

## EXPOSITION OF JOHN

Message #43

John 10:1-21

One of the best loved pictures of one's perception of Jesus Christ is one that pictures Jesus as a Shepherd. There are various drawings of Him holding a shepherd's crook, surrounded by sheep. That picture in part comes from **John 10**.

**John chapter 10 is one of the best loved chapters of all of the New Testament and it is probably one of the least understood chapters in the New Testament.** The shepherd teaching of John 10 has thrilled people of this Church Age dispensation. However, there have been a rift of interpretations which have been given to this chapter, most of which are not really focused on the true meaning of the passage. As one commentator observed, **the greatest failure most have with this chapter is a failure to understand it in its context.**

For example, some teachers have made it a text that talks only about heaven, the ultimate and true fold of God's sheep. However, that cannot be the case because how does a robber or thief climb his way to heaven (**10:1**)?

Now remember, this teaching sits contextually in the aftermath of a blind man being excommunicated from Judaism. This blind man was one of Israel's hurting sheep and Jesus gave him his sight and led him out of both personal and spiritual blindness. This parable is really a follow-up to **John 9**. The main message is this:

**JESUS CHRIST IS THE ONLY MEANS OF EXITING FALSE RELIGION THAT LEADS TO DEATH, AND JESUS CHRIST IS THE ONLY DOOR OF ACCESSING A TRUE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD WHICH WILL GIVE ONE ETERNAL LIFE AND AN ABUNDANT LIFE.**

Now as near as I can determine these verses break down into two main parts:

**PART #1** – The sheep and shepherd metaphors. **10:1-18**

We will immediately observe from **verses 1 and 7** that this is a “truly, truly” text = dogmatic, unchanging Truth. As near as I can determine there are three main metaphors.

**Sheep Metaphor #1** - The shepherd metaphor. **10:1-6** = Jesus Christ is “the” Shepherd.

The people of Israel knew something about sheep, sheepfolds and shepherds. A shepherd would lead his flocks over the terrain. He always went first and the sheep, knowing his voice, would follow him. At night the animals were led to some type of strong enclosure. Some of the sheepfolds had walls over ten feet high. There was one door, through which the animals gained entrance. These protective walls kept out thieves and wild animals that would steal or kill the sheep. If multiple flocks were in the fold, the shepherds would take turns at the door, guarding the sheep. Sometimes, one man was hired as a doorman for this job. At dawn the shepherd would call his sheep and they would follow his voice. Now in the western United States, usually dogs are used to lead sheep, but in the promised land the shepherds could use their voice.

**Now these verses feature this background and these verses are figurative (10:6).** What that means is this is a figurative language or metaphorical language designed to illustrate literal truth.

Now when the figure opens, the shepherd is not the door and the figure of speech was addressed to religious leaders who actually claimed to be the shepherds of God's flock. The Pharisees and scribes considered themselves to be the real leaders and shepherds. Now there are five messages in this first sheep metaphor that Christ presents:

**(Message #1)** - The true shepherd of sheep will enter by the doorway, not some secret criminal way. **10:1-2**

Now the "fold" in **verse 1** is not heaven and it is not the church, it is religious Israel which was not right with God (**v. 16**). Jesus Christ entered religious Israel legitimately. Jesus Christ came publicly and legally to Israel. He came fulfilling every prophecy of birth and life and every law that God demanded. He met every prerequisite to identify Himself as the true shepherd who could lead Israel into a true relationship with God. No one else had his credentials. He entered Israel's religious system in full accordance with the Word of God.

**(Message #2)** - The doorkeeper will open the door for the true shepherd. **10:3a**

The doorkeeper has been viewed two ways: 1) A reference to John the Baptist who recognized Jesus Christ and paved the way for Him to Israel; 2) A reference to the Holy Spirit who opens the doors for Christ's ministry to reach the sheep. Both are true and both only moved when Jesus Christ came to this earth.

**(Message #3)** - The sheep hear the voice of the true shepherd. **10:3b**

The true sheep hear the voice of the true shepherd and they follow Him. That is a far cry from what the Pharisees would do. They heard the voice but they hated Him and wanted to kill Him.

