

The Door To Life is Jesus

John 10:1-10

BI: False religions and false teachers have always peddled their counterfeit ways to God, but Jesus is the only door to eternal life.

Read John 10:1-18

One of the church's most beloved metaphors in the Scriptures is the picture of God as our Shepherd. I often have the opportunity to sit down with elderly saints who have loved God and His word for many years, and when I ask them if they have a favorite Scripture that I can read for them I'm never surprised to hear them suggest Psalm 23, "The Lord is my Shepherd." Nothing in all the world is more comforting than knowing that God Himself is our leader, protector, and provider. In the N.T. this theme is picked up again here in John chapter 10, but this time it is in reference to Son of God; namely Jesus Christ. He is "the Good Shepherd."

This is one of those passages that I have really looked forward to sinking my teeth into because it is so rich and full of divine comfort and security for the believer. But there is more to this passage than the metaphor of Jesus as Shepherd. In fact, before He speaks of Himself as a shepherd, He speaks of himself using a different metaphor altogether; namely, that He is "the Door." Now, we'll come back to the Shepherd imagery next week, but since the "Door" metaphor comes first, let's invest our morning considering that. What does it mean that Jesus is "the Door"?

We know that the idea of a door is used elsewhere in the N.T. For example,

- A. Luke 13:24 Jesus exhorts his audience by saying, "*Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.*"
- B. Acts 14:27 "*When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.*"

In both of these cases the door has to do with the way to God. What they don't tell us explicitly is that the door actually has a name – Jesus. Now the question before us is, how is Jesus like a door. To answer that question we need to consider the key elements of the analogy. So consider this:

The proper way into the sheep pen is by the gate/door (1). The sheep pen may have been a courtyard (cf. 18:15) near or bordering a house. It would be surrounded by a stone wall and topped with briars for security [presumably to keep thieves and robbers out]. This sheep fold would be a place where one or several families kept their sheep. The gate/door, which probably could be locked would have been guarded by a doorkeeper (3), who was hired to stand watch. The terms "thieves" and "robbers" overlap in meaning and refers to those who make

an unwelcome entrance and whose intention is violence]. Because of them, a shepherd had to be on his guard to protect the sheep.¹

What Jesus is presenting to us here is a classic allegory. And while there are a lot of images referenced here, there are really only two that matter. We know that because these are what Jesus focuses on in his explanation of the allegory beginning in verse 7. Here Jesus offers two of His “*I Am*” statements; namely, “I am the door” (7&9), and “I am the good Shepherd” (11&14). Both have to do with salvation.

As the “Door” Jesus is *the one and only way of salvation*. As the “Good Shepherd” Jesus is *the one who cares for the sheep and provides for their salvation at the cost of His own life*.² For this this morning, however, I just want to consider the first image, that of Jesus as the “Door” or *gate* to the sheep pen.

I. Jesus is the Door to Salvation:

1. The interpretive key to the meaning of Jesus as the “Door” is found in verses 7-10 (Read).

2. We know Jesus is speaking of salvation because he says in verse 9, “*If anyone enters through me he will be saved.*” So Jesus is the door in the sense that there is no other way to enter into salvation (i.e. to become one of God’s sheep) except through Him. Jesus made a similar statement in chapter 1:51 when he pictured Himself as a ladder connecting heaven and earth. He will do it again in chapter 14 where He says, “*I am the way... [and] no one comes to the Father but through Me.*”

3. The message is clear: Jesus is the only way to salvation. He came (10) “that they might have life, and have it abundantly.”

4. The question we need to ask here, however, is, Why does Jesus feel compelled to declare that He is the *only way*? The answer is found in the fact that there were others in His day (and throughout human history) who have claimed to have a different way to eternal life.

