastors this morning when we prayed for the preaching, "If we had a smarter, wiser pastor, we would have preached last week's sermon

on the love of God. We would have done that today." But unfortunately, we don't have that pastor, we have me. Team's going to come back to lead us in one more song, but before that happens, let's pray.

God, thank you for your word and thank you for hard texts. Thank you for texts that challenge us. These texts challenged me this week deeply. Am I really going to preach that on Mother's Day? Thank you for your grace to all of us. We all come at these truths and many other truths from very different points right now, but the goal is that our lives and our thinking conform to your word because your word is truth, and so please use your truth in all of our lives. Use your truth to draw us closer to you, closer to the truth. Pray that you would do this for each of us and again, I pray for the moms here. Even use this truth as they face very difficult situations, some of them. May the truth we've looked at today encourage them and bless them as they continue to walk in your will and seek to please you. Do all of this, I pray, for our good, and do it all for the glory of your name. Amen.