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Shepherds and Hirelings in John 10: An Intertestamental Correction

Abstract

This article will examine the Good Shepherd discourse attempting to analyze whether the Pharisees were in purview as false-shepherds as commonly assumed and finding that interpretation lacking. Given the events of inter-testamental history, septuagintal usage of μισθωτὸς, and the setting of the discourse occurring during the feast of dedication, this article will find that Jesus is drawing a contrast between the foreign false-shepherds found in the political rulers, as well as the hireling pharisee and himself as the true shepherds. Through a careful reading of the text, it becomes apparent that Jesus is not solely disappointed in the Pharisees actions, but that he is also offering a kingdom that contrasts to the foreign oppression that Israel had been subjected to for centuries by the political powers of the day. This slight nuance will aid the exegete in finding the root cause of the Pharisees eventual rejection of Jesus, as they seek to preserve their own office, abandoning the sheep by conspiring with the false-shepherds to kill the Good Shepherd in the remaining narrative of the Gospel.

Keywords

Shepherd, Hirelings, Good Shepherd, Johannine, Inter-testamental, Feast of Dedication, John 10

Cover Page Footnote

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Introduction

In John 10, Jesus' conflict with the religious leaders of Israel comes to a climax. While many have sought to see the parable of the Good Shepherd as an indictment upon the religious leaders as false shepherds, this interpretation is flawed.¹ This study will seek to show how intertextual allusions and intertestamental historical and literary context identifies the shepherd metaphor as an allusion to Kingship, and therefore Jesus is contrasting himself to the civic rulers of Israel, past and present. The religious leaders, by contrast, are identified as hirelings, those who have a rightful presence within the sheepfold but prove to be irresponsible in relationship to the sheep. This interpretation is further validated by John's description of the Jew's rejection of Christ in the subsequent narrative because of similarities between Christ's claim as God to that of Antiochus IV. By examining the text for intertextual allusions, recognizing the literary setting of the speech immediately preceding the feast of dedication (Hannukah), and observing the Jewish response to this speech, it will become evident that (1) Jesus identifies himself as the proper King of Israel since He is equal to יהוה and the Son of David, (2) that the previous foreign shepherds of Israel have done immeasurable harm to the sheep, (3) that Jesus' rule was rejected by the hirelings because of the danger this posed for them personally, and (4) that only those who respond to Jesus' voice prove to be God's sheep. This paper will begin with an analysis of contextual considerations, giving special attention to the identification of John's opponents, the Jews, shepherd imagery in general, and intertestamental messianic expectations. After the contextual considerations have been discussed, the paper will turn to exegetical analysis with special attention to the intertextual allusions and the influence of the succeeding narrative upon the author's intended argument. In conclusion, this paper will show how Jesus proves his identity as King of Israel, the religious leaders as hirelings to be distrusted, and how proper response to Jesus delineates the sheep of God's pasture.

Contextual Considerations

Literary

The book self-attests authorship by "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:20). Irenaeus asserts Apostolic Johannine authorship, and internal evidence

¹ Murray J. Harris, *Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2015), Kindle Edition, Loc. 6443

agrees.² The date of John's writing seems to be somewhere after A.D. 80 (after Timothy's Ephesian ministry and before John's exile to Patmos).³ The Gospel's predominant narrative setting is Jerusalem, though literary provenance according to Irenaeus would be Diaspora Ephesus. Various details of the Israelite cult, Samaritan relations, and Qumranic thought found within John seem to indicate an informed Jewish audience, though a gnostic polemic in John is also present (admittedly not a typical Jewish problem).⁴ A broad diaspora audience is the most satisfying explanation for the diversity of evidence.⁵ Assuming an Ephesian provenance, for the Ephesian church, one can now posit the identity of John's opponents.

Ephesus was a Pauline church, entrusted to the care of Timothy (Acts 16; 1 Tim. 1) with clear opposition from "Judaizers" (see particularly Paul's instructions to Timothy in 1 Tim. 1:6-7).⁶ John is historically reckoned as Timothy's replacement as the head elder of the Ephesian church until his death.⁷ The individual history of this particular church can explain John's supposed anti-Jewish rhetoric, which would have served to establish new boundary markers for the Johannine Community, preventing intrusion by Judaizing opponents.⁸ Furthermore, John's various personal interactions with the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem (e.g., the rejection and crucifixion of Christ, assent to the martyrdom of

² D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), Kindle Edition, Loc. 5483.

³ *Ibid.*, Loc. 6038.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Loc. 5853.

⁵ Edward W. Klink, *John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 65.

⁶ George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 53.

⁷ Ignatius of Antioch, "The Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 54, who notes that "The Christians of Ephesus, who have always had intercourse with the apostles by the power of Jesus Christ, with Paul, and John, and Timothy the most faithful." See also Irenaeus of Lyons, "Irenæus against Heresies," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 416, who states, "Then, again, the Church in Ephesus, founded by Paul, and having John remaining among them permanently until the times of Trajan, is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles." See also Carl Clemen, "The Sojourn of the Apostle John at Ephesus," *The American Journal of Theology* 9, no. 4 (October 1905): 643-676, <https://doi.org/10.1086/478566>, argues that it is at least feasible.

