

EXPLANATION OF 43RD BIBLEBOOK

JOHN 10 (A.D. 70-95)

INTRODUCTION

John 10:1-18 describes the allegory of the good shepherd.

John 10:19-42 describes the appeal of Jesus Christ to the Pharisees and disciples that he is the Son of God.

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EXPLANATION

What is an allegory?

a. The difference between a parable and an allegory.

De Greek word 'paroimia' is a figure of speech that compares things with each other. In 2 Peter 2:22 it is a proverb: "A dog returns to its vomit." In John 10:1-18 and 15:1-8 'paroimia' is an allegory.

A simile is a figure of speech that makes a comparison between two unlike things and the comparison is explicitly stated, using the word 'as' or 'like'. For example: "We all, like sheep, have gone astray"¹. Lost people behave like lost sheep.

A parable is an extended comparison. For example, "The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed"². The Kingdom of God functions like a mustard seed: it begins very small and grows very large.

A metaphor is a figure of speech that makes a comparison between two unlike things and the comparison is only implied. For example: "The Lord is my shepherd"³. The Lord acts towards me like a shepherd to his sheep.

An allegory is an extended metaphor. For example: "I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener" (15:1). Jesus is for me like a vine is for the branches and fruit. God the Father functions like the gardener.

b. Rules for the explanation of an allegory.

Do not explain every detail of the symbol. Note which details Jesus gives a particular meaning and try to grasp the main thought. In the allegory of the good shepherd the following symbols have meaning: 'The door' is Jesus himself (10:7,9). 'The sheep pen' is Israel (10:16). 'The sheep' are the people for whom Jesus laid down his life on the cross, who are consequently saved, have received eternal life, are personally known by Jesus, listen to the voice of Jesus and follow Jesus (10:4,9,11,14,28). 'The flock' is the complete community of saved people from all the sheep pens of all the nations in the world (10:16).

¹ Isaiah 53:6

² Matthew 13:31

³ Psalm 23:1

Not every predicate point to the symbol. Sometimes a sentence has a metaphor as subject and a predicate that does not refer to the metaphor, but to the person to whom the metaphor refers. John 10:9 says, “I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.” The subject is a metaphor (“One of the sheep” that thieves and robbers try to slaughter and destroy (10:8,10). But the predicates: (“enters through the gate, will be saved”, “comes in and goes out through the gate”, and “finds pasture”) do not refer to a sheep of the flock, but to a person. This person (as a sheep of the shepherd, the Lord) comes into the community of saved people for the first time through Jesus⁴; he has complete freedom to enter into his presence at any time⁵; and he finds spiritual food and the abundant life with Jesus Christ. With a literal sheep this is different: he is herded through the gate; he does not go out or come in by himself; and he does not find the best pastures by himself. But a human, as the sheep of the Shepherd, Jesus, can do all these things. *What is impossible and unreasonable with the sudden change of symbols, is quite possible and reasonable in the reality to which these symbols refer.*

The sudden change of the metaphor: from “Jesus is the gate” (10:7) to “Jesus is the good shepherd” (10:11,14) does not mean that ‘the gate’ can be ‘the shepherd’. But the reality to which these metaphors refer is Jesus Christ and he can and is at the same time ‘the gate into the community of the saved’ and ‘the shepherd of the community of believers’. Jesus Christ is so big that his significance can never be expressed in just one word. From one point of view Jesus is ‘the lion, the king that rules⁶, but from another point of view Jesus is ‘the lamb’ that has been sacrificed⁷. From one point of view the Church is ‘the bride’⁸, but from another point of view the Church is ‘the city’⁹. Likewise the Jewish religious leaders are from one point of view ‘thieves and robbers’ (10:1,10) and from another point of view ‘hired hands’ (10:12-13). In the context the thieves and hired hands refer to the Pharisees. *The point is that you should find the main thought.*

In John 10 the main thought is: Jesus, ‘the good shepherd’, is contrasted with the Pharisees, ‘the hired hands’. Jesus is also the gate, but that thought is subordinate to the main thought. With a real flock of sheep a shepherd often sits in the gate to watch the entrance. Jesus as ‘the gate’ shows who the bad shepherds are: they are the leaders who force their entry into the sheepfold illegally, for example, by intimidation (9:22). They do not enter by the gate, that is, they do not believe in Jesus Christ and are also not appointed by him. Jesus as ‘the gate’ also shows that Jesus is the One who gives believers (the sheep) freedom, rest, safety and spiritual food.

c. The context of this allegory.

John 10:1-18 contains an allegory about the good shepherd. It connects well with the preceding context: the Jewish religious leaders as the false shepherds (9:35-41). The following discussion (10:19-21) points to the argument about the theological absurdity: how could a demon-possessed person open the eyes of a man born blind.

d. The allegory connects to what the Old Testament teaches about God as Shepherd.

God is the shepherd of Israel¹⁰ as well as of individual believers¹¹. He says, “I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down”¹². God is the good shepherd that tends his flock, carries the lambs close to his heart and gently leads those that have young¹³.

There were unfortunately also bad shepherds that destroyed and scattered the sheep of God’s pasture, drove them away and not bestowed care on them¹⁴. Such shepherds only took care of themselves. They ate the curds, clothed themselves with wool and slaughtered the choice animals. They did not strengthen the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. They did not bring back the strays or searched for the lost. They ruled them harshly and brutally. The sheep were scattered and became food for wild animals. They wandered over mountains, but no one searched or looked for them¹⁵.

Then there will be God’s appointed shepherd on earth. God himself would place one shepherd over his people, his servant David, and this shepherd would tend his people and be their shepherd¹⁶. But this shepherd would also suffer. “Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered”¹⁷. John 10:1-18 is the fulfilment of this prophecy.

(I) 10:1-6. Jesus is the shepherd.

⁴ cf. Luke 13:24

⁵ Hebrews 4:14-16

⁶ Revelation 5:5

⁷ Revelation 5:6

⁸ Revelation 21:9

⁹ Revelation 21:10

¹⁰ Psalm 80:1

¹¹ Psalm 23:1

¹² Ezekiel 34:15

¹³ Isaiah 41:11

¹⁴ Jeremiah 23:1-5

¹⁵ Ezekiel 34:1-6; cf. Zechariah 11:16-17; 1 Kings 22:17; Zechariah 10:2

¹⁶ Ezekiel 34:23

¹⁷ Zechariah 13:7; Matthew 26:31

10:1. I tell (vipa) you the truth, he who does not enter (vppn) the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs over (vppa) from another place, is (vipa) a thief and a robber.

10:2. But he who enters (vppn) by the gate is (vipa) the shepherd¹⁸ of the sheep.

10:3. To him the gate-keeper¹⁹ opens (vipa) the gate, and the sheep listen (vipa) to his voice, and he calls (vipa) his own sheep by name and leads (vipa) them out.

