

Week 22

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Before we begin today's study of John 10, let's review what we have learned about Jesus in the first 9 chapters of the gospel of John.

First, the purpose of the book, found in John 20:30 and 31; these signs are recorded so that you may know and believe that Jesus is the Messiah and believing have eternal life.

What signs has John recorded that we have studied which would show Jesus to be Messiah or divine?

Chapter 2 recorded the miracle at Cana, where He changed the water into wine.

Chapter 4 told us about the healing of the son of a royal official, a gentile child, on the verge of death.

Chapter 5 a lame man is healed.

In Chapter 6 Jesus fed 5000 men, plus their wives and children, easily a crowd of 15,000 people with 2 loaves of barley bread and a few fishes. He also walked on the waters of the Sea of Galilee in the midst of a storm so great that even seasoned fishermen were desperately afraid.

Chapter 9, which we just finished, showed us the miracle of giving sight to a man born blind.

The formerly blind beggar in Chapter 9 stated beautifully, "I once was blind but now I see".

I have had that experience myself. I too was born spiritually blind and continued in that state for 30 years, until Jesus opened my spiritual eyes, gave me life and now I see Him for Who He is. I admit I do not understand fully all that He is but I know He is God; He has taken away my

darkness, and lighted my world, forgiven my sin, and given me life eternal, I am His child.

He takes care of me every day, and while I have experienced many trials and pain, He has allowed these for my good and has delivered me through them, not from them.

Chapter 9 ended with the Pharisees throwing out (excommunicating) of the synagogue the man, healed from blindness. Why? The blind man had broken their rules and would not condemn Jesus for healing on the Sabbath. What did Jesus do? Jesus sought him out to teach him, which will relate to His teaching in Chapter 10, Jesus is the Good Shepherd Who seeks His sheep. Some of the Pharisees were still there, also listening to Jesus.

John 10:1-2

The first thing Jesus tells us is what the false shepherd does; he does not come into the fold by the door but enters some other way. What did Jesus have in mind when he talked about the door that the shepherd is to enter? It is Christ Himself who is the door. The true shepherd of souls is he who enters the ministry with his eyes on Christ, desiring to glorify Christ, doing all in the strength of Christ, preaching Christ's doctrine, walking in Christ's footsteps and laboring to bring men and women to Christ. What does the shepherd do? He enters by the door, of the sheepfold.

The minister who makes little of Christ is one who is an imposter, a false shepherd, who has climbed up to his holy position not by the "door" but some other way. With these words Jesus condemned the ministry of the Pharisees but He also condemns many leaders today who know nothing whatever about Him. You can tell who is the true shepherd; he is going to come through the door, he is going to glorify Jesus.

A sheepfold is the place where the shepherds took the sheep at night when they were traveling from place to place. It could be a cave, shed or open area surrounded by a fence of some sort. It had a single entrance, making it easier to guard the sheep. Several shepherds might use the same fold at the same time.

John 10:3-4

The doorkeeper opens to the shepherd, he is known to the doorkeeper. The shepherd was also the gate or the door for the sheep-which in this teaching.

What was the role of the Pharisees? They were supposed to be the Shepherds of Israel, how does this relate to Chapter 10? We will see that Jesus said the false shepherds are thieves and robbers, contrasting Himself with the Pharisees, they were not true shepherds.

The sheepfold of Judaism held some of Jesus own sheep, those who were awaiting their Messiah. The sheep heard His voice, when the Shepherd came; believing Jews recognized His voice and followed Him. Not all Jews were God's people. The shepherd has a call for the sheep and they recognize his voice, the voice of their own shepherd. I have heard that two shepherds can meet, the flocks intermingle and when the shepherd moves on and calls his own sheep, they follow him. He calls them by name and He leads them out. He knows your name and true believers know His voice.

What is significant about all this? He leads them out, he never drives them. He goes before them; they follow because they know His voice. Isaiah 52 "the LORD will lead you, HE will go before you".

John 10:5

What about the sheep? They hear and follow because they know him they will flee from a false shepherd, one they don't know. They know their shepherd, are you following the true Shepherd?

All throughout scripture God refers to us as sheep, I wonder why. What are sheep like, what do they need from the shepherd, why do they follow? Are sheep able to take care of themselves? Sheep need continuous care; food. Look at PS 23, the shepherd makes us lie down in green pastures, food available.

The shepherd also needs to provide water. Sheep are afraid to drink from running water. The shepherd leads us beside still water. When sheep

must cross running water, because they are afraid, he has to carry them.
IS 23:32

Sheep have to be lead, they easily become lost, they will stray. They will literally fall off the side of a cliff while eating. Is 53:6 "All of us like sheep have gone astray". And what do sheep do when they stray?, they become lost.