⁸ Raimo Hakola, *Identity Matters: John, the Jews, and Jewishness* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 232-234, argues convincingly that John's Gospel seeks to develop an autonomous Christian religion. However, by examining the historical context of the Ephesian heresies, combated in Paul and Timothy's ministry, it becomes at least plausible if not convincing, that the reason for self-identification was to draw new boundaries for the Christian community at Ephesus which had long been plagued by the Judaizers so common to Pauline studies, and that John was drawing a line to expel those who failed to accept the new boundaries which are established in this Gospel.

John's brother James, the beatings and imprisonment that he suffered alongside Peter at the hands of Jewish leadership) would explain that John's interactions with Jews would be justifiably ambivalent before his arrival in Ephesus and sufficiently explain his rhetorical treatment within the Gospel.

Structure

John's book divides neatly into two major parts, bracketed by a prologue and an epilogue.⁹ The section at hand falls into "The book of signs," though, as noted by multiple commentators, all of John points to signs.¹⁰ John structures the book of signs around major festivals.¹¹ The Passover was a time to celebrate the birth of Israel as a nation through the Exodus from Egypt.¹² The literary structure of the feasts is particularly significant since it also invokes historical contextual considerations. The passage at hand also falls within the context of a festal holiday, though not the Passover. John 10 occurs in the immediate context of the feast of dedication (John 10:22). Murray J. Harris describes the feast stating that "The eight-day Feast of Dedication or the Festival of Reconsecration (now celebrated as Hanukkah or the Feast of Lights) began on the 25th of the month of Kislev (= December 14) and celebrated the purification of the Temple in 164 BC after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes."¹³ By structuring the literary work around festivals that celebrate the deliverance of Israel from foreign oppression, John seemingly seeks to show a liberation for God's people through Christ's work.¹⁴ Furthermore, these festivals are unequivocally a political deliverance, by which the Israelites are freed from foreign oppression, consistent with the messianic expectations common during the second temple period (STP), which will be addressed below. In light of this literary structuring, it is important to recognize the particular importance of political imagery in John, which is

⁹ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 103.

¹⁰ Gerry Wheaton, *The Role of Jewish Feasts in John's Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2015), 2.

¹¹ Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1–11*, The New American Commentary 25A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 95–97.

¹² John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 259.

¹³ Murray J. Harris, *Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2015), Kindle Edition, Loc. 6630-6632.

¹⁴ Warren Carter, "Festivals, Cultural Intertextuality, and the Gospel of John's Rhetoric of Distance," *HTS Theologisches Studien / Theological Studies* 67, no. 1 (April 11, 2011): 6, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v67i1.802>.

consistent with ANE imagery throughout the ancient literature by its dependence upon the sheep/shepherd metaphor.

Shepherd Imagery

Shepherd as King Imagery in ANE

Shepherd imagery was common stock for kings in the ANE. In Egypt, the "'Good Shepherd' was a metaphor representing the king in the middle kingdom and an image of a god in the new kingdom."¹⁵ In Hammurabi's law code, the king's understanding and self-identification as a shepherd is found when it states, "I am indeed the shepherd who brings peace, whose scepter is just. My benevolent shade was spread over my city, I held the people of the lands of Sumer and Akkad safely on my lap."¹⁶ Such imagery was common in Sumerian and Akkadian literature as well.¹⁷ This leads Marc Van de Meiroop to assess the metaphor, succinctly stating that "The king was a shepherd and a farmer. He had to take care of his people, providing them with fields for their sustenance and making these fields fertile through irrigation projects. The people expected such a level of concern from him."¹⁸

Shepherd as King Imagery in OT

Shepherd imagery in the OT is consistent with the ANE usage, whereby "shepherds were . . . providers, guides, protectors and constant companions of sheep. They were also figures of authority and leadership to the animals under their care."¹⁹ It was natural to see the Shepherd metaphor used for any leader in the OT society, whether Moses, Aaron (Ps. 77:20), Joshua (Num. 27:17), David (Ps. 78:70-72), or Amos (Am. 7:15) and numerous other examples. However, it was particularly the King, and ideally the Davidic King, who would be recognized as the under shepherd of God's people (Ez. 34:23; Is. 44:28), and יהוה himself as the chief shepherd (Ps. 23; Is. 40:11; Gen. 49:24, etc.). Andreas Köstenberger

¹⁵ Jørn Varhaug, "The Decline of the Shepherd Metaphor as Royal Self-Expression," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 33, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 16-23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09018328.2019.1599623>.

¹⁶ Marc Van de Mierop, *A History of the Ancient Near East, Ca. 3000-323 BC* (Chichester: John Wiley, 2016), 121.

¹⁷ James B. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011); see "Sumerian Inana and the King," 408; "The Akkadian Enuma Elish" tablet 6, 35; and the Sumerian, "The Curse of Agade," 417.

¹⁸ Van de Mierop, *A History of the Ancient Near East*, 120-121.

¹⁹ Leland Ryken et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 782.

describes the Davidic ideal, noting that "David, who was a shepherd before he became king, became a prototype of God's shepherd. Jesus saw himself as embodying the characteristics and expectations attached to this salvation-historical biblical figure as the Good Shepherd par excellence."²⁰ Though it is proper to acknowledge that the Pharisees could be viewed as shepherds in the context of the Old Testament, their role would be subjugated to that of the political shepherd. The political shepherd exercised the primary shepherding role, while Pharisees would be more appropriately viewed as under-shepherds or hirelings.²¹

Shepherd as King Imagery in Intertestamental Lit.

