

“THE THIEF, THE STRANGER, AND THE SHEPHERD”

John 10:1-6

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INTRODUCTION

Shepherds are supposed to protect their flocks—feeding them, watering them, guiding them, and keeping their natural adversaries (like wolves, lions, and bears) and unnatural adversaries (like men) away from them. Sheep are not the brightest animals, and can get themselves into some precarious situations also. They also do not do a very good job of finding their own food and water. Otherwise, **they need help!**

There are good shepherds and bad shepherds. Bad shepherds think more of their own needs than they do of the needs of the sheep. They might even run away when danger arises. They also might be careless or indifferent to problems for the sheep. They might even enter into collusion with those who wish to steal sheep in order to get kickbacks. Some shepherds dislike their jobs and wish for a better job with less work and more pay. Of course, some shepherds are simply lazy. As difficult as it is to believe, some even drive away and destroy their sheep.

Sadly, spiritual shepherds have the same kinds of problems. The Old Testament has a great deal to say about derelict shepherds. Jeremiah 23:1 refers to the shepherds who “destroy and scatter the sheep.” Zechariah 11 paints a vivid picture of shepherds who care nothing for the sheep and even slaughter them and desert them. In Isaiah 56:9-12 Israel’s shepherds are portrayed as *blind* (*Compare the context here in 9:39-41!*), *lazy, greedy, ignorant (compare 10:6!), and drunkards.* Ezekiel 34 describes Israel’s shepherds as totally selfish—feeding themselves and becoming fat instead of feeding the sheep (vv. 2-3). These shepherds do not care for the *weak and the sick sheep; they do not mend the injured sheep; they do not search for the straying sheep* (v. 4). **As the result, the sheep have become scattered “as sheep without a shepherd”** (compare Matt. 9:36) *and they have become prey to all the wild beasts* (the enemy nations around Israel).

Because Israel’s shepherds have done such a miserable job, the Lord promises that He will destroy these miserable shepherds, and will Himself become their shepherd! (vv. 7-16). He will be their search and rescue team, gather them, feed them, and settle them back in their pasture (the land of Israel). He will “seek the lost,” “bring back the strayed,” “bind up the injured,” and “strengthen the weak” (v. 16). Even more, the Lord will deal with **the fat sheep” who are not really His sheep but abuse and trample the true sheep (vv. 20-22).**

Then the Lord promises an amazing thing; He will set over all of His true sheep, purged of the false sheep and freed from the abusive shepherds, **“ONE SHEPHERD—MY SERVANT DAVID”** And David (Messiah) **“will feed them and be their shepherd”** (v. 23).

Now, all of these Old Testament passages must be seen as background to what Jesus is saying here in John chapter 10. Although He is not yet ready to establish His millennial kingdom on earth with Israel as the center, ***He is about ready to establish His new flock, the Church, consisting of saved Jews and Gentiles (cf. vv. 14-16).*** JESUS IS THE GOOD SHEPHERD IN JOHN CHAPTER 10. However, the Pharisees and other leaders with whom He has been dealing in chapters 7-9

(especially chapter 9) are the false and worthless shepherds who are being replaced and about to be destroyed!

These are the shepherds who literally “CAST OUT” the man born blind—the poor lost sheep whom Jesus went and found and brought him into His fold!

Yes, the Old Testament shows us that “the Lord is my (the believer’s) Shepherd” (Ps. 23:1; 79:13; 80:1; 95:7). **But, before we become His sheep, we like sheep had wandered astray (Is. 53:6; 119:176) and the Lord searched for us and saved us!**

ARE YOU ONE OF HIS SHEEP? IS JESUS YOUR SHEPHERD?
OR ARE YOU STILL GOING ASTRAY?

DO YOU RECOGNIZE AND FLEE FROM FALSE SHEPHERDS AND CLING ONLY TO YOUR TRUE SHEPHERD?

In this passage, we see “*The Thief, the Stranger, and the Shepherd*” and how the true sheep respond to them all.

As we look at the *thief*, the *robber*, the *stranger*, and the *shepherd*, we will notice the character and the conduct of each. Then we will observe how the *true sheep* respond to both the *shepherd* and the *stranger*.

I. THE THIEF AND ROBBER (1)

- The man born blind was under the care of bad shepherds—in Jesus he now had a Good Shepherd.
- The Pharisees had cast him out of doors—Jesus showed him the Door to salvation.
- The Pharisees put him out in order to drive him away—Jesus puts His sheep out in order to lead them and feed them.

A. The Character of the Thief and Robber

1. The thief is cunning, selfish, and greedy.
2. The robber can also be violent and harmful.

B. The Conduct of the Thief and Robber

1. Does not follow God’s prescribed way—refuses to enter by the door.
2. Has no right to enter by the door—has no relation to the sheep.
3. Follows his own way—“climbs up at another place.”

Many are seeking God in their own way and refuse to follow God’s prescribed path; how sad it is when these are so-called leaders!

C. The Confusion of the Thief and Robber (6)

They “don’t get it.” They do not understand what Jesus says here. They are spiritually **blind**—see 9:39.

II. THE STRANGER (5)

A. His Character

1. He does not know the sheep.
2. The sheep do not know him.
3. He does not know the shepherd.

B. His Conduct

1. Seeks to imitate the Shepherd—he may wear the shepherd’s clothes, imitate his voice, mimic the shepherd’s mannerisms.
2. Seeks to allure the sheep.
3. Irresponsible toward the sheep; does not have good motives.

III. THE SHEPHERD (2-4)

A. His Character

1. Unselfish—wants what is best for the sheep.
2. Loving—tenderly cares for them and protects them.
3. Knowing—has an intimate knowledge of each sheep (calls them by name).

B. His Conduct

1. He follows God’s plan—is the Father’s designated messenger.
He comes in by the door (v. 2). In fact, He is the Door! (v. 7)
2. He is recognized by those responsible for the sheep—doorkeepers
3. He is responsible toward the sheep.
 - a. He calls the sheep by name (3). He know them individually!
 - b. He leads them out (v. 3, in order to feed, water, exercise them).
 - c. He “puts them out (v. 4)”
 - d. He puts forth **ALL** His sheep—not losing any of them!
 - e. The sheep are “His own.” He has a personal loving interest in them.
 - f. He guides them by “going before them.” **He does not drive them like cattle!** (v. 4) He leads by example.

IV. THE SHEEP (4-5)

A. They Hear (v. 3) and Recognize (v. 4) the Shepherd’s Voice.

B. They Follow the Shepherd (v. 4).

C. They Refuse to Follow Strangers (5).

*The negative here is very emphatic—**They will certainly not, in no way, follow strangers!***

1. They do not know the voice of strangers.
2. They flee from strangers.

DO YOU THINK THAT JESUS HERE TELLS US ONE OF THE CRUCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF GENUINE SHEEP? ARE YOU THIS KIND OF SHEEP?

CONCLUSION

SO, WHAT KIND OF A SHEEP ARE YOU? DO you recognize and follow the Shepherd, or do you get off the path and listen to false shepherds?