# “How Can I Know I’m Going to Heaven?”

**Some people know they’re going to heaven, and I would like to be sure too. Can you help me?**

Thank you for your e-mail requesting information about an assurance of your salvation. I will try to lay out some things which I hope will help. God wants us to have an assurance of our salvation, and until we do, we live life in uncertainty.

1. First of all, I would point out that the very fact you are concerned about this is an indication that you are in the Family of God. Non-Christians don’t spend any time thinking about this or being anxious about their spiritual condition. That you are concerned, in my judgment is a “sign of life.”

2. Secondly, we have the clear teaching of Jesus in John 3 in his dialogue wth Nicodemus, that salvation comes about by a new, or spiritual birth. The analogy is very clear: Jesus compares physical birth with spiritual birth. And with both, there must be a beginning, a birth before there can be life and growth. In a number of passages we read of this new birth which brings about a transformation when we fine ourself IN CHRIST: “Therefore, if any man is IN Christ, he is a new creature; old things pass away and behold, all things become new.” (II Cor. 5:17).

Now Jesus did not say that we must be born again and again and again. We are born into God’s family once by faith, claiming Christ as our Saviour and Substitute, and we begin to trust in Him, and Him alone, to make us presentable to God the Father when we die. And Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:8-9 that this is a result of God’s grace to us, and it is totally apart from any good works that we could do to merit or attain heaven apart from Him and what He did on our behalf.

3. One of the things Paul warns the Galatians about is that they had originally understood salvation was by faith, but they started adding various works to make sure that they were saved. Paul asks, “You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you. . .Having begun in the Spirit (by unmerited grace through faith), are you now being perfected by the flesh (works)?” (Gal. 3:1-5)

This is exactly the question you are asking, _____. Do we begin in faith + no works, but then have to keep on working in order to stay saved?

4. There is a place for good works in the Christian life, but it is very important where we position these good works. If we put them before we exercise faith in Christ, then we are working our way to heaven just like every other religion teaches. Good works become the means of achieving salvation. And if we could get to heaven by our good works, then God made a terrible mistake! He let His only Son come and die for our sins. By choosing our good works as the means of our salvation we negate, nullify what Christ accomplished on the Cross.

5. Where do good works have significance? After our new, or spiritual birth. Good works are a sign of Christ’s life within us. We do not perform them in order to remain in God’s family. We do them out of grateful hearts because we find ourselves “accepted in the Beloved.” (Ephesians 1:6).

If we take the Galatians approach, knowing that we were “saved by grace,” but then turn right around and do our good works to stay saved, then we are right back on the old treadmill. Furthermore, the driving force/motivation to do good works with this approach is FEAR. We keep trying because we are afraid we will lose our relationship with God. We could never say with the Apostle Paul that “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” How could he say that? He wasn’t perfect! He could say it because “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to guard what I have

entrusted to Him until that day." (II Tim. 1:12)

If we take Paul's approach, we are motivated, not out of Fear, but out of LOVE. We want to serve God and glorify Him in our lives. But there's a problem.

6. Sin is the problem. Christians still sin after their conversion. You know, God could have dealt another way with sinning Christians. When a person first heard and understood the Gospel, and then became a believer, God could have zapped him/her dead right on the spot! That would have taken care of sin in a believer's life!

But God chose not to do that. He chose rather to leave us here, imperfect though we are, to be His ambassadors. And He made provision for cleansing the believer by means of acknowledging our sin to Him in confession and claiming the forgiveness over it which Christ provided through the Cross.

Let me have you just focus on I John 2:1-3. There John says, "My little children, I am writing these things to you – (he's just talked about confessing our sins [I John 1:9] with the promise that God is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness)– " that you SIN NOT." (This is the ideal) "But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."

God does not want us to sin. But if we do, here is the provision for God's forgiveness. We have an Advocate, a defense attorney who pleads our case and we are cleansed. Now I want you to just think about this for a moment. Does one sin, like being angry at your spouse, cause a loss of salvation? How about 10 times a week? Or 100 times a month? How much gossip? Or coveting what others possess? Do you see where I'm going with this? People who talk about being good enough or having (in their own estimation) done enough to

retain their salvation in good standing really don’t have a very accurate picture of how pervasive our problem is.

