

Chapter Twelve

“The Savior as the Good Shepherd, as the Great Shepherd, and as the Chief Shepherd”

“THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST: ITS FLOCK METAPHOR”

The late Dr. Earl Radmacher, theologian, writer, speaker, and longtime faculty member and president of Western Seminary, wrote,

“The figure of the flock is one of the broadest in application of any of the figures used of the church. In the Old Testament, Israel is called ‘the Lord’s flock’ (Jer 13:17; cf. Zech 10:3). Jesus referred to his small circle of disciples as the ‘little flock’ (Luke 12:32). Again, the term is used of the church on several occasions (cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:3). In addition to these are the repeated references to the sheep that compose the flock (cf. John 10:16; 21:15-17) and to the Shepherd of the flock (John 10:2-16; 1 Pet 2:25; 5:4; Heb 13:20). Although this figure is rich with potential for application, there are a few things that deserve special note, for this figure is used to speak of relationships within the church.”¹

Except for his misunderstanding that the Church includes everyone who is a Christian while Scripture reveals the Church refers to a congregation, I concur with his comment above. Jeremiah 13.17 reads,

“But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for *your* pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORD’s flock is carried away captive.”

¹ Radmacher, page 298.

Next, Zechariah 10.3:

“Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle.”

Jeremiah was writing at the beginning of the Babylonian captivity and Zechariah was writing after the Babylonian captivity. We see in the words of both prophets that the house of Judah was identified as “the LORD’s flock” by Jeremiah and “the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah” by Zechariah.

Recognize that just because the house of Judah is characterized as the LORD’s flock in the Old Testament, by use of a figure of speech, it does not, therefore, mean that using the same figure of speech in the New Testament necessarily means that the same entity is being referred to in both testaments. I contend that the use of the flock metaphor in the Old Testament and the New Testament speaks more to the kind of relationship the LORD exercises than it does to the actual identity of each flock referred to. This will become obvious as we proceed.

A challenging consideration arises when thought is given to the Lord Jesus Christ’s description of His men as the “little flock” in Luke 12.32. Of course, this takes place after the Lord Jesus Christ has called the twelve to be apostles, Luke 6.13. Since the Lord Jesus Christ founded the Church during His earthly ministry, and since the first members of the Church of Jesus Christ were the apostles,² the phrase “little flock” is a fair representation of the Church of Jesus Christ when it consisted of but twelve men recently selected.

Does the Lord Jesus Christ by His use of the word “flock” when He addressed His apostles mean that they are “the LORD’s flock” in the same sense as the house of Judah when so labeled by the prophets Jeremiah and Zechariah? Not at all. Keep in mind that the Church in Ephesus was identified as “the flock” by the Apostle Paul in Acts 20.28-29, though they were undoubtedly a mostly Gentile Christian congregation:

² I Corinthians 12.28

- 28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.
- 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Consider, as well, the Apostle Peter's uses of the term in First Peter 5.1-3:

- 1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:
- 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;
- 3 Neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

How can Peter's comments not be about a particular congregation of Christians, since practical reality dictates that elders cannot feed all of Christianity and because Peter referred to that "which is among you"? How can elders be examples to the flock if the flock is everywhere and not rather in a local congregation? As well, how can elders take oversight over all who are Christians? No. This concept of the flock is meaningful only when referring to a congregation or congregations and not to all sheep everywhere. All sheep everywhere is not a flock in anyone's thinking. Therefore, congregations are rightly understood to be flocks of God, and a Church is the flock of God.

The question, remember, is whether "the LORD's flock" in Jeremiah and "his flock" in Zechariah, though using the same figure of speech, is referring to the same thing in the New Testament. Is the house of Judah in the Hebrew Scriptures the same entity as a New Testament Church congregation? Granting the same figure of speech with both, the notion of the flock, is the Old Testament usage and the New Testament usage of that figure of speech therefore necessarily a reference to the same entity? To help

us answer the question, I would like to compare and contrast the nation of Israel and the Church of Jesus Christ:

**The distinctions between
Israel and the Church.**

J. Dwight Pentecost has summarized in his classic work *Things To Come* what Lewis Sperry Chafer set forth in his famous *Systematic Theology*. Twenty-four contrasts between Israel and the Church of Jesus Christ show conclusively that these two entities cannot be united into one, but that they must be distinguished as two separate entities with whom God is dealing in a special program. These contrasts may be outlined as follows:

- (1) The extent of Biblical revelation: Israel is dealt with in nearly four-fifths of the Bible; the Church of Jesus Christ is dealt with in about one-fifth of the Bible.
- (2) The Divine purpose: Israel is the beneficiary of the earthly promises of the Abrahamic, the Palestin-ian, the Davidic, the New, and the Mosaic covenants; the Church of Jesus Christ is the beneficiary of the heavenly promises in the gospel.
- (3) The seed of Abraham: With respect to Israel, the seed of Abraham is his physical seed, of whom some become a spiritual seed; whereas with the Church of Jesus Christ a spiritual seed is in view.
- (4) Birth: With respect to Israel a physical birth occurs that produces a blood kin relationship with those descendants of Abraham who are also in covenant with God; whereas with respect to the Church of Jesus Christ a spiritual birth occurs that establishes a relationship with Christ as a precursor to Church membership.
- (5) Headship: With Israel, father Abraham is the patriarchal head of the covenant nation; in the Church of Jesus Christ, it is the Lord Jesus who is the head of the Church.