Throughout the intertestamental period, it was frequent to expound upon Shepherd imagery in relation to kingship since "Young David, first shepherd, then king, literally risked his life for his sheep" and the true kings of Israel would come from the Davidic line. In theory, that king would also need to be a warrior capable of delivering them from false shepherd kings.²² It was in reference to David's victorious battle exploits that Sirach employs the shepherd metaphor as he equates the lion's and bears to goats and lambs (Sir. 47:3-4). Philo, a contemporary of Jesus, continued such traditions when "Philo speaks of a 'good' (*agathos*) shepherd (*Agriculture* 44, 49) and applies "shepherd" terminology not only to kings and sages but also to both God and his firstborn Son or Word."²³ In *On Husbandry* (*On Agriculture* dependent upon translation), Philo states, "Yes; there is the shepherd and the rearer of cattle. The organs of the body are the cattle of

²⁰ Andreas J. Köstenberger, "John," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 462.

²¹ Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi* (Dallas, TX: Word Incorporated, 1984), 269-270, Commenting on Zech 11, Ralph Smith notes that, "Yahweh commands the prophet to assume the role of the shepherd of the flock (political leader of the people) in v 4, because the present shepherds (leaders) buy and sell the people with impunity (v 5). However, Yahweh has already determined that the flock is doomed to be slaughtered (vv 4, 6)." Smith then goes on to note multiple suggestions which include, "Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians; Persians, Greeks, and Romans." Given the historical context as post-exilic books, as well as Prophetic discussions on the Babylonian and Persian Kings as shepherds, messiahs and servants (Is. 44:23-45:8 for Cyrus as Shepherd, Eze. 29:8-12) this article will accept the idea of these political shepherds being the Persians, Greeks and an unknown future kingdom (inferred from Daniel's referent in Dan 2 and Dan 7, whom later history and John's readership would later identify as Rome) as the referents in Zechariah 11, and therefore the Pharisees would represent under-shepherds and not lead shepherds appointed by God.

²² Köstenberger, "John," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 463.

²³ *Ibid.*

each one of us. A careless Mind is unfit to guard them; it will not check excess, or exercise needful discipline. These things a shepherd will do. So honourable is his calling that poets call kings' shepherds,' and Moses gives this title to the wise, the real kings."²⁴ Moses must first be remembered as the deliverer from Pharaoh before Law-giver in Israel. The shepherd entailed the right to rule through deliverance and the ability to rule through justice.²⁵ In the Psalms of Solomon, there is hope for the destruction of the lawless nations (17:27 LES), and the cleansing of Jerusalem from the Nations which were trampling the city underfoot (17:25-26 LES). Speaking of the Holy People corporately, the author says that the LORD himself is their King (17:38) and then describes what the reign of God would look like. Speaking of the people of Israel in the singular, the author writes, "And his hope in the Lord will not be weak; and who will be strong against him? Strong in his works and mighty in the fear of God, shepherding the flock of the Lord in faithfulness and righteousness, and he will not permit *any* among them to be weak in their pasture."²⁶ Shepherds are those whom God has given the role of king among his people, though God himself is the ultimate shepherd of Israel; this was clear in the Old Testament, and carried on in the inter-testamental period. However, it was in the second temple period (biblically speaking) and the intertestamental period (literarily speaking) that the people began to look for an eschatological day when the LORD would rule over them as Shepherd removing foreign rule. This would have drastic implications for the historical situation during the Gospel's narrated setting.

Historical

The Old Testament canon concludes during the Persian rule and the New Testament resumes during the rule of the Roman empire. During this time frame, the nation of Israel was a political pawn and a frequent war zone, and this political history is critical to understanding the socio-political cultural milieu in which the

²⁴ Philo, *Philo*, trans. F. H. Colson, G. H. Whitaker, and J. W. Earp, vol. 3 of *The Loeb Classical Library* (London; England; Cambridge, MA: William Heinemann Ltd; Harvard University Press, 1929–1962), 104–105.

²⁵ Iain W. Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 279–280, who notes that “The process by which leaders in early Israel came to power seems to have entailed three stages: designation, demonstration, and confirmation. The process would look something like this. First, an individual would be designated by some means for a particular leadership role. Next, the new designee would be expected to demonstrate his status and his prowess by engaging in some feat of arms or military action. Finally, having thus distinguished himself and come to public attention, the designee would be confirmed in his leadership office.”

²⁶ Rick Brannan, Ken M. Penner, et al., eds., *The Lexham English Septuagint* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), Ps Sol 17:44–45.

Gospel narrative occurred. With the decree of Cyrus, historically attested through archaeological findings as having occurred in 539 B.C., Nehemiah and Ezra led a revival restoring Jewish boundary markers in Jerusalem.²⁷ Persian rule continued until the fourth century, when Alexander and the Greeks triumphed over the ANE.²⁸ After Alexander's death in 323 BC. Ptolemy took over Jerusalem on the Sabbath, and Ptolemaic and, subsequently, Seleucid rule continued until the uprising of the Maccabees in 160 BC.²⁹ During this time, Israel was a perpetual war zone. It is important to note that Hellenization was a centuries-long process, not a neat process often caricatured.³⁰ Hellenistic culture was a fusion of Greek and ANE thought, forming a sui generis cultural expression.³¹ During this time, Jason, buying the priesthood and expediting the Hellenization of Jerusalem through his business dealings with Antiochus IV, brought about changes that the Maccabees would likewise caricature as part of their apologetic for their revolt (1 Macc. 1:10-19).³² Menelaus followed suit three years later, causing civil unrest.³³ During Menelaus' rule, Antiochus was taken into the temple by Menelaus to raid the temple and pay the fees which Menelaus had promised but was unable to pay for his rise to office.³⁴ Though the Maccabean revolt had multiple, difficult-to-trace causes, it was a series of breaches by the religious leaders in collaboration with Antiochus' rule which led to the latter's eventual religious suppression that ultimately led to the revolt.³⁵ During the revolt, the Maccabees became leaders through military and political expedience.³⁶

²⁷ Randall Price and H. Wayne House, *Zondervan Handbook of Biblical Archaeology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 166.

