

JESUS & PSALM 82

What's Going on in John 10:34-36?

John 10:22-39 (ESV)

22 At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, **23** and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. **24** So 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.” **25** Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me, **26** but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. **27** My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. **28** I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. **29** My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. **30** **I and the Father are one.**”

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31 The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. 32 Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?” 33 The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.” 34 Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’? 35 If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— 36 do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? 37 If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; 38 but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.” 39 Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands.

What's Clear

- Jesus identifies himself with the Father. **v.30**
- The Jews consider this statement blasphemy. They hear Jesus making himself equal with God. **v.33**
- Later, Jesus reiterates the idea that he and the Father are one by saying he is in the Father and the Father is in him. **v.38**

What Isn't Clear

- **Jesus cites Psalm 82:6 in defense of his claim in v. 30 that “I and the Father are one”**
 - Every John commentary I've ever seen interprets the statement and the psalm to be speaking of (a) Jewish elders or (b) Israelites / Jews in general – i.e., mere mortals.

Prompts Some Q's for Interpretation

- How does Jesus' use of Psa 82 **reinforce** his claim to this identification?
- How does Jesus' use of Psa 82 **reinforce** his claims elsewhere in John to full deity? (e.g., the "I AM" statements?)
- How do we interpret the citation to **reinforce** John's / Jesus' use of it, and its own original meaning?

MORTAL VIEW

= the gods are men: (1) Jewish elders; or (2) Israelites generally

34 Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’? 35 If he called them gods to whom the word of God came— and Scripture cannot be broken— 36 do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?”

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The Jewish Elder Option

Is it not written **in your Law**, 'I said, you are gods'?

Taken as an appeal to Exodus 18

Exodus 18

elohim highlight 

Search [All Bible Text](#) in [All Passages](#) in [English Standard Version](#) for

אלהים

→ Yellow 

18 ^mJethro, ⁿthe priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that **God** had done for Moses and for Israel his people, how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt. ² Now Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had taken Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her home, ³ along with her ^otwo sons. The name of the one was Gershom (^pfor he said, ^q"I have been a sojourner^l in a foreign land"), ⁴ and the name of the other, Eliezer² (for he said, "The God of my father was my help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh"). ⁵ Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness where he was encamped at the ^rmountain of **God**. ⁶ And when he sent word to Moses, "I,³ your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons with her," ⁷ Moses ^swent out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and ^tkissed him. And they asked each other of their welfare

Exodus 18

and went into the tent. ⁸ Then Moses told his father-in-law ^uall that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them in the way, and how the LORD had delivered them. ⁹ And Jethro rejoiced for all the good that the LORD had done to Israel, in that he had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians.

¹⁰ Jethro said, ^v“Blessed be the LORD, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. ¹¹ Now I know that ^wthe LORD is greater than all gods, because in this affair they ^xdealt arrogantly with the people.”⁴ ¹² And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God; and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law ^ybefore God.

Exodus 18

¹³ The next day Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from morning till evening. ¹⁴ When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?" ¹⁵ And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because ^zthe people come to me to inquire of God; ¹⁶ ^awhen they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I ^bmake them know the statutes of God and his laws." ¹⁷ Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. ¹⁸ You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. ^cYou are not able to do it alone. ¹⁹ Now obey my voice; I will give you advice, and God be with you! You shall ^drepresent the people before God and ^ebring their cases to God,

Exodus 18

²⁰ and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know ^fthe way in which they must walk and ^gwhat they must do. ²¹ Moreover, look for ^hable men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. ²² And ⁱlet them judge the people at all times. ^jEvery great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will ^kbear the burden with you. ²³ If you do this, God will direct you, you will be ^lable to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace.”

Exodus 18

²⁴ So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. ²⁵ ^mMoses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. ²⁶ And ⁿthey judged the people at all times. Any hard case they brought to Moses, but any small matter they decided themselves. ²⁷ Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and ^ohe went away to his own country.

Observations:

1. Every occurrence of *elohim* (except the reference to foreign gods in v. 11) can easily and coherently be translated SINGULAR (“God”)
2. The men doing the judging are never called *elohim*.

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MORTAL VIEW

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The corporate Israelite / Jews Option

34 Jesus answered them, “Is it not written **in your Law**, ‘I said, you are gods’? 35 If he called them gods **to whom the word of God came** ...

- Taken as descriptive of Sinai when Israel received the law.
- Question: Is Psalm 82, the source of the quotation, describing events at Sinai?

Psalm 82

- 1 ^mGod ⁿhas taken his place in the divine council;
in the midst of ^pthe gods he ^qholds judgment:
- 2 “How long will you judge unjustly
and ^rshow partiality to ^sthe wicked? *Selah*
- 3 ^tGive justice to ^uthe weak and the fatherless;
^vmaintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.
- 4 ^wRescue the weak and the needy;
^xdeliver them from the hand of the wicked.”
- 5 ^yThey have neither knowledge nor understanding,
^zthey walk about in darkness;
^aall the foundations of the earth are ^bshaken.
- 6 ^cI said, “You are gods,
sons of the Most High, all of you;
- 7 nevertheless, like men ^dyou shall die,
and fall like any prince.”^l
- 8 ^eArise, O God, judge the earth;
for you shall ^finherit all the nations!