**(Message #4)** - The true shepherd calls each sheep by name and leads them out of the fold. **10:3c**

**The specific need that Israel had was to be led out of her phony religion and into a true relationship with God.** Jesus Christ brings true sheep out of their false religion and into a new, exciting personal relationship with Him. J. Vernon McGee said Jesus Christ will lead His real sheep out of a legalistic system and if they are not being fed the Word of God, He will lead them out of church. He also said he believed, based on this verse, that at the Rapture, every sheep would hear his own individual name to "come up here."

There are three ways Jesus Christ knows you if you belong to Him:

- 1) He knows you by your name - He knows who you are
- 2) He knows you by your nature - He died for you while in your sin, so he knows your struggles
- 3) He knows you by your needs - He knows the needs of every one of His sheep

**(Message #5)** - The true shepherd puts all of his sheep out of the fold and they follow him. **10:4**

Why didn't all Jews follow Jesus out of that Judaistic sheepfold? Because all were not His sheep. All of Christ's own are out of the fold. Notice the "all." All of the true sheep follow Jesus Christ out of false folds of religion. One commentator said you cannot fool God's real sheep permanently. You may trick them to get caught up in an "ism" for a while but eventually the real sheep of God will follow the true Shepherd.

**(Message #6)** - The sheep will not follow the voice of one who is not their real shepherd. **10:5**

The true sheep of God will listen to the true message from God. When the true Word of God is preached it will awaken within the real sheep a realization of the truth of God. You may fool one of God's sheep for a while with some false doctrine but sooner or later God's real sheep will hear the truth and they will follow it right out of their false belief.

I talked with a person who was raised in a religious system that questioned creationism. This person grew up in a church that didn't really know what to believe about creation. One night it was learned that Ken Hamm of the Creation Institute was speaking on this very subject, so this person went and immediately truth was seen and heard and believed. God led this person instantly out of a false doctrine right into His truth. That is exactly what Jesus promises right here.

The future tense of the verb "will not follow" indicates that true sheep will not follow false teachers and their teachings into the future. They may get sidetracked for a moment but it won't last long. **Sooner or later real sheep recognize real truth and real grace found only in Jesus Christ.**

Now look at **verse 6** - they didn't have a clue what Christ was talking about. These religious leaders had no idea what Christ was even saying. These were the same religious leaders who said they knew everything (**9:29, 31, 34**). But they were spiritually blind and this text proves it.

Since the religious leaders couldn't figure out the shepherd metaphor, Jesus decides to make it even more clear and simple by using another metaphor:

**Sheep Metaphor #2** - The door metaphor. **10:7-10** = Jesus Christ is the door.

All throughout this context the door metaphor is used: **Verse 1** - Christ comes through door into the fold; **Verse 7** - Christ is the door of the sheep; **Verse 9** - Christ is "the" door, "the I AM Door."

In this part of the metaphor, Jesus identifies Himself as the door of the sheep. **What this means is that He is claiming that He is the only way to access eternal life and He is the only way to access an abundant life.** Jesus Christ is the doorway out of religion into a real relationship with God. No mere man may make this claim.

Any who came before Him who said they were the way to life were thieves and robbers and the true sheep would not listen to them. It is interesting that Christ uses this language to describe these religious leaders because they were not interested in truth, they were interested in money.

They would keep people in the dark about being right with God because they were able to manipulate more money. They would tell people they would go to hell if they didn't give their tithes and offerings and these leaders were not only robbing these people of their money, but of eternal life.

Any person who tries to present any other way to being right with God is a thief, a robber, a killer and a destroyer. There is no other door that will give you access to a real relationship with God, other than Jesus Christ.

According to **verse 9** if any one enters this door - he shall be saved and he shall have a living, vital relationship with God. Anyone regardless of past sin or past failure, if you will enter through this door you shall be saved. Then, if that isn't enough, according to **verse 10**, not only will you have eternal life you will also have an abundant life. A life of overflowing existence. A life that is totally filled to a surplus level.

So Jesus says "I am the door" who can give you eternal life and abundant life. He is the only way into this relationship with God.

In **verses 9-10**, there are three wonderful things promised to one who believes on Jesus Christ: 1) This person is completely saved (**v. 9a**); 2) This person is completely secure (**v. 9b**) "in and out"; 3) This person is completely satisfied (**v. 10**). This person has an abundant life.