10:4. When he has led out (without force)(vsaa) all his own (sheep), he goes on (vipn) ahead of them, and the sheep follow (vipa) him because they know (by relation, reflection and intuition)²⁰ (vira) his voice.

10:5. But a stranger they will in no way (double negative) follow (vifa), but will run away (vifd) from him, because they do not recognise (know by relation)²¹ (vira) the voice of strangers.

10:6. This allegory²² Jesus told (viaa) them, but they did not understand (grasp)²³ (viaa) anything that he was telling (viia) them.

a. The difference between shepherds and thieves.

Everyone in Israel knew the life of shepherds. A village might have only one big sheep pen, in which several flocks of sheep were kept during the night. The sheep pen consisted of an enclosure within a wall of stones or branches with a gate, but without a roof. A gatekeeper (watchman) guarded them during the night. In the morning, the shepherds would come to lead their flocks out to grass and to water. The gatekeeper knew the shepherds and opened the gate for them. Each flock of sheep knew the voice of their own shepherd and would not follow another shepherd. But also the shepherd knew his own sheep, even by name. The shepherd loved his sheep and would defend them against wolves and even against lions and bears, as king David did. So, the shepherd does not drive the sheep as a cowboy drives cattle from behind, but walks in front of the sheep. He leads and the sheep follow him.

In contrast, thieves and robbers climb over walls. They do not enter via the gate, because the gatekeeper is guarding at the gate. They do not know the sheep and the sheep do not recognise their voices as that of good shepherds. They drive sheep by force into a particular direction.

b. The difference between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders.

This particular sheep pen represents the nation of Israel (10:16). The sheep represent the believers in Israel. The shepherd of the sheep is the Messiah, Jesus Christ who came in the way that was predicted in the Old Testament (cf. the messianic prophecies). At his first coming into the world he came to his own sheep in the sheep pen (1:11)²⁴. The thieves and robbers represent the Jewish religious leaders, who enter the sheep pen illegally (because God had never sent them²⁵). They try to gain power over all the sheep within the sheep pen, for example by intimidation (9:22) or by excluding good shepherds²⁶. They avoid the gate, which is another symbol for Jesus Christ, because they do not believe in him and are not appointed by him.

For the explanation of this allegory it is not important who the gatekeeper is. He could represent John the Baptist or even better: the Spirit of Jesus Christ²⁷! The shepherd, Jesus Christ, knows his own sheep by name; that is, he knows every single one he saves personally and intimately²⁸. He calls them by their names by way of the proclamation of the gospel²⁹. And *he leads them out of the sheep pen of Israel* (10:3; cf. 1:11-13) *and later also out of the sheep pens of all the other nations* (10:16). The people who believe in Jesus Christ follow him out, because they recognise his voice, trust him and obey him. Genuine Christian believers will in no way (a very strong negative) follow the Jewish religious leaders or the religious leaders of all the other religions in the world! They do not recognise their voices and do not trust their words and actions. True Christian believers will never follow people proclaiming a false or strange doctrine, a false or strange theology, a false or strange philosophy or a false or strange ethic. They will run away from such people³⁰!

c. The Jews did not understand the allegory.

Jesus told this allegory to his disciples (9:2), the Jewish religious leaders (9:40) and the other Jews (10:19). But they did not understand anything that he was telling them. These people were spiritually blind³¹. If the Jews had read the Old

¹⁸ G: poimén

¹⁹ G: thuróros

²⁰ G: oida

²¹ G: oida

²² G: paroimia

²³ G: ginóskó

²⁴ cf. Matthew 10:5-6

²⁵ Jeremiah 23:21-22

²⁶ 1 John 9-11

²⁷ cf. Revelation 3:7-8

²⁸ 2 Timothy 2:19

²⁹ Romans 1:6; 8:30; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)

³⁰ cf. 2 John 9-11

³¹ cf. Isaiah 6:9

Testament carefully they would have known that the LORD³² was the good shepherd³³ and that he would lead ‘the remnant’ of the Old Testament Israel out of all the places where they had been exiled or imprisoned: out of every family, every city and every country³⁴. The gathering of ‘the remnant’³⁵ is even compared to saving the sheep from the lion’s mouth³⁶ and with the thought that the Messiah would be the good shepherd³⁷!

The additional thought that the good shepherd (Jesus Christ) would separate the true Israel³⁸ (the Israel of God³⁹, the believers in Jesus Christ) from the rest of the natural nation of Israel⁴⁰ and lead them out of the sheep pen of Israel in order to form his own flock (10:16)⁴¹ was unthinkable for the Jews, because that ‘mystery’ (secret) would only be revealed during the period of the New Testament revelation⁴²!

(II) 10:7-10. Jesus is the gate.

10:7. Therefore Jesus said (viaa) again, “I tell (vipa) you the truth, I AM⁴³ (vipa) the gate of the sheep.

10:8. All who ever came (viaa) before me are (vipa) thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen (viaa) to them.

10:9. I AM⁴⁴ (vipa) the gate; if anyone enters (vsaa) by me, he will certainly be saved (vifp), and he will certainly go in (vifd) and out (vifd) and will find (vifa) pasture.

10:10. The thief comes again and again (vipn) only to steal (vsaa) and slaughter (vsaa) and destroy (vsaa); I have once for all come (viaa) in order that they may continually have life (vspa) and continually have (vspa) abundance.

John 10:7-10 is an explanation and an extension of the allegory of the good shepherd in John 10:1-5.

Jesus is not only the good shepherd, but also the only true gate for the sheep, through which a person can gain legal and legitimate entrance into the one flock (the one Kingdom or the one Church)(10:16). There is simply no other gate⁴⁵! The one flock of the Shepherd (the community of believers, the Church, the Kingdom) will find pasture and life in all its fulness through Jesus Christ.

Note that the sheep pen, first the natural nation of Israel (10:1) and later also the natural nations of the Gentiles (10:16), are not the same as the flock of the good shepherd (10:16)! *All sheep are led out of their natural sheep pens and form the one flock of the Good Shepherd outside their original sheep pens!* Those who become believers in Jesus Christ receive a new identity⁴⁶, live by the Kingdom culture instead of their original national cultures⁴⁷ and prefer Jesus Christ above their own family, culture and tradition⁴⁸! Only Jesus Christ is the gate that actually reaches the sheep in every nation and the gate that actually allows the sheep to leave their old sheep pens and join the one flock of the Good Shepherd.

a. Jesus is the gate to the sheep.

