

“I Am the Door”

THE SHEPHERD AND THE DOOR

In the verses leading up to John 10:10, Jesus Christ makes a statement that startles the Western mind: “I am the door of the sheep.” What is the meaning of this bold declaration, and what application does it have for us today?

First, we must understand the meaning of the word “door” as it is used in this verse.

- How can a person be a door?
- Since when do sheep have a door?
- A door to what?

Second, we must understand the contextual reference to “sheep”.

- What does shepherding have to do with Jesus Christ as the door?
- We know that in the Grace Administration we are not sheep, but sons of God. Is there anything for our learning here?

Third, we must understand what Jesus Christ accomplished for us as the door.

- Will other passages enlighten us as to why Jesus Christ chose this analogy?
- Why would God want for Jesus Christ to be a door?
- How would his being a door help us?

As we embark on this journey of discovery, we'll learn how the shepherd is both gateway and gatekeeper of his flock, and build our appreciation for all that Jesus Christ accomplished for us as the door. Jesus Christ the door is both our *gateway* to eternal life and the *gatekeeper* of our more abundant life.

THE "DOOR" OF JOHN 10

What does the word "door" mean in the context of John 10?

John 10:7:

Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

Biblically, the word "door" can refer either to a swinging mechanism hanging on a doorframe of a built house, or to an opening, entrance, or doorway. In this teaching, we will concern ourselves exclusively with this second meaning: an opening or gateway.

As used in the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for doorway (*pētach*) is not restricted to houses; it is also used of the entrance to tents, houses, cities, gates, and caves. In John 10, the word "door" is used to refer to the entrance to a sheepfold. A fold is a pen or enclosure for sheep. It may be small or large, and may or may not have a roof.

Realizing that the "door" is simply an entrance, it is also important to recognize that the phrase "I am the door" is a figure of speech—a metaphor, which indicates in its simplest terms: "I am what a door is." Let's keep our eyes open as we learn all that a door is, and see how it applies to Jesus Christ.

Since the word "door" in John 10 refers to the entrance of a sheepfold, we will need to study shepherds and sheep to better understand how Jesus Christ is the door of the sheep. As the door, Jesus Christ is both the *gateway* and the *gatekeeper* of the sheep.

SHEPHERD AS GATEWAY AND GATEKEEPER

As the *gateway*, the shepherd leads the flock both into and out of the fold or pen.

John 10:9:

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

The door is the only way in and out of the fold. The doorway has no door. The shepherd becomes the door.

As the *gatekeeper*, the shepherd lays down his life as a sacrifice. The shepherd is prepared to give his life for the sheep.

John 10:15b:

... I lay down my life for the sheep.

As the door, Jesus Christ is the *gateway* — our porter, provider, and benefactor. The shepherd enters the fold by the doorway, beckons the sheep, and leads them in and out.

John 10:1-4:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD OF PSALM 23

The good shepherd sees to every need of the flock. Psalm 23 relates how God is a shepherd to His people.

Psalm 23:1-6:

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Each verse of this psalm has a direct application to sheep that we must learn about to more fully appreciate the spiritual significance of each statement. Let's go through it line by line to learn about this in detail.

Psalm 23:1:

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

In his book *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, author and professional shepherd Phillip Keller recounts from lifelong personal experience what it is like for a sheep to be under the care of a good shepherd. Keller's assertion is that "No other class of livestock requires more careful handling, more detailed direction, than do sheep."

PSALM 23:1

“The LORD is my shepherd”

In Psalm 23 we have the shepherd David, speaking as one of the flock. Each sheep bears the mark of ownership, having had its ear notched as a permanent sign that they are in the shepherd’s gracious care.

A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, not just once, but continuously.

“I shall not want”

Without a good shepherd, a sheep could want for many things on their own: good forage, a reliable water supply, and protection from disease, pests, and predators, to name a few.

Under the watchful shepherd’s care, all these things and more are readily provided.

Psalm 132:4:

I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids.

