

## 91. The Gospel of John—10:2-9

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### *“The Good Shepherd” Pt.2*

(10/13/19)

In John chapter 10, we have recorded one of the most beautiful and powerful discourses that the Lord Jesus ever gave during the course of His earthly ministry—the Good Shepherd discourse.

It’s hard for those of us who are ‘city dwellers’, living in an industrialize society to appreciate what it was like to live thousands of years ago in an agrarian culture where animals played such an integral part of their daily lives—and required so much care!

The life of a shepherd was especially difficult.

I think it’s pretty safe to assume that no one here this morning has ever been a shepherd, and that none of us therefore has any frame of reference from which to understand what it was like to live the life of a shepherd.

The care of sheep was not an easy thing and required constant vigilance and sacrifice.

For months out of the year the shepherd had to live miles from home, out in the open field, sleeping under the stars at night on the cold, hard ground.

It was a dangerous life in that, at any time, he could be attacked and even killed by wild animals who would then drag away the sheep, that were like children to him, to be torn apart and devoured for food.

And so, when Jesus likened Himself to a shepherd and the Jewish people to sheep—it doesn't impact us the same way it did those standing there that day who heard His words for themselves.

One historian provides us with some context—

*“The illustration of a shepherd and his sheep would have been as common and familiar to these people as automobiles and expressways are to us. In Israel there is a main plateau of land that stretches about 35 miles north and south and is about 14 to 17 miles wide. Because it's rocky and rugged, it was not much good for farming—so it became grazing land for sheep instead of agricultural land. And shepherds with their flocks dotting the Judean hillside became a familiar sight. It was a hard life because there's very little grass which means the sheep have to constantly be led around to find what little grass there is. There were many valleys and ravines which posed constant danger for the sheep and meant the shepherds had to constantly be watching over and tending their flocks. There was also the constant danger of wild animals mostly wolves coming to prey on the sheep as well as thieves and robbers that the shepherd had to guard the sheep from. A shepherd had to have courage patience and a love for his flock. He had to really care for them and about them like little children because they were absolutely helpless and defenseless. And many shepherds were known to have laid down their lives for their sheep.”*

Now, as we start in John 10, let me give you the background one more time so that you can fully appreciate all that Jesus is saying in His ‘Good Shepherd’ discourse.

As we have already said, John chapter 10 is a continuation of chapter 9 where Jesus healed a man born blind. (Elaborate)

This whole discourse centers around Jesus as the Good Shepherd—in contrast to the false shepherds of Israel whom Jesus calls ‘*thieves and robbers*’—who only came to steal, kill and destroy the sheep.

But as we pointed out numerous times in our study of chapter 9—this blind man represents fallen humanity (all of us who are born spiritually blind—in Adam).

And in that regard, we are all lost sheep that need a Shepherd to find us, open our eyes, and lead us in our journey thru life.

And so, with that in mind, let's dive into John chapter 10.

## **I. The Illustration—v.1-6**

### **A. The sheepfold**

**John 10:1 (NKJV)**

**<sup>1</sup> "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."**

Jewish shepherds kept their sheep in two kinds of sheepfolds throughout the year depending on the season (winter or summer).

During the rainy season (winter and early spring) when there was an abundance of green grass around the village—the shepherds would use the sheepfold in town.

In Israel there was in each village located somewhere near the middle of town a common or communal sheepfold.

This sheepfold was a large walled-in area (corral) made up of stone walls that were roughly 6 to 8 feet high, having no roof and only one door.

In the evening, all the shepherds in the village who had their sheep grazing in the surrounding fields and hillsides—would lead their sheep into this communal sheepfold.

There was a man who was hired to care for the sheepfold during the night—he was called the *porter or doorkeeper*.

The shepherds would lead each of their flocks into this one sheepfold—and then go home for the night.

The doorkeeper's responsibility was to shut the door and guard the sheepfold against animals, thieves or robbers getting in by climbing over the walls.

The Greek word for **‘thief’** is *kléptēs*; and the Greek word for **‘robber’** is *lēstēs*.

The primary difference between *kléptēs* (thief) and *lēstēs* (robber) is that the *kléptēs* relied on *stealth* and did his stealing in secret so as not to be discovered—the robber on the other hand (*lēstēs*) was much bolder and did his stealing out in the open thru violence.

## B. The shepherd

### John 10:1-5 (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup> "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. <sup>2</sup> **But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.** <sup>3</sup> **To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.** <sup>4</sup> **And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.** <sup>5</sup> **Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."**

In the morning, each shepherd would stand by the door of the sheepfold (the doorkeeper knew the shepherds and would only open the door to them), and the shepherd would call his own sheep by name (he had a name for each of them).

