

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD [I AM SERIES]

I. BACKGROUND

A. Occasion

1. The Fifth of Six Feasts in John's Gospel

- First Passover—John 2:13
- A Feast of the Jews (unknown)—John 5:1
- Second Passover—John 6:4
- Feast of Booths/Tabernacles—Jn 7:2
- **Feast of Dedication—Jn 10:22**
- Third and last Passover—John 13:1

2. Feast of Dedication = Hanukkah

a. Not one of the three major feasts

1. Passover—Feast of Unleavened Bread (Pesah)

- 15th day of Nisan—in the Spring—usually March or April
- Celebrates Angel of Death's Passover, delivery from Egypt

2. Pentecost—Feast of First-fruits—Feast of Weeks

- 50 days after Passover—late April to early June
- Celebrates first gathering of wheat harvest

3. Booths—Feast of Tabernacles (Succoth)

- In the fall month of Tishri—September or October
- Commemorates journey and huts in the Wilderness

b. One of the minor feasts already celebrated in Jesus' day

1. Purim—in February or March

- Celebrates Esther's delivery of Jews in Persia
- From Haman's plot to exterminate the Jews

2. Feast of Dedication—Feast of Lights—Hanukkah

a. Eight-day feast beginning 25 Kislev (late December)

b. Celebrates Judas Maccabeus' dedication of temple

- Greek Seleucids had Hellenized and paganized Israel
- With the collusion of some Hellenistic Jews
- Antiochus Epiphanes had built altar to Zeus in Temple
- Sacrificed pig on altar—abomination of desolation—167
- Revolt by Maccabees overthrew Seleucid rule
- Cleansing and re-dedication of Temple—164 BC

c. Miracle of lights

- Only enough sanctified oil to last one day
- But it burned 8 days—until more oil could be sanctified
- So the Hanukkah Menorah has 9 lights
- The 9th light is a reminder it is just a commemoration

d. In Jesus' day

- Non-Hellenistic 'Jews' ran the Palestinian synagogues
- They were opposed to Hellenism and Roman rule
- Hanukkah was a time of lament about false leaders
- And discussion about who the 'True Shepherd' would be

B. Biblical Context

1. After Jesus healed the man born blind at Siloam's fountain—John 9

a. Division among the people about who Jesus was

1. Some Pharisees said

- He is not from God—He is a sinner
- He broke the law—healing on the Sabbath

2. Others asked—how can a sinner perform such miracles?

b. The testimony of the blind man

b. The testimony of the blind man

1. His truthfulness

Jn 9:25—*Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.*

2. His fearlessness—in the face of the synagogue rulers

Jn 9:30-33—*Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes. We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him. Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.*

3. His punishment—they threw him out of the synagogue!

c. Progressive revelation—who Jesus became to the blind man

- The man named Jesus—9:11
- He is a prophet—9:17
- [He is] from God—9:33
- Son of Man—9:35—Jesus has already alluded to this as:
 - The divine messenger from heaven—Jn 1:51
 - The savior who must be lifted up—Jn 3:14
 - Who has the power of life and judgment—Jn 5:27
 - Giver of life-giving bread and blood—Jn 6:53
 - Who has come from heaven—Jn 6:63
- The Messiah—9:37
 - His language—like that to the Samaritan woman
 - Only the second person to whom He has said this
- Lord!—9:38—New Testament equivalent of Jehovah!

d. Significance of John 9

1. Highlights Jesus' proclamation—I am the Light—in John 8

2. Jesus dealing with blindness

- a. The man born blind got both physical and spiritual sight
- b. Those who rejected Jesus stayed spiritually blind—9:41
 - 1. Their darkness—contrast with upcoming Feast of Lights
 - 2. Like false leaders they themselves lamented at Hanukkah

2. Context of John 10

a. About 2-3 months after John 9

- See 10:22—it was the Feast of Dedication
- Earlier Feast of booths (Jn 7) was in September or October
- Hanukkah was in late December

b. John ties these themes together

- 1. No gap in the narrative—though clearly a separate occasion
- 2. Continues the progressive revelation of Jesus' identity
 - a. His is both Son of Man (9:35)—and Son of God (10:36)
 - b. Unveiling of John 9—ends with His claim to deity (10:30)

II. THE GOOD SHEPHERD

A. Structure of the Chapter—Jn 10

- 1. The parable of the true and false shepherd—vv 1-5
- 2. The parable explained—vv 7-18
- 3. The Jews' confusion and confrontation—vv 19-24
- 4. Jesus' amazing claim—vv 25-30
- 5. The Jews' reaction—vv 31-33
- 6. Jesus' biblical response—vv 34-38

B. The Parable of the True and False Shepherd—read verses 1-6

1. How sheepfolds were constructed

- Waist-high stone wall with thorns on top
- Usually backed up to cliff or end of canyon
- One small entrance—closed by pushing dry thorn bushes into it
- And the shepherd stood sentry or slept at the entry

2. The thief or robber

- Scares the sheep by entering the wrong way—over the wall
- Has a strange voice—the sheep will run away, not follow

3. The true shepherd

- Enters only at the gate—and does not scare the sheep
- He does not drive them from behind—but leads from the front
- The implication: he clears the way of all danger ahead
- Why—because they know his voice

EX: Shepherds would sing and talk to their sheep constantly
Some used a short flute—played certain tunes the sheep knew
They could separate flocks by calling/playing to their own

4. The Old Testament model

- a. The model for the Good Shepherd was the Lord Himself
- b. 23rd Psalm—The **Lord** [i.e. Jehovah] is my Shepherd!

