

The Gospel of John

I Am the Door of the Sheep

John 10:1-10

INTRODUCTION:

As we continue in the Gospel of John open your Bibles to the tenth chapter of the Gospel of John.

The context of our scripture is very important. You will note that there is no real break between chapter 9 and 10. I know it says “Chapter 10” but it is the same day, the same scene, the same people, and Jesus responding to the same event. Remember that chapters and verses were added to the Bible in the mid 1500's to help us with memorization and make it easier to find scripture. Chapter 9 was about a man born blind who had become a beggar, and Jesus gave him his sight. And then you remember the beggar and Jesus were confronted by the leaders of Israel, who showed nothing but disdain for the beggar and nothing but violent hatred for Jesus. They threw the beggar out and they intended to kill Jesus.

In a sense, the main characters in chapter 9 are the leaders of Israel and they are false shepherds who devour and fleece their people. Jesus contrasts Himself with them and He actually says in verse 11, “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.”

All Stand and Read Scripture

John 10:1-10 (NASB)

10 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. ² But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. ³ To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶ This figure of speech Jesus spoke to them, but they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.

⁷ So Jesus said to them again, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. ⁹ I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have *it* abundantly.

Prayer

BODY:

I. FIRST CENTURY CULTURE.

One of the problems that we face in the 21st century, is that we live in a very different culture than the people in the 1st century. They were very familiar to the culture of their day and could relate to the figures of speech and parables that Jesus used to teach them about the kingdom of heaven. They were also much more knowledgeable of the Old Testament because it was their complete Bible. We tend to spend most of our time in the New Testament.

The population of Jerusalem and Judea were very familiar with shepherding and caring for a flock and they knew enough about the Old Testament to know that God Himself was referred to as a Shepherd. So they understood the earthly story of shepherding, and they also understood that the story was an illustration of God's care for His own people.

ILLUSTRATION:

I am going to use a lame paraphrase of John 10:1-5 using the culture of our language.

10 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the football field from the locker room door, but climbs in some other way, he is a thief and an imposter who will attempt to steal plays and offensive and defensive schemes in order to present them to opponents. ² But he who enters by the locker is the coach of the football team. ³ To him the guards allow entry and the players hear his voice, and he calls his own players by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the team players follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ A imposter coach they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they will not listen to the voice of an imposter.

We understand perfectly what has been said because we have a good understanding of the game of football. Can you imagine the 1st century people trying to make sense of this? What is a football? Is it like a round shoe that you wear on your feet? Why is it referred to as a field? What is a play? Do we meet in a coliseum and watch actors enact a live play in front of us? How could they steal that? What are offensive and defensive schemes? Are they plans on how to fight a war? I guess that is partially correct! The horse drawn **coach** wasn't even invented until the 15th century, so I do not have any idea how they might interpret that one.

We tend to do the same thing with their culture. We do not have a good understanding of the world they lived in or the Old Testament scriptures like they did. We tend to try to use our own terminology to understand theirs.

So let's look briefly at the life of a shepherd during the 1st century.

The life of a shepherd was hard. It was outside against all the elements, the heat, cold and the rain. There is little grass in the area so the sheep would tend to wander. It was easy for sheep to get lost and easy for predators to assault and kill them. The shepherd had to keep constant attention on the sheep because danger was all around. Not only from animals, but also from thieves and robbers who came to steal the sheep for the wool and for the meat.

What is a fold? Inside of each village or on the edge of the village was a sheepfold surrounded by a wall or a pen. That pen would be a place where the sheep were brought at night to be safe. They would be out on the fields grazing during the day, and then at night each shepherd in the village would bring his sheep and put them in one fold. That was the place of protection. So the sheep were all mixed into the fold. The shepherds would go to rest and sleep after a day in the fields, and a hired doorkeeper would close the door at night and guard them for the night while the shepherds slept.

In the morning, as the sun came up, the shepherds would reappear and they would call their sheep. They would call their sheep out of the fold and lead them back out to pasture. Only the shepherds were allowed to get by the doorkeeper. Thieves and robbers who came in the night, had to climb over the wall.

The 1st century group understood the story, but still had a hard time understanding the meaning. But they did have the advantage of knowing that the most well-known Shepherd in the Old Testament was God.

Remember Psalm 23? It says, “**The Lord is –**” what? “**- my Shepherd.**”

Psalm 23 (NASB)

23 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. ² He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. ³ He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.

This is just like a good shepherd. The sheep knew him and trusted him to lead them to a safe place with good places to eat and drink. They felt completely protected by him.

Jesus tells us in His story that there will be false shepherds. There is only one true shepherd and Jesus tells us that it is He.

John 10:11 (NASB)

¹¹ “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

Let us first look at some Old Testament scripture that the people in Jesus' day would be very familiar with as well as some New Testament scripture concerning the false shepherds.

II. THE FALSE SHEPHERDS.

If the word "cross" was mentioned we would already have a good understanding of what the cross is all about and would know several New Testament passages concerning it. When the word "shepherd" was mention to the people in Jesus' day, they would have a good understanding of what the Old Testament said about a shepherd.

