

John 10:1-21 Jesus: Both Door & Shepherd

Introduction: John wrote his Gospel as an evangelistic tract. His goal was to persuade unconverted Jews, living throughout the Roman Empire, to believe in Jesus. As we read this, ask yourself, *How did John design this information to cause an unbeliever to believe in Jesus?*

Review: John 9 records the healing of a man born blind. Jesus purposely did so on a Sabbath day, even going to the trouble of mixing mud and applying it as an ointment. All this was done as a sign that 1) Jesus is the Messiah and 2) to force the Jewish leadership to proclaim Him as the Messiah or reject Him as a fraud. Unable to deny the reality and magnitude of the miracle, they never-the-less refused to acknowledge that Jesus was from God.

To whom was Jesus speaking at the very end of John 9? At the very end, Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees (9:40-41). John 10 is the continuation of Jesus' conversation with the Pharisees after they had thrown the blind man out of their offices (9:34).

******What well-known truths about shepherding did Jesus review for the Pharisees (10:1-6)?** Jesus pointed out the obvious truth that a man who snuck into a sheep fold over the back wall was up to no good; he was there to steal sheep. Unlike the robber, the shepherd enters the fold through the door. The sheep know his voice and willingly follow him.

What is a sheepfold (10:1)? A sheepfold is an enclosure where sheep sleep. It was typically made out of stone with a single opening that was controlled by a gate keeper. The wall kept the sheep in and robbers out.¹

Based on 10:3-5, what motivated the sheep to go out each morning when it was time to leave the fold? The flock knew the voice of its own shepherd and willingly followed him. They will not follow a stranger's voice. Cowboys drive cattle but Middle-eastern shepherds lead their sheep.² Since a gatekeeper was hired, it is likely that several different flocks were kept in the sheep fold each night.

John described what Jesus said as a "figure of speech" (10:6). What is a figure of speech? It is a comparison of one thing to another to convey meaning. It is a symbolic illustration. Thus, Jesus spoke about sheep by way of comparison to some other real-life situation.

What problem did John point out in 10:5? The Pharisees did not understand what Jesus was getting at. They didn't know why He was telling them obvious facts about shepherding. No doubt Jesus intended to be little vague in order to pique their curiosity and get their attention.

¹ There is nothing to suggest that there were several flocks in one sheepfold (Brown, *John*, 385).

² Carson, *John*, 383.

******What is the main idea, the big picture, conveyed by Jesus' figure of speech (10:7-18)?**

Jesus explained the meaning of the gate, the shepherd and the sheep. The sheep in the sheepfold are Jewish believers. Jesus said that He is both the door to the sheepfold and the good shepherd, whose sheep know His voice, who will die for the sheep to protect them and then rise again, and is loved by the Father. In contrast to Jesus, there are thieves, wolves and hired hands, all of whom hurt the sheep. The author of Hebrews called Jesus:

ESV Hebrews 13:20 . . . the great shepherd of the sheep . . .

Insight: In the Old Testament, Jehovah is the Shepherd and the Israelites were His sheep ("The LORD is my shepherd", Psalm 23). That Jesus here presents Himself as the good shepherd hints at the fact that Jesus is the Jehovah read about in the Old Testament.³ At the very least, this is a subtle claim to be the Messiah.

ESV **Ezekiel 34:23** And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd.

Jesus said he was the door of the sheep (10:7). How could He be both the door and the shepherd (10:11)? He is also both the Alpha and the Omega! This is a figure of speech making the point that any other way in is illegitimate and any other person not the good shepherd. Jesus already made reference to a literal gate and gatekeeper (10:3), but perhaps the shepherd himself would sometimes lie down across the door opening, using his body as a door.⁴

Application: The *only* way into God's sheepfold is through Jesus (10:7). It is an exclusive club with controlled access:

ESV **John 14:6** I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

ESV **Acts 4:12** . . . there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Who were those who came before Jesus (10:8)? The "all" has to be focused. Not every person who came before Jesus was bad (Abraham, Isaac), not every prophet before Jesus was bad (Ezekiel, Daniel), not every religious leader before Jesus was bad (Moses, David). Perhaps this is a reference to "all" false Messiahs who had already come (Messianic pretenders).⁵

If there is a difference between a thief and a robber (10:8), what is it? If there is a difference, it might be that a thief sneaks in to steal whereas a robber steals using the threat of violence. However, it is not clear that Jesus intended any great difference. The simple idea is that unauthorized people who sneak into the sheepfold are up to no good.

Who would the sheep correspond to in real life (10:9)? The sheep would be those who believe in Jesus, who go in through Jesus and who Jesus leads to pasture.

³ Steven Cole, "Lesson 54: The True Shepherd and His Sheep (John 10:1-6), Bible.org, accessed December 29, 2019.

⁴ Douglas, *Dictionary*, 1104.

⁵ Dennis & Grudem, *Study*, 2043.

In this figure of speech, who do you suppose the thieves, robbers, wolves and hired hands represent (10:7-18)? Jesus did not identify them. I am hesitant to be specific when Jesus was not specific. Who they were is not the point. The point is that Jesus is the true, legitimate, good shepherd.

According to 10:10, what impact do the robbers have on the sheep? The effect was to steal, kill and destroy.

Application: The New Testament is full of warnings against false teachers. For example:

ESV **Matthew 7:15** Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

Realize that false teachers do not wear flashing signs warning that they are false teachers, and know the Scriptures well enough to recognize a false teaching when you hear it. The ecumenical creeds of the ancient church are good smoke detectors for heresy.

