

***"LIFE'S MEANING & PURPOSE: A Study of the Gospel of John"***

**V. The "Signs" and Testimony of Jesus (Jn. 2:1-12:50)**

**M. Opposition and Signs (John 9:1-12:50)**

**2. I AM the Door and I AM the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-21)** – despite the opposition from many Jesus continues to proclaim who He is – Yahweh in the flesh. Here we have the third and fourth "I AM" statements from Jesus with the latter being one of the most beloved! Jesus declares, "***I am the door***" (the sheep gate) and "***I am the Good Shepherd.***" However, in verses 1-6, Jesus first addresses the reality of false shepherds and false entryways. The role of a shepherd was an important one in ancient Israel. Many of the most notable leaders of Israel had been shepherds, including King David who penned the beloved **Psalm 23** "*The Lord is my Shepherd.*" A good shepherd would care and protect his sheep and the sheep would know the voice and call of their particular shepherd. They would never follow a different shepherd. And yet Jesus says that those who enter by a different way are thieves and robbers. Jesus says that those who have gone before Him are thieves and robbers. This is a reference to the countless counterfeits that arose prior to Christ's appearing who claimed to be the Messiah as well as those who would follow afterwards. By saying that He is "***the door of the sheep***" (v. 8) as well as "***the Good Shepherd***" (v. 10) who lays down His life for the sheep, Jesus is declaring that He is both the means (entryway) of salvation as well as the destination of salvation (recall later in **Jn. 14:2-3** – "***I go to prepare a place for you...that where I am, there you may be also***".) First, He says in v. 9, "***I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.***" This refers to our salvation and the fullness of life. He then says in v. 10 "***The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.***" Jesus not only provides eternal life but He provides "***abundant life***" (v. 10) which refers to a life full of meaning and purpose, a life in which all our needs are not only met but in an overflowing way. But again, it can only come through Jesus. And this is not merely a means which is independent of the end, the means is the very end! The means and end are the same and refer to being in a personal, everlasting relationship with the Living God, with the Lord Jesus Christ! And those who hear the voice of Jesus and respond to it will be the beneficiaries of that wonderful relationship. Notice that Jesus says as the Good Shepherd, He "***lays down His life for the sheep.***" This points us to His crucifixion. It is through Christ's death that man's sin is paid for and our guilt is removed. Jesus is the means of our salvation not only because of Who He is as the Son of God but also because of what He does – dies for us.

As stated above, Jesus as the Good Shepherd hearkens back to Psalm 23 and King David and his background as a shepherd. David famously declared wrote "***The Lord is my shepherd.***" Now, Jesus, by saying that He is the Good Shepherd (recall Jesus said in that no one is good except God) He is declaring that He is the Lord of Psalm 23! In fact, there are two other instances that Jesus is identified as "shepherd" in the New Testament. First, in **1 Peter 5:4** "***And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.***" This is, of course, within the context of Christ's Second Coming - Jesus is coming back for us. Then in the final benediction of **Hebrews 13:20**, we read "***Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the Great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord,***" This speaks of Christ's resurrection and the fact that Jesus eternally lives for us. Yet, as the Good Shepherd, Jesus says that He will lay down His life for the sheep – for us – for all people. Do you see the complete revelation of Jesus as our Shepherd? He has died for us, He lives for us, and He is coming back for us!

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Notice that while Jesus referenced *“thieves and robbers”* originally, He speaks of a primary thief who comes *“to steal, kill, and destroy.”* This undoubtedly is a reference to the devil. Recall in **John 8:44** that Jesus said to those who would reject His teaching that their *“father is the devil.”* This affirms the reality of a personal devil who is real and who is the spirit behind all false teaching and spiritual rebellion. We may not like the idea of a real devil but Jesus taught that there is one and that we need to be on guard against his schemes and attacks. We read in verses 12-13, *“He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13“He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep.* The false shepherds (religious leaders of Israel) do not really care about the sheep (Jewish people) entrusted to them. Rather than challenge the false teaching or the attacks of the wolf (Satan) they ignore the threat and as a result the flock of God is deceived and broken apart. Jesus then speaks of other sheep *“I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.”* While Jesus came to His own (the Jewish people) He also came for the Gentiles. John highlights this wonderful truth when he wrote in **John 1:11-13**: *“He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. 12But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, 13who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”* Jesus’ message of salvation is for all people and is open to both Jew and Gentile alike.

