

Lesson Fourteen

(John 9:35-10:21)

Upon receiving his sight, the former blind man boldly witnessed concerning the miracle which he had experienced. He still did not know a great deal about Jesus and his teachings. He just knew that no one could have done such a wonderful thing unless he had come from God.

But the Jewish authorities, looking at this case from the viewpoint of a broken tradition (healing on the Sabbath) rather than an act of mercy and power, were angered by the man's testimony. And since they could not convince him he was wrong, they "expelled him from the synagogue" (9:34).

Spiritual Blindness

(John 9:35-41)

³⁵When Jesus heard what had happened, he found the man and asked him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

³⁶The man answered, "Tell me who he is, sir, so that I can believe in him!"

³⁷Jesus said to him, "You have already seen him, and he is the one who is talking with you now."

³⁸"I believe, Lord!" the man said, and knelt down before Jesus.

³⁹Jesus said, "I came to this world to judge, so that the blind should see and those who see should become blind."

⁴⁰Some Pharisees who were there with him heard him say this and asked him, "Surely you don't mean that we are blind, too?"

⁴¹Jesus answered, "If you were blind, then you would not be guilty; but since you claim that you can see, this means that you are still guilty."

It wasn't long before one of Jesus' disciples brought the news of how the man who had been healed was being persecuted for praising Jesus. So the Lord, once again, takes the initiative and goes looking for the man.

And when he finds him, he leads him to a deeper and more knowledgeable faith. Frank Pack writes, "Jesus used the title *Son of man*, according to all four Gospels, to refer to himself in his public ministry, in the suffering he would endure, and in his future glorification, and his coming again finally to judge all men. The expression *Son of man* means more than his being a human being, and is to be understood in view of Daniel 7:13 (cf. Mark 14:62). As used in this context, the *Son of man* refers to the one sent from God who has powerfully demonstrated God's love and power" (*The Gospel According to John*, I, 164).

The man no longer thinks of Jesus as only a miracle worker, for he now understands that Jesus is the Lord (9:38)! That is also the message which Peter preached on the day of Pentecost: "All the people of Israel, then, are to know for sure that this Jesus, whom you crucified, is the one that God has made Lord and Messiah!" (Acts 2:36). And the phrase quickly became a standard testimony of Christians everywhere, as Paul indicates: "I want you to know that no one who is led by God's Spirit can say 'A curse on Jesus!' and no one can confess 'Jesus is Lord,' unless he is guided by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3).

Notice that in the TEV the man's statement contains an exclamation mark to indicate, as the Greek text does (*aphiemi*, "said"), that this man spoke with intensity of conviction and loudness of voice. How thrilling it is to really know Jesus as your Lord!

And his first response, after becoming aware of the true identity of Jesus is to worship him. The Greek verb *proskuneo* means to do reverence, to worship, to pay homage. The same

word was used when the wise men from the East came to see the baby Jesus at Bethlehem and presented him with precious gifts (Matt. 2:1-11). It was also used to describe the attitudes and actions of the apostles when Jesus calmed the stormy sea (Matt. 14:33). And it was used when the apostles humbly prostrated themselves at the feet of their resurrected Lord (Matt. 28:9). If we are to worship Jesus as this man and the other disciples did, we must begin by humbling ourselves before him and by giving him the best we have to offer.

In 9:39-41 Jesus exposes these Pharisees for what they really are. They are like an alcoholic who refuses to admit he has a drinking problem, although his drinking has resulted in his being divorced by his wife, fired from his job, and being put into jail for driving under the influence. The proof is as plain as a circus clown's big, red nose. But so long as the alcoholic can shut his eyes to the truth, he will ignore the facts and continue to drunkenly shout his innocence. That kind of person cannot be rescued until he realizes he just can't make it on his own. And the Pharisees, who remained arrogantly addicted to their man-made religious rules, refuse to admit their guilt and so cannot be forgiven.

As Burton Coffman says, "Those who would receive life and salvation of Christ must come in meekness and humility, confessing their sins, denying themselves, and crying, "Lord be merciful to me a sinner." The entrenched pride and conceit of the religious leaders were utterly repugnant to the Lord; and, as long as men were wrapped up in such a cloak of self-righteousness, there was absolutely no hope for them" (*Commentary on John*, p. 247).

The Parable of the Shepherd

(John 10:1-21)

¹Jesus said, "I am telling you the truth: the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber. ²The man who goes in through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him; the sheep hear his voice as he calls his own sheep by name, and he leads them out. ⁴When he has brought them out, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice. ⁵They will not follow someone else; instead, they will run away from such a person, because they do not know his voice."

⁶Jesus told them this parable, but they did not understand what he meant.

⁷So Jesus said again, "I am telling you the truth: I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All others who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate. Whoever comes in by me will be saved; he will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only in order to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come in order that you might have life — life in all its fullness.

¹¹"I am the good shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep. ¹²When the hired man, who is not a shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees a wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away; so the wolf snatches the sheep and scatters them. ¹³The hired man runs away because he is only a hired man and does not care about the sheep. ¹⁴⁻¹⁵I am the good shepherd. As the Father knows me and I know the Father, in the same way I know my sheep and they know me. And I am willing to die for them. ¹⁶There are other sheep which belong to me that are not in this sheep pen. I must bring them, too; they will listen to my voice, and they will become one flock with one shepherd.