7. If one sin isn’t enough for us to lose our standing in Christ, then how many and what kind of sins would be enough to push us over the edge and out of the Family of God? No one has answered that question to me satisfactorily We would never know the answer to that question. Martin Luther addressed this problem five hundred years ago. He, as a monk, had lived with this uncertainty about his soul until he came to understand that the “just shall live by faith.” The issue was not sins, it was a lack of righteousness. Being born into God’s Family means God has declared us righteousness through our identity with and trust in Christ.

I am not saying that good works are not important. They are. And people who know they have been dealt with in grace and are forgiven have a strong motivation not to sin. I think it’s kind of like the difference between a cat and a pig. A cat might fall into a mud puddle, but it immediately gets out and starts cleaning itself. That’s its nature. But a pig can lie all day in the mud and it loves it because that’s its nature. Another sign of “life” in a believer is that when we sin we feel bad. It hurts us. We tend to be more sensitive to it. And sometimes when we decide to stay in the mud, God has another provision for us. We find it in Hebrews 12: “Whom the Lord loves, He chastens” (vs. 5-14). Our sin becomes a “family” matter when we have been born into the God’s family. Paul tells us in I Cor. 11 that “if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.” If we fail to get ourselves back in line and out of the mud, choosing to ignore the “warning lights,” our Father, though longsuffering, may have to take us to the “divine woodshed” and discipline us. But it is the discipline of a Father, not the punishment of a Judge. That is what Paul meant when he said to the Corinthians, “For that reason (disobedience) some of you are weak and sickly. . .and some of you sleep (have died under discipline.”

8. And that brings us to another problem connected to all of this, and that is the fact that we disappoint God, our family, and the body of Christ, and we see them disappointing us. We rarely wonder how we could act in an un-Christian way, but we sure do wonder about others! And then we begin to wonder if we are really "in the Family," and we wonder the same about others.

Our problem here is that we, as the Bible says, "(man) looks on the outward appearance, while God looks upon the heart." Paul says in Romans 8:16,17 "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." This means that You can know about you, and I can know about me, but we can't ultimately know by someone's outward behaviour whether they are God's children or not. We have probably made misjudgments on both sides. There are some who appear godly, upstanding, etc., who have been playing a clever charade. There are others whom we might assume not to be Christians that may well be. We can wonder. We can speculate. And if we see little or no evidence of the fruits of the spirit, we can wonder. But we cannot, should not judge. Because we just don't know.

But here is what we DO know. "The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in Himself. The one who has not believed God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the witness that God has borne concerning His Son. He who has the Son has the life. He who does not have the Son does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know (not think, hope, feel) that you have (present tense, not future, present! We possess it now!) eternal life." (I John 5:10-13)

_____, I hope some of this will help answer your question. Someone has defined "faith" like this: "Faith is when you stop saying please to God, and you start saying, Thank You." If we have asked Christ to be our Savior, and we have opened the

door to our heart and our life to Him and we are trusting only in Him for our salvation, then we need to be saying “thank You” to Him, and then living our lives in a way which demonstrates a genuine gratitude to the One who has forgiven us. and prepared a way of access into God’s presence.

May God Bless you,

Jimmy Williams

Founder, Probe Ministries

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# “Why Did God Allow Animals to be Eaten and Sacrificed?”

**Why did God allow animals to be sacrificed and to eat other animals if He loves His creation? They are innocent. (I am not an animal rights activist. I am a Christian.)**

I think the answer must first be addressed in the reality with which we find ourselves. The cosmos according to Christians was created by God. In the early chapters of Genesis we find that everything God created is expressed over and over as being something GOOD.

The Cosmos is made up of minerals, plants, animals, and humans, the lower to the higher. We are told that only man was created in God’s image. That does not mean the rest of creation is of NO value, but there is a hierarchy involved. We are told that all of the created order was intended for man. And that he was to have dominion over it. This does not mean the exploitation of everything for selfish purposes. But God provided a food chain involving plants and animals for man.

We see in the Hindu culture a good example of what happens to a culture when the food chain is distorted. Hindus, with their doctrine of reincarnation, believe that animals are just as valuable as human beings, and some, in a former life, may have actually been human beings. Therefore, all devout Hindus are vegetarians.

What makes this difficult is that now scientists are moving toward the position that even PLANTS have consciousness! Does God love the flora any less than the fauna He created? That leaves us with a diet for our existence totally dependent upon rocks!

