

THE GOOD SHEPHERD: JESUS, THE TRUE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD

JOHN 10:11–21

Introduction

Jesus Christ claimed to be “the Good Shepherd.” He is not a bad or a false shepherd.

- I. The meaning of “Good Shepherd” (vv. 11-13).
- II. The proof that Jesus is the “Good Shepherd” (vv. 14-16).
- III. The final proof of Jesus’ claim (vv. 17-18).
- IV. The reaction to Jesus’ claim (vv. 19-21).

JOHN 10:11–21 JESUS, THE SHEPHERD

God foretold that He would send a Shepherd to save and to take care of His people.

Isa 40:10-11 See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

Ezek 34:22-23 I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another. I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd.

Ezek 37:23-24 They will no longer defile themselves with their idols and vile images or with any of their offenses, for I will save them from all their sinful backsliding, and I will cleanse them. They will be my people, and I will be their God. My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees.

Zec 9:16 The Lord their God will save them on that day as the flock of his people. They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown.

Jesus’ work as the Shepherd is fourfold.

1. Jesus Christ is the *Good Shepherd*. He is called “good” because He risks and sacrifices His life for the sheep (Jn. 10:11, 15; see Psa. 22).
2. Jesus Christ is the *Great Shepherd*. He is called “great” because He arose from the dead and He perfects the sheep (Heb. 13:20-21).
3. Jesus Christ is the *Shepherd and Overseer* of our souls. He is called the “shepherd and overseer” because He welcomes those who wandered off and went astray (1 Pet. 2:25).

4. Jesus Christ is the *Chief Shepherd*. He is called “chief” because He is to return to earth with great glory to reward the faithful (1 Pet. 5:4).

Note: God also is called a Shepherd in Scripture (Gen. 48:15; Psa. 23:1; 77:20; 80:1; Isa. 40:11; Eze. 34:11-31). □

I. *John 10:11–13 Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd*

The meaning of “Good Shepherd.” There are two reasons why Jesus is called the Good Shepherd.

1. Jesus is called the “Good Shepherd” because He gave and sacrificed His life for the sheep (See *Death of Jesus Christ*, Jn. 10:11).
2. Jesus is called the “Good Shepherd” because He is not a hired or employed shepherd. Jesus is the Shepherd by birth. He was born to be the Shepherd with all the Shepherd’s rights. The sheep are His and He is the sheep’s. The hired shepherd was just a man passing through who was temporary help. He was a man hired to look after the sheep until the real shepherd came along. He was not the true, permanent shepherd. He was a false, unfaithful, and irresponsible shepherd. His interest was not a calling, but...
 - a job and profession
 - acceptance and recognition
 - authority and esteem
 - money and comfort
 - position and prestige

The false, unfaithful and irresponsible shepherd has little if any sense of responsibility for the sheep. He seeks to benefit self, not the sheep.

- ⇒ He is a shepherd for what he can get out of it, not to serve and care for the sheep.
- ⇒ His primary interest is not the sheep but job security: wages and benefits, position and prestige, money and comfort.
- ⇒ He values himself much more than the sheep.
- ⇒ He seeks His own things and not the things of others (1 Cor. 10:24; Phil. 2:3-4).
- ⇒ He has no *natural* care for the state of the sheep (Phil. 2:20).
- ⇒ He has no interest in seeking the lost sheep, lest his life be threatened “in the open country” (Lk. 15:4).

Note that Jesus says three significant things about the hired or employed shepherd.

1. The irresponsible shepherd runs away when he sees danger (the wolf). He seeks to save himself and to protect his own security and position even if it means forsaking the sheep and leaving them exposed to the danger.
2. The irresponsible shepherd causes the sheep to be caught in the danger and in the error.

- ⇒ Some of the sheep are ravaged and eaten by the dangerous wolf. The wolf is any thing or any power that seeks to destroy the sheep, such as worldliness, false teaching, and carnal men.
- ⇒ The remaining sheep are scattered throughout the wilderness of the world and lost to the Owner (God).
3. The irresponsible shepherd lacks genuine care for the sheep. He is not involved and concerned with the fate and eternal welfare of the sheep.