¹⁷"The Father loves me because I am willing to give up my life, in order that I may receive it back again. ¹⁸No one takes my life away from me. I give it up of my own free will. I have the right to give it up, and I have the right to take it back. This is what my Father has commanded me to do."

¹⁹Again there was a division among the people because of these words: ²⁰Many of them were saying, "He has a demon! He is crazy! Why do you listen to him?"

²¹But others were saying, "A man with a demon could not talk like this! How could a demon give sight to blind people?"

The task of every messenger of God's word is to present it in such a manner that the people can easily understand. Here Jesus places his gems of truth in a pastoral setting. And nothing was more commonplace in Jesus' day than to see shepherds guiding their flocks over the rough Palestinian hills.

In addition, the people of Israel were accustomed to the idea that they were the flock and God was their shepherd. "He is our God; we are the people he cares for, the flock for which he provides" (Psalm 95:7). And they, like we today, loved these words: "The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need" (Psalm 23:1).

The shepherd in Palestine did not drive his sheep as ranchers drive cattle. He walked in front of his flock, leading them both by his example and by the sound of his voice. And at the end of the day he placed them inside one of the many sheep pens which were scattered among the hills. The walls of the sheep pens were

usually made of rocks. And whenever a wooden gate was unavailable, the shepherd simply blocked the entrance with his own body as he slept upon the ground.

Keep in mind that Jesus is telling this story to the same Pharisees whom he had just accused of being blind and guilt-ridden (9:41). And when he tells it the first time, they don't get the point (10:1-6). So Jesus elaborates upon it to make it even clearer to those who really want to understand.

Beginning with 10:7, Jesus identifies himself as the gate of the sheep. Now the purpose of any door is to limit the access to those things which are inside, thus protecting and preserving them. Similarly, Jesus came to this earth to lead us into a close relationship with God where, protected by his power, Satan can no longer harm us. As Paul wrote, "It is through Christ that all of us, Jews and Gentiles, are able to come in the one Spirit into the presence of the Father" (Eph. 2:18).

But there are others, Jesus warns, who are "thieves and robbers" (10:8) and have come for destructive purposes. They are determined "to steal, kill, and destroy" (10:9). Jesus' reference is to all those who in any way lead people away from him. Down through history there have been innumerable "saviors" who promised people "the good life" if they would fall in line. And today we are being assaulted by Hugh Hefner's hedonism, by "Reverend" Ike's crass materialism, by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's thinly veiled Hindu gospel of transcendental meditation, by the flagrantly anti-Christ demagoguery of Sun Myung Moon, and by the large number of preachers who say that Jesus was a good man but nothing more. Then there are the evangelistic disciples of Joseph Smith (Mormons), Gardner Ted Armstrong (Worldwide Church of God), and Charles T. Russell (Jehovah's Witnesses). Satan is alive and well in our generation!

In 10:12-13 Jesus warns against putting our trust in false shepherds. This is a theme drawn from the Old Testament prophets. Ezekiel, for example, uses the Hebrew term for shepherd or pastor (*raah*, "to feed") when he gives this rebuke from God: "Now, you shepherds, listen to what I, the Lord, am telling you. As surely as I am the living God, you had better listen to me. My sheep have been attacked by wild animals that killed and ate them because there was no shepherd. My shepherds did not try to find the sheep. They were taking care of themselves and not the sheep" (Ezekiel 34:7-8; read the entire chapter).

That kind of hireling-shepherd would kill the sheep to get the

wool or to provide himself with a midnight snack! Today there are some "hireling" preachers who are more concerned about their salary than they are about souls. There are some elders (presbyters, bishops, or pastors) who lead long prayers on Sunday morning for "those not able to be here"; but they never go out to check on the missing members of their flock during the week. To them Peter says, "I appeal to you to be shepherds of the flock that God gave you and to take care of it willingly, as God wants you to, and not unwillingly. Do your work, not for mere pay, but from a real desire to serve" (1 Peter 1-2). And every elder should read Paul's instructions to the elders at Ephesus (Acts 20:25-31).

In 10:16 Jesus refers to the Gentiles as his "other sheep". Frank Pack says, "After his resurrection the great commission specifically commanded that the gospel should be proclaimed unto all men (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 14:46; John 20:21). While the early church had difficulty overcoming Jewish prejudice against the Gentiles and taking seriously Jesus' worldwide commission to them, the Gospels all make clear Jesus' teachings in this regard. His limited mission was directed to Israel, but his purpose was to create a new race of men, both Jews and Gentiles" (*The Gospel According to John*, I, 171).

John 10:19-21 marks a sad turning point in the ministry of our Lord. During the remainder of Jesus' stay in Jerusalem, the so-called believers no longer witness for him. Instead, the unbelievers become the vocal group. Perhaps many of the disciples sense the end is near. If so, they bear mute testimony that silence is not always golden; sometimes it is yellow.

Thought Stimulators on John 9:35-10:21

1. There is a song which says, "There are none so blind as those who will not see." Discuss this principle in relation to the Pharisees.
2. What does the expression "Jesus is Lord" mean to you?
3. Define "worship" and give two examples of it.
4. In what sense is Jesus the "gate of the sheep"?
5. In what sense are false teachers "thieves and robbers"?
6. For what purpose did Jesus come?
7. How did Jesus prove that he was "the good shepherd"?
8. What is a "hireling"?
9. What, specifically, are the duties of elders?
10. How can you make the elders' job easier?

11. Who took Jesus' life?
12. What should be done when those who are responsible for feeding the flock are not doing it?