

John, Part 33 — The Revelation of Jesus Christ — The Good Shepherd

Jesus was still in Jerusalem after the Feast of Tabernacles. During this time, he faced increasing opposition to His ministry and miracles. It is likely that Jesus was addressing the same group of Pharisees who were present when He healed the man who was born blind. The Pharisees claimed to be the shepherds or overseers of the people of Israel. They did not feel that anyone was as qualified to lead and protect the people.

John 10:22 tells us that this occurred at the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem. The feast of dedication recalled the Maccabean revolt against the “false shepherds” of Israel. This chapter reflects back to the prophecy of Ezekiel 34, where God reproves the false shepherds of Israel.

John 10 reveals Jesus the Good Shepherd and His sheep.

Jesus is the only true Shepherd of the sheep.

John 10:1 NKJV Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

What is the sheepfold?

In Jesus’ day, in Palestine the sheepfold was a courtyard with stone walls in front of their houses. The sheepfold had one gate or entrance.

Jesus said, there is a sheepfold where sheep are kept. It is a place of God’s acceptance and a place of safety and security in God’s presence. This is the position of those who believe and are saved. It is a place of providential and favorable care and shelter for believers. It is a place of safety for all who are accepted by God through the name of His Son, Jesus Christ. The sheepfold symbolizes the place where the sheep (believers) are kept.

John 10:28 NKJV And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

Jesus is revealing the security provided to those who are His. He gives them eternal life and they shall never perish. Not only does He initiate and provide it, Jesus carries our salvation to complete fullness. Look at those words, “Neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.” Whenever the enemy attacks, you need to know that you are kept in Christ.

John 10:29 NKJV My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.

God the Father is watching over them. *God is faithful, who has called you into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.* No one is greater than your heavenly Father. He is able to keep you. Those who belong to Christ are kept in the Kingdom of God. They are kept from the enemy. They are kept in the place of acceptance and safety. They are kept in salvation.

This parable talks of a false shepherd and True Shepherd.

- Both go after the sheep with different purposes.
- The true Shepherd is Christ.
- False shepherds oppose Christ.

Jesus indicated there are many thieves and robbers who are going after the sheep. Notice the distinction between the true and the false.

John 10:10 NKJV The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

There are many false teachers who do not have light. They stand against “Jesus the Light of the world.” They offer a false security, safety, and blessing. They offer a substitute for what God provides in Christ. God our Father has provided safety and security for those who put their trust in Christ. In Christ, we may have life and that more abundantly. The implication of what Jesus is saying is that we do not have to look for another source of security, safety or blessing.

Access into the sheepfold is provided.

John 10:1 NKJV Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

Jesus said there is a door or way into the sheepfold. The door is the only acceptable way to enter. God has provided a place of safety, but there is only one way to get in.

False shepherds climb into the sheepfold "some other way." If there is only one way provided, "some other way" indicates something illegitimate. It indicates a point of access.

Jesus said He came from the Father. The false shepherd comes from some other direction, source, road, way or position. Jesus said anyone who tries to enter some other way is a thief and a robber. The false shepherd is a thief, seducer and deceiver. He is crafty and dishonest. He uses any method he can to gain access to the sheepfold and steal the sheep. As a robber, he uses violence and cruelty to destroy and devour to get into the sheepfold.

John 10:10 NKJV The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

There is a clear difference in the true shepherd.

John 10:2-3 NKJV But he who enters by the door is the 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 language in this parable was not understood by those who heard Jesus speaking.

First, He Who enters by the door is the Shepherd of the sheep.

The only true access into the sheepfold is through the door. Jesus was addressing His office as the Messiah, the Christ. Later, Jesus says He is the door. God the Father has not provided multiple ways into His safety, salvation, and blessing.

There are several ideas about the identity of the doorkeeper, watchman, or porter.

There are only two legitimate possibilities. The doorkeeper is either God the Father or the Holy Spirit. When the doorkeeper opens, the sheep hear the Shepherd's voice.

John 6:44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

Philippians 2:13 For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Access to the sheep is granted to the True Shepherd.

He is not trying to start a flock on His own. He is focused on the sheep and the Owner's will. *God is faithful, who has call you into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Jesus came into this world to do the will of the Father.

His purpose was to be the Shepherd of the Owner (God).

Therefore, the Shepherd enters the sheepfold by the door.

The door and the access are Jesus Christ. The access was made for Him and the sheep to enter. His deeds were not done in secret.

Second, the Watchman or Doorkeeper knows the Shepherd.

This point is critical.

God the Father and Holy Spirit know Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit constantly points people to Christ, the Door into the sheepfold.