JOHN 10:11 DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

*“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” **John 10:11***

The word *for* (hyper) is a simple word with profound meaning when used with the death of Christ. It proclaims the most wonderful truth known to man. Note this striking truth: it does *not mean* that Christ died only as an example for us, showing us how we should be willing to die for the truth or for some great cause. What it means is that Christ died *in our place, in our stead, in our room, as our substitute*. This meaning is unquestionably clear. (Eph. 5:2; See *Death of Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. 2:21-25.)

1. The idea of sacrifice to the Jewish and pagan mind of that day was the idea of a life given in another's place. It was *a substitutionary sacrifice*.
2. The idea of sacrifice is often in the very context of the words, “Christ gave Himself up *for us*” (Eph. 5:2).

John 6:51 *“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”*

John 10:11 *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”*

John 10:15 *“Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father — and I lay down my life for the sheep.”*

John 11:51 *He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation.*

John 15:13 *“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”*

John 17:19 *“For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.”*

(See Rom. 8:32; Gal. 1:4; 2:20; Eph. 5:2; 1 Tim. 2:6; Tit. 2:14.) □

1 PETER 02:21–25 DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

There are at least four references to Isaiah 53 in this passage: v. 22 (Isa. 53:9); v. 23 (Isa. 53:7); v. 24 (Isa. 53:5, 12); v. 25 (Isa. 53:6).

It should be remembered that Peter was an eyewitness to Jesus' life and sufferings upon the cross. He says three things about the death of Christ.

1. Christ "suffered for you" (v. 21). That is, His death took the place of sinners.
2. Christ "committed no sin" (v. 22). That is, He was sinless; He had lived a perfect and righteous life. Therefore the sins He bore in death were not His sins but the sins of men.
3. Christ "bore our sins in his body" (v. 24). That is, the suffering Jesus bore was the penalty due to sin.

In the Old Testament, the words "bore our sins" means to be answerable for sin; to endure its penalty; to die for sinners (Exo. 28:43; Lev. 24:15-16; Isa. 53:12). Thus, the death Jesus bore was substitution; He bore the sins of others. It is this act that shows the supreme love of God for man. □

II. *John 10:14–16 Proof, Jesus is the Good Shepherd*

Proof that Jesus is the "Good Shepherd:" There are four proofs.

1. Jesus knows His sheep, and they know Him. There is an intimate knowledge between Jesus and His sheep.
 - a. He knows them, their lives, their being, their all. He knows them...
 - by name, individually and personally
 - in all their joys and blessings
 - in all their trials and sorrows
 - in all their wanderings and stumblings
 - in all their needs and privations

He keeps His mind upon them, looking after them by His Spirit and caring for them through intercession as well as by companionship. This is proof that He is the "Good Shepherd" of the sheep.

John 10:3 "The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out."

John 10:14 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me."

2 Tim 2:19 Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

1 Cor 8:3 But the man who loves God is known by God.

b. The sheep know Him, His life, His being, His all. They know Him, believing and trusting...

- His love and care
- His mind and Word
- His companionship and leadership
- His experience and knowledge
- His destiny and pasture (heaven)

The fact that the sheep know Him so well is clear proof that Jesus is the “Good Shepherd” of their lives.

John 4:42 They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world.”

John 10:4 “When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.”

John 10:27 “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”

John 17:3 “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”

Phil 3:7-8 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

2 Tim 1:12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

Job 19:25 I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.

2. Jesus knows the Father, the Owner of the sheep. The question naturally arises, how well does He know Him? One thing is of critical importance. When Jesus claims to know the Father, He does not mean that He knows God in the same sense as other men know Him. Note His exact words:

John 10:15 “Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father — and I lay down my life for the sheep.”

How well does God know any man? However well God knows Jesus, that is how well Jesus knows God. That is what Jesus is claiming. God, of course, knows every

man perfectly, knows everything there is to know about a person. Therefore, Jesus knows the Father perfectly, just as God knows everything about Him. Jesus and “the Father are one” (v. 30). There is a perfect, intimate knowledge and relationship between them.

