

The Door & the Good Shepherd: Christ becomes the Gathering Center

John 10

John 10. The events of this chapter took place in two parts; vv.1-18 took place in the fall, and vv.19-42 took place in the winter of the same year. The Spirit of God brings these two discourses of our Lord together in this chapter because both have to do with the Good Shepherd and His sheep. The chapter is divided into four parts; the teaching on the Good Shepherd (vv.1-18), a resulting division among the Jews (vv.19-21), an encounter with the unbelieving Jews in Solomon's Porch (vv.22-38), and an encounter with believing Jews beyond Jordan.

Contents

- [Teaching on the Good Shepherd \(10:1-18\)](#)
 - [The Allegory: Entrance of the Good Shepherd into the Fold \(vv.1-6\)](#)
 - [The Door of the Sheep: Exit and Entrance \(vv.7-10\)](#)
 - [The Good Shepherd \(vv.11-18\)](#)
- [A Division Occurs Among the Jews \(10:19-21\)](#)
- [The Lord in Solomon's Porch: Encounter with Unbelievers, Not His Sheep \(10:22-38\)](#)
 - [Setting \(vv.22-23\)](#)
 - [Anti-sheep Marked by Unbelief \(vv.24-26\)](#)
 - [The Characteristics of the True Sheep of Christ \(vv.27-30\)](#)
 - [Controversy over Christ's Deity \(vv.31-37\)](#)
- [The Lord Beyond Jordan: Encounter with Many Believers, His Sheep \(10:39-42\)](#)

Teaching on the Good Shepherd (10:1-18)

John 10:1-18. In this section the Lord contrasts Himself as the true Shepherd of Israel (Psa. 121:4; Ezek. 34:31) with those who pretended to be shepherds of Israel. Three main points are developed:

1. *He came in by the door (vv.1-6).* He is qualified to be the true Shepherd because He came into the fold by the door, meeting all the qualifications for the Messiah.

2. *He is the door, in two ways (vv.7-10)*. He is leading the elect of Israel *out* of Judaism *into* Christian privilege.
3. *He is the Good Shepherd (vv.11-18)*. His character in contrast with the Pharisees is that of: (1) intimate knowledge of His own, and (2) laying down His life for His own.

The three doors of John 10. The idea of a door is used in three different ways in this chapter. All have something to do with the Lord Jesus.

1. **v.1** The door of entrance to the fold, where the fold is Judaism. The Lord entered through this door by fulfilling all the Old Testament scriptures and prophecies completely.
2. **v.7** The door of exit from the enclosure of Judaism. To exit before the Shepherd came would be apostasy.
3. **v.9** The door of entrance into Christian blessings.

The Allegory: Entrance of the Good Shepherd into the Fold (vv.1-6)

The Allegory. The Lord begins with an allegory of a shepherd coming to his own sheep and leading them out of the fold. It speaks of Christ coming to those of faith in Israel (e.g. the blind man, ch.9) and leading the remnant out of Judaism into Christianity. In order to lead sheep out of the fold, the shepherd first must come into the fold, and the proper entrance was through “*the door*” (v.1).

CHAPTER 10

1 Verily, verily, I say to you, He that enters not in by the door to the fold of the sheep, but mounts up elsewhere, “he” is a thief and a robber; **2** but he that enters in by the door is *the* shepherd of the sheep. **3a** To him the porter opens; and the sheep hear his voice; vv.1-3a In these verses we get three things that establish who the True Shepherd is:

1. He comes in the proper door. The door speaks of the scriptural qualifications for the Messiah, which only the true Shepherd would fulfill. When the Son came into this world, even though He was a Divine Person, still He submitted to all the Messianic requirements established by Jehovah in the Old Testament. His entrance through the door is fully detailed in Matthew’s gospel. His herald (Mal. 3:1), His place of birth (Mic. 5:2), His royal lineage (Matt. 1), His virgin birth (Isa. 7:14), the character of

His ministry (Isa. 42:1-4), the sphere of His ministry (Isa. 9:2), the manner of His presentation to Israel (Zec. 9:9), His betrayal (Zech. 11:12-13), His sufferings (Isa. 53), His time of death (Dan. 9:26) were all the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy. There were some “thieves and robbers” that entered the sheep fold, but they came in by another way; i.e. not in fulfillment of prophecy. These were false Messiahs; such as Theudas and Judas of Galilee (Acts 5:36-37). Their mission was to create a following of Jews after themselves... an action characterized by the Lord as “stealing the sheep”. But they did not meet the requirements for the Messiah.

