

Jesus furnished the Pharisees and all the world for all ages a truism which needs to be remembered. No man is so blind as one who will not see! If the Pharisees had realized their blindness and had been pure in heart they would have sought the Light which would have led them to Jesus, the true Light, which lighteth every man (cf. John 1:9). The man who knows his own ignorance and blindness, but who desires to know more, is the man whose vision can be increased and his knowledge enlarged. But the Pharisees boasted of their vision—"we know," again and again. They did not seek the Light for they did not think they needed the Light—they already possessed all the Light there was. Therefore, because they would not recognize their own spiritual destitution, they rejected the only source of grace and forgiveness. What a lesson this is for all of us today! May we never arrive at the place where we reject God's Word in favor of our own opinion or knowledge. Let us never be so presumptuous as to think that we, as a group or as individuals, can never be taught from God's Word because we know it all.

Quiz

1. Did Jesus find the beggar by accident? Explain.
2. What did Jesus call Himself in verse 35? What did the title imply?
3. Does John 9:39 contradict John 3:17? Explain.
4. In what way were the Pharisees remaining in their sins?

EXPOSITORY SERMON NO. NINE

LIGHT FOR THE BLIND

John 9:1-41

Introduction

I. JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES SEE THE BLIND BEGGAR SITTING, PERHAPS, AT THE TEMPLE GATE

- A. Can you sympathize with the blind man? He was born blind. He had never seen the lovelight in the eyes of his father or mother. He had never seen the green fields, the majestic mountains, the winding Jordan river. The brilliance of the sun by day had never shone upon his eyes, nor had he ever witnessed the dark blue sky at night sprinkled with twinkling stars. Yet, as we shall see, he saw more than all the others about him who had their eyesight.

II. THE QUESTION OF THE DISCIPLES

- A. They raise the theological question about his infirmity being connected with sin—especially do they presume that his blindness has come as a punishment. In a sense, our sins are visited upon our offspring for generation upon generation. But in another sense, our sins are not borne by our children (cf. Ezek. 18:19-20). There was a purpose in the beggar's blindness and Jesus answers with that purpose—that the glory of God might be made manifest. All infirmities are for such a purpose. They are for discipline, chastisement, that the will of God might be perfected in those who believe and that God's justice and power might be shown. To the disciples this man posed a problem of the past—"How did he get that way?" But to Jesus he presented a challenge and an opportunity to work the works of God in the present!

Discussion

I. BLINDNESS OF THE BEGGAR

Although his physical sight had never been given him, he was not really the blind one at all. Actually, it was probably his physical blindness that worked to bring his greatest blessing. It caused him to turn in utter dependence upon the mercy of God and anyone else who would help him. His sightless eyes thrust him upon the grace of God—they led him to hope.

Thus his faith was a faith that would obey Jesus' commands with unhesitating obedience. It seems that always the poor, infirm and outcasts, who found both themselves and others incapable of help, that professed the greatest faith in Jesus. They had nowhere else or no one else to turn to—the religious leaders of the day would not be their shepherds. The prosperous, healthy and self-righteous felt no necessity to trust in God. The church at Laodicea was told, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and *blind* and naked . . ." (Rev. 3:17. (Italics mine.) AND SO IT IS! THE MAN WHO HAS LOST HIS PHYSICAL SIGHT CAN NEVER BE SO BLIND AS THE MAN WHO HAS LOST HIS INDEPENDENCE UPON GOD!

This man had courage. He knew as well as any other Jew of that city and of that particular time what would happen to anyone who associated with Jesus. Not only had he associated with the hated Nazarene, he had allowed himself to be healed by Him on the Sabbath.

The beggar had an honest heart and when convinced of the truth, he followed the leading of the truth. He accepted the testimony that was presented to him and believed it. He might not be a student of theology, as were the rulers, but he could witness to what Jesus had done for him—this he knew. His honesty allowed Him to see far more than the Pharisees could see about Jesus. They said Jesus could not possibly be good for He healed on the Sabbath. The blind man said, "God would not work through a deliberate blasphemer." He knew more of the Old Testament than did the students of the Scriptures. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psa. 66:18). "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood" (Isa. 1:15).

II. THE BLINDNESS OF THE BEGGAR'S PARENTS

Theirs was the blindness of cowardice and fear. Even in everyday experience we know that fear can cause people to be blind to many things that would otherwise be easily seen. What did they fear? They feared loss of social liberty and prestige. If they should profess any belief in Jesus they would be boycotted socially and economically. Their friends would not come near them . . . they would not be sold anything in the markets. They also feared excommunication—religious condemnation. They would no longer be allowed to participate in the services of the temple or the synagogue. This has been used by other religious dictators in modern times as a means of forcing the dictates of men upon the superstitious and indifferent. The parents might also have been afraid of the responsibilities they would have to assume should they become followers of Christ. Many today are afraid of the truth because they might have to change their way of living—to give up some of their sinful, indulgent pleasures and so they have conveniently blinded themselves to the truth—they have seared their consciences.

The parents could not see beyond the level of this world. They could see only the persecution and criticism they would have to face. They could see only the things of this world which they might lose. Peter at Antioch is a good example of such blindness. His fear of the Jews actually blinded him to the truth that he himself had already preached concerning the reception of the Gentiles into the kingdom. When some Judaizers criticized him for eating with Gentiles, he defected and separated himself from the Gentiles. He had just preached that God is no respecter of persons—that the Gentiles are to be received into the church as brothers—now he gives in through fear. It

isn't easy to be a witness for Jesus today. Today's great philosophy is "Don't be different from the world—be a conformist—don't be abnormally religious." I sometimes believe it is more difficult to witness for Christ in times of peace and prosperity and security than in times of persecution and hardship. But cowardice and fear brings a blindness that covers our spiritual eyes so that we cannot see the truth—we do not see facts and ideas in their proper perspective. If all we can see are the consequences and losses in this world by following Christ, we are no better than this beggar's parents. The heroes of the O. T. were not even permitted to see the Christ and yet they could see better than these parents through their spiritual eyes for "these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were pilgrims on the earth . . . for they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country . . ." (Heb. 11:13-14). **THE BLIND BEGGAR WAS LOOKING AT THE HEAVENLY CITY, WHILE HIS PARENTS GROPED BLINDLY FOR THIS WORLD AND LOST BOTH THIS WORLD AND HEAVEN!**

III. THE BLINDNESS OF THE PHARISEES

Theirs was a blindness of prejudice and hate and bigotry. Do you hear any of them rejoicing even that the man born blind was healed? They were interested in nothing but revenge for having one of their traditions broken. They were interested only in trapping Jesus. Woe unto them, for "Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil." There are men and women even in our day who are so filled with hate and prejudice that they can see no good in anything but their own ideas and their own ways of living.