This is exactly what Jesus was claiming. He was claiming to be “*the Good Shepherd*,” the very One sent by God to be the Good Shepherd of the sheep. The proof is that He knows the Father even (as well) as the Father knows Him.

Mat 11:27 “*All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.*”

John 7:29 “*But I know him because I am from him and he sent me.*”

John 8:55 “*Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and keep his word.*”

John 10:15 “*Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father — and I lay down my life for the sheep.*”

John 17:25 “*Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me.*”

3. Jesus will die for the sheep. He was the “Good Shepherd,” not a bad shepherd; therefore, He would face the enemy of the sheep. He would not run away from His calling and purpose. He would stand and fight the enemy as the Good Shepherd was sent to do. Note two striking facts.
 - a. Jesus did not say that He would fight and protect the sheep. He said He would die for the sheep — definitely die. He knew that death awaited Him, that His purpose was to die for them.
 - b. Jesus dropped the imagery of the shepherd in this statement. He no longer said, “the good shepherd lays down His life” (v. 11); He now said “I lay down my life.” (See *Death of Jesus Christ*, Jn. 10:11.)
4. Jesus worked to enlarge the fold, “the sheep pen.” Note several facts.
 - a. The “other sheep” was a reference to worldwide evangelism. It referred to all believers who were not standing there with Him. It included all countries and generations. It foresaw every believer of all time.

Rom 10:12 *For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him.*

- b. The words “I have other sheep” is a close, intimate term. The closest bond and fellowship imaginable, a Spirit-filled and supernatural relationship were to exist between Christ and these future sheep. (See *Fellowship*, Acts 2:42.)

- c. The word *must* (*dei*) means necessity, constraint. Jesus was compelled to reach the other sheep.

John 4:34 “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.”

John 9:4 “As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.”

- d. The future sheep were to become sheep of His by “listening to His voice”. The sheep know the Shepherd’s voice. They know both His sound and His words.
- ⇒ The sound of His voice is not uncertain and unclear, not weak and frail, not quivering and indecisive. It is clear, strong, sure, and decisive.
- ⇒ The words of His voice are words of care and tenderness, of warning and safety, of truth and security.

Thought 1. Believers trust the voice, the Word of Christ, because they know His voice.

John 6:68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

- e. There is to be one flock, not two flocks. Every believer becomes a part of the Good Shepherd’s flock. Note: there are not several shepherds and several flocks. There are not even two shepherds and two flocks. There is only one shepherd and one flock, and that is the flock of the Good Shepherd, of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

1 Tim 2:4-6 *Who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men — the testimony given in its proper time.*

Now note: The very fact that Jesus enlarges the sheep pen is proof that He is the Good Shepherd. He is the Good Shepherd in that He works and labours for both the Owner and the sheep. He works to keep the sheep healthy so that they will reproduce and increase the flock. An enlarged and healthy flock, of course, means a pleased Owner (the Father).

ACTS 02:42 FELLOWSHIP

The fellowship wrought by the Spirit of God means more than the association existing in secular groups such as civic clubs and community bodies. There is a vast difference between *community participation* and *spiritual participation*. *Community participation* is based upon neighbourly association. *Spiritual participation* is based upon a spiritual union wrought by the Spirit of God.

The distinctiveness is this: the Holy Spirit is within the Christian believer. The Holy Spirit creates a spiritual union by melting and moulding the heart of the Christian

believer to the hearts of other believers. He attaches the life of one believer to the lives of other believers. Through the Spirit of God, believers become one in life and purpose. They have a joint life sharing their blessings and needs and gifts together. Note several things about fellowship that are taught by this passage.