PSALM 23:2

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures”

Sheep will only lie down if four (4) conditions have been met:

1. Free from fear
 - a. Timid and easily panicked
 - b. Powerless to defend selves
2. Free from tension (Ezekiel 34:20-22)
 - a. Friction with other sheep
 - b. Rivalry (“butting order”)
3. Free from aggravation

- a. Pests, parasites
 - b. Relieved by anointing oil
4. Free from hunger
- a. Able to fill up quickly
 - b. Then lie down quietly to gain

“he leadeth me beside the still waters”

Shepherd scopes out unpolluted sources in advance:
dew on the grass, deep (hand-hewn) wells, springs or streams.

PSALM 23:3

“He restoreth my soul”

What is it to be “cast down” in the context of a sheep’s life?

Psalm 42:11:

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou
disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise
him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

1 Corinthians 10:12:

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest
he fall.

A sheep is said to be “cast” when it is turned over on its back and
unable to get up again. This can happen more readily than you
might imagine. Even the healthiest and strongest of sheep may
accidentally roll over after lying down in a slight hollow and
changing positions to the point where its center of gravity shifts.

A cast sheep is easy prey for predators. Furthermore, if the
shepherd doesn’t arrive on the scene in a short time to right the
sheep and set it on its feet again, it will die as gases build up in the
rumen and circulation to the legs is cut off.

A shepherd can reduce a sheep's risk of being cast by reducing its weight (by having it eat less) or by shearing it.

"he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake"

Without the shepherd's guidance, sheep can easily overgraze a pasture, causing rutting and reinfestation. The good shepherd keeps his flock on the move from week to week to ensure fresh forage.

Proverbs 14:12:

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

PSALM 23:4

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death"

A good shepherd never takes the flock where he has not been before. He always scouts out the territory in advance.

In summer, he leads the flock up the well-watered valleys to mountain meadows because he knows that is where they will find the best forage at that time.

Predators may lurk in the surrounding high cliffs; but the shepherd keeps watch for any dangers and protects his sheep along the route.

"I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me"

Rod

A weapon and an instrument of correction/discipline. Implied authority of God's Word. "Thus saith the Lord." The Scriptures are His rod. Used to guide the wayward back, away from danger.

Ezekiel 20:37:

And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant:

Calls the counting of the sheep “passing under the rod.” Rod also used in the individual examination of the sheep for defects hidden beneath the surface of the wool.

Comfort:

In the sure hand of the well-practiced shepherd, it can be used to strike and kill predators.

Staff

An instrument uniquely designed and crafted for sheep, and only sheep -- no other animal. Symbol of shepherd's concern and compassion for the sheep.

Three uses:

1. Drawing a newborn lamb together with its mother.
2. Drawing a sheep of any age to the shepherd for examination.
3. Gently guiding a sheep: “In touch” with the master. Delivers them from self-inflicted troubles.

PSALM 23:5

“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies”

Pastures:

Clearing out the poisonous plants each year before the sheep arrive to graze there.

Watering holes:

Clearing away the surrounding brush and possible pollutants.

“thou anointest my head with oil”

“Summer time is fly time”:

A “fly in the ointment.” Nasal fly larvae can literally drive a sheep crazy. Shepherd’s remedy consisted of linseed oil, sulphur and tar applied to the nose.

“Summer time is scab time”:

Scab is a highly contagious sheep disease prevalent the world over. Due to their proclivity to rub heads, it can be readily spread. Modern antidote is linseed oil, sulphur, and other chemicals, often applied in a vat (“sheep dip”). Have to submerge the head as well as the body for treatment. Ancient antidote was likely olive oil, sulphur and spices. Sacrificial lambs were to be “without blemish,” i.e., free of scab (representing contamination/sin/evil).

“my cup runneth over”

To revive/reinvigorate a sheep chilled by drenching from a sudden mountain downpour, modern antidote is brandy and water. Suppose the ancient antidote could have been wine.

PSALM 23:6

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life”

Sheep can be the most beneficial of all livestock if properly managed. Best manure, consistently deposited where needed most (the bare, higher ridges). Would consume the widest variety of herbage, including noxious weeds. Beneficial effect on the land: goodness and mercy following the flock. They leave a blessing behind themselves.