- (6) Covenants: Israel is in covenant with God through the Abrahamic and all the subsequent covenants; the Church of Jesus Christ is indirectly related to the Abrahamic and the New covenants.
- (7) Nationality: Israel is one nation; the Church of Jesus Christ is comprised of members from all nations.
- (8) Divine dealing: Israel is dealt with by God on both a national and an individual basis; the Church of Jesus Christ is dealt with by God on a congregational and an individual basis.
- (9) Dispensations: Israel is seen in Scripture in all ages from the time of Abraham; the Church of Jesus Christ is seen in Scripture only in this present age.
- (10) Ministry: Israel has been engaged in no missionary activity and has been given no overt Gospel to preach; the Church of Jesus Christ has been charged to fulfill the Great Commission and to proclaim the Gospel.
- (11) The death of Christ: Israel bears national guilt for rejecting Christ and will someday be saved by Him; the Church of Jesus Christ is comprised of those now saved on the merits of Christ's sacrifice.
- (12) God the Father: Israel is related by a peculiar relationship with God as the rejected Father to the nation;³ those who are members of the Church of Jesus Christ are related individually to God the Father through faith in His Son Jesus Christ.
- (13) Christ: Toward Israel, the Lord Jesus is as yet the unrecognized Messiah, Immanuel, and King;⁴ the Church of Jesus Christ owns Jesus Christ as Savior, Lord, Bridegroom, and Head.
- (14) The Holy Spirit: Several men in Israel had some experience with the Spirit when He came upon them

³ I Samuel 8.7

⁴ Acts 2.22-23

temporarily; those in the Church of Jesus Christ are continually indwelt by the Spirit.⁵

- (15) Governing principle: Beginning with Moses, Israelites were under the Mosaic Law system until Christ's crucifixion;⁶ the Church of Jesus Christ is guided by the principle of grace.⁷
- (16) Divine enablement: The nation of Israel was provided with no ongoing and usual supernatural enablement but was commanded to keep the Law; the Church of Jesus Christ is enabled by the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- (17) Two farewell discourses: The nation of Israel was given the rejected Savior's Olivet discourse; the Church of Jesus Christ comprised of the apostles was given the upper room discourse.
- (18) The promise of Christ's return: The Lamb of God who was slain will visibly return to Israel in power and glory as the Lion of the tribe of Judah and as the King of kings and Lord of lords for judgment at the time of His second coming; the Church of Jesus Christ will be caught up to meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the air seven years before His Second Advent in the Rapture.⁸
- (19) Position: Israel occupies the position of a servant; the Church of Jesus Christ occupies the position of members of the family.
- (20) Christ's earthly reign: Israel will be His subjects during the millennial kingdom; the Church of Jesus Christ will be co-reigners with Him during His millennial kingdom reign.

⁵ Romans 8.9; Ephesians 1.13-14

⁶ Deuteronomy 5.1-3; Romans 3.19

⁷ John 1.17

⁸ I Thessalonians 4.13-18

- (21) Priesthood: Israel had a priesthood; the Church of Jesus Christ is a priesthood.
- (22) Marriage: Israel is the LORD's unfaithful wife; the Church of Jesus Christ is our Lord's bride.
- (23) Judgments: Israel must face judgment; the Church of Jesus Christ has been delivered from all judgments, with the Judgment Seat of Christ being a time of rewards.
- (24) Positions in eternity: Israel is comprised of the spirits of just men made perfect in the new earth; the Church of Jesus Christ will be the Church of the firstborn in the new heavens.

These clear contrasts, which show the distinction between Israel and the Church, make it impossible to identify the two in one program. Therefore, the flock figure of speech in the New Testament does not refer to the same entity as the flock figure of speech in the Old Testament.⁹

In our study of the Church of Jesus Christ, we observe that metaphors and other figures of speech are used to provide a greater and more thorough understanding of the nature and function of the Church of Jesus Christ. We know the Church of Jesus Christ is the body of Christ.¹⁰ We know the Church of Jesus Christ is the temple of God.¹¹ We know the Church of Jesus Christ is comprised of priests.¹² We are at present exploring the metaphor of the flock in connection with the Church of Jesus Christ. The challenge arises when it becomes apparent that the nation of Israel, specifically the kingdom of Judah (which would include those from the northern tribes of Israel who had migrated to the kingdom of Judah region over the years), is described as “the LORD's flock” by the prophet Jeremiah and the prophet Zechariah, while

⁹ Without completely revising their remarks, to be in full agreement I have modified to a degree to reflect my own convictions excerpts from Pentecost, pages 201-202, and Chafer, *Vol. IV*, pages 47-53.

¹⁰ Chapter 9.

¹¹ Chapter 10.

¹² Chapter 11.

the metaphor “the flock” is also found in the New Testament as a label for Churches of Jesus Christ.