²⁸ Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 615.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 639.

³⁰ Lester L. Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism: History and Religion of the Jews in the Time of Nehemiah, the Maccabees, Hillel, and Jesus* (New York : T & T Clark, 2010), Kindle ed., Loc. 193-195.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, Loc. 208.

³³ *Ibid.*, Loc. 237.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Loc. 248.

³⁵ Hānān Ēšel, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hasmonean State* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), Loc. 192.

³⁶ Walter C. Kaiser and Paul D. Wegner, *A History of Israel: From the Bronze Age through the Jewish Wars* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2016), 642, who notes that after Mattathias' death, his son Judas led the revolt efforts. "Judas was an excellent military strategist and won his first battles in the area around Modin, Beth-Horon, and Emmaus, facing such opponents as Seron, the supreme commander of Coele-Syria, and Gorgias, a general in the service of Lysias." Judas was encouraged by a victory in Beth-zur, and led his forces to Jerusalem defeating Menelaus.

The Hasmonean period began in 164 B.C., on the fifth of Kislev, when the temple was reconsecrated and would become the feast of dedication.³⁷ Though Lysias, Antiochus' southern Syrian governor, attempted to regain Jerusalem, he was forced to return prematurely because of Antiochus's death and Philip's encroachment and offered a treaty to the Jews which included the removal of Menelaus as high priest.³⁸ The Hasmoneans would eventually ascend to the High Priesthood with the ascension of Jonathan through simony.³⁹ Over time Simon Maccabeus and John Hyrcanus would claim the kingdom and priesthood in a dual office that would continue until Herod the Great.⁴⁰

The Post-Hasmonean Period would be a problematic time, seeing the great rulers of Rome in Pompey, Antony, Julius Caesar, and the Herodian Dynasty come to power.⁴¹ The political turmoil of constant fighting between differing generals seeking to ascend political ladders would ravage Israel multiple times.⁴² There was no shortage of political acumen, as displayed by all of these men mentioned, nor was there a want of bloodshed. Such times of historical violence served as fertile ground for revolutionary violence and a hope for peace. In ancient Israel, such hopes for peace through a final eschatological battle could only be found in the hope of a sovereign divine plan whereby the day of LORD arrived via the messiah.

During the intertestamental period, revolutionary sentiments and actions were frequent and messianic expectations were varied.⁴³ These two socio-political-religious phenomena were intrinsically tied through the drastic growth of apocalyptic literature during this time. Grabbe notes that Messianic expectations revolved around a warrior-judge or a priestly messiah.⁴⁴ In Qumran, both of these ideals were extant through two messiahs.⁴⁵ Johannine literature seems to validate these expectations, moving from a priestly Messiah in the Gospel and ending with the warrior judge in Revelation.⁴⁶ However, the Gospel of John here seems to

³⁷ Ibid., 643.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Kaiser and Wegner, *A History of Israel*, 644.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 649.

⁴¹ Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, Loc. 321-340.

⁴² Ibid., see chapter 1, sections 1.1.7-1.1.8.

⁴³ Ibid., Loc. 1011.

⁴⁴ Ibid., Loc. 1019.

⁴⁵ James C. Vanderkam. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), Kindle ed., Loc. 2319-2320.

⁴⁶ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 629, who notes that “our approach to the Father rests firmly on Christ’s priestly work for us” which is substantiated throughout multiple passages, including the one at hand where exclusivity of Christ as the gate to salvation and God’s attendant provision is clearly asserted as well as John 3 with Nicodemus and John 4 with the woman at the well.

emphasize the crowd's desire for a warrior-judge Messiah (John 18:40) and the religious leaders' rejection of any messiah (11:47-48). Though people are quick to judge the religious leaders' rejection of a messiah, the history of Israel from the Hasmonean dynasty through Bar Kokhba shows that Messianic speculation historically ended in the demolition of Israel.⁴⁷ Though this survey was brief, only allowing for a general account of the socio-political environment of Israel during the intertestamental period, it should prove sufficient for explaining the historical background that will be detailed in the exegetical analysis below.

Exegetical Analysis

Exegetical analysis is comprised of a close reading of the text in the historico-grammatical method to include translation and discourse analysis of the text (see appendices 1 and 2).⁴⁸ The text of John 10:1-21 is the discourse at hand, unified by a cycle of speeches. The first speech is a parable (1:1-6) followed by an extended explanation of the parable in three segments, delineated by narration or change in topic. The subsequent narrative (vv. 22-42) seems to be intentionally placed through lexical, thematic, and logical points of continuity. Therefore, a fifth section summarizing that pericope is not only useful in interpreting the parable of vv. 1-21, but necessary.