2. The Porter opens to Him. This unnamed servant who operates the door is a picture of the Spirit of God; see [seven figures of the Holy Spirit in John's gospel](#). The action described as “the porter openeth” is the providential working of the Spirit of God to mark out Jesus as the Messiah. The begetting power of His incarnation was the Spirit of God (Matt. 1:18). His identification by John the Baptist (John 1:29-34), and the witness from heaven at the Jordan baptism (Matt. 3:16-17) was by the Spirit of God. This identification by the Spirit of God is what Paul calls His being “*justified in the Spirit*” (1 Tim. 3:16). Through the work of the Porter there was a small formation of sheep ready to receive the Shepherd when He entered the fold; for we read of His reception by a small remnant in Jerusalem (Simeon and Anna, Luke 2:25-38).
3. The sheep hear His voice. Those in Israel who truly loved God, the elect, responded to the “voice” or teaching of Jesus. An example is the two disciples of John who “heard him speak, and they followed Jesus” (John 1:37). The hearing of His voice indicates *faith*; the existence or the impartation of divine life... “*an hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard shall live*” (John 5:25). These sheep are those referred to as “*as many as received Him*” which were “*born of God*” (John 1:12, 13).

3b and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out. v.3b When the True Shepherd came to Israel, He was rejected by them, as we see over and over in ch.1-9. He is now calling His sheep to Himself and leading them out of the Jewish system which is doomed to judgment. That sentence of judgment pronounced at the end of Matthew's gospel “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Matt. 23:38) is a forgone conclusion in John's gospel. Before the Messiah came and was rejected, it would have been wrong for any Jew to leave Judaism. But now that the True Shepherd was stepping away, they had every reason to step away also. This work began when Christ was on earth, but was continued by His apostles after He went to heaven. Notice the order; He first puts the sheep into personal communion with Himself by calling them by name. Secondly, He leads them out of the fold by walking out with them attached to Him.

4 When he has put forth all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice. **5** But they will not follow a stranger, but will flee from him, because they know not the voice of strangers. vv.4-5 In v.4 we have an indication of another mode of getting His sheep out of the fold. It says He has “put forth” His own. The word means ‘to cast out’ or ‘eject’ and is the same word [G1544] as used in John 9:34 for the excommunication of the formerly blind man! This is helpful. Some sheep He leads out (v.3b) and others He pushes out (v.4) by allowing difficult circumstances. But whether drawn or pushed, the sheep are led by the Shepherd. The “sheep follow him, because they know his voice” indicating that the elect have a faculty within them that will respond to the Shepherd’s voice. By the same token, they have “an unction from the Holy One” (1 John 2:20) and can detect the voices of antichrists through being familiar with the Shepherd’s voice! We can be preserved through being wise concerning the good and simple concerning evil (Rom. 16:19). How gracious that He does not leave His sheep to their own wisdom, but “goes before them”. This is important because there are special dangers outside the fold. A fold derives its protection from the walls; but a flock gets its protection from the Shepherd. Israel was preserved in some ways from pagan influences, etc. by the protective wall (Isa. 5:2) of ordinances that separated them ceremonially. Naturally speaking, stepping outside the walls of Judaism is a risky move, making one vulnerable. But the Shepherd is enough to meet all these dangers.

Enemies of the Shepherd. This might be a good time to compare the various enemies or predators that could harm the sheep. The True Shepherd is the perfect opposite to all these characteristics! First, a few notes. The thief and the robber are engaged first to take sheep out of the fold of Judaism (v.1, v.8). The stranger gets involved after the true shepherd has led someone out of the fold but not through the True Door (v.5). The thief gets involved again (v.10) to steal sheep out of Christ’s flock. The hireling and the wolf act in turn to scatter the sheep (v.12). To summarize; a Jew in the fold should beware of the thief and the robber, a quickened soul (but not saved) should beware of the stranger, and those who are in the flock should beware of the thief, hireling, and wolf.

1. *The thief.* The thief is looking to “steal, kill, and to destroy”. A theft occurs any time there in an unauthorized taking of property from another; and usually craftiness or subtlety is involved. This type of enemy might refer to a heretical man, who would through “good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting” (Rom. 16:18), and draw sheep away from the rightful Shepherd. In the words of Paul, “of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:30).

2. *The robber*. Robbery is essentially theft accomplished through the use of physical force or fear. This might refer to a tyrannical overseer, one who dictates total control over the sheep, and views them, not as ones he can serve, but as ones who ought to serve him. Strictly speaking, the robber is only connected with the fold of Judaism. However, an example in a Christian context might be "*Diotrephes, who loves to have the first place*" known for refusing apostles and casting ones out of the assembly (3 John 9-10).
3. *The stranger*. The stranger is mentioned as using his *voice* to lead sheep astray, which indicates teaching or presenting doctrine. This type of enemy might refer to a false teacher. Peter warns that "there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies" (2 Pet. 2:1).
4. *The hireling*. A hireling is one who takes the place of oversight without a care for the flock. This type of enemy might refer to an indifferent overseer. He doesn't encourage the evil, but he doesn't resist it either. Paul exhorted the Ephesian elders; "take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers..." (Act 20:28). This may or may not be a true believer. It is one in the place of oversight without a true care for the flock. Wolves are allowed in on the hireling's watch.
5. *The wolf*. The wolf comes is from outside, not from the inside; "after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:29). This type might refer to an apostate infiltrator. Jude refers to them as "certain men crept in unawares" (Jude 4). The effect of the wolf is to "scatter" the sheep; i.e. to distract them from following Christ.

