

GOSPEL OF JOHN

Encounter Jesus – The Son of the Living God

The Door

Today's scripture study concerns the third of seven **I AM** declarations of Jesus recorded only in John's Gospel. *I Am the Door*. In this **I AM** statement, Jesus colorfully points out for us the exclusive nature of salvation by saying that He is The Door not a door. He is the only door by which we may enter and be saved. Jesus is the only means we have of receiving eternal life. There is no other way.

Last week, we studied how the man born blind had been thrown out of the temple by the condemning Pharisees and Jesus found him, revealed himself to him and the man believed and professed Jesus as Lord. However, the condemning Pharisees were still hanging around doing what they did best, that is, finding fault with Jesus and anyone who believed in Him. Today, we pick up the study as Jesus turned the topic of conversation to shepherds and doors.

The shepherd's work was difficult since the sheep required constant care. Abel was the first shepherd mentioned in scripture. The greatest heroes of Israel - Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David – all had been shepherds. No imagery is used more frequently in prophecy or in *Psalms* than the pictures taken from the shepherd's work. In Jewish thinking, a 'shepherd' was any kind of leader, spiritual or political. The word 'shepherd' suggests leadership and caring. However, when Jesus healed the lame man by the Pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath, the religious leaders did not rejoice that this poor man (this pitiful sheep of Israel) had been healed. Rather, they condemned Jesus for violating their Sabbath rules revealing their lack of caring for the people they should have been tenderly shepherding.

Their open arrogance and lack of concern for another sheep of Israel was again displayed when Jesus healed the man who had been blind from birth. They threw him out of the temple and threatened his parents and not once did they rejoice over the wonderful fact that this man's eyes had been opened. Rather, they were incensed that Jesus had violated their legalistic Sabbath rules again. These so-called shepherds had no concern for this man who had miraculously received physical light. Through their actions we see that these Pharisees who were the religious leaders in Israel were not being faithful shepherds over the Lord's flock.

Let's read what our Lord Himself had to said to them about the shepherd and his flock.

Read John 10:1-5 (ESV) ¹ *“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.* ² *But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.* ³ *To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.* ⁴ *When he has brought out all his own, he*

goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵ A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.”

Jesus began with another of His *truly, truly* statements – a solemn introduction to some of His deeper teachings. The Lord had just healed a blind man. Another miracle had been performed; but, many onlookers remained spiritually blind and unknowing of the Messiah’s Presence among them.

Even today, we like illustrations in sermons. Jesus often used illustrations during His ministry. For people in that time, the illustration He used would have been familiar – for us – maybe not so much. To understand **John 10:1-5**, we need a mental picture of a sheepfold in that day. To be specific there were two different types of sheepfolds – the village sheepfold and the country sheepfold in the open areas. This illustration is of the village sheepfold – a common walled-in fold where every evening the shepherds from the village would bring their sheep. There was one door or entrance to the fold, which often was just an opening. The gatekeeper would guard the door opening by lying across it, making sure that wild animals or robbers would not enter to harm or steal the sheep. In the morning, when the shepherds returned to the fold, the gatekeeper would open the door and each shepherd would call his sheep from among the group to lead them to pasture during the day. The sheep recognized the voice of their shepherd and that is how the sheep were separated.

Warren Wiersbe comments, “It is unfortunate that **John 10:1** is often used to teach that the sheepfold is heaven, and that those who try to get in by any way other than Christ are destined to fail. This teaching is true; however, it is not based on this verse.” **Acts 4:12 (ESV)** ¹² *And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*

Let’s make sure we understand the details of this illustration. The sheepfold is Judaism/Israel. Jesus the true Shepherd first came to the sheepfold of the nation of Israel for the purpose of blessing all nations. The coming of Jesus through the descendents of Abraham fulfilled the LORD’s promise to him in **Genesis 22:18 (ESV)** ¹⁸ *and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”*

Jesus came to the fold to lead His sheep (Israel) out to pasture. God did not intend to leave His sheep forever inside the fold of Judaism which was under the law. Jesus came to lead them into the covenant of grace. In the spiritual fold, the gatekeeper was John the Baptist who was sent by God to announce the arrival of The Shepherd. Others suggest the gatekeeper is the Holy Spirit who opens the ears of the sheep to hear the Shepherd’s voice. I believe it can be a picture of both. The man born blind is a picture of the sheep. The thief who leaps over the wall, instead of entering the fold by the door, represents those who become teachers and guides of the people under their own will instead of God’s.