The Jewish religious leaders and teachers tried to gain power over the people of Israel as thieves and robbers do. But only Jesus Christ is the true Anointed of God (the Messiah, the Christ) and the only legal and legitimate way to reach the lost sheep of Israel. And only via Jesus Christ (based on his completed work of salvation) other genuine shepherds (the New Testament leaders: apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, teachers, elders, group leaders, etc)⁴⁹ gain access to the sheep pen of Israel and the sheep pens of the other nations. The gatekeeper (the Spirit of Jesus Christ) will only allow the genuine shepherds to enter in order to reach his sheep. All the religious leaders of the other religions in the world are illegally present within their nations, because they all climbed over the wall and did not enter via the gate, Jesus Christ! *The Bible does not acknowledge the legality of any leader of other religions in the world!* These religious leaders and teachers are the false prophets and false teachers that proclaim another message and another way. The fact that the true sheep in Israel and in the other nations do not listen to their voices proves that these religious leaders and teachers are false shepherds and at the same time proves that these sheep are genuinely born-again.

Verse 7 and 8 explain verse 1 and 2. Only shepherds that gain access to the sheep pens by faith in Jesus Christ and by appointment by Jesus Christ are the true shepherds. All so-called shepherds that came before Jesus Christ to the people *are* thieves and robbers. Not only the Pharisees and Sadducees in Israel, but also the founders and prophets of all the

³² Hebrew: JaHWeH

³³ Psalm 23:1-6; Isaiah 40:10

³⁴ Jeremiah 3:14; 23:3

³⁵ Amos 5:15; Micah 2:12-13

³⁶ Amos 3:12

³⁷ Micah 5:1-3; Ezekiel 34:23

³⁸ Romans 9:6b

³⁹ Galatians 6:16

⁴⁰ Romans 9:6a

⁴¹ cf. Matthew 21:43

⁴² Ephesians 2:11-22; Ephesians 3:2-6

⁴³ G: egó eimi

⁴⁴ G: egó eimi

⁴⁵ John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5) (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5

⁴⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:17

⁴⁷ cf. Philippians 3:20

⁴⁸ Luke 9:23-27,57-62; 14:26-33

⁴⁹ 1 Peter 5:2-4

other religions in the world are false shepherds. Jesus does not refer to the prophets of the Old Testament or to John the Baptist, but to all the Jewish religious leaders and teachers standing around him as he tells this allegory (9:40; 10:19). These thieves and robbers intimidate the sheep (9:22) and seek their own glory (5:44)⁵⁰. They threaten the sheep, take violent measures against the sheep and even kill (stone) the sheep!

Of course there were also many sheep that listened to these thieves and robbers. They do not belong to the sheep of the good shepherd. They are the adherents of the other religions in the world. The sheep of the Good Shepherd do not listen to these thieves and robbers.

⁵⁰ Matthew 23:6

b. Jesus is the gate *for* the sheep.

Jesus says, "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved." This gate is not the gate to the sheep pen, but the gate to the one flock, to the Church, to the Kingdom of God. Jesus is the only legal and legitimate gate for the sheep to enter into the Kingdom of God (the Church, the Community of the saved). Jesus is the only Way for the People of God to be saved, to be kept safe and to find genuine pasture in life. With the Jewish religious leaders and the leaders of the religions of the world people find no salvation, no protection and no genuine pasture. Such leaders only intimidate (9:22), rob, tear apart and slaughter. With such leaders and teachers no one feels safe, loved, appreciated or cared for. Jesus Christ says the following of the Jewish religious leaders: "You hypocrites! You shut the Kingdom of God in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. You travel land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are"⁵¹.

Note that the gate is also not the elders or pastors of congregations or the leaders of Christian organisations, but no one else than Jesus Christ himself.

Verse 9 does not speak about entering the sheep pen of the nation of Israel, but about entering the one flock of the good shepherd (10:16)! When anyone enters the Christian Community through Jesus Christ he will be saved. Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation (14:6). 'To be saved' cannot simply mean that whoever enters through Jesus Christ, will be *safe* only. 'To be saved' means to receive eternal life (3:16-17). It means to receive life forever as God intended it, a new and completely transformed and perfect life, a life with the Living God (Christ), a life that never ends! It means never to be doomed in the final judgement (5:24) and never to perish in everlasting death (10:28). It means that you can never and will never be lost. It means that no one and nothing can or will separate you from God's love for you⁵². It means freedom from the guilt, misery, pollution, power and punishment of a life of sin. The sheep of the Good Shepherd will also dwell safely in the presence of their shepherd, Jesus Christ, because *nothing that happens to them on earth can really harm them*⁵³. They will experience his care and protection when it is really needed.

Jesus promises, "He will come in and go out, and find pasture. He will have life in abundance" (10:9b-10). The picture of 'walking in and out' is a picture of an ordinary flock of sheep in daily life. The ordinary shepherds lead their flocks into the sheep pen at the end of the day and out of the sheep pen in the morning.

But genuine Christians do not go out of the Church or Kingdom and then come in again. They are always with the Good Shepherd, whether he rests or is on the move. They are always at home with Christ. They always follow Jesus Christ wherever he leads. They have absolute salvation and eternal security. And they experience the abundance of the Christian life: Jesus Christ gives Christian believers abundant grace (1:16)⁵⁴, abundant spiritual life (4:14; 6:35; 7:37-39)⁵⁵, enough food and clothing (6:13)⁵⁶ and lots of joy (2:6-7)⁵⁷.

(III) 10:11-15. Jesus is the good shepherd.

10:11. I AM⁵⁸ (vipa) the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down (vipa) his life for the sheep.

10:12. He who is a hired man, not being (vppa) a shepherd, whose own the sheep are (vipa) not (i.e. the sheep are not his), sees (vipa) the wolf coming (vppn), and abandons (deserts)(vipa) the sheep and runs away (vipa) - the wolf snatches (vipa) them and scatters (vipa)(them) -

10:13. (He runs away) because he is (vipa) a hired hand and to him there is no care (concern)(vipa) regarding the sheep.

10:14. I AM⁵⁹ (vipa) the good shepherd; I continually know (by observation and experience)⁶⁰ (vipa) my sheep and my sheep continually know (by observation and experience)(vipa) me.

10:15. just as the Father constantly knows (by experience)⁶¹ (vipa) me and I constantly know (by experience)(vipa) the Father, and I give (lay down)(vipa) my life for the sheep.

John 10:11-15 is the main thought of the allegory.

a. Jesus is good because he gives his life in the place of all true believers.

Jesus says, "I AM the good shepherd." The word 'good'⁶² means 'useful', 'making a real and permanent difference in and contribution to life' He is morally perfect, absolutely pleasing to God the Father and his excellence surpasses

⁵¹ Matthew 23:13,15

⁵² Romans 8:37-39

⁵³ 1 John 5:18

⁵⁴ Romans 5:17; Ephesians 1:7-8

⁵⁵ Psalm 1:3

⁵⁶ Matthew 6:25-34

⁵⁷ 2 Corinthians 8:2

⁵⁸ G: egó eimi

⁵⁹ G: egó eimi

⁶⁰ G: ginóskó

⁶¹ G: ginóskó

⁶² G: kalos

everything and everyone. He is the absolute ideal in character and behaviour. He is absolutely unique. He is truly the only 'I AM'!