Man was never intended to "rape the resources." Having "dominion" meant for man to be good stewards of the plant and animal world. "The Earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof," says the psalmist. (Ps. 24:1) We don't own the earth; we are to be good stewards of it.

The scriptures are filled with indications of God's love for that which He created. Jesus notices the beautiful lilies of the field. Men are not to abuse their animals, but rather care for them with kindness, not with harshness. He takes notice of every sparrow who falls to the ground in death. God explicitly states that one purpose of plants and animals was to provide food for man. He even gave some instructions about *which* animals we were to eat and which we should not.

Consider this verse: Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not *worth much more than they?* (Matt. 6:27). Jesus goes on to say, "Do not be anxious saying, 'What shall we eat? Or what shall we drink?'…for…your heavenly Father *knows* that you have *need* for all these things." (Matt. 6:31-32).

Your question springs out of a matrix of thought which is very popular in the modern world. . .that all life is sacred (I

agree). But the further notion held forth today is that the life of a dolphin or a sea otter or a spotted owl is equal in value to a human being.

The Bible does not teach this equality. Jesus didn't teach it, as we see above. All life is sacred because it came from the hand of God. But it is not all equal in value. Man is set apart as the recipient for which it was intended.

Those who would remove this distinction do not elevate man. If there is nothing special about man (which appears to be true in so many ways), then man is dragged down to the status of beast or animal, and an "open season" on man to cure overpopulation problems would make as much sense as an open season on whitetail deer each fall here in Texas to thin out the one half million which inhabit this state. My point here is that once you remove this line, man is not special in any sense and there is no reason we shouldn't live like the rest of the animals on the planet: "survival of the fittest." Hitler understood this. . .and practiced it!

I don't think you would agree that this is a solution to the problem.

Does this help any?

Sincerely,

Jimmy Williams, Founder
Probe Ministries

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# "Why Did the Book of Jacob

# Get Changed to the Book of James?”

**By what authority did the translators of the KJV (and other translations) change the name of the book of YAAKOV (Jacob) to JAMES? The original Greek states this author’s name as “IAKOBOY”, or Jacob in English. Thank you.**

You are correct in your awareness of the Old Testament designation “Yaakov” (Hebrew) and the New Testament designation, “Iakboy” (Greek).

Tracing the etymology of a word is a fascinating endeavor. And as it is translated from language to language, or even its development within a language, spelling and pronunciation often change. Beyond the Greek and the Hebrew, this word went through several stages of the Latin language (i.e., Old Latin, New Latin, Late Latin), and there were further influences of the word through the barbarian tribes that overran Western Europe in the fourth and fifth centuries. In England this involved two distinct blending of languages—the first by the Anglo-Saxons (Angles, Saxons, and Jutes), who overlaid their language on top of the (1) Latin & (2) Celtic (two dialects: Brythonic and Goidelic) amalgamation as they conquered much of England between the fifth and seventh centuries, and second, by the Norman/Vikings, who overlaid their language upon all of that during the eleventh and twelfth centuries!

One of the reasons the English Language is such a rich one is because of the blending of these linguistic strains which created totally different words for identical things: for example: lamb-mutton, brotherly-fraternal, etc.

The words *Jacob* and *James* come out of this matrix. Jacob follows the French/Norman tradition (Jacobin, for example), and James comes out of the Anglo-Saxon tradition.

The use of “James” in the King James Version was not something they had to think about. It was already imbedded into their language as the equivalent of “James” or “Jacob.” Since this translation from Greek and Hebrew involved putting the text into readable and understandable English, they chose the popular word already in circulation.

Actually, three common English names come out of this: James, Jacob, and Jack.

Hope this answers your question.

Thanks for writing.

Jimmy Williams, Founder
Probe Ministries

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# “How Should A Christian Think About Alcohol?”

**There are people who I am close to that believe having an occasional drink (keeping in mind that they aren’t drinking to get drunk) is okay.**

**Personally, in the short amount of time I’ve been alive, I have seen nothing but bad things produced from drinking alcohol (whether the purpose is to get drunk or not). Which is why I have made the decision to stay away from it. My fiance has a different opinion. I know I can’t push my convictions on others, but if we are to “become one” (which is what God has communicated to us both) then how is it possible for one of us to drink (just a little) and the other not drink?**

**Throughout the Bible it talks about wine; Jesus drank wine.**

**How is the wine from back then different from now (if it is different)? Is it okay to drink alcohol upon occasion (New Year's, weddings, celebrations)? What do you believe about people that are called into the ministry that drink (on occasion)? I would appreciate any advice or references that you could send my way.**

Let me give you some thoughts which hopefully are an accurate assessment of the question from the Bible's point of view.

