

I Am The Good Shepherd

This series began with the three metaphors in John 14:6, where Jesus said to Thomas, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." The last three blog articles are; Believe in Me, Be Not Afraid, and Come unto Me. All six, and those in-between are to some degree summarized with the understanding of what a good shepherd was and is.

In John chapter 10, Jesus declares Himself to be both the door into the sheepfold (John 10:7) and the good shepherd (John 10:11) who calls and leads the sheep. Although spoken about six months apart, John 10:7-10 and John 14:6 teach the same thing in different metaphors. Jesus is the only one who has been in heaven, has opened the doors to heaven, shows us the way to heaven and can lead us to heaven.

Through the prophet, God said in Ezekiel 34:11 "Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out." God had appointed shepherds over His people in the form of priests, elders, and kings. None had lead his people in righteousness but had allowed, and sometimes led them, to do all manner of unrighteous things. Not only would God lead and protect those near to Him but would search for the lost ones to bring them back to Himself.

The contrast between the bad shepherds and the good shepherd is illustrated in Ezekiel chapter 34 and brought to life in the person of Jesus the Christ. Psalm 23 is another passage where God is described as a good shepherd. The shepherd leads those that are His to green pastures near refreshing waters. The shepherd guards him in right paths and protects him from evil. This is applied to Messiah in Ezekiel 34:11-16.

The analogy was well understood by those in both Old and New Testament times. The sheep fold was usually an enclosure without a door or gate for an entrance. The shepherd would lead his flock to pasture and water in the day and call them into the sheepfold at night. With no gate or "door" the shepherd would lay down across the entrance to keep sheep in and danger out. So, in John 10:7 declaring Himself to be "the door" the meaning is in John 10:11, "I give my life for the sheep." He is the doorway into the safety of the sheepfold being both protector and defender of the sheep.

Sheep are skittish animals and "spook" easily. Because they knew the shepherd's voice, they would calm down and follow him and nobody but him. Jesus referred to this in John 10:27-30 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. 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. I and My Father are one."

Several flocks can mix together, and when the true shepherd speaks, his sheep separate from the rest and follow him. If a thief comes, the sheep will not follow him because they do not know his voice. Jesus is the Good Shepherd to the sheep (true believers) who are His. What Jesus is saying here ties right into John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me." Jesus is not only the Good Shepherd who gives His life willingly for His sheep (John 10:11), but He is the also the "gate" or "door" of the sheep (John 10:9). In this metaphor Jesus presents Himself as the One who gives salvation, the One who offers access to heaven. So, Jesus is the True Shepherd who feeds His sheep with the truth, guards them, gives His life for them, and is the Doorway to heaven for those who hear His voice and follow.

There are those today who would lead His people away. They are false shepherds and just as evil as those who led Israel away from God. Sadly, such false shepherds abound today, more interested in

fleeing the flock for their own personal gain, than in feeding and protecting the sheep as shepherds of the church who follow the example of the Good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us give honor and respect to those among us who have received this admonishment from Peter. "The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." 1 Peter 5:1-4

May we pray for each other as the Hebrew writer did long ago? "Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."
(Hebrews 13:20-21)