The entire 34th chapter of Ezekiel gives us a dramatic picture of the contrast between the false shepherds of Israel in our Lord's day and Himself as the true shepherd. They would have been very familiar with this passage of scripture. I am going to read a few portions from it.

Ezekiel 34:1-6, 11-14 (NASB)

34 Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, ² “Son of man, (this was referring to the prophet Ezekiel) prophesy against the **shepherds** of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? ³ You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat *sheep* without feeding the flock. ⁴ Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them. ⁵ They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. ⁶ My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill; My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth, and there was no one to search or seek *for them.*””

Now listen to the contrast between the bad shepherds and the Good Shepherd.

¹¹ For thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. ¹² As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day. ¹³ I will bring them out from the peoples and **gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land**; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land. ¹⁴ I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.

In the context of John chapters 9 and 10, Jesus is speaking to the Jews and Pharisees about being spiritually blind and they had asked Jesus the following question:

John 9:40 (NASB)

⁴⁰ Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, “We are not blind too, are we?”

It was at this time that Jesus continued with the story of the false shepherds and the one true shepherd. Once they had heard the story, they, no doubt had Ezekiel 34 ringing in their ears. But as Jesus tells us, they were blind to the truth and refused to believe that they, the spiritual leaders of the world, could possibly be considered a false shepherd.

Jesus makes it very plain to them many places in the scripture.

Matthew 23:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte (convert); and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

The scriptures tell us that there will be, throughout the history of mankind, many false Christs and false prophets.

Matthew 24:24 (NASB)

²⁴ For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.

But is it possible? No. Although God allows Satan to do his evil in this world, He has promised that He will not allow him to destroy the church.

The scriptures also tell us that during the last days that we are experiencing now, there will be many false Christs.

1 John 2:18,22 (NASB)

¹⁸ Children, **it is the last hour**; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; **from this we know that it is the last hour....**²² Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

There is even a mention of a major false Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 (NASB)

³ Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, **and the man of lawlessness is revealed**, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

We do not know who this "**son of destruction**" is or will be. But it appears that when he arrives, he will be revealed. He will reign on earth just before the second coming of Christ and he will deceive many people.

How are we to react to these false shepherds? We see it in two verses from our passage.

John 10:5,8 (NASB)

⁵ A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers."⁸ All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.

Simple conclusion: People who are loyal to false teachers don't know the true Shepherd. Once Jesus has removed us from the fold of sin and death and judgment, we will follow Him. We will not listen to a stranger who contradicts God's Word. We follow Jesus, not perfectly, but faithfully. We will never heed another voice.

III. THE TRUE SHEPHERD.

Jesus is utterly unlike the Pharisees that Jesus refers to as false shepherds.

John 10:2-3 (NASB)

² But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. ³ To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

The **shepherd** of the sheep is allowed to come in the **door**. What is that?

That's privilege, right, authority, and ownership. The guard is not going to let anybody but the real shepherd in. This indicates to us that Christ is the rightful Shepherd of His sheep. He has the privilege to come in and call His sheep and take them out. He has

fulfilled all Messianic prophecy. He has demonstrated by words and works that He is the Messiah, the Son of God.

Throughout the gospel of John, He has been testified to by the Holy Spirit. In the beginning of the gospel of John, by the early disciples, by John the Baptist, by His words, by His works, even by the voice of demons. Jesus conformed to every Messianic promise. He is the rightful Shepherd. He is the one sent from the Father to be the one Shepherd, to lead the elect of Israel out of the fold of Judaism into the green pastures and still waters of salvation.

Sheep knew their master's voice because they heard it all the time. Like the good shepherd in Jesus' story, the great shepherd knows His sheep, too. He knows their name because their names have been written in the Lamb's Book of Life from before the foundation of the world. He knows who they are. He calls them by name. They know His voice, and He leads them out.

John 10:4 (NASB)

4 When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.

When He goes ahead of them, what do the sheep do? **They follow!** Jesus doesn't have to keep pushing us. Once we have been saved through the miracle of regeneration, once He made us His own, once we have recognized His voice, once we began to share His life, once we were set free from the bondage of the world's fold, we follow willingly, and we will not follow a stranger.

Please notice that the shepherd leads. He goes ahead of them to make the pathway, to clear the danger, to find the water, the pasture, the provision. Everything is bound up in sanctification as He leads us into eternal glory and blessing.

CONCLUSION:

John 10:16 (NASB)

16 I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock *with* one shepherd.

Who are the other sheep who are in another fold?

They are the Jews and Gentiles, the nations and countries of the world that have had their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life since the foundation of the world, but have not yet come to Jesus. It is just as Ezekiel promised, that God would gather his flock from all of the nations and all the countries. The fold, then, is whatever holds temporarily the sheep that belong to God: Judaism or the world.

God already knows the names of His sheep. When all of God's people whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life is saved, Jesus will come again. Then we will all be in the presence and glory of our one true Shepherd for eternity.

This is the Day.