

The True Gate & the True Shepherd

The Gate to Life

John 10.6-10

Review: Imposters & Imprimaturs — 10.1-5

- ❖ **Legitimate Shepherds:** A legitimate shepherd is recognized as one who is possessed by one compelling passion and message: to reveal Jesus Christ and the glorious gospel of grace as the singular hope for a world that is lost and broken.
- ❖ **True Sheep:** *“The sheep listen to his voice.”* Here, as elsewhere, listening—*“he who has ears to hear”*—is a primary emphasis of Jesus. True sheep are devoted to listening; they want to hear and be taught about Jesus—*they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching (Acts 2.42).*
- ❖ **False Voices:** Strangers do not speak the language of the True Shepherd. If the language is not Christocentric, if it does not bring people into “the mind of Christ” and conformity to the likeness of Christ, then it is the voice of a stranger and an “other way.” That “voice” is not under the true influence of the Gatekeeper (the Holy Spirit), regardless of how “successful” they appear to be in ministry.
- ❖ **Authentic Language:** The language of the “Gate-Shepherd” is surrender to the Father’s will, humility, service, self-sacrifice and sacrificial love. This is the language and voice of true Christ-representing shepherds, and true sheep will heed and follow the voices that speak this language.

The True Gate — 10.7-8

Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them.”

As we saw in last week’s study, Jesus has continued his dialogue with the Pharisees, using an illustration (an extended metaphor) based on the word of the Lord to Ezekiel against shepherds who do not demonstrate God’s concern for the sheep. Jesus followed his illustration with two explanations based on his own identity.

Therefore—because the Pharisees did not understand this figure of speech used by Jesus (neither in light of the Torah or in how it applied to them and the healed blind-man)—Jesus said again:

“Amen, amen (I am the Truth and I speak the truth),

I AM the Gate for the sheep.

I AM the Gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.

I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.

- ❖ The Gospel of John is primarily the words of Jesus. The seven miraculous signs curated by John validate his representation of the Father. Most significant, however, are the seven statements made by Jesus which attest to his divine nature as the Son of God and his fulfillment of Old Testament anticipation of the Messiah. This is Christology in Jesus' own words.

“I AM the Gate for the sheep.”

- ❖ “I am” *Ego eimi* - In the Septuagint, the Hebrew to Greek translation of the Old Testament made before the birth of Jesus, God's divine and exclusive name in Exodus 3.14-15 is translated as *Ego eimi*, the same reference Jesus applies to himself:

God said to Moses, “I AM who I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ” God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.’ This is My name forever, the name you shall call Me from generation to generation.”

- ❖ Jesus never presented himself as less than who he truly was: God the Word (Prologue 1) who became flesh (P¹⁴), God the One and Only sent from the Father (P¹⁸), the Sole Representation of the Father with the authority to judge and give life (cf. 5.21-27).
- ❖ This is the third of the “I AM” statements of Jesus—each an emphatic Christological presentation.

(1) I AM the Bread of Life.

Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

(2) I AM the Light of the World.

Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

(3) I AM the Gate for the sheep.

Whoever enters through me will be saved.

Jesus' Unequivocal Pronouncement — 10.8

"I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers . . . "

- ❖ In his figure of speech, Jesus had revealed the Pharisees to be nothing less than thieves and robbers. They had dealt harshly with the healed blind-man, scorning him and throwing him out of their presence. They had shown themselves to be the faithless, hard-hearted shepherds denounced through the prophets.
- ❖ They declared "we know" (9.24, 29), but had rejected the truth presented to them, both in word (spoken by Jesus) and work (miraculous signs). They opposed the Truth with their interpretation of truth.
- ❖ They were purveyors of an "other way"—rejecting any witness about Jesus, from the Scriptures, to John the Baptizer, to the witness of the Father (John 5.33-40). They were, Jesus said, children of their true father, the devil (8.44), and thus, as thieves and robbers, showed themselves to be under the influence of the ultimate thief who blinds and steals (2 Corinthians 4.4; John 10.10).

The Gate of Salvation — 10.9

"I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture."

Some translations render Jesus' statement: "I am the door." In keeping with his illustration of a sheep pen, it is appropriate to render *thura* as gate: "a medium or means of entrance; a portal, a door; access."

"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

—John 3.17

"I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved."

—John 10.9

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

—Romans 5.9-10

- ❖ As we saw in our study of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus (John 3), the Pharisees believed that by virtue of their heritage through Abraham and their law-keeping through Moses, they achieved access to the kingdom of God. Jesus declared himself to be the exclusive access for salvation: "through me"— *"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (14.6).
- ❖ The apostolic testimony given before the Jewish religious council would be a faithful re-presentation of this declaration of Jesus—

"Jesus is " 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.' Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