The two flocks are *not* the same. Israel is not the Church, and the Church is not Israel though the flock metaphor is used in both testaments. The flock in the Old Testament refers to the nation of Israel, an entity bound to God by covenant into which mostly unregenerate physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were physically born and males were circumcised. The Church of Jesus Christ, on the other hand, is comprised of saved individuals from every kindred, tongue, and tribe, both Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians who have been baptized by immersion following their conversion to Christ into a local congregation for worship, for service, and the administration of the ordinances.

Though it is comparatively easy to correlate passages in the New Testament related to the Church that are written to Churches, or that contain the word translated church in them, too often passages intimately related to the Church of Jesus Christ are completely dismissed as instructive about the Church of Jesus Christ because use is made of a metaphor that goes unrecognized. Such is the case in John 10.1-21 where the Lord Jesus Christ spoke after having just restored the sight of the man born blind in John chapter 9. He spoke to false shepherds (Pharisees) who had no care for the sheep. However, it must be understood that He spoke for the benefit of His apostles who would serve as His under-shepherds.

Keep five things in mind as we make our way through the passage: *First*, Jesus Christ is the Door. *Next*, the sheep of Israel is a flock in the sheepfold. *Then*, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd. *Fourth*, He calls His sheep out from the sheepfold. *Finally*, there are the other sheep He has that are not of the sheepfold initially referred to.

- ¹ Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, 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 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 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, 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 spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what
things they were which he spake unto them.
- 7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am
the door of the sheep.
- 8 All that ever 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 out, and find pasture.
- 10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I
am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more
abundantly.
- 11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the
sheep.
- 12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the
sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and
fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.
- 13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the
sheep.
- 14 I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of
mine.
- 15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I 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, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and*
one shepherd.
- 17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that
I might take it again.
- 18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power
to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This
commandment have I received of my Father.

- 19 There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings.
- 20 And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?
- 21 Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

This passage is easily recognizable as falling into five parts: In the first five verses, our Lord rehearsed important facts known to anyone of that era about sheep and shepherding. In verse 6 the apostle provided a brief explanation to his readers. In verses 7-10 the Lord Jesus Christ identified Himself with the declaration "I am the door of the sheep." Verses 11-18 are built upon the Lord Jesus Christ's statement, "I am the good shepherd." Verses 19-21 conclude the passage by rehearsing the dispute among those to whom the Savior was speaking. I propose to deal with each of these five unequally-sized portions of the passage separately:

First, OUR LORD REVIEWED THE EXPERIENCES OF THE FLOCK

Allow me first to provide a bit of background from comments written by Arthur W. Pink before we look again to verses 1-5:

"It will probably be of some help to the reader if we describe briefly the character of the 'sheepfold' which obtains in Eastern lands. In Palestine, which in the pastoral sections was infested with wild beasts, there was in each village a large sheepfold, which was the common property of the native farmers. This sheepfold was protected by a wall some ten or twelve feet high. When night fell, a number of different shepherds would lead their flocks up to the door of the fold, through which they passed, leaving them in the care of the porter, while they went home or sought lodging. At the door, the porter lay on guard through the night, ready to protect the sheep against thieves and robbers, or against wild animals which might scale the

walls. In the morning the different shepherds returned. The porter would allow each one to enter through the door, calling by name the sheep which belonged to his flock. The sheep would respond to his voice, and he would lead them out to pasture.”¹³

John 10.1-5:

- ¹ Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, 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 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 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, 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.

Verses 1-5 is a literary device that is unique to the New Testament, which I will explain in greater detail after we have carefully considered the passage:

Verse 1: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.”

“Verily, verily, I say unto you,” or “Amen, amen, I say unto you,”

should be recognized as signifying a very important statement or declaration made by the Lord. However, there is something else to take note of concerning double amen statements in John’s Gospel. John’s particular writing style is such that none of the Lord’s discourses ever begins in this

¹³ Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), Vol 2, pages 102-103.

Gospel with a double amen statement.¹⁴ That strongly suggests we have here a continuation from John 9. In other words, the Lord Jesus Christ is in the middle of a serious comparison of Himself to the Pharisees, showing that, by contrast, He is the legitimate shepherd, and they are frauds.

“... He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.”

Who of those familiar with the care of sheep in that culture would argue with this rehearsal of truth? There is only one way into the sheepfold and one way out of the sheepfold, and only thieves and robbers seek to gain entrance any other way than by the door of the sheepfold.

Verse 2: “But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.”

There are only two types of men who would seek to gain entrance to the sheepfold, the shepherd of the sheep who is legitimately authorized to enter in, with the thief and the robber being illegitimate and seeking entrance by other means. Simple. Indisputable.

Verse 3: “To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.”

Of course, the porter is the fellow charged with the responsibility of guarding the sheep at night once they are penned in the sheepfold. It is his job to open the door to the sheepfold and to close the door to the sheepfold, as well as to allow only a shepherd to come in to call his sheep to follow him out to pasturage for the day.

“and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.”

¹⁴ Andreas J. Kostenberger, *John - ECNT*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), page 299.

Shepherds in the Middle East tended to their flocks differently than shepherds in Europe. The Basques of Northern Spain and shepherds throughout Europe and the British Isles use sheepdogs to drive their flocks. In the Middle East, however, shepherds are far more intimate with their flocks, giving each sheep a name and each sheep of the flock recognizing and responding to the voice of the shepherd.