He proves that he is unique by giving his life⁶³ for his sheep. When an ordinary shepherd of sheep gives his life for his sheep, it means *the end* of the shepherd and also the end of the flock. But when Jesus Christ gives his life for his sheep, it means *the beginning* of his flock! When a noble person gives his life for someone on earth, that someone gains only a little longer *temporary* life on earth. But when Jesus Christ gives his life for his sheep, the sheep actually receive *eternal* life! Jesus gives his life '*for*'⁶⁴ *the sheep, that is, 'for the sake of', 'in the interest of', 'in the place of' or 'in exchange for'* his sheep (10:11,15; 11:50-52; 15:13; 18:14)⁶⁵. The real interest of the sheep is their eternal salvation. But it costs Jesus Christ his life! The sheep do not receive 'cheap grace' that consists of mere words and costs nothing, but they receive 'costly grace' that cost God the life of his only Son! Jesus took the curse and punishment of our sins 'in our place'⁶⁶, so that 'in exchange' he may give us his perfect righteousness⁶⁷.

Jesus gives his life 'for his sheep'. This means that he gives his life for 'his people', that is, for those he genuinely saves from their sins⁶⁸. But not every human being on earth or in history belongs to his flock. And not every human being in history is set free from his sins. Jesus gives his life for 'the people whom God the Father has given to him' (6:37,39; 10:29; 17:6,9,24)(cf. 6:44,65), for those that come to him and believe in him (6:37,40). But not everyone is given to Jesus Christ (10:26), not everyone comes to Jesus Christ (6:37) and not everyone believes in Jesus Christ (6:40). Only those people, whom God the Father by his grace has given to Jesus Christ, who by grace believe in Jesus Christ⁶⁹, are the genuine believers that do not perish (3:16; 6:39-40; 17:12).

God acquires his Church (and not the whole world) by the blood (death) of his own Son⁷⁰. Jesus Christ has given himself for the Church⁷¹. God gave up his own Son in death for those he chose⁷². Likewise, the good shepherd gave his life to his sheep. *The atonement on the cross was not universal. The salvation of people is not universal.* The atoning death of Jesus Christ is limited to those who are actually saved. Jesus only died for those he effectively saves. God's salvation work through Jesus Christ cannot be thwarted by the decision or effort of any human being. His salvation work is sovereign and always effective⁷³.

While Christ's atoning death is sufficient for all people who ever lived, his death is effective only for those who are saved. While the gospel must be preached to all people who live, not all people will respond to the gospel by faith. While God draws his people from all nations that exist in the world, not all people of all nations will be saved. Nevertheless, the flock will be very large and consist of an uncountable number of his sheep from every nation, people, tribe and language⁷⁴. They will be led out of every sheep pen of the nations in the world (10:16)⁷⁵. John 10:16 explains what Jesus Christ means by the word 'the world' in John 1:29; 3:16; 4:42; 6:33,51; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46 and what he means by the word 'all' in John 12:32 and in Romans 5:16-17.

b. Jesus is good because he protects his sheep with his life.

The 'wolf' does not need explanation in this allegory. It is a symbol of people and events that threaten and attack the sheep and try to rob and destroy them.

The 'hired hand' is another symbol for the leaders of the Jews and the other religions of the world, because they care nothing for the sheep. They did not care for the lame man during the 38 years he was lying at the Pool of Bethesda (5:3,10), but cared only about religious laws, like keeping the Sabbath. They mercilessly doomed and wanted to stone the woman caught in adultery (8:1-11), but they had not even received mercy and forgiveness for their own sins! They expelled the man born blind from the religious, social and economic community, simply because he did not believe in their theology (their religious point of view), but believed in Jesus Christ instead (9:34). They abandoned (deserted) the ordinary people in Israel. But no one, no religious, political, economic or judicial leader will be able to snatch one genuine believer from the hand of Jesus Christ, that is, from the hand of God the Father (10:28-29; 18:9)!

c. Jesus is good because he knows his sheep by name.

Jesus calls the Jewish religious leaders and teachers 'strangers' and 'thieves'. Religious leaders in the world are strangers (10:5), because they do not know their followers by name and they do not know the personal condition of each

⁶³ G: his soul: *himself as spirit and body*

⁶⁴ G: *huper*

⁶⁵ cf. Mark 10:45

⁶⁶ Galatians 3:13

⁶⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:21

⁶⁸ Matthew 1:21

⁶⁹ Acts 13:48; 16:14; 18:27; Ephesians 2:8; Philippians 1:29; Hebrews 12:2

⁷⁰ Acts 20:28

⁷¹ Ephesians 5:25-27

⁷² Romans 8:32-35

⁷³ Romans 8:29-30; 9:6-18; 1 Thessalonians 2:13-15

⁷⁴ Revelation 7:9; 5:9

⁷⁵ cf. Genesis 22:18; Matthew 24:14

of their followers. But Jesus knew his own sheep personally, by name (10:3; 10:14,27)⁷⁶. He knows the condition of each believer⁷⁷.

He knows every one of their circumstances⁷⁸. He confides in each of them⁷⁹. He carries the small and the weak close to his heart⁸⁰.

Religious leaders in the world are hired hands (10:12-13) and even thieves (10:1), because they do not own their followers, but nevertheless rule over them and lord it over them as if they are property⁸¹. But Jesus is the owner of each of his sheep⁸², because he bought each with his own blood⁸³. He calls them 'my sheep' (10:14). Religious leaders in the world only care for their own position and power and glory, but run away when danger arises. But Jesus gives his life in the place of his sheep (10:15).

(IV) 10:16-21. The commission and authority of the shepherd.

a. The unique commission of Jesus (10:16).

10:16. I also have (vipa) other sheep that are (vipa) not of this sheep pen⁸⁴. Them also I must (vipa) lead (vnaa), and they will *certainly* listen (vifa) to my voice, and will become (vifd) one flock⁸⁵, one shepherd⁸⁶.

Jesus Christ builds his Church⁸⁷. Jesus not only gathers his sheep (genuine believers) from the sheep pen of the nation of Israel, but also his sheep from the many sheep pens of the nations on earth. Because God the Father from all eternity knows who the chosen sheep from all the nations are that he is going to give to Jesus Christ (17:6)⁸⁸, Jesus can say of them that he *has* (present tense) other sheep even before he starts to gather them (even before they are actually saved)⁸⁹.