VV. 1-6 Jesus Describes Shepherd Sheep Relationships

John 10 immediately follows a conflict between the Pharisees and Jesus concerning the healing of a man born blind, where Jesus indicts the religious leaders for believing that they have no sin. Jesus then begins a *παροιμίαν* (v. 6) about shepherds and sheep. The introductory formula employed by John, "Ἀμήν ἀμήν λέγω," alerts the reader to "a solemn asseveration about Jesus or his mission," being a peculiar phrase in Johannine literature.⁴⁹ In this parable, Jesus describes those who enter the sheepfold inappropriately, outside of the door, and are ultimately rejected by the sheep because they are not the shepherd. By contrast, Jesus explains, the one who enters the door appropriately is the shepherd and is recognized by the sheep. Shepherd imagery is frequent in the OT, and the relationship between sheep and shepherds is summarized by Ryken et. al, who note that "Shepherds are inseparable from their flocks, and their work is

⁴⁷ See Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, Loc. 1067.

⁴⁸ Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), Kindle Ed., Loc. 3140.

⁴⁹ Merrill C. Tenney, "John," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: John and Acts*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 107.

demanding, solitary and sometimes dangerous (Gen. 31:38–40; 1 Sam. 17:34–35). Shepherds were aided by their sons or daughters (Gen. 37:12; 1 Sam. 16:11) or hired help (John 10:12–13), again placing them in a position of authority and responsibility.⁵⁰ The qualitative differences among shepherds (previous kings and Jesus), between the shepherd and hirelings (Jesus and Jewish religious leaders), will all come to bear in this parable through Jesus' explanations below, defining Jesus's role as proper king, and his superiority to those lesser authority figures who are rejecting Jesus' role throughout the Gospel.

Throughout Jesus' parable, all but two verbs are in the present tense, which is considered foreground in discourse.⁵¹ The only well-defined foreground verbs in the entire chapter occur in these verses, found in 4 & 5, the term: οἶδασιν, which is repeated and offers a contrast. The sheep know the voice of the shepherd and follow him, but they do not know the voice of the stranger/foreigner, so they do not follow him. Jesus' speech is consistent with John's purpose (John 20:30–31), grammatically highlighting a verb of knowing relating to Christ's identity as the Good Shepherd of Israel. Particularly, in John 10, Jesus' main concern is to delineate who is a true shepherd, and consequently, who are the true sheep. The answer to these two questions will be that the true sheep are those who know the voice of the shepherd; and the true shepherd is the shepherd to which the true sheep listen. Though this argument would seem circular alone, the true shepherd is further identified by actions (signs) that are detailed in the explanation as confirmatory evidence of the rightful shepherd.

The idea of a shepherd being a metaphor for the king was established above; however, the term ἀλλοτριῶς is particularly important. This term can be glossed as "stranger" (ESV, NASB, NIV, NET, KJV, NKJV, HCSB, etc.), or it could be glossed as "foreigner" (Louw-Nida). The unsuspecting modern audience may simply see the term as one who is not known to the sheep, but Louw-Nida is apt to point to the fact that this term denotes "a person from another geographical or cultural region and/or one not known to members of the socio-political group in question—'stranger, foreigner.'"⁵² The fact that this term denotes someone from a different geographical or cultural region and is one outside of the "socio-political group" seems to lexically deny the identification of the false-shepherds with the religious leaders. Surely, Jesus saw the Pharisees and Priests as insiders of the Jewish socio-political group. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus limits his ministry to Jews and is found eating with the Jewish leaders and speaking with them of his own accord, contrasted with his interactions with Gentiles, who

⁵⁰ Ryken et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 782.

⁵¹ Constantine R. Campbell, *Advances in the Study of Greek: New Insights for Reading the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 126.

⁵² Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1989), 131.

typically approach Jesus first and engage in conversation, sometimes through the use of intermediaries. Verse 6 ends with a narration, breaking up the direct discourse of Jesus, categorizing this discourse as a figure of speech while noting the audience's failure to comprehend what Jesus meant. This will give the basis for Jesus' explanation. That explanation will show Jesus to be the proper King of Israel who is superior to previous shepherds, though rejected by religious leaders because of the political ramifications, and offering a line of demarcation for the true sheep of Israel.

Jesus and Doors (vv. 7-10)

Jesus speaks again in v. 7 and will continue his discourse until the end of v. 18. He will offer two metaphors for himself: the first as the door of the sheep in 7-10, and the second as the Good Shepherd, throughout the rest of the discourse. Verses 11-18 can be delineated as having two minor units, the first dealing with hirelings and the last dealing with Christ's care for the Sheep. In this first section of explanation, the metaphor of a door is prominent. Brown describes this statement noting that "it is quite clear that here the image is that of the gate through which the sheep go in and out."⁵³ Though this imagery is unfamiliar, it makes some sense in Jewish religious thought. If יהוה alone is King in Israel, then He is also the Shepherd, as Ps. 23 makes clear. Therefore, this is the least problematic claim that Jesus will make in this section. His assertion would, therefore, be that the sheep who would go to the Father must enter the sheepfold through him. His brief reference to "all who came before him" in v. 8, could mean shepherds—previous kings, or it could mean those others who claimed knowledge of how to find access to God—thereby castigating his primary opponents as the Pharisees (compare with Matt. 23:13). Brown makes a note of how "in some of the offshoots of Islam, the title *Bāb* ("gate," e.g., to knowledge) has been applied to great religious leaders."⁵⁴ This reading makes contextual sense in light of the hireling passage that will come below. However, the use of ἀλλοτρίω in v. 5 seems to limit the reference here to foreign kings. Jesus states that all who came before him are thieves and robbers, solely looking to profit off the sheep, and they are rejected by the sheep (v. 8). This could be used to describe any number of leaders in Israel's history, domestic or foreign, throughout the Old Testament. However, the domestic shepherds were lost after the exile, and the official shepherds were foreign (see Zech. 11 and Dan. 2 and 7). In v. 9, Jesus repeats his identity as the door before offering a conditional. This use of repetition is an