First of all, the Bible never indicates that drinking wine (as well as other liquids with alcoholic content) is a sin. You have mentioned the fact that Jesus drank wine. In fact, He was accused by His enemies of being a "wine-bibber," or wine-drinker; that is, He was habitually observed doing this. Jesus admits that He has. When He compares His ministry lifestyle with that of John the Baptist's He says, "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon!' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a wine-drinker, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!'" (Matthew 11:18,19).

We actually have an account in John 2 where John describes the wedding at Cana (which Jesus and the disciples attended) and lays out in detail the fact that the hosts had run out of wine. You know the story. At His mother's request for Him to help, Jesus ordered the servants to fill up seven huge clay pots with water, which He turned into wine.

Was this grape juice, or wine? The context tells us which. After this newly-created wine was served, the headwaiter came to the bridegroom and complimented him: "Every man serves the good wine first, and when men have drunk freely, then that which is poorer; but you have kept the good wine until now!" (John 2:10). Every bartender knows instantly what this man is saying: "Serve the good wine first, and then, when people have become affected by it, and their taste has been dulled, serve them the cheap, inferior wine."

Another instance which lets us know that these ancient wines contained alcohol is confirmed from the lips of Peter on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit has just fallen upon the believers and they were empowered miraculously to speak in other languages. Since there were Jews present from all over the Mediterranean world (cf. Acts 2:9-11) all of these different people who spoke different languages heard the gospel spoken in their own tongue. They are amazed at this and some of those present suggest that these Christians are drunk (2:13). But Peter comes to their rescue and says, "Men of Judea,. . .let this be known to you, and give heed to my words. For these men are **not drunk** as you suppose, for it is **only the third hour of the day!**" The Jewish day begins at 6:00 A.M., so it is only 9:00 in the morning and Peter is reminding them that it was too early for them, or any other men, to be drunk yet.

Fermentation is also implied in our Lord's discussion about not pouring new wine into an old wineskin (Matt. 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37). The process is as follows: You kill a sheep or a goat. You take the skin of say, the hind leg. You tie the bottom tightly so it won't leak, and you have a nice flask. The skin is new and pliable, a "green skin." You bring freshly crushed grape juice from the winepress, and pour it into your wineskin. Then you tie the top. Inside, the grape juice ferments and becomes wine. Since the skin is pliable, it expands and the pressure builds up inside. Then it is hung up in a cool place, a cellar, just as wine is attended to today, and two or three years later, you drink it. During that storage time, the skin, in its expanded state hardens, and becomes rigid.

Jesus' point is that you would never take this old wine skin after you have drunk all the wine in it and recycle the wineskin with more new wine. The fermentation process would burst it. The application Jesus is making alludes to the fact that what He is proclaiming, the New Covenant, cannot be

contained in the old “wineskin” of the Jewish Law system. The book of Hebrews personifies this same vivid contrast between the Old Mosaic Law system and its replacement with the Gospel of Grace found in Christ Jesus.

I hope with the above, we have proven our point that the wine in the days of Jesus did the same thing to those who drank it as it does to those who drink too much wine today.

Some Christians who do not wish to believe that there is any alcoholic beverage mentioned in the Bible and seek an alternative have suggested that “new wine” (*gleukos)* actually means “grape juice.” However, this is the exact word used in Acts 2:13 associated with their accusation of “drunkeness.”

On the other hand, while drinking wine is not a sin in the Bible, getting drunk definitely *is*. There is an extended passage in the Proverbs warning people about the danger of wine:

> *Who has woe? Who has sorrow?*
> *Who has contentions? Who has complaining?*
> *Who has wounds without cause?*
> *Who has redness of eyes?*
> *Those who linger long over wine,*
> *Those who go to taste mixed wine.*
> *Do not look on the wine when it is red,*
> *When it sparkles in the cup,*
> *When it goes down smoothly;*
> *At the last it bites like a serpent,*
> *And stings like a viper.*
> *Your eyes will see strange things,*
> *And your mind will utter perverse things.*
> *And you will be like one who lies down in the middle of the sea,*
> *Or like the one who lies down on the top of a mast.*
> *They struck me, but I did not become ill;*
> *They beat me, but I did not know it.*