6 This allegory spoke Jesus to them, but they did not know what it was of which he spoke to them. v.6 This word "allegory" is different than "parable". An allegory is a description of one thing under the image of another, and they make principles easier to understand. Parables on the other hand are a comparison of two things, and were given to hide the meaning from those without faith (Matt. 13:13). This allegory sets forth truths concerning the Person of Christ, while parables set forth the kingdom, etc. In the synoptic gospels Jesus speaks with many parables, as a governmental consequence of His rejection by Israel. We get zero parables in John's gospel! But here we find that even an allegory is not understood by these religious leaders, because they were not His sheep.

The Door of the Sheep: Exit and Entrance (vv.7-10)

The Door of Exit from Judaism: Authority to Exit (vv.7-8)

7 Jesus therefore said again to them, Verily, verily, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. 8 All whoever came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them. vv.7-8 The Lord changes now to a new figure; a door. Not the “man-door” of the sheepfold, in the sense of Messianic qualifications, because that door is what He had already come through (v.2). Instead, it is a “sheep-door”, in two aspects. In vv.7-8 it is a door of exit from Judaism, in vv.9-10 it is a door of Christian privilege. The Lord mentions that all who ever came before Him to lead sheep away from Judaism were thieves and robbers; that is, they were not sent from God, and they were only interested in making themselves rich. They could not justify their reasons for leaving; but Christ as the true door gave His sheep authority to exit the fold. When Christ came, the fold was becoming more and more a den of thieves and robbers. What a remarkable difference, to have one in their midst speaking the truth from a pure heart!

The Door of Entrance into Christianity: Security & Liberty (vv.9-10)

9 I am the door: if any one enter in by me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and shall go out and shall find pasture. v.9 He repeats the expression; “I am the door”, but now in a different sense, not of exiting Judaism, but of entering something different for salvation and blessing. This is one of the great [“I am” statements](#) of John’s gospel. Three things we have through Christ the Door:

1. **Salvation.** Notice that the way is exclusive; “if any one enter in by me, he shall be saved”. The Jews believed that salvation came from keeping the Law, but here we find that it is through the glorious Person of Christ.
2. **Liberty.** The sheep in Christ’s flock are no longer restricted by a legal enclosure of laws and ordinances; they have liberty to “go in and out”. It reminds us of the liberty of sonship that we enjoy as a result of the indwelling Spirit (Gal. 4). See note below on “in and out”.
3. **Food.** The Shepherd will see to every need of His sheep. In His love, God has freely given us all things (Rom. 8:32). What a contrast to the false shepherds of Israel (Ezek. 34) who only cared about feeding themselves, and not the poor of the flock. Without doubt, the Christian’s food is Christ Himself!

Note: The general thought of “in and out” is liberty, but there have been several suggestions as to a more specific application. F.B. Hole suggested that the sheep move “in” for worship (Heb. 10:19) and “out” for service (Acts 8:4). L.M. Grant suggested that “in” is Christian truth (New Testament) and “out” is Jewish truth (Old Testament). Christ’s sheep can browse for pasture in *all* the Word of God!

10 The thief comes not but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I am come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly. v.10 The Lord now contrasts the motives of the Shepherd with those of His enemies. The thief comes to “steal” the enjoyment of our blessings, to “kill” any exercise for God, and to “destroy” the unity of God’s people. By contrast, the Lord had come to give His people [divine life](#) (John 5:25) but He doesn’t stop there. Old Testament saints had new birth, but the Lord told Nicodemus that those were but earthly things, and the heavenly things had to do with [eternal life](#) (John 3:12). This is why Jesus says “have [life] abundantly”. Abundant life is that same divine life, now in the power of the Spirit of God (John 20:23), and characterized by fellowship with the Father and the Son!

Three things are required to have Eternal Life:

1. (John 1) The Son must come and reveal God to man.
2. (John 3) The work of redemption must be accomplished.
3. (John 4) The Spirit of God must take up residence in the believer.

How could eternal life have been known by Old Testament saints? It couldn’t. None of these three conditions existed in the Old Testament.

