

I AM The Gate (Door)
John 10:1-17
“One Flock, One Pen, & Only One Way In”

Introduction

Upon first glance of **John Chapter 10**, it seems simple enough to understand. But, after more careful scrutiny, it becomes a difficult passage to say the least. Then after a careful examination illuminated by The Holy Spirit's discernment, the passage becomes altogether glorious. At first, it seems that Jesus is mixing His metaphors, calling Himself both The Gate to the sheepfold, as well as, The Good Shepherd. After all, how can he possibly be both? The answer to this question can be explained with two simple words: I AM. There are actually three components in this analogy that serve as protectors of the “flock”. They are: The Gatekeeper, The Gate, and The Shepherd. All three of them are necessary to ensure the safety and protection of the sheep. All three have different, and yet complimentary, roles in keeping the flock. All three are representations of God Himself, and all three are representations of Christ as well. How can this be? Because He is God, that's how. He is The Great I AM.

In order to fully comprehend the analogy of “The Gate”, it is necessary to back up to the **Ninth Chapter of John** so that we may see the events that preceded Jesus' third and fourth I AM statements found in **John 10**. All of the events of **Chapter Nine** and the **first twenty one verses of Chapter Ten** occurred following the Feast of Tabernacles during which Jesus declared himself to be “The Light of The World” (**John 8:12**). God's timing is always perfect. Upon claiming to be The Light of The World, Jesus meets a man who was born blind. Being God in the flesh, He heals the man in a very remarkable way. He puts mud upon the poor mans eyes and has him go wash in the Pool of Siloam, which was a spring in Jerusalem that was fed by waters from the Gihon Spring. The water was used as a place of ritual cleansing for the Jews, and it was from this pool that the Jewish Priests drew water for their Libation service during the Feast of Tabernacles. The man obeyed the command of Jesus and as a reward for his obedience, he received his sight. Just think about that for a moment. He had never actually “seen” Jesus, but upon hearing His voice and obeying, he received his sight. Jesus did not accompany him to the Pool of Siloam. He merely sent him there (The word *Siloam* actually means “sent”). It was a miracle reminiscent of Naaman's healing in the Jordan River (**2 Kings 5**).

The Pharisees were furious that the man had received his sight and tried every way to discredit Him. For if Jesus had truly given sight to a man born blind, then it was proof positive that Jesus truly was The Light of The World! The Pharisees would never be willing to admit this, for they considered themselves to be the true shepherds of Israel, and they were unwilling to surrender themselves to the lordship of this “Nobody” from Galilee. Rather than be overjoyed at the amazing miracle and celebrating with this man who had been healed, they threw the poor man out of the synagogue (**9:34**)! They had to have a reason to justify their decision. So, they all agreed that since Jesus had healed this poor man on the Sabbath Day, that it couldn't possibly be a miracle of God. Wow, talk about spiritual blindness.

When Jesus heard that the man had been thrown out, which basically meant that he was no longer considered a Jew and would be disowned by everyone who knew him including his own parents, He came to him with a question: **“Do you believe on The Son of God?”** I LOVE the man's answer! Remember that he had never actually “seen” Jesus before, but that voice, that wonderful voice was one that he would never forget! He looked at Jesus and replied, **“Who is He Lord, that I might believe?”** What exactly was he saying? Simply this. **“If YOU tell me who He is, I will believe, because I believe in YOU!”** Jesus answered him and said, **“You have seen Him, and He is talking to you now”** (**9:37**). The man fell at His feet and worshipped!

These “so-called” shepherds of Israel had thought that they had the power to throw this poor man out of God's “flock”, but they had no such authority. The ONE Who had the authority over the sheep of Israel was standing before them now. He was the only gate by which the sheep could enter into the Fold

of God. He was the Great I AM. His was the AUTHORITY, His was the sole right of ACCEPTANCE, and His was the way to ABUNDANT LIFE.

His Authority

Jesus starts His discourse of The Gate by saying **“Amen. Amen” (vs.1)**, which is truly, truly; meaning, what He was about to say is absolute truth. It is undeniable and indisputable. He IS the Gate into the sheepfold. Simply put, He is saying that He, and He alone, has the authority over who is in and who is out. The Pharisees thought that they had the authority to cast this poor man out of the synagogue, but they were mistaken. Only God has that kind of authority. The Pharisees were assuming power that was not theirs, therefore, they were thieves (**vs. 1**). They were attempting to steal God’s authority. Jesus was calling them out for the self-appointed phonies that they were.