1. Fellowship is being experienced by the new believers because they join other Christians in learning the Scriptures (apostles' teachings) and in worship (prayers and celebrating the Lord's Supper, Acts 2:41-42).
2. Fellowship forbids an unattached Christian life. Their fellowship is maintained because they "are devoted" in the Scriptures and in worship. An unattached Christian life is just impossible.
 - a. Christianity is first an individual matter, but then it becomes a social matter. The Christian is attached to Christ individually, but he is also attached to other believers. He walks with other believers in the Scriptures and in worship.
 - b. Christianity is first a spiritual organism, but then it becomes a spiritual organization. The Christian has an *inward life*, but he also takes on an *outward form* of life. He becomes a living organization with other Christian believers. He sits at the feet of the apostles listening to their teaching and joins right in with other Christians as they worship together.
 - c. Christianity makes the true believer a saint (one who is set apart unto God), but Christianity is made up of *saints* — plural. Christianity is not just one person; Christianity is many persons — *saints*. The word is often used in the New Testament, but it is never used in the singular. Christianity is Christianity because the saints *study the Scriptures together* and *worship together*.
 - d. Christianity demands that a believer personally live out such virtues as kindness, long-suffering, and love; but the believer can do this only in association with others.
 - e. Christianity means that the Spirit of God has entered the believer's life, but it also means that the Spirit of God has placed the believer into a corporate body (the church), into Christian society itself. The Spirit of God indwells the corporate body of believers as well as the individual (see 1 Cor. 3:16).
3. Spiritual fellowship faces two dangers.
 - a. Fellowship and society can be over-emphasized — to the point that individual salvation is missed. An individual must "accept His message" (Acts 2:41).
 - b. Individual salvation and individual worship, whether through nature or by any other means, can be overly stressed — to the point that Christian fellowship and society can be missed (Acts 2:42; see Heb. 10:25).

Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Rom 12:5 *So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

1 Cor 10:17 *Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.*

Gal 3:28 *There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Eph 4:13 *Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

Heb 10:25 *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

1 John 1:7 *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

Psa 119:63 *I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts.*

Mal 3:16 *Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honoured his name. □*

III. **John 10:17–18** *The Sacrificial Death of Jesus Christ*

The final proof that Jesus is the “Good Shepherd” is His sacrificial death and resurrection. A shepherd could do no greater “good” than to give his life for his sheep. A shepherd who died for his sheep was beyond question a good shepherd. But there is something else here as well. The owner was pleased, deeply appreciative that the shepherd gave his life for the flock. The owner *counted* the shepherd to be a “good” shepherd.

Jesus made two revealing points.

1. His sacrificial death was the very reason God loves His Son so much. Of course this does not mean that God does not love His Son just because of who He is. God naturally loves His Son just as any man loves his child. But God loves Jesus *even more*, in a much more special way, because Jesus was willing to pay such a price to bring men to God.

Note that Jesus died so that He might arise from the dead.

- a. He took the sin of man upon Himself to free man from sin, (that is, to provide righteousness for man, positionally).

1 Pet 2:24 *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

1 John 3:5 *But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.*

- b. He arose from the dead to free man from death (that is, to provide eternal life for man).

Rom 4:24-25 *But also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness — for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

Rom 6:4-5 *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.*

2. His death was the supreme act of obedience. It was voluntary; He willingly died. No man took His life; He sacrificed it Himself. The power to take it was His and His alone.

Note the critical point: this “command” to die was of God. This gives a higher meaning to the death of Jesus than just meeting man’s need. It means that Jesus did not just die because of sin but because He wished to glorify and honour God. He wished above all else to show His love and adoration for God.

This is an aspect of Jesus’ death that is often overlooked — an aspect that rises far above the mere meeting of our need. For in giving Himself as an “offering to God,” Christ was looking beyond our need to the majestic responsibility of glorifying God. This means that His first purpose was the glory of God. He was concerned primarily with doing the will of God, with obeying God. God had been terribly dishonoured by the first man, Adam, and by all those who followed after him. Jesus Christ wished to honour God by showing that at least one man thought more of God’s glory than of anything else. Jesus wished to show that God’s will meant more than any personal desire or ambition which He might have.

He said: “but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me [to die for man]” (Jn. 14:31; see Lk. 22:42; Jn. 5:30). (See *Jesus Christ, Death*, Jn. 10:11 for verses of Scripture.)

IV. John 10:19–21 Response to the Claims of Jesus Christ

The reaction to Jesus’ claim was mixed. Some said that Jesus was demon-possessed and mad (Jn. 7:20; 8:48, 52). Others said that He was perhaps the Messiah (Jn. 7:12, 40-44).

John 5:36-38 *“I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent.” ■*