— Acts 4.11-12

- ❖ The warning of the author of the Letter to the Hebrews is sobering—
"How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? (Hebrews 2.3)
- ❖ This word *salvation* "gathers into itself all the redemptive acts and processes" that were accomplished in and through the One who came "full of grace" and gave his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10.45) to address our sin and guilt and to save us from death. The doctrine of salvation encompasses an extraordinary scope of blessing for those who believe in Jesus to save them from the just penalty of their sins—
 - Substitution: Jesus taking our place and punishment - Hebrews 2.9; 1 Peter 3.18
 - Grace: Christ's infinite merit for my demerit - Romans 5.15
 - Atonement: Christ's payment for the judgment against me -
 - Propitiation: "to appease the wrath of justice" - Romans 3.25; 1 John 4.10
 - Forgiveness - Ephesians 1.7; Colossians 2.13
 - Reconciliation - Colossians 1.21-22
 - Peace - Romans 5.1; Colossians 1.20
 - Justification - Romans 3.24; 4.25
 - Imputation - our sin is attributed to Christ our Substitute and his righteousness is credited to us - Romans 4.24; 2 Corinthians 5.21
 - Regeneration - Ephesians 2.4-5; Titus 3.4-6
 - Adoption - Galatians 4.4-7
 - Assurance - Romans 8.1; Hebrews 10.22; 1 John 5.11-12
 - Sanctification (to be set apart) - 1 Corinthians 6.11; 1 Thessalonians 5.23-24
 - Glorification - Philippians 3.20-21; 1 John 3.2-3

Death-dealer or Life-giver - 10.10

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

- ❖ Behind everything seen and experienced, there are only two power-brokers: the death-dealer and Jesus, the Life-giver. Jesus came to redeem us from the power of the death-dealer, *"that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3.16).

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

—Hebrews 2.14-15

Giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

—Colossians 1.12-14

- ❖ It is the agenda of the god of this world to blind minds to the "gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4.4). Any teaching or any agenda that does not lead to abiding life in Christ (John 15.1-8) brings death. *"There is a way that seems right . . . but leads to death."*
- ❖ Only Jesus can give eternal life (salvation) and abundant life. The *"revelation of [Jesus] demands that man abandon his attempt to find himself by giving up himself to this or that cause, because God in his revelation has already given up himself for men; Jesus has already come to give life and fullness"* (Bultmann).¹

"life and life more abundantly"

- ❖ Jesus has used the word "life" 23 times since his conversation with Nicodemus: always with reference to spiritual life, 11 times with specific reference to "eternal life" and never once in reference to the quality of earthly life.
- ❖ This statement of Jesus is frequently and egregiously misinterpreted and misapplied. It is often associated with material blessing or sufficiency, emotional happiness, or a physically and financially secure future. This constitutes nothing less than an "other" voice and gospel (John 10.5; Galatians 1.6-9).

¹ *The Exclusiveness and Absoluteness of the Revelation* (see addendum at the end of notes)

- ❖ The life that Jesus gives is not something that the world also gains possession of through their own work, greed, or self desire. We were purchased by the blood of Jesus for purposes much higher and valuable (cf. Revelation 5.9-10) than feeling good about life because we have a lot of stuff and security. What does Jesus give us that is “life more abundantly”? Here is a small but awesome list—
- ▶ Reconciliation with God (Colossians 1.19-22)
 - ▶ Peace with God that transcends understanding (Romans 5.1; Philippians 4.7)
 - ▶ Eternal life and eternal security of my soul (John 10.28-30)
 - ▶ Adoption as heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8.16-17)
 - ▶ A Spirit-enabled life that gives power to overcome the sabotaging work of the thief, and gains eternal affirmation and reward (Romans 8.13-14; Revelation 3.21)
 - ▶ Much fruitfulness to the Father’s glory—*“showing yourselves to be my disciples—demonstrating that you are full of my life and vitality”* (John 15.8)

This is a life of blessing that the richest person on earth could not touch—an abundant and eternal life that Jesus exclusively can give, and he freely offers it to anyone who will come in to his sheepfold “through him.” What is your response to his invitation?

— ADDENDUM —

THE EXCLUSIVENESS AND ABSOLUTENESS OF THE REVELATION

Rudolph Bultmann

Jesus' dismissal of "those who came before me" cannot be limited to particular figures in the past. All pretended revealers of all ages are swept away by the 'coming' of Jesus which is experienced in faith, Jesus' *ego eimi* [I AM] . . . always means that there is only one who can lead man to salvation, only one Revealer. There are not various possible answers to man's quest for salvation, but only one. A decision must be made. This is the basis of the intolerance of the revelation. . . . Yet so much as the modern idea of tolerance has—in radical relativism—ultimately abandoned any idea of an objective *verum* (truth), it has led once more to a form of profane intolerance, through a recognition that a relativistic acceptance of all claims . . . cripples any kind of commitment whatsoever . . . the revelation of [Jesus] demands that man abandon his attempt to find himself by giving himself up to this or that cause, because God in his revelation has already given up himself for me; that Jesus has already come to give life and fullness. It is this faith in the revelation which leads to the peculiar security of faith (vv. 14-18, 27-30), whereas man's [own] commitment is essentially insecure and his own heroism but the reverse of his despair.

—quoted by F. D. Bruner, *The Gospel of John*, 621