

Last month, Swiss climber Dani Arnold set the speed record for climbing the Cima Grande, a 550-meter high mountain face in the Italian Alps. He beat the previous time by around 19 minutes with his new time of 46 minutes, 30 seconds. But what makes this climbing record so terrifying is that he did it without the aid of ropes or a safety harness. [Video: Free Solo Climber breaks Record](#)

For most of us, thankfully we'll never experience anything like this. I don't have a head for heights, so even watching that gives me nightmares. But sometimes, I think our Christian lives can feel a bit like this.

It can feel like following Jesus is like trying to climb a mountain, with no ropes or safety gear. It's like we have to desperately hold onto Jesus, knowing that at any moment, if we don't have enough strength, or take a wrong step, we will fall to our death!

But that's not how Jesus described the Christian life. It isn't about us desperately trying to hold onto him. Rather it's about knowing that he is securely holding onto us!

John 10:22-42: "Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, <sup>23</sup> and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade. <sup>24</sup> The Jews gathered round him, saying, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

<sup>25</sup> Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, <sup>26</sup> but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. <sup>27</sup> My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no-one can snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no-one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one."

<sup>31</sup> Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, <sup>32</sup> but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?"

<sup>33</sup> "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."

<sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are gods'? <sup>35</sup> If he called them 'gods', to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken— <sup>36</sup> what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'? <sup>37</sup> Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. <sup>38</sup> But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." <sup>39</sup> Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.

<sup>40</sup> Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptising in the early days. Here he stayed <sup>41</sup> and many people came to him. They said, "Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man was true." <sup>42</sup> And in that place many believed in Jesus."

## 1. The Celebration of Deliverance

So far in John's gospel, we've seen Jesus interact with the Jews during three Jewish feasts – the Sabbath, the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles. Here, we are introduced to a fourth– "[The Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem.](#)" John 10:22.

Unlike the others, this feast, also called Hanukkah, was not commanded by God in the Old Testament. Instead this was a commemoration of the rededication of the Jerusalem temple in 164 B.C.

Three years before that, the Syrian Emperor, Antiochus Epiphanes, had desecrated the temple by erecting an altar to the false god Zeus. But in a heroic struggle, Judas Maccabaeus led a revolt against the Syrians and restored and purified the temple. This was marked by the dedication of the new altar with sacrifices, song, music and the relighting of the Temple lamps.

And each December, the people would gather for eight-days to joyfully celebrate this victory and their new-found religious freedom.

But as they did this, it also stirred up their hope in a new heroic leader, the Anointed One, the Christ, who they believed would bring them the ultimate deliverance and freedom from the oppression that they longed for.

## 2. The Crucial Question

"Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade." John 10:23. This was a covered walkway on the east side of the temple enclosure and provided shelter from the cold winter winds. It was also where the meetings of the earliest Christians were held.

As Jesus walked there, the Jewish leadership gathered round him and asked: **“How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.”**

John 10:24

Now, maybe on first glance, this sounds like a simple and direct request for information. However, it was far from an innocent question.

- For one thing, they were accusing Jesus that he had been hiding his identity – maybe even to deliberately frustrate or annoy them!
- But the bigger problem was that, in the middle of the celebration of a heroic victory, for Jesus to declare himself the Christ, would have stirred up all the military ambition of the Jews – perhaps even of his own disciples. These people were either trying to force Jesus into their idea of what he should do, or get him into trouble with the Roman authorities.

But of course, this was a crucial question to ask. In fact, it is the core question of this gospel and of our lives. If we don't understand and accept who Jesus really is, then we cannot enter into the salvation that he offers. That's why John wrote his gospel. **“These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”** John 20:31

So how would Jesus answer this question, without feeding into this false idea of a heroic leader who was going to lead a military victory over the Romans?

### 3. The Clear Evidence

Well, Jesus did this by refusing to give a simple yes or no answer. Instead first of all he confronted their criticism of him.

