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The Sermons of Jesus Christ: The Good Shepherd Sermon

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THE SERMONS OF JESUS

THE GOOD SHEPHERD SERMON (Jn. 10:1-39)

Introduction:

On three occasions in the New Testament Jesus is described as a shepherd:

The author of Hebrews calls Him the Great Shepherd (Heb. 13:20). This corresponds to Psalm 23.

The Apostle Peter refers to Him as the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4). This corresponds to Psalm 24.

The Savior in this sermon describes Himself as the Good Shepherd. This corresponds to Psalm 23.

We are told in John 10:22 that Jesus preached this sermon during the Feast of Dedication, also called the Feast of Lights. This was not an Old Testament feast. It came to be observed after the close of the Old Testament Canon. It commemorated the purifying of the temple after its defilement by the Syrians under Antiochus Epiphanes. The feast began on the 25th of Chisleu, which in A.D. 29 was the same as our December 20. It lasted for eight days, the length of time Judas Maccabaeus, the deliverer of the city, took in purifying it. It came to be called the Feast of Lights because the city of Jerusalem was brightly illuminated for its observance.

In this sermon we have described for us the characteristics of the following individuals or groups:

Characteristics of the shepherd

Characteristics of the sheep

Characteristics of thieves and robbers

Characteristics of the hierarchy

Characteristics of goats

• Characteristics of the Shepherd

- A. He does things the right way — *“But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep”* (John 10:2).
- B. He is recognized by the porter — *“To him the porter openeth”* (John 10:3). (Note: The porter referred to here may possibly be the Holy Spirit.)
- C. He knows His sheep (John 10:3, 14, 27) — *“He calleth his own sheep by name”* (John 10:3).

Paul the apostle amplified upon this in a later epistle: *“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity”* (2 Tim. 2:19).

- D. He is known by His sheep (John 10:4, 14, 27)—“*The sheep follow him: for they know his voice*” (John 10:4).
- E. He leads His sheep (John 10:3).
- F. He is the only true Shepherd—“*All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them*” (John 10:8).
- G. He lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:17-18)—“*I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep*” (John 10:11).

In the Old Testament the sheep died for the shepherd. In the New Testament the Shepherd will die for the sheep. Homer Kent wrote:

Many shepherds died while defending their flocks. There were knives and clubs of robbers to be faced, as well as the attacks of wild animals. In their cases, however, death was always unintended. Christ, on the other hand, was also to die for his sheep in order to save them, but he was going to do so voluntarily. He would ‘give his life.’ His sheep were in danger of the greatest kind. ‘*All we like sheep have gone astray*’ (Isa. 53:6). Jesus was thus predicting his own death, which would occur the following spring. (*Light in the Darkness*, p. 140)

- H. He takes up His life for the sheep (John 10:17-18)—“*No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father*” (John 10:18).
- I. He imparts life to the sheep (John 10:9-10)—“*I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture*” (John 10:9).
“*I am come that they might have life*” (John 10:10).
- J. He imparts abundant life to the sheep—“*And that they might have it more abundantly*” (John 10:10).
- K. He imparts eternal life to the sheep—“*And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand*” (John 10:28-29).

Note the “life” and “abundant life” phrases here:

The first (life) speaks of that peace *with God* in Romans 5:1.

The second (abundant life) refers to that peace *of God* in Philippians 4:7.

The phrase “no man” is not found in the Greek text. It reads rather, “No thing.” In other words, not even the believer himself can remove himself from the Father’s hand. Paul later built a marvelous case for this. (See Rom. 8:33-39.)

- L. He is approved by the Father (John 10:15).

- M. He is loved by the Father (John 10:17).
- N. He is authorized by the Father (John 10:18).
- O. He is one with the Father (John 10:30, 38).
- P. He is the Son of the Father (John 10:36).

- **Characteristics of the sheep**

- A. They will not follow strangers (John 10:5, 8)—*“And a stranger will they not follow; but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers”* (John 10:5).
- B. They are totally dependent upon the shepherd (John 10:12). They share the same fold with other sheep—*“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd”* (John 10:16).

Here is a reference to the Church. Our Lord had already promised it and would soon pray for it.

1. The promise—

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18).

2. The prayer—

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:20-21).

- **Characteristics of thieves and robbers** (John 10:1, 8, 10)

- A. Their words are evil—

“All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them” (John 10:8).

- B. Their works are evil—

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:1, 10).

It was at the dawn of human history when the first thief (Cain) killed the first sheep (Abel).

- **Characteristics of the hireling** (John 10:12-13)

- A. He is unconcerned.

B. He is unprotective—

“But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep” (John 10:12-13).

- **Characteristics of the goats (John 10:19-20, 31-39)**

A. They deny the claims of the Shepherd (John 10:38)—

“The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God” (John 10:33).

B. They accuse the Shepherd of demon possession—

“And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?” (John 10:20).

C. They accuse the Shepherd of blasphemy (John 10:33, 36).

They attempt to kill him—

“Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him . . . Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand” (John 10:31, 39).