Also in 10:10, in contrast to the thieves, what was the impact of Jesus' ministry? In contrast to the thieves, Jesus gives the sheep abundant life. Jesus not only offers duration of life (eternal) but also quality of life (abundant life, life at its best).

The good shepherd potentially risks his life for the sheep, whereas the hired hand runs away from danger (10:11-13). In real life, when would a shepherd potentially lay down his life for the sheep? In the days before guns, it was doubtless more dangerous to fight off wolves. A shepherd could possibly be killed fighting with wolves. The idea at this point is simply that a literal shepherd is willing to risk dying in defense of his sheep. The introduction of the hired hand may simply to contrast with what is characteristic of the good shepherd.⁶

According to 10:14-15, how well do Jesus and His sheep know each other? Amazingly, they know each other just as Jesus and the Father know each other. This was quite a remarkable claim in several ways! The intimacy of the shepherd with the sheep is possible because of the intimacy of the Father with the Son.⁷ On judgment day, this will be the determining factor in where you spend eternity:

ESV **Matthew 7:21-23** Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven . . . then will I declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me . . ."

Based on 10:15, how committed was Jesus to His sheep? He said that He lays His life down for them (present tense). Whereas death was potentially an outcome from any encounter with a wolf, it was also clearly a reference to His certain coming death on the cross.

Substitutionary Atonement: A good shepherd risked his life to save the sheep from a wolf. Occasionally a shepherd would be killed in so doing. However, no shepherd would jump off a

⁶ Carson, *John*, 387.

⁷ Carson, *John*, 387.

cliff simply to show the sheep how much he loved them. Jesus, the good shepherd, laid down his life for His sheep, not to show us how much He loves us, but as a substitute, dying in our place, to save us from death. His death was substitutionary to make us at one with God (at-one-ment).

Particular Redemption: Jesus died on the cross to pay for people's sins. If Jesus paid for all the sins of all people, then everyone would go to heaven. However, we know from Scripture that there will be people in hell. Thus everyone, except heretics, focuses the atonement in some way. Some say Christ died for all people, but not all sins (the one sin of unbelief). Others say Christ died for all sins, but not all people (only for the sheep). In our passage, Jesus said He would lay down His life for the sheep. His death was very specific, very focused.

ESV **Ephesians 5:25** . . . Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her . . .

ESV **Matthew 1:21** . . . you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

What did Jesus mean when He said He had other sheep that are not of this fold (10:16)?

This evidently is a reference to His future Gentile followers. (This means that the sheep in the sheepfold illustration represent Jewish believers).

ESV **Romans 1:16** . . . the gospel . . . is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

According to 10:16, what relationship will exist between the two folds? The two will become one flock, with one shepherd.

Application: God does not have two peoples, the church and Israel. God only has one flock and it is the church.

ESV **Galatians 3:28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

In 10:17-18, for what reason does the Father love Jesus? The reason given is because Jesus was willing to lay His life down for the Sheep.

What did Jesus mean when He said He had authority to take His life up again after He laid it down (10:17-18)? This is a reference to His resurrection from the dead. Earlier He said:

ESV **John 2:19-22** "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" . . . he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Deity: It is Jesus who has authority to take His life up again. Elsewhere in Scripture, the Father is said to have raised Jesus. This is another indication of the doctrine of the Trinity.⁸

⁸ Brown, *John*, 399.

What important truth about Jesus' coming death should be noted from 10:18? Jesus was claiming to have supernatural powers over life and death. The crucifixion was not some unfortunate turn over events over which Jesus had not control. They were only able to kill Jesus because He allowed them to do it. All was done under Jesus' "authority". It has been rightly pointed out that it was not really the nails that held Jesus on the cross.

******What division did Jesus' words cause among the Jews (10:19-21)?** As before (9:16-17), some said Jesus was oppressed by a demon (thus, "demented"), but others doubted that a demon could have opened the eyes of the blind.

Application: Since the options are that Jesus was either crazy or God, we'd be crazy not to follow Him.⁹

******Why did the Jews not believe that Jesus was the Messiah (10:22-26)?** The reason they did not believe is because they were not part of His flock, 10:26.

Riddle: Look carefully at 10:26. Were the Jews not sheep because they did not believe, or did they not believe because they were not sheep? Scientists speak of cause and effect. Notice that the word "because" is found in 10:26. "Because you are not part of my flock", therefore the effect is that you do not believe.

Inconvenient Truth: Believing does not make a person a sheep. Being a sheep makes a person believe.

ESV **John 5:21** For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.

ESV **John 6:44** No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

ESV **John 6:65** . . . no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.

ESV **John 8:47** Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.

So What?

According to John 10, who is Jesus? Jesus both the door to the sheepfold and the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep and who takes it up again. Jesus and the Father are one, meaning Jesus is God, and Jesus is the Son of God.

⁹ Cole, "Lesson".

According to John 10, what are the signs that a person is one of Jesus sheep? Jesus' sheep enter the fold through the door, can hear Jesus voice, and follow Him (in obedience).

Why did the Jews not believe that Jesus is the Christ? They did not believe because they were not His sheep.

**** = Ask this question before reading the text. This will engage people's minds and focus their attention.

•You can hear this lesson being taught at SermonAudio.com/NTRF.

•Stephen E. Atkerson
NTRF.org
Revised 12/29/2019