

Shepherds and Christmas **John 10 (12/25/2011)**

At this time in Israel shepherds were uneducated, unskilled, and insignificant. They were common laborers whose profession made them ceremonially unclean. Shepherds were among the first people to see Jesus Christ with their own eyes and to report His birth to others, Luke 2:15-20.

1. The Illustration of the Sheepfold (1-6)

A Jewish Metaphor

Shepherds were part of the landscape of Judea. The image here is of a common sheepfold in a common village. A sheepfold was a large pen-type structure often in the center of the village. In the evening the shepherds would lead their sheep to the fold for the night. A doorkeeper would be hired to watch over the sheep while the shepherds slept.

- **The sheepfold is a picture of Israel**

God used the nation of Israel to bring the promised seed of the woman into the world. Jesus was born a Jew, Luke 1:26-27. God providentially arranged the circumstances so that Jesus would be born in Judea, in Bethlehem, Luke 2:1-7. Jesus was going through the nation calling out those who would follow Him. In the morning each shepherd would come to the door and call out “his own sheep” by name “and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice” (4).

Sheep Know the Voice of Their Shepherd

This was an illustration they would be intimately familiar with. “they did not understand the things He spoke to them” (6).

2. The Illustration of the Door (7-10)

A Combined Metaphor

In the evening, the shepherd would lead his flock to the door of the sheepfold. He would stand in the doorway, stopping each sheep with his rod in his hand. He would pass the rod over the sheep to check for parasites or injuries. At other times, the flock would be grazing far away from the village. The shepherd would make a crude sheepfold for the sheep. He would then lie down and sleep in the doorway.

- **The door is Jesus**

(7) “Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.”

Jesus Christ is the only way to God. Many have come before Him and after Him claiming that truth. For a sheep to enter or leave, it had to go over the body of the shepherd. None can enter into fellowship with God except through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus isn't talking about sheep, He is talking about people.

John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

- **Jesus came to give eternal life**

(10) “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.

I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

Eternal life is a major theme of John's Gospel. The reader would clearly understand by chapter 10 that this is what Jesus is referring to.

John 3:36, “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life”

(28) “And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”

This is not just a life that does not end. This is a new quality of life, the life of God. This is true living the way God intended us to live when He created us.

Jesus Christ Is the One and Only Door to God

3. The Illustration of the Shepherd (11-19)

An Identifying Metaphor

To the Jewish mind a shepherd represented leadership. It could be a political or spiritual leader. It was also a common metaphor for God.

- **Jesus was claiming equality with God**

(11) "I am the good shepherd."

This is the conclusion of this entire message (38) "the Father is in Me, and I in Him." Jesus is not "a" shepherd He is "the" shepherd.

Psalm 100:3 "Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture." The imagery of Psalm 23 was very familiar to them, "the LORD is my shepherd".

- **Jesus was announcing His atoning death**

(11) "The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."

The person who died in the mission of Jesus was Jesus. In the sacrificial system the sheep gave their lives for the worshipers. Now the shepherd gave His life for the sheep. He did this willingly. (15) "I lay down My life for the sheep." (18) "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself."

- **Jesus was revealing that He would die for the world**

(16) "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."

Jesus did not just die for the nation of Israel. There was a hint of this in the angelic message to the shepherds.

Luke 2:10, "Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people."

This is why we are here today to celebrate the birth of the Messiah of the nation of Israel; He is the Savior of the World.

True Sheep Follow the True Shepherd

John 10:26-27, "But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."