⁵³ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (I–XII): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, vol. 29 of Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 386.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 386.

example of tail-head linkage, which has a specific discourse function: "The use of the tail-head linkage accomplishes several things. First, the repetition has the effect of slowing the pace of the narrative, creating anticipation."⁵⁵ Jesus is thereby emphasizing his assertion of exclusivity regarding access to God, the true Shepherd of Israel, through His mediation which provides access to salvation and sustenance. Given the assessment of Pharisaic Judaism in recent scholarship, in which meaningful Pharisaic influence was limited to the time of Alexandra after the death of Jannaeus despite the assessment of Josephus, this interpretation has some level of merit.⁵⁶

In v. 10, Jesus castigates his predecessors and expands upon his earlier indictment. Where v. 8 characterized Jesus' predecessors as thieves and robbers (something already noted of the Pharisees in John through the temple cleansing narrative in 2:16 and throughout the synoptics), now he states that these thieves come only to "steal, kill and destroy" (v. 10). This violent charge against those who came before Jesus seems to eliminate this charge against the present Pharisees. Though the Pharisees are far from moral exemplars, there is little evidence that would warrant them being categorized as murderers of the sheep of Israel outside of Jesus' scathing rebukes in the Gospels. It seems best to note those who came before Christ as referring to the stranger-kings who ruled over Israel during the Greco-Roman empire, who made frequent victims of the Jewish people as detailed above. Christ, by contrast, asserts a purpose statement—noting that He has come to give life, and that in excess (v. 10, see John 3:16-17). In this section, Jesus identifies himself as the proper King of Israel, alluding to His prototype predecessor David and showing the superiority of His reign to that of the previous foreign shepherds of Israel who have done immeasurable harm to the sheep. Jesus continues his explanatory discourse by beginning an assault on the religious establishment in vv. 11-13, where he changes metaphors for himself, and gives a new metaphor to new opponents.

Jesus and Hirelings (vv. 11-13)

With Jesus' declaration of his identity as "the Good Shepherd," he would immediately awaken a number of religious sentiments.⁵⁷ Multiple places note God's role as Shepherd over the people of Israel, particularly through mediaries (Ps. 77:20, 78:52; Isa. 63:11, 14; Micah 5:13, etc.). In this section, Jesus identifies himself as the proper King of Israel since shepherd imagery is clearly kingship

⁵⁵ Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2010), 174.

⁵⁶ Grabbe, *An Introduction to Second Temple Judaism*, Loc. 309.

⁵⁷ Köstenberger, "John," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, pp. 461-464 for a comprehensive list of such allusions.

language. In the Old Testament, the shepherd king language is particularly used of David, who likewise risked his life to save the lives of sheep (see v. 11 and compare with 1 Sam. 17). However, David would later assert that the LORD is the shepherd of Israel in Psalm 23:1. Though the audience of Jesus' discourse seemingly did not understand this statement as a claim to deity in this pericope, leaving Jesus to state it explicitly in the next; they could not, however, have missed the claim to kingship. Jesus then begins explicitly to contrast himself to hirelings, stating that they have no claim to the sheep and that they abandon the sheep who scatter when the wolf comes (12-13). This particular pericope seems to best describe the religious rulers of Israel since a hireling would have legitimate access to the sheep while lacking the requisite responsibility.⁵⁸ Unlike the Pharisees, who were willing to kill for the people of Israel, as will be evidenced in the Gospel of John (11:49-53), they were unwilling to suffer for the people of Israel. Throughout this subsection, it is clear that the hirelings are concerned only for themselves. John's Gospel will show that Christ's rule is rejected by the religious leaders because of the danger posed for them personally which they feel can be avoided by allegiance to the foreign shepherds, as seen in 11:48 and foreshadowed in 10:5. In this subsection, Jesus clarifies that his rule is currently rejected by the hirelings because of the danger this posed for them personally (see 9:35-41), and he implies that it will continue to be rejected on those grounds. Jesus continues explaining his parable, having established his role as the Davidic King, and the failure of previous kings and religious leaders, by now defining his relationship to the sheep of God's sheepfold.

