

The Glory of Christ: Lessons from John's Gospel "I Am the Good Shepherd"

1. Introduction.

- a) *Scripture gives us many images/pictures/metaphors to speak of God's relation to his people.* E.g. Potter – clay; Father – children; Bridegroom – Bride. In our text, we see another one: Shepherd – sheep. This last image is found repeatedly in Scripture (=e.g. Psalm 80:1; Isaiah 40:10ff; Psalm 23; John 10 – Jesus as the 'Good Shepherd').
- b) *The Shepherd – sheep imagery has also been found in church history.*
- c) *Why has this imagery been so precious throughout the years?* Here are some reasons.
- d) *However, even as familiar as the image of Shepherd-sheep is to us, one of the problems we face when we come to John 10 is we forget that images/pictures/metaphors are tied to particular cultures, and that they can change over time.* Let's think about this.
 - i) What images come to mind when you hear – Shepherd/sheep?
 - ii) In the 1st century, there is a specific understanding of this imagery. Examples.
- e) *One further observation before we turn to John 10.*
 - i) John 10 is *not* a 'narrative parable'. *Examples of narrative parables* (e.g. Good Samaritan; Parable of the Sower; Parable of the Wheat and Tares).
 - ii) Rather it is an '*extended parable*' of a number of sheep/shepherd imagery/metaphors. You will see that this is important to remember as we move through the text.
- f) *With all of this in mind, let's look at our text.* 4 points to stress about Jesus and his relation to his people:
 - i) As the 'Good Shepherd,' our Lord knows his own people intimately (vv 1-6).
 - ii) As the 'Good Shepherd,' our Lord nurtures/cares for his own people (vv 7-10).
 - iii) As the 'Good Shepherd,' our Lord substitutes his life for his people (vv 11-18).
 - iv) As the 'Good Shepherd,' our Lord saves his own; confronts/judges others (vv 19-42).

2. 1st: As the Good Shepherd, our Lord knows his own People Intimately (vv 1-6).

- a) *Cultural context and background setting.*

- b) *What is Jesus saying? What is the meaning of these verses?*
- i) *V 6* – makes it clear that the hearers did *not* understand what he was saying. But given our knowledge of this chapter, John’s gospel, the NT, and the entire Bible, it is quite clear what he is saying. *But to understand it properly, we must first go back to OT.* It is *not* as if ‘shepherd-sheep’ imagery is foreign to these people.
 - a) God is not only presented as the shepherd of his people.
 - b) Religious leaders (=under-shepherds) are also presented as shepherds.
 - c) For most part we identify the ‘religious leaders’ with Prophets/Priests/Kings.
 - d) When these under-shepherds *do* their job people are protected and fed. But when they do *not* do their job... the opposite takes place (=which is what sadly happens in the history of Israel). *Examples* (=Isaiah 56:9-12; Jeremiah 23:1-4).
 - ii) *Probably the most important text to understand what is going on here is Ezekiel 34.* Let us spend some time looking at this passage.
 - a) *Vv 1-6* (=message of judgment).
 - b) *Vv 7-16.* (=message of promise).
 - c) *Vv 17-22* (=separation/judgment of the flock).
 - d) *Vv 23-31* (=promise of the David-Shepherd-King and the New Covenant).
 - iii) *Given this OT background, the meaning of these verses now becomes clear.*
 - a) *Thieves/robbers* = religious leaders. See the context of John 10.
 - b) *Who are the sheep in the pen?* In this context it is a reference to Judaism.
 - c) *In addition, there is an incredible ‘identity’ claim Jesus makes as well.* Jesus is *not only* claiming to be the Messiah. He is also identifying himself *as the Lord of the OT* (=see John 1:1-18; cf. 8:58). He is the One who fulfills Ezekiel 34, who ushers in the New Covenant age!
 - iv) *Application Points.*

3. **2nd: As the Good Shepherd, our Lord Nurtures/Cares for his own People (vv 7-10).**
- a) *Here is where some people fail to recognize that Jn 10 is not a narrative parable.*
 - i) Instead, it is an extended ‘parable’ of a number of sheep/shepherd imagery/metaphors. It is *not* attempting to explain the previous verses – instead it’s develops it in a different way. This is why the imagery/picture changes. There is no watchman in this picture. Jesus is *not* the Shepherd who goes through the gate, *but now he is the gate.* In the 1st century, this would have been easily understood.
 - ii) There is also a probable allusion to Numbers 27:15-17.

b) *What is the point? Meaning? The point is quite simple. It is akin to John 14:6.*

c) *Application Points.*

4. **3rd: As the Good Shepherd, our Lord Substitutes his Life for his People (vv 11-18).**

a) *In this context, this is quite a remarkable statement. Let me explain.*

b) *Also note the language used to describe his death.*

i) Language used here (=‘for us’) = sacrificial, substitutionary imagery.

ii) Jesus’ laying down of his life is *not* merely exemplary; *He dies as the substitute.*
He is no martyr; he has all-authority (see vv 14-15, 17-18).

iii) *Point?* Apart from him and his cross, there is no life and salvation. Nothing!

c) *Who is v 16 referring to?* This has to be a reference to Gentiles.

i) Here is the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy.

ii) ‘One flock and one shepherd’ = later developed in terms of the church (=Eph 2).
Church = new humanity, one people of God, under one Shepherd.

d) *Before we leave this section, one other point needs to be made – intentionality of his death, which is the basis for affirming ‘particular redemption.’ Let’s think about this.*

e) *Application Points.*

5. **4th: As the Good Shepherd, our Lord saves his own, but Confronts/Judges those who are not his own (vv 19-42).**

6. **Concluding Reflections.**