The Watchman/Doorkeeper knows the Shepherd who comes to the door and opens to Him and the sheep hear His voice. The Shepherd is not afraid to face the Watchman, but has been appointed access to the sheep. The Shepherd has the authority and the right to enter.

John 10:15 NKJV As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

Third, the Shepherd knows the sheep.

John 10:2-3 NKJV But he who enters by the door is the 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.

He knows each one by name. True shepherds know their sheep. Shepherds know each sheep individually, even in large herds. The fact is certainly true with Christ and His sheep. The words “His own” [idios] means: unique, individually, separately. He calls His own, not as a whole, not as a flock, but as individuals. The Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, knows each of His sheep by name.

John 10:14 NKJV I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.

1 Corinthians 8:3 NKJV But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.

2 Timothy 2:19 NKJV Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

Fourth, the Shepherd leads, loves and shepherds the sheep.

Isaiah (43:1) was given this prophetic word: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; You are mine.” He leads them to the green pastures and beside still waters. He is the one who feeds, protects, and gives the very best care possible. He feeds and cares for the sheep even if He has to gather them in His arms and carry them to the feasting pasture.

Isaiah 40:11 NKJV He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.

Psalms 23:1-4 NKJV ¹The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

He seeks and saves the sheep that get lost.

Matthew 18:11-12 NKJV ¹¹ For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. ¹² “What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying?”

Ezekiel 34:16 NKJV I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment.

The Good Shepherd protects the sheep and sacrifices His life for the sheep.

John 10:11 NKJV I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

He restores the sheep that go astray and returns them to the sheepfold.

1 Peter 2:25 NKJV For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

He rewards the sheep for obedience and faithfulness.

1 Peter 5:4 NKJV When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

He will keep the sheep separate from the goats.

Matthew 25:32-33 NKJV All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

We should turn our focus toward the sheep.

Who are the sheep?

First, the sheep know the Shepherd's voice. They know both the sound of His voice and His words. His voice is not uncertain, unclear, indecisive, weak or frail. His word and voice is clear, strong, sure, and decisive. His sheep know the Words of His voice. We trust what is said because we know His voice.

John 6:63 NKJV The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

John 18:37 NKJV Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.

Second, the sheep follow the Shepherd. He goes before them and they follow where He leads. He does not drive them like cattle. He leads in order to provide a safe and secure way to pasture. He leads to show the sheep that the road is clear and safe.

The sheep know this. They have followed Him to safety and He has made them secure. He knows the path that should be taken and lays the path out before them.

They follow Him because He saves them and gives them life.

John 10:27-28 NKJV My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. ²⁸ And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

They follow Him because they are the sheep of His pasture.

Psalms 100:3 NKJV Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

They have much to be thankful for. He feeds and keeps me safe, shelters and heals, protects and guides.

They follow Him because they are sheep in the midst of wolves.

The Apostle Paul warned believers about grievous wolves that would enter and not spare the flock. (Acts 20:29)

1 Peter 5:8 NKJV Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

They follow Him because He assures them and delivers them from fear.

Luke 12:32 NKJV Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Kingdom pleasures and privileges are prepared for you.

They follow Him because they have learned that without Him they are scattered and lost.

Matthew 26:31 NKJV Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'"

They follow Him because He takes care of all their wants.

Psalms 23:1 NKJV The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Who are the sheep?

Third, the sheep flee from strange voices.

John 10:5 NET They will never follow a stranger, but will run away from him, because they do not recognize the stranger's voice."

They will not follow a stranger. They flee from the strange voice.

Years ago a youth in our church was raising sheep for an FFA project. Late one Sunday night he called me to come help him rescue his sheep. During church his sheep had got out of the sheepfold and they were running down the highway. I got there and started trying to help him with the sheep. The more I said, the more panicked the sheep became. Finally, I told him, get some feed and put it in a bucket and you call the sheep. My voice, sound and

words were not familiar. When he calmed down and called his sheep they knew they could trust his voice and word.

Jesus said, "My sheep know my voice and a stranger they will not obey." There are many voices in the world. All of them do not sound bad to the carnal ear. You have to measure the voice with the Word of God.

When Jesus used this parable, they did not understand the things He said. Spiritual truth is beyond the grasp of their natural minds. They could not see themselves as false shepherds. They could not see Jesus as the True Shepherd. The natural man rebels against being called false. The natural man rejects the Lordship of Christ as the only Shepherd of the sheep. We need to develop ears that hear the voice of the Lord.

Acts 28:27 NKJV For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.

God the Father and the Holy Spirit are still pointing us to Jesus. If you will hear the tender Shepherd, He will lead you to places of healing, renewal, and strength. He will shelter and remove fear.