5. Notice the contrast Jesus makes between Himself and the false teachers, false prophets, and false religions of the world. In verse 1 He describes them as those *who climb over the wall* of the sheep pen thus identifying themselves as “*thieves and robbers.*” Again in v. 8 He calls them “*thieves and robbers.*” Finally, in v. 10 He declares that “*the thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy.*”

6. To whom was Jesus referring? I submit to you that He was referring specifically to the religious leaders of His day who had treated so terribly the blind man whom Jesus had healed. They had set themselves up as the shepherds of Israel. In reality, however, they

¹ Andreas Kostenberger, (2004) *John: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic), 300

² Leon Morris, (1971), *The New International Commentary On The New Testament: The Gospel According to John*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans) 505

were fleeing God's flock. They were false teachers, false prophets, and false shepherds peddling a false religious system that promised life but delivered eternal death.

7. Jesus was dealing with a very old problem. There have always been false teachers leading people astray. In fact, there are so many of them even in our day that, to the undiscerning eye, it seems all but impossible to distinguish them from the true shepherds of the true God. So how do you tell the difference?

8.

To answer that question let's take a few minutes to turn back to the book of Jeremiah where God deals with false teachers, false prophets, and false shepherds in the most comprehensive manner anywhere in Scripture. What are the marks of a false teacher. (There are so many I may not have time to cover them all).

II. Marks of a False Teacher:

1. Years ago when I was wading through the book of Jeremiah I was struck by the realization that the people before whom Jeremiah laid most of the blame for Israel's rebellion against God, were the religious leaders of the nation. For the most part, their bondage in Babylon was brought about by unfaithful prophets, priests, scribes and spiritual shepherds or pastors. We see this throughout the book. For example:

- A. (5:30) "An appalling and horrible thing Has happened in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, And the priests rule on their own authority; And My people love it so!" (their teaching was so positive, so affirming, so appealing... the people loved it!)
- B. (8:8) "Behold the lying pen of the scribes... they heal the brokenness of the daughter of My people superficially, saying "Peace, Peace" when there is no peace." (Misleading religious books).
- C. (10:21) "The shepherds have become stupid and have not sought the Lord." (They didn't care about God! They didn't care about feeding, leading, and protecting the sheep. They cared only about advancing themselves even if they had to *steal, kill, and destroy* to get it.

In a word, the reason the nation was on the road to destruction was because those responsible for feeding them the word of God had become unfaithful.

- A. (Jer. 7:28) "Truth has Perished"
- B. (Jer. 9:13) "They have forsaken my law..."
- C. (Chap. 11) "They have broken my covenant"
- D. The land was saturated with false teachers who had lead God's people astray, turning them away from His sufficient word in favor of more trendy, more fashionable, more appealing flavor of religious teaching. So what are the Marks of a false teacher?

I. They neither model nor teach biblical holiness:

1. Read Jer. 23:13-15

2. The first distinguishing mark of a false teacher is that he neither models nor teaches biblical holiness. His life may be characterized by wealth, popularity, and influence, but not by true holiness.
3. These are not men who wake up in the morning and pray “Search me oh God, and know my heart. Try me, and see if there is any wicked way in me.”
4. Who can forget the terrible events of the 1980’s when again and again and again men who had put themselves forth as shepherds of the Lord were exposed as frauds. First Jim Baker, then Jimmy Swaggart, then Robert Tilton, and others of lesser fame. And people were stunned! But it should have been no surprise.
5. Listen, these men were never known for their preaching about God’s call to holy living? The gospel they preached was not a gospel of repentance from sin. You never got the impression that they marveled at and feared the holiness of God.
6. What effect does that have on a church? Jeremiah say (v. 14) it “strengthens the hands of evildoers, so that no one has turned back from his wickedness.”
7. You stop preaching the true word of God and start telling people what they want to hear, the result will be unholy prophets leading unholy people into the blazing fires of the thrice holy God.
8. And that brings us to the second mark. First, they fail to preach and model holy living, and second...

