

I AM the Good Shepherd

John 10:11, 14

The 4th great “I AM” statement of the Book of John is “I am the Good Shepherd”

The Context: Jesus had just declared the 3rd great “I AM” statement: “I am the Door of the sheep” (John 10:7, 9), when He stated two purpose statements in John 10:10 (which transition to this wonderful truth, “I am the Good Shepherd” - John 10:11, 14).

John 10:10 tells us the contrasting purposes of the thief and of Jesus Christ:

- 1) The purpose of the thief: “The thief comes not except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (10:10a). The Jewish religious leaders devised a legalistic religious system to enrich and aggrandize themselves. The Old Testament Scriptures prophesied of this (Jeremiah 23:1-6; Ezek. 34:1-3). Application: Today, there are examples of “thieving pastors” fleecing the church.
- 2) The purpose of Jesus Christ: “I came that they (saved sheep) will have life, and will have life abundantly” (10:10b). Jesus came to give spiritual, eternal life to all who believe in God and His Son, Jesus Christ (John 5:24-26). The Greek word “abundant” (#4053) means beyond what was anticipated; exceeding expectation; more excellent. The ABUNDANT CHRISTIAN LIFE in Jesus is not just surviving (barely making it from day to day), but is a happy, free, overflowing, adventurous, and exciting life beyond what we deserve. **Jesus is the Door to abundant life** (and the Good Shepherd). Thank you, Jesus!

The New Testament Shepherd: The Greek word, “Shepherd” #4166, is used 18 times in the New Testament (15 times in the four Gospels; and three times in the Epistles). A brief look at these “shepherd” uses in the New Testament will help us to better understand the significance of this great declaration:

- 1) It is used 8 times in John; exclusively in John 10:1-16.
- 2) It is used four times in Luke; all in reference to the shepherds at the time of the birth of Jesus (Luke 2).
- 3) Matthew and Mark speak of Jesus being moved with compassion when He saw the multitudes scattered abroad, as “sheep having no shepherd” (Matt. 9:36; Mark 6:34).
- 4) And just before His death, Jesus spoke of being the “smitten Shepherd” (Matt. 26:31-32; Mark 14:27-28).
- 5) Eschatologically, the Son of Man (Jesus) will come in glory as the Shepherd separating His sheep from the goats (Matt. 25:31-32).
- 6) The church is given apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds (pastors), and teachers for the perfecting (equipping; preparing) of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying (building up) of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-12).

- 7) Peter writes of the wonderful truth that we (believers) were as sheep going astray, but are now returned (brought back; turned back) unto the Shepherd and Bishop (overseer) of our souls (I Pet. 2:25).
- 8) Finally, in the benediction of the Book of Hebrews, Jesus is declared to be the “Great Shepherd of the sheep” (Heb. 13:20-21). He truly is the GREAT Shepherd!
- 9) A related Greek word #750 is “Chief-shepherd” which is only used once in Scripture. The Chief-shepherd (Jesus Christ) will appear and faithful pastors (under-shepherds) will receive the crown of glory (I Pet. 5:4).

The Characteristics of the Shepherd (John 10:1-16): The following are the characteristics and/or actions of the Shepherd of the sheep:

- 1) First and foremost, Jesus is the “Good” Shepherd. The Greek word “good” describes that which is good, wholesome, beautiful, and noble (in contrast to that which is wicked, foul, unlovely, and mean). God’s inherent (innate) goodness is one of His attributes. God is always and forever GOOD! If I would say, “God is good,” you would say what? Jesus is always and forever the Good Shepherd!
- 2) The Shepherd enters through the door (entrance, gate) opened by the porter (doorkeeper), Who is God (the Father and Holy Spirit), into the sheepfold (10:2-3).
- 3) The Shepherd calls His own sheep by name (10:3) If you are one of His sheep, He knows your name (and mine). When He calls us, He leads us out of the darkness and blindness of this world.
- 4) The Shepherd leads His sheep in and out to pasture; going before them as they follow only Him, because they know His voice (10:3-4)
- 5) The Shepherd lays down (gives up) His life for the sheep (10:11, 15, 17-18). Note: It says for “the” sheep not just “His” sheep (Jesus died for the sins of the world- John 3:16). Jesus, being willing to die for the sheep is expressed over and over in the New Testament (Rom. 5:8; 8:32; Heb. 9:14; I Pet. 2:24; Rev. 1:5).
- 6) The Shepherd knows experientially (ginosko) His sheep and is experientially known by His sheep (10:14). There is an everlasting relationship between Jesus and His sheep.
- 7) There are other characteristics of the Shepherd found in Psalm 23, Ezek. 34, and other Old Testament passages. They are wonderful truths, but beyond the scope of this study. They speak of the Shepherd providing for, protecting, guiding, comforting, anointing, and nurturing the sheep.