Friends, Jesus is using these truths about sheep to tell us what we are like and the illustration of the good shepherd to tell us what he is like. It isn't very complimentary to be compared to sheep. They are not very smart, they smell bad, and they get themselves into ridiculous problems.

How do the sheep know the shepherds voice, they have such an intimate and close relationship and He has cared them so thoroughly, they trust him? When a loved one calls you on the phone, don't you recognize his voice?

What must the shepherd do? He has to find His and gather his sheep. Ezekiel 34:11-13. "For thus says the LORD GOD, Behold I myself will search for My sheep and seek them out". As a shepherd cares for his sheep so Jesus cares for us. You did not find Jesus; He went out and found you. He initiated the relationship; He is calling the lost and the straying. Where were you when He found you? He put a book in my hand, THE LATE GREAT PLANET EARTH, which contained things I had never heard of, why? I called myself a Christian; I had never read the bible. I really didn't know what a true believer was, I didn't know Jesus, He found me. I will never get finished thanking Him for seeking me because I know I was too proud to admit I needed Him, or to seek Him on my own. Religion was what I thought I needed, wrong, I needed a relationship. Remember Jesus is contrasting himself with the Pharisees.

The King James Bible says John 10:6 is a parable. However, it is not really a parable; the Greek word is paroimia, meaning, proverb, or figure of speech, much more powerful than a parable. This "figure of speech" is the basis of the entire discussion of chapter 10.

John 10:7-9 He is the door, repeated for emphasis

Based on this figure, what does He mean when He says He is the door? Did He mean there are many doors and we can each find our own and we will all end up in the same place? No. One door.

Sheep can only go out through the one door which the shepherd guards carefully inspecting each one who passes by. He is the gate for the sheep, He, Jesus is the only way. No one else is the door; there are not many doors, only Jesus. Friends, this door will be closed someday, shut forever, people will want in but will not be able to enter. Walk through while you can.

What does He mean about all who came before Him? He is referring to the evil Jewish religious leaders who cared nothing about the spiritual welfare of the people but only about their petty rules and their reputation. This type of false shepherd had been in Israel for 100s of years. The way they treated Jesus made it clear they were much more interested in their system than to God's Word or the people they were supposed to serve. They had invented their own door the door of false religion.

John 10:10

The thief here refers to false messiahs, false shepherds who make up their own religion. What are they here to do? To steal, to kill and to destroy the sheep. Have you considered these motives of false leaders? They care only about feeding themselves or making money off their flocks, notice any of these on TV?

Jesus is the life giver, abundant life for His sheep in contrast to the false shepherd who takes life. Those false shepherds took the life of the Good shepherd. Have you noticed, Jesus never asked for anything, He only came to seek and save the lost.

John 10:11

Now that He has explained the sheepfold and the gate, He contrasts the thief, the hired hand and the Good Shepherd. Would you notice that the Good Shepherd has 4 characteristics?

1. He enters by the gate-he approaches directly, not sneaky
2. He has God's authority-the gatekeeper allows him to enter
3. He meets real needs-the sheep recognize his voice and follow him

4. He has sacrificial love-he is willing to lay down his life for his sheep.

John 10:12-13

This false person, the hired hand, is in contrast with the Good Shepherd. He is doing the job for pay and doesn't care about the sheep. He is not ever going to risk his life, he will run away. The hired hands refer to corrupt religious leaders-we have many of these today. So the thief steals, kills, destroys and the hired hand runs away when trouble comes. The Good Shepherd will not run away, He is committed to His sheep. Isn't it wonderful and amazing that Jesus is committed to us, wayward sheep that we are? Its pretty clear the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders we have met so far, have no commitment to the sheep.

John 10:14-15

The relationship between God and Jesus is used to illustrate the commitment Jesus has to His sheep.

His sheep love and trust Him because they know Him. He has stressed knowing Him, so we can avoid following the wrong shepherd or leader. Friends, do you know Him well enough to follow only Him? Can you avoid following a false shepherd? Only by knowing the real can we avoid the false. He repeats He will give His life for His sheep.

John 10:16

When He was leading His sheep out from the fold of Judaism He knew He had other sheep that were not Jews and He still does today. The other sheep are the Gentile believers that would be you and me. Jesus came to save Gentiles as well as Jews. Paul refers to this in Ephesians 2:11-16.

The good Shepherd came to gather into one flock all the believers, Gentile and Jewish. Friends there are others as well. We have fellow believers suffering in Japan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Libya. I heard an Arab believer say how hurtful it is to them for us to forget them and believe all Arabs are Muslims. Don't forget to pray for these who we will meet in eternity, they are part of the flock, which Jesus shepherds and they are suffering and dying for their faith.

The flock of Jesus has unity because we all have one shepherd. One shepherd died for all of us.