

John Chapter 10

THE GOOD SHEPHERD AND THE LIVING GATE

Read John 10: 1-21

Historical Background

To better understand what Jesus wants to teach us about Himself, it will be helpful to familiarise ourselves with how shepherds in Israel cared for their sheep. Sheep were commonly herded in a walled enclosure, mostly open to the sky, but providing protection from the worst of the elements and from beasts of prey. ...

What is apparently in mind [in John 10] is a large fold where several flocks find shelter. One doorkeeper can thus look after a large number of sheep. ... When the shepherd comes in he calls the sheep, who know his voice. The Eastern shepherd often has an individual call for each of his sheep. ... The sheep know their shepherd and recognize the call he gives his own. Moreover, they respond to it, and in this way he leads them out.

When he has put all his own sheep out of the fold the shepherd leads them to their destination by walking before them. This is a very different picture from that of driving the sheep (which is more familiar in lands like Australia today).

John 10:1-5

- What is the first image Christ uses for himself in this passage?

- What do the sheep, shepherd and stranger represent?

- What is the relationship of the Shepherd to his sheep? How do the sheep respond to the Shepherd?

- What does Jesus mean by likening himself to a gate for the sheepfold?

- How is he unlike the thieves and robbers?

- How does Jesus identify himself with the good shepherd? (vv 11-15).

- How significant is verse 10 to you in view of the world claims that Christianity is boring and lifeless? Discuss.

- Which verse gives you a clue that Jesus' redemption is universal—that is beyond Jewish borders? (Compare Galatians 3: 28; Ephesians 2:13,15-16).

The Reaction of the Jews

Read verses 22 - 42

The Jews' reaction are mixed (v.19): some hate Jesus, castigating Him as satanic or psychotic (v.20); others, though as yet uncommitted, are convinced His words and deeds could not be attributed to demonic power (v.21). The dissension remains unresolved as the curtain abruptly falls on this scene.

Given the meaning of Hanukkah (when Jews celebrate their deliverance during the Macabean revolt), what feelings about Rome's authority might surface among the crowds? How would the Roman authorities prepare for this feast? Given these tensions, what might be the real intent of the Pharisees' questions in verse 24?

2. How does Jesus push things further? Why? How does he diagnose their problem?

3. How do the leaders interpret Jesus' claim to be one with God? How does Jesus sidetrack them?(v34; Ps 82:6)

1. I've always thought of Jesus as:

- a. superman - coming to my rescue
- b. hired hand - paid to do a job
- c. thief - taking away my most prized possession
- d. shepherd - constant companion, caretaker and guide
- e. stranger

2. In this story, who do the sheep represent?

- a. followers (as opposed to leaders)
- b. all the people of the world
- c. Christians

3. Why do you think Jesus used sheep in his example?

- a. they are helpless without a shepherd
- b. their eyesight is poor
- c. they are lovable
- d. they are pretty dumb animals

4. A shepherd who knows his sheep by name has:

- a. a phenomenal memory
- b. incredible love
- c. nothing better to do
- d. an appreciation of the uniqueness of each sheep
- e. infinite patience

5. The basic point of this story is that:

- a. Jesus is vigilant against intruders
- b. Jesus is committed to his sheep
- c. Jesus lays down his life for his sheep
- d. Jesus protects his sheep from anyone who would harm them
- e. Jesus gives his sheep the good life
- f. Jesus wants to expand the fold

MY OWN STORY

1. The nursery rhyme that best describes my relationship to the Good Shepherd is:

- a. Mary Had a Little Lamb
- b. Little Bo Peep
- c. Baa-Baa Black Sheep
- d. Little boy Blue

2. If I were to follow the shepherd it would be because I need:

- a. protection
- b. to be fed
- c. security
- d. someone who knows me by name
- e. direction

3. When I don't follow the shepherd it's because:

- a. the grass is greener somewhere else
- b. I feel like a black sheep
- c. I've fallen asleep in the grass
- d. no one else around is coming along
- e. I'm too timid
- f. I don't know any better

4. The most reassuring thing about this passage for me is that:

- a. Jesus always has his eye on me
- b. all my needs are met by the Good Shepherd
- c. I have been accepted just the way I am
- d. no thief or stranger can take me away from Christ
- e. others I love will be brought into the fold eventually

5. As a group or family, "count sheep" by listing some of the blessings you have received from the Good Shepherd.

SHEEP 1: _____ SHEEP 6: _____

SHEEP 2: _____ SHEEP 7: _____

SHEEP 3: _____ SHEEP 8: _____

SHEEP 4: _____ SHEEP 9: _____

SHEEP 5: _____ SHEEP 10: _____

REFLECTIONS

- What has convinced you that Jesus is the Messiah?

- What "old ways" of looking at Jesus must you overcome by faith?

- What difference does it make that Jesus is God and not just a man?

- Would the promise of verse 28 mean much otherwise?