Their blindness was to be found in that they said, "We see." Over and over they insisted, "*We know* this man is a sinner . . .", or, "*We know* that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man we know not whence he is . . ." They knew everything, and the people did not know anything. They were the teachers and everyone else were the ignoramuses. Paul points out the blindness of the Jewish teachers in Romans, the second chapter. The Jews gloried and were secure in the belief that they were the guides of the blind, yet they themselves did not practice what they taught as light.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians (II Cor. 3) that even in his day the Jews were still blinded by the veil of prejudice—they refused to see that the Old Covenant was done away in Christ. ". . . the god of

this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ should not dawn upon them." Jesus wisely pointed out these self-righteous men as "blind guides trying to lead the blind . . ." and both would fall into the pit. **NO MAN IS SO BLIND AS ONE WHO WILL NOT SEE! HOW MANY TIMES MIRACLES WERE WROUGHT BEFORE THE VERY EYES OF THE PHARISEES, BUT THEY WOULD NOT SEE!**

Conclusion

I. WHAT CAUSES SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS?

- A. Materialism (cf. Isa. 56:10, 59:10). The Jewish national eye was so full of materialism that it was utterly blind to God. Take any American weekend or, more especially, national holiday, and you can see the same blindness. Our eyes are so full of tinsel, gifts, food and wanton pleasure that we cannot possibly see God. God's solemn warning to the Jews before they possessed the promised land was, "Beware lest after you have eaten, builded fine houses, increased your flocks and silver and gold . . . beware lest your heart be lifted up and you forget Jehovah thy God."
- B. Fear! Fear of what will be done to us or fear of what we will have to do if we allow our conscience to be convicted and follow Jesus. Herod's fear of the truth caused him to put John the Baptist in prison and to death. Felix's fear of the truth caused him to put off listening to Paul (Acts 24:25). Agrippa's fear of becoming a Christian and giving in to the truth and giving up his sensual way of life caused him to reject Paul's message.
- C. Self-righteousness and prejudice and hate! "If ye were blind, ye would have no sin: but now you say, "We see: your sin remaineth." "The whole have no need of a Physician, but the sick do . . . I came not to call the righteous unto repentance but the sinners . . ."

II. HOW MAY ONE HAVE SPIRITUAL SIGHT?

- A. Purity and humility! "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The blind beggar was honest, pure, innocent, guileless and thus his spiritual eyes were opened along with his physical eyes.
- B. Faith! "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27). Moses saw even that which was invisible through eyes of faith!

- C. Courage! One thing is certainly true of the blind beggar—he was a brave man. He knew quite well the consequences of declaring Jesus to be a good man—a prophet. But he made his statement and took his stand. It was as if he said: "I am bound to believe in Him, I am bound to take my stand by Him because of all that He has done for me . . ." We are reminded of Martin Luther when summoned before the Catholic hierarchy and commanded to recant and return to the Roman church—Luther said, "Here I stand, I can do no other, God help me."
- D. Loyalty to Christ always brings greater revelation and spiritual insight. This man was rewarded for his faith by a further revelation of Jesus. When the Jews had cast him out of the temple, the Lord of the temple went searching for him and found him. **IF ANY MAN'S CHRISTIAN WITNESS SEPARATES HIM FROM THE WORLD, IT ALWAYS BRINGS HIM CLOSER TO JESUS CHRIST.** It is to the man who is true to Him that Jesus most fully reveals Himself. Loyalty to Jesus may well bring persecution and scorn at the hands of men, but the reward of loyalty is a closer walk with Christ and an increasing knowledge of the wonder of Christ.

III. THIS CLOSER WALK CAN BE YOURS . . . THIS SPIRITUAL SIGHT CAN BE YOURS

- A. By obedience to His will (cf. John 7:17). The more we know Jesus by doing His will, the greater He becomes to us personally. Why do you tarry, my friend?

CHAPTER TEN

The first half of Chapter Ten undoubtedly takes place just after the incident with the Pharisees and the man born blind—especially the beggar's excommunication in Chapter Nine. The discourses on the Door and the Good Shepherd are chronologically a continuation of the Feast of Tabernacles' discourses. But there is a very evident lapse of time near the middle of Chapter Ten. At verse 22 of this chapter we are suddenly transferred in time about three months forward to the Feast of Dedication. Between the Feast of Tabernacles (September) and Dedication (December), Jesus conducts an extensive ministry in and around Jerusalem (cf. Map #5, page 12). Between 10:21 and 10:22 Jesus sends the Seventy on an evangelistic campaign; visits the

home of Mary and Martha; retires to an oft-used place for prayer; dines in a Pharisee's home; preaches soul-stirring evangelistic sermons recorded in Luke 12 and 13; heals a woman bowed double in a synagogue, and teaches many parables. We continue our general outline:

II. The Word Manifested to the Jews and their rejection of Him, 1:19—12:50

D. Public Ministry, Third Year

2. Later Judean Ministry, 7:1—10:21, The Feast of Tabernacles

a. The Door of the sheep, 10:1-10

b. The Good Shepherd, 10:11-21

3. Later Judean Ministry, 10:22—10:42, The Feast of Dedication

a. Claims to Deity, 10:22-31

b. Evidence for Deity, 10:32-42

In the first half of Chapter Ten we have two allegories—the Door of the Sheep and The Good Shepherd. The word (10:6) by which John classifies the figure of speech used by Jesus is the Greek word, *paroimia*. This is not the Greek word used in other places in the New Testament for parable (*parabole*). Neither is *paroimia* the same in its form of expression as *parabole*. The *paroimia* is more like an allegory. D. R. Dungan, in his Hermeneutics textbook says, on pages 258-259, "The distinction in Scripture between a parable and an allegory is said to be, that a parable is a supposed history, and an allegory is a figurative application of real facts." A parable is an extended similitude (expressed comparison), while an allegory is an extended metaphor (implied comparison).

In the interpretation of allegories the tendency is usually, as with all figurative language, over-interpretation rather than under-interpretation. That is, most interpreters tend to manufacture and extend points of analogy which the author did not intend to include in the lesson of his allegory. Any good hermeneutics book will give a number of rules to follow in interpreting allegories. We mention just a few of the most important ones:

- a. Be very careful not to demand too many points of analogy.
- b. Let the author give his own interpretation.
- c. Remember, figures of speech are not always used with the same meaning everywhere in Scripture.
- d. Let the literal facts of everyday life be made to assist in the interpretation of figurative language.

- e. Allegories may explain allegories (which is exactly what we have in John 10:1-21—two allegories; the first evidently misunderstood and the second given in an attempt to clarify the message of the first).

The very evident purpose and message of these two allegories is a strong contrast between Jesus as the Door of security and peace and the Good Shepherd of compassionate trustworthiness with the false, insecure, unloving, untrustworthy Pharisees who claimed to be shepherds of the sheep. Such a contrast—between Jesus and those who claim to be shepherds—is very appropriate for our day.

THE DOOR OF THE SHEEP

Text 10:1-10

- 1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.
- 2 But he that entereth in by the door is the (or, *a*) shepherd of the sheep.
- 3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.
- 4 When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.
- 5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.
- 6 This parable (or, *proverb*) spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.
- 7 Jesus therefore said unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.
- 8 All that came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.
- 9 I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture.
- 10 The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.

Queries

- a. Why does Jesus use this particular figure (The Door) to teach at this particular time?
- b. Is Jesus referring to Himself as both the Door and the Shepherd in the first two verses?
- c. Does the "salvation of verse 9 and the "pasture" have any connection with the "life . . . abundantly" of verse 10?

Paraphrase

I assure you most solemnly that the one who does not lead the sheep into the sheepfold through the Door, but enters deceitfully by climbing into the fold some other way, that one is a thief and a robber. But the one leading the sheep through the Door is a true shepherd of the sheep. Unto him the door-keeper opens the door and the sheep heed his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has firmly started all of his own on the way to pasture, he goes in front of them leading them and the sheep follow him because they recognize him as a true shepherd. They will never follow a stranger, but to the contrary, they will flee from him because they do not want to know or give heed to the voice of strangers. This allegory Jesus told them, but they did not understand what He was saying to them. So Jesus said again to them, I assure you most solemnly, I Myself am the Door of the sheep. All others who come elevating themselves before me in eminence are thieves and robbers, but the true sheep heed them not. I Myself am the Door. If anyone enters into the sheepfold through Me he shall be saved, and he shall go in and out freely enjoying peace and security and he shall find pasture upon which to feed his soul. The thief comes only in order that he may steal and kill and destroy; I came that the sheep may have life and that they may have it in overflowing abundance.

Summary

Jesus first hints that those claiming to be shepherds of Israel are not entering by the Door and are thus not true shepherds but strangers, thieves and robbers. Then He states plainly that He is the Door and those entering the fold through Him shall be secure and find substance.