“and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever”

To quote Philip Keller, “It is the sheep owner’s presence that guarantees there will be no lack of any sort; that there will be abundant green pastures; that there will be still, clean waters; that there will be new paths into fresh fields; that there will be safe summers on the high tablelands; that there will be freedom from fear; that there will be antidotes for flies and disease and parasites; that there will be quietness and contentment..” Live ever aware of God’s presence.

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER LAMB

Having studied how the shepherd cares for the sheep, we have gained a better understanding of how Jesus Christ is both *gateway* and *gatekeeper* of the fold.

How does this relate to what he accomplished for us as our Passover?

1 Corinthians 5:7b:

For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:

Jesus Christ's crucifixion took place at the same hour as the yearly Passover sacrifice. In order for God's Word to be fulfilled, every requirement of the Scripture had to be met before his work as the complete Passover was accomplished. John 19:30 attests to this truth.

John 19:30:

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

At the same time, something happened in the entrance to the Holy of Holies in the Temple at Jerusalem. The veil that hung in the doorway of the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom, indicating that the separation between God and man had been done away.

Mark 15:38:

And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

Why is this significant? The veil was not on the outside of the temple, but rather at the entrance to its most interior part — the Holy of Holies, the temple's inner sanctum. The Holy of Holies represented the presence of God with Israel, and the veil represented the separation of Israel from God. When Jesus Christ died for us, the separation between man and God was eliminated once and for all.

Look at all that Jesus Christ accomplished for us as the door! With his crucifixion he passed through the entrance to the holiest once and for all, giving us free and open access to God's presence.

Hebrews 10:19, 20:

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

Jesus Christ became our gateway into God's presence so that we could "enter into the holiest... By a new and living way... through the veil." Man now has free access to know the heavenly Father intimately and personally.

By his sacrifice, Jesus Christ also abolished the separation between the Gentiles and Judeans, breaking down the middle wall of partition between them.

Ephesians 2:13, 14:

But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

In the Temple, Gentiles were restricted to the outer section known as the Court of the Gentiles. By breaking down the "middle wall of partition", Jesus Christ became the Gentiles' gateway into the household of God.

Ephesians 2:19:

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

Jesus Christ gave men entrée to God by abolishing the separation between God and man in two ways:

1. The Gentiles could now pass through the middle wall of partition and, with the Judeans, enter in freely, being no longer strangers and foreigners.
2. Both Israel and the Gentiles could now enter into God's presence, being fellowcitizens, saints, and of the household of God.

How tremendous to comprehend that by laying down his life, Jesus Christ the door tore down the walls that separated man from God, so that "whosoever will may come"! All who believe now have free access to God through the pathway opened up by his sacrifice.

Ephesians 3:12:

In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

JESUS CHRIST OUR DOOR TO LIFE

We would not have this access without Jesus Christ the door.

We have examined in detail how Jesus Christ is both gateway and gatekeeper, and what he accomplished for us as the door of the sheep. Truly, he is the *gateway* to our eternal life and the *gatekeeper* of our more abundant life. He obtained this by his sacrifice for us, once for all.

As the *gateway*, Jesus Christ came that we might have eternal life.

John 10:9, 28:

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

As the *gatekeeper*, Jesus Christ came that we might have a more abundant life.

John 10:7, 10:

Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

God knew what Jesus Christ would accomplish from the very beginning. The service of the original Passover foreshadowed what Jesus Christ would accomplish for us as the door. At the time of the exodus when God saw the blood of the animal lamb, He passed over the door of the houses of the children of Israel and would not allow the destroyer to come in to smite them. At the time of the crucifixion when God saw the blood of the human lamb of God, the veil of the Temple was rent in two and Jesus Christ entered into the holiest by a new and living way. When Christ's accomplishments were complete, God's people were protected from the destroyer not only here and now (with a more abundant life) but for all eternity (with eternal life).

How can we emulate our lord and savior in his wonderful ministry as the door?

1 John 3:16:

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

As the shepherd laid down in the entrance as both gateway and gatekeeper of the fold, we should stand in the gap to care for God's people. The threats have been thwarted, our needs have been secured. We now have the privilege of putting our all on the line to love and serve God's people.