

Lesson 2 – Jesus, the Good Shepherd

Text: John 10

Main Characters: God, Jesus, the Jews

Key Passages:

- John 10:11 – Jesus is the good shepherd; he would eventually lay down his life for his sheep.
- John 10:30 – Jesus asserted plainly that he and the Father [God] were one.

Main Storyline:

At some point (likely shortly after his confrontation with the Pharisees, if not directly following it), Jesus illustrated his teaching by comparing himself and his followers to a shepherd and his sheep. He started by explaining the difference between a shepherd and a thief: a shepherd will enter by the door while a thief will not, but rather climb up some other way. When the shepherd comes, the doorkeeper will open the door, and the sheep will know the shepherd's voice and follow him as he calls each one by name. On the other hand, they will not follow a stranger, but will run away from him, as they do not know his voice.

The people did not understand what Jesus was talking about, so Jesus continued by explaining the illustration. Jesus explained that he was the door of the sheep. If anyone enters by Jesus, he would be saved, go in and out, and find pasture. Those others who had come to the sheep were thieves and robbers, and the sheep would not hear them. Jesus had come so the sheep could have abundant life. The thieves had not come for any reason but to steal, kill, and destroy the sheep. Jesus said he was the good shepherd who would give his life for the sheep. Others, even a hired hand, upon seeing a wolf would flee and leave the sheep alone to be caught by the wolf.

Jesus also indicated that there were other sheep that would need to be gathered to the flock. There would eventually be one flock and one shepherd. Jesus told the people that the Father (God) loved him because he would lay down his life (of his own will) and take it again for the sheep. The Jews continued to be divided and confused by Jesus' teachings, as it was plain that Jesus was claiming to be from God.

In these things, Jesus was teaching how he would be the leader and caretaker for those people who would submit to following him. The important lesson to notice is that Jesus taught that he would eventually lay down his life for the sheep so that they might have life. Notice also that Jesus did not say that his life would be taken, but that he would give it by his own will. There are numerous parallels that can be drawn between this illustration and the relationship that Christ now has with his people today, Christians.

About three months before Christ's eventual crucifixion, the Feast of Dedication was being held in Jerusalem. Jesus had gone up to the temple, and the Jews had surrounded him, asking him to confirm plainly that he was the Christ (Messiah). Jesus explained that he had told them, but that they had not believed. Jesus said that the works that he had done in the Father's name had confirmed what he had said. They did not believe because they were not his sheep. Jesus' sheep had heard his voice and followed him. Jesus concluded his short lesson by saying, "I and my Father are one," affirming that he truly was the Son of God.

The Jews immediately took up stones in order to kill Jesus. Jesus asked them to explain, "For which of [these good works] do you stone me?" The Jews stated that they were not killing him because of his works, but because he had blasphemed God by making himself out to be God. Jesus rebuked the Jews by citing a passage from Psalm 82. Jesus put his message very simply to the Jews: "If I do not do the works of my Father [God], do not believe me; but if I do, though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I am in him." Still, the Jews did not believe Jesus, and they tried to seize him, but Jesus escaped to the place where John the Baptist had been baptizing at first. Many people realized that the things that John had said about Jesus were true, and they believed in Jesus.

Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) Jesus had so much compassion and love for his people that he was willing to lay down his life for them.
- 2.) We can know that Jesus is the Christ not only by what he said, but also by what he did (John 20:30-31).