

“The Righteous Shepherd” (Jn. 10:1-21)

1. Bad Shepherds (1-6)

a. Description

- i. Towns had sheep pen where shepherds of different flocks could bring them and there were hired gatekeepers who watched overnight. Also, there was private sheep gates where the shepherd himself would act as the gatekeeper.

b. Delinquency

- i. The ‘thief’ and ‘robber’ likely refer to the derelict shepherds of Jesus’ day and those mentioned in Ezek. 34.
- ii. God’s prophets and leaders were charged to protect His people (sheep in the analogous terms) yet they are said to have ruled brutally! Such involved exploitation, self-indulgence, and neglect.
- iii. In fact, God had promised His exploited sheep that He Himself would come to rule over them as a Good Shepherd.

c. Davidic

- i. In Ezek. 34, God was removing the last Judean king of the successional ancestral monarchy viz. Zedekiah. However, God promised the reign of David as their shepherd (23). Nevertheless, He also reiterated that He would personally and peacefully reign over them (24-25).
- ii. Such was necessary as God’s appointed shepherds were devouring the sheep (10).
- iii. There is a mixture of metaphors both in Jn. 10 and Ezek. 34 and we ought never to force details of parables and analogies. The major point is the contrast of those who were charged to care for God’s people yet were cruel (e.g. Jn. 9:34) to them vs the promised one from David who would rule righteously and compassionately over His Sheep (Matt. 9:36).

2. Beautiful Shepherd (7-21)

- a. Promised One: this passage is rich with OT allusions of God and His own as a Shepherd and His sheep e.g. Ps. 79:13; 118:20; Jer. 23; Zech. 9 (coming on donkey). As stated, Ezekiel 34... Also, Ps. 23 immediately comes to focus. Another precise yet not popular reference is that of Moses’ supplication for Israel in Nu. 27:15-18. Note that Joshua here and another in Zech. 6 are types of Christ who respectively represent Jesus’ mission and status i.e. divine shepherd/priest/king. Furthermore Joshua = Jesus, the Greek transliteration which means Yahweh saves.

- b. Qualified One: Whereas the leaders of Israel proved illegitimate, Jesus displayed true qualifications as a protector/shepherd. I mentioned the Davidic promise and qualifications prophesied in various places in the OT. Jesus claiming to be the sheep gate may connote both His qualifications as the promised Davidic King as well as the righteous means of the sheep’s protection. For as noted earlier, shepherds would have smaller pens out in the fields whereby they enacted as the protective barrier against threatening animals and such. If the Bible teaches us anything it is that Jesus is the One whom the Law described, the Writing proclaimed, and the Prophets pictured!

c. Divine One:

- i. Firstly: “I Am” “ego eimi” Here in v. 11, Jesus clearly claims the prerogative that only God’s Davidic Messiah could attain. In fact, it is an exclusive claim to be the LORD!

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- ii. Furthermore: He also states that He “gives His life for the sheep.” Such is a claim to His dedication to them as opposed to their current abusive shepherds – but also points to His sacrificial death for His sheep!
 - iii. Finally, the term “good” is also “beautiful.” The term connotes attributes such as being praiseworthy, precious, and benevolent.
 - d. Faithful One: Unlike the false shepherds and hirelings, Jesus’ lays His own life down for His own and He knows them and they know Him (14). Anyone can claim and even pretend for a time to be legitimate, but the proof is found in sincerity. N. T. Wright wrote: “But the sign of the real king is the response that comes from the heart, when people hear his voice and, in love and trust, follow him. ¶The parable of these first five verses, it seems, is designed to say: this is what I’m doing; this is what gives substance to my claim to be sent by God as Israel’s true king. The fact that people are hearing me and following me—notably the man born blind—is the sign that God has sent me.”¹
 - e. Loving One:
 - i. Sacrifice for His sheep (above). Knowing God and God knowing you is a theme in Scripture and John highlights it here and in 1 Jn. 3. Also see
 - ii. Such is a relationship akin to the Trinity (15).
 - iii. Not only the nation Israel but those of all nations (16)! Exclusive (1 Tim. 2:5) & Inclusive Gal. 3:28-9. Also see v. 9 “...if *anyone* enters by Me...”
 - iv. Father’s Loved One: Ps. 69:9 speaks of Jesus heart for the father which is seen and recorded (Jn. 2:17) and Ps. 40:6-10 is expounded in Heb. 10:5-10 as the author wrote of their relationship Preincarnate Christ. Verse 17’s “Therefore,” is not conditional but descriptive of Jesus’ relationship with the Father viz. His heart, mission, commitment, and sacrifice mirrors the Father’s and thus Jesus could say that He freely lays down His life in order to take it up again for the sake of His sheep (18). → Jn. 2:19-21 →
 - v. Almighty One: The Son of God was illegitimately taken, tried, and tortured; but He was untouchable till His hour had come when He would lay down His life committing His spirit to God (Lu. 23:46 cf. Jn. 19:30). Time and again the Jews would take up stones to kill Him yet they could not and when they came to seize Him * Do you know what happened? Read Jn. 18:3-9 &ff. mention Peter’s assault yet still released!
3. Branched Sheep (19-21)
- a. Jesus the great Divider cf. Jn. 3:36. Jesus certainly made a claim that left His hearers to make a choice.
 - b. Some refused His claims of authority (20) and others acknowledged logically that a possessed man could not open the eyes of the blind man (21 cf. previous chapter)!

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It is amazing how often critics demand incredible amounts of proof from others while they themselves refuse to honestly consider evidence presented. Some say that Jesus never claimed to be God and others say He never proved it. In our passage today we see that Jesus publicly and definitively claimed to be the LORD and pointed to His resurrection that would prove such. *John* 10 records two discourses of Jesus where He alluded to the OT warnings to the bad shepherds of Israel and the promises of God

¹ Wright, T. (2004). *John for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-10* (p. 150). London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

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coming to be their good Shepherd. It was the fulfillment of this very promise that Jesus said of Himself to have fulfilled.