

The True Gate & the True Shepherd

Imposters & Imprimaturs

John 10.1-10

Recapping the Christocentric Significance of John 10

- ❖ While we have a chapter division here in our Bibles, in reality, the dialogue of chapter 9 continues uninterrupted into chapter 10. It will embrace the healed man in a relationship of breathtaking significance with the One he is worshipping, while the Pharisees who are spiritually blind will continue to fail to comprehend some of the most profound and comforting revelations found in the person of the One and Only.
- ❖ The conversation continues with Jesus speaking to the Pharisees and the healed man, as well as the disciples also hearing the words of Jesus. All parties will be included in the descriptions that Jesus will use to characterize those who hear his voice and follow him and those who are wolves, hired hands, and strangers.
- ❖ Figures of speech, descriptions of contrast, and corresponding dynamics characterize this passage: sheep and shepherd; sheep, stranger, and shepherd, shepherd and hired hand, “I/me” and thief, sheep and wolf, death and life, listening, knowing and following. All will serve to define the preeminence of Christ in his sufficiency and authority.

- ❖ Chapter 9 described the sixth of the seven signs that John curated to reveal the glory of Jesus (cf. John 1.14) and presented Jesus in messianic fulfillment as the ultimate healer and purveyor of grace; chapter 10 presents two more of the “I AM” declarations of Jesus, fulfilling in the person of Jesus one of the most profound Old Testament images of God in covenant relationship with His people (cf. Psalm 23; Isaiah 40.11; Ezekiel 34.16, 23; Micah 5.4).
- ❖ Unapologetically and without qualification, Jesus will present himself as the exclusive access to salvation. He will be unequivocal in declaring that there are no alternatives to his care and actions on behalf of the sheep. In stating thus, he will declare himself to be the willing and vicarious sacrifice who came as the singular means and with sufficient authority to determine the composition of the “one flock.” This is original Christology—not the claims of someone else, but the words of Jesus Christ himself.
- ❖ The unambiguous nature of Jesus’ declarations will be reinforced with his use of repeated emphasis as he drives home these truths—Truth that ultimately determines the destiny and well-being of every one in the world.

Jesus' Figure of Speech

- ❖ Illustration, vss. 1-5
- ❖ Explanation: Gate, vss. 7-10
- ❖ Explanation: Shepherd, vss. 11-18

❖ Descriptions—

- ▶ Sheep pen
- ▶ Gate
- ▶ Shepherd: the one who enters by the Gate
- ▶ Watchman (or Gate-keeper)
- ▶ Thieves, robbers: anyone who climbs in some other way
- ▶ Strangers: anyone whose voice is not that of the Shepherd

❖ Actions—

- ▶ Climbing in by some other way than the “Gate-way”
- ▶ Entering through the Gate
- ▶ Listening and following

Thief or Shepherd? First Imprimatur

“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.”

Speaking directly to the Pharisees, Jesus employed an extended metaphor that built on the message spoken by the LORD in Ezekiel 34—

“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? . . . You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally.’”

—Ezekiel 34.2, 4

- ❖ As thieves and robbers, the Pharisees had dealt harshly with the healed blind-man. Their ministry did not bring healing or blessing—to anyone, ever. Worst of all, they rejected the “Gate” through whom the blind man had received his sight (9.24, 29). They are thieves and robbers: robbing people of blessing and stealing honor from Christ—and ultimately, from God (see John 5.23).

The LORD then spoke this messianic promise—now fulfilled in Jesus:

“I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. . . . I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd.

—Ezekiel 34.22, 23

- ❖ In his explanations, Jesus will identify himself as both the True Gate and the True Shepherd.
- ❖ Therefore, *“anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way”*—that is, any message or agenda that is not Christocentric—is an “other way” and robs people of the only way to salvation and blessing—*“I resolved to know nothing among you except Christ and him crucified”* (1 Corinthians 2.2; see also 9.16).
- ❖ *“The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.”* 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.

“Be faithful shepherds of God’s flock under your care . . . eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.” —1 Peter 5.2-4

Shepherding & A Second Imprimatur

“The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.”

- ❖ The Gatekeeper doesn't open the gate for just anyone—only for the legitimate shepherd.

“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that He will receive what He will make known to you.

—John 16.13-14

- ❖ Three truths for legitimate shepherds:

(1) The Holy Spirit only honors Christ-centered ministry.

(2) The legitimate shepherd has a personal interest in his sheep: *“calls his own sheep by name.”*

(3) The legitimate shepherd and true sheep of the Gate go out—*“into all the world.”*

- ❖ *“The sheep listen to his voice.”* Listening is a main emphasis of Jesus as he speaks to the Pharisees. True sheep are devoted to listening; they want to hear and be taught about Jesus.

Shepherding Theology & Another Imprimatur

“When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.”

- ❖ Legitimate shepherds have deep concern that their sheep would be led into nothing less than a valid Christocentric life: one of surrender, abiding, loving, and bearing fruit (John 15).
- ❖ Legitimate shepherds speak with the voice of the Chief Shepherd. They don’t speak their own words and they don’t speak to promote themselves; they speak *“as one who speaks the very words of God”* (cf. 1 Peter 4.11).
- ❖ 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 influence of the Gatekeeper—regardless of how “successful” they appear to be in ministry.
- ❖ 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 true sheep will heed and follow.