Comment

The figures (Shepherd, Sheep, Sheepfold, Hireling) used by Jesus in these allegories should have been familiar enough to the Jews. Read these Old Testament references for yourself to see why Jesus could expect the Jews to understand His allegory: Num. 27:17; I Sam. 17:34-36; II Sam. 12:3; I Kings 22:17; Psa. 23, 79:13, 80:1, 95:7; Isa. 40:11; Jere. 23:1; Ezek. 34; Zech. 10:2, 11:17, 13:7, and others to be found in your concordance.

There are a number of reasons why we believe Jesus was not referring to Himself as The Shepherd in these first ten verses of Chapter 10. First, the main idea is to show that those rulers who had excommunicated the beggar (chapter 9) were not, as they claimed to be, true shepherds of God's flock—because they refused to lead the

sheep through the true Door! Secondly, as the marginal note of the A. S. V. text shows, the definite article *the* (verse 2) before the word *shepherd* may be supplanted by the indefinite article *a*—making verse 2 to read “. . . he that entereth in by the door is *a shepherd* of the sheep.” In fact, the definite article is omitted in the best Greek manuscripts. Thirdly, Jesus makes a point of referring to Himself as the Door in verses 1 through 10 and then makes a point of emphasizing Himself as The Shepherd in verses 11 through 21.

Usually the sheepfolds were community edifices wherein each shepherd of the community would shelter his flock by night. They were large enclosures walled by stone walls and sometimes large briars or thorns were secured to the top of the wall to fend off thieves. These folds were protected by a strong door of which only the porter (door-keeper), who was either paid or took turns with other shepherds, held the key. The porter knew the various shepherds and would immediately open the door for the shepherds who has led their sheep in through the door. Each shepherd knew each of his own sheep by name—and all his sheep knew their shepherd's voice from any other! The true shepherd, then, must first lead the sheep into the fold by the door; the true shepherd is also recognized by his own sheep. The one who proposes to get into the fold by some other way than the Door is very evidently a stranger, thief and robber. He is both crafty and violent, and the sheep flee from him. Sometimes there were sheepfolds of a less imposing structure out in the fields and upon the hills. They had lower walls and were without doors. The shepherds themselves lay down across the entrance gap at night and literally became the door of the sheep. The point, we reiterate, is this: there is no rightful access into the fold except by the door, and any who enter any other way are strangers and have no intention but to steal or destroy.

Jesus had for two years boldly presented Himself as the Way to God—the Way to Life. The Pharisees and rulers of the Jews who claimed to be the spiritual shepherds of God's people violently rejected Him and deceitfully went among the flock stealing and destroying. A prime example of such rejection of the Door was just experienced by Jesus when the blind beggar was excommunicated because he dared to confess Jesus as one sent from God. The beggar was manifestly one of the true sheep for he saw through the hypocrisy and false shepherding of the Pharisees—he knew not their voice, for they, with one voice, contradicted plain evidence of Jesus' Divine nature.

Thus as Jesus speaks to the crowds at the Feast of Tabernacles, He distinguishes both the true shepherds and the true sheep. The true shepherds of God's flock "go before" the flock—that is, they lead—they do not drive. However, as is intimated in verse 4, it is sometimes necessary for the shepherd to be firm with unwilling sheep for the sheep's own good.

The sheep, on the other hand, are to recognize the shepherd's voice and follow him. They are also to beware the false shepherd and robber and are to flee from him.

Now this writer believes that definite application may be made of these allegories to both the elders of the New Testament church and the members of the church. A quick survey of the duties and responsibilities of both elders (Acts 20:28-32; I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11; Heb. 13:17) and the responsibilities of the members of the church toward the elders (Heb. 13:7, 17) will substantiate this application. The elders must, to be true shepherds of God's flock, lead the people into the fold through the Door. True elders should take individual interest in each member, knowing them by name and by need. He should be firm with the sheep when necessary. The members are to willingly submit to the leadership of the shepherds because they know them and trust them.

The people standing about Jesus as He taught did not understand His allegory, so He said plainly, "I, Myself, am the Door of the sheep." He is, indeed, the only access men have to the Father's fold. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and no one comes to the Father but through Him (cf. John 14:6). Through Him we have access unto the Father (cf. Eph. 2:18, 3:12; Rom. 5:2).

In verse 8 there is no reference to Moses or the Prophets as being thieves simply because they came before Jesus in the matter of time, for they believed in the Christ and sought to lead men to faith in the Christ (cf. Heb. 10:24-27; I Pet. 1:10-12). Jesus is naming *all* those who make themselves and their schemes pre-eminent to Him as thieves and robbers. The Lord is primarily aiming this condemnation toward the self-seeking, materialistic, self-righteous Pharisees and Sadducees who sought to intimidate the sheep and destroy the flock and all this by "climbing up some other way" than through the Door.

We cannot agree with Lenski that verse 9 refers only to the shepherds entering in, finding salvation and going in and out to pasture. In the first place, Jesus says, "If *any* man enter in . . ." Secondly, in the sentence immediately preceding verse 9, Jesus is concerned with the safety of the sheep (v. 8).

And so Jesus assures His listeners that if *any* man will come to the Father through Him, that man shall be saved. He will be given life and that presently and in abundance. In his everyday "goings in and goings out" such a man will be led into green pastures and beside the still waters. The poor beggar had just been cast out of the synagogue and deprived of spiritual security, but Jesus was showing him and others the "new and living way." The thieving shepherds come to steal, kill and destroy the sheep, but Jesus came as the Door of the sheep to bring life and more than life—life overflowing. The word used for "abundantly" is *perisson* and is related to the word used in John 6:13 to speak of the abundance left over from feeding of the five thousand. Barnes explains it this way, "They shall not merely have life—simple, bare existence—but they shall have all those super-added things which are needful to make life eminently blessed and happy." Hendriksen comments, "These sheep receive freedom from the guilt, the misery, and the punishment of sin. Abundance—the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, the peace of God that passes all understanding—is their portion, here in principle, by and by in perfection." See our comments on John 5:24 concerning the enjoyment of eternal life in this present world (Gospel of John, Vol. I, page 188). Remember the Beatitudes for the promises of happiness and blessedness for those who come to God on Jesus' terms (cf. Matt. 5:1-12).

Quiz

1. What lapse of time occurs in chapter 10?
2. What is an allegory and what is the biggest danger in interpreting one?
3. Give at least three Old Testament references to the figure of shepherds and sheep and give the gist of each reference.
4. How do we know that Jesus is not referring to Himself as the shepherd in these first ten verses?
5. What is the great contrast presented by this first allegory—the Door?
6. What application may be made of this allegory to the N.T. church?
7. What is the meaning of ". . . have life, and have it abundantly"?

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Text 10:11-21

11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep.

12 He that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf snatcheth them, and scattereth them:

13 he fleeth because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

14 I am the good shepherd; and I know mine own, and mine own know me,

15 even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, (or, *lead*), and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become (or, *there shall be . . .*) one flock, one shepherd.

17 Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again.

18 No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power (or *right*) to take it again. This commandment received I from my Father.

19 There arose a division again among the Jews because of these words.

20 And many of them said, He hath a demon, and is mad; why hear ye him?

21 Others said, These are not the sayings of one possessed with a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?

Queries

- a. Why the contrast between the good shepherd and the hireling?
- b. Who are the "other" sheep, not of that fold?
- c. What is so important about Jesus' laying down His life that causes the Father to love Him?