Psalm 82

Other points of
incoherence for the
mortal view

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DIVINE VIEW

= the gods are divine beings

¹ *m* God ⁿ has taken his place in the divine council;
 in the midst of ^p the gods he ^q holds judgment:

Surface	2: title	A	PSALM	OF	ASAPH.	1	God	has	taken	his	place	in	the	divine	council;								
MSS	→	1	מִזְמוֹר	2	לְ	3	אֲסָף	1	אֱלֹהִים	→	→	→	2	נִצַּב	3	בְּ	→	4	5	אֵל	4	עֲדַת-	
MSS Trl			miz-môr	l	'ā-sāp'		'ēlō-hîm'						niṣ-ṣāb'	bă	'ēl'	'ādāt							
Lemma			מִזְמוֹר	1	לְ	אֲסָף	אֱלֹהִים						1	נִצַּב	בְּ	5	אֵל	1	עֲדַת				
Lemma Trl			miz-môr	l	'ā-sāp		'ēlō-hîm						nṣb	1	b	'ēl	5	'ē-dā(h)					

Surface	the	divine	council;	in	the	midst	of	the	gods	he	holds	judgment:	2	“					
MSS	→	4	5	אֵל	4	עֲדַת-	6	בְּ	→	7	קָרַב	→	→	8	אֱלֹהִים	→	→	9	יִשְׁפֹּט:
MSS Trl		'ēl'	'ādāt	b	qē'-rēb				'ēlō-hîm'		yiš-pōṭ'								
Lemma		5	אֵל	1	עֲדַת	בְּ	קָרַב		אֱלֹהִים		שֹׁפֵט								

DIVINE VIEW

= the gods are divine beings

- ⁵ Let ^rthe heavens praise your ^swonders, O LORD,
 your faithfulness in the assembly of ^tthe holy ones!
- ⁶ For ^uwho in the skies can be compared to the LORD?
^uWho among the heavenly beings² is like the LORD,
- ⁷ a God greatly ^vto be feared in the council of ^tthe holy ones,
 and awesome above all ^wwho are around him?

Surface	pared to	the LORD?	Who among	<i>the heavenly beings</i>	is like	• the LORD,	7
MSS	יַעֲרֹךְ לְ	יְהוָה	בְּ	בְנֵי אֱלִים:	→ יְדַמָּה לְ	יְהוָה	
MSS Trl	rōk' lă	yhwh	bi	b ^e nê' 'ē-lîm'	yid-mě(h)' lă'	yhwh	
Lemma	ערך לְ	יהוה	בְּ	בְנֵי אֵל	דמה לְ	יהוה	
Lemma Trl	l 1	yhwh	b	bēn 1 'ēl 5	dmh 1 l 1	yhwh	

To whom does the “word of God” come?

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So... **what was Jesus doing by citing this verse?**

My answer: **Defending his deity**

What if:

1) we take the divine view ...

2) marry that to the narrative flow and context of John 10?

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Points

- **Jews are angry at Jesus for (earlier) claiming equality with God. Earlier we read in John 5:18**
 - **This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.**
- **The Jews assume the “Father” language means Jesus is claiming divine parentage.**
- **Thus he is claiming to be divine and in that sense “the same” as God (i.e., he isn’t a mere man).**

Points

- **To defend himself, Jesus doesn't deny this identification by saying "I'm just like you" or "you're just like me" (we're all *elohim*).**
- **Instead, he reminds his Jewish opponents that the Scriptures do teach the idea of DIVINE sons of God (i.e., God has sons who are more than human / are not human)**

Points

- **That means his claim (to be divine) has precedent on one level:**
 - **If God has divine sons, then those sons are divine**
 - **God is my father; I am divine**
 - **If this weren't true, I wouldn't be able to do the miraculous things I do (the "works of the Father" – stuff only God could do)**

Upping the Ante

John 10:38

... that you may know and understand that **the Father is in me and I am in the Father.**”

i.e., we are ontologically inseparable

Key = “the Father is in me” in OT context

cf. John 14:10, 11, 20; **17:21, 23**

Exodus 23

20 **I am sending an angel** before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have made ready. 21 Pay heed to him and obey him. Do not defy him, for he will not pardon your offenses, since **My Name is in him**; 22 but if you obey him and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes.

Psalm 20:1, 7

May **the Lord** answer you in the day of trouble!

May **the name** of the God of Jacob protect you!

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in **the name of the Lord** our God.

2 Samuel 6:1-2

¹ David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. ² And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale-judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called the **Name**, the **Name** of the Lord

[אֲשֶׁר-נִקְרָא **שֵׁם** **שֵׁם** יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת] of hosts who sits enthroned on the cherubim.

(poor) ESV: “called by the name of the Lord of hosts”

Isaiah 30:27

Behold **the Name** of the Lord
Comes from afar
In blazing wrath,
With a heavy burden—
His lips full of fury,
His tongue like devouring fire,

Deuteronomy 4:35-37

³⁵ To you it was shown, that you might know that **the LORD** is God; there is no other besides him. ³⁶ Out of heaven he let you hear his voice, that he might discipline you. And on earth he let you see his great fire, and you heard his words out of the midst of the fire. ³⁷ And because he loved your fathers and chose their offspring after them and **brought you out of Egypt with his own presence** (*panim*) by his great power...

Judges 2

1 The **angel of YHWH** came up from Gilgal to Bochim and said, “**I brought you up from Egypt** and I took you into the land which I had promised on oath to your fathers. **And I said, ‘I will never break My covenant** with you. 2 And you, for your part, must make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you must tear down their altars.’ **But you have not obeyed Me**—look what you have done!