*“For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. 18“No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.”*

No one forced Jesus to the cross and no one took Christ’s life without His permission! He willfully lays His life down for us as a result of His love for the Father and for mankind. God’s Word is clear – the Father raised Jesus from the dead, the Son also raised Himself from the dead, and the Spirit rose Jesus from the dead! Jesus takes us from His crucifixion to His resurrection.

*19A division occurred again among the Jews because of these words. 20Many of them were saying, “He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?” 21Others were saying, “These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A demon cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?”*

Jesus’ ministry will always result in a response! Here we have the contrast between the folks who think He is evil and/or crazy and those who realize that Jesus is not of this world and is supernaturally good. It reminds us of how Anglican writer C. S. Lewis put it in his book, *Mere Christianity*. You can’t just call him a good teacher or great prophet. Jesus is either a lunatic, liar, or Lord. There are no other options!

What can we learn from the above passage? Jesus is both the Son of God and the long awaited Christ predicted by the prophets of Israel and Judea. But He is not just the Christ for the Jews but for all people. He came to save us through His death and resurrection. He is our means of salvation but He is also our destiny. In Him we find ultimate reality, our purpose for living, and our meaning in life. He provides a loving, secure, and eternal relationship for all believers. There is no other way or means to experience life everlasting. All other ways are counterfeit, deceptive, and destructive.

**3. The debate over Jesus deity (John 10:22-42)** – the Feast of Dedication (now know as Hanukkah) was the celebration of the purification and rededication of the Temple by Judas Maccabeus in December of 165 BC after it was desecrated during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Solomon’s

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portico was a long walkway on the east side of the Temple covered by a roof and supported by large columns overlooking the Kidron Valley. It provided shade from the heat of the sun in the summer and the rain in the winter. It was a place where Jesus undoubtedly preached and taught. Here a crowd gathers around (encircled) Jesus. They want Him to state plainly that He is the Christ. In other words, they wanted Him to tell them that He was the One who would set the Jews free from their Roman oppressors! His explanations were neither convincing nor compelling in light of their preconceived bias. They were looking for a political ruler. But Jesus would not be beholden to the politics of man! So Jesus simply highlights their problem in verses 25-26, ***"I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me. 26"******"But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep."*** Jesus words and actions should be enough but they aren't because His hearers have a "heart" problem. They don't want to listen and follow the Lord - ***"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 29"******My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."***

Jesus is more than just the Christ/Messiah, He is God! We read in v. 30, He says, ***"I and the Father are one."*** By saying this, Jesus was committing blasphemy. As a result, those present began to pick up stones to stone Him (v. 31). But then ***"Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?"*** The debate continues as ***33The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God."***

The entire emphasis of John's Gospel is to highlight Jesus' words about Himself as well as His incredible miracles to demonstrate that Jesus is in fact God in human flesh. It is the fundamental truth that separates Christianity from the world's religions and cults. Both Jews and Muslims refuse to accept the possibility that God could become a man. It is their main stumbling block to faith.

Jesus then quotes **Psalm 82:6** of the Hebrews Scriptures (Old Testament): ***34Jesus answered them, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I SAID, YOU ARE GODS'? 35"******If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), 36do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"*** The point here is if God can call mortals "gods" in a sense that they are made in His image and have the potential to become like God in many ways, why do Jesus' hearers have a problem with His referring to the fact that He is the "Son of God?" This also shows that when people refuse to believe that God can become like a man, they are in fact, limiting God. They are actually putting God in a box of their own limitations! Also, notice how Jesus says ***"and the Scripture cannot be broken."*** This is another example of Jesus' high regard for the Holy Scriptures as God's Word.

***37"******If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; 38but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father."***

Finally Jesus says if they won't believe what He says, then simply look at what He does! That should be enough for anyone to believe. And yet sadly, due to hardness of heart, those present were seeking to seize Him but He eluded their grasp. We read in conclusion, however, that after Jesus went to beyond the Jordan (Perea under Herod Antipas) where John had first baptized, ***"many came to Him and were saying, While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true."*** ***42Many believed in Him there."*** Jesus presents all who are encountered by Him with a choice – Trust and follow or reject and leave!