Paraphrase

I, Myself, am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd willingly lays down his very soul on behalf of the sheep. The hireling, who is neither the true shepherd nor the owner of the sheep, when he sees the wolf coming, deserts the sheep and runs away—and the wolf attacks the flock and scatters them—because the hireling is what he is—one who cares not for the welfare of the sheep. I, Myself, am the Good Shepherd; I know those that belong to Me, and those that are mine know Me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father. My life I willingly lay down on behalf of the sheep. Now I have other sheep which are not of this particular fold; unto them also must I become Shepherd and they shall hear and heed my voice and all

who heed my voice will become in equality one Flock on the basis of their heeding and obeying one Shepherd. This is the reason why the Father loves Me—because I willingly suffer death in order that I might be resurrected from the dead! No one has the power to take it from Me, but to the contrary I, Myself, voluntarily give it up. I only have authority to lay it down and I only have authority to take it up again. I received this charge from My Father.

There came a division again among the Jews on account of the words which Jesus had spoken. Many of them were saying, He has a demon in him and is insane—why do you listen to Him? But others were saying, at the same time, These are not the words of one being possessed of demons. A demon-possessed person does not have the power to open the eyes of one born blind, does he?

Summary

The Lord has, in the previous section, contrasted the evil shepherds with good shepherds in general. Now He makes the contrast even more vivid by casting alongside the hireling the One and Only, Good Shepherd of the sheep—Himself. His relationship to the sheep is like that of His Father to Himself. He willingly sacrifices Himself for the sheep.

Comment

The syntactical arrangement of the first sentence of verse 11 in the original is good Greek idiom to stress both the pronoun and the adjective. In other words, the original Greek would be translated literally, "I, Myself, am the shepherd, the good shepherd . . ." Both "I" and "good" are stressed. In the preceding section (vs. 1-10) Jesus contrasted the evil shepherds (the Pharisees) with good shepherds in general—but now the distinction is made even more vivid by contrasting all who propose to be shepherds with The One Good and Faithful Shepherd.

The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. After meditation upon this statement, we begin to see that there is more involved here than the mere sacrificing of a ransom—as profoundly sublime as that is itself! Inherent in His goodness as *The* Shepherd is the fact that *only His* life as a ransom would be efficacious. Other shepherds of the flock might indeed willingly lay down their lives, but none would bring salvation and safety to the flock through their sacrifice!

Now the hireling is described. Hireling is simply "one who receives wages for his labor." He may be a good hireling or an evil hireling

Moses and Paul were under-shepherds of God's flock who received wages for their labors and they were hired men with a large measure of the love and concern of the Good Shepherd in their hearts for the sheep. But the Pharisees and Sadducees were mercenary, evil hirelings whose primary concern was not for the sheep but for the wages. The sheep do not belong to the hireling—he has no personal relationship to them, nor will he tender any personal commitments to them. The hireling is not willing to give up himself for the sheep when they are attacked, but "looks out for 'number one'"—flees to preserve his own safety. Read Ezekiel 34:1-10 for God's condemnation of the hireling shepherds.

We quote here from an anonymous Palestinian traveler of many years ago—a beautiful illustration of a good shepherd:

"It was while riding through the low hills covered with this vegetation, and coming out on the blighted flats of the Dead Sea, that one of those pictures passed before me which are ever after hung up in the mind's gallery among the choicest of the spoils of Eastern travel. By some chance I was alone, riding a few hundred yards in front of the caravan, when, turning the corner of a hill, I met a man coming toward me, the only one we had seen for several hours since we had passed a few black tents some eight or ten miles away. He was a noble-looking young Shepherd, dressed in his camel's-hair robe, and with the lithesome, powerful limbs and elastic step of the children of the desert. But the interest which attached to him was the errand on which he had manifestly been engaged on these Dead Sea plains from which he was returning. Round his neck, and with its little limbs held gently by his hand, lay a lamb he had rescued, and was doubtless carrying home. The little creature lay as if perfectly content and happy, and the man looked pleased as he strode along lightly with his burden; and as I saluted him with the usual gesture of pointing to heart and head, and the 'Salaam alik!' (Peace be with you!), he responded with a smile and a kindly glance at the lamb, to which he saw my eyes were directed. It was actually the beautiful parable of the Gospel acted out before my sight. Every particular was true to the story; the Shepherd had doubtless left his 'ninety and nine in the wilderness,' round the black tents we had seen so far away, and had sought for the lost lamb till he found it, where it must quickly have perished without his help, among those blighted plains. Literally, too, 'when he had found it, he laid it on his shoulders rejoicing.'"

What a high ideal the Good Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd (I Pet. 5:4), has set for all his under-shepherds! Elders are, by divine appointment, shepherds of God's flock under His Chief-Shepherdship. In our opinion, deacons, evangelists and teachers should be considered in some sense shepherds, inasmuch as they feed (teach) and minister to the flock. Those who desire the awesome responsibility of shepherding God's flock need to remember that they "watch in behalf of the souls of the sheep as they that shall give account" (cf. Heb. 13:17). The under-shepherd is to "feed the flock of God" and protect it against wolves both from within and from without (cf. Acts 20:26-32); he is to accept the oversight willingly and not by constraint, to do it eagerly and not for love of money, not to use the position for the exercise of power, and to be an example to the flock (I Pet. 5:2-3). One of the qualifications for elders is that they must "not be greedy of filthy lucre." The ministry or the eldership is not to be considered as a calling on the basis of "pay scale." The Lord is not interested in hirelings (those interested primarily in their wages). This does not mean, however, that ministers should not be paid a living wage. When the Lord *ordained* "that they that proclaim the gospel should live of the gospel" (I Cor. 9:14), He intended that the man who labors in the kingdom is "worthy of his hire." We should never think of the minister's salary as simply a gift—if he labors he earns, and is worthy of, his hire.

Another characteristic of the Divine Shepherd is held up for an example in verses 14 and 15. The Good Shepherd knows His own sheep and His sheep know Him, just as the Son knows the Father and the Father knows the Son. And what is this *knowing* relationship between the Father and the Son which is to be exemplified in under-shepherds and the flock? It is a union of wills, purpose and works (cf. John 5:19-23 and our comments, Vol. I, pp. 184-186). There is absolute harmony and oneness. The Father was constantly aware of His Son's needs and sustained Him every moment—when Jesus felt pain or hunger the Father's heart went out to Him. When Jesus knew joy, the Father rejoiced. On the other hand, the Son knew the Father's will and found exceeding joy in doing His will (cf. John 8:29). Now, the Good Shepherd knows His sheep individually and knows their needs better than they themselves—He is constantly sustaining them. Those who are true sheep of the Good Shepherd hear His voice and are united with Him in will, purpose and work—they obey Him for they trust Him as the Shepherd of their souls. This characteristic is

applicable, also, to under-shepherds (elders and ministers) and to the flocks which they serve. The matter of shepherding the Lord's flock and being a member of the Lord's flock is a reciprocal arrangement. The under-shepherds should *know* their flock as much as possible, like Jesus knows them. The members of the flock should *know* the voice of their under-shepherds the same as Jesus was in harmony with His Father's will! "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17). When elders are to be chosen to act as Christ's under-shepherds, this allegory of the Good Shepherd, the hireling, the Door of the Sheep ought to be studied and applied:

" . . . the flock suffers from a double danger. It is always liable to attack from outside from the wolves and the robbers and the marauders. It is always liable to trouble from the inside from the false shepherd. The Church runs a double danger. It is always under attack from outside. It often suffers from the tragedy of bad leadership, from the disaster of shepherds who see their calling as a career and not as a means of service. The second danger is by far the worse; because, if the shepherd is faithful and good, there is a strong defense from the attack from outside; but if the shepherd is faithless and a hireling, then the foes from outside can penetrate into and destroy the flock. The Church's first essential is a leadership which is based on the example of Jesus Christ." (The Gospel of John, Vol. II, Daily Study Bible, by William Barclay.)

It is very evident in the incident of the man born blind and the Pharisees (John 9) that the supposed shepherds of Israel did not *know* the sheep (the blind man) as the Good Shepherd would have them know—they were hirelings. Further, once the stubborn unbelief and obstinate ungodliness of the Pharisees was revealed, the blind man recognized them as false shepherds and did not know them (obey them) as his spiritual shepherds.

