

LESSON 10



JESUS IS OUR GOOD SHEPHERD

(Part 1)

Scripture Text: *John 10:1-6*

Jesus used some familiar scenes or customs to illustrate His teachings. About Him in the fields of Palestine could be seen many flocks of sheep cared for by shepherds. He used these to picture His relationship with His people. He calls Himself the Shepherd, and the people of God, sheep.

Jesus is our Shepherd; saints are His sheep. He knows, saves, protects, feeds, and heals them. They know and follow Him. Today we study the relationship between the Good Shepherd and His sheep. The background of this lesson is the 34th chapter of Ezekiel.

MEMORY VERSE: *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.*

John 10:16

Nature of the True Shepherd

John 10:1-2 The sheepfold of that day was not a building but an open enclosure. Its walls were covered with branches of thorny shrubs to keep predators out. Sometimes there was a door, and at other times the shepherd himself at night would lie across the entrance, keeping his flock safe within. Several flocks would occupy the same fold. Each group had names. One shepherd watched the flocks at night. In the morning the other shepherds came and, standing outside, called their sheep by name. As the sheep began to come out of the fold, the shepherds would lead them until each flock had been led to pasture. Every shepherd knows his sheep and each sheep knows its shepherd's voice. They can never be deceived by the voice or call or dress of anyone else.

How beautifully this describes for all time the relationship of Christ to His church and the relationship of pastors to their flocks. **He that entereth not by the door . . . the same is a thief and a robber.** The Pharisees were false shepherds—thieves and robbers. They had not entered in by the door. They had secured their position by political conspiracy with the Roman government. Christ was the true Shepherd, for He had been placed by God. His coming had long been prophesied. God's approval and power rested upon Him. The true sheep—men and women of genuine religious faith—heard His voice, understood Him, and followed Him.

One Voice

John 10:3-5 **And the sheep hear his voice . . . and leadeth them out.** The shepherd goes before his sheep. This is a perfect application to Jesus Who is our Leader in the matter of learning. He does not drive us but walks ahead of us in hours of temptation, and is near to us in seasons of pain and trouble. He goes before us in everything in this life and in the things which have to do with eternal life. **The sheep follow him: for they know his voice.** There are many voices around us today speaking words of spiritual instruction and advice. How can we know which voice is the right voice? The Holy Spirit is the answer; He came to guide us in all things (John 16:13). Try the spirit and see where it is leading! Only the Spirit of Christ will lead us to green pastures. All others will lead to a dry, thirsty, and barren land away from God (1 John 4:1-3). Christ is telling us here that the true church must have true leaders.

For they know not the voice of strangers. As the sheep only move at the voice of their shepherd, so the true saint knows no other voice but that of Jesus Christ.

A Parable

John 10:6 This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things . . . he spake unto them. Jesus told these men that he that enters not into the kingdom by Jesus has not entered into the kingdom at all. He has not entered into the fold by the door but has attempted to climb up some other way. Why could they not understand His Words?

The church of Israel began with God's blessing upon it. God had established it, had provided in detail for its every need, and had made clear its everyday duties. But that religious body had become corrupt. The Pharisees were false shepherds—thieves and robbers. They refused to enter in by the door. Jesus tried to get them to see their condition, to find their location, and to walk in the light. **But they understood not what . . . he spake unto them.** They did not have open hearts to receive the truth. Their traditions and seats of power and recognition among the people caused a great number of them to fail to follow the voice of the Good Shepherd Who had come to lead them out of their terrible condition into a rich experience in a new and better land, the kingdom of God. Jesus, from that time until the present, has swept leaders of this world and their followers from their places of power by His simple righteous teachings about the kingdom of God.

When Christ calls and His sheep refuse to follow that call, it is only a matter of time until they, whether they be sheep or undershepherd, will be devoured by some of the predators who wait for an opportunity to destroy the flock of Christ. The safest place is close to the Shepherd. The wolf attacks those sheep who wander away to the outside edges of the pasture.

JUST A THOUGHT

"To try to win the world by the methods of the world is to become like the world."

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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