- During the Old Testament period the believers from the Gentile nations joined the believers from Israel. During the Old Testament period the genuine sheep consisted mainly of Israelites. The Gentiles were mainly under the thralldom of Satan in the sense that God allowed the nations to go their own way⁹⁰. The Old Testament prophets prophesied that God would *extend* his work of salvation to all the nations in the world. God promised to bless all the families of the earth through the Messiah⁹¹. God promised to pour out his Spirit on people from all nations⁹². And Malachi prophesied that God's name would be great among all the nations⁹³. However, the prophets in the Old Testament thought that the people from the Gentile nations would be *saved by joining the nation of Israel*⁹⁴! And so during the period before the gospel was proclaimed, believers coming from the Gentile nations joined the community of believing Israel⁹⁵.
- During the New Testament period all believers are led out of their respective national sheep pens and led into the one flock of Jesus Christ. However, from the first coming of Jesus Christ, believers in Jesus Christ from Israel and from the Gentile nations are led out of their respective nations and into the one flock of Jesus Christ (the one worldwide Church or Kingdom of God). With the first coming of Jesus Christ a new era commenced. During the New Testament period the true Israel (the believers in the natural nation of Israel) was *not destroyed (terminated) or replaced (substituted)* by the Church (the believers coming from all the heathen nations). God *continued* the community of genuine believers in Israel ('the remnant') on a higher plane (of realities instead of shadows) *and extended (enlarged)* it to include the genuine believers from all the nations on earth⁹⁶! Then the Old Testament prophecies went into fulfilment⁹⁷. Jesus Christ leads his sheep (the genuine believers) in Israel out of the sheep pen of the nation of Israel and his sheep (the genuine believers) in the Gentile nations out of the sheep pens of the other nations in the world into his own sheep pen (the Church or Kingdom of God). So during the New Testament period the genuine sheep from all the nations in the world form 'one flock with one shepherd' (one Church under one Head, one Kingdom under one King).

⁷⁶ 2 Timothy 2:19

⁷⁷ Proverbs 27:23

⁷⁸ Psalm 139:1-5

⁷⁹ Psalm 25:14

⁸⁰ Isaiah 40:11

⁸¹ Matthew 20:25-28

⁸² Matthew 16:18; 1 Peter 5:2

⁸³ 1 Peter 1:18-19

⁸⁴ G: aulé

⁸⁵ G: poimné

⁸⁶ G: poimén

⁸⁷ Matthew 16:18 "I build my Church"

⁸⁸ cf. Romans 8:29-30,33

⁸⁹ cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15

⁹⁰ Acts 14:16

⁹¹ Genesis 12:3

⁹² Joel 2:28

⁹³ Malachi 1:11

⁹⁴ cf. Isaiah 2:2-4; 54:2-3; 56:3-8; 62:10-12; Micah 4:1-2; Zechariah 8:23

⁹⁵ Acts 13:26; 17:4,17

⁹⁶ Matthew 8:11-12; 21:43-44

⁹⁷ Genesis 12:3; Joel 2:28; Malachi 1:11

Jesus Christ has only one Church.

- The one flock of Jesus Christ is NOT a denomination. While during the Old Testament period the genuine believers from the Gentile nations were absorbed into Israel⁹⁸, during the New Testament period the genuine believers from Israel are brought out of Israel and into the flock of Jesus Christ. The genuine believers from the non-Jewish nations enter the Kingdom of God on the basis of complete equality with the believers from the nation of Israel. Together they form one flock with one shepherd (10:16)⁹⁹.

The Good Shepherd does not lead his sheep of the other nations into the 'sheep pen' of Israel, but leads them out of all their own sheep pens and gathers them into the one 'flock' with one shepherd (17:20-21)¹⁰⁰. The Community of believers does not become 'one sheep pen or sheep fold' in the sense of 'one denomination' as some translate the word 'ovile' in the Latin Vulgate¹⁰¹. The word refers to 'one flock' of sheep rather than to 'one sheep pen/sheepfold' for the sheep. The Shepherd Jesus Christ gathers his sheep (believers) into one flock (one Body of Christ; one worldwide Church/Kingdom consisting of people, not into one institute/denomination. The flock does not become one world-wide organisation/institute/denomination. It does not become the church of a state or the church of the world-wide empire. It does not become an organisation under a pope, bishop, council, bishop, synod or any other denominational church structure. The one flock consists of very many independent local congregations or churches in every country that form a spiritual unity with one another under the one and only Shepherd and Bishop of their souls, Jesus Christ¹⁰².

- What the Old Testament did not know about the Gentiles. The following three teachings had not been revealed to the prophets of the Old Testament:

- The teaching that God's work of salvation would no longer be concentrated in the natural nation of Israel, but will be extended to all the Gentile nations¹⁰³.
- The teaching that God's people are no longer only the believers in the nation of Israel only, but the totality of believers out of all the nations in the world (the Church of Christ or the Kingdom of God)¹⁰⁴.
- The teaching that the believers from the Gentile nations would enter into the Kingdom of God on basis of equality with the believers from the nation of Israel¹⁰⁵. The branches of both the natural and the wild olive trees are grafted by faith onto the one root (which represents Jesus Christ) of the one tree (which represents the new covenant people)¹⁰⁶.

There is only one Gate, one Shepherd and one Flock. This allegory teaches us how important it is to enter through the gate, Jesus Christ, into the community of believers. How important it is to know Jesus Christ personally and intimately.

It is important to follow Jesus and obey his voice. Only when we follow close behind him, will he protect us from the people who want to control us and destroy us. This allegory also teaches us that *there are different sheep pens in the world, but only one flock of believers in the whole world, namely the Church of Christ or the Kingdom of Christ.*

b. The unique authority of Jesus (10:17-18).

10:17. For this reason the Father loves (vipa) me because I give (lay down)¹⁰⁷ (vipa) my life in order that I may take (vsaa) it again.

10:18. No one takes (vipa) it away from me, but I give (lay down) (vipa) it (my life) of my own accord. I have (vipa) authority¹⁰⁸ to lay it down (vnaa) and have (vipa) authority to take it up¹⁰⁹ (vnaa) again. This command (charge)¹¹⁰ I received (viaa) from my Father.

There are three differences between the good shepherd and other shepherds:

The good shepherd lays down his life willingly. Ordinary shepherds do not lay down their lives, because that would destroy their flock! But Jesus lays down his life willingly, because that is the only way to save his flock. The word 'lay down' or 'give' is in the present continuous tense. Jesus laid down his life throughout his life¹¹¹ and at his death on the cross. No one 'takes' (conquers, murders) his life by surprise. No one (e.g. a false prophet) 'defeats' Jesus Christ so that

⁹⁸ Isaiah 56:3-8

⁹⁹ Ephesians 3:2-6; 1 Peter 2:9-10

¹⁰⁰ Ezekiel 34:23

¹⁰¹ John 10:16 in Latin Vulgate: "... et fiet unum ovile unus pastor".

¹⁰² 1 Peter 2:25; 5:4; cf. Revelation 1:12-13

¹⁰³ Matthew 28:19; Hebrews 11:40.