In this passage, the door itself can be described as the credentials of the coming Messiah as prophesied in the Old Testament. Jesus' credentials are what open the door! We often see detectives on television pulling out their 'creds' when they come to a person's door to identify themselves. Jesus came to earth and showed His credentials. To name a few: born of the tribe of Judah, a descendant of David, born in Bethlehem to a virgin. Jesus sent his credentials to John the Baptist with these words in **Matthew 11:5 (ESV)** ⁵ *the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.* These credentials acknowledged His right to claim the role of Messiah and the religious leaders of the day did not like it.

Read John 10:6 (ESV) ⁶ *This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.*

Since the people did not understand His symbolic language, Jesus followed the illustration with additional information and another *truly, truly* statement!

Read John 10:7-10 (ESV) ⁷ *So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*

Here Jesus gives a second allegory or parable. He has spoken about the door of the sheepfold. Jesus had already said: *he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.* This time He says: *I am the door of the sheep.* And He says it not once but twice!

In the sheepfold in the village the gatekeeper was the door. In this portion of the scripture, Jesus emphasizes *I am the door of the sheep.*

The location of this sheepfold is different from the village sheepfold. Here the setting was open country where the shepherd's role included serving as shepherd and as the door for the sheep. The shepherds led the sheep out of the village for grazing. In the summer months, the shepherd and sheep might spend the night in the open field. According to Tyndale Commentary overnight the sheep were placed in roughly constructed round stone-walled enclosures. The top of the dry-stone wall was covered with thorns to keep out wild animals. Inside the enclosure the sheep were safe so long as the entrance was secured by the shepherd himself. He slept across the entrance. The shepherd was the door.

Jesus as the Door made it possible for the sheep to *leave* the fold Judaism and to *enter* His flock. Later in the chapter we will learn that Jesus' flock of sheep goes far behind the limit of the sheep of Israel.

The Pharisees threw the beggar out of the synagogue, but Jesus specifically led him out of Judaism and into the flock of God! The shepherd stayed with the sheep as they grazed in the pasture. He offers access to safety and security. Christ is our protector. Some people don't want to admit that Jesus is the Door, the only way to access God – the only way to heaven. But, He is!

Jesus clearly says He is the only way to God. Just as there was only one door into Noah's Ark and only one door into the Tabernacle, so Jesus is the only door to salvation and God's presence.

When Jesus said: *All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them*, He was not referring to the true Old Testament teachers. The Old Testament is filled with those who recognized the True Door - Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel to name a few. But, after the return from the Babylonian Captivity, there had grown up a priestly group who, if not in words, in practice, had been claiming that they were the door to the kingdom of God.

There are still such doors today. Other doors might be called the "Islam Door" the "prosperity gospel door" or even the "I Can Make It On My Own Door." As we share the gospel, we must remember that there is only One Door. Don't buy into Satan's lie that there are many ways to enter the Door of heaven. **John 14:6 (ESV)** ⁶ *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

Notice verse 9, Jesus said: *If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture*. The True Shepherd came to save the sheep, but the false shepherds take advantage of the sheep and exploit them. Behind these false shepherds is the thief of verse 10 which probably is a reference to Satan. The thief wants to steal the sheep from the fold, slaughter them, and destroy them. We shall study later that the sheep are safe in the hands of the Shepherd and the Father.

When we go through "the Door," we receive life and we are saved. As we go "in and out," we are not losing and regaining our salvation. We are enjoying *abundant* life in the rich pastures of the Lord. This is a picture of the life we are to live as God's children. Jesus is our salvation. When we enter The Door or Gate, we are saved from sin. But, the Shepherd's protection is constant. As God's children, we should enter into His presence daily.

Jesus is the Door of Eternal Salvation but going through the Door offers so much more now. When I think back on times of trial in my own life and the times of trial in the lives of other Christians, I love how God intervenes and gives us strength. When we go through rough times, if we go via the Door of Security provided by Jesus, we know we can weather any storm and we will find peace. **Philippians 4:7 (ESV)** ⁷ *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* Hallelujah! Jesus is The Door!