The Good Shepherd (vv.11-18)

The Shepherd’s Sacrificial Love for His Sheep (vv.11-13)

11 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep: v.11 This is another of the great [“I am” statements](#) of John’s gospel. It is well known that a good shepherd would lay down at night in the doorway area as a protective measure against predators, as if to say to the sheep; “If a predator is going to get you, it will have to get me first.” It is in the laying down of a person’s life that their love is expressed; “hereby we have known love, because he has laid down his life for us; and we ought for the brethren to lay down our lives” (1 John 3:16). See also John 15:13. When we think of the Good Shepherd it brings before us the thought of His love. And where was His love manifested? at the cross.

But I believe it is even in a broader sense than at the cross, although surely that is the highest expression of it. John would not exhort us to lay down our lives in the sense of physical death only (1 John 3:16) and neither is the Lord's laying down His life a physical thing only. In a broader sense, a person lays down their life when they sacrifice personal ambition and resources, when they go out of their way for another, even if it is at some great cost or inconvenience to themselves. The Lord's every breath was drawn with unselfish motives. Nowhere was that seen greater than at the cross when He offered up Himself as "the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:2; Rom. 3:25). What a pattern for us! Note: this is also a pattern for those in assembly oversight.

Our song, then, forever shall be
Of the Shepherd who gave Himself thus;
No subject's so glorious as He,
No theme so affecting to us.

The Shepherd. As the One who *died* for us He is the GOOD SHEPHERD (past, John 10:11), as the One who *lives* for us He is the GREAT SHEPHERD (present, Heb. 13:20), and as the One who is *coming again* for us He is the CHIEF SHEPHERD (future, 1 Pet. 5:4)! These are three aspects of salvation.

12 but he who serves for wages, and who is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf seizes them and scatters the sheep. **13** Now he who serves for wages flees because he serves for wages, and is not himself concerned about the sheep. vv.12-13 The character of the hireling is brought in as a contrast to the Good Shepherd. While the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep, the hireling abandons the sheep in the hour of danger. The sheep do not rightfully belong to the hireling; "whose own the sheep are not". He has no vested interest in the sheep, he is not "concerned about them" because his interest is only in "wages". We know from nature that when a wolf comes to a flock of sheep, the first thing he does is scatter them. Then he finds a weak or young sheep, and singles it off, then kills it. The Spirit of God focuses us on the scattering part only. Why? because the subject here is attraction to the Person of Christ. Satan wants to distract the sheep from that attractive center. Also, the death of a sheep in a spiritual sense is not possible. Once we come into the flock through the door we are saved, and gain a security that is eternal; inasmuch as it says "they shall never perish" (v.28). Notice that the word "catch" or "seize" in v.12 is the same original word as "pluck" in vv.28-29. The wolf may come and seize the sheep who are in the care of hirelings; but he

cannot seize them out of the true Shepherd's hands.

The Antichrist will behave in a similar way towards "*the flock of slaughter*" (Zech. 11:7). When the terrible Assyrian ("the wolf") begins his sweep southward through Palestine (Dan. 11:40), the Willful King in Jerusalem will demonstrate that he is that "*foolish and idol shepherd that leaveth the flock*" (Zech. 11:17). But God will be over this circumstance, for He says "*I will drive thee from thy station*" (Isa. 22:19). After Antichrist is driven away, the True Shepherd of Israel will come to His ancient people, God will "*commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah*" (Isa. 22:21). Note that this is only an application.

Also, the Antichrist can be seen *typically* in the following ten persons: Abimelech (Judges 9), Saul (1 Samuel 8-31), Absalom (2 Samuel 15-19), Ahab (1 Kings 16-18), Ahaz (2 Kings 16), Shebna (Isaiah 22), Zedekiah (Jeremiah 39 & 52), Haman (Esther 3-7), Herod (Matthew 2), and the Hireling (John 10).

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The Mutual Knowledge of the Shepherd and His Sheep (vv.14-15)

14 I am the good shepherd; and I know those that are mine, and am known of those that are mine, **15** as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. vv.14-15 Now we come to something exceedingly precious. The KJV translation totally obscures the meaning of these two verses. The Lord is saying that the mutual knowledge of the Shepherd and sheep is of a Divine character, the same as the mutual knowledge between the Father and the Son! This is a blessing far beyond Israel's earthly hopes. This is what we mean by "a personal relationship with Christ" - to have a personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be conscious of His personal knowledge of us. This is something only possible through the indwelling Spirit of God. A Christian is one who knows the Lord, knows His heart, His character, His thoughts, His purposes; and who walks step by step in the conscious knowledge that they belong to Him! Again He returns to His sacrificial death; the expression of His love. Why bring it in here? Our communion with Christ came at a cost; He would remind us of that cost.