II. They abandoned the true and sufficient word of God.

1. If I were to put these in order of significance, this one would be first because Jeremiah’s entire message to the shepherds and prophets is a rebuke that they have abandoned the word of God.
2. Look at the next verse (v. 16-22)
3. Why do the false teachers not lead God’s people into true holiness? Because they don’t preach the true word of God? This is a major theme throughout the book of Jeremiah. For example:
 - A. (5:13) “The prophets are a wind and the word is not in them.”
 - B. (6:10) “The Lord asks, “To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear? Behold, their ears are closed And they cannot listen. Behold, the word of the LORD has become a reproach to them; They have no delight in it.”
 - C. And even after everything Jeremiah predicted concerning the coming of Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Jerusalem, the people were still unwilling to listen to the word of God. In 45:16 we read, *“As for the message that you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD, we are not going to listen to you! ¹⁷ “But rather we will certainly carry out every word that has proceeded from our mouths...”* In other words, we are not going to listen to God. We know better than Him.

4. This is stunning! The wrath of God had come just as Jeremiah had preached it. The people were fleeing for their lives to Egypt. But still they would not listen to the word of the Lord. The false teachers had taught them well, and they had no intention of letting go of their failed beliefs.

III. They give Preference to Personal Visions over the Bible

1. The question is, if they are not really teaching the word of God, then what are they teaching? Jeremiah answers in v. 16, “They speak a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of the Lord.”

2. This is classic deception. Once you have led people away from the authority and sufficiency of the written word of God and have taught them to depend upon you for truth, they’ll believe anything.

3. False teachers are forever asking people to trust in visions they say they have seen. And if you’re a false teacher this is one of the most powerful tools of your trade. Why? Because there’s no way to disprove a personal vision! It’s completely subjective! And who would have the audacity to question a noted teacher who says that God appeared to him in a dream?

4. And this is a warning you find throughout the bible.

A. Lam. 2:14, “Your prophets have seen for you False and foolish *visions*; And they have not exposed your iniquity So as to restore you from captivity, But they have seen for you false and mislead-ing oracles.”

B. Eze. 13:9, God says, "So My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations.”

C. Eze. 22:28 "Her prophets have smeared whitewash for them, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' when the LORD has not spoken.”

D. Col. 2:18 Paul warns us, “Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on **visions** he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind.”

5. Do you see what was happening here? These religious leaders were not coming to the sheep through the gate/door. They were climbing over the wall because they were nothing more than religious thieves and robbers using the sheep to fulfill their own ambitions and desires. And this is how you convince the sheep to trust you. If you are out to deceive people for your own gain, just tell them you have had a vision from God, and they will line like naïve little sheep up to do whatever you say.

6. False teachers always prefer personal visions over the written word.

IV. They often use the phrase “God told me”:

1. Solomon was right. There is nothing new under the sun. What is happening today was happening all the way back in Jeremiah’s day, in 620 BC.

2. Look at v. 31 (Read)

3. Listen, folks. In Jeremiah's day when a prophet stood up and said, Thus saith the Lord", what he meant was "God told me."

4. We see this clearly in chap. 28 where a false prophet by the name of Hannaniah stood against Jeremiah and declared (v. 2), "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, 'I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon.' Within two years I am going to bring back to this place all the vessels of the LORD'S house, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place and carried to Babylon." But this was a false prophesy. The Lord never said that. In fact, the people and all the articles of the temple were to spend 70 years in Babylon because of the sin brought about by obeying the word of the false teachers rather than the word of God.

5. Beloved, all I have to say on this point is please be careful about saying "The Lord told me." By doing so a person elevates a subjective word or message above the level of scrutiny. I mean, if God told you that, than who am I to question God? Even if it sounds unbiblical, immoral, or down right diabolical. Implying that you are receiving direct revelation from God is a really serious thing.

In the early 1700's, Jonathan Edwards wrote:

*"This error will defend and support errors. As long as a person has a notion that he is guided by immediate direction from heaven, it makes him incorrigible and impregnable in all his misconduct."*³

6. Jeremiah 29:8-9 "For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream. 'For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them,' declares the LORD."

7. A true shepherd of God's people will only say "God told me" when he can point at a text of Scripture and demonstrate plainly that God really did say it.

V. They Give False Hope to Religious Unbelievers:

1. Jer. 23:17, "They keep saying to those who despise Me, 'The LORD has said, "You will have peace "'; And as for everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart, They say, 'Calamity will not come upon you.'