The “fold” in this story represents Israel itself. Israel is God’s nation. It was God who called to father Abraham and promised to make a great nation of him (**Genesis 12:2**). Israel had become everything she was because of God’s sovereignty. But, not all who belonged to Israel, belonged to God. There were many “sheep” inside the fold, but not all of them belonged to The Good Shepherd. Jesus lays claim in this narrative to His complete authority over the sheepfold of Israel. By doing so, He is claiming to be God. In **vs. 3** he states that He has been authorized to lead His sheep by the Gatekeeper. Think about what He is saying for a moment. If Israel is the “fold”, then its Gatekeeper is God. Jesus has been authorized by God as both The Gateway and The Shepherd (**vs. 7,11**). He is the only way in, and He is the only legitimate Shepherd who shall lead the flock. Jesus fulfilled over three hundred prophecies given in The Old Testament as to who the Messiah would be. There can be no disputing His authority. His coming was foretold, and He has proven His worthiness to be granted all power and authority by God. There is actually a pretty good picture of the Trinity here: The Gatekeeper, The Gate, and The Chief Shepherd. Jesus is saying that God has given Him the authority to open a way for any who will to come into the fold. In other words, Jesus is the door, and God has authorized Him to open so that men can be saved (**vs. 9**). I am reminded here of the story of Noah, where all who would be saved entered into the Ark through a single open door. When the opportunity for entering into salvation had expired, then it was God Himself who closed the door (**Genesis 7:16**). There will also come a time when no one else will be able to enter into salvation through Christ. When that time has come then the “doorway” to salvation will be forever shut. Believe on His Name, while there is still time (**2 Corinthians 6:2**).

It was common practice in those days for many shepherds to bring their flocks into the common fold in the evening. The gate keeper would lie in the doorway serving as “the door” to keep predators out, and to keep the sheep safe inside the fold. In the morning, the shepherds would return to the sheepfold and call out to their sheep. The flocks would separate and follow their shepherd’s voice. I have a flock of sheep myself, and I can tell you from experience that my sheep know me and will follow me where I lead them. It is virtually impossible to “drive” sheep, they must be led. If they recognize their leader’s voice they will follow, because they know that he is the one who feeds them. When Jesus said that He is “The Door”, He is saying that, just like the gate keeper, He will lay down in the doorway of the fold until the morning when The Shepherd comes to take His flock. In this case He is claiming to be both the Gate Keeper and The Shepherd. How can He do this? Because He is GOD! The fold is His, and the sheep are His. Apply this to the church for a moment. The Church is Jesus’ flock. He has left us in the care of The Holy Spirit during this dark time, but will return for us in “the morning” and call us out. He hasn’t really left us, for He is always with us! We are His sheep, and we know His voice. He knows us all by name and calls us (**vs.3**), just the same way He knew that poor blind man and called him (**9:35**). Jesus lay down his life to become the doorway for us to belong to The “flock” of God, The Church. He has been given ALL authority to accept us as His own and present us to God. He is both The Door and The Shepherd.

His Acceptance

Jesus tells us that any who would believe upon Him will be accepted into the flock (“saved” **vs. 9**). He has been given the authority to accept us on God’s behalf (**John 3:16**). I love the story of the blind man in the preceding chapter. Everyone else had turned their backs on him, but not Jesus. When Jesus heard that the poor man had been cast out of the synagogue, He made a special trip to look him up and save his soul. Have you ever felt abandoned? Turn to Jesus. He will take you in, no matter what you have done. He longs to be your shepherd. In fact, He died so that He could save you. He wants to be your Doorway out of whatever hurt or emptiness you are feeling. He wants to lead you to a safe place. He wants to take you into the flock.

There is wonderful news for US in **verse 16**. Jesus announces that He did not come just to save the Jews alone, for there were other sheep “not of this fold” (Israel) that would also hear His voice and be added to the flock. This is a reference to the Gentiles. He is in essence saying, there are some “wild sheep” roaming around out there that I am going to bring into God’s flock. When I first started raising sheep, I looked into crossbreeding my sheep with some of the wild Bighorn Sheep that roam the western Rocky Mountains. I learned that it was impossible for these wild sheep to live with domestic sheep. Domestic sheep carry diseases for which wild sheep have no immunity. A wild sheep will usually die of pneumonia within a few days after being exposed to domestic sheep. Needless to say, I had to abandon my hopes of entering a wild sheep into my little flock.