Thus, in this word picture, our Lord showed the shepherd to be the leader of the flock rather than one who merely herds the flock. Implicit in this concept of a sheepfold is the idea that more than one flock would be penned inside at night and that a sheep would respond only to his shepherd's voice. Important to point out here is that each sheep is called individually by the shepherd; the flock is not called in or out as a group. That, I am convinced, is an important feature of this entire passage.

Verse 4: "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice."

Thus, the common pattern of shepherding is known to one and all. Even those who do not make their living as shepherds recognized from the culture they have grown up in that shepherds lead their sheep and do not drive them and that sheep follow their shepherd and no one else because they recognize the voice of their shepherd.

Verse 5: "And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers."

What is stated here needed to be said, though it was already understood by everyone who originally heard the Savior's words. Sheep will not follow a stranger. Sheep will run away from a stranger. And this is because sheep do not recognize the voice of a stranger.

Next, THE APOSTLE OBSERVED THE PHARISEE’S FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND

Verse 6: “This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.”

Please take note of the word that is in this verse translated “parable.” What we understand to be parables are found only in Matthew, Mark, and Luke in the Gospels, but not in the Gospel of John. The word used here is not the Greek word παραβολή, but the word παροιμίαν, which is a specific kind of parable known as an allegory.¹⁵ Allegories typically have more points of comparison between the reality that is being described and the word picture used to portray it than do parables. Thus, it should have been easier for the Pharisees to understand what the Lord Jesus Christ said in verses 1-5 than if He had uttered a parable, yet they still did not understand what things He said to them.

Read John 9 once more, and you will see that the Pharisees are the thieves and robbers, the blind man is a sheep, and the Lord Jesus Christ is the legitimate shepherd of the kind referred to in John 10.1-5. The sheep hear the Savior’s voice and follow Him, while the Pharisees responded to the undeniable miracle of the man born blind’s newly given eyesight by casting him out of the synagogue.¹⁶ The Pharisees failed to grasp what our Lord had said. Of course, they could not understand His words, since they were not His sheep and did not recognize the sound of His voice.

Third, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS THE DOOR

At this point, the Lord Jesus Christ began to explain to His obstinate audience the first of His two great metaphors within this flock metaphor by pointing out specifically where He is to be found in the allegory of verses 1-5, and He did this in verses 7-10:

¹⁵ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures In The New Testament, Vol V*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1932), page 175.

¹⁶ John 9.22-34

- 7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.
- 8 All that ever 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 out, and find pasture.
- 10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.

Consider the verses individually.

Verse 7: “Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.”

Again, grabbing His audience’s attention by saying “Verily, verily, I say unto you,” the Lord Jesus Christ uttered for the third time one of His important “I am” statements:¹⁷

“I am the door of the sheep.”

These “I am” declarations hearken back to the burning bush and God’s declaration to Moses in Exodus 3.14,

“I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.”

It is important for us to understand at this point what the Lord Jesus Christ meant by the declaration “I am the door of the sheep.” In addition to the obvious assertion of His deity by use of the “I am” phrase, the door here referred to should not be understood to be the door to the sheepfold. After all, no one referred to becoming a part of the flock of the nation of Israel by entering in through the door which is Jesus Christ. Remember as well that

¹⁷ John 6.35; 8.12

the sheep to whom the Lord was then referring were all Jewish and that they were already penned in the sheepfold of the covenant nation of Israel under the authority of the Law of Moses. That said, most of the Jews who were in the sheepfold of Israel were not sheep, as evidenced by the fact that they did not hear His voice and follow Him. When the Lord Jesus Christ declared Himself to be the Door of the sheep, it must be that a different sheepfold was in mind than the one He called His sheep out from.

Verse 8: “All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.”

This verse is not a reference to prophets sent by the LORD, men such as Samuel and Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah. The Lord was here referring to unauthorized men who did not represent God while claiming to speak for Him. His allusion here was to the Pharisees.

Verse 9: “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”

Again, our Lord declared, “I am the door.” However, in this verse, He explicitly claimed to be the exclusive door by which any man entering in shall be saved. These two claims, He declared in verses 7 and 9, may echo Psalm 118.20, where we read,

“This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter.”

There are two very important, though not at all obvious, truths we need to grasp to benefit most from this verse, paying careful attention to the two middle phrases:

“by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved.”