¹⁰⁴ 1 Peter 2:9-10

¹⁰⁵ Ephesians 1:9-10; Ephesians 3:2-6

¹⁰⁶ Romans 11:16-24

¹⁰⁷ G: tithémi

¹⁰⁸ G: exousia

¹⁰⁹ G: lambanó

¹¹⁰ G: entolé

¹¹¹ cf. Romans 12:1

he can think that he and his religion gained the victory. No one in history has the 'right' or 'authority' to take his own life (to commit suicide). Only Jesus Christ has the 'right' or 'authority' or 'commission' to give himself as a sacrifice of atonement of sins of his sheep. God the Father loves God the Son, because he was obedient to this commission¹¹².

The good shepherd takes his life up again. After an ordinary shepherd has laid down his life, he cannot take it up again. But after Jesus Christ has laid down his life, he 'takes it up' or 'takes it *once for always* into possession' again. He dies and he is resurrected from the dead and lives forever.

¹¹² Luke 24:26-27,44

His death and his resurrection are not events that happen to him, but are his deliberate and willing acts of love and obedience to the commission which God the Father gave to him. The will of God the Son is in complete harmony with the will of God the Father. The Father ‘gives’¹¹³ the Son with a view to die (3:16) and the Son ‘gives’¹¹⁴ himself to die (10:11,15,17,18). Both words mean a giving as an atonement for sins (3:16; 15:13)¹¹⁵. The Father ‘raises’¹¹⁶ the Son from the dead¹¹⁷ and the Son ‘takes his life in possession’¹¹⁸ again.

The good shepherd gives eternal life. An ordinary shepherd can lengthen the life of his sheep a little. But Jesus Christ gives his sheep eternal/everlasting life.

c. Jesus is not demon-possessed or mad (10:19-21).

10:19. There was (viad) again a division among the Jews on account of these words.

10:20. Many of them were saying (viia), “He has (vipa) a demon and raves (is raving mad) (vipn). Why do you listen (vipa) to him?”

10:21. Others were saying (viia), “These words are (vipa) not of a demon-possessed (vppn). Surely a demon cannot (vipn) open (vnaa) the eyes of the blind, (can he)?”

Again Jesus Christ brought division among the Jews¹¹⁹. Some began to insult him again and were saying that he had a demon that made him raving mad (cf. 8:48). They tried every method to keep the Jews from listening to Jesus Christ. Other Jews began to think about what Jesus said and did. They were saying that his teaching cannot possibly come from a demon or a madman, because how could a demon open the eyes of the man born blind? It is clear that the Great Divider had come and that no one on earth could any longer stay neutral towards Jesus Christ¹²⁰!

(V) 10:22-29. False and genuine sheep.

a. The Feast of Dedication (10:22).

10:22. Then came (viad) the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was (viia) winter.

The feast of Dedication (Chanukah) was *not* one of the appointed feasts of the Old Testament revelation¹²¹, but only a festival of later Jewish tradition. It was celebrated in December A.D. 29 and was in commemoration of the cleansing and rededication of the temple by Judas the Maccabee in 164 B.C. after king Antiochus (Theos) Epiphanes (means God manifest) of the Greek-Syrian Empire had erected “the abomination that causes desolation” in the temple in 167 B.C.¹²². The feast had many lights, festive family gatherings and took eight days long.

It was the rainy season and Jesus walked in Solomon’s Colonnade, the only part left of Solomon’s original temple.

b. Jesus is the Messiah (10:23-25).

10:23. And Jesus was walking (viia) in the temple in Solomon’s Colonnade.

10:24. So the Jews gathered around (encircled) (viia) him and were saying (viia) to him, “How long are you lifting up (vipa) our soul? (i.e. how long will you keep us in suspense?) If you are (vipa) the Messiah (the Christ), tell (vmaa) (imperative) us plainly.”

10:25. Jesus answered (viao) them, “I did tell (viaa) you, but you do not believe (vipa). The works (miracles) which I am doing (vipa) in my Father’s name, these bear witness (vipa) concerning me (i.e. they are sufficient to prove my claim)¹²³.”

The Jews desired a statement of Jesus that he was the expected Messiah. Jesus had already done that openly when he spoke to the Samaritan woman (4:25-26) and had openly said to the Jews that he was the ‘I am’ (8:23-25). But he did not use the word ‘Messiah’ here, because the Jews wrongly regarded the Messiah to be a political liberator from Roman oppression (6:15)¹²⁴.

c. Divine election and human responsibility (10:26-27).

10:26. But you do not believe (vipa) because you are (vipa) not of my sheep.

10:27. My sheep listen to (vipa) my voice: and I know (by observation and experience)¹²⁵ (vipa) them and they follow (vipa) me.

¹¹³ G: didómi

¹¹⁴ G: tithémi

¹¹⁵ Mark 10:45; Romans 8:32; 1 John 3:16; 4:10

¹¹⁶ G: anistémi

¹¹⁷ Acts 2:24

¹¹⁸ G: lambanó

¹¹⁹ Luke 2:34

¹²⁰ cf. Matthew 16:13-16; 25:31-33; Luke 2:34

¹²¹ Leviticus 23

¹²² Daniel 9:27; 1 Maccabees 1:54-62; 4:52-59; Matthew 24:15

¹²³ cf. Matthew 11:1-6

¹²⁴ Matthew 26:63; Acts 1:6

¹²⁵ G: ginóskó

The assurance of salvation is based on the fact that God the Father has given believers to Jesus Christ (6:37,39; 17:2). In John 10:26, Jesus says to the Jews who do not believe in him, “You do not believe *continuously and persistently* (present continuous tense), because you are not my sheep”.

This verse contains two very important truths in the Bible, namely, on the one hand, the doctrine of *divine election* and on the other hand, the doctrine of *human responsibility*. The fact that they are not his sheep is part of divine election. And the fact that they do not believe continuously and persistently is a part of human responsibility. It is not possible for us to harmonise these two doctrines, because they run parallel in the Bible!

Divine election. On the one hand, *God the Father chooses whom he gives to Jesus* and whom he does not give to Jesus. Jesus says, “The Father who has given (perfect tense) the sheep to me ...” (10:29). Jesus teaches this truth also in John chapter 6, “All that the Father *continues* to give (present continuous tense) me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away...” (6:37). “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me has *once for all* drawn (aorist past tense) him. ...” (6:44). “This is why I told you that no one can *once for all* (aorist past tense) come to me unless this has been given (*and remains a given reality*)(perfect tense) to him by my Father” (6:65). Only those people whom God the Father draws irresistibly to Jesus Christ, will believe in him! This is divine election!

Divine election is more fundamental than human responsibility. The sheep (people) who *continuously and persistently* (present continuous tense) listen to the words of Jesus Christ and *continuously and persistently* (present continuous tense) follow (that is, believe and obey) him do that because God in his mercy and grace draws them to Jesus Christ (6:44) and has given them the ability to listen and to follow¹²⁶.