His contrast throughout this allegory has been between evil shepherds and good shepherds, and finally, *The Good Shepherd*. A big difference between the two has been their concept of who are and who are not true sheep. Now in verse 16 Jesus looks ahead a few short months when the "middle wall of partition" will have been broken down and the Gentiles will be led into the "one flock." The

Jewish spiritual leaders refused to accept this idea from the very beginning of Jesus' ministry (cf. Luke 4:16-30). The uniting of Jew and Gentile into one flock was plainly foretold in their prophets (cf. Isa. 56:8 and Ezek. 34:23). The Gentiles were not to be gathered into the Old Covenant "fold," but both Jew and Gentile would be led into a New Covenant "flock." It was not intended that the Gentiles be led into the "fold" of Judaism—the Old Covenant was intended exclusively for the Hebrews (cf. Deut. 5:1-3; Rom. 3:19; Eph. 2:11-18).

When Jesus said "I have," He is manifesting divine foreknowledge. It is not a predestination in the sense that He has made an absolute and irrevocable choice of some and passed over others. The sovereign will of man is not violated in foreknowledge. His foreknowledge and man's will is exemplified in Judas, the traitor, whom Jesus foreknew, while Judas very evidently exercised his own free will in betraying Him.

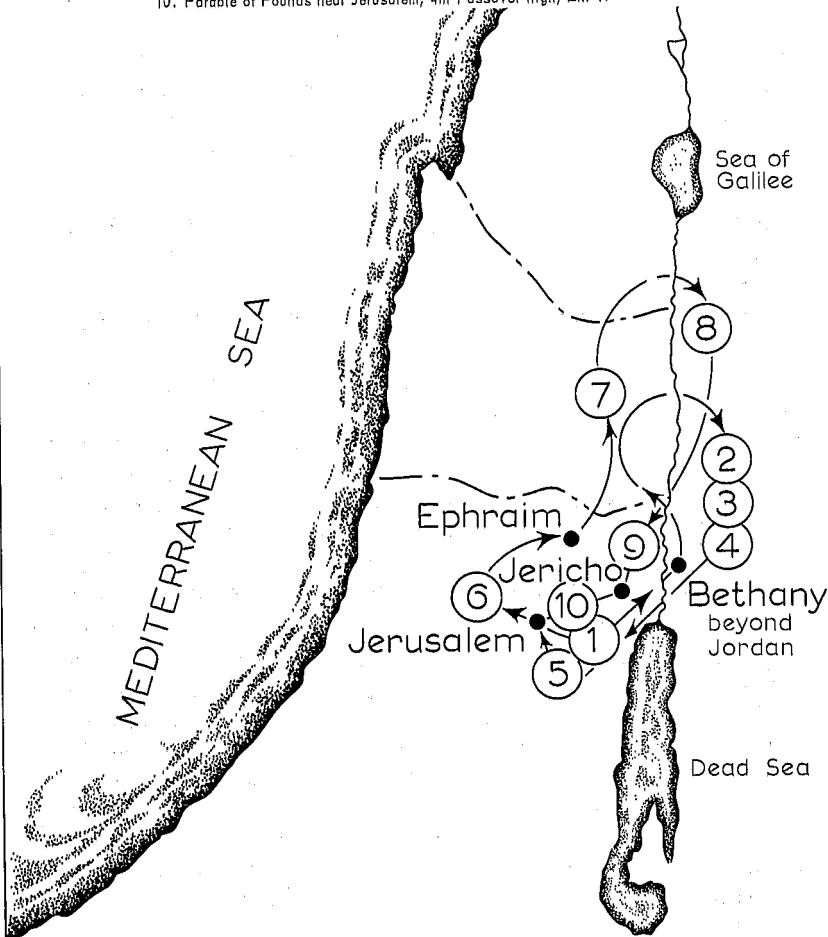
And so Jesus, through His apostles, went out into the wilderness of heathendom and led the strays and the outcasts into the one flock (cf. Acts 9:15, 22:21). They did gladly hear His voice through the apostles and many thousands obeyed (cf. Rom. 1:5, 8; Eph. 1:15; Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:3-4).

The important phrase of verse 16 is: ". . . and they shall become one flock, one shepherd." Jesus sees the unity of the future church. Most commentators on this verse hold to a mystical, invisible unity only as the inference of "one flock, one shepherd." It is true that Christians are one in Christ, held together by a spiritual bond which is stronger and higher than any visible structure. But it is also true that this spiritual unity must, by its very nature, express itself in a visible unity of doctrine and worship according to the divine standard in the New Testament (cf. Eph. 4:1-16).

This is not an enforced unity—held together by a great superstructure or "World Church" organization. This is a unity based on faith and love where all the true sheep hear, answer and obey one shepherd. This oneness is based on loyalty to Jesus Christ and His person. The very foundation for Christian unity is in all the "sheep" hearing and obeying "one Shepherd," even Jesus. It is as simple as this: "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15), and, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). An intelligent, believing, obeying, sacrificing love for Christ and His Body will result in unity!

MAP NO. 6—THIRD YEAR, LATER PEREAN MINISTRY (about 3 months)

1. Feast of Dedication, Jerusalem; attempts to kill Jesus; retires to Bethabara (place of His baptism), Jn. 10
2. Perea; journey through cities and villages; few saved, Jn. 10
3. Home of a Pharisee; rules for feasting, Lk. 14
4. Place unknown; parables of lost sheep; lost coin; lost son; Lazarus and Rich man; Lawyer's question, Lk. 15 & 16
5. Receives call to come to Bethany; raises Lazarus; Jews seek to kill both, Jn. 11
6. Retirement to Ephraim with 12 disciples, Jn. 11
7. Journey through borders of Samaria; Galilee, Perea; heals ten lepers, Lk. 17
8. Sermon on time of Kingdom; teaching on Divorce; little children; Pharisee and publican; rich young ruler; parable of laborers in vineyard; plainest prediction of crucifixion; James & John seek chief honors, Mt. 19-20, Mk. 10, Lk. 17-18
9. Jericho; two blind men healed; Zacchaeus, Lk. 19
10. Parable of Pounds near Jerusalem; 4th Passover night, Lk. 19



Verses 17 and 18 are full of meaning. Jesus willingly lays down His life for the very purpose that He may take it up again. We like the statement of Hendriksen in this connection, "The dying and rising again are *deeds*, not merely *experiences*." Jesus was not helplessly caught up in a mesh of circumstances over which He had no power. There was purpose behind His death and that purpose was the resurrection! He did not lose His life: He gave it. He was not killed: He chose to die. Every word and every deed of Jesus had a purpose within the plan of redemption and none of it was accidental (e.g., John 7:30, 8:20, 12:23-28, 13:1, 17:1, 18:4-11, 37, 19:11).

The Son willingly "emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (cf. Phil. 2:5-8). As an earthly father's love is the more drawn out when his child willingly and lovingly obeys—so "on account of this" willing obedience by Jesus, His Father's love is the more drawn out. "Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name;" (Phil. 2:9-11).

Jesus possessed the prerogatives of Divine Omnipotence. No one had power or authority to take His life. When He died it was because He allowed it (Matt. 26:53; Jn. 19:11)! And He permitted wicked men to kill Him for the very purpose of Himself taking up His life again in three days! The Father presented the Son with this charge or commission ("commandment"), the Divine plan for man's salvation (cf. Jn. 3:14, 8:28, 12:32). This death and resurrection of the Incarnate Word was the Father's scheme of redemption for man because God's wisdom and love decreed it so; it was the only way to win man's heart! The Son, being the Son, is in perfect accord (in knowledge, love, authority) with the Father (cf. our comments on Jn. 5:19-23, Vol. I, pp. 183-186). Although equal with the Father and free to do that which He wills to do, He wills to lay down His life and take it up again. His will is motivated, directed and controlled by His divine love and trust in His Father and by His love for mankind.