First, notice that the Savior indicated salvation is the result of entering in *by Him*. This fact is important to note since no sinner can save himself. Not only must a sinner pass through the Door from death to life, from sin to

salvation, but that passing through must be accomplished, according to the Savior, “by me.” That is, no one saves himself. Sinners are saved by the Savior. *Second*, do not mistakenly think that the words “if any man enter in” refer to entering the sheepfold of Mosaic Law Judaism. It does not. The fact is, for those Jewish people to “enter in,” they had to *leave* the sheepfold of Mosaic Law Judaism, something most of them would not do because so many in that sheepfold were not, in fact, sheep. Then, the final phrase about going in and out to find pasture is a frequent theme describing God’s relationship with His people in the Old Testament.¹⁸ Before moving on to verse 10, read a summary of verse 9 written by Arthur W. Pink:

“‘I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.’ Seven things are enumerated in this precious verse. First, ‘I am the door’: Christ the only Way to God. Second ‘*By me* if any man enter’: Christ the Imparter of power *to* enter. Third, ‘If *any* man enter’: Christ the Saviour for Jew and Gentile alike. Fourth, ‘If any man *enter in*’: Christ *appropriated* by a single act of faith. Fifth, ‘he shall be saved’: Christ the Deliverer from the penalty, power, and presence of sin. Sixth, ‘he shall go in and out’: Christ the Emancipator from all bondage. Seventh, ‘and find pasture’: Christ the Sustainer of His people.”¹⁹

Verse 10: “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.”

It is abundantly clear from John 9 that the Lord Jesus Christ was addressing the Pharisees who were so opposed to His ministry. In John 10.5 He referred to them as strangers (plural). In John 10.6 we are told that He was speaking to them (again, plural). In verse 8 He referred to them as thieves and robbers (plural for the third time). In this verse, however, our Lord spoke in the

¹⁸ Deuteronomy 28.6; Psalm 23.2; 79.13; 100.3; 121.8; Ezekiel 34.12-15

¹⁹ Pink, Vol 2, page 115.

singular by referring to “the thief,” with the definite article used in the Greek text.

Who do you suppose He was referring to in this verse? The Pharisees were described in verse 8 as “thieves and robbers,” but this individual is one who comes “for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.” Stealing is usually done by stealth. Destruction is typically accomplished by violence. And this word kill, θύω, used only here in John’s Gospel, “is not the common term and may connote the abuse of the sacrificial system by the priestly authorities.”²⁰ Who was our Lord alluding to here? Could it be our Lord was powerfully contrasting Himself not only with the Pharisees but also with the “idol shepherd” of Zechariah 11.15-17?

- 15 And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd.
- 16 For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, *which* shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces.
- 17 Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword *shall be* upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.

I think this is likely the antichrist, with the Devil being the real genius who lies back of the Pharisee’s opposition to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Devil backs the insane denials of the implications of our Lord’s great miracles and His rightful claim to be the Messiah of Israel. Those who are false shepherds are, like the idol shepherd, unconcerned about the health and welfare of the flock. What a contrast there is, then, between the counterfeit and the True. The verse concludes with one of the most wonderfully comforting statements of our Lord’s mission found in the Bible:

“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.”

²⁰ Kostenberger, page 304.

How soothing to the sheep is the voice of our Shepherd. His motives are pure. His strength is unsurpassed. His wisdom is unmatched. His sovereignty should be unquestioned.

Fourth, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

- 11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.
- 12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.
- 13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.
- 14 I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine.
- 15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I 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, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd.
- 17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.
- 18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

This is the fourth time in John's Gospel that the Lord Jesus Christ identified Himself using the "I am" declaration, this time twice stating, "I am the good shepherd."

In verse 11 He told His audience that the Good Shepherd dies for His sheep.

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

It is always beneficial to keep in mind when examining our Lord's statements that, since He is the fulfillment of numerous Old Testament predictions, it is needful to consider not only the backdrop of Scripture but also the mindsets of the Jewish people our Lord was speaking to who were steeped in Old Testament learning. This is especially true when considering the Lord Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd. The Pharisees our Lord was speaking to on this occasion, as well as His apostles whose benefit He was speaking for, were well aware that in the Old Testament God repeatedly contrasted Himself with unfaithful shepherds who because of their dereliction of duty were subject to His judgment.²¹ As well, David (or the Davidic Messiah) is spoken of as a good shepherd.²²

Moses is also portrayed as the "shepherd of his flock."²³ By once more using the "I am" phrase to identify Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ was again declaring in no uncertain terms His absolute deity. He is God. He is the One who spoke to Moses from the burning bush. He is the God of Israel. By stating, "I am the good shepherd," He was more obviously contrasting Himself with the Pharisees than He had previously done. Remember that the Pharisees, for the most part, were not priests and certainly were not God-called prophets. They were self-anointed religious zealots fulfilling a self-appointed role as enforcers of the Law of Moses as they understood it. Though there were exceptions among them, such as Nicodemus, for the most part, they were religious nitpickers and intrusive hypocrites who imagined themselves to be spiritual shepherds of the Jewish people. They were not.

Not authorized in any way in the Hebrew Scriptures to fulfill the role they presumed to occupy, Pharisees are most known for their opposition to the Savior. Following the dispersion of the Jewish people in 70 AD, it was the Pharisaic version of Judaism that has survived in their writings over the centuries to have by far the most influence on modern religious Judaism. However, that is not all the Lord accomplished when He declared, "I am the good shepherd." He declared Himself to be God. He identified with the Old Testament references to shepherds: God, Moses, and David. Then there are

²¹ Jeremiah 23.1-4; Ezekiel 34; Zechariah 11.4-17

²² II Samuel 5.2; Psalm 78.70-72; Ezekiel 37.24; Micah 5.4

²³ Isaiah 63.11-12; Psalm 77.20

the types of Christ in the Old Testament who were shepherds: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and David. So, our Lord accomplished a great deal by identifying Himself with the statement, “I am the good shepherd.”