5. People's expectations fell short—verse 6

- a. Looking for another 'good' shepherd—like Moses or Davie Human
 - Willing to settle for another prophet or king
 - Who might meet their immediate political and physical needs
- b. Like those in chapter 9—they could not understand His words
 - They understood the mental picture
 - But they did not understand how it applied to their situation

C. The Parable Explained and Applied—read verses 7-18

1. Jesus' surprising approach

- a. We might expect Him to start with—I am the Good Shepherd
- b. Instead, he sets the parable in a bigger context—"I am the **door**"
- c. The **door**—serves many purposes

1. He is the way to salvation—verse 9

- a. Allusion to "the way, the truth and the life"—Jn 14:6
- b. Allusion to Mt 7:14

For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

c. He is the right way—Ps 118:19-21

Open to me the gates of righteousness; I shall enter through them, I shall give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous will enter through it. I shall give thanks to You, for You have answered me, And you have become my salvation.

2. Implied: He is the doorkeeper—see verse 3

- a. He is our Protector—admits us to the fold at night
- b. And will not admit any robbers or thieves

3. He is the key to abundant life

a. Through Him we go in/out—find pasture—verse 9

1. In the wilderness where food and water are scarce
2. He knows the way to good pastures—Psalm 23:1-2

- Where the green pastures are
- Where the still waters are

b. 'Abundant life'—verse 10

1. The thief comes to *take* and *kill*

2. I come to *give*—and give *life*—immeasurable, overflowing

2. How He gives abundant life—by being the Good Shepherd

a. The singular mark of the Good Shepherd

1. He lays down His life for the sheep

2. Jesus is not talking theoretically

a. He is not just *prepared* to die—He has *come* for that purpose

b. He knows He will do this in less than four months!

b. The false shepherd is not a shepherd—vv 12-13

1. Characteristics

a. He does not own the sheep

b. He works only for pay

c. He is not concerned about the sheep

2. He aimed these words at His religious opponents

a. Jesus had already chastised them for their blindness—Jn 9:41

b. In a few months, He would call them 'blind guides'—Mt 23

3. Ironically—it played on the sentiments of the Hanukkah setting

a. In synagogues the 'Jews' were looking for the 'true shepherd'

b. They appealed to **Ezek 34** for the promise of a deliverer

Ezek 34:1-2,7-10—*Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, 'Thus says the Lord God, "Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock?"'. . . Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: "As I live," declares the Lord God, "surely because My flock has become a prey, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not search for My flock; therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: 'Thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will demand My sheep from them and make them cease from feeding sheep. So the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore, but I will deliver My flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them."'"*

c. This was an indictment on their own false shepherding!

c. Why the Good Shepherd lays down His life

1. Obedience

a. Please His Father—for this reason the Father loves me—v 17

b. His Father commanded it—v 18

c. His whole being is dedicated to the Father's will

2. Trust—v 18

a. He did it voluntarily—of His own initiative

b. *Knowing* He was capable of raising it up again

c. It was not the futile gesture of a false prophet

d. But certain victory—based on confidence in the Father

3. Faithfulness to His own

a. We are *His* sheep—He *owns* us [opposite v 12]

- The Father has given us over to His care—see Jn 17
 - **Ps 100:3**—*Know that the Lord He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture*
- b. So He is *concerned* about His flock [opposite v 13]
- c. But it goes deeper than that—He *knows* us—vv 14-15
1. Not just intellectual knowledge
 2. But a deep relational connection
 - a. Like His relationship with the Father
 - b. He loves us like He loves the Father
- Jn 15:9**—*Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.*

D. The Effect of the Parable

1. Response to Jesus' explanation

- a. Division among the people about His identity—v 19
1. The third time people have argued about who He was
 2. Two other instances
 - a. Jn 7:40-44—at the Feast of Booths
 - When he spoke as he did to the Samaritan woman
 - **Jn 7:37-38**—*If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'*
 - Some tried to seize Him—but no one laid hands on Him

- b. John 9:16—after He healed the man born blind
- b. Accusations of demon-possession and insanity—v 20
1. The third time He was accused of this
 2. Two other instances
 - a. At the Feast of Booths—Jn 7
 - When He said His teaching came from God
 - And the 'Jews' were not obeying Moses's law
 - b. After proclaiming He is the Light of the World—Jn 8
 - When He said His came from God
 - And He said the 'Jews' were children of the devil
 - And claimed: who keeps His word will not see death
 3. Similar to C.S. Lewis's defense of Christ
 - a. You have three options when deciding about Christ
 - Lunatic (insane)
 - Liar (demonic and intentionally deceitful)
 - Lord—who He claimed to be
 - b. You cannot just say He was only a good and moral teacher
- c. Final confrontation—in the Temple at Solomon's porch—v 24
1. The situation
 - a. Some of the 'Jews' were genuinely curious
 - Probably willing to accept Him as a political messiah
 - b. Others were setting Him up for charges
 - Probably of sedition, possibly of blasphemy
 2. The demand—"Tell us plainly if you are the Christ"

2. Jesus' amazing revelation

a. Jesus' most direct claim to deity

1. Reiterated in v 38—*the Father is in me, and I in the Father*
2. This is not Patripassionism
 - a. The word 'one' is neutral
 - b. So it does not mean they are one *person*
 - c. Rather—they are one in purpose, will, and essence of being

b. This is the basis for all His claims regarding salvation

1. It gives Him the power “to take it up again”—v 18
2. It enables Him to grant eternal life—v 28
3. It secures eternal life permanently—v 28
 - We are doubly secure
 - In the Son's hand
 - Who is in the Father's hand

c. Jesus is claiming to be the Good Shepherd of Psalm 23

*The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want,
He maketh me lie down in green pastures,
He leadeth me beside the still waters,
He restoreth my soul,
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
I will fear no evil, for thou art with me
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me
Though preparest a table before me
In the presence of my enemies
Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over
Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me
All the days of my life
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*