

I. Introduction

- A. One of the differences between the true and living God and the gods of the world, is that of caring.
- B. The gods of Hindu do not care; the gods of the Buddhist do not care; the god of Islam, Mormonism, Christian Science, Roman Catholicism, and the cults do not care.
1. They, instead, compel people to continually hurt themselves, push themselves, drive themselves, to one day, hopefully, appease them.
 2. It hurts, is harsh, and is never really good enough.
 3. Their “gods” do nothing in return.
- C. However, the nature and heart of our God is love.
1. Not a love of sinful expectation and a drive to perform.
 2. But a love that causes one to do what is pleasing to His good heart.
 3. Even in his severity God is fair.
 - a) He is not the one at fault.
 - b) He is not the one proven to be evil.
 - c) We are.
 - d) The fact that we live compels us to see his kindness:
 - e) Exodus 20:4-7
- D. Our God, in heart, is the very definition of love.
1. His glory, His honor, and His own brilliance, are all holy and without sin.
 2. Yet, His love and compassion and mercy temper what would otherwise be eternal devastation, even for the elect.
- E. In short, God is a Shepherd.
1. Hebrew 13:20-21
 2. 1 Peter 2:21-25
- F. Today, we will begin to open up John 10.
1. You will see what makes Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd.
 2. You will see why the sheep of God follow Him.
 3. You will see why those who try to enter the sheepfold, reserved only for sheep, are only there to attack the sheep and kill the shepherd; you must avoid them.

The Parable of the Shepherd – pt.1 John 10:1-5

- G. Three parables to set the theological stage:
1. Luke 15:11-32 -> the proximity to the Father.
 2. Matthew 21:33-39 -> the proximity to the inheritance.
 3. Matthew 22:1-14 -> the proximity to the wedding celebration.
- H. All of these parables teach:
1. Only certain people enter:
 - a) Into relationship to the father.
 - b) Into an inheritance.
 - c) Into the celebration.
 2. Others:
 - a) Are far from the father.
 - b) Do not receive the inheritance.
 - c) Are cast out of the celebration.
- I. We will find that the categories of one and the other are respectively:
1. Sheep
 2. Goats

II. v. 1 "Truly, truly I say to you, the one not coming through the door into the pen of the sheep, but rather this one, while coming up another way, is a thief and a robber."

- A. Why did Jesus say this?
1. Speaking to Pharisees who had witnessed the healing of the blind man.
 2. Speaking in the hearing of the blind man.
- B. Who are the characters in this parable and what is their significance?
- a) *"He who does not enter the fold of the sheep..." v.1*
 - b) *"He who enters by the door..." v.2*
 - c) *"Sheep" vv. 1,2,3,4,7,8,11,12,13,15,16 (not including pronominal usage).*
 - d) *"doorkeeper..." v.3*
- C. What is the focus?
- a) *The sheepfold.*
 - b) *This is the central point.*
 - c) *Everything revolves around either getting into, or remaining out of, this sheepfold.*
 - d) *It is a place of safety and care.*
- D. The main thought:

➤ "The sheepfold is for sheep."

III. v. 2 "But, the one coming into (the sheepfold) through the door is a shepherd of the sheep."

A. The description of the shepherd is one who comes into the sheepfold through the appropriate means-the door.

1. The idea here is that there is no need to come in any other way because there is no need to hide.

- a) *His sheep know him.*
- b) *His servant, the doorkeeper, knows him.*
- c) *He has good intentions for the sheep.*

2. What is a "shepherd"?

- Hebrew: רֹעֵה
- Greek: ποιμήν

a) *This word means "to feed a flock, to pasture, to tend."¹*

b) *A shepherd, obviously, is one who pastures sheep.*

(1) There are nuances of significance in the society of ancient Israel/Middle East that make this title significant.

(a) First, the title of "shepherd" was built upon the idea of one who managed livestock.

(i) *The first shepherd in the Bible was God, as the owner of the sheep, he was free to slaughter one (or two) in order to clothe Adam and Eve-Genesis 3:21.*

(ii) *The first shepherd apart from that very real occupation of God, which we will see, is Abel (Genesis 4:2).*

- "flock" = a group of small livestock animals (Genesis 4:2).

- "herd" = a group of larger livestock animals (Genesis 12:16; 13:5; cf. Genesis 24:34-35 "flocks and herds" = they are different).

(iii) *Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, were shepherds.*

(iv) *The main occupation of Israel was shepherding (Genesis 46:31-34).*

(a) Second, the title of Shepherd was slowly developed in Scripture and would become a picture of the work of God.

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(v) Genesis 49:24

(vi) Genesis 48:15

15 He blessed Joseph, and said,
 “The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,
 The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,

(b) Third, the concept of shepherd was summarized in the work of the ruler of Israel.

(i) This was the description given to Joshua-Numbers 27:15-23.

(ii) And, given that description of "leading out and bringing in," it is clear that Moses himself was viewed as a shepherd of God's people, Israel.

(2) However, as we enter into the culture of the day of Christ, the shepherd was no longer valued, but despised.

a. In a Rabb. list of thieving and cheating occupations we find that of the shepherd. 38 This classification of herds as notorious robbers and cheats means that like the publicans and tax-gatherers they were deprived of civil rights, i.e., they could not fulfil a judicial V 6, p 489 office or be admitted in court as witnesses. This discrimination against shepherds on the part of Pharisaic Rabbinitism is best understood if one realises that the independence of the shepherd, who during the summer was on the move with the flock for months at a time with no supervision (→ 486, 5 ff.), constituted a serious temptation to steal some of the increase of the flock. It is worth noting that to buy wool, milk, or a kid from a shepherd was forbidden on the assumption that it would be stolen property. The Rabb. ask with amazement how, in view of the despicable nature of shepherds, one is to explain the fact that God is called “my shepherd” in Ps. 23:1.1.¹

(2) Therefore, in the minds of the leadership of Israel, themselves "shepherds," shepherds were despicable and the lowest of the social structure—a forced relationship existed with them because of the livestock they provided for their religious sacrifices.