2. The false teacher's message is always uplifting, always pleasant, always upbeat, never judgmental, designed to make us feel good about God and ourselves. But do we remember what Jesus said the H.S's job is? It is to *convict* the world of sin, righteousness and judgment.

3. The frightening thing to me, quite frankly, as I watched one of these worship services on the internet a few years ago, is that the whole thing was so up-lifting, so positive, it

³ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, (p. 405)

was such a “feel-good” experience that any unbeliever could attend and come away feeling blessed of the Lord. Is that what God wants?

4. And that’s the danger. People come together in droves NOT to humble themselves before God but to have a “spiritual” experience. Then, when a positive emotion is experienced they call it worship. They feel like they have connected with the heart of God, and the man behind the pulpit tells them it’s true!

5. But it never occurs to them that God might actually view what they are doing as nothing more self-worship; A kind of religious experience that leaves the main issues of rebellion and sin in the heart unaddressed and disguises the road to hell with up-lifting music, slick presentations, positive thinking, warm feelings all pasted together with a few verses of Scripture.

6. And so, week after week false teachers offer false hope with a false gospel to naïve sinners who think they’re good with God.

7. Now, that’s a valid fear. A fear that millions will stand before the Lord at the judgment and hear the horrifying words, “Depart from me; I never knew you.” And according to Jesus the ones who will be most astounded are the men and women who will say, “*Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?*” (Mat. 7:22) These will go away into everlasting fire; but the righteous, into eternal life.

VI. Their Character is Saturated with Pride:

1. Read v. 32

2. The key phrase here is “reckless boasting.” These are men who are determined to make sure you understand how great they are.

3. And notice how they do it. They do it by telling people about the amazing dreams god has given them. The implication is this, “God speaks to me in dreams, and that makes me special. Only men who are especially anointed of the Spirit are granted the high privilege of receiving visions from the Lord, and I’m one of them!

4. Don’t be deceived by this. The prophet Jeremiah says they are “false dreams designed to lead Gods people astray.”

5. It’s interesting to note that when the apostle Paul spoke of the true visions the Lord gave him, he did it with such humility it’s difficult to tell whether he is speaking of himself or someone else.

A. 2 Cor. 12:2 “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago-- whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man-- whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows-- was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

On behalf of such a man I will boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to *my* weaknesses. For if I do wish to boast I will not be foolish, for I will be speaking the truth; but I refrain *from this*, so that no one will credit me with more than he sees *in* me or hears from me.”

- B. Did Paul, as a special apostle of the Lord, have visions from the Lord? Yes. But he didn't speak of them, or use them to impress people. That's not why God gave them. The only thing Paul was willing to boast about was his own weakness so that the all surpassing power of his ministry might clearly be from God and not from men. He wanted all the glory to be Christ's glory! All the honor to be Christ's honor! All the praise to be Christ's praise.
- C. Paul was happy to be viewed as the scum of the earth, a nobody who was personally unimpressive and without distinction so long as his ministry caused people to love Christ. And frankly, the visions, though necessary for God's purposes, were viewed by Paul as a source of temptation.

Conclusion:

1. Oh church family. It is so vitally important that we learn to be discerning about the spiritual leaders we follow. Don't listen indiscriminately to any teacher. Not even me! I am not God's word to you. The Bible is God's word to you.

2. There will always be false teachers with false religious ideas that desire not to feed and protect the flock, but to “steal, kill, and destroy.” There will always be religious imposters climbing over the wall to get to the sheep telling them there is a different way to God other than through the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

3. Jesus is the only door to salvation. And that is evidenced by who He was and how He lived. What are the characteristics of the True Shepherd?

- A. He taught and model a life of holiness.
- B. He lived under the authority of God's word.
- C. He regularly brought popular teaching under the scrutiny of Scripture.
- D. He warned religious people of the danger of false security.
- E. His character was saturated with humility and love for God and people.
- F. His ministry was governed by obedience to the Father, even unto death.
- G. The goal of his work was to bring many sons to glory.

4. This is the true shepherd. May God give us the grace to follow Him alone into abundant, eternal life.

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