

The Good Shepherd (John 20:1–18)

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Introduction

Moses fell into reproach because his efforts to defend his true kinsmen led to the death of an Egyptian at his hand. Rejected, he fled from Egypt to Arabia (Exodus 2:16–19). This man, who was in line to become king of Egypt as Pharaoh's daughter's son, became a shepherd in the wilderness of Sinai.

Keeping His father-in-law's flock, God called him to a greater service (Exodus 3:7, 8). The beginning of the nation of Israel is illustrated by a good shepherd delivering the people of God—the sheep of His pasture—from evil shepherds to bring them into the Lord's fold.

The same pattern is followed when the Lord chose David, a shepherd, to be king over Israel in the place of the failed king, Saul (2 Samuel 5:1–3).

In these forerunners, the pattern is established in *reproach*, *suffering* even to death, then *victory* in deliverance. Moses and David are Old Testament types and serve as a pattern for Christ, the true Shepherd of His people.

I. Israel's False Shepherds

1. The false shepherds of Israel are exposed.

John 10 continues the Lord's response to the Pharisees' excommunicating the blind beggar whose sight was restored by Jesus in chapter 9.

a. The Pharisees cast the beggar out for challenging their rejection of Jesus.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, sought him and took him into the fold (9:35–38).

He followed up with a declaration aimed at the false shepherds of Israel: "*For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind*" (9:39).

Judicially incapable of apprehending and receiving the truth to which they have willfully shut their eyes, the Pharisees asked Him, "*Are we also blind?*" (v. 40; note 10:6). Their question revealed their pride and rage against Jesus.

The Lord responded to these "recognized" *spiritual* leaders, "*If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains*" (John 9:39–41).

b. These blind guides of Israel were false shepherds. The prophet Jeremiah indicted them (Jeremiah 2:8).

c. Remember the pattern used to introduce this message. God's true shepherds first experience reproach and rejection, particularly by those in leadership. Jesus was resisted and rejected because He was a threat to these religious charlatans (note 10:19–21). He would not be subjected to their program. He exposed their false claims to godliness and righteousness.

2. The activity of false shepherds is revealed. Jesus first condemned these assumed leaders in their *persons*; then He exposed their unlawful *plans*.

a. He exposed their unlawful entry into the sheepfold. True sheep and shepherds enter and exit the fold by the door (v. 1). All others laying claim are shown to be *thieves and robbers*. Their entering by climbing in some other way indicates that they had no divine commission or authority for their claim. Rather, they were servants of Satan (John 8:44), who, with him, seek only to "*steal and kill*

and destroy.” By contrast, only the true shepherd’s goal for the sheep is “*that they may have life and have it abundantly*” (v. 10).

- b. The passage also distinguishes hirelings from false shepherds (v. 12). Hirelings are not there to steal, kill, or destroy. They are hired to look out for the sheep, but they look out only for themselves and not for the sheep. Jesus, on the other hand, is no hireling for He, not fearing the wolf, laid down His life for the sheep (v. 15).

This raises a major question: if the shepherd dies, how does he care for the sheep in his charge? Here Jesus makes an outrageous claim. Not only does He lay down His life for the sheep, He also declares that He will take it up again because He has other sheep that He must bring into the fold (v. 16). The Father loves Him because He willingly sacrifices Himself for the sheep (vv. 17, 18).

II. John’s Purpose Explained

1. The first public act of Jesus’ ministry in John was the cleansing of the temple (the Father’s house; John 2:13–22; Psalm 69:13–17).
 - a. The Lord’s zeal for His Father’s plan was foretold in Psalm 69.
 - 1) This psalm is quoted 7 times in the NT and clearly speaks of Christ as evidenced where cited. In verse 4, the psalmist said, “*Those who hate me without cause.*” This refers to Jesus, as John declares in 15:25: “*But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause.’*” They hated Jesus because He opposed their fraudulent scheme to use God’s house to enrich themselves. Thus, we read, “*For zeal for your house has consumed me*” (Psa. 69:9).
 - 2) John shows the importance of this psalm by having the quote cited by the disciples, which has to do with purpose of God to destroy of His Jewish house, the temple. This destruction was necessary to accomplish His purpose in a way that was totally unexpected by the world. The physical house of God was to be replaced by a greater spiritual house (John 1:10, 11).
 - b. This purpose of God was declared when the *Jews* (the false religious leaders) pressed Him for a *sign*, a miraculous evidence to confirm the word of a prophet (John 2:18–22).
2. The connection with John 10
 - a. Jesus was the true prophet of God, revealing to the nation the Word of God. Like the prophets of old whose word was rejected and their persons subjected to suffering, Jesus followed in their path (Matthew 23:29–36).
 - b. Jesus, however, won the victory, by which He promises His own that their victory is assured in Him (John 14:19; 1 Corinthians 15:57).

Lesson

1. Are you one of the Good Shepherd’s sheep? Three defining facts characterize His sheep: (1) His sheep hear His voice, and He calls them by name and leads them out (v. 3); (2) His sheep enter by Him, the true Door, and thus will be saved and find pasture (v. 8); (3) He knows His sheep, and they know Him (v. 14).
2. Do you see the glorious truth that we celebrate in His resurrection? Because He lives, all who are His sheep hear His voice and follow Him. He will give them eternal life and secure them in His and His Father’s hands.