

John 10:1-21

¹ “Truly, truly I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.”

1 The audience knew Jesus was describing a pen in a village. Anyone who tried to sneak into the pen without going through the gate had ulterior motives. They were there to steal the sheep (Ezekiel 34:1-6).

² But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

2,3 The only person allowed through that gate is a shepherd of one of the flocks. The watchman knows the shepherds of the flocks within the enclosure and won't let anyone else in. Watchmen sometimes used the watchtower that gave them an overview of the area so that no one could sneak up on them or the flock (Hebrews 13:20). The sheep listen to the voice of their shepherd because he is the one who guides and protects them in the wilderness. They only know his voice in the wilderness (Psalm 78:52,72). The shepherd goes out in front of the flock leading them to pasture. He knows each one of the sheep. If he gets to the next pasture and one of them is missing, he will know the name of that missing sheep.

⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵ A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.

4,5 You cannot walk up to a flock of sheep and call them away from their shepherd. Even if the shepherd is not there, they won't follow you (1 John 2:19). And forget trying to drive them anywhere. It is like herding cats, unless you have a sheepdog that drives them through fear. Sheep can only be led by someone they know and trust (John 6:37).

⁶ This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

6 Up to this point, the people all probably nodded their heads in agreement because they had observed this picture many times. But what is the prophet trying to say? What is the message? Jesus will clear this up in the next verse.

⁷ So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep.”

7 Jesus has switched from talking about a village pen to the one in the fields. When his is referring to those pens in the fields, the gate and the shepherd are one, for the

shepherd lies down in the entrance of the pen. Is Jesus claiming to be God, the Sovereign Lord who told Israel that they are His flock (Psalm 118:20; Psalm 23:1)? If the picture He just painted is that He is the true shepherd and keeper of the sheep and there are no others, then that is exactly what he is claiming!

⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.

8 Jesus is the only way (John 14:6). All the other Messianic pretenders were not the gate (2 Peter 2:1-3). The corrupt Sanhedrin was not the gate. Many well-meaning Christians refer to other beliefs as good religions. That does not coincide with what Jesus is saying here. Nor is it being intellectually honest.

⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

9 Jesus is laying the exclusive claim that only in Him will we be saved/safe from predators like false thieves and robbers (Numbers 27:15-17). We will also only find pasture in Him. He is the only provision of God that we can have confidence in (Isaiah 49:9-10).

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

10 Jesus makes it clear that any other way leads to death and utter destruction, but then contrasts abundant life in Him in the here and now. A life that is marked by God's divine favor both here and in eternity. Which life do you desire (Isaiah 49:9-10, Ezekiel 34:12-15)?

¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. ¹² He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

11 The false shepherds of this world exploit, kill, steal and destroy, but Jesus is the only good shepherd who did lay down his life for His sheep on the cross (Colossians 1:19-20). Jesus compared all the self-seeking false shepherds to hirelings. He explained that since the sheep don't belong to them, they do not really care about the sheep. If the sheep are threatened, the false shepherd runs from danger. Jesus ran to the danger because we belong to him.

¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep.

14,15 You are valuable to Him. He watches to see that you are nourished and cared for because you are His. He knows you just as He knows the Father (the watchman and shepherd relationship). He has the intimacy with you that He has with the Father. Why? Because He laid down His life for you! There was a lion coming, a beast to devour your soul (1 Peter 5:8). Jesus defeated death and hell for you so that the intimacy you have with Him can continue to grow.

16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.

18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from the Father.

18 He declared that God had given Him the authority to lay down His life and take it up again. He was speaking of His coming death and resurrection. He would lay down His life for us, but He would also rise from death in victory. This was not only a claim, but a prophecy of what was to come.

19 There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. 20 Many of them said, "He has a demon and is insane, why listen to him?" 21 Others said, "These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

19-21 They were again divided over the claims of Jesus. Some believed Him, and others were sure He was evil. How could a human make such claims?

Questions

- 1) What are the two types of pens in Jesus' discourse?
- 2) What is the motivation for coming in some other way than the gate?
- 3) How do sheep know to which flock they belong?
- 4) What are two Old Testament passages that speak of the LORD as our shepherd?
- 5) How can a person be a gate?

- 6) Is Jesus the only way into the pen? Why?
- 7) What is the difference between a hireling and a shepherd?
- 8) What is the shepherd willing to do?
- 9) What were the predictions in the passage?
- 10) What is the motivation of the Good Shepherd? The bad?
- 11) What is the Good Shepherd trying to give us?