Bringing in Other Sheep to form One Flock around One Person (v.16)

16 And I have other sheep which are not of this fold: those also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, one shepherd. v.16 The Shepherd's love having been successively unfolded, He now proceeds to explain His great purpose to bring in "other

sheep [the elect among the Gentiles] which are not of this fold [Judaism]“ to form one flock around one Person. As if to say, “A love that will carry me into death for my sheep cannot be limited to this fold only; I’m going global with it!” The death of Christ has opened the flood-gates of Divine blessing. The “one flock” of Christ is not the same idea as “one body” of Christ. It is more the idea of “one family”. A body has the idea of the functioning of members, etc. but a family is more the idea of common fellowship and interests. But notice that it would be a future work; “*there shall be, etc.*” It refers to that work that began after the Day of Pentecost when “*God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name*” (Acts 15:14). There would not be two flocks (a Jewish flock and a Gentile flock) but *one* flock, and the gathering center would be the Person of Christ. In John 12:32 we find that Christ had to be “*lifted up*” in order for all men to be drawn to Him.

Flock vs. Fold. There are two different words used in v.16 for gatherings of sheep. The “*fold*” to which the Lord refers speaks of Biblical Judaism. A fold is an enclosure without a center. God’s people under Judaism were kept in line and held together by a “fence” of legal and restrictive principles. A “*flock*” on the other hand is a gathering with an attractive center. In Christianity we are not under law (Rom. 6:14), but we are brought into the fellowship of God’s Son. The Spirit of God personally indwells each believer, and ministers Christ to the heart. This produces the effect of being drawn to Jesus, the attractive center; and by this we are held together. In a fold, sheep are *pushed* together; in a flock, sheep are *drawn* together. In a fold, the sheep are there regardless of their desires; in a flock, the sheep are there because they desire it. In the words of F.C. Blount; “*A fold is a circumference without a center; but a flock is a center without a circumference.*” A fold derives its protection from the walls; but a flock gets its protection from the Shepherd.

The Intrinsic Value of the Son’s Death, His Divine Power & Perfect Obedience (vv.17-18)

17 [On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again.](#) v.17 Here we find that the death of Christ has afforded the Father an additional reason to love the Son! In John 3:35 we read that the Father always loved the Son, without a specific reason. But here it is love for Him on account of the intrinsic value of the Son’s life offered up to God as a propitiation. Notice that it doesn’t say “I lay down my life for my sheep”, because our portion does not come in here. Propitiation is that aspect of the cross that was all for God. On the cross the Lord Jesus glorified God in every attribute of His Person. In John 13:32 we find the immediate result of the finished work was Christ’s glorification “straightway”; but here in John 10 it is the debt of love produced in the Father’s heart by the sacrifice of Christ.

18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it again. I have received this commandment of my Father. v.18 The death of Christ was a voluntary sacrifice. It is true that man is guilty of the blood of Christ in the sense that they crucified Him, but the Spirit of God carefully guards that the Son laid His life down. We get this in John 19:33-36; “a bone of Him shall not be broken.” Not a bone was to be broken in fulfillment of Exodus 12:46. To break a bone of the lamb would introduce the thought of “crushing” or forcibly ending life. It is imperative that Christ laid down His own life. We have here also the fact that the Son had the power as a Divine Person to raise Himself from the dead. In fact, we find that the whole Trinity was involved in His resurrection: He was raised by His own power (John 2:19; John 10:17, Rom. 1:4), He was quickened by the Spirit of God (1 Pet. 3:18), and He was raised by the glory of the Father (Rom. 6:4). The last sentence of this verse brings out a beautiful balance. While the Son had the right to lay down His life and take it again as a Divine Person, yet He did not do it as such, but as the dependent, obedient Man! He did it all because He had “received this commandment of my Father”.

A Division Occurs Among the Jews (10:19-21)

19 There was a division again among the Jews on account of these words; v.19 The incredible truth of vv.17-18 drew out still deeper expressions of hatred from the Jews. Jesus had just declared His Father’s love for Him, and there were two different reactions to this. As a result, a division occurred. We read of three divisions (“schisma”) in John; (1) John 7:43 is a division over *His Person*; (2) John 9:16 is a division over *His works*; and (3) John 10:19 is a division over *His sayings*.

20 but many of them said, He has a demon and raves; why do ye hear him? **21** Others said, These sayings are not *those* of one that is possessed by a demon. Can a demon open blind people’s eyes? vv.20-21 The conclusion of the majority was that Jesus was possessed (“*He has a demon*”), and that on account of being possessed, His words could not be taken seriously (“*He raves*”). Others knew that such a conclusion was preposterous. How could a possessed man do such an act of goodness and power as to open the eyes of the blind? Satan cannot fight against Satan. Jesus did not “rave” (speak nonsense), it was the Jews that spoke nonsense.