And even though several flocks had mixed together in the common sheepfold during the night—it didn't matter because they each knew their shepherd's voice and recognized their name when he spoke it.

And upon hearing him call their name—they followed him (and only him) out of the sheepfold.

If a stranger called the sheep, they would either not respond or run away.

## Who is the Shepherd?

The Shepherd is Jesus Christ, who went on to call Himself—the Good Shepherd (verses 11 and 14).

## What is the sheepfold?

Some say it's the *church*—but why would the Shepherd lead the sheep out of the Church?

Some say its *heaven*—but why would Jesus, the Good Shepherd, ever lead His sheep out of heaven?

Remember the context and who is standing there.

John chapter 9 is all about a 'lost sheep' of Israel (man born blind) who was rejected by the bad shepherds of Israel (Pharisees) who cast him out of their 'sheepfold' (Judaism) and how the Good Shepherd found him and made him a part of *His* fold (the Church).

And so—the sheepfold is Judaism.

The sheep that hear the Good Shepherd calling their name are Jewish believers in Messiah Jesus.

The false shepherds that Jesus calls *thieves* and *robbers* were all the false messiahs, false prophets and false teachers that had 'shepherded' God's sheep down thru the centuries.

### Jeremiah 23:1 (NLT)

<sup>1</sup> “What sorrow awaits the leaders of my people—the shepherds of my sheep—for they have destroyed and scattered the very ones they were expected to care for,” says the LORD.

**Ezekiel 34:9-11 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> ...therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the LORD! <sup>10</sup> Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I *am* against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them." <sup>11</sup> 'For thus says the Lord GOD: **"Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out..."**[a prophecy of Jesus as the 'Good Shepherd']

**Ezekiel 34:23 (NKJV)**

<sup>23</sup> I will establish one Shepherd over them, and he shall feed them--My servant David. He shall feed them and be their Shepherd.

All throughout the history of Israel, God's people were plagued by false and evil 'shepherds' who led them into idolatry and immorality.

But God's true sheep didn't listen to them and didn't follow them into idolatry because they knew their Shepherd's voice (Yahweh) and lived in obedience to their Shepherd's commandments—they were what the O.T. called the "faithful remnant" (1Kings 19:18).

**John 10:8 (NKJV)**

<sup>8</sup> **All who *ever* came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.**

And now the Good and True Shepherd had come and was standing at the door of the (communal) sheepfold of Judaism and calling His sheep out.

It was communal in that it contained many flocks who followed many different false shepherds (rabbi's, prophets and even messiah's) all mixed together in the sheepfold of Judaism.

But, along with all the false sheep, the sheepfold of Judaism also contained the true sheep of God—those that belonged to the Good Shepherd, Jesus the Christ (Messiah).

One author had this to say—

*"Israel's True Shepherd had now come to the door of the sheepfold of Israel to call His sheep out of the restrictive, legalistic walls of Judaism into the Green Pastures of Christianity."*

Another said—

*“God had His true sheep in the sheepfold of Judaism and Jesus as the Good Shepherd, the Messiah, had come to lead them out of Judaism into a new covenant relationship with God. Into a new sheepfold called Christianity thru Him. Over the centuries, many false messiahs and prophets had climbed the walls and carried off many sheep—but those shepherds were thieves and robbers and the sheep only listened to them because they weren’t God’s sheep and proved it by following these false shepherds.”*

Some commentators liken the door of the sheepfold in verse 1 to Jesus’ Messianic Authority—as no one else had the right to go through that door and lead God’s true sheep out of Judaism into the Green Pastures of the New Covenant—except Messiah Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

And so, we know that the *sheep* Jesus leads out of Judaism were believing Jews in Messiah Jesus; the *false shepherds* were religious leaders like the Pharisees—but who does the ‘doorkeeper’ represent?

Many commentators see him as John the Baptist who ‘opened the door’ of the sheepfold of Israel to the Good Shepherd by calling the nation to repentance and the ‘opening’ of their hearts to their true Messiah.

*“So, you’re saying in John 10, Jesus is only talking about the Jewish believers as His sheep? As a Gentile believer, doesn’t He consider me one of His sheep too?”— absolutely!!*

**John 10:16 (NKJV)**

<sup>16</sup> And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd.

**John 10:6 (NKJV)**

<sup>6</sup> Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.

They didn’t understand because—these false shepherds weren’t God’s sheep—

**John 8:43, 47 (NKJV)**

<sup>43</sup> Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word...

<sup>47</sup> He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."

As Jesus would go on to say—His sheep hear His voice and they follow Him!