Divine election does not begin with people standing on the zero line, where they have never done any good or evil. All people have sinned and fall short of God’s righteous demand, namely, that all people should be perfectly holy and righteous in God’s eyes¹²⁷. No one is qualified to choose for or against Jesus Christ from a position on the zero line. Divine election is carried out when all people stand a very long way below the zero line, have a corrupt nature, do evil and only deserve eternal damnation. The fact that they are nevertheless chosen out of this deep fallen position, is divine grace!

Human responsibility. On the other hand, *every human being is himself responsible to believe* or not to believe in Jesus Christ. The Jews alone are fully responsible for their sin: disobedience and unbelief! Jesus says, “You do not believe, because you are not my sheep” (10:26)! *This is human responsibility!* When we preach the gospel, we preach human responsibility to all people in the world. All people in the world have *the responsibility* to repent and believe¹²⁸.

Divine election includes human responsibility. The fact that God sends people to proclaim the Gospel and that many of them will respond to the Gospel is *divine election*. But the fact that some people do not or do not want to listen to the words of Jesus Christ and consequently do not follow him, is *human responsibility*. They continually and persistently harden their hearts against Christ and his words¹²⁹. *By their own guilt they arrive in a state* where they no longer can listen and no longer can follow and *from which God does not want to save them¹³⁰*. Persistent unbelief and unwillingness means deserved guilt and eventually causes an inability to listen, to understand, to believe or to act. God is not obliged to save people who harden their hearts by unbelief and unwillingness. Divine election teaches that God remains perfectly holy, righteous and sovereign even if he does not save a single person!

Divine election and human responsibility move parallel in the Bible. Three examples:

- Jesus Christ has been crucified in accordance with divine election: by what God decreed¹³¹ (perfect tense)¹³² and by his foreknowledge¹³³. And Jesus Christ has been crucified in accordance with human responsibility: by the wicked action of the Jews and Romans¹³⁴.
- God justifies people in accordance with divine election: by what God foreknew (elected)¹³⁵, decreed (predestined)¹³⁶, chose¹³⁷ and purposed¹³⁸ before the beginning of time¹³⁹. And God justifies people in accordance with human responsibility: by their faith¹⁴⁰.

¹²⁶ Philippians 1:29

¹²⁷ Romans 3:23; Galatians 3:10; James 2:10

¹²⁸ Mark 1:15

¹²⁹ Romans 1:18,25

¹³⁰ Romans 9:10-18

¹³¹ G: horizó

¹³² Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23a; 4:28

¹³³ G: prognósis. Acts 2:23b.

¹³⁴ Acts 2:23c; 4:27

¹³⁵ G: proginoskó

¹³⁶ G: prohorizó. Romans 8:29-30

¹³⁷ G: haireð)(all three aorist tense)(2 Thessalonians 2:13a

¹³⁸ G: prothesis

¹³⁹ 2 Timothy 1:9

¹⁴⁰ Romans 4:2-8; 2 Thessalonians 2:13b-14

- There is an elect remnant of Israel that has been chosen by grace (perfect tense)¹⁴¹. And there is the rest of Israel that have been hardened (aorist tense)¹⁴². Thus, not all Jews are sheep of Jesus Christ (10:26).

True believers are known by Jesus; they will obey his voice; and they will follow Jesus and no other religion, philosophy or value-system (10:27). True believers do not need to doubt the promise of Jesus about assurance of salvation.

The fact that I *continue* to believe in Jesus Christ and *continue* to follow him is a great assurance that God the Father has given me to Jesus Christ! *Without a continuous and persistent faith and obedience (my responsibility), I cannot have a subjective experience of assurance of my salvation (my election).*

d. Salvation is guaranteed (10:28-29).

10:28. I give (vipa) them eternal life, and they shall in no way (double negative) perish (vsam) forever; and no one shall snatch (vifa) them out of my hand.

10:29. That which (singular) (this is a reference to ‘the flock of sheep’) my Father has given (vira) to me is (vipa) greater (more excellent and costly) than all (other creatures), and no one is able (vipn) to snatch (vnpa) (them) out of my Father’s hand.

The assurance of salvation is based on the promise and power of Jesus Christ. In John 10:27-28, Jesus says about those people who are his sheep, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.” In a sovereign way Jesus promises three absolute certainties concerning those people who are his genuine sheep:

- Assurance that my new life will never end. True believers already now possess eternal life, that is, the life that characterises the coming age of the new heaven and the new earth! It is the transformed life. It is the life of personally knowing and fellowshiping with Jesus Christ. It is the life that never ends!
- Assurance that I will never perish. True believers cannot backslide in such a way that they perish. They will never be condemned to everlasting separation from God’s presence and loving care! ‘Never’ really means ‘never’!
- Assurance that no one can snatch me away from Jesus Christ. True believers cannot be snatched away out of the hand of Jesus/God (verse 29). No one is powerful enough to snatch them from Christ’s powerful protection and care! No devil or demon, no false prophet or religious leader and no powerful political leader or judge. ‘No one’ means ‘no one’!

The original Greek says, “That which my Father has given to me (i.e. the flock of sheep) is greater than all”. These sheep have been given to Jesus Christ (perfect tense)(cf. 6:37,39). These sheep are greater, that is, ‘more excellent’ or ‘more costly’ than all other creatures! *Nothing in all creation is more important and more precious to God than Christian believers, gathered together in Christ’s flock!* In verse 28 the sheep are viewed as individuals in the plural, but in verse 29 the sheep are viewed as one flock of sheep in the singular! What God the Father has given to Jesus Christ remains the possession of Jesus Christ in verse 28 and remains the possession of God the Father in verse 29.

Note the relationship between divine election and human responsibility: the shepherd calls his sheep by name and they listen to his voice and follow him. In all these characteristics Jesus Christ is always first: if he does not call the sheep, they cannot hear; and if he does lead the sheep, they cannot follow. God’s mercy and grace is always first. This proves divine election. But whoever does not take his human responsibility serious and does not respond, can never be sure that he is saved!

(VI) 10:30-39. Jesus claims to be the Son of God.

10:30. I and the Father are always (vipa) one.”

10:31. The Jews again picked up (viaa) stones in order to stone (vsaa) him.

10:32. Jesus said (viao) to them, “Many good works I showed (viaa) you from the Father. For which work of these do you (try to) stone (vipa) me?”

10:33. The Jews answered (viao) him, “We are not stoning (vipa) you for (any) good work, but for blasphemy, because you, being (vppa) a mere man, make (vipa) yourself God.”

a. Jesus claims that God the Son and God the Father are one (10:30).

The words: ‘we are’ points to more persons within the divine being. But the word: ‘one’ points to the absolute unity in their works and in their divine being (their metaphysical-ontological nature). *Jesus clearly teaches that God has revealed himself as one God in substance or nature, and distinguishable as one God in three persons (inner distinctions within the one divine being).* This verse is very important, because on the one hand it rejects the doctrine that denies the *unity of essence* of God and on the other hand it rejects the doctrine that denies the *diversity of three persons* in the Godhead. The Jews understood clearly that the claim of Jesus in John 10:30 confirmed his absolute equality with God the Father. Jesus already did that in John 5:17-18 and 8:58-59.

b. Jesus argues that his works prove that God the Son is one with God the Father (10:31-33).