Jesus and Sheep (vv. 14-21)

Jesus repeats his identification as the Good Shepherd and asserts that he has a mutual relationship of knowing with His sheep. The terms of knowing move from οἶδασιν to γινώσκω, which are semantically related, yet have a discourse effect that subjugates the phrase of v. 14 from similar sentiments earlier in v. 5. Jesus then makes a comparison whereby the true sheep which belong to him (the only door to the Father via salvation and provision) know him and are known by him as He is known and knows the Father (15). Jesus then repeats the fact that he is laying down his life for the sheep, and the logical implication is that this is due to his care of the sheep as the proper shepherd (see the contrast with hirelings in vv. 12-13). Jesus then asserts that He has other sheep who are not of this fold. There are now two folds, both belonging to the shepherd, but a different fold

⁵⁸ The term μισθωτός employed in John 10 is found in the LXX in Exod. 12:45; Lev. 22:10, 25:40 and 53 pairing the term with foreigners (παροίχος) or strangers and sojourners in the case of Lev. 25:53, referencing backwards to Lev. 25:47 where παροίχου is found.

denotes a different location, though there is one shepherd and one purpose—to likewise lead them to salvation and provision (v. 9). These sheep will likewise listen to the voice of Jesus, and upon their listening, the two flocks are united under one shepherd (v. 16). This assertion shows that regardless of geographical location only those who respond to Jesus' voice prove to be God's sheep. This diminishment of Jewish boundary markers, particularly geographical boundary markers, is consistent with John 4:21 and may be evidence of the Johannine community's new identity conflicting and contrasting with the Judaizing opponents common to Ephesus.⁵⁹

Jesus concludes his discourse (v. 17) with a logical assertion of basis. The Father loves Jesus for a reason—he willingly sacrifices his life for the sake of the sheep in order to take it up again. This assertion of taking up his life again was clearly a prediction of the resurrection. Carson notes that "Jesus' sacrificial death was not an end in itself, and his resurrection an afterthought. His death was with the resurrection in view. He died in order to rise, and by his rising to proceed toward his ultimate glorification (12:23; 17:5) and the pouring out of the Spirit (7:37–39) so that others, too, might live."⁶⁰ Though the hirelings would soon seek to kill Jesus (see subsequent narrative synopsis below), Jesus affirms that none can take his life apart from His own predetermined plan because of His Father's charge (v. 18). Verses 19–21 show a debate among the Jews with mixed responses. The resolution to this debate is found instead in the succeeding narrative. Though this parable can stand alone, it was not written to be read alone, but is closely connected to what precedes and what follows. Immediately after being introduced to the shepherd metaphor, the original audience would have continued reading the next pericope and would have been confronted with a barrage of similar themes. It seems this structuring, though temporally dislocated, is thematically consistent to serve John's authorial intention, clarifying how the identification of Jesus as the Good Shepherd should be properly understood through a contrast with those who fail to understand it properly.

Jesus and Non-Sheep (vv. 22–42)

Verse 22 begins with a temporal marker, τότε, denoting a point of time subsequent to the previous, and identifies the narrative setting as Jerusalem at the

⁵⁹ Hakola, *Identity Matters*, 232–234, argues convincingly that John's Gospel seeks to develop an autonomous Christian religion. However, by examining the historical context of the Ephesian heresies, combated in Paul and Timothy's ministry, it becomes at least plausible if not convincing, that the reason for self-identification was to draw new boundaries for the Christian community at Ephesus which had long been plagued by the Judaizers so common to Pauline studies, and that John was drawing a line to expel those who failed to accept the new boundaries which are established in this Gospel.

⁶⁰ Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 388.

Feast of Dedication.⁶¹ "The language of 10:22, 'Then came the Feast of Dedication,' would seemingly indicate a break in the chronology at this point. The writer was drawing events from memory as they suited his purpose and recounting them in general chronological order, without supplying all the details of a continuing story."⁶² Morris, like Wheaton, notes that this statement is probably meant to denote something more than a simple passage of time: "But, . . . it is more likely that John wants us to see in Jesus the fulfillment of all that the feast stands for."⁶³ Wheaton notes the feast's role in stirring nationalistic fervor, stating that "Nationalistic sentiment was present throughout the year, but it was naturally heightened during the festivals, when tens of thousands of Jews made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate past saving actions of God."⁶⁴ This is particularly important to understand for the Feast of Dedication. Though the Passover, John's primary feast for organizing his narrative, celebrated deliverance from Egypt in the distant past, Dedication reminded the audience of a more recent deliverance. The Feast of Dedication, as noted above, was a time of celebrating the Maccabean revolt and the successful cleansing of the temple. While the temple was currently operative and not in need of cleansing, Israel was still under foreign rule, without an Israelite leader. The Jews become curious about Christ's identity during the feast and approach Jesus as he is walking in the temple (v. 23), asking him to clearly identify himself (24). Though this question may have been posed by people who were not present for the previous discourse, John structures the narrative in such a way as to show an implied relationship through his use of "sheep" (vv. 26, 27, compare with 10-16 *passim*) as well as "hear my voice" (v. 27 compare with vv. 4, 16), "I know them (v. 27 compare with 10:14) and "they follow me" (v. 27 compare with v. 4).

Though the previous narrative may not have been apparent for Jesus' audience as it was to John's, the Feast of Dedication, and the question of messianism would no doubt lead to contemporary messianic expectation. If Jesus is the Messiah, would he be seeking to initiate some type of violent revolt as Judas Maccabaeus had in the past? Jesus refuses to indulge His audience with a straightforward answer, relying on his past experiences with the Jews. Morris notes that contextually Jesus seems to imply "that his works and his whole manner of life are such that the answer to the question is plain for all who really want to know."⁶⁵ However, the Jews do not believe Jesus (v. 26) and that is

⁶¹ Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 634.

⁶² Tenney, "John," 107.

⁶³ Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 460.

⁶⁴ Wheaton, *The Role of Jewish Feasts in John's Gospel*, 84.