All of this dissertation concerning the Good Shepherd (especially the power to lay down life and take it up again) has been sort of a parabolic statement of divine equality with God by Jesus. Evidently many of the Jews present understood clearly that Jesus was claiming what would be preposterous for any mortal to claim—divine power over life and death. This could only mean to the Jews that He was

claiming to be God; in their eyes blasphemous, demonical or insanity. Many of them did indeed speak out and call Him insane and possessed of demons. Others, remembering the great miracle they had witnessed could not, inspite of the consequences of disagreeing with the rulers, deny what they had seen. The choice still remains today; the claims which Jesus makes through the historical records of the Gospel writers are either the claims of a deluded maniac, a deliberate liar, or the Divine Son of God. In light of the empirical, historical and absolutely trustworthy evidence, the first two alternatives are absurd! We shall discuss the evidence for His deity more fully in the next section. Suffice it to say here, there is overwhelming evidence of verifiable nature sufficient to convince any honest-hearted searcher that Jesus is all He claims to be!

Quiz

1. What is the evident purpose for declaring Himself to be The Good Shepherd?
2. What is the essential characteristic of the "hireling"?
3. What application may be made in the church from this allegory of the Good Shepherd and the sheep and the hireling?
4. What responsibilities do the elders have to the flock? The flock to the elders?
5. What is the very foundation stone to unity? How is unity expressed?
6. Was Jesus' death a mistake? Explain!
7. What alternatives present themselves in light of Jesus' claims?

CLAIMS TO DEITY

Text 10:22-31

22 And it was the feast of the dedication at Jerusalem:
 23 it was winter; and Jesus was walking in the temple in Solomon's porch.
 24 The Jews therefore came round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou hold us in suspense? If thou art the Christ, tell us plainly.
 25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believe me not: the works that I do in my Father's name, these bear witness of me.
 26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep.
 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:
 28 and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.

29 My Father, who hath given them unto me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

30 I and the Father are one.

31 The Jews took up stones again to stone him.

Queries

- a. Why the inferences of a particular season (vs. 22-23)?
- b. Why did the Jews say, ". . . tell us plainly"?
- c. Is Jesus declaring "eternal security" in verses 28-29?

Paraphrase

And the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple was in progress at Jerusalem. It was winter-time and Jesus was walking in the temple in the colonnade which is called Solomon's Porch. So the Jews encircled Him and demanded, How much longer are you going to keep us hanging in suspense? If you really are the Messiah, tell us so in plain words! Jesus answered them, I told you before and you do not believe. The miraculous works that I do in My Father's name bear sufficient testimony to prove my Messiahship. However, you do not believe because you are not willing to surrender to the implications of these works and become my obedient sheep. My sheep hear and obey my voice and I, in turn, recognize them as my own. My sheep follow me wherever I lead them, and I give them eternal life now. Furthermore, they will never, never lose this life for all eternity for no one is able to snatch them from the safety of my hand. My Father and I are equal; He gave me the sheep and He is certainly greater than all the enemies of the sheep—no one is able to snatch them from His hand. I and the Father are One!

At this declaration the Jews ran and picked up stones carrying them to Solomon's Porch to stone Jesus to death.

Summary

The hostile Jews demand an unequivocal statement from Jesus as to His Messiahship. He states plainly that He and the Father are One, especially in omnipotence. The Jews, unwilling to have a Messiah who is God in the flesh, prepare to kill Him. The awfulness of unbelief!

Comment

This section (10:22-31) takes us from the Feast of Tabernacles (September) to the Feast of Dedication (December). Three months of the ministry of Jesus is omitted by John between 10:21 and 10:22, but recorded by the Synoptics (cf. Map #5, page 12). The Feast

of Dedication came on the 25th of Chisleu (December). This is the beginning of winter in Jerusalem. The weather is stormy, with the rainy season well under way; snow has been known to fall on the mountain-tops of Judea at this time of the year. The seasonal note of verse 2 with the accompanying phrase picturing Jesus walking under the protection of the roof of Solomon's porch is very graphic.

The Feast of Dedication was founded on this wise: Upon the death of Alexander the Great, his Grecian world empire was divided three ways. Seleucus I, one of Alexander's army officers, obtained the satrapy of Babylonia. By later conquests, he became the ruler of Syria and the greater part of Asia Minor and founded the Seleucid era which lasted from about 312 B.C. to 65 B.C. (when Pompey reduced the kingdom of Syria to a Roman province).

During the era of the Seleucid rulers, one Antiochus Euphianes came to the throne at a time (175-164 B.C.) when all the Near East was under Seleucid rule. Antiochus Euphianes was a lover and devotee of Greek culture and very passionately so. He made up his mind that he would do away with Jewish religion and culture for good and introduce Greek culture and religion into Palestine. Some of the Jews welcomed Hellenization, but others were so patriotic and faithful to the Hebrew religion that many forfeited their lives in resistance. This great struggle, incidentally, gave birth to the sect of the Pharisees (also known as Separatists) who were men dedicated by vows to resist any heathen encroachment upon the Hebrew customs and religion. At first Antiochus tried to introduce his cultural renovation by peaceful methods, but found the resistance too strong. In 170 B.C., Antiochus attacked Jerusalem and it is said that 80,000 Jews perished and almost as many were taken away into slavery. About \$2,000,000 was stolen from the temple treasury. It became a capital offense to possess a copy of the Hebrew law, or to circumcise a child; and mothers who did circumcise their children were crucified with their children hanging around their necks. The temple courts were profaned with heathen intrusions; the temple chambers were turned into brothels; and the ultimate insult was when Antiochus ordered a sow (swine) sacrificed upon the altar of burnt offering in the temple of the Jews. This was the "straw that broke the camel's back," so to speak, and Judas Maccabaeus, with his brothers and an outnumbered and ill-equipped, but courageous army, arose to fight a war of six long, bloody years for independence. In 164 B.C., the first time for

about 400 years, the Jews were an independent kingdom. In this year the Temple was cleansed and purified of all heathen defilements. The altar was rebuilt; the robes and the utensils which had been stolen were replaced. The Temple was re-dedicated! It was to commemorate this re-dedication that the Feast of Dedication was instituted. I Maccabees 4:59 reads, ". . . the days of the dedication of the altar should be kept in their season from year to year, by the space of eight days, from the five and twentieth day of the month of Chisleu, with gladness and joy." Most historians point out the close similarity in the ritual of this feast with the Feast of Tabernacles (lighting of the great candelabra, singing of the Hallel, etc.).

There is a great nationalistic heritage connected with this festival. Furthermore, it was recent enough in Jewish history at Jesus' time to be extremely significant. Time and events in Jesus' day were pregnant with meaning. Many of the elders of the Jews could remember in their own lifetime the last days of the Maccabean freedom—then came the Roman oppression and domination. Then there came among the Jews a John the Baptist preaching repentance for the kingdom of God is near at hand; following him comes a miracle-working Nazarene claiming to be the Messiah.

Therefore, the intenseness of the challenge by the Jews in verse 24 is not difficult to understand. Political freedom and social reform is uppermost in their minds as they participate in this Feast of Dedication and hear hints and rumors concerning a Messiah.

B. F. Westcott says that the tense of the verb *ekuklosan* (encircled) indicates a definite, decisive act. They "had Him cornered" in a public place and this time He would not escape until they had what they wanted from Him—an unequivocal statement that He was the Messiah.

