



TEEN TREE OF LIFE

The Good Shepherd

Part 2

November 14, 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 ended last week's study looking at how sheep have a natural tendency to wander off and get lost – very much like people do!! **ISA 53:6 (New International Reader's Version)** covers this topic perfectly: ***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.*** When sheep go astray, they are in danger of being attacked or even killing themselves by drowning or falling off cliffs. The dangers we face, as people who go astray, threaten our spiritual lives because they take us away from God and His Word. Thankfully, God acts as Our Shepherd helping to keep us in line, protecting and providing for us. Our Heavenly Shepherd meets our every need: food, water, rest, safety, and direction. When we, as believers, follow Him, we, too, know that we'll have all we need. We will not lack the necessities of life, for He knows exactly what we need.

The Old Testament warns us about evil, worthless shepherds. **EZE 34:1-6 (The Message Bible)** is the Lord's condemnation of the priests who were supposed to

shepherd the people but were instead exploiting them: **God's Message came to me: "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherd-leaders of Israel. Yes, prophesy! Tell those shepherds, 'God, the Master, says: Doom to you shepherds of Israel, feeding your own mouths! Aren't shepherds supposed to feed sheep? You drink the milk, you make clothes from the wool, you roast the lambs, but you don't feed the sheep. You don't build up the weak ones, don't heal the sick, don't doctor the injured, don't go after the strays, don't look for the lost. You bully and badger them. And now they're scattered every which way because there was no shepherd—scattered and easy pickings for wolves and coyotes. Scattered — my sheep! — exposed and vulnerable across mountains and hills. My sheep scattered all over the world, and no one out looking for them!"**

The same message is shared in **JER 23:1-14 The Message Bible**: **"Doom to the shepherd-leaders who butcher and scatter my sheep!" God's Decree. "So here is what I, God, Israel's God, say to the shepherd-leaders who misled my people: 'You've scattered my sheep. You've driven them off. You haven't kept your eye on them. Well, let me tell you, I'm keeping my eye on you, keeping track of your criminal behavior. I'll take over and gather what's left of my sheep, gather them in from all the lands where I've driven them. I'll bring them back where they belong, and they'll recover and flourish. I'll set shepherd-leaders over them who will take good care of them. They won't live in fear or panic anymore. All the lost sheep rounded up!' God's Decree."** Do you see what love God has for you and do you understand that He will always take care of you?

Zechariah denounced evil, worthless shepherds in a similar manner: **"Doom to you, useless shepherd, walking off and leaving the sheep! A curse on your arm! A curse on your right eye! Your arm will hang limp and useless. Your right eye will go stone blind."** (**ZEC: 11:17 The Message Bible**) Did you notice how in this message God condemns the shepherd for being evil in abandoning the flock instead of protecting it? Protection is very meaningful to God. If you think about it – it's what He's all about: protecting us! Look at **PSA 121:7-8 (The Message Bible)**: **God guards you from every evil, he guards your very life. He guards you when you leave and when you return, he guards you now, he guards you always.** That is one of the most comforting verses imaginable, isn't it??

Look at what Moses says in **NUM 27:16-17 (New International Reader's Version)**: **"Lord, you are the God who gives life and breath to all living things. Please put someone in charge of this community. Have that person lead them and take care of them. Then your people won't be like sheep without a shepherd."** Moses prays for God to appoint a man over the congregation to lead them. Israel often had good shepherds, but they also had many false ones like those described above and in **ZECHARIAH 10:2-3 (The Message Bible)**: **Store-bought gods babble gibberish. Religious experts spout rubbish. They pontificate hot air. Their prescriptions are nothing but smoke. And so the people wander like lost sheep, poor lost sheep without a shepherd.**

Now let's look at **EX 3:1 (New American Standard Bible)**: **Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. The angel**

of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush... It's interesting to know that Moses was a shepherd when God called him to lead Israel out of Egypt. And upon God's call, he remained a shepherd – but one of a much larger flock: **Hidden in the hands of Moses and Aaron, You led your people like a flock of sheep. (PSA 77:20 The Message Bible)** Moses' leadership was an extension of God's Leadership. Of course, the ultimate fulfillment of Moses' prayer for God to appoint someone to lead the congregation would be the coming Messiah Who would shepherd the flock.

Now, all these lessons are the things the Pharisees (who were listening to Jesus Christ in **JOHN 9 and 10**) should have known. But as we learned in last week's Teen Tree, they didn't understand and couldn't apply the analogy because they were blind to The Truth. But in His Graciousness, Jesus goes on further to explain His Own Nature and Fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah as the shepherd: **Jesus told this simple story, but they had no idea what he was talking about. So he tried again. "I'll be explicit, then. I am the Gate for the sheep. All those others are up to no good—sheep rustlers, every one of them. But the sheep didn't listen to them. I am the Gate. Anyone who goes through me will be cared for—will freely go in and out, and find pasture. A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of. (JOH 10:6-10 The Message Bible)**

We learned last week how a shepherd would lay down in the pen doorway to keep the sheep in and the predatory animals out. In **JOH 10:6-10**, Jesus alludes to the Old Testament prophecies of God protecting His people and providing good pasture for them. Our Lord is clearly making a spiritual analogy in that He offers salvation to all who enter through Him. That is the means to becoming one of the sheep that He will care for.

Our Lord contrasts Himself with the evil shepherds who, like those in the Old Testament, were thieves and robbers. This is His Charge against the Pharisees and other religious leaders of that day. They were the thieves and robbers.

Look at what The Lord Jesus Christ says to the Pharisees in **MATT 23:23-24 (The Message Bible)**: **"How terrible for you, teachers of the law and Pharisees! You pretenders! You give God a tenth of your spices, like mint, dill and cumin. But you have not practiced the more important things of the law, which are fairness, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the last things without failing to do the first. You blind guides! You remove the smallest insect from your food. But you swallow a whole camel!"** Jesus had recently accused them of seeking to murder Him. They sought to kill. By contrast, Jesus sought to provide, build, and give life. He protects the sheep like a door. He provides pasture for them, and He came to earth so that they might have life and might have it abundantly.

Back in **JOH 10**, let's look at the **New American Standard Bible** translation of verse 10: **The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came so that they would have life, and have it abundantly.** This reference to an abundant life does not refer to having a lot of material wealth, nor is it a promise for an easy life. You may acquire things and you may have easy times but Our Lord's teachings are clear that in following Him, the world will give you tribulation and that you should expect to be lied about and

persecuted. This is what He said in **MATT 5:10-12 (The Message Bible)**: ***“You’re blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God’s kingdom. Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens — give a cheer, even! — for though they don’t like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.”***

{to be continued}