

WHO IS JESUS?

THE GOOD SHEPHERD!

“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”

John 10: 11

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We have been looking at the question, “Who is Jesus?” Jesus introduces himself not as a king, nor as a great teacher. He says that he is the good shepherd. A shepherd is one of the lowliest occupations possible. Little children learn Bible verses. Perhaps you did also. One of the first verses that they memorize is Psalm 23. “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want (I shall not have any lack or need).” The Bible compares us to sheep. Sheep are animals that are foolish, weak, helpless, and love to wander. They need a shepherd to care, lead, and protect them. Do you know your need for a good shepherd?

WHY A SHEPHERD?

Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd.” Those who heard him say this could realize that he was saying that he is God. They knew their Scriptures. As quoted above, “The LORD is my shepherd.” LORD is put in the text by the translators instead of the name Jehovah. Jehovah God is my shepherd. God is called that also in Psalm 80 and in Isaiah 40. Jesus declares himself to be the Shepherd of the sheep. He is the revelation of Jehovah. I am God, the shepherd! When Jesus says, “I am’ he is again identifying himself as God.

Jesus calls himself “the good shepherd.” Of course he is identifying himself over against the religious leaders of his day who were not the shepherds that they pretended to be. Rather they were thieves, robbers, and hirelings. Hirelings are people who are paid to take care of the sheep. Hirelings work only to receive wages and have no love for the sheep.

Jesus is the “*good* shepherd”. The word ‘good’ is also a word that points out that he is divine. When a man came to Jesus and said unto him, “Good Master...”, Jesus responded, “Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God... (Matt. 19:17).” Jesus is therefore saying, “I am divine and a spiritual shepherd, unlike human shepherds.” When the word “good is first used in John’s Gospel, it is in John 2 contrasting the good

wine contrasted with inferior. Good means ‘choice’ or ‘excellent’. So here, Jesus is the pre-eminently excellent shepherd, infinitely elevated above all that had gone before him.

There were many Old Testament pictures (types) of Jesus as shepherd. Abel was “a keeper of sheep” (Gen. 4:2). Jacob cared for his sheep. Joseph fed the sheep. Moses watered, protected and guided the sheep. David even jeopardized his life for the sheep when a lion and bear came and took a lamb out of the flock. David killed both the lion and bear.

Jesus is the chosen, appointed, and sent One by God to care for God’s sheep. These are those whom God had given to Jesus before the world was formed. God entrusts his sheep to Jesus to care, feed, protect, and save them. He calls and leads his sheep in and out of the sheepfold. What gracious care Jesus, the good shepherd, has for his sheep.

HOW DOES JESUS SHEPHERD HIS SHEEP?

The main duty of a shepherd is to care for the sheep of his flock. That care involves several aspects. A shepherd has to protect and defend his sheep. Jesus does that. A shepherd has to feed his sheep, and Jesus does that, too. A shepherd has to provide rest for his sheep. And Jesus certainly does that. A shepherd must lead and guide his sheep, making sure that they follow him. Jesus does that also.

Two main parts of Jesus’ care are brought out in John 10:11-18. First of all, Jesus knows his sheep. Second, Jesus lays down his life for his sheep.

First, Jesus knows his sheep. Jesus speaks of this in vs. 14, “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.” This is different from a person who is merely hired for a short time to take care of animals. I grew up on a farm. When my father had to go back to the Netherlands at the passing of his mother, he hired a man to take care of our cows. This hired man did not know the cows by name. He did not know the nature and

characteristics of each animal. The hired man did not know the individual needs of each animal. When my father returned home after two weeks, there were several of the cows that were very sick or diseased.

The religious leaders of Jesus' day did not know, love, or care for the sheep of Israel. They were as sheep without a shepherd. In contrast, Jesus, the good shepherd knows his sheep. God's people are Jesus' very own sheep. They belong to him. He knows them personally. He loves them. Jesus compares his knowledge of his sheep with his Father's knowledge of him and his knowledge of his Father.

How wonderful this is. Jesus knows everything about you, child of God. He knows our specific names and individual needs, trials, afflictions, sorrows, and temptations. We are like sheep: weak, sinful, wayward, helpless, and defenseless. Jesus leads us to the green pastures of his Word. Jesus knows what sheep are not yet gathered. It is by his Word, the Gospel that Jesus calls, feeds, and saves his sheep.

Second, the gracious care of Jesus for his sheep is revealed especially in that he lays down his life for his sheep. We read this three times in John 10:11-18. "The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep (vs. 11)." "I lay down my life...No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself... (vs. 17, 18)."

What does this mean? All of his life, Jesus gave his life for his sheep. But, Jesus is especially referring to his death on the cross. Jesus' sheep are sinful, and the punishment of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). The guilt of sin brings death and hell. As sheep, we are weak and helpless to save ourselves. Jesus gave his own life for us. He took our place, bore our sin and guilt, died our death, and suffered our hell. He did this by becoming the sacrificial lamb on the cross.

A hired man would run away if he saw his and the sheep's life threatened. Jesus voluntarily and deliberately put himself in our place. He laid down his life for his sheep. Why would Jesus do that? It was his Father's will. It was his great love for his sheep. Jesus gave himself for his sheep. That death was powerful, saving each and every one of the sheep that the Father gave him to save.

THE SHEEP ARE SECURE AND SAVED

What a blessing to know and have this good Shepherd! He calls his sheep, and they know his voice and follow him (vs.4). They know him because he comes by his Word and his Spirit. We love our shepherd as he has loved us. Under the care of our Shepherd, we are saved. We are saved from every foe that seeks our destruction. We are saved from our sin and guilt and deserved death.

Although as sheep we still face our last enemy, physical death, we do not fear. Why is this? Jesus, the good shepherd, had the power to lay down his life and take it back up again (vs.18). It is that life he gives to his sheep. It is eternal life. It is life now already, and life that continues after our physical death. We join Jesus in glory in heaven. Jesus says in verse 28, " And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall and man pluck them out of my hand."

A bear and a lion tried to tear one of David's lambs, but David prevented it. Far greater is our good Shepherd! He has destroyed the power of Satan and death. All of our life, God' people are under the care of our great Shepherd. From heaven, Jesus protects us in all of our trials and temptations. He keeps us safe in his sheepfold and leads us in and out to green pastures. He feeds us with his Word. He leads and guides us through this life so that we arrive in glory and heaven.

Do you know this Shepherd? It is the knowledge of faith. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Live in the care and comfort of this good Shepherd, Jesus.