These men weren't sheep at all—they were goats! (Matt. 25:31-46)

**I. The Illustration—v.1-6**

**II. The Application—v.7-18**

**John 10:7 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

*"Wait a minute, I'm confused!" you might be thinking. "Is Jesus mixing metaphors? I thought He was the Shepherd—but here He's talking about being the Door. Is He moving on to a whole different subject using another analogy?"*

No, Jesus' audience would have understood perfectly what He was saying.

As we said, the communal sheepfold in town had a door and a doorkeeper that guarded it from thieves and robbers during winter and early spring.

However, when the weather started to get warm and then hot—the shepherd had to lead his flock farther and farther away from town during the late spring through early fall looking for pasture (grass for the sheep to eat).

At one point, the shepherd would lead his flock too far away from the village and the common sheepfold—to go back at night.



During those times, he would have to make a small, temporary sheepfold out of rocks, branches or brush (tumbleweeds)—with a single entrance or ‘door’.

The shepherd would only make the opening wide enough for one sheep to enter at a time—that was purposeful on his part.

You see, the shepherd would stand next to the entrance of the sheepfold with his staff in his hand, holding it in front of the opening, so low that the sheep couldn’t pass under it.

And as each sheep stood before the entrance to this makeshift sheepfold, the shepherd would carefully examine the sheep from front to back, and from head to hoof to make sure each sheep was free of burrs, cuts or any other injuries that he would have to address.

After the sheep passed inspection—the shepherd would raise his staff and allow the sheep to enter the sheepfold—one at a time.

He would do this for every one of his sheep.

And then, after the last sheep had been examined and was safely inside the fold—he, the shepherd, would lay across the opening and literally become the **“door of the sheep [sheepfold]”** (v.7).

That way, no sheep could exit, and no wolf could enter without stepping on the shepherd and waking him up.

*“Thus, in referring to Himself as the **“Door”**, Jesus was saying, “I’m the Shepherd on duty. I’m the One whose job it is to guard the flock.”*

**John 10:8 (NKJV)**

**<sup>8</sup> All who *ever* came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.**

In saying this, the Lord wasn't including Israel's *true* spiritual leaders (such as Moses, Joshua, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and many others).

Jesus was referring to Israel's false shepherds—her wicked kings, corrupt priests, false prophets, and pseudo-messiahs.

However, the true sheep did not hear them; they did not heed them and were not led astray by them—because they were God's true sheep.

Of course, Jesus led the lost sheep of the house of Israel out of the sheepfold of Judaism (those that responded to His voice—i.e. His message, the gospel).

He now calls Himself the *Door* into a small sheepfold (small at first).

In that regard, Jesus is the Door into the new covenant, into the Church—or in other words, the Door of Salvation—

**John 10:9 (NKJV)**

**<sup>9</sup> I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved...**

There's only one entrance into salvation—thru Jesus Christ.

We enter God's sheepfold—one sheep at a time.

Jesus said (Matt.7:13-14) that the way into heaven was 'narrow' (a Greek word for 'turnstile').

**John 10:9 (NKJV)**

**<sup>9</sup> I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.**

This little Sheepfold is only for Jesus' sheep and it represents the blessings of God as a child of God to which Jesus is the Door.

Jesus not only leads a person out of bondage—but into blessings.

But He alone is the entrance into eternal life and heaven—even as He said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* (John 14:6)

Be careful that you don't misunderstand what Jesus meant when He said, *"If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out..."*

He is not saying that, once saved, we would go "in and out" of salvation.

He was referring to going in and out and finding pasture.

Remember that the context is how the shepherd is leading his sheep on a journey to find pasture.

He builds these temporary sheepfolds along the way as a place of rest and rejuvenation for the weary sheep.

These places of rest could be a weekly church service or a Christian retreat of some kind or some other place of rest.

The journey that our Shepherd leads us on is not always easy—in fact it’s often a deep dark valley, but we must embrace our pilgrimage.

**Psalm 84:5-7 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> Blessed *is* the man whose strength *is* in You, Whose heart *is* set on pilgrimage. <sup>6</sup> As *they* pass through the Valley of Baca [‘weeping’—painful experiences, personal loss, adversity and afflictions], They make it a spring [a place of refreshment and strength for others going thru similar experiences that we can encourage them in—2Cor.1:3-5]; The rain also covers it with pools. <sup>7</sup> They go from strength to strength [from ‘sheepfold’?]; Each one appears before God in Zion.

In other words, even though our journey thru this life can be very difficult—our destination will be absolutely glorious!

And we all make it!

Our Shepherd loses none of His sheep! (John 6:39-40)