However, when He went so far as to say “the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep,” He broke new ground. God showed Himself as shepherd to His people in the Old Testament, yet He did not die for the sheep. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and David were each shepherds, but they did not give their lives for the sheep. Certainly, David risked his life, but he did not give his life for the sheep. The Lord Jesus Christ at this moment distinguished Himself from all others described as shepherds in the Hebrew Scriptures by first declaring that as the Good Shepherd He will die for His sheep, and then by actually dying for His sheep. He alone is the shepherd who dies for His sheep, with this Greek preposition translated “for” suggesting that He dies for the benefit of His sheep and not merely as an example they are to follow.²⁴ This is an allusion to Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice on the cross of Calvary.

One final observation is pertinent to verse 11. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, declared that “the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” His declaration gives rise to a question: What about the goats? Our Lord here referred only to the sheep, those who hear His voice and follow Him, which is to say, believers. Nothing is here stated about goats and the Good Shepherd giving His life for goats, which is to say those who did not hear His voice and did not, therefore, follow Him.

The character and conduct of hirelings is outlined in verses 12-13:

- 12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.
- 13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

If you will remember from John 10.1-2, the Lord Jesus Christ referred to sheep, to shepherds, and also to thieves and robbers. In this passage, He

²⁴ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According To John (PNTC)*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), page 386.

introduces yet another type of character, who is neither as bad as a thief and a robber nor as good as a shepherd. The hireling is a fellow who is charged with the welfare of the sheep, though he is only on the job for what he can get out of it by way of pay. Hence the label, hireling.

We must be mindful that this type of fellow is not around to steal what is not his. He does not sneak into the sheepfold unawares. He has no intention of harming the sheep. This is a fellow whose presence is very much known to the shepherd and who is in the shepherd's employ. Notice what we learn of such a fellow from the Savior's description of him.

First, he is a hireling and not a shepherd. Our Lord said in John 10.12,

“But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd.”

Thus, though you might observe two different kinds of men tending to a flock, it is a mistake to confuse the two or to take the one for the other. No hireling is a shepherd by any definition.

Next, the sheep cared for by the hireling are not his; he does not own them, and therefore his concern for them is very superficial.

“whose own the sheep are not.”

When things are going well, the hireling does not pose a problem of any kind. The issue with the hireling is that he is a guy you can depend upon until you need him. He is a sunshine patriot, a fair-weather friend, a person who says nice words to you because they don't cost anything, and who does needful things so long as they are easy tasks.

Third, the hireling is someone you most definitely cannot depend on when you need him because he

“seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.”

So, you see, this individual called a hireling might very well pass for reliable and even be thought of as someone with integrity and character. However, when push comes to shove, when the crisis hits, when there is a danger, he

cuts and runs. Interesting is the Savior's appraisal of the hireling, found in John 10.13:

"The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep."

Notice the principle set forth by the Savior. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and because he has no care for the sheep. In other words, he does what he does because he is what he is. Again, Pink's observations of the principle stated here by our Lord clarifies the situation:

"There is ever a rigid consistency between character and conduct."

"When the testing time comes each man reveals what he is by what he does."

"Conduct conforms to character as the stream does to the fountain."

"Character is revealed by our conduct in the *crises* of life."²⁵

Of course, the comments made by our Lord to the Pharisees, but for the benefit of the apostles, serve three important purposes:

First and foremost, the Master was establishing a comparison between Himself and His enemies, the Pharisees. They were thieves and robbers, but also hirelings who performed their pastoral duties so long as they receive personal benefit. As soon as the personal risk of any kind was seen, they were so like any hireling when he sees a wolf. They cut and run, motivated only by self-interest.

Second, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ wanted to bring along His apostles so they would not act like hirelings. Remembering that they were men who had jobs they left to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, none of the twelve but Judas Iscariot followed the Lord Jesus Christ for what they could gain materially. Nevertheless, it was always good to remind disciples and redraw the lines that needed drawing in the first place. Those men were to serve as under-shepherds of the Lord's flocks, so running away when they

²⁵ Pink, Vol 2, page 124.

saw wolves approaching was not an option. Therefore, this was in part for their edification.

Finally, there was the person who is neither sheep nor shepherd who heard the Good Shepherd speaking. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke (and the preacher preaches, by the way) so that His sheep will hear His voice and will follow Him. If the bystander hears the Lord's voice and follows Him, it may be that he is both sheep and someday under-shepherd. If you are an under-shepherd, can you shepherd the Lord's flock, yet not be so craven and indifferent to their welfare that you will run and hide when you see danger approaching them?

I know a man who has been in the ministry approaching fifty years. Forty years ago, he said in my hearing that whenever he perceived trouble arising in a Church where he was serving as the pastor, his habit was to resign immediately and move on, leaving the problem for the next guy to resolve. His conduct since then bears out what he said. He has probably averaged a new pastorate every three or four years. That is the behavior of a hireling. And the one thing you know about such a fellow is that he does not care for the sheep; the Lord Jesus Christ said as much in John 10.13.

John 10.14 shows us the intimacy that exists between the Good Shepherd and His sheep:

“I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine.”