⁶⁵ Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, 462.

because they are not among His sheep. Jesus repeats the sentiments from the passage above, stating that his sheep hear his voice, he knows them, and they follow him (v. 27). By contrast, these Jews have not heard Jesus' voice from previous teachings; therefore, he does not know them, and the Jews are not following him. This leaves the Jews barred from the eternal life that Jesus gives to his sheep (v. 28, see v. 10) and explains the extent of that salvation and the source of their provenance being a gift from the Father. Jesus then says the unthinkable: the Jews had initially desired to know if Jesus was the Messiah, and though he refuses to answer that plainly, he plainly asserts equality with the Father (v. 30). During the Feast of Dedication, it would have been common to reflect on the story of the Maccabees and the quintessential blasphemer, Antiochus IV. Wheaton describes Antiochus' blasphemous nature noting that "Ancient sources attest the divine pretensions of the pagan king Antiochus in several ways. Most immediately, the king's title gives evidence of this pretense, for it indicates his self-conception as God' manifest."⁶⁶ The overthrow of Antiochus would be perpetually commemorated at the Feast of Dedication. The Feast of Dedication "would become a celebration of the reorientation of worship from the pagan oppressor Antiochus back to the one true God of Israel in addition to the renewal of stalled Temple worship."⁶⁷

With Jesus' claim to deity clearly understood, the Jews now attempt to stone Jesus (vv. 31-33). Jesus rebuts them from Scripture, the conflict continues, and Jesus escapes (vv. 34-39). With this conclusion, Jesus has shown the Jews of Jerusalem, and particularly Jewish leadership, to be sheep of another shepherd other than the one true God of Israel. While that would be a seemingly depressing place to end, chapter 10 has one additional brief narration, showing Jesus' flight across the Jordan. Upon his arrival there, many came to him and believed in him (40-42), showing that there were yet true sheep within Israel, though they are not to be found primarily among the religious leaders and within the confines of Jerusalem. Though, the previous narrative hinted that some sheep of another sheepfold would hear Jesus' voice and prove to be true sheep. The narrative of 10:22-42 draws a line of demarcation by which only those who respond to Jesus' voice, whether of the Jewish sheepfold or that of another sheepfold, prove to be God's sheep.

Conclusion

When John 10:1-21 is read consecutively with the following narrative, it becomes clear that Jesus' audience understood his clear claim to the monarchy through the employment of the Shepherd metaphor necessitating a messianic

⁶⁶ Wheaton, *The Role of Jewish Feasts in John's Gospel*, 166.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 167

question in 10:24.⁶⁸ Intertestamental history and literature show that Messianic expectations during the second temple period desired a warrior judge, similar to the Maccabees, though their faithless actions in later history proved them to be hirelings, and all rulers subsequent to them were foreigners, who wreaked havoc on the sheep. Jesus asserts that He is one with the Father, the ultimate Shepherd of Israel, as the OT frequently asserts of God alone.⁶⁹ The people understand Jesus' self-identification as God and accuse him of blasphemy, thereby rejecting his ministry as the Good Shepherd because they do not hear his voice and equate him instead with Antiochus. It was shown above that Antiochus named himself God manifest. John now makes a clear thematic link through another seemingly blasphemous assertion—this time by Jesus.⁷⁰ This causes the Jews to reject Jesus as another Antiochus and wish to stone him. Jesus' assertion is clear—he desires to be a King—since He is the Good Shepherd, and He is equal to God. A Jew who was unconvinced of Christ's identity would find this assertion blasphemous and historically problematic; thus, they reject Jesus in the strongest terms. The Jewish rejection of Jesus, though overwhelming in 10:40-42, displays a clear contrast to the reaction of the false sheep who reject the Shepherd's voice and the true sheep within Israel who hear the Shepherd's voice and believe.

Application

Though John's portrayal of Jesus towards the Jews in John 10 can be construed as exclusive, it cannot be deemed racially biased. Jesus portrays his relationship with his Jewish audience as dependent upon their reaction to His voice. Those who refused to believe, and threatened Jesus with mob action, are invited to believe Jesus' voice on account of evidence, even as they picked up stones (10:38). This text assists Christians by informing Jewish Christian relations. Particularly, the text shows that Jews are not excluded from Christ by nature of their Jewishness but solely upon their unwillingness to believe in Christ. Secondly, the text shows that popular Jewish messianic expectations, particularly the warrior-judge role, were unfulfilled in Christ's life, and this is problematic for evangelism, even usurping the best evidence (10:21). However, Christians should note that Christ is clear that the Jews are not the only sheepfold which Christ has

⁶⁸ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, 390, describing the response of the audience notes that, "Some are convinced that talk identifying Jesus as the Davidic shepherd, yet one determined to lay down his life for the sheep, proves he is *demon-possessed and raving mad*."

⁶⁹ Köstenberger, "John," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 462–463, notes that "God as the true shepherd is repeatedly contrasted with unfaithful shepherds who are subject to divine judgment."

⁷⁰ Wheaton, *The Role of Jewish Feasts in John's Gospel*, 181-182.

sheep in; and there are many other evangelistic opportunities, and sheep which need to hear the Gospel and may prove to be more responsive. This last idea has drastic implications for Zionist movements: if Palestinians form part of Christ's other sheepfold, is it morally acceptable, on political grounds, to aid the Jewish government in oppressing them for political ends? It seems that Zionism must be rejected if there is to be one sheepfold and one shepherd under Christ, since they are all equal as sheep.

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