**Sheep Metaphor #3** - The good shepherd metaphor. **10:11-18** - Jesus Christ is the good shepherd.

The Shepherd Metaphor is critical to Jesus Christ. Here He is the good shepherd; in **Hebrews 13:20** He is called the Great Shepherd; in **I Peter 5:4** He is the Chief Shepherd.

We need to understand something historically from this religious context. To call Jesus Christ "good" in this Jewish world was the same as calling Him "God" (**Mark 10:18**). Only God is good, all others are filthy, rags sinners who are evil (**i.e. Luke 11:13**).

Jesus Christ identifies Himself as the good shepherd as opposed to the religious leaders who pretended to be the shepherds of Israel. One might ask, how could Jesus be the door and the good shepherd at the same time. In all reality, **the door was the shepherd**. There are five specific marks of Jesus Christ, who is the good shepherd:

**(Mark #1)** - The Good/God shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. **10:11**

This critical fact is emphasized four times in this context: **vv. 11, 14, 17, 18**. The good shepherd who can give us life would be identified by His willingness to die. We need to carefully understand this point.

If you give most people a choice between staying alive or dying, most choose to stay alive. But every now and then someone chooses to die. This is where the context becomes so important. The critical point to see is that Jesus Christ lays down His life so He can take back His life so He

can give us life. The criteria of our Savior must be, He dies, comes back to life so He can give us life. The prepositional phrase “for the sheep” means that Jesus Christ died on our behalf and in our place. It is the preposition “huper” (υπερ). Now when most people die, most think of it as a tragedy. When Jesus died we must think what a victory for us. He laid down His own life so He could save us.

**(Mark #2) - The Good/God shepherd does not run from threatening trouble. 10:12-13**

Jesus Christ saw the trouble the world was in. We were enslaved to Satan and to sin. Neither of those two things could touch Him, because He was God. However, the only way we could be saved from our sin, in view of the fact that we all have sinned, is if He would lay down His life, take it back again and then give us life. He did not run from this, He willingly went through it all.

**(Mark #3) - The Good/God shepherd knows His sheep and they know Him. 10:14-15**

The word “know” means more than just academic knowledge of something, it means the shepherd has an intimate knowledge of and relationship with His sheep and His sheep have the same connection to Him.

Time and time again this point is stressed because Jesus wanted us to know that just because the vast majority of the religious world is caught up with relying on their religious works, the true sheep of God know Him as the only true good, God-saving shepherd. The real sheep of God know the connection between God the Father and God the Son. Jesus Christ knows every one here who truly relies on Him to save him or her. Jesus knows you by name.

**(Mark #4) - The Good/God shepherd has other sheep not from this fold. 10:16**

The good shepherd had to bring other people who were non Jewish into His family. His sacrifice would be far reaching. He would reach sheep like us from the entire Gentile world. He would bring people to Himself and they would be part of the flock of God.

Jesus Christ was fully authorized to lay down His own life. It was His call. His Father turned this decision over to Him. But He was such a wonderful shepherd that He was willing to do this for us.

**(Mark #5) - The Good/God shepherd is loved by the Father. 10:17-18**

God the Father loves God the Son very uniquely because He has turned all authority over to Him and He knew the only way for sinful people to be made right with God is if He would pay the price for their sins - lay down His own life and then take it up again so He could give life to any who would believe on Him. In order to be able to do this you must be at an equal level with God. There is no other religious person who can offer you life or give you life. Jesus Christ is the only One who can do it for you.

**PART #2** – The responses to the sheep and Shepherd Metaphors. **10:19-21**

Jesus Christ's teaching of truth brought about division, not unity among religious people. Notice in **verse 19**, the adverb "again." The Truth of God, the Grace of God divides people. It does it again and again and again. When you preach a pure grace, non-works message which takes man out of the equation of salvation, you cause division. The truth cuts into him like a hot knife in butter and it cuts him to the heart and he does not like that. So he responds.

**(Response #1)** - Some said Jesus is demonic. **10:20a**

**(Response #2)** - Some said Jesus is insane. **10:20b**

**(Response #3)** - Some said Jesus is not demonic. **10:21**

These religious leaders ask a very stupid question (**10:20**), "Why do you listen to Him?" Because He is God, our only Savior, our only hope of an abundant life and eternal life.

What do you say? Who is Jesus Christ to you?