

The Gospel of John

Week 21

The Good Shepherd (10.1-21)

1. Introduction and Review

- All information, study notes and related material can be found on the internet at <http://www.rtrc.net/biblestudy/john/john.htm>
- Course Syllabus
- Weekly Outlines (notebook)
- Discussion Forum: <http://www.rtrc.net/forum/> [go to the forum marked "Bible Studies"]
- Audio files are available on the web site

2. Outline for the next two weeks

- This week: 10.1-21 (7th discourse)
- Next week: 10.22-42

3. Introduction to this week's Lesson

- Interpreting allegorical passages. Brief discussion about parables versus allegories. Remember that the gospel of John does not contain any parables. The author employs discourses to convey his thoughts. The very term parable occurs only in the Synoptics and in Hebrews 9.9; 11.19.
- The difference between a parable and an allegory is that an allegory is more like a metaphor while a parable is more like a simile. Therefore, an allegory may be defined as an extended metaphor while a simile can be defined as an extended simile.
- No attempt should be made to explain every trait or feature of the symbols offered unless you have good reason to do so. That is, if the author or historical situation supplies the interpretation it should be noted and considered.

4. Background

- The main or key verse of this section is 10.11
- The main thought: I am the Good Shepherd

- Consideration of this passage in the light of chapter 9. Some observations:
 - Does this chapter introduce a new thought?
 - Does this chapter tie together the thoughts of chapter 9?
 - Jesus' remarks at the close of chapter 9 are aimed at the Pharisees who were both blind and blind guides.
 - No discourse in the gospel record starts with the declaratory words "truly, truly".

- Contextual backdrop: Old Testament Considerations
 - God is the Shepherd of Israel and of individual believers, who are regarded as the sheep – Psalm 23, 80.1, 95.7, Ezekiel 34.15; Psalm 119.76; Isaiah 53.6
 - He is a very good and a very tender hearted and loving shepherd – Isaiah 40.11 cf. 2 Samuel 12.3; Luke 15.3-6
 - There are evil shepherds – Jeremiah 23.1; Ezekiel 34.1-2; Zechariah 11.17
 - Forsaken by the shepherd the sheep become prey of wild beasts, lions, bears and especially wolves – 1 Samuel 17.34-36; 1 Kings 22.17; Zechariah 10.2, 13.7
 - The great Son of David will be the one Shepherd of the reunited remnant – Ezekiel 34.23 (the fulfillment of which lies in John 10)

5. The Allegory (10.1-6)

VERSES 1-3

- The cultural setting is clear. In ancient times (and in some places today) shepherds would lead their flocks into a safe area that was accessible only through a place designated by the shepherd. Thus, this was only one way to get to the sheep – through the door as established by the shepherd.
- The implication is obvious: anyone who enters by a way that is not the shepherd's designated entry point is up to no good.

VERSES 4 – 6

- The sheep follow. Note that. They follow because they know the shepherd. Implication – there is a relationship, to some degree, between the shepherd and the sheep.
- Note also that they do not FOLLOW a stranger. One commentator relates that even in Palestine today the sheep will run away from a stranger, even if dressed like the shepherd because they do not know his voice. Cp 2 John 10

6. The Application to Christ (10.7-18)

Introduction

- This is the point in the passage where Jesus now applies the allegory to Himself. There are two aspects to the allegory that is applied to Jesus:
 - The Door – one way of entrance into salvation
 - The Good Shepherd – the one who cares for the sheep

VERSES 7-9

- Note at the onset that Jesus refers to Himself as the door. This is used metaphorically in other places (Luke 12.24; Acts 14.27; 1 Corinthians 16.9, etc.). Yet this is the only passage in which Jesus Himself is regarded as the Door.
- Verse 8 introduces a contrast between Himself and those that would seek to enter into the sheep fold by another way. This does not refer to the faithful prophets of old but is a direct attack on the religious leaders who have preyed on the people for their own selfish interest and gain.
- Verse 9 – Jesus repeats the statement “I am the Door” interestingly “... of the sheep” is left out of this statement. The stress here is on His function as the door. Just as in the allegory, there was one way in and out of the fold so is there in Christ – He is the way to eternal life.

VERSE 10

- Verse 10 again revisits the idea of contrast between the Lord Jesus and the religious leaders of the day.

VERSES 11 - 18

- I am the Good Shepherd statement is now introduced. Note the characteristics of the Good Shepherd.
 - Lays down his life for the sheep - verse 11
 - Knows His own (and sheep know Him) - verse 14
 - Has other sheep - verse 16
- Discuss the aspects of a shepherd from Scripture:
 - Genesis 48.15 – blessing of Israel
 - Numbers 27.17 – appointment of Joshua
 - Jeremiah 17.6 – love and concern for his people
 - Matthew 2.6 – Jesus as Shepherd
 - Matthew 9.36 – compassion and love for the sheep
 - Hebrews 13.20 – Jesus, as the Great Shepherd of the sheep
 - 1 Peter 5.2 – Exhortation to shepherd the flock given to the Elders of the Church
- Discuss the aspects of sheep from Scripture:
 - Psalm 95.7 – sheep are shepherded by God
 - Isaiah 53.6 – sheep tend to wander
 - Ezekiel 34.8 – sheep require a shepherd to protect them
 - Ezekiel 34. 11, 12 – God seeks out the sheep
 - John 21 – Shepherds love the sheep

7. Applications

- Jesus is the Great Shepherd of our souls but he has not left us without a visible shepherd in the Church. We have been given Elders to shepherd our lives and we are to submit to their lead and follow them. There is a serious problem in the Church today about submission to authority that stems, by and large, because there is a gross misunderstanding of what the Church is and what authority it has in our lives. Scripture plainly teaches us to submit to our God appointed “under-shepherds” of God’s flock:

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Hebrews 13.17)

- Elders must know their sheep. This is not an optional aspect of shepherding the flock of God. In order to rightly shepherd an elder must be willing to develop a meaningful relationship with those sheep he has been charged to shepherd. In our lesson we saw that

the sheep followed the Shepherd because they knew him. They knew his voice and followed him based on their knowledge of him.