*When shall I awake?*
*I will seek another drink. (Proverbs 23:39-35)*

Drunkenness is mentioned many times in both Old and New Testaments in a negative light. Get a concordance and look under “drink” and “drunk.” You’ll see what I mean. Drunkenness is also included in the list of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21. It is also mentioned by Paul in the context of Christian leadership in the Church. One of the qualifications for elders is “not *addicted to wine*” (1 Timothy 3:3). This is repeated in Titus 1:7. I take it that there is a distinction between drinking in moderation and addiction. I don’t think Jesus was addicted to wine, do you? But He drank wine. And here is where it gets “fuzzy.” When do you pass the point when you qualify as either drunk or addicted? I think the question that needs to be continually asked if one drinks is **“Do I have it, or does it have me?”** And there is a danger here, as we saw in the Proverbs passage above. We could ask the same question about money, or television, or food, or travel, or sports, or exercise, and on and on. The Bible seems to call for *moderation*, for an awareness that things can *gain control* over us which will be detrimental to our life, our family, our ministry.

Most of us would like for the world to be black and white. Clear-cut. No gray. But gray is a biblical color. All of these things I have mentioned above fall not in a “yes/no” pattern, but a “maybe/maybe not” pattern. We could place these into an area we might call “doubtful things.” The signature passage on this is Romans 14. And I think this passage speaks directly to the communication you have described you are having with your fiancé. Let’s look at some verses:

“Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does

not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge another man's servant?" (14:1-4)

Use the word "wine" or "alcoholic beverage" and "drink" and re-read the passage. Both parties have a responsibility. The one who "eats" is not to look on the other with *contempt*. The one who does not "eat" is not to *judge* the one who does. God is able to bless both people though they do different things.

"One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. *Let every man be fully convinced in his own mind*"(v.5). It is okay to hold different positions on some of these things, and neither should judge the other.

But Paul brings in another factor: "Therefore let us not judge one another any more, but rather determine this—that no one is to put an *obstacle* or a *stumbling block* in a brother's way. I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that *nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it IS unclean*" (13,14).

"For if because of food (or drink) your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. Therefore do not let what is for you a *good* thing be spoken of as evil, for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. . . So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food (or drink). All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats (drinks) and gives offense. It is good not to eat meat or to *drink wine*, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles. The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. But he who doubts is condemned if he eats (drinks), because his eating (drinking) is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin. . . .Now we who

are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just *please ourselves.* Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. For even Christ did not please Himself" (14:15-15:3).

What we have in this wonderful passage gives both freedom and restraint. God has provided many wonderful things for the human race, including wine "to make glad the heart of man" (Psalm 104:15). Yet we have additional responsibilities to behave in such a way that we might not offend another's conscience. There is what we might call the "Law of Love" which would make us careful not to exercise our freedom at the expense of someone else's expectation of us. A second law might be called the "Law of Expediency." Paul says, "All things are *lawful*, but not all things are *expedient* (I Corinthians 6:12)" In other words, if I have freedom to have a glass of wine, I still have to look to the leading of the Holy Spirit to help me decide whether it would be expedient in a particular context for me to exercise my freedom.

So _____, I would suggest that you and your fiancé get together and look at this material and have a good discussion about it. I would not make this issue the pivot upon which your shared life together will turn. If he wants a glass of wine at a meal at home, you do not have to have one too, but you also should not judge him for having one. If it becomes something habitual, and seems to be gaining greater control, I think you have a right to talk to him about it and express your concern. "Becoming one" in a marriage is not something based upon both people thinking the same things or doing the same things. It is about being open to one another and sharing your lives. It is possible for him to have a glass of wine and you deciding not to.

The word "becoming" is most important. It is a process. It takes many years for a couple to become one. Couples who have "pulled in the harness" for thirty or forty years together are the ones who best exhibit this "oneness," since they know each

other so well, and have fought their "fights," and made their adjustments to each other, and there is a harmony between them that has been hammered out over their married life.

