



## TEEN TREE OF LIFE

# The Good Shepherd Part 1

November 7, 2021

**Before you begin, ask yourself a very important question: Do you believe that Jesus Christ died on The Cross for all of your sins? If you answered yes, you will need to be sure that you are filled with The Holy Spirit. How do you do this? You name your sins to God The Father in His Son's Name. This is called Rebound. As a Christian, you must rebound any time you sin. This is taught in 1 JOH 1:9: *If we confess [name] our sins [directly to God], He [God] is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Now, if you have never believed that Jesus Christ died on The Cross for all of your sins, all you have to do is say to yourself that you believe in Him and you are saved! The Bible verse which teaches us this is ACTS 16:31: *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."***

We're going to begin this study with some background on sheep and shepherds. Philip Keller, in his book "A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23," describes the nature of sheep: "They are creatures of habit that will follow a path through a desolate place and ignore excellent forage even though it is not far away. They are given to listless wandering. They have even been known to walk into an open fire. They can be timid and stubborn. At times they can be frightened by silly things and at other times they cannot be moved. They can be quite helpless. If a sheep accidentally rolls on its back, it will be stuck there with its feet in the air. Someone has to roll it back over. Sheep are also defenseless and have no way of protecting themselves."

The duty of shepherds is to keep their flock intact, protect it from predators and guide it to market areas in time for shearing. So, obviously, sheep need a shepherd – someone who will lead them to food and water, who will care for them when sick or injured. In this way, sheep are actually a lot like humans. At times, we prove to be helpless, defenseless and a bit stupid. That's why people are compared to sheep so often. Clearly, we're in need of someone to guide, direct and protect us and that's why God is Our Shepherd: ***He takes care of his flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in his arms. He carries them close to his heart. He gently leads those that have little ones.*** (ISA 40:11 New International Reader's Version)

The shepherd of ancient Israel was very different from his modern counterpart in America today. In ancient times, shepherds commonly milked their sheep, and made cheese from it; few shepherds still do this today. In this day and age, sheep farming is big business with large flocks, modern equipment, and different practices. Modern shepherds use sheep dogs to drive their flocks in front of them. The ancient shepherds had smaller flocks and knew each of his sheep, often naming each one. The sheep knew their shepherd, too and would follow him wherever he led.

When the shepherd was in the field, he would protect his sheep at night by putting them in a pen. The pen would consist of a round enclosure created by a fence of rocks. There would be one opening to this enclosure. The shepherd himself would become the gate. He would sleep in the opening so that no sheep could get out without passing over him, and no dangerous animal or thief could enter without confronting him.

If the shepherd was in a more populated area, there would be a community pen with a door into the pen guarded by a gatekeeper. There could be several different flocks all kept in the same pen, but this didn't cause a problem when the shepherds needed to separate the flocks. This is because the sheep would recognize the voice of their shepherd and would come when he called.

With all of this in mind, let's now look at **JOH 10:1-6 (New International Reader's Version)**: ***"What I'm about to tell you Pharisees is true. What if someone does not enter the sheep pen through the gate but climbs in another way? That person is a thief and a robber. The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him. The sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own sheep, he goes on ahead of them. His sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger. In fact, they will run away from him. They don't recognize a stranger's voice."***

Jesus Christ Himself told this parable from **JOHN 10** but the Pharisees didn't comprehend what he was saying. The message in it is that Jesus Christ is The True Shepherd. He is The Good Shepherd who was willing to die for those who put their faith in Him. Any other person who claims to be the true shepherd is a robber or thief. He or she is a false shepherd. This was a powerful message to the Jewish religious leaders who considered themselves to be the true shepherds of God's flock. They refused to believe the truth that Christ, Jesus is the Door to Eternal Salvation, and He is The Good Shepherd who cares, watches, and protects those who believe in Him.

Now, in **JOHN 10**, Our Lord was speaking to the same people he had been dealing with in **JOHN 9** after He had performed an unprecedented miracle in healing a man who had been born blind. The witnesses were astonished, but the Pharisees refused to believe the story. Even after questioning the man and his parents, they were still trying to find some other explanation for what had taken place. The man who had been blind insisted that Jesus had healed him and that He had to be from God. The Pharisees scorned the blind man and even kicked him out of the synagogue.

Jesus then found the man and revealed Himself to him. Some Pharisees were present when this took place and Our Lord said to them: ***"I have come into this world to judge it. I have come so that people who are blind will see. I have come so that people who can see will become blind."*** (JOH 9:39 New International Reader's Version) Then they then questioned Our Lord asking Him if they were blind, too and Jesus answered: ***"If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin. But since you claim you can see, you remain guilty."*** (JOH 9:41 New International Reader's Version)

Immediately after this statement, Our Lord makes the sheep analogy found in **JOHN 10** to give further explanation as to their blind condition. They should have readily understood what He was talking about since similar analogies are used throughout the Old Testament, but they didn't understand at all, thus further illustrating the blindness Jesus had just pointed out to them!

Now, it can be safely assumed that the Pharisees understood what Jesus was talking about in terms of caring for sheep. They would have understood that someone that climbs over the wall to get into the sheep pen would be a thief and robber. Such a person doesn't want to be seen by the guard at the gate. A shepherd uses the door for the sheep and the doorkeeper opens it for him. They would have understood that the sheep would know their shepherd's voice and that in a community sheep-fold, the sheep would come to their shepherd while the other sheep would flee because he was a stranger to them. They would have understood about the care of the sheep, too. But what they didn't get was the application of the analogy to themselves. If they had thought through what they should have known from the Old Testament analogies of shepherds and sheep and God and Israel, they would have understood the metaphor Our Lord was making. But the reality of Our Lord's comments kept them from understanding. They claimed to be those who could see and lead people in the ways of God, but they were in fact blind to God's Truth.

***He takes care of his flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in his arms. He carries them close to his heart. He gently leads those that have little ones.*** (ISA 40:11 New International Reader's Version) The Lord God is often referred to as The Shepherd and His people as a flock of sheep. There are many instances throughout the Bible. In **PSALM 23**, David uses the analogy of sheep and their nature to describe us: ***The Lord is my shepherd. He gives me everything I need. He lets me lie down in fields of green grass. He leads me beside quiet waters.*** (PSA 23:1-2 New International Reader's Version)

Sheep have a natural tendency to wander off and get lost. As believers, we tend to do the same thing throughout our Christian Walk. Isaiah put it this way: ***All of us are like sheep. We have wandered away from God. All of us have turned to our own way. And the Lord has placed on his servant the sins of all of us.*** (ISA 53:6 New International Reader's Version) When sheep go astray, they are in danger of getting lost, being attacked, even killing themselves by drowning or falling off cliffs. Do you see why people are called sheep?

Within our own nature there is a strong tendency to go astray, following the lusts of our flesh and eyes: ***Here is what people who belong to this world do. They try to satisfy what their sinful desires want to do. They long for what their sinful eyes look at.***

***They take pride in what they have and what they do. (1 JOH 2:16 New International Reader's Version)*** We are very much like sheep wandering away from the Shepherd through our own futile self-remedies and attempts at self-righteousness. It is our nature to drift away, to reject God, and to break His commandments. When we do this, we run the risk of getting lost, even forgetting the way back to God. Furthermore, when we turn away from The Lord, we soon find ourselves confronting one enemy after another who will attack us in numerous ways. And as always, God's Word supplies the remedy to this problem: ***So we must pay the most careful attention to what we have heard. Then we will not drift away from it. (HEB 2:1)***

{to be continued}