For centuries, Jews had little or nothing in common with Gentiles and considered them unclean. Jesus came to change all that. He came to accomplish what The Apostle Paul called “the great mystery” (**Ephesians 3:6**) by uniting Jews and Gentiles into one flock with One Shepherd. Jesus had the authority to bring Jews and Gentiles into one body, a feat that no one ever thought would be possible, but God did. He even hinted to this truth in the Feast of Pentecost. Pentecost was a feast in the Old Testament that represented the gathering of the harvest. It was during Pentecost that the “Church Age” (harvest) began in the book of Acts (**Acts 2:1**). God had commanded in His Word that during the feast of Pentecost two freshly baked loaves of bread be presented as a wave offering (lifted up as a ceremonial gesture) before The LORD (**Leviticus 23:17**). These two loaves of bread were actually to be baked with yeast in them. Yeast in the Old Testament ALWAYS represents sin. Why would God command two loaves of bread bake with yeast be presented as an offering when no other grain offerings were allowed to have yeast in them? Because these two loaves represent the two components of The Church that will one day be harvested from the earth. The loaves are not sinlessly perfect, just as the Church is not sinlessly perfect, but they represent the Jews, along the Gentiles, being brought together as one body!

No one but Christ could take wretched sinners from among the Jews and wretched sinners from among the Gentiles and present them together as a sweet smelling offering to The LORD. Christ died to make sinners holy! I am not perfect, but I am FORGIVEN! He has accepted me into the flock. A wild sheep like me may not belong in such a holy company, but I have been grafted in nonetheless (**Romans 11:17-20**). He died to give us ACCEPTANCE into the flock. Believe in Him, and He will not turn you away. He is The Door, and He is The Good Shepherd. You do not have to be a blood relative of Abraham to be accepted into The LORD’s flock. He will accept you just as you are. This might be a good time to give Him praise in the house of God! The simple truth is this; Jesus lived, died, and lives forevermore to forgive sinners and bring them into the flock. How can you tell if someone truly belongs to Christ? They will live to do the same as well. Let us always strive as His Church to live out His message of forgiveness and restoration.

His Abundant Life

Many preachers have looked at this story of the sheepfold and taught that it means that Jesus is the only way into heaven. While this is a true statement, the story actually has little or nothing to do with Heaven. It IS, in fact, a story about how to be included in God’s flock. Ultimately, all who believe on The

Name of Jesus will live for an eternity in Heaven, but what about the here and now? Is Heaven all we have to look forward to? Of course not! Jesus has promised to give His sheep an ABUNDANT LIFE (**vs. 10**). To be in Jesus' flock is to follow Jesus wherever He leads in the here-and-now as well. In other words, Christ has promised to lead us, teach us, and provide for our needs while we are here on earth. A Good Shepherd will never abandon his sheep. He sees to it that they are cared for EVERY SINGLE DAY. Jesus will never leave us, nor forsake us. He is the Good Shepherd that David wrote about in the **23rd Psalm**.

Allow me to ask you an important question this morning. Did you believe in Christ because you wanted to go to heaven when you die, or did you surrender your life to him so that He could lead you every step of the way from here to eternity? Heaven is just the believer's retirement plan, I want Christ to lead me in the here and now. I want an abundant life. It's not just about the final destination. It's about knowing and following The Shepherd. Is He leading you in paths of righteousness for His Name's sake? Is He leading you into green pastures or are you wandering aimlessly into endless disasters? Do you know His voice? How is your life treating you these days? Is it abundant, or is it empty? Jesus is your gateway from emptiness into fulfillment. He alone can give you a purpose.

The Feast of Tabernacles occurs in the fall. The very next spring after these events, Jesus rode triumphantly into Jerusalem at the beginning of Passover week on a day that we now call "Palm Sunday". The crowd shouted, **"Hosanna. Blessed is He who comes in the Name of The LORD"**. They were actually quoting **Psalm 118**, which was a song that they sang every Passover. It is the same song that Christ Himself would sing the night before He went to the cross (**Matthew 26:30**). The crowds were singing this song of praise to Him, but just a few days later these same people were shouting **"crucify Him"**. If they had only, truly understood the words to the song they were singing that day, then they would have seen Him for Who He truly was. He was The Gate of The LORD.

Open to me the gates of righteousness;
I shall enter through them, I shall give thanks to The LORD.

This is the gate of The LORD; The righteous will enter through it.

I shall give thanks to You, for You have answered me,
and You have become my salvation.

The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

This is The LORD'S doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day which The LORD has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

O LORD, do save, we beseech You; O LORD we beseech You, do send prosperity!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of The LORD.....

Psalm 118:18-26

If they had only known what the song was truly about. Jesus said I AM The Gate.

Who do YOU say that He is?

And ALL of God's people said... TRUTH!!!