You are just embarking on that great journey called marriage. Realize that you both bring what you are to the relationship. You will discover that you are very different people Sometimes those differences will bring friction. You will rub on each other. This is part of the process of any meaningful relationship. Your differences should not be considered a threat, but rather a union which should be viewed as complementary, rather than competitive. Someone has said that marriage is like a tennis match. But it's not singles; it's doubles! You are both on the same side of the net giving all *you've* got—each of you, to make your relationship and your marriage a winner.

I hope this helps answer your question, _____.

Warm regards in Christ,

Jimmy Williams, Founder
Probe Ministries

**See Also:**

- "Is It OK for Christians to Drink in Moderation? Didn't Jesus Drink?"
- "Jesus Contributed to Drunkenness!"

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# "You Are Gods"?

**I have heard New Agers claim that even the Bible makes the claim that we (people) are gods. They use the words of Jesus**

**in John 10:34. This verse has always puzzled me. What did Jesus mean when he quoted this scripture?**

Thank you for your question. Let me see if I can shed a little light on it.

The contexts in both John 10 and the Old Testament Psalm which Jesus quoted (Psalm 82:6) are very important in understanding our Lord's answer to the Jews which were about to stone Him. As they pick up stones, Jesus says, "I've shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning me?" They say, "For a good work we do not stone you, but for blasphemy; and because you, being a man, make Yourself out to be God." (John 10:32-33).

Then Jesus refers to Psalm 82:6 and says, "Hasn't it been written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'? If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say to Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming'; because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? If I do not do the works of my Father, do not believe Me…" (John 10:34-37)

Now let us look at Psalm 82 to determine its context and the theme/purpose of the Psalm. The entire psalm is a scathing rebuke aimed at unjust judges in contrast to the just Judge of all the earth. In reality, Asaph, the author of the psalm, is crying out for God to do something about the corrupt judges of his day; they show partiality, they neglect caring for the downtrodden, the weak, the afflicted, etc. Then in verse 6, God Himself speaks, and says:

> *"I said, 'You are gods (Elohim),*
> *And all of you are the sons of the Most High."*

Some observations:

1. The words, "Elohim" (God)," and "Yahweh" (Lord), are the

two major names of God in the Old Testament. It is Elohim that is used here in verse 6.

2. Its meaning in Psalm 82:6 does not imply that men are gods. It rather refers specifically to the fact that God has appointed judges to act in a dignified, God-like manner in the discharge of their God-appointed responsibilities.

3. Actually, the word "Elohim" is also used in verse 1 of both God and men:

"Elohim (God) takes His stand in His own congregation; He (God) judges in the midst of the Elohim (corrupt judges who are acting like Gods—said in sarcasm)."

Notice in John 10 that Jesus reminds these accusers from the first half of Psalm 82:6 that God is the one who appoints the human judges with their awesome responsibility: "Ye are gods." He goes on in the second half of the verse to remind them that sons are supposed to resemble their Fathers: "And all of you are the sons of the Most High." Neither the judges in the psalm nor the Jewish leaders confront Him were reflecting this.

4. In jurisprudence there are two types of authority: *de facto* and *de jure*. The Most High God (Elohim Himself) has *de facto* authority. It is an un-derived authority. He has it because He is God. *De jure* authority, on the other hand, is derived, or delegated authority. And delegated authority makes one responsible to the one who did the delegating! The second half of verse 6 is a solemn reminder that these judges are called "Sons" of God, because they are to represent faithfully a justice which reflects their "Father," the Judge of all the earth.

5. Now the words of Jesus in John 10 make a lot more sense. If you or I had come to earth as the Messiah, we would probably have been moving about and taking every opportunity possible with people to verbally emphasize who we really were: Elohim.

But Jesus didn’t do that. He chose rather to imply His identity through the miracles, through the Parables, through His actions. It was as if He was careful that a person came to the conclusion that He was Elohim solely of their own accord, and with no pressure or persuasion on His part, though He was eager for them to come to this very conclusion.

6. Notice that in the dialogue in John 10 with these angry Jews, Jesus could have taken the “bait” and said, “I am Elohim!” But He doesn’t. He claims identity with the second half of Psalm 82:6, the one that models a relationship to His Father exactly like what God is desiring from the judges in Psalm 82. Even though Christ is Elohim, He functions during the Incarnation in a *de jure* capacity to the Father and faithfully carries forth His responsibilities to His Father: accomplishing His mission to redeem the human race (John 3:16).

I hope this answers your question.

Jimmy Williams, Founder
Probe Ministries