It is hardly in keeping with the context of this incident to maintain, as do some commentators, that the Jews surrounding Him were sincere in their question as to His claims. The multitudes, it is true, were hanging on His every word and calling Him the prophet (cf. Luke 12:1, 13:17). But John almost always means the rulers when he says "the Jews . . ." and the animosity of the rulers was coming to a fevered pitch (cf. John, Chapters 7 through 10:21 and see also Luke 11:53). All this makes us believe that these "Jews" who "encircled" Jesus were the rulers and their subordinates—all with a definite plan to trap Him and kill Him.

If they could not kill Him, they might at least discredit and denounce Him publicly. A literal rendering of the question of the Jews

in verse 24 would read, "Until when do you lift up our soul?" What these enemies probably aim at is a plain, straight-forward, not-to-be misunderstood statement, "I am the Messiah!" He was not behaving as they thought He ought—politically, militaristic—if He was the Messiah. Yet, though Jesus did not fulfill the popular concept of the Messiah, the multitudes were stirred up and of divided opinion concerning Him. Some were even opposing the rulers in favor of the Nazarene (cf. Jn. 7:12, 31, 43; 10:19-21). The rulers are actually challenging Jesus to either stop His meddling in morals, ethics, and doctrine, or come out and declare Himself plainly as their type of Messiah.

Jesus replies, "I did tell you, but you did not believe me!" Although He never said as plainly as they demanded, "I am the Christ," (except in two instances to individuals, cf. Jn. 4:26, 9:37), His works accomplished always in the name of the Father were plain enough—Nicodemus recognized Him as sent from God (cf. Jn. 3:2). Over and over again, Jesus told them that He and the Father were one (cf. Jn. 5:17-47; 8:16-19; 26-29, 42, 56-58; 10:11-18), and substantiated it with His miracles. The evidence was of the highest nature of credibility and verification—empirical! Their failure to accept Him as the Son of God was not due to insufficient evidence—it was their own sin! Greed and false pride led them into bigotry, prejudice and spiritual blindness. They did not believe because they did not *want* to believe! They were not like the humble, obedient, trusting sheep who listened to Jesus' voice (e.g., the Samaritan woman, John 4, and the blind beggar, John 9).

We have dealt with the subject of sheep and Shepherd in our comments on 10:11-18. However, there is one aspect of that relationship emphasized here in verses 27-29 that was not stressed in the previous section. Those who become obedient, trusting, and following sheep to the Good Shepherd will be *given* eternal life. The verb *didomi* (give) is in the present tense, indicating that one is given eternal life at the moment he becomes one of Jesus' sheep. Those who are believing in Jesus are possessing eternal life (cf. our comments, Jn. 5:24, Vol. I, p. 188). John the Apostle later wrote his First Epistle to give Christians assurance that they "might know that they have eternal life" (cf. I Jn. 5:13). They will never perish! Perish here does not mean annihilation, but eternal separation from the presence of God. The Greek idiom to express *never* is emphatic! Trans-

lated literally verse 28b would read, ". . . and they shall not perish, no, not even unto eternity!"

The main idea Jesus propogates in the last phrase of verse 28 ("and no one shall snatch them out of my hand") is the equality of power to protect the sheep He shares with the Father, Jehovah-God. He is leading up to the sublime, unfathomable, and astounding statement, "I and the Father are one." He wants these Jews to know that along with His promise of eternal life He promises omuiopotent protection. He can promise divine security because the Father is omnipotent and He and the Father are one! The Father gave Him the sheep and sent Him into the world with all His power and authority (again we refer you to John 5:17-47). Lenski says, "Does the promise of Jesus, standing there in human form before the Jews, sound preposterous, that no one shall snatch his sheep out of his hand? To snatch them out of *his* hand is the same as snatching them out of *the Father's* hand." Paul speaks of the safety of our newly given life in Colossians 3:3, "For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

These two verses (28-29) certainly do not offer proof texts for the unscriptural doctrine of "once in grace, always in grace," or the more dignified, "eternal security." Westcott says concisely, "If man falls at any stage in his spiritual life, it is not from want of divine grace, nor from the overwhelming power of adversaries, but from his neglect to use that which he may or may not use. We cannot be protected against ourselves in spite of ourselves . . . The sense of the divine protection is at any moment sufficient to inspire confidence, but not to render effort unnecessary." Paul states plainly that salvation is given by God, but requires a continuing effort of faith and works on the part of man (cf. Eph. 2:8-10; Phil. 2:12-13). Romans, the eighth chapter, combines the two ideas that when man submits to the leading of the Holy Spirit and puts to death the deeds of the body, there is no principality, power, nor any other creature which is able to separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. As the old adage has it, "No one can snatch us out of the Lord's hand, but we can certainly jump out ourselves!" Perhaps Jesus has in mind the poor blind beggar who, three months before, had been excommunicated from the temple. The Jewish rulers might cast him out, but no one would be able to snatch him out of the Good Shepherd's hand, for he was one of the true sheep.

Having inferred His equality with the Father in the matter of protection for the true believer, Jesus says straight out in verse 30, "I and the Father are one." Commentators go to great lengths to argue whether this oneness is oneness of wills and works or oneness in essence. Some even attempt to explain how the Father and Son may be two persons yet be One. It is useless to bring earthly analogies into play to try to explain this unique relationship. All are untrue and fall far short of explaining this unity. We are forced to see that Jesus speaks distinctly about two persons and yet, they are one! Here we must walk by faith and not by sight. It is better to accept the profound statements of Scripture on this subject, e.g., ". . . for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily . . ." (Col. 2:9) and concern ourselves with interpreting His will for our lives. Of one thing we may be certain, the Son and the Father are equally God (cf. John 1:1, 14, 18; 5:17-23; 14:8-11).

This declaration was certainly plain enough! Perhaps it was too much! Perhaps if Jesus had said, "I am your Messiah," they would not have been so violent. It seems that the Jews, in spite of clear prophecy to the contrary, had an idea that the Messiah would be simply a powerful, personable, politically oriented human being. They certainly were not looking for Immanuel ("God with us"). When one stood before them in mortal flesh and claimed, "I am equal with the Father," they would have none of it. They had no time for God among them, convicting them of their sins and preaching a spiritual kingdom—they wanted a Messiah that would give them food in their stomachs (cf. Jn. 6:26). Therefore, they ran (as the Greek verb implies) to some section of the temple where there were stones, probably piled for repairs, and carried them to Solomon's Porch ready to stone Him to death for alleged blasphemy.

Quiz

1. What is the history behind the Feast of Dedication?
2. Why did the Jews "encircle" Jesus near Solomon's Porch?
3. How did Jesus tell the Jews that He was the Christ?
4. Does verse 28 teach "once saved, always saved"?
5. Can you explain how The Father and The Son are One, yet two persons?
6. Why would these Jews suddenly become so violent as to want to kill Jesus for the simple statement, "I and the Father are one"?

EVIDENCE FOR DEITY

Text 10:32-42

32 Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from the Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?

33 The Jews answered him, For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?

35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came (and the scripture cannot be broken),

36 say ye of him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

37 If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.

38 But if I do them, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.

39 They sought again to take him: and he went forth out of their hand.

40 And he went away again beyond the Jordan into the place where John was at the first baptizing; and there he abode.

41 And many came unto him; and they said, John indeed did no sign: but all things whatsoever John spake of this man were true.

42 And many believed on him there.

Queries

- a. Were the Jews *really* concerned that Jesus might be blaspheming or were they about to stone Him for other reasons?
- b. Who were those whom God called "gods" (v. 35)? And why does Jesus use this in His defense?
- c. Why the strong appeal to His works (vs. 37-38)?

Paraphrase

Jesus spoke to them calmly, I have shown you many miracles of mercy and goodness from the Father; for which of those good deeds do you now propose to stone me to death? The Jews replied angrily, We are not going to stone you for a good deed, but because you blaspheme the name of God—you are a man and yet you make yourself out to be God! Again Jesus spoke, It is written in your law, is it not, "I said, Ye are gods?" If, then, Jehovah called those judges of Israel gods, unto whom Jehovah gave authority to administer His

word (and the Scripture cannot be altered by man), why are you saying of Him whom the Father manifestly set apart and commissioned to a divine task, "You are a blasphemer," when I say, "I am the Son of God"? If I am not doing the works equal to God, my Father, do not believe me. But, on the other hand, If I do such works, although you can not believe in me through my teaching, you ought to believe in me because of my works so that you may know and recognize that the Father is in me and I am in the Father. They again tried to lay hands on him but he went out from their midst.

So he went away across the Jordan river to Bethany beyond the Jordan, the place where John the Baptist had first been baptizing, and there He stayed awhile. Many people followed Him and came to Him there saying, John the Baptist did no miraculous signs, it is true, but all the things he testified concerning Jesus of Nazareth were indeed true! And many people expressed their belief in Him there.

Summary

Jesus appeals to the best type of evidence for His deity—empirical, experiential evidence. First, He reminds the Jews of the inviolability of Scripture. Second, He calls upon them to believe through what they themselves have seen. Then He attempts to retire from the public to prepare spiritually and physically for the final and terrible ordeal.

Comment

As the Jews came running with stones in their hands, surrounding Jesus in the Temple court, He reminded them calmly and deliberately of the many miracles of mercy and goodness which He had done. There are at least thirteen recorded miracles of mercy performed by Jesus before this time. He raised the dead, opened blind eyes, cleansed lepers, cast out demons and healed many other physical infirmities. But the whole point of the statement is, as Jesus said, these many good works were "from the Father." The question of Jesus, "for which of those works do ye stone me?" is designed as a challenge; a challenge for the Jews to stop and think about their accusations. Jesus is not resting His claim on philosophical abstractions, but on empirical evidence.

How blinded by bigotry and envy were these Jews! Their jealousy for their cherished traditions and commandments of men made them not only blind to evidence of deity, but cruel and impervious to suffering. When the lame were made to walk and the blind to see on

the Sabbath, the Jews had not the least joy in their hearts for the healed ones—they were only enraged that their Sabbath traditions had been ignored. And so here the Jews not only gave no thought to the compassionate nature of His miracles, but they also missed their primary value—evidence for His Divine nature. Furthermore, the political undertones of the time probably agitated their desire to arrest Jesus and later accuse Him as a revolutionary (cf. Jn. 11:47-53)—they needed a scapegoat.

Jesus' answer to the charge of blasphemy is twofold. He appeals to the authority of Scripture and then to empirical testimony of His miraculous works. The Scripture which Jesus quotes and calls "law" is in Psalms 82:6. Our Lord used a varied terminology to speak of the Scriptures as a whole, or in part. Sometimes He said, "the law and the prophets"; sometimes "the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms"; sometimes "it is written"; sometimes "ye have heard that it hath been said."

In Psalms 82:6 God is speaking through the psalmist of impending judgment upon those whom He had appointed judges by Divine commission. These judges and magistrates God called "gods." They administered justice as direct representatives of God Himself and the Word of God had come to them—thus God called them "gods." Jesus reminds them that their highly cherished "torah" called men "gods" and they had never protested that! Furthermore, the Scripture cannot be broken! That which had been written must be accepted as authoritative—the Scriptures themselves had spoken of some men as gods. How then could the Jews have the right to accuse Jesus of blasphemy when He says, "I am the Son of God . . ." especially since all of His miraculous works indicate that He has been sanctified and sent into the world by the Father.

The parenthetical statement of Jesus ("and the Scripture cannot be broken") has far-reaching implications. It is the unequivocal, dogmatic assertion by the Incarnate Word that the revealed, recorded and canonical Word is divinely inspired, authoritative and imperishable. Edward J. Young says, "The Scriptures . . . possess an authority so great that they cannot be broken. What they say will stand and cannot be annulled or set aside. If the Scripture speaks, the issue is settled once and for all . . ." (*Thy Word Is Truth*, by Edward J. Young, p. 27, pub. by Eerdmans.) The contemporary existential and subjective validation of the Word is crushed by this statement of Jesus. However, we must be careful in our application of this principle.

"Cannot be broken" does *not* mean that a portion of Scripture may not be fulfilled, abrogated, or made unapplicable to man by God Himself; e.g., the Law of Moses as law and covenant was abrogated and replaced by a new covenant. "Cannot be broken" *does* mean that the Scripture cannot be altered as to historical factuality, and applicability in its own dispensation!

In verse 37 Jesus turns to an appeal to empirically verifiable evidence. The works that He has done can be tested by men themselves through their own senses. God placed the spirit of man within a fleshly tabernacle at man's creation. It was, therefore, necessary that God reveal Himself (to a degree sufficient to establish faith) in a sensory perceptible form. Thus, all through the ages God made Himself and His will known by miracles and signs which man could see and hear and feel and touch. At the end of the age, God Himself became Incarnate in His Son and did His works among men that men might know (cf. I John 1:1-4).

Jesus makes an emphatic appeal to His works in verse 38. His works were of such a nature that there were only two alternatives for the Jews. If they could not accept Him as God-sent on the basis of His teaching, then they must accept Him on the basis of His works. Either accept His works as divine and then learn that His teaching is also divine, or be found rejecting the Messiah. Of course, as we have tried to point out before, there is the moral element to faith as well as the intellectual. That is, a man must want to believe in order to believe. He must exercise his will in belief as well as his mind. All the evidence in the world will not convert a man and cause him to believe in Jesus Christ if he doesn't want to believe. There has to be a balance of three characteristics in man before real faith comes; will, reason and obedience or action. Every proclaimer of truth and righteousness has found this to be the primary barrier to bringing men to living faith—the desire, the will to believe in Jesus and surrender to Him! This was one of the purposes of the spectacle of the cross. The divine love evinced there was intended to break stubborn wills and turn them to God . . . "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

This moral rebelliousness had so hardened the hearts of the rulers of the Jews that they would not even consider the miraculous and merciful works of Jesus. All they could think of was taking Him and using Him for their evil purposes.

But Jesus "went forth out of their hand." How this was accomplished is purely conjectural on our part and so we simply accept the statement of the gospel writer. He retired to the place where John the Baptist was at the first baptizing which was probably Bethany beyond the Jordan (cf. Map #1, Vol. 1, p. 17). He evidently stayed there for a considerable length of time seeking rest, private communion with the Father in the environment of one of His momentous spiritual experiences—His own baptism and audible approval by the Father. He was not there long, however, until the crowds of the common people who always followed Him found Him and came to Him.

The memories of the people were also vividly aroused as they gathered here and heard Jesus teach and saw His signs. They remembered all that the great man, John the Baptist, had said about this One. They remembered that the Baptist in all his greatness had done no signs—yet it was evident that he was God-sent. Thus the wisdom of Jesus' words and the divine nature of His works confirmed the testimony of the Baptist and many believed on Jesus there. Jesus then went on to exercise a short ministry in Perea before He returned to Judea at the call of the sisters of Lazarus (cf. Map #6, p. 117-A).

Quiz

1. Upon what kind of evidence does Jesus rest His claim to deity?
2. Why were the Jews blind to the evidence of His works?
3. What does ". . . and the scripture cannot be broken" mean?
4. Why was it necessary that God give evidence for His nature and will that man could see, hear, feel and touch?
5. What are the three characteristics of man that must be exercised in true belief?
6. Which of these three is of primary importance?

EXPOSITORY SERMON NO. TEN

THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP

John 10:1-16

Introduction

I. WHY DID JESUS USE THIS ALLEGORY?

- A. The Jewish rulers and Pharisees had just exhibited themselves as hirelings when they were supposed to be shepherds by casting out the blind man (John 9) (cf. also Ezek. 34:1).