¹⁴¹ Romans 11:5-7a

¹⁴² Romans 11:7b-10

If Jesus were not God, his claims would be blasphemy and he would have to be stoned to death¹⁴³. The Jews thought that Jesus had committed blasphemy and began to pick up stones to stone him (8:59; 11:8). Jesus said that he had shown the Jews many good works from the Father and asked for which one of these works were they trying to stone him. The Jews did not realise that the many good works Jesus was doing by order of God the Father and in the power of God the Father showed that he was indeed the Son of God. He did not commit blasphemy and ought not to be stoned. But the Jews wanted to stone him, not because of his works, but because of his words!

¹⁴³ Leviticus 24:16

c. Jesus argues that his *words* also prove that God the Son is one with God the Father (10:34-36).

10:34. Jesus answered (viao) them, “Is (vipa+) it not written (+vprp) in your Law, “I said (viaa) you are (vipa) gods”.

10:35. If he called (viaa) them ‘gods’ to whom the word of God came (viad) and the Scripture cannot (vipn) be broken (vnap).

10:36. can you say (vipa) of him whom the Father has set aside¹⁴⁴ (viaa) and sent (viaa) into the world: “You are blaspheming (vipa)” because I said (viaa), “Son of God am (vipa) I?””

Jesus used an argument from the Bible that supports his claim of being the Son of God. The Bible pictures God as the Great Judge surrounded by ‘heavenly judges’¹⁴⁵ and ‘earthly judges’¹⁴⁶. In Psalm 82 God rebukes the earthly judges that they are unjust towards the oppressed, the weak and the poor. *God (or Asaph inspired by God) calls these earthly judges ‘gods’ and ‘sons of the Most High’, because they represent divine justice on earth!* God speaks through these judges¹⁴⁷. Jesus argues that if the Scripture, which may not be broken, may call earthly judges ‘gods’ and ‘sons of the Most High’, then Jesus Christ as Judge of all the living and the dead in history (5:22)¹⁴⁸ may also be called ‘Son of God’!

Jesus argues from the lesser truth to the greater truth.

- The earthly judges are born on earth, but Jesus Christ is sent from God to the earth. The word of God comes to these earthly judges, but Jesus Christ is the Word of God.
- Earthly judges represent ordinary earthly jurisdiction, but Jesus Christ as Judge represents the absolute and final jurisdiction from God over all people.
- If earthly judges in the Bible may be called ‘sons of God’ in a general sense, then the Jews must not protest when Jesus Christ is called ‘the Son of God’ (1:14,18; 3:16). Jesus was not blaspheming. He is the Mediator of all divine works between God and man (cf. 5:17-23); the Mediator of creation (1:3), the Mediator of miraculous signs (5:19-21), the Mediator of salvation (5:24-26)¹⁴⁹ and the Mediator of judgment (5:22,27,30; 10:34-36).

d. Jesus invited the Jews to grow from faith in his divine works towards faith in his divine nature (10:37-39).

10:37. If I am not doing (vipa) the works of my Father, then do not believe (vmpa)(imperative) me.

10:38. But if I do (vipa)(them), then, even though you do not believe (vspa) me, believe (vmpa)(imperative) the works, in order that you may come to realise (know by observation and experience)¹⁵⁰ (vsaa) and may *continue to realise* (know by observation and experience) (vspa) that the Father (is) in me, and I in the Father.

10:39. So again they were trying (seeking) (viia) to arrest (vnaa) him, but he escaped (viaa) out of their hand.

Jesus said, “Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, so *that you may come to know and continue to know that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.*” After arguing from Scripture, Jesus argued from his works. He asks the Jews not to reject him without considering his works. If it is difficult to understand and believe his words (namely, that he is the Saviour and Lord), let them consider his works. *His divine works can bring them to the insight that God the Father and God the Son are present in one another’s persons and works. There is an absolute unity in their works, because there is an absolute unity in their being.* The persons of God the Father and God the Son exist in one another in a glorious mutual relationship as one divine being that knows itself completely. God the Father and God the Son are identical in their being, but apart as persons. As persons they are not subordinate (inferior) to one another.

So once more the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but he escaped from their grasp (cf. 7:30,45).

APPLICATIONS

- 10:1. Beware of thieves and robbers that come into your congregation, but not in the way the Bible teaches.
- 10:3. Get to know the Lord Jesus Christ so well that you can recognize his voice and distinguish it from the voice of the thieves and robbers.
- 10:9-10. If you have never entered through the gate, Jesus Christ, then enter and you will be saved forever, you will live safe on earth where nothing can really harm you and you will have a meaningful and satisfying life.
- 10:12. Recognise the hired shepherds or pastors. These religious leaders and teachers do not really care for the sheep and will not lay down their lives for the sheep.
- 10:16. Make your congregation a mission congregation. The Shepherd, Jesus Christ, wants to save people from every language and culture in the world!
- 10:27. If you are a genuine sheep, you will listen to the voice of Jesus Christ and you will follow Jesus Christ.
- 10:28. Never doubt that the Shepherd, Jesus Christ, promised to you that he has given you everlasting life, that you will never perish and that no one is able to snatch you out of his hand!

¹⁴⁴ G: hagiázó

¹⁴⁵ 1 Kings 22:19-23; Job 1:6

¹⁴⁶ Psalm 82:1-8

¹⁴⁷ cf. Hebrews 1:1

¹⁴⁸ Acts 10:42; 17:31; Romans 2:16; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5

¹⁴⁹ 1 Timothy 2:5-6

¹⁵⁰ G: ginóskó

- 10:29. Never doubt that the Shepherd, Jesus Christ, promised that his flock of sheep is greater or more excellent (than all other creatures on earth), and that no one is able to snatch this flock out of the hand of God the Father!
- 10:30-39. Never doubt that Jesus Christ claims that he and God the Father are one divine nature; that he is God that has taken on the human nature; and that God the Father is in God the Son and that God the Son is in God the Father.
The Jews clearly understood this meaning; otherwise they would not have accused him of blasphemy and would not have tried to stone him to death.

QUESTIONS

- 10:1-6. What is the difference between Jesus and other religious leaders?
- 10:7-10. How is Jesus the only gate *to* and *for* the sheep?
- 10:11-15. What makes Jesus to be the *good* shepherd?
- 10:16-21. What is the unique commission of Jesus Christ?
- 10:17-18. What is the unique authority of Jesus Christ?
- 10:26-27. What is the relationship between divine election (predestination) and human responsibility?
- 10:28-29. Which three promises of Jesus guarantees salvation?
- 10:30-39. How should Christians view the unity between God the Son and God the Father?