

John Chapter 10

Verses 1-39: Jesus' discourse on Himself as the "Good Shepherd" flowed directly from chapter 9, as Jesus continued to talk to the very same people. The problem of chapter 9 was that Israel was led by false shepherds who drew them astray from the true knowledge and kingdom of Messiah (9: 39-41).

In chapter 10 Jesus declared Himself to be the "Good Shepherd" who was appointed by His Father as Savior and King, in contrast to the false shepherds of Israel who were self appointed and self righteous.

John 10:1 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."

Jesus spoke (in verses 1-30), using a sustained metaphor based on first century sheep ranching. The sheep were kept in a pen, which had a gate through which the sheep entered and left. The shepherd engaged a "doorkeeper" (verse 3), or "hired hand, (verse 12), as an under-shepherd to guard the gate.

The shepherd entered through that gate. He whose interest was stealing or wounding the sheep would choose another way to attempt entrance.

The words of (Ezekiel 34), most likely form the background to Jesus' teaching since God decried the false shepherds of Israel, i.e. the spiritual leaders of the nation, for not caring properly for the flock of Israel, i.e. the nation.

The gospels themselves contain extensive sheep/shepherd imagery.

John 10:2 "But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep."

We see here, the Shepherd is Jesus and his sheep are the believers in Christ Jesus. This seems to be speaking about these religious leaders (those who do not come in by the door). Jesus is the Door.

These Pharisees and Jewish rulers did not believe in Him, so they are trying to get in some other way. Those who know the voice of the Shepherd (Jesus Christ), come in by the door which is also Jesus.

John 10:3 "To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out."

The porter or doorkeeper was a hired under-shepherd who recognized the true shepherd of the flock, opened the gate for Him, assisted the shepherd in caring for the flock, and especially guarded them at night.

“The sheep hear his voice”: Near Eastern shepherds stand at different locations outside the sheep pen, sounding out their own unique calls which their sheep recognize. As a result, the sheep gather around the shepherd.

“He calleth his own sheep by name”: This shepherd goes even further by calling each sheep by its own special name. Jesus’ point is that He comes to the fold of Israel and calls out His own sheep individually to come into His own messianic fold. The assumption is that they are already in some way His sheep even before He calls them by name (See verses 25-27; 6:37, 39, 44, 64 and 65; 17:6, 9, and 24; 18:9).

Verses 4-5: Unlike Western shepherds who drive the sheep from the side or behind, often using sheep dogs, Near Eastern shepherds lead their flocks, their voice calling them to move on. This draws a remarkable picture of the master/disciple relationship. New Testament spiritual leadership is always by example, i.e., a call to imitate conduct.

John 10:4 “And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.”

The way is open to Jesus since He is the Way, and the Door also. The followers of Jesus will not follow another. The followers of Jesus know the voice of their Master. They are not deceived into following another.

There are shepherds under Jesus who tend to a specific flock until the great Shepherd calls. This would be speaking of ministers who Jesus has set over a portion of His flock, to care for them. The great Shepherd is Jesus. He is the one the sheep are really following.

John 10:5 “And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.”

A true Christian will not be deceived and follow after a false prophet, because they will be well trained by the Word of God. They will be well versed in the Scriptures and will not listen to sermons that please the flesh.

John 10:6 “This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.”

This phrase conveys the idea that something cryptic or enigmatic is intended in it. It occurs again in 16:25 and 29 but not in the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark & Luke’s gospels). Having given the illustration (verses 1-5), Jesus then began to draw salient spiritual truth from it.

These Pharisees could not understand a parable and that is why Jesus spoke in a parable. He knew they would not understand what He was saying. They looked only at the literal message. They did not understand the deeper meanings that could only be understood by the spirit.

In (verses 7-10), "I am the door": This is the third "I Am" statements of Jesus. Here, He changes the metaphor slightly. While in (verses 1-5), He was the shepherd, here He is the gate. While (in verses 1-5), the shepherd fed the sheep out of the sheep fold, here He is the entrance to the fold, (verse 9), that leads to proper pasture.

This section echoes Jesus' words (in 14:6), that He is the only way to the Father. His point is that He serves as the sole means to approach the Father and partake of God's promised salvation. As some Near Eastern shepherds slept in the gateway to guard the sheep, Jesus here pictures Himself as the gate.

John 10:7 "Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep."

Jesus is giving the interpretation of what He had said before, but they will not understand this either. He explains here, that He is the door that leads to eternal life. His sheep will go through this door to heaven.

John 10:8 "All that ever come before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them."

Jesus is speaking of those who came on their own without being called. During this time, there had been many false prophets and false gods. I believe that is what is referred to here.

Verses 9 and 10 are a proverbial way of insisting that belief in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God is the only way of being "saved" from sin and hell and receiving eternal life. Only Jesus Christ is the one true source for the knowledge of God and the one basis for spiritual security.

John 10:9 "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

The only way to salvation is through Jesus Christ. He is the Door. This is speaking of that great pasture or resting place in heaven. Jesus is still speaking in a way that the Pharisees and Jewish leaders will not understand.

John 10:10 "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

The thief mentioned here, is the devil. Satan's mission is to steal, kill, and destroy. Jesus' mission is to bring everlasting life to those who will accept it. His wish is that His followers will be in good health and prosper as their soul prospers.

Jesus' plan for us to have life more abundantly is for us to put Him first, and then all these good things will be added to us.