By restating that He is the Good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ was emphasizing the contrast that existed between the hirelings mentioned in verses 12-13 (which were, of course, the Pharisees of John chapter 9) and Himself. They were only men, and not very good men at that, truth be told, while He is the God of Israel (remember His “I am” declaration), who as the Good Shepherd will give His life for the sheep. And what is the result of the Good Shepherd giving His life for the sheep? He knows His sheep and is known by His sheep. That is, the Lord Jesus Christ comes to know His sheep, and His sheep come to know the Good Shepherd; this as a direct result of Him giving His life for His sheep.

Another example of Arthur W. Pink's marvelous devotional observations is worth noting: Here in John 10.14, he pointed out that we see

the Savior identify Himself as the Good Shepherd in connection with His death on the cross and laying down His life for the sheep. Pink then pointed out that in Hebrews 13.20, in connection with His resurrection from the dead, our Lord is referred to as the Great Shepherd of the sheep. And in First Peter 5.4, in connection with His glorious Second Coming in power and great glory, He is referred to by the Apostle Peter as the Chief Shepherd, who shall appear.²⁶ What a wonderful Savior and glorious Shepherd of the sheep is our Lord Jesus Christ.

John 10.15 points out to us the intimacy that exists between the Father and the Son:

“As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.”

Interesting, is it not, that the Greek word for our English word know, γινώσκω, is found four times in these two verses, twice in verse 14 and twice in verse 15? The Savior knows and is known by His sheep and knows and is known by the Father.

Not to suggest that the depth of the Christian’s knowledge will ever reach the depth of Christ’s knowledge or the Father’s knowledge, but each is a knowledge born of experience. It is interacting knowledge and not purely abstract knowledge. It is to know and to be known. This is the relationship the Christian has with the Savior, the Savior has with the Christian, and the Father and the Son have with each other, though our human limitations mean our knowledge is necessarily restricted.

Such a stunning assertion is unique to the Christian faith in light of the Muslim claim that Allah is unknowable.²⁷ As well, notice once again that reference is made by the Savior to Him laying down His life for the sheep. And why not make mention of His sacrifice once more? His sacrifice as the Good Shepherd is profoundly important and is the central act of all God’s dealings with mankind, providing the basis for everything having to do with

²⁶ Ibid., 125.

²⁷ Georges Housney, *Engaging Islam*, (Boulder, CO: Treeline Publishing LLC, 2010), page 85.

our salvation from sins and our salvation to glory in eternity. We must mention it not only again, but again and again.

John 10.16 brings to our attention the Gentile sheep saved by the Shepherd:

“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd.”

A portion of the verse at a time: The verse begins,

“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold.”

It is difficult to imagine who our Lord might be referring to if He is not speaking of Gentiles “which are not of this fold,” with “this fold” being the nation of Israel, with “this fold” being Judaism. Also interesting is that the Savior referred to these as yet unsaved people who will become Christians as sheep: “other sheep I have.” The next phrase reads,

“them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice.”

Pay attention to the certainty with which the Savior speaks. “I must bring” and “they shall hear my voice.” There is no question in His mind what will happen about the salvation of His sheep, who will hear His voice and who will follow Him. The verse ends,

“and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd.”

There is also no question about the Savior once and for all gathering all Jewish people who have believed in Him and all Gentiles who have believed in Him together into one fold. No one that I know of questions that certainty. The issues are how quickly will this take place and where will this take place. The confusion arises from the fact that the word “fold” at the beginning of verse 16 is the usual word meaning a sheepfold (the pen where

sheep are placed at night for their protection), while the word “fold” at the end of this verse is a different term that refers to a flock.

Why it was translated in this fashion, I do not know. What is clear, however, is that the sheep that hear Christ’s voice and follow Him will comprise a single flock of sheep and will not be segregated into a Jewish Christian flock and a Gentile Christian flock. There is only one flock.

John 10.17-18 further illuminate our understanding of the relationship existing between the Father and the Good Shepherd:

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

18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

Please do not misunderstand verse 17 as a declaration by the Lord Jesus Christ of the Father’s love for Him being conditional, based upon His compliance with the Father’s will. He always does His Father’s will.²⁸ Rather, the Father’s love for Him is eternal, based as it is on their absolute unity of essence and purpose, and the fact that they are in reality One God.²⁹

This verse is a declaration by Christ of the Father’s love for Him and also His voluntary laying down of His life so that He might take it up again, of course referring to the resurrection following His crucifixion. Anticipating those who would try to explain Christ’s crucifixion regarding Him being a helpless victim overwhelmed by events beyond His control, He made three strong statements: *First*, no man takes His life from Him, but He lays it down, Himself. *Second*, He has power (read authority here) to both lay down and also to take up His life. *Third*, His actions are according to the will of God and not any group of chief priests or a traitorous disciple.

Finally, THE DISPUTE AMONG THE JEWS IS SUMMARIZED

²⁸ John 8.29

²⁹ Deuteronomy 6.4; I Corinthians 8.4, 6; I Timothy 2.5

- 19 There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings.
- 20 And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?
- 21 Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

John 10.19 informs us there was a division again among the Jews over what our Lord said. Thus, this was a recurrence of an ongoing dispute. But who were these Jews? The Pharisees only or a larger crowd that had assembled? I am inclined to think the Jews referred to here was a larger crowd that had assembled as our Lord spoke.

Notice the dispute that is recorded in verses 20-21, with some insisting our Lord was demonized or perhaps insane. Some onlookers would have wondered why listen to the guy? Others were kinder, pointing out that His words were not inspired by a demon, especially because He worked the miracle of giving sight to the blind.

The problem, of course, is that even those who saw themselves as somewhat sympathetic to the Lord Jesus Christ did nothing beyond uttering a few sympathetic words. They were still lost. Still sinners whose sins remained unforgiven, still not born again, and content to sit on the sidelines with everyone else when came the time to arrest Him, to unjustly try Him, and to wrongly crucify Him.

As wonderful and compelling as John 10.1-21 has proven to be, our primary interest in the passage has been to gain an understanding of the important but frequently misunderstood metaphor of the flock used by the Lord in the passage. The sheepfold of Judaism contained the Jewish population, some of whom were Christ's sheep and were called out by Him, His sheep hearing the Good Shepherd's voice, knowing His voice, and passing through the Door (which also was Him). It was in John 10.16 that our Lord referred to His "other sheep," which are Gentiles who are sheep outside the sheepfold of Judaism. Whenever one of His sheep responds to His voice, be he Jewish or be he Gentile, he becomes part of the Good

Shepherd's flock. One commentator wonderfully comprehends the issue when he writes,

"The 'one flock' comprehends, we believe, the whole *family* of God, made up of believers before the nation of Israel came into existence, of believing Israelites, of believing Gentiles, and of those who shall be saved. The 'one flock' will have been gathered from *various* 'folds.'"³⁰

Consider now, if you will, the Apostle Paul's use of the metaphor, found in Acts 20.28-30 on the occasion of his final meeting with the Ephesian elders, where he said to them,

- 28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.
- 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.
- 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

There can be no denying that in this context the Apostle Paul twice used the metaphor of the flock to refer to the Ephesian congregation and only to the Ephesian congregation. Can the same be said about the Apostle Peter's two uses of the metaphor in First Peter 5.2-3?

- 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;
- 3 Neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

Though some might protest against the obvious, there is a clear indication that the flock mentioned in this passage is a congregation and is not by its

³⁰ Pink, Vol 2, page 130.

use here a reference to all Christians everywhere (or even all Jewish Christians everywhere). Observe that the Apostle Peter mentioned that he was referring to “the flock of God which is among you,” and that the elders should be examples to the flock. Such cannot apply to all Christians everywhere.

Admittedly, John 10.1-21 does not suggest that Christians are sheep that are brought into the sheepfold of the congregation, the Church of Jesus Christ. That passage only shows that Christ’s Jewish sheep are called *out* of the sheepfold of Judaism and that Christ’s “other sheep” join them in belonging to one flock of the Good Shepherd’s sheep. I suggest for your consideration that though all Christians everywhere are of the same flock, we will not be gathered into a single sheepfold this side of heaven, but will someday be so gathered in heaven, as Hebrews 12.22-23 reveals:

- 22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,
- 23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

There will come a day when the Good Shepherd, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, will incorporate all who are His flock into this general assembly and Church of the firstborn, and He will bring us all into one all-encompassing sheepfold. But that will not be until our Chief Shepherd shall appear at the time of His second coming in power and great glory. Until the Rapture occurs, the Savior plans to bring His sheep into little sheepfolds that are congregations, assemblies of born again, Scripturally baptized believers in Jesus Christ. They are small sheepfolds in which He pens members of His flock, with under-shepherds assigned to feed the flock and to provide protection for them as needed.

What then do we learn from the metaphor of the flock if metaphors are useful to enhance our understanding?

- Using the metaphor of the flock, we gain a clearer picture of our Savior as the Good Shepherd, as the Great Shepherd, and as the Chief Shepherd.
- Using the flock, we can obtain a clearer picture of ourselves as sheep who know and are known by our Shepherd, and who must be both led and fed by Him and His designees.
- Finally, and this is what is most frequently lost by both Protestants and too many Baptists, the flock metaphor enhances our understanding of the place and the importance of the Church of Jesus Christ in the lives of Christ's sheep as a provision for protection from spiritual danger and nourishment and growth under the oversight of under-shepherds.

So many sheep erroneously think they are competent to provide for themselves and to protect themselves, yet the Apostle Paul warned the Ephesian under-shepherds (and not the congregation at large) of the danger facing the flock. Consider Acts 20.29-30 again:

- ²⁹ For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.
- ³⁰ Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

There are many ways in which the Church of Jesus Christ is described in the New Testament. However, it is the metaphor of the flock which best shows not only the danger sheep face from thieves, from robbers, from the neglect of hirelings, from grievous wolves that enter in among us, and from men who arise from among Church leaders who will speak perverse things to draw away disciples after them, but also our Good Shepherd's provision for our nurture and protection.

Our wonderful Shepherd of the sheep knew what He was doing when He brought the Church into existence. We should, therefore, honor His wisdom by complying with His wishes and His provision for us as His sheep.