The Lord in Solomon's Porch: Encounter with Unbelievers, Not His Sheep (10:22-38)

Setting (vv.22-23)

22 Now the feast of the dedication was celebrating at Jerusalem, and it was winter.

v.22 From chapter 7:1 - 10:20 we have the Lord's time in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. Now we jump forward two more months, to the end of the year.

The "Feast of the Dedication" also called the "Feast of Lights" occurred in the winter (John 10:22). It was not one of the feasts of Jehovah, but it began in the times of the Maccabees. After Antiochus Epiphanies desecrated the temple, it remained in a defiled condition for 2300 days (Daniel 8:14). This period was brought to a close partly by the force and courage of the Maccabees. The temple was once more cleansed, and the Jewish worship resumed. When they went to light the menorah in the Temple, only one flask of holy oil was found, which was enough to burn for one day, yet it burned for eight days! This was accomplished in the winter time. Jews worldwide to this day celebrate "Hanukkah" ("dedication") for eight days, usually in December. This feast, along with the "Days of Purim" (Est. 9) are two man-made feasts that the Jews had, different than the [seven feasts of Jehovah](#). Evidently the Lord went along with man-made feasts, but never commended them.

23 And Jesus walked in the temple in the porch of Solomon. **v.23** Solomon's porch

was a porch or colonnade attached to the Temple. It was originally constructed by King Solomon (1 Kings 6:2-3), and later rebuilt after a fashion by Herod. Solomon's porch comes up three times in the scripture, and each time it is connected with a notable rejection of God by Israel. The first mention is John 10:23, where Jesus had presented Himself as the Good Shepherd, and then was attacked by the Jews who tried to stone Him for claiming equality with God. The second mention is in Acts 3, where Peter and John had healed the lame man, and Peter held out the provisional offer of repentance to Israel, then the Jewish leaders cast Peter and John into the hold (Acts 4). The third mention is in Acts 5, where Israel had

witnessed the unity of the believers and the signs of power among them, and the High Priest cast the Apostles into prison, where they were beaten. In all three cases, Israel was presented with grace, and rejected it with hostile energy.

It would seem that the contrast in this chapter is between the *rejection* of Christ by those more privileged Jews in Solomon's porch, and the *reception* of Christ by those less privileged Jews beyond Jordan (vv.39-42).

Anti-sheep Marked by Unbelief (vv.24-26)

24 The Jews therefore surrounded him, and said to him, Until when dost thou hold our soul in suspense? If thou art the Christ, say so to us openly. **v.24** The Jews took the position of feigned ignorance. It is clear from John 9:22 that the Jews well knew that Jesus bore all the credentials of the Messiah, and they were actually trying to get a clear, public "confession" from Him that they might put Him to death. As always, the Lord does not answer their question as they had asked, but in His response, He goes beyond it. More than claiming to be the Messiah, instead Jesus claims to be the Son of God (vv.25, 29-30).

25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye do not believe. The works which I do in my Father's name, these bear witness concerning me: **26** but ye do not believe, for ye are not of my sheep, as I told you. **vv.25-26** Unbelief is the mark of those who are not Christ's sheep. The Jews had not believed His *word* (v.25a), nor had they believed His *works* which He did in His Father's name (vv.25b-26). The evidence was not only verbal, but visible. It was this *visible* evidence that Jesus pointed the unbelieving Jews to in v.38. The truth is that the Lord was absolutely consistent in His actions with what He said (John 8:25). It is not possible to believe His works while rejecting His words. Compare to the true sheep (vv.27-30, 41) who have no need of visible evidence, but rather hear the Shepherd's voice.

The Characteristics of the True Sheep of Christ (vv.27-30)

27 My sheep ⁽¹⁾ hear my voice, and ⁽²⁾ I know them, and ⁽³⁾ they follow me; **28** and ⁽⁴⁾ I give them life eternal; and ⁽⁵⁾ they shall never perish, and no one shall seize them out of my hand. **29** My Father who has given *them* to me is greater than all, and no one can seize out of the hand of my Father. **30** I and the Father are one. **vv.27-30** **Five characteristics** of the true sheep of Christ are given in these verses:

1. **Faith.** *"My sheep hear my voice"*. The first great characteristic of the true sheep is that they hear the Shepherd's voice. This speaks of faith in the individual, evidence that divine life has been imparted by the Spirit of God. This is how God has always communicated to His people; "on the principle of faith, to faith" (Rom. 1:17)... the "faith frequency"!
2. **Relationship.** *"I know them"*. The second characteristic is the "being known" by the Shepherd. Not that we know Him, although we do, but that *He knows us*. It is the intimate knowledge of relationship. "O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways" (Psa. 139:1-3).
3. **Obedience.** *"They follow me"*. The third characteristic is that the sheep follow the Shepherd; i.e. they obey His word. Faith is practical. Not that we obey in order to become Christ's sheep, but simply that those who are His sheep (those of faith) will obey His word.
4. **Communion.** *"I give them life eternal"*. The fourth characteristic is that the sheep have eternal life.