Verses 11-18: Jesus picked up another expression from (verses 1-5), i.e., He is the “good shepherd” in contrast to the present evil leadership of Israel (9:40-41). This is the fourth of 7 “I Am” statements of Jesus. The term “good” has the idea of “noble” and stands in contrast to the “hired hand”, who cares only for self-interest.

John 10:11 “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”

Many ministers of the gospels are shepherds; but there is only one good Shepherd, and His name is Jesus. We know that Jesus gave His life on Calvary to save those who will follow Him (be His sheep). The concern of the good Shepherd is the care and feeding of the sheep. Jesus alone is the good Shepherd.

John 10:12 “But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.”

“Sheep ... wolf ... flees” The hired hand likely represents religious leaders who perform their duty in good times but who never display sacrificial care for the sheep in times of danger. They stand in contrast to Jesus, who laid down His life for His flock (15:13).

In (Ezekiel chapter 34), we read about these hireling shepherds (ministers).

Ezekiel 34:1-2 “And the word of the Lord came unto me saying, "Son of man prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds: Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?"

Go on and read all of (chapter 34 of Ezekiel), and you will see just what happens to shepherds who do not take care of God's sheep but are only interested in taking care of their own needs. In this Scripture that says Israel, it means all who are God's, whether they are of the physical house of Israel or the spiritual house of Israel (Christian).

Look especially at: Ezekiel 34:10 “Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.”

We see here, that God will remove these ministers who are not giving the true Word of God. This type of minister will lose his job and won't be able to make a living from the ministry. Worse than that, God will hold them responsible for the sheep they deceived.

Read the whole chapter over and over, and you will see the churches of our day in this.

John 10:13 “The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep.”

Some ministers in our day fall into this category (thank the precious Lord, not many). Someone who is a minister because of the salary he or she gets has no business being a minister.

Of course, everyone knows they have to live, but their first and primary reason should be to help the sheep (members). Someone who is just working for money will quit and go home when problems arise, but someone dedicated to their people and their God will stay in there and protect the flock.

John 10:14 “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.”

Just as any good shepherd knows each of his sheep, Jesus knows each of His. His sheep know His voice and will follow Jesus wherever He goes. That is the best way to tell if they belong to Jesus, do they hear His Word and follow Him?

John 10:15 “As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.”

Jesus is explaining here, His relationship to the Father. The Father knows and approves of everything Jesus is doing. Jesus has lived His life in the will of the Father.

Just before Jesus was carried away to die for our sins on the cross, He said to the Father “Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.” Jesus was totally committed to the will of the Father even unto death.

John 10:16 “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.”

This refers to Gentiles who will respond to His voice and become a part of the church (Rom. 1:16). Jesus’ death was not only for Jews, but also for non-Jews, whom He will make into one new body, the church.

A Gentile who follows Jesus is grafted into the tree of Jesus Christ. They are adopted, if you will. The Jews are the natural branches. Jew or Gentile, who follows Jesus are Christians of Israel. Jesus is one, so Jew and Gentile believers are one in Christ. Jesus is the Shepherd of both.

John 10:17-18 "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."

“Take it again” Jesus repeated this phrase twice in these two verses indicating that His sacrificial death was not the end. His resurrection followed in demonstration of His messiahship and deity,

(Romans 1:4). His death and resurrection resulted in His ultimate glorification (12:23; 17:5), and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (7:37-39).

This Scripture above renounces the teaching that is prevalent in our day that Jesus was subject to the devil. Jesus, at no time (even hanging on the cross), was subject to anyone. Jesus, of His own free will, hung on the cross for you and me. He never was out of control of the situation.

He also, of His own free will, brought His body out of the grave on resurrection morning. He lay His life down, and He took it up again with His own will. No one took Jesus' life, He gave it. He went into hell (not to suffer), but to victoriously take the keys from Satan and to preach and bring captivity captive out of hell.

Jesus was in control of the situation all the way through. They could not have even taken Him, had He not been willing. He could have blinded them, as He had done before, and walked right past them.

John 10:19-21 "There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings." "And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?" "Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?"

Jesus stirred them up. He told them of things that they knew none of them could do. As we said before, if they did not understand, some of them just said He has a devil. Others were convinced, not only by the fact that He gave sight to the blind, but by what He said as well.

The Jews once again had a mixed reaction to Jesus' words. While some charged Him with demon possession, others concluded His works and words were a demonstration of God's sanction upon Him.

John Chapter 10 Questions

1. What two things are the ones who climb up some other way, and do not come by the door called?
2. Who enters in at the door?
3. Who is this Shepherd?
4. Why do the sheep follow Him?
5. Who are known as shepherds also?
6. Why will the sheep run from anyone besides the Shepherd?
7. In what way did Jesus speak to them that they would not understand?

8. Who is the door?
9. Who did Jesus say, the others who had come were?
10. Jesus said "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be _____."
11. What does the thief come to do? (Three things)
12. Jesus said "...I am come that they might have _____."
13. Jesus is the good Shepherd, what did He do for His sheep?
14. What is the one who leaves the sheep when troubles come called?
15. What Book of the Old Testament explains about these shepherds who abandon their sheep?
16. Why does the hireling flee?
17. Who lays down His life for the sheep?
18. What was meant in verse 16 about other sheep?
19. Who took Jesus' life?
20. Jesus had power to _____ and _____.
21. How did the Jews accept this message from Jesus?
22. Can a _____ open the eyes of the blind?