They'd claimed that their lack of knowledge about him had been caused by his secrecy and lack of openness. But Jesus refuted this. He said **“I did tell you, but you do not believe.”** John 10:25

The problem wasn't that Jesus hadn't declared his identity openly. The problem was their refusal to believe the evidence that he'd already provided. This evidence was both Jesus' words and his works.

#### a) His Words

Throughout this gospel Jesus spoke about the uniqueness of his identity. The Jews had a deep reverence for God and this impacted how they spoke about him. In the Old Testament, God's name is declared to be Yahweh, the Great I Am. It is the most frequently used way to refer to God in the Bible.

But our Bibles translate this as LORD, and written all in capitals. This is because the translators followed what the Jews did when they came to the name Yahweh in the Scriptures. They regarded his name with so much reverence that they would never take it upon their lips. Instead of saying his name, they pronounced the name Adonai, which means my Lord.

But when Jesus spoke into this culture of deep reverence for God, he referred to God as **“My Father.”** John 10:29. This was a radical way to refer to God. He claimed to have unique relationship with him, one of intimacy and love.

And Jesus made this even clearer in this passage. He said, **“I and the Father are one.”** John 10:30. This didn't mean that he and his Father are the same person. In the Godhead there are three distinct persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

But this meant that he was one with his Father. He was in absolute unity with him in his purpose. And this was because he was equal with him in nature. It was a clear claim from Jesus to be fully God, co-equal with the Father.

And his audience understood this. They picked up stones to kill him, they said, **“For blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”** John 10:32

Of course, they were wrong. Jesus is not a mere man, and he was not trying to make himself God. But, they did understand the implication of what Jesus was saying. He is fully human, and yet he is also fully God.

And this is what Jesus made clear throughout this gospel.

- In John 5:19, Jesus said, **“Whatever the Father does the Son also does.”**
- In John 8:58, he said, **“Before Abraham was born, I am!”**
- And throughout this gospel he claimed to be the Great I Am when he said things like **“I am the bread of life.”** John 6:35,

“I am the light of the world.” John 8:12, “I am the good shepherd.” John 10:11.

And this is what John, the apostle, has taught, right from the start of his gospel: John 1:1, 14: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”

### i) In Scripture

This was a radical teaching for the Jews to hear. Jesus being fully man and fully God did not fit into their theological framework. And so Jesus helped them to bridge that gap by pointing them to the words of Scripture. “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I have said you are gods’?” John 10:34

This is a quotation from Psalm 82:6-7. “I said, ‘You are “gods”; you are all sons of the Most High.’ But you will die like mere men; you will fall like every other ruler.” These verses have been debated by scholars for years. The question is, who are these people referred to as ‘gods’? So we can’t be dogmatic about it.

But one suggestion is that this psalm is contrasting the unjust human judges in the nation with God, the perfect Judge. And so God called them ‘gods’ (small g) because they had been given the responsibility to declare his word and dispense his justice.

But the reason Jesus quoted this psalm here is that “If he called them ‘gods’, to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken—<sup>36</sup> what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world?” John 10:35-36

Jesus believed that God’s Word was completely trustworthy. And so if Scripture used this term of ‘gods’ to refer to mere men, then is it really too big a leap to consider Jesus’ claim to be the “Son of God”?

He was calling his audience not to jump to the conclusion that he is guilty of blasphemy; not to immediately reject his claims to be the Son of God. He was asking them to consider whether he is who he claimed to be – the one that the Father set apart, or dedicated, and sent into the world.

And this was especially significant at this Feast of Dedication. As they celebrated the rededication of the temple as the sanctuary of the living God, Jesus was calling them to consider him as the ultimate meeting place between God and his people, the sanctuary in and through whom the living God may be approached and worshipped.

### b) His Work

So Jesus had told them before who he was and he made it clear to them again. But it wasn’t just his words that pointed to his identity. It was also his works. He said, “The miracles I do in my Father’s name speak for me.” John 10:25

So far in John’s gospel we’ve seen 5 of these miraculous signs.

- He turned water into wine at a wedding in Cana.
- He healed an official’s Son in Capernaum.
- At the pool at Bethesda in Jerusalem, he healed a man who had been an invalid for 38 years.
- Then on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, he fed a crowd of 5000 men, plus women and kids, from a boys packed lunch.
- And then back in Jerusalem, he gave sight to a man who had been born blind.

No wonder, Jesus could say, “I have shown you many great miracles from the Father.” John 10:31 And each of these miracles were signposts that pointed to his identity.

And so Jesus didn’t just expect people just to take his word for who he was. He encouraged them to look at the evidence of what he did. “Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does.<sup>38</sup> But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.” John 10:37-38

## 4. The Choice We All Face

And so instead of the crowd challenging Jesus to answer their question, Jesus turned this situation around and challenged them to make a choice – a choice that we all face, of how to respond to the evidence that points to the identity of Jesus.

### a) To Reject

Tragically, many that day refused to believe. They heard his wonderful words. They saw his powerful work. And yet they still would not believe. “Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.” John 10:39.

The time for the cross was approaching, but it wasn't yet. And so Jesus escaped their attempts to seize him, but the Jews had once again rejected the Messiah. Not because Jesus had hidden his identity, but instead because they did not belong to him. "You do not believe because you are not my sheep." John 10:26

In rejecting Jesus, they had revealed the hardness of their hearts and their separation from God's flock. And today, this is still the same. If we refuse to listen and follow him – then we've placed ourselves outside of God's flock.

#### b) To Receive

But if we listen to him and follow him – then we belong to him. "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." John 10:27 If we accept Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, then we are brought into a new, loving, intimate relationship with him, that changes our lives as we listen to his voice and follow his leading.

And this is what people did in the area across the River Jordan where John the Baptist had ministered. When Jesus went there, many people trusted in him. They said, "Though John never performed a miraculous sign, all that John said about this man was true." John 10:41

They listened to Jesus' words. They saw his work. And they remembered John the Baptist's witness to the one who was coming after him who will baptise with the Holy Spirit. And in response they believed in him.

And this morning, we are faced with this same choice. The evidence is there if we are willing to look. He has clearly revealed his identity, through his word, his works and his witnesses. So how are we going to respond?

- Will we refuse to believe and declare ourselves to be outside of his flock?
- Or will we listen to him and put our faith in him.

#### 5. The Confidence We Can All Have

This is the most significant choice we'll ever make. Because of who Jesus is, if we refuse him, then we will forever be separated from God. In John 3:18, Jesus said, "Whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

#### a) Eternal Security

But on the other hand, because of who Jesus is, if we receive him, then we will forever be part of his flock and we will never be separated from him. This is Jesus' wonderful promise to all who listen to him: "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no-one can snatch them out of my hand." John 10:28

It is one of the greatest statements of our security as believers in Christ. If we're among those who've heard his voice and answered his call, then Jesus has given us eternal life. We will never perish. We will never be lost.

That's because Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins in full, once and for all, and because he rose again from the dead and ever lives to hold onto us and secure our salvation.

But just as Father and Son were united in the sacrifice of Calvary, so Father and Son are united in the security of the believer as Jesus continued: "My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no-one can snatch them out of my Father's hand." John 10:29

We are doubly loved and doubly secured. We're not just held by our living Saviour, we are also held by our Heavenly Father, who is greater than all, so we can be sure that no-one can snatch us away.

#### Conclusion

What this means is, that even although it might feel as if the Christian life is like trying to climb a mountain without safety gear, desperately holding on, terrified that we might fall at any moment, nothing could be farther from the truth.

If we have recognised who Jesus and responded to his call and put our faith in him as our Saviour and Lord, then we are saved, we have been delivered from sin and death and hell, and we have been dedicated to God as his children, adopted into his family, and nothing and no-one can ever separate us from his love.

So this morning, do you know who Jesus really is? Do you know the salvation and security that he alone can give?