The Contrasting Hireling (John 10:12-13): After declaring Himself as the Shepherd, the Scriptures (10:12-13) tell of a “hireling” (Greek #3411 meaning one hired; a wage-worker) who is neither a shepherd nor one who owns the sheep (shepherds of ancient times were not usually the owners of the sheep; though Jesus is both the shepherd and the owner).

Hirelings are hired hands that do what they do for money; having no concern for the sheep (10:13). A hireling is a mercenary only concerned about personal gain, and a coward in a crisis. As soon as there is danger, he flees (as soon as he sees or beholds the wolf). There is no attempt

to gather the scattered sheep; he is “out-of-there” with no concern other than self-protection. A religious hired hand flees from wolf-attacks because he is not really committed to the welfare of Jesus’ sheep. Hireling is another description of the religious leaders of Israel (especially temple/synagogue priests) and of those like Judas (who proved to put money and safety before loyal discipleship). Today, there are religious mercenaries (called preachers) who are in the ministry for money, or whatever personal advantages or gains they can fleece from the church. The world has always been full of hirelings.

Who is the wolf? The wolf was the most common threat to sheep in the time Jesus was incarnate. The wolf is anything that attacks the sheep. Satan, persons, things, worldliness, etc. All seeking to devour the believer in Jesus Christ (sheep).

The Relationship between the Father, the Shepherd, and the sheep (10:14-16): After speaking of the hirelings, Jesus repeats the 4th great “I am” (the Good Shepherd) and goes on to say that He knows His sheep and is known by His sheep (10:14). Further, He says the Father knows Him and He knows the Father (10:15a). The relationship between the Heavenly Father, the Shepherd, and the sheep has a three-fold basis:

- 1) Based in Experiential Knowledge: Christianity is based in a relationship between God and believing sheep; it is not a religion. Experiential (ginosko) knowledge involves an intimate relationship between the persons involved. God the Father and God the Son have an intimate and eternal relationship (experiential knowledge) between each other, and believing sheep have an intimate and everlasting relationship with the Godhead through Jesus Christ. In Matt. 7:21-23, Jesus declares “**I never knew you**, depart from Me, you workers of iniquity” when speaking to those He knew perceptively, but not experientially (no intimate, eternal relationship with them).
- 2) Based in Sacrificial Love: Jesus now says, “and I lay down My life for the sheep” (10:15b). Jesus died for **the** sheep (all sheep; not just His sheep). He and the Father loved them so much that Jesus came to die for them. There is no greater love...
- 3) Based in an “united flock”: Jesus now declares “I have other sheep who are not of this fold (Greek #833- uncovered, walled area as court-yard or sheepfold).” This is the same Greek word as in 10:1 (a city sheepfold containing sheep from the entire Jewish nation). “Them (the other sheep; Gentiles) also I bring (lead, carry) and they will hear my voice, and there will be (future tense) one flock (Greek #4167- flock of sheep) and one Shepherd” (10:16b). This speaks of the future church with Jews and Gentiles as one “flock” in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28-29; Eph. 3:6). Not two flocks; but one united church!
- 4) Jesus is the Good Shepherd Who knows, loves, and unites His sheep. The relationship between Jesus and His sheep is likened to His relationship with His Father, and nothing could be closer than that relationship between God the Father and God the Son. It is an incredible privilege to have an intimate, personal, two-way relationship with God that cannot be broken (eternally secure)!

Some thoughts worth reading:

What does the Abundant Life mean?

By Rose Noland (He is So Worth it Ministries)

Rose writes:

This is what I used to think the abundant life meant:

No more pain, sorrow, suffering; perfect health.

Getting all that I desired.

Always feeling joy and peace

No one would sin against me

No more relational problems; peace in my home, work, church, and with extended family members

The evil in this world wouldn't touch me

In a nutshell the abundant life meaning is:

Joy despite suffering, pain, and sorrow

Peace in the middle of turmoil

Love in the midst of hate

Forgiveness despite wrongdoing

Security in the face of the unknown.

Confidence in the face of inadequacy.

Quietness of heart in the busyness of life.

Living on a higher plane—above our circumstances, not under them

Being content despite apparent lack

Oneness with God.

It's having a sense of wellbeing and wholeness; knowing all our needs, spiritual and physical, are being or will be met—no matter the circumstances.