3. Now, as we saw, God Himself was considered a shepherd.

a) This work of God became the basis or the metaphor for a leader of people.

(1) This even was the case in the pagan world:

Already on Sumerian royal inscr. the king (from Lugal-zaggisi) is described as the shepherd appointed by deity. In Babylonian and Assyrian rê’û (“shepherd”) is a common epithet for rulers and the verb re’û (“to pasture”) is a common figure of speech for “to rule.” Courtly style honours the king with this title, which is combined with a whole number of recurrent attributes; on inscr. the king also uses it of himself as the one divinely chosen to bring salvation. Gathering the dispersed, righteous government and

¹ Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 488–489.

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care for the weak are marks of the shepherd function of the ruler. Gods, too, bear the title of shepherd.8 In Egypt the image of the ruler of the world to come (usually Osiris or the dead king as Osiris), who, as a herd tends his flock, protects his subjects (as stars), is already common in the royal funerary (or pyramid) texts of the ancient kingdom, e.g., "thou hast taken them up in thine arms as a herd his calves,"10 or the god of the underworld is said to be "thy herd who is behind thy calves." From the early Middle Kingdom (in the first interim period) the image of the king as the shepherd of his subjects is then a favourite one in literature; he is, e.g., a "herd for all the people" or the "herd who watches over his subjects."12 The same metaphor is used for the gods; thus Amun is "the strong drover who guards his cattle" (hymn of the 18th dynasty). Similarly, it is said of men as subjects: "Men are well cared for, the cattle V 6, p 487 of God," or: "Let us crown a king, for we are a herd of oxen without a herd." 15 Thus far there is no attestation of the transf. use of the title in Canaan.²

b) *Therefore, when a Moses, or Joshua, would be called a "shepherd," the idea is that they would lead and tend to the care of the flock, the flock of God.*

(1) They were not owners.

(2) They could not use the flock for their own purposes.

(3) They had to lead them according to the standards of God Himself.

4. To understand this, look at Psalm 23.

cf. Psalm 78:52–53

52 But He led forth His own people like sheep
And guided them in the wilderness like a flock;
53 He led them safely, so that they did not fear;
But the sea engulfed their enemies.

Psalm 28:9

9 Save Your people and bless Your inheritance;
Be their shepherd also, and carry them forever.

Deuteronomy 1:31–32

31 and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, just as a man carries his son, in all the way which you have walked until you came to this place.'

32 "But for all this, you did not trust the LORD your God,

➤ Isaiah 40:11

a) *Here is the work of the shepherd, God.*

b) *Also, here is the work of the true shepherd:*

Amos 3:12

12 Thus says the LORD,

"Just as the shepherd snatches from the lion's mouth a couple of legs or a piece of an ear,
So will the sons of Israel dwelling in Samaria be snatched away—
With *the* corner of a bed and *the* cover of a couch!

c) *However, look at the state of the shepherds of Israel in the centuries prior to Messiah:*

² Ibid. 486–487.

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Jeremiah 23:1–2

1 “Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!” declares the LORD.

2 Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: “You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,” declares the LORD.

➤ see especially:
Is 56:9–12; Jer 10:21; 50:6 .

d) *And yet, all of this is the work of the Great Shepherd, God:*

Zechariah 11:15–17

15 The LORD said to me, “Take again for yourself the equipment of a foolish shepherd.

16 “For behold, I am going to raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for the perishing, seek the scattered, heal the broken, or sustain the one standing, but will devour the flesh of the fat *sheep* and tear off their hoofs.

17 “Woe to the worthless shepherd
Who leaves the flock!
A sword will be on his arm
And on his right eye!
His arm will be totally withered
And his right eye will be blind.”

IV. v. 3 "The doorkeeper opens to this one, and the sheep hear his sound/voice, and he calls/sounds (out) his own sheep according to name, and he leads them."

A. Given the descriptions we just learned, this makes sense!

B. The picture is that of the owner of the sheep, the shepherd, coming to care, tend, "carry," the sheep that he owns:

➤ See the relationship here:

- The sheep recognize the sound of the voice of their owner.
- The shepherd has named them, and taught them their names.
- The sheep respond without hesitation.
- The shepherd "leads" them; goes in front of them to feed.

➤ This is the love and care that the shepherd has for the sheep.

➤ This is the loving look the sheep give to the shepherd.

➤ This is the heart of the true shepherd who knows the needs of the sheep and when they need it.

V. v. 4 "Whenever all his own (sheep) are sent out/cast out, he himself goes before/in front (of them), and the sheep follow him, because they know his sound."

A. The picture is that once all the sheep are out of the pen (because if you stay in the pen, you do not get to the food and water), he then gets in front of them and directs them FROM THE FRONT.

1. This is what is known as leadership.

a) *He leads.*

b) *He does not drive.*

2. The sheep follow because they instinctively know, by familiarity, the sound of the voice of the shepherd who cares for them.

B. Notice the point Jesus is making: the sheep recognize the sound of the voice as well as the very name he gave to them.

Therefore, the point is that sheep listen to the true shepherd.

VI. Conclusion

Next week we will be introduced to the alternative, the false shepherd.