The term "eternal life" is commonly translated "everlasting life" or "life eternal". The word "eternal" does not define the *duration* of the life, but it defines the *character* of the life. It couldn't be the idea of "living forever" because even the unsaved live forever in eternal fire. It is a life of love, holiness, peace, and joy. Above all, eternal life is characterized by communion with the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit; *"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent"* (John 17:3). Eternal life is the highest character of life that one can ever know, because it is the same life that the Father and Son enjoy together (1 John 1:3), and which had existed from eternity to eternity (John 1:2). In His ineffable grace, God in His eternal counsels purposed that this fellowship of the Father and the Son would be shared with the sons of men! Read John 14:18-20. We are brought into this fellowship through the gift of *eternal life*.

[Read more...](#)

5. **Security.** *"They shall never perish"*. The fifth characteristic is that the sheep are eternally secure. To "*perish*" in this verse is to die the second death. A believer, once saved, can never be lost. Jesus says that "*no one*"; neither man nor demon can void the believer's security. Not only are we in the Son's hand, but we are in the Father's

hand! This is a double security. We get pictures of this double security all throughout the Old Testament. Noah's ark was atoned within and without with pitch (Gen. 6:14). Each board in the tabernacle rested on two sockets of silver (Exodus 26:19). The names of the tribes of Israel engraved in onyx stones rested on two shoulders of the high priest (Exodus 28:9). Abraham was given two immutable things, God's word and God's oath, and we are too; that we might have "strong consolation" (Heb. 6:18). These verses deal a death-blow to the doctrine of [Conditional Security](#). In an attempt to defend Conditional Security, some will say they can pluck themselves out of the Father's hand. That is adding to the word of God, and utterly false.

In v.30, Jesus says "*I and the Father are one*". He does not say they are one Person, but one in Divine essence. See John 12:44-45. As a result, they are one in their *purpose* and *power* to keep the believer secure. This statement, and Christ's use of the expression "My Father" are a clear testimony to the deity of Christ, and His co-equality with the Father. Compare with John 14:28, where Christ speaks as a man, "my Father is greater than I". This oneness in Divine essence is further brought out in v.38.

Indeed, the Son and the Father are one, not one Person, but one thing, one Divine nature or essence (as other Scriptures equally prove).¹

Controversy over Christ's Deity (vv.31-37)

31 The Jews therefore again took stones that they might stone him. **32** Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewn you of my Father; for which work of them do ye stone me? **33** The Jews answered him, For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy, and because thou, being a man, makest thyself God. **vv.31-33** The truth of the deity of Christ, and of His oneness with the Father, elicits vehement hatred against Jesus. They tried to separate the words and the works of Christ... that is impossible (John 8:25). There was not one good work with which they could find fault. But they attacked His words, His language, like "my Father", etc. The Jews understood what Jehovah's Witnesses and others today deny... that Jesus claimed equality with God. The Jews accused Him, saying, "*thou, being a man, makest thyself God*". The opposite was true! He was God, and made Himself a man (Phil. 2:6-7)... what grace! Abstractly, of course it was true; Jesus claimed equality with God. In the following verses, Jesus defends that claim.

34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, "*I said, Ye are gods?*" [Psa. 82:6] **35** If he called "them" gods to whom the word of God came (and the scripture cannot be

broken), **36** do ye say of him whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am Son of God? **vv.34-36** The Lord now defends His claim to deity from the Old Testament scriptures; “*your law*”. Every Jew knew that their scriptures (Psa. 82:6) record Jehovah calling the judges of Israel “*elohim*”, (lower case “*e*”) or, “*gods*” (lowercase “*g*”), because these men were commissioned by God and responsible to judge in God’s name. If such a title could be used by God for a mere magistrate in Scripture, how unreasonable to brand as blasphemy Jesus’ statement that He was God’s Son, when the Father had sanctified and sent Him into the world. The Lord is using *Argumentum a fortiori*, which is a common logical construct in the doctrinal progressions of the New Testament (e.g. Eph. 6:3; 1 Cor. 9:11). He is not declaring the fullness of His personal glory. He is merely applying the scripture to convict them of their willful opposition and resistance to the truth. The “*scripture cannot be broken*” means that it is inerrant. Jesus held the inerrant inspiration of the Old Testament! If God called the judges by His name as being His representatives, how much more was it due to Jesus, who was the Sent One of God? Both the sanctification and the sending of the Son have to do with His incarnation.

The Sanctification of the Son. Twice we read that the Son was sanctified; once in John 10:36, and again in John 17:19. Neither have to do with sin in the same sense as with the believer's sanctification. Sanctification is a broad term, and it means “set apart for a holy purpose”. The Son was set apart, not from sin, but from every other occupation, to come into this world and accomplish the will of God (Heb. 10:5). This was a totally *new position* for the Son to take! In a certain way, He was set apart from the other Persons of the Godhead - not separated, of course - because He alone of the three became man. In that way, the Son was sanctified in incarnation. In John 17 we find that upon His ascension, the Son was sanctified again! That time it was the Son returning to heaven, setting Himself apart as a man in glory. Previously, there had been men on earth, but never a man in glory. Now there is! Christ has left this world, and taken a new position. By attaching believers to Himself in that sanctified position, we “**also might be sanctified through the truth**”, by detaching our hearts from this world, and attaching them to an object in heaven. To review; first the Son was sanctified by the Father at His *incarnation*, and then the Son sanctified Himself at His *glorification*!

Jesus Claimed to be the Son of God. One of the striking claims of the Quran is that Jesus never claimed to be the Son of God, or equal with God.² That is simply not true. He directly confessed it (John 10:36). He acknowledged it in His discourse with the Jews (John 5:17-18). He acknowledged it in His discourse with the Blind man (John 9:35-37). He acknowledged it in His upper room discourse with the disciples (John 16:27-28). He affirmed it after Peter’s confession (Matt. 16:16-17). Lastly, He affirmed it in His response to Caiaphas (Matt.

26:63-64; Luke 22:70).

37 If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; **38** but if I do, even if ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know *and believe* that the Father is in me and I in him. **v.38** Having debunked their accusations of blasphemy, the Lord returns to the subject of the works of His Father. They had changed the subject, but He does not let them get away. The actions of the Son perfectly displayed the character of the Father. It is not so much the works of power, although they do declare His deity, but the character of His works. Healing the impotent man (John 5), feeding the multitudes (John 6), and opening the eyes of the blind man (John 9) were all actions of Divine love. This expression “*the Father is in me and I in him*” has two parts that are complementary.³ “The Father is in me” means that He and the Father are one in nature and Divine essence. The complementary phrase confirms it, “and I in him.” Both bring out the eternal oneness of the Father and Son in deity. See John 14:10-11, 20, where this expression is repeated three times.

The Lord Beyond Jordan: Encounter with Many Believers, His Sheep (10:39-42)

39 They sought therefore again to take him; and he went away from out of their hand **v.39** The Jews tried to arrest the Lord, having fully rejected both His words and His works. But this was not the time. They had yet to see a greater work - the power of resurrection (ch.11) - which would further magnify the hardness of their hearts.

40 and departed again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was baptising at the first; and he abode there. **41** And many came to him, and said, John did no sign; but all things which John said of this *man* were true. **42** And many believed on him there. **vv.40-42** The Lord then went over the Jordan, into the region of Perea, where He apparently remained until the death of Lazarus. This area is where “*John was baptising at the first*”, in ch.1. At this point, John the Baptist had now been imprisoned and beheaded (Matt. 14), but we see that the effects of his ministry remained. Many turned in faith to Christ, having received the message of John; “Behold the Lamb of God!” In contrast with Jesus, John did no miracles. John was the last of the prophets, and God does not see fit to dispense great power at the end of a dispensation. Compare the miracles done by Elijah and Elisha (early prophets) to the lack of miracles in the time of Isaiah and Jeremiah. But far better than outward signs, John’s teaching and preaching was *reliable*. What a lesson this is for any servant of God! We

can speak the truth about Jesus, and when the Spirit begins to work with souls, it is the Word of God that has the power to change hearts. These were the true sheep of Christ. They did not need outward signs, because they had heard the Shepherd's voice through John the Baptist. Another lesson we can learn is this: we may not see the fruits of our labors in our own lifetime. John was in heaven before this day came. But what a tribute to the tireless forerunner of our Lord, that "*many believed on Him there*".

Footnotes

1. Kelly, William. *An Exposition of the Gospel of John*. T. Weston, 1898. p.220
2. "*And when Allah will say: O Isa (Jesus) son of Marium (Mary)! did you say to men, Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah he will say: Glory be to Thee, it did not befit me that I should say what I had no right to (say); if I had said it, Thou wouldst indeed have known it; Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I do not know what is in Thy mind, surely Thou art the great Knower of the unseen things.*" - The Quran, sura 5, verse 116, Shakir Translation
3. Huebner, R. A. *The Eternal Relationships in the Godhead: Fundamental Truth Concerning the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Word, the Eternal Life, and the Eternal Sonship*